

**The Taylors of Ongar: Faith and Pragmatism in a Dissenting Family's
literary enterprise c1780-1830**

Georgina Bailey

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

**Department of History
University of Essex**

Date of submission: January 2019.

Abstract

The Taylors of Ongar were a Dissenting literary family and authors of 65 books published between 1804 and 1833. In the mid-Victorian era members of the family also published a series of autobiographies and memoirs. These works contributed to the creation of the family's literary legacy. Today the Taylors of Ongar are associated with the conservative, evangelical literary tradition that contributed to the middle-class ideology of domesticity in the nineteenth century. Previous studies of the family have been based primarily on assessments of their books and the published autobiographies with reference seldom made to primary sources.

By incorporating evidence from primary source material, including the unpublished memoirs of Mrs Ann Martin Taylor that were discovered during research for this study, this thesis re-evaluates the literary enterprise of the Taylors of Ongar. The new, unpublished information is contrasted with the family's authorised biographies and a strong, female voice is returned to the family history. Particular consideration is given to the role of Dissent in the family's life and work and the transition of that faith down the generations. The impact this had on the family history and literary legacy is discussed. The professional nature of the family's literary work is re-evaluated and the literary reticence advanced in family biographies questioned. The impact the new evidence has on an understanding of the role of gender in their literary work is explored and the contribution of the women of the family to the success of the literary enterprise of the Taylors of Ongar is evaluated.

Contents

Introduction	p.	1
Chapter I: Faith, Family, and Networks	p.	30
Chapter II: “An Old Puritan Life: Homely, Frugal, Studious” The Taylor Family Ethos	p.	77
Chapter III: “Fruits of Authorship” The Family Literary Enterprise	p.	130
Chapter IV: “They Shrank From Notoriety” Gender and Genre in the Taylor Family’s Literary Enterprise	p.	165
Chapter V: A Literary Legacy The Taylors’ Auto/biographies	p.	203
Conclusion:	p.	236
Appendix 1:	p.	270
Bibliography:	p.	275

List of Figures

Figure 1: The Taylors of Ongar family tree	p.	2
Figure 2: Fetter Lane Congregational Church Network	p.	41
Figure 3: Tablet of Human Knowledge by Isaac Taylor II	p.	113
Figure 4: Partial lending library catalogue reconstructed	p.	120
Figure 5: Evidence of income from engraving	p.	148
Figure 6: Excerpt from accounts of Jane Taylor's estate, 1825	p.	159
Figure 7: Books produced by Taylors of Ongar, 1804-1833	p.	168
Figure 8: Table of Taylor family's most successful books	p.	169
Figure 9: Table giving Taylors of Ongar Auto/biographical works	p.	205

Abbreviations

COLEM:	Colchester Museum Service
ERO:	Essex Record Office
LMA:	London Metropolitan Archives
SRO:	Suffolk Record Office
ODNB:	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor James Raven, for his support and advice during the course of this thesis. I would also like to thank Christina Duff Stewart for her interest in this work and her hospitality when I visited Toronto. Christina's extensive bibliographic work during the 1970s and 1980s is the starting point for any study involving the Taylors of Ongar. I would also like to thank Robin Taylor Gilbert and Fiona Martin, two descendants of the Taylors, who have undertaken considerable research into their family's history and have been kind enough to share their genealogical research.

In undertaking the research for this study I would like to thank David Borg Muscat of Colchester Central Library, Essex Libraries for arranging for me to have access to the Taylor Collection in the strong room and allowing me to catalogue the books. Leslie McGrath, Senior Department Head, Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books in Toronto Public Library for arranging for me to have access to the Taylor material in the collection and introducing me to Christina Duff Stewart. I am grateful to have received assistance from archivists, curators and librarians at: Colchester Central Library, Essex Libraries; Colchester Museums Service; The Guildhall Lavenham; London Metropolitan Archives; Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books, Toronto Public Library. I would also like to thank Dr Jane Pearson for regular discussions of the thesis and Jeff and Miranda Bailey for their invaluable support and encouragement.

Introduction

The focus of the research for this thesis is the literary enterprise established by the Taylors of Ongar, a family circle consisting of Isaac Taylor II (1759-1829), his wife Mrs Ann Martin Taylor (1757-1830) and their children, Ann, Jane, Isaac III and Jefferys.¹ The family members were Dissenting writers and engravers who made a contribution to the literary culture of the Romantic age and whose reputation continued throughout the Victorian era into the early years of the twentieth century. During the first quarter of the nineteenth century, members of this family were among a number of writers from Dissenting backgrounds whose influence on the culture of the century is now being re-evaluated because they constituted, “an extensive and collaborative publishing network that would represent Dissenting culture, its beliefs, practices, interests and tastes to the national republic of letters.”²

As well as being successful and prolific authors, members of the Taylor family were assiduous recorders of their own lives who produced a series of autobiographical and biographical books and essays. These works helped to create the family’s literary legacy and they have provided a resource for studies featuring, or referring to, the Taylor family. Crucial in creating the public history of the family was Isaac Taylor III, the eldest son of Isaac II and Ann Martin Taylor, who memorialised his sister Jane and established the family’s collective identity in his essay, *The Family Pen*.³ In the process of constructing the family’s literary reputation, Isaac III chose to suppress his mother’s

¹ The recurring use of the name Isaac in the Taylor family creates confusion between the generations. For the purposes of this thesis I have used a numerical definition: Isaac Taylor I, (1730-1807), Isaac Taylor II, (1759-1729), Isaac Taylor III, (1787-1865), Isaac Taylor IV, (1829-1901). Isaac II’s wife is referred to as Ann Martin Taylor or Mrs. Taylor. Isaac II and Mrs. Taylor’s daughter, Ann, is called by her married name, Ann Taylor Gilbert.

² D. E. White, *Early Romanticism and Religious Dissent*, (Cambridge, 2006), p. 66.

³ I. Taylor III, *The Family Pen*, first appeared in the periodical *Good Works* in 1864. It was later included in a group biography of the family edited by Isaac Taylor IV that was published in 1867.

contribution to the Taylor family history and sequestered the three volumes of her memoirs in a family collection. These memoirs remained hidden until becoming available during research for this thesis. Ann Martin Taylor's memoirs provide new information on the family history and they present material that enables a more detailed analysis of the literary enterprise undertaken by the Taylor family. The memoirs contradict the history presented to the public by Isaac III and later generations of the Taylor Family.

In order to clarify the subjects of this study, Figure 1 details the family members featured in this thesis. The people under primary consideration, collectively known as The Taylors of Ongar, are highlighted in bold:

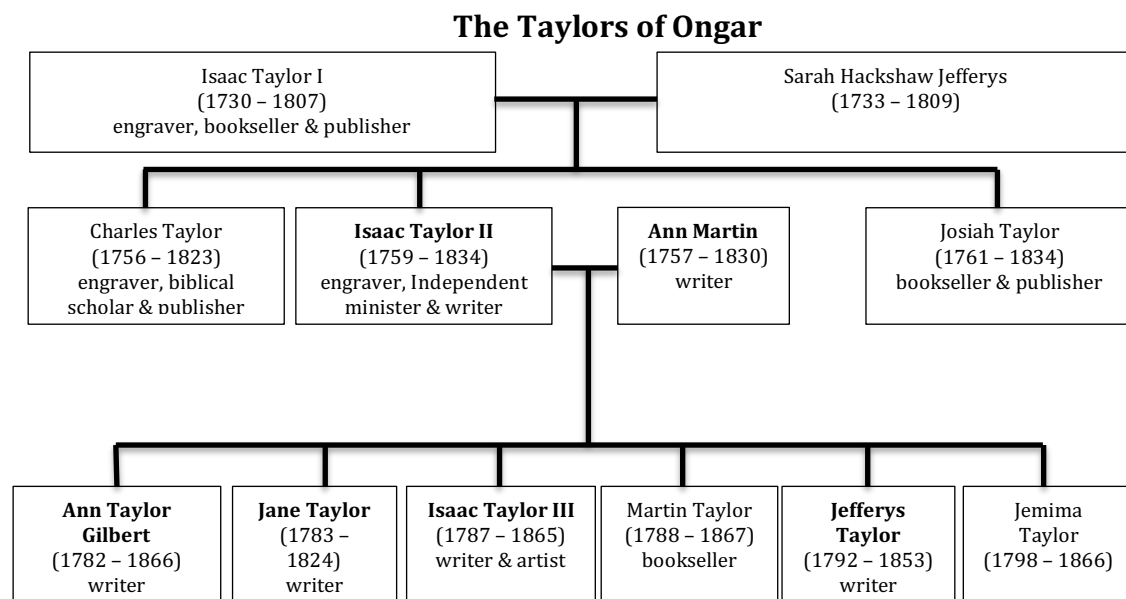


Figure 1.

The dates 1780 to 1830 in the thesis title are not restrictive. They encompass the years Isaac Taylor II worked as an engraver and the period during which the books associated with the epithet 'Taylors of Ongar' were published. A premise will be made

that a full evaluation of the Taylors' literary enterprise is not possible without being set within the context of the family's initial experience of the publishing world through their work as engravers.

The first book associated with the Taylors of Ongar was published in 1804 and the last work, identified with the family's literary enterprise, appeared in 1833. Following the deaths of Isaac II and Ann Martin Taylor their surviving children, Ann, Isaac III and Jefferys, produced further books and revised editions of previous works. These books and revised editions are regarded as individual achievements and not part of the family's collective literary work. Additionally, during the late 1850s to the 1870s, key biographical and autobiographical works were produced that presented the family history and literary enterprise to the Victorian public. These works will be considered in this study.

The Taylors of Ongar are known today, if at all, for their works for young children that were published at the start of their literary careers. This narrow association with a particular readership does not do justice to the range and volume of material associated with the Taylor family. During their literary enterprise the Taylors of Ongar produced 65 works,⁴ covering a range of subjects and genres, with several books running to multiple editions. A number of works were also published overseas, notably in Germany and America.⁵ In addition, Isaac II and Ann Martin Taylor's children, Ann, Jane and Isaac III, contributed to contemporary journals known for their religious affiliations. The Taylors were recognisable names in the literary world of the Victorian

⁴ This figure is based on an examination of the catalogue compiled by C. Duff Stewart for *The Taylors of Ongar, An Analytical Bio-bibliography in 2 volumes*, (New York, 1975).

⁵ Duff Stewart records editions of books by the Taylors of Ongar that were published abroad in her Bio-bibliography of the family.

era, but this reputation has diminished over time. With the exception of Davidoff and Hall's influential study, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*,⁶ and two unpublished theses examining the Taylors' work as authors for children,⁷ the family have largely been reduced to the position of marginal figures in the literary history of the period. After considering the body of work the family produced, along with biographical and archival material available on the Taylors, the paucity of studies on the family presented the opportunity for further investigation and provided the stimulus for this thesis.

An examination of sources used in studies that refer to the Taylors of Ongar reveals that, with the exception of Duff Stewart's works, there has been a particular reliance on the family's published biographical material and literary works for much of the information used to evaluate the family.⁸ In this context, the discovery of Mrs Taylor's manuscript memoirs, combined with other surviving primary sources, presents an opportunity for a more detailed examination of the Dissenting domestic culture and literary enterprise established by the family. The two facets of the enterprise, familial and literary, both contributed to their public reputation as the 'Taylors of Ongar'. The new information also provides a greater understanding of the influence exerted on the life of the family by the literary enterprise, in particular for the women.

⁶ Davidoff & Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of The English Middle Class 1780-1850*, (Oxford, 1987).

⁷ C. Duff Stewart, *The umbelliferous trio: the literary, moral and educational contributions to children's literature of Ann, Jane and Jefferys Taylor*, (M.A. theses, University of Toronto, 1968), J. K. H. Rose, *Ann and Jane Taylor as writers of improving verse for children in the early nineteenth century*, (MPhil, Leicester, 1991).

⁸ Studies include: Davidoff & Hall, *Family Fortunes*; C. Shiner Wilson & J. Haefner, *Re-Visioning Romanticism: British Women Writers 1776-1837*, (Philadelphia, 1994); L. Paul, *The Children's Book Business: Lessons from the long Eighteenth Century*, (London, 2011).

A defining characteristic of the Taylors of Ongar was their Dissenting faith. A recent study has recognised: “Dissent as central to our understanding of the culture, literature and politics of the period.” Yet within this field the editors, Felicity James and Ian Inkster note, “more work needs to be done on identifying Dissenters and on establishing denominational differences, which are so often overlooked.”⁹ Previous studies have been relatively generalised in relation to the Dissenting tradition associated with the Taylor family. Members of the family are often referred to quite broadly as Nonconformists or Dissenters. They have also been affiliated to the Independents, which they were during their time in Colchester, but otherwise they attended Congregational churches. Daniel White has cited Jane Taylor’s sympathy to Methodism and her subsequent conversion to the faith, which was an event that did not take place.¹⁰ This thesis will examine the importance of understanding the Dissenting faith of the Taylor family. It will investigate the detail of their doctrinal beliefs, and the practical support they received from likeminded individuals, both privately and publicly, and assess its relevance to their literary enterprise. An exploration of the manifestation of change in the culture and form of the Dissenting belief across the generations of the family will be considered. An assessment will be made of the relevance of these changes to an appreciation of the explication of the family’s life and literary success by later generations in the course of establishing their literary legacy.

The biographical works published by later generations of the family established the impression of a conservative literary enterprise, guided through the patriarchal oversight of Isaac Taylor II. The idea that the family’s literary work was carried out in

⁹ F. James & I. Inkster (eds.), *Religious Dissent and the Aikin-Barbould Circle 1740-1860*, (Cambridge, 2012), p. 6.

¹⁰ Davidoff & Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. 61. White, *Early Romanticism*, p. 183.

the service of being ‘useful’ to its evangelical readership was also established. These later biographical works also accentuated the contribution of the two sisters, Ann and Jane, at the expense of other family members. It will be suggested that this served to masked the co-operative nature of the family enterprise. The manuscript sources reveal a much more complex family dynamic and help to re-establish the contributions of other members of the family.

Since the 1990s there has been an interest in studies that look at the, “enterprise, ingenuity and adaptation,” behind women writers.¹¹ This has occurred within the framework of a debate on the nature and extent of the professionalisation of women as writers in the literary world of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. An intention of this study is to apply information available through the manuscript sources, in combination with the published works, to offer a more detailed and nuanced examination of the literary enterprise of the Taylor family. Throughout, consideration will be given to the significance and role of gender and generations when evaluating the family’s literary professionalism.

Primary Sources and Methodology

Members of the family produced a series of autobiographies, biographies and recollections for journals and magazines in the middle of the nineteenth century, with one exception. This was the early edition of Isaac Taylor III’s memoirs of his late sister, Jane, published in 1825. These writings have subsequently been used to inform studies featuring the Taylors, which in turn have largely conformed to the impression the

¹¹ E. J. Clery, Free Market Feminism? The Political Economy of Women’s Writing in J. Batchelor & G. Dow, (eds.), *Women’s Writing 1660-1830: Feminisms and Futures*, (London, 2016), p. 46.

family created through the selective content they chose to include in their published material. The sequestered manuscript memoirs of Mrs Ann Martin Taylor reveal new information on the Taylor and Martin families. This information has implications for any previous study of the Taylors of Ongar as it reveals greater detail on the nature of their religious denomination and the professions and social status of both families. It also provides a more detailed picture of the network of Nonconformist friends and literary associates than previously revealed. The memoirs also reveal a significant amount of information on the day-to-day life of the family.

Above all, the memoirs provide much new information on Mrs Ann Martin Taylor, whose reputation has been constrained by the stereotypical portrait constructed of her as a conservative, evangelical woman whose literary success was over shadowed by her daughters. The memoirs, combined with other primary source materials that include letters and church records, present a much more complex and intriguing picture of Mrs Taylor and her contribution to the domestic and literary life of the family.

The memoirs were located in a significant collection of 364 published works by several generations of the Taylor family. The collection was held in the strong room of Colchester library and was not on public display. It was not catalogued and therefore did not appear in the digital database, nor previously card index, searches. Supporting documentation for the collection did not exist and the provenance remains uncertain. Annotated notes in several of the books indicate that it may at one time have been in the possession of Henry Taylor, (1837-1916), son of Isaac Taylor III. Henry Taylor was a family historian who undertook research relating to the family history and ancestry.

He and his sister, Euphemia, (1846-1934), compiled a large amount of archival materials relating to the family that are now dispersed amongst various public archives and libraries. A letter from Euphemia to Henry reveals that in the course of this work, while they examined the material they were collecting, they also destroyed items that came into their possession. In 1911, Euphemia Taylor wrote: "Some interesting scraps of family history have come my way, partly through Grandmother Taylor's letters [Mrs Ann Martin Taylor] sent for me to look through and burn."¹² This is another instance where Mrs Taylor voice is being removed from the family narrative.

In addition to Mrs Taylor's memoirs, the collection also includes a previously unknown accounts and letters book which contains a partnership agreement between Isaac Taylor I and his son, Josiah. The accounts book covers the years 1780-1807 and records the dissolution of the partnership in 1798, when Isaac Taylor I retired, together with interest subsequently paid to Isaac Taylor I. This item provides new information on the family firm and the work Isaac I and Josiah Taylor undertook, together with the identity of people they commissioned and fees they paid.

In addition to Mrs Taylor's memoirs and the accounts book, there are further primary sources that survive in other archives and libraries. These add to a more detailed and nuanced picture of the familial and religious character of the Taylor family and a greater understanding of their literary enterprise. These sources include letters written by family members, both unpublished and published, sketch books and educational materials. Paper ephemera have also revealed further information. An example of this is a catalogue of books held by a lending library, of which Isaac Taylor II

¹² SRO: HD 588/1/157.

was secretary. The catalogue had been torn apart and used as scrap paper for general notes by Henry Taylor in the course of his research. Although not all the pages survive it was possible to reconstruct part of the catalogue providing an insight into the reading material that was accessible to the Taylor family.

The record books from the Congregational churches in Fetter Lane and Lavenham have also been consulted during the course of research for this thesis.¹³ These have revealed information on the network of friends and associates that were influential in the lives and literary careers of the Taylors of Ongar. They also provide evidence of doctrinal influences that Isaac Taylor II and his family experienced.

Many of the sources used in this study come within “the umbrella term” of life writing that encompasses a broad range of manuscript materials.¹⁴ Examples include letters, diaries, memoirs and unpublished items, including poems Isaac II and Ann wrote to each other. Through the use of such sources, in character, this study is a microhistory of one Dissenting literary family. It employs this methodology to explore in greater detail wider historical interests, as cited by James and Inkster, whereby, “family connections [are] a key to exploring larger cultural questions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.”¹⁵

As a methodology, microhistory evolved as a response to the ‘large-scale quantitative studies’ that occurred during the middle of the twentieth century. These aimed to provide an analysis of social change and cultural evolution that had implications for

¹³ LMA: N/C/31. SRO: FK 3 504/1, FK 3 504/2.

¹⁴ Caine, *Biography and History*, (Basingstoke, 2010), p. 66.

¹⁵ James & Inkster (eds.), *Religious Dissent*, p. 6.

wider historical fields including political, social and economic studies. Such studies followed in the respected tradition of the Annales school and required extensive knowledge and the incorporation of “other disciplines, especially the social sciences, economics, sociology, social psychology and geography.”¹⁶ A particular criticism of large scale, quantitative studies, as cited by historians who participated in the development of microhistory, is, “that they distorted reality on the individual level.” The development of microhistory as a methodology has sought to provide detail to perceived generalisations by focusing on, “what is usually kept hidden from the outside world.”¹⁷ In doing so, such small-scale work is capable of exploring, “the intricate textures of a limited area.”¹⁸ Sources commonly used to do this include life sources such as letters, diaries and reminiscences that will be used in this study. Additionally, the records of the Dissenting churches reveal personal details and social interactions that contribute to the ‘intricate texture’ of the lives of the Taylors of Ongar. This methodology has the potential to provide contradictions to existing assumptions made in relation to the family. It also offers the means to examine and appraise the public narratives created by members of the family, whether through their biographical work or the church records that Isaac Taylor II kept. From these contradictions, and new information, a reconsideration of the literary enterprise of the Taylors of Ongar can occur.

The memoirs and the primary sources have raised questions that this study has sought to address in the fields of Dissenting familial culture and literary professionalism.

¹⁶ S. Gylfi Magnusson, What is Microhistory?, in *History News Network*, 5-7-06, <http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/23720>, p. 1. J. Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*, (Edinburgh, 2010), p. 62.

¹⁷ S. Gylfi Magnusson, What is Microhistory?, in *History News Network*, 5-7-06, <http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/23720>, p. 1.

¹⁸ L. Jordanova, *History in Practice*, (London, 2006), p. 124.

Firstly, what would be the impact of the information in the discovered memoirs on the current understanding of the Taylor family history and their familial and domestic ethos? These are the un-edited reminiscences of a woman whose contribution to the life of the family had been diminished in later biographies published by her descendants. As well as providing a means of reinstating Mrs Taylor's contribution to both the domestic and professional life of the family, the memoirs enable a re-evaluation of the Dissenting culture of the Taylors through the presence of a restored female voice. The question raised by the discovery also requires an exploration of why it was felt that her memoirs were unsuitable for publication by a family predisposed to publishing biographical material.

A notable characteristic of the memoirs is the prevalence of financial details that Mrs Taylor recorded which related to the family. From this a further question arose. If this financial information were combined with other primary sources would it be possible to reconstruct the literary enterprise of The Taylors of Ongar in greater detail? The process of combining this information may also provide a means of evaluating the contribution to, and role of, different genders in the family enterprise. The members of the family associated with the appellation 'Taylors of Ongar' were divided equally between genders. Sisters Ann and Jane achieved a longer lasting reputation than other contributors to the family enterprise. Mrs Taylor's place in the literary enterprise was subsequently ignored in one biography of the family by her grandson, Isaac IV. In the course of reconstructing the literary enterprise would an analysis of the sources, when combined with an evaluation of the family's literary output, offer a more nuanced interpretation of professionalism and achievements within this Dissenting literary family?

A third question was raised when the manuscript sources were contrasted with published biographies that had created such a strong portrait of the Taylors' family and literary life. In the formal, public, representation the family was prodigiously hardworking, religiously observant, inclined to literary modesty and guided by the firm but benevolent Dissenting principles of Isaac Taylor II. Today there is scholarly interest in the working practices of familial literary groups from the Romantic era and the balance of power within these family models. Would the information in the memoirs, supported by other sources, uphold or contradict the impression of literary reticence that was promoted by the family in their later biographical works?

Literary and Historiographical Contexts

The literature surrounding this study, and the themes that have informed its progress, involve a number of historical fields. When combined with the sources that have been used, these literary histories have contributed to the formation of the questions this study is seeking to address, requiring a discussion of key texts that contributed to this process. The academic research involved includes studies looking at the wider national context and the impact of contemporary events on the social, cultural and religious climate of the period.

Consideration has also been given to a number of different specialisms including the history and cultural impact of Dissent, work on the publishing industry and book trade,

and the rise and growing influence of Evangelicalism.¹⁹ All of which directly relate to the history of the Taylor family. Of particular relevance are studies that look at the professionalisation of women writers during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Critical evaluations of biographies and autobiographies from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have contributed to the discussion on the impact the Taylor family's published biographical material had on their literary legacy.

The first point of reference for the study was the identification of existing works that feature the Taylors of Ongar. The main studies that have incorporated the family are two academic theses and Davidoff and Hall's, *Family Fortunes Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*. The two unpublished theses concentrate on the Taylor family's works for children. Canadian, Christina Duff Stewart, completed the first of these theses in 1968. Duff Stewart's extensive research in the 1960s and 1970s, recovering the books and associated writing by the Taylor family, helped re-establish the family's reputation in the Dissenting literary canon of the Romantic era. Duff Stewart's thesis evaluated the contribution of Ann, Jane and Jefferys to children's literature in the nineteenth-century. Additionally, Duff Stewart produced an extensive two-volume catalogue of the Taylor family's work in a Bio-bibliography published in 1975.²⁰ Christina Duff Stewart visited Colchester and examined the Taylor material in the Colchester Museum Collection and the catalogued works in Colchester library. If the large collection of un-catalogued books by the Taylor family was then in the library no one thought to bring it to her attention.

¹⁹ This thesis is following the convention of the capitalisation of 'Evangelicalism' when referring to the movement or people associated with the Church of England. When referring to the wider concept, 'evangelicalism' will be used.

²⁰ C. Duff Stewart, *The umbelliferous trio: the literary, moral and educational contributions to children's literature of Ann, Jane and Jefferys Taylor*, (unpublished PhD thesis, Toronto, 1968), *The Taylors of Ongar, An Analytical Bio-bibliography in 2 volumes*, (New York, 1975).

The second thesis by J. K. H. Rose also focused on an evaluation of the works for children by Ann and Jane Taylor. The study acknowledges the success of these books and sought to place them in the broader context of nineteenth-century poetry.²¹ The focus on the works for children is indicative of the strong association the family have with this one particular genre. As Duff Stewart acknowledged it is also a reflection of the fact that these works were generally, “free of moralising content”, that meant they were not confined to a Dissenting or evangelical readership, and therefore had a longer cultural life.²² The focus on the works for children presents the opportunity to undertake a wider study relating to the literary career of the Taylors of Ongar.

As noted, the Taylor family featured as a significant case study in Davidoff and Hall’s influential book *Family Fortunes Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*, first published in 1987²³. The study has become a seminal text in the fields of gender and class history. Its scholarly range and detail have ensured its standing amongst the large-scale, social histories produced at the end of the twentieth century. Davidoff and Hall wrote that the central argument of this work is, “the assumption that gender and class always operate together, that consciousness of class always takes a gendered form.”²⁴ It is an idea which has a central place in their exploration of public and private spheres and the development of the culture of domesticity during the nineteenth century. Davidoff and Hall opened up wider themes in relation to the Taylor family by extending their consideration of the family’s work beyond that of the books for children. As part of this study they noted that, “the family business remains a neglected

²¹ J. K. H. Rose, *Ann and Jane Taylor as writers of improving verse for children in the early nineteenth century*, (unpublished MPhil, University of Leicester, 1991).

²² C. Duff Stewart, *The umbelliferous trio*, p. 63.

²³ L. Davidoff & C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and women of the English middle class 1780-1850*, (London, 1987).

²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 13.

topic". Mrs Taylor's memoirs and the Taylor firm's accounts book, unavailable to Davidoff and Hall, will aid a more detailed study of the business aspect of the Taylor family.²⁵

The period 1780-1830 covered by this thesis was a time of financial instability and social change. Much of the professional life of the Taylor family was carried out against the background of the French Revolution and impact of the wars with France that followed. Hilton in *A Mad, Bad, and Dangerous People? England 1783-1846*, (Oxford, 2006) addressed the context of the period in which this study is located. Analysing the changes in the economy Hilton noted that the era has been described as one of 'Great Transformation' or a 'Great Divergence', which was marked by a population explosion and intermittent financial and political crisis.²⁶ A review of the national context assists in contextualising the vacillations in the Taylor family's financial situation that is reflected throughout the sources. Understanding these changes and the reasons behind them are significant in assessing the causes behind the development of family's literary enterprise.

Of further relevance for a study of the Taylor family is Hilton's consideration of the role of "the republic of letters" in the historical process whereby "Anglican privileges were legislated away between 1828 and 1832."²⁷ Before this process was complete, Hilton details the resurgence of antipathy towards Dissenters engendered by the reactionary forces unleashed by the government. This period, known as Pitt's Terror, had a direct

²⁵ Ibid, p. xxxv. For a further discussion on the history of family firms and women in business see p. 22.

²⁶ B. Hilton, *A Mad, Bad & Dangerous People? England 1783-1846*, (Oxford, 2006), p. 3.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 24.

impact on the Taylor family.²⁸ Studies of this period have contributed to an understanding of the role and impact of religion on political, economic and social developments. Of significance to this study is the transformation from religious 'Others' to contributors to the establishment by Nonconformists and Evangelicals. These changes occur through the series of reforms affecting religious and political rights in the 1820s and 1830s. One of the most notable reforms was the repeal of the Test and Corporation Act in 1828.

In *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1795-1865* (Oxford, 1988), Hilton used the ideological model of Evangelicalism for an analysis of free trade individualism. This work contributes to the perception of the growing and all-pervasive nature of Evangelicalism on the political, economic and social processes of the period. By the Victorian era the dominance of evangelical values on cultural and social conventions is reflected in the published biographical works of the Taylor family. This study will investigate the impact of the expansion of evangelicalism, identified by Hilton, on the literary legacy of the Taylor family.

In recent years there has been an acknowledgement of the importance of religion on the processes of the past. Hilton concentrated on the influence of Evangelicalism but other studies have sought to investigate, "the enormous intellectual and cultural contribution Dissenters made to English Society in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries," which, "is now beginning to be appreciated in scholarship and criticism."²⁹

²⁸ Ibid, p. 65.

²⁹ Felicity James, Introduction in *Religious Dissent and the Aikin-Barbault Circle 1740-1860*, (Cambridge, 2012) p. 6.

Examining the changes to the role and influence of Dissent, both historically and in the field of English literary studies and criticism, has demonstrated the contribution that Dissent and Dissenting writers made to the literary world of the eighteenth century and the Romantic era.

Recent historical analysis from the Dr Williams's Centre for Dissenting Studies has advanced the profile of Dissent in relation to aspects of social and cultural change. Studies include Isabel Rivers and David Wykes (eds.) *Dissenting Praise: Religious Dissent and the Hymn in England and Wales* (2011) that includes a chapter assessing the role of the Taylor's friend and publisher, Josiah Conder, to this field. Rivers more recent work, *Vanity Fair and the Celestial City: Dissenting, Methodism and Evangelical Literary Culture in England, 1720-1800*, (Oxford 2018) is a comprehensive examination of the literary world, reading habits and works popular with consumers in the expanding market for religious literature of the period. This study includes details on the extensive contribution the Taylors' friend, George Burder, made to evangelical culture. Of note is the absence of work by the Taylors of Ongar from any significant consideration in these studies. This may indicate that while the family is strongly associated with their religious principles, their published books proved to be of a more practical nature. Rivers and Wykes studies highlight the prominent position two people, who were well known to the Taylors, held in the publishing world for religious material during the nineteenth century. This suggests the need to evaluate the influence the religious and familial networks associated with the Taylor family had on their literary enterprise.

Of interest to scholars of the history of Dissent is the role and contribution made by women and family groups to Dissenting Culture. Timothy Whelan, of the Dr. Williams's Centre, is General Editor of a six-volume compilation of material by *Nonconformist Women Writers, 1720-1840*, (London, 2011). These compilations continue the reclamation process of women writers in literary history. A further field of interest has been the prevalence of family groups in the literary world of the Romantic era.

Religious Dissent and the Akin-Barbauld Circle 1740-1830, edited by F. James and I. Inkster, (2012), is a group biography that examines the Akin-Barbauld family across several generations in order to explore "their extraordinary achievements and their powerful presentation of themselves as a group."³⁰ Addressing a different family member in each essay the work highlights the significance of the family ethos associated with this productive and influential, Unitarian family group. James and Inkster argue for the need of further work in understanding the impact of denominational differences and change on the culture of the period. The Taylors of Ongar with their orthodox Dissenting principles provide a contrast to the heterodox position of the Akin-Barbauld family and a contrasting family ethos.

Studies in the field of literary history also emphasise the need to consider the religious character of the period in assessing the literature of the Romantic era. Daniel E. White's *Early Romanticism and Religious Dissent, 2006*, asserts that: "Literary creation and political expression in late eighteenth-century England were inextricable from religious discourse" yet remains "insufficiently understood".³¹ Barbara Taylor in *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination*, 2003, has researched the central part

³⁰ Felicity James & Ian Inkster, (eds.), *Religious Dissent and the Aikin-Barbauld Circle, 1740-1860*, (Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 1.

³¹ Daniel E. White, *Early Romanticism and Religious Dissent*, (Cambridge, 2006) p. 2.

played by religion in Wollstonecraft's thought and argues that to ignore the religious influences and references in Wollstonecraft's work serves only "to tear it from its eighteenth century context."³² Kevin Gilmartin in *Writing Against Revolution: Literary Conservatism in Britain, 1790-1832* examines literary form in "British counterrevolutionary and anti-radical print" from the French Revolution to the Reform Act of 1832.³³

As these works indicate, in terms of religious practice and beliefs, the period under consideration for this study was one of change and, at times, considerable turmoil. The Dissenting principles of Isaac II and Ann Martin Taylor were upheld through decades that witnessed periodic phases of religious fervour, and saw the development of the culture and language associated with Victorian evangelicalism. The evolution and impact of Protestant evangelicalism is considered in a series of books looking at its history, people, movements and ideas across the English-speaking world from 1730 to the 1890s.³⁴ Noll addresses the rise of Evangelicalism; Wolfe considers its expansion while Bebbington looks at its dominance, which is discussed in Hilton's *The Age of Atonement*. These studies provide an overview of the origins and evolution of the evangelical movement and help provide an understanding of the changes in the character of religious beliefs across the generations that concern James and Inkster.

³² Barbara Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft and Feminist Imagination*, (Cambridge, 2003), p. 4.

³³ Kevin Gilmartin, *Writing Against Revolution: Literary Conservatism in Britain, 1790-1832*, (Cambridge, 2007), p. 1.

³⁴ M. A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys*, (Illinois, 2003); J. Wolfe, *The Expansion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Wilberforce, More, Chalmers and Finney*, (Nottingham, 2006); D. Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody*, (Leicester, 2005).

Isobel Rivers has argued that, “in the early nineteenth century” there was a “growing evangelical reading public, who greatly outnumbered non-evangelical literary readers.”³⁵ This demographic trend coincided with the continuing expansion of the book industry that had begun in the eighteenth century. Academic literature on the history of the publishing industry from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries provides a frame of reference in which to situate the professional background of the Taylor family.

To add to the Dissenting heritage of the Taylor family was their involvement in the literary world of the eighteenth century. The family had been involved in the publishing industry since Isaac Taylor I arrived in London in 1752. Several members of the family, engaged in the work of engraving and publishing, settled in the area around Holborn. Studies looking at the wider history of the book business and publishing industries have provided salient information necessary to appraise the achievements of the family in this profession.

The expansion and diversification that occurred in the publishing industry and book trade during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, addressed in James Raven’s, *The Business of Books: Booksellers and the English Book Trade, 1450-1850*, (Yale, 2007), had begun in the late fifteenth century. As the industries developed this had resulted in a corresponding increase in the trades and suppliers within the vicinity of the booksellers and publishers that helps identify and interpret the geography surrounding the family network. The dominance of London in the literary market place suggests

³⁵ I. Rivers, *Vanity Fair and the Celestial City*, p. 23.

that Isaac Taylor II's decision to remove his family from the city, together with the family network in Holborn, needs further examination.

The growth in the literary market place resulted in a corresponding rise in the range of opportunities for writers to participate in the publishing industries. The characteristics associated with the Taylor family, as Dissenters, writers of literature for children and a close family group, has resulted in their inclusion as case studies in books examining diverse aspects of the literary world of the Romantic era. Lissa Paul in *The Children's Book Business: Lessons from the long Eighteenth Century*, (London, 2011), re-examines the legacy of eighteenth and early nineteenth-century women writers from the conservative and radical traditions. These include Ann and Jane Taylor together with Mrs Barbauld, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Hannah More. Of particular interest to Paul, and an idea that has informed this study, is the need to understand the concept of 'didactic' within the culture of the day. In re-evaluating the literary output of a 'didactic' nature Paul suggests there are common themes and concerns that cross the denominational boundaries as, "a matrilineal tradition of women ... develop a maternal pedagogical identity and style of their own."³⁶

Michelle Levy has considered the Taylor family as one of the studies in *Family Authorship and Romantic Print Culture*, (New York, 2008). In this study Levy, "addresses family authorship as a distinctive and influential cultural formation of the Romantic period," by considering the "various ways family authors presented themselves to the public." As with Paul, Levy finds common ground between writers from the radical tradition, exemplified by the Godwins, and the conservative tradition,

³⁶ L. Paul in *The Children's Book Business: Lessons from the long Eighteenth Century*, (London, 2011), p. 96.

represented by the Taylors, based on opportunity and economic need.³⁷ Levy and Paul both concentrate their studies on Ann and Jane Taylor with Levy acknowledging that the Taylor sisters' success had, "enormous consequences for the rest of the family." The limited focus of both studies on the sisters offers the opportunity to expand an investigation on the family's work and professionalism to the wider Taylor family.³⁸

As previously noted in *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English middle class 1780-1850*, Davidoff and Hall commented on the paucity of scholarship on the subject of the family firm.³⁹ The familial groups cited by Levy and Paul as a characteristic of the book industry, particularly during the Romantic era, are an aspect of family enterprise. The scholarship on these literary families can be affiliated with more recent research recovering the manner and extent of female enterprise and entrepreneurship in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Academics working in the fields of business and economic history have argued that there was a greater involvement by women of middling status in business than previously thought. These provide a context for an evaluation in this thesis of the form of the Taylor family's literary enterprise and the contribution made to it by the women.

In *Women in Business 1700-1850*, (Woodbridge, 2006), Nicola Phillips argues that: "The gendered dichotomy of masculine/feminine at the heart of the public/private divide tends to highlight areas of conflict and thus to obscure areas of co-operation between men and women and between family and business life."⁴⁰ Using sources that include insurance registers and law reports, particularly those relating to femme sole traders

³⁷ M. Levy, *Family Authorship and Romantic Print Culture*, (New York, 2008), p. 7.

³⁸ Ibid, p. 91.

³⁹ Davidoff & Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. xxxv.

⁴⁰ N. Phillips, *Women in Business 1700-1850*, (Woodbridge, 2006), p. 255.

in London, Phillips examines ideas of continuity and change in women's economic position and role from 1700-1850. In this study Phillips re-evaluates "the rather limited picture" of women's experience of business as being "of short duration" and confined by marriage or their experiences as spinsters or widows.⁴¹ Phillips also notes, "the complexity of reconstructing women's experiences of being in business when so few traces of their voices remain."⁴² This observation highlights the significance of the evidence contained in Mrs. Ann Martin Taylor's memoirs that record financial details relating to both her family and professional life.

In *The Business of Women: Female Enterprise and Urban Development in Northern England 1760-1830*, (Oxford, 2006), Hannah Barker argues that women who were involved in business, "were not as rare as once thought."⁴³ As well as using insurance records Barker also uses trade directories, newspaper adverts, court records and family papers to, "tell us about both their [women's] place within family firms and their relationships with the wider commercial world." Barker argues that the evidence indicates that while women did 'cluster' in traditional female employment relating to clothing, retail, food and drink, they also participated in areas "commonly undertaken by men", citing occupations such as butchery and manufacturing.⁴⁴

Barker's work explores the public nature of women entrepreneurs and examines, "the ways in which women sought to present their business activities in public", and the importance they placed on "presenting themselves as respectable women of

⁴¹ Phillips, *Women in Business*, p. 14.

⁴² Ibid, p.17.

⁴³ H. Barker, *The Business of Women: Female Enterprise and Urban Development in Northern England 1760-1830*, (Oxford, 2006), p. 167.

⁴⁴ H. Barker, *The Business of Women*, p. 2, p. 66.

business.”⁴⁵ Alison C. Kay in *The Foundations of Female Entrepreneurship: Enterprise, Home and Household in London c1800-1870*, (London, 2009), has also identified this aspect of female entrepreneurship. Through an analysis of trade directories, insurance records and trade cards Kay reconstructs the extent and range of the involvement of “entrepreneurial women” in business in London during the nineteenth century. A central theme of Kay’s study being the idea that respectability and the need to maintain a women’s reputation while participating in the world of business was a key component in the work many women undertook. For Kay, “making a respectable living was for women ... more important than profit maximization at any cost.”⁴⁶ Kay argues that the importance placed on respectability, associated as it was with the evolving middle-class values of domesticity and female propriety, has served to hide the extent of women’s participation in business and contributed to historical generalisations concerning women and their working life.

A proposition common to the research undertaken by Phillips, Kay and Barker is that: “the metaphor of separate spheres has lost its analytical power within the overarching narratives of women’s history.”⁴⁷ In their studies these scholars assert the need to look beneath the idealism associated with the role of middle-class women that was constructed during nineteenth century to reveal the complexity of working life and the position of women in business. Kay observes that the lack of scholarship on Victorian women in business is, “partly a reflection of the strength of the Victorians’ own idealizing.”⁴⁸ This thesis considers the paradox that the women and family coterie

⁴⁵ H. Barker, *The Business of Women*, p. 73.

⁴⁶ Alison C. Kay, *The Foundations of Female Entrepreneurship: Enterprise, Home and Household in London c1800-1870*, (London, 2009), p. 2.

⁴⁷ N. Phillips, *Women in Business*, p. 16.

⁴⁸ A. C. Kay, *The Foundations of Female Entrepreneurship*, p. 2.

who took advantage of the opportunities to become writers in the expanding literary market place of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries contributed to the construction of this “labyrinth of middle-class moralism and mystification.”⁴⁹ The development of a professional approach to literary work by an increasing number of women participating in the literary world has been of interest to scholars.

Academic works investigating the professionalisation of women writers have been consulted in order to evaluate and compare the Taylor family’s enterprise. This has been an area of particular academic interest since the 1990s. One of the first studies in this field, Catherine Gallagher’s *Nobody’s Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Market Place, 1670-1820*, (Oxford, 1994), examined the professional nature of Maria Edgeworth’s literary career. As a contemporary of the Taylors, and a member of another familial group, this work provides a useful comparison for the Taylors’ literary practices. Linda H. Petersen extended the theme of the professionalisation of writers in the nineteenth century in *Becoming a Woman of Letters*, (Princeton, 2009). In this work Petersen explored the development of the idea of “professional” and the implication for the status of male and female writers and their work.

More recently academics have considered “enterprise, ingenuity and adaptation” in evaluating the success and professionalism of women writers from the eighteenth century through to the nineteenth. In *Women’s Writing 1660-1830: Feminisms and Futures*, (London, 2016), the idea of professionalism is widened and the argument is

⁴⁹ A. C. Kay, *The Foundations of Female Entrepreneurship*, p. 17.

made to expand the evidence used to evaluate the extent and success of women writers in order to understand their professional involvement in the literary market place.⁵⁰

If, as a number of academic studies indicate, there was a growth in professional women writers of the Romantic era, a parallel development advanced the idea of reticence and favoured anonymity for the female writer. The literary and social traditions that reinforced these stereotypes have been a consideration in works that provide an analysis of the development of autobiography. Felicity A. Nussbaum's, *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in 18th Century England*, (Baltimore 1989), and more recently Amy Culley in *British Women's Life Writing 1760-1840: Friendship, Community and Collaboration*, (London, 2014), have considered the conventions that governed women, and men, in this increasingly popular genre. The Taylors were aware of the importance of their history to their reputation and wrote memoirs and autobiographies contributing to the construction of their own literary legacy. Much of the biographical detail previously available on the family is based on their own edited recollections of their lives in published works that need to be examined in a critical light.

Thesis Outline:

The reputation of the Taylors of Ongar is often evaluated against similar Dissenting literary groups by focusing on a reading of their work that is then contextualised by their published biographies. This study is not a literary analysis of individual works by members of the Taylor family, but seeks instead to direct attention to the business and

⁵⁰ J. Batchelor & G. Dow, *Women's Writing 1660-1830: Feminisms and Futures*, (London, 2016), p. 46.

practical aspects of the family's literary careers. The study aims to incorporate an evaluation of the genre and broad content of the works the family produced within a framework of their Dissenting family life and principles. Within these parameters, a hypothesis is made that the works can be seen as examples of opportunity and enterprise, the result of a pragmatic response to circumstances that later came to incorporate a religious direction.

Chapter I will examine the background to the Taylor family's domestic and professional lives and incorporate new information on the family history from Mrs Taylor's memoirs. Using manuscript sources to supplement, and question, the family's published biographical narrative the chapter will examine how Isaac II and Ann Martin Taylor's early lives provided the basis for the contacts and networks that the family later drew upon to support their literary careers. The broader context of the Taylor family's literary enterprise will be established within the family tradition of engraving. This chapter will also examine the Dissenting heritage of the Taylor and Martin families and clarify the denominational and doctrinal position of Isaac Taylor II that influenced the domestic and professional life of the family. Using the discovered memoirs of Ann Martin Taylor, the previously unknown history of the Martin family will be incorporated. This will provide a contrasting picture of the Taylor and Martin families social status and professional backgrounds, knowledge of which contributes to an understanding of the ethos and enterprise later associated with the Taylors of Ongar.

In chapter II, the strong family ethos that Isaac II and Ann Martin Taylor created together will be examined as this provided the intellectual framework and significant material for the Taylor family's literary enterprise. Details from the family life were

subsequently used selectively by the younger generations in order to construct the Taylor family legacy. It will be argued that while Isaac Taylor II retained patriarchal authority over the family and their religious practices, his role was tempered by pragmatic decisions necessary for supporting a large family. The contribution made to their domestic life by both Isaac II and Ann Martin Taylor will be assessed, and the role of both faith and pragmatism in the construction of their domestic arrangements will be discussed. Again the memoirs provide new information on the detail of the Taylors' domestic life that contrasts with the impression created in the published biographical material.

The third chapter will look at the practical, business details of the professional life of Isaac Taylor II and examine the reasons for the development of the family's literary enterprise. This chapter will draw on the new financial evidence Mrs Taylor's memoirs contain, together with financial and practical details found in further primary sources. It will examine the vacillations in the family income and the role this played in decisions made in relation to Isaac Taylor II's professional life and the family's participation in this work.

Chapter IV will look in greater detail at the nature of the literary enterprise and the range of genres the family wrote in. It will consider how they used material from their own lives in many of the books and essays they published, and how the domestic and religious beliefs of the family contributed to their writing. The chapter will also examine how they consulted and collaborated on different works and ask if it can be considered a family enterprise. The extent of the patriarchal oversight Isaac Taylor II may have had over the family's literary output will also be discussed. The involvement

of a wider network and its impact on the literary direction of the family will also be evaluated. The chapter will consider the gender balance within the family and evaluate the often-repeated statement that Isaac II and Ann Martin Taylor did not wish their daughters to pursue literary careers.

Chapter V will consider the idea that the literary and familial reputation of the Taylors of Ongar was the result of the self-censorship and editing choices of Isaac II and Ann Martin Taylor's children and grandchildren. It will be argued that this occurred because they conformed to the biographical traditions and cultural and social expectations of the Victorian era. The chapter will examine the role of Isaac Taylor III in the construction of the family legacy, in particular his decision to withhold his mother's memoirs from print, while promoting Jane's reputation and that of other family members in later life. The contribution of Ann Taylor Gilbert's autobiography, together with the implication of the involvement of her son in their completion and editing, will be discussed, together with the manner in which the family's reputation came to be appropriated into the evangelical culture of the nineteenth century. There will also be a discussion of how the Taylor legacy, promoted by surviving family members, was utilised by some nineteenth and early twentieth century biographers perpetuating this Victorian legacy.

Chapter I: Faith, Family and Networks

This chapter will look at the background of members of the Taylor family of Ongar and connections to a Dissenting faith and the literary world of the period. It will examine how for Isaac Taylor II and Mrs Ann Martin Taylor their early years spent in London provided formative experiences that had a significant influence on the creation of the Taylor family identity and ethos together with the direction of their literary enterprise. Early in Isaac Taylor II's life in the city his commitment to a Dissenting faith developed and he established the path of his professional life. For Mrs Ann Martin Taylor, knowledge of experiences during her childhood and early years of adulthood aids an understanding of her contribution to the family identity and the direction of her writing in later years. Prior to the rediscovery of Mrs Taylor's memoirs much of the information on her life before her marriage to Isaac Taylor II was unknown.

As with her husband, Isaac II, Ann Martin Taylor's Dissenting faith was formed during these early years. However, it can be argued that the challenges of her childhood and youth led her to a more pragmatic approach to circumstances in her life. From these formative years the competing tensions of the Taylors' adherence to their faith and a pragmatic response to events that was to run through the lives and literary careers originated. For both Isaac II and Ann it can be argued that this period influenced the family ethos they constructed.⁵¹ This chapter will also examine the development of a network of literary and religious contacts that originated from this time in London which in later chapters will be shown to have an impact on what became the family's literary enterprise.

⁵¹ A consideration of the Taylor family ethos is undertaken in Chapter II.

Isaac Taylor II and Ann Martin were born in 1759 and 1757 respectively, a period that saw “long lasting changes in English religious life” and an expansion in print culture.⁵² Book production in particular increased significantly during the last quarter of the eighteenth century.⁵³ Both religion and the literary world were integral features in the lives and literary identity of the Taylors of Ongar. Understanding the family’s literary pursuits requires an examination of the backgrounds of, and early influences on, Isaac II and Ann Martin Taylor through these twin concerns.

A Dissenting Faith

Isaac Taylor committed to his Dissenting faith during an extended period of transformation in the religious culture of England. The ‘Evangelical Revival’, led by John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield, that originated predominantly from within the Church of England during the 1730s, had begun to transform the ecclesiastical landscape of the country. Although scholars now place the origins of this evangelical movement earlier, it was during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that characteristics that were to become associated with Victorian evangelicalism evolved.⁵⁴ The impact on the cultural landscape of this evolution manifested itself in a transformation over the generations of the Taylor family which was to have a particular influence on the biographies published by later generations.

⁵² I. Rivers, *Vanity Fair and the Celestial City; Dissenting, Methodist, and Evangelical Literary Culture in England, 1720-1800*, (Oxford, 2018), p. 3.

⁵³ B. Hilton, *A Mad, Bad and Dangerous People*, (Oxford, 2006), p. 15.

⁵⁴ For a discussion on the debate regarding the start of the revival see I. Rivers, *Writing the history of early evangelicalism*, in *History of European Ideas*; 35:1, 105-111, (2009), DOI:10.16/j.histeuroideas.2008.09.004).

The meaning of the word 'evangelical' in a religious context has evolved "throughout history but almost all [the changes] are related to its etymological meaning of 'good news'".⁵⁵ From the sixteenth century, the Reformation placed a central emphasis on the final authority of the Bible that contrasted "faithful adherence to the gospel message of the New Testament and Catholic perversions of that message." In this context, 'evangelical' "became a virtual synonym for Protestant".⁵⁶ The Protestant religion that progressed across Europe, including those denominations and sects that dissented from the Established Church in England, manifested characteristics that were later to influence the Wesleys and Whitefield. The authority of the Bible, a concept of conversion, justification by faith and a Trinitarian belief had, by the nineteenth century, exerted "a broad influence on cultural and social values of Victorian England," through the process of an expanded interpretation of evangelicalism.⁵⁷

During the eighteenth century as well as establishing New Dissent that "consisted of various branches of Methodism,"⁵⁸ the religious fervour engendered by the Evangelical Revival served, in a reciprocal process, to revitalise branches of traditional, Old Dissent. However, not all Nonconformists were influenced by this evangelical movement. Unitarianism, descended from Presbyterianism, had theologically moved away from a Trinitarian belief to a heterodox position placing emphasis on one God, making the Unitarians doctrinal position incompatible with Methodism.⁵⁹ Other branches of Old Dissent, notably Congregationalists and Independents, benefitted from the revitalising

⁵⁵ M. A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys*, (Illinois, 2003), p. 16.

⁵⁶ Noll, *Rise of Evangelicalism*, p. 17.

⁵⁷ Noll, *Rise of Evangelicalism*, p. 262.

⁵⁸ D. Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity*, (Gwynedd, 1992), p. 13.

⁵⁹ Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity*, p. 13.

spirit Methodism engendered.⁶⁰ Although by the nineteenth century evangelicalism had expanded “to cross denominational boundaries” and become a significant characteristic of the Victorian era, during the eighteenth century many Dissenters still adhered to the earlier concept of evangelical through the doctrinal position and practices associated with their denomination or sect.⁶¹ For Isaac Taylor II, throughout his life, the importance of this allegiance to his Dissenting principles predominated over any changes taking place in Protestantism. That Taylor assumed his religious identity while in London and against the background of religious upheaval can be traced to his family ancestry.

In the two principal areas of Isaac Taylor II’s life, his faith and work, the influence of both his parents can be seen. His father, Isaac Taylor I (1730-1807), initiated Isaac II’s career as an engraver and the evidence indicates it is from his mother, Sarah Hackshaw Taylor [1733-1809], that he inherited the tradition of his Dissenting faith. For Isaac Taylor II, a person’s principles were of paramount importance in life. As a meticulous man of letters, Taylor’s words were carefully chosen and the frequency with which he referred to ‘principle’ indicates the importance he placed on this concept. Principles were the foundation for the “specific moral precepts” upon which he structured his daily routine, his work and his family life and pre-eminent of these were his religious principles and practices that were to have a significant influence on family life.⁶²

Isaac Taylor II’s religious principles were embedded in issues still concerning Dissenters in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and illustrate how

⁶⁰ Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity*, p. 13. Noll, *Rise of Evangelicalism*, p. 9.

⁶¹ G. M. Ditchfield, *The Evangelical Revival*, (London, 1998), p. 1.

⁶² Robert Hole, *Pulpits and Public Order in England 1760-1832*. (Cambridge ,1989) p. 3.

religious debates at a national level affected both local Dissenting churches and the individual and could “deeply influence man’s view of the purpose of life and his perception of his real interests.”⁶³ Taylor’s principles were based in the Congregational tradition of Old Dissent, were of orthodox Calvinistic form and initiated by his mother.

Isaac Taylor II’s mother, Sarah Hackshaw Jefferys, was born in 1733 and kept house for her uncle, Thomas Jefferys, in St Martin’s Lane, London. It was here that she met Isaac Taylor I while he was employed as an engraver by her uncle. They married in the church at Shenfield, Essex, home of her parents, on 9 May 1754.⁶⁴ It is through the Hackshaws that the Dissenting faith of Isaac Taylor II and his family can be traced. Recent research into the genealogy of the Hackshaws has clarified their longstanding connection to protestant Dissent, including the origins of the family’s membership of the Congregational Church.⁶⁵ The association with a Dissenting faith is illustrated through Isaac Taylor II’s great, great grandfather, Robert Hackshaw II (1653-1722), a successful London merchant and a Dissenter.⁶⁶

That the Taylor family knew of the Dissenting heritage of their ancestor is evident from an account of Hackshaw’s alleged activities as a ‘spy’ in the service of William III and the protestant cause during events leading to the Glorious Revolution of 1688. This episode was recorded by Isaac Taylor II’s grandson, Josiah Gilbert, in his mother’s

⁶³ Hole, *Pulpit* p. 3.

⁶⁴ Robin Taylor Gilbert, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* p. 909.

⁶⁵ Fiona Martin has undertaken research into ancestors of the Taylor family, notably the Hackshaws, and published these in articles on a website on the Taylor family: *Robert Hackshaw (1653-1722) The Orange Skipper: Two Family Legends – The Orange Skipper and Jane Hackshaw’s elopement with Josiah Jefferys*, (<http://freepages.family.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~taylorsofongar/index/html>).

⁶⁶ Martin, *Robert Hackshaw (1653-1722) The Orange Skipper*.

autobiography.⁶⁷ The story appears to be more apocryphal than factual, contributing to the historical narrative the family constructed, however, there is evidence of Robert Hackshaw's commitment to the Dissenting cause in other records.⁶⁸ These affirm his membership of Congregational Churches in London, while in his will he left legacies to a Dissenting minister and the poor of his church. The Hackshaws had a family tomb in the Dissenting burial ground of Bunhill Fields, Islington, and later descendants including Isaac Taylor II's mother, maternal grandmother and three of his four siblings' were buried there.⁶⁹

Although the protestant heritage of the Hackshaws appears influential in the choice of the branch of nonconformity, Congregational, that the Taylors followed, Ann Taylor Gilbert's autobiography, published in 1874, simply noted that: "At thirteen [Isaac Taylor II] commenced a life which became one of diffusive piety. At sixteen he joined the church under the Reverend Mr Webb of Fetter Lane"⁷⁰. In contrast to the impression of self determination that this family narrative created, the church records reveal that his mother commenced the connection with the Congregational Church in Fetter Lane in 1759, not long after the family moved to London having lived in Shenfield following her marriage. She was accepted into full membership of the church in May 1759, although the church books record the baptism of Isaac in February of the same year, one month after his birth, indicating prior attendance before full

⁶⁷ A. Taylor Gilbert, *Autobiography and other Memorials of Mrs. Gilbert*, (London, 1874), p. viii.

⁶⁸ Fiona Martin identifies the story of his arrest on suspicion of importing subversive pamphlets from Holland in connection with the Rye House plot in 1683.

⁶⁹ Martin, *Robert Hackshaw*; Henry Taylor, *Pedigree of the Taylors of Ongar*. SRO, HD588/1.

⁷⁰ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 3.

membership. Isaac's elder brother Charles, was the only child of Isaac I and Sarah Hackshaw Taylor who was not baptised by the Rev. James Webb.⁷¹

With the move to London, the Congregational Church in Fetter Lane, close to the family residence in Holborn, was an understandable choice for Sarah Hackshaw Taylor given her Dissenting family heritage and the puritan antecedents and orthodox position of the church's ministers. The Fetter Lane Church had a notable history in the Congregational movement. This reached back to the period after the English Civil War when a meeting of Independents had been drawn together at Fetter Lane by Dr Thomas Goodwin who had attended the death of his friend and patron Oliver Cromwell.⁷² It can be argued that the network of religious associates that were later to benefit the Taylor family's writing career originated from Isaac Taylor II's membership of the Congregational Church in Fetter Lane. This church also marked the beginning of the doctrinal beliefs that were to inform the family ethos that Taylor and his wife created and later exploited during their literary careers.

The Taylor family commenced its involvement with the Fetter Lane Congregational Church against the backdrop of the eighteenth-century Evangelical Revival. For several decades, starting in the 1730s, Fetter Lane was a site for developing religious movements and theological debates and "became a crossroads for restless and adventurous Protestants of all colours."⁷³ Following the building of a new Congregational church in 1732, the old building was used by a group of Moravians who had arrived from Germany in 1738. Founded by the Moravians as part of their

⁷¹ LMA, N/C/31/2: Baptismal register of Fetter Lane Congregational Church.

⁷² Walter Wilson, *History and Antiquities of Dissenting Churches and Meeting Houses in London 3 Vols.* (London, 1810), Vol. 3 p. 429.

⁷³ A. Ryrie, *Protestants; The Radicals who made the modern world*, (London, 2017), p. 172.

missionary work in England, the group was supported for a period by the Wesleys. Over time the Wesleys came to suspect the Moravians of Antinomian tendencies and separated to found their society at the Foundery in Upper Moorfields. The Moravians continued their association with the old Congregational church building in Fetter Lane and were there during the time the Taylor family attended the Congregational Church.⁷⁴

Also present in Fetter Lane during the time the Taylors attended the Congregational Church was a meeting house presided over until his death in 1763 by a Calvinistic clergyman, John Green who was associated with George Whitefield. It was through Whitefield that Ann Martin Taylor's father was converted. Green's meetings were well attended and became known for doctrinal disputes where Arian, Antinomian and anti-Trinitarian views were discussed. Disputes surrounding these religious concepts were to impact on Isaac Taylor II and his family at periods throughout his life. Against this fervid religious background and the transformative period of the Evangelical Revival, Isaac Taylor II commenced his association with the Congregational faith of his mother. Isaac II's more traditional, protestant evangelicalism, later revealed in his writings, had its foundations in the orthodox, Calvinism of the Fetter Lane Congregational Church.

Traditionally, Congregational Churches were austere and avoided symbolism, as reflected in their puritan roots. They were characterised by a style of governance that centred on the autonomy of individual church members in the running of their Church. These self-governing churches were part of the tradition of Old Dissent that also

⁷⁴ Wilson, *History and Antiquities*, p. 429.

included the Presbyterians, the Baptists and the Quakers.⁷⁵ The Congregational churches observed two sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper, although as Sellars notes they were "not notably a theologically conscious body, [and] had no firmly fixed term for their doctrinal stance".⁷⁶ The independence of the churches in allowing the members to select ministers whose doctrinal views were compatible with the congregation, combined with the ability of individual Congregational churches to decide on aspects of religious service, provides a method of examining early religious influences on Isaac Taylor II.

The Articles of Governance for the Fetter Lane Church, including the processes for seeking membership and of admonishment, were set out in the Record Book.⁷⁷ As well as the principle of self-determination, among Congregational churches the articles of governance had to be defined in scripture. Establishing the membership of the church was a method of reinforcing the doctrinal character of each congregation. Central to this process was the establishment of an applicant's conversion experience that was later defined by Isaac Taylor II: "Conversion is the heart turning to God, under a conviction of error, confessing guilt, and applying for mercy, to the instituted medium of divine goodness."⁷⁸ The process of conversion was to become a notable indicator of nineteenth-century Victorian evangelicalism, but at the time Isaac II became a member of the Fetter Lane Church it still had a significant role in the process leading to membership of Dissenting churches.

⁷⁵ David Thompson, *Nonconformity in the Nineteenth Century*, (London, 1972), p. vi.

⁷⁶ R Tudor Jones, Congregationalism in England, in Ian Sellars (ed.), *Nineteenth-Century Nonconformity*, (London, 1977), p. 2.

⁷⁷ LMA: N/C/31/5, 28 February 1728.

⁷⁸ Taylor, *Autobiography*, p. 83.

As well as the puritan origins of his maternal ancestors, the early influences on the direction of Isaac Taylor II's religious principles stem from the orthodox, Calvinistic tradition of the Fetter Lane Church as upheld by consecutive ministers. This position was described in a nineteenth-century history of Dissenting Churches and Meeting Houses in London by Walter Wilson, which discussed ministerial characters and capabilities⁷⁹. Wilson placed the early history of the Fetter Lane Church within the traditions of strict puritan Calvinism through Dr Goodwin the first minister at the church between 1660 and 1680. In particular, Goodwin was noted for "the gloomy notions respecting religious decorum, which were at that time prevalent".⁸⁰ In 1757, the Rev. James Webb was selected as the minister at Fetter Lane and during his long association with the church, which only ended with his death in 1782, members of the Taylor family joined.

Wilson was not effusive in his praise of Webb, noting his "regular and uniform piety" and his "irreproachable character" but described him as "not distinguished by superior talents either in the pulpit or out of it". His sermons, "were not thought remarkably judicious, nor his style good, yet there was an unction attending his preaching which rendered it very acceptable to experimental Christians. He was deeply read in the old divines, and imbibed much of their spirit and manner."⁸¹ In spite of this analysis of Webb's abilities as a minister, there were aspects of his character and personal history that Isaac Taylor II evidently found admirable. When Webb died in 1782, he wrote a long tribute in verse to; "A friend, a father, a companion dear."⁸²

⁷⁹ W. Wilson, *History and Antiquities of Dissenting Churches and Meeting Houses in London, Westminster and Southwark 3 Vols* (London 1810), Vol 3.

⁸⁰ Wilson, *History and Antiquities*, p. 460.

⁸¹ Wilson, *History and Antiquities*, p. 460.

⁸² Ann Taylor, MS 'Her Own Memoirs', p. 454.

Isaac Taylor II's relationship with, and admiration of, Webb assists our understanding of the Taylors' doctrinal beliefs. The orthodox position and religious connections of this minister and the developing network of religious associates played a prominent role in the lives of Taylor and his family. See *Figure 2* on page 41.

Webb's doctrinal stance is indicated from his membership of the King's Head Society, an organisation founded in 1730 to support both an orthodox, Calvinistic education for ministerial students and promote evangelical Dissent.⁸³ One of the first ministers associated with the society was Thomas Bradbury, also a previous minister at Fetter Lane Congregational Church in the first half of the eighteenth century. James Webb was an early student of the society. Students funded for their ministerial education by the King's Head Society were regularly examined on doctrinal points to ensure orthodoxy and were expected to adhere to A Declaration as to some Controverted Points of Christian Doctrine (London 1732),⁸⁴ a document notable for upholding the orthodox Calvinist principle of pre-election.

⁸³ Dissenting Academies Online 2011, Dr Williams Centre for Dissenting Studies, <http://dissacad.english.qmul.ac.uk>.

⁸⁴ Simon N. Dixon, Dissenting Academies Online 2011, Dr Williams Centre for Dissenting Studies, <http://dissacad.english.qmul.ac.uk>.

Fetter Lane Congregational Church Network

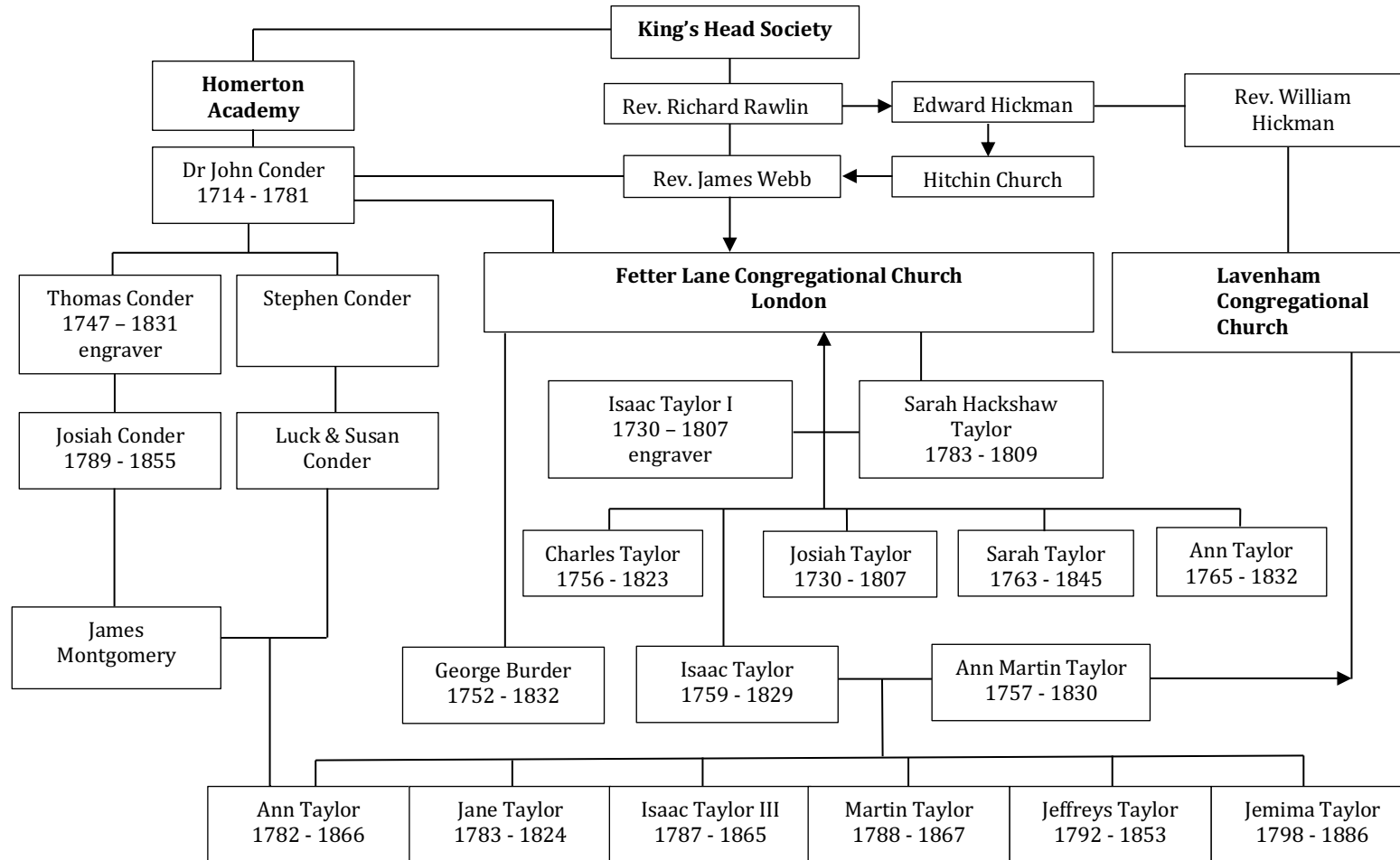


Figure 2

As a student of the King's Head Society, Webb met and shared a house with John Conder. Dr Conder (1714-1781) was a leading figure in the Congregational Church, who became a Congregational minister in Cambridge and later President of the Homerton Academy. The church records reveal that when Webb took up his position with the church in Fetter Lane, Conder attended church meetings.⁸⁵ They also reveal that in the period in which the Taylor family was associated with Fetter Lane, a number of students from Homerton Academy applied to be members of the church indicating an affiliation with this Independent academy, which was founded by the lay members of the King's Head Society in 1754.⁸⁶ Continuing the links between the King's Head Society and Fetter Lane Congregational Church Dr Davies, who succeeded James Webb in 1783 as a minister at Fetter Lane shortly before Isaac Taylor left London, was also a classics tutor at the Homerton Academy.⁸⁷

The Fetter Lane Congregational Church with its orthodox, Calvinist doctrinal tradition also followed Congregational forms of membership and organisation. In August 1775, Isaac Taylor II was proposed to "full communion with the church" and two brethren "were appointed to converse with him as to his experience of divine things and to enquire as to his moral character and behaviour".⁸⁸ If, as was the case with Isaac II, having conversed with an applicant, male or female, the brethren were "fully satisfied as to [their] moral behaviour" it was possible to recommend them to the church as a proper person to be admitted.

⁸⁵ LMA: N/C/31/5.

⁸⁶ The Academy assumed the name when in 1769 it moved to a house in the village of Homerton, to the north east of London where there was a strong, nonconformist tradition.

⁸⁷ Wilson, *History and Antiquities*, p. 463.

⁸⁸ LMA: NC/31/4

As well as upholding the church's doctrinal position, membership required adherence to recognised standards of behavior. Failure to maintain these standards in the eyes of their fellow church members resulted in the disciplining of people whose behaviour fell below the accepted principles. Indications of behaviour which caused admonishment are illustrated in records of the occasional judgements passed on members. In accordance with the principle of scriptural supremacy, the process of upholding these standards was noted in the records succinctly by referring to biblical passages: "As to admonishment may it suffice to observe Galat 6:1, Matth 18.15."⁸⁹ In addition to discipline these church communities would also provide assistance in times of need. These self-selecting groups provided the individual with a community that combined religious direction and moral standards and were also a source of social activities.

There is no evidence from the church records that Isaac Taylor II's father ever became a full member of the Fetter Lane church but it does seem that the church played a role in the Taylor family's life. One of Isaac Taylor I's apprentices, George Burder, was also a member of the Fetter Lane Congregational Church, a lifelong acquaintance of Isaac Taylor II and eventually minister of the Fetter Lane Church from 1803. From Ann Martin Taylor's memoirs it is clear Isaac II socialised with Burder and other members of the church as he accompanied Isaac II to the social gathering at her house when Isaac and Ann first met.⁹⁰ The Taylor family and a branch of the Condors were also friends

⁸⁹ Galatians 6:1 states: "if someone is caught in any kind of wrongdoing, those of you who are spiritual should set him right; but you must do it in a gently way. And keep an eye on yourselves so that you will not be tempted too." Mathew 18.15 states: "If your brother sins against you, go to him and show him his fault. But do it privately, just between yourselves. If he listens to you, you have won your brother back. But if he will not listen to you, take one or two other persons with you, so that every accusation may be upheld by the testimony of two or more witnesses, as the scripture says. And if he will not listen to them, then tell the whole thing to the church. Finally, if he will not listen to the church, treat him as though he were a pagan or a tax collector."

⁹⁰ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 158.

and, as Ann Martin Taylor was to write, there was an “understanding” between the two families based on the expectation that Isaac II would marry Miss Conder, an agreement that Isaac would later withdraw from.⁹¹ In his youth, Isaac Taylor II had developed ministerial ambitions and a marriage to a member of the Conder family would have been advantageous considering the reputation Dr John Conder had amongst Congregational churches.

Although Isaac Taylor II was unable to pursue his ministerial ambitions because of ill health, records show he became increasingly involved in the church’s governance. In February 1776, at the age of 17, he is recorded attending the regular church meetings. These were separate from the Sunday public services, and decisions were taken at these meetings concerning membership, discipline and matters relating to the church’s interaction with external bodies such as the Congregational Fund.⁹²

On 24 September 1784, following the death of Webb and the ‘calling upon’ and ‘setting aside’ of Dr Davies as the new minister, an Extraordinary Meeting was called to elect three Deacons. Isaac Taylor II, now 25 and a member of the church for nine years, appears to have stood for one of the positions. Of the 59 votes cast for the ten persons standing, Isaac Taylor II, together with three others, received one vote each.⁹³ This marks the first time following the disappointment of his ministerial ambitions that Isaac Taylor was to seek a more formal role in a church, a course he was to pursue with other churches he subsequently joined.

⁹¹ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 171.

⁹² LMA N/C/31/5

⁹³ LMA N/C/31/5

Shortly after these elections, Isaac Taylor II, now married to Ann Martin and with two children, took the decision to remove his family from London. There is no overt evidence of disappointment with the Fetter Lane Church, however, Taylor was to benefit from a more senior position in the new church he joined in Suffolk. The way Isaac Taylor II approached the move, and where the family ended up residing, illustrates the support provided by the religious network established through the Fetter Lane Church. It also demonstrates the connections between the regional Congregational churches and Dissenting Academies in London. Taylor's choice of church underlines the importance he placed on the continuing support of a like-minded religious community.

Ann Taylor Gilbert noted that, "my father, always methodical, obtained a list from Homerton College, run by Dr John Conder, of all the ministers supplied from that Institution to within one hundred miles from the metropolis and wrote, I believe, to all of them."⁹⁴ This first evidence of the practical support the network provided is reinforced when Isaac Taylor II received a reply to his letter from Rev. William Hickman then the minister of a small Congregational church in Lavenham, Suffolk. Hickman's father, Edward Hickman, had also been a member of the Fetter Lane Church from 1752-58, and had acted as an assistant to James Webb's predecessor Rev. Richard Rawlin. Edward Hickman left the church acrimoniously when the Fetter Lane Church members failed to select him as their new minister on Richard Rawlin's death choosing James Webb instead. In turn Edward Hickman then replaced Webb as minister of the church in Hitchin.⁹⁵ [See Figure 2].

⁹⁴ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 12. Taylor must have addressed this letter to another person at the Academy since Dr Conder had died in 1781.

⁹⁵ Wilson, *History and Antiquities* p. 459.

Lavenham: 1786-96

Isaac Taylor II moved his family to Lavenham, Suffolk, in June 1786. In her autobiography his daughter, Ann, noted that in spite of spending his first thirty years in London Isaac Taylor II had “caught not a taint from its atmosphere”.⁹⁶ On arriving in the town Isaac and Ann Taylor requested ‘occasional communion’ with The Congregational Church that was granted on 2 July. Although church records again show Isaac Taylor taking part in church meetings shortly after they arrived, it was two and a half years before he sought formal dismissal from Dr Davies at Fetter Lane, “to transfer their relation as actual church members from this church to that of Lavenham in Suffolk,” which was accepted on 16 February 1789.⁹⁷

The contrast between the two Congregational Churches experienced by the Taylor family must have been pronounced. Although there had been an Independent Congregation meeting in Lavenham since 1692,⁹⁸ when the family moved to the small town there was only, “a little band of Dissenters who occupied a small ‘meeting house’ that nestled under the shade of some fine walnut trees”⁹⁹ in Water Street. Church records show that prior to their arrival, when a new minister was being sought, the church members acknowledged that “the dissent of Religion in this town is but low” and that they could only afford a salary of between £30 and £40 per annum.¹⁰⁰

Although the congregation was small Ann Taylor Gilbert recorded that the family found

⁹⁶ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 3.

⁹⁷ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 3.

⁹⁸ SRO FK 35 04

⁹⁹ Gilbert *Autobiography*, p. 14.

¹⁰⁰ SRO FK 35 04/1

them 'friendly and intelligent', and in her autobiography she described several families who were members of the church.¹⁰¹

From this description it is apparent that there was an underlying social and gender hierarchy that the Dissenting principles, on the surface egalitarian, did not override. Any male member of the church could be elected an elder and all members "fell under the elders' jurisdiction, including the elders and pastor themselves."¹⁰² However, in practice within the meeting house social status seemed to be observed. Families from the middling sort that included a wool trader, schoolmaster, linen draper, blacksmith and baker occupied the pews. There were two families of notable wealth, that of Mrs Sherrar and her son-in-law Mr Hillier who were in "upper seats 'the squires pew' carefully screened at both ends from the vulgar gaze."¹⁰³ Then there was the family of Mr Watkinson, a master wool comber, "of Quaker extraction who still retained traits of this original, [sic]" and took their place in front of the pulpit with his wife and twelve children.¹⁰⁴

More overt social separation occurred with "the poor of the Congregation in the galleries." Additionally in this area there was gender segregation with "the men occupying the one, the women the other; the girls and boys of the small Sunday school being similarly apportioned in one or the other gallery."¹⁰⁵ As with the Fetter Lane church, membership was open to men and women following a common process of interrogation undertaken by senior, male, members to ascertain the persons

¹⁰¹ Gilbert *Autobiography*, p. 14.

¹⁰² Ryrie, *Protestants*, p. 55.

¹⁰³ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 21.

¹⁰⁴ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 233.

¹⁰⁵ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 21.

“experience of divine things and they being fully satisfied as to [their] moral behavior.”¹⁰⁶ Women could be members of the church, and contribute to its funds, but they did not stand for office or undertake any preaching. Women did attend weekly meetings unless they judged their presence was better served at home providing religious instruction to their children.

The church in Fetter Lane had been in an area teeming with religious debates, disputes and groups, that was part of the “tainted atmosphere” Ann Taylor Gilbert had remarked on her father avoiding. By contrast, in Lavenham the Taylors encountered a different atmosphere that harked back to the historic prejudices experienced by Dissenters. With the passage of the Acts of Uniformity and subsequent laws including the Clarendon Code the history of Nonconformity from the seventeenth century is a manifestation of the active and re-active process of othering where “dimensions of power and powerlessness are taken as constituting the other.”¹⁰⁷ This sense of ‘other’ or outsider associated with, and often reveled in by Dissenting church members, is evident in events at this time and found form in experiences of the Taylor family. During the ten years Isaac Taylor II spent at Lavenham the perception of this Dissenting congregation, regardless of social status, as outsiders within the town was demonstrated during the tense atmosphere in the 1790s caused by the French Revolution and war with France. This period, referred to as Pitt’s Terror, meant that Dissent was associated with a radical position with the result that little distinction was made between the more orthodox nonconformist branches, such as the Congregationalists, and radical Dissenters who advocated support for the principles of

¹⁰⁶ LMA: N/G/31/4

¹⁰⁷ Sue Wilkinson & Celia Kitzinger (eds.), *Representing the Other* (London, 1996), p. 5.

the French Revolution and whose doctrines were an anathema to those Dissenters with orthodox beliefs.¹⁰⁸

An indication of the attitude of the town's people to the small Congregational Church is provided by Ann Taylor Gilbert when she wrote of, "this reviled conventicle (for the spirit of 'Church and King' was the demon of the neighbourhood, or rather the times)." ¹⁰⁹ This deliberately referred back to the Conventicle Act of the Clarendon Code (1661-65) which for a time had made gatherings for Nonconformist services illegal. An important aspect of Isaac Taylor II's faith and Dissenting identity resided in the historic disjuncture between his religion and that of the Established Church. Isaac Taylor II purposely upheld the separation caused by the choice to Dissent from the Church of England and the loss of political and social power as a source of affirmation.

The importance of the history and traditions behind Isaac II's Congregational principles were exposed during this time in Lavenham in the course of an acrimonious dispute, "which menaced the peace, if not the existence of the Dissenting interest to which we belonged."¹¹⁰ The formal Church record of the dispute comes from the hand of Isaac Taylor II himself. Up to this point, the records had been kept by Deacon Hillier until his abrupt resignation on 3 January 1790, which was the culmination of the dispute that also resulted in Isaac II being elected a Deacon. When he took over the upkeep of the records, Isaac II began with a detailed entry on the course of the disagreement between the church and Mr Hillier written retrospectively.

¹⁰⁸ B. Hilton, *Mad, Bad and Dangerous People*, p. 65.

¹⁰⁹ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 14.

¹¹⁰ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 282.

Isaac Taylor II's record notes that on the 29 November, a few months after he had assumed full membership, a special meeting of the church was called, "to consider the propriety of an application to Parliament for a repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts which prevented Dissenters from Qualifying for Office."¹¹¹ In order to circumvent the Act, some Nonconformists would take occasional communion within the Church of England. As the influence of Nonconformists grew, pressure was mounting for the repeal of the Act, particularly amongst the Whig party. The outcome of the debate on this subject remains unrecorded for the meeting turned instead to a challenge to the Dissenting principles of the Deacon, Nathaniel Hillier.

At the meeting, this practice of taking occasional communion with the Church of England was recorded as an accusation made by William Hitchcock, a senior and wealthy member of the church, "abruptly enquiring" of Hillier "if he had not done it, namely received the sacrament at our Parish Church." Hillier "publicly [sic] avowed himself a Churchman."¹¹² According to Taylor's church record, attempts were made to reconcile the dispute if Hillier were willing, "to avoid every occasion of giving them offense in future," then previous actions could be overlooked. Hillier's conscience did not allow him to "declare himself a Dissenter." Instead, he stated that he was a Churchman. The apparent deceit he had practiced by undertaking the process of becoming a member and accepting the role of Deacon was done, he stated, "with a view of serving and uniting the interest here."

As a result of this confrontation, the members of the church felt "necessitated" to make a declaration which was recorded in the church records by Isaac Taylor:

¹¹¹ SRO FK 35 04/1

¹¹² SRO FK 35 04/1

That the principles upon which we dissent from the Church of England being drawn from Scripture are of real value and importance. It is our duty therefore to adhere to them with firmness and consistency.

That occasional communion with the Church of England appearing like a renunciation of those principles, is, if lawful, by no means convenient or consistent in members of our churches and in any person sustaining office character among us it is doubly improper.¹¹³

In seeking resolution the church resorted to a process for admonishment almost identical to that outlined in the Fetter Lane Records, which had succinctly referred to the biblical passages, Galat 6:1, Matth 18.15", indicating a common understanding in governance between Congregational churches.

On 2 February 1790 five ministers assembled in Lavenham from Long Melford, Bury St Edmunds, Sudbury, Castle Hedingham, and Dedham, who proceeded to affirm the priority of self governance by Congregational churches by stating, "that the church only had authority in disputes between its own members, that themselves could take no part but that of peacemakers."¹¹⁴ From the evidence presented to the church, Hillier's complaint against the minister was not upheld and it was noted that Mr Hickman, "had not been guilty of aspersing him." In resigning from the church, Hillier subsequently accused Isaac Taylor II, together with another member, "of precipitancy and want of candour in drawing up the resolutions so immediately." In the years following the dispute the Hilliers subsequently left Lavenham.

¹¹³ SRO: FK 35 04/1, p. 84.

¹¹⁴ SRO: FK 35 04/1, p. 86.

Mrs Taylor's memoirs suggest that the dispute originated partly in social concerns outside religious matters when she recalled that two years after arriving in Lavenham the church's minister became a widower. After the death of his wife, Hickman renewed "an intimacy with the sister of one of his principle people, a family who ranked themselves among the quality [sic] of the neighbourhood [the Hilliers]," which resulted in the family's "opposition which became decided and violent."¹¹⁵ Not for the first time, Mrs Taylor's memoirs reveal an alternative interpretation from formal or published records. According to his wife, Taylor was asked by the church members to construct a letter to the Congregational authorities in London regarding the dispute. His detailed record of the events was presented with careful attention to note correct Congregational principles and procedures. This created a tidy impression of a messy dispute that involved not just religious sentiment but class and social position. It also served to present the Lavenham Congregational Church in a correct light to the Congregational hierarchy in London.

Following Hillier's departure, a vote was taken in February 1790 for the election of a new deacon. Hitchcock received 5 votes, Watkinson 5 and Taylor 2. With Watkinson unwilling to take on the role, Isaac Taylor II became a deacon. His "methodical" approach previously mentioned by his daughter Ann was illustrated in the new church record book he started. He began by recording a series of "Preliminary Memorandums" recording Church property, the location of books and paperwork with various members, church officers and a list of church members.

¹¹⁵ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 283.

By the mid 1790s, Isaac Taylor II was regarded as a prominent Dissenter in the Suffolk town, and one night in 1794 his house became the target of an attack by townsfolk fired up by reactionary zeal caused by the wars with France and the generalised association of Dissenters with the revolutionaries. The attack was only calmed through the intervention of the Taylors' neighbour and former landlord, Rev. Mr Cooke. In response to this insecurity and persecution one of the senior members of the Congregational church, Mr Watkinson, decided to emigrate with his family to New England. They were joined by others from the neighbourhood "to the number of 60" who left at the same time for North America.¹¹⁶

As well as the loss of friends, the emigration caused a fall in prosperity for the church which resulted in a reduced stipend for Rev. Edward Hickman. He was obliged to ask Isaac Taylor II periodically for loans to tide him over between salary payments. The financial insecurity and the continuing "sore feeling" over the Hillier affair resulted in Edward Hickman seeking a new position elsewhere. Having achieved a position as a deacon and, "become a leading man among the frequenters of the Meeting House at Lavenham," Isaac Taylor II sought to enhance his public role in the church and, with his income from engraving to support him, he saw an opportunity to fulfil his calling as a minister. It was a step that contributed to Isaac Taylor II's reputation and the family's identity.¹¹⁷

Isaac II had the support of local ministers but, "the majority of the Lavenham church apparently could not brook that a fellow member should thus become their

¹¹⁶ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 58

¹¹⁷ I. Taylor III, Memoir of Jane Taylor in I. Taylor IV, *The Family Pen Vol I*, (London, 1867), p. 109

Minister.”¹¹⁸ In the process of seeking this position, Taylor undertook to preach in the churches of other local communities. As a result, he was invited to preach at Colchester so that members of a Presbyterian congregation could hear him. In place of the disappointment he experienced at Lavenham, Taylor was offered the ministerial position at a small Independent Church in Colchester which he assumed in November 1795, moving his family to the town in January 1796. During the time Isaac Taylor II spent in Lavenham he obtained greater involvement in the church’s affairs and governance, putting him in a position to fulfill the ministerial ambitions he held since his youth. It was an episode that demonstrated that the distinction between the Dissenters and the Church of England was still important, clear and identifiable, particularly for Isaac Taylor II. For the rest of his life, Isaac Taylor II maintained the identity of his Nonconformist faith bound to such Dissenting principles as the Lavenham declaration.

Colchester and Ongar: 1796-1830

Throughout the Taylors’ residence in Colchester, the ferment and debate surrounding the French Revolution and its aftermath continued, but subsumed in a larger town there is no record of the family experiencing the persecution as Dissenters that they had in Lavenham. Instead, as a minister with a greater role in the public sphere of his church the family was exposed to antagonism directed at them by his own congregation caused by religious debates that had been present in the Fetter Lane area. Although here again the importance of social status played a contributory part as Mrs Taylor’s memoirs reveal.

¹¹⁸ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 62.

Despite the town having a long history of Dissent, on arrival in Colchester at the end of the eighteenth century the Taylor family's initial impression of the Dissenting community was not favourable: "The Dissenters of the town were men of habit more than men of piety and few knew or thought why they dissented."¹¹⁹ Isaac Taylor II had to confront a further aspect of late eighteenth-century Dissent, that of doctrinal differences with his congregation. Among Dissenters in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there were a series of vigorous, and at times acrimonious debates concerning the doctrine of salvation, together with arguments centering on the interpretation of the Trinity. These soteriological disputes and diverging opinions led to approaches variously defined as Arianism, Arminianism, Antinomianism and later Socinianism. Mrs Taylor recalled on arriving at Colchester there was, "a Socinian congregation, now reduced, as well from the immoral conduct of the late Pastor, as from erroneous doctrines, to a very scanty sprinkling of attendants,"¹²⁰

As an extension of their organisational autonomy, Independent and Congregational churches maintained a degree of theological independence but these doctrinal divisions caused by the soteriological debates and Trinitarian controversy affected the relationship between the preacher and congregation and by extension his family.¹²¹ The continuing ferment around these debates in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is reflected in the autobiographical materials and correspondence of members of the Taylor family. These records reveal how the controversies reached into provincial Dissenting communities such as Colchester. The disputes also serve to

¹¹⁹ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 47.

¹²⁰ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 322.

¹²¹ M. Watts, *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Oxford, 1978), p. 467.

illustrate Isaac Taylor II's continuing commitment to his orthodox, Calvinist principles that he acquired through his membership of the Fetter Lane Church.

When Isaac Taylor II joined as minister, his church was described as “a small congregation of Presbyterian origin which had degenerated into a condition not so intellectual but as cold Unitarianism.” It was felt that, “a return to something like evangelical sentiment seemed the only chance of revival.”¹²² While Congregationalists and Presbyterians had a common Calvinist heritage a separation had occurred in the first half of the eighteenth century centred mainly on the Doctrine of Predestination, with the Congregationalists taking a more moderate approach following the belief that redemption was possible for all, a view also taken by Wesley's Armenian Methodists. The Presbyterians maintained the Calvinist doctrine of Predestination in which it was believed God had already decided who would be saved.¹²³ During the eighteenth century doctrinal differences continued to cause “ecclesial disruptions.”¹²⁴ That a difference arose on doctrinal matters between Isaac Taylor II, as minister, and his deacons and congregation is clear from family correspondence. Isaac Taylor II held firmly to his orthodox religious principles of scriptural sufficiency and Trinitarian beliefs in the face of what Ann Taylor Gilbert later referred to as “the bane of Colchester, high (antinomian) doctrine.[sic]”¹²⁵ Antinomianism was a general charge used at a time when “religious characterisation was a subjective, partial and often polemical business.”¹²⁶

¹²² Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 47.

¹²³ D. M. Thompson, *Nonconformity in the Nineteenth Century*, (London, 1972), p. 3.

¹²⁴ A. Sell, *Philosophy, Dissent and Nonconformity 1689-1920*, (London, 2003), p. 3.

¹²⁵ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 81.

¹²⁶ J. Craig, *Reformation, Politics and Polemics in East Anglian Market Towns*, (Ashgate, 2001), p. 133.

Although these debates had not been such a concern in Lavenham, they were not unheard of.¹²⁷ In Colchester however, the disruptions were far more prevalent and an intimation of conflict ahead was indicated prior to Taylor's ordination in a particular concern expressed by the family. The Taylors believed that religious sentiments of the Church's congregation, "might afford ground for suspicion that he [Isaac Taylor II] could scarcely be quite sound himself" and thus presented a challenge to Isaac Taylor's orthodox reputation. However, attendance at his ordination on 21 April 1796 of several ministers regarded by the Taylor family as being of sound reputation addressed that concern for a time.¹²⁸

Isaac Taylor II's initial impact as a minister was positive and Mrs Taylor referred to, "the crowds that flocked to it [the church]...and we and our children were in high repute."¹²⁹ Later in her memoirs she recalled that, "my dear husband has returned exhausted from the lectures [sermons] after preaching to upwards of a thousand people."¹³⁰ In time, this success waned and his wife cited three causes for the decline. Isaac Taylor II's more austere, orthodox position came into conflict with members of his church when he, "committed the unpardonable crime of occasionally expressing his dislike of instrumental music in public worship... there is scarcely a more formidable enemy than an offended musician."¹³¹ Secondly, when the Taylors joined the church, not only was the congregation in reduced circumstances but the building itself was in a state of disrepair so, "a general renovation [was] decided on, and at first met with little

¹²⁷ Gilbert had noted that a member of Rev. Hickman's congregation, Mr Stribbing the blacksmith, closely followed the weekly sermons and was "troubling his minister occasionally by complaining of him as a "legal preacher", on the ground that he selected "Arminian Texts", thus challenging his orthodoxy. *Autobiography*, p. 15.

¹²⁸ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 72.

¹²⁹ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 342.

¹³⁰ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 354.

¹³¹ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 388.

opposition.” According to Mrs Taylor her husband, as an artist, was employed to make the designs but these, together with the final cost for which church members would be liable, ended up alienating many. “It proved a most convenient opportunity for the low sentiments, and the high sentiments...to unite, wide as they were, in laying the blame on Mr Taylor.”¹³²

Finally, the pressure of continuing his work as an engraver while fulfilling his duties as minister led to a falling out with a wealthy member of his congregation. Impressed by Isaac Taylor II's preaching Mrs Rouse, a former Baptist, had joined his church. Mrs. Rouse appears to have expected a considerable amount of her minister's time and attention. After purchasing a new washing machine, “which with good housewives was then in high repute”, she expected Mr Taylor to leave his workroom and assist her with it. To her request Mrs Taylor had replied, “will you madam, I said, engage to pay our debts.” On receiving the answer no Mrs. Taylor responded: “Then, rejoined I with some sharpness, do not prevent Mr Taylor from doing so himself. From that hour he did not preach the gospel according to Mrs Rouse and she busied herself going from house to house” spreading her views.¹³³

Autobiographies and memoirs published later by the Taylor family interpret these disputes in a religious context while family letters reveal the distress they caused the family. A letter dated August 1811 by the Taylors' eldest son, Isaac III, sent from Devon where he was recovering his health, refers to encountering similar attitudes which had caused his father, “to have as hard a fight of it as you... have so long had” in Colchester. The attitudes to which he was referring were, “on the one hand putrid and contagious

¹³² Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 388.

¹³³ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 390.

exhalations from the antinomian marshes of Plymouth and dock – and on the other – of the nipping north wind of Socinianism which is felt so generally on the hills of Devon.”¹³⁴

As a result of the aspersions being cast on Isaac Taylor II’s religious principles, he took the decision to resign from the ministry of the church in 1811. Until he found a new position, the family worshipped at the Congregationalist’s Round Meeting House in Lion Walk Colchester. Taylor accepted a new ministry at a small Congregational Church in Ongar to where the family moved in 1812. This small nonconformist church was not without its disputes and, “two or three principal people in our congregation had unhappily imbibed high sentiments.”¹³⁵ Additionally in 1819 on returning home from a visit to their eldest daughter Ann, the Taylors found that, in their absence, the church had split and a portion of the congregation from Stanford Rivers, “had conceived it to be their bounden duty to introduce the Gospel there.”¹³⁶ Although there was a split in the congregation this church appears to have presented Isaac Taylor II with less trouble and he remained minister at the church until his death in 1829.

During his time as a minister in Colchester, and later at Ongar, Isaac Taylor II received a salary from each church. The extent of the salary paid to Dissenting ministers was dependent on financial contributions made by members attending a church, which varied according to the congregation. The salary from the small Ongar Church was £80, while for Colchester £60. In comparison, the Minister of the Lavenham church, which had a larger membership, received £30-£40 per annum. The salaries paid by the

¹³⁴ SRO: HD 588/7/20

¹³⁵ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 410.

¹³⁶ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 416.

Lavenham, Colchester and Ongar churches were below that recorded by Patrick Colquhoun in his analysis of the social structure of England and Wales from 1801-03. In this comparison Dissenting Clergymen and Itinerant Preachers were given as having an average income of £120, placing them in the lower ranks of the middle class but above those of better off laboring classes.¹³⁷ As Mrs Taylor's record of the dispute in Colchester demonstrated, in addition to his salary from the church, Isaac Taylor II had to continue his work as an engraver in order to sustain the Taylor family's financial position within the middle ranks of society.

A Family Profession

Isaac Taylor II's profession was initiated by his father, Isaac I (1730-1807), who was considered by contemporaries to be, "one of the foremost copperplate engravers of his day."¹³⁸ His father's reputation and connections contributed to the network that supported the Taylors of Ongar in their literary enterprise. In the case of the Conders and George Burder the links between the Fetter Lane church and Taylor II's professional life also overlapped.

During his professional life Isaac Taylor I achieved a notable reputation in his field and was associated with several of the foremost artists and writers of his day. Originally from Worcester where he had been a brass founder, Isaac I had begun to develop skills as an engraver of silverware and bookplates. Following a rift with his father in 1752, Isaac I came to London where he began the Taylor family involvement in the book trade when he obtained employment with Thomas Jefferys a geographer, topographer

¹³⁷ Hilton, *Mad, Bad and Dangerous*, p. 126.

¹³⁸ N. Tattersfield, *The Complete Illustrative Work, Vol. I*, (London, 2011), p. 49.

and map engraver. Jefferys, whose business was in St Martin's Lane, Charing Cross, had achieved a level of success and was geographer to the Prince of Wales, later George III.¹³⁹ It was here that Isaac I also met his wife Sarah Hackshaw Jefferys who was his employer's niece. From 1767 Isaac Taylor I worked as an engraver at A&H Webley, based in Holborn, a firm specialising in architectural work. In 1770, as his success increased, Isaac Taylor I was able to purchase the company.¹⁴⁰ In 1787 he renamed the company the Architectural Library.

Isaac Taylor I's growing reputation as an engraver came with the increased success of British engravers in a market that had previously been dominated by French engraving. An improvement in trade between Britain, France and the Netherlands, together with a growing awareness of the commercial potential for a market for prints, had led to a rapid expansion of print sellers and publishers. In turn, the increased opportunities allowed artists to exploit this new market.¹⁴¹ Isaac Taylor I was to benefit from this expansion and, as his reputation developed, Taylor I was to provide illustrations for some of the eighteenth-century's most prominent writers including Samuel Richardson and Oliver Goldsmith. He was also in a position to commission work from some of the leading figures of his day, these included Thomas Bewick, who considered a frontispiece by Isaac Taylor I to be, "the best thing that was ever done."¹⁴² An accounts book dated from 1786 for Taylors' business, which had continued the architectural work initiated by the Webleys, shows payments to John Soane in 1790. Work was also

¹³⁹ SRO, HD588/1/107

¹⁴⁰ R. Taylor Gilbert, *Isaac Taylor (1730-1807)*, ODNB, p. 908.

¹⁴¹ Sven H.A. Bruntjen, *John Boydell 1719-1804: A Study of Art Patronage and Publishing in Georgian London*, (New York & London, 1985).

¹⁴² Tattessfield, London 2011, p. 49: Bewick has come to be regarded as one of the foremost exponents of wood-engraving. The frontispiece by Taylor that Bewick admired was for Cunningham's *Poems, Chiefly Pastoral*, 1766.

commissioned from Humphrey Repton and Augustus Pugin.¹⁴³ Between 1775-c1783 Isaac Taylor I was also the secretary of The Society Of Artists of Great Britain, a precursor of the Royal Academy.

Following his marriage in 1754 Isaac Taylor I lived for a short time in Shenfield, Essex, home to his wife's family where he worked as a land surveyor. However, by the late 1750s he moved his family to Holborn and resumed his profession as an engraver. During this time Holborn was an area of London that included many publishing concerns, booksellers, and trades necessary to support the industry. Isaac Taylor I was to be followed by several members of his family into the profession of engraving and publishing. This included his brother James (1737/8-1790), who joined Taylor in London and was a printmaker and illustrator, though less successful than his brother. In the course of their working lives, several members of the family, including for a short time Isaac II, came to live in the area around Holborn, the district remained at the centre of the Taylor family network for a number of years. In a letter Mrs Taylor wrote to her family while they were still in Colchester, she refers to visiting all "the Holbornites" during a stay in London.¹⁴⁴

Isaac I and Sarah Taylor had five children, three sons and two daughters, born between 1756 and 1765. Taylor apprenticed his three sons to his profession, ensuring the continuing family involvement in the book trade. There is evidence to suggest that Taylor trained each son in a different aspect of his business and this was to have an impact on the early years of Isaac Taylor II's professional and married life. At points in his professional life, Isaac Taylor II was to undertake work for his brothers.

¹⁴³ Colchester Central Library, Essex Libraries, *MS, Accounts Book*.

¹⁴⁴ Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books, Toronto Public Library.

The eldest brother, Charles (1756-1823), was apprenticed to his father at the age of 15.¹⁴⁵ During his apprenticeship he appears to have been trained in the art of line engraving. Directly after his marriage in 1777 to Mary Forrest, Charles and his new wife left for France, the most important centre for engravers, where they stayed for a year, “to improve himself in the art of engraving.”¹⁴⁶ On their return, Charles and his family were to live in High Holborn where, except for a short break, they were to remain until 1796 when they moved to Hatton Garden. His brother Isaac II was later to record that on his return from France Charles, “practised as an engraver only, publishing for himself (which was the custom of the best engravers at that time).”¹⁴⁷ One of Charles Taylor’s publishing enterprises on which Isaac Taylor II was to work was *The Picturesque Beauties of Shakespeare*, which preceded the more famous and ambitious *Shakespeare Gallery* that the Boydells were to initiate in 1786. Charles Taylor was also to become well known as a biblical scholar and the publisher of *Calmet’s Dictionary of the Bible*, “a work of great importance to the Biblical student.”¹⁴⁸ Additionally, in 1796, he became Librarian of the London Library, and housed the entire collection in his home for a number of years.

Although the younger brother, Josiah (1761-1834) may have been apprenticed to his father as an engraver, the evidence suggests he was also trained in the business affairs of Isaac Taylor I’s profession. A recently uncovered accounts book for the firm reveals that in 1786, when Josiah was 25, an agreement was drawn up between Isaac I and

¹⁴⁵ SRO: HD 588/4/14.

¹⁴⁶ SRO: HD 588/1/29.

¹⁴⁷ SRO: HD 588/4/14.

¹⁴⁸ SRO: HD 588/4/14.

Josiah allowing for Josiah to progressively buy out Isaac from the company.¹⁴⁹ Isaac I was to retire to Edmonton, Middlesex while Josiah remained in Holborn where he was to make a considerable success of the business his father started. The accounts book shows that the family business continued to commission work from members of the Taylor family over a number of years.¹⁵⁰

As the second son, Isaac Taylor II (1759-1829) also began his professional career in this family network, apprenticed as an engraver to his father. Family memoirs indicate that this was not his first ambition. According to his daughter, Ann Taylor Gilbert, Isaac Taylor II had originally wished to train as a minister but a severe illness prevented him from pursuing this calling. Although it is never made clear why this illness should have prevented him from following this path, it is known that several times in his life Isaac Taylor II was afflicted by severe bouts of illness that at times threatened his life. Once he had recovered he was apprenticed to his father.

During his time as an apprentice, Isaac Taylor II met his future wife Ann Martin. His courtship of Ann that began in May 1778 continued for 3 years until he had completed the apprenticeship in 1781.¹⁵¹ At the start of Isaac II's apprenticeship, his father chose to train his second son in 'writing engraving' that left him at a disadvantage at the start of his professional life. In her memoirs his wife Ann recalled that Isaac Taylor II had, "served the former part of his apprenticeship to the writing engraving" which prevented him from attaining "any proficiency in the line [sic] way."¹⁵² Isaac II continued to develop his professional skills with the assistance of his brother Charles in

¹⁴⁹ Colchester Central Library, Essex Libraries, *MS Accounts Book*.

¹⁵⁰ R. Taylor Gilbert, *Isaac Taylor (1730-1807)*, ODNB. SRO: HD 588/1/167.

¹⁵¹ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 172.

¹⁵² Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 208.

the early years of his marriage and moved his new family to Holborn, which would help to facilitate this.¹⁵³

In addition to their shared professional occupations religion also played a part in the lives of Isaac I and Sarah Taylor's children. Along with Isaac II and Ann Taylor, Charles Taylor and his wife became members of the Fetter Lane Congregational Church. Charles' life-long ambition to produce an edition of *Calmet's Dictionary of the Bible* was later lauded by his nephew Isaac Taylor III in a biographical essay. Isaac I and Sarah Taylor's daughter, Ann, married a congregational minister James Hinton. Their son, John Howard Hinton (1791-1873), became a Baptist minister and author known to many Victorians.

By the end of his professional life, Isaac Taylor I had accrued a considerable reputation, acquired professional and social connections with literary and artistic figures of the day and settled his three sons in the world of engraving. Taylor's business was, and continued to be under his son Josiah, successful. Two portraits exist that show Isaac Taylor I and his wife, Sarah, as fashionable, well dressed figures from the middle class. Sarah Hackshaw Taylor stands in profile, wearing a fine dress together with a substantial, embellished hat while holding a fan. Isaac Taylor I is portrayed in the act of drawing, wearing fashionable breeches, waistcoat and jacket with a grey wig under a black hat.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter III.

¹⁵⁴ These two portraits are currently on display in the Guildhall, Lavenham as part of an exhibition on the Taylor family.

From his father's professional connections and those of the Fetter Lane Congregational Church Isaac Taylor II was provided with a network, centred on London, which would be supportive during his life. Within this context, Isaac II's proposed marriage to a member of the Conder family would have been desirable, uniting the family's religious and business connections. As well as his association with the Fetter Lane Congregational Church one of Dr John Conder's sons, Thomas, was also a publisher and bookseller based in Bucklersbury Lane. It was a firm that was to feature in the Taylor family's future literary careers. However, when Isaac Taylor II ended the engagement, his subsequent choice of a bride was not well received. Ann Martin Taylor recalled in her memoirs that, "our respective families hated each other most cordially."¹⁵⁵ From Mrs Taylor's memoirs this mutual antipathy can be seen to reside in social and religious distinctions. Little was known until recently of the Martin family history as the family chose not to include information on the maternal side of the family in published biographies. Although Ann Martin's family, like the Taylor family, was from the middling sort, this strata of society consisted of different gradations. Within the middle level of eighteenth century society, as Hilton has noted, "people's status largely depended on how they behaved, whom they associated with, and how they esteemed themselves."¹⁵⁶ In this context, the differences between the Taylor and Martin families were pronounced.

¹⁵⁵ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 177.

¹⁵⁶ Hilton, *Mad, Bad, and Dangerous*, p. 124.

The Martin Family

Isaac Taylor II's courtship of Ann Martin began in May 1778 and continued for three years until he had completed his apprenticeship in 1781.¹⁵⁷ An aspect of Isaac Taylor II's Dissenting faith was a belief in marrying within the denomination. In *Bunyan Explained to a Child* Taylor wrote; "How can two walk together except they be agreed?"

Pity when a pious mind
With a worldling marries;
Be he cross, or be he kind,
Happiness miscarries.¹⁵⁸

In accordance with his principles, it was through his membership of the Fetter Lane Congregational Church that Isaac Taylor II was to meet Ann Martin. In later years the family recorded in biographical works the lifelong affection between Isaac Taylor II and his wife, Ann.

Ann Martin was born in London in 1757, the eldest child of Mary Plaxton (1730-1798) and Thomas Martin (1734/5-1764). Thomas Martin's father had been a grocer in Kensington, but for reason's unknown to Ann, Thomas was apprenticed to a pawnbroker and then set himself up in the business. Although her father "lived and died, with the established reputation of an honest man," the absence of Thomas Martin's profession from subsequent family memoirs was undoubtedly because of its disreputable association.¹⁵⁹ The location that her father chose for his marital home and business was Liquorpond Street in the parish of St Andrews, Holborn, which by the

¹⁵⁷ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 172.

¹⁵⁸ Isaac Taylor, *Bunyan Explained to a Child being Pictures and Poems founded on the Pilgrim's Progress*, London 1824, p. 40.

¹⁵⁹ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 5.

nineteenth century had acquired a reputation for being a, “gloomy and ruinous tenement.”¹⁶⁰

It was from her father that Ann Martin Taylor was to acquire her nonconformist affiliation. Thomas Martin had converted from the Church of England to the Dissenting tradition through the preaching of George Whitefield, who together with the Wesleys, was a leading figure in the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century. Whitefield split from the Wesleys when his Calvinistic beliefs could not be reconciled with the Wesleys Arminian tendencies. Thomas Martin, who joined the Eagle Street Baptist Church, appears to have been a zealous convert since, as Ann related, on her return home after a time living with her grandparents Thomas provided Ann with a supper of burnt bread and milk. He also threw a doll Ann had been given by her grandparents into the fire, both actions designed to teach her a lesson in self-denial. Additionally, Thomas Martin appears to have been attracted to the more enthusiastic or “supernatural” aspects of religious fervour that was present during the religious revivals of the eighteenth century and exemplified through preachers such as Whitefield.¹⁶¹ Such characteristics would have been an anathema to the Congregational tradition of Old Dissent inherited and followed by the Taylor family.¹⁶²

The faith of Ann Martin Taylor’s mother appears more obscure, but may have included an element of nonconformist descent since Ann noted that her maternal great grandfather, “was a clergyman and kept an academy for young gentlemen at

¹⁶⁰ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 5.

¹⁶¹ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 42. Thomas Martin was acquainted with Polly Special who was reputedly cured of breast cancer by Methodist preacher George Bell.

¹⁶² Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 41.

Beverly.”¹⁶³ Ann was keen to record a donation to the Trinity House at Hull by a Mrs Elizabeth Plaxton, and noted its significance to those, “who happen to inherit a portion of my taste and feelings.” Ann Taylor’s mother, Mary Plaxton Martin, attended her husbands’ churches. Initially this was Eagle Street Baptist Church and then Fetter Lane Congregational Church when her third husband, Mr Hewitt, chose to attend this Congregational Church. However, in later life on becoming insolvent and retiring Mary Martin left Fetter Lane Congregational Church much to the disapproval of her daughter who valued the support church membership could provide.

Ann Martin Taylor’s faith at times appears more ambiguous than her husband, Isaacs. She does not record undergoing the conversion demanded by many Dissenting Churches, and later a central feature of nineteenth century evangelicalism. Ann also acknowledged that she could not fulfill the requirements of a public profession of faith required for membership of certain Dissenting churches such as the Eagle Street Baptist church that she attended for a time. In a further indication of Ann Martin Taylor’s religious beliefs, which also explains why the more conservative Congregational Church would appeal to her, she noted that, as a child, during the time she attended the Eagle Street church she was, “not decidedly favourable to some of their modes of church discipline.” This included, “the requirement of a verbal and public confession of faith, from our sex” which was part of the process of becoming a member of the church. Ann noted that if she had to undertake such a process she probably would not have obtained membership of a church since she felt:

¹⁶³ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 7.

“That any female could exhibit [sic] in the presence of such crowded assemblies as I have seen on these occasions is to me entirely inexplicable; because I am sure I could not have given one rational answer: but though I may not judge for others; I may be allowed to express my doubts on the subject, till I can find such practices anywhere ordained in scripture.”¹⁶⁴

For the Martin family, in particular Ann’s mother, the religious discipline of the Taylor family appears to have been a cause for concern. Ann Martin Taylor’s memoirs suggest that the puritan antecedents of the church to which Sarah Hackshaw Taylor sought membership found expression in the family home. Ann Martin Taylor noted that, “my husband previous to our marriage, laboured under a degree of prejudice which she [her mother] harboured against his family.” As a result of this Ann’s mother, “made me promise that should he [Isaac Taylor II] deny me any of the comforts to which I had been accustomed I would apply to her and she would supply the deficiency.”¹⁶⁵

Throughout the memoirs, Ann Martin Taylor’s religious conviction appears pragmatic, influenced by her domestic circumstances and defined by her male associations. Unlike her husband who appears to have been driven by a strong religious calling and longstanding family commitment to the Congregational tradition, Ann’s faith can be connected to the circumstances of her residence. When living with her grandparents, it was the Church of England, when she returned to her parents she was to follow the Dissenting faith of her recently converted father and attended the Baptist Church at Eagle Street. In due course she found it judicious to transfer her attendance to the church her stepfather attended, not initially from any religious persuasion but for the more pragmatic reason that, “I thought it most advisable to attend in future with my

¹⁶⁴ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 40.

¹⁶⁵ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 351.

family.”¹⁶⁶ This was the Congregational church in Fetter Lane where in October 1778 she was formally to become a member and through which she met her husband.¹⁶⁷

Ann acknowledged that her husband was then to lead her spiritual development. In recalling her childhood and youth, Ann admitted that: “I might have lived in a heathen land, for any advantages I at present possessed, at all calculated to give my mind a right direction respecting the one thing needful,” and that her life was “destitute of all that might excite serious feeling and religious interest.”¹⁶⁸ Ann credits her husband with her religious development stating, “he exerted all his energies in its [her minds] culture and renovation. Especially did he endeavour to lead me step by step to the contemplation of my immortal concerns.”¹⁶⁹

In this respect, the male influence on the spiritual character of Ann’s life appears dominant. However, possibly as a result of her greater pragmatism, Ann presents a more critical interpretation of the religious communities in which the family moved. It is through Ann’s memoirs that the underlying social tensions that contributed to conflicts within the churches to which the Taylor family belonged are revealed. Notably in the case of the serious dispute within the church at Lavenham it can be seen that although doctrinal issues played a part it was not to the exclusive extent that Isaac Taylor II’s church records would portray.

While male influence was predominant in the development of Ann’s religious beliefs it can be argued that the most significant influence on Ann’s early life was that of her

¹⁶⁶ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 144.

¹⁶⁷ LMA: N/C/31/4

¹⁶⁸ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 143.

¹⁶⁹ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 169.

mother. On her mother's death, Ann wrote, "I have known few so abstemious, few so indefatigably industrious – few of stronger natural sense and I am compelled to add few of stronger passions."¹⁷⁰ Aside from her husband Isaac, her mother Mary is the most dominant presence in Ann Martin Taylor's memoirs. It is a powerfully written, unusually masculine portrait, of a strong woman that is in stark contrast to the visual portrait that survives of Isaac Taylor II's mother. It emphasises the different life experiences and class distinction between the two mothers.

The early-married years of Ann's parents marriage were hard. Pawnbroking was a difficult profession for Thomas Martin to become established in and he and his wife lived "from hand to mouth" for a considerable time. Ann Taylor recalled that the business, which needed to be conducted, "with spirit and address... was especially indebted to my mother", as her father, while "a man of intellect...a sensible man" was "evidently not a man of the world." Should there be a dispute, Ann wrote, "my mother was invariably summoned, and he disappeared, till the matter was adjusted, somehow or other."¹⁷¹

Following her first husband's death in 1764 Mary Martin remarried twice; both husbands were members of the Eagle Street Baptist church that the family had joined following Thomas Martin's conversion. The first, William Lucas (1731-1766), died fifteen months after their marriage. Mary Martin then married a former friend of her husband, Thomas Hewitt (1735-1784). Both Lucas and Hewitt brought encumbrances to the marriage that dented the financial prosperity of Thomas Martin's business that was now managed by Mary Martin. In the case of Lucas, it was an elderly mother and

¹⁷⁰ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 350.

¹⁷¹ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 12.

sisters, which on Lucas's deathbed Mary Martin made clear she would not continue to support, while Hewitt brought "debts and embarrassments."¹⁷² Of both marriages Ann Martin Taylor was to comment in her memoirs that, "sensible people sometimes do very foolish things." The complications the two men brought to her mother's life led Ann to observe that her mother, "had the notion that her business especially, required a man – or something in the shape of a man, to appear at the head of it". However in her daughter's opinion Mrs Martin's character and abilities rendered the need for such a "help mate less necessary than it would have been in a great majority of cases."¹⁷³

When Ann reached the age of thirteen, following three years of schooling, Mary Martin trained her daughter in the pawnbroking business. She did this rather than train Ann in the skills of household management in which Mary Martin appeared to have no interest. As a result of "the conduct of Mr Hewitt, either as a husband, or a man of business,"¹⁷⁴ the accounts for the business together with the administration of tickets relating to objects pawned and redeemed, was in disarray so Ann was to be trained in the management of these areas. When, in 1777, both her mother and Mr Hewitt became seriously ill Ann successfully ran the business for four months until they were well again.¹⁷⁵

Ann Taylor brought the business skills she obtained at this time to her marriage. The evidence survives in her memoirs where she records details of the family's financial affairs. These chart the fluctuating financial fortunes of the family and contribute to an understanding of decisions taken in the course of their professional lives. The memoirs

¹⁷² Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 57.

¹⁷³ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 61.

¹⁷⁴ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 94.

¹⁷⁵ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 159.

also reveal a personal understanding of the precarious situation in which women frequently found themselves, through their dependency and the lack of provision in skills necessary to support themselves against the vagaries of life. As a result, this period in Ann Taylor's early life, while being one later generations of the family would seek to suppress, can be argued to have had a significant influence on her ideological development. The exposure to the pawnbroking business would have brought Ann into close contact with much human deprivation. In 1839 Charles Dickens wrote:

"The very nature of these places [pawnbrokers] occasions their being little known, except to the unfortunate beings whose prolificacy or misfortune drives them to seek the temporary relief they offer."¹⁷⁶

The danger from profligacy, combined with the importance of the skill of keeping accounts, are central themes in the memoirs and also a later concern in Ann Martin Taylor's books, that would have stemmed from her experiences in the Martin family business.

Conclusion

The merger of the Taylor and Martin families through their association with the church in Fetter Lane provided the basis for a web of familial and social connections. These connections featured in the lives of the Taylors of Ongar, alongside the central tenets that ran through their family life as a result of the Church's doctrinal position.

Historians of the family have examined changes in familial structures over the course of

¹⁷⁶ C. Dickens, *The Pawnbroker's Shop*, in *Sketches by Boz*, (London, 1995), p. 220.

the centuries from “open lineage” and extended to the more modern concept of the nuclear family.¹⁷⁷ In examining familial relations in the eighteenth century, Tadmor has sought to analyse “concepts of the family used by people in the past,” arguing that a historical understanding of the family “must inevitably branch from relationships of blood and marriage to other social ties.”¹⁷⁸ For the Taylors of Ongar the impact of Church membership and Dissenting faith can be seen to influence this broader understanding of family in the course of their lives. The network of contacts Isaac II and Ann Martin Taylor established during their time in London reveals a web of connections between blood family and church members. During the course of their lives, the significance of the ties, created through shared religious principles, achieved increasing importance.

Isaac II and Ann Martin Taylor remained attached to their families throughout their married life, with letters revealing visits to different relations. While the shared professional background of the sons of Isaac Taylor I ensured intermittent continuing professional involvement. In addition to their attachment to this family network, was the support provided socially and then professionally from their connections with fellow Church members. The process prospective members of Dissenting faiths undertook to be accepted into a church created self-selecting congregations with a commitment to shared values through doctrinal positions and commitment to standards of behavior. The relationships formed in these likeminded communities could assume the character of close friendships and, occasionally, surrogate family relationships. This was the case for Isaac Taylor II where his relationship with Rev.

¹⁷⁷ N. Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth Century England*, (Cambridge 2001), L. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*, (Harmondsworth, 1977), L. Davidoff & C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850*, (London, 1987).

¹⁷⁸ N. Tadmor, *Family and Friends*, p. 10.

James Webb assumed greater significance not just as a friend and companion but, it can be argued, as father figure in his early life. The close connection between different members of the Taylor and Conder families formed in these early years in London came to have professional significance in the direction of the Taylor family's literary enterprise.

In spite of the social differences between the Taylor and Martin families, Isaac II and Ann Martin Taylor's shared experiences and attitudes stemming from their lives in London were to shape the family life of the Taylors of Ongar. As well their membership of the Fetter Lane Congregational Church, the couple were also well matched in terms of their literary and educational interests. This led to a joint commitment to a Protestant, Calvinistic ethic in structuring their professional and family life, even though their personal routes to this approach were different. Isaac Taylor II absorbed Calvinistic Dissenting principles through his religious calling and his family's nonconformist heritage. Ann Martin Taylor acquired these characteristics through hard-earned experiences during childhood and adolescence influencing her concept of the attributes and principles necessary to survive the challenges of life. Together, the couple developed an approach to their domestic life that created a strong family ethos and one to be exploited during the family's literary careers.

Chapter II
“An Old Puritan Life: Homely, Frugal Studios”
The Taylor Family Ethos

The Taylors of Ongar would have been associated with the nineteenth-century ideal of an orthodox, middle-class, Dissenting literary family. This perception was created by the works they produced during their literary careers, and their association with the didactic conservative writers who followed in the style of Hannah More. The Taylor family's own biographical writings also served to promote this identity within the public sphere. In recent studies by historians of the family and domestic life during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, attention has been paid to the construct of gender on roles within the home.¹⁷⁹ Some studies have additionally incorporated an analysis of developments in the areas of material culture and consumer expansion. Literary families active during this period have proved fertile sources for such studies through the written material they produced.

The Romantic era in which the Taylor family published the majority of their books is notable for the number of family groups that were active in the literary world of the day. These family coteries often had strong, although often antithetical, religious beliefs that frequently conformed to the Dissenting or emerging Evangelical traditions. The combination of religious principles and literary efforts produce particularly strong family cultures. With frequent Dissenting associations these families provide a method for exploring the concept of, “a familial ethos and its shift across the generations”.¹⁸⁰ As a result of the contribution the Taylors of Ongar made through their published works

¹⁷⁹ Studies include A. Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter Women's Lives in Georgian England*, (Yale 1998); A. Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors At Home in Georgian England*, Yale 2009; J. Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth Century Britain*, (London, 2005). N. Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England*, (Cambridge, 2001).

¹⁸⁰ F. James & I. Inkster (eds), *Religious Dissent and the Aikin-Barbould Circles 1740-1860*, (Cambridge 2012), p. 3.

to the creation of the culture of domesticity, and the emphasis they placed on their familial identity, it is relevant to consider their family life and domestic routines.¹⁸¹

In examining the detail and ethos of the Taylor family within their domestic environment there are two principal sources. The first, and most frequently consulted in previous studies of the Taylors, are the published autobiographies and memoirs produced by the family. The second source comes from examples of life writing that have survived. These include family letters and the recovered manuscript of Mrs Ann Martin Taylor's unpublished memoirs. These life sources provide a more unconstrained insight into the family ethos and a contrast to the edited material selected for publication by the Taylors. The memoirs also provide the opportunity to assess the family's domestic life from a female perspective and evaluate the balance of power within the Taylor household. As well as revealing the extent to which Mrs Taylor participated in the creation of this family ethos, the life sources help disclose the degree to which Isaac Taylor II engaged in the domestic routines of family life. While attention has been paid to the manner in which women often crossed gender boundaries in a marriage, less deliberation has been given to the role of men within the domestic setting during a period of change in the culture of middle-class family life.¹⁸² In this chapter consideration will be given to the division of responsibilities between Isaac II and Ann Taylor within the home, and the manner in which Isaac Taylor II presided over family life. The surviving manuscript materials, together with memoirs and autobiographies, indicate that Isaac II and Ann's experiences of family life during their own childhoods, and their joint commitment to education and books, finds expression in their family ethos. The influence that the Taylors' orthodox Calvinistic

¹⁸¹ A consideration of the influence of their family life within their writing will be discussed in Chapter IV.

¹⁸² J. Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth Century Britain*, (London, 2005).

principles, established during their time in London, had on the family culture will be evaluated and contrasted with those ideas that appear more liberal and forward thinking. The chapter will consider the idea that, in contrast to the published biographies, personal experiences contributed to the ethos of the family life as much as adherence to religious principles. This applied most notably to Mrs Ann Martin Taylor.

In Ann Taylor Gilbert's published autobiography, sub-titled 'Domestic Recollections', her son and editor, Josiah Gilbert, noted in the preface that the work is, "a personal narrative of an almost unique family life" that recalled an, "old Puritan life – homely, frugal, studious."¹⁸³ For a Victorian readership, this description already placed the reminiscences in a bygone age, distancing aspects of the family life from mid-Victorian mores. Incorporating new information from the life sources, this chapter will examine the family life that Isaac Taylor II and Mrs Ann Martin Taylor constructed. The chapter will consider the extent to which the family life was an 'old Puritan' one or a 'unique family life'.

Married Life

As discussed in the previous chapter, Isaac II and Ann Martin Taylor met through their family's membership of the Congregational church in Fetter Lane. Their marriage, at St. Andrew's Church, Holborn in 1781, was in accordance with Isaac Taylor II's belief in the importance of marrying someone who shared the same religious principles. Evidence suggests that this was a marriage based not on financial or social gain but

¹⁸³ Ann Taylor Gilbert, *Autobiography and other Memorials*, (London, 1879), p. vi.

religious and personal compatibility. Copies of unpublished poems written by Isaac II to his wife, some of which were later incorporated in Mrs Taylor's memoirs, show that they remained an affectionate and committed couple throughout their long married life. Their daughter Ann was to note of her father in her autobiography: "For nearly half a century he was the lover as well as the husband, alive to all the impressions of tenderness, and constantly devising with considerate affections pleasant little surprises for my dear mother."¹⁸⁴ In 1812, after thirty years of marriage, Isaac Taylor II wrote a description of his wife in a poem, *Time Defeated*:

Her glistening eye, her glowing cheek,
 Her form transparent, fair and sleek,
 Her coral lips, her pearly teeth,
 Her dimpled rounded chin beneath'
 Th' expression of her smiling face,
 And every varied form of grace,
 That floated o'er each gliding limb,
 Turned the white arm, and fingers slim.
 All, All I drank with eager eye,
 And felt with growing ecstasy.
 From year to year remained the same
 Or more enamoured still became.¹⁸⁵

Ann Martin Taylor also wrote that it was a marriage based on "mutual affection, and similarity of taste and sentiment".¹⁸⁶ From this perspective, the Taylor's marriage appears to be illustrative of studies that have noted the transition of the institution of marriage during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries amongst the middling and genteel classes. The institution was evolving from one dependent on social and financial arrangements, overseen by parental authority, to one concerned with more "egalitarian" unions based on sentiment and companionship.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 5.

¹⁸⁵ Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books, Toronto Public Library.

¹⁸⁶ Ann Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 203.

¹⁸⁷ Robert B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society, 1650-1850*, (London, 1998), p. 89.

As Vickery has discussed, entering into a marriage marked a significant rite of passage for the couple often resulting in the first break from the parental home and control.¹⁸⁸ For a man, it meant the acquisition of financial and legal responsibility for his own household together with the associated status. For a woman, marriage marked the transition from a state of dependence on her parents, or guardian, to that of her husband. With this change came the acquisition of wider responsibilities within a setting defined by her husband. In practice, for middling and genteel classes, the institution of marriage was a complex web of power and responsibilities situated in gendered expectations, legal parameters entirely in favour of the husband, and, for many, supported by biblical authority. The various gendered conventions were broadly observed, but in practice the manner in which individual couples may have negotiated domestic and family responsibilities varied. The Taylors were no exception to this. Their marriage conformed to expected gender roles but common intellectual interests and attitudes contributed to a collaborative approach to their married life and the family culture.

Although Isaac II and Ann's marriage began with a demonstration of the couple's independence from full parental approval in their choice of partner, the prospect of marriage, and the marriage itself, was based in the legal and gender conventions of the period.¹⁸⁹ Ann Martin Taylor's memoirs record her anxiety at the transition of financial dependence from her parents to her future husband. Ann was financially astute and regularly recorded details in her memoirs of the family finances, providing information on periods during her marriage when she and her husband were financially comfortable and extended periods of financial hardship. The memoirs also reveal the

¹⁸⁸ A. Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, p. 8 & 9.

¹⁸⁹ The antipathy between the Taylor and Martin families was discussed in Chapter I.

anxiety and vulnerability Ann felt because of her financially dependent state, reliant on male generosity and the need to honour personal and social expectations. As Ann Martin awaited her marriage, which she approached with the positive anticipation of escaping from a cold and at times hostile parental home, she found herself in the traditional position whereby her future husband had an expectation that a financial settlement would be given to Ann on her marriage.

Isaac Taylor II's expectation came from two sources. Ann recorded that at the start of their courtship her stepfather, Mr Hewitt, had promised to furnish lodgings for the couple, a commitment that "Isaac Taylor had placed full dependence on".¹⁹⁰ By the time the couple married three years later, Hewitt's financial situation rendered the prospect of the settlement unlikely. Ann recalled that she had, "convinced myself to have a right to some small share of the property my father had left behind, and that the way in which it had been subsequently dissipated was no affair of mine."¹⁹¹

Consequently Ann approached her mother and hinted to her, "that if my just expectation were not complied with I should certainly involve some of the brethren [of the church]", as a result of which a "wagon load of goods" was sent to the couple's new home in Islington.¹⁹²

In addition to Hewitt's commitment, Ann's paternal grandfather had died shortly before her marriage and she was due to inherit £100. Complications with other beneficiaries in receiving this bequest, and the embarrassment felt by Ann on the prospect of failing to provide the sum at the start of her marriage, led her to borrow

¹⁹⁰ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 195.

¹⁹¹ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 195.

¹⁹² Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 195.

from her friend, Ann Whithy's suitor, Christopher Moon. Mr Moon soon sought repayment of the debt, and the strain of being unable to admit the situation to her husband led Ann to approach her mother again, who repaid the debt on her behalf.¹⁹³ Mrs Taylor's understanding of the precarious position women were in due to their dependent financial state and the failure, in most cases, to provide women with any skills to ensure a means of support should the necessity arise, is apparent in several episodes in her memoirs.

Mrs. Taylor's financial astuteness came from the training she received during her adolescence in the Martin family business that was determined by her mother. Following three years of schooling, when Ann reached the age of thirteen, her mother trained her daughter in the pawnbroking business.¹⁹⁴ When in 1777 both her mother and Mr Hewitt became seriously ill, Ann successfully ran the business for four months until they were well again.¹⁹⁵ Ann Taylor brought the business skills she acquired at this time to her marriage. This financial training was an aspect of Ann Martin Taylor's unconventional preparation for married life and is a skill that contributed to her notion of the duties of a married woman. At the time of Ann's marriage it was not the advantages of her financial abilities that concerned her but the lack of training in domestic skills and household management.

In the late eighteenth century it was expected that men and women of the middling and genteel classes had been prepared, during their childhood and adolescence, for the gender-defined responsibilities of future married life. Ann Martin Taylor was aware of

¹⁹³ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 204.

¹⁹⁴ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 115.

¹⁹⁵ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 94.

these expectations and it is clear, that in her opinion, both she and her husband were lacking in the skills of their respective new duties. As well as overcoming their parents' antipathy towards their marriage and the reluctant provision of the expected financial settlement, according to Ann Taylor, she and Isaac also had to overcome a mutual lack of preparation for the start of their life together. Ann's analysis of the readiness of Isaac Taylor II and herself to begin their marriage was again based on traditionally defined gender roles. According to Ann, Isaac Taylor II was under prepared professionally to support a family financially,¹⁹⁶ and she herself was inadequately prepared domestically. Although their engagement had lasted until Isaac Taylor II's apprenticeship was complete, Ann wrote that when they married, "he was as little competent to maintain a family, as his wife to conduct one."¹⁹⁷ In her own case, Ann Martin Taylor wrote that despite the arguments of her mother's friends, Mary Martin had "paid not the least regard" to the necessity of preparing Ann to run a household, "she would neither instruct me, nor permit me if she could help it to instruct myself."¹⁹⁸

In her memoirs, Ann made it clear that she retained a lifelong grievance against her mother for not providing her with the skills she felt were not only necessary but essential for managing the home and providing care for her family. They were skills Ann struggled to acquire in the early years of her marriage. With her financial proficiency in mind, Ann was later to write: "of all temporal concerns, I hesitate not to maintain that domestic duties are the most important study to which a young female can apply herself. On this not merely the daily comfort of her family depends, but in a

¹⁹⁶ The skills Isaac Taylor II had acquired by the time of his marriage and the impact it had on his working life is discussed in Chapter III.

¹⁹⁷ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 208.

¹⁹⁸ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 198.

considerable degree the pecuniary circumstances and ultimate prosperity of her husband.”¹⁹⁹

Thus, Mrs Taylor’s account of her and Isaac Taylor II’s position at the start of their marriage was based on gender specific roles rooted in the social and cultural expectations of the day. Mrs Taylor’s approach to this domestic order supports the challenge Vickery has made to the historical convention that the gendered constraints placed on women were; “a model of domestic femininity that was *actively imposed* [sic].”²⁰⁰ In her memoirs Mrs. Taylor describes several events that suggest her embrace of a domestic role was influenced as much by early experiences in her life as by expected social conventions.

In explaining this preference for a private domestic life, Mrs Taylor cites the events of her early childhood as being an overriding influence. Before her father’s death in 1764, Ann spent some time with her paternal grandparents. In the early years of their business Mrs Taylor’s parents struggled financially, and at the age of two Ann contracted smallpox. When Thomas Martin’s parents offered to look after Ann this was accepted. In contrast to her family home in Liquorpond Street, where her parents were struggling to establish their pawnbroking business, Ann Taylor looked back, with what she acknowledged was a nostalgic fondness, at the period of her life spent with her grandparents. Thomas Martin’s father, in the grocery business by profession, had achieved some success and he and his wife lived in Kensington where they took in lodgers. Mrs Taylor stated that this period was a formative one in her life. Her

¹⁹⁹ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 198.

²⁰⁰ Amanda Vickery, *Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women’s History*, in *The Historical Journal*, 36 2, Cambridge 1993 p. 391.

grandmother, although a little profligate which caused strife with Ann's grandfather, was nevertheless a "first rate manager" and an:

"air of comfort and neatness which pervaded every part of the house, and at all times and seasons, bore ample testimony; and to this may be attributed a kindred taste, which was so effectually imbibed during my childhood as to prove one of my predominant passions, amid, and through all the various trying scenes of my life....In that dear – that kind – that indulgent and hospitable abode that the love of home took deep root in my warmest affections – home comfortable home - to the important duties, and the simple pleasures of which I have devoted the greatest, and the best portion of my days.[sic]" ²⁰¹

In contrast to the warm domestic environment of her grandparent's house, on returning to her parental home, Mrs Taylor revealed a childhood that was a far cry from the ideal which was idealised by nineteenth-century writers including the Taylors themselves. The majority of Ann Taylor's childhood and adolescence was spent in what she described as a profoundly emotionally cold environment. Although fond of her puritanically strict father he died when she was only six. Mrs Taylor's mother then re-married twice, firstly to Mr Lucas, then to Mr Hewitt, and as a consequence Ann's home life became more difficult. Mr Hewitt and Mary Martin were an ill-suited couple who fought regularly while Mr Hewitt and Ann appear to have had a mutual dislike for each other and Hewitt appears to have made Ann's life a misery. Mrs Taylor records in her memoirs that Mr Hewitt would never call her by her name referring to her as "they."²⁰² From the memoirs it is clear that this background resulted in a lack of self-esteem and possibly depressive illness in Ann. During this time Mrs Taylor described her own

²⁰¹ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 25.

²⁰² Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 119.

character as having “a strong propensity to melancholy – to that gloomy brooding which operated as a dead weight on all natural feelings of youth”, and recalls times when she was unable to rouse herself from bed. Ann also appears to have had a low self-image recalling at this time that, “I deemed myself the subject of contempt or ridicule to all but my intimate friends” and “I imagined that my figure, so strange and grotesque, as to attract the notice of passengers as I passed along, as well as that of the congregation when I entered the meeting.”²⁰³

In addition to these mental afflictions, Mrs Taylor developed a hearing loss that was to affect her throughout her life. Even at this young age she was to find conversations difficult because of this loss of hearing and, in later life, she became almost completely deaf. Mrs Taylor recorded in her memoirs the sense of isolation and removal from social and family gatherings this caused:

“It is scarcely possible, but that a deaf person, should in process of time become a distinct being in a family: the little every day incidents – not worth repeating from which they are necessarily estranged, produces a sort of secluded and insulated feeling, from their ignorance of what is passing, and their being to a certain extent shut up from social intercourse.”²⁰⁴

As a consequence of this lack of self-esteem and her deafness, Mrs Taylor was not a social person and favoured the security of family and home. It explains her predilection for a private life over a public one. From this evidence, Ann Martin Taylor’s preference for the domestic sphere was influenced as much by the physical, psychological and emotional impact of her childhood and adolescence as the cultural

²⁰³ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 119.

²⁰⁴ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 190.

expectations women experienced in the period. Mrs Taylor's subsequent advocacy of the importance of the domestic role of women within family life should not mask the contribution she made to the construction of a family ethos and her contribution to the literary atmosphere that pervaded the family home.

Although Isaac II and Ann Martin Taylor had an understanding of the traditional gender roles and authority expected in a marriage, the culture of the family life they created was the result of a common approach to raising a family. Although Mrs Taylor experienced anxiety regarding her mother and step-father fulfilling their financial obligations, in an example of joint effort by the couple in planning their future life, Ann Taylor recalled that at the end of Isaac Taylor II's apprenticeship; "like very discreet people, we had recourse to arithmetic; duly balancing the probable outgoings against the certain [sic] incomings."²⁰⁵ She was also to write how in the early days of their marriage "many projects we formed for intellectual improvement."²⁰⁶

In spite of this initial shared approach to the planning for their married life, the locations and situations in which the couple subsequently raised their family were the result of decisions taken by Isaac Taylor II. Although this indicates that in "the balance of decision making" the authority lay with Isaac Taylor II, the evidence suggests this was not without Mrs Taylor's, at times critical, involvement.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 193.

²⁰⁶ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 204.

²⁰⁷ Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, p. 88.

Family Homes

One of the most striking decisions taken by Isaac Taylor II was to remove his family from the wider family and church networks in the Holborn area and move to rural Suffolk and later Essex.²⁰⁸ The location of the family homes was initially dependent on Isaac Taylor II's business and financial considerations, later it was defined by his ministerial responsibilities. The couple began their married life in London, and their first rented accommodation was in Islington, "nearly opposite the church and commanding a view from the back windows over the Hampstead and Highgate Hills which gratified our rural taste."²⁰⁹ When they began their marriage, the principal source of the family income came from work Isaac II was undertaking for his older brother Charles. This occupied three days a week and required him to spend long hours away from home leaving Mrs Taylor behind.²¹⁰ Their first child was born in January 1782 and shortly after this as Ann recalled, "on account of business it had seemed advisable on the whole that we should remove to London".²¹¹ A further consideration may have been the isolation his wife felt with a new baby, living at a distance from the support of family and friends and with her husband working away from home. In 1783 the Taylors moved to rented accommodation in Red Lion Street, Holborn near several members of both the Taylor and Martin families and close to the Fetter Lane Congregational church.

²⁰⁸ Robin Taylor Gilbert has undertaken research into the homes of the Taylors of Ongar for The Taylor Family of Ongar and their houses there in *Aspects of Ongar* (ed.) Michael Leach, (Ongar, 2000), p. 55-101.

²⁰⁹ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 203.

²¹⁰ The details of Isaac Taylor II's professional life will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter III.

²¹¹ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 216.

Three years later, in June 1786, with their family increasing, the Taylor family moved out of London to Suffolk. Again their financial situation was one of the considerations that contributed to the move. According to Mrs Taylor, her husband's argument was that the family move; "for seven years into some part of the country where we might live at less expense and where the income arising from what I am now doing from my brother, might be made to meet our wants."²¹² The house the family rented in Shilling Street, Lavenham was compared by Mrs Taylor to "a mansion" in comparison to the family's "style of living and general appearance". Its cost was £6 per annum in comparison to the £20 Isaac Taylor was paying in London. Although the move resulted in a considerable financial benefit, it was a decision that concerned Mrs Taylor. Years later, when writing her memoirs she was still prepared to argue that the course of her husband's professional life, and the impact on the family's situation, would have been made easier had he stayed "the course" in London.

In spite of the preference, shared with her husband, for a rural situation, the prospect of a move that was a reasonable distance away from her family and friends caused Mrs Taylor considerable anxiety. In this frame of mind her initial impression of Lavenham was not good. It was, she thought, a town in "decay" and she felt "buried alive".²¹³

Isaac II had sought to ease the move for his wife, who was pregnant again at the time, by traveling ahead and setting up the new family home with their furniture. Over the years the family lived in the town the couple came to regard this period as the happiest of their lives.

²¹² Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 225. Other factors can be argued to have contributed to the move, these have been examined in Chapter 1.

²¹³ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 229.

The Taylors remained in Lavenham for ten years, longer than Isaac Taylor II had planned and during that time they moved from the house they rented to one they purchased. Recent scholarship has noted that the majority of families of the middling sort in Georgian England lived in rented accommodation and this was a situation that the Taylor's experienced for considerable periods of their married life.²¹⁴ Of the eight properties the couple lived, in six were rented. Owning property can be taken as a mark of financial security and identifiable success for the middling sort and the Taylors were able to achieve this status at two points in their life. The first was during their time in Lavenham in the 1790s, a period that also marked the pinnacle of Isaac Taylor II's engraving career. In 1792 when their landlord required his property back Isaac II and Ann Taylor decided that, "having so long experienced the sweets of a country life for which we had a lively taste, we were now as fully resolved to remain where we were."²¹⁵ For their final years in the Suffolk town the Taylors purchased a neighbouring property for £150 and spent a similar sum restoring the property.²¹⁶ To achieve this sum a loan was acquired "from two or three friends" together with £15 per annum interest.

The decision to own the property fairly rapidly became a financial burden for the Taylors. A few months after the purchase of Arundel House Isaac Taylor became dangerously ill and was unable to work for five months. Following his recovery, and as a result of the strain she had been under, Mrs Taylor experienced what appears to have been a breakdown, described in her memoirs. This was another episode in Mrs

²¹⁴ Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, p. 7.

²¹⁵ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 290.

²¹⁶ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 290. There is a discrepancy in family histories regarding the sum as Ann Taylor Gilbert records the sum as being £250 for purchase and same for renovation, *Autobiography*, p. 46.

Taylor's life that again illustrated the precarious nature of women and a family's financial security.

In the period following Isaac Taylor II's recovery, significant changes occurred in their lives in relation to their church.²¹⁷ When church members rejected Isaac as the replacement minister, he sought a new opportunity elsewhere to fulfil his ministerial ambitions. The subsequent move to Colchester in 1796 coincided with the downturn in the print market caused by the wars with France and resulted in a significant decline in Isaac Taylor II's income. When the family moved from Lavenham the Taylors did not sell their property immediately, the implication being they were unable to dispose of it. When in 1808 the sale did take place, Mrs Taylor records that £200 was lost in its disposal resulting in the Taylors being unable to clear the debt they accrued in its purchase for a number of years.²¹⁸

It was another two decades before Isaac and Ann purchased another property. This was their third and final house in Ongar, Essex. The move from Colchester to Ongar in 1812 was also caused by a breakdown in relations between Isaac Taylor II and the members of his Independent Church in Colchester. The property in Ongar was bought for £700 "without a loan", in 1822 seven years before Isaac Taylor II died. With all their children, except the youngest child Jemima, now established in their own households, the income obtained from their writing had, according to Mrs Taylor, allowed them comfort in old age. At the end of their lives, on the cusp of the Victorian era, while not reaching the status they had in Lavenham, Isaac and Ann had achieved a

²¹⁷ These changes have been described in Chapter 1.

²¹⁸ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 342.

degree of comfort and security and, as property owners, secured their position in the developing middle class.

Domestic Space

Following the Taylor's move from London, as Isaac Taylor II's skill and success as an engraver increased the family's homes in Suffolk and Essex had to facilitate both his working practices and the family's domestic routine.²¹⁹ Additionally, the family was increasing and, as the children grew up, both Isaac and Ann Taylor were committed to their education, principally within the home environment. Georgian households of the middling and genteel sort were often an extended unit and could include not just the immediate family, but servants and apprentices as well. Ann Martin Taylor's memoirs show that when she was growing up, both her grandparents and mother took lodgers into their family homes. This was a situation that applied at various times to the Taylor household. As the size of their family increased, the spacial layout of the houses was allocated by Isaac II and Ann Taylor to accommodate both people and activities. The management of space within the family home by the Taylors became a contributory element in the facilitation of their literary careers.

The houses in Lavenham were substantial enough to provide the space the family required for all their activities. Ann Taylor Gilbert's autobiography provides a description of the first house in Lavenham:

"On the ground floor were three parlours, two kitchens, and a dairy, together with three other rooms never inhabited; and above them were six large bedrooms. An

²¹⁹ The working practices of the Taylor family are discussed in further detail in Chapter III.

extensive garden, well planted, lay behind. A straight broad walk through the middle was fifty-two yards in length, with an open summer-house on rising ground at one end, and ha-ha fence separating it from a meadow, of which we had the use, at the other end.”²²⁰

It was while they lived in this house that a portrait was painted by Isaac Taylor II that has become synonymous with the idyllic nature associated with the middle-class childhood of the Taylor children, in particular their eldest daughters Ann and Jane. In the foreground of this portrait are the two sisters, clothed in white dresses with large pink sashes and pink shoes. Jane is holding a pink rose from a rose bush that they are standing next to. In the background is the white summerhouse, described by Ann in her autobiography, in which Mrs Taylor, is sitting holding a baby. In front of the summerhouse are two younger children, likely to be Isaac III and Martin, playing with a toy cart.²²¹

Of this house Ann Taylor Gilbert was to write that: “nurseries at Lavenham, and at that time of day, I do not remember. The parlour and the best parlour were all that was known beside the kitchens, and thus parents and children formed happily but one circle”.²²² This conformed to Mrs Taylor’s belief in keeping her children close and not trusting their care to servants. Ann Taylor Gilbert also recalled a large room adjoining the parlour and, “there or in the garden we were at liberty to romp.” There was a closet

²²⁰ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 13.

²²¹ This portrait is now in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery.

²²² Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 17.

in this large room that the sisters were allowed as, “a baby-house, round the walls of which were arranged our toys.”²²³

In this house, as with all the houses the family lived in following the move out of London: “Another room, ... was fitted up as a workroom to which my father’s high desk was moved.”²²⁴ As Isaac Taylor II’s professional success increased, he took on two apprentices. Ann Taylor Gilbert was later to recall that these apprentices lived in Lavenham and so did not, “intrude on the comfort of the fireside, to which my mother and father would not willingly have submitted.”²²⁵

The descriptions of the family circumstances across several of the biographical sources are consistent in suggesting this period for the Taylor family marked the height of their financial success, accompanied by the trappings associated with the status of the middling sort. In 1792 when Isaac and Ann Taylor were in the position to purchase their next house they were able to commission renovations. Through restoration Arundel House was, “made to suit us exactly.” Ann Taylor Gilbert recalled how:

“The best parlour (a ‘drawing room’ was not then known in Lavenham), till a little of the pecuniary pressure was worked down, was left unfurnished at the disposal of “Ann and Jane” to whip their tops in, but the common parlour was as pretty and comfortable as it could be, with a door and a large bay window into the garden, and a sliding panel

²²³ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 28.

²²⁴ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 46.

²²⁵ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 46.

for convenient communication with the kitchen. China closets and store closets were large and commodious;"²²⁶

The workroom in this house now had to accommodate multiple uses. It was: "a large room running the entire length of one part of the building" with Isaac Taylor II's high desk, "placed at the upper end; a row of windows facing the yard was occupied by the apprentices and another overlooking the garden was filled by the children pursuing their education." Further additions to the household at this time were an un-named young lady being taught the art of engraving. This lady is not, however, referred to as an apprentice. At this time Isaac II and Ann Martin Taylor had also "offered temporary accommodation" to Mrs Salmon, a destitute widow. It was by now a "numerous household" and a "scene of active and intelligent industry."²²⁷

By the time the family moved to Colchester in 1796 their circumstances had changed. Isaac Taylor II rented a house near the Independent church where he had been appointed Minister but this house was smaller than the two properties in Lavenham. It was again arranged so that a large room was used to combine both engraving and educational tasks. Isaac Taylor II's high desk was at one end and long tables ran from his desk the length of the room. Ann Taylor Gilbert recalled that it was here that the elder children practised engraving, while "[b]ehind us a second range of tables was occupied two or three days a week by pupils."²²⁸

²²⁶ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 49.

²²⁷ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 55.

²²⁸ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 69.

The time the family spent in Colchester was marked by financial difficulties of which Mrs Taylor was to write: “here my feelings would urge me to consign to oblivion the next sixteen years of my life.”²²⁹ The Colchester workroom became, according to Mrs Taylor, “a workhouse in the truest sense. Father, mother and children toiling like slaves, incessantly and none of them in robust health.”²³⁰ The Colchester years marked both the nadir of the Taylors’ position amongst the middling sort and the beginning of their literary careers. In spite of these difficulties Isaac II and Ann Taylor appear to have masked the impact of the financial troubles they were experiencing from their children. In contrast to her mother, Ann Taylor Gilbert was to recall this period with great affection and wrote that her recollections of the town, “never present themselves but as bright and warm as a summer sun.”²³¹

The two apprentices moved with the family to Colchester although it is not clear whether they resided with the family. In due course, as the income from engraving subsided, they were laid off. In addition to the family the household also incorporated a servant. Both Mrs Taylor’s memoirs and Ann Taylor Gilbert’s *Autobiography* reveal a strongly negative attitude to servants, seeing them as a potentially malevolent influence. Mrs Taylor was to write; “for what cannot confidential maids effect, when once they have taken root in a family and successfully ingratiated themselves.”²³² This attitude appears to have developed during Ann Martin Taylor’s childhood and adolescence when episodes in her life and her relationship with her mother and

²²⁹ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 323.

²³⁰ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 361. This period of financial insecurity is discussed in greater detail in Chapter III.

²³¹ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 70.

²³² Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 91.

stepfather, Hewitt, were made even more difficult through the intervention of a family servant.²³³

Although the main living space was shared, Isaac II and Ann Martin Taylor advocated the importance of a personal space for all their children. In the *Memoirs* of his sister Jane, Isaac Taylor III wrote that, “it was always a part of their parents plan of education to afford to their children both *space* and *materials* for furnishing amusements to themselves. [sic]”²³⁴ Isaac Taylor III noted that in Lavenham, the two sisters were given exclusive use of a room to play in. On moving to Colchester, small rooms were used, or spaces created, as studies. Ann Taylor Gilbert was to note in her autobiography what seems to have been a determining factor in their parents’ decision: “what, either mental improvement or of personal piety, can be expected to flourish where numbers are crowded into one room?”²³⁵ The provision of this private space for individual family members as they matured indicates the influence of Isaac Watts who had advocated “access to closets” or other private spaces as a means of religious contemplation and private observance.²³⁶ The house in Colchester was smaller than the properties in Lavenham, but “the plan of providing, as far as possible, separate small rooms as ‘studies’ for his children” was “carried out as far as possible as our confined space at Colchester would admit.”²³⁷ Isaac III and his younger brother, Martin, “fitted up their own ‘Sanctum’”, by dividing their room with paste-board. Isaac

²³³ Ann Taylor’s mother employed a servant who was with the family for 16 years and she appears to have been favoured over Ann on occasions, and on other occasions betrayed Ann’s confidences to her mother.

²³⁴ Taylor III, *Memoirs*, p. 9.

²³⁵ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 87.

²³⁶ Rivers, *Celestial City*, p. 75.

²³⁷ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 87.

III, the oldest son, had the space with the window. Martin removed some bricks and inserted “a pane or two of glass.”²³⁸

It was in the house in Colchester that Jane “succeeded in fitting out an attic room,” which had previously been used as a lumber-room.”²³⁹ In an indication of the origin of the most famous poem written by a member of the family, Jane wrote that here:

“I used to roam and revel ‘midst the stars

When in my attic, with untold delights,
I watched the changing splendours of the night.”²⁴⁰

Once again, Isaac Taylor II’s relationship with his church deteriorated and in 1810 he resigned as the minister.²⁴¹ In 1811 he obtained a position with the small Congregational church in Ongar. In the September of that year, the family moved to Castle House, a rented property surrounded by a moat, once again in a rural setting. The property was substantial enough to provide the personal space the Taylors now required for their writing and Ann Taylor Gilbert wrote that the rooms were “light and pleasant” and “fitted up with every modern convenience. We have a hall, two parlours, kitchen, store-room &c [sic] on the ground floor; three chambers above; and a good workroom, study, two bed-chambers, and a light closet on the attic floor.” In this house Ann Taylor Gilbert had requested an attic room, with views of the surrounding countryside that included “a closet where I could sit and write.”²⁴² The Taylors spent four years in the Castle House before the tenancy was cancelled. In the summer of

²³⁸ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 87.

²³⁹ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 87.

²⁴⁰ Taylor III, *Memoirs*, p. 45. Jane Taylor’s poem, *The Star*, is now more commonly referred to by its opening line, “Twinkle, twinkle little star.”

²⁴¹ These events are discussed in Chapter I.

²⁴² R. Taylor Gilbert, *The Taylor family of Ongar*, p. 76 & 77.

1814 Isaac Taylor II rented another Elizabethan farmhouse in the countryside around Ongar. Ann Taylor Gilbert was to describe the property in a letter as being:

“exceedingly pleasant and convenient; large, low, farmhouse rooms in abundance, innumerable closets and lumber rooms.” Here she went on to describe a “parlour, 18 feet square” and a “library, 14 by 15, a very comfortable room where company can be asked without seeing a trace of the business,” together with a:

“commodious workroom and what Father calls his cabinet, [sic] containing prints, pictures and everything of that kind. Kitchen, dairy, very comfortable storeroom and outplaces of all sorts. Above, mother’s room, large and very pleasant opening into the little study over the porch, which is furnished with all the family pictures, and is her delight.”²⁴³

Once again, in 1822, the Taylors were asked to quit this property. For what was to be Isaac II and Ann’s last house they purchased a property for £700 “without a loan”²⁴⁴ in what is now known as Castle Street, Ongar. It was a smaller property than either the Castle House or the New House Farm and was on the outskirts of Ongar itself rather than the countryside around the town. To this property Mr Taylor built a study, a cabinet for his pictures, and adapted an outbuilding for his ‘brown room’, which was his workroom.”²⁴⁵

An examination of the details of the houses illustrates the fluctuations in the family’s financial situation and social position while the ability to allocate personal space,

²⁴³ R. Taylor Gilbert, *The Taylor family of Ongar*, p. 80.

²⁴⁴ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 424.

²⁴⁵ R. Taylor Gilbert, *The Taylor family of Ongar*, p. 85.

together with the employment of servants even when they were financially embarrassed, was indicative of Isaac II and Ann striving to maintain a position within the middle ranks of society. That Ann Taylor Gilbert was able to note of the final house in Ongar, the separation of the Taylors business practices from social activities marks an appreciation of the increasingly important distinction between public and private aspects of the family's life. In addition to the size and status of the family houses, the Taylors approach to material culture provides an insight into both their principles and financial situation.

During the eighteenth century material and consumer culture began to develop, continuing to expand throughout the nineteenth century. In Europe Britain emerged as the most successful mercantile and manufacturing economy.²⁴⁶ The expansion of the engraving industry, which was the main source of Isaac Taylor II's income, was an aspect of this growth. The Taylors' attitude to this advance in consumerism appears to represent a more 'puritan' approach to material culture. The descriptions members of the family provided in reminiscences often revealed they left rooms unfurnished in the various houses they lived in.

Ann Taylor Gilbert also recalled that her mother dressed her children plainly, noting that; "my mother used to say that a child is pretty without the trimmings".²⁴⁷ During their time in Colchester, a period of considerable financial strain, Ann Taylor Gilbert recalls Jane and herself learning to make their own dresses. Ann Taylor Gilbert also recalled how for a period of time a family friend taught her "ornamental needlework",

²⁴⁶ J. Styles and A. Vickery (eds), *Gender, Taste and Material Culture in Britain and North America 1700 – 1830*, Yale 2006, P. 1.

²⁴⁷ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 56.

but commented that this was surprising since her parents thought that needlework was an accomplishment that wasn't worth having.²⁴⁸ These characteristics can be regarded as being in keeping with Isaac II and Ann Martin Taylor's orthodox, Calvinistic principles.

Although their reminiscences imply a puritan attitude to material culture, it is clear that Isaac II and Ann Martin Taylor were prepared to purchase items for the family that they thought appropriate. Books were at the forefront of this approach, but the Taylors also purchased toys for their children, in addition to the ones they made. In a letter from Lavenham to Isaac II, who was in London dealing with publishers, Mrs Taylor provided a list of presents the children had requested from the city. This was not a universally accepted approach at that time. In contrast to the willingness of Isaac II and Ann Martin Taylor to provide objects for play, Cunningham notes that the educationalist Maria Edgeworth, whose writing was well known to the Taylors, was critical of the provision of toys for children.²⁴⁹

Although their daughters were taught to make their own clothes, Ann Taylor Gilbert noted how pleased she and Jane were when they began to receive money from the first books they had published, enabling them to buy the clothes instead. That they should be allowed such items may stem from Mrs Taylor's experience when, before her marriage, her mother did not allow her pocket money to purchase clothes. Mrs Taylor was instead dressed from her mother's wardrobe. Of this, Ann Martin Taylor wrote:

²⁴⁸ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 79.

²⁴⁹ Cunningham, *History of Childhood*, p. 125.

“on some occasions I have been exceedingly chagrined when not permitted to equal in appearance my young friends.”²⁵⁰

While it is often assumed that the Taylors’ approach to material culture displayed the puritan influence of their Dissenting faith Mrs Taylor’s approach could equally have been influenced by her upbringing and training in the family’s pawnbroking business. Ann experienced the suffering of people who had fallen on hard times, whether through no fault of their own, profligacy, misfortune or illness. This reinforced the fragility of people’s financial and social circumstances in a period when provision for the poor lay in the inefficient management of the parish and workhouse contributing to a more careful and frugal approach to material culture.²⁵¹

Family Routine

Throughout their lives and the various changes in their circumstances, Isaac II and Ann Martin Taylor adopted a co-operative approach to raising their children, which they took seriously. Again, their methods appear to have been influenced by a combination of religious principles and an appreciation of contemporary debates relating to childhood and personal experiences. In many cases the methods they adopted can be seen as a reaction to their own upbringing. In her autobiography, Ann Taylor Gilbert noted that both her parents were involved in their children’s lives: “father and mother were accessible, and many a choice entertainment did we owe to their patient contrivances. My father, especially, was never weary of inventing, for our amusement

²⁵⁰ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 176.

²⁵¹ R. Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century*, (London, 1990), p. 129.

or instruction.”²⁵² Less detail is available relating to Isaac Taylor II’s upbringing, but through references in both published and unpublished material he appears to have grown up in a strict and cold household. Ann Taylor Gilbert wrote that his father, Isaac I, “exhibited towards his family an austere reserve”, while his mother’s “will was law.”²⁵³

Mrs Taylor’s childhood experiences were even more challenging. As previously mentioned the time spent with her grandparents was very influential in establishing her love of home. When Ann was taken back by her father to the family home, following his recent religious conversion, he did so in part: “from having as he conceived been injudiciously indulged in his childhood, [and] adopted on the whole too rigid a system of discipline.”²⁵⁴ Following this return to the family home Mrs Taylor observed: “Did I not at this juncture need soothing treatments and would it not have been better calculated for the attainment of my father’s object. How rarely do we erring mortals observe due medium”.²⁵⁵ On his deathbed, Thomas Martin was to insist that his daughter, Ann, should not be allowed to return to live with his parents.

One of the ‘indulgent’ acts experienced by Ann Martin Taylor when staying with her paternal grandparents was to be taken to events and not left at home: “to mope or divert myself as I could, or to associate with servants, and be privy to their sly ways.”²⁵⁶ In Mrs Taylor’s memoirs she provides several instances detailing events in her life prior to her marriage where this negative attitude to servants began. While the

²⁵² Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 29.

²⁵³ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 3.

²⁵⁴ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 34.

²⁵⁵ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 29.

²⁵⁶ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 28 & 29.

published autobiographies by the Taylors' children provide further evidence of the tension between the family and the servant class. In the *Memoirs* of his sister Jane, published in 1825, Isaac Taylor III recalled how his mother had to, "unavoidably abandon [her children] to the neglect and the improper treatment of servants," leaving their "minds and manners to those evil influences" when she had to nurse her husband through a serious illness while they lived in Lavenham.²⁵⁷ In her autobiography Ann Taylor Gilbert wrote that her, "mother had always the strongest objection to leaving her little girls to the care of servants and seldom visited where we were not invited."²⁵⁸

The decision by Isaac II and Ann Taylor not to rely on third parties to raise their children and keep them close was guided by their wish to promote religious and moral principles and self-discipline. In order to facilitate her duties, Mrs Taylor was to write that once their children started to arrive she resorted to absorbing all the advice "which I could from books and other sources." Such guides were produced in increasing numbers during the eighteenth century. The works were influenced by debates that were taking place regarding the nature of childhood, inspired by Locke and Rousseau's contributions to the subject.²⁵⁹

In keeping with her active approach to childrearing, Mrs Taylor breastfed her two oldest children, Ann and Jane. However, personal circumstances were to change her approach and in the memoirs Mrs Taylor implies that her ability to breastfeed became inadequate. Shortly before the Taylors left London, their third child, called Isaac, died. Mrs Taylor was expecting another child when they arrived in Lavenham. This child,

²⁵⁷ Taylor III, *Memoirs*, p. 21.

²⁵⁸ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 17.

²⁵⁹ H. Cunningham, *The Invention of Childhood*, (London, 2006), p. 119.

also called Isaac, died and although their next child, again named Isaac, survived, not long after he was born he also began to fade. A friend recommended that Ann Taylor should consider using a wet nurse and a young woman in Lavenham, referred to as Nanny Keble, was identified. Isaac III did not stay with the nurse but was “carried daily” to her and he began to thrive. Martin, their next child, was also placed with Nanny Keble. When Jefferys was born in 1792, “Nanny Keble was out of date” and a new wet nurse was found in the village who was known as Nurse Hunt.²⁶⁰

The decision to raise their children with limited involvement from servants meant that the family was frequently together. When the children were younger their education was carried out in the family work-room and, as they reached their teenage years, they were then also trained by their father in the art of engraving. Mrs Taylor was frequently in the same room sometimes assisting in teaching the younger children and their daughter’s domestic skills, at other times reading to the family as they worked. Isaac II and Ann Taylor encouraged self-discipline and hard work and this was illustrated by Ann Taylor Gilbert in her autobiography when she described the family routine in Lavenham where they: “Breakfasted at eight, dined at half past one, took tea at five; then at eight we went to bed and my father and mother supped at nine. On Sunday’s, however, we were indulged to sit up to supper, a treat indeed.”²⁶¹ By the time they were older and had moved to Colchester the routine had altered slightly. They now “Breakfasted at eight, allowed an hour for lunch, half an hour for tea and finished in the work room at eight.” It was “only by rising early and supping as late as

²⁶⁰ Taylor III, *Memoirs of Jane Taylor*, p. 43 & 47.

²⁶¹ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 31.

half-past nine” could the children write. This time also had to allow for prayers as well.²⁶²

Although the principle of self-discipline was instilled early on in their children, the Taylors’ approach was always tempered with restraint. In Mrs Taylor’s memoirs, having described her harsh childhood experiences, she “determined if ever I became a parent to adopt a different plan... That my children should never suffer under the oppression which had so affected my childhood and youth. My husband too, had been trained under the boasted system of ‘a word and a blow and the blow first’.”²⁶³ Isaac II and Ann were against physical punishment and for their children the “daily guide in education, were mild but firm. [sic]”²⁶⁴

There is much in Isaac II and Ann Taylor’s approach to raising their children that suggests the influence of the ideas of John Locke whose work, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* first published in 1693, remained influential during their lifetime. Locke advocated an early start to education in a child’s life, balanced with play and play things, which should be combined with the development of self-discipline and a respect for the child’s parents. Locke discouraged the use of corporal punishment and was also concerned about the detrimental effect that servants could have in the raising of a child.²⁶⁵ From a young age all the Taylor children were encouraged to be intellectually inquisitive, and Isaac Taylor II constructed a comprehensive educational programme for the children without differentiating between their sons and daughters.

²⁶² Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 86.

²⁶³ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 248.

²⁶⁴ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 5.

²⁶⁵ Cunningham, *The Invention of Childhood*, p. 110.

Educational Practice and Routine

It is clear that the approach Isaac II and Ann Martin Taylor adopted towards the education of their children was one that came from a joint commitment to the importance of a wide-ranging, home education. It is notable that the education provided did not distinguish between their children. Isaac II and Ann Taylor had both developed a love of learning during their childhoods and adolescence that continued into their married life. For Isaac Taylor II this love of learning began with work he undertook during his apprenticeship with his father. Isaac Taylor I was commissioned to provide engravings for a new edition of Chambers' *Cyclopaedia* that was produced between 1778 and 1785. During the Enlightenment encyclopaedias, which had been the province of the church and universities, became widely available through the expanding book trade, becoming an "example of how the trade in knowledge was judged to be worthy of capital investment."²⁶⁶ The growth in the popularity and availability of encyclopaedias was a manifestation in print of the Enlightenment period's fascination with knowledge. Isaac Taylor II was asked by his father to undertake the production of the plates for this new edition that was being edited by Dr Abraham Rees. As a result, Isaac II communicated regularly with Rees, "who welcomed the young engraver to his study, gave him access to scientific books, and by many a gratuitous instruction, promoted his personal improvement."²⁶⁷ The influence of this undertaking was to continue throughout the Taylors' life. His daughter Ann recalled that during their childhood their father would refer to the encyclopaedia, the lexicon

²⁶⁶ R. Yeo, *Encyclopaedism and Enlightenment* in M. Fitzpatrick, P. Jones, C. Knellwolf & I. McCalman (eds.) *The Enlightenment World*, (London, 2004), p. 354.

²⁶⁷ Taylor, *Family Pen*, p. 83.

and the gazetteer “whenever a question arose in conversation on points of science or history which we could not accurately determine.”²⁶⁸

Ann Martin Taylor developed a love of learning and reading at around the same age as Isaac II. Anne’s paternal grandfather had not encouraged an education for his own children, nor with Ann.²⁶⁹ When Ann was 10 years old her mother sent her to Miss Mannington’s; “an old, established and very respectable day school in the neighbourhood” “to finish me” and to be instructed in the traditional feminine accomplishments of needlework, reading, writing and arithmetic.²⁷⁰

In place of her limited schooling Mrs Taylor pursued educational opportunities where she could. On being removed from Mrs Mannington’s school at thirteen to be trained in the pawnbroking business by her mother, Ann sought educational experiences from various lodgers who resided at her mother’s house. These included Mr and Mrs Fisher who, when she was thirteen, introduced her “into a new state of existence” through the microscope and the telescope. Ann was lent many varied books from the library of two elderly widows who also became tenants. Her friend and neighbour, Ann Withy, leant her copies of *The Spectator* from her father’s library because she knew Ann had a “vehement desire to read this work.”²⁷¹

Although as a couple both Isaac II and Ann Taylor regretted their lack of education, they did not particularly regret a lack of schooling. In her memoirs, Mrs Taylor wrote about the perils of “public seminaries ... where the vices of so many families are in

²⁶⁸ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 4.

²⁶⁹ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 29.

²⁷⁰ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 72.

²⁷¹ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 117.

effect congregated.”²⁷² With her retiring nature, Ann had found attending school excruciating and she also experienced public disapproval of her family’s nonconformist affiliation. Mrs Taylor was to draw several conclusions from this experience that contributed to the family preference for home education, especially for their daughters. Mrs Taylor wrote:

“That a Mother who does not discern from the above details, to what perils she exposes her daughters, by sending them to a public seminary, might as well discontinue the perusal of this narrative; because she will not be likely to draw any salutary conclusions from events which are yet to be recorded. It is readily granted, that a variety of circumstances, may prevent the majority of mothers from superintending the education of their daughters; but where no impediments intervene, in what pursuit can they be engaged that may come in competition with a duty which nature, and nature’s God require at their hands?”²⁷³

In Isaac II and Ann’s opinion the subjects taught in schools, particularly for girls, were inadequate and this contributed to their choice of a home education. In his *Memoirs of Jane Taylor* published in 1825, Isaac Taylor III, wrote of his father’s aim to provide his children with an education that would; “expand the mind by a general acquaintance with all the more important objects of science.” This would also “prevent the formation of a narrow and exclusive taste for particular pursuits, by exciting very early, a lively interest on subjects of every kind.”²⁷⁴ Mrs Taylor showed a similar opinion to her

²⁷² Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 85.

²⁷³ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 85.

²⁷⁴ Taylor III, *Memoirs of Jane Taylor*, p. 26.

husband when she referred to a well off family who attended her husband's church in Colchester.

The Thorn family was, an "opulent family who from this circumstance had great weight in the affairs of the church, was worldly and dissipated in the extreme." Mrs Taylor criticised them in her memoirs for having had a restricted education, and "being satisfied with a good grounding in reading, writing and arithmetic only, therefore lacking in intelligent conversation."²⁷⁵ In contrast for their children Ann Martin Taylor noted; "the unremitting and systematic efforts of their father, [that] enabled them to understand subjects on which they must otherwise for many subsequent years have remained ignorant."²⁷⁶

Isaac Taylor II and his wife shared the task of educating their children. Ann Taylor Gilbert recalled: "Reading, the Needle, and the Catechism, we were taught by her [mother], and as my father was constantly engraving at the high desk in the same room, [where] it was easy for him to superintend the rest.[sic]"²⁷⁷ When they moved to Colchester, Ann Taylor Gilbert noted that it soon became known that her father's "modes of education were worth participating in, and several families requested that their young people might share in them."²⁷⁸ This teaching method was described by his daughter Ann as seeking "to address the eye as being much more retentive than the ear." The method Isaac Taylor II preferred was helped by his artistic skills. This teaching role added to the family income at a time when the engraving market was

²⁷⁵ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 327.

²⁷⁶ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 272.

²⁷⁷ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 30.

²⁷⁸ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 73.

severely depressed.²⁷⁹ Isaac Taylor II conceived the idea of delivering lectures once a month on various subjects including astronomy, geography, geometry, mechanics, fortifications, general history and anatomy. He did this for a period of three to four years from 1798. These lectures were delivered in the family parlour in Colchester to around sixty to seventy young people.²⁸⁰

A collection of teaching materials created by Isaac Taylor II survives and they illustrate the breadth of subjects he covered.²⁸¹ In keeping with his admiration for encyclopaedias, Isaac Taylor II created an illustrated hierarchy of knowledge. This diagram, shown on page 113, illustrates the range of subjects Taylor addressed and shows how he reconciled many of the subject areas with his religious faith. It followed an encyclopaedic tradition where subjects were considered through an “overarching pattern”, one example of which was a “cosmological chain of being with Divinity at its apex.”²⁸² The subtitle for the diagram, ‘an Arrangement of the Arts and Sciences’ can be seen as a reference back to Chambers’ work *Cyclopaedia or, a Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*.

²⁷⁹ This is discussed in more detail in Chapter III.

²⁸⁰ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 90.

²⁸¹ These are held in the collection of Colchester Museum Service.

²⁸² Yeo, *Encyclopaedism and Enlightenment*, p. 351.

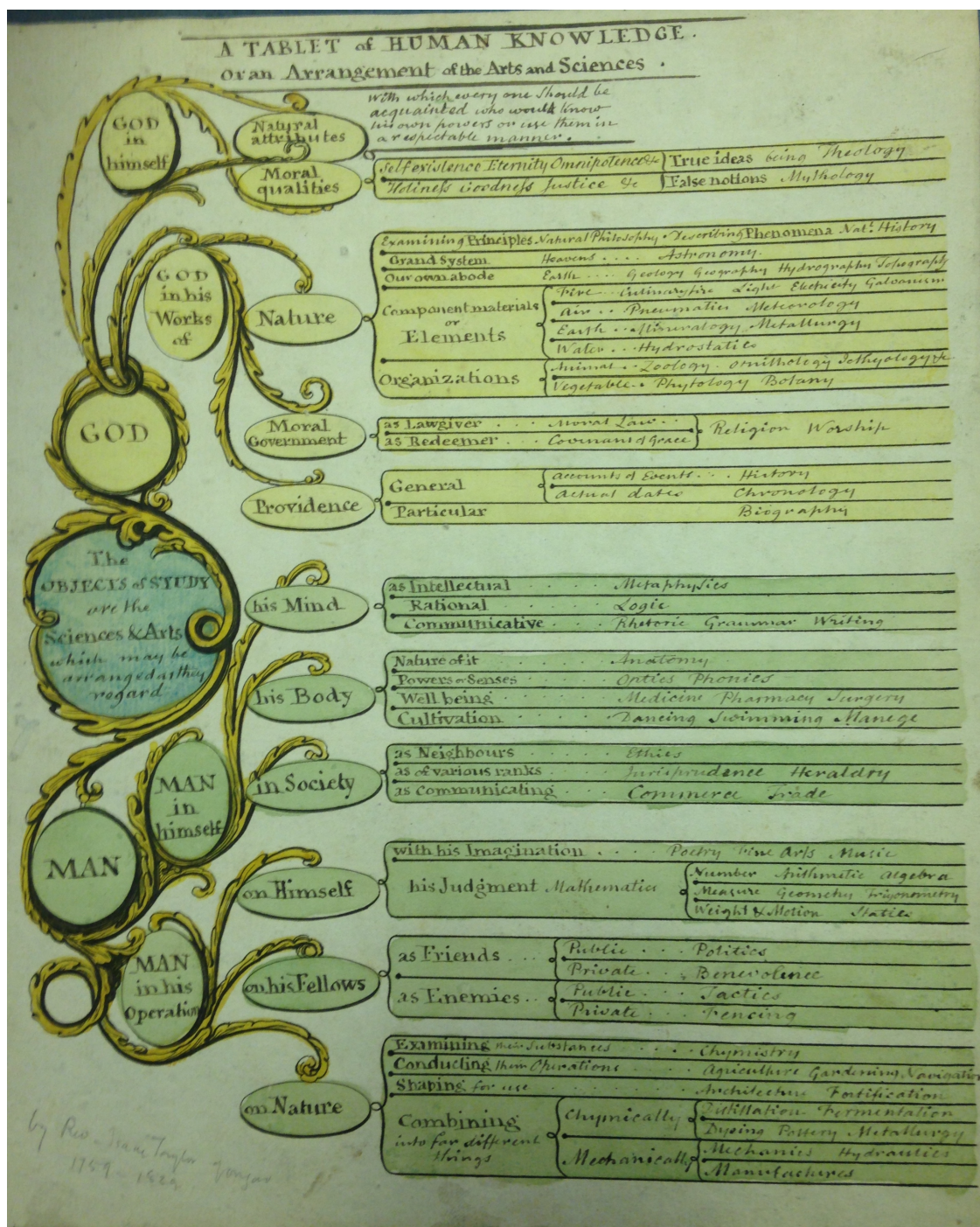


Figure 3: Reproduced by permission from Colchester Museum Service.

The broad education provided by Isaac II and Ann Martin Taylor to their children was the same for their daughters as their sons. This approach continued once the children reached the age when it was expedient to consider skills appropriate for their adult life. Again, Isaac and Ann Taylor considered their daughters' future position as well as their

sons. Mrs Taylor wrote: "It was at this season the age of four of our family rendered it necessary to place them in some employ with a view to their future subsistence, but having no premium to give their father could only place the graver in their hands."²⁸³ In addition to the education of all their children Isaac Taylor II began training their four eldest, Ann, Jane, Isaac and Martin, in the art of engraving. The two girls additionally received an education in domestic skills from their mother who had felt the lack of such training herself. On alternate weeks Mrs Taylor instructed her two daughters in domestic duties that included essays in cookery, and skills such as washing, preparing fine linens, and a small amount of needlework.²⁸⁴

Two reasons lay behind the approach Isaac II and Ann Taylor adopted in preparing their children for adulthood. In a letter to Mrs Taylor, Isaac Taylor II reports that he had taken Isaac III and Martin to a solicitor in Colchester and had them formally apprenticed to him. This was because of the danger of their oldest sons being "pressed" into the army due to the continuing wars with France. In the case of their daughters Isaac and Ann Taylor recoiled, "from the thought of sending our two daughters Ann and Jane from under our wing, to convert them into mere seamstresses," so they also took up "the graver."²⁸⁵ The use of the word "mere" indicates a degree of both social awareness and intellectual ambition for their daughters. Mrs Taylor also found needlework "truly oppressive" even though this was a skill that was both a traditional employment and leisure activity for women depending on their social status.²⁸⁶ The decisions taken at this time in their children's lives, particularly in relation to their daughters, is an element of the recurring theme

²⁸³ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 358.

²⁸⁴ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 83.

²⁸⁵ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 358.

²⁸⁶ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 355.

throughout Mrs Taylor's memoirs, concerning the lack of skills provided to enable a woman to be in a position to support herself and her family financially should the need ever arise.

Although not discussed in such detail, references in letters reveal that Jefferys and Jemima, the Taylors two youngest surviving children, received the same education and training. Both the home education and family apprenticeships contributed to the close family circle. This provided a defensive barrier against "worldly" experiences that Mrs Taylor suggested the children might experience in a public school.

Domestic Religious Practices:

For Isaac Taylor II, the education he provided for his family and the wider community was not to be undertaken at the expense of religious observance. As well as his involvement in the Church, which required regular attendance at services and meetings, in his private life Isaac Taylor II's routine was structured by daily religious observance and the promotion of the same to his family. Mrs Taylor participated in the family's domestic religious practices. These religious beliefs had a wider influence on family life, including areas such as their leisure activities, and contributed to their approach to material culture.

The Taylor family's religious routine can be divided into public and private observance. In accordance with Dissenting practice, meetings were held at the church on Sunday and during the week. Unless he was ill Isaac Taylor II, as a deacon while in Lavenham, and minister in Colchester and Ongar, was in attendance at both weekday and Sunday

services. While in Colchester and Ongar, Isaac Taylor II also travelled to deliver sermons at other places around the county during the week.

Mrs Taylor held strong views concerning a woman's place at public services when she was raising young children. Her views were illustrated in her memoirs in the description of a visit she made to London to see Mrs Moon, her childhood friend Ann Withy. She cites the detrimental impact on Mrs Moon's children of their mother's regular attendance at weekday Church. The result, in Mrs Taylor's opinion, was a "disorderly family" and her friend's failure "to instruct her family in the religious principles she so warmly professes."²⁸⁷ In contrast Mrs Taylor did not attend weekday meetings as she believed it was her duty to instruct her younger children at home.

Mrs Taylor contributed further to the family's religious observance by writing addresses, the practise of which seems to have been agreed with her husband. In her memoirs she describes how, at a time of personal crisis in her faith, she burnt the addresses. It was an action about which "Mr Taylor had considerable regrets."²⁸⁸ Mrs Taylor did, in time, resume her practise of writing addresses and there is evidence that Isaac II and Ann Taylor also discussed his sermons together. In a letter written to their daughter Jane in 1803, offering advice on how to observe a Fast Day, Mrs Taylor wrote about a "wonderful sermon" that Isaac Taylor had delivered on a text she had chosen, David's words to Goliath of Gath.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁷ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 267.

²⁸⁸ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 253 & 254.

²⁸⁹ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 128.

At home during the week Isaac Taylor II upheld a strict personal routine. Ann Taylor Gilbert was to recall that his “habits of devotion formed a valuable part of his example.”²⁹⁰ Isaac Taylor began each day between six and seven in a private closet in “articulate prayer,” which he preferred together with a hymn sung aloud. He ended each day with another hour of prayer. In her autobiography, Isaac II’s daughter Ann later recommended this habit of “*stated* prayer [sic]” as a method of maintaining concentration.²⁹¹

Adherence to the traditions of the Sabbath in the Taylor household was also important to Isaac II and Ann. Their daughter Ann Taylor Gilbert was to recall that; “our Sunday habits I am thankful to remember that, though never gloomy, they were after the olden fashion – *strict*. [sic]” She thought that from these days “habits were then formed such as afford a safe ground work on which principle may build with advantage.”²⁹² At home, family activities were restricted to “strictly Sunday readings.”²⁹³ Works mentioned by the family as being read on Sunday included *The History of Master Goodchild* by Rev. George Burder, Isaac Taylor II’s friend and a fellow apprentice to his father, who became the minister at the Fetter Lane Congregational church in 1803.²⁹⁴ Ann Taylor Gilbert recalled that on a particular Sunday, when her father was ill and unable to lead the service at the church, she stayed at home and read Wilcox’s sermons to him.

²⁹⁰ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 6.

²⁹¹ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 6.

²⁹² Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 33.

²⁹³ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 33.

²⁹⁴ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 33.

Leisure time

The home education and emphasis on regular religious observance may have contributed to the perception that the Taylor children grew up “isolated in the provinces,” but it can be argued that this was not the case. As well as entertainment in their home, the Taylor children had friendships with children from their church and others from a wider society.²⁹⁵ Isaac II and Ann’s children participated in outside activities and entertainment, and travelled to London to stay with relatives and friends. However, the community from which their friendships were drawn did gradually reduce over the years as the influence of their religious connections grew.

As well as material culture, Isaac II and Ann Martin Taylor were also strict in their approach to leisure activities, an area that was becoming increasingly circumscribed by developing evangelical cultural conventions. This was a period of considerable debate regarding the appropriate nature of various activities and leisure pastimes. Isaac Taylor’s friend, George Burder, contributed to this debate when he published a sermon on ‘*Lawful Amusements*’ in 1805. Isaac II and Ann Martin Taylor did apply restrictions on the activities their children were allowed to participate in, which conformed to their more conservative religious principles. This was in contrast to Mrs Taylor’s own childhood, as she recalled in her memoirs. When she was growing up Ann had effectively been left to herself in relation to her reading and activities. In childhood, Mrs Taylor had read what she could borrow from her mother’s tenants and neighbours, these included fairy tales, plays, novels, and periodicals such as *The Spectator*. Of this time, she was to consider that her instructors agreed; “to do by me the things which

²⁹⁵ L. Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes, Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*, (Oxford, 1987), p. 66.

they ought not to have done; and to leave undone those things which they ought to have down.”²⁹⁶

Within the Taylor home the principal leisure activities, beyond playing with dolls, toy soldiers and other toys, were books, drawing and writing. Ann Taylor Gilbert recalled: “Books were a staple commodity in the house. From my mother’s habit of reading aloud at breakfast and at tea, we were always picking something up; to every conversation we were auditors, and I think, quiet ones, for, having no nursery, the parlour would have been intolerable otherwise.”²⁹⁷ Reading aloud had been a habit Ann Martin Taylor began with her mother. She read to her mother in the evenings from varied books, such as the popular novel *Roxanna*, or religious works. Ann later wrote that it was one of the few pleasures she enjoyed with her mother. Mrs Taylor drew on this example with her own family when she adopted the habit of reading at mealtimes to the family circle.²⁹⁸

In addition to the lexicons, gazetteers and the encyclopaedias that Isaac Taylor II had in the house, he read newspapers and acquired books. Many books are referred to in the autobiographies and memoirs of the Taylors, although it is not always clear whether they were purchased or part of a lending library. According to his daughter Ann, “[w]herever my father moved there soon arose a book society, if there had not been one before.”²⁹⁹ Part of a catalogue survives from Isaac Taylor II’s time in Colchester

²⁹⁶ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 55.

²⁹⁷ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 28.

²⁹⁸ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 140.

²⁹⁹ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 35.

when he was secretary of a lending library, from which an indication is given of the range of books the Taylors had access to.³⁰⁰

The Catalogue of the Books in the Colchester Library
St Helen's Lane, 1803. Price six-pence.
I. Marsden Printer, Colchester

The binding and arranging of the books being now completed, the subscribers are informed that the library will be re-opened for their use, on Monday, the twentieth instant; and will continue open, at the usual seasons, from that period.

On account of the number of new books added to the library, a new catalogue will be printed, and ready for delivery as above; price sixpence each

Isaac Taylor, Treasurer
[Marsden, printer]

- P9. Philosophy, Sciences, Arts & etc
Brown's Observations on Darwin 1798
Cogon on the Passions 1800
Euler's Letter to a German Princess, 2 vols 1802
Fontenelle's Plurality of Worlds 1801
Kett's Elements of General Knowledge 1803
Locke on Human Understanding 1710
Memoirs of Egypt under Buonaparte
Ree's Dictionary of Arts and Sciences
Rumford's (Count) Essays
Walker's Philosophical Lectures
- P10. Law
Security of Englishmen's Lives by Grand Juries 1796
Medicine
Hufeland's Art of Prolonging Life 1797
Medical Extracts, 3 vols
- P13. Poetry
Baillie's (Miss Joanna) Plays
Campbell's Pleasures of Hope 1800
Guion's (Madame) Poems by Cowper 1801
Mary, Queen of Scots, a Tragedy
Maunde's Translation of De Lille's Rural Philosopher 1801
Opie's (Mrs) Poems
Pindar's (Peter) Horrors of Bribery
-- -- -- Middlesex Election
-- -- -- Ode to Ins and Outs
-- -- -- Pitt and his Statu
Village Curate 1797
West's (Mrs) Poems and Plays, 2 vols 1799
- P14. Novels
Attala 1802
D'Israeli's Romances 1801
Edgeworth's (Miss) Moral Tales 5 vols 1801

³⁰⁰ The surviving sections of this catalogue are pieced together from a large bundle of materials in the Taylor Collection at the Suffolk Records Office. Later generations had used the offcuts of the catalogue to make various notes. HD 588/6/139.

Jesuit (The) 3 vols 1799
 Lee's (Miss) Canterbury Tales 4 vols 1801
 Modern Philosophers 3 vols 1801
 Mordaunt by Dr Moore 3 vols 1800
 Opie's (Mrs) Father and Daughter (2 copies) 1802
 Scott's Persian Tales 1800
 Smith's (Charlotte) Solitary Wanderer 1802
 Zimao, the African 1800

Figure 4: Partial lending library catalogue reconstructed

During her adolescence Mrs Taylor developed a love of writing and this was a pastime she passed on to her children. As part of the literary character of the family house, during the time they spent in Colchester, their father encouraged his daughters to form a society with their friends. The formation of such groups was a recommendation that had been made by Isaac Watts, who suggested the formation of reading groups “that would read the book and debate about the subject.”³⁰¹ The group Ann and Jane formed was named the Umbelliferous Society and, as well as discussing books, its purpose was for its members to present pieces of their own writing.

In addition to reading, both Isaac and Ann Taylor had opinions on what was appropriate for their children's free time. In her memoirs Mrs Taylor expressed a particular concern about dancing:

“nor do I deem the thing itself [dancing] more criminal than the game of chess, backgammon, draughts, or the manly exercises of trapball or cricket with which many serious persons do not scruple to amuse themselves: but the temptation to improper company and late hours with the evil report which attaches to dancing are sufficient

³⁰¹ Rivers, *Celestial City*, p. 77.

persuasives to forego one of the most healthy amusements in which the young could possibly indulge. [sic]"³⁰²

Isaac Taylor II was less concerned about dancing, noting in a letter to Jane Taylor that it was not the dancing itself, but where the dancing takes place.³⁰³ The Taylor children had attended a dancing school at The Swan Inn while they were in Lavenham. They also attended dances given by members of their church in Lavenham around Christmas time.³⁰⁴ Isaac II and Ann Taylor appeared to differ on dancing but they both agreed that attending theatre and the playing of cards were not appropriate. Ann Taylor Gilbert recalled that during a childhood visit to the fair in Bury St Edmunds, the family came across "holiday makers flocking into the theatre," but their father refused to let the children attend. However, a few years later when Ann was staying with relatives in London, her maternal uncle John did let her attend and she "would have readily sacrificed many an evening to its fascinations."³⁰⁵ Both the theatre and cards were associated with the risk, as their parents perceived it, of becoming overly attached to a pastime detrimental to a person's work and responsibilities. Isaac Taylor thought of it as "the narrow end of the wedge."³⁰⁶ For Mrs. Taylor, her mother's experience on first arriving in London may have influenced her principles. Before her marriage Mary Martin had to support herself as a ladies companion and had been required to spend long periods of time entertaining the lady at "the card table from morning to night".³⁰⁷ Once again practical experience seems to have contributed to Mrs. Taylor's opinions in matters concerning her family.

³⁰² Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 353.

³⁰³ SRO: HD 588/7/45, letter dated 3rd March 1815.

³⁰⁴ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 51.

³⁰⁵ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 52 & 96.

³⁰⁶ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 52.

³⁰⁷ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 8.

As a family the Taylors took part in several forms of activities outside the home. Ann Taylor Gilbert recalled how “Domestic Anniversaries” were always marked and enjoyed. In winter these were called ‘Parnassian Evenings’ when the whole family sat at the dining table, drawing, writing or reading out loud. Food was served which was “something inexpensive but a little out of the common way” for supper. In the summer the events were called a ‘Gypsy Ramble’ where they took a walk with a picnic. This was generally alone but sometimes the family could be accompanied by up to twenty or thirty friends.³⁰⁸ However, the family did not need birthdays to go on long walks in the countryside around them. They would take picnics, servants, drawing and writing materials. As well as marking birthdays, the Taylors also regularly attended local village and town fairs. The most exciting, according to Ann Taylor Gilbert, was the annual Long Melford fair. They would also attend the Lavenham fair in October and Guy Fawkes celebrations, ‘in all his glory’ was also marked.³⁰⁹

Friendships

As suggested by the number of people who accompanied the family on a walk, the Taylor family had many friends in Lavenham and Colchester. In Lavenham, when the children were young, there were families at their church with whom to socialise. When they moved to Colchester Ann Taylor Gilbert described how there were no young people associated with their church at the time they arrived. Instead the children made friendships outside their church, foremost amongst these were the four daughters of the widow Mrs Stapleton and the family of eccentric Mr Benjamin Strutt. Ann Taylor Gilbert describes the Strutts with amusement and even affection noting that: “It was in

³⁰⁸ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 115.

³⁰⁹ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 36 & 38.

the social hour after eight that if we ever enjoyed ourselves from home," they frequently supped with the Strutts. Her mother was not as charitable in her memoirs considering that; "in principle he [Mr Strutt] was a radical; in practice, so far as related to his domestic conduct, like many other radicals, a tyrant, and to complete his character, an avowed infidel."³¹⁰ Whatever Mrs. Taylor's view was of Benjamin Strutt's religious principles and character the friendship between the families continued. Their children later co-operated on a book together, while Benjamin Strutt was also friends with Josiah Conder and the diarist, Henry Crabb Robinson, who would become part of the literary network surrounding the Taylor sisters.

The family also visited London, although never together. Mrs Taylor returned to visit her friends and relatives and would take different children with her. On occasion Isaac Taylor II, who had to visit London relatively frequently for his work, might take one of his children. Ann Taylor Gilbert recalled a visit at a time when her only thought was for the arts and her father made a point of introducing her to all the artists he visited. Later when Ann and Jane had begun to have success as writers Isaac II and Ann Taylor made sure their daughters had alternate turns to visit London and associate with other writers.

While they were in Colchester the family experienced the loss of a number of the children who were their friends, principally through consumption. All four Stapleton daughters were lost to the disease starting in 1804. It can be observed that, during this time, the family grew more and more reliant on themselves and a developing circle of likeminded, Nonconformist friends, notably the Conders. Members of the Conder

³¹⁰ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 376.

family were part of the network around the Taylor family in London. When Ann was twelve years old she was introduced to Stephen Conder's daughters, Susan and Luck. It was through them Ann met their cousin, Josiah Conder.³¹¹ The Taylors' friendship with Josiah in particular was influential in relation to their literary careers and was to involve them in a wider literary circle in London.³¹²

As the children grew older, their association with friends from a wider, religious network developed. In later memoirs several members of the family would look back on these new friendships and, comparing them to those of their childhood, concluded that; "the local associations of childhood and youth are better dropped than continued, moral differences may widen, and tastes so opposite may develop themselves that continued intimacy might be as burdensome as dangerous."³¹³

During their time in Colchester the first of the Taylor family's children moved away to begin their own lives. Their eldest daughter Ann married the Rev Joseph Gilbert in 1813. Martin was settled in London by his father to work for the publishing firm established by Isaac Taylor I, then run by Isaac II's younger brother Josiah. In 1810 Isaac Taylor III followed to work as an artist and miniaturist. By the time the Taylors moved to Ongar their household had reduced in size and the family was reliant on maintaining communication with family and friends by letter and occasional visits.

³¹¹ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 56.

³¹² The role of this wider network of literary and religious associates is to be discussed in Chapters III & IV.

³¹³ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 56.

Family Identity:

The loss of so many friends from their childhood, combined with Isaac II and Ann's approach to raising and educating their children in such a close and personal manner, fostered an increasingly strong family identity. Isaac Taylor III was to comment that; "In this scene of united employment and mutual education was formed that close and endeared family friendship."³¹⁴ It was a characteristic that continued through out the lives of Isaac II and Ann Taylor and continued after their deaths with their children's families. Isaac Taylor III wrote in his memoirs of his sister Jane recalling that, in Colchester during the period when their friends died, "The family learned to look, almost entirely, within itself for social pleasures."³¹⁵ Later, recalling a visit to Ongar, Ann Taylor Gilbert's son Josiah, who lived with his grandparents in Ongar for a number of years, described the family in a parlour, which was a "common room." They gathered there with, "the father sat in an arm-chair on one side of the fire, the mother on the other, leaning with her hand behind her ear to catch the sounds; Isaac, Jane, Jeffreys, Jemima completed the circle. Someone might then read the latest composition amidst a running fire of comments, - sarcastic from the mother, genial from the father, acute from Jane, sedate though not without humour from Isaac, droll from Jeffreys, Jemima, the youngest of the circle, joining in with quiet little hits that left their mark."³¹⁶

The Taylors were tremendous letter writers and the correspondence that survives contains long and detailed news concerning home, work, family and friends. Isaac III

³¹⁴ Taylor III, *Memoirs of Jane Taylor*, p. 47.

³¹⁵ Taylor III, *Memoirs of Jane Taylor*, p. 54.

³¹⁶ R. Taylor Gilbert, *The Taylor family of Ongar*, p. 83.

highlights the importance of this communication amongst family members in a letter written shortly after he left home to begin a career as engraver and artist. In it he complains to his family: "Why does not somebody write [sic] to me. There are six of you and only one of me if we do not correspond more fully have you begun to forget me? I sit alone and think of you everyday."³¹⁷

The bond between the family was also illustrated during the deterioration of the relationship between Isaac Taylor II and his church in Colchester and when he resigned his position as minister. Isaac III and Martin, living in London, communicated their concern about the situation and Isaac III informed his parents that Martin was very anxious to be home to be able to contribute to "the family council."³¹⁸ This indicates that family came together to discuss and contribute to decisions regarding family matters. This shared communication between family members began in childhood when, as Isaac Taylor III later recalled, his mother "confided in her children as friends" and they were made aware of their father's affairs in order to "enduce [sic] them to adapt their own feelings and expectations to their parents means."³¹⁹

As the children grew up and dispersed, Isaac Taylor II constructed a method to enable the family to feel close despite the distance between them. On the day of a full moon and at a specific time, wherever they were, Taylor determined that the family members should go outside and look at the moon, knowing that the other members of the family

³¹⁷ SRO: HD 588/7/6.

³¹⁸ SRO: HD 588/7/10.

³¹⁹ Taylor III, *Memoirs of Jane Taylor*, p. 47.

were all doing the same. In his organised manner Isaac II even included the days of full moons.³²⁰

Conclusion

Isaac II and Ann Taylor had a marriage that can be described as companionate, based in mutual affection and shared intellectual, religious and educational beliefs. It is clear that both husband and wife also reacted against the perceived failings of their own parents and sought to invest considerable energy in their domestic arrangements. Although the orthodox principles and middle-class values acquired during their time in London influenced family practices and social associations, it is evident that wider cultural ideas prevalent during the eighteenth century were also influential in the couple's approach to family life. As well as their perspective on childrearing, this is particularly evident in Isaac and Ann Taylor's attitude to education. The impact of contemporary debates engendered by the value the Enlightenment placed on knowledge and learning, particularly in relation to women and the middle classes, was reflected in the intellectual character that was a central feature of the Taylor ethos. For Isaac II and Ann, education had no boundaries based on gender, or the range of subjects covered, and all could be reconciled with Isaac Taylor II's religious principles as demonstrated through the Tablet of Human Knowledge that he constructed.

Isaac Taylor II's profession still reflected the practices generally associated with the pre-industrial era, whereby the centre of family employment was in the home.³²¹ The balance of power in the Taylor family resided with Isaac Taylor II, and much of the

³²⁰ SRO: HD 588/7/42.

³²¹ J. Tosh, Domesticity and Manliness in the Victorian Middle Class in J. Tosh & M. Roper, *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800*, (London, 1991), p. 49.

structure of family life depended on his professional requirements and religious commitments, however, it was Mrs Taylor who carried out the domestic management of the home. This was in line with widely accepted principles but the practical involvement in raising their children was a shared activity. Due to the “spacial distance of work and home,” combined with the decision by Mrs Taylor to raise their children with limited third party involvement, the supervision of play and education involved both husband and wife on a daily basis.³²² Just as Isaac Taylor II crossed gender boundaries in his practical involvement in raising his children, Mrs Taylor contributed significantly to the intellectual character of the home through her reading, writing, and business acumen.

What becomes evident from the family ethos that Isaac II and Ann Taylor constructed is the balance required between religious principles and new ideas. This is typified by their approach to education and between faith and a pragmatic response to events affecting their lives, including the decision to train all their children regardless of gender. The ‘puritan’ characteristic cited by Josiah Gilbert in the preface to his mother’s autobiography, was as much determined by the characteristics of their orthodox belief as a frugality dictated by the financial circumstances of their life. The Taylors were to promote, and subsequently profit from, the moral, religious and intellectual characteristics that were associated with their family ethos during the course of their literary careers. The manner in which this came about can be evaluated through surviving letters and information contained in Mrs Taylor’s memoirs. It is apparent that financial necessity drove the family to a greater reliance on their written works and this will be examined in the next chapter.

³²² Tosh, *Domesticity and Manliness*, p. 49.

Chapter III

“Fruits of Authorship”

The Family Literary Enterprise

Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the Taylor family’s professional life and the development of the literary enterprise undertaken by the Taylors of Ongar. It will examine Isaac Taylor II’s occupation and the extent to which members of his family were involved in this work. The role of a familial network and the significance that family members’ occupation as engravers had in the development of their literary enterprise will be discussed. Consideration will also be given to the process of, and the reasons for, the transition from engraving to the incorporation of writing and publishing within the family profession. In the memoirs of his sister Jane, Isaac Taylor III wrote of his sister’s literary work:

“As to the fruits of authorship in a commercial sense, her *motto*, [sic] if so one might call it, was this: “My income, whether it be more or less is the exact sum yearly with which it pleases God to entrust me.”³²³

Financial details relating to various literary endeavours by members of the family will be examined in order to evaluate the commercial nature of the enterprise and assess the extent to which the work undertaken, particularly by the women, was as providential as later generations of the family portrayed it, or whether more pragmatic inferences should be applied to their literary work.

³²³ I. Taylor III, *The Family Pen*, in I. Taylor IV (ed.), *The Family Pen, Memorials, Biographical and Literary of the Taylor Family of Ongar*, (London, 1867), p. 14.

The literary reputation of the Taylor family today resides in its association with families and coteries of writers who are now seen, in part, as characterising the literary world of the Romantic era. In contrast to the 'solitary writer' associated with literary Romanticism, attention has focused on the "larger network of voices and ideas," which corresponds to recent research on "sociable groups and modes of collaboration."³²⁴

The familial and co-operative working practices of Romantic era writers, such as the Aikin-Barbauld family, Richard and Marie Edgeworth, Charles and Mary Lamb, and the Wollstonecraft-Godwin-Shelley families, have been the subjects of literary and historical studies.³²⁵ More recent research has examined the importance of the Dissenting affiliation of many of the writers in these coteries, and the role of Dissent in eighteenth and nineteenth-century culture in general.³²⁶ Within this field, the Taylors are often mentioned as comparative subjects for discussions concerning better known families from this era, in particular the Edgeworths and the Aikin-Barbaulds, rather than as subjects in their own right.

These case studies have placed the Taylor family's literary output and reputation within the broad category of conservative, middle-class writers, where the father assumed a patriarchal authority over the literary careers of the family. Paul states that the Taylor family belonged "to the conservative right of Hannah More."³²⁷ While Krawczyk argues that the prevailing atmosphere of radicalism and reaction, caused by the impact of national and international events including the French Revolution and the

³²⁴ F. James & I. Inkster (eds.), *Religious Dissent and the Aikin Barbauld Circle, 1740-1860*, (Cambridge 2012), p. 5.

³²⁵ S. Burton, *A Double Life, A Biography of Charles and Mary Lamb*, (London 2003). F. James & I. Inkster (ed.), *Religious Dissent and the Aikin Barbauld Circle, 1740-1860*, (Cambridge 2012), M. Hay, *Young Romantics: The Shelley's, Byron and other Tangled Lives*, (London, 2010), L. Gordon, *Mary Wollstonecraft: A New Genus*, (London, 2005).

³²⁶ D. White, *Early Romanticism and Religious Dissent*, Cambridge, 2006. M. Knight & E. Mason, *Nineteenth-Century Religion and Literature*, (Oxford, 2006).

³²⁷ L. Paul, *The Children's Book Business: Lesson from the Long Eighteenth Century*, London 2011, p. 131.

wars with France, meant that “the literary family witnessed the return of patriarchal oversight evidenced by the supervisory roles of Richard Edgeworth and Isaac Taylor Snr.”³²⁸

Together with the generalisations of conservative affiliation and patriarchal authority, it is often stated that: “Isaac and Ann Martin had not wished their daughters to become authors, despite the family tradition. They thought professional literary work both precarious and inappropriate.”³²⁹ This approach identifies the family, and in particular its female members, with the concept of literary modesty and anonymity in which religious principles and gender are used to justify reluctant participation in the literary public sphere.

The notion of reluctant authorship is further enhanced by a perception of the family as isolated by their location outside London and, by inference, their faith.³³⁰ Davidoff and Hall acknowledge the importance of the family’s London connections stating that, “publishing contacts through the Condors, Darnton and Harvey, and uncle Charles Taylor were crucial in promoting the literary enterprise,” while arguing that this was important for, “all the Taylors but in particular for Ann and Jane – young female and isolated in the provinces.”³³¹ It is often the case that where the Taylors are mentioned, the focus of any discussion involving their literary achievements is centred on the two eldest daughters, Ann and Jane. Even though Ann and Jane’s works may have continued to be revised and published later into the nineteenth and early twentieth

³²⁸ S. Krawczyk, *Romantic Literary Families*, New York 2009, p. 98.

³²⁹ L. Davidoff & C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*, London 1987, p. 67. C. Duff Stewart, *The Taylors of Ongar: An Analytical Bio-bibliography*, New York and London, 1975, p. 6.

³³⁰ The degree to which the family can be seen as isolated in the countryside is discussed in Chapter II.

³³¹ Krawczyk, *Romantic Literary Families*, p. 66.

centuries, it is important to consider the significance of all the family members who published books during the height of the family's literary career. The active participation of six out of the eight immediate family members in producing literary works differentiates the Taylors of Ongar from the families they are often compared with.

By examining family letters and Mrs Taylor's unpublished memoirs, this chapter will test some of the generalisations made about the Taylors' literary enterprise. It will also question the nature and extent of Isaac Taylor II's oversight of the family's work and evaluate the contribution made by individual family members, regardless of gender, to the enterprise. A new understanding of the family's practices and the networks they exploited to support their work, questions the frequently stated reluctance of the family to participate fully in the literary world and challenges the Taylors' perceived isolation. A further aim is to identify the juncture where and when literary output and family name became associated with the collective identity of the 'Taylors of Ongar'.

Engraving: A Family Profession

There is a contrast between the professional backgrounds of the Taylors of Ongar and two of the literary families to whom the Taylors are most frequently compared, the Akin-Barbaulds and the Edgeworths. Anna Letitia Barbauld's father, John Aikin, was a schoolmaster and subsequently a tutor at the influential Warrington Academy and her brother, John, was a physician, geographer, literary critic and editor.³³² Richard

³³² James, Inkster, *Religious Dissent*, p. 4.

Edgeworth, Maria Edgeworth's father, was an educational writer and engineer.³³³ The Taylor family's professional background was in the literary world. Engraving was the predominant area of employment although family members were, at different times, also engaged in publishing and bookselling. It is through this professional background that Isaac Taylor II had an initial experience of a familial working practise that he later extended to his own family.

The involvement of the Taylor family in different aspects of the book trade began with Isaac Taylor I (1730-1807) who came to London from Worcester in 1752, as outlined in chapter one. In the years following his move to London Isaac I had been able to take advantage of an expanding market for British engravers. This professional success led Isaac I to purchase the publishing firm of A and H Webley, who specialised in architectural works and practical manuals to support the building trade.³³⁴ Renamed 'The Architectural Library' in 1787 this firm became the prosperous business that Isaac I's youngest son, Josiah, subsequently took over.

The company Isaac Taylor I purchased, A & H Webley, was based at the Bible and Crown, Holborn. Several members of the Taylor family who were connected to the book trade took up residence in the area around Holborn. This established a professional family network in the area. The family members included Isaac Taylor I's brother, James (1737/8-1790), who also travelled from Worcester to London, and became a printmaker and illustrator. The Taylors' eldest son Charles moved to High Holborn in 1778 following his marriage in 1777. Charles Taylor remained in the Holborn area at no. 10 Holborn until 1785 and then moved to 108 Hatton Garden in

³³³ C. Edgeworth Colvin, *ODNB*, p. 724.

³³⁴ R. Taylor Gilbert, *ODNB*, p. 909.

1796.³³⁵ Isaac and Sarah Hackshaw Taylor's second son, Isaac Taylor II, and his wife Ann moved from Islington to Red Lion Street, near Holborn in 1783. The youngest son Josiah took over the family business in Holborn from his father in 1786/87 and resided at 56 Holborn.³³⁶ The association of male members of the Taylor family with Holborn continued into the third generation as Isaac Taylor II's second son, Martin, who was employed at "one of the larger publishing houses in Paternoster Row,"³³⁷ lived in High Holborn.

The location of various members of Isaac Taylor I's family within the area around Holborn placed them within one of the geographic centres of the book trade in the eighteenth century. Fetter Lane, the site of the Congregational church to which Mrs Sarah Hackshaw Taylor introduced her family in 1759, linked Holborn to the Strand and Fleet Street. St Paul's, Paternoster Row and Cheapside, that lie at the east end of Holborn, were areas of the city where a significant number of successful booksellers and publishers, together with people who traded with and supplied the industry were found.³³⁸

The proximity of members of the Taylor family to each other within the Holborn area, together with a surviving accounts book for Isaac Taylor I's firm, indicates that there was a degree of co-operative professional involvement between extended family members for a number of years. The accounts book dated from 16 May 1786, details the partnership agreement between Isaac Taylor I and his third son Josiah. The book

³³⁵ SRO: HD 588/4/14.

³³⁶ MS. Accounts Book, Taylor Collection, Colchester Library.

³³⁷ Ann Taylor Gilbert, *Autobiography and other Memorials*, London 1874, p. 136.

³³⁸ J. Raven, *The Business of Books: Booksellers and the English Book Trade*, (New Haven, 2007), p. 162.

reveals periodic payments for drawings and engravings commissioned by Isaac I and Josiah. These include payments to James Taylor, Charles Taylor and Isaac Taylor II.

Isaac Taylor I, who had apprenticed his three sons to his firm, initiated the collaborative work between family members that included Isaac Taylor II.³³⁹ Evidence from Mrs Ann Martin Taylor's memoirs show the degree to which Isaac Taylor II was to benefit from the support of this family network, in particular from his older brother Charles, when he set out on his own as an engraver.

There is the indication in Mrs Taylor's memoirs that Isaac Taylor I's three sons acquired different skills during their time as apprentices. The eldest son, Charles trained in line engraving, and spent a year in France following his marriage improving his skills. On his return from France, Charles practised as an engraver but also published for himself.³⁴⁰ Although there is no indication of the training received by Isaac I's third son Josiah, he did subsequently take over his father's firm. The transition between father and son took place between the years 1786-87 when a partnership agreement was established.³⁴¹ Prevented by illness from pursuing a ministerial vocation, Isaac II was also apprenticed to his father in 'writing engraving'. At the beginning of his marriage in April 1781 his wife, Ann, later recalled that although his apprenticeship was complete he was not trained as he wished:

³³⁹ One of these was Robert Pollard, a friend of Thomas Bewick who subsequently undertook work for Taylor.³³⁹ Another included George Burder who was a friend of Isaac Taylor II and a fellow member of the Fetter Lane Congregational church.³³⁹ Burder later relinquished his engraving profession for that of a Congregational minister eventually becoming the minister at Fetter Lane, editor of the *Evangelical Magazine* and Secretary of the Missionary Society.

³⁴⁰ SRO: HD 588/4/14.

³⁴¹ Accounts book, Taylor Collection, Colchester Library.

“my husband, having served the former part of his apprenticeship to the writing engraving, could not have attained to any proficiency in the line way, which his natural talents prompted him to choose in preference, so that he was perhaps as little competent to maintain a family, as his wife to conduct one.”³⁴²

Demand increased for the skills of engravers across different fields as a result of the advance in both material culture and commerce during the eighteenth-century. In addition to the traditional requirement of plates for books, which employed line, stipple and wood engravers, writing engravers supported commercial work including stationery headings and advertising materials. Decorative metalwork, including personalised valuable objects, also required the skills of an engraver.³⁴³ Within the Taylor family all aspects of the engraving profession were present, from the early experience of Isaac Taylor I with bookplates and silverware, to the line engraving he later taught his eldest son, and the more commercial skill of writing engraving through Isaac Taylor II.

Nigel Tattersfield recounts that within London it was usual for firms to specialise in an aspect of engraving while provincial engravers, “were expected to provide craftsmen who could take all these divisions of labour in their stride.”³⁴⁴ Since his arrival in London, Isaac Taylor I had widened his skills and developed a reputation in the fine art of line engraving. This skill was more closely associated with fine artistic and literary productions of the day than with commercial engraving. Mrs Taylor’s memoirs indicate

³⁴² Ann Martin Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 208. In 1783 one of the artists Charles Taylor commissioned to produce drawings for his Shakespeare project was Robert Smirke who subsequently went on to be the most prolific contributor of 31 canvases to the Boydell’s Shakespeare’s Gallery.

³⁴³ N. Tattersfield, *Thomas Bewick Graphic Works*, (London, 2014), p. 8.

³⁴⁴ Tattersfield, *Bewick*, p. 9.

that Isaac Taylor II wished to follow his father's example and expand his skills in the more prestigious art of line engraving. Isaac Taylor II's lack of technique in this field meant that from beginning of his marriage, when his apprenticeship to his father ceased, he had to spend several years improving his skills and advancing his reputation. To this end, Isaac's elder brother Charles, to whom he became an assistant, initially supported him.³⁴⁵ Isaac II undertook working three days a week for Charles Taylor and received "half a guinea certain," which appears to have been his main source of income.³⁴⁶

In 1780 Charles Taylor had begun a publishing project known as *The Picturesque Beauties of Shakespeare*. Interest in Shakespeare had revived and Charles Taylor's project sought to exploit this demand. The most famous example of this type of project was *The Shakespeare Gallery*, undertaken by the print publisher John Boydell and his nephew Josiah, which was initiated in 1786.³⁴⁷ Between 1783 and 1787 Isaac Taylor II produced 19 of the 40 plates for Charles Taylor's earlier Shakespearean enterprise. Isaac Taylor II later recalled that as the project progressed "after six numbers I took [it] of him to continue."³⁴⁸

When Isaac Taylor II "got his start" from his brother Charles, who was already based in Holborn, it meant long days away from his wife and new daughter Ann, born in 1782, at their home in Islington. This may have precipitated Isaac II and Ann's move to Red Lion Street, Holborn in 1783 joining the network of family members in the Holborn

³⁴⁵ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 208.

³⁴⁶ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 7.

³⁴⁷ J. Bruntjen, *John Boydell 1719-1804: A Study of Art Patronage and Publishing in Georgian London*, New York 1985, p. 72.

³⁴⁸ SRO. HD 588/4/14

area. However, their time close to this network only lasted for two years as in 1785 Isaac Taylor II took the decision to move his family out of London. According to his wife the move was initially intended to last seven years, Isaac Taylor II having reasoned that: “we might live at less expense and where the income arising from what I am now doing for my brother, might be made to meet our wants.”³⁴⁹ It was his wife’s judgement, expressed in her memoirs, that this decision was precipitous and hindered his professional development:

“Viewing him merely as an artist, and with talents of no mean order, there is little doubt but that had he determined to stand the brunt, and submit a while to his difficulties, he would not only have surmounted them but have become one of the first in his profession; for however theoretically well laid the plan might have appeared to him; experience proved, how decidedly advantageous it would have been had he remained at his post. That the step he took proved eventually beneficial is undeniable (for providence thereby had wise purposes to answer) yet as of these there could be no anticipation; so no merit can be justly claimed for the decision.”³⁵⁰

The move to Lavenham in Suffolk did prove to be financially beneficial in terms of the Taylors living expenses, reducing their rent for a house from £20 to £6, but the impact on Isaac II’s professional life was apparent.³⁵¹ Following the move there are a few references in letters and memoirs indicating that Isaac Taylor II undertook some commissions outside London. Isaac II produced a series of drawings and engravings of *Gentlemen’s Seats of the county of Norfolk* for Gedge’s Pocket Book published at Bury St

³⁴⁹ A. Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 225. As discussed in chapter 1 this period was also a time of change at Isaac Taylor II’s church and his father was beginning the process of handing over his business to younger brother Josiah.

³⁵⁰ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 227.

³⁵¹ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 227.

Edmunds. He also received a commission from the agriculturalist, Arthur Young. It is not certain that Isaac II completed the work from Young as he became seriously ill in the course of carrying out the commission. However, London in the late eighteenth century was the main centre for the English book trade and while there were opportunities in regional towns, Isaac Taylor II's main contacts and commissions remained principally with the London market. As a consequence of this, Isaac II began a routine of travelling back to London to seek work in order to acquire the more prestigious and lucrative commissions he required to continue the development of his skills and reputation.

To pursue his profession, Isaac II utilised the improved transport links that developed during the eighteenth century. Ann Taylor Gilbert recalled that her father made occasional use of "the nightmail for London" when he had work to be sent to the city.³⁵² Letters to his family over a number of years detail how Isaac Taylor II stayed for periods of time in the city and walked between various publishers, occasionally using a coach, seeking commissions. This description supports his wife's analysis of the difficulties that any move out of London would entail in relation to business opportunities. In spite of the additional effort Isaac Taylor II had to undertake to obtain work, letters he wrote to his family, together with his wife's memoirs, trace his growing professional success during the 1790s.

At the start of these regular visits to London, Taylor was still establishing his reputation as a line engraver. He eventually succeeded in obtaining significant commissions, the most notable being his association with the Boydells, whose

³⁵² Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 7.

Shakespeare's Gallery was initiated in 1786. In a letter to his wife, dated 1 October 1787, Isaac II records that: "I have offered myself to Boydell, the young one likes my work vastly, but the old one is in France."³⁵³ The significant turning point came four years later in 1791, when Isaac Taylor II was commissioned by the Boydells to produce an engraving of John Opie's *The Assassination of Rizzio*. The importance that Taylor placed on this commission is clear from Mrs Taylor's memoirs:

"The Rizzio would certainly have proved advantageous if the time Mr Taylor determined to bestow upon it at all hazards, had not involved him 100£ in debt – a justifiable venture as the only means of establishing his reputation as an artist, and ultimately improving his circumstances! It was [sic] a hard struggle, but it deserved encountering for by the time it was completed he was enabled to double his price and to procure the Anna Bullen [sic] at 500 guineas. And now business more than he could do showered upon him. He obtained a prize at the Adelphie of 25 guineas and a gold medal. He took two apprentices and seemed in the high road to affluence and to fame."³⁵⁴

As John Bruntjen notes, John Boydell was the most important publisher of the second half of the eighteenth century. Boydell began his business in premises on the Strand before moving to Cheapside. Already successful in 1786, Boydell, together with his nephew Josiah, conceived of the plan for a *Shakespeare Gallery*. The intention was to commission a series of oil paintings inspired by the works of Shakespeare from major

³⁵³ SRO: HD 588/7/1.

³⁵⁴ A. Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 259.

artists of the day that were to be on permanent display in a gallery.³⁵⁵ A folio of engravings of these paintings was then to be produced together with an edition of Shakespeare's plays also with accompanying engravings.³⁵⁶

As the project progressed Boydell's nephew, Josiah, took responsibility for the production of the engravings from a workshop based at his home in Hampstead where he organised the copying of the paintings for the engravers. At its peak, Boydell employed 46 engravers, at that time the largest number working on a project of its type.³⁵⁷ One of these engravers was Isaac Taylor II providing an indication of the skill and level of success Taylor had achieved. The experience Isaac II obtained working on his brother Charles' Shakespearean project would explain the Boydells' appreciation of his work. For *The Shakespeare Gallery*, as with their other projects, the Boydells also required the engravers to use the "line engraving" technique, which Taylor had set out to master.³⁵⁸ Isaac Taylor II subsequently undertook thirteen plates for the Boydells' *Shakespeare's Gallery*.

Thus, during the family's time in Lavenham, from 1786 to 1795, Isaac Taylor II was engraving works by some of the leading artists of the day.³⁵⁹ As his experience increased his wife noted that:

"as he rapidly attained to greater perfection in his art, he found that what he had been accustomed to execute in three weeks now to do it ample justice according to his

³⁵⁵ Artists who worked on the project included Sir Joshua Reynolds, Henry Fuseli, and George Romney. Robert Smirke, who contributed drawings to Charles Taylor's *Picturesque Beauties of Shakespeare*, was the largest contributor the Boydell's project with 31 canvases.

³⁵⁶ J. Bruntjen, *John Boydell 1719-1804*, p. 69.

³⁵⁷ J. Bruntjen, *John Boydell 1719-1804*, p. 104.

³⁵⁸ J. Bruntjen, *John Boydell 1719-1804*, p. 106.

³⁵⁹ These included Henry Fuseli, Thomas Stothard, John Opie.

improved conceptions, required two months; a deflation in his income was the natural consequence; and finally an abandonment of the work on which he had principally depended.”³⁶⁰

In consequence, during this time, Isaac Taylor II ceased to rely on his brother Charles as his main source of income, although he continued to undertake periodic work for his elder brother. The accounts book of his father’s firm also indicates that he still undertook occasional work for his father and younger brother, Josiah.

This appears to be the time when the Taylor family came closest to fulfilling the ideal ambitions of the middling sort. Isaac Taylor II was professionally successful, had an established reputation, able to take on apprentices, and was in a position to take out a loan to purchase a house. In addition to apprentices, the professional success that Isaac Taylor II experienced at this time meant he acquired a printing press for “proving.” A young woman from Lavenham was employed and trained to operate it and “the building intended for a brew house [was] converted into a printing office.”³⁶¹ During this time Isaac Taylor was principally working for himself but this was to change in the years following the family’s move from Lavenham to Colchester in 1796.

³⁶⁰ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 259.

³⁶¹ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 46.

A Family Concern

The Taylor family left Lavenham for Colchester in January 1796 following a period of unrest that had been directed against Dissenters in the town. In addition, a bitter dispute amongst the congregation of the Lavenham church contributed to Isaac Taylor II's decision to move.³⁶² During the years the Taylor family spent in Colchester they began working together as engravers. In her autobiography, Ann Taylor Gilbert stated that she and Jane began learning the art of engraving on 12 July 1797.³⁶³ Ann was then fifteen years old and Jane fourteen.

Evidence suggests that a number of factors contributed to the decision to involve both the Taylor sons and daughters in the family business as discussed in chapter two. In her memoirs, Mrs Taylor recalled that this decision was taken to ensure their children had, "some employ with a view to their future subsistence." Demonstrating that the ability of their daughters, Ann and Jane, as well as their sons Isaac and Martin, to support themselves became a consideration. An additional concern, as Mrs Taylor also stated in her memoirs, was that the decline in her husband's income, as a result of the depression in the market for prints, meant that there was no money to support alternative options. As a consequence of this, their children were apprenticed to their father, "against a time which he hoped was not far distant, when the arts would revive."³⁶⁴

³⁶² These episodes have been outlined in Chapter 1.

³⁶³ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 83.

³⁶⁴ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 358.

With the continuation of the war with France, Isaac III and Martin also needed to avoid the press gangs that were active in Colchester, a busy garrison town. As a result of the general environment in the town, in May 1803, Isaac II wrote to his wife who was visiting London: "You will be surprised at my binding [as apprentices] the two boys so suddenly, but you will I know be glad of it. Isaac would in 3 months be liable to the militia ballot, and both might be laid hold of some evening by the press-gang. They wished it and so did I."³⁶⁵

Further family correspondence reveals that Isaac Taylor trained all his children in the art of engraving. In a letter from 1813, in a rare surviving mention of Jefferys, Isaac II wrote: "I shall write for the next set [to Boydells] that Jefferys may get on."³⁶⁶ The professional options for their sons was primarily restricted by financial constraints and the threat of military conscription but for Ann, Jane and later Jemima, being trained as engravers was because of the limited alternatives available to women. Mrs Taylor was only too aware of the precarious position women with no means of support could find themselves in. In her memoirs she writes that had she not married:

"I must have been a pensioner on the bounty of my two brothers; or which would have been the more probable case have been turned adrift on a world, for no department of which I possessed as I know of, any qualification to enable me to provide comfortably for myself."³⁶⁷

³⁶⁵ SRO: HD 588/7/1

³⁶⁶ SRO: HD 588/7/31

³⁶⁷ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 299.

Additionally, Isaac II and Ann recoiled at “sending our two daughters from under our wing,” making their place within the family business attractive.³⁶⁸ The Taylors’ solution also supported their belief in the protective environment of the Dissenting family home, enabling them to keep their family apart from influences that may have impinged on the principles and practices of their faith.

The decision to apprentice the Taylor children with their father was to establish a model for family collaboration. A letter written in March 1811 by Isaac Taylor II to his three eldest children, who were in Devon at the time, offers a glimpse of how the family worked together. It is clear from the letter that in the matter of the family’s engraving work Isaac Taylor II was in command of the complete process:

“I send the King let the drapery be bit in moderately, I had rather bite twice than too much. All the ornaments but the star may bite. Adam and Eve Ann may do as soon as convenient the foreground is to be rich and grassey. The creation of Adam. I have done the heads of the beasts to keep the grand character of awe at the presence of the Deity so finely put in by Isaac but I think Jane may do the rest from where the instrument leaves off. Let her begin the same width gradually opening a little towards the [?] and becoming very rich and grassey round Adam. The foreground much opener let none of these Boydell’s be bit till I come. I outlined the three figures of these two plates on Tuesday. [sic]”³⁶⁹

Following the move to Colchester and the start of the family’s engraving work, the manuscript evidence reveals the extent of the decline in the engraving market as a

³⁶⁸ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 358.

³⁶⁹ SRO: HD 588/7/1

result of the wars with France. The concern caused by the conflict was noted by Mrs Taylor when her husband went to London seeking work, “this time the war had begun to make its ravages on trade in general and the arts were the first to suffer by it. He returned with nothing, and little prospect for the future ... though the business he had yet in the house afforded a present supply it was important that with two apprentices, there should be no chasm ... at length business was nearly at a stand producing in the course of six months but ten pounds.”³⁷⁰

Much of Isaac Taylor II’s professional life was carried out against a background of national economic instability. James Hamilton noted that following, “the end of the wars with France in 1815 money supply suffered intermittent constrictions, about once every ten years.” This resulted in periods of “private misery, public uncertainty, and social unrest.”³⁷¹ Operating purely as a line engraver, without the additional support of income from the wider publishing and bookselling opportunities that both Charles and Josiah undertook, had left Isaac II particularly vulnerable to the collapse in the engraving market during these periods of economic decline. The additional income he received as a minister in Colchester, that “averaged little more than sixty per annum, not with standing the crowds that flocked to it,” was not sufficient to supplement the fall in commissions that he experienced.³⁷²

Compiling surviving evidence from different sources it is possible to indicate the vagaries in the income the Taylor family received from engraving spanning from their time in London to Ongar. With Mrs Taylor’s financial acumen, provided by her training

³⁷⁰ Taylor, *Memoirs* p. 259.

³⁷¹ J. Hamilton, *A Strange Business: Making Art and Money in the Nineteenth Century*, (London, 2014), p. 25.

³⁷² Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 339.

in the Martin family business,³⁷³ she frequently recorded details of the family's financial situation in her memoirs. This, together with the accounts book for Isaac Taylor I and Josiah Taylor's business from 1786 – 1798, references in letters and Ann Taylor Gilbert's autobiography provides an indication of the variations in Isaac Taylor II's income from engraving.

Evidence of Income from Engraving

Date	Sum	Commission	Source
c.1781	Half-a guinea for 3 days work a week	Charles Taylor: The Picturesque Beauties of Shakespeare.	Ann Taylor Gilbert, <i>Autobiography and other Memorials</i> , 1879, p. 7
24 Nov 1787	£10 10s	For Engraving, commissioned by Isaac & Josiah Taylor	Ms: Accounts Book for I & J Taylor.
10 May 1790	£10 10s	Four plates, monuments. Commissioned by I & J Taylor.	Ms: Accounts Book for I & J Taylor.
1791	250 guineas Prize of 25 guineas	Engraving of Opie's <i>The Assassination of Rizzio</i> for Boydells Gold medal at the society of arts, Adelphi Taylor subsequently produced 13 plates for Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery.	Ms. Mrs. Ann Martin Taylor, Memoirs, p. 259
1792	500 guineas	Engraving of painting by Stothard of the first interview between Henry VIII and Ann Boleyn, for Shakespeare Gallery	Ann Taylor Gilbert, <i>Autobiography and other Memorials</i> , 1879, p. 46 Ms. Mrs. Ann Martin Taylor, Memoirs, p. 259
1 May 1792	£10	No details, payment by I & J Taylor	Ms: Accounts Book for I & J Taylor.
27 May 1793	£59 19s 6d £12 12s	Editing new edition Inland Navigation & Addenda, commission by I & J Taylor	Ms: Accounts Book for I & J Taylor.
c.1796	£10 in 6 months, business at a stand		Ms. Mrs. Ann Martin Taylor, Memoirs, p. 342
21 Dec 1801	40 guineas plate	Josiah Boydell	SRO: HD 588/7/1-28
7 Dec 1810	200 guineas for Isaac Taylor III for drawings 600 guineas for Isaac Taylor II engraving	Settlement for 20 plates, of prospective 110 for Josiah Boydell	SRO: HD 588/7/1
29 March 1815	£50	Including frontispiece for an Arabian Tale, Isaac Taylor II to do drawing, Isaac Taylor III the engraving, commission from publisher Harrison.	SRO: HD 588/7/47

Figure 5

³⁷³ Mrs. Taylor's training in her family's business during her adolescence is discussed in Chapter II.

The information shown in figure 5 confirms that the peak of Isaac Taylor II's earning from engraving occurred in the early 1790s through his initial involvement with the Boydells. It is possible to indicate how prestigious these early commissions were when the sums of 250 guineas for the Rizzio in 1791 and 500 guineas for the Stothard engraving in 1792 are compared to earning for other artists of the period. In the 1790s Sir Joshua Reynolds charged 200 guineas for a full-length portrait and in 1803 Turner asked 300 guineas for his painting *Festival Upon the Opening of the Vintage Macon*.³⁷⁴

The art market was unstable and experienced fluctuations in prices. In addition to the impact of the national economic climate, dealers and collectors had changing attitudes toward artists, and the various artistic mediums.³⁷⁵ By 1810 it is noticeable that while Isaac Taylor II and III received a substantial sum from the Boydells of 800 guineas in total, this was for the production of not one but twenty plates.

In addition to emphasising the peak in earnings that Isaac Taylor II achieved in Lavenham in 1792, the evidence also confirms the financial difficulties of the early years in Colchester, after 1796. As well as the decline in commissions from engraving, the Taylor family were carrying interest on a debt of £200 from a loss on the sale of the house they purchased in Lavenham. Mrs Taylor recorded in her memoirs that her husband subsidised the family income by opening a drawing school around 1796 and that his "skilful hand [was] employed in engraving dog collars. [sic]"³⁷⁶

³⁷⁴ Hamilton, *A Strange Business*, p. 6.

³⁷⁵ Hamilton, *A Strange Business*, p. 6.

³⁷⁶ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 365.

In her memoirs, Mrs Taylor provided a vivid picture of the change in the family's material circumstances. She described how a German stove that warmed the workroom, in which the family was employed in engraving, produced noxious fumes. Although ventilation was added at a later date, Mrs Taylor described the conditions as being "a workhouse in the truest sense. Father, mother and children toiling like slaves incessantly, and none of them in robust health."³⁷⁷ At this time "every expense was curtailed", and Mrs Taylor wrote that she could also not, "forget the first afternoon in which (considering it to be a superfluity) we left off tea."³⁷⁸ In order to contribute to the family income Mrs Taylor undertook the colouring in of maps and was "compelled to neglect the affairs of my family" for "incompetent remuneration". It is clear that engraving alone was not enough to sustain the family income during a continuing period of instability in the straitened wartime economy. A financial imperative underpinned the family's need to develop their writing opportunities.

The Transition to Writing

The start of the process by which the family undertook the transition to writing occurred during this time of financial difficulties and began, as Ann Taylor Gilbert noted in her autobiography, unintentionally. The move to writing was to mark the start of an improvement in the family's financial situation. In 1798, one year after Ann and Jane started engraving for their father, Ann submitted pieces of writing, in the name of Juvenilia, to competitions in the *Minor's Pocket Book*. Ann, Jane and Isaac III submitted further pieces over the following years and that resulted in the publishers of the *Pocket*

³⁷⁷ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 361.

³⁷⁸ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 354.

Book, Darton and Harvey, approaching Isaac Taylor II in 1803 for “some specimens of easy poetry for young children” from his family.³⁷⁹

The first volume of a book by members of the Taylor family, *Original Poems*, was published in 1804, with second volume following in 1805. These volumes contained works by Ann, Jane, Isaac III and two additional writers.³⁸⁰ Between 1804 and 1812 Ann and Jane produced eight works for Darton and Harvey. These were both original works and commissioned revisions of existing books from the publisher’s catalogue. In the knowledge that the publishers frequently produced small books with plates, Ann Taylor Gilbert approached Darton and Harvey with a proposal that the family undertake engravings for them as well. This resulted in the Taylors being “frequently employed on small plates for their juvenile works,” that contributed to an improvement in the family’s situation.³⁸¹ This was noted by Mrs Taylor who observed in her memoirs that, “by degrees business revived” when “[p]lates for children’s books were now obtained.”³⁸²

The original works produced by Ann and Jane Taylor for Darton and Harvey were immediately successful and ran to multiple editions. Within the next five years other members of the family began their writing careers. Following the success of his daughters, Isaac Taylor II wrote his first two works for publication in 1811, although he continued engraving for the rest of his working life.³⁸³ One of these books, *A Child’s Birthday*, was also published by Darton and Harvey. Mrs Ann Taylor’s first work,

³⁷⁹ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 118 & 119.

³⁸⁰ The publishers added several pieces by Adelaide O’Keeffe and one by the Quaker poet Bernard Barton.

³⁸¹ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 119.

³⁸² Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 358.

³⁸³ These are the first two works written specifically for publication, although a sermon reputedly by Isaac Taylor II was published in 1807.

Maternal Solitude For A Daughter's Best Interests, appeared in 1814, and with the exception of the year 1820, Mrs Taylor completed a new book each year until 1821. Her final work, *The Itinerary of a Traveller in the Wilderness*, appeared after a gap of four years in 1825, following the death of Jane from cancer in April 1824. Although Isaac Taylor III contributed a few pieces to *Original Poems* at the beginning of the family's writing career his first book, *Elements of Thought or First Lesson in Knowledge of the Mind*, did not appear until 1822. Isaac III continued to be involved in the family literary enterprise principally through the production of drawings and engravings for books and articles for periodicals written by other family members. During the period that the family was writing, Isaac III is also known to have contributed to periodicals, although because several were published anonymously it is unclear how many he wrote.³⁸⁴ Jeffery's first book, *Harry's Holiday Or The Doings Of One Who Had Nothing To Do*, appeared in 1818 and he continued publishing new works regularly up until 1833, then more occasionally until 1850.

In 1811, when the family moved to Ongar, and Isaac Taylor II took up his position as minister of the small Congregational church, the family's literary output increased and involved still more members.³⁸⁵ The type of writing undertaken by family members also broadened as well as their exercise of greater control over the publication process. Although Isaac II and Isaac III continued the family's engraving work, by the time of the move to Ongar Ann Taylor Gilbert reported that, "we [Ann and Jane] had given up engraving, so far as it implied daily employment unless father occasionally required

³⁸⁴ Duff Stewart, *Bio Bibliography* Vol. II, p. 842.

³⁸⁵ This had been precipitated by a disagreement within their church in Colchester that had caused Rev. Isaac to resign as its minister in 1810.

assistance.”³⁸⁶ The literary activities of the two sisters expanded shortly after the move.

Ann Taylor Gilbert had remained a regular contributor to *Minor's Pocket Book* becoming its editor until her marriage in 1813.³⁸⁷ In 1812 Ann Taylor Gilbert also began to write reviews for *The Eclectic Review*. The Taylor family friend Josiah Conder edited and published the periodical during this period and Isaac Taylor III also became a contributor. In 1816 Jane Taylor began writing for a periodical, *Youth's Magazine and Evangelical Miscellany*. She continued contributing to this work, also becoming its editor, until just before her death in 1824.³⁸⁸

Again demonstrating the link between the family's work as engravers and their literary careers, the opportunity for Jane to contribute to the periodical arose from her father gaining an engraving commission from his publisher. Isaac Taylor II wrote to Jane in April 1816: “Mr Gurney saw me re the plates for Youths Magazine. I regained that job, which being annual is of some importance. They are excessively anxious for your help to send them a paper every month.”³⁸⁹

Both *The Eclectic Review* and *Youth's Magazine* had religious affiliations. *The Eclectic Review* was associated with the Dissenting tradition, and supported many of the causes espoused by the growing evangelical movement including Bible societies, the abolition of slavery and missionary work, while *The Youth Magazine* was a popular forerunner of

³⁸⁶ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 147.

³⁸⁷ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 93.

³⁸⁸ Just before Jane's death she compiled a collection of these articles that was published as *The Contribution of QQ to a Periodical Work*, in 1824.

³⁸⁹ SRO: HD 588/6/17

religious periodicals for children.³⁹⁰ This marks a change in the character of the Taylors' literary enterprise. From 1804, when the Taylors' first book was published, the first editions of their works appeared with publishers who commanded broad catalogues and ones that were not defined by denomination or associated specifically with Christian or evangelical concerns. *Original Poems* represented the start of the Taylor family's association with a number of publishers who specialised in books for children and young people, a readership for whom the family remain associated.

The trade in books for children had begun to expand significantly in the mid-eighteenth century. The firm of John Newbery, founded in 1740, proved the dominant firm in this emerging field. When John Newbery died, Quaker William Darton who ran a firm in Gracechurch Street, bought over 20 titles and blocks from Newbery and took on Joseph Harvey as a partner. Newbery's continued as a company for a number of years until it was purchased by John Harris, who had managed the firm between 1797 and 1802 on behalf of the Newbery family.³⁹¹ Harris continued the success of Newbery's and Isaac Taylor II began a series of books for J. Harris in 1818, an association that was to continue until 1831. In 1810, Ann and Jane received a commission from the publisher Sir Richard Phillips to revise a work, *Signor Topsy-Turvy's Wonderful Magic Lantern*. Phillips was a successful publisher and a radical, associated with educational works and children's books. He founded *The Monthly Magazine*, which was edited by John Aikin, and contributors included William Godwin.

The Taylor family also became associated with other successful publishers of the Romantic era. Taylor and Hessey always published the first editions of Mrs Taylor's

³⁹⁰ Duff Stewart, *Bio Bibliography*, p. 826 & p. 834.

³⁹¹ M. V. Jackson, *Engines of Instruction, Mischief and Magic*, Nebraska 1989.

works. This was generally in association with Josiah Conder, who had taken over his father Thomas's firm in Bucklersbury. Taylor and Hessey, situated at 93 Fleet Street, were publishers of work written by some of the most significant literary figures of the Romantic era. These included Keats, Clare, Hazlitt, Lamb and De Quincey. The firm Rest Fenner, who at the time published Samuel Taylor Coleridge, published Jefferys first two books. Rest Fenner also published a work by Isaac Taylor II in the year a work by Jefferys first appeared in print. With the exception of Mrs Taylor who continued to be published by Taylor and Hessey, from the 1820s onwards the firms publishing the Taylors' works were increasingly associated with a more overt religious intention.

By 1822 B. J. Holdsworth had taken over Josiah Conder's publishing firm.³⁹²

Holdsworth published the first individual work by Isaac III, *Elements Of Thought*, and Isaac continued an association with B. J. Holdsworth for a number of years.

Holdsworth's firm was associated with the publication of religious works and poetry by various Dissenting denominations. As well as the change in the profile of the firms publishing the Taylors' works the family also increasingly sought to publish for themselves rather than rely on commissions. It is evident that financial considerations lay behind this decision.

Surviving evidence indicates that the Taylor family appreciated the financial advantages of literary work from the time they were first approached by Darton and Harvey in 1803. Ann Taylor Gilbert recalled the family concluding that, "Books good but cash better [sic]" in response to the publisher's offer of remuneration in books or

³⁹² Duff Stewart, *Bio-Bibliography*, p. 1017.

monetary terms.³⁹³ Occurring at a time of considerable strain in the family finances, Ann Taylor Gilbert later wrote that, “the employment was so much to our taste as well as advantageous to our limited funds.”³⁹⁴ Being literate, well read and familiar with the publishing world through their work as engravers, the Taylors were in a position to exploit the growing demand for materials in the expanding periodical and book markets. The family’s commitment to their writing clearly advanced, together with their recognition and exploitation of opportunities, underlining a professional approach to their literary careers. In the case of Isaac Taylor II and Isaac III this was combined with engraving; for the women and Jefferys, writing became the main occupation.

In her autobiography, Ann Taylor Gilbert provides evidence of the growing financial benefit from their work. In 1804 the family received £5 from Darton and Harvey for *Original Poems* with £5 added afterwards and £15 for the second volume. For *Rhymes for the Nursery* published in 1806 they received £20. In 1809 Ann received 12 guineas from Darton and Harvey for an imitation of the popular book *Butterfly Ball*. Ann’s work was called *Wedding among the Flowers*.³⁹⁵ Grenby has shown that Darton and Harvey paid women a “median £10.7s”, which placed Ann and Jane Taylor’s initial earnings within this category.³⁹⁶ In 1810 Sir Richard Phillips paid Ann and Jane 25 guineas to revise *Signor Topsy-Turvy’s Magic Lantern*.³⁹⁷

³⁹³ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 118.

³⁹⁴ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 121.

³⁹⁵ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 122.

³⁹⁶ M.O Grenby, Pay, Professionalization and Probable Dominance? Women Writers and the Children’s Book Trade, in J. Batchelor & G Dow (eds.), *Women’s Writing 1660-1830: Feminisms and Futures*, (London, 2016), p. 124.

³⁹⁷ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 123.

By 1811 Ann Taylor Gilbert noted that they were now in a position to place “small sums at interest”. It was during this time the family took greater control of their work. Ann recalled, “it was not till we began to publish for ourselves that we felt the solid advantage that literature might bring us.”³⁹⁸ The first of these works was *Hymns for Infant Minds*, 1810, which in the first year of publication realised £150.³⁹⁹

The decision to publish for themselves was initially the result of the financial failure of Thomas Conder’s firm who published *Hymns for Infant Minds*. Ann Taylor Gilbert later recalled that: “All our little savings were now floated off to meet expenses, and we had to make a fresh start.” By taking the decision to publish their own works they were to receive the entire benefit of their labours. *Hymns for Infant Minds* was to become the most successful work by members of the Taylor family and Ann Taylor Gilbert noted that: “Before the 1st January 1811 the third edition of *Hymns for Infant Minds* had made their appearance, and we enjoyed the entire profit.”⁴⁰⁰ The Taylors were now taking the initiative and offering books to publishers. Mrs Taylor’s first book, *Maternal Solitude for a Daughter’s Best Interests*, 1814, was the result of her husband believing there to be a potential interest in the series of private addresses Mrs Taylor had written for their youngest child, Jemima. On offering it to booksellers in London he received 60 guineas “with a contingency of 10£ per thousand after the first two editions”.⁴⁰¹ By 1818 Grenby notes that, “following the expiry of the first term of copyright, the Darton firm paid each sister £100 plus £35 per annum for 14 years, amounting to an astonishing £590 each.”⁴⁰²

³⁹⁸ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 139.

³⁹⁹ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 139.

⁴⁰⁰ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 139.

⁴⁰¹ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 403.

⁴⁰² Grenby, *Pay and Professionalization*, p. 127.

A further indication of the success of the Taylors' literary enterprise is indicated in the print runs discussed in family documents. Stephen Behrendt has noted how authors' incomes were often dependent on the success of their publishers and the readership, including affiliated lending libraries, associated with the various firms. Writers' financial benefits were therefore connected to, "the economic realities of the Romantic-era publishing industry that often dictated surprisingly small press runs." Works by writers now held in considerable esteem were often published in print runs of between 250 to 500 copies. Stephen Behrendt cites works by Shelley, including *Prometheus Unbound*, published in 1820, as having print runs within this numerical range.⁴⁰³

A consideration of the print runs of works by members of the Taylor family helps to contextualise the success of the literary enterprise. In family correspondence there are references to runs of 1,000 copies for editions of works such as Mrs Taylor's *Maternal Solitude*. In her will Jane Taylor bequeaths the money from future new editions of her books *Display, A Tale* and *Essays in Rhyme*, each a run of 1,000 copies, to her beneficiaries.⁴⁰⁴ The financial benefits from the Taylors' literary works are also shown in evidence from Isaac Taylor II's executor's accounts in 1825 for his daughter Jane's estate, made following her death in 1824. This reveals income that Jane, and by implication for certain works her sister Ann, were still receiving from publishers some of whom were associated with their first books. From these 1825 accounts it can be seen that *Hymns for Infant Minds*, first published in 1811, was still producing an income for the sisters. The amount of £150 for the work *Contributions of QQ to a Periodical*

⁴⁰³ S. C. Behrendt, Publishing and the provinces in Romantic-era Britain, in S. Curran (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, (Cambridge, 2010), p. 154.

⁴⁰⁴ Taylor Collection, Osborne Collection of Early Children's Book, Toronto Public Library.

Work, published posthumously in 1824, reflects the sum the Taylors made on the initial print runs of previous works. The accounts also confirmed the observation made by Mrs Taylor in her memoirs that upon Jane's death, "my dear child had accumulated by her mental exertions, a competency, sufficient to enable her to dispense with a liberal hand."⁴⁰⁵

	£	s	d
Cash in home:	10	13	11
450 four p. cent:	453	5	0
Dividends due:	9	0	0
Youth Mag:	7	18	0
Darnton to pay:	56	0	0
Hessey contingent:	31	10	0
Holdsworth Hymn:	86	18	0
Profits on QQ:	150	0	0
Hessey contingent valued at:	130	0	0
Good Appart. Etc:	23	1	0
Darnton bonds:	405	11	11
	1363	17	10

Figure 6: Excerpt from Accounts of Jane Taylor's Estate, 1825.⁴⁰⁶

The decision by the family to publish for themselves and to offer unsolicited material to publishers indicates a confidence in their literary reputation and a desire to exploit it. At the start of their writing careers, Ann and Jane who were the first of the family into print, published anonymously or, as in the case of their entries for competitions, pseudonymously. This was in keeping with a recognised publishing tradition where anonymity and pseudonymity were "simply accepted authorial practices" in the eighteenth century.⁴⁰⁷ The practice also provided a bulwark against any public approbation that the sisters, or the family, might encounter. In the early editions of Ann and Jane's books they remain anonymous, however any engraving by members of

⁴⁰⁵ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 433.

⁴⁰⁶ Taylor Collection in the Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books, Toronto Public Library.

⁴⁰⁷ J. Batchelor, Anon, Pseud and 'By a Lady': The Spectre of Anonymity in Women's Literary History in J. Batchelor & G Dow (eds.), *Women's Writing 1660-1830: Feminisms and Futures*, (London, 2016), p. 40.

the family included in the books would include a personal attribution. By 1811, the year the family began publishing for themselves, individual authors' names began to appear with each work and there is the indication that the family recognised the combined worth of the family name in the literary market place.

In a letter written around 1814 when Mrs. Taylor's first book was published, Isaac Taylor II wrote to his son, Isaac III, outlining what; "I call our family advertisement. I think by consolidating the several publications then each will help the other."⁴⁰⁸ The proposed advertisement included several of the Taylors' works and announced the intention that: "The Following Publications intended to facilitate the work of Pious Instruction are submitted to the consideration of Religious Parents and teachers."

Isaac II then listed the following works:

"By the Rev'd Isaac Taylor, Ongar
 The Child's Birthday
 By Mrs. Taylor
 Maternal Solicitude for a Daughter's Best Interests
 By Ann and Jane Taylor
 Hymns for Infant Minds
 Original Poems for Infant Minds
 Rhymes for the Nursery
 Lined Twigs to Catch Young Birds
 Original Hymns for Sunday Schools
 Published by Taylor & Hessey, 93 Head Street
 Darton & Harvey, 55 Greenchurch Street
 Josiah Conder, 30 Bucklersbury"

In addition to an understanding of the collective value that had come to be associated with their family name in the literary market place, it is clear that the Taylors' appreciated the financial potential their literary works offered. Throughout her memoirs, Mrs Taylor recorded details of the family finances. She writes that from the first payment for her writing in 1814 to the present year, 1825, she had earned, £1039, 10s, 0d. While this is considerably less than the £9396, 3s, 9d that Harriet Martineau

⁴⁰⁸ SRO: HD 588/7/39.

(1802-1876) later obtained from her writing, Mrs Taylor's earning came from 8 books in 11 years, in contrast to the extended career of Harriet Martineau.⁴⁰⁹ Mrs Taylor believed the family's written works, "have proved the means, in concert with others, of emancipating us from our tedious thralldom." This enabled Isaac II and herself in old age to be, "if not affluent, at least in easy and unembarrassed circumstance."⁴¹⁰ It gave Mrs. Taylor further comfort to know that, "our two daughters had long o'er this, maintained themselves by their mental exertions."⁴¹¹

Both the monetary appreciation and acknowledgement of the financial benefits that were attached to their name contradict the frequently quoted notion of reluctant authorship. Additionally, the pleasure the family noted in the act of writing, the willingness to take on opportunities for revising books, reviewing works for periodicals and assuming the role of editor further undermines this perception. It was Ann Taylor Gilbert who recalled a remark made by her father that, "I do not want my girls to be authors. In that wish he was not entirely gratified and I conclude that before the death of his daughter Jane he had retracted it."⁴¹² The first part of the quote has often been cited in order to define the Taylor family as reluctant authors but it masks the professional approach the family adopted towards their literary careers. The second part of the quote, which is frequently omitted, undermined the idea of literary reticence and in particular in relation to the literary work of the Taylors' daughters, Ann and Jane.

⁴⁰⁹ L. V Petersen, *Becoming A Woman of Letters: Myth of Authorship and Facts of the Victorian Market*, (Princeton 2009), p. 68.

⁴¹⁰ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 406.

⁴¹¹ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 408.

⁴¹² Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 119.

Further evidence that contradicts the idea of reticence came from the support Isaac Taylor II and his wife, Ann, provided to their daughters in order to support their literary reputation. This can be found in Mrs Taylor's memoirs where she records that "they [Ann and Jane] had acquired by this time a degree of literary reputation."⁴¹³ In consequence their daughters were allowed, alternately, an annual trip to London where they socialised with, and had the opportunity to meet, people associated with the contemporary literary scene. In her autobiography Ann Taylor Gilbert recalls that they harboured "idol worship" of "girls with pen in hand" and she was particularly excited to meet Mrs Barbauld on one of these trips to London.⁴¹⁴ Henry Crabb Robinson's diary records that on 25 June 1810 he had met and conversed with Josiah Conder and Jane Taylor about William Blake.⁴¹⁵ These two episodes suggest that during these trips, Ann and Jane met with a range of significant literary figures during their visits to the city.

Conclusion

The backgrounds of both the Taylor and Martin families contributed to and influenced the professional nature of their literary enterprise. From the Taylor family came the reputation associated with the Taylor name, established initially by Isaac I, together with connections to a network of London publishers and knowledge of the book industry. From the Martin family came Mrs Taylor's understanding of financial and administrative order necessary for the business aspect of their literary work. This was obtained through the training she received in her family's pawnbroking business.

⁴¹³ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 362.

⁴¹⁴ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 133.

⁴¹⁵ G.E. Bentley Jr., *The Stranger From Paradise, A Biography of William Blake*, (Yale, 2001), p. 339.

The Taylors of Ongar had established themselves as a professional family enterprise through engraving before the opportunity and financial imperative led the family to make the transition to writing. As writers they worked collectively and individually but with the knowledge that together their name provided them with a greater degree of recognition. It is during these years that a subtle change occurred over the control of literary output within the family, which will be examined in the next chapter.

The Taylor family's writing benefitted from the contemporary development of literary professionalism, together with a greater variety of publishing opportunities available to writers. Middle-class writers earned a living by the pen where previously, in general, it had been wealthy, writers with alternative means of financial support, who pursued a literary career.⁴¹⁶ The Taylors were not ambivalent towards the commercial opportunities their work offered and they took a professional approach to their writing undermining any notion of reluctant authorship. The financial benefit of their literary careers extended to both male and female members of the family who participated in the literary enterprise. Contributing to this success was the growing religious culture of the nineteenth century, of which they were a part, combined with the family's use of the networks, literary and religious, that arose from Isaac II and Ann Martin Taylor's early years in London.

The extent to which individual family members can be said to have pursued professional writing varied. Isaac Taylor II combined it with engraving and his ministry, Mrs Taylor with her household duties. Jane and Jefferys could be argued to

⁴¹⁶ Linda H. Petersen, *Becoming a Woman of Letters: Myths of Authorship and Facts of the Victorian Market*, Princeton 2005, p. 4.

have been the most professional while Ann was until her marriage, after which she was only able to return intermittently to writing and editing previous works. Isaac Taylor III contributed sporadically to family writing, but mainly provided illustrations. Only later in life, after the family enterprise had ceased with the deaths of his father, mother and sister Jane, did he pursue his own extensive literary pursuits. However, Isaac Taylor III made an important contribution to the literary reputation of the family through biographical works that were published in the mid Victorian era.⁴¹⁷ The nature of the Taylor family's literary enterprise, together with the extent of professionalisation exhibited by individual members will be explored in the next chapter.

⁴¹⁷ The significance of the biographical works of members of the Taylor family in relation to their literary reputation will be discussed in Chapter V.

Chapter IV

“They Shrank From Notoriety”

Gender and Genre in the Taylor Family’s Literary Enterprise.

Introduction:

In the previous chapter a clear financial incentive for the Taylors of Ongar to develop writing careers and pursue publishing opportunities that enhanced the family income was established. This chapter will argue that the transition to writing had the greatest impact on the women of the family who were to evidence notable professionalism through this aspect of the family’s literary enterprise. This was contrary to an interpretation later generations sought to apply to the women’s involvement, with Isaac III stating that, “they shrank from notoriety, and would most gladly have remained under the screen of anonymous authorship to the end of their course.”⁴¹⁸ It will explore how members of the family exploited publishing opportunities and examine the extent to which these were a co-operative or individual enterprise. The process by which the Taylors incorporated their strong family ethos within these works in a manner that became synonymous with the collective identity the ‘Taylors of Ongar’ will also be discussed.

The Taylor family were not unique in their familial literary enterprise and studies have looked at contemporaries of the family who shared similar characteristics. These have included Richard and Maria Edgeworth, with their educational imperatives wrapped in a strong patriarchal dynamic.⁴¹⁹ Other studies are of contemporaries who shared a Dissenting background such as the Aikin-Barbauld’s, where Mrs Barbauld wrote on a

⁴¹⁸ I. Taylor III, *The Family Pen*, in I. Taylor IV (eds.), *The Family Pen, Memorials, Biographical and Literary of the Taylor Family of Ongar*, (London, 1867), p. 12.

⁴¹⁹ C. Gallagher, *Nobody’s Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Market Place, 1670-1820*, (Oxford, 1994).

wide range of subjects.⁴²⁰ Comparisons have also been drawn between the Taylors and Hannah More through her conservative, didactic writing. All of these writers were familiar to the Taylors. Ann Taylor Gilbert wrote of her excitement at meeting Mrs Barbauld on one of her visits to London, and there is a record of correspondence between Ann and Maria Edgeworth. Ann Taylor Gilbert also reviewed works by both Edgeworth and Moore for *The Eclectic Review*.

Gallagher discussed the significance of the involvement of women in the operation of a family business as a precursor for the development of a literary career in her pioneering work on the development of women's literary professionalism. Maria Edgeworth, a familiar figure in the literary world of the Taylors' era, was steeped in the economic affairs of her family's estate in Ireland where her father "employed her as an agent and accountant." During Richard Edgeworth's life Maria perceived her literary career to be "a partnership" with her father. However, on his death she assumed control over her literary affairs, managing relationships with publishers and employing a literary agent.⁴²¹ The women of the Taylor family shared Maria Edgeworth's experience of an involvement in the working life of the family through their engraving. Prior to her marriage Mrs Taylor had also been involved in her family's pawnbroking business. This chapter will examine the extent to which the women of the Taylor family assumed control, in the manner of Maria Edgeworth, over their literary careers and the role male members of the family adopted in the publishing pursuits.

⁴²⁰ F. James, I. Inkster (eds.), *Religious Dissent and the Aikin-Barbauld Circle 1740-1860*, (Cambridge, 2012).

⁴²¹ C. Gallagher, *Nobody's Story*, p. 257, p. 260.

The Female Writing Tradition

The Taylors of Ongar are most closely associated with the broad category of literature for children, although the family did write outside this field. There has been scholarly interest over a number of years in the history of children's literature and the publishing industry involved in its development.⁴²² As Grenby has observed this has resulted in a number of extensive bibliographies associated with publishers of books for children that can be consulted.⁴²³ A similar work is the authoritative bio-bibliography published in 1975 on The Taylors of Ongar by Christina Duff Stewart.⁴²⁴ Developing Gallagher's study of women's literary professionalism Clery has argued that an; "alternative measure of value and significance to the tradition of aesthetic judgment governing the masculinist literary canon", should be used to evaluate professionalism and women writer's position in the literary market place.⁴²⁵

With women writers often confined by gender to genres that lacked critical value and regard, success within the contemporary literary market through editions, print runs and fees are relevant when assessing literary success and intention. With the Taylor family, and the women in particular, producing principally didactic, juvenile or instructional works that lack critical regard or posthumous longevity, these criteria become an important means of quantifying the literary professionalism associated with

⁴²² H. Cunningham, *The Invention of Childhood*, (London, 2006). M.V. Jackson, *Engines of Instruction, Mischief and Magic: Children's Literature in England from its Beginnings to 1839*, (Nebraska, 1989).

⁴²³ M. O. Grenby cites bibliographies on John Newbery by S. Roscoe, John Harris and Benjamin Tabart by M. Moon and Darton by L. Darton in Pay, Professionalization and Probable Dominance? Women Writer's and the Children's Book Trade, p. 117-137, in J. Batchelor & G. Dow (eds.), *Women's Writing 1660-1830 Feminisms and Futures*, (London, 2016).

⁴²⁴ C. Duff Stewart, *The Taylors of Ongar: An Analytical Bio-Bibliography in two Volumes*, (London & New York, 1975).

⁴²⁵ E. J. Clery, Free Market Feminism? The Political Economy of Women's Writing, p. 47, in J. Batchelor & G. Dow (eds.), *Women's Writing, 1660-1830 Feminisms and Futures*, (London, 2016)

the family. An examination of the works produced by the Taylors of Ongar reveals that in terms of quantity Isaac Taylor II published the most books but in terms of editions the women of the Taylor family were the most popular authors.

Books produced by the Taylor of Ongar: 1804-1833⁴²⁶

Isaac Taylor II	22 books, the last two posthumously.
Mrs Ann Martin Taylor	8 books.
Ann Taylor Gilbert	17 books, thirteen with her sister, one with a coterie of writers including other family members and members of the Conder and Strutt families.
Jane Taylor	19 books, thirteen with her sister, one with her mother, two published posthumously, one with a coterie of writers including other family members and members of the Conder and Strutt families.
Isaac Taylor III ⁴²⁷	1 book, written contributions to four others.
Jefferys Taylor ⁴²⁸	13 books.

Figure 7

Many of the works Isaac Taylor II published were annual volumes for educational or instructional series commissioned by the publisher John Harris. These explain why Isaac II published the greatest number of books. Further analysis of the Taylors' published works reveals that, with the exception of one work by Isaac Taylor II, the books written by the women of the family ran to the most editions. The women's success, indicated by repeated publication, demonstrates the significance of the women within the family literary enterprise.

⁴²⁶ These figures are taken from the works identified by C. Duff Stewart in, *The Taylors of Ongar: An Analytical Bio-bibliography in two volumes*, (London & New York, 1975).

⁴²⁷ Isaac Taylor III contributed illustrations to many of the Taylor family works. On his marriage in 1825 he moved to Stanford Rivers and assumed a separate identity. As Isaac Taylor of Stanford Rivers he was to publish a further 30 works.

⁴²⁸ Following the publication in 1833 of Jeffery's final work that can be associated with the Taylors of Ongar, he did not publish another work for ten years. He then produced five more books before his death in 1853.

Table of the Taylor Family's most successful works

	Work	Author	Editions ⁴²⁹
1.	Hymns for Infant Minds 1810	Ann and Jane Taylor	50 editions by 1880s
2.	Original Poems for Infant Minds 1804	Ann and Jane Taylor, (with contributions from Isaac Taylor III, Adelaide O'Keefe & Bernard Barton)	31 editions by 1835
3.	Rhymes for the Nursery 1806	Ann and Jane Taylor	27 by 1835
4.	Display, A Tale 1815	Jane Taylor	14 by 1840
5.	Practical Hints to young females on the duties of a wife, a mother and a mistress of a family 1815 Contributions of QQ to a periodical work 1824 (posthumous)	Mrs Ann Martin Taylor Jane Taylor	13 editions by 1830 13 editions by 1866
6.	Maternal Solitude for a Daughter's best interests 1814	Mrs Ann Martin Taylor	12 editions by 1825
7.	The Present of a Mistress to a Young Servant consisting of friendly advice and real histories 1816	Mrs Ann Martin Taylor	11 editions by 1835
8.	City Scenes or a peep into London for good children 1806	Revised by Ann and Jane Taylor for Darton & Harvey	10 editions by 1845
9.	Limed Twigs to Catch Young Birds 1808 Scenes in Europe 1818	Revised by Ann and Jane Taylor for Darton & Harvey Rev. Isaac Taylor	8 editions by 1834 8 editions by 1825
10.	Correspondence between a Mother and her Daughter at School 1817	Mrs Ann Martin Taylor and Jane Taylor	7 editions by 1829

Figure 8

It can be argued that the literary success of the female members of the Taylor family stemmed from a tradition for writing amongst the women that transformed into an increasingly professional approach. The Taylors were highly literate and books formed a significant presence in the individual and collective lives of the family. As previously discussed, both Isaac II and Ann Taylor contributed to this atmosphere in which the

⁴²⁹ Figures based on editions identified by Duff Stewart for the *Bio-bibliography of The Taylors of Ongar*. These relate to editions prior to new versions of the books produced with more significant revisions.

children grew up.⁴³⁰ In addition to the daily practice of reading to the family at meal times or during periods of rest, it can be asserted that Mrs Taylor had a further significant influence on this literary culture through the family's habit of writing. As well as contributing to the culture and ethos of the family life with her husband, Mrs Taylor set an example to her children, particularly her two eldest daughters, with her own penchant for writing. Shoemaker argues that the experiences of childhood through exposure to "gender roles from watching their parents" contributed to children developing "their own masculine or feminine identities in the process."⁴³¹ As recorded in autobiographical sources the activity of writing in the Taylor household was a notably female occupation and pastime.

Mrs Taylor's love of writing preceded her marriage to Isaac Taylor II and was an aspect of her personality that caught his attention. Their relationship and subsequent courtship began with an exchange of rhymes.⁴³² In her memoirs Mrs Taylor recorded that during her adolescence, as well as her wide reading, she had also discovered writing. In a passage, that disregards the masculine character of the authors she cites, Mrs Taylor wrote:

"But as Milton, and Pope and Thompson had written why should not I? I did write and proceeded to compose songs and sonnets on all persons and things that happened to

⁴³⁰ This is discussed in more detail in Chapter II which looks at the Taylor Family Ethos.

⁴³¹ R. B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society: The Emergence of Separate Spheres? 1650-1850*, (Edinburgh, 1998), p. 88.

⁴³² Mrs. Taylor recorded some of these in a notebook and gave it to her friend Ann Withy in 1780. The book was subsequently offered for sale to a family member, its whereabouts is no longer known. The rhymes included; The Temple of Hymen by Isaac Taylor, To Mr Isaac Taylor on his Temple of Hymen by Ann Martin, To Miss Martin on her observations by Isaac Taylor, My Answer to Mr Isaac Taylor by Ann Martin, S.R.O., HD 588/4/7.

strike my fancy. But who is disposed to consign their mental effusions to oblivion?

Certainly I was not, for soon my fame spread abroad."⁴³³

One of those who became aware of this "fame" was Isaac Taylor II when he attended social events for church members held by Ann's stepfather at their family home. Once married, and with a growing family, Mrs Taylor's contribution to domestic religious practices was to write pieces inspired by biblical passages for the family at evening and Sunday observances. Mrs Taylor's talent for writing is evident in her memoirs and through surviving letters to her family and friends which are often long, full of wit, detail and advice.

The routine Isaac II and Ann Martin Taylor created at home for their children, particularly when they were young and in Lavenham, allowed for creative expression and imaginative play that, in the case of their eldest daughters, frequently included the construction of rhymes and stories.⁴³⁴ Through various family members there is evidence that all the Taylor children experienced these opportunities for play and scientific experimentation at home and, at times, in the surrounding fields. However, members of the family later noted the tendency for creative play in particular in relation to the two eldest daughters. Isaac III recalled that from a very young age during play his two elder sisters would recite a "simple couplet of their joint composition."⁴³⁵ In the memoirs of his sister Jane, Isaac wrote that she was a creative child who 'inhabited fairyland.' Ann Taylor Gilbert likewise recalled that as a child she, like Jane, enjoyed 'castle building' and creating imaginative stories. Like her mother

⁴³³ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 117.

⁴³⁴ The domestic arrangements of the Taylor family are discussed in greater detail in Chapter II.

⁴³⁵ Taylor III, *Memoirs and Poetical Remains of the late Jane Taylor*, (London, 1825), p. 9.

before her, Ann Taylor Gilbert would write that from the age of around eight to ten, “it became my perpetual amusement to scribble, and some large literary projects occupied my reveries.” These childhood works were ambitious in scale and demonstrated a precocious literary model in line with her parent’s educational approach. They included, “a poem intended as an antecedent to the Iliad; a new version of the Psalms; an argumentative reply to Winchester on Future Punishment.”⁴³⁶

In recalling these youthful written efforts, there is already recognition of the public nature of the activity in which all three Taylor women participated. Mrs Taylor referenced her “fame” spreading abroad. Isaac III stated in his memoirs of Jane that “most of her childish scribblings had the form of something prepared for the public.” He noted that “she first wrote to cherish the attention of her friends; and when afterwards, she felt the obligation of a yet higher motive – that of making a faithful employment of the talent committed to her.[sic]”⁴³⁷ Together with the public aspect of the activity they enjoyed came an early understanding of the accompanying social admonishment that women, even as young girls, could experience if they ventured into the literary sphere. Early on, before any material by the family had appeared in print, Ann and Jane encountered negative connotations that were associated with women writers, or those interested in intellectual pursuits. Ann Taylor Gilbert made a “magnanimous conflagration of all my MSS [sic]” burning her writing when stung by the accusation of “literary vanity” while she lived in Colchester.⁴³⁸ Mrs Taylor also made note in her memoirs of the time in Colchester when her daughters and their

⁴³⁶ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 34.

⁴³⁷ Taylor III, *Memoirs of Jane Taylor*, p. 11 & p. 60.

⁴³⁸ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 80.

friends were referred to “by our own people” as “Learned Ladies it evidently was not intended as a compliment. [sic]”⁴³⁹

In spite of the insinuations associated with the literary interests of his daughters, as they grew older and reached adolescence Isaac Taylor II encouraged his children to form societies focused on literary amusements that included both writing and reading. It was this pastime of writing for amusement that led Ann Taylor Gilbert to purchase copies of *Minor's Pocket Book* and enter the competitions they contained leading, in turn, to publishers Darton and Harvey approaching Isaac Taylor II for material from his children for publication. From this female initiative the writing careers of the Taylors of Ongar began.

Between 1804 and 1810 the two sisters produced successful original books for Darton and Harvey and accepted commissions from the publishers to revise a number of works from books the firm had rights to publish. It was several of these works for young children by the sisters that ran to multiple editions. In producing these first works the sisters worked on the poems both individually, and co-operatively over the next seven years. Elder sister, Ann, was later credited with providing the lead in the writing process by family members. It was certainly Ann's initiative that led directly to the literary careers the Taylors were later to have. Jane was to write in verse:

My Ann, you had taken the lyre;
And I, from the pattern you set,
Attempted the art to acquire,
And often we played a duet:⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁹ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 344.

Initially the poems and hymns in the original, early works were not attributed to either of the sisters, however, copies of the books survive where members of the family have identified which poem each sister wrote. There are a relatively equal number of poems and hymns written by both Ann and Jane. As well as creating individual new pieces, as Isaac III was to recall, the sisters were often; “employed conjointly” revising the works for Darton and Harvey.⁴⁴¹ Ann Taylor Gilbert noted that; “from this time for several years we were never without commission of some sort”, which they “much altered, and I must say, improved.”⁴⁴²

When their works for young children were first produced, as literary studies have noted, the sister’s success could be attributed to the originality of the books in their day. Ann and Jane “were not merely imitators, but innovators” in the writing for children.⁴⁴³ This fact was understood by the Taylors themselves. As Ann Taylor Gilbert was later to write they “had the advantage of being almost the first in the field.” Although others, such as Mrs Barbauld, had written for children they had mostly done so in prose. As Ann noted, “since the days of Dr Watts there had scarcely been, I will not say a poet, but a rhymers on the ground!”⁴⁴⁴ Watts was an influence on the family ethos that Isaac II and Ann Taylor constructed and his popular work, *Divine Songs Attempted in Easy Language for the Use of Children* (1715), had been admired by several generations of the Taylor family.⁴⁴⁵ This influence is apparent once more in Ann and Jane’s poems and hymns for young children.

⁴⁴⁰ Taylor III, *Memoirs of Jane Taylor*, Vol. II, p. 85.

⁴⁴¹ Taylor III, *Memoirs of Jane Taylor*, Vol. I, p. 80.

⁴⁴² Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 122.

⁴⁴³ Stewart, *Bio-Bibliography*, p. 167.

⁴⁴⁴ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 123 & 124.

⁴⁴⁵ The influence of Watts, together with John Locke, on the creation of the family ethos is discussed in Chapter II.

An examination of the methods used by the sisters in their writing reveals a progressively formal approach that indicates a growing professional attitude to this work. According to Ann the sisters had a specific approach to their writing for young children; “We kept the little one for whom we were writing, so far in view as to write honestly for its benefit.” They considered the language of the poems, and Jane would “try to conjure some child into my presence, address her suitably, as well as I am able, and when I begin to flag, I say to her, ‘there love, now you may go’.”⁴⁴⁶

Initially the writing by Ann and Jane for these first books was undertaken after their regular engraving, education and domestic occupations were completed; “our evening became truly valuable to us,” wrote Ann Taylor Gilbert.⁴⁴⁷ By 1811, and the family move to Ongar, the sisters had ceased engraving work due to their writing commitments. In his memoirs of Jane, Isaac Taylor III recalled that: “Her frequent absence from home, her increasing literary engagements, and other circumstances, had before this time induced my sister to relinquish the practice of the arts [engraving] as a profession.”⁴⁴⁸ From September 1812 Isaac Taylor III was sent for periods of time to the West Country to recuperate from illness. On the first visit both his elder sisters, Ann and Jane, accompanied him. However, on subsequent visits it was Jane alone who was his companion. During the periods she spent in the West Country, without additional family and domestic responsibilities, Jane appears to have adopted a more formal approach to her writing. Engaged now on works for an older readership Isaac Taylor III recalled her daily routine: “It was her custom, in a solitary ramble among rocks half an hour after breakfast, to seek that pitch of excitement without which she

⁴⁴⁶ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 124.

⁴⁴⁷ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 121.

⁴⁴⁸ Taylor III, *Memoirs of Jane Taylor*, p. 119.

never took up her pen – this fever of thought was usually exhausted in two or three hours of writing.”⁴⁴⁹

Indicating parental appreciation of their daughter’s literary occupation, while Jane was in Cornwall, Mrs Taylor wrote to her expressing concern over potential disadvantages she might be facing in relation to her ability to pursue her writing. Jane had replied that domestic concerns were removed and, aside from her accounts and the “little needlework” she had to do, there was little to interrupt her time for writing. Jane was also able to take advantage of “the rare privilege of having a room and fire quite to myself during the morning,” and assured her mother that: “As to my writing ‘under disadvantageous circumstances,’ it is so far from being the case.”⁴⁵⁰

Ann Taylor Gilbert also described a more formal approach to her writing when in 1812 she began submitting articles for *The Eclectic Review*. Ann described how she would write “every morning till about weary,” she would then review the manuscript and “read it aloud, for until able to judge from the ear I could never form an opinion of what I had written.”⁴⁵¹ In her memoirs Mrs Taylor wrote less about the process of writing and more about recording the positive impact the occupation was to have on the earnings of herself, her husband and in particular her two daughters.

Once Mrs Taylor began writing for publication in 1814 she maintained a regular productivity for a number of years. A surviving letter indicates that when Mrs Taylor embarked on a project she focused on it for a consistent period of time. Ann Taylor

⁴⁴⁹ Taylor III, *Memoirs of Jane Taylor*, p. 137.

⁴⁵⁰ Taylor III, *Memoirs of Jane Taylor*, p. 141.

⁴⁵¹ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 149.

Gilbert recalled a visit to Ongar in 1818 where she found “mother with a Tale completely written, the production of three weeks mental fever.”⁴⁵² The period during which Mrs Taylor wrote her eight books occurred when all but her youngest child, Jemima, had left home. This indicates that her domestic commitments had lessened and the opportunity for her to write had increased.

As well as adopting regular routines in relation to their writing, Ann and Jane Taylor also widened their literary responsibilities by undertaking commitments to provide regular contributions to periodicals and, subsequently, editorial roles. In this the two daughters differed from their mother who confined herself to the production of books and the provision of private advice and support for the literary activities of family members. In 1811 the Taylors began publishing for themselves after the firm of one of their regular publishers collapsed. During this time the Taylor sisters ceased writing exclusively for young and nursery aged children. The last works specifically for young children were published in 1812 when *The Mother's Fables in Verse* was revised for Darton and Harvey, and *Original Hymns for Sunday Schools* was published by Josiah Conder.

Once again elder sister Ann led the way in these new undertakings when, in 1811, she was invited to “undertake an article” for *The Eclectic Review* by its editor, Daniel Parken. Parken was acquainted with Josiah Conder who subsequently took over editing the periodical. Ann's first piece for the periodical was a review of a tale entitled *Self Control* by Mrs West and this was followed by a review of Maria Edgeworth's

⁴⁵² Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 247.

Tales.⁴⁵³ Biographical accounts indicate that Ann Taylor Gilbert was prepared to undertake each writing opportunity as it arose. Her autobiography, while expressing a wish to have been 'useful' in her writing, does not indicate any reticence in relation to her literary occupations. What is hinted at in her reminiscences is regret at not being able to continue to pursue this aspect of her life to the degree that she wished once she had married.

For Jane the broadening of the subjects she wrote about and the readership she wrote for occurred during the time she and her brother Isaac III were to spend in Devon and Cornwall due to Isaac III's ill health. During this time they were absent from the direct influence of their parents and open to broader religious experiences. Isaac III would later write in detail of these experiences in his memoirs of his sister.⁴⁵⁴ In the winter of 1813 Jane had a break from writing but when she resumed her brother noted that her work was now for older readers as she had been advised to attempt.⁴⁵⁵ Jane's writing was also increasingly governed by her growing religious sensibilities under the influence of new acquaintances she made in the West Country. The first work was a 'Tale', called *Display*. Jane then wrote a series of *Essays in Rhyme on Morals and Manners*. In 1816 she began a regular series of pieces for the *Youth Magazine* that she was to continue writing until shortly before her death in 1824.

It is clear from letters and biographical evidence that Ann and Jane, together with their mother, understood the practical and monetary aspects of the publishing industry and concerned themselves in its details in relation to the publication of their books. In a

⁴⁵³ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 148.

⁴⁵⁴ This period in the lives of the brother and sister and its impact on the literary legacy of the family is discussed in Chapter V.

⁴⁵⁵ Taylor III, *Memoirs of Jane Taylor*, p. 144 & 45.

letter dated 1819, Mrs Taylor wrote to Ann Taylor Gilbert on the progress of her tale, *The Family Mansion*. In her letter she notes concerns that she and Jane had regarding their dealings with Taylor and Hessey:

“I do begin to fear that we have not fair play at Taylor & Hessey – Reciprocal Duties is now going into [second] edition in 7 months! But ye question is will it not stick there as School Correspondence had done and what is worse as Jane’s Essays in Rhyme have done although published 2 years? Is not this shameful? She is in a fever of irritation every time it is mentioned and I begin to be so too. [sic]”⁴⁵⁶

Further evidence of the knowledge the women of the Taylor family had of the business arrangements between the family and publishers occurs in a letter of advice, cited by Grenby, which was written by Jane to a prospective female author. In this correspondence she remarks on the power of publishers and notes that the success of a work is only determined by the size of a print run and the numbers sold. Jane further advises the woman to stipulate additional payments for any further additions.⁴⁵⁷

Despite evident concern over reprints of later books the earlier work of the Taylor sisters remained popular throughout the nineteenth century. However, Mrs Taylor’s advice books and didactic tales, well received in her lifetime, soon went out of print following her death in 1830. Although Jane’s five-verse poem, *The Star*, is now the only work by the Taylor family that remains widely known to the public, in their day Ann’s poem, *My Mother*, was equally, if not better known. Stylistically Ann’s poem was modeled on *My Mary*, a poem by William Cowper. The Taylor family admired the poet

⁴⁵⁶ Taylor Collection, Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Books, Toronto Public Library.

⁴⁵⁷ Grenby, *Pay, Professionalization and Probable Dominance?*, p. 128.

who was the Church of England's most popular and successful Evangelical writer during the mid to late-eighteenth century.⁴⁵⁸ The sisters both contributed equally to the creation of the earlier children's works but it was Jane who gained the greater reputation, particularly following her death in 1824.⁴⁵⁹ There are indications that Ann felt this loss of recognition. With her marriage in 1813, and the subsequent birth of her children, Ann Taylor Gilbert found she could no longer continue her regular writing. This appears not to have been without regret on Ann's part although she prioritised her married life and family responsibilities. As with her mother Ann Taylor Gilbert's marriage came with the additional public responsibilities of being the wife of a minister.

In later life Ann Taylor Gilbert produced two short works, *The Convalescent: Twelve Letters on Recovery from Sickness* in 1839, and *Seven Blessings For Little Children* in 1844. She also provided revisions for later editions of the works for children. The significance Ann Taylor Gilbert placed on her literary career and reputation is evident in her autobiography, together with an indication of sibling pique at the greater recognition her sister's work came to receive. Ann wrote in her autobiography that her initial success at the expense of her sister Jane, "has been rectified by the public since, and indeed so as to swing a little beyond the mark, attributing to her many productions that are really mine." Of her sister's reputation Ann also remarked: "Dear Jane never needed to steal, while I could not afford to lose."⁴⁶⁰ Her husband, Rev. Joseph Gilbert, was supportive of the idea that Ann might continue her writing following their marriage. In one letter, not long after their wedding in 1813, Ann was to write that,

⁴⁵⁸ Rivers, *Celestial City*, p. 19.

⁴⁵⁹ The greater recognition Jane was to achieve over her sister Ann will be discussed in chapter V.

⁴⁶⁰ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 80.

“Mr G. is very desirous the ‘Mrs Gilbert’ should be as well-known as ‘Miss Taylor’[sic].” Joseph Gilbert wanted Ann to persuade Jane and Isaac III to join them in writing a new book of hymns, as he believed that, “our names would render it superior to any other.”⁴⁶¹ In his support of his wife’s writing Rev. Joseph Gilbert shared an approach that male members of the Taylor family adopted towards the literary work of the Taylor women. This reveals an interesting gender dynamic within the family in relation to support for the act of the women’s literary work, even while they operated within traditional gender appropriate literary genres.

The Question of Patriarchal oversight

A recent study has maintained that, within the literary enterprise of the Taylor family, Isaac Taylor II asserted a traditional patriarchal oversight in common with the role of Richard Edgeworth in his daughter Maria’s early work.⁴⁶² The engraving component of the Taylor family’s literary enterprise conformed to this traditional patriarchal model, however, the writing element of their literary profession demonstrated a more active, independent role for the women of the family.

During the period they were engraving together Isaac Taylor II maintained his authority over the family business supervising the details of each project. As writing became a greater aspect of the family income it can be argued that Isaac Taylor II’s authority disseminated and a more collaborative approach in line with the culture of their family life was established. Additionally, once the financial benefits of the literary works produced by Ann and Jane became clear, there is evidence of Isaac Taylor II

⁴⁶¹ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 206 & 216.

⁴⁶² Krawczyk, *Romantic Literary Families*, (New York, 2009).

encouraging other members of his family into print and providing opportunities to enable this to happen using the network of professional contacts he had developed.

This was demonstrated in 1814, three years after Isaac Taylor II's first book appeared, when he persuaded his wife into print. As recorded in Mrs Taylor's memoirs her husband, who she noted had considerable regard for the addresses she wrote for the family, formed the opinion that they would be of interest to a wider readership and sought a publisher for a book containing her writing. He would subsequently write to his three elder children, who were in Devon, that Mrs Taylor had "been dragged forward into authorship."⁴⁶³ Once the first book was published Mrs Taylor, with the exception of the year 1820, proceeded to produce a book a year for the next six years for the publisher Taylor and Hessey. Mrs Taylor and her daughters became the most successful authors in the family. In addition to publishing opportunities Isaac Taylor II identified, there are also indications that he utilised his contacts with publishers through his engraving work to promote writing and book opportunities for the family. This can be seen when Isaac II passed on the request in 1816 from the publisher of *Youths Magazine*, whose engraving commission he had recently re-acquired, for pieces by Jane.

The evidence of practical support and use of professional contacts in the literary market place by Isaac Taylor II and his family first occurred in 1811 when Ann and Jane's regular publisher, Darton and Harvey, produced one of the first works by Isaac Taylor II. Further indications that the Taylors continued to utilise contacts with publishers to support each other appears again in 1818 when the first book by the

⁴⁶³ SRO: HD 588/7/42.

Taylors' third son, Jefferys (1792-1853), was published. That year Isaac Taylor II produced the second of three advice books addressed to 'teens'; *Advice to the Teens, or Practical help towards the formation of one's own Character*. This work was published by Rest Fenner who also produced Jeffery's first work that year, *Harry's Holiday or the doings of one who had nothing to do*. Isaac Taylor II took an active role in establishing all his sons in appropriate employment and accommodation. As with his siblings, Jefferys was trained in engraving and letters later record Isaac Taylor II travelling to London with his third son to find suitable accommodation for him. It is not inconceivable that Jefferys was introduced to Rest Fenner through his father as part of this process of support.

While there is evidence of Isaac Taylor II exploiting the contacts in his professional network to support family members of both genders into print, there is less evidence that he provided overt "patriarchal oversight"⁴⁶⁴ regarding the content of the works family members produced. There are, however, examples of the co-operative and discursive nature of the Taylors' literary undertaking in a manner very much in keeping with the close and consultative bond that evolved through the family's domestic practices and routines.⁴⁶⁵ Levy has argued in relation to the Taylors; "That the family could only engage in gender-appropriate work, and only as a collection of solitary individuals, was largely due to cultural pressures that made not only work for the market, but family work of any kind, increasingly suspect."⁴⁶⁶ Evidence available, particularly through letters, suggests that while restrictions relating to gender can be said to have applied to the genre of individual Taylor books and work, in terms of the

⁴⁶⁴ Krawczyk, *Romantic Literary Families*, p. 98.

⁴⁶⁵ The creation of this close bond and "the family council" that they would hold is discussed in Chapter II.

⁴⁶⁶ Michelle Levy, *Romantic Authorship and Romantic Print Culture*, (New York, 2008), p. 93.

writing process, they adopted a variety of configurations and in a manner that was not solitary. With the exception of the initial works for children by Ann and Jane, the books were sold under individual family names, as Levy suggests, but even when members of the family had moved away from the Essex home of their parents, they provided continued support and advice on each other's writing through letters.

Isaac Taylor II did offer opinions on the family's writing, but all members of the family were involved in this process and there is no evidence his opinions carried more influence. In 1815 Isaac II wrote to his daughter Jane regarding her book, *Display: A Tale*. He thought it an important topic, noting that, "your plot if nothing very particular is yet sufficient, but your incidents are admirable, various yet natural." Isaac II did also recommend that Jane consider "Pride of Intellect" as the next subject for her writing, but there is no indication she followed this suggestion.⁴⁶⁷

A letter by Ann Taylor Gilbert to her father, cited in her autobiography, indicates that the children critiqued their parent's work. Ann offered her opinion on Isaac Taylor II's book, *Self-Cultivation Recommended or Hints to a Youth Leaving School*, published in 1817, observing frankly that, "it appeared to us to make a great improvement in style about the middle of the third chapter." Ann Taylor Gilbert also offered support and encouragement to her mother once she began to write for publication, informing her that: "I truly rejoice in what you are doing, and hope, my dear mother, that you will go on with ardour while the sun shines." Ann also writes that her mother's next project, *Correspondence between a Mother and Daughter*, published in 1817, to be co-written with Jane, "is so good, and Jane's name will be so advantageous an addition that you

⁴⁶⁷ SRO: HD 588/7/45.

will have no need to wait for public opinion on this.”⁴⁶⁸ Later in life, after their parent’s deaths, when Ann Taylor Gilbert returned to print with *The Convalescent*, she was to receive encouragement from her brother, Isaac III, who wrote to “express my particular pleasure in finding that you have returned to your vocation, and left (as I heartily hope forever) the mending of stockings to hands that cannot so well handle the pen.”⁴⁶⁹

In addition to the evidence of frequent consultation on literary projects across both gender and generations of the family, there are also examples of the joint authorship of works by the Taylors. The most well known of these literary collaborations by the family are Ann and Jane’s early books written for young children. Isaac III, also contributed to the first of these books, *Original Poems*. Mrs Taylor and Jane collaborated in 1817 on the book *Correspondence between a Mother and Daughter*. In 1822 Ann and Jane, together with their father and brother, Isaac III, participated in the production of poems for a book, *The Linnets Life*.⁴⁷⁰ In 1809 several members of the family collaborated on a work with writers from outside the family. This work, *Associate Minstrels*, was initiated by the Taylors friend, Josiah Conder. As well as the Taylors and Conders the undertaking concerned members of Benjamin Strutt’s family from Colchester. This work most clearly illustrates the involvement of a wider network of acquaintances from Isaac II and Ann Taylor’s early years in London that was influential in the family’s literary enterprise.

⁴⁶⁸ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 210.

⁴⁶⁹ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 379.

⁴⁷⁰ Duff Stewart, *Bio-Bibliography* Vol. I, p. 378.

A Coterie of Critics:

In addition to family collaboration and consultation the Taylors, most notably Ann and Jane, debated and worked with a wider circle of literary acquaintances. These contacts originated in the networks surrounding the Fetter Lane church and the Taylor family engraving profession that had been established by Isaac II and Ann before leaving London for Suffolk.⁴⁷¹ In addition to their sororal partnership the Taylor sisters were part of a group that were associated with their friend, Josiah Conder. Ann Taylor first met Josiah on a trip to London with her father in 1800. At that time Ann and Jane were already friends of Josiah's cousins, Susan and Luck. Josiah was the son of publisher and bookseller, Thomas Conder, whose firm in Bucklersbury Lane had sold books by the family since 1804.

In her autobiography Ann Taylor Gilbert recalled that Josiah: "soon exhibited literary taste and ability, and became in a few years almost the centre of our poetic circle, or as we ventured to entitle it, the 'Wreath'."⁴⁷² Thomas Conder's firm was involved in publishing and selling early works by the Taylor family and Josiah was to take over the business. Josiah Conder was also part of the wider literary world in London and his friendships included Daniel Parken, editor of *The Eclectic Review*. It was Josiah who recommended Ann to Parken as a contributor to the periodical in 1811. Subsequently Josiah took over the editing and publishing of the periodical and during this time Ann and her brother, Isaac III, were contributors.

⁴⁷¹ The origins of this network are discussed in Chapter I.

⁴⁷² Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 99.

Josiah Conder was also friends with James Montgomery, the poet and hymn writer, who was a resident of Sheffield and the editor and publisher of the *Sheffield Iris* until 1825.

On her marriage and subsequent move to the midlands, Ann was to continue the acquaintance with Montgomery that Josiah had initiated. When Jane was writing *Essays in Rhyme on Morals and Manners* in 1815, she sent samples of poems to her sister for comments. Ann involved “a coterie of critics” in providing written assessments of the poems that included her husband and James Montgomery.⁴⁷³

Josiah Conder was also acquainted with the diarist Henry Crabb Robinson who was familiar with many of the most influential literary figures of the Romantic and early Victorian eras. Crabb Robinson had lived in Colchester from 1790, leaving just before the Taylors arrived, where he was articled to a solicitor. During this time Crabb Robinson knew the Strutt family who also became friends with the Taylors when they arrived in Colchester in 1796. From Crabb Robinson’s diary it is known that Josiah Conder and Jane Taylor met with him during one of Jane’s trips to London on 25 June 1810 where they discussed William Blake.⁴⁷⁴

During a visit to the Taylors in Colchester it was Josiah Conder who proposed the idea for the book *Associate Minstrels*, published in 1810. Conder was to be the editor and publisher with poems being contributed by himself, his future wife, Ann, Jane and their father, Isaac II. Jacob Strutt also contributed to the work and Isaac III provided a design for the title page. The work was inscribed to Montgomery.⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷³ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 222.

⁴⁷⁴ G.R. Bentley, Jr, *The Stranger from Paradise: A Biography of William Blake*, (Yale, 2003), p. 339. Literary and artistic figures that Crabb Robinson was acquainted with include Blake, Wordsworth, Lamb, Coleridge, Goethe and Schiller. Crabb Robinson also accompanied Mdm de Stael on a trip across Europe.

⁴⁷⁵ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 136.

As well as being visitors to each other's home the Taylor and Conder families were regular correspondents. In this manner the Taylor sisters were frequently engaged in discourses on religious, moral and literary topics outside the immediate family. Josiah Conder was also consulted during the writing process for works the sisters produced. Although they offered their writing for opinions prior to publication, the sisters maintained their authority over the completed pieces. In response to criticism by Conder that Jane received during the writing of *Essays in Rhyme* she noted that anything that was not literary in nature was not welcome. Instead she was "disappointed to find so few of that description; and still more, to find so many relating to matters of *opinion* [sic], which you would hardly expect I should give up."⁴⁷⁶

As Krawczyk has observed: "In a typology of collaboration what differentiates one model from another is the nature of its mediating network."⁴⁷⁷ For the Taylors the nature of this wider network lay in the developing literary market associated with Protestant Dissenters, Methodists and Church of England Evangelicals that underwent considerable development during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁴⁷⁸ This association had an effect on the direction of the Taylors' literary output that became progressively associated with the interaction between the "popular religious culture" emanating from the religious revivals of the eighteenth century and the expanding world of print and periodicals.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁶ Taylor III, *Memoirs of Jane Taylor*, p. 156.

⁴⁷⁷ Krawczyk, *Romantic Literary Families*, p. ix, New York, 2009.

⁴⁷⁸ Rivers, *Vanity Fair and the Celestial City*, p. 1.

⁴⁷⁹ Rivers, *Vanity Fair and the Celestial City*, p. 2.

Gender and Genres

The women of the Taylor family were familiar with all aspects of the publishing business, maintaining an increasingly professional approach to their writing, however, in terms of the genre they wrote in they maintained traditional female associations. In the later years of the eighteenth century “entire new genres dominated by women” developed, often with an educational focus and these included conduct books, improving tracts, and moral tales.⁴⁸⁰ Unlike Mrs Barbauld, Mary Wollstonecraft or later Harriet Martineau the Taylors did not venture into print in the areas of politics, religious or social reform. Indeed, this is not a characteristic of the work of the Taylors of Ongar as a literary family. Instead they drew on attitudes and experiences from their own life that corresponded with publishing opportunities in the fields of domestic, educational and didactic literature together with religious and moral essays that reflected the family ethos and principles. This indicates a commercial imperative as much as serving a religious purpose. As Isaac Taylor II had benefitted from the growth in the print market earlier in his engraving career, the family took advantage of the widening publishing opportunities that had entered the literary market place. Their association with gender specific literary genres contributed to the traditional and conservative reputation the family’s literary enterprise created. This helped hide the professional nature of the undertaking and the contribution of the women to the family’s literary achievements.

⁴⁸⁰ S. Curran, Women readers, women writers in S. Curran, (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, (Cambridge, 2013), p. 176, M. Myers, Hannah More’s Tracts for the Times Social Fiction and Female Ideology in M. A. Schofield & C Mackeski, (eds.), *Fetter’d or Free: British Women Novelists 1670-1815*, (Ohio, 1986) p. 264.

A characteristic of the books published by the Taylors of Ongar is the manner in which they utilise aspects of their family life and ethos in the works they published. This could be from the practical side, such as education, childrearing or domestic management, or the intellectual character of the Taylor family centred on their religious and moral principles. The books themselves conform to types increasingly prescribed through the reading lists associated with the expanding evangelical movement. An examination of the types of works the Taylors produced shows the family working in different forms, but often opportunistically and frequently drawing on the realities and experiences of their lives. The educational priorities of Isaac II and Ann Taylor that were a significant part of the family ethos are noticeable in the content and the readership that many of the works addressed.

Although Ann and Jane displayed a professional attitude and approach to their writing, they remained confined to genres and content that did not overtly challenge those considered the appropriate concern of women. In the poems and hymns for children, whether original or revised, together with Jane's *Essays in Rhyme on Morals and Manners* that were directed at young people, the sisters satisfied their desire to write, achieving financial benefits without challenging traditional gender roles. Ann, in undertaking reviews that were more likely to be read by adults of both sexes, came the closest to a departure from an appropriate literary sphere.

Even when Jane and her mother ventured into a fictional genre they were constrained by conservative cultural conventions to follow the model of 'a Tale', seeking to differentiate their works from a novel. Contemporary attitudes associated the novel with negative connotations of immortality and inferiority as an art form. For many,

novels were a form of entertainment that were viewed with suspicion. In 1810 Mrs Barbauld wrote an essay on a defense of the novel, and female novelists.⁴⁸¹ However, Barbauld placed greater value on works that were realistic in their content, which were called 'Tales' to separate them from the novel. Both Mrs Taylor and her daughter Jane complied with the convention of socially realistic content when they produced fictional works.

In addition to Ann and Jane their younger brother, Jefferys, also contributed to the literary enterprise. As with his two elder sisters Jefferys main source of income was from his literary works. In this he differed from his father and eldest brother Isaac III, who continued the family engraving work in addition to literary pursuits. While his other brother Martin followed a career in publishing and bookselling. Jefferys remains something of an enigma within the Taylor family history. He is seldom mentioned in the biographical works and sources relating to him are scarce. This situation may have arisen due to the age gap between the Taylor children. Ann and Jane were born within a year of each other in 1782 and 1783, while Isaac III and Martin were born in 1787 and 1788. Four years separate Jefferys, who was born in 1792, from Martin. During this time two daughters, Harriet and Eliza, had been born but died in infancy. Following Jefferys birth, Decimus was born but died at the age of five. The Taylors' youngest surviving child, Jemima was born in 1798.

Although today Jeffreys is seldom mentioned in connection with the family's literary output, it is clear when they were writing that he was considered part of the family

⁴⁸¹ C. E. Moore, "Ladies... Taking the Pen in Hand" Mrs. Barbauld's Criticism of Eighteenth Century Women Novelists in M.A. Schofield & C. Mackeski, (eds.), *Fetter'd or free: British Women Novelists 1670-1815*, (Ohio, 1986).

literary enterprise. A letter from his mother to her children in 1819 indicates both the quantity of books the family were then publishing and Jefferys association with these. Mrs Taylor informs her children that: "Josiah⁴⁸² told Isaac that the public begin to be sick of our publishing so often and that when Jeff's book appeared they exclaimed 'O those Taylors'. But this is Josiah's account and it may be coloured a little – your father says 'the grapes are sour'."⁴⁸³

Rosenberg considers that the "Taylors were innovators of writing targeted at specific age groups", noting that Isaac Taylor II applied "the first modern usage of the work *teen* [sic] in his 1818 work *Advice to the Teen, or, Practical help towards the Formation of one's own Character*."⁴⁸⁴ Jefferys works continued this family literary tradition. Following his father Jefferys undertook educational and instructional books for J. Harris including *The Farm: A New Account of Rural Toils and Produce* 1832, and *The Ocean*, 1833. Jefferys also wrote fiction but in the manner of an instructional novel incorporating characteristics of the family ethos. This was exemplified in his first published work, *Harry's Holiday or the doings of one who had nothing to do*, 1818, which examined the follies of a boy called Harry. In place of traditional misconduct such as lies or thieving, Harry's mistake is to waste time by copying an old chart that is available in print when his efforts could have been better spent elsewhere. Additionally, he fails to complete the task, compounding the error.⁴⁸⁵ The faults Jefferys chose to highlight and correct demonstrates the expediency and work ethic Isaac Taylor II sought to impart to his children when they were growing up.

⁴⁸² It is unclear from the letter whether this refers to Isaac Taylor II's brother, Josiah, or the family friend, Josiah Conder. At this time both Josiah Taylor and Josiah Conder were publishers.

⁴⁸³ Taylor Collection, Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books, Toronto Public Library

⁴⁸⁴ D. Rosenberg, *The Young and the Restless*, p. 6, in *Cabinet Magazine*, <http://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/29/rosenberg.php>.

⁴⁸⁵ Rosenberg, *The Young and the Restless*, p. 1.

Several of Jefferys works also illustrate the educational imperative inherent in his childhood. *The Little Historians: A new chronicle of the affairs of England in Church and State*, 1824, is concerned with the history of England for children told principally through the monarchs. While *Parlour Commentaries on the Constitution and Laws of England*, 1826, sought to explain legal procedures for children. As with his siblings Jefferys initially followed the Dissenting faith of his parents. In 1828 he produced a book, *The Barn and The Steeple*, which portrayed an argument, “between the Established and Dissenting Churches [that] was probably intended for young people.”⁴⁸⁶ The barn won the argument in this book, produced while his parents were both still alive, however later in life Jefferys, like his brother Isaac III, turned away from the Dissenting faith they were raised in and joined Church of England.

Isaac Taylor II wrote principally in the genre of literature for children and adolescents although his writing was combined with his continuing work as an engraver. Much of the content in Taylor’s books can be associated with material drawn from his life and the principles associated with the Taylor family ethos. Isaac Taylor II did not write any biographical work; our knowledge of his life comes from extensive references in the reminiscences of other family members. It is through his writing that Isaac Taylor II reveals details of his principles and priorities, and from this it is confirmed that as well as his religious faith his dominant concern was education. Many of his books are concerned with geography, biography or are instructional, with the twelve he produced for J. Harris equating to almost one a year between 1818 and 1830. The last two of these were published posthumously. These works were not directed at a specific gender; however, Taylor did produce three conduct books directed at young men. *Self-*

⁴⁸⁶ Duff Stewart, *The Taylors of Ongar Vol. I*, p. 460.

Cultivation Recommended, or, Hints to a youth leaving school, 1817, *Advice to the teens; or, practical help towards the formation of one's character*, 1818, and *Character Essential to Success in Life addressed to those who are approaching Manhood*, 1820. In these three works the overarching theme is the continuing benefits of education throughout life and the development of strong principles and self-discipline. The books appear to draw on the practices and principles he and his wife had developed for their family.

The first book, *Self-Cultivation Recommended*, sought to “address the mistake that when a child leaves school his education is finished.” The tone of the work is socially conservative. In chapter I Isaac II wrote that, “the purport of education [is] to fit us for our station in life.” While the work also outlines his view on the significance of books and reading, “when there is a book at hand, the excitement of the mind is kept up.”⁴⁸⁷ In *The Advice to the Teens*, there are chapters on reading, observation, and thinking. There is also a chapter on private study in which he describes the practice he implemented for his family. He wrote that: “My advice to every young person, secure some place, however small, which you may call your study.” Taylor then cited the episode from Colchester where Isaac III and Martin divided their room: “I have known a separation made in a corner of a room, by a few sheets of brown paper hung as curtains from top to bottom.”⁴⁸⁸ In *The Advice to the Teens* Taylor also outlined his opinion on the importance of home, “the grand nursery for virtues” where “duties are always reciprocal”, together with the importance of the respect for parents.⁴⁸⁹ He also

⁴⁸⁷ I. Taylor, *Self-Cultivation Recommended, or, Hints to a youth leaving school*, (London, 1817), p. 4.

⁴⁸⁸ I. Taylor II, *Advice to the teens; or, practical help towards the formation of one's character*, (London, 1818), p. 8. This episode together with the allocation of space in the family home is discussed in Chapter II.

⁴⁸⁹ Taylor, *Advice to the Teens*, p. 11.

discussed an opinion he and his wife both held on “the principle of selecting your associates” carefully.

The third work in the series, *Character Essential to Success in Life*, continued to develop his themes, notably the importance of a person’s character and principles. In this work Taylor devotes a chapter on the influence of religion on character, but his argument does not pursue specific doctrinal points and is more concerned with observance and regularity. Taylor stated that: “It is not intended, neither is it needful to give such a definition of religion as shall mark any specific denomination or party among Christians. Real religion may exist among most of them.”⁴⁹⁰

Other works by Taylor combined this educational commitment with his ministerial purpose. The first book he published, in 1811, drew on material he had used in the Sunday school Taylor set up at the church in Lavenham, *Twelve Addresses on Moral and Religious Subjects delivered to Young Persons at School with an Original Hymn to each*. It was a form he returned to in 1821 with his book *Picturesque Piety or Scriptural Truths illustrated by 48 engravings and an original poem to each*. In the introduction to this work Taylor outlines the importance of visual stimulation that had been recorded by his daughter, Ann, in her autobiography in relation to his educational methods. Taylor stated that: “they [children] are extremely desirous of picturesque representations, no mother can doubt, and that much knowledge can be in this manner conveyed, is found by experience.”⁴⁹¹

⁴⁹⁰ I. Taylor II, *Character Essential to Success in Life addressed to those who are approaching Manhood*, (London, 1820), p. 26.

⁴⁹¹ I. Taylor II, *Picturesque Piety or Scriptural Truths illustrated by 48 engravings and an original poem to each*, (London, 1821), p. ii.

Taylor also produced versions of two widely read religious works adapted for children. The first in 1824 was, *Bunyan Explained to a Child*, in two parts. Part one being Christian's journey, part two Christiana's journey that appeared in 1825. In 1826 Taylor then produced a version of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*⁴⁹² for the young. In these works, Taylor is opportunistically producing books that corresponded to a popular market in religious publishing but doing so for the readership the Taylors wrote for, children and adolescents. Rivers has noted that from 1720 there was a movement, principally amongst Trinitarian Dissenters, to promote Dissenting writers of the seventeenth century and these works appear in this tradition. In a similar manner Isaac Taylor II's friend and fellow apprentice, George Burder, had contributed engravings to a version of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, published in 1778. In 1803 Burder then wrote and published *Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress Versified*.⁴⁹³

In 1815 Taylor published a book titled *The Child's Birthday*, which was addressed to both parents and children and corresponds to many aspects of the Taylors' domestic life and ethos as described in biographies and memoirs. The book, addressed to a young daughter named Eliza, contains many details that equate to Isaac II and Ann Taylor's domestic practices. Attention is given to good financial habits, the avoidance of "the rod" in education and discipline, and simplicity and elegance in appearance, particularly for daughters, over vanity. Isaac II also outlined subjects for education that, in keeping with his own practice, were broad but not defined by gender. However, he does make clear his adherence to socially accepted gender roles by promoting

⁴⁹² J. Foxe, *Book of Martyrs*, 1563. I. Taylor II, *A Book of Martyrs for the Young*, (London, 1826).

⁴⁹³ I. River, *Vanity Fair and the Celestial City: Dissenting, Methodist, and Evangelical Literary Culture in England 1720-1800*, (Oxford, 2018), p. 121 & p. 140.

gender appropriate toys and play which he relates directly to future roles in life for girls and boys.

The Child's Birthday is also an interesting book as it reflects personal attitudes to contemporary events that the Taylors seldom revealed. In it, Taylor discussed war and the concept of 'great' in relation to men within the context of current events. The wars with France had resumed and the final battle with Napoleonic forces took place the year the work was published. In the book the son is told, "you have not found out a reason yet to justify offensive war. I fancy you will find war to be diametrically opposite to justice, mercy, policy and everything valuable to our comfort and feelings." In consequence of which the book's narrator argues that a 'great man' is not the warrior Alexander the Great, but John Howard for, "visiting prisons and seeking to relieve the wretched and friendless" or "those who tried so much to get the wicked slave trade to be put to an end."⁴⁹⁴ This work is of note since the Taylors seldom wrote on political or social matters restricting their writing to domestic, educational and moral principles that were correspondingly popular in the literary market place of the era.

In concert with her husband, Mrs Taylor's works similarly drew much material from her experiences and the principles and practices of their family ethos. Having been encouraged into print by her husband with the addresses she had written for her youngest daughter, Jemima, Mrs Taylor then produced a series of advice books that were popular in her lifetime. These books were similar in character to the ones she described using in the early days of her marriage when she most keenly felt herself

⁴⁹⁴ I. Taylor II, *The Child's Birthday*, (London, 1815), p. 128.

lacking in domestic skills. Ann Martin Taylor had recourse to such books when she married as a result of her mother's decision not to instruct her in household duties but in the financial and administrative responsibilities of the family pawnbroking business. Mrs Taylor's books were not addressed to children but to young women as they approached married life. *Practical Hints to Young Females on the duties of a wife, a mother and a mistress of a family*, 1815, was followed by *The Present of a Mistress to a Young Servant consisting of friendly advice and real histories*, in 1816, while *Reciprocal Duties of Parents and Children* was published in 1818.

The work Mrs Taylor wrote with Jane, *Correspondence between a Mother and her Daughter at School*, in 1820 addressed several concerns of the Taylor family. Written in the form of a series of letters, the book includes discussions on the difference in education between accomplishments and true learning together with the need to avoid self-satisfaction and self-promotion when undertaking good works. Also addressed in the book is the recurring Taylor concern of the need for care in choosing friends and acquaintances.

Mrs Taylor wrote two 'Tales', *The Family Mansion: A Tale*, in 1819 and *Retrospection: A Tale*, in 1822. Both follow the socially realistic construction exemplified through the works of Hannah More and promoted by Mrs Barbauld. *The Family Mansion* charts the loss of a family property through the mis-management of the son and heir's new wife. The wife's failings in both household management and charitable giving are contrasted with the correct approach previously adopted by her widowed mother-in-law, who vacated the house on her son's marriage. In a further detail when leaving the house the, "old and faithful domestics" accompanied the mother-in-law. Mrs Taylor describes

them as “part of the family who yielded their service from motives of attachment not disorderly and unprincipled mercenaries like their successors.”⁴⁹⁵ This episode reflects another recurring subject in Taylor family biographies regarding the character of servants.

Mrs Taylor’s next tale, *Retrospection*, was also directed at improving the middle-class female character. This work is notable for its censorious approach to female writing that appears to be an act of self-admonishment for Mrs Taylor’s own adolescent experience. The female narrator begins the work proud of her accomplishments as a writer and a wit capable of “burlesquing” her friends “to the great amusement of some.”⁴⁹⁶ This talent is pointedly ignored by the Thoroughgoods, a model Dissenting family with whom the narrator resides for a time, for its trivial and vain associations. Later in the work Mrs Taylor is strongly critical of those who assume too puritanical approach to life stating that, “those who render themselves conspicuous in the world by their personal austerities... may indeed attract public notice and astonish the superficial observer but with the intelligent and reflective portion of mankind *they will not do.* [sic]”⁴⁹⁷

Mrs Taylor’s last work was a return to the manner of her first book. This was written after a break of three years during which time her daughter Jane died. *The Itinerary of a Traveller in the wilderness addressed to those who are performing the same journey*, 1825, was a series of reflections inspired by biblical passages that portray a strong premonition of mortality; inspired it could be argued by her daughter’s death. Though

⁴⁹⁵ A. Taylor, *The Family Mansion: A Tale*, (London, 1819), p. 20.

⁴⁹⁶ A. Taylor, *Retrospection, A Tale*, (London, 1822), p. 13.

⁴⁹⁷ A. Taylor, *Retrospection*, p. 167.

Mrs Taylor's books went out of print after she died, during her lifetime she was as successful as her daughters and a significant contributor to the literary enterprise. A fact Ann Martin Taylor made a point of recording at the end of her memoirs, noting the gross earnings she had made from her books.

Conclusion:

Krawczyk, supporting Davidoff and Hall, argues that Ann and Jane followed parental, particularly paternal, guidance in their writing and that both parents counseled against "professional literary work" and its "inappropriate" nature.⁴⁹⁸ These statements conform to Isaac Taylor III's statement that his family "shrank from notoriety." However, this can be countered through the details available in the surviving life sources, the unpublished memoirs of Mrs Ann Martin Taylor and, to a degree, Ann Taylor Gilbert's autobiography. In the education of their children and the apprenticeships their sons and daughters undertook, there is an unstated appreciation of the necessity for equipping their children, male and female, with the means to support themselves financially. When the opportunity arose to enhance their income through writing the Taylors of Ongar applied the educated and literary character of the family to that purpose. Propriety was maintained by adherence to appropriate subject matter and genre.

Their financial acuity in relation to their literary earnings, that is revealed by the sources, indicates the importance of the writing in the lives of the Taylor family. The financial returns from the books, together with the clear understanding of publishing

⁴⁹⁸ Krawczyk, *Romantic Literary Families*, p. 107.

industry, further indicates the professional approach applied by the Taylors of Ongar to their literary enterprise. This professional approach was, in turn, in keeping with the Taylors' Calvinistic work ethic whereby any task undertaken should be fully committed too.

Although gender constrained the choice of literary form and content in the works by the women, the variety of material they produced also argues for a professional approach. From their original books, to periodical writing in the form of both essays and reviews, together with revisions of books for publishers, the family were pursuing opportunities to participate in the literary market place of the day. Despite being opportunistic, the family was careful to include, and trade on, the moral principles inherent in their Dissenting family life. They offered these values, through their writing, as exemplary models within middle class culture.

It is also clear, through the advertisement that Isaac Taylor II constructed and family letters, the Taylors appreciated the collective value inherent in the family name and were not displeased with the recognition the family received through their books. In a letter from 1815, Jemima writes to her parents that while in London; "I was introduced lately by Miss Bunmell as the sister of The Miss Taylor and a gentleman told me the other evening that he had to honour of knowing all my family by reputation in common with the rest of England! [sic]"⁴⁹⁹

After the death of their parents the family ceased its close association in the literary market place. Isaac Taylor III pursued a prolific literary career writing predominantly

⁴⁹⁹ Taylor Collection, Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books, Toronto Public Library.

on early church history as Isaac Taylor of Stanford Rivers. Ann Taylor Gilbert continued to produce revisions of her and Jane's earlier works for young children. Towards the end of their lives Isaac III and Ann Taylor Gilbert published a series of biographical works that presented the history of the family and their literary endeavour to the mid-Victorian public. In so doing they presented the history of the family and the culture of their domestic life within the conservative cultural constraints of mid-Victorian evangelicalism that had come to reflect the beliefs of Ann Taylor Gilbert and Isaac Taylor III. It is these works, which are the subject of chapter V, that had a significant impact on the public interpretation and understanding of the Taylors of Ongar.

Chapter V

A Literary Legacy

The Taylors' Auto/Biographies

Introduction:

This chapter will examine the auto/biographical⁵⁰⁰ works of the Taylor family and assess their role in the creation of the family's literary legacy. The Taylors of Ongar wrote as part of a family enterprise between 1804, when the first volume of *Original Poems* was published, and 1833 when Jefferys Taylor produced his last book for noted publisher John Harris.⁵⁰¹ During this period members of the family wrote and published 65 books.⁵⁰² Isaac Taylor II died in 1829 and his wife, Ann Martin Taylor, five months later in 1830 while Jane had pre-deceased her parents in 1824. Surviving family members who had contributed to the literary enterprise, Ann Taylor Gilbert, Isaac III and Jefferys, did produce books after 1833 but these can be seen as separate from the main body of work associated with the Taylors of Ongar.

Ann Taylor Gilbert continued to revise and edit the earlier works she had produced with her late sister Jane. Ann also published two new books inspired by events in her married life.⁵⁰³ Isaac Taylor III, who had published three works during the main period of the family's literary career, continued to write extensively following his parents' deaths. From 1825, the year of his marriage, Isaac III had moved to Stanford Rivers

⁵⁰⁰ Auto/biography is a term that has been applied to a range of life writing sources including autobiography, biography, diaries and letters, e.g. *a/b: Auto/biography Studies Journal*, published by Taylor Francis. The published biographies of the Taylor family are often hybrid works, containing several different life-writing forms in one book. Following this convention this term will be used in the chapter to refer to Taylor works where multiple sources are included.

⁵⁰¹ The literary enterprise of the Taylors of Ongar is discussed in Chapters III and IV.

⁵⁰² Christina Duff Stewart in her extensively researched *The Taylors of Ongar: An Analytical Bio Bibliography*, New York 1975, lists 63 works excluding the auto/biographical works, p. 920 - 933. Isaac Taylor IV in *The Family Pen: Memorials, Biographical and Literary of the Taylor Family of Ongar*, London 1867, collated a list of 52. The differences can be explained by some of the works that included more than one volume, being counted either separately or together.

⁵⁰³ A. Taylor Gilbert, *The Convalescent*, (London 1839); *Seven Blessings for Little Children*, (London 1844).

and between that year and 1863 he produced a series of works of a predominantly theological or philosophical nature. From this point he was referred to as Isaac Taylor of Stanford Rivers and became known for his interest in the Early Church and his patristic studies.⁵⁰⁴ After a gap of over ten years Jefferys, who died in 1853, produced the first of his final three books, *Incidents of the Apostolic Age in Britain*, published in 1844.

In addition to the books published by members of the Taylor family, either individually or as part of their literary enterprise, there are a group of memoirs, autobiographical and biographical, written by the family. These books contributed to the construction of a public family history and to the creation of a literary identity for the Taylors of Ongar that endures to this day. The works also presented an authorised justification for their literary careers. The first of these, *Memoirs and Poetical Remains of the late Jane Taylor*, was written by Isaac Taylor III in 1825, the year immediately following the death of his sister Jane.⁵⁰⁵ Towards the end of his life Isaac III wrote a series of personal recollections that were published in the periodical *The Good Works* in 1864. His son, Isaac Taylor IV, included some of these essays in a family biography, *The Family Pen: Memorials, Biographical and Literary of the Taylor Family of Ongar*, which he edited and published in 1867.

In 1853 Ann Taylor Gilbert had published a short biographical sketch of her late husband, Rev. Joseph Gilbert (1779-1852).⁵⁰⁶ Later in her life Ann also wrote several

⁵⁰⁴ B. Brandon Schoenberg, Isaac Taylor (1787-1865), *ODNB*, p. 912.

⁵⁰⁵ I. Taylor III, *Memoirs and Poetical Remains of the Late Jane Taylor with extracts from her correspondence in two volumes*, (London 1825).

⁵⁰⁶ A. Taylor Gilbert, *Biographical Sketch of the Rev. Joseph Gilbert by his Widow with recollections of Discourses of his closing years from not at the time by one of his sons*, (London 1853).

chapters of an autobiography that was completed and published by her son, Josiah, in 1874, eight years after her death. In addition to these works in 1825, the year Isaac III published his work on his sister, Jane, their mother Ann Martin Taylor commenced writing her memoirs. Mrs Taylor's reminiscences remained unpublished and were sequestered by Isaac Taylor III in a family archive that eventually passed to a public library sometime during the twentieth century.

Taylors of Ongar: Auto/biographical work

Year of Publication	Auto/biography	Author and Editor	Publisher	Notes
1825	Memoirs and Poetical Remains of the late Jane Taylor with extracts from her correspondence. In two volumes.	Isaac Taylor III (1787-1865)	B. J. Holdsworth 18 St Paul's Church Yard, London	
1825	Her Own Memoirs by Mrs Taylor a 3 vol. manuscript	Ann Martin Taylor (1757-1830)	This work remains unpublished.	
1853	A Biographical Sketch of the Rev Joseph Gilbert by his widow with recollections of Discourses of his closing years by one of his sons.	Ann Taylor Gilbert (1782-1866)	Jackson and Walford St Paul's Church Yard, London	The discourse notes were made by Josiah Gilbert (1814-1892)
1864	Personal Recollections in Good Works, 1864: Including: The Cornish Coast Sixty Years Ago; A Dark Night's Ride; Echoes of Revolution and War in Remote Places; Nearer Echoes of Revolution and War; Some of the Costs of War from 1795-1805; The Summer Comet of 1811; Devonshire and Dartmoor – Country Life; Country Life Routine of the Seasons Family Health; The Wheat Harvest and its interpretation; The Long Evening and Books; A Family Pen; A Family Pen and Random Thoughts among Books.	Isaac Taylor III (1787-1865)	Norman Macleod DD 32 Ludgate Hill, London	
1867	The Family Pen: Memorials, Biographical	Edited by Isaac Taylor IV	Jackson Walford & Hodder	This work included: The

	and Literary of the Taylor Family of Ongar. In two volumes.	(1829-1901). Includes pieces by Rev Isaac Taylor; Isaac Taylor III; Isaac Taylor IV; Jane Taylor; Ann Taylor Gilbert; Jefferys Taylor and Jemima Taylor	27 Paternoster Row, London	Family Pen by Isaac Taylor III; The Late Isaac Taylor, by Isaac Taylor IV; A new edition of Memoirs & Correspondence of Jane Taylor, by Isaac Taylor III
1874	Autobiography and other Memorials of Mrs. Gilbert	Chapters I - V by Ann Taylor Gilbert, edited by Josiah Gilbert. Preface and Chapters VI - XX by Josiah Gilbert	Wordsworth, Henry S. King & Co 65 Cornhill and 12 Paternoster Row, London	

Figure 9.

The information published in these auto/biographies was subsequently used in later biographies of the family and, more recently, has been cited by academics in studies that have included the Taylors. The later nineteenth and early twentieth-century biographies reproduced information and substantial quotes from the Taylors' published biographical works. One of these later books is from a descendant of the family, Doris Mary Armitage, a great, grandniece of Ann and Jane Taylor, who published *The Taylors of Ongar* in 1939.⁵⁰⁷ A further example, again drawing on the Taylors own works, is *Ann and Jane Taylor: A Colchester Reminiscence* written by F. M. Savill.⁵⁰⁸ The Rev. John Savill was the minister of the Round Meeting House in Colchester, a friend of the Taylor family and an ancestor of the author.

Other biographies based on information the family published focused on panegyric portraits of the sisters Ann and Jane. Clara Lucas Balfour's *Women Worth Emulating*,

⁵⁰⁷ D. Armitage, *The Taylors of Ongar*, (Cambridge 1939).

⁵⁰⁸ F. M. Savill, *Ann and Jane Taylor: A Colchester Reminiscence*, Colchester.

was published in 1877 and included both of the Taylor sisters.⁵⁰⁹ In 1880, Mrs H. C. Knight published *Jane Taylor: Her Life and Letters*.⁵¹⁰ This work centred on an evangelical narrative of Jane's life and relied heavily on Isaac Taylor III's *Memoirs* of his sister including substantial quotes and letters selected from Taylor's book.

In a collection of essays published in 1925 Virginia Woolf included a biographical profile of Ann Taylor Gilbert. This essay, titled *Lives of the Obscure*, also featured the Edgeworths and Laetitia Pilkington. It is evident from the content of the essay that Woolf used material from Ann's autobiography to create an elegiac portrait, secular in nature, that focused on Ann's early life and friendships in Colchester.⁵¹¹ Woolf, whose father Leslie Stephen was the first editor of the Dictionary of National Biography, was an early proponent of the value of the biographies. In the *Art of Biography*, Woolf observed that life writing, a literary development of the eighteenth century that had gained in popularity during the nineteenth century, was dependant on accommodating the desires of the family to protect the subject's reputation. This was to ensure that the public should "on no account be disillusioned." As a result, in Woolf's opinion, "the majority of Victorian biographies are like the wax figures now preserved in Westminster Abbey... effigies that have only a smooth superficial likeness to the body in the coffin."⁵¹²

This was a perception of biography that predominated through the first half of the twentieth century. From the 1970s onwards there was a change in opinion in relation

⁵⁰⁹ C. Lucas Balfour, *Women Worth Emulating*, (London 1877).

⁵¹⁰ H. C. Knight, *Jane Taylor: Her Life and Letters*, (London 1880).

⁵¹¹ V. Woolf, The Lives of the Obscure in *The Common Reader First Series*, (London, 1925), p. 64.

⁵¹² V. Woolf, *The Art of Biography*, in *The Death of the Moth, and other essays*.
<https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91d/chapt 23.html>

to biographical sources and academics began to acknowledge the value of auto/biographies as part of an increased interest in life writing sources. Even with the flaws that Woolf noted, as a source they could provide information through an analysis of both the material included or omitted, together with an assessment of the voices, authorial and editorial, associated with the works.

This chapter will consider the auto/biographical works of the Taylor family and the part the works played in creating and maintaining the family's literary reputation and legacy. Of importance in this discussion is the discovery of Mrs Ann Martin Taylor's unpublished memoirs and the decision taken, initially by her son and then supported by his children, not to publish them. Mrs. Taylor's manuscript allows for a reassessment of the published works and provides a comparison between material selected for disclosure in the books and what the family omitted. The memoirs also enable consideration to be given to the roles played by the different genders of the Taylor family in authorising and providing a voice to the family legacy. Mrs. Taylor's manuscript also offers a stylistic contrast with the printed auto/biographies enabling an evaluation of the role and extent of contemporary cultural and literary conventions on the construction of the authorised family history.

Biographical Conventions

The auto/biographies and memoirs by the Taylor family, both published and unpublished, are examples of a genre that has become increasingly prominent as a

source in historical and literary studies during the later twentieth century.⁵¹³ In conjunction with the use of these biographical materials, theoretical debates surrounding the validity and quality of biography as a source have increased. Since the 1980s the question of whether biography is “art or science has been supplanted by a more profound inquiry into its position within the academic landscape.”⁵¹⁴ Although Woolf, in the early years of the twentieth century, made the argument for the value of biography, she argued that as a literary form it had limitations and a transient relevance as it was constrained, she suggested, by facts in comparison to literature and poetry unconstrained by the imagination.⁵¹⁵ Lee, in the twenty first century, has argued for the value of biography and life writing as a longer lasting social record both valuable for the “visible and invisible” material they contain or omit.⁵¹⁶

The increase in the use of auto/biographical sources was part of the growing interest in minority histories that occurred from the 1970s onwards in fields that included women’s history, gender history, black history and colonial history.⁵¹⁷ Life writing, of which auto/biographies are a part, has also contributed to studies on the role of Dissenters and the Dissenting tradition during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries within the fields of social and cultural history.⁵¹⁸ The wealth of material available for scholars to recover and examine resulted from the growth in popularity of auto/biography as a literary form from the late seventeenth century. The style, conventions and subjects deemed appropriate for the genre changed and developed over the centuries. As its popularity grew many of the conventions relating to the

⁵¹³ B. Caine, *Biography and History*, (Basingstoke, 2010), p. i.

⁵¹⁴ H. Renders, B. De Haan & J. Harmsma (eds), *The Biographical Turn: Lives in History*, (London 2017), p. 4.

⁵¹⁵ Woolf, *Art of Biography*, p. 6.

⁵¹⁶ H. Lee, *Biography: A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford 2009), p. 14.

⁵¹⁷ J. Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*, (Edinburgh 1984) p. 279.

⁵¹⁸ F. James & I. Inkster (eds.), *Religious Dissent and the Aikin-Barbault Circle 1740-1860*, (Cambridge 2012).

nature and propriety of the details of private lives described within the auto/biographical content changed and developed. It is around the contested field of 'private', as Woolf's early assessment identified, that much of the debate on the value of auto/biographical sources stems. This is due to the shifting nature of ideas relating to material deemed appropriate for publication and the self-censorship that adherence to the correct principles entailed.

Caine argues that in the biographical field during the seventeenth century, "details, often small, of an individual's life" were expected, and the focus of biographical works was on significant public figures, who were almost exclusively male. By the eighteenth century the concept of private life moved to centre more on the semi-public world of the subject's social circle and conversations and away from the domestic sphere. The eighteenth century saw a broadening of subjects considered worthy of biographical works with artists, writers and members of the clergy now being included.⁵¹⁹ The eighteenth century was also the period that witnessed an increase in auto/biographical works by women. Nussbaum broadly categorises the works produced by women in this era as, "spiritual narratives, scandalous memoirs, and personal narratives of family life."⁵²⁰ A differentiation between the form of male and female auto/biography also evolved with male subject's lives discussed within a public, working environment with narratives contextualising intellectual development that preceded and supported this public life. In contrast women's biographical narratives, centred principally on the domestic realm, were often defined by their relationship to male relatives as daughter, sister, wife or mother. In order to overcome the conflict between making public that

⁵¹⁹ Caine, *Biography and History*, p. 27 - 29.

⁵²⁰ F. Nussbaum, *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth Century England*, (Baltimore 1989), p. xviii.

which is private through publishing details of their lives, many of the auto/biographical works by women are justified through a statement of intent by the writers to record their personal histories for children and grandchildren, thus retaining a private, familial association.

In the nineteenth century there was a reactionary response to the conventions surrounding subject material deemed appropriate for auto/biographical works when, “the protection of reputations came to be seen as far more important than the revealing of the whole.”⁵²¹ This can be seen as a backlash against the exposure of more private and at times salacious details in some eighteenth-century biographies and memoirs, particularly those referred to as scandalous.⁵²² The public response to William Godwin’s biography of his wife, Mary Wollstonecraft, first published in 1796, was typical of this reaction. In this work Godwin, amongst other details, discussed intimate aspects of Wollstonecraft’s relationships and a suicidal episode that had a profoundly negative impact on her reputation for many decades. An example of this negative reception is found in Isaac Taylor III’s essay, *The Family Pen*, where he claims his mother had a, “pungent dislike of certain of the English female sympathisers with the French Revolution” specifically noting “inclusive of Wollstonecraft.”⁵²³

A culture of self-restraint developed where privacy and propriety had a central place in the construction of the biographical narrative. Caine argues that, “this new emphasis on morality, propriety and respectability [was] associated in Britain with the rise of evangelical religion and with an increasingly prominent and self-confident middle

⁵²¹ Caine, *Biography and History*, p. 29.

⁵²² C. Breashers: *Eighteenth Century Women’s Writing and the Scandalous Memoir*, (London 2016).

⁵²³ Caine, *Biography and History*, p. 29, I. Taylor, *The Family Pen*, p. 18.

class.”⁵²⁴ In addition to the carefully curated content of an individual’s life, particular stylistic conventions were formed during the nineteenth century. Many of the works by, or concerning, women proceeded in a linear narrative, and followed the “standard pattern” including “early signs of spirituality in childhood... a conversion... and a good death”, combining exemplary behaviour and fulfilling the duty of being “useful” in their “display of moral values.”⁵²⁵ Petersen has described many of the Victorian auto/biographies of women as, “hybrid works” including selections of letters and “a combination of first person narrative and editorial amplification or excision.”⁵²⁶ As well as their formulaic nature many Victorian women’s auto/biographies were further constrained by a codified language that was based in the semiotics of Victorian evangelicalism.⁵²⁷ These conventions produced, as Nussbaum has discussed, works of a repetitive and predictable nature, Woolf’s superficial literary legacies.⁵²⁸

The Taylor’s published auto/biographical works follow many of the stylistic conventions of mid-Victorian biography. Linear in narrative with the inclusion of excerpts from correspondence and examples of writing by family members, incorporating some previously unpublished pieces. Linguistically the works are influenced by the cultural conventions of Victorian evangelicalism. The reminiscences are periodically framed by religious reflections, or interspersed with episodic justifications of actions or events, that are contextualised by spiritual contemplation. They are infused with concepts inherent in the biographical writing of the middle-class Victorian era, reinforcing gender, cultural, and familial constructs while the semantics

⁵²⁴ Caine, *Biography and History*, p. 35.

⁵²⁵ Lee, *Biography*, p. 52.

⁵²⁶ L. H. Petersen, *Traditions of Victorian Women’s Autobiography: The Poetics and Politics of Life Writing*, Virginia 1999, p. x.

⁵²⁷ Nussbaum, *Autobiographical Subject*, p. 177.

⁵²⁸ Nussbaum, *Autobiographical Subject*, p. 177.

of Victorian evangelicalism permeate the writing. However, as these works were authorised for publication by the family it indicates they present an interpretation of the family and their life that the surviving members of the Taylor family wished to be seen. It is therefore important to examine them in order to consider the literary legacy constructed by the Taylor family that has proved influential in the decades following their publication.

The Taylor auto/biographical works

The first biographical work on a member of the Taylor family was, *Memoirs and Poetical Remains of the late Jane Taylor with extracts from her correspondence*. This was written and compiled by her brother Isaac Taylor III and published in 1825, the year after Jane's death. Jane had appointed her brother, Isaac III as her literary executor. The connections between the Taylor family were strong and those between Isaac III and his sister Jane were particularly close. Jane was Isaac's companion when he travelled to Devon and Cornwall for three years as he recuperated from ill health. On their return from the West Country in 1815 they resided with their parents at Ongar until Jane's death in 1824. Prior to her death Jane was engaged to James Medland but the engagement was broken off due to what turned out to be mortal illnesses for both parties.⁵²⁹ A motivation for the memoirs can be interpreted as a wish to memorialise the character and achievements of his late sister. It would also have provided a method for a constructive outlet for his grief.

⁵²⁹ A. Martin Taylor, *MS Memoirs*, p. 425.

The work was produced at a time when the literary reputation of the family was established and new works by the Taylors were still appearing annually. The *Memoirs* provided the first public presentation of the life and work of a member of the family. From statements made in the introduction Isaac III had a clear understanding of the culture and tradition of the biographical form that he was working in and he used these to establish a particular interpretation of Jane's, and by association the family's, history. In the year following Jane's death Isaac III married Elizabeth Medland her good friend and the second daughter and Jane's former fiancé. He dedicated the memoirs to his new wife. In this dedication Isaac III is clear on what he perceived to be his responsibilities as biographer and outlined his wish to "retrace" Jane's life without impeding too much on the "personal history" of her family, indicating his intention to maintain in print the expected reticence relating to her private life.⁵³⁰ He wrote: "a biographer must be as free to give or to withhold the facts of personal history."⁵³¹

From the dedication it is also clear his emphasis was on Jane's religious principles emphasising that: "especially in the latter years of her life, a peculiarly deep impression of the great objects of Christian faith, and the obligations of Christian duty"⁵³² enveloped her life and "inclined her to estimate, as of very trivial importance, many of the pursuits which engross the attention of cultivated minds." Isaac III also identified the readership he had in mind when he compiled the work as those "to whom through her writings, the name of Jane Taylor has been associated with some of their earliest intellectual pleasures and perhaps, with their first impressions of virtue and piety."⁵³³

⁵³⁰ I. Taylor III, *Memoirs of Jane Taylor*, p. xiii.

⁵³¹ I. Taylor III, *Memoirs of Jane Taylor*, p. xiv.

⁵³² I. Taylor III, *Memoirs of Jane Taylor*, p. xix.

⁵³³ I. Taylor III, *Memoirs of Jane Taylor*, p. xi.

This placed her literary career within the appropriate feminine spheres of childhood, religious and moral example.

In structure the *Memoirs* are typical of similar works of the period. Published in two volumes the first being a linear narrative of her life from childhood to her death, interspersed with extracts from her letters, while the second volume contained further letters and selected pieces of Jane's writing. As it was not written by Jane herself Isaac III included selections from letters and noted that "the history of my sister's mind will best be given herself, in extracts from her correspondence."⁵³⁴ Caine has argued the use of letters was a method of trying to provide an authentic voice, "but most nineteenth century biographers censored these letters heavily."⁵³⁵ In this instance, as was frequently the case, the choice of extracts from her letters and the selections of Jane's writing in the second volume lay with a male authority. Of his role Isaac III wrote that: "the part, therefore, of her biographer will chiefly be to give such connecting facts as will render the continued perusal of the subjoined section intelligible and interesting."⁵³⁶ The direction of interest and the legibility was provided not by Jane but mediated by Isaac III for the readership he was addressing.

Jane is the central focus of the *Memoirs* and other members of the family, in accordance with biographical propriety, remain on the periphery. Through the "connecting facts" that Isaac III had chosen, and the interpretive narrative that he provided, he ensured the picture of Jane that emerged from the 1825 version is one of an exemplary female figure. He contextualised this picture within a Dissenting tradition and presented a

⁵³⁴ I. Taylor III, *Memoirs of Jane Taylor*, p. 83.

⁵³⁵ Caine, *Biography and History*, p. 35.

⁵³⁶ I. Taylor III, *Memoirs of Jane Taylor*, p. 83.

character in the process of evolving through exposure to the growing influence of evangelicalism that was increasingly crossing religious denominations. The characteristics Isaac attributed to her are those of “soundness of sentiment” raised in a family intent on ensuring “firm religious principles”, whose literary ambitions were directed at being “useful” and who displayed “a diffidence of her own powers” in relation to her success.⁵³⁷

In 1867 Isaac Taylor IV published a group of biography called *The Family Pen: Memorials, Biographical and Literary, of the Taylor Family of Ongar*. Included in this was a re-edited version of Isaac Taylor III’s *Memoirs of Jane Taylor*, which he had completed shortly before his death in 1865. In the introduction to the revised edition of the *Memoirs* Isaac III wrote that in the time that had passed Jane’s “name and literary repute, within her proper field, still survive, and that her influence within that field has undergone little diminution.”⁵³⁸ Added to this later edition was material Isaac III felt unable to include in 1825 out of respect for surviving family and friends. Isaac III also revealed the names of people previously only referred to by an initial, altered the content of chapters and embedded more selections from Jane’s letters into the body of the *Memoir*. The new edition featured expanded sections and religious expositions in many of the chapters, but did not include the second volume of correspondence or literary material. From Chapter X onward there is a greater divergence between the two versions with the later edition including more information on the Taylor family’s “removal to Ongar” and letters Isaac III added that emphasised Jane’s religious character. Also included were congratulatory letters to friends who were about to get

⁵³⁷ I. Taylor III, *Memoirs of Jane Taylor*, p. 35 & 36.

⁵³⁸ I. Taylor III, *Memoirs of Jane Taylor*, in *The Family Pen: Memorials, Biographical and Literary of the Taylor Family of Ongar*, I. Taylor IV, (ed.), (London, 1867), p. 77.

married and embark on their “new and important situation,” both subjects appropriate to the female sphere.⁵³⁹

A notable change occurs in chapter XI when Isaac discussed their time in the West Country. In the 1825 edition Isaac III had previously confined himself to mentioning anonymous friends who were either members of the Church of England or Wesleyan Methodists. He noted that they had contributed to a, “marked change in her mind and habits of feeling [that] was evidently much promoted by the new scenes she witnessed and the new friendships she formed in Cornwall.”⁵⁴⁰ He qualified this statement by adding that “the principles in which she had been educated did not become at all less firm.”⁵⁴¹ In the 1865 edition Isaac III provided greater information on these new connections. In the intervening years between the two editions, a wider public would have come to know the reputation of the friends he and Jane met. These included Josiah Hill, a Wesleyan preacher with whom Jane and Isaac frequently conversed and whom Isaac noted was now known to many for his work *John Forster’s Life and Letters*. Another friend, Miss Anne Maxwell, had later married Rev. Henry Lyte who had published a volume of poetry that “still has its admirers”.

There was a third character who had the greatest resonance to readers in the mid-Victorian era and this was Lydia Grenfell. In July 1814 Isaac III and Jane became acquainted with Lydia when they stayed at a property owned by her mother in Marazion, Cornwall. By 1865, Lydia had become known for her connection to Henry Martyn (1781-1812), a well-known and respected missionary within Evangelical

⁵³⁹ I. Taylor III, *Memoirs of Jane Taylor in I. Taylor IV, The Family Pen*, p. 250.

⁵⁴⁰ I. Taylor III, *Memoirs of Jane Taylor*, p. 148.

⁵⁴¹ I. Taylor III, *Memoirs of Jane Taylor*, p. 142.

circles, who had translated the New Testament into Urdu, Farsi and Arabic. Martyn had wished to marry Lydia but her mother had objected to the marriage since she did not approve of her daughter's adoption of Methodism. Martyn undertook his missionary work for the East India Company, dying at Tokat in 1812. Martyn's affection for Lydia remained un-diminished and his life story had become well-known within Victorian evangelical culture.⁵⁴²

The difference between the 1825 edition of *Memoirs and Poetical Remains of Jane Taylor* and the 1865 edition is the greater emphasis on, and association, with the culture and characteristics of mid to late Victorian Evangelicalism. When the work was first published Isaac Taylor III's parents were still alive and he and Jane had attended the church their father ministered to in Ongar. After his parent's deaths Isaac III eventually abandoned their dissenting tradition and joined the Church of England. In the earlier version of the *Memoirs* Isaac III indicated the influence on his sister of the broader religious group they spent time with in the West Country. Noting that previously his sister, and by association himself, "had been almost exclusively within the pale of one religious community."⁵⁴³ He was also careful to state that Jane remained, and died, within the Dissenting tradition. Jane had become a full member of her father's church in 1815, shortly before her breast cancer was diagnosed. In the 1865 edition Isaac III's discretion was replaced with a more overt emphasis on the broader religious experiences they first encountered in the West Country. These experiences came to affect Isaac III's life in the years following the death of his parents. In the 1850s Isaac III had left his father's Dissenting faith and converted to the Church of England. His new perspective subsequently pervaded his literary memorial to his

⁵⁴² B. Eaton, *Letters to Lydia 'beloved Persis'*, (Penzance 2005), p. 1.

⁵⁴³ I. Taylor III, *Memoirs of Jane Taylor*, p. 142.

sister. This connected and translated her life into that of the culture and language of mid to late Victorian Evangelicalism and presented Jane as model of female modesty and propriety within these traditions.

Following the 1825 publication of the *Memoirs* there was a gap of a nearly 30 years before further biographical works were published by members of the family. The first of these, although not directly about the immediate family, was *A Biographical Sketch of the Rev. Joseph Gilbert*, published in 1853 by Ann Taylor Gilbert in memory of her husband. This work also included “recollections of Discourses of his closing years from notes at the time by one of his sons.”⁵⁴⁴

A further ten years passed before Isaac Taylor III produced a series of “*Personal Recollections*” in the periodical *Good Works*, published in 1864. These recollections included two pieces, ‘*A Family Pen*’ and ‘*A Family Pen And Random Thoughts Among Books*’, together with recollections of the impact the Wars with France had on the areas where he grew up during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. *The Family Pen* appears to have been written around the time Isaac III was revising the *Memoirs* of his sister and it is a commemoration of the “literary doings” of his family over eight decades.⁵⁴⁵ In accordance with the form of nineteenth-century male biography, the second half of *The Family Pen* is a record of the influences on, and direction of, Isaac III’s own intellectual interests. Following the purchase of a book on the writings of Sulpicius Severus around 1820, his attention focussed principally on the Patristic Church and “the Christianity of the early Christian ages.”⁵⁴⁶ The first half of

⁵⁴⁴ A. Taylor Gilbert, *A Biographical Sketch of the Rev Joseph Gilbert by his widow*, (London 1853).

⁵⁴⁵ I. Taylor III, *The Family Pen*, in I. Taylor IV, *The Family Pen: Memorials*, p. 1.

⁵⁴⁶ I. Taylor III, *The Family Pen*, p. 33.

the essay contains a record of authors within the Taylor family. Isaac III chose to begin the essay outside his immediate family with an account of his paternal uncle, Charles Taylor, in particular commemorating his long years of anonymous work as editor and publisher of *Calmet's Dictionary of the Bible*.⁵⁴⁷

Isaac III then addressed the work of his sisters, Ann and Jane, and though he states he cannot discuss Ann because she is still alive, he again praises Jane for her literary modesty, disdain for financial remuneration and "excellent moral discipline".⁵⁴⁸ Isaac III reserved the two longest profiles in the essay for Charles and Jane Taylor. In acknowledging his parents, Isaac III recorded that, "the intelligence of the father" was directed at factual material, "it was knowledge and science rather than literature or taste, that prevailed with him." While "[o]n the mother's side," although she had a predilection from her teens "to scribbling verses" she had a "decisive feeling of antagonism toward *authorship* [sic]."⁵⁴⁹ Of his brother Jefferys he wrote just one paragraph, although he did acknowledge that; "He was gifted;"⁵⁵⁰

Throughout *The Family Pen* Isaac III placed considerable value on the adoption of anonymity, writing that to his death Charles Taylor refused to acknowledge his work on Calmet. Isaac Taylor III associated the disdain for "literary notoriety" with the rest of the family. He stated that: "They wrote, what they wrote, with an *intention*, and *for a purpose* [sic]" and that "Fame or no fame – income or no income" their aim was "to write for a good purpose."⁵⁵¹ In relation to his sister's literary works, as in *The Memoirs*

⁵⁴⁷ C. Taylor, *Calmet's Dictionary of the Holy Bible with the Biblical Fragments*, (London, 1830).

⁵⁴⁸ I. Taylor III, *The Family Pen*, p. 12 - 15.

⁵⁴⁹ I. Taylor III, *The Family Pen*, p. 18.

⁵⁵⁰ I. Taylor III, *The Family Pen*, p. 31.

⁵⁵¹ I. Taylor III, *The Family Pen*, p. 13.

and *Poetical Remains of Jane Taylor*, Isaac stated that Ann and Jane's "early scribbling" although not unknown to their parents, was not encouraged by them and emphasised that; "As to literary ambition, or any eagerness to venture into print, such impulses were far from the minds a like of parents and of children."⁵⁵² Isaac III retrospectively emphasised an interpretation of, and gave a specific intent to, the family's literary enterprise that evidence suggests was not always a priority when financial pressures affected the family during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁵⁵³ At the time it can be argued that the family adopted a more pragmatic approach to their writing over the ideal principles inherent in literary modesty. However, it is the characteristic of literary modesty, together with a religious and moral purpose, presented in Isaac Taylor III's biographical works that have come to be associated with the Taylors of Ongar and, in particular, with the female members of the family.

Isaac III died in 1865, the year after his series of recollections was published in *Good Works*. Two years later, in 1867, his son Isaac Taylor IV produced a group biography that he named after his father's essay, *The Family Pen, Memorials Biographical and Literary of the Taylor Family of Ongar in Two Volumes*. In this work he included his father's essay, *The Family Pen*, together with his own recollection of his father and the edition of the *Memoirs and Poetical Remains of Jane Taylor* that Isaac III had revised shortly before his death. The second volume contained examples of work by several members of the Taylor family; fifteen by Jane, two each by Jefferys, Isaac Taylor II, and Ann Taylor Gilbert, and one by Isaac Taylor III. Isaac Taylor IV also included a piece by Jemima, the youngest child in the family and now Mrs Herbert, who had not participated in the family's literary enterprise. The intention of the selection appears

⁵⁵² I. Taylor III, *The Family Pen*, p. 17.

⁵⁵³ The financial imperatives affecting the Taylors' writing careers are discussed in Chapter III.

to have been to emphasise the appropriate nature of the title, 'Family Pen'. The collective value of the Taylors of Ongar, first used by Isaac Taylor II in the advertisement he produced during the period 1812-1813, remained identifiable in the literary world of mid-Victorian England.⁵⁵⁴ The inclusion of so many pieces by Jane indicates the pre-eminent position she had come to hold within that literary reputation. Noticeably absent from the material included by Isaac IV in this collection was any example of the work of his grandmother, Mrs. Ann Martin Taylor, who had been one of the family's most successful authors during the main period of the family's literary enterprise.

In 1874, eight years after her death, Josiah Gilbert published his mother, Ann Taylor Gilbert's autobiography. This work, *Autobiography and other Memorials of Mrs. Gilbert, formerly Ann Taylor*, was constructed in several stages.⁵⁵⁵ Chapters I to III were written by Ann and then according to her own words suspended for a number of years. She restarted the autobiography in her eightieth year, completing Chapters IV and V. She concluded her writing at the point of her marriage in 1813 together with the statement that from then on her family would know as much about her life as she did. Ann Taylor Gilbert died in 1866, the same year she completed her autobiography, and her son, Josiah Gilbert, subsequently edited the work and contributed a further fifteen chapters before its publication in 1874.

In addition to the full title of the autobiography, following a preface and an introduction by Josiah Gilbert, the work begins with a subtitle, 'Domestic Recollections', before the

⁵⁵⁴ The collective value of the family name identified by Isaac Taylor II is discussed in Chapter III.

⁵⁵⁵ A. Taylor Gilbert, *Autobiography and other Memorials of Mrs Gilbert, formerly Ann Taylor*, (London, 1874).

heading for Chapter I. It is unclear whether Ann or her son chose this description for the opening of her autobiography but it identifies the work within the appropriate domestic realm for women's biography that was common in the mid Victorian era. Stylistically it again follows the appropriate conventions of the nineteenth century being linear in narrative, with a description of Ann's childhood and early adult years, together with her conversion and acceptance into membership of her father's church. The chapters written by Ann do not include examples of letters, it is only when her son Josiah took over the narrative that edited material from letters was embedded into the work, providing a link to Ann's voice. The chapters written by Ann, liberated to a degree from literary reticence by the distance of time to the events being portrayed, include engaging portraits of characters and events from the family's time in Lavenham and Colchester. The extensive chapters written by her son are more formal and focus on achievements and connections associated with his mother's later married life. However, neither Ann's or Josiah's writing are as formal or restrained as Isaac Taylor III's writing on Jane Taylor.

It is from Ann's chapters in the autobiography that an enduring portrait of the Taylor family emerged as she included considerable detail relating to her childhood, family life and their work in the years before her marriage in 1813. At the very start, from the two quotes with which Ann begins her autobiography, influential subjects within her recollections become apparent. The first is a quotation of her own, "My Father! Well the name he bore, For never man was father more." Throughout the autobiography Ann presents an exemplary portrait of her father, one that dominates the family life of her childhood and youth. She describes him as, "an unusually single-hearted man and

Christian” who “at thirteen commenced a life which became one of diffusive piety.”⁵⁵⁶ His indefatigable hard work combined with his regular habits of devotion “formed a valuable part of his example,” which together with his commitment to education and learning guided the family. Any notion of a cold, strict upbringing, that readers may be inclined to infer from what Ann’s son referred to as “the old Puritan life – homely, frugal, studious” that could be associated with her father’s orthodox Dissent, was dispelled by Ann’s description of his affectionate nature towards his family.⁵⁵⁷ Ann wrote that; “Hope and cheerfulness were as the air he breathed and these were confirmed and rendered habitual principles by a faith in promises and providences of God.”⁵⁵⁸ From Ann Taylor Gilbert’s autobiography the presence, oversight and influence of her father enveloped the family’s life.

The second quote at the start of the autobiography is by Robert Browning, “And found myself in full conventicle. ——— To wit, in Zion Chapel meeting. [sic]”⁵⁵⁹ Her parents’ Dissenting background was the other great influence in Ann’s life. Her husband, Joseph, was a Congregational minister and, unlike her brothers, Isaac III and Jefferys, Ann remained a Nonconformist throughout her life. More in keeping with the Dissenting tradition of her parents, Ann’s autobiography is not as constrained by the cultural and semiotic practices associated with Victorian Evangelicalism that was present in her brother’s biography of their late sister. However, she did periodically qualify past events in her life with extended paragraphs of religious exposition and she did participate in many social and charitable activities associated with evangelicalism that crossed the denominational divides in the nineteenth century.

⁵⁵⁶ A. Taylor Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 3.

⁵⁵⁷ A. Taylor Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 3.

⁵⁵⁸ A. Taylor Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 5.

⁵⁵⁹ A. Taylor Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 1.

While Ann Taylor Gilbert's voice is present in the first five chapters it is superseded by a male voice, that of her son, Josiah. As with his Uncle, Isaac Taylor III, Josiah reveals he has an understanding of the expected conventions of biography at the start of Chapter VI. When he took over as biographer he acknowledged that while it had been "an easy task", nevertheless as editor he carried out a process of "selection and condensation" on the material.⁵⁶⁰ As well as the adherence of individual Taylors to the stylistic conventions of Victorian auto/biography what is also evident from these works is the predominance of a male voice in control of the material contained in the auto/biographies. For many decades it is these published biographical works presenting a history that is authorised and constructed by the family, guided by a predominantly male subjectivity, and created within the constraints of the stylistic model of Victorian auto/biographies that has formed a major source in the consideration of the Taylors of Ongar and their literary careers. With the rediscovery of Mrs Ann Martin Taylor's unpublished memoirs another, female voice unconstrained by a male editor or biographer, provides a contrasting narrative source.

Mrs Ann Martin Taylor's Memoirs

In many of the auto/biographical works Mrs Ann Martin Taylor appears as a remote figure within the family's history or, as is the case of Isaac Taylor IV's collation, is excluded all together. The predominant influence on the family life is attributed to her husband, Isaac Taylor II, and when Mrs Taylor is referred to it is as a subordinate to the

⁵⁶⁰ A. Taylor Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 152.

patriarchal influence of her husband in the creation of the family ethos.⁵⁶¹ Although Mrs Taylor is mentioned briefly in Isaac Taylor III's *Memoirs* of his sister Jane, and is included in his piece, *The Family Pen*, the more detailed description of Mrs Taylor occurs in Ann Taylor Gilbert's autobiography. In contrast to the strengths of her father, Ann produced an impression of her mother with frequent references to her infirmities. Mrs Taylor is introduced in the autobiography as:

"My dear mother was a character more peculiar, and her disadvantages had been greater than those of my father. The sensibility of her frame, both mental and bodily was extreme; her affections were strong and lively, and her sufferings (irrespective of bodily pain) from the sorrows and bereavements of her seventy-two years proportionately intense."⁵⁶²

Ann Taylor Gilbert does acknowledge the greater disadvantages of her mother's early years and the fact that her spirit was excited "by a thirst for knowledge" that had raised her above her brothers and sisters, combined with her early discovery of "an expertness of pen."⁵⁶³ In place of the cheerfulness and indefatigability of Isaac Taylor II is the description of a character, "with health never strong", who suffered "constant pain", and who had a "greater susceptibility of nature, nervous, anxious and foreboding" that pervaded her life.⁵⁶⁴ It is only from the recovered manuscripts that a more detailed and complex picture of Mrs Taylor is revealed, together with an indication of the significant role and influence that she had on her family in the course of their life and work.

⁵⁶¹ Chapter II discusses the Taylor family ethos and the roles of Isaac II and Mrs. Taylor in its construction.

⁵⁶² A. Taylor Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 8.

⁵⁶³ A. Taylor Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 10.

⁵⁶⁴ A. Taylor Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 13.

Mrs Taylor began writing her memoirs “at the united request of my family” in 1825, the same year that Isaac Taylor III first produced his *Memoirs and Poetical Remains of Jane Taylor*, and initiated the process of providing an authorised version of the family history. On her death in 1830, Mrs Taylor entrusted the manuscript to Isaac III and in the front of the memoirs he noted that:

“These memoirs of her own life (occupying three M. S. volumes) were entrusted to me by my dear mother and were placed at my sole discretion whether to publish them or not; yet with these conditions, namely that they should not be published till several years after her death. The produce if published to be shared equally among her grandchildren surviving at the time of publication.”⁵⁶⁵

Three months before he died in 1865, Isaac Taylor III inserted an additional memorandum in which he stated that since the time he was entrusted with the manuscripts he had:

“never thought it desirable to bring them forward for the purpose of publication; but on the contrary have continued to think the publication of them undesirable and in that respect have used the discretion which my mother left me.”

Isaac III goes on to mention that he periodically discussed the matter with his children, “who have severally expressed their feeling and opinions to the same effect – namely that the publication of these memoirs is undesirable.” It should be noted that this

⁵⁶⁵ A. Martin Taylor, M.S. *Memoirs*, 1825.

decision was recorded around the time Isaac Taylor III produced the “personal recollections” for the periodical *Good Works* in 1864 and re-edited his memoirs of Jane indicating that he was certainly not averse to public dissemination of information on the family.⁵⁶⁶

Mrs Taylor addressed statements in her memoirs to “my dear grandchildren” and “any of our family” which implies the private nature of her reminiscences. However, there is the indication contained in Isaac III’s memorandums, and the discretion to publish left to him, that the possibility of publication was a consideration as she recalled her life. With the subsequent publication of works detailing the life and literary careers of family members, the decision taken by Isaac Taylor III and supported by his children, raises the question of why it was thought undesirable to publish Mrs Taylor’s Memoirs and instead sequester them within his family archive? Isaac III never elaborated on the reasons behind his decision but conjectures can be made when the stylistic form and content of his mother’s memoirs are examined and compared with the published auto/biographies by other family members, with striking results.

As with the published Taylor biographical works, Mrs Taylor’s Memoirs follow a linear pattern beginning in childhood and recalling her life until just after Jane’s death in 1824. The memoirs differ from the auto/biographical works of her children and grandchildren by being very detailed and forthcoming in the intimate descriptions she provides of her life and the family history. It can be argued that Mrs Taylor’s memoirs have more in common with the less constrained biographical works of the eighteenth

⁵⁶⁶ C. Duff Stewart, *The Taylors of Ongar: An Analytical Bio-Bibliography Vol. II*, (London & New York 1975), p. 694.

century than the nineteenth century model exemplified in the family's published works.

In the course of her reminiscences Mrs Taylor discussed aspects of her personal and married life, including those relating to her physical and mental health, as well as some aspects of her childrearing practices. In a manner that could be seen as a challenge to the idea of patriarchal authority, she did not feel constrained in questioning and criticising some of the decisions her husband made which affected the course of their family life, notably his decision to move the family out of London. Mrs Taylor further revealed significant points in her life when, despite the example set by Isaac Taylor II, she suffered periods when she lost her faith. In comparison to the auto/biographical works by her children, who portrayed their faith in terms of personal spiritual challenges and in the tradition of the Victorian era, Mrs Taylor's memoirs describe a more worldly background to the family's religious experience. She details episodes where public discord and practical concerns within the membership of their churches encroached on family life at significant times.

The Memoirs also contain details of Mrs Taylor's family history that had been excluded from any previous biographical work. Later generations of the family focused on the ancestry of the Taylor family and, particularly in Ann Taylor Gilbert's autobiography, and on their early association with Nonconformity. Very little is mentioned about their maternal ancestry beyond Mrs Taylor's father's conversion to Nonconformity, through an encounter with George Whitefield, during the revivalist period of the eighteenth century. The conversion and Nonconformist heritage of the Taylors were associations the family would seek to promote in the mid nineteenth century to support their appeal

to a particular readership. In contrast, Mrs Taylor's memoirs go in to considerable detail about her parents' background with notable information on her father, who died when she was six. They also discuss his parents with whom she lived for a time when she was young and for whom she had a great affection. In the memoirs it is revealed that her father had been a pawnbroker, a fact never discussed in any other family source and acknowledged by Mrs Taylor as carrying a stigma. She also revealed that her grandparents were members of the Church of England and described details of her early experiences of the Established faith.

Through out her memoirs Mrs Taylor provides descriptions of women that revealed the perilous situation many could find themselves in as a result of educational restrictions and social expectations placed on them. These women are described in a manner that would have presented a challenge to middle-class ideals of the mid-Victorian period. In writing about these women, while Mrs Taylor stated she did not condone their actions, she refrained from contextualising their decisions with any standard providential justifications that might mitigate their actions. The presentation of women in a worldly and realistic manner throughout the memoirs would have challenged the traditional ideas of femininity and the social role of women. In this manner they can be argued to run counter to much of the Taylor family writing that, in many instances, portrayed the ideal principles and role of a woman's life and duties.

One of the strongest characters in the memoirs is that of Mrs Ann Taylor's mother, Mary Plaxton. Mary was married three times and widowed twice and Ann Taylor had a difficult, but influential, relationship with her. It was Mary that Ann Taylor credited with being the driving force in the Martin family's pawnbroking business not her

father. Following her first husband's death, according to Ann, Mary Plaxton Martin ensured the continuation of the business in spite her subsequent husbands. Mrs Taylor described these men as being at best ineffectual if not incompetent. Mrs Whitty was a further illustration of a capable woman who challenged the traditional roles of gender by successfully assuming control of, and continuing to run, a business after being widowed. A detailed description is provided of Mrs Whitty, their neighbour and her mother's friend, who assumed control of her husband's building business and proceeded to run it successfully after being widowed and left with eight children while expecting another.

Throughout the memoirs it is clear that Mrs Taylor had considerable financial acumen. This was acquired when she was thirteen and trained in the management of the books and tickets for the pawnbroking business by her mother. This was due, Mrs Taylor states, to the incompetence of her stepfather Mr Hewitt.⁵⁶⁷ Contravening the principle of financial reticence, these skills are further reflected in the memoirs where Mrs Taylor often recorded and discussed details of the financial aspects of the Taylor family's work in relation to both engraving and writing.⁵⁶⁸ In contrast to her son Isaac's descriptions of pecuniary reticence in both *The Memoirs of Jane Taylor* and *The Family Pen*, Mrs Taylor indicated that the family were well aware of the financial benefits they were accruing from their literary work and was appreciative of it. The origin of the infirmities that Mrs Taylor suffered are recorded in Ann Taylor Gilbert's autobiography are also revealed in Mrs Taylor's memoirs. These infirmities were a result of a challenging childhood and early life before she married and were

⁵⁶⁷ A. Martin Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 96.

⁵⁶⁸ The financial information Mrs Taylor recorded has been discussed in Chapters III and IV in relation to the family literary enterprise.

experiences that caused both mental and physical scars. The deafness that was to plague Mrs Taylor later in life also began in the years before she married.

In addition to the unconstrained content of the memoirs, the style of Mrs Taylor's writing in the manuscripts differs from that of her published works, and of those by other members of the family. The books written by Mrs Taylor in her literary career exemplify the formal language and style that was characteristic of didactic works of the early nineteenth century. Mrs Taylor's books were already out of print by the mid to late-Victorian era and today they can come across as dry and turgid, now relegated principally to the field of academic study. In her memoirs Mrs Taylor breaks with this restraint, using a language and style of writing that appears natural and almost conversational with a wit that, as later generations mentioned about her character, is apparent. The memoirs follow literary conventions, being set within the domestic locales of her early years and married life, however, the overall picture obtained from the reminiscences is broader in scope. Throughout there is a blurring between the family's private life and the public sphere that occurred as a result of their work being centred within the family home but public in nature. Contributing to this was her husband's role as a minister that exposed the rest of the family, in particular his wife, to public scrutiny.

As Caine has argued, the stylistic constraints applied to nineteenth-century biographical material ensured that "painful matters" should not be referred to and that the "concern to stress virtue also meant that harsh characteristics, including wit, were softened or omitted."⁵⁶⁹ In contrast to this biographical model associated particularly with women during the nineteenth century, such is the openness and honesty of Mrs

⁵⁶⁹ B. Caine, *Biography and History*, p. 35.

Taylor's memoirs they had the potential to undermine significant aspects of the portrait of the family that had been constructed by the younger generations in the service of the family's literary legacy.

Conclusion

In response to the general question posed by Nussbaum regarding "in whose interests these narratives of self serve," in the case of the Taylors the biographical works are of particular service to later generations.⁵⁷⁰ However, the 'narrative of self', constructed by the family in the Victorian era, masked much of the detail and character that contributed to their literary enterprise and the dynamics of their family life. By the time the main group of published auto/biographical works were produced in the mid to late-Victorian period the literary world had changed and expanded over a generation, as Isaac Taylor III noted in *The Family Pen*.⁵⁷¹ In the 1860s he wrote that the literary market place was by then a, "modern era of sensation novels and of 'series', and "of mortal elbowings for life, for fame, for cash.[sic]"⁵⁷² It was Isaac III's opinion that many of the books produced by the Taylors of Ongar belonged to a period of "a slower rate of going" in place of "the modern agonistic paroxysms in literature."

The Taylors still had a presence in the literary world but their relevance was diminishing. It was during the mid to late-Victorian era that the body of work by the Taylors that continued to be published was contracting to that of the earlier material, principally for children. Ann Taylor Gilbert, into her later years, was still editing and,

⁵⁷⁰ Nussbaum, *The Autobiographical Subject*, p. xi.

⁵⁷¹ I. Taylor III, *The Family Pen*, p. 30.

⁵⁷² I. Taylor III, *The Family Pen*, p. 30.

on occasion revising to suit Victorian sensibilities, the poems and hymns she and Jane had written in the early years of the nineteenth century. The reputation of her sister Jane, first presented as an exemplary female character by her brother in 1825, had become part of the culture of Victorian female propriety within evangelical spheres. It was during these later years of the nineteenth century that biographies of the Taylor sisters appeared that restated much of the material that had been found in the Taylor auto/biographies.

With revised editions of the Taylors' work, particularly that of Ann and Jane, continuing to be published and included in anthologies throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, it can be argued that from a professional perspective the later auto/biographical works had the dual purpose of modest financial benefit while maintaining the family's profile in mid to late-Victorian literary and evangelical circles. The auto/biographical works presented a public image associated with their earlier literary reputation and made it relevant to the cultural and social sensibilities of the Victorian era. Edited by male members of the family, these works reinforced an image of a hardworking, self-disciplined and modest family governed by the principles of the father's Dissenting faith and presented it through the values of mid-Victorian Evangelicalism. This was at the expense of portraying the co-operative nature of the family's work and their wider involvement in the Dissenting literary sphere of the Romantic era. It also masked the professionalism, across genders, of the Taylors that underpinned their literary efforts. By refraining from publishing Mrs Taylor's *Memoirs*, as well as hiding the candid personal nature of their content, it can be argued that an additional reason behind the decision not to publish becomes apparent in protecting the Victorian reputation of the family. If the memoirs had been published

Mrs Taylor's more worldly and pragmatic reminiscences of the family's life and work risked subverting the legacy of 'The Family Pen' that had been presented, and justified, by the younger generation of the family through the prism of Victorian Evangelical cultural and literary values.

Conclusion

Faith and pragmatism traverse the literary enterprise of the Taylors of Ongar. The evidence reveals there was a constant tension between the practices and principles of the Taylors' Dissenting faith and the need to secure their position in the developing middle class and to support a large family. In this context, the decision to pursue the family's literary enterprise was pragmatic. How to reconcile the two concerns remained a constant challenge. Later generations sought to preserve the Taylors' literary reputation through the language and conventions of an evangelical faith that had expanded in cultural range and influence during the years since the Taylors were writing. In so doing, the memoirs that Mrs Taylor wrote would, if published, have disrupted this later narrative, which explains their removal from public view. The very act of silencing Mrs Taylor's voice indicates that her reminiscences carried details that her son, Isaac Taylor III, and his children wished to remain obscure.

With the memoirs sequestered, any analysis of the standing of the Taylors of Ongar in the literary world and Dissenting culture of the Romantic era has relied mainly on the family's edited history in conjunction with the books that the family published. The new evidence does not diminish conclusions reached by previous studies through this approach, but enables certain themes to be expanded. As authors, the Taylors' identification with a conservative literary tradition and Dissenting culture ensured that the works that the family published undoubtedly contributed to a developing narrative of middle-class domesticity. Their published biographical works reinforced these values by emphasising a model family; close, hardworking, religiously observant and guided by the exemplary character of Isaac Taylor II. Nonetheless, Robert Shoemaker's caution to scholars against, "often assuming that prescriptive literature constitutes a

reliable picture of historical reality," is particularly pertinent in the case of the Taylors' literary enterprise.⁵⁷³

The new evidence provided by Mrs Taylor's memoirs, supported by information from other sources, reveals contradictions between the life of the family and the idealism presented in publications by family members. Details contained in the memoirs also contribute to a greater understanding of the decision taken by the family to engage in the literary world of the early nineteenth century. This information, together with an examination of the manner in which they carried out their literary pursuits, contributes to ongoing debates surrounding the professionalism of women writers, Dissenting culture and literary families from the Romantic era.

In the memoirs, a strong female voice provides practical details and personal information relating to her family's life and work. Alternative interpretations that challenge previous conceptions of the Taylors of Ongar can be presented, even if they do not alter significantly the nature of the family's contribution to the literary world of the nineteenth century. Mrs Taylor's memoirs provide a greater context to the high religiosity of later biographies and suggest that a balance was necessary between adherence to the family's religious beliefs and the practicalities of their daily lives. Later generations set out to portray this incongruity to a Victorian evangelical readership and this has masked a more detailed understanding of the professionalism of the Taylors' literary enterprise.

⁵⁷³ R. B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society 1650-1850; The Emergence of Separate Spheres?*, (Edinburgh, 1998), p. 5.

Mrs Taylor's Memoirs

"My father was a man of talent, but my mother was a woman of genius." This was a statement written by Isaac Taylor III of his parents.⁵⁷⁴ It is a description that underlines the success his father, Isaac Taylor II, eventually achieved as an engraver through persistent hard work. The intention in relation to his mother is harder to discern because Isaac III went on to remove the manuscript that would have contributed evidence to support this statement. In a further act of excision, Isaac III's son, Isaac Taylor IV, excluded any examples of her writing from a family collection.⁵⁷⁵ Mrs Taylor's reminiscences reveal a life of many challenges, particularly during her childhood and adolescence. Throughout, the memoirs demonstrate how the practical experiences of the real world frequently subvert the literary ideal presented in books by the Taylor family. The worldly character and detail contained in the memoirs predominate over Mrs Taylor's religious considerations.

From her early years, Mrs Taylor expressed herself through writing. Later, her writing became a method of communication with the family as her deafness became more severe. When finally encouraged by her husband to participate in the family literary enterprise, the books she wrote were formal in tone and appear very dated to modern tastes. In contrast, her entertaining yet informative memoirs and surviving letters reveal a witty, sharply observant personality that is very different from her published

⁵⁷⁴ D. M. Armitage, *The Taylors of Ongar*, (Cambridge, 1939), p. 7.

⁵⁷⁵ I. Taylor IV, *The Family Pen, Memorials, Biographical and Literary, of the Taylor Family of Ongar, Vol II*, (London, 1867).

work. Particularly striking are the details of her early life and the Martin family, together with the manner in which she portrayed a number of women.

The history of Mrs Taylor's parents contains much that was the antithesis of the Taylor family. Her paternal grandfather was a grocer by trade in contrast to Isaac Taylor I's skill and success as an engraver and publisher. The Taylor family had a long-standing Dissenting heritage, while the Martin family were recent converts to the Dissenting tradition. Her late father was inclined to the more 'enthusiastic' practices that occurred during the religious revivals of the eighteenth-century. By the nineteenth century, 'enthusiasm' carried negative connotations relating to extremes of religious passion that were un-moderated by reason. One of Isaac Taylor III's more popular books was *A Natural History of Enthusiasm*. First published in 1829, the book continued to be in print throughout the Victorian era. In the introduction to this book Isaac Taylor III warned that, "'enthusiasm' was a perilous illusion which too often supplants genuine piety."⁵⁷⁶ The frank description Mrs Taylor provides regarding various religious experiences with the Martin family is in stark contrast to the long-standing association the Taylor family had with orthodox Dissent through Sarah Hacksaw Taylor.

One notable detail concerning Mrs Taylor's family that was never revealed in any biographical material by later generations, or referred to in other sources, was her father's profession as a pawnbroker. It was an occupation that carried considerable social and religious stigma, a fact that Mrs Taylor acknowledged in her memoirs. The business dealt with people in distress, financially and socially, who had to pledge items to raise money in order to avoid debt or to provide for their needs. Those who ran

⁵⁷⁶ I. Taylor III, *Natural History of Enthusiasm*, (London, 1834), p. ii. Following his marriage in 1825 Isaac III moved to Stanford Rivers. Referred to as Isaac Taylor of Stanford Rivers, he continued publishing works throughout his life but these books are not associated with the period during which the family enterprise was known as The Taylors of Ongar.

pawnshops were generally associated with corrupt practices. Mrs Taylor noted that at the time, “the supposition that the inclination to defraud” was associated with the business. She went on to argue that there were “men in the business who acquitted themselves with equal integrity, to those of any other calling,” her father being among them.⁵⁷⁷ In spite of these assurances it was an occupation that went against many of the principles held by Isaac Taylor II and the Dissenting community to which the family belonged.

Membership of the Congregational Church required adherence to standards of behaviour that included avoidance of profligacy and debt. If these were transgressed a church member could face admonishment procedures. In addition, since the Middle Ages when money lending began to flourish, the Christian Church held a poor opinion of the occupation based on biblical passages.⁵⁷⁸ The reputation that the Taylor family came to hold within Victorian evangelical culture made knowledge of the Martin family’s occupation and hints of religious zeal undesirable.

Presenting a further challenge to the Victorian middle-class values of later generations of her family was Mrs Taylor’s narrative of the integral involvement of her mother, Mary, in the operation and success of the pawnbroking business. Throughout the memoirs, there are descriptions of women acting in a manner that was contradictory to the ideal of middle-class femininity, or stepping outside the traditional domestic realm expected of women in the Victorian age. Mrs Taylor included her own family in this

⁵⁷⁷ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 5.

⁵⁷⁸ K. Hudson, *Pawnbroking: An Aspect of British Social History*, (London, 1982), p. 22-23. Deuteronomy, Chapter 23, v. 19. Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother, usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of anything that is lent upon usury.

presentation by writing of her own, and her daughters', financial success from their literary achievements.

It is the depiction of Mrs Taylor's mother, Mary that is the clearest example of a departure from established gender roles. Mrs Taylor's representation of her mother credits her with masculine qualities. She attributes the continuance of the pawnbroking business to Mary Martin's strength and her "industrious and indefatigable" character rather than the efforts of any of her three husbands. Mrs Taylor describes her mother as having no concern for domestic details and lacking motherly qualities. The account of Mary Martin's failure to provide for her daughter emotionally or educationally contributes to a vivid, complex and at times contradictory portrait that Ann creates of her mother. It is a portrait that subverts the prescriptive ideal of domesticity for women found in both Mrs Taylor's published works and her own stated preference.

The memoirs reveal Mrs Taylor to have had a good understanding of the financial dependency that women experienced during the course of their lives. This was due to having to rely on the men they were married or related to. The reality that illness or death could strike at any time with serious consequences for a family was clearly presented. In addition to the situation her own mother found herself in, being widowed twice, Mrs Taylor's description of the Martin family's neighbour, Mrs Withy, adds to the portrayal of ingenuity and capability in women she knew. Mrs Withy, on

being widowed with eight children to support, carried on her late husband's affairs, "with as much ability and address as her husband had done before her."⁵⁷⁹

These women's experiences took place against the backdrop of an expanding literary market for works that emphasised women's duties as wives and mothers. In this climate, scholars have noted that arguments were being made that; "Women did not need the accomplishments of men, they did not need to be involved with parts of his work or take his responsibilities in either the public world or the world of the church."⁵⁸⁰ In contrast, Mrs Taylor's memoirs bear witness to the dangers inherent for women confined by such ideals and she lauded the actions of those women who stepped outside these gender boundaries as required.

Mrs Taylor's insight into these perils was undoubtedly affected by the nature of the Martin family's business. Her mother instilled into her a financial acumen as a skill in place of domestic duties. A further theme running through the memoirs is that of money. From Mrs Taylor's mother refusing to allow her money to buy her own clothes, to the dowries her husband expected on marriage, the vacillations in the family income over the years and the earnings from books the family produced. As family sources indicate, Mrs Taylor made sure her children were aware of their father's business affairs to enable them to understand the material limitations that were placed on the family life. It is in keeping with this experience and approach that when evidence relating to the Taylors' literary enterprise is compiled it indicates that their daughters,

⁵⁷⁹ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 115.

⁵⁸⁰ Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*, (London, 1987), p. 116.

as well as their sons, understood the business details and financial intricacies of the publishing world.

Quoting from Mrs Taylor's work, *Practical Hints to Young Females on the Duties of a Wife, a Mother and a Mistress of a Family*, 1815, Davidoff and Hall remark that, "[Mrs] Taylor even argued that the running of the home might be able to exert a good influence on that of the business." Davidoff and Hall also noted of Mrs Taylor's writing that, "[h]er commercial language in relation to motherhood became a commonplace in later years for being a mother was indeed a business."⁵⁸¹ From her memoirs it is now clear that, in the absence of domestic training, Mrs Taylor brought her practical experience and financial skills to her marriage. This financial ability found expression in her books. Ann Martin Taylor clearly believed that providing her daughters with the means to support themselves, in addition to domestic skills, was a pragmatic defence against the insecurities inherent in a middle-class woman's dependent position. The resulting decision to train all their children in the engraving profession ultimately led, through their daughters, to the Taylor family's literary enterprise.

Literary Professionalism Reconstructed

Studies in the area of auto/biography note that during the nineteenth century there was the necessity for women to banish signs of vanity and ambition and proclaim modesty.⁵⁸² It is noticeable that in her memoirs Mrs Taylor does not proclaim such sentiments in relation to her own, or the family's writing. Linda Petersen argues that,

⁵⁸¹ Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. 174 & 176.

⁵⁸² H. Renders, B. De Haan & J. Harmsma, (eds.) *The Biographical Turn: Lives in History*, (London, 2017), p. 7.

“lesser-known writers, famous in their day, un-canonical now, but nonetheless representative of important models of nineteenth century authorship,” can contribute to a greater understanding of literary professionalism.⁵⁸³ In this context, the fact that the Taylor family’s literary works have not retained cultural currency is not as significant as their commercial success during the course of their literary enterprise. As indicated in Mrs Taylor’s memoirs, family letters and Ann Taylor Gilbert’s autobiography, the Taylors did appreciate the financial benefits from the family’s writing profession.

Reconstructing the working practices of the Taylors of Ongar through the manuscript sources illustrates that although the published biographical works conform to the standards of nineteenth-century auto/biographical restraint, an alternative discourse can be proposed in relation to the Taylors’ literary output. This demonstrates that later generations of the Taylors masked the true extent of the professional nature and co-operative working practices of the family. Using a variety of indicators to assess professional intent, including print runs, editions, and the range of material written, demonstrates the significance of their literary undertaking, particularly for the women. While this does not undermine or contradict the family’s contribution to the didactic and conservative literature of the era, it can be argued that in their working practices members of the family shared a similar disciplinary approach to their work as a number of their contemporaries. This is particularly true for Ann and Jane who can be

⁵⁸³ L. H. Peterson, *Becoming a Woman of Letters: Myths of Authorship and Facts of the Victorian Market*, (Princeton, 2006), p. 6.

compared through their approach and business acumen to Maria Edgeworth, Mrs Barbauld, Harriet Martineau, and Hannah More.⁵⁸⁴

Contemporary female literary figures, with radical or conservative viewpoints, wrote in a variety of forms including books, articles for periodical and reviews. Ann and Jane Taylor also published in these formats. Gallagher has argued that Edgeworth understood the commercial aspect of her literary work and the Taylor family also appreciated the financial details and publishing transactions associated with their writing.⁵⁸⁵ When, after twenty-six years of marriage, Ann Taylor Gilbert returned to writing she was urged to do so by her brother. In a letter he encouraged her to return, “to your vocation” and to leave “the mending of stockings to hands that cannot so well handle a pen.”⁵⁸⁶ Similarly, Harriet Martineau recalled that her brother had encouraged her “to leave it to other women to make shirts and darn stockings” in order to concentrate on her writing. This shared analogy demonstrated equivalence between the orthodox Isaac Taylor III and heterodox Henry Martineau and their sisters’ participation in the literary world. It was an approach that Isaac III later sought to conceal.

Petersen has observed that Martineau considered; “that professional work is different from, not an extension of, domestic responsibility; that the female author must leave her needle and the domestic circle behind in order to take up the pen.”⁵⁸⁷ While not

⁵⁸⁴ F. James & I. Inkster (eds.), *Religious Dissent and the Aikin-Barbauld Circle, 1740-1860*, (Cambridge, 2012), C. Gallagher, *Nobody’s Story The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1820*, (Oxford, 1994), A. Stott, *Hannah More, The First Victorian*, (Oxford, 2003), L.H. Petersen, *Traditions of Victorian Women’s Autobiography*, (Virginia, 1999).

⁵⁸⁵ C. Gallagher, *Nobody’s Story*, p. 260.

⁵⁸⁶ A. Taylor Gilbert, *The Convalescent, Twelve letters on recovery from sickness*, (London, 1839). Stewart, *The Taylors of Ongar*, p. 538.

⁵⁸⁷ Petersen, *Traditions of Victorian Women’s Autobiography*, p. 69.

advocating this practice, in print, the women of the Taylor family undertook their writing in a similar manner. As letters indicate this approach applied in particular to Jane who, at the time of her stay in the West Country, wrote to assure her mother that domestic responsibilities were not impeding her writing. While in her autobiography Ann Taylor Gilbert was clear that the responsibilities of her married life subsequently impeded her ability to continue writing, a fact that accorded her regret.⁵⁸⁸

Martineau began her writing career in 1834, around the time the literary enterprise of the Taylors of Ongar ceased. She was concerned with the difference between the amateur and professional writer at a time when the concept of 'professional' was under construction. The nineteenth-century debate associated with middle-class values concerned the definition of "a profession and a trade" - the former deemed to require knowledge, the later "a business that manufactures or sells some object or commodity."⁵⁸⁹ The social hierarchy associated with defining occupational status was present over several generations of the Taylor family. It was demonstrated by the difference in status between the trade of a grocer, practiced by Mrs Taylor's grandfather, and the artistic skill and business success of Isaac Taylor I. It is evident again in the decision of Isaac Taylor II to acquire the skill of line engraving in place of writing engraving with its association to commerce and trade. For the Taylors of Ongar the difference manifested itself in their attitude towards the occupations of engraving and writing.

⁵⁸⁸ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 206.

⁵⁸⁹ L. H. Petersen, *Becoming a Woman of Letters: Myths of Authorship and Facts of the Victorian Market*, (Oxford, 2009), p. 2.

Persuaded of the need to train their daughters as well as their sons to enable them to provide for themselves, the family occupation of engraving was one of the few professions deemed acceptable for women. When Ann Taylor Gilbert wrote her autobiography several decades later, she felt obliged to justify this decision to her mid-Victorian readers: "I must say we were never ashamed of it, and why need we have been? We had the honour of stepping first on that line now regarded as nearly the one thing to be accomplished, the respectable, remunerable, appropriate employment of young women."⁵⁹⁰ In so doing, she indicated the greater value later placed on the family's reputation as authors.

Petersen has shown that the debate concerning the nature and propriety of middle-class professionalism incorporated the status of writers.⁵⁹¹ A distinction was drawn between manuscripts, a product of knowledge, and books the commodity produced by publishers and sold by booksellers. This contributed to growing definitions for the profession of writing and the trade of publishing. In keeping with this delineation, later generations of the Taylors accentuated the writing character of the family's occupation promoting, 'The Family Pen' over the engraving origins. By the time this epithet was established, Isaac Taylor III had written numerous books of a theological and philosophical nature. In contrast to the established reputation of Isaac Taylor III as an author, the description in Mrs Taylor's memoirs of her husband's frequent trips to London, walking between publishers and seeking commissions, carried the connotations of a trade.

⁵⁹⁰ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 74.

⁵⁹¹ Petersen, *Becoming a Woman of Letters*, p. 3.

A further distinction was made between those writers considered 'authors' and those considered 'hacks'. As M. O. Grenby has observed the successful female author, Eliza Fenwick, published by Sir Richard Phillips, portrayed her literary work as being that of a 'writer' rather than a contributor to the field of 'literature'.⁵⁹² In a similar manner the Taylors of Ongar had no preconception that they were creating works of literature, but considerable care was taken by the family in their writing, evidenced through their co-operative critical practices. If the Taylors needed to obtain financial benefit from their work as writers, the method and forms in which they wrote reconciled the activity to the family's ethos and principles.

This methodology corresponded in particular to one of the precepts that Isaac Taylor II nurtured in his family, that was the importance of completing a task well if it was worth undertaking at all. It was the central feature of Jefferys' first book, *Harry's Holiday or the doings of one who had nothing to do*, (1818), and noted by Ann Taylor Gilbert in her autobiography. She commented on the, "unappeasable disgust at the bad in any production, whether art or mechanism" that her father held.⁵⁹³ The subjects included in their writing also adhered to the Dissenting principles and ethos of the Taylor family. This appealed to the aspect of their faith that sought to undertake work that was both 'useful' and 'practical'. Here the family opportunistically employed material and an approach associated with their domestic life and used it to make a success in the literary market place.

⁵⁹² M. O. Grenby, Pay, Professionalization and Probable Dominance? Women Writers and the Children's Book Trade, in J. Batchelor & G. Dow, (eds.), *Women's Writing 1660-1830 Feminisms and Futures*, (London, 2016), p. 126.

⁵⁹³ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 79.

Although a financial benefit accrued from their writing, the Taylors' labored under the necessity of maintaining female propriety in pursuit of the family enterprise. In the literary world a restricted choice of subject matter, together with the mask of anonymity and its association with "a lack of ambition and 'feminine' focus on the domestic", undermines any attributes inherent in the professionalism that writers, in particular women, may have exhibited.⁵⁹⁴ Stuart Curran maintains that: "Rather than see inconsistency or, worse, hypocrisy in such attitudes, we should perhaps recognize the priority of the enveloping cultural contradictions within which these figures labored."⁵⁹⁵ A point that appears relevant to the literary enterprise of the Taylor family. The initial anonymity adopted by the Taylor sisters, Ann and Jane, was later discarded when writing became a wider family activity. The collective advantage of using the family name when pursuing publishing opportunities and book sales was exploited. In so doing, the achievements of the women in the literary enterprise became subsumed under the guise of a family activity overseen by the patriarchal figurehead of Isaac Taylor II. With the market associated with evangelical readers expanding, Isaac II's position as a Dissenting minister further benefited the family's literary enterprise. The familial identity and Dissenting status created a sense of literary propriety that enveloped the Taylors of Ongar. The later biographies of the family interpreted these characteristics in the language and expectations of mid-Victorian evangelicalism.

Unlike many of their contemporaries, the Taylors did not contribute openly to wider social and cultural debates. However, threads of their beliefs can be picked up

⁵⁹⁴ K. Binhammer, *Feminist Literary History: How do we know we've won*, in J. Batchelor & G. Dow, (eds.), *Women's Writing 1660-1830 Feminisms and Futures*, (London, 2016), p. 81.

⁵⁹⁵ S. Curran, *Women readers, women writers*, in S. Curran (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, (Cambridge, 2013), p. 180.

tangentially from certain works.⁵⁹⁶ The conservative Hannah More and the radical Mary Wollstonecraft both wrote on the debate surrounding women's education, whereas the Taylors did not outline their educational approach even though it was a central characteristic of their family life. In contrast to Mrs Barbauld, the family refrained from addressing political or social reforms, such as attempts to repeal the Test and Corporation act, in spite of their Dissenting affiliation.⁵⁹⁷ The evidence indicates that the Taylors enjoyed the intellectual challenge associated with writing. They reconciled any conflict between their literary practice and their religious principles by adhering to domestic, moral and educational genres influenced by the family ethos. The increasingly prescribed nature of the written material helped obscure the professional nature of the family's literary output.

It has been proposed that during the period in literary history that preceded the Taylors of Ongar: "The investment of eighteenth-century women in patriarchal discourse is ... a frustrating phenomenon to pin down."⁵⁹⁸ Davidoff and Hall argued that during the nineteenth century, "women were central to the effort to imagine a particular – and for some – a new pattern of family life."⁵⁹⁹ For the women of the Taylor family, although they were active participants in the public literary world, through their deepening involvement in an expanding evangelical network, their writing became entwined with evolving cultural and creative constraints.

⁵⁹⁶ Such works include I. Taylor II's *The Child's Birthday*, (London, 1811), Mrs. Taylor and Jane Taylor's *Correspondence between a mother and daughter at school* (London, 1817).

⁵⁹⁷ James & Inkster, *Religious Dissent and the Akin-Barbauld Circle*, p. 2-3.

⁵⁹⁸ E. Kowaleski-Wallace, *Their Father's Daughters: Hannah More, Maria Edgeworth and Patriarchal Complicity*, (Oxford, 1991), p. 9.

⁵⁹⁹ Davidoff & Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. xiv.

These restraints had not been as evident in Ann and Jane Taylor's earlier books and commissions undertaken for publishers. These earlier works maintained a cultural relevance into the twentieth century, contributing to the preeminent reputation of the two sisters in relation to the family enterprise. Much of the work by other members of the family, in particular Mrs Taylor, ceased publication by the mid-nineteenth century. As Isaac Taylor III acknowledged in his essay, *The Family Pen*, his mother's books in particular were associated with the works of Hannah More, "and a half dozen writers some Christian and some in various degrees Christianised, and therefore antagonistic to Maria Edgeworth and to those tainted with the French Revolution atheism.[sic]"⁶⁰⁰ The excising of Mrs Taylor's work from the literary marketplace contributed further to the loss of her reputation, and voice, within the history of the Taylors of Ongar. For the family in general, their association with the conservative literary tradition of the Romantic era distracts from an appreciation of the professionalism in their literary enterprise. Recently scholars have begun to re-evaluate the professional nature of the work of writers whose literary relevance has been diminished by association with reactionary agendas. A further understanding of the professionalism adopted by the Taylors of Ongar in their literary enterprise is suggested by theories made in these studies.

Agency and Complicity

Binhammer has postulated that consideration of the position of women writers in the "patriarchal print culture" of the eighteenth century, continuing into the Romantic era, has been distorted through a, "concentration on the politics of sexual difference ...

⁶⁰⁰ I. Taylor III, *The Family Pen*, in I. Taylor IV, *The Family Pen, Memorials, Biographical and Literary of the Taylor Family of Ongar, Vol. I*, (London, 1867), p. 28.

rather than drawing out their agency or complicity.”⁶⁰¹ An assertion can be made that the literary enterprise of the Taylors of Ongar, which benefitted the women of the family, demonstrated both agency and complicity. The Taylor family displayed considerable agency by producing books that were popular in the literary marketplace of their day. The talent for writing that first found expression in the innovative works for young children, together with their connections to the publishing industry through their work as engravers, enabled the Taylors to be well placed, “for exploiting the networks of the book trade.”⁶⁰² By using many of the characteristics of their family ethos such as a literary and Dissenting culture, educational priorities, self-discipline and hard work, the family achieved notable financial benefit.

By confining their writing by gender and subject matter to specific genres, the Taylors adopted a compromise that allowed the family to participate in the literary world and accommodated their religious principles. This enabled the Taylors to construct works and interpret details from their lives in a manner they considered a desirable model for the readers they sought to address. In pursuing this path, a divergence occurred between the worldly experiences the family encountered and their literary idealism. This is highlighted when details from Mrs Taylor’s memoirs are contrasted with content that appeared in her books.

A notable example appears in *Retrospection: A Tale*, where Mrs Taylor’s central female character is admonished for the pleasure and pride she takes in her writing. This is contrary to the portrayal in the memoirs of the enjoyment and appreciation of financial

⁶⁰¹ K. Binhammer, *Feminist Literary History: How do we know we’ve won*, in J. Batchelor & G. Dow, (eds.), *Women’s Writing 1660-1830 Feminisms and Futures*, (London, 2016), p. 65.

⁶⁰² J. Batchelor & G. Dow, (eds.), *Women’s Writing 1660-1830 Feminisms and Futures*, (London, 2016), p. 3.

gain that Mrs Taylor, and her daughters, obtained from their writing. As a result of an approach that Binhammer suggests could be considered an act of complicity, Kowaleski-Wallace has argued, “the women most celebrated in their day are not necessarily those we most admire.” Noting that literary daughters in particular, “participate successfully in a masculine literary discourse that, at its best, creates a female subject according to its own bias and interests.”⁶⁰³

Contributing further to the conservative agenda associated with the Taylors’ books was the direct manner in which they frequently addressed a middle-class market. In *Retrospection: A Tale*, (1821), Mrs Taylor wrote of the female narrator, “having been born in that intermediate class of society generally esteemed the most favourable to virtue and happiness.” In the introduction to *A Present of a Mistress to a Young Servant*, (1816), Mrs Taylor stated that the intention of the book was to, “contribute greatly to the comfort of both classes,” in order to foster “steady principles and sober habits.”⁶⁰⁴ Ann Taylor Gilbert, in offering support to her mother, advised that if her book is, “designed for a certain class principally ... it is no fault if to that class it is in some degree, confined.”⁶⁰⁵ In this approach the Taylors were not alone. The family was writing during a period when the emerging middle classes were striving to differentiate themselves from the disreputable behaviour associated with the aristocracy, and were seeking to assume a moral superiority when unable to acquire social equality. This movement for ‘the reformation of manners’ was supported by a considerable debate in print and was not confined to writers of the conservative tradition such as the Taylors. Mary Wollstonecraft considered *Vindication of the Rights*

⁶⁰³ Kowaleski-Wallace, *Their Father’s Daughters*, p. 9.

⁶⁰⁴ A. Taylor, *Retrospection: A Tale*, (London, 1821), p. 5. *The Present of a Mistress to a Young Servant consisting of friendly advice and real histories*, (London, 1816), p. iv.

⁶⁰⁵ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 120.

of Women to be addressed to middle-class women, 'because this woman lives in a 'natural state'."⁶⁰⁶

In restricting their writing to educational, didactic and instructional works for middle-class, religious readers, the Taylors' literary enterprise suffered by association. In this context, recognition of the achievements of Mrs Taylor and her daughters, Ann and Jane, experienced; "what happens to women around institutions and value: cultural capital shifts away from those genres and disciplines that are associated with women (romance, children's literature, home economics) and authority accrues to fields dominated by men."⁶⁰⁷ The professional achievements of the Taylors of Ongar, and the women in particular, became subsumed in the critical debate that enveloped writers who pursued a moral and didactic agenda.

Criticism of the prescriptive nature of Dissenting writers for children and young people began in the Romantic era. James and Inkster have discussed the frequent criticism by literary contemporaries of Dissenting writers regardless of their position within the orthodox or heterodox traditions. They note that; "There is a long tradition of denigrating Dissenters' capacity for imaginative response."⁶⁰⁸ It is evident that the Taylors' participation in didactic and educational genres is associated with their Dissenting tradition and practices. Ryrie has noted that Calvin charged church elders, "with systematically overseeing everyone's moral conduct."⁶⁰⁹ Acceptance into the Congregational denomination of Isaac II and Ann Martin Taylor required adherence to

⁶⁰⁶ M. Brody, The 'Feminist Manifesto' –The Argument of the Vindication, in M. Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, (London, 2004), p. xlii.

⁶⁰⁷ K. Binhammer, Feminist Literary History: How do we know we've won, in J. Batchelor & G. Dow, (eds.), *Women's Writing 1660-1830 Feminisms and Futures*, (London, 2016), p. 68.

⁶⁰⁸ F. James & I. Inkster (eds.), *Religious Dissent and the Akin-Barbould Circle, 1740-1860*, (Cambridge, 2012), p. 7.

⁶⁰⁹ Ryrie, p. 55.

standards of behaviour that were subject to admonishment by members of the church should they be found lacking. The standards of morality implicit in membership of their Dissenting churches found a natural expression in the values included in the family's writing.

As part of an appreciation of the commercial success the Taylor family achieved, consideration should also be given to Grenby's argument that, "our ideas of literary professionalism should certainly not exclude the author's determination to improve the quality of children's books available, or to bring moral, spiritual and social benefits to their readers."⁶¹⁰ Despite the eventual contribution of books by the Taylors of Ongar to the conservative culture of domesticity, evidence suggests the original purpose of the family's writing corresponds to the benefits discussed by Grenby. The commitment to lifelong education by Isaac II and Ann Martin Taylor that was central to the family ethos, combined with the commitment to 'work well done' supports this view. Evidence of the care the Taylors took in their writing, particularly the sisters, Ann and Jane, contributes further to this interpretation.

The books produced by the Taylor family formed part of a growing market for didactic and educational material. Paul has noted a misapprehension associated with the definition of the idea of 'didactic' based in the current usage of the word. Today by common understanding the connotation of the word is harsh and "a form of derision." A formal definition, which dates from 1644, describes it "rather neutrally" as "having the character or manner of a teacher."⁶¹¹ Didactic works produced during the Romantic era, often written by women, which today seem turgid, overly moral and

⁶¹⁰ Grenby, *Pay, Professionalization and Probable Dominance*, p. 132.

⁶¹¹ L. Paul, *The Children's Book Business: Lessons from the Long Eighteenth Century*, (London, 2011), p. 95.

socially controlling, are being re-evaluated. In this context, when consideration is given to the agency shown by the Taylors in sustaining an active literary enterprise over two decades, their recognition of the potential in employing material and principles associated with their family ethos should be credited with contributing to the success of their literary enterprise.

Davidoff and Hall attribute a religious imperative to Mrs Taylor's writing.⁶¹² While there is no denying Mrs Taylor's faith or her domestic agenda, her memoirs suggest an alternative interpretation behind her writing and also the literary enterprise of the Taylor family. This can be interpreted as a pragmatic response to the family's financial situation. It was the later decision to publish for themselves, which took place in 1811, that saw the family become progressively involved in a growing network of evangelical authors and publishers of books and periodicals. The decision to write was not initially defined by the family's Dissenting faith. However, their religious principles increasingly contributed to the form and direction of their literary enterprise. Ultimately, the transition in religious principles across the generations of the family had an impact on the literary legacy of The Taylors of Ongar. Of the surviving children, Isaac Taylor III and Ann Taylor Gilbert contributed to the construction of this literary legacy through the biographical works they produced in later life. By additionally sequestering his mother's memoirs Isaac III ensured the endurance of this reputation for many years within the confines of Victorian evangelical literary culture.

⁶¹² Davidoff & Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. 172 & 173.

Faith across the generations

In a study of the Aikin-Barbault family James and Inkster observe the, “passage of Enlightenment figures and ideals through shifting perspectives of the later eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries.” Literary families of this period, through their published works, networks of sociability and their tendency to record their lives and legacies, provide a ready method for examining “subtle patterns of change” across the generations. It is a process that James and Inkster consider, “so often overlooked.”⁶¹³

In the case of the Taylors of Ongar investigating the transition of the Dissenting faith of the parents down through their children, demonstrates how the culture of Victorian evangelicalism came to define the literary legacy of the Taylors of Ongar.

Curran states that the years 1785-1825 are, “generally construed as the age of Romanticism, which saw a crucial transition between an Enlightenment world view and the values of modern, industrial society.”⁶¹⁴ With the more detailed information provided by his wife’s memoirs, Isaac Taylor II and Ann Martin Taylor appear as a figures of the eighteenth century, more aligned to the values and concerns of the Enlightenment. Ann Taylor Gilbert recalled how Isaac II retained a lifelong commitment to education. This formed a central tenet in the Taylor family ethos and began with Isaac II’s work as an apprentice on one of the eighteenth-century’s repositories of knowledge, the encyclopaedia. Mrs Taylor’s memoirs confirm this impression and make it clear that she shared his commitment to lifelong education, regardless of gender. The effect of two influential writers of the Enlightenment, John Locke and Isaac Watts, on the literary culture and family ethos established by Isaac II

⁶¹³ James & Inkster, *Religious Dissent and the Aikin-Barbault Circle*, p. 3 & 4.

⁶¹⁴ S. Curran (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, (Cambridge, 2013), p. xi.

and Ann Martin Taylor is evident in their domestic and educational routines. Watts' writing on recommended reading and the importance of having closets or places of retirement for private study and contemplation had practical application in the allocation of space within the Taylors' houses.

Isaac Taylor II's religious principles were strong on the need to affirm the act of separation implicit in his Dissenting faith. He made this clear during the dispute in Lavenham over the action of a church member taking occasional communion within the Church of England. His concept of evangelical Protestantism appears closer to the earlier understanding of the word that placed central emphasis on Biblical supremacy. This differentiated Protestant Dissenters from that of the Catholic Church and the Church of England. The soteriological debates that prevailed during the eighteenth century formed part of the disputes Isaac Taylor II had with his congregations. These disputes led commentators in the eighteenth-century to consider Dissenters, "hopelessly entangled in dry – yet potentially dangerous – controversy and dispute."⁶¹⁵

Isaac Taylor II was not comfortable with the widening concerns that came to define nineteenth-century evangelicalism. Ann Taylor Gilbert recalled an incident in Lavenham when her father was a Deacon. Church congregations were being asked to send petitions to the government in support of Dr David Bogue's (1750-1825) application to undertake missionary work in India. At this time the idea of missionary work was a relatively new concept, but one which came to carry great importance to evangelicals in the nineteenth century. Ann Taylor Gilbert recalled that: "The strange proposal was discussed" by the Minister, Mr Hickman, and Isaac II. Her father,

⁶¹⁵ James & Inkster, *Religious Dissent and the Akin-Barbould Circle*, p. 7.

“forward as he was in every good word and work”, had doubts over Bogue’s proposed undertaking. He questioned whether it was even a ‘duty’ and “if it was not running before Providence.” Writing of the event in the mid-1860s Ann Taylor Gilbert asked her readers: “where could the antiquated Christian be now unearthed, whom we could find harbouring such suspicions?”⁶¹⁶

There is evidence in his writing that Isaac Taylor II upheld a religious principle, which gained prominence during the eighteenth century, regarding women as spiritually equal, while maintaining in practice the gender hierarchy. Autobiographies of women from the Nonconformist culture of the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries frequently demonstrate, “the ideas of hierarchy based on sex and equality based on faith.”⁶¹⁷ In his book, *Bunyan Explained to a Child*, Isaac Taylor II referred his readers to Romans 16 when he argued that; “One speech of the good host was a defence of women, especially on the ground of their being friendly to religion. ... Women have been greatly honoured as vessels of mercy, frequently; and have often rendered great service to the cause of Christ in the world.”⁶¹⁸ In spite of Isaac Taylor II’s spiritual defence of women and his approach to education, in which he did not differentiate between his sons and daughters, in temporal concerns it is evident Isaac II did uphold accepted gender distinctions.

In *Advice to the Teens*, Isaac Taylor II stated that: “The female mind may differ from that of man; her occupations, her disadvantages may, in some cases place her lower than a man. Were she to be a man, this were something to be considered, to be objected to;

⁶¹⁶ Gilbert, *Autobiography*, p. 160.

⁶¹⁷ F. A. Nussbaum, *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth-Century England*, (Baltimore, 1989), p. 176.

⁶¹⁸ I. Taylor II, *Bunyan Explained to a Child*, (London, 1824), p. 53.

but as her lot is to be a woman, these very differences are to be to her advantage.

Society is benefitted by the variation.”⁶¹⁹ It is a statement that illustrates a dichotomy at the heart of the Taylor family ethos and enterprise, between actions arising from practical need and adherence to religious principles. In the course of their literary enterprise this cognitive dissonance experienced by the Taylor family in seeking to reconcile their Dissenting principles with their intellectual upbringing and writing careers had the greatest impact on the women.

As the eighteenth century progressed, excluded from the male hierarchy of church organisations, women found ways to engage and express their faith both in the home and outside the domestic sphere. Contributing to this process was the expansion of opportunities for women to engage in print. Felicity Nussbaum has argued that from the eighteenth century, “Religion gives them [women] new independence, yet severely restricts it as well.”⁶²⁰ In the Taylor family, Mrs Taylor set the example through her regular writing for family observances as well as her practical, domestic essays. When the family engaged in the literary world, pragmatic concerns were initially pre-eminent as the family experienced the material benefits of writing. Participation in the book industry was reconciled to their Dissenting principles through the serious approach the family adopted to writing and involvement in gender appropriate genre and subject matter.

As the success of books written by the Taylors of Ongar increased, their public reputation grew. Justification for their fame, which was contrary to contemporary ideas concerning religious humility and female modesty, came through their Dissenting

⁶¹⁹ I. Taylor II, *Advice to Teens*, (London, 1818), p. 13.

⁶²⁰ F.A. Nussbaum, *The Autobiographical Subject*, p. 176.

principles. Towards the end of her life Jane used her faith to justify her writing and encourage others to do the same. When she wrote to a friend Jane cited 12 Romans v.6-8 and argued that: "We have all a talent entrusted to us; and what shall we say when our Lord comes, if we have not improved it?"⁶²¹ Batchelor has noted that recent scholars have adopted a more nuanced view of women's participation in the literary world. Re-evaluating an idea that was, "seen to confirm assumptions that women's writing was determined an immodest or dangerous activity that contravened the gendered imperative that women conform to an ideal of silence and modesty."⁶²² The women of the Taylor family challenged this concept of literary propriety in spite of their conservative reputation.

For the men of the Taylor family, who were expected to sustain a profession that could support a household, the income from writing being added to that of their engraving or artistic work was not troubling. Any concern relating to the father and brothers' literary work was associated with a wish to ensure that the books produced conformed to the principles of the Taylor family, maintaining an educational and 'useful' function. The women of the Taylor family were raised on an educational and intellectual par with the men and encouraged in the manner of Watts, to read, write and debate. Writing was a creative and intellectually expressive occupation for them. The additional financial benefit, that came at a time when the family was in straitened circumstances, added to the acceptable nature of the work. It provided the women

⁶²¹ H. C. Knight, *Jane Taylor, Her life and letters*, (London, 1880), p. 161. 12 Romans v.6-8: Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophecy according to the proportion of faith: Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth on teaching: Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity: he that ruleth, with diligence: he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness [sic].

Authorised King James version.

⁶²² J. Batchelor, Anon, Pseud and 'By a lady'; *The Spectre of Anonymity in Women's Literary History* in J. Batchelor & G. Dow, (eds.), *Women's Writing 1660-1830 Feminisms and Futures*, (London, 2016), p. 81.

with the ability to sustain themselves financially should the need occur, satisfying one of the recurring concerns in Mrs Taylor's memoirs.

The Taylors' two eldest daughters initiated the family's literary enterprise and the women achieved the greatest commercial success. Writing was an activity that was supported and encouraged within the family regardless of gender, being justified through Isaac Taylor II's Dissenting principles and Mrs Taylor's practical example. Davidoff and Hall assert that the cultural climate changed as the nineteenth century progressed and; "The evangelical revival, in which the home was central, made the religious idiom the cultural norm for the middle class."⁶²³ This led to the re-interpretation of the literary enterprise of the Taylors of Ongar through the values and language of the mid-Victorian era. The origins of this process lay in the religious and familial network established by Isaac II and Ann Martin Taylor when they lived in London.

There is an inherent contradiction in the notion that writing was a private occupation, separate from the public sphere. Davidoff and Hall make the point that as women were more marginalised, "from gainful employment in public places meant that 'private' activities such as writing" assumed greater importance.⁶²⁴ Although Isaac II and Ann Martin Taylor were more retiring in their literary careers, they supported their daughters in engaging with a wider literary network through their trips to London. Members of this network were often friends and family contacts originating from Isaac II and Ann Martin Taylor's early years in London. Notable amongst these was Josiah Conder who took over his father's publishing firm, and became editor of the *Eclectic*

⁶²³ Davidoff & Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. xviii.

⁶²⁴ Davidoff & Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. xiv.

Review. Another was Isaac Taylor II's fellow apprentice, George Burder, who abandoned his engraving profession to train as a Congregational minister. Burder became minister at the Fetter Lane Congregational church, instigator of The Religious Tract Society and compiler of a popular hymn collection. Burder also wrote and published a series of one hundred Village Sermons in eight volumes that were translated for readers in America and colonial countries including India and Africa.⁶²⁵

From the time Isaac II and Ann Martin Taylor were in London, evangelicalism was growing in influence and the practices and characteristics associated with it were becoming a stronger presence. Isaac Taylor II may have had his doubts over the growing ascendancy of evangelicalism. However, people he and Ann Martin Taylor knew from their time in the city had become significant figures in the movement as it transcended denominational differences. Many of the characteristics that were to define Victorian evangelicalism had their origins in the practices of Dissenting churches, making its progressive adoption by a number of the Taylors' children, through influences outside the family, understandable. The significance of this process had the greatest impact on the Taylor literary legacy through Ann Taylor Gilbert and, in particular, her brother Isaac Taylor III.

In her autobiography, published in 1874, when Isaac Taylor II's daughter, Ann, introduced her father to her readers she used a phrase that exuded evangelical connotations. She wrote that he was, "an unusually single-hearted man and Christian."⁶²⁶ Her posthumous tribute reflected on a life that was embedded in the

⁶²⁵ I. Rivers, *Vanity Fair and the Celestial City, Dissenting, Methodist and Evangelical Literary Culture in England, 1720-1800*, (Oxford, 2018), p. 250.

⁶²⁶ Ann Taylor Gilbert, *Autobiography and Other Memorials of Mrs Gilbert* (London, 1874), p. 3.

culture of the second half of the eighteenth-century through the prism of nineteenth-century evangelical values. Such values had come to unite significant sections of both the established church and various branches of nonconformity. The literary reputation and continuing success members of the Taylor family enjoyed in the nineteenth-century resided in an interpretation of their works and lives, within this evangelical framework, as an example of good Christian practice, protestant hard work, modesty and self-restraint. Ann Taylor Gilbert's published biographical work presents a portrait of family life that is hagiographic in nature. She emphasized her father's role and influence on the family while diminishing the contribution made by her mother, Ann Martin Taylor, a successful author in her own right and integral to the development of the Taylors' family life and values.

Facilitated by Mrs Taylor's memoirs, the re-evaluation of Ann Taylor Gilbert's mid-Victorian interpretation has demonstrated a more nuanced and complex picture of her father and mother that underpinned the family's literary careers. Ann Taylor Gilbert's memoirs constructed an enduring image of family life that was simple, religious, patriarchal and idyllic. However, she also described the importance and satisfaction she gained from her writing. Ann additionally acknowledged the regret she felt at not being able to pursue her literary work to the degree she once had before she married.

In the autobiography Ann Taylor Gilbert remarked on her diminished literary reputation in comparison to that of her late sister, Jane. The pre-eminent position Jane came to hold in relation to the family's literary enterprise was the result of the biographical work undertaken by their brother, Isaac Taylor III. It was a process that began when Isaac III first published his memoirs of Jane in 1825, the year following her

death. Towards the end of his life Isaac III took several steps that reaffirmed his interpretation of the Taylors of Ongar. He revisited his memoirs of Jane, adding detail to the evangelical influences he encountered with his sister in the West Country, created the idea of 'The Family Pen' traversing the generations of the Taylor family, and sequestered his mother's detailed and worldly memoirs.

By the time Isaac Taylor III wrote his biographical material and re-edited his memoirs of Jane, he had left his father's Dissenting faith and joined the Church of England. As the senior male member of the family, following his father's death, it is in an understanding of Isaac Taylor III's character and religious allegiance that an explanation for the direction of his biographical works can be found. While his father was alive, and in the years immediately following Isaac II's death in 1829, Isaac III continued to attend the Ongar chapel. As his son Henry later recalled, this was, "out of respect to his father's memory," as Isaac III increasingly found himself in disagreement with "the vapid out-pourings of the often-uneducated mind of a Dissenting Minister."⁶²⁷ Isaac Taylor III indicated the dominance of his father's principles and Dissenting faith over the family life when he wrote of the three years he and Jane spent in the West Country for his health. During this time, they both came into contact with people from differing religious backgrounds than they previously had the opportunity to experience as they had grown up, "almost exclusively within the pale of one religious community."⁶²⁸ Most of these new acquaintances had been members of the Established Church and some were Wesleyan Methodists.

⁶²⁷ SRO: HD 588/6/83.

⁶²⁸ I. Taylor III, Memoir of Jane Taylor, in I. Taylor IV, *The Family Pen, Memorials, Biographical and Literary of The Taylor Family of Ongar*, (London, 1867), p. 294.

Adding to these new religious experiences in the West Country and his disillusionment with Dissent, Isaac III read extensively on early church history. When, around 1850, Archdeacon Tattam, “a devoutly good Christian man and an eminent scholar, became rector of Stanford Rivers,” Isaac Taylor III took the decision to return to the Church of England accompanied by all his family.⁶²⁹ In recent years scholars have associated the rise in significance of “morality, propriety and respectability” with the growing influence of evangelical religion.⁶³⁰ This is evident in the character and beliefs of Isaac Taylor III that are reflected in the literary legacy he constructed for the Taylors of Ongar.

His nephew, Josiah Gilbert, wrote that as Isaac Taylor of Stanford Rivers, “for forty years he had accumulated his ‘Patristic’ folios, and wrote the works which gave him his high place in literature.” During his literary career Isaac III, a retiring character, had initially sought anonymity. This was abandoned by 1836 when he was encouraged to stand for election to the chair of Logic at Edinburgh University, a position he failed to obtain.⁶³¹ By the end of his life Isaac Taylor III had acquired a considerable reputation through his books independently from the Taylors of Ongar. His nephew, Josiah Gilbert wrote; “to seek ‘the recluse of Stanford Rivers’, came one and another of the band of thinkers he gathered around him in England, Scotland and America.”⁶³²

Isaac Taylor III’s reputation was as an ‘author’ of respected philosophical and theological works contributing to the ‘masculine literary discourse’ of the Victorian era

⁶²⁹ SRO: HD 588/6/83.

⁶³⁰ Caine, *Biography and History*, p. 35.

⁶³¹ B. Brandon Schnorrenberg, *Isaac Taylor of Stanford Rivers*, in Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, p. 912.

⁶³² J. Gilbert, *Autobiography and other Memorials of Mrs. Gilbert*, (London, 1879), p. 305.

as suggested by Kowaleski-Wallace. This was in contrast to the earlier books of the Taylors of Ongar who, as ‘writers’ had contributed to the domestic literature of the Romantic era. His works continued to be published throughout the Victorian era, as were the early works of his sisters, Ann and Jane. Towards the end of her life his sister Ann continued to amend and revise the poems and hymns for children that she and Jane first wrote.

It was against this background of middle-class respectability, a supporter of “Church and State” who now “so enjoyed the comfort of a Liturgical form of worship”, with his literary achievements situated in the culture of Victorian evangelicalism, that Isaac Taylor III constructed his biographical material.⁶³³ In describing the nature of the family’s writing and the edited detail of their lives, Isaac III attributed his own sentiments to their actions and used a vocabulary that Stott has identified as part of an “Evangelical code” familiar to serious Christians who understood “the ‘vital religion’ the Evangelicals believed was the essence of true Christianity.”⁶³⁴ In Isaac Taylor III’s published biographical works any hint of practical necessity or financial need is replaced by an enterprise in which the writers were compelled by faith and a sense of duty. It is in these works that we get the statements that have come to be associated with the Taylors of Ongar. Isaac III writes of Mrs Taylor’s “antagonism towards *authorship*[sic],” and of his sister Jane’s “distain for financial remuneration.” In relation to the whole family he describes their distain of “literary notoriety” and the lack of encouragement to write by their parents. All these points can be countered through

⁶³³ SRO: HD 588/6/83.

⁶³⁴ A. Stott, *Hannah More: The First Victorian*, (Oxford, 2003), p. 112.

the evidence contained in surviving life sources and the manuscript memoirs of his mother that Isaac Taylor III carefully sequestered.⁶³⁵

It is clear from the evidence that the writing and publishing of books, essays and reviews by The Taylors of Ongar was a successful public activity. Though in their writing the Taylor family professed reticence and advised modesty they engaged in public, debate through letters, and reviews, with male and female participants in the literary world. The achievements of the women in the Taylor family altered the dynamics of financial responsibility. At first the family income was entirely dependent on Isaac Taylor II, when he led the family's engraving work. When the writing and publishing became an integral part of the family enterprise it became a collective undertaking where, in this sphere, women were the greater contributors. This was contrary to the growing concept of the gender roles of the middle-class family and the private, domestic responsibilities of women in the nineteenth century.

The co-operative nature of this literary enterprise and the financial pressures that led to the undertaking, were subsumed by Ann Taylor Gilbert and Isaac Taylor III in an interpretation that placed the emphasis on 'old puritan' values and correct evangelical principals. It was an interpretation that later biographers helped to perpetuate. In the process Mrs Taylor's character and achievements faded into the background of the family history as the pall of Victorian evangelicalism covered the pragmatic details of the literary enterprise. This was due to the potential of her memoirs to subvert the Victorian legacy of the Taylors of Ongar.

⁶³⁵ I. Taylor III, *Memoir of Jane Taylor*, p. 8 & p. 12.

In uncovering her reminiscences a much more interesting history emerges. One that illustrates the struggles and compromises the Taylor family had to undertake in order to maintain financial security and a social position during a time of war, social unrest and economic uncertainty. It reveals the determination to maintain the appearance of socially defined propriety while the situation the family found themselves in required the active participation across genders in the family's work. In the performance of this work the memoirs make it clear that Mrs. Taylor was in no way apologetic for the family's actions. Her background and upbringing, so well hidden by her son, provided her with the knowledge and precedents required to contribute in whatever manner was needed in order to sustain the family. Through this pragmatic approach to the challenges of everyday life, and her contributions to the literary and religious culture of the family, Mrs Taylor set an example for her daughters, which provided them with an implicit endorsement to engage in writing when the opportunity arose. Contradicting the later Victorian interpretation, together, mother and daughters, were the willing participants, and most commercially successful contributors to, the family enterprise that became known as The Taylors of Ongar.

Appendix 1: Books Published by The Taylors of Ongar

Date	Book	Author	Publisher
1804	Original Poems Vol. I	Ann, Jane, Isaac Taylor, Adelaide O'Keeffe, P. Barton?	Darton & Harvey
1805	Original Poems Vol. II	Ann, Jane, Isaac Taylor, Adelaide O'Keeffe, Bernard Barton	Darton & Harvey
	Rural Scenes or a Peep into the Country	Ann & Jane Taylor	Revised for Darton & Harvey
1806	City Scenes or a Peep into London	Ann & Jane Taylor	Darton & Harvey
	Rhymes for the Nursery	Ann & Jane Taylor	Revised for Darton & Harvey
1808	Limed Twigs to Catch Young Birds	Ann & Jane Taylor	Revised for Darton & Harvey
1809	The Wedding Among the Flowers	Ann Taylor	Darton & Harvey
1810	Signor Topsy-Turvey's Wonderful Magic Lantern	Ann & Jane Taylor	Revised for Sir Richard Phillips
	Hymns for Infant Minds	Ann & Jane Taylor	Darton & Harvey & T. Conder
	Associate Minstrels	Ann, Jane, Isaac II, Isaac III Taylor, Josiah Conder, Mrs. Josiah Conder, Jacob Strutt.	Thomas Conder
1811	Twelve Addresses on Moral and Religious Subjects delivered to Young Persons a School with an Original Hymn to Each	Isaac Taylor II	Williams & Son
	The Child's Birthday	Isaac Taylor II	Darton & Harvey
1812	The Mother's Fables in Verse	Ann & Jane Taylor	Darton & Harvey
	Original Hymns for Sunday School	Ann & Jane Taylor	Josiah Conder
1814	Maternal Solitude for a Daughter's Best Interests	Mrs. Ann Martin Taylor	Taylor & Hessey, and Josiah Conder

1815	Practical Hints to Young Females on the Duties of a Wife, a Mother and a Mistress of a Family	Mrs. Ann Martin Taylor	Taylor & Hessey, and Josiah Conder
	Display, A Tale	Jane Taylor	Taylor & Hessey
1816	The Present of a Mistress to a Young Servant Consisting of Friendly Advice and Real Histories	Mrs. Ann Martin Taylor	Taylor & Hessey, and Josiah Conder
	Essays in Rhyme on Morals and Manners	Jane Taylor	Taylor & Hessey, and Josiah Conder
1817	Self-Cultivation Recommended or Hints to a Youth Leaving School	Isaac Taylor II	Rest Fenner
	Correspondence between a Mother and her Daughter	Mrs. Ann Martin Taylor & Jane Taylor	Taylor & Hessey
1818	Scenes in Europe for the Amusement and Instruction of Little Tarry-at-home Travellers	Isaac Taylor II	J. Harris
	Advice to the Teens or Practical help towards the formation of one's own Character	Isaac Taylor II	Rest Fenner
	Reciprocal Duties of Parents & Children	Mrs. Ann Martin Taylor	Taylor & Hessey
	Harry's Holiday or the Doings of one who had nothing to do.	Jefferys Taylor	Rest Fenner
1819	Scenes in Asia for Little Tarry-at-Home Travellers	Isaac Taylor II	Harris & Sons
	The Family Mansion: A Tale	Mrs. Ann Martin Taylor	Taylor & Hessey
1820	Character Essential to Success in Life addressed to those who are approaching Manhood	Isaac Taylor II	Baldwin Craddock & Joy

	Scenes In Africa for the Amusement and Instruction of little Tarry-at Home Travellers	Isaac Taylor II	Harris & Sons
	Aesop in Rhyme with some Originals	Jefferys Taylor	Harris & Sons
1821	Picturesque Piety or Scriptural Truths	Isaac Taylor II	E. Butles & Longhurst, Rees, Orme and Brown
	Scenes in America for the Amusement and Instruction of Little Tarry at Home Travellers	Isaac Taylor II	Harris & Sons
	Ralph Richards, The Miser	Jefferys Taylor	Baldwin, Craddock & Joy
	Retrospection, A Tale	Mrs. Ann Martin Taylor	Taylor & Hessey
	Incidents of Childhood	Attributed to Isaac Taylor III	B. J. Holdsworth
1822	Scenes in England for the Amusement and Instruction for Little Tarry-at-Home Travellers	Isaac Taylor II	Harris and Sons
	The Linnet's Life	Issac II, Ann, Jane & Isaac III Taylor	G&W Whittaker, B. J. Holdsworth
	Tales and Dialogues in Prose and Verse	Jefferys Taylor	B. J. Holdsworth
	Elements of Thought or First Lesson in Knowledge of the Mind	Isaac Taylor III	B. J. Holdsworth
1823	Scenes of British Wealth in Produce, Manufacturing & Commerce for the amusement of Little Tarry-at-Home Travellers	Isaac Taylor II	Harris & Sons
1824	Contributions of QQ to a Periodical Work with some pieces not before published	Jane Taylor	B. J. Holdsworth

	Beginnings of Biography: being the lives of one hundred persons eminent in British History. Vol I Bunyan Explained to a Child Little Historians, A New Chronicle of the affairs of England in Church and State	Isaac Taylor II Isaac Taylor II Jefferys Taylor	Harris & Sons Francis Westley Baldwin, Craddock & Joy
1825	Memoirs and Poetical Remains of the Late Jane Taylor The Itinerary of a Traveller in the Wilderness Addressed to those who are performing the same journey	Jane Taylor (ed Isaac Taylor III) Mrs. Ann Martin Taylor	B.J.Holdsworth Taylor & Hessey
1826	A Book of Martyrs for the Young Parlor Commentaries on the Constitutions and Laws of England	Isaac Taylor II Jefferys Taylor	Francis Westley J. Harris
1827	Beginnings of European Biography Vol I The Early Ages, Vol II The Middle Ages Vol III To the Present Time Hymns for Infant Schools Original Anniversary Hymns adapted to the public services of Sunday Schools and Sunday School Unions Old English Sayings	Isaac Taylor II Isaac Taylor II Isaac Taylor II Ann Taylor Gilbert Ann Taylor Gilbert Jefferys Taylor	J. Harris J. Harris J. Harris B. J. Holdsworth B. J. Holdsworth Wightman & Cramp

1828	The Balance of Criminality or Mental Error Compared with Immoral Conduct addressed to young doubters	Isaac Taylor II	Westley & A.H. Davies
	The Barn and the Steeple	Jefferys Taylor	B. J. Holdsworth
1829	The Biography of a Brown Loaf	Isaac Taylor II	J. Harris
	A Nutshell of Knowledge	Isaac Taylor II	J. Harris
1830	Scenes of Commerce by Land and Sea (Tarry-at-Home series)	Isaac Taylor II (posthumously)	J. Harris
	The Ship	Isaac Taylor II (posthumously)	J. Harris
1831	The Forest or Rambles in Woodland	Jefferys Taylor	J. Harris
1832	The Child's Life of Christ	Isaac Taylor II (posthumously)	E. Wallis
	The Farm: A New Account of Rural Toils and Produce	Jefferys Taylor	J. Harris
	A New Description of the Earth considered chiefly as a residence for man	Jefferys Taylor	Harvey & Darton
	A Month in London	Jefferys Taylor	Harvey & Darton
1833	The Ocean	Jefferys Taylor	J. Harris

Bibliography

Primary Sources: Manuscripts

Colchester Central Library, Essex Libraries

Taylors of Ongar Collection

Mrs. Ann Martin Taylor, Her Own Memoirs, 1825
Josiah Taylor Accounts, Tour in 1814, Letter Book

Colchester Museums

Taylor Collection
COLEM:1929.662.3: Tablet of Human Knowledge diagram.

London Metropolitan Archives

N/C/31/2: Baptismal Register belonging to a Congregation of Protestant Dissenters in Fetter Lane, London
N/C/31/4: Church Book belonging to a Congregation of Protestant Dissenters in Fetter Lane, London 1722-1783
N/C/31/5: Church Book belonging to a Congregation of Protestant Dissenters in Fetter Lane, London 1722-1783

Suffolk Record Office, Bury St Edmunds Branch

FK 35 04/1: Lavenham United Reformed [formerly Congregational] Church Lavenham, Memorandum relating to Church affairs 1747-1790.
FK 35 04/2: Transactions of Congregational Church of Christ assembling in Lavenham recorded by Isaac Taylor, Deacon.

HD 588/1/29: Notes by H. Taylor.
HD 588/1/107: Copy of entry in Dictionary of National Biography for Thomas Jefferys.
HD 588/1/157: Letter E. Taylor to H. Taylor, 25 February 1914.
HD 588/1/167: Letter J. Taylor to I. Taylor II, 22 March 1820.
HD 588/4/14: Letter E. Taylor to H. Taylor, 8 January 1813.
HD 588/6/17: Extract from letter by I. Taylor II to Jane Taylor, 10 April 1816.
HD 588/6/83: Notes by H. Taylor regarding I. Taylor III religious affiliation.
HD 588/6/139: Miscellaneous collection of notes.
HD 588/7/1: Notes and extracts from Taylor correspondence.
HD 588/7/6: Letter I. Taylor to family, no date.
HD 588/7/10: Letter I. Taylor, 10 October 1810.
HD 588/7/20: Letter I. Taylor III to family, August 1811.
HD 588/7/31: Letter I. Taylor II, 2 April 1813.
HD 588/7/39: Extract of letter from I. Taylor II to I. Taylor III, 1[?] November 1813.
HD 588/7/42: Letter I. Taylor II to Mrs. Gilbert, 4 February 1814.
HD 588/7/45: Letter I. Taylor II to Jane Taylor, 7 March 1815.
HD 588/7/47: Letter I. Taylor to Jane Taylor and I. Taylor III, 29 March 1815.

Toronto Public Library, Canada

Taylor Collection in the Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books

Letter, Mrs. Ann Martin Taylor, Thames Street, London to Angel Lane, Colchester, (no date).

Letter, Mrs. Ann Martin Taylor, Ongar, 1 January 1819.

Letter, Jemima Taylor, New Street, London, 17 June, 1815.

Poem, Time Defeated by Isaac Taylor II, 20 June, 1812.

Copy of Jane Taylor's Will, 6 April 1824.

Copy of the Executors Accounts for Jane Taylor's estate, 1824.

Account of the personal estate of Jane Taylor as delivered in at the legacy office, 8 February 1825.

Secondary Sources

Doris Mary Armitage, *The Taylors of Ongar*, (Cambridge, 1939).

Karen Armstrong, *A History of God*, (London, 1999).

C. Lucas Balfour, *Women Worth Emulating*, (London, 1877).

H. Barker, *The Business of Women: Female Enterprise and Urban Development in Northern England 1760-1830*, (Oxford, 2006).

H. Barker & E. Chalus, *Gender in Eighteenth Century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities*, (London, 1997).

Jennie Batchelor & G. Dow (eds.), *Women's Writing 1660-1830: Feminisms and Futures*, (London, 2016).

David Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity*, (London, 1992).

The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody, (Leicester, 2005).

G.E. Bentley Jr, *The Stranger from Paradise: A Biography of William Blake*, (Yale, 2001).

C. Breashers, *Eighteenth Century Women's Writing and the Scandalous Memoir*, (London, 2016).

John Briggs and Ian Sellers, (ed.), *Victorian Nonconformity*, (London, 1973).

Andrew Brown, *A Brief History of Encyclopaedias, From Pliny to Wikipedia*, (London, 2011).

Richard Brown, *Church and State in Modern Britain 1700-1850*, (London, 1991)

Sven H.A. Bruntjen, *John Boydell, 1719-1804: A Study of Art Patronage and Publishing in Georgian London*, (New York, London, 1985)

Sarah Burton, *A Double Life: A Biography of Charles and Mary Lamb*, (London 2003).

Barbara Caine, *Biography and History*, (Basingstoke, 2010).

John Craig, *Reformation, Politics and Polemics: The Growth of Protestantism in East Anglian Market Towns, 1500-1610*, (Ashgate, 2001).

Eustace R. Conder, *Josiah Conder: A Memoir*, (London, 1857).

Daniel Cook & Amy Culley, (eds.), *Women's Life Writing 1700-1850*, (Basingstoke, 2012).

Amy Culley, *British Women's Life Writing 1760-1840: Friendship, Community and Collaboration*, (London, 2014).

Hugh Cunningham, *The Invention of Childhood*, (London, 2006).

Stuart Curran (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, (Cambridge, 2013)

Donald Davie, *Essays in Dissent*, (Manchester, 1995).

Shani D'Cruze, *Our time in God's hands: Religion and The Middling Sort in Eighteenth Century Colchester*, (Essex, 1991).

Shani D'Cruze, *A Pleasing Prospect: Social change and urban culture in eighteenth-century Colchester*. Studies in Regional and Local History Volume 5 General Editor Nigel Goose, University of Hertfordshire Press, 2008

Robert Darnton, In Search of the Enlightenment: Recent Attempts to Create a Social History of Ideas, *Journal of Modern History*, 43, (1971), pp 113-32.

Leonore Davidoff, *Thicker Than Water: Siblings and their relations*, (Oxford, 2012).

Leonore Davidoff & Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and women of the English middle class 1780-1850*, (London, 1987).

Charles Dickens, The Pawnbroker's Shop, in *Sketches by Boz*, (London, 1995).

G.M. Ditchfield, *The Evangelical Revival*, (UCL Press, 1998).

Christine Duff Stewart, *The umbelliferous trio: the literary, moral and educational contributions to children's literature of Ann, Jane and Jefferys Taylor*, (unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Toronto, 1968).

The Taylors of Ongar, An Analytical Bio-bibliography in 2 volumes, (New York, 1975).

Ann Taylor Gilbert's Album, with introduction and biographical notes, (New York, 1978).

Alex Easley, *First-Person Anonymous*, (Farnham, 2004).

Barbara Eaton, *Letters to Lydia 'beloved Persis'*, (Penzance, 2005).

Elizabeth Eger & Lucy Peltz, *Brilliant Women 18th Century Bluestockings*, (London, 2008).

Ursula Enriques, *Religious Toleration in England 1760-1837*, (London, 1961).

Martin Fitzpatrick, Peter Jones, Christa Knellwolf & Ian McCalman, (eds.), *The Enlightenment World*, (Oxford, 2004).

Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody's Story; The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1820*, (Oxford, 1994).

Vic Gatrell, *The First Bohemians: Life and Art in London's Golden Age*, (London, 2013).

Kevin Gilmartin, *Writing Against Revolution: Literary Conservatism in Britain, 1790-1832*, (Cambridge, 2007).

Ann Taylor Gilbert, *Autobiography And Other Memorials of Mrs. Gilbert*, (London, 1879).

Robin Taylor Gilbert, The Taylor family of Ongar and their houses there, in *Aspects of Ongar*, ed. Michael Leach, (Ongar Millennium History Group, 1999).

Richard Godfrey, *Printmaking in Britain: A General History from its Beginning to the Present Day*, (Oxford, 1978).

Caroline Gonda, *Reading Daughters Fictions 1709-1834, Novels and Society from Manley to Edgeworth*, (Cambridge, 1996).

Lyndall Gordon, *Mary Wollstonecraft A New Genus*, (London, 2005).

Anthony Gottlieb, *The Dream of Enlightenment; The Rise of Modern Philosophy*, (London, 2017).

Harriet Guest, Hannah More and Conservative Feminism, in Jennie Batchelor & Cora Kaplan (ed.), *British Women's Writing in the Long Eighteenth Century, Authorship, Politics and History*, (Palgrave, 2005).

Small Change: Women, Learning, Patriotism 1750-1810, (Chicago, 2000)

Knud Haakonsen (ed.), *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Cambridge, 1996).

Knud Haakonsen (ed.), *Natural Law and Moral Philosophy, From Grotius to the Scottish Enlightenment*, (Cambridge, 1996).

James Hamilton, *A Strange Business: Making Art and Money in Nineteenth Century Britain*, (London, 2014).

Daisy Hay, *Young Romantics: The Shelleys, Byron and other Tangled Lives*, (London, 2010).

Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down, Radical Ideas During the English Revolution*, (London, 1972).

Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad & Dangerous People? England 1783-1846*, (Oxford, 2006).

The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1795-1865, (Oxford, 1988).

Arthur M. Hind. *A History of Engraving and Etching From the Fifteenth Century to the year 1914*, (New York, 1963).

Robert Hole, *Pulpits, politics and public order in England, 1760-1832*, (Cambridge, 1989).

Paul Hyland, Olga Gomez & Francesca Greenside, *The Enlightenment: A Source Book and Reader*, (London, 2003).

T.J. Hosken, *History of Congregationalism and Memorials of the Churches of our Order in Suffolk*, (Ipswich, 1920)

Kenneth Hudson, *Pawnbroking: An Aspect of British Social History*, (London, 1982).

Mary V. Jackson, *Engines of Mischief and Magic*, (Lincoln, 1989).

Felicity James & Ian Inkster, (eds), *Religious Dissent and the Aikin-Barbault Circle, 1740-1860*, (Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Allan G. Johnson, *The Gender Knot Unravelling: Our Patriarchal Legacy*, (Philadelphia, 1997).

Ludmilla Jordanova, *History in Practise*, (London, 2006).

Alison C. Kay, *The Foundations of Female Entrepreneurship: Enterprise, Home and Household in London c. 1800-1870*, (London, 2009).

H.C. Knight, *Jane Taylor: Her Life and Letters*, (London, 1880).

Mark Knight & Emma Mason, *Nineteenth-Century Religion and Literature*, (Oxford, 2006).

E. Kowaleski-Wallace, *Their Father's Daughters: Hannah More, Maria Edgeworth and Patriarchal Complicity*, (Oxford, 1991).

Scott Krawczyk, *Romantic Literary Families*, (New York, 2009)

Timothy Larsen, (ed.), *Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicals*, (Leicester, 2003).

Michael Leach, Religious dissent in Ongar from 1662 to 1810, in *Aspects of Ongar* ed. Michael Leach, (Ongar Millennium History Group, 1999).

Hermione Lee, *Body Parts, Essays of Life-Writing*, (London, 2008).

Biography: A Very Short Introduction, (Oxford 2009).

E.S. Leedham-Green, (ed.), *Religious Dissent in East Anglia*, (Cambridge, 1991).

Michelle Levy, *Family Authorship and Romantic Print Culture*, (New York, 2008)

John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, (1689).
A Letter Concerning Toleration, (1689).

Donald K. McKim (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, (Cambridge, 2004)

Sigurdur Gylfi Magnusson, What is Microhistory?, in *History News Network*, 5-7-06, <http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/23720>.

Fiona Martin, *Robert Hackshaw (1653-1722) The Orange Skipper: Two Family Legends – The Orange Skipper and Jane Hackshaw's elopement with Josiah Jefferys*, (<http://freepages.family.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~taylorsofongar/index/html>)

Catherine E. Moore, "Ladies...Taking the Pen in Hand" Mrs Barbauld's Criticism of *Eighteenth Century Women Novelists* in Mary Anne Schofield & Cecilia Macheski, (ed), *fetter'd or free? British Women Novelists 1670-1815*, (Ohio, 1986).

Tim Murphy, Elements Of A Semiotic Theory Of Religion, *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion*, 1 (2003), pp48-67.

Martin Myrone, *Henry Fuseli*, (Tate Publishing, 2001).

Mark A. Noll, *Protestantism, A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford, 2011)

The Rise of Evangelicalism; The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys, (Illinois, 2003).

Felicity A. Nussbaum, *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth-Century England*, (Baltimore & London, 1995).

Eighteenth-Century Women's Autobiographical Common Places in Shari Benstock (ed), *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings*, (London, 1988), p147-171.

Kieran O'Hara, *The Enlightenment*, (Oxford, 2010).

Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment*, (Cambridge, 2013).

Lissa Paul, *The Children's Book Business: Lessons from the Long Eighteenth Century*, (London, 2011)

Patricia Pender, *Early Modern Women's Writing and the Rhetoric of Modesty*, (Hampshire, 2012).

Linda H. Peterson, *Traditions of Victorian Women's Autobiography: The Poetics and Politics of Life Writing*, (Virginia, 1999).

Becoming A Woman Of Letters: Myths of Authorship and Facts of the Victorian Market, (Princeton, 2009).

Nicola Phillips, *Women in Business 1700-1850*, (Woodbridge, 2006).

Elizabeth Podnieks, Introduction: "New Biography for a New Millennium" in *a/b:Auto/Biography Studies*, [https://muse.jhu.edu/article/Vol. 24, Num. 1, Summer 2009](https://muse.jhu.edu/article/Vol.24,Num.1,Summer2009).

Ellen Pollak, (ed.), *A Cultural History of Women in the Age of Enlightenment*, (London, 2013).

Roy Porter, *The Creation of the Modern World: The Untold Story of the British Enlightenment*, (New York, London, 2000).

James Raven, *Bookscape: Geographies of Printing and Publishing in London before 1800*, (London, 2014).

The Business of Books: Booksellers and the English Book Trade 1450-1850, (Yale, 2007).

Publishing Business in Eighteenth-Century England, (Woodddbridge, 2014).

Marjorie Reeves, *Female Education and Nonconformist Culture, 1700-1900*, (Leicester, 2000).

Jane Rendall, *The Origins of Modern Feminism: Women In Britain, France and the United States, 1780-1860*, (London, 1985).

H. Renders, B. De Haan & J. Harmsma, (eds.) *The Biographical Turn: Lives in History*, (London, 2017).

Isabel Rivers, (ed), *Books and their Readers in Eighteenth Century England*, (Leicester University Press, 1982).

Vanity Fair and the Celestial City; Dissenting, Methodist, and Evangelical Literary Culture in England 1720-1800, (Oxford, 2018).

Writing the history of early evangelicalism in *History of European Ideas*, 35:1, 105-111, DOI:10.16/j.histeuropeas.2008.09.004

Isabel Rivers & David L. Wykes, (eds), *Dissenting Praise: Religious Dissent and the Hymn in England and Wales*, (Oxford University Press, 2011).

Michael Roper & John Tosh, (eds.), *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800*, (London, 1991).

D. Rosenberg, The Young and the Restless, p. 6, in *Cabinet Magazine*, <http://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/29/rosenberg.php>.

Gillian Russell & Clara Tuite (eds), *Romantic Sociability: Social Networks and Literary Culture in Britain 1770-1840*, (Cambridge, 2002).

George Rude, *Hanoverian London 1714-1800*. (London. 1971)

Alec Ryrie, *Protestants, The Radicals who made the Modern World*, (London, 2017).

William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, (Cambridge, 2004).

Alan P.F. Sell, *Christ and Controversy: The Person of Christ in Nonconformist Thought and Ecclesial Experience, 1600-2000*, (Oregon, 2011).

Philosophy, Dissent and Nonconformity 1689-1920, (London, 2003).

Ian Sellers, *Nineteenth Century Nonconformity*, (Edward Arnold, 1977).

Kathryn Shevelov, *Women and Print Culture, The Construction of Femininity in the early periodical* (London 1989).

Carol Shiner Wilson & Joel Haefner, (eds.), *Re-visioning Romanticism: British Women Writers, 1776-1837*, (Philadelphia, 1994).

Sidonie Smith & Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography; A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives, Second Edition*, (Minneapolis, 2010).

Robert B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society 1650-1850*, (Longman, 1998).

Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*, (Harmondsworth, 1977).

Anne Stott, *Hannah More: The First Victorian*, (Oxford, 2003).

John Styles & Amanda Vickery, *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America 1700-1830*, (Yale, 2006).

Rev., G. Sydenham, *The Story of Congregationalism in Hadleigh and District*, (Hadleigh, 1967).

Naomi.Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth Century England*, (Cambridge 2001).

Nigel Tattlesfield, *Thomas Bewick: The Complete Illustrative Work Vol I*, (London 2011).
Thomas Bewick Graphic Works, (London, 2014).

Barbara Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft and Feminist Imagination*, (Cambridge, 2003).

Isaac Taylor III, *Memoirs and Poetical Remains of the late Jane Taylor with Extracts From Her Correspondence*, (London, 1826).

Isaac Taylor IV, *The Family Pen, Memorials, Biographical and Literary of The Taylor Family of Ongar*, (London, 1867).

Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, (New York, 1957).

David M.Thompson, (ed.), *Nonconformity in the Nineteenth Century*, (Routledge Keegan Paul, 1972).

John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*, (Edinburgh, 2010).

A Man's place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England, (Yale, 1999).

Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain, (Edinburgh, 2005).

James Treadwell, *Autobiographical Writing and British Literature 1783-1834*, (Oxford, 2005).

Jenny Uglow, *Words & Pictures: Writers, Artists and a Peculiarly British Tradition*, (Faber & Faber, 2008).

In These Times: Living in Britain through Napoleon's Wars, 1793-1815, (London, 2014).

Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England*, (New haven & London, 1998)

Behind Closed Doors; At Home in Georgian England, (New Haven & London, 2009).

Golden Age To Separate Spheres? A Review Of The Categories And Chronology of English Women's History, *The Historical Journal*, 36, 2 (1993), pp313-414.

Isaac Watts, *The Improvement of the Mind*, (London, 1787).

Michael Watts, *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution*, (Oxford, 1978).

Daniel E. White, *Early Romanticism and Religious Dissent*, (Cambridge, 2006).

Sue Wilkinson & Celia Kitzinger (eds), *Representing the Other: A Feminism and Psychology Reader*, (London, 1986).

Ben Wilson, *Decency and Disorder 1789-1837*, (London, 2007).

Linda Wilson, *Constrained By Zeal: Female Spirituality amongst Nonconformists 1825-1875*, (Milton Keynes, 2000).

Walter Wilson, *History and Antiquities of Dissenting Churches and Meeting Houses in London, 3 Volumes*, (London, 1810).

Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, (London, 1792).

Virginia Woolf, The Lives of the Obscure in *The Common Reader First Series*, (London, 1925).

The Art of Biography, in *The Death of the Moth, and other essays*.
<https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91d/chapt23.html>

John Wolffe, *The Expansion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Wilberforce, More, Chalmers and Finney*, (Nottingham, 2006).

Duncan Wu, (ed.), *Romanticism, An Anthology*, (Oxford, 2012).