

The South African Commercial Advertiser and the making of middle class identity in early nineteenth-century Cape Town.

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## ABSTRACT

This project constitutes a close textual analysis of The South African Commercial Advertiser in the years 1824 and 1830 - 1831. It uses this text to explore issues around the making of colonial identity in Cape Town during the early nineteenth century, making use of post-structuralist theories about discourse and the textual nature of historical reality. It therefore hopes to build on already existing work which concerns this period, but which does not directly address issues of cultural change in this way.

The study commences with an account of the Advertiser's conception of the place of the press in the reform agenda of the middle classes in Cape Town. It explores contemporary notions about the nature of the rational public sphere and its basis in a literate culture. The second chapter explores the reconstruction of social space in Cape Town and the way in which these middle class efforts were disrupted by troubling perceptions of the underclasses in the city. Chapters three and four address the notions of gender identity and labour organization which informed the Advertiser's conception of an appropriately civilized society, as well as exploring the way in which these perceptions were destabilized by their operation in the colonial context of the Cape. The final chapter looks at the importance of representative government in the aims of the paper, and draws together some threads on the nature of colonial identity at the Cape as expressed in the Advertiser.

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## INTRODUCTION

This is a preliminary study in a much wider project on the construction of middle class identity at the Cape of Good Hope in the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> The thesis comprises some ideas about the construction of early nineteenth-century colonial identity in Cape Town, as revealed by a close reading of The South African Commercial Advertiser in the years 1824 and 1830 - 1831.<sup>2</sup> In addition to this, by limiting its attention to a single primary source material, it seeks to demonstrate, with reference to this topic, the historiographical usefulness of an approach which draws on post-structuralist concepts of discourse and of the textual nature of historical reality.

Cape Town in the 1820s and 1830s was a city undergoing profound socio-economic transitions. Commercial horizons were widening after a long period of restriction during the rule of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), with a new era of growth being heralded

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<sup>1</sup> This topic will be addressed by my D.Phil, to be commenced at Oxford University in October 1993.

<sup>2</sup> The exact copies of the paper under discussion are 7 January 1824 to 5 May 1824, and 2 October 1830 to 31 December 1831. This is not intended to be an exhaustive account of all the issues raised in the text of the Advertiser, which lies far outside the limits of such a study as this. As this introduction indicates, the 1820s and 1830s were important decades of social change in the Cape colony, and it is for this reason that this period has been addressed by the present study. The exact years, however - 1831 rather than 1832, for example - were not chosen for any specific reason, and as this thesis explores, broad themes are evident in the paper across the separations of specific years. On rare occasions, when material of particular richness highlights themes under discussion, references have been made to issues of the Advertiser which fall outside these years.

by the Cape's incorporation into the British empire. These factors supported the growth of a group of indigenous merchants in Cape Town. These men, and their families, were beginning to form the upper echelons of the colonial middle class during this time, their social mobility facilitated by the comparative lack, at the Cape, of the hierarchical class structure operational in England which placed land ownership at the climax of the search for social legitimacy.<sup>3</sup> This group of white middle class merchants and men of commerce was predominantly made up of British immigrants, but also contained a substantial element of Dutch notables who had made use of the new economic opportunities presented by the assumption of final British control over the Cape in 1806.<sup>4</sup>

The shift in the structure of capital in Cape Town was one from an agrarian to a mercantile economy, and this was paralleled by a change in the labour structure of the city. The city's dependence on slave labour began to erode well before the official ending of slavery in 1834<sup>5</sup> and, influenced by their new

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<sup>3</sup> Meltzer, J. L. 'The Growth of Cape Town Commerce and the Role of John Fairbairn's Advertiser (1835 - 1859) (MA, University of Cape Town, 1989), p.32

<sup>4</sup> DuToit, A. and Giliomee, H. Afrikaner Political Thought: Analysis and Documents. Volume One: 1780 - 1850 (Cape Town and Johannesburg, 1983), p.24 ff. See also Rayner, M. 'Wine and Slaves: The Failure of an Export Economy and the Ending of Slavery in the Cape Colony, South Africa, 1806 - 1834' (PhD, Duke University, 1986), p.91, for an examination of the socio-economic links formed between Dutch notables and the British during the early nineteenth century.

<sup>5</sup> Bank, A The Decline of Urban Slavery at the Cape, 1806 - 1834 University of Cape Town Centre for African Studies, Communications No.22/1991, p.20

place in the urban economy, some slave groups began to assume the consciousness of wage labourers.<sup>6</sup> The economy of Cape Town, and of the colony as a whole, therefore, was making a transition "from a pre-capitalist economy based on slave labour to a mercantile economy with a wage labour force."<sup>7</sup> These developments heralded "the transformation of a small and initially rather isolated group of Cape Town merchants and traders into a self-conscious, organized social and political power bloc."<sup>8</sup>

Despite the beginnings of the forging of a distinctive middle class identity at the Cape, which will be the major focus of this thesis, the dominant classes were by no means in total control of their city. Andrew Bank has suggested that the very socio-economic transitions described above led to the fact that the dominant classes of nineteenth century Cape Town were marked by a high degree of economic fragmentation caused by their heterogenous composition: "The urban dominant class was heterogeneously comprised of an ascendant merchant strata with growing metropolitan links, smaller scale retailers amongst whom there were a handful of free blacks, a limited number of professionals in the form of doctors, lawyers, teachers etc., and a social tail of independent craftsmen (as well as the military elite and other members of the apparatus of the colonial state). Superimposed and overlapping with these broad occupational

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p.41

<sup>7</sup> Elks, K.D. 'Crime, Community and Police in Cape Town 1825 - 1850' (MA, University of Cape Town, 1986), p.10

<sup>8</sup> Meltzer, 'The Growth of Cape Town Commerce', p.33

divisions were economic differences between slaveowners and non-slaveowners, and ethnic rifts between the Dutch and the British."<sup>9</sup> The middle class identity which the Advertiser was attempting to forge at the Cape needed to prevail over these internal tensions in order to survive. In addition to this element of potential disruption, various writers have documented both the vibrancy of underclass culture in Cape Town in this period as well as the web of poverty, crime and disease which dominated the city, and over which the middle classes exerted only a limited control.<sup>10</sup> Both internal divisions and external pressures were threats to the attempted construction of a middle class colonial identity in early nineteenth-century Cape Town.

This then was the context within which the Advertiser operated, which affected its content, and which it in turn sought to shape by means of its own influence. It is the contention of this thesis that the Advertiser's underlying agenda was the creation of a rational public sphere within the colonial context, out of which a distinctive middle class identity might be formed and which might allow representative government to be established at the Cape. The Advertiser was aware of the two dangers of internal division and external disruptions which threatened to upset its agenda of social reform at the Cape, and the consciousness of this consistently troubled its discourse of class unity and

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<sup>9</sup> Bank, The Decline of Urban Slavery, p.82

<sup>10</sup> Bank, The Decline of Urban Slavery, p.101 ff. Elks, 'Crime, Community and Police' and Judges, S. 'Poverty, Living Conditions and Social Relations - Aspects of Life in Cape Town in the 1830s' (MA , University of Cape Town, 1977)

colonial self-confidence. Because the Advertiser self-consciously saw itself as a force which might guide the development of the colony in the appropriate direction of a rational public sphere, it is an extremely useful source through which to examine the socio-economic transitions, outlined above, which the Cape was undergoing in the early nineteenth century. The Advertiser was fully aware of these transitions and considered it necessary that a shift in colonial culture should accompany these shifts in social and economic orientations. This thesis will therefore put forward some thoughts on the cultural content of the social transformations which were taking place in the city during this period.

The Advertiser, for most of its existence, was edited by John Fairbairn, who arrived at the Cape in 1823, and, during the period under consideration, it was largely a mirror of his views and interests.<sup>11</sup> Fairbairn's background, which will be further considered in chapter one, lay in the Edinburgh of the Scottish Enlightenment, and he was induced to emigrate to the Cape by his friend Thomas Pringle, who had arrived with a party of settlers in 1820, moving from Albany to Cape Town in 1822. It was Pringle's plans to start a magazine in Cape Town "to enlighten South Africa"<sup>12</sup> which Fairbairn claimed helped to persuade him

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<sup>11</sup> Botha, H.C. John Fairbairn in South Africa (Cape Town, 1984), p.ix

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Pringle to John Fairbairn 24 November 1822, quoted in J. Meiring, Thomas Pringle: His life and times (Cape Town, 1968), p.80

to move to the Cape<sup>13</sup> although financial considerations were also evidently part of the incentive to emigrate.<sup>14</sup>

As will be considered in chapter one, there was no free press at the Cape at this time. Both the VOC and the British Colonial Government, in particular the Governor, Lord Charles Somerset, opposed it, and the publication of the Advertiser took place amidst the struggle to establish an independent press in the colony. Thomas Pringle, along with the Dutch Reformed Minister, the Reverend Abraham Faure, finally obtained permission to publish their periodical The South African Journal / Het Nederduitsch Zuid-Afrikaansch Tijdschrift in 1824, despite Somerset's profound misgivings. This relaxation of the control over free publications caused the publisher George Greig to announce the publication of The South African Commercial Advertiser without asking official permission. The fact that a government levy was imposed upon the paper convinced him that it had official sanction. The paper first appeared on 7 January 1824. From the third number of the paper, Pringle and Fairbairn took over its editorship. The paper soon ran into trouble with the governor, however, chiefly for its publication of detailed transcriptions of the libel case of William Edwards, L. Cooke, a Cape Town merchant, and J.B. Hoffman. The case centred around a petition to the British Government written by Cooke in which he urged the necessity of an investigation into the actions and

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<sup>13</sup> John Fairbairn to Thomas Pringle, 2 March 1823, quoted in Meiring, Thomas Pringle, p.80

<sup>14</sup> Botha, John Fairbairn, p.10

misconduct of C. Blair, the Collector of Custom, regarding the allotment of Prize Negroes. During the course of the case, Edwards, in particular, attacked the Governor, the Fiscal, and legal institutions at the Cape, winning a large measure of sympathy from the colonists in the process.<sup>15</sup> After attempts were made by the government to censor the Advertiser it was suspended by Greig, Fairbairn and Pringle in May 1824, and Greig left the colony after being threatened with banishment by Somerset.

On Greig's appeals in Britain, Lord Bathurst, Secretary of State, decided, in 1825, to approve his return to the Cape, the continuation of his printing profession and the resumption of the publication of the Advertiser, which reappeared in August 1825 with Fairbairn as editor. Pringle returned to England in 1826. Clashes with the government continued, and the Advertiser was suspended again in March 1827, on Bathurst's orders, for having published an extract from the London Times which reflected negatively upon the character of a Cape official. Publication resumed in October 1828 after Fairbairn visited England to protest its suspension. The Advertiser's troubles with the Colonial Government were ended in 1829 with Ordinance 60 which placed the colonial press under the protection of the law.<sup>16</sup> In

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<sup>15</sup> Botha, John Fairbairn, p.19

<sup>16</sup> The ordinance, however, stressed the concept of libel far more strongly than it did that of press freedom, being suggestively titled: "Ordinance for Preventing the Mischiefs arising from Printing and Publishing Newspapers and papers of a like nature by persons unknown." It did, however, repeal the Governor Yonge's proclamation of 1800 which forbid any other publication of printed material in the Cape, other than that which was under the control of the Colonial Government. In 1859, Ordinance 60 was repealed, barring the section which repealed the

1853 the Advertiser merged with The Cape Town Mail, and in 1859 Fairbairn retired from editorship of The South African Commercial Advertiser and Cape Town Mail.

The Advertiser, therefore, is intimately connected with the establishment of a Free Press at the Cape, and this is the place which it has occupied in traditional historiography.<sup>17</sup> More recently, its content has been examined more closely as a source in the examination of the growth of commerce in Cape Town<sup>18</sup> and in the debates over slavery in the years prior to emancipation<sup>19</sup>. These two works, however, and Watson's in particular, might be categorized more as traditional intellectual histories of ideas which focus on disembodied abstracts such as liberty, property, and free trade and free labour ideology than as the 'histories of meaning' which have become a major focus in the more recent trends of cultural history.<sup>20</sup>

This thesis draws on post-structuralist ideas about the textual  


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proclamation of 1800.

<sup>17</sup> See Murray, R.W. South African Reminiscences (Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and Johannesburg, 1894), Cutten, T. The History of the Press in South Africa (Cape Town, 1935), Barry, R. A History of Printing in Cape Town 1784 - 1830 (Illinois, The Author, [1957?]) and Touyz, B.M. 'The Cape Colony: The Struggle for the Liberty of the Press 1822 - 1829' (BA Honours, University of Cape Town, 1977)

<sup>18</sup> Meltzer, 'The Growth of Cape Town Commerce'

<sup>19</sup> Watson, R. The Slave Question: Liberty and Property in South Africa (Johannesburg, 1990)

<sup>20</sup> See W.J. Bouwsma, 'Intellectual History in the 1980s: From History of Ideas to History of Meaning.' In T.K. Rabb and R.I. Rotberg, (eds) The New History: The 1980s and Beyond (Princeton, 1982)

nature of reality and the importance of the study of discourse. It stresses that language is not something that produces reality; rather, meaning is produced by language.<sup>21</sup> This is not to deny a material reality which exists outside the text, but to stress that we perceive reality through language<sup>22</sup> and that "[t]he opposition between phenomena and noumena itself is incapable of operation or verification, since however close to the margins of phenomena we may suppose ourselves to be, what is beyond the boundaries of discourse simply cannot be said, nor even thought within such a spatial metaphor .... discourse is not representation, for it is not secondary. It is presentation; it does not recreate but it creates."<sup>23</sup> A simple dichotomy between a concrete historical reality and a text, such as the Advertiser, which accurately or inaccurately represented it, is rejected by this study. It stresses that, in the writing of history, it must constantly be borne in mind that "[w]ords did not just reflect social and political reality; they were instruments for transforming reality."<sup>24</sup> This is a particularly important notion to be borne in mind when examining the contents of the Advertiser which was seeking, quite self-consciously, to bring about a new social, economic, political and cultural order at the Cape through the power of language as it expressed itself through the

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<sup>21</sup> Eagleton, T. Literary Theory: An Introduction (Oxford, 1983), p.60

<sup>22</sup> Todd, A.D. and Fisher, B. (eds) Gender and Discourse: The Power of Talk (New Jersey, 1988), p.6

<sup>23</sup> Mason, P. Deconstructing America: Representations of the Other (London, 1990), p.15

<sup>24</sup> Hunt, L 'Introduction: History, Culture, and Text, in L. Hunt (ed) The New Cultural History (London, 1989), p.17

medium of a free press. The historian should attempt to approach the relationship between texts and contexts with sensitivity to the literary processes of their 'intertextuality' rather than "with the causal notion of reflection."<sup>25</sup>

What this conception of historical writing strives to avoid, is what Hayden White has referred to as the 'ironic' perspective of much modern historiography: "[t]his perspective develops a sceptical attitude toward the way in which historical actors use language to describe reality by stressing the gap between words and things. When applied to the past, Irony enables historians to take a realistic or superior view of the people and events that they discuss, because people always lack the perspective in their own time to see the disjunction between their words and experience as clearly as historians see it in retrospect. 'Irony presupposes the occupation of a 'realistic' perspective on reality [i.e., the historian's], from which a non-figurative representation of the world of experience might be provided.' "<sup>26</sup> White's analysis of this perspective thus criticises the fact that it takes on a sceptical attitude to the way in which people

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<sup>25</sup> Kramer, L.S. 'Literature, Criticism, and Historical Imagination: The Literary Challenge of Hayden White and Dominick LaCapra' in Hunt, The New Cultural History, p.114 - 115. Kramer is here drawing on LaCapra's stipulation that "the context does not simply exist as a prelinguistic reality that language faithfully describes", referring to his History and Criticism (New York, 1985)

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p.104 The quotes are from H. White Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe (Baltimore, 1973), p.37

in the past use language to describe reality. Post-structuralist theory, of course, puts forward the idea that there is no non-figurative representation of the world of experience; nothing can be expressed outside of language. The way in which men and women use language to represent their world is indicative of the way in which they experience and constantly re-make that world. Much of the richness of the Advertiser as an historical source is lost if it is merely treated as an accurate or inaccurate reflection of a material historical reality. This study rather seeks to look at the Advertiser's attempts to construct, through the language of reform at the Cape, a social reality which would lead to its ultimate desire of representative government in the colony.

This emphasis on the linguistically constructed nature of social reality hopes to fill a historiographical gap in the already existing studies of early nineteenth-century Cape Town. There have been studies that have looked at the broad influences of abstract ideas on the intellectual development of the dominant classes,<sup>27</sup> as well as work which emphasised the life experiences of the underclass<sup>28</sup>, but there has been little emphasis on the general world view and, sometimes unconscious, perceptions of the middle and upper classes of the Cape.<sup>29</sup> While something of the

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<sup>27</sup> See Meltzer, 'The Growth of Cape Town Commerce' and Watson, The Slave Question as well as Rayner 'Wine and Slaves'.

<sup>28</sup> See Bank, The Decline of Urban Slavery, Elks, 'Crime, Community and Police', and Judges, 'Poverty, Living Conditions and Social Relations'.

<sup>29</sup> For an example of this is a somewhat earlier period see K. McKenzie The Making of an English Slaveholder: Samuel Eusebius Hudson at the Cape of Good Hope (BA Honours, University of Cape Town, 1991 and in Press, Cape Town, 1993)

socio-economic transitions undergone by the city have been outlined above, there has been little work on the social and cultural meanings that these changes had for the classes which were trying to direct the future of the colony.

This work will attempt to map some of these meanings by means of a close textual analysis of the language and the themes employed by the Advertiser. Its main focus will be on the construction of a middle class identity at the Cape and on the paper's attempt to construct a rational public sphere in the colony. The thesis will begin with a chapter on the Advertiser's conception of the place of the press in its social reform agenda, examining the issues of the paper's readers, its role in the colony, and its conception of the public sphere. Thereafter the Advertiser's attempt to reform the social space of the city will be considered, in an examination of the attitudes towards public and private spheres, sites of discourse, and relations between moral and material filth and contamination. Following this will be chapters on the paper's attempt to lay down the rules for proper gender roles and a proper labour system for the colony which would bring it along the road to social respectability and thus to representative government. A concluding chapter will attempt to pull together some of the themes relating to the construction of a specific colonial identity and the political expression this found in the attempt to have a Legislative Assembly established at the Cape. The stress throughout will be on the paper's attempt to re-form and re-present the colony to its inhabitants, as well as its attempts to guide their behaviour and reconstruct their

society.

An additional theme will attempt to stress the connections between dominant and popular culture in the colony, despite the fact that its main focus will be on the identity of the colony's elite. These connections have been largely disregarded in the previous historiography, despite the questions of cultural ambiguity which are raised by the issue of the socio-economic transitions being experienced by the colony which are explored above. Given these rapid changes, the cultural identity of the colony was in a similar state of flux, and the interactions between different groups in the re-making of this identity are likely to be of importance. Most studies have focused either on the perceptions and culture of the underclasses or on those of their masters, although, as outlined above, there has been little work on the general world views of the upper and middle classes at the Cape. The interconnections of thought, beyond the structures of hegemony and resistance, have, however, been largely ignored. This study stresses that "the classificatory body of a culture is always double, always structured in relation to its negation, its inverse."<sup>30</sup> The conceptions of culture of writers such as Peter Stallybrass and Allon White have been a strong influence on this work. In their conceptions of the relationship between 'high' and 'low' culture, they stress that "The low-Other is despised and denied at the level of political organization and social being whilst it is instrumentally

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<sup>30</sup> Stallybrass, P. and White, A. The Politics and Poetics of Transgression (London, 1986), p.20

constitutive of the shared imaginary repertoires of the dominant culture."<sup>31</sup> The distinction between dominant and popular culture should not be stressed too strongly; what needs emphasis are borrowings and exchanges as well as the functioning of cultural oppositions in the construction of class identity.<sup>32</sup> Although the Advertiser might be generally assumed to be a cultural production of the middle class, as will be considered in chapter one, this is to ignore the creative process which constitutes the reading of a text, and the fact that the Advertiser was very likely read by some individuals whose cultural orientation might be described by historians as 'underclass', and whose transformation of the text by the act of reading may well have imbued it with diverse meanings. In addition, as will be stressed throughout this study, the middle class discourse of the Advertiser is crossed through and through by the troubling voices and disruptive echoes of those cultural groups, such as slaves, slaveowners, critical overseas visitors, and women, against which the paper was defining itself and its conception of the colony in opposition.

This study, therefore, will attempt to stress the multiplicity of contradicting images and representations which constitute the construction of a cultural identity, treating the text as an expression of an ambiguous, self-contradictory and constantly unstable colonial identity undergoing a continuous process of self-definition. In this, it will attempt to say something about

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p.5 - 6

<sup>32</sup> Chartier, R. 'Text, Printing, Readings' in L. Hunt (ed) The New Cultural History

the nature of the social world of Cape Town in the early nineteenth century, and about this world's image in the mind of the Advertiser's writers and readers.

## Chapter One

"Franklins of the Kaap": the place of the press in the reconstruction of Cape society.

The agenda of social reform which the Advertiser sought to direct towards the Cape was centred around the paper's conception of the role of the press in a civilized society. Fairbairn and others saw the press as perhaps the most crucial driving force behind the attempt of reformers to bring forth an acceptable world order. This chapter will address the paper's ideas on the role of the press in the general tide of social reform which it considered to be sweeping the world at large, and also look at the way in which the transforming power of the press was seen to operate within the colonial context of the Cape.

The public sphere which the Advertiser sought to establish at the Cape might be defined as "a sphere between civil society and the state, in which critical public discussion of matters of general interest was institutionally guaranteed"<sup>1</sup>. An essentially middle class construction, the public sphere took shape in the context of the developing market economy of eighteenth-century Europe, and defined itself in opposition to the trappings of aristocratic power, an opposition which will be examined in more detail in later chapters. The criteria for the admission of a private individual into the domain of the public sphere depended upon a combination of property and education, these two concepts demarcating largely the same groups of people.<sup>2</sup> These

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<sup>1</sup> McCarthy, T. 'Introduction' to Jürgen Habermas The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society Translated by T. Burger, with the assistance of F. Lawrence. (Cambridge, Ma. 1989) Original German edition 1962, p.xi

<sup>2</sup> This, at least, was the case in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, when "education ... was more a consequence than a precondition of social status". Habermas, The Public

restrictions, however, were only compatible with the principle of publicity if equal chances for their acquisition were perceived to exist within the private sphere; as a result of this belief, "the propertyless were excluded from the public of private people engaged in critical political debate without thereby violating the principle of publicity."<sup>3</sup> The dichotomy which this conception of the public sphere created between exclusion and potential inclusion resulted in a profound ambiguity of vision amongst its advocates, an ambiguity which will resurface continually throughout this thesis.

This then, was the notion of the public sphere, crucial to the development of a political culture which might allow the establishment of representative government at the Cape, which the Advertiser sought to engender within the colony. As this restricted notion of the concept of the public might suggest, the readers towards whom the Advertiser directed itself might be loosely termed to belong to the "dominant classes". This term appears more strictly defined than was the social reality in Cape Town. As noted in the introduction, the group loosely comprised colonial officials, merchants, smaller scale retailers, professionals such as doctors, lawyers and teachers, and, in its lowest ranks, free craftsmen and artisans.<sup>4</sup> Warren has challenged the view advanced by Kirk that the dominant classes of the Cape in the first half of the nineteenth century were divided into a

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Sphere, p.85

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p.111

<sup>4</sup> See Bank, The Decline of Urban Slavery, p.82

Cape 'aristocracy' of élite merchants with strong links to Britain who were engaged in class competition with a rising commercial class of local self-made men. Warren finds this distinction to be exaggerated, and contends that there was a strong degree of co-operation between these two groups.<sup>5</sup> He stresses that, in the 1840s, the commercial class was not a homogenous group of commerce-orientated individuals: "In view of the presence amongst the municipal commissioners of professional, agricultural and properties interests in addition to trading and financial, the label of 'commercial' would seem to be rather narrow and misleading. ... Moreover, many of the municipal commissioners (about three-fifths) were locally-born, and the majority were of Afrikaner or German origin. The municipality therefore represented a strong colonial-born and Afrikaner constituent ... Hence the appellation 'colonial' would perhaps more aptly identify the emerging bourgeoisie - it allows for their economic as well as ethnic, cultural and religious heterogeneity, and it underlines their southern African rather than their metropolitan orientation."<sup>6</sup> This examination of the Advertiser tends to support Warren. Despite its repudiation of the cultural norms of aristocratic privilege and patronage, to be explored below, the paper indicates a community of interest which crosses the divide suggested by Kirk. In addition, as the

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<sup>5</sup> Warren's criticisms of A. Kirk's 'Self-government and self-defence in South Africa: the interrelations between British and Cape politics, 1846 - 1854' (D.Phil., Oxford, 1972) can be found in 'Merchants, Commissioners and Wardmasters', especially chapter two, and pages 225 ff.

<sup>6</sup> Warren, D. 'Liberalism and Cape Politics in the Nineteenth Century: An Overview' Draft of chapter one of PhD, p.12 - 13.

last chapter will explore, the Advertiser was seeking to create a colonial identity at the Cape along the lines suggested by Warren.

As the following chapters will make clear, the Advertiser addressed itself to a dual audience: those that shared its ideas on the nature of the social reform which might be brought about at the Cape, as well as those groups who might be profitably drawn into the ranks of the 'enlightened' by the modification of their principles. This was especially true of the Cape Dutch, for middle class members of this group, including slaveowners, were targeted for incorporation into a colonial middle class which took its cultural tone from metropolitan Britain, and the union of Dutch and British colonists was an important issue in the concerns of the Advertiser.

While these were the readers to whom the Advertiser addressed itself, the fact that it was read by others, who in no way subscribed to the ideas of its writers, is also a point which must be constantly borne in mind. As historians of reading and printing such as R. Chartier and Robert Darnton have stressed, reading is an active process with its own history, and the readers of the Advertiser, like those of any other text, were not necessarily subjugated to a single meaning imposed by the author.<sup>7</sup> The troubling voices of those whose readings conflicted

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<sup>7</sup> See Chartier, R. 'Texts, Printing, Readings' in Hunt, The New Cultural History, Chartier, R. Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations Translated by L. Cochrane (Oxford, 1988), Darnton, R. The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History (London and New York, 1990) and Darnton, R. The

with the meanings given in the Advertiser's discourse are a muted presence in the text. As chapters three and four will address, individuals such as women, slaves and slaveowners were readers of the paper whose interpretations could undercut the certainties of the Advertiser's authorship.

Despite these disruptive readings, the paper persisted in its attempt to construct a rational public sphere at the Cape by addressing and guiding its target audience. Fairbairn had come to the Cape with the idea of setting up an independent newspaper already in place in his mind. A year before the Advertiser was established, he wrote to Thomas Pringle: "Your hint about Magazines and Newspapers pleases me exceedingly. What should hinder us from becoming the Franklins of the Kaap?"<sup>8</sup> This identification with Benjamin Franklin is a significant one, given Franklin's symbolic association as a "harbinger of liberty" connected to the press, the diffusion of scientific knowledge, and political representation.<sup>9</sup> Later, as editor of the Advertiser, Fairbairn was fond of invoking the image of Franklin as the model to which he turned when conducting his newspaper.<sup>10</sup> Fairbairn clearly saw himself and his paper as being at the head of a civilizing process at the Cape, believing, as the epigraph

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Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History  
(London and New York, 1984)

<sup>8</sup> John Fairbairn to Thomas Pringle, 2 March 1823. Quoted in Meiring, J. Thomas Pringle: His life and times. (Cape Town, 1968), p.80

<sup>9</sup> Schama, S. Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution (London, 1989), p.44

<sup>10</sup> SACA 13 October 1830

adopted by the Advertiser claimed, that "The mass of every People must be barbarous where there is no Printing."<sup>11</sup>

In order to create the rational public sphere which Fairbairn desired for the Cape, a literate culture, in the sense of a culture which emphasized the transmission of knowledge and ideas in printed form, was essential. It seems as if this had only existed in the most limited form during the Dutch period. A colonial press was contrary to the policies of the Dutch East India Company, and placaaten forbidding the establishment of an independent paper were issued in 1702, 1726 and 1744.<sup>12</sup> Certainly the colonial authorities emphasized the backwardness of the local inhabitants in terms of their relation to literate culture, Francis Dundas writing in 1801 that "the establishment of a printing press I conceive to be more likely to produce evil than good effects, since the minds of the inhabitants are by no means prepared to exercise the freedom of discussion on almost any subject, particularly politics, concerning which they had been led to entertain very confused and erroneous opinions."<sup>13</sup>

Traditional forms of recreation amongst the city's elite seem to have been individualistic rather than communal or semi-public. The social historian, Hattersley, taking on a similar discourse to that of Fairbairn and Dundas, stressed: "the Cape burgher was

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<sup>11</sup> The quote is from the writings of Samuel Johnson, but no more precise reference is given in the Advertiser.

<sup>12</sup> Meiring, Thomas Pringle, p.82

<sup>13</sup> quoted in Meiring, Thomas Pringle, p.82

unambitious, took small interest in literature and was decidedly averse to innovations ... Social clubs and masonic lodges, the first of which, de Goede Hoop, was opened in 1772, exerted a civilising influence."<sup>14</sup> The rational public sphere which the Advertiser sought to establish needed to be based on the sites of discourse which will be explored in the following chapter: coffee houses and assembly rooms, supported by subscription, in which the reading of printed material and the discussion of the ideas expressed in them were crucial to the construction of a 'civilized' society.

This conception of the role of the press within the public sphere was built on the developments in Europe during the previous century. From the eighteenth century onwards, reading clubs and coffee houses had provided a social foundation for a distinct variety of bourgeois culture.<sup>15</sup> What was being built up was a connection between civil society and the state in which the notion of a public life, one conceived of as a life passed outside the sphere of family and close friends, was becoming an important part of masculine identity.<sup>16</sup> As will be considered further below, the cultural antecedents of men such as Fairbairn and Thomas Pringle lay firmly within this milieu, as it expressed itself in the Edinburgh of the Scottish Enlightenment.

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<sup>14</sup> Hattersley, A.F. An Illustrated Social History of South Africa (Cape Town, 1969), p.17 Emphasis added.

<sup>15</sup> Darnton, R. The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History (London and New York, 1990), p.170

<sup>16</sup> Landes, J.B. Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution (Ithaca and London, 1988), p.39

The cultural institutions upon which the public sphere was based, - coffeehouses, clubs, reading and language societies, lending libraries, theatres, journals and newspapers - "were all distinctive products of a swelling verbal and written culture."<sup>17</sup> The bourgeois public sphere was thus established upon the assumption of a written culture and orientated around language: "The prohibitive cost of books and periodicals encouraged the growth of subscription services, public libraries, reading rooms, and reading societies. ... Together, these institutions generated new public (literary and political) spaces".<sup>18</sup> Within the context of the Cape, this cost factor was especially important. The costs of producing newspapers at the Cape was high since most of the materials needed to be imported.<sup>19</sup> It seems likely that many of the readers of newspapers like the Advertiser did not buy their own copies, but read copies housed in places in which the public (in the limited sense espoused by the Advertiser) met to read, socialize and thus discuss their reading. This would have applied even more strongly to publications received from Europe which were in limited supply, and which appeared at irregular intervals. As Robert Darnton stresses, reading is a cultural activity, and was not always and everywhere the same.<sup>20</sup> It seems appropriate to think of the process of reading in the Cape Town of the 1820s and 1830s as having a strongly communal character.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p.51

<sup>19</sup> Hattersley, Social History, p.140

<sup>20</sup> Darnton, Kiss of Lamourette, p.187

William Bird gave a characteristically caustic account of this process of information-sharing in his State of the Cape of Good Hope in 1822:

"In this street [the Heerengracht], once the residence of the best Cape families, but now of English shopkeepers, is the Subscription or Society-House; a building appropriated by the proprietors for the accommodation of the town. Here are billiard and card rooms, and a ball room, where, during the winter, the assemblies are usually held. There are also, what are called in Europe, coffee-rooms, where stale newspapers and pamphlets are to be read. ... The subscribers to the rooms are numerous, but the newspapers and pamphlets are meanly and shabbily supplied. ... The charm of the society house lies in its situation, so prime for gossip, being in the centre of the heerengracht, traversed by everyone going to the parade, to the government offices, to the custom-house, or to the wharf; so that, between the hours of eleven and five, almost every one may be seen from the door of this house. ... The talk commences, and that which is, or is not being reported, gains currency for the day. A gross untruth on any subject, deceiving the hearer, and circulated from the spot, for the amusement of the inventor, is called 'shaving', and the dupe, being shaved himself, wanders through the town to shave others. ... the peace and happiness of individuals are frequently invaded; credit impaired, and society distracted, by the circulation of base and unfounded reports."<sup>21</sup>

Peter Stallybrass and Allon White see the European coffeehouse, as it became established as a social institution from the eighteenth century onwards, as playing "an important role in the disciplining of its particular public to norms of sobriety and polite social interchange: the norms, in fact, which are the absolute precondition for the establishment of a 'democratic' domain of verbal exchange without violence and without the privileges of rank."<sup>22</sup> As will be explored in the following chapter, institutions such as coffeehouses were set up in

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<sup>21</sup> Bird, W. State of the Cape of Good Hope in 1822. (London, 1823) p.149 - 150.

<sup>22</sup> Stallybrass and White, The Politics and Poetics of Transgression, p.96

opposition to meeting places such as taverns, and combined an accessibility which was perceived as democratic, with a cleansed discursive environment. The crucial ambiguities between the notion of inclusion and social separation are evident in this particular spatial domain of the bourgeois public sphere.

Bird's scathing description masks what was in fact a vital development in the creation of a rational public sphere in Cape Town. Communal reading processes in sites of discourse such as coffeehouses allowed for the free exchange of ideas and the forging of class links which were crucial to the establishment of both middle class identity and political strength. The sites of social assembly in which printed matter was read provided the focal points in a web of information dispersal which spread over the entire city. Bird's account thus also reveals the links between verbal and written culture that were important in Cape Town: isolated readers would be less instrumental in the construction of a common identity than the verbally linked community of readers, talkers and listeners that Bird describes.

The tone of Bird's description leads one back to another vital aspect in the importance of the press at the Cape which was touched on earlier. A Cape-based literate culture was seen as a sign of civilization, a vindication of the claims of men such as Fairbairn that the Cape was worthy of self-government, and a denial of the disparaging descriptions of the Cape made by visitors from the metropole. The importance of having a literate, and literature-producing, culture at the Cape is underlined by

Henry Gates's examination of the importance of writing in the Enlightenment's conception of reason and humanity. Considering the importance of literature by African writers, he asks: "Why was the creative writing of the African of such importance to the eighteenth century's debate over slavery? I can briefly outline one thesis: after René Descartes, reason was privileged, or valorized, above all other human characteristics. Writing, especially after the printing press became so widespread, was taken to be the visible sign of reason. Blacks were 'reasonable', and hence 'men', if - and only if - they demonstrated mastery of 'the arts and sciences,' the eighteenth century's formula for writing."<sup>23</sup> The ability to write creatively, to produce one's own literature, was thus a criterion for incorporation into the ranks of the 'enlightened'. The lack of this capacity condemned one as barbarous; forever outside the group of reasonable men, and lacking in access to the public sphere. For the Cape's middle classes to lay claim, within an African context which risked tainting them with the brush of barbarism, to being part of the metropolitan self rather than the colonial other, it was crucial that they be seen to establish a literate culture patronized and sustained by an enlightened social group.

The Advertiser indicated strongly in the Prospectus which it issued to announce its publication, that this was its express purpose, appealing to the elite of the colony not to fail them in their task of creating a enlightened social system at the

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<sup>23</sup> Gates, H.L. 'Introduction', in Gates, (ed) 'Race', Writing, and Difference (Chicago and London, 1986), p.8

Cape:

"as a free diffusion of knowledge is the grand means of giving a tone to society, by elevating its morals, and promoting a taste for literature, we look to the more enlightened part of the community; in the confident hope that they will not allow this, the first attempt to establish a medium of general communication in a British Colony, to fail for want of that support which the well informed, the intelligent, and the patriotic, are alone able to afford."<sup>24</sup>

The newspaper articulated a clear division between the enlightened and unenlightened people of the colony, and appealed for support to those who shared their social vision and whose position would be benefited by the Cape projecting an image of a sophisticated colonial community to the outside world.

With this concern in mind, the Advertiser, in its very first number, emphasized the signs of civilized learning that could be seen at the Cape. It did this in the form of a poem, ostensibly by an impressed spectator from Europe:

"What caus'd more surprise, as it will to my cousins,  
The Bookseller's shops are now starting by dozens.  
Once a very few volumes was full *quantum suff*.  
And the buyers of books were the vendors of snuff.  
At the first that I enter'd, believe me 'tis true,  
Was the Settler's Report, and the Pamphlet of Pugh -  
But how can my pen its great wonders express,  
They were both dripping-wet from a Hottentot Press.  
A Prospectus was shewn, still to make the folks wiser,  
By reading the Pages of GREIG'S ADVERTISER;  
A Magazine too, in which Languages mingle,  
Is announc'd from the efforts of Faure and Pringle.  
If this mania for Learning the Natives shou'd foster,  
The Cape may yet rival the fam'd Paternoster,"<sup>25</sup>

As later chapters will emphasize, colonial identity was

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<sup>24</sup> SACA Prospectus, 20 December 1823

<sup>25</sup> SACA 7 January 1824

constructed partly in direct opposition to the critical gaze of metropolitan visitors. In this poem, however, the usual perspective of the viewer is shifted into one which expresses admiration. The Advertiser, nevertheless, allows a slight facetiousness of tone to remain. Most probably the paper is satirising the usual attitudes of visitors to the Cape, but the fact remains that doubt is still cast, by the poem, on the enlightening efforts of the paper. The fact that the press is designated 'Hottentot', bearing in mind the resonances of this term, indicates the ambiguity which still adhered to the notion of colonial civilization, and highlights the importance which the Advertiser attached to creating a literate Cape culture which would demarcate the division between the colonial realm and the barbarism of the African continent.<sup>26</sup>

This theme of the advancement of Cape culture was underlined as the Advertiser congratulated itself, in the pages of its second number, on the success that its first number had enjoyed:

"The eagerness to obtain our paper, and the rapidity with which the copies were sold, is a convincing proof to us of the fallacy of the unfounded assertions which have been made as to the general apathy of the Inhabitants of this Colony to literary affairs, and of the certain ruin that would follow any attempt to establish a Literary

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<sup>26</sup> See Gilman, S. 'Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature.' Critical Inquiry 12 (Autumn 1985) pp. 204 - 242 for an account of the iconography of the female Hottentot in European minds: "while many groups of African blacks were known to Europeans in the nineteenth century, the Hottentot remained representative of the essence of the black, especially the black female." p.206 The appellation 'Hottentot' thus implied association with the ultimate other of the colonial self.

production."<sup>27</sup>

Fairbairn clearly felt that by showing that his newspaper was a success at the Cape, he could assert claims that the colonists showed sufficient sophistication to be justified in their desire for self-government, as well as fostering the literature-based public sphere which was structurally necessary for the establishment of a Legislative Assembly.

With reference to this attempt to assert a civilized identity, the Advertiser was greatly concerned with the images which the colonists and their society presented to the outside world. Men like Fairbairn resented the intrusive eye of the European traveller and the critical accounts of the colony's colonial inhabitants which were generally the result of his enquiries. John Barrow's travel account was one which was frequently attacked, probably partly in an attempt to foster the union between Dutch and British which the Advertiser was anxious to attain.<sup>28</sup> Visitors from Europe and from India, which boasted a level of colonial culture far in advance of that of the Cape, tended to emphasize the lack of the trappings of civilized life at the Cape and thus their reports flew in the face of the image that the Advertiser was carefully trying to construct of the colony. One critical traveller dismissed in a single blow all attempts by middle-class dwellers of Cape Town to create a

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<sup>27</sup> SACA, 14 January 1824

<sup>28</sup> Barrow, J. Travels into the interior of Southern Africa in the years 1797 and 1798. (London 1801)  
Barrow, J. An Account of travels into the interior of Southern Africa (London, 1804)

civilized social world in their city, claiming that "their capital boasts the anomalies of a College without professors, a Theatre without actors, an Exchange without commerce, and a Bishop without a Church."<sup>29</sup>

The formation of a literate-based culture at the Cape would enable the colonists to take over the task of representing themselves to the outside world. As the Advertiser complained:

"We have seldom seen in writing a good description of Colonial life ... Your travellers are sometimes tolerably correct respecting the height of a mountain or the course of a river; but of the domestic, daily, inward life, habits, and modes of thought of a whole people, what a mass of ill-balanced misrepresentations do most of their REMARKS, NOTES, TOURS, JOURNALS, VISITS, DESCRIPTIONS, and STATEMENTS exhibit. Superficial, restless, and impatient, you see these gentry running to and fro over the outside of this world as earnestly as if something important depended on their speed - jumping over the fences of private and personal affairs - bouncing into every open door, and prying through the windows of decent retirement with an impudent face of curiosity, and after all producing nothing which a man of ordinary reflection could not have told them, or invented for them, without quitting his own parlour. ... The truth is, a country can be faithfully described by none but its own inhabitants. They alone have a due degree of interest in it. They alone know its real character; and their accounts, by showing their own dispositions and ability, let you at once into the mind and heart of the people among whom they dwell. Till books are written and printed in the Colonies, they will continue to be misrepresented, misunderstood, injured, and insulted. For the world at a distance, however good natured and kind in one or two particulars, deals in the main with every man, and every set of men, according to the inward respect and deference they entertain towards them."<sup>30</sup>

The resentment contained in this extract, should be linked to the discussion of the naming of the press as 'Hottentot', above, and can be traced to the fact that the Advertiser felt the colonists

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<sup>29</sup> SACA 20 October 1830

<sup>30</sup> SACA 10 March 1824

to have been placed in a position which was more commonly reserved for the indigenous inhabitants of Africa: that of an uncivilized colonial other which consolidated an enlightened imperialist self. The images of objectification, humiliation and powerlessness which pervade the Advertiser's description of the traveller's activities in relation to the settlers reveal the anxiety that the Advertiser felt over the fact that the class whose political legitimacy it was attempting to foster might be equated with the 'barbarous' inhabitants of Africa rather than with the 'civilized' observers of the continent. What comes through strongly is the sense of the violation of their carefully constructed private sphere; the fear that they are being "injured and insulted" rather than being treated with "respect and deference".

Analyses of imperialist travel writing have stressed the objectification and denial of the agency of those who peopled the landscapes that were subjected to the invasion of the colonialist gaze.<sup>31</sup> Given this fact, it is not surprising that the Advertiser showed resentment of its readers being at the receiving end of this process. As J.H. Elliott has emphasized, "The continuous bombardment of calumny to which settler communities were subjected [by their metropolitan antecedents] gave them an early and powerful incentive to develop a more favorable image of themselves, if only in self-defense. Where the settlers lived in

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<sup>31</sup> Pratt, M.L. 'Scratches on the Face of the Country; or, What Mr. Barrow Saw in the Land of the Bushmen.' Critical Inquiry 12 (Autumn, 1985) p. 120 - 121. Pratt, M.L. Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation (London and New York, 1992), p.33

the midst of an allegedly 'barbaric' native population ... this meant in the first instance differentiating themselves from these alien peoples to whose characteristics they were assumed by misguided Europeans to have fallen victim, as if slothfulness, mendacity, and barbarism were some kind of contagious disease."<sup>32</sup>

This process of separation necessitated a self-other dichotomy of the colonist's own, and a positioning of themselves as part of a civilizing project directed at a barbarous continent. As Clifton Crais stresses, "the Other emerged as signifier around which a colonialist discourse was born."<sup>33</sup> Hence Fairbairn wrote:

"From the triumphs of Liberty in Europe, our readers will turn to contemplate with equal pleasure the progress of Civilization beyond the borders of our own Country, towards the interior of Africa. African Research has had many martyrs, some of them men of the highest qualifications, to whose genius and energy every obstacle must have yielded that was not in its nature insurmountable. Yet with the exception of a few spots around its shores, the whole of this vast continent is covered from the eye of the Geographer by thick darkness, and shut against the influence of the Christian philanthropist by almost universal barbarism. To conquer the physical and moral difficulties that lie in the way of African Discovery seems to have been reserved for the Christian Missionaries, and the basis line of their most successful operations is the extensive Frontier of this Colony. A salubrious climate, and a civilized native population, give this end of Africa prodigious advantages over every other point from which the Traveller, the Merchant, or the Missionary can attempt to penetrate into those unknown regions; and the abolition of the Slave Trade - the source of perpetual wars, massacres, and famines, - by producing a state of comparative

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<sup>32</sup> Elliottt, 'Introduction' to Canny and Pagden (eds) Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, p.9

<sup>33</sup> Crais, C. The Making of the Colonial Order: White Supremacy and Black Resistance in the Eastern Cape, 1770 - 1865 (Cambridge, 1992), p.129

tranquillity, gives good ground to hope that the work of Discovery and amelioration will henceforth proceed with unprecedented rapidity."<sup>34</sup>

This extract sets the Cape firmly apart from the rest of Africa, as well as placing the colonists on the side of the 'civilized' rather than the 'barbarous'. It also establishes the image of the dark continent in opposition to, yet soon to be subdued by, the endeavours of a rational colonial subject. The issue of the traveller's gaze is once more pertinent here: "Africa grew 'dark' as Victorian explorers, missionaries, and scientists flooded it with light, because the light was refracted through an imperialist ideology that urged the abolition of 'savage customs' in the name of civilization."<sup>35</sup> The readers of the Advertiser needed to be reassured that they were holding up the light, not being subjected to its "impudent" glare. As Elliott notes, the "sense of being engaged in a civilizing mission ... was a potent element in creating a corporate sense of identity among settler societies which found themselves consistently misunderstood and abused by their European critics."<sup>36</sup>

The extract also highlights the ambiguity of the colonists' conception of their civilizing mission. On the one hand, as has been explored above, they sought to separate themselves from the

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<sup>34</sup> SACA, 15 December 1830

<sup>35</sup> Brantlinger, P. 'Victorians and Africans: The Genealogy of the Myth of the Dark Continent' Critical Inquiry, 12 (Autumn, 1985) pp 166 - 203

<sup>36</sup> Elliottt, 'Introduction' to Canny and Pagden, Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, p.11

barbarous inhabitants of the African environment. On the other hand, however, they sought to incorporate these groups into an enlightened whole through "influence" and "the progress of Civilization". The Cape was seen as a useful point from which the "Discovery and amelioration" of Africa might be launched, and the successes in incorporation within the colony were stressed by the extract's notion of "a civilized native population" within the colony. The tension and ambiguity between social separation and incorporation through enlightenment thus pervaded the Advertiser's agenda of reform in the colony.

The press, therefore, and the literate culture of which it was an important sign, was crucial in both practical and symbolic terms to the creation of a rational public sphere at the Cape. It was also perceived to be a major driving force behind a world-wide agenda of political and social reform in which the Cape was seen to be playing a significant role.

The Advertiser, with some justification, saw itself as operating at a time of immense and unprecedented social change. This process was generally regarded in a favourable light, and the possibilities for improvement were considered to be both limitless and achievable. An article entitled "Political Prophecy" and reprinted from the Edinburgh Review, looked forward one hundred years, to the year 1930, in which "machines, constructed on principles yet undiscovered, will be in every house" and stressed that:

"[t]o almost all men the state of things under which they have been used to live seems to be the necessary state of

things. ... We cannot absolutely prove that those are in error who tell us that we have seen our best days - But so said all who came before us, and with as much apparent reason."<sup>37</sup>

The underside of this optimism, however, was a sense of living in "fearful times"<sup>38</sup> of exceptionally rapid change which could threaten to slip beyond the control of legitimate reformers, and into the hands of the monstrous "many-headed mob".<sup>39</sup> Crucial to this dichotomy of optimism and anxiety was the issue of whether the press had succeeded in its agenda of civilizing and improving the society undergoing the process of change.

Fairbairn felt no doubts about where the credit for the creation of public opinion should be laid. He claimed:

"no Government has yet been found capable of resisting, for any protracted period, the united voice of Public Opinion. But how are discordant opinions to be assimilated? How are weak prejudices to be overcome? And how are a body of people, who have exactly the same interests, to be brought to feel in the same way? It can only be done by an open discussion of the differences that exist. We repeat, it is only to be effected by means of a Free Press."<sup>40</sup>

The sense of optimism and self-congratulation at the changes that had been worked upon the world was strongly expressed in 1824, ironically only two months before the Advertiser's attempt to create a new social order at the Cape was to be (temporarily) terminated by Lord Charles Somerset:

"Come bright Improvement! on the car of Time,  
And rule the spacious world from clime to clime;

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<sup>37</sup> SACA, 16 December 1830

<sup>38</sup> SACA, 14 May 1831, letter from 'A Tourist'.

<sup>39</sup> SACA, 21 September 1831

<sup>40</sup> SACA, 7 April 1824

Thy handmaid Arts shall every wild explore,  
Trace every wave, and culture every shore.'

The illustrious author<sup>41</sup> who wrote these lines six-and-twenty years ago, with all the buoyant and unchecked enthusiasm of opening manhood, yet scarcely anticipated, even in Poetry, the actual realities the world has since attained, much less the brighter prospects now opening on humanity in almost every quarter of the globe. ... both Knowledge and the love of Liberty are rapidly pervading every part both of the old and new Continents ... mankind, however apparently controlled by physical power, are always in reality governed by *Opinion*; and by opinion only can any permanent sway be retained ... With genuine Christianity the arts and decencies of civilized life, and the love of rational liberty, go ever hand-in-hand. Of other parts of the world, and of the important aids which civilization may derive from the continual improvements in the mechanical arts - from Steam Navigation, and the almost universal influence of the PRESS - we have not now room to speak; - but the amount of the whole is in the highest degree animating and consolatory.

Far be it from us, then, to despair of the political and physical amelioration of our species - farther still, of their moral and religious regeneration. The means and the mode are in the hand of Providence - the human appliances will be called forth when opportunity requires them."<sup>42</sup>

The emphasis here is on the Spirit of the Age, what the Advertiser often referred to as "The School-master Abroad"<sup>43</sup> or the "March of Intellect"<sup>44</sup>, as bringing about a reformed society. The Advertiser tended to dismiss the individual agency of 'great men', as part of the rejection of an aristocratic Court culture which will be examined in chapters four and five. Instead, it

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<sup>41</sup> The Advertiser gives no indication as to who the author of these lines is, indicating that, to some extent, it was addressing an audience in whom a shared body of knowledge could be assumed. The tension between the paper's direction at both the 'enlightened', and those who could be educated so as to deserve incorporation into this group, is once more apparent.

<sup>42</sup> SACA, 3 March 1824

<sup>43</sup> SACA, 7 May 1831

<sup>44</sup> SACA, 2 March 1831

emphasized depersonalized forces of society such as 'public opinion' and 'the People', the credit for which it laid at the door of institutions such as the press. These ideas were no doubt influenced by the social background of men such as Fairbairn and Pringle. The Scottish Enlightenment had been brought about largely by the initiative of a self-made middle class, although with the approval and patronage of the landed classes, and there were very few original or personal contributions to this cultural florescence from the aristocracy.<sup>45</sup> An example of this attitude is this claim by the Advertiser of 1824:

"Who invented, if we may so use the word, The Liberty of the Press - Representative Governments - Religious Toleration - Open debates in Parliament and Courts of Law - Reports of Proceedings in these - NewsPapers - Post Roads and Mail Coaches to carry these and all other sorts of intelligence, faster than the winds, to all quarters of the civilized world. Yes! To whom do we owe these? To no man exclusively. They are emanations of the Spirit of 'this Majestic World' brooding on its own thoughts."<sup>46</sup>

Fairbairn imbued the press with the god-like imagery of a divine bringer of justice, comparing a newspaper to a "Court of Justice" and its editor to a "Judge".<sup>47</sup> With reference to the Advertiser's role at the Cape he stressed:

"It is against the errors, mistakes, or misconduct of mankind - the mere citizen as well as the man in authority - that the Press here puts on its armour, and bares its exterminating sword."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Smout, T.C. A History of the Scottish People 1560 - 1830 (Glasgow, 1969), p.473]

<sup>46</sup> 25 February 1824

<sup>47</sup> SACA, 16 April 1831

<sup>48</sup> Ibid

It was during the Revolution in Paris in 1830<sup>49</sup> that the full force of this imagery was unleashed. The Parisian revolution, in which press liberty was curtailed by an autocratic government, was clearly seen as a parallel situation to that of the Cape, and Fairbairn stressed the role of the suspension of Press freedom in the events leading up to the fall of the Bourbons, no doubt pouring all his resentment against the harassment and suspension that the Advertiser had suffered at the hands of the colonial authorities into his description of events. In Fairbairn's account, immersed in biblical-type language, the press takes on the role of the heroic avenger smiting the wicked:

"amidst all the triumph of the hour, let us not forget the Triumph of the PRESS. Let all the Kings of the earth draw near, and learn wisdom. - Before this Engine their sceptres are reeds shaken with the wind, their armies shadows, & their towers & strong holds but as mists, that dissolve and vanish when the sun has filled the air with his beams. Let them listen to its warnings; they are echoes from all the haunts and retreats of men, in which the eye of power is blind, and its ear deaf. They issue from the depths of the universal mind of man, brooding on the past and on the future, and accumulating magazines of wrath against the sons of violence and wrong, whose heads have been anointed to destruction. It is every where present. It never sleeps. It never dies. Its arrows cannot be avoided or withstood, and the wounds they inflict are incurable.

To the friends of the human race, the servants of God, it is a light, a guide, and a guard amidst all the darkness of political convulsions. It is the source of more lasting and desirable honors than ever emanated from the thrones of Kings. And such immortality as the breath of man can give - that is its gift.

It was against the Press that the late King of France had the presumption to raise his arm - and within three days his Kingdom was taken from him, and given to another."<sup>50</sup>

The issue of Press freedom was crucial to the interest raised by

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<sup>49</sup> This issue will be more fully discussed with relation to colonial identity in chapter five.

<sup>50</sup> SACA 23 October 1830

the 1830 Revolution. It was the occasion of long speeches, reported in the Advertiser, at a dinner given at the Commercial Exchange to celebrate the Revolution.<sup>51</sup> The factor which distinguished the celebrated 1830 revolution from the condemned revolution of the previous century was that of press freedom. This was seen to have produced a rational public sphere and thus the chance of a social change which was deemed legitimate:

"There is now no terror in the word Revolution. When Christianity, Philosophy, and Science have unchained the mind, a Revolution is only a Reverting to First Principles.

Why was the former Revolution so bloody? Because a knowledge of principles had not penetrated the whole mass of society. The People knew what they were flying from, but the region whither they were bound was an undiscovered country to them. There was no Free Press in Old France.

How different is their position now. In England itself. Liberty - that is, the reign of Just Laws and universal Equality before the Law, is not better understood or more ardently adored."<sup>52</sup>

The Advertiser was not always so sanguine regarding the process of change, exhibiting on occasion an anxiety about the swiftness with which it was progressing, and fearing that it might slip from beyond the control of legitimate political actors and fall into the hands of the 'mob':

"in the course of a few months the political aspect of Europe will be entirely changed, and the change, it is equally clear, will not be confined to outward appearances or forms of government, which like clouds may again unite their vapoury limbs to overshadow and threaten the subject world. Hitherto the minority in point of numbers has been the majority in point of tactics and position; and tyrants could only be conquered by tyrants, and mankind, like Aesop's ass, had only a change or a choice of master, - none of the number of their pack-saddles, or the weight of their burdens. We admit that it requires no ordinary nerve

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<sup>51</sup> Mr P. Wynch, of the East India Company, proposed a toast to the Freedom of the Press which was reported in the 24 November 1830 issue of the Advertiser, being so long that it took up almost the entire issue.

<sup>52</sup> SACA, 10 November 1830

to contemplate unmoved the shocks which now usher in the new order of things, - and order of things where the people, without leaders, take into their armed hands the whole powers of a state - not the Armies, not the Representatives, or the hereditary Legislators, but the simple mass of the inhabitants, recognised as a body by no written laws - whose powers are only circumscribed by their will, whose will can only be discovered by their actions. The constituted Authorities are laid aside in an instant, and resume their being only at the invitation of the people, who may again annihilate them without a breath. It required we say, great faith in the good sense, honesty and prudence of the present generation, to anticipate from such a revolution any thing short of anarchy and all its inevitable excesses.

Every new movement, however, goes to prove that such faith was well grounded. The victories of the People have been every where followed by a conduct at once dignified and humane. We hear nothing of the proscriptions, confiscations, and murders by which the victories of tyrants over each other have been marked in every age. Despotism was merely thrown off like an antiquated garb. It had waxed old, and grown threadbare as doth a garment, and like a vesture it has been folded up and consigned to the moths."<sup>53</sup>

As the end of this extract indicates, however, a fundamental optimism about the course of change did remain, bound up, as it was, with the Advertiser's sense of its civilizing mission which would educate a literate populace in the proper terms of political action. It is arguable that, during the period under discussion, it is only towards the end of 1831, when the debate over slavery at the Cape and the press wars which accompanied it was becoming so bitter as to leave little hope for unity between Dutch and British, that Fairbairn began to indicate a more apprehensive attitude to the social change experienced by the Cape.<sup>54</sup> The press was seen to be channelling the process of social reform on a global level in an acceptable manner, and the

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<sup>53</sup> SACA 22 December 1830.

<sup>54</sup> These issues will be explored in chapters four and five.

Advertiser used the cities of Paris, Edinburgh and Cape Town as analogous examples of the means by which the social worlds of cities were reconstructed by a progressive and improvement-orientated literate culture.

The Advertiser emphasized the cross-national links between those that were engaged in reform initiatives in cities such as Cape Town, Edinburgh and Paris. These links were forged by the transmission of written material:

"the PRESS, to which the universal diffusion of Education has given a species of Omnipresence, and, as far as mere human power goes, of Omnipotence. The attempts to stop this iron tongue of destiny, so terrible to the ear and the conscience of despots, by a Censorship in any particular Kingdom or State, only reminds us of the old fable of hedging in the Cuckoo. If the Parisian Press be suspended for a day, all Europe rings with the fact, and the causes which led to it, and a thousand torrents of political wild-fire flow back upon France to fill up the vacuum."<sup>55</sup>

The universal nature of the reformers' concerns was constantly emphasised, individual differences tending to be suppressed. Thus an account in a Cape Town newspaper of a speech at a public dinner held in Edinburgh celebrating a revolution in Paris stressed:

"What a proof did this afford the liberty was the only safe preventative of all excesses! (Applause) This was not only the cause of France, it was the cause of England, it was the cause of Europe, it was the cause of the whole human race. (Cheers)"<sup>56</sup>

Edinburgh, given Fairbairn's roots in that city, played a fairly prominent role in the Advertiser which frequently carried quotes

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<sup>55</sup> SACA, 30 October 1830

<sup>56</sup> SACA, 1 December 1830

from articles in the Edinburgh Review. Edinburgh had, during the time of the Scottish Enlightenment, seen the coming together of a wide variety of men of reform who were determined to construct a society according to enlightened ideals. The establishment of a rational public sphere based on a combination of numerous societies devoted to social improvement and of literary journals such as the Edinburgh Review, the Quarterly Review (both of which could be found in the South African Public Library from the 1820s onwards<sup>57</sup>) and William Blackwood's Edinburgh Monthly Magazine, was the achievement of these reformers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.<sup>58</sup> Fairbairn held Edinburgh up as an example of the social transformation that could be wrought on a city by committed reformers wielding the strength of the press:

"Edinburgh has long held out to the world a very perfect specimen of a time-serving and truckling Corporation, close and corrupt to the last degree; while at the same time there has been within it, for the last quarter of a century, a more splendid array of talent on the side of Liberty than perhaps any other city in the empire could exhibit. All the lights of the Bar, and, with the exception of Sir WALTER SCOTT, all the lights of literature, shone on the liberal side. The result has been a revolution nearly as remarkable as that of Paris itself. At a meeting composed of the elite of the inhabitants, the *Lord Provost in the Chair*, and on the motion of the *Dean of the Faculty of Advocates*, they congratulate the citizens of Paris on a successful Rebellion! This triumphant Revolution in Public Sentiment has been effected chiefly by two periodical works of extraordinary merit, the '*Edinburgh Review*' and the '*Scotsman*' Newspaper. These two patriotic Journals fought side by side the great battles of Toleration, Economy, and Reform; - while in literature, science, and taste, the rising generation regarded the former as their guiding

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<sup>57</sup> Turrel, P.V. 'A Cape Periodical: The Cape Monthly Magazine 1870- 1875' (BA Honours , University of Cape Town, 1974) p.17

<sup>58</sup> See Daiches, D., Jones, P. and Jones, J. (eds) A Hotbed of Genius: The Scottish Enlightenment 1730 - 1790 (Edinburgh, 1986), Smout, T.C. A History of the Scottish People 1560 - 1830 (Glasgow, 1969) and Lenman, B. Integration, Enlightenment, and Industrialization: Scotland 1746 - 1832. (London, 1981)

Star. This happy union of sound political principles wit, learning, elegance, and all the graces, has lately been crowned by the binding charm of Religious purity. The Scottish Capital is justly proud of the *Edinburgh Review*; and the master spirits who moved within its circle, wielding the magic rod of genius in the defense of Truth, can now look with equal pleasure on the renovated spirit of the age, expelling at once and for ever the gloomy phantoms of despotism, bigotry, and infidelity. ...

In this Colony the diffusion of knowledge has rendered any indication of Party-spirit a standing joke. In no country in the world have the bitter in heart, the base in principle, the children of petty strife, been left in so ridiculous a pickle. To them, even Infamy would seem a sort of Fame, as they stand shivering in the deserted forum of contempt, lamenting that the hard-hearted Public will not bestow upon them so much as a passing look of scorn."<sup>59</sup>

The explicit connection which Fairbairn draws between Edinburgh and the Cape indicates the manner in which he saw the Scottish capital acting as a model for his own activities in Africa. Papers like the Advertiser were to be instrumental in bringing forth a like revolution in sentiment so as to transform the Cape from being "close and corrupt" to standing "on the side of Liberty".

Fairbairn hoped that the Advertiser would act as a means of communication between potential reformers, forming the catalyst for practical improvement efforts suggested and undertaken by its readers:

"We have been favored by our Correspondents with Hints on various Improvements of a local nature, which we shall from time to time lay before our readers without much regard to arrangement or classification. By being still more communicative many of them might make their experience and powers of observation very useful to the public. In this way the Periodical Press might be made to supply to a certain extent the Societies, Lectures, Institutions, and Popular meetings, to which the present inhabitants of more enlightened countries are so much indebted for their

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<sup>59</sup> SACA, 4 December 1830.

superiority."<sup>60</sup>

This view of a hierarchy of societies, ranked according to their degree of enlightenment, was a prominent one in the Advertiser, and the paper was directing its efforts towards the people of the colony in order to ensure that the Cape was raised in this mental chain of being. The crucial factor in allowing a society to advance was education, and it is here that the Advertiser saw the importance of the role of the Press. It unequivocally stated:

"All human power, all the machines and contrivances by which man is raised to what is called a state of civilisation, originate in the Mind. That is his magazine and armory. Leave him merely to his teeth and claws, and no beast of the field would need to envy him. Infuse the Roman, the Grecian, or the British mind into the bodies of the most barbarous nation, and you have, in a short period of time, the glories and grandeur of Rome, Greece, or Britain - all that was or is grand in a moral, intellectual, or political view of these splendid associations of human beings, - where nothing was seen before but wilderness, wild beasts, and wilder men. In this work the Colonists are now heartily engaged. They are now satisfied that Seminaries for Education are the Seed of Empires, and having laid a sound foundation which can every hour be extended, they proceed with confidence and joy in the noble career which so many nations have run before them - From this Colony Knowledge and all the arts of life may penetrate to the center, and to the utmost bounds of Africa."<sup>61</sup>

The attitude of innate racial characteristics, in which the British are equated with the Greeks and the Romans, is here tempered with the idea that attitudes of mind are not innate and can be passed on to the "most barbarous nation". The inference is that the improvements possible at the Cape are limitless and that "glories and grandeur" can be brought forth in the

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<sup>60</sup> SACA 12 November 1831

<sup>61</sup> SACA, 31 August 1831

"wilderness", given the diffusion of knowledge amongst the inhabitants of the colony. Even more significant is that, once more, the colonists are themselves placed firmly within the position of civilizer, sowing the "Seed of Empires" and subduing a dark African continent. The ambiguity of the colonial vision is made manifest in the extract; it put forward both the idea of separation between colonists and the other, as well as the idea that the other might merit transformation into the likeness of the self by means of education and improvement. This positioning of the colonists as improving both their own social environment and that of the 'primitive' societies around them had an important cognitive element: "There was good reason for this insistence on improvement. On the one hand, it countered the prevailing assumption in the mother country that all colonists were endemically idle. On the other, it helped to legitimate their enterprise in their own eyes and also - or so they hoped - in those of their fellow countrymen. It provided them with a sense of purpose and helped to place them in a divine order of things, which was perceived in essentially developmental terms."<sup>62</sup> The Advertiser's agenda of improvement thus went far beyond the realm of the practical: it was crucial in the construction of a colonial middle class identity.

The paper's role in the colony was a theme which was discussed in detail within its own pages. Fairbairn attempted to regulate the manner in which people expressed themselves within the medium

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<sup>62</sup> Elliottt, 'Introduction' to Canny and Pagden, Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, p.11

of the newspaper.<sup>63</sup> He also spelt out in detail, and over an extensive period of time, what he considered a newspaper to be, and how the colony should react to the new press culture that was establishing itself there.

Editorials exploring the nature of the newspaper, of press freedom, and of the role that a free press should take in the reformation of society were especially prominent in 1824. This is understandable, given that this period constituted the first appearance of an independent press at the Cape and its subsequent suspension by Lord Charles Somerset. The details of the confrontation between the Advertiser and the Cape's autocratically-minded governor have been detailed above<sup>64</sup>, but it is also important to note that Somerset's views were not uncharacteristic of the colonial authorities as a whole at this time. C.A. Bayly stresses that "the British empire from 1780 to 1830 (and in some areas beyond) represented not simply a hiatus between the irresistible waves of liberal reform, but a series of attempts to establish overseas despotism and the Holy Alliance of contemporary Europe."<sup>65</sup> It is important to realize that, despite Fairbairn's optimism about the rate and direction of social change, he was flying in the face of the dominant ideology of the colonial government: "The dominant ideological character of this Second British Empire [1780 - 1830] was aristocratic,

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<sup>63</sup> This will be considered in more detail, and with relation to the Slave Question, in chapter four.

<sup>64</sup> See page 6 - 7.

<sup>65</sup> Bayly, C.A. Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World 1780 - 1830 (London and New York, 1989), p.8

autocratic and agrarianist. By contrast, free trade and early 'liberal' ideas were much more characteristic of what might be called the 'Third' Empire which emerged in 1830s and after."<sup>66</sup>

As a result, Fairbairn was obliged to tread carefully in his attempt to set up the Advertiser, although his frequent examinations of the importance of press freedom and the power of a free press in bringing about social change still led to the suspension of the paper on 14 May 1824. The controversy resulted in a marked change in tone between the paper of 1824 and that of 1830 and 1831, following the greater press freedom after Ordinance 60 of 1829. On the suppression of the paper, the Advertiser attempted to present itself as being uncritical of government proceedings, of having avoided political discussion, and of having attempted to instil loyalty in its readers:

"to cherish, in the minds of all, the warmest loyalty to His Majesty, and an unbounded confidence in the wisdom and good wishes of the Colonial Department of the British Government: - its diligence in conveying to the minds of our fellow-colonists, in the simplest and clearest way, the *feature principles* of the British Constitution ... its prudent and proper forbearance on all irritating personal topics ... its high moral tone, and its *entire purity* in that respect: - its avoiding, with scrupulous fidelity, 'the discussion of all subjects relating to the Policy or Administration of the Colonial Government,' - whatever it might explain respecting the *constitution* of that Government, which is a very different matter, and a mere affair of opinion here, as any alteration in that respect can only be made at home."<sup>67</sup>

This claim to impartiality was in strong contrast to how the paper conceived of its role in relation to politics in 1831:

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p.137

<sup>67</sup> 'Facts connected with the Stopping of the Advertiser', 14 May 1824.

"Some time ago a friendly Editor of a Newspaper in New South Wales remarked, that the Cape Papers were chiefly occupied with cases of Libel and *Religious Controversy*, because the Press at the Cape is in shackles, and prohibited from treating of Political or Public Affairs. - Our good friend is mistaken in both points. The press is not in shackles - it is now as Free as the Press in England. Political subjects, and particularly the Official Acts of Governors and Magistrates are its daily food; and when the conduct of the People, or of any party in the Colony, or our out it, requires *Revision*, we appeal to our readers to say whether they have found our hand more light than when Tyrants themselves were brought up for Judgment."<sup>68</sup>

The contrast in tone and content between the two extracts reveals how much farther Fairbairn felt it safe to go in his criticisms of the colonial government, and in his examination of the role of the press by 1831. The exploration of the nature of a newspaper and of press freedom were not, therefore, confined to 1824. The persistence of this theme indicates the extent to which Fairbairn considered that Cape society continued to need instruction in the art of interacting through a printed medium.

In a response to the criticism of the editor from New South Wales, that the Advertiser was filled with controversy over religious matters, Fairbairn gave a defence of a newspaper's right to be involved in the discussion of religious and political ideas and then embarked on an extended examination of what a newspaper should strive to be, and how it should operate in the context of a colony such as the Cape:

"A Newspaper, generally speaking, is principally intended to be a Record of Events. When there is room, the Editor gives his remarks and opinions upon them. In a country like this, where books are scarce, and in many places altogether unknown, these remarks may be extended to a much greater

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<sup>68</sup> SACA 16 April 1831

length than would be becoming in other circumstances, unless the Editor happened to be one of those gifted individuals who are destined by nature and education to enlighten their species. Having no pretensions to such a character, we make the observation as an explanation - not an apology - which may reconcile the reader to our occasional tediousness. We write for those chiefly who have few other opportunities of hearing *Principles* discussed either with knowledge or candor. But *Events* do not merely include commerce, manufacture, or agriculture, or the movements of parties in peace, or of armies in war. A change in the opinion of any great body of men, on any subject connected with human happiness, may be infinitely more important both in its character and consequences; and the reader of a Newspaper has a right to expect a clear and full account of it. Education, therefore, and the progress of knowledge, and above all of liberal, political, moral, and religious principles among the great body of the people, must be constantly watched, and reported from time to time by the Periodical Press."<sup>69</sup>

The role that the Advertiser saw itself as playing in the education of the public at the Cape is made clear by this extract, for, despite Fairbairn's conspicuous modesty, he certainly saw himself as "one of those gifted individuals who are destined by nature and education to enlighten their species." Also of significance is the distinction Fairbairn draws between the social worlds of the Cape and the "other circumstances" of Europe - the project of social reconstitution at the Cape was so far from complete that as a newspaper editor he considered that he still needed to take a very prominent role in leading his readers through the transition to a literature-based public sphere. A colonial newspaper, therefore, was considered to have certain elements which distinguished it from its metropolitan counterparts. With this in mind, Fairbairn continued his editorial with a guide as to how the Cape public should react to the press and provided instruction on the art of acceptably

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid

conducting a public discussion through the printed medium:

"In conducting an argument in a Newspaper, it is not necessary to make personal allusions. It is equally from the purpose to charge any particular set of doctrines or opinions on any sect or class of men, which they desire either to deny or to explain away. Nor is it worth while to enumerate all the erroneous views which may have been taken on the point in dispute. ... in a letter to a Newspaper, your best plan is - simply to state your doctrine in plain words taken in their strict grammatical sense, as they are defined in Standard Dictionaries, and to support it by the proofs which have satisfied your own mind. If you succeed you will have overthrown every error known to you or unknown. ... Having given this hint, we now give a warning. The contending parties must not charge each other with insincerity or hypocrisy. God alone knows the heart, and at the great and general review of us all it will be known, and then only, who has had a single eye to the truth, and who has fought in a mask. It is absurd, also, to charge each other with too much zeal. If the parties are sincere, and if they have taken sufficient care to inform themselves by patient research and well ordered study, so as to feel a rational conviction that they are in possession of Truths which the world would be benefitted by knowing and adopting, they cannot be too zealous in disseminating them."<sup>70</sup>

This editorial was directed at a religious 'controversy' which had been dominating the pages of the paper in recent numbers. The Advertiser, however, objected to that term and was seeking to guide the expression of the debaters since, "we could wish that our Correspondents would enable us to term it *discussion* or *argument*."<sup>71</sup> Its essential thesis, however, is in keeping with all the admonitions which the Advertiser addressed to its correspondents, whatever the bone of contention between them. Rational public debate, which was what the Advertiser was anxious to assure, demanded the restraint of its participants.

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<sup>70</sup> SACA, 16 April 1831

<sup>71</sup> Ibid

This concern raises the related issue of the debates over what constituted press freedom, and thus the regulation of the manner in which a newspaper expressed its own opinions. During 1824, shortly before the paper was suspended, the Advertiser quoted at length an examination of what constituted press liberty, and how the press was to be restrained from the inappropriate public expression of ideas:

"Where blasphemous, immoral, treasonable, schismatical, seditious, or scandalous libels are punished by the English law, some with a greater, others with a lesser degree of severity, the *Liberty of the Press* properly understood, is by no means infringed or violated. The liberty of the press is indeed essential to the nature of a free state: but this consists in laying no *previous* restraints upon publications, and not in freedom from censure for criminal matter when published. Every man has an undoubted right to lay what sentiments he pleases before the public: to forbid this, is to destroy the freedom of the press: but if he publishes what is improper, mischievous, or illegal, he must take the consequences of his own temerity. ... to punish (as the law does at present) any dangerous or offensive writings, which when published, shall on a fair and impartial trial be adjudged of a pernicious tendency, is necessary for the preservation of peace and good order, of government and religion, the only solid foundations for civil liberty. Thus the will of individuals is still kept free; the abuse only of that free will is the object of legal punishment. Neither is any restraint hereby laid upon freedom of thought or inquiry: liberty of private sentiment is still left; the disseminating, or making public, of bad sentiments, destructive of the ends of society, is the crime which society corrects."<sup>72</sup>

The existence of a culture at the Cape which was centred around a free press was therefore not sufficient to ensure a rational public sphere. Debate needed to be restrained and conducted on a proper footing by those whose public expression of ideas was deemed legitimate. Fairbairn had a limited sense of who had the right to express such ideas. As he noted: "What is a Free Press,

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<sup>72</sup> SACA, 5 May 1824, quoted from 'Blackstone'.

but the opinions of the best informed persons of the community - each speaking to the whole deliberately, and on those subjects he is most conversant with!"<sup>73</sup> Those who did not conform to the appropriate standards of expression could not be permitted to express their ideas openly.

Given the Advertiser's ideas on the power of the press to reform society and to channel progress in a specific direction, it is not surprising that the paper tended to react violently to rival publications that put forward contrasting views on the direction which social change should take in the colony. In 1825 and 1826, the Advertiser conducted a war of words with the pro-government South African Chronicle and Mercantile Advertiser, which lies outside the bounds set by this study.<sup>74</sup> From 1831, when it first appeared, the Advertiser attacked the views held by the Dutch-orientated newspaper, De Zuid-Afrikaan, especially with relation to slavery. As will be considered in chapters four and five, Fairbairn considered De Zuid-Afrikaan to be putting forward a world view which was hostile to his long term aims to transform Cape society along 'enlightened' lines. Fairbairn's ire was such that he went back on his carefully worded instructions on the means by which a public debate within the press should be conducted, and launched into a viciously damning description of the history of the rival newspaper:

"That they will be able to taint the atmosphere, or spread the contagion of bad principles and worse feelings among

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<sup>73</sup> 28 April 1824

<sup>74</sup> This controversy is dealt with in Botha, John Fairbairn, p.39

the unwary who approach them too nearly, we entertain no apprehension. For, in the first place, they possess no Principles whatever, good or bad. They are any thing, or nothing. The folly of to-day supersedes, instead of being added to the folly of yesterday, it being of the very nature of foolishness to be inconsistent with itself; and the malignant lie put forth one week is strangled by a lie equally malignant, but of an opposite tendency put forth, with equal audacity, next week. And in the second place, their feelings are so manifestly selfish, and their rancorous attacks on individuals so clearly traceable to inward malice, that any thing like sympathy is morally impossible. Bad men do not sympathise even with one another. These men (for as they pay taxes we must, we suppose, call them men), in the course of their impure proceedings [sic] have exercised their fangs on each other more than on any body else - and for the best of all possible reasons, because they know each other thoroughly - the baseness of their motives and the vileness of their means. In the short period of one year and a few months, no less than Four hostile Heroes succeeded each other in the command of their rubbish-cart, - each denouncing his compatriot as an imposter, and not the true 'dog's meat man,' who alone could satisfy the craving appetites of the customers with warranted unsound provisions. We laugh aloud when we see these enemies of decency bespattering on another, so as no other scavengers on earth could bespatter them, mistaking all the while the grins of the passengers for marks and expressions of approbation! Such exhibitions, however degrading to human nature, are regarded by the sensible and well disposed as warning to deter, and not as examples to be imitated; as drunken slaves were set before the youth of Sparta to show them what *degradation is*. In this manner they made sport for the public for *their hour*, and that hour is passed. Toleration has expired with the novelty of the spectacle. Having done their work, they will be hung up, like stuffed carrion-crows, to show all the same feather what they are to expect, if they trespass on Colonial Corn-fields in future."<sup>75</sup>

This vitriolic attack on the Zuid Afrikaan followed an account of the various improvements that had been made in the colony during the time of the Advertiser's existence, changes for which the newspaper gave itself direct credit in having played the role of making the appropriate suggestions for change to the colonists. It extolled the virtues of the "Good Cause" on which

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<sup>75</sup> SACA, 10 December 1831

it was leading the colonists, and claimed that no opposition existed to this "March of Intellect". As it claimed, "You cannot surely term the tissue of falsehoods, ignorant grossness, and stupidity which compose the 'Zuid Afrikaan' Newspaper, an Opposition?"<sup>76</sup> The Advertiser's rival is given no credit as a similarly united institution with its own reform agenda and its own reading public. Instead it is imbued with the images of barbarism - placed on the level of drunken slaves, of 'carrion-crows', and of dogs, rather than of rational men; dogs, as the next chapter will indicate, inhabiting a symbolic status in the city which had strong resonances with an undesirable social order.

The war of words between the Advertiser and the Zuid Afrikaan is indicative of the important role which the press was seen to play in the reconstitution of Cape society. A literate culture centred around sites of communal reading and the transmission of ideas was an important practical necessity in creating a rational public sphere at the Cape. In addition, the press played an significant symbolic role at the Cape; acting as a sign of a civilized and sophisticated social milieu which was ripening for self-government. In this it functioned as a source of inspiration for the construction of an acceptable middle-class colonial identity.

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid

Chapter Two

Slaves, Dogs and the Public Sphere: the reconstruction  
of social space in Cape Town.

This chapter will examine the Advertiser's articulation of the process by which the dominant classes of Cape Town attempted to exert control over the spatial organization of the city's social world. It will also address the degree to which this attempt, crucial to the construction of middle class identity and confidence in the first half of the nineteenth century, was continually disrupted by those elements of the city over whom the supporters of institutions like the Advertiser were seeking to exert control.

Just as the formation of a literature-based culture was both symbolically and practically crucial to the establishment of a bourgeois public sphere at the Cape, so too was the creation of appropriate spaces within which this discourse of rational enlightenment might be articulated. With reference to this, Peter Stallybrass and Allon White have outlined the importance of social place in the construction of discourse in a way which is useful to the understanding of this process at the Cape: "Discursive space is never completely independent of social place and the formation of new kinds of speech can be traced through the emergence of new public sites of discourse and the transformation of old ones. Each 'site of assembly' constitutes a nucleus of material and cultural conditions which regulate what may and may not be said, who may speak, how people may communicate and what importance must be given to what is said. An utterance is legitimated or disregarded according to its place of production and so, in large part, the history of political struggle has been the history of the attempts made to control

significant sites of assembly and spaces of discourse."<sup>1</sup> With its stress on the importance of proper public utterances in the establishment of a civilized colony, the Advertiser sought to institute an organization of social space in Cape Town which would ensure the legitimacy of such utterances.

Fairbairn's programme of spatial reform and urban reconstruction in Cape Town had its roots, like his conception of the public sphere as a whole, in the Scottish Enlightenment, and most particularly in Edinburgh, which had, during the course of the eighteenth century, embodied its enlightened ideals in the construction of the city's New Town. This urban development was "planned to achieve in architecture and in the use of space the ideals of order, elegance, rationality, progress and proper social relationships represented by the Scottish Enlightenment",<sup>2</sup> and was set up in symbolic and spatial opposition to the Old Town's haphazard dirt and disorder. While the Old Town was marked by a tendency for different social classes to inhabit the same building, albeit on different levels, the New Town was laid out with quite a different mode of middle class living in mind - one which stressed social separation. The most prosperous members of the middle classes hastened to leave the Old Town to the working class and establish themselves in a new environment so that by 1830 Edinburgh consisted of two spatially distinct social environments in which the New Town was "the cold, clear and

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<sup>1</sup> Stallybrass and White, The Politics and Poetics of Transgression, p.80

<sup>2</sup> Daiches, 'The Scottish Enlightenment', in Daiches et al A Hotbed of Genius, p.17

beautiful expression of the rational confidence of the eighteenth-century middle class."<sup>3</sup>

The need to control sites of assembly and spaces of discourse had especial relevance to Cape Town's middle classes. Davidoff and Hall make the argument that the middle class of England was forged at a time of exceptional economic and political uncertainty. It was only after long years of struggle that some middle class interest groups were incorporated politically in 1832. Land remained for a long time a unique form of property which conferred a status above all other forms of wealth, and the social stigma attached to trade was not one which should be ignored, despite all the signs of middle class social ascendancy in the second half of the nineteenth century. All these factors were important in producing an intense psychological need in the middle classes to exert control over both the spatial organization of the social world and over the definition of the categories of people inhabiting that world.<sup>4</sup>

Even if the social hegemony of land was far less obvious at the Cape than it was in England,<sup>5</sup> it does have relevance when assessing the social confidence of the commercial classes of the city. William Wilberforce Bird wrote somewhat scathingly of the

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<sup>3</sup> Smout, T.C. A History of the Scottish People, p.347

<sup>4</sup> Davidoff, L. and Hall, C. Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English middle class, 1780 - 1850. (London, 1987) pp. 19, 25, 30.

<sup>5</sup> Hattersley, A. F. An Illustrated History of South Africa (Cape Town, 1969), p.115

"Cape Merchants" and their attempt to place their architectural mark of the city in the form of the Commercial Exchange:

"The Commercial Exchange, a large and a handsome building, built by subscription, stands on the western extremity of the parade. ... The commercial room became too small for the expectation of growing wealth - the frog expected to swell to the size of the ox. At that moment no plan could be too magnificent for the rising self-importance of Cape merchants, and the Exchange was erected on a scale ridiculous if compared to the required purposes. However personally respectable many of this class of merchants may be, the nature of their trade is retail. ... A retail way of sale appears to be the occupation of a little mind; yet there are not wanting at the Cape mercantile men of capacity and of generous feeling. Taken as a whole, the class is respectable and respected."<sup>6</sup>

Clearly, in the eyes of Bird, their involvement in retail and trade was not a point in the commercial class's favour.

Bird's metropolitan disdain was symptomatic of the critical vision, explored above, with which visitors from Europe, as well as from India, viewed the culture of the Cape. Their representations of the Cape formed a negative self-image against which colonial identity was constructed, and, as with its attempts to stimulate the development of a literate culture at the Cape, the Advertiser also sought to improve the city's spatial organization partially in order to prove this negative representation false.

The process by which Cape Town was to change its shape in the first half of the nineteenth century was significantly one in which the old Dutch city was to be reincarnated as the city of rational British commerce. This process was already well under

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<sup>6</sup> Bird, W.W. State of the Cape of Good Hope in 1822. (London, 1823), p.146 - 7.

way by the time the Advertiser was first published in 1824.<sup>7</sup> The poem quoted in chapter one, which emphasized the wonder of European visitors to the Cape at the changes which had taken place in colonial culture since the English took over stressed the differences between the spatial organization of the old and the new city:

"And the first thing I saw was the new butcher's shambles  
All ranged in good order, quite cleanly and neat,  
With their backs to the sea, and their fronts to the  
street.  
Then I sauntered along, and continued my range,  
Where the aqueduct stood, there now stands the Exchange.  
But, O monstrous! the scandal and jeer of town-talk,  
They've stuck a score shops in the Gentlemen's walk -  
Where the naked are cloth'd, and the hungry, if heedful,  
Can supply all their wants, by the help of the  
needful,"<sup>8</sup>

Despite the slight ambiguity of vision in this poem, discussed above, it is the English city of free market commerce and enlightened learning which is the crucial image - one which the Advertiser was at pains to cultivate. The Dutch city of canals has been replaced by the English city of the Exchange, while the shops of British commerce have replaced the fashionable dwellings of the VOC officials. The new retail culture of rational commercial activity was one on which many of the supporters of the Advertiser relied for their material basis of existence. As was stressed in the introduction, this class was fundamentally the creation of the British occupation of the Cape, for under the

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<sup>7</sup> Material culture changes formed a vital part of the means by which the British established hegemonic control over the Dutch at the Cape from the time of the first British occupation in 1795. For a further account of this see K. E. McKenzie The Making of an English Slaveowner: Samuel Eusebius Hudson at the Cape of Good Hope 1796 - 1807, chapter two. In press.

<sup>8</sup> SACA, 7 January 1824

Dutch system the rise of such a class was not possible. As Meltzer puts it "In response to the VOC's mercantilist restrictions, trade largely took refuge in various semi-legal and illegal forms, though there was some legal participation. The latter was in the form of trade in locally-grown agricultural commodities, via the Company's pacht or concession system. ... Out of this system arose a small, elite group of men, parasitic on the mercantilist order, yet with entrepreneurial ambitions and interests."<sup>9</sup> Most of the smaller-scale trade was illegal and a great deal was informal, and in the hands of the women of the town.<sup>10</sup>

The new social and economic system required a new culture of commerce. With reference to English middle class ideas about private and public spheres, gender roles and the enterprise, to be explored in chapter three, it was crucial that the commercial relations of the city (and, by implication, the colony) be modified according to the new order. It is in this light that one may view complaints such as this letter by 'A Speculator':

"I take the liberty of requesting you will insert in your paper the following observations relative to the manner of holding Auctions at the Cape.

It frequently happens that at a crowded sale, not more than one third of the attendants can possibly have a chance of knowing what is going on, or of ascertaining the nature, use, or quality of the article put up, in consequence of the auctioneer being hid in the crowd, and of his disinclination to describe what he is selling; ... Catalogues, I presume, would be the means of conducting sales with more regularity, and of preventing

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<sup>9</sup> Meltzer, J.L. 'The Growth of Cape Town Commerce', p.17

<sup>10</sup> K.E. McKenzie "Characteristic Feminine Weakness": Some Considerations on the Representation of the Women of the Cape Slave Society' Unpublished Paper 1990.

misunderstandings which sometimes occur at public sales, where the bidders are not sufficiently informed of what they are bidding for. ... the nature of sales in England and at this place is pretty nearly the same, except the mere form of selling adopted by the auctioneer; every person who has witnessed an English sale will no doubt admit that a larger amount is realized in a shorter time than is done at the Cape, which may be attributed solely to the use of Catalogues, and to a better method of conducting sales, and which (with a few alterations) may easily be brought into practice here."<sup>11</sup>

The need for regulation and order was of great importance in the conduct of commerce. George Thompson's account of auctions at the Cape emphasizes the blurring of distinction between leisure and business common to the Dutch inhabitants of the Cape: "A public sale of any importance usually collects a number of the inhabitants together, as much with the view of meeting company, as of making a bargain" and he gives a description of an auction held near Cape Agulhas followed by a "barbarous" drunken supper.<sup>12</sup> This attitude to auctions and the manner in which they were conducted is analogous to middle class attitudes to the fair in Europe: "As the bourgeoisie laboured to produce the economic as a separate domain, partitioned off from its intimate and manifold interconnectedness with the festive calendar, so they laboured conceptually to re-form the fair as either a rational, commercial, trading event or as a popular pleasure-ground."<sup>13</sup> The new culture of commerce amongst the middle classes of Cape Town demanded that the blurring of domestic and economic spheres,

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<sup>11</sup> SACA 24 March 1824

<sup>12</sup> Thompson, G. Travels and Adventures in Southern Africa (London, 1827), p.315

<sup>13</sup> Stallybrass and White, The Politics and Poetics of Transgression, p.30

which accounts such as Thompson's indicate, be replaced by a more rigid separation.

Of great importance to this focus on British capital and commercial methods was the presentation of the city as an orderly domain worthy of British investment and sustained trading links in which the newly emergent wealthy merchants and commercial classes saw themselves as playing the dominant role at the Cape. The Advertiser therefore had an interest in portraying the city in terms of a specific kind of discourse, one example of which is the poem cited above - significantly included in the very first issue of the paper. Periodically, letters appear in the Advertiser congratulating the inhabitants on the progress they are making in the control of the physical nature of the city: "I cannot conclude without congratulating the public of this Town on the daily increasing beauty and convenience of the public streets" wrote 'An Observer' in 1830.<sup>14</sup>

M. Hall has traced the process of Cape Town's bourgeois self-representation in the art of Thomas Bowler and Charles D'Oyly and in the lithographs in Greig's Almanac (the links with the Advertiser are significant) based on the work of H.C. De Meillon.<sup>15</sup> As Hall notes of Bowler: "Bowler and his lithographers presented a particular image of Cape Town - the image that he expected prospective purchasers of his watercolours

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<sup>14</sup> SACA 10 November 1830.

<sup>15</sup> Hall, M. 'Fish and the Fisherman, Archaeology and Art: Cape Town seen by Bowler, D'Oyly and De Meillon' South African Journal of Art and Architectural History vol 2, 1991

and lithographs to want to see. Firstly, squalor and the life of the slums was completely excised. The underclass were busy, well dressed and not too numerous. There was the prospect that their labour could bring them social advancement. Streets were clean and wide, and buildings were tall and impressive, and showed no sign of decay."<sup>16</sup> Similarly, De Meillon "needed to paint what his clients wanted and, like Bowler, the resulting images of Cape Town stressed architecture and orderliness. Indeed, in De Meillon's work Cape Town seems almost abandoned. Streets and Squares are empty except for one or two well-dressed figures in the foreground."<sup>17</sup> The lithographs based on De Meillon's work were published in 1832, almost contemporaneously with the issues of the Advertiser under discussion. Bowler's work was somewhat later. He arrived at the Cape in 1834 and the works which Hall refers to date from the 1840s onwards. The representations of Cape Town in his work are still pertinent, however, for the struggle for representative government continued during these years, and the need to present an orderly city to the critical gaze of the metropolitan onlooker became no less important.

As the previous chapter has indicated, the Cape colony, and Cape Town itself, was seen as a bastion of civilization on the tip of a 'dark continent' of barbarism. In the creation of an image of Cape society which stressed its enlightened nature, roads were an important image in the cosmology of the Cape's middle classes. As sinews of empire, they were a means of exerting control over

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p.84

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p.86

a landscape of African wilderness. From the city's position of relative control, it was necessary to extend a web of rationalization into the rural areas in the form of a modern system of transportation. Many public meetings were held on the subject of the extension of the roads system at the Cape. At one of the Anniversary Dinners at the Commercial Hall, the governor, Sir Lowry Cole, was praised for his role in the improvement of the roads and passes in the colony:

"By this means the Governor had shortened the distance between us and the remote districts; had brought almost inaccessible parts into communication. By this means too, the great object of Civilisation had been promoted. For that act of his government, his Excellency was entitled to the grateful remembrance of future generations; and he had already received the expressed gratitude of the present."<sup>18</sup>

It is within such a context of "the great object of Civilization" that an examination of the moral and mathematical duties of land surveyors must be considered:

"you must cultivate both mathematical and moral science with equal assiduity, and acquire the habit of considering at every moment of your career, the principles of morals as sacred and inviolable, as necessary for your direction and success, as the rules of Arithmetic, or the properties of triangles. A wicked Surveyor may commit more extensive robberies among an ill-informed People, and under a careless Government, than the unworthy member of almost any other Profession."<sup>19</sup>

Apart from the importance of land surveying in the rational, exact and scientific division of property, the crucial symbolic importance of the role in subduing the landscape must be borne in mind. The surveyor is one who imposes his gaze on what Mary Louise Pratt has, following Barrow, called, "the face of the

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<sup>18</sup> SACA 23 April 1831

<sup>19</sup> SACA 5 October 1831.

country", a country which, like the streets of Cape Town in the art of Bowler and De Meillon, is one which is depopulated.<sup>20</sup> The surveyor is the master of an empty land, and the quotation, which comes from an account of the teaching of these techniques at the South African College, indicates the use that these skills were seen to have in the teaching of young boys who would inherit control over the land upon which they gazed.

Within the city itself, the middle classes, in their attempt to re-form their environment according to the norms of the rational public sphere, strove to create a social space for themselves which was physically separate from that of the underclass. The establishment of suitable domains for the articulation of public discourse was vital to the project that the writers and readers of the Advertiser had undertaken in the reconstruction of the city. The creation of a specific kind of class identity necessitated the foundation of areas in which its members could assemble, express common ideas and establish a sense of solidarity. The most important physical expression of this solidarity was perhaps the Commercial Exchange, of which Bird spoke so scathingly in the quotation cited above. The fact that he speaks of the Commercial Exchange and the character of the class that built it in one breath indicates the important role the building played in the construction of class identity. As Meltzer puts it "[t]he first steps taken by members of the small and as yet isolated group of Cape Town merchants were to create institutions with which to facilitate their rise to a position

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<sup>20</sup> Pratt, M.L. 'Scratches on the Face of the Country', p.127

of influence within colonial society. They began by establishing a Commercial Exchange and by strengthening their links with London merchants, who had access both to Parliament and government departments in Britain. This indirect access to the British Parliament was important for Cape merchants because they had to initiate their struggle for influence in the absence of a local Parliament."<sup>21</sup>

Once more the importance of commercial and political links with Britain comes to the fore, and indicates why the representation of the city, and the colony, as a rational, ordered theatre for the growth of international commercial activity was of such importance to the middle classes of the Cape. The style and grandeur of the Commercial Exchange was also important on a symbolic level, as the quotation from Bird indicates. Meltzer notes: "It was indeed an edifice of neo-Classical [in contrast to the Baroque style of the Dutch order] splendour, standing on the Grand Parade ... So large was it that much of its space had to be rented out to various businessmen, firms, societies and institutions, such as the South African Library. Completed in 1822, it rapidly became a centre of economic and social life for white middle class Cape Town - a venue for public meetings, banquets, and balls, though it continued to be a financial worry to its owners during most of its existence."<sup>22</sup> As Bird recognized, it was a symbol of the construction of middle class identity in the colony, or, as he put it more scathingly, of "the

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<sup>21</sup> Meltzer, 'The Growth of Cape Town Commerce', p.29

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p.30

rising self-importance of Cape merchants".<sup>23</sup>

The annual Commercial Dinner which was held in the Commercial Hall was an occasion of great importance in the making of middle class solidarity. The occasion would be announced in the press before it took place, and a detailed report of the event would follow. This report almost always included the names of the most important attenders, as well as a list of those who acted as stewards. This last role was one which played a specific social function in England, and, it seems likely, at the Cape. As at the Cape, stewards in England were often named in newspaper reports of public dinners, "thus publicly demonstrating their right to inclusion within the elite ... Indeed stewarding could be one of the ways in which young men learnt their public roles."<sup>24</sup> In the figure of the steward, therefore, it is possible to see the Cape merchant and commercial class actively adding to its membership. Often the stewards would be the sons of already established members of the dining fraternity.<sup>25</sup> The public dinners were characterized by a high level of ritual behaviour - specific songs, toast drinking, speeches, and, most importantly, the rituals of inclusion and exclusion by which those who attended were selected. Important international events, such as the Revolution in Paris in 1830, were used as vehicles for symbolic expressions of class solidarity and collective identity. Great

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<sup>23</sup> See above, page 60.

<sup>24</sup> Davidoff and Hall Family Fortunes, p.441 - 442

<sup>25</sup> Listed, for instance, as a steward in 1831 was 'E. Chiappini, jun.', the son of the prominent merchant, Antonio Chiappini. [SACA, 23 April 1831]

emphasis was laid in the Advertiser on the importance of thus publicly expressing sentiments of unity and mutual regard, for, as chapter five will explore, these dinners were part of the proto-political activities of the town's middle classes.

Davidoff and Hall have examined the important role that public dinners had in the construction of a gendered middle class identity. As they stress, "'public' dinners were not of course public in the sense of open. They were public occasions which the rest of the town, meaning those tradesmen and artisans who were not 'gentlemen', the working classes, Dissenters and women could watch. The 'public' was propertied men."<sup>26</sup> In Birmingham, in 1855, at the dinner to welcome Prince Albert, watching by women took place in the literal sense: "the ladies sat in the galleries, excluded from both the dining and the drinking, there only as spectators, even then only gaining a clear view of the proceedings after mounting a protest at being put behind pillars."<sup>27</sup> There is no evidence that the public dinners at the Commercial Hall were watched by women or by other marginalized groups, but it is certain that it was essential to their designed purpose that their status in the town be noted by those whose presence was excluded. As chapter four will examine, this observation sometimes threatened to spill over into participation by groups, such as women, who were politically marginalized, and the element of spectacle which pervaded these assemblies in the Commercial Exchange was therefore not unproblematic.

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<sup>26</sup> Davidoff and Hall Family Fortunes, p.104.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, p.447

There were other sites of rational assembly for the middle classes of the Cape apart from that of the Commercial Exchange. Of great importance was the library, which had, significantly, been housed within the Commercial Exchange for part of its history. The South African Library was founded in 1818, and owed its early support to revenue from the wine tax, but this was removed in 1828 and the library was run on subscription support.<sup>28</sup> The symbolic importance of the library as a sign of the city's civilization far outstripped its actual effect - when one considers how limited was the section of the population who had access to it. This importance is indicated by a concerned report in the Advertiser on a meeting on the library's financial and administrative difficulties:

"No one but must look with regret at the decay assailing an Institution such as this. It is one great source from which the taste and the appetite for polite learning of the rising generation are to receive nourishment. That appetite, now that the means of acquiring Education had been brought within the reach of the Colonists, will increase, if indeed, it has not already surpassed expectation. This is the most delightful feature in every community. It is the surest sign of an improvement in the mind; and no friend of order and rational liberty but must hail it with delight, as every addition to our knowledge will make us better citizens. "<sup>29</sup>

As an institution which supported the literature-based culture upon which the construction of the rational public sphere depended, the library was a force by which "better citizens", who cared for "order and rational liberty", were made. Institutions such as the library and the Commercial Exchange were set up in opposition to the sites of the unacceptably irrational recreation

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<sup>28</sup> See Turrel, P.V. 'A Cape Periodical', pp.13 - 14.

<sup>29</sup> SACA, 21 May 1831

of the lower orders, to be considered later in this chapter, and were an important means by which the middle classes could establish the respectability and social separateness perceived necessary for legitimate control of the city.

The theatre was another very popular source of recreation amongst the middle classes, and it is interesting in the fact that it contained a worrying element of ambiguity which threatened to break down the barriers between class-specific forms of recreation and between the division between private and public spheres, which, as chapter three will explore, was so crucial to the making of gender identity. It therefore throws light on the class anxieties about social separation which were expressed in the Advertiser. For the theatre to remain socially acceptable it was necessary to ensure that the audience was primarily, if not wholly, of the 'respectable classes'. The underclasses were systematically removed from the social spaces within which people of refinement encountered one another. Thus Bird notes of the theatre: "None of doubtful appearance are admitted to those seats in the theatre where, by their behaviour, they might put modesty to the blush; nor are the eyes of innocence offended by the effrontery of immodest women, or of men heated by intemperance. If libertinism does prevail in private, the eye and ear are guarded from the public display of indecent conduct."<sup>30</sup> This quotation emphasises the importance of the division between public and private spheres, as well as the ambiguous status of the theatre which threatened to blur the barriers of class-

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<sup>30</sup> Bird, State of the Cape, p.167

specific recreation. This process of exclusion is evident in the notices of theatre performances carried by the Advertiser. Hence an advertisement for the "Amateur Theatre Under the Patronage of His Excellency the Governor and Lady Frances Cole" reads:

"The Director's having resolved to sell no Tickets at the doors, positively none but Subscribers will be admitted, - for which purpose a list will be opened at the Gazette-Office, Heerengracht, till Saturday Afternoon at 3 o'clock."<sup>31</sup>

An even more explicit reference to this practice occurs in an advertisement given by "The Private Dutch Theatrical Company", which stated that:

"[t]he Company, to avoid disorders, having resolved not to sell tickets or take money at the door, notice is hereby given that a list for the Pit and standing places will lie at the Gazette Office To-day, till two o'clock."<sup>32</sup>

The use of these strategies of exclusion by a Dutch theatrical company indicates the level of acculturation which was taking place in the Dutch urban community, and which will be addressed in chapter five.

Hence, despite its claims for democracy and equality, the Cape bourgeoisie demonstrated its desire to separate itself from society at large by reserving for itself an 'uncontaminated' social space, secure within the patronage of the political establishment. The display of the name of a prominent individual or group was also made use of in England to defuse any possible criticism of public theatre performances, and it is likely that

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<sup>31</sup> SACA, 23 October 1830

<sup>32</sup> SACA 28 May 1831, emphasis added.

this provided the model for the Cape's practice.<sup>33</sup>

The theatre carried other resonances at the Cape as a form of middle class entertainment: there was a fine line trod in the theatre of the Cape between private and public worlds; the element of the private was strong enough in this 1824 report to make it understandable why the class exclusivity of the performance should be maintained:

"We are glad to notice the advances to improvement which the company has made during the vacation. Redundancy of action, and a halting sing-song mode of delivery, are generally the prominent faults of "Amateurs;" but from these, we can in a great measure exempt the performers of Saturday Night. Where a whole company strains every nerve to amuse their friends, it would be unfair to individualize; and he must be a churl indeed that could complain of a host who had served up an entertainment (however humble) to the best of his ability."<sup>34</sup>

These references to the theatre in the Advertiser indicate some sense of anxiety over the respectability of the theatre as a form of middle class entertainment. Patronage by official bodies was one way of assuaging this unease. Another was to insist on the amateur, private nature of the activities, which made it important to keep the audience class-specific, in order that it remain possible to represent the relationship between actors and audience as one between host and guests. The use of subscription lists housed in buildings of rational activity in the city, rather than the indiscriminate selling of tickets at the door was one means of preserving this exclusivity. Evidence suggests, however, that it was not wholly effective, and that other, less

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<sup>33</sup> Davidoff and Hall Family Fortunes, p.438

<sup>34</sup> SACA 14 April 1824

subtle, methods were employed. K. Elks notes that "in 1829 after a fracas at the theatre, all slaves and free-blacks were expressly prohibited from attending. In 1831 this rule was still operative, with three policemen stationed at the theatre under orders from the manager to 'keep all black boys out'."<sup>35</sup>

Subscriptions played an important role in the construction of a rational social space for the middle classes of the Cape. Linking together various acceptable individuals, they helped to define the nature of the public in the specifically limited sense envisaged by the supporters of the Advertiser. The newspaper gave notice of various subscription lists and, as the quotations cited in the previous chapter indicate, it saw itself as having a very definite role in bringing appropriate people together to form groups of mutual interest which focused on various aspects of colonial improvement in order to bring the Cape up to the level of "enlightened countries".<sup>36</sup> These class connections and the related development of a civilized social world at the tip of a barbaric continent were deemed vital in the drive towards a Legislative Assembly:

"... That the People here are as ready to unite for the accomplishment of special objects as any people upon earth, is now obvious to the most careless observer. For Education, for the improvement of morals, for the relief oh distress, for mercantile or agricultural purposes, Associations are no sooner proposed than formed; and the habit of assembling ourselves together for benevolent and public objects being thus acquired, a general Object will naturally command a general Union. In this way a Community

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<sup>35</sup> Elks, K.D. 'Crime, Community and Police', p.66 Archival Reference: Government Gazette, 17 July 1829; 1/CT 6/16 20 September 1831, case of Adam.

<sup>36</sup> See SACA 12 November 1831, quoted above, page 44.

ripens for *Self-Government* in the widest sense of the term. It becomes an organised body, in which each member performs with ease:- its relative functions, and all its powers, without overstraining any part, can be exercised at every moment for the good of the whole.

On this ground we hail with pleasure every *New Association*, whose objects are not manifestly absurd, as an additional proof that the Inhabitants are getting more and more into the feelings of the social state; that they are becoming better acquainted with the nature of Liberty, and more and more disposed to dedicate a portion of their thoughts, time, and means to the benefit of others without a direct reference to their private interests."<sup>37</sup>

Subscriptions, therefore, ruled the organization of social activities, and were specifically linked to the limited notion of whom the public consisted of. Thus the Advertiser could define the public as "the majority of the wealthy and intellectual inhabitants of the country."<sup>38</sup>

This attempt to construct a social world in which the middle class developed a separate social space in which public and private spheres were kept rigidly separate is well illustrated by the irate reaction of Fairbairn to a critical examination of Cape society by an English civil servant visiting from India.<sup>39</sup> The attack Fairbairn made on British visitors to the Cape from India was prompted by an account of a stay in Cape Town published

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<sup>37</sup> SACA 14 December 1831

<sup>38</sup> SACA 26 October 1831. The quotation is from the *Courier* of 14 July.

<sup>39</sup> The significance of Indian visitors to the Cape to the construction of a specifically colonial identity will be dealt with in more detail in chapter five. The Advertiser's response to this specific denunciation of the lack of civilized society at the Cape is, however, of relevance here, because of the way in which it invokes the need for a society in which public and private spheres remain separate.

in the Bengal Hurkaru of 22 June 1830. Fairbairn launched a bitter denunciation of the report in an editorial in the Advertiser of 13 October which was in turn defended by 'An Observer', a friend of the original writer whom Fairbairn refers to as 'An Indian Valetudinary'. 'An Observer's' remarks came under fire in the Advertiser of 20 October. Fairbairn's response indicates the importance of the construction of a rational public sphere to the middle classes of the city, and also throws light on the means by which they constructed a distinct identity in opposition to other colonies of the British empire. As will be examined in chapter four, the treatment of and relationship with the labouring classes, in particular slaves and personal servants, was crucial in this. What is of importance here is the role that the division between private and public spheres and the creation of a separate social domain played in the manufacture of middle class identity at the Cape.

In response to the comments of the 'Indian Valetudinary' Fairbairn scathingly remarks:

"He confesses that he knows little of the Society of Cape Town, having been, for some unexplained, but perhaps not inexplicable cause, kept entirely to the back ground during his sojourn among us. He was, however, allowed to subscribe to a Ball at the Society House, where he made the following discovery in the arts, namely, - '*negus*<sup>40</sup> *actually made in a wash-hand basin!*' and he seems to have had good reason to complain of the custom in force here among the English of making Indians wait till they are called for. It would certainly be more agreeable to the stranger if he could call on any Resident he might select, with the certainty of seeing the visit returned - but there are difficulties in the way, of the nature of which our author can scarcely be ignorant. Suppose, for instance, that a few such worthies

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<sup>40</sup> "hot sweetened wine and water" [The Concise Oxford Dictionary, (Oxford, 1982)]

as the person before us should honor us with their acquaintance for a few months, and that the first thing that met our eyes in the Indian Papers, of a date immediately subsequent to their return, was our own Names, at full length, with those of our wives and daughters; a description of the material of our tables, a critical essay on our particular wines - all done in a very condescending style, as if the mighty Hindoo did us infinite honor in thus noticing our awkward attempts to please. Although no great harm is done, yet few people feel much flattered by having the walls which surround their most domestic retirements suddenly converted into chrystal, and all the idlers of the world invited to gaze upon them. In fact, the scribbling race of Tourists bid fair to drive Hospitality out of the world; - at all events, their late conduct sufficiently justifies the Cape Custom of compelling all strangers to wait till they are called for."<sup>41</sup>

The role that controlled access to specific social domains played in the hierarchy of Cape society is very clear in this response. The images are of boundaries and the penetration of inner sanctums. Public and private worlds must remain strictly separate, and respectability depends upon not being randomly subjected to the gaze and reports of the undesirable. In its outrage at the colonist subjected to the impudent gaze of the visitor, it is analogous to the attacks on travellers cited in the previous chapter. As a later chapter will examine in more detail, gender is a crucial part of this construction of respectability and social legitimacy. Interestingly, Fairbairn claims that such processes are a "Cape Custom", indicating the degree to which the class he represents had already developed a sense of their role in the social world of Cape Town which was bound to the new circumstances of the colonial, rather than the metropolitan, context. The extract also reveals both the degree of social confidence that newspapers like the Advertiser, as,

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<sup>41</sup> SACA 13 October 1830

indeed they claimed, had been instrumental in building up within the community of its supporters, as well as this self-confidence's limits in the face its hyper-sensitivity to the criticisms of sophisticated visitors.

Despite its emphasis on colonial self-confidence, the Advertiser clearly reveals the dark side of the city which remained beyond the control of the respectable classes. The discourse of rational reconstruction was constantly disrupted by troubling perceptions of Cape Town's underclasses. In their analysis of "the process through which the low troubles the high",<sup>42</sup> Stallybrass and White, as indicated in the introduction, have stressed the crucial part which the 'low-Other' plays in the construction of dominant culture identity. Hence "the 'top' attempts to reject and eliminate the 'bottom' for reasons of prestige and status, only to discover, not only that it is in some way frequently dependent upon that low-Other ... but also that the top includes that low symbolically, as a primary eroticized constituent of its own fantasy life. The result is a mobile, conflictual fusion of power, fear and desire in the construction of subjectivity: a psychological dependence upon precisely those others which are being rigorously opposed and excluded at the social level."<sup>43</sup> For all their attempts to portray Cape Town as a city of order and commercial and social rationality, elements of their social world not only remained beyond the control of the middle classes, but

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<sup>42</sup> Stallybrass and White, p.3

<sup>43</sup> Stallybrass and White, The Politics and Poetics of Transgression, p.5

were also fundamental to their construction of identity. The Advertiser, therefore, becomes a somewhat uneasy record of bourgeois anxiety juxtaposed with bourgeois self-confidence. The ideal is constantly disrupted by the real; the ordered world constantly threatens to shift into the disordered world and the perception of the physical landscape of the city is intimately connected to its moral landscape.

Many of the worries of the supporters of the Advertiser coalesced around the street and its symbolic associations. The streets of Cape Town were an important site of struggle between the world views of the upper and underclasses. By virtue of their status as important aspects of the public sphere, as sites of activity binding the city together, and as the site of the meeting of public and private worlds, control over the workings of the street was crucial for the city's dominant classes. There was a strong moral dimension to the attempt to keep the streets clean. As Mary Douglas points out, dirt is not an absolute but a cultural construction: "As we know it, dirt is essentially disorder. There is no such thing as absolute dirt: it exists in the eye of the beholder. ... Dirt offends against order. Eliminating it is not a negative movement, but a positive effort to organize the environment. ... In chasing dirt ... we are not governed by anxiety to escape disease, but are positively re-ordering our environment, making it conform to an idea. ... rituals of purity and impurity create unity in experience."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Douglas, M. Purity and Danger: An analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo (London, 1966), p.2

Attempts to impose order and cleanliness on the street, therefore, had a clear hegemonic intent and were important to the construction of the "unity in experience" of middle class identity. The respectable classes were never able to fully preserve themselves from the threat of the touch of the underclasses. Indeed, their symbolic identity was partly dependent upon their fear of the threat of this touch: "[t]he emphasis upon dirt was ... central to the discourse which traced the concealed links between slum and suburb, sewage and 'civilization'."<sup>45</sup>

Correspondents were deeply concerned about the state of the streets in Cape Town. They wrote letters to the Advertiser complaining about practical problems, or "public nuisances"<sup>46</sup> as they termed them. Complaints were made about the excessive amounts of dust and grit blowing off the streets of Cape Town in the summer months and suggestions were made that the streets be sprinkled with water to alleviate this problem.<sup>47</sup> Other writers complained of street flooding.<sup>48</sup> Some of these complaints, however straightforward they might appear on the surface, had deeper symbolic resonances. One example of this was the lighting of the streets, which was a persistent goal, and one in which images of darkness and evil battling illumination and

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<sup>45</sup> Stallybrass and White, The Politics and Poetics of Transgression, p.130

<sup>46</sup> SACA 10 November 1831, letter from 'A Pony' check date

<sup>47</sup> SACA 13 October 1831. Letter from 'H'.

<sup>48</sup> SACA 10 November 1831, letter from 'A Pony' check date.

civilization predominated.<sup>49</sup>

A correspondent wrote complaining of the state of the streets in Simon's Town and gave a vivid description of the reality of street conditions in the city quite in contrast to both the idealised artist's representations and to the Advertiser's poem discussed above:

"Will any of your readers inform me, through the medium of your Paper, on which of the Civil Authorities of this Town devolves the business of inspecting the street, as it seems there is some misunderstanding about it, and the consequence is, as may be expected, that it is in a very filthy and dangerous state, from the deep gutters cut across it.

I would in particular call the attention of the inhabitants to that part in front of the Hotels and Butchers Shops, where it is nearly impassable from mud and filth of all kinds; and there is, in addition, an accumulation of offal, bones, putrid feet, and manure, &c., thrown not into the sea, as ought to be the case, but on the bank, which produce a stench which must be unwholesome, as well to those who pass as those who live near it.

There are other Nuisances in this town, such as the number of pigs allowed to run about, &c., but at present I wish to point out to the respectable inhabitants, before the hot weather begins, the neglect which is shown both to their health and comfort; and I can only say, that if they put up with it any longer, by submitting without remonstrance to the proper quarter, they have no one to blame but themselves.

We have a right to a clear and even street, free from filth and nuisances; and depend upon it there does exist an Authority somewhere or other, that can and will enforce it, if it is only properly represented."<sup>50</sup>

This is not the city of the enlightened and rational public sphere, with the respectable classes firmly in control of their physical world. In this representation, people live at the mercy of a hostile and filthy environment, unsure of where to direct

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<sup>49</sup> See SACA, 5 March 1831

<sup>50</sup> SACA, 12 October 1831, letter from 'An Inhabitant'

their complaints and how to obtain redress. The extract indicates the ambiguities of bourgeois political existence in the Cape of the early nineteenth century. Perceptions of a rational public sphere are being built up, for the writer feels that there must exist a public authority "somewhere or other", to whom, as individual with "rights", he can turn for the vindication of those rights, but the practical workings of control over the city elude him. With reference to the image of pigs in the street, Stallybrass and White have noted that, from the seventeenth century, the pig in Europe became "increasingly associated by the bourgeoisie with offenses against good manners. The pig was demonized less for its supposed evils than for its rustic boorishness from which polite citizens must dissociate themselves."<sup>51</sup> The symbolic resonances that the thought of pigs running loose in the streets evokes was not one which would have appealed to a representation of Cape Town as a thriving, expanding, and commercially focused urban area, distinct from the countryside. If the city, backed by the force of the colony as a whole, was to form a hub of civilization from which roads might be put forth to subdue the wilderness of the African landscape, it could not be subject to the encroaching images of a rural area, by having its inhabitants at the mercy of the pigs in the street.

Another issue which this letter raises is the confusion over who was responsible for the cleansing of public areas in the city.

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<sup>51</sup> Stallybrass and White, The Politics and Poetics of Transgression, p.51

Here an examination of the role of the Cape Town police force is necessary. In the role of the police can be seen the manner in which physical dirt and moral disorder were so intimately connected in the minds of Cape Town's dominant classes. K. Elks stresses that the "tasks assigned to the police were surprisingly varied, many of which would not be associated with a modern constabulary."<sup>52</sup> Complaints about the dirt and 'nuisances' in the streets were often made via the Advertiser to the police. Control over the behaviour of undesirable elements of the city and control over its physical nature, or cleanliness, were analogous in middle class minds. This was to become a point of controversy in the 1840s with different elements of the emerging municipal government disagreeing as to whether the police were responsible for the cleansing of the city or whether such activities were incompatible with their main purpose of crime prevention and punishment.<sup>53</sup> Be that as it may, there is no doubt that moral and material filth were linked in the minds of the readers and writers of the Advertiser. The police were to be part of the means by which the rational public sphere was implemented at the Cape and the social exclusivity of the middle classes was maintained. They guarded the exclusivity of the theatre, as mentioned above, and "[o]n Sundays policemen were also sent to the major denominational churches (St George's, Lutheran etc.). This ensured that the wealthier and respectable Capetonians were not plagued by beggars or 'Swarms of filthy, ragged, disgusting

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<sup>52</sup> Elks, K.D. 'Crime, Community and Police', p.36

<sup>53</sup> Warren, D. 'Merchants, Commissioners and Wardmasters: Municipal politics in Cape Town, 1840 - 1854', (M.A., University of Cape Town, 1986), p.99

children' as they filed in and out of church."<sup>54</sup>

Policing in Cape Town in the 1820s was divided between two distinct authorities. Under the Burgerraad (Burgher Council) was the Burgerwagt (Burgher Watch), whose task was to patrol the town after dark. "The other arm of the law came under the supervision of the Fiscaal, who until 1825 was both chief of police and public prosecutor in the Court of Justice. This second branch was staffed by caffre constables and police dienaars."<sup>55</sup> The convict caffres had been a feature of the town through the Dutch era and were the object of great fear and loathing during that time.<sup>56</sup> William Wilberforce Bird referred to them as "the refuse of the Cape population".<sup>57</sup> Elks makes a comment regarding their role which is interesting in terms of the confusion and controversy surrounding the role of the police as street cleaners: "By the time of the second British occupation, a greater proportion of colonists were utilized so that gradually these caffres were only allocated tasks that white policemen probably found distasteful; punishing and executing slaves, destroying stray dogs, collecting refuse, cleaning the prison and cooking for the inmates."<sup>58</sup> In this racial division of the police force, therefore, the caffres were symbolically associated with the tasks they performed, which

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<sup>54</sup> Elks, 'Crime, Community and Police', p.38 - 9. The quotes are from a letter to SACA 11 December 1841

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p.23

<sup>56</sup> Ross, R. Cape of Torments, p.35

<sup>57</sup> Bird, State of the Cape, p.19

<sup>58</sup> Elks, 'Crime, Community and Police', p.24

were considered unacceptable activities for white colonists.

One of the tasks Elks mentions is of particular relevance in an examination of sources of bourgeois unease in the Advertiser. A far more serious practical and symbolic problem than the occasional pig which found its way into the streets of Cape Town was the overabundance of dogs. Bird commented thus upon this: "[T]he number of dogs in Cape Town is so great that no one would be safe from the danger of hydrophobia. In addition to the most extraordinary breed of diminutive lap-dogs, of which each house has a portion, whose long hair is combed and washed almost daily, numerous unowned dogs, of a larger description, roam around in packs. These animals live and grow fat on the offal of the fish market, and of the butchery; and after a nightly repose under the warm covert of the outhouses, rush tumultuously at dawn to the sea-shore, with the cry, but not with the melody, of a pack of hounds. There they are gorged with the offal; and during the day, except their haunts suffer from intrusion, they are quiet. - Numerous as the beggars in Europe, they are not so importunate, but the whip will dismiss these, whilst the pertinacity of the beggar can only be conquered by a gift."<sup>59</sup> As will be considered below, the symbolic associations which Bird draws between dogs and beggars, or members of the underclass, was an extremely significant one in the cognitive world of Cape Town's middle classes. His account also makes the distinction between dogs in private - lap-dogs, and dogs in public which create a threat in the public streets, a mental division which was of great

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<sup>59</sup> Bird, State of the Cape , p.162

significance.

Correspondents to the Advertiser were worried about the threat of rabid dogs, a problem Bird cites, but the main focus of their unease was that of the ambiguity presented by dogs and their treatment at the Cape. Stray dogs lived on the refuse of the town and were symbolically linked to both this source of filth, and, as the extract from Bird indicates, to the underclasses of society. Letters concerning dogs abound in the Advertiser. A few are quoted here to indicate the themes of anxiety they reveal:

"TO THE EDITOR: Sir, - Your Paper contributing so strongly to the public benefit, I take the liberty to ask, whether it would not be better to make an exception in Dog-killing, instead of frightening the inhabitants by the following notice: - 'From the 11th to the 24th all dogs found in the streets will be destroyed,' - without specifying any hour or time. I have but one dog, which I would not part with for £25. My profession does not allow me to watch the poor animal during the whole day, and in my absence the room in which he is locked may be opened, or he may escape, ignorant of the dangers which await him, and the useful and inoffensive animal become prey to some emissaries, armed, like Hercules, with immense clubs. What a sight it would be to me on coming home, after laboring for the public benefit, even to the sacrifice of my own interest, to find the only companion of my leisure hours - my faithful 'Karo' - weltering in his blood. How cruel to the poor innocent animal!

No; say rather, that all Dogs found without a Collar shall be destroyed, as it may be inferred that they have no masters: this was the practice of former days. Let such dogs be killed.

Hoping to create some sympathy in the hearts of authority, and that pity may be felt for the useful, and war only be declared against the useless dogs.

I subscribe myself, A FRIEND OF MY KARO."<sup>60</sup>

Such images of violence, and emotional expression, were common in the letters concerning dogs. Another letter entitled 'Killing of Dogs in the Street' noted:

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<sup>60</sup> SACA 9 October 1830

"There is something extremely disgusting and cruel, in my opinion, in the manner in which the canine race is occasionally treated by having their brains beaten out in the public streets by Policemen; and it appears to me desirable that some other mode of lessening the danger apprehended, and abating the nuisance, should be adopted. I have long been of opinion that a local Dog-tax, affecting Cape Town and the Table Valley only, would be found the most effectual means of accomplishing this object. No person desirous of retaining a *really useful* Dog would object to an annual tax of 5 Rds., the money thus raised might serve as the nucleus of a Fund to be employed in Lighting our Streets."<sup>61</sup>

A third letter supported this argument:

"A good deal has lately been written on the subject of Dogs, and it must be confessed that considerable annoyance, if not danger, is experienced from the great overstock of those animals in Cape Town; but I agree with a late Correspondence of yours, that the periodical massacres of dogs found in the public streets, without answering any effectual purpose, are extremely disgusting, and have a tendency to familiarize the youth of this town with acts of barbarity.

I am no way connected with Government, nor am I an encourager of increased Taxation; but if ever there was a case in which local Taxation was admissible, and even desirable, it is certainly so for the abatement of such a nuisance and in assisting the useful purpose of lighting up our streets. A Fine should likewise be imposed on persons who throw the carcasses of animals in the outlets of the Town, which either become the food of wild and dangerous dogs, or taint the atmosphere with unwholesome miasma."<sup>62</sup>

These writers have at heart the sanitization and rationalization of the public sphere at a time when cruelty to animals was becoming a mark of lack of civilization and refinement.<sup>63</sup> Hoards of dangerous semi-wild dogs terrorizing the populous, and alternating with bloody dog massacres in the streets were hardly conducive to the construction of the material world which

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<sup>61</sup> SACA, 10 December 1830

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 8 December 1830

<sup>63</sup> Thomas, K. Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500 - 1800 (London, 1983), p.149

stressed the control which the elite exercised over the rational operation of the city. Also, as Elks notes, those that performed such jobs were of a status that justified their label as 'scavengers'<sup>64</sup> - the caffres inherited from the old Dutch order.

Beyond this, however, lies a further insight which can be gained from these letters. One can identify strong symbolic resonances between dogs and slaves: both are operating in a similar way as the low-Other troubling the discourse of the 'high' within the Advertiser. While the 'high' depended on the subjugation of elements of society such as dogs and slaves, the methods of its control could potentially disrupt the constitution of a rational bourgeois subject. Both dogs and slaves possess symbolic ambiguity - they are both within and outside the household, they can be loyal and useful 'members of the family' as well as threatening outsiders. They represent the potential for danger within the domestic sphere, and as such disrupt the rigidly defined categories so vital to the creation of a rational public domain. What the writers of these letters are seeking is a rational division between wild and domestic dogs: a resolution of ambiguity. Their concern is analogous to the anxieties of slave owners such as Samuel Hudson who both valued and feared slaves and who were troubled by the way in which they slipped between defined categories of work and home, family and community.<sup>65</sup> The letter writers are also concerned, even to the

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<sup>64</sup> Elks, 'Crime, Community and Police' p.24

<sup>65</sup> McKenzie, The Making of an English Slaveowner, especially chapters three, four and five.

point of an uncharacteristic advocacy of new taxes, with the treatment of this problem. The means by which it is solved should be one which is rational and centrally controlled - taxation - rather than being individualistic, violent, morally corrupting, and capricious. In addition, taxation could achieve the further rational objective of street lighting. There are strong links here with the debates over the treatment of slaves by their masters and the concern that this be taken out of the hands of individuals and placed in the hands of the state.<sup>66</sup> Both dog massacres and capricious slave owners who considered themselves to be above the law, act against the rational organization of society as envisaged by many readers of the Advertiser.

The concern with the ambiguous nature of the other becomes even clearer in two earlier letters concerning dogs, dog killings and the police:

"Sir, --- As I was passing through Plein-street, on the night of the 16th inst., I saw, as nearly as I can guess, about eight men, whom I took to be watchmen. They went up to a stoop, enclosed with iron railings, where there was a dog; they struck at the animal three or four times with their batons, and at last three or four of them went upon the Stoop, and beat it most unmercifully; they then kicked it off the Stoop, and said, now chop off its head; they stabbed it in three or four places, and when asked why they did so, they said it was their orders to kill all dogs found in the Streets --- which, of course, I conceive, excludes Dogs on Stoops. I hope, by inserting this in your useful Journal, a stop will be put to all such wanton cruelty.

I am Sir, &c.

A MAN OF COMMON FEELING. "<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> See Mary Rayner Wine and Slaves, and R. Watson, The Slave Question.

<sup>67</sup> SACA 22 August 1826. I am grateful to Andrew Bank for directing me to this reference.

The concern this writer feels is stimulated by the lack of distinction made between dogs of the house and dogs of the street. As such, further light is thrown on the attempts to reconstruct the spatial organization of the social world. The balcony was on the threshold of the street - a boundary zone of ambiguous nature. Of the balcony in nineteenth century literature and painting, Stallybrass and White note: "From the balcony, one could gaze, but not be touched. ... the bourgeoisie on their balconies could both participate in the banquet of the streets and yet remain separated."<sup>68</sup> The balcony was thus an important mechanism of social separation. In this incident, however, despite the "iron railings" of social separation, the underclass in the form of the socially unacceptable police, penetrated the discrete space of the middle class and did violence to a part of their household. The fact that dogs were often kept as protection against theft adds a further dimension to the theme of class tension in the encounter.<sup>69</sup>

Prompted by this failure on the part of the police to distinguish between the dogs of use and the dogs of danger, a correspondent extended the anthropomorphic image further by adopting the voice of the dog in a letter to the newspaper:

"Sir. --- Bearing no badge of servitude, I cannot but feel greatly alarmed at the *dogmatic* anathemas thundered out in the shape of a 'Bull' from the Police Vatican, dated the 15th instant. The old adage, that 'every dog had his day,' is now become a dead letter, for there is no longer security for him either by the night or by the day: --- his

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<sup>68</sup> Stallybrass and White The Politics and Poetics of Transgression, p.136

<sup>69</sup> Elks 'Crime, Community and Police' p.114

freedom, his liberties, and his privileges being thus cruelly mangled and curtailed, --- can it be wondered that much growling has been the consequence, ... Our sagacity is well known and has often been the subject of *high panegyric*, yet our lives may be sacrificed in the public streets and in the open day-light, either in going from or to our *Domicilium*, and are further called upon to communicate our sagacity to others, for in our *dog-trot* style, we may '*appear to have no Masters*,' notwithstanding the orders issued on this subject. Alas! Mr. Editor, what are we poor *sad dogs* to do, are we to *hire* ourselves out, or are we to apply for numerical tickets like our biped coolies. Thus, should one of our Police Toes have failed to study *Lavator*, or another be a determined Phrenologist, and let the weight of his *baton* (his *organ* of vindictiveness) fall on the unoffending *caput*, to ascertain whether the organ of domesticativeness had existence, we should in either case be lost.

*Incidit in Scyllam, qui vult evitare Charybdim.*

Really, Mr. Editor, this is carrying the matter too serious a length:--- 'it may be fun to them, but it is death to us;' and if you cannot avert these *canine* disasters, we may be driven to desperation and even madness, in which case on their own heads much mischief may fall, while they are privily contriving mischief for others. ... I am no *snarler*, but cannot help showing my teeth; as it is grievously hard that we faithful and useless animals should be exposed to the organs of destructiveness existing in Jail Myrmidous.

I am Sir, &c.

POMPEY THE LITTLE. <sup>70</sup>

This extraordinary letter, in its references to badges of servitude, hiring out, and coolies, makes the links between slaves and dogs undeniably explicit. It invokes the images of phrenology and throws light upon the middle class anxiety about ambiguity which pervades the Advertiser. Phrenology constituted an attempt to find a definite link between physical traits and mental ability in the classification of races: "[t]he essence of the phrenological system was the belief that the human mind could be divided into thirty-seven different 'faculties,' each of which was to be found in a different part of the cortex. For any

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<sup>70</sup> SACA 29 August 1826. I am grateful to Andrew Bank for directing me to this reference.

individual, the strength or weakness of each of these faculties could be discovered by carefully measuring the shape of the skull. Thus character could be analyzed merely by external examination of the head."<sup>71</sup> The letter stresses the distinctions which must be made between those dogs with rights and those without; a resolution of the ambiguity inherent in the image of the dog being necessary for this. In its links to early nineteenth-century obsessions with racial and species classification it reveals the wider implications of the discourse of social reconstruction inherent in the re-making of the spatial organization of the city. The tensions between civilization and incorporation, and barbarism and separation are evident in middle class discourse about dogs.<sup>72</sup>

Stray dogs and members of the underclass, symbolically linked in the cosmology of the 'respectable classes', both belonged to an element of the city which was troubling to the project of social reconstruction the Advertiser was involved in. As the troubling

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<sup>71</sup> Curtin, P.D. The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780 - 1850 Volume One. (Wisconsin, 1964), p.243

<sup>72</sup> This link between dogs and the underclass was also made at the level of official communications concerning the problems involved in eradicating the unwanted dogs in the city's streets. Charles De Lorentz, Superintendent of Police, wrote to Colonel John Bell, Secretary to Government, in 1836, complaining of the difficulties he experienced in trying to kill off unwanted dogs in the city. One of his major difficulties was "the unaccountable infatuation that induces many of the inhabitants, principally among the Coloured population, to secrete [sic], by locking up in their houses during the time appointed for destroying dogs, an almost incredible number of the most useless curs and turning them loose again when the danger of their being destroyed has ceased." [CA, 1/16 CO 451, no. 60, de Lorentz to Bell, 29 Oct. 1836. I am grateful to Anthony White for providing me with this reference.

presence of the 'low' within the discourse of the high, the underclasses of the city appear more overtly in the text of the Advertiser than in the metaphorical resonances surrounding the control of dogs in the streets. As mentioned earlier, the streets were a site of struggle between class outlooks, and this was especially evident with reference to class-specific forms of recreation.

'A Constant Reader' wrote a letter to the Advertiser which provides an illuminating contradiction to the self-satisfied accounts of the degree of control the middle classes were able to exert over the streets of Cape Town. The complaint relates to the scenes witnessed in the public streets on the Sabbath-day, a time in which a feeling of control was arguably of especial psychological importance:

"There is scarcely a street but which is infested with a multitude of both adults and younger persons, who are seen engaged in the pestilent vice of Gambling, much to the annoyance of those who happen to be walking, and more inconveniently so to housekeepers, who can neither allow their domestics to be ordering away from their several doors the different vagabondizing groups, or be disturbed during the Lord's day by constantly hearing the low and obscene language which such gaming occupations induce. Swearing also to a great extent accompanies these scenes.

If any class of people exist, who consider the morals and habits of their own children, and the offspring of their slaves, of little importance, and who think that what adds to their gratifications, whether good or bad, does not need to be discouraged, I think, in the absence of proper and correct feeling, that the interference of the Police is rendered absolutely necessary, and that the Police of this Colony should be as zealously employed in suppressing these iniquitous scenes as in preventing the more grievous delinquencies which are daily committed, and towards which the non-observance of the Sabbath-day in a chief degree contributes."<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> SACA, 8 June 1831

Many of the anxieties over the streets of Cape Town coalesce in this extract. The image is of the streets as a plague-infested area surrounding the sanctity of the home. Streets were a source of anxiety because they were the areas that linked private and public worlds. Streets as public space came right up to the threshold of the private home, the doorway, and it is in the attempt to keep these worlds - the controllable and that which is beyond control - separate from one another, that the writer's anxiety reaches a peak. Those that might be tempted over the threshold - children, and, specifically, servants - must not be allowed to be subjected to the temptation that illicit street activity represents. The extract indicates that the underclasses of Cape Town used the streets as a site for recreation and for putting forward a morality which was anathema to their masters. Part of the reason for this was practical - the poor did not have the property-owning resources to keep their recreation away from the prying eyes of the city reformers by keeping it within their own private space.

On a symbolic level, however, there are important resonances of social autonomy in this underclass use of the street as a site of social recreation. The streets, as this chapter has indicated, were an element of public space over which the middle classes of the Cape were attempting to exert their rational control. By filling the streets with the recreational activities which the middle classes sought to eradicate, by surrounding their houses, thereby, with a "sea of vice", and by tempting with an alternative morality those they sought to keep as their

dependents, and to add insult to injury, by conducting such activities on the Sabbath day, when the discourse of the dominant should have been at its height, the underclasses of the city could articulate a subtle expression of autonomy and collective identity which resisted the hegemony of the elite.

The writer's appeal to the police, to protect the sanctity of the home, may well have fallen on deaf ears when one considers the class origin of most of the contemporary police force and takes complaints such as the following into account:

"Sir, While I, in common with the greater part of the Inhabitants of Cape Town, can bear testimony to the zeal and energy displayed by the Superintendent of Police, in the execution of his arduous duty, I cannot help noticing the disgraceful scenes which frequently present themselves in the neighbourhood of your office in Burg-street. The Dieners, whose duty, I presume, it is to be on the spot, and prevent the feelings of the inhabitants from being shocked by the indecent exposures of the Hottentot women, and the noise and uproar of the men, are generally either off their station altogether, or lurking in the neighbouring Tap-houses drinking and smoking with people of every variety of character and complexion; and thus encouraging, rather than preventing tumult and disorder. I am surprized that this evil has not yet been complained of by the shopkeepers and inhabitants of Burg-street, whose interests must materially suffer from it; and the greater part of whom I have heard lament the existence of the evil, but who appear to forget that a public medium is open, through which complaints of this kind are sure to meet the eye of the individual capable of affording redress. I am, sir, &c. A constant passer-by."<sup>74</sup>

Despite their persistent calls for assistance from the police in the abatement of moral and material 'nuisances', the 'respectable' classes clearly found the police a somewhat unreliable ally in their assault on dirt and disorder in the city. They were more likely to be "lurking" in the taverns of the

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<sup>74</sup> SACA, 29 August, 1826

town, sites of discourse against which domains such as the library and the Commercial Exchange were set up, with the very people whose activities they were supposed to be controlling, than combating the moral and material filth of the city with "zeal and energy". This was understandable given the fact that "police and the 'criminals' were of the same class backgrounds and hence had similar interests."<sup>75</sup> The control which the elite could exercise over the spatial organization of the city, in which the physical landscape was intimately connected to the moral landscape, was clearly extremely limited.

The Advertiser, therefore, reveals a great deal about what aspects of the city were troubling to the attempt to reconstitute its social space along the lines of a rationally organized, commercially-orientated urban centre focused on links with the mother country. In the drive towards a Legislative Assembly, the middle classes of the Cape had to prove their social and political legitimacy by means of their ability to re-form the city in their own image. Although they attempted to persuade both themselves and sympathetic observers of their success in this project, the Advertiser reveals a dark side of the city which remained beyond the control of the 'respectable' and persistently troubled their discourse.

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<sup>75</sup> Elks, 'Crime and Community', p.51

### Chapter Three

Private Women and Public Men: Gender roles and the making of colonial identity.

The new social system which the Advertiser envisaged for the Cape was based on a specific conception of appropriate gender roles. The notion of the rational bourgeois public sphere was articulated in gendered terms, and the legitimacy of colonial society was considered to depend upon the willingness of its women and its men to behave in a manner considered suitable to their sex. This chapter will consider the conceptions of femininity and masculinity which informed the Advertiser's social reform agenda, in an attempt to illustrate the constructed, and contested, nature of gender identity at the Cape in the early nineteenth century.

Until comparatively recently, gender has been a woefully neglected concept in the historiography of the pre-industrial Western Cape.<sup>1</sup> Feminist historians worldwide have convincingly

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<sup>1</sup> The work of R. Ross and R. Shell has addressed the experience of men and women in the pre-Industrial Western Cape, although gender as a historiographical concept is not directly dealt with in their work. See R. Ross, Cape of Torments (London, 1983) and R. Shell, 'The Family and Slavery at the Cape, 1680 - 1808', in W.G. James and M. Simons, eds, The Angry Divide: Social and Economic History of the Western Cape (Cape Town, 1989), and 'Tender Ties: The Women of the Slave Society' (Paper presented at the 'Cape Slavery - and After' Conference, University of Cape Town, Aug. 1989). Problems with the work of Ross and Shell have been addressed by P. van der Spuy in 'A Collection of discrete essays with the common theme of gender and slavery at the Cape of Good Hope with a focus on the 1820s' (M.A., University of Cape Town, 1993). Writing of their work, van der Spuy has noted that "men's analysis of slave women did not display the kind of gender-sensitivity required in such a project." [Essays on gender and slavery, p.4.] As well as van der Spuy, see also P. Scully, 'Emancipation and the family in the rural western Cape, South Africa, c1830 - 1842' (paper presented to University of Cape Town History Department post-graduate seminar, April 1992); P. Scully, 'Rituals of rule: infanticide and the humanitarian sentiment in the Cape Colony c.1834 - 1850' (paper presented to the Centre for African Studies Africa Seminar, University of Cape Town, 29 April 1992); P. Scully, 'Liberating the Family: Gender, State and Emancipation in the Rural Western Cape, South Africa, 1830 -

demonstrated the crucial nature of gender as a useful category of historical analysis, indicating its far-reaching importance in all aspects of experience, rather than simply in the most obvious instance of family and domestic life.<sup>2</sup> They stress that "[t]he production of culturally appropriate forms of male and female behaviour is a central function of social authority and is mediated by the complex interactions of a wide range of economic, social, political, and religious institutions."<sup>3</sup> Much attention has been given to the cultural construction of notions of femininity and female gender roles across time and space, and more recently, in the small but growing area of Men's Studies, the importance of examining the processes and struggles by which masculinity is constructed has also come under scrutiny.<sup>4</sup>

This examination of the Advertiser seeks to demonstrate the importance of studying the interpenetration of the historical

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1870' (PhD thesis, The University of Michigan, forthcoming, 1993); K. McKenzie The Making of an English Slaveholder: Samuel Eusebius Hudson at the Cape of Good Hope 1796 - 1807 (Cape Town, 1993) for work that examines the importance of gender as a historiographical concept.

<sup>2</sup> Scott, J. Gender and the Politics of History (New York, 1988)

<sup>3</sup> Editors: 'Introduction: The Concept of Gender' in Conway, J.K., Bourque, S.C., and Scott, J.W. (eds) Learning About Women: Gender, Politics, and Power (Michigan, 1989)p.xxii

<sup>4</sup> Brod, H. (ed) The Making of Masculinities: the New Men's Studies. (Boston, 1987) See also Ramazanogly, C. 'What can you do with a man? Feminism and the critical appraisal of masculinity' Women's Studies International Forum 15 (3) 1992 and Mangan, J. and Walvin, J. (eds) Manliness and Morality: Middle-class masculinity in Britain and America 1800 - 1940 (Manchester, 1987)

construction of masculinities and femininities, as well as the way in which gender is interwoven into many diverse aspects of human experience. Taking gender identity for granted denies much of the richness of life experience in the past. As H. Brod stresses with relation to masculine identity: "While seemingly about men, traditional scholarship's treatment of generic man as the human norm in fact systematically excludes from consideration what is unique to men qua men. The overgeneralization from male to generic human experience not only distorts our understanding of what, if anything, is truly generic to humanity but also precludes the study of masculinity as a specific male experience, rather than a universal paradigm for human experience."<sup>5</sup> No use of the word 'man' or 'woman' in texts such as the Advertiser, therefore, can be viewed as innocent and without cultural content, for both categories were (and are) contested ones, in which conflicting notions of masculinity and femininity jostle for social acceptance.

Middle class identity in Britain, from which the Advertiser substantively derived its role model for the colonial context, was predicated upon the articulation of a new conception of what it meant to be a man or a woman: "the language of class formation was gendered"<sup>6</sup>, as Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall stress. Men were to be active citizens and breadwinners within the public sphere of civil society, while women were to confine themselves,

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<sup>5</sup> Brod, H. 'The Case for Men's Studies' in Brod (ed) The Making of Masculinities, p.40

<sup>6</sup> Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes, p.450

as wives and mothers dependent upon their male relatives, to the private sphere. The entire basis of the rational public sphere, therefore, rested upon the concept of distinct gender roles. As J.B. Landes succinctly describes the differing relationship of men and women to the public sphere, "[a] public man is one who acts in and for the universal good. ... On the other hand, a public woman is a prostitute, a commoner, a common woman."<sup>7</sup> As the concept of occupation became a crucial part of masculine identity, any role for women, except one which placed them in relation to a male's occupation rather than in relation to a profession of their own, was anomalous.<sup>8</sup> The divisions between men and women, and between public and private, were seen to be fixed and natural; the dangers of transgressing these bounds were seen to be indicative of the threat of a degenerate society. The Advertiser examined the horrors of blurred barriers between public and private by re-printing 'Cobbet's Advice to a Husband':

"I am told that in France it is rare to meet with a husband who does not spend every evening of his life at what is called a café; that is to say, a place for no other purpose than of gossiping, drinking, and gaming. And it is with great sorrow that I acknowledge that many English husbands indulge too much in a similar habit. ... Innumerable are the miseries that spring from this cause. ... And does the husband, who thus abandons his wife and children, imagine that she will not in some degree at least, follow his example? If he do, he is very much deceived. For, while the husbands are assembled, it would be hard if the wives were not to do the same; and the very least that is to be expected is, that the Tea-pot should keep pace with the porter-pot or grog-glass. Hence crowds of female acquaintances and intruders, and all the consequent and inevitable squabbles which form no small

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<sup>7</sup> Landes, J.B. Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution (Ithaca and London, 1988), p.3

<sup>8</sup> Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes, p.272

part of the life of man.

The way to avoid the sad consequences of which I have been speaking, is to begin well; ... Let him resolve from the very first, never to spend an hour from home, unless business or at least some necessary purpose, demand it. Where ought he to be, but with the person whom he himself hath chosen to be his partner for life, and the mother of his children? What other company ought he to deem so good or so fitting as this? With whom else can he be so pleasantly spend his hours of leisure and relaxation?"<sup>9</sup>

In this extract, the separation between home and business is made clear and absolute. The ideal put forward is one of a domestically orientated family in which the marriage between the parents is one in which companionship and affection are the motivation behind their 'partnership', while man and wife occupy clearly defined and distinct roles.<sup>10</sup> The woman is inscribed as mother, caring for the children from within the privacy of the home, while the man inhabits the dual role of father in private leisure, and entrepreneur in public business. As the extract stresses, the fact that the division between men and women was one between public and private did not mean that men had no private role within the family. On the contrary, rational middle class male recreation was seen as taking place within the bounds

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<sup>9</sup> SACA, 5 January, 1831.

<sup>10</sup> Lawrence Stone has given a detailed account of this family model, which he calls the 'Closed Domestic Nuclear Family'. Stone, L. The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500 - 1800 (Cambridge, 1977) p. 221 - 478. See also: Trumbach, R. The Rise of the Egalitarian Family: Aristocratic Kinship and Domestic Relations in Eighteenth-Century England. (New York, 1987) The models of writers such as Stone and Trumbach have been criticised for largely portraying the ideal rather than the reality of family life and gender roles. For an account of the contested nature of the relationships which Stone and Trumbach tend to assume as absolute see Poovey, M. Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England (Chicago, 1988) and Digby, A. 'Victorian Values and Women in Public and Private' Paper presented at the staff/student seminar series, University of Cape Town, 27 August, 1992.

of family life, a life which was made pleasant for his enjoyment by the work of the woman within the home. It is the man only, however, who is given the possibility of a public role, in keeping with his access to the rational public sphere, while the home must remain closed off from public 'intruders'. Characteristically, the public activities of "drinking and gaming" are denounced, in the Evangelical vein which ran strongly through middle class conceptions of the family. The attachment of both men and women, albeit in different ways, to the family, as an essential institution in their lives, is stressed. Morally degrading family roles are associated with France, indicating the role played by conceptions of gender and the family in the construction of a patriotic national identity: degeneracy amongst the family, since it is not natural, cannot be seen as originating in the heart of the mother country. It should also be noted that this advice is explicitly directed at the husband; the notion of manliness was one which was often addressed by the Advertiser which, it might be argued, directed more attention to the proper position of the male in society than to that of the female, for reasons that will be considered below.<sup>11</sup>

A woman's 'natural' role was that of the mother. The Advertiser quoted 'Herder' thus on 'Maternal Affection':

"Last among the characteristics of woman, is that sweet, motherly love with which Nature has fitted her; it is almost independent of cold reason, and wholly removed from

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<sup>11</sup> In contrast, Davidoff and Hall note that preoccupation with forms of 'manliness' was not as central an issue in Christian writings in Britain in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century as that of forms of femininity. Family Fortunes, p.104

the selfish hope of reward. ... It is only the most corrupting forms of society which have power gradually to make luxurious vice sweeter than the tender cares and toils of maternal love."<sup>12</sup>

Women are here divorced from the socio-economic models, based on the assumption of "reason" and the "hope of reward" which governed the actions of men in the public sphere. The opposition posed here between true nature and the corrupting influence of culture, especially upon women, was a common one. Following a report from the Durham Chronicle of a young woman who died as a result of the too tight lacing of her stays, the Advertiser elaborated on this theme of the relationship between women, nature and artifice:

"This is an example of the evils of tight lacing that only affects life, which, with ladies of fashion, is secondary to the achievement of a certain shape that very much resembles an hour-glass! We do not hope to touch their reason through instances of this sad kind; but there is an argument more convincing behind - it is, that nature has given them a much more beautiful form than the most exquisite stays can produce. Could flattery of this sort reach their feelings, could they learn to have more confidence in Nature than the Milliner, they would begin to see the deformity they commit by screwing in and out the fair proportions of their original selves. ... A lady who obeys the fashion changes her figure monthly. In January she is a balloon - in February a skeleton - in March a May-pole - in April a barrel. But if she keep somewhat closer to nature, she will be always graceful and easy, and have the free use of her limbs. .. If ladies see the difference between the artificial and the simple in all other matters of taste, how is it that they cannot reconcile themselves to acknowledge it in this, the most interesting of all?"<sup>13</sup>

This conception of the female body and its adornment has wider implications than one might at first suppose; themes contained

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<sup>12</sup> SACA, 22 June 1831.

<sup>13</sup> SACA, 1 June 1831.

within it were crucial to the general conception of the rational public sphere. As Mary Douglas puts it, one must "see in the body a symbol of society, and to see the powers and dangers credited to social structure reproduced in small on the human body."<sup>14</sup> Although the preoccupation with personal adornment can be seen as a function of its being one of the few areas available in which women's creativity could be expressed<sup>15</sup>, the domestic ideology of middle class identity demanded a woman who did not make use of her body as a spectacle for display. The aristocratic manner of putting the body at the centre of the rituals whereby power was displayed was rejected.<sup>16</sup> Women's bodies could not be signifiers of status when their role was to be kept within the private sphere of society, concerned with the "toils of maternal love", rather than with "luxurious vice".

The bourgeois public sphere arose at roughly the same time as the ideal of the domestic family, with its appropriate gender roles. Certain writers, in fact, have stressed that it was conceived of as an essentially masculine political and social order, set up in opposition to an artificial, feminine, rococo court culture. Jürgen Habermas sees part of the strength of the eighteenth century coffee house culture lying in its explicitly masculinist nature, as opposed to that of the "style of the

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<sup>14</sup> Douglas, M. Purity and Danger, p.115

<sup>15</sup> Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes, p.413

<sup>16</sup> Armstrong, N. 'The rise of the domestic woman' in N. Armstrong and L. Tennenhouse (eds.) The Ideology of Conduct: Essays in Literature and the History of Sexuality. (New York and London, 1987), p.97

salon, [which] like that of the rococo in general, was essentially shaped by women."<sup>17</sup> Landes stresses that the early modern classical revival invested public action with a masculinist ethos which was reinforced by the "bourgeois repudiation of aristocratic splendour and artifice in favour of the values of nature, transparency, and law."<sup>18</sup> This process of repudiation sidelined female salonnières who were accused of artifice and stylized discourse in conflict with nature<sup>19</sup>, much in the same way as the Advertiser repudiated female concern with dress in favour of a woman's true role as a 'natural' mother. Masculinist classicism was embraced as the culture of political discourse in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century<sup>20</sup>, finding its expression at a later date, at the Cape, in symbols such as the neo-Classical facade of the Commercial Exchange, the classically-inspired pseudonyms such as 'Civus' and 'Justus' used by writers to the Advertiser, and the equation of British cultural achievement with that of the Greeks and Romans.<sup>21</sup>

This opposition between unacceptable female bodily display and

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<sup>17</sup> Habermas, J. The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society. Translated by T. Burger, with the assistance of F. Lawrence. (Cambridge, Ma. 1989) Original German edition, 1962., p.33

<sup>18</sup> Landes, Women and the Public Sphere, p.4

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p.28

<sup>20</sup> For an examination of the masculinist classicism of the public sphere in the French Revolution, see S. Schama, Citizens, p.170 - 1.

<sup>21</sup> As the Advertiser claimed on 31 August 1831: "Infuse the Roman, the Grecian, or the British mind into the bodies of the most barbarous nation, and you have, in a short period of time, the glories and grandeur of Rome, Greece, or Britain".

restrained masculine political culture at the Cape can also be linked to the replacement of Dutch cultural forms by those of Britain in the construction of the rational public sphere. The divide is reminiscent of the criticisms of Cape society levelled by Samuel Hudson during the slightly earlier period of 1796 - 1807, when the city had not been so much transformed by British culture. Hudson deplored the conspicuous bodily display of the Dutch women of the Cape, as well as attacking the lack of division between public and private spheres within the Dutch slaveholding family.<sup>22</sup> The notion of conspicuous consumption and bodily display was vital to the operation of political power under the Dutch order at the Cape. The exhibition of social status, through the use of these notions of power, was strictly controlled by means of sumptuary laws. The great codifier of Dutch sumptuary laws in the eighteenth century was Jacob Mossel, whose "Measures for Curbing Pomp and Circumstance"<sup>23</sup> came into force at the Cape in 1755. The code minutely stipulated the degree of lavishness allowed to the different social groups of a highly hierarchical society in matters of dress, carriages and other forms of public display.<sup>24</sup> Such laws were obviously in flagrant contradiction of British notions of a free market economy, but they were also indicative of a social system that invested power in bodily display in a way that was anathema to

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<sup>22</sup> See McKenzie, The Making of an English Slaveowner, especially chapter four.

<sup>23</sup> Plakaatboek, 6: 773 - 95, quoted in Jean Taylor, The Social World of Batavia, (London, 1983)

<sup>24</sup> Taylor, J. The Social World of Batavia, (London, 1983), p.

the new social system which the Advertiser was trying to establish at the Cape. The new political order's conception of gender and power was thus not only set up in opposition to European aristocratic notions of power, it was also constructed against a conception of the Dutch social system at the Cape. Hudson's criticisms took place in the colonial context of a city whose perceptions of gender and the family he found both disturbing and alienating; twenty to thirty years later, the Advertiser considered its attitudes to be the cultural norm, transgressions against which were unacceptable.

'Natural' political discourse, therefore, was male political discourse. The essentially masculine nature of the bourgeois public sphere, and its dependence upon a specific conception of male identity, caused the Advertiser, in its attempt to create a rational public sphere at the Cape, to lay especial emphasis on the importance of 'manliness'.

Some female readers of the Advertiser clearly felt alienated by the excessively masculinist nature of the rational public sphere. Early on in its history, a female correspondent<sup>25</sup> wrote to the

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<sup>25</sup> Since almost all correspondents to the Advertiser made use of pseudonyms, a practice of which the newspaper approved, their actual gender can never be determined with complete accuracy. There may well have been women who wrote to the Advertiser in the guise of men, taking on an explicitly masculine discourse. Correspondents which are ostensibly female use a very different tone to that of their male counterparts, as the letters quoted below indicate. It seems likely that the correspondents considered below, 'Letitia Tattle' and 'An Old Maid', were women, either thoroughly imbued with contemporary negative images of women or manipulating them in their desire to get their letters printed and to have their voices heard within the public sphere.

paper complaining that its pages contained nothing of interest to women:

"Mr. Editor,

It is not a little surprising, while the barbarous Mantatees, Appollo's Head, and Drunkenness, in all its various shades, occupy so large a share of your paper, that they 'whom men were born to please,' are almost excluded. This unfriendly conduct, Sir, is creating you many enemies; and, unless you are indifferent to the displeasure of the *female world*, you must immediately alter it. In a female party the other evening, it became the subject of conversation; and, though none of us could reason well, we could all abuse and call names - one said you were a bachelor, who, perhaps, had not studied the ladies, and were afraid of them: - another ventured to suggest, that every lady should have notice to run at your approach: - Rebecca Doubtful thought you a libertine, because you had never recorded a *marriage*; and Deborah Tabby, an old maiden-lady, remarked, that it must arise from some mental deficiency, for regard to the ladies was always the first proof of reason in man; but though we could not agree as to the cause, all united in reprobating that indifference which has been said by your sex to be more provoking to us than downright abuse. - Now, Sir, as it would be so easy to please us, at least to give us something to talk about (which is the same thing,) I shall think you a most disagreeable odious creature, if you continue to exclude us from your pages."<sup>26</sup>

'Letitia Tattle' takes on conventional female discourse in her letter, poking fun at her own sex and playing upon stereotypical images of women as gossips without the capacity to reason, this rational ability being seen as the means by which entrance into the public sphere might be gained. She also invokes an image of men and women which sets each up in a completely different "world" so that one must 'study' the other almost as if they belong to different species. The image of separate spheres is taken almost to the extremes of parody in her letter, but the serious fact remains that many middle class women probably found the process of social reconstitution which the Advertiser was

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<sup>26</sup> SACA, 21 January 1824. Letter from 'Letitia Tattle'

engaged in both alienating and without personal reference or interest. Another point which the letter raises is the extent to which it is crucial to read the Advertiser in gendered rather than in generic terms. It was written by men with masculine interests which were determined by their position in a particular historical circumstance, and it is a reduction of the complexity of the Advertiser's text to reduce it to generic terms.

Another female correspondent who styled herself 'An Old Maid', wrote to the Advertiser complaining of the fact that the Ball Room was to be closed and auctioned. Again, her letter is written in a tone of self-mockery which invokes derisive images of women.<sup>27</sup> Her point of view, however, casts an interesting light on the degree to which the 'Age of Reform' was not of personal interest to certain women:

"I am truly rejoiced to read in your Paper of the FAIR, as I trust it may be the means of drawing your attention to the very negligent way in which the Fair Sex are treated here. ...what vexes me is, that while every one is thinking and talking about Representatives, and Councils, and Wine, and Agriculture, and Fairs, no one seems to care for us, or our concerns. They call it the Age of Intellect; but I call it a sorry, pitiful, petty-fogging, money-making, lady-unpitying; bachelor-continuing, scandalous, non-descript sort of ungallant age; so I hope this appeal will stir the metal (if any such be in 'em) of the single men, married men, old men, young men, white men, or, as the last resource, the 'gekleurd' men, to provide a fitting Ball Room for us. And as for you, Mr. Editor, if you do not advocate our cause, you will never hear the last of it

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<sup>27</sup> Both writers choose pseudonyms which invoke images which were commonly used to ridicule their sex. Looking more closely at the terms, however, reveals the constraints under which women of their class operated in their society - they were denied legitimate public expression and their speech was branded as 'tattle'; they were given no career options outside marriage, and those who did not marry were labelled 'old maids'.

from, - Oh that I should ever write it, - An Old Maid."<sup>28</sup>

Since the views of women, even of middle class women, are often silences in history, we have no way of knowing how representative of a certain viewpoint this letter was, nor do we know how much real social criticism underlies 'An Old Maid's' self-parody. What these two letters do hint at, however, is that one cannot assume universal class interest across gendered lines. Many middle class women may well have felt alienated by the contents of the Advertiser, as well as feeling that the reform agendas of the men of their class, who debated issues such as representative government with such passion, were not to do "with us, or our concerns".

The reconstruction of the social world of the Cape, in which the Advertiser saw itself as playing a crucial role, was thus an essentially masculine process which sought to prepare the colony for self-government. The proper operation of a man within society was correspondingly an important focus of the Advertiser. Middle class male identity was a crucially important aspect to the class's drive for political representation, 'manhood' having "political as much as sexual connotations" by the early nineteenth century.<sup>29</sup> Habermas has stressed that the bourgeois public sphere was fundamentally based on education and property ownership, both of which were largely masculine prerogatives.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> SACA, 17 December, 1831

<sup>29</sup> Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes, p.199

<sup>30</sup> Habermas, The Public Sphere, p.85. Habermas notes that during the French revolution, the tax list was used as the "standard for the distinction between full citizens and those of

The Advertiser clearly saw masculinity as being partially based on property ownership. When attacking its opponents at De Zuid-Afrikaan, it called them 'men' since, "as they pay taxes we must, we suppose, call them men."<sup>31</sup>

Davidoff and Hall, as well as other writers, have stressed the fragility of British middle class masculine identity in the early nineteenth century; it was especially vulnerable to attacks from the more firmly anchored image of the male aristocrat, an issue which may partly explain the virulent attack on masculine recreation in public quoted above<sup>32</sup>. The Advertiser frequently attacked this aristocratic image in its attempts to forge a self-confident middle class male identity at the Cape. Early on in its history, the Advertiser reacted violently to the reports of "a barbarous and revolting murder which has been perpetrated in the vicinity of London by a desperate association of Gamblers and

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lesser status." Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> SACA, 10 December 1831

<sup>32</sup> Because men have historically been seen as those who benefit under an oppressive sex-gender system, it can be all too easy to assume that their assumption of identity is a simple and unproblematic process. In fact, "[t]he process of becoming a man is ... one of struggle, and striving for power. Far from a natural process, men must strain to succeed in establishing their masculinity ..." Ramazanogly, C. 'What can you do with a man? Feminism and the critical appraisal of masculinity' Women's Studies International Forum 15 (3) 1992, p.342. Men's Studies, arising out of the destabilisations in gender identity which accompanied the feminist movement, "lays decisive emphasis on dispelling the commonly held belief that the contemporary period is uniquely tumultuous and troubling for beleaguered male egos. It reveals that constructs of masculinity have always resulted from conflicting pressures." Brod, H. 'The Case for Men's Studies', p.46

Pugilists."<sup>33</sup> It set the idea of the moral man up against that of the man of rank:

"While therefore the miscreant retailers of blasphemy and sedition are held up (and righteously held up) to the execration of all good men and lovers of their country, let thoughtless men of rank and influence, who patronize these irrational and degrading "Sports" consider whether they are not equally abetting, by such unchristian courses, the enemies of the human race, and promoting the progress of corruption, violence, and abandoned vice throughout the world."<sup>34</sup>

True 'manliness' was seen to be based on intellectual character, rather than upon brute strength. This is not surprising since "[t]he accomplishments of middle-class men were primarily sedentary and literate, the manipulation of the pen and the ruler rather than the sword and the gun."<sup>35</sup> Duelling was considered a "Gothic method of settling disputes"<sup>36</sup>, the paper stressing the anachronistic nature of trial by combat in the Age of Reason.<sup>37</sup> In its attempts to control the expression of its correspondents, the Advertiser urged: "Let us not come before the most grave and majestic Public to make sport like gladiators, or to tilt at each

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<sup>33</sup> SACA, 18 February 1824

<sup>34</sup> Ibid

<sup>35</sup> Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes, p.205

<sup>36</sup> SACA, 5 January 1831

<sup>37</sup> For an account of the attacks on duelling which arose in England in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century see Kiernan, V.G. The Duel in European History: Honour and the Reign of the Aristocracy. (Oxford, 1988)p.167 ff. Trumbach links the decline in duelling to the rise of the domestic ethos in Britain: Trumbach, The Rise of the Egalitarian Family, p.235 The Family. Samuel Hudson also attacked duelling, primarily amongst British army officers, at the Cape. See McKenzie, The Making of an English Slaveowner, chapter one.

other's reputations like vain and ambitious Knights".<sup>38</sup> Again, the rejection of the symbols of aristocratic culture are explicit. The traditional blood sports of the upper and lower classes were rendered barbarous by a culture that stressed compassion and moral feeling as essential components of male identity<sup>39</sup>:

"BARBAROUS SPORTS - As to the tendency of barbarous sports of any kind or description whatever, to nourish the national characteristics of manliness and courage - (the only shadow of argument I ever heard on such occasions) - all I can say is this, that from the mercenary battles of the lowest beasts - namely, human boxers - up to those of the highest and noblest that are tormented by man for his degraded pastime, I enter this public protest against it. I never knew a man remarkable for heroic bravery whose very aspect was not lighted up by gentleness and humanity, nor a kill and-eat-him countenance that did not cover the heart of a bully or a poltroon."<sup>40</sup>

Middle class masculinity was bound up with a man's ability to act within the public sphere, 'manhood' being "a central part of claims to legitimate middle-class leadership."<sup>41</sup> In moments of crisis, such as the violent debates over slavery in 1831, to be

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<sup>38</sup> SACA, 2 February 1831

<sup>39</sup> For an examination of the rejection of physical cruelty, especially toward the vulnerable members of society such as slaves, children, women and animals, which arose during the course of the eighteenth century, see Keith Thomas, Man and the Natural World, p.175. See also Stone, The Family, p.238.

<sup>40</sup> SACA 2 February 1824. Speech of Lord Eskin in the House of Lords. As the source of this quotation indicates, much of the ideology relating to the family and to gender roles which one could label 'middle class' had, in fact, been absorbed by all but the highest levels of the aristocracy. See Trumbach, The Rise of the Egalitarian Family. This was partly the result of middle class Evangelical reform efforts during the eighteenth century which were directed, initially, at the upper classes. See Hall, C. 'The Early Formation of Victorian Domestic Ideology' in Burman, S. (ed) Fit Work for Women (London and Canberra, 1979)

<sup>41</sup> Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes, p.199

further considered in chapter four, the Advertiser called upon its male readers to take action as public men:

"It is impossible for a Community, so excited as we now are, to remain stationary, or to fall back, into our former state of apathy. It is therefore no longer a simple question between patriotism and indolence, but between active duty and personal danger, that each and all of us have to consider. There are surely natural Leaders and Advisers in this as in every other country, on whom the People have a right to call in this hour of difficulty. Men of property, rank and experience - men of talent and principle, are imperiously commanded by the circumstances of the times, to step forward and to exert their influence, whether it be to kindle or retrain the popular feeling, till our affairs shall be fixed on some secure and permanent foundation. Popular Agitation in a Slave Colony is of all things the most formidable. Open Resistance to the Laws, public Insults offered to the persons of Magistrates and Servants of Government, by the Owners and Managers of Slaves, on account of their supposed friendly intentions towards that class, cannot fail to unsettle all their habits of submission, and fill their minds with the most dangerous sentiments. ... When such men are busy, and when the natural fruits of their wickedness begin to manifest themselves, as we have lately seen, what man among us can lay his head on his pillow without asking himself - what he had done during the day to restore and secure the tranquillity of the country? ... We would push no man into action beyond his natural strength. We do not look for very great sacrifices for the public welfare from individuals. We ask not for martyrs - because they are not needed in the present case. All that is required is an open manly expression of those sentiments which most of us, if not all, indulge in privately, and scruple not to confess frankly among our confidential friends. Is this demanding too much? Can an honest man do less, if he does any thing? Yet who doubts that an universal expression of such sentiments from all ranks and classes would at once obtain for us the Rights we so much desire, and without which the colony many, or rather must, very soon be utterly ruined?"<sup>42</sup>

The importance of public action by men of sound moral principles is stressed here: while men might, like women, express sentiments in private, it is only when their thoughts achieve "open manly expression", that their true social role can be fulfilled. Like

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<sup>42</sup> SACA, 28 May 1831

its British counterpart, the middle class masculinity of the early nineteenth century Cape was based upon the assumption of a public role in the reconstitution of the social world. This was seen as particularly important in a slave colony, which is rendered here as inherently unstable, and in need of the actions of a rational group of men. As will be considered below, a slaveowner's power had an important physical aspect, which was analogous to aristocratic notions of the display of power discussed above. It was therefore troubling to the notion of male gender roles laid down by the Advertiser. Slavery was also a labour system which acted against the rigid separation of public and private spheres, since workers were intimately bound to the family of their owners.<sup>43</sup> Slavery tended, therefore, to erode a sense of the economic as a separate domain, a point which was raised in the previous chapter. One of the reasons for the 'instability' of a slave colony, apart from the threat of revolt by slaves, was the effect which slaveowning had of being incompatible with British notions of the family and of gender roles. As will be considered below, it also acted against the union of Dutch and British settlers which the Advertiser considered a crucial prerequisite for the establishment of a Legislative Assembly at the Cape.

The Advertiser clearly saw itself as taking on a position of guidance: calling men to action to prevent disaster as well as outlining in detail the role which men should take on within the

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<sup>43</sup> For an extended examination of this issue in Cape society see K. McKenzie The Making of an English Slaveowner, chapters three, four and five.

public sphere. The position of men within a rational public sphere could not, therefore, be taken for granted at the Cape. The Advertiser certainly felt that its readers were unfamiliar enough with it to have to be told (or reminded) of its nature. This emerges even more explicitly in an editorial written ostensibly in reply to a correspondent who styled himself as a 'Dumb Dog'<sup>44</sup> and who wrote to the paper to ask advice on the question of whether it was permissible to express opinions on subjects which do not directly concern one.<sup>45</sup> More especially, he asked, can one express opinions about slave labour when one owns no slaves? Fairbairn replied at length since he clearly saw the importance of his role as the guide to men embarking on public action when they were relatively unsure of their explicit role. This is an extract from a much longer editorial:

"In the present case of Slavery, to which he chiefly refers, we cannot see how any man in the Colony can justify his silence. It is very clear that mischief and danger are in progress. . . . we fear that not a few ignorant persons, under the influence of mistaken friends, will, unless prevented by more prudent counsels from cooler heads, cause partial disquiet, and bring disgrace and ruin upon themselves and families. This is the evil against which every good man should exert his influence, be it great or small, disdaining the thought of being deterred by the obloquy which bad men invariably attempt to heap upon the firm and independent lovers of their country.

Good advice, in times of excitement, must no doubt give offence. All the Passions hate Truth. In an angry crowd, the angriest orator is necessarily the favorite for the moment. But his favor, like the feelings he flatters and exasperates, is short lived. Returning reason, or the rubs and sufferings which his blinded followers soon

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<sup>44</sup> Once more, the symbolism surrounding dogs and their opposition to rational men must be borne in mind here.

<sup>45</sup> Since this letter, which was not included in the pages of the paper, was exactly such a one as Fairbairn needed to justify his attempts to guide the actions of public men at the Cape, it seems likely that the letter was conveniently invented for his own purposes.

experience in the false course they have entered upon, strip the tinsel from his eloquence; and his due reward is *dishonor*, and perhaps something more tangible, just by way of keeping him in mind of his folly.- The People then return to their natural guides, provided they have made themselves known by the test of consistency; and by manifesting, as well in the storm as in the calm, in good report and in bad report, that though they love a good name much, they love the good of their countrymen more.

In the present partial disturbances, no thinking man can feel at a loss how to act, or to advise."<sup>46</sup>

In keeping with the agendas that informed the creation of a rational public sphere, the 'thinking man' is honoured over the passionate orator. Reason must prevail over emotion, and for it to do so, a 'dumb dog' must be transformed into a 'thinking man' by one familiar with the proper behaviour expected by a man acting within the public sphere. The explicit links which Fairbairn draws between patriotism and the moral man are interesting, because the editorial goes on to describe the actions of the Stellenbosch slaveowners whose 1831 riot, described in chapter four, was a response to the imposition, under the British amelioration legislation, of the punishment record books in which all punishment of slaves had to be noted down for the inspection of the British government:

"The naughty boys who have fallen into this absurdity, must, upon reflection, admit that they have done no credit either to their party or their country; and their Counsellors in Cape Town and elsewhere should lose no time, and spare no pains, to convince them, that if their cause be good it will prevail sooner and more certainly by reasonable and manly conduct, such as becomes a true Colonist, than by uproarious manifestations of childish hostility to Persons rather than to Principles."<sup>47</sup>

Fairbairn must attempt to defuse the potential force of the

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<sup>46</sup> SACA, 18 May 1831

<sup>47</sup> Ibid

Stellenbosch riot by denying its political implications. He does this by referring to the slaveowners as "boys" rather than as "men", in a colony in which the distinction between boy and man was not only confined to divisions of age, but was also one between free and slave, indicating the crucial part that notions of masculinity played in the Advertiser's perceptions of legitimate political activity. A further point is raised when one considers the divergence between the images of men held by British-orientated reformers and by Dutch slaveholders. Fairbairn's construction of an appropriate form of masculine identity at the Cape, which was an important part of the process by which the colony was to "ripen" for self-government, was threatened by an alternative and threatening notion of masculinity centred around the status of slaveholding.

Patricia van der Spuy has used the term 'patriarchy' in a specific sense to describe the "form of social control in terms of which power and authority is vested in the household head within the 'private domain'. The slaveholder, therefore, exercised power over his wife, children, servants and slaves, both male and female."<sup>48</sup> Van der Spuy stresses that this model represented an ideal rather than the reality that was constructed through the day to day struggles between men and women, slave and free.<sup>49</sup> In the struggles between slaves, slaveowners and the

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<sup>48</sup> van der Spuy, P. 'Essays on gender and slavery', p.9 - 10.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p.12 In this, patriarchy at the Cape was analogous to the image of the domestically-orientated family outlined above. In both cases, of course, the fact that these images represented ideals rather than the reality, made them no less cognitively powerful.

British state activated by the amelioration process, different conceptions of private and public were held by all three groups. Slaveowners viewed their farms, and all those in them over whom their patriarchal power was exercised, as a private sphere outside the jurisdiction of the state.<sup>50</sup> For slaves, "traditionally the public sphere arguably would have been the slave holding, with the patriarchal slaveholder representing the state in miniature."<sup>51</sup> The amelioration process struck a powerful blow at the patriarchal self-concept of the Cape slaveholder; removing the basis of his power by placing ultimate authority in the hands of the paternalistic state.<sup>52</sup> The punishment record books were particularly disruptive of patriarchal masculine identity, because they broke into the 'private' sphere of the family/farm<sup>53</sup> and undercut the absolute power of the slaveholder over this domain. It is important, therefore, to see the Stellenbosch riots as being at least partially motivated by the

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<sup>50</sup> Scully, P. 'Emancipation and the family in the rural western Cape, South Africa, c.1834 - 1842' (Paper presented to University of Cape Town History Department post-graduate seminar, April 1992), p.5

<sup>51</sup> van der Spuy, 'Essays on gender and slavery', p.25

<sup>52</sup> van der Spuy makes this useful distinction between the concepts of patriarchy and paternalism when dealing with the context of the early nineteenth century Cape: "Patriarchy depended on the notion of absolute power resting in the hands of the slaveholding patriarch, which relied on rigid hierarchies and brutal imagery and praxis, whereas paternalism clothed itself in a more subtle liberalism which denied the use of naked despotism while adapting the notions of family and reciprocity to its more invidious, because more hidden, form of power." 'Essays on gender and slavery', p.12 - 13.

<sup>53</sup> Pamela Scully has stressed the crucially interdependent nature of these concepts in the slaveholders notion of the family and of private and public space. See 'Emancipation and the Family in the rural Western Cape'.

disruption of masculine identity which amelioration represented. The fact that this notion of masculinity was strongly based on the right to inflict physical punishment highlights the reason why it was rejected by a conception of the family in which notions of power were more subtly expressed. Adding to this process of emasculation, was the manner in which the Advertiser sought, according to its own conflicting terms of gender identity, to cast doubt upon the political legitimacy of the actions of the Stellenbosch slaveholders, by denying their status as "men".

Middle class identity at the Cape, therefore, was bound up in a reform process which institutions such as the Advertiser were trying to promote, and which sought to reconstitute Cape society in opposition to the cultural forms of the Dutch slaveowner described above. Men and women, however, had characteristically distinct roles within this process of social improvement at the Cape. It seems that, in this, the situation at the Cape differed from that of Britain, where reform movements sometimes provided women with space to move outside the rigid confines of the private sphere, in however limited a way.

Digby has stressed the contested nature of the public/private dichotomy which operated in nineteenth century Britain, using the concept of the 'borderland' to indicate the blurred reality of seemingly sharp distinctions in gender roles.<sup>54</sup> Philanthropy was one area which women, as perceived nurturing beings who wielded

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<sup>54</sup> Digby, A. 'Victorian Values', p.2

moral influence within the domestic sphere, could enter without enough disruption of the status quo to provoke social outrage.<sup>55</sup> It therefore provided an area which could be manipulated by women, allowing them differed access to the public sphere. This was especially true in respect to antislavery, in which women were strongly involved, and which moved closer to the domain of national politics than did other philanthropic movements.<sup>56</sup> Ferguson has linked the antislavery movement to the development of feminism in Britain, stressing the degree to which it allowed women to develop their subjectivity and articulate dissatisfaction with their own position in the social system: "Women throughout the provinces transcended their prescribed social role as philanthropic domestic angels to become political activists protected from any charge of excess by that very prescription. ... In founding associations, raising funds, and formulating principles, resolutions, reports and pamphlets apart from men, women had established a firm autonomy as community publicists and historians."<sup>57</sup>

The antislavery movement at the Cape was so weak as to be almost non-existent, and it was, in addition, noted for its lack of autonomous female involvement, in contrast with contemporary

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<sup>55</sup> Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes, p.431

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p.8

<sup>57</sup> Ferguson, M. Subject to Others: British Women Writers and Colonial Slavery, 1670 - 1834 (London and New York, 1992), p.299

movements in Britain and North America.<sup>58</sup> Middle class women at the Cape also seem to have had a far weaker and less autonomous role in reform movements generally. This was in keeping with the ideology relating to gender roles described by Davidoff and Hall: "Power was for men, influence for women. Through their example in life women could hope to make those around them, in their family circle, better people. It was moral influence which was to allow a reassertion of self for women."<sup>59</sup> Influence, rather than action, was the crucial term in the description of the female role in reform, and was one which the Advertiser frequently invoked. As the paper noted with reference to the Parisian revolution, "the smile of beauty [is] the best and most acceptable award for deeds of bravery."<sup>60</sup>

One must be careful of confusing the reality of middle class women's involvement in the reform process with the doctrines laid down by the Advertiser (which are the real subject of this thesis) and the question of their relative autonomy of action within colonial reform needs further empirical investigation. If, however, the Advertiser's accounts of the role of women in reform are accurate, one reason for the greater inflexibility of gender roles at the Cape may relate to the importance of the proper positioning of men and women in the attempt to forge a social

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<sup>58</sup> For an account of the role of women in the Cape of Good Hope Philanthropic Society for Aiding Deserving Slaves to Purchase their Freedom, founded 1828, see Watson, R. The Slave Question, p.203

<sup>59</sup> Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes, p.170

<sup>60</sup> SACA, 24 November 1830

views of the learned and wise, coincide with ours."<sup>61</sup>

The private woman must therefore take on the role of influencing, and encouraging the public man to further effort in the public sphere. This letter, in appropriately tentative a tone, received a somewhat patronizing and self-satisfied reply from Fairbairn:

"To this LADY we present our respectful thanks. However highly we prize the approbation of the learned, we are still more deeply sensible of the kind attention of such pure and feeling spirits as the writer of the above proves herself to be."<sup>62</sup>

Women, therefore, as those who were seen as the "pure", rather than as the "learned", were to be the observers and supporters of the male reform initiative at the Cape. Thus they attended meetings on appropriate topics, such as the Infant School Society, but they withdrew before the real business of voting began.<sup>63</sup> They supported reform initiatives by making "Fancy Articles" of needlework for sale, but took no part in their financial organization.<sup>64</sup> The tensions inherent in this prescription of suitable gender roles came to a somewhat spectacular head at the first General Meeting of the Temperance Society on 28 January 1832<sup>65</sup>, when the ambiguities surrounding

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<sup>61</sup> SACA, 4 February 1824

<sup>62</sup> Ibid

<sup>63</sup> SACA, 19 February, 1831

<sup>64</sup> SACA, 17 August, 1831

<sup>65</sup> The aims of the Cape of Good Hope Temperance Society, formed on 9 December 1831, were to recruit as many members as possible, who "should be prepared to renounce strong liquor and discourage its use, also among non-members, by distributing tracts on the evils of liquor abuse." Botha, John Fairbairn, p. 141. Fairbairn and John Philip were among the founder-members.

female influence and male action and the division of men and women into public and private spheres resulted in a heated debate on the place of women in the reform agenda. The incident is particularly interesting in the contrasts it makes with equivalent reform movements in Britain and America. Women were particularly strongly attracted to temperance movements in these countries, temperance being considered, in many ways, to be "a women's issue", because women saw themselves as the primary victims of men's drinking.<sup>66</sup> In America, women came primarily to control the temperance movements, not least since "[t]emperance was an attractive issue for women because men's drinking symbolized so many of the injustices that women felt" in an oppressive society.<sup>67</sup> In the later nineteenth century, women's temperance movements became linked to female emancipation and female suffrage. The movement therefore held the potential for female autonomy of action and for the articulation of female dissatisfaction with the men of their society.

The Advertiser described disturbances which took place at the Temperance Society's General Meeting as follows:

"Having a great Public Object in view - viz. the Suppression of a Vice which has ruined the Labor of the Colony, and carried disorder and unceasing annoyance into every household; and conscious that their exertions for the salvation of the Colony in this respect, would be successful in proportion to the extent of the co-operation of virtue and talent; the Society by a public Advertisement invited the Ladies of the Colony to honor them with their presence - whose influence all men feel, and all but

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<sup>66</sup> Epstein, B.L. The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America (Connecticut, 1981), p.100

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, p.107

savages are proud to acknowledge."... [One man (Mr Buckton) then rose:] "He began to oppose the cause of Virtue in the abstract, in a gush of words which seemed almost too foul even for the lips from which they issued. Offended modesty instantly withdrew, and, in the bustle, he escaped that summary chastisement which no gentleman who had an arm to his body could have kept suspended one moment longer.

On returning to their seats the gentlemen of the Society found themselves in rather an undignified situation. They had invited the Ladies of the Colony to grace the meeting with their presence; they had provided accommodations and escorted them thither, and they now saw them driven from the room by an unmannerly stranger who, had things been properly managed, could not have uttered a word but by the permission of the Chair. And there he still stood, with a brow of brass, and an eye whose every expression is a breach of decorum, grinning and leering in their faces!"<sup>68</sup>

The actual transcribed account of the meeting is rather more dramatic. The first speaker is the Mr Buckton who was the cause of the disruption:

"He wished the Society to go further than it proposed ... in looking at this they must think whether in steering clear of Scylla, they don't touch on Charybdis. They were well aware that Bacchus and Venus were inimical to each other [cries of Shame!] but they were not far apart; and they were not aware how far Ardent Spirits being annihilated might not be opening the door to other vices; for in falling from Bacchus they might stumble upon Venus, and he was sure -

Here the Chairman interrupted Mr. Buckton. He spoke the sense of the meeting in saying such a course of observations could not be allowed.

Mr Buckton said (in a tone of derision) that he would bow to the rebuke of the Chair, and proceed at once. Temperance was a solitary bird, and he would add chastity, for

(Loud Cries of scandalous! shame! kick him out!)

Several gentlemen here rose at once:-

Mr PEARS said the members of the Temperance Society stood there to answer argument, but not abuse. That man - for he could scarcely bring himself to pronounce the word gentleman - had used language unbecoming a gentleman or any man, he had better recollect where he was, and what he was doing.

Mr Buckton again attempted to speak, but was indignantly met by the cries of shame! turn him out!

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<sup>68</sup> SACA, 1 February 1832. I am grateful to Andrew Bank for providing me with this reference.

(The language, tone, and gesticulations of this person here became so ineffably offensive, that the cries of "Chair," "Chair" resounded from all parts of the room; and in the midst of the confusion the ladies were conducted from the rooms by their friends.)

Mr. HAMILTON ROSS said he was glad the ladies had retired. He thought they had no business at such a meeting. It was not a proper place for them to come to, and if they had been introduced to stifle debate, that object would not succeed."<sup>69</sup>

Out of this incident, Fairbairn took the opportunity to lay down the appropriate role which women should play within the process of reform which he was trying to engender at the Cape:

"We now come to the question at issue. Are the Ladies of the Colony to be excluded from our Public Assemblies at the Cape of Good Hope? Is it to be understood that Societies exist in this town, composed of Clergymen, the Instructors of Youth, Civil and Military Officers of the highest rank, and patronized by the Governor, that hold meetings at noon day, with open doors, which neither Female Modesty nor the Innocence of Youth dare approach. Shall such a question require a division? Is there a gentleman with a heart in his bosom, or who retains the power of reason, that does not indignantly answer, 'No. Their presence is our safety and our glory - it both kindles and chastens every nobler feeling of our souls. For them, infinitely more than for ourselves, we think, and speak, and act. For their tranquillity and domestic happiness we labor to reform - all orders of men, from the highest to the lowest - to relieve them from the terrors of the midnight robber, the keen disgust occasioned by the sight of servile intoxication, and all the dangers that flow from moral disorder in the population by which they are surrounded. We invite, we implore their countenance, their encouragement, and their aid, in this great work. Let them forgive us this once, if we appeared slow in their defence; and we vow by Birth, by Honor, by Love, and by Filial Affection, that our Public Halls, where they condescend to honor us, shall be, in future, as sacred as their own drawing-rooms from the intrusion of every unbidden guest who has not on the wedding garment of good breeding and respect.'" <sup>70</sup>

The woman's importance is seen to lie in her "influence" on the public man, especially in their attempt to prevent "disorder"

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid

<sup>70</sup> Ibid

from being carried into the private sphere of the household. Female influence is also considered to be something that sets "men" apart from "savages", and thus contributes to the social legitimacy of the public sphere which the Advertiser was attempting to erect at the Cape. What causes the disruption is a failure to abide by the rules of public expression: Mr Buckton causes the meeting to fall into disorder and the women to withdraw because he voices in a public forum that which must remain unspoken - the connections between drink and prostitution.<sup>71</sup> The incident causes the inclusion of women at a public meeting to be criticised - they are not in their "proper place" in the public sphere. Part of the tension evident in the meeting stemmed from the presence of the 'other' in the sacrosanct domain of the Commercial Hall, a domain whose inviolability was discussed in the previous chapter. It may be that the women at the meeting were approaching too close to the status of participation in the public sphere for the comfort of some of its male members. Also, it is not only the physical presence of middle class women which is disturbing to men such as the prominent merchant Hamilton Ross, it is also the symbolic presence of the ultimate other - the female prostitute - whose image is invoked in what should be a haven of class respectability.

Fairbairn's editorial took issue with the view that women were out of place at the meeting; not because he felt that women

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<sup>71</sup> For this connection, see Elks, 'Crime, Community and Police', p.154 and Judges, S. 'Poverty, Living Conditions and Social Relations', p.110

should be given access to a place as autonomous subjects in the public sphere, but because he felt that failure to allow female observers in a masculine public sphere cast doubt on its respectability as a rational middle class construct. Women are to be the receivers, rather than the creators, of a reformed society: men "speak, and think, and act" "for" women, who in themselves have no speech, thought or action. The "public hall" must be as "sacred" as the private "drawing-room", but the two spheres are not to be confused.

As the distinction between 'men' and 'savages' which Fairbairn draws in the above extract indicates, appropriate gender roles were a crucial part of the construction of social respectability for the middle class at the Cape. The uncomplimentary gaze of the foreign visitor was once more an issue here.<sup>72</sup> The Anglo-Indian 'Observer', against whom Fairbairn was so incensed, cast doubt on the respectability of colonial society at the Cape by attacking the status of its women:

"The housemaid marries, and then comes and stands in the same quadrille with her sidevent mistress; and ladies have begun by washing the drawing rooms in which they now receive the best company."<sup>73</sup>

This image of the World Turned Upside Down in which the maid becomes the mistress was anathema to a conception of the middle class at the Cape as a stable and reputable group who would bring

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<sup>72</sup> For an account of the critical views directed by British visitors at Cape women and the family, especially with relation to slavery, see K. McKenzie, The Making of an English Slaveholder, chapter four.

<sup>73</sup> SACA, 20 October 1830

the colony forward to a position of self-government.<sup>74</sup> Given the small size of the colonial community at the Cape, the degree to which the 'Observer's' criticisms were justified; that is, the level of upward social mobility through marriage, needs to be investigated.<sup>75</sup> Fairbairn responded to the criticisms of such writers by attacking their disruption of the private sphere which served to protect women from the gaze of intruders, and emphasizing that Cape homes were not open to the indiscriminate inspection of the visitor. His response, quoted above, on page 78, described the horror at having the names of "wives and daughters" used within the contemptuous descriptions of visitors at the Cape and stressed that "few people feel much flattered by having the walls which surround their most domestic retirements suddenly converted into chrysalis, and all the idlers of the world invited to gaze upon them."<sup>76</sup>

The emphasis in his reply on preserving the sanctity of the female private sphere of 'wives and daughters' was part of the link which was made between female respectability and class

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<sup>74</sup> Kunzle, D. 'World Upside Down: The Iconography of a European Broadsheet Type.' in Babcock, B.A. (ed) The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society (Ithaca and London, 1978), p.40 has stressed the potential of the image of the World Upside Down to shift symbolism into real social disruption. Other writers have indicated that symbolic reversals could serve to defuse rather than to ignite social tensions. Nevertheless, the image of role reversal inherent in the 'maid turned mistress' carried, at least, the potential of social disruption. On this last point, see Stallybrass and White, The Politics and Poetics of Transgression, p.14

<sup>75</sup> It needs to be borne in mind that most housemaids in Cape Town in the early nineteenth century were slaves, and that their incorporation into a colonial elite was therefore unlikely.

<sup>76</sup> SACA, 13 October, 1830

legitimacy; a link which made intruding eyes and slighting comments about female social origins a threat to the new social order which the Advertiser was trying to establish at the Cape. Proper gender roles, and more specifically, the manner in which women were treated by men, were seen to be a vital part of a civilized and rational society, an issue that made adherence to the ideal of particular importance in the colony. If women at the Cape were to be subjected to the intruding gaze of the critical observer within their private sphere, the implication is that Cape society did not have the respectability to warrant the proper treatment of women.

There were concrete economic aspects to this concern over social reputation. The economic base of the British middle class in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was not a uniformly stable one; institutions for investment and for the raising of capital remained in short supply<sup>77</sup>, and middle class property, in contrast to that of the landed classes, was by its very nature both flexible and vulnerable.<sup>78</sup> As Davidoff and Hall note, "[g]iven such uncertainty and the fact that credit arrangements remained essentially local or at the most regional, personal reputation became a key to survival. The behaviour of the entrepreneur, his family and household as well as their material setting, were tangible indications of financial as well as moral probity."<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes, p.207

<sup>78</sup> Poovey, Uneven Developments, p.52

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, p.208

This financial insecurity was to some extent mitigated, in England, by the strong links between kinship and business which allowed for the building up of networks of mutual trust.<sup>80</sup> At the Cape however, the new commercial class was in an even more vulnerable position, since its economic basis had been in place for a much shorter period. In addition, the fact that it had a substantial number of immigrants, such as Fairbairn himself, within its number, prevented the strong kinship links which were used as a basis for many business activities in England. Worries concerning an upward social mobility which might be taking place too quickly for social stability to survive was another issue; one which explains Fairbairn's heated reply to the visitor who invoked the image of the 'maid-turned-mistress'. Personal reputation was therefore crucial in the ambiguity of the colonial context. This was partially dependent upon the ability of a man to keep his family in a financial position in which the female members would not need to find paid employment, making a non-working wife a fixed point of middle class social security.<sup>81</sup> Having women inhabit a private sphere was a mark of middle class status which indicated financial security and thus signalled the family head as a worthy business connection. It is therefore important to realize the economic importance of putting forward an image of appropriate gender roles at the Cape. Gender roles, the family, and financial integrity were linked in the Advertiser's attempt to signal to the outside world the colony's position as a worthy trading partner.

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid, p.216

<sup>81</sup> Poovey, Uneven Developments, p.52

In the process by which colonial identity was forged at the Cape, the Advertiser contrasted other societies with its own, according to their attitudes towards gender roles, and especially with regard to their treatment of women. An important part of the paper's denunciation of the French Revolution of the previous century was the fact that "ladies of rank, delicacy and unimpeachable virtue, were treated with cruelty, brutality, and insult, merely because they bore names which had adorned the history of France."<sup>82</sup> Even more importantly, the Advertiser was concerned, once again, to set the civilized nature of the colony off from the rest of barbarous Africa. In the paper's attack on the tendency of European artisans to mix with a racially heterogeneous underclass, to be explored in the following chapter, Fairbairn stressed the bad influence of "the seductive society of native females, into which the European laborer is so easily entrapped".<sup>83</sup> Like the image of the prostitute which invaded the sanctity of the Commercial Exchange, the image of the "native female" carried the threat of racial and class disruption, especially when considered in the light of the comments of the visitor to the Cape on maids who became mistresses. The social contamination of unsuitable gender roles was one which was of use in the construction of a distinct colonial identity at the Cape. Within this frame of reference can be seen Robert Moffat's speech at the Annual Meeting of the Cape Town Auxiliary to the London Missionary Society in 1830s, which

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<sup>82</sup> SACA, 1 December 1830, account of a public dinner in Edinburgh to celebrate the revolution in Paris.

<sup>83</sup> SACA, 10 August 1831

gave a lurid account of the horrors of the domestic arrangements of the 'Bechuanas' when unredeemed by missionary activity:

"There you will see man tyrannising over the females - the weaker vessels doomed to bear infirmities and afflictions, of which their husbands are comparatively ignorant. There you will see the men reclining under the shade of a spreading tree, while the females are most of the year employed preparing the ground, sowing the grain, and gathering in the harvest. There you may see a mother of twins, without compunction, allow one to be strangled by the hands of her attendant, when it has but just entered the world. If there be one of each sex, the female is the victim; if both of one sex, the weaker is cut off. Their minds are debased - they are earthly, sensual and devilish."<sup>84</sup>

In this account the full horror of inappropriate gender roles and family structures is unleashed. Women are treated harshly, rather than with delicacy, by men. Men lie idle while women take on the economic burdens of the family and the community. Mothers do not cherish their children above all else, but allow them, at their most helpless, to be strangled. What is described might be called the 'anti-family', for in its "earthly, sensual and devilish" state it is the exact opposite of that ideal of gender roles and the family set down by the Advertiser. Positing the 'Bechaunas' in these terms allows them to be set down as an other which is to be reviled and opposed, but which consolidates a sense of a separate colonial identity in which gender roles are appropriately acted out in a rational society. At the same time, however, the redeemability of 'the African' is also stressed. Moffat claimed that these scenes of barbarousness pass away once the recipients of the missionaries attention "have been taught industrious habits, and to appreciate and be grateful for the

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<sup>84</sup> SACA, 15 December 1830

boon which has been handed to them by British Christians"<sup>85</sup>, in keeping with the dual colonial vision of inclusion and exclusion.

Proper gender roles, therefore, were crucial to the making of an appropriate colonial identity at the Cape. Conceptions of masculinity and femininity played an important role in the functioning of the Advertiser's text and in the reform agenda of which it was a part. As in so much else, the paper saw itself as a guide within the pages of which appropriate gender roles in relation to the rational public sphere might be sought by the men and women who were seeking to create a specific colonial identity at the Cape. This chapter has also sought to stress the ambiguities of these ideal gender roles when transported to a colonial context which contained other, potentially disrupting models of proper gendered behaviour, and the resultant tensions which arose over their construction.

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid

## Chapter Four

"Discreet and judicious masters": the reformation of the labour system in Cape Town.

Crucial to the new colonial order which Fairbairn and other social reformers envisaged at the Cape was the fact that it be based on a reconstructed labour system. The character of labour in general, and of slavery in particular, was therefore a subject of major concern to the Advertiser. Slavery was an issue strongly connected to a wide range of important factors in the re-ordering of Cape society. Not least of these was the threat that the debate over slavery posed to the fragile unity between English and Dutch which Fairbairn was at such pains to construct. This analysis of the representation of labour in the Advertiser will therefore address both the way in which the 'Slave Question' threatened the solidarity of Cape Town's, and the colony's, dominant classes and the way in which a reconstructed labour force was seen as a means of exerting the appropriate measures of social control over the underclasses.

The conception of ideal labour relations held by the Advertiser was one in which self-interest rather than coercion provided the stimulus for the labourer's activities. This fitted the actual labouring conditions in Britain in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, where, since people were now embarking on wage labour partly to fulfil non-subsistence needs, there had developed a greater emphasis on labour incentives and productivity, as opposed to coercion.<sup>1</sup> These "materialist

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<sup>1</sup> See Eltis, D. 'Abolitionist Perceptions of Society after Slavery' in Walvin, J. (ed) Slavery and British Society 1776 - 1846 (London, 1982), p.198 and Eltis, D. Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade (New York and Oxford, 1987), p.20

assumptions about human nature"<sup>2</sup> were shared, in Britain, by the followers of Jeremy Bentham and of Adam Smith (the latter being a prominent referent in the Advertiser), by the antislavery crusaders, by those campaigning for the reform of the Poor Laws and the Criminal Law, and by those seeking to rehabilitate the poor of England by means of educational schemes. As this thesis continually attempts to demonstrate, the various reforming impulses of the middle classes were intricately woven together. With regard to labour, and to slavery in particular, the reform impulse at the Cape was far less strong in its commitment to emancipation than was the case in England, a circumstance which can be attributed primarily to the differing tensions and anxieties of social control in the colonial context. Nevertheless, antislavery sentiment at the Cape, such as it was, was similarly bound up in a web of reforming impulses, as will be considered below.

The notion of a labour system which emphasized "the maximization of output on the basis of a sober, industrious labor force made prosperous by its own efforts"<sup>3</sup>, therefore, was held by that group of social reformers from which the Advertiser took its lead in its activities at the Cape. The abolition of colonial slavery and the reformation of the British labour system were part of the same agenda for such reformers. Labour systems such as slavery were deemed irrational; reliance on the whip to provoke labour from the oppressed worker was regarded as counterproductive and

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<sup>2</sup> Rayner, 'Wine and Slaves', p.250

<sup>3</sup> Eltis, D. Economic Growth, p.21

unprofitable. Of especial cognitive importance was the fact that coercive labour systems were considered irrational, as opposed to the carefully balanced workings of the free market system. At the same time, this "recognition that increased rewards induced increased quantities of labour did not preclude the coercion of idlers who refused to respond appropriately."<sup>4</sup> This double vision of reformation and coercion was one which crucially informed the Advertiser's own attitudes. Given the prominence of these ideals about labour relations held by the social reform agendas of Britain, it is not surprising that making use of a labour system that conformed to the new model of rationality was considered a vital factor in determining the 'civilization' and legitimacy of a society, just as the capacity to control and improve the working class was crucial to the formation of middle class identity.<sup>5</sup>

In constructing a new colonial identity along the lines of metropolitan Britain, the labour systems of other British colonies provided a foil against which a sense of belonging to the ranks of the civilized might be insisted upon, as well as a distinct identity of the colony being forged. India and the West Indies played a particularly important role in this process. One of the criticisms levelled at the Cape by the writer of the letter to the Bengal Harkaru, the 'Indian Valetudinary' referred to in earlier chapters<sup>6</sup>, concerned the poor standard of personal

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<sup>4</sup> Eltis, 'Abolitionist Perceptions', p.198

<sup>5</sup>Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes, p.30

<sup>6</sup> See above, page 77.

servants to be encountered at the Cape. In Fairbairn's derogatory account of the letter, he quotes the writer as saying:

"I do not mean to advance that good servants may not be had in Cape Town; but they are certainly more rare than in any other part of the world; and a wise man will not run the chance of dipping into the bag where there are a hundred snakes, and one eel. The price of labor is so high, and fish and brandy so low, that two days' work in the week suffices to ensure a comfortable subsistence for the remainder. The consequence is that they all know the secret of their own strength and independence, a discovery which very generally proves fatal to the comfort of their masters.'" <sup>7</sup>

Fairbairn was clearly incensed at this criticism and replied to it at length in the editorial which quoted it:

"There are as many good servants in Cape Town as there are discreet and judicious masters; but amongst that number we cannot class the man who degrades himself in his own estimation into the mere suckling of a scullion, and who has become emasculated to such a degree that all the comforts of his existence hang upon the right flavor of a Sauce, or the composition of a Curry. Every servant is not fit to be a nurse, nor is it every nurse that can handle without injury such a flimsy human fabric as our author. How is he served in India, while enjoying what passes there for a state of health? Instead of two or three domestics he has perhaps not fewer than eight or ten lazy thievish loungers, one of whom, it is confidently affirmed by travellers, has no other duty to perform during the twenty four hours, than to see that his master's houka, or tobacco-pipe, is not too dirty, and duly filled! To a fellow so coddled and pampered, the more manly habits of the Cape people appear shockingly barbarous. He has been transplanted from the nursery to Indian society before his mother's milk was out of his nose; and he retains and adds daily to the tenderness and delicacy of the tender and delicate woman who cannot touch the ground with her foot for tenderness and delicacy; - and then, truly, his very existence depends on the skill of his cook and the soft attention of his servants?" <sup>8</sup>

The criticism which the Indian writer levelled at the Cape was one of great seriousness because it represented the society as a world turned upside down in which masters are at the mercy of

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<sup>7</sup> SACA, 13 October 1831

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

their servants. In this view, servants work just as much as they need to indulge their creature comforts, rather than working soberly and abstemiously for self-betterment. Fairbairn responded by constructing contrasting social identities for the colonial inhabitants of India and of the Cape which are based on their relationship to labour. As his comments reveal, the character of masters and of servants are intimately related - the representation of servants reflects on the characteristics of their masters, indicating the importance of the labour question in the cognitive world of the Cape middle classes.

Fairbairn represents the Cape as a place of manly self-reliance where masters provide the guidance for servants, as opposed to the emasculated infancy or womanliness of India, where "coddled and pampered" masters are at the mercy of their servants.<sup>9</sup> This emphasis on gender identity indicates its importance in the construction of colonial identity, as explored in the previous chapter. In accordance with the project to reform colonial society, Fairbairn had to indicate both that servants are malleable and that masters are in control of the underclass, rather than vice versa. The malleability of the working class was not incompatible with free wage labour ideology. Fairbairn, in

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<sup>9</sup> This image of the British India is reminiscent of Western Orientalist discourse, explored by Edward Said in Orientalism (London, 1978) As he puts it: "The Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, 'different'; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, 'normal'." p.40 Orientalism was therefore a form of othering whereby a rational colonial self was consolidated through the construction of an irrational colonial other. The Advertiser is therefore invoking an already established imperialist discourse in order to defuse and denigrate the criticisms levelled by the visitor at Cape society.

his defence of the Cape, therefore, turns the appraisal of Cape society as "barbarous" on its head by criticising the perspective of the visitor who thus labelled the social system of the Cape.

The West Indies played a parallel role in the construction of colonial identity at the Cape, with its slave system being set up in opposition to that of the Cape slave society. Positing the slave system at the Cape as 'mild' was common to abolitionists, slave-holding apologists and defenders of slavery alike. The role that the West Indies played as a focus for the anxieties which both Cape slave owners, and non-slaveowning readers of the Advertiser, felt about their own society, was a crucial one. Near the start of the Advertiser's career, an editorial carried one of the earliest examples of the paper's anxiety about slavery, and, significantly, it is with reference to the West Indies:

"The insurrection of the Slaves in Demerara has been completely suppressed, and the island is restored to a state of tranquillity. ... Such dangers open the eyes of men a little to the real nature of the relation subsisting between Masters and their Slaves."<sup>10</sup>

The first extended examination of the "great Slave Question" is also related explicitly to the atrocities committed in the West Indies:

"Some slight disturbances have of late taken place in the West Indies, and some outrages have been committed both by the White and the Black Population of those Colonies, which, though checked by the decision and vigor of the constituted authorities for the present, call loudly on the slumbering wisdom of the British Government.

It has been obvious for many years, to every one acquainted with the principles of legislation, and who is aware of the deep influence which men's private interest exerts over their political feelings, that some definite, intelligible, and final enactment, respecting the great

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<sup>10</sup> SACA, 11 February, 1824.

Slave Question, was becoming daily more necessary, in order to secure the confidence, and consequently the peaceable obedience, of these interesting dependencies of the Empire."<sup>11</sup>

The West Indies served a useful function as a focus for the projection of anxieties over slavery, and the colonists' role in it, which were too inflammatory to be addressed directly. Comparisons between the slave owners of the Cape and the West Indies were especially important in the way in which Fairbairn sought to defuse the debate over slavery and emancipation which threatened to break down the fragile unity amongst the dominant classes in the colony, to be explored more fully in chapter five. Fairbairn, whose views never embraced the concept of slavery as inherently sinful, in contrast to most British abolitionists<sup>12</sup>, sought to create a somewhat artificial distinction between slave holding and slave treatment in his attempts to promote class unity between English and Dutch and his use of the West Indies as a contrast to the Cape was vital to this:

"There is here no detail of horrors like those which have been witnessed in the West Indies, to rouse the indignation of mankind, and to call for vengeance on the oppressor as loudly as for justice and redress to the oppressed. ... It is not the mere possession of slaves that has called down the thunders of the British nation on the Colonies. It is the monstrous abuses of the power vested in the masters and managers of slaves - abuses that are absolutely without a parallel in the history of iniquity, that have inflamed the minds of all who possess a spark of humane feeling in their bosoms, and raised an universal cry for the immediate interference of Parliament."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> SACA, 14 April 1824

<sup>12</sup> See J. Walvin, 'The Propaganda of Anti-Slavery' in Walvin, J. (ed) Slavery and British Society, p.63

<sup>13</sup> SACA, 26 January, 1831.

Following these assertions, Fairbairn gives a long and gruesome account of the torture, flogging and murder of a female slave by her owners, a Mr and Mrs Moss. The extreme nature of the case served as a striking contrast to most reader's blinkered vision of slavery at the Cape and masked the reality of the slave system in the colony, which had its fair share of "horrors". The representation of the Cape slave system as mild had more reference to the consciences of the colonists than to the experiences of the slaves, for, as Robert Ross succinctly put it, "[a] mild slave regime is a contradiction in terms."<sup>14</sup>

In order to achieve the class unity between British and Dutch colonists which Fairbairn deemed necessary for the establishment of representative government at the Cape, slavery as an institution at the Cape could not be attacked in terms which were too strongly emotive, a point which will be further considered below. The West Indies, therefore, played an important role in allowing for the displacement of the anxiety of reformers about the nature of the labour system of the Cape.

Apart from the use of other colonies for the construction of a specific colonial identity at the Cape, the Advertiser also sought to establish middle class identity through the reformation of the working class according to the paper's own principles.

Antislavery sentiment in Britain was firmly rooted in a wide range of reforming activities. A major characteristic of the

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<sup>14</sup> Ross, Cape of Torments, p.1

early nineteenth-century middle classes was the diversity of the objects of their reforming vision. David Turley has stressed that, by looking at the diverse concerns of reformers in England, "particular attention is focused on how they saw the appropriate balance of liberty and control and the contest of civilization and barbarism within England and in the wider world."<sup>15</sup> This analysis of English reform movements applies, with some reservations, to the Cape; as this thesis suggests, the Advertiser's conception of reform was multi-focused. Richard Watson has convincingly demonstrated this phenomenon with regard to the members of the Cape of Good Hope Philanthropic Society for Aiding Deserving Slaves to Purchase Their Freedom. The society was established in 1828, and "was a symptom of the growing power and self-confidence of the liberal community <sup>at the Cape</sup>".<sup>16</sup> Its executive committee was primarily urban and business-orientated, and included both English and Dutch, some of which were themselves slaveowners, a seeming contradiction which was indicative of the fact that the needs of class unity were put above the needs of radical emancipation ideology. Amongst the social movements in which society members were involved were: the drive to establish a representative government, to eliminate the British East India's tea monopoly, to establish press freedom, to set up the South African College, and to establish an infirmary and a temperance society.<sup>17</sup>

*misprint*

<sup>15</sup> Turley, D. The Culture of English Antislavery, 1780 - 1860. (London and New York, 1991), p.6

<sup>16</sup> Watson, R.L. The Slave Question, p.74

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

The Cape of Good Hope Philanthropic Society was formed against the background of ameliorative legislation which the British government applied to the Cape and to its other slaveholding colonies during the 1820s and 1830s. The legislation sought to ease the transition to emancipation by encouraging in slaves the behaviour it associated with a sober, industrious, free wage labour force. Apart from materially easing the working conditions of slaves and attempting to facilitate the formation of stable slave family groups, it also sought to remove the slave from the arbitrary and irrational direct physical control of the master, placing him or her under the impersonal jurisdiction of the state. The office of Guardian (later 'Protector') of slaves was set up to allow slaves to bring complaints of ill-treatment or unlawful actions against their masters. An early edition of the Advertiser praised these efforts:

"Amid the rapid improvements in knowledge, which pervade the territories subject to Great Britain, we cannot but notice the progress which has been made in this Colony ... we refer our candid readers to the various Proclamations which, whilst they secure to the Proprietor the undoubted right to his property, ensure to the enslaved that protection which the humble and defenceless will always receive from British Justice."<sup>18</sup>

Amelioration, therefore, was fundamentally supported by the Advertiser, although it engendered problems in relation to the class unity which the paper was anxious to achieve.

The amelioration, and eventual abolition, of slavery, and the reformation of free labour were analogous concerns in the minds

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<sup>18</sup> SACA, 7 January 1824.

of both Cape and British reformers, and while debate over the Slave Question carried the danger of division and disunity, the reformation of the habits of the free labour force was less problematic and was a frequent concern of the Advertiser. Free wage labour ideology in no way precluded a stress on the importance of reforming the character of the labouring classes. In order to properly participate in the workings of a free labour market, it was felt by institutions such as the Advertiser that their attitudes towards labour and material advancement had to be in line with the models proposed by the middle classes. A primary aspect of this reformation was the stress on instilling a sense of 'self-order' in the labouring classes: "The redemption or improvement of the individual depended not only on his own agency through growing control of self but on alteration of environments including the institutional environments to provide conditions more conducive to the striving for self-control or order within the self."<sup>19</sup> A tension, however, existed in these agendas for improvement between the need to encourage self-discipline and the need to impose discipline and good order on potential deviants.<sup>20</sup>

The emphasis on a free labour market emerged early on in the paper's history, in a letter to the Advertiser by a Correspondent who denied the need for government involvement in charity at the Cape because of the particular demand and supply forces of the

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<sup>19</sup> Turley, The Culture of English Antislavery, p.136

<sup>20</sup> Temperley, H. 'Anti-slavery' in Hollis, P. (ed) Pressure from without in early Victorian England. (London, 1974), p.142

labour market of the colonial context:

"It is almost needless to tell those, who have observed the effects of Public Charities in Europe, that the greatest evil occasioned by them is not the unjust imposition of a tax on one man to protect another from the consequences of his own indolence, extravagance, or dissipation - but the encouragement they hold out to these vices, and the demoralization they produce amongst those who have once become objects of them.

The labourer is worthy of his hire. His hire should be what his labour will fetch in a free and open market. It is on the savings out of this hire he must live, when assailed by sickness and the various accidents to which the human frame is liable. If, in consequence of a combination amongst those who employ him, he receives less than he ought to do, it is on them that the burden ought in equity to fall. It is only on this ground that the Poor Laws in England are justifiable. ... But in the Colonies we have no such paupers. There is a constant demand for labor, and high wages are given to any one who is willing to work ... But if those who are in want have no inclination to work, - if they wish to live luxuriously - if they cannot forego the pleasures of Society - that is to say, if they prefer idling, gossiping, and tippling, in Cape Town, to earning an honest subsistence in the Country, I can see no claim their distress can give them on the community, and should rather consider it a virtuous act to withhold than to afford relief."<sup>21</sup>

Many of the themes of labour reform common to the Advertiser are touched on here - the emphasis is on free market forces and the need for self-regulation in the character of the labour force. The writer also stresses the peculiar conditions of colonial, as opposed to metropolitan, labour relations, in which the demand for labour was perceived to outstrip the supply, so that labourers had no excuse for impoverishment beyond laziness.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, one should note the separation the writer makes

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<sup>21</sup> SACA, 10 March 1824, letter by 'Indicator'.

<sup>22</sup> Shirley Judges has stressed that the demand for labour reflected in letters to the press such as this one was only for certain types of worker-skilled men, servants and manual labourers: "The labour shortage therefore was not necessarily general and it may have been that there was under-employment in some areas where people were willing to work." 'Poverty, Living Conditions and Social Relations', p.17

between the conditions in the town and in the country. As will be argued later in this chapter, the social conditions of Cape Town provided a greater potential for labourers to live according to their own moral dictates, a phenomenon which provoked the Advertiser to call for greater measures of social control, apart from the encouragement of self-order. These factors mitigated against the voluntary removals from the town to the country, in search of work, which the writer of this letter so casually suggests.

The emphasis on the labourer's character which pervaded free wage labour ideology caused slavery to occupy a slightly ambiguous cognitive position in the campaign to reform the labour system at the Cape. In one editorial which attempts to defuse anxieties about slaves running riot after emancipation, Fairbairn emphasises the civilizing effect that slavery has on the slave, which he describes in opposition to the degradation of the Prize Negro.<sup>23</sup>

"He [the slave] is a Native of the Colony. He has been trained up in steady industrious habits. He speaks the same language, and has nearly the same manners and religion as his master. He has been accustomed from infancy to live in a house - to sleep under cover - to eat regular meals, and to perform as it were instinctively all the evolutions of the well-ordered army of social life. He has, in some faint

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<sup>23</sup> Prize Negroes were slaves captured by the British from foreign slaving ships on the high seas after 1808 when Britain had outlawed the slave trade. Between 1808 and 1816, 27 ships carrying over 2 100 slaves to the Americas were intercepted. The majority of these labourers were forcibly re-directed to the Cape and apprenticed to owners for 14 years, thus serving in some way to alleviate the slave labour shortage the ending of the slave trade had created at the Cape. See Saunders, C. 'Liberated Africans in Cape Colony in the first half of the Nineteenth Century' International Journal of African Historical Studies, 18, 2 (1985), p.223 - 239

degree, family connexions and family pride.- There is therefore no danger of his suddenly running wild."<sup>24</sup>

There are elements of classic paternalist discourse in this extract, in its stress on the family and affective links between master and slave. It has strong resonances with what Robert Shell has called the 'family' mode of control. Shell stresses the psychological control which masters exerted over slaves, incorporating them into the slave system as permanently infantilized members of a 'familia' which included both kin and servants.<sup>25</sup> As will be explored below, the social conditions necessary for the operation of this form of social control were not to be found in the Cape Town of the early nineteenth century. Nevertheless, this extract is a reminder that one cannot be too rigid in separating the progressive interests of a reforming merchant capital class from the world view of the paternalistic slave owner. As Meltzer notes, Cape merchant capital was 'Janus-faced', looking both forward and backward, with commercial links to slavery, and not unambiguously opposed to pre-capitalist social relations<sup>26</sup>, an ambiguity which was further exhibited in the fact that several members of the Cape of Good Hope Philanthropic Society were slave owners themselves.<sup>27</sup> The ideology of labour reform was not, therefore, a rigid break with a paternalistic past; the project of re-making the working class in the image of the middle class had resonances with this

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<sup>24</sup> SACA, 2 March, 1831

<sup>25</sup> Shell, R. 'Slavery at the Cape of Good Hope, 1680 - 1731', (Ph.D., Yale University, 1986)

<sup>26</sup> Meltzer, 'The Growth of Cape Town Commerce'

<sup>27</sup> Watson, The Slave Question, p.92

description of the civilization of slaves by their masters.

Generally, however, the labour system of slavery was seen as inhibiting the formation of a suitable labouring class. As an image evoked in the writing of the Advertiser, slavery was more often used to connote a state of barbarism, in contradiction to the editorial quoted above. Thus when comparing the popular French revolution of 1790 to the bourgeois French revolution of 1830, the paper quoted a remark made in Edinburgh that "[t]he excesses of 1790 were those of slaves broken loose, who were as unfit for as they were unworthy of liberty."<sup>28</sup> Slave ownership was seen as a disruptive factor in the operation of the free market forces supported by the reformers. As one editorial noted with references to the problems the middle classes were experiencing in relation to the labour system at the Cape:

"In this Colony there is said to be a deficiency of laborers. The proof of this is the high Wages given for good labor. The Wages of Domestic Servants are monstrously high. ... here there is no fair competition between the laborers. The greater part of them being Slaves, their proprietors being few in number, can fix the rate of wages by tacit consent, and being able to keep the article from the market, they determine its price. The owner of the Slave, who has sunk money in the purchase of him, cannot afford to hire him out at the same rate that the laborer, if free, could hire out his own services. This is one of the inseparable evils of Slavery. By keeping up the wages of labor (not to mention its bad effects on the quality of labor generally), it keeps down the profits derived from the stock which sets it in motion. This retards the progress of accumulation, and is one of the causes of our Poverty."<sup>29</sup>

In an economic sense, therefore, slavery was anathema to the new, rational free market system which the reforming impulse tended

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<sup>28</sup> SACA, 1 December 1830

<sup>29</sup> SACA, 19 November 1831

to support, because it disrupted the balances between supply and demand, causing the destabilization of the carefully constructed interplay of self-interested motivation conceived of by Adam Smith, which produced the mutual dependence and mutual benefit needed for the development of an enlightened economic system.<sup>30</sup>

Slave emancipation was generally seen as desirable by the Advertiser, but slaves must be deserving of their freedom, as the full name of the Philanthropic Society indicated, in that they must begin to show the proper behaviour desired in free workers, behaviour which the Advertiser and other instruments of reform sought to instil in the labouring classes by means of various mechanisms of improvement. One of these was education, an apparatus which was seen as a vital tool of social reformation in both England and the Cape. During the 1830s the South African Infant Schools, for the education of children between the ages of 18 months and 6 years, were set up. The two schools were termed the 'Upper' and the 'Lower' schools since those children in the 'Lower' school were the children of slaves and "the poorer classes". The explicit division along class lines was openly acknowledged by the committee controlling the schools, as was the role the school should play in forming the character of the labouring classes along lines which the dominant classes felt to be desirable:

"Considering the chief object the Instruction of the Infant Poor, they directed their first attention to the establishment of the Lower School. ... The Committee conceive, that it is to the child of the poor, - of

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<sup>30</sup> Raphael, D. 'Adam Smith' in Daiches et al (eds) A Hotbed of Genius, p.85

whatever nation or colour, - whose infancy, but for this institution, might prove only the seed-time of vice, prove so incalculably beneficial to himself, and the public, in implanting the seeds of those good principles, which they trust, under the Divine Blessing, will never perish.

The Committee conceive, that it is to the child of the slave, to whom, at an age when his services are absolutely use-less to his master, and which, but for this institution, might be passed in the acquirement of, at best, indolent, but most likely vicious habits, instruction may be given, which will teach him the duty he owes to God, and his master, - and render him a good man, a faithful servant, and in both characters a blessing to the community."<sup>31</sup>

Campaigning for contributions to these infant schools, Fairbairn stressed the importance of educating the children of the poor:

"Considering Ignorance, and Vice its child and everlasting companion, not only as nuisances, but as diseases at once infectious and fatal, to whose corrupting influence the children of all ranks are exposed, we would offer the specific remedy of a sound moral Education as a free gift even to the children of those parents who are able but unwilling to spare so much from their selfish and vulgar indulgences."<sup>32</sup>

The symbolic link between moral behaviour and disease is reminiscent of the representation of city space in chapter two. Gardening imagery was one which was common to the reform movements of the early nineteenth century and was used to stress the malleability of dependent groups such as women, children and the lower classes.<sup>33</sup> The Advertiser often invoked it with reference to the education of the lower classes as a way of staving off the threat to social order posed by this group:

"the popular mind, unreclaimed by *Education* taken in its widest sense, lies not merely unfruitful, or produces only weeds, like a neglected field, but that it sends forth from its luxuriant wilderness noisome pestilence or savage

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<sup>31</sup> SACA, 26 March, 1831. Annual Report of the Committee of the South African Infant Schools.

<sup>32</sup> SACA, 8 June, 1831

<sup>33</sup> Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes, p.373

beasts of prey, like the stagnant marsh, or unpierced forest."<sup>34</sup>

Middle class activities in the sphere of education at the Cape, therefore, appear to have had a clearly hegemonic intent, and were aimed at producing a working class whose behaviour was appropriate to the ideals of the rational public sphere. Free workers, therefore, needed to conform to this new mode of thinking, and slaves needed to be regenerated into a productive and docile workforce before they could be emancipated. As Fairbairn put it:

"Early Education and moral discipline will not save every individual from crime; but speaking generally, they are the only bulwarks of security in the social state."<sup>35</sup>

Education was not the only persuasive mechanism operating on the labouring classes of Cape Town. Other reforming institutions sought to re-constitute the character of the parents of the children attending the 'Lower' Infant School.

The perceived need for the establishment of a Savings Bank, of a Temperance Society and of Mutual Insurance Societies were part of the general project to produce a reformed labouring class at the Cape. In 1831 the Cape of Good Hope Savings Bank was established. Fairbairn claimed that:

"The Presidents, Directors, and Managers of this Bank can never reap any direct pecuniary advantage from it. The only private benefit they can look to, is the pleasure of doing good to those who are in less comfortable circumstances than themselves - the pleasure of seeing the poorest but most numerous class of their fellow men improving, by means of their direction and assistance, in moral, industrious,

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<sup>34</sup> SACA, 18 June 1831.

<sup>35</sup> SACA, 26 November 1831

and provident habits; and the satisfaction of having contributed, by the mere force of kindness, to the reformation of the public manners."<sup>36</sup>

The material and political benefits that dominant classes hoped to gain from this institution are, however, made manifest in their conception of the effect it will have:

"The condition of the Lower Orders in this Colony, that is, of the laboring Poor, the Slaves and the uneducated Natives, has for many years attracted the attention of the Government, and of every judicious observer among ourselves, as well as of the benevolent in foreign countries. On all hands it has been admitted to be deplorable; and without going into the causes of the indolence, drunkenness, and general immorality, which have so long shackled the right arm of national wealth - INDUSTRY, - we merely appeal for the establishment of the fact to all the Employers of Labor, and especially to all who are forced to engage the attendance of Free Servants in their families. The complaint is general, if not universal; the evil must be so too; and so must be the remedy. ... we consider the scheme for introducing Economy and Foresight among the Poor - the primary object of the SAVINGS BANK - as a most valuable auxiliary in the cause of Improvement. The small sums deposited in it are not only reserved for the service of virtue and refinement, but, what is not less important, they are arrested in their progress to the Treasury of Vice, where they would have been devoted to swell the torrent of the grossest and most loathsome immoralities."<sup>37</sup>

The unreformed character of the working class was seen as a threat to both national progress and to the sanctity of the middle class family. The wider economic and political aims of the dominant classes were seen to be dependent upon a sober, reliable and tractable workforce.

Hegemonic aims which were more concrete than moral education could also be achieved by a Savings Bank. Despite the claim that no direct advantage can be gained by the managers of the bank,

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<sup>36</sup> SACA, 18 June 1831

<sup>37</sup> Ibid

the Advertiser gave practical advice only a few months later upon how these officials could be of use in aiding the dominant classes to control their servants by means of preferential employment:

"In hiring Servants it must be considered a strong recommendation that they have had self-denial enough to lodge their little Saving in this Bank, against the day of need. It is a good test of Character. A regular depositor can neither be an habitual drunkard, or sloven, or frequently out of place. It is a better proof of sobriety and steadiness than the mere opinion of a casual employer. We have no doubt but that the Directors would grant the requisite information on this head to any gentleman who wished to engage a Servant, particularly a confidential one. We should like to see the practice of making such inquiries becoming general, as it would tend greatly to improve the character of Domestic Labor, of which so many feel the intolerable inconvenience at present. Many efforts, well directed and highly honorable to the parties concerned, are at present making to improve the habits and morals of the Poorer Classes in Cape Town. This Institution appears to us among the most valuable, and it is much to be desired that its influence could be extended to every populous District in the Colony. It requires nothing but a beginning any where. The poor soon become alive to their real interests, when they see the higher orders sincerely and universally engaged in promoting their welfare."<sup>38</sup>

The hegemonic intent that lay behind such charitable institutions as the Cape of Good Hope Savings Bank is very clear in this extract. A working class character suitable to middle class aims and aspirations was a crucial part of the reformation of the social world of the Cape, in order that representative government might be achieved, and the surveillance of the Directors of the bank which held a worker's savings were seen as an important mechanism for bringing this about.

An important campaign in the moral improvement of the labouring classes was that which sought to set up a Mutual Insurance

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<sup>38</sup> SACA, 2 November 1831

Society. The Advertiser claimed that "Benefit, Friendly, or Mutual Insurance Societies among the Mechanics, Artisans, and Industrious Poor" were the "most powerful instruments for diminishing the sufferings of the People - increasing the number and amount of their comforts, and elevating their moral character."<sup>39</sup> It was necessary for material and moral improvement to proceed together in the making of a working class appropriate to middle class desires. Fairbairn read a paper at the Literary Society on 'Some Remarks on the importance of establishing Benefit, Friendly, or Mutual Insurance Societies at the Cape of Good Hope' and the paper was published in the Advertiser at the request of the Literary Society. The paper stressed the vital role that the improver can play in society and celebrated the position of the reformer, claiming that the "zeal of such men is as apart from fanaticism, as the selfishness of a sordid genius is sunk beneath true wisdom."<sup>40</sup> It then addressed the problems that the reformers had with the labouring classes:

"Of the Labor of this Colony, it may be remarked in general, that its great distinguishing defect is the WANT OF CHARACTER. The Laborer is neither skilful, active, steady, nor faithful. ... The cause of this must be sought for in the circumstances which surround the laborer, and in the absence of those props and pillars of character which sustain him in more favored situations. It is not necessary to specify those circumstances, or to give them a name - we may merely advert to the existence of slavery - the want of competition among free laborers and mechanics for employment- the smallness of their number rendering any sort of free laborer or artisan the subject of competition among employers who cannot afford to be fastidious about steadiness, or the quantity or quality of labor performed - the consequent high rate of wages for any given time of labor, compared with the cheapness of the first necessaries of life - the low prices of intoxicating liquors - and the

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<sup>39</sup> SACA, 6 August 1831

<sup>40</sup> SACA, 10 August 1831

seductive society of native females, into which the European laborer is so easily entrapped. ... the laborer artisan or mechanic on arriving from Europe suddenly finds himself ALONE. The upper classes he cannot approach in any shape. There exists not in this town that perfect chain of intermediate links, as in England, between him and them, through which they can sympathize without impairing the just distinctions of rank. The well disposed of his own class are too few in numbers to satisfy his love of society. To fill up the dreary void, and to enable him to forget the comforts of the home he has left for ever, he descends to the debased and debasing crowd below him, soon loses his self esteem and pride of reputation, which he is like to think, in his first agony of disappointment, will no longer be of any use to him - his life proceeds from one degree of profligacy to another, and ends in poverty and despair."<sup>41</sup>

The paper is concerned with the needs of what it calls the "Industrious Poor", and clearly one of the chief concerns is the lack of division between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor within the working class at the Cape. Particularly worrying to Fairbairn are the social connections which exist between the European free labourers and mechanics and the "debased and debasing crowd" symbolized by the "native females" - in short the urban underclass of slaves, free blacks, Khoi, Prize Negroes and poor whites. The symbolic connection between 'native females' and 'intoxicating liquors' is reminiscent of the uproar in the Temperance Meeting examined in chapter three. This fear of racial mixing contrasts with sense of a general working class quoted on page 157, above, where the "Lower Orders" are defined as "the laboring Poor, the Slaves and the uninstructed Natives". It was not often that reformation of the labouring classes in Cape Town invoked racial divisions in so explicit a way. Class divisions are a more frequent image in the years under discussion. The Advertiser deplores the a lack of what it sees as a desirable

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid

(and inherently unequal) connecting relationship between skilled labour, which was predominantly white, and often immigrant in character, and the dominant classes of the colonial context. The divisions between middle class and working class are seen to be absolute, and overriding of any racial connection. This is in contrast with conditions in England where class divisions are portrayed as more gradual, and less definite, and where sympathy could be expressed across class lines without "impairing the just distinctions of rank."<sup>42</sup>

Bank has emphasized both the strength of a general underclass culture in Cape Town in the years prior to emancipation and the strong links that existed between different elements of a working class ostensibly divided by race and legal status. Slaves, as the criticisms relating to the labour market which are quoted above indicate, often performed very similar tasks to free workers. Hiring out, the practice of a master hiring his slave to another employer, was becoming increasingly common and increasingly flexible during this period, and "urban slave hirelings were beginning to assume the consciousness of wage labourers."<sup>43</sup> The

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<sup>42</sup> This representation of the Cape seems to indicate that the Advertiser felt that an aristocracy of labour needed development in the colony. This social group had cultural ties with the middle classes, and were perceived by middle class observers to be "a moderating influence on the politics of popular protest". Gray, R. The Aristocracy of Labour in Nineteenth-Century Britain, c. 1850 - 1900. (London, 1981), p.8. As men of this class tended to be employed in the upper echelons of sectors of the economy such as engineering, building, various urban crafts, mining and cotton-spinning, the general lack, or weak development, of such industries at the Cape acted against the development of such a group. See Gray, Aristocracy of Labour, p.21.

<sup>43</sup> Bank, The Decline of Urban Slavery, p.41

strength and vibrancy of underclass culture made attempts to impose vertical lines of acculturation over either slaves or free white workers particularly difficult to achieve. The anxiety that this perception of an alien working class solidarity gave rise to is expressed in the extract relating to Benefit Societies.

Being a working-class specific phenomenon, this general underclass culture operated on very different lines from those which were acceptable to the readers of the Advertiser. As with its inappropriate use of social space, which has been described in chapter two, it implicitly rejected the use of 'rational' leisure. "It was a culture of drinking, gambling, card-playing, cock-fighting, street brawling, music-making and dancing. It was a culture that thrived on the weekends, outside the place of work. From the point of view of urban slaves, it was part of a life experience that was independent of the master and took place beyond the household unit."<sup>44</sup>

Drink, the 'intoxicating liquors' so deplored in the quotation above, played an important role in this community. As Shirley Judges notes, wine was probably more easily available than water in Cape Town of the 1830s.<sup>45</sup> Also, the material conditions of life were so bad for the vast majority of the poor that drink provided an escape mechanism as well as a form of recreation. As Judges puts it: "Alcohol was relatively cheap, easily available

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p.120

<sup>45</sup> Judges, S. 'Poverty, Living Conditions and Social Relations', p.102

and effectively dulled people's awareness of the circumstances of their lives - therefore they drank."<sup>46</sup> Alcohol also played an important bonding role amongst the working class: "[T]he racially 'mixed' urban culture of leisure centred largely around canteens and drink. Dominant class observers were acutely aware and usually highly critical of the role of drink and drinking-houses in the lives of the city's subordinate strata (hence the repeated requests for 'sober' workers in the colony's newspapers)."<sup>47</sup> The worries over drink and its place in the canteen culture of the city's underclass can be seen in the letter of 29 August 1826, which attacked the connections between the police and the underclass.<sup>48</sup>

The dominant classes did more than request sober workers in the newspapers, however; they attempted to create them through the mechanisms which have been described. To return to the issue of the Benefit Society and its workings, Fairbairn's paper uses arguments based on Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations<sup>49</sup> which stress that while the man of wealth and rank must constantly pay attention to his conduct because the eyes of society are upon him, the man of low condition, especially when living in a large city, never feels himself to be the object of scrutiny and therefore has no incentive to morality. Fairbairn notes that:

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid, p.106

<sup>47</sup> Bank, Slavery in Cape Town, p.121

<sup>48</sup> See above, page 96.

<sup>49</sup> The reference given in the editorial is 'Volume Three, page 204'.

"it must occur to every one on a moment's reflection, how important it is in a moral point of view, to form the people into little combinations and fraternities. By concentrating the eyes of all upon each individual, it makes good conduct a thing of infinite value to him, as it renders bad conduct infinitely detrimental. Without trenching on his liberty, it gives him the benefit of the most vigilant and most effectual of all censorships, the most salutary of all inspections. It is a restraint of his own choice and selection, of which his reason every moment approves; and it gives him in return the same influential attitude with respect to all his neighbours, the exercise of which influence is the very gymnastics of virtue and self control."<sup>50</sup>

There is a tension here between the stress the paper puts on self-control, and the assumption that this can only be generated through the application of surveillance and censorship by other members of the group. Adding to this ambiguity is the fact that the 'South African Mutual Insurance Society' to be set up should be run by gentlemen of education "possessing weight and influence with the laboring classes".<sup>51</sup> They should join as members of the society, effectively creating the vertical class links which Fairbairn was concerned were being subsumed by a threatening underclass culture. He optimistically predicted the success of such a venture in the following terms:

"The influence of example on all classes of mankind, but particularly on the uneducated poor, is inconceivably great. On such occasions they may be led almost entirely by their eyes and their affections; and thousands have been induced to lay up provision for sickness and old age in this manner, merely from the feeling of complacency and self respect which the fact of having their names enrolled on the same list with those of men whom they look up to with esteem or veneration."<sup>52</sup>

The poor may therefore be completely reconstructed by the

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<sup>50</sup> SACA, 10 August 1831

<sup>51</sup> Ibid

<sup>52</sup> Ibid

influence of the enlightened. In a starkly utilitarian approach, Fairbairn declared at one point:

"The improvement of the body of the People, considering them merely as a machine for the production of wealth, is the highest object to which governments, legislators and patriots, who look no farther than national prosperity and aggrandisement, can devote their studies."<sup>53</sup>

As the quotation which ends the previous paragraph indicates, the Advertiser projected a confident image of the middle class's ability to achieve a new social order at the Cape, based on an appropriate labour system. The reality was rather different, however. As has been noted above, the dominant class in early nineteenth-century Cape Town was economically fragmented; Bank stresses that this was one factor which allowed for the development of a vibrant underclass culture in the city.<sup>54</sup> The persuasive means of social control outlined above were largely unsuccessful in creating a 'sober' and 'industrious' working class, as desired by the readers of the Advertiser. The paper provides unwitting evidence of this failure of cultural hegemony in its account of the more coercive and violent means to which the dominant classes reverted in order to maintain authority over the working class. There was, therefore, no complete break with the former coercive methods of labour relations in the new economic models which stressed self-interest and personal betterment.

Coercive methods of social control made themselves felt even

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<sup>53</sup> SACA, 19 November, 1831

<sup>54</sup> Bank, The Decline of Urban Slavery, p.81

within the operation of legislation ostensibly aimed at protecting the slaves. Slaves made extensive use of the office of the Slave Protector, frequently bringing their owners to court on charges of ill-treatment, the cases of which were often reported in the Advertiser.<sup>55</sup> The fact that slaves could gain redress against their masters through the legal system of the Cape was a major factor in eroding the hegemony of the dominant classes in Cape Town and in making cultural control over slaves less likely to succeed.<sup>56</sup> Correspondents to the Advertiser expressed many fears of slave and underclass crime, especially with reference to emancipation. In a case of a slave charged with attempted rape of a white woman, Mr. Justice Menzies, in passing sentence, noted that "he was sorry to find that every Session the crime for which the prisoner was tried and found guilty was increasing - not alone in Cape Town, but in various Circuits."<sup>57</sup> A correspondent from Albany, involved in petitioning for a Vagrancy Law, emphasized the "predatory habits" of the "varied" labouring population over whom his class was seeking to exert control.<sup>58</sup>

Fairbairn actively tried to allay the fears of such

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<sup>55</sup> For an early example of such a case, which stresses the limits of the amelioration legislation at the Cape, see the account of the slave, Dortje, who brought charges of ill-treatment against her master for having flogged her with a leather strap. The case was overturned on appeal, the slave's "insolence" being the major defense used by the master. SACA 17 March 1824.

<sup>56</sup> Bank, The Decline of Urban Slavery, p.86

<sup>57</sup> SACA, 21 May 1831

<sup>58</sup> SACA, 20 November 1830

correspondents, for reasons which will be explored below. Thus he notes in an editorial:

"we may notice some mistakes into which our trusty and well-beloved Correspondents have stumbled ... They say, - 'If the Slaves are suddenly emancipated, they will desert the Farms, and crowd to the towns and villages, where they will find high wages, cheap provisions, and abundance of brandy - hence ruin, uproar, and confusion.' - Now,

Firstly. The Slaves are not to be suddenly emancipated. The work is to be done *deliberately*, and only begun after every possible arrangement has been completed, and every possible precaution taken, for the prevention of any danger, and even of every inconvenience.

Secondly. The people are to be apprenticed or bound by Indenture to serve their former masters - so that the great wheel of labor shall not be stopped for a single hour.

Thirdly. It is an error to suppose that, if the whole laboring population were permitted to flock to the towns, they could either find work, wages, provisions, or brandy. A few hundred might for a short time; but to imagine that *thirty-five thousand* could thrust themselves into such villages as ours, in addition to their present complement of poor inhabitants, and aspire to the prerogatives of Idleness, Provisions, and Brandy, is a sorry jest. Hunger, the Scourge, and the Treadmill, would very soon undeceive them."<sup>59</sup>

The fear of being overwhelmed by a hostile horde of unreformed labourers intent on causing "ruin, uproar and confusion" is strongly conveyed in this extract. The self-confidence that writers such as Fairbairn exuded when waxing lyrical on the methods by which the labouring classes were to be transformed by persuasive means of social control is undercut by such fears and also by the draconian images of "hunger, the scourge, and the treadmill" as the mechanisms of domination. The reformation of the labouring classes at the Cape, therefore, did not preclude the use of coercive methods of social control.

The treadmill and the role it could play in the reformation and

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<sup>59</sup> SACA, 2 March 1831

control of the labouring and criminal classes was the subject of a lengthy editorial in 1831. It gives important insight into the conception of the workings of criminal law and of the new technologies of power which the reformers were attempting to establish at the Cape. The extract begins with an account of the proper aims of criminal law and the role of imprisonment in this:

"The first object of Criminal Law is the protection of person, property, and public morals against violation by force or fraud. For this end it disarms the ill-disposed who have committed overt acts - warns by examples the ill-disposed who may be on the road to evil, and only waiting for temptation - and attempts to reform those criminals whom it thinks fit to restore to society at the end of a certain period. For all these purposes Imprisonment and the Tread Mill have been found admirably efficient.

Imprisonment alone may answer the first article, though not perfectly. For an idle man will often find means to commit crimes even in prison. It is also a terror and a warning to evil-doers, though many seem to take it very philosophically, and even to acquire a sort of fondness for the tranquillity and security of their cells. But mere imprisonment without labor, or with such labor as hardly deserves the name, ruins the industrious habits both of the mind and body of a common labourer where such habits have been formed; and where the prisoner has always been an idle dog, he is turned adrift after the period of his confinement ten times more the child of idleness than before. He may by instruction, and the stings and reproaches of his own mind, perhaps have been brought to form good resolutions and an abhorrence of his past deeds; but the *education of his muscles* has been suspended. He returns to his usual avocations relaxed, and feeble, and awkward. He needs, or thinks he needs, stimulants to oil his joints and sting his nerves; and with the first or second dose of Cape Brandy, seven other spirits, more wicked than the first, enter and kindle all the inordinate and vicious propensities which had lain as quiet as gunpowder during his days of rice-water. ... The Law, therefore, in letting loose these gentlemen untamed, defeats its first object - the security of the Public. ... confinement on low diet, except for a few days, is not *discipline* in the proper sense. It deteriorates instead of improving."<sup>60</sup>

The account stresses the importance of "discipline" and the

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<sup>60</sup> SACA, 13 April 1831

"taming" of the criminal before his being returned to society. This was symptomatic of the new perceptions which were making themselves felt in the criminal law at the Cape at this time. Taking his cue from Michel Foucault, Clifton Crais has stressed that the first half of the nineteenth century marked a crucial change in the mechanisms of power at the Cape.<sup>61</sup> "With the British the criminal should be repositioned outside of society and punishment should be focused around the deployment of a legal code aimed at the transformation of the soul."<sup>62</sup> As this account of the treadmill indicates, discipline was a crucial concept in this process. The aim of disciplinary technologies, according to Foucault, is to forge a "docile body that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved."<sup>63</sup> This can be contrasted to the use of punishment as a spectacle to display power and can be seen in the shift that British amelioration legislation was trying to achieve from personalized punishment of slaves by owners to depersonalized discipline of slaves by the state. The objective of disciplinary technologies is very similar to the Advertiser's conception of the workings of criminal law and the stress is on the reformation of the criminal who is represented as a "dog" and a "child" needing "education". This education is crucially linked to the ability of the criminal to work: lack of self-regulation

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<sup>61</sup> Crais, C. 'Race, the State, and the Silence of History in the Making of Modern South Africa: Preliminary Departures' Paper presented at the Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, 22 July 1992.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p.12

<sup>63</sup> Foucault, M. Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (London, 1977) Translated by Alan Sheridan. Original French edition 1975., p.198

which will produce labour indicates a lack of education. Foucault sees disciplinary technologies as among the preconditions for modern capitalism<sup>64</sup>, a significant point when one considers the economic basis of the new society which the Advertiser was trying to establish at the Cape.

The article on the treadmill continues with an examination of its usefulness as a disciplinary mechanism:

"Bring the Tread Mill into the System, and the whole aspect of the case is changed. Once mounted on its mysterious circle, the patient is in no danger of falling asleep. He holds on by his hands and arms, the grand instruments of labor; and all the muscles of these invaluable extremities, including those of the shoulders, are judiciously bent and relaxed alternately, as if they were hoisting the maintopsail of a man of war. Those of the back and abdomen are also thrown into a healthy and invigorating style of action, while those of the lower limbs, thighs, legs, and feet, undergo a most sanitary course of training for every future emergency of life. It must not be forgotten, moreover, that thieves and lazy villains of every description dread this great moral machine. It is, in their imagination, more formidable than stripes, or even Dr. Snatchaway's prescription of fasting upon fasting. Thus it deters, punishes, and reforms all at once; and when there is wheat to be ground, the miller's profits assist in defraying the expense of the establishment."<sup>65</sup>

Foucault has noted that criticisms were levelled at the penitentiary system in the early nineteenth century that it did not make prisoners suffer enough,<sup>66</sup> an issue that is raised in this extract. The point of disciplinary technologies, however, as this extract also indicates, was not so much to inflict pain

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<sup>64</sup> Rabinow, P. (ed) The Foucault Reader (New York and Toronto, 1984), p.18

<sup>65</sup> SACA, 13 April 1831

<sup>66</sup> Foucault, Discipline and Punish, p.16

on the body, although this was usually unavoidable<sup>67</sup>, as to reach and reform the soul of the prisoner through acting on his body. Penal labour was a crucial part of the operation of the new disciplinary system, linked as it was to the rise of modern capitalism: "It is intrinsically useful, not as an activity of production, but by virtue of the effect it has on the human mechanism. It is a principle of order and regularity; through the demands that it imposes, it conveys, imperceptibly, the forms of a rigorous power; it bends bodies to regular movements, it excludes agitation and distraction, it imposes a hierarchy and a surveillance that are all the more accepted, and which will be inscribed all the more deeply in the behaviour of the convicts, in that they form part of its logic ... Penal labour must be seen as the very machinery that transforms the violent, agitated, unreflective convict into a part that plays its role with perfect regularity. ... If, in the final analysis, the work of the prison has an economic effect, it is by producing individuals mechanized according to the general norms of an industrial society".<sup>68</sup> The disciplinary techniques, therefore, were no less important than the techniques of cultural control such as savings banks, schools, benefit and temperance societies. The fact that the middle classes of the Cape needed to resort to the draconian methods of discipline such as the treadmill indicates that their cultural influence over the labouring classes, despite the claims

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<sup>67</sup> What the extract, in its unemotional and utilitarian style of expression, fails to spell out, is exactly how the tread mill worked. The 'patient' was 'in no danger of falling asleep' because even if he stopped climbing the wheel his weight would continue to make it turn and thus fall on him, breaking his legs.

<sup>68</sup> Foucault, Discipline and Punish, p.242

of the Advertiser, was less than absolute.

With reference to the extent of dominant class control at the Cape, the 'Slave Question' played another important role in the Advertiser. The debate, and Fairbairn's attempt to control its expression, throws an interesting light on the limits to the unity he and others were attempting to create amongst the potential leaders of Cape society. These divisions no doubt contributed to the failure of the dominant classes to exert an extensive measure of cultural control over the working classes in Cape Town. The Advertiser issued a warning very soon after it started publication, of the disruptive effect debate over slavery would have:

"It has been obvious for many years, to every one acquainted with the principles of legislation, and who is aware of the deep influence which men's private interest exerts over their political feelings, that some definite, intelligible, and final enactment, respecting the great Slave Question, was becoming daily more necessary, in order to secure the confidence, and consequently the peaceable obedience, of these interesting dependencies of the Empire. Half measures are bad; but measures that have and appearance of boldness - which make a great deal of noise - which include a long prospective range, and after all come to nothing, are a thousand times worse. They create alarm; they generate distrust; and irritate the minds of the parties most concerned to an intolerable degree of dislike and aversion."<sup>69</sup>

The paper did respond to various ameliorative measures but it was only with the publication of a pamphlet by Thomas Miller called 'Considerations on the Exact Position of the Slave Question' that the debate really became intense.<sup>70</sup> Miller's pamphlet rejected

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<sup>69</sup> SACA, 14 April 1824

<sup>70</sup> For a detailed account of the issues raised by Miller's pamphlet, see R. Watson, The Slave Question, p.101 ff.

property rights as a hindrance to emancipation and claimed that freedom was an inalienable right. Although Fairbairn did not agree with its rejection of property rights, his reaction to the pamphlet was generally positive:

"MR MILLER has the merit of voluntarily opening the debate in this Colony ... The whole Pamphlet is written in a spirit of urbanity and respect for the unfortunate situation of the class to whom it is addressed. We are sure it will be met on their part with corresponding cordiality, which will furnish the best proof they can have, that the Public Mind in South Africa is not incapable of distinguishing an honorable adviser and sincere friends from a flattering and deceitful enemy, whose alliance is Disgrace from the first - Ruin and Confusion in the end."<sup>71</sup>

The class that Fairbairn is referring to here is not, as one might think, that of the slave, but rather that of the slave owners. As he put it elsewhere:

"An able and candid review of the position of the Slave Question at the present moment, is of more importance to the Master than to the Slave. In the discussion, the latter can take no part; in the decision his voice is not heard. If it is carried against him, he loses nothing; if in his favor, he will for some time be but imperfectly aware of the inconceivable value of the award".<sup>72</sup>

Contrary to Fairbairn's belief, the 'voices' of the slaves are very much to be heard in the effect that the two rebellions in 1808 and 1825, as well as the resistance slaves took by taking their masters to court, had on the progress towards emancipation.<sup>73</sup> It was the Master class that Fairbairn was concerned with, however, and of primary concern was the effect which the debate over slavery would have on the class unity that was necessary for the establishment of a Legislative Assembly.

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<sup>71</sup> SACA, 15 January 1831

<sup>72</sup> Ibid

<sup>73</sup> See Watson, The Slave Question, p.49 - 66.

Of great importance, according to Fairbairn, was the manner in which the debate was conducted. This is hinted at in the response to Miller which praises its "spirit of urbanity and respect". Fairbairn was anxious to ensure that the debate was conducted in a rational manner according to the correct procedures of public speech. Constructing a rational public sphere was dependent upon the ability of the 'public' to keep to the rules of appropriate expression. Apart from this, violent language, Fairbairn feared, would prevent any spirit of unity from remaining. As it had before and would again, the West Indies provided a contrast for Fairbairn to attempt to construct a public sphere in the Cape:

"This Colony will, we are convinced, exhibit to the world a very different scene. [to that of the West Indies] The question here is simply between the state of Slavery and the state of Freedom, and if it shall be decided that it is better for a country to be cultivated by free than by slave labor, the second and only remaining question is, - how can the change be effected most expeditiously, most safely, and with the least shock to Property and Vested Rights? ... Our Slave Owners and the Emancipationists can meet without the sentiment of remorse, and terror of exposure, on the one side; or abhorrence and just resentment on the other. This distinction in our favor should always be carefully kept in view."<sup>74</sup>

The stress on impersonal economic factors was one which the Advertiser strove to establish in its editorials. Interestingly, this economic emphasis was also to be found in the gradualist phase of the British Antislavery movement which was almost universal up to the mid-1820s: "The freeing of economic forces to operate, it was believed, would produce developments which spelled the death of slavery and should lead to a prosperous, morally appropriate and stable order."<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> SACA, 26 January 1831

<sup>75</sup> Turley, The Culture of British Antislavery, p.33

Fairbairn's hope that the debate might be conducted according to the respectable modes of public speech proved short-lived. A month after Miller's pamphlet appeared, the Advertiser carried an editorial which attempted to bring its correspondents to order, since their language was threatening to disrupt the rational public sphere which the paper was trying to construct:

"Let us not come before the most grave and majestic Public to make sport like gladiators, or to tilt at each other's reputations like vain and ambitious Knights; let us appear wigged and gowned, as it were, with courtesy and mutual oblivion, being known only to the Judges and to each other, as nothing more than embodied Propositions, Proofs, and Arguments. These alone ought to decide every question, and the world will always incline towards that Advocate as the most sincere, who appears to trust in the goodness of his cause, by adhering closely and calmly to the point at issue.

Some of our late Disputants have, we think, wandered a hair's breadth or so from this judicious line; and if our advice had any weight, we would urge the propriety of an immediate return to it. In treating the SLAVE QUESTION, in particular, where every man who is capable of holding two ideas in his head at one time, feels, and every candid man admits, that he is beset with difficulties of the most embarrassing nature, - all flights of fancy, and all *personal allusions*, should be rigidly excluded as totally irrelevant. The merits or demerits of such as take the trouble to write on either side, are as foreign to the question as the Longitude, or the Squaring of the Circle; and every person of clear judgement must conclude that whatever may be the fate of the Question itself, the gentlemen who thus beat about the bush are either utterly in the dark, or self-convicted."<sup>76</sup>

Rational public debate demanded the excision of the body and of its emotion; the proper expression of ideas needed to be in the abstract. In characteristic middle class fashion, Fairbairn rejects the aristocratic images of mortal combat as irrational and barbarous, preferring to construct an identity which stresses mental factors and which invokes the image of 'wigged' and

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<sup>76</sup> SACA, 2 February 1831

'gowned' law makers. The personal must be kept out of the debate, the principles only are allowed to remain. In a sense the debate over the Slave Question was to some extent a test case as to how far the society Fairbairn was attempting to construct had progressed. In its failure to abide by the rules of rational expression, Cape society indicated to Fairbairn the extent to which it remained unredeemed.

The Advertiser tried, as far as possible, to teach by example:

"In treating this question we have from the beginning (1824) carefully abstained as much as possible from touching on the moral and religious grounds from which so many able writers have drawn their arguments in favor of Liberty. Not that we overlooked or were insensible of their paramount importance, or slighted the authority which the sanction of our Holy Religion sheds over every design. But in discussing the propriety of Political arrangements we prefer, for ordinary use, the more generally intelligible principles of Political Science."<sup>77</sup>

Watson has claimed that the lack of moral attacks on slavery in papers such as the Advertiser indicates the weakness of the abolition movement in the colony.<sup>78</sup> This certainly seems to be valid, but it should be borne in mind that another possible reason was the attempt to preserve a unity within the dominant classes, even if it was a unity primarily on the terms of reforming Britain. Yet another factor may be the fear felt by the dominant classes that literate slaves, having access to the newspapers, might be unwelcome witnesses to the divisive

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<sup>77</sup> SACA, 2 March 1831

<sup>78</sup> See Watson, The Slave Question, especially chapter nine.

character of the debate.<sup>79</sup>

A major bone of contention was the fact that under the ameliorative legislation, slave owners were bound to keep a punishment record book which was to be inspected to insure that owners did not punish their slaves illegally. This ruling was enforced from 1831, to the accompaniment of much resistance by slave-owners. Fairbairn tried to reconcile slave owners to the record books, desperate as he was to call forth from them a law-abiding discourse that would be looked upon favourably by the colonial government. Thus he gives an appropriate response to be used by those who object to the legislations:

"Though we still object to the Book, yet it does not appear so oppressive as it did at first; and though we will use every means in our power to get that part of the Order in Council rescinded, yet for the sake of the Public Tranquillity, and in consideration of the obedience we owe to every existing Law, and to show that we are neither disloyal nor factious, not altogether unworthy of being made free ourselves, we will take this Book."<sup>80</sup>

Fairbairn pleaded:

"what good can come of Resistance? All the good people in the world are throwing off their prejudices and proclaiming Justice and Liberty in the face of danger and death. Shall we alone raise a disturbance - alas, not for Liberty, - but for the very worst parts of the code of Slavery? Shall we have a Rebellion for the privilege of inflicting arbitrary punishments without Trial and without Record? Forbid it Heaven. Spare us this last disgrace!"<sup>81</sup>

Less than a month later, slave-owners in Stellenbosch rebelled

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<sup>79</sup>: "As late as 1831 the newspaper De Zuid-Afrikaan recalled both Galant's and the 1808 revolt and noted darkly that slaves hire persons 'to read the contents of the periodical newspapers at the present day'." Watson, The Slave Question, p.58.

<sup>80</sup> SACA, 30 March 1831

<sup>81</sup> Ibid

against their being forced to swear to the punishment record books. The justice of the peace from Paarl "was assailed with rotten eggs, mud, and every kind of filth."<sup>82</sup> All Fairbairn's worst fears appeared to be realized. The correspondent to the Advertiser hastened to add:

"We are bound in justice to add that no person having the slightest claim to the character of respectability appeared to be connected with this scandalous affair, one of the most disgraceful in the annals of the Colony; but from our knowledge of the higher authorities, at the head quarters, we make no doubt that an immediate investigation will be instituted and a signal example made, such as will deter the *rabble* of this Colony from insulting the Government and violating the often calumniated character of the Colonists, in general, into disrepute; for we have reason to know that, although the hardship of some of the provisions of the New Slave Law are fully felt, the general feeling is 'first obey and then remonstrate,' we therefore sincerely hope the unbecoming conduct of the Stellenbosch rabble, on this occasion, will not prejudice the general cause."<sup>83</sup>

Despite claims of the lack of respectability, the inference was clear - many of those whom Fairbairn and others were hoping would not be alienated from the new order by the reconstruction of the labour force along reformed lines were indicating their dissatisfaction and refusal to partake in the new social system.

Under this threat, Fairbairn called on all 'thinking men' to act in a sober and rational way to prevent a crisis. Those who subscribe to the new rational discourse must speak up:

"In the present case of Slavery, to which he chiefly refers, we cannot see how any man in the Colony can justify his silence. It is very clear that mischief and danger are in progress. It is also clear that those who expect to make a harvest of mischief are not idle. ... This is the evil against which every good man should exert his influence, be

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<sup>82</sup> 30 April 1831

<sup>83</sup> Ibid

it great or small, disdaining the thought of being deterred by the obloquy which bad men invariably attempt to heap upon the firm and independent lovers of their country."<sup>84</sup>

Fairbairn then heaped disdain on the perpetrators of the Stellenbosch incident, calling them "childish" and "naughty boys".<sup>85</sup> Again he stressed what the proper expression of ideas in the public sphere should be. If objections are felt towards the punishment record books,

"this fact is to be established by arguments, by clear intelligible statements, and not by flinging mud and rotten eggs, or even fresh eggs, at those who experience no scruple of conscience in obeying the law. Neither will the breaking of windows make the subject clearer. This is not the way to enlighten either the Government or our fellow subjects, who conscientiously differ from us in opinion. Does not every man see that if we have Enemies, such frolics will furnish the best arguments that can be used to our prejudice? Can we hope for liberty to act for ourselves as a Community, when we will not allow our fellow-citizens to express their private opinions, or even to act as they think they are bound in duty to do in their private affairs?"<sup>86</sup>

This extract raises the question of a Legislative Assembly, which will be more directly dealt with in the following chapter. The process by which the labour of the colonial setting was to be transformed, with specific reference to the emancipation question, was a serious disruption of the construction of the unity of dominant classes that was needed in order to achieve self-government. Symptomatic of this division of interest was the press war that developed between the Advertiser and De Zuid-Afrikaan, the latter of which Watson has claimed represented the

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<sup>84</sup> SACA, 18 May 1831.

<sup>85</sup> See above, page 119.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid

Dutch colonists in general, and slaveholders in particular.<sup>87</sup> Although Watson feels their views on slavery to be not incompatible, their conflict was real enough, and Watson claims that this conflict rested primarily on ethnic tension between English and Dutch<sup>88</sup>, a point which will be more fully considered in the following chapter. The clash between these two papers was a bitter one, causing the Advertiser to go back on many of its beliefs about the proper discourse of debate. Fairbairn referred to De Zuid-Afrikaan as a "rubbish-cart", to the editor as a "dogs meat man" and to the writers as "scavengers" and "carrion-crows".<sup>89</sup> Several correspondents accused De Zuid-Afrikaan of trying to divide the colonists by alienating the Dutch from the English, one referring to it as "the monstrous Hydra, which has been too long permitted to exhale its pestiferous breath amongst us."<sup>90</sup> Another writer asserted:

"The vulgarity, the coarseness, the want of all principle, and the demoralizing tendency of that Paper are scattering the seeds of Irreligion, Hatred, Depravity over your parishes, and counteracting all your efforts to promote religion and virtue among your people. It is corrupting the taste and morals of the young under your charge, and communicating to their minds the taint of vulgarity and coarseness. It is sowing the seeds of inveterate hatred between the different classes of the community, contrary to all the principles of that religion which teaches us to love our neighbour as ourselves. To do good to those who hate us, and to pray even for our enemies. ... By the Zuid-Afrikaan this Colony has been brought to the brink of a precipice, over which it is every moment in danger of being dashed to pieces."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Watson, The Slave Question

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, p.134

<sup>89</sup> SACA, 10 December 1831

<sup>90</sup> SACA, 28 December 1831

<sup>91</sup> SACA 24 December 1831

The apocalyptic images that pervade the text indicate the deeply divisive nature of the debate over the Slave Question and the important negative effects it had on the move towards social reconstitution which was so desired by the Advertiser.

In examining the Advertiser's representation of labour and of the issues surrounding it, the limits to the reconstruction of the new social world of the Cape are revealed. Despite the importance that the labour system had in the construction of colonial identity, the middle classes of the city had far from succeeded in creating a work force which was appropriate to their desires. In addition, the divisive nature of the debate over the reformation of the labour system had brought about a crisis of class position which proved a major obstacle in the move towards representative government at the Cape.

Chapter Five

"We are all Africans": Colonial identity and the establishment of a Legislative Assembly at the Cape.

Of paramount importance to the Advertiser's programme of social reconstruction at the Cape was the granting of representative government to the colony. As the paper unequivocally stated, "A REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT (it cannot be too often repeated) is the turning point - the pivot on which the whole army of Reformers in this country must move."<sup>1</sup> This chapter will address the manner in which the Advertiser sought to bring forth a colonial identity at the Cape whose notion of political activity might facilitate the granting of a Legislative Assembly to the colony.

This project has stressed throughout the ambiguities and contradictions which attended the construction of colonial identity at the Cape. J.H. Elliott's conception of the making of colonial identities is a useful summary of the main trends inherent in this process: "colonial societies, like all societies, were in constant process of defining and redefining themselves. But, as settlements and colonies that owed their existence to a distant mother country, they all found themselves trapped in the dilemma of discovering themselves to be at once the same, and yet not the same, as the country of their origin. The dilemma was made all the more acute by the fact that ... without exception their countries of origin held them in low regard."<sup>2</sup> The colonists, even while celebrating the unique qualities of their own environment, sought to make it resemble

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<sup>1</sup> SACA 28 May 1831

<sup>2</sup> Elliott, 'Introduction' in Canny and Pagden, Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, p.9

the social world they had left behind.<sup>3</sup> Thus, as the previous chapters have explored, the Advertiser took its cultural cue from Britain in the focus of its reform agenda, advising the colonists as to the proper organisation of social space, the appropriate means of public expression of ideas, and the suitable expression of gender roles and labour organization. These cultural models, however, were continually disrupted by their application in a colonial context. Colonial identity was, therefore, marked by the transportation and transformation of the necessary social and cultural values, rather than by their creation, and this resulted in them being uneven, incomplete, and ambiguous.<sup>4</sup> This ambiguity was a constant companion in the Advertiser's attempt to reform a physical and moral colonial landscape which consistently slipped from under its control.

J. P. Greene's study of the shifts in colonial identity which took place in Barbados is a useful parallel to the processes acting on the Cape. He considers identity to be based not only upon the characteristics of place, but also to be affected by certain variables peculiar to the colonial context: "First were the short-term and long-term social and economic goals that had initially drawn and, as revised in the light of local potentialities, would continue to draw European settlers to specific places. Second were the standards of what a civilized society should be and how its members should behave. These standards had initially been brought by the earliest settlers

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p.10

<sup>4</sup> Pagden and Canny 'Afterward' in Colonial Identity, p.269

from their metropolis, but were subsequently revised or updated through a process of continuous cultural interaction with that metropolis. Third were the collective experiences - the history - that successive generations of inhabitants shared in their particular place."<sup>5</sup> As the previous chapters indicate, these themes were prominent in the Advertiser. In its attempt to reconstruct the social world of the Cape by the reformation of the manners and customs of its inhabitants, by the articulation of social and economic goals and the guidance it gave its readers in the pursuit of these, and by the celebration of the achievements of its readers, the Advertiser was engaged in the forging of a colonial identity at the Cape which was compatible with its own world view. This was closely connected to the attitude of Britain towards the Cape. As Greene says of the Barbadians and their attempts at social reconstruction: "Given their heavy reliance upon their old country for standards of what a civilized - an improved - society should be, however, they could never hope to achieve a fully satisfying sense of themselves and their colony until they had won the approval of the metropolis itself."<sup>6</sup> The Advertiser was fundamentally devoted to the establishment of what it regarded as a civilized society at the Cape, and the granting of representative government might be said to constitute the strongest expression of approval that the metropolis could bestow on its colony, and thus it was that the Advertiser hung its entire reform agenda upon this goal. The

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<sup>5</sup> Greene, J.P. 'Changing Identity in the British Caribbean: Barbados as a Case Study.' in Canny and Pagden, (eds) Colonial Identity, p.214

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p.241

paper claimed, using Shakespeare's image, that it had made the importance of a representative government at the Cape "familiar in the mouths as household words"<sup>7</sup> and clearly regarded the fulfilment of this desire as a panacea for all social ills:

"When this grand point is carried, every evil caused by bad Government will decay and vanish, and every advantage which good Government can confer will follow in natural and steady succession. In all our Memorials - in all our discussions in public, in our private conversations, and in our secret thoughts, let A LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, composed of the People's true REPRESENTATIVES, ever hold the first place. Till that is gained, let us not deceive ourselves with a belief, that any permanent Reform has been or can be enjoyed."<sup>8</sup>

Apart from its importance as a measure of metropolitan approval, the concept of a representative government needed to be based upon a notion of a colonial identity separate from that of the mother country. It is possible to see, within the pages of the Advertiser, a shift in the national identities invoked by the paper. A tendency to refer to British national characteristics when speaking of the colonists gave way, fairly soon after the paper's first issue, to appeals to a sense of local identity. This was not a simple process, however, because the links to Britain were still considered to be strong. As institutions like the Advertiser began to feel that they were succeeding in their programme of social reform, they stressed the concept of an amalgamated class of disparate national origins from which they had forged, in something of their own image, an identity which was appropriate to the Cape Colony. Their sense of themselves,

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<sup>7</sup> SACA, 1 June 1831. See Shakespeare, King Henry V, Act IV, Scene III, line 51.

<sup>8</sup> SACA, 28 May 1831

and of the colony as a whole, became locked in to a wider notion of the British empire, in which the Cape, like other British colonial possessions, was to play a civilizing and rationally improving role from its position on the tip of Africa.

During the first year of the paper's publication, it showed a tendency to use British national identity as a point of reference. The Advertiser designated Britain as "our native country"<sup>9</sup>, stressed that "we are not so destitute of British feeling as to hesitate in designating a gross violation of a people's dearest right - that of regulating their own mode of Government"<sup>10</sup> and called the freedom of the press "a privilege so congenial to the heart of every Englishman - to every British subject who had once felt its value".<sup>11</sup> Soon after it began publication, however, the Advertiser began to put forward a sense of a specifically colonial identity, seeking especially to promote a sense of unity between Dutch and English colonists at the Cape:

"Whatever we are, whether born in the Northern or Southern hemisphere, in England, Holland, or in Africa, if we have made Africa our home, and feel a common interest in the prosperity of the Colony, we are all Africans.

If we do as we ought - we will love, respect, and promote the welfare, first of our families, friends, and connections - secondly, that of the Colony we inhabit - next of the Empire of which it forms a part - and lastly of the whole human race."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> SACA 28 January 1824

<sup>10</sup> SACA 7 January 1824. Emphasis added.

<sup>11</sup> SACA 28 April 1824. Speech by Greig at the Commercial Anniversary Dinner, emphasis added.

<sup>12</sup> 17 March 1824

This stress on the 'African' nature of all the colonists at the Cape seems to put forward a sense of self which is to be independent of metropolitan origins, in which all national loyalty is to be subsumed under a devotion to the Cape. Interestingly, the word 'Africans' is used rather than 'Natives'. As chapter four indicated, this term had racial connotations, and applied to those who were the real 'Africans' of the colony. The appropriation of the word 'African' indicates the manner in which Africa was being reinvented by the colonists. Their activities in the Cape, as chapter one explored, were transforming the 'Dark Continent' into a domain of rational enlightenment. Their confidence in their level of success in the re-definition of Africa was high enough to justify naming themselves as 'Africans'. In this single identity, however, the union of Dutch and British colonists, which will be considered in more detail below, was to be on the terms of the British, in keeping with the basis which the Advertiser's reforms had in the construction of a rational public sphere along the lines of British developments.

Thus, even as it stressed patriotic loyalty to the Cape, the paper laid down the colony's position in a global British empire "of which it forms a part". It also stressed that colonists must embrace the colony's links with Britain and reject former ties with Holland:

"We are composed of nearly all the nations of the earth, if we look to our national origin.- Dutch, French, Prussians, Danes, Norwegians, Swedes, English, Scotch, Irish, are to be found, not here and there, living in a state of separation, but every where throughout the Settlement, united and mingled and inseparably combined, so that few if any Native Colonist can say that his blood is wholly of this or that particular spring - and if he could, and

should venture to boast of the fact, he would excite more mirth than admiration. ... What folly is it, then, to talk of *Holland* being the *mother country* of the Colonists - or to hint at a re-union with a country to which the great majority of the Colonists are utter strangers - a country with which we could have no beneficial intercourse in peace, and which could not protect us for an hour in a war with any of the great maritime powers! It was a discovery that struck us with amazement, to find that we have any such wild beasts among us - men so profoundly ignorant of the people among whom they live, and of the importance of being under the protection of a powerful Empire. ... the honest, upright, hearty Colonists of every nation and tribe have a high and healthy ground on which to take up their position, beyond the effluvia of these wallowers in the mud of Personality and National Invective. South Africa is our Country and our Home. If it is not the home of our Fathers, it has a still more sacred claim upon our affections, - it is to be the home of our Children, our children's children, and of those who shall be born of them."<sup>13</sup>

The colonial identity which Fairbairn was attempting to construct at the Cape, therefore, had certain limitations. It was an identity which was based upon strong cultural, economic and political connections with Britain. The Cape must take up its place within the British empire, as a civilizing force sowing "the Seed of Empires"<sup>14</sup> on a 'dark' African continent, as chapter one explored, and not look towards Holland as a cultural source from which a colonial character might be derived. The emphasis on the protective nature of the empire stresses the inherently unequal relationship between Britain and the Cape. Those who turned their backs on Britain and on the Cape's position in the British empire are seen as "wild beasts"; their ideas being "the effluvia of these wallowers in the mud of Personality and National Invective" and deemed not worthy of playing a part in the rational political processes which the Advertiser hoped the

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<sup>13</sup> SACA 7 December 1831

<sup>14</sup> SACA, 31 August 1831

colony might be granted.

The connections which the Advertiser regarded the Cape to have to Britain found expression in the place it considered the colony to occupy in the global economy of reform which was so crucial a part of how the British Empire was seen to operate. The Cape was to take its cue in these endeavours directly from the mother country itself:

"If life and vigor in the natural body proceed from the centre to the extremities, so in the body politic the march of improvement appears to be from the Parent country to the Colonies; and it is to Great Britain that we in this Colony should look for principles of Legislation, for models of free and enlightened Institutions, that have for their object the diffusion of moral and intellectual knowledge, and for plans for the advancement of national prosperity."<sup>15</sup>

The image is of a great imperial body with Great Britain forming the centre to which the Cape is intimately bound. The colony was perceived, by the Advertiser, as one of several different examples of the diffusion of rational concepts of society by the mother country: "Amid the rapid improvements in knowledge, which pervade the territories subject to Great Britain, we cannot but notice the progress which has been made in this Colony".<sup>16</sup> The Cape was to join in the great task of reform which social improvers had set themselves throughout the British Empire. As indicated in chapter one, the Advertiser made links between the actions of reformers in Edinburgh, Paris and the Cape, but there is also a sense in the paper of such activities taking place

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<sup>15</sup> SACA, 30 October 1824

<sup>16</sup> SACA, 7 January 1824

within a specifically Imperial context. The newspaper indicates the links which were made between like-minded men in widely dispersed colonies by means of the press. Soon after it began publication, the Advertiser carried a letter from a correspondent in St. Helena, detailing the various social reforms in progress in that colony, and praising the Advertiser for its role in reform at the Cape. Fairbairn commented thus on the letter:

"[It] gives us sincere satisfaction, not merely from the very favourable opinion he is pleased to express of our Editorial labours, but also because it proves that sound and consistent principle is sure of obtaining the staunch support of all good and liberal men throughout every part of the British Empire; and that there is a simultaneous spirit of improvement now in activity throughout all our national dependencies - put in motion by the mind of the British nation, and fostered by the good and liberal men at the head of our Home Administration - which cannot fail speedily to banish misgovernment and corruption from their darkest coverts and remotest strongholds."<sup>17</sup>

The Cape was to be seen, therefore, as one of many colonies all engaged in similar efforts of reform, so that the social reconstruction which the Advertiser envisaged at the Cape was to be brought forth on a global scale. In this extract the links with Britain are put forward so strongly that a sense of individual Cape identity is almost lost, in contrast to the editorial quoted above which stressed that the colonists "are all Africans". This is indicative of the ambiguity which necessarily attended the construction of colonial identity, and the complexity of this process must constantly be borne in mind. There was no simple switch in the Advertiser from a metropolitan to a colonial identity, and the paper often put forward contradictory positions, as these quotes invoking various

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<sup>17</sup> SACA, 21 April 1824

national identities indicate.

If the Advertiser defined the Cape as one of Britain's colonies, it also defined itself against other British colonial territories. In the previous chapter, the means by which the Advertiser constructed a colonial identity in contrast to the labour relations of India and of the West Indies was addressed. India, in particular, played an important role in the making of colonial identity at the Cape. There was a strong Anglo-Indian presence in Cape Town in the early nineteenth century. Leave, if claimed on the grounds of health, could be spent at the Cape without forfeiting any pay or allowance, and many civil servants and army officers made use of this, spending large sums of money at the Cape, and contributing substantially to the colony's revenue.<sup>18</sup> Many Anglo-Indian visitors, or 'Hindoos', as they were sometimes referred to by both the Advertiser and themselves<sup>19</sup>, complained of the primitive nature of the social life at the Cape, and some cast doubt upon the respectability and orderliness of Cape society in a way which was strongly condemned by Fairbairn. As previous chapters have indicated, they attacked the respectability of the women of the Cape, and provoked vehement defences, by the Advertiser, of the colony's culture. Their critical attitude was summed up by one visitor, quoted in chapter one, who said of Capetonians that "their capital boasts the

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<sup>18</sup> Hattersley, An Illustrated Social History, p.90

<sup>19</sup> See SACA 13 October 1830. The use of the term has resonances with the use of Orientalist discourse by the Advertiser to denigrate the criticisms of British visitors from India, discussed in the notes of the previous chapter. See Chapter Four, page 143.

anomalies of a College without professors, a Theatre without actors, an Exchange without commerce, and a Bishop without a Church."<sup>20</sup> Anglo-Indians at the Cape, therefore, played an ambivalent role in the symbolic world of colonial identity construction. On the one hand, they were attacked as haughty and hyper-critical outsiders who undermined the Cape's sense of itself as a civilized society, while on the other hand they were hailed as representatives of a colonial society which was much more sophisticated than that of the Cape. In their denigration of Cape customs they acted as a catalyst to the making of a colonial identity in opposition to themselves, while at the same time they were held up as something to which the Cape might aspire. After Fairbairn had launched his counter-attack on the 'Indian Valetudiniary', he stressed:

"The Gentleman who has given occasion to the above remarks is not, however, by any means a fair specimen of our Indian visitors. Superficial, half-educated and underbred triflers may be found in every class of society as well as among the Civil Servants of the Company; but take these Servants as a body, and we know not where to look for their superiors. In scholarship, in science, and in an intimate acquaintance with political affairs, they would rank high in the most enlightened circles in Europe. In this Colony we have seen innumerable instances of their benevolence and generosity, their love of liberty and respect for the rights of mankind. Such men make no complaints against the reserve or contempt which has so much vexed our author."<sup>21</sup>

The link which the Advertiser makes between the sophistication of Indian Civil Servants and their counterparts in Europe, indicates that Fairbairn was still sensitive to the fact that the reformers at the Cape had much to achieve before their desire to

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<sup>20</sup> SACA 20 October 1830

<sup>21</sup> SACA, 13 October, 1831.

create a civilized colonial society could be realized. This sensitivity is also apparent in his violent outbursts against Anglo-Indian criticism of the colony which appears to have touched him on the raw. If the Cape was to take up its position within an 'Empire of Reform', and be accorded the dignity of a civilized, and civilizing colonial territory, it needed to be worthy of the respect of the inhabitants of other British colonies, and could not afford to let itself become the object of their contempt.

Apart from the strongly masculinist frame of reference explored in a previous chapter, the Advertiser's sense of colonial identity was also bound up with specific notions of class and ethnicity. As explored above, the appropriate political culture was deemed to be one which rejected the ideals of the aristocracy and embraced the principles of a self-made middle class. Part of the reason for this may stem from the cultural antecedents of men like Fairbairn, for, as explored in chapter one, the Scottish Enlightenment, although making use of aristocratic patronage, was mainly the achievement of the middle classes, some of whose members had risen by their own efforts from relatively humble origins.<sup>22</sup> The rejection of the ethics of a court culture, however, also stemmed from circumstances at the Cape. As chapter three has indicated, the political culture of the Advertiser was forged against a conception of power which was in use during the Dutch rule of the VOC in the colony. Furthermore, in their

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<sup>22</sup> Smout, T.C. A History of the Scottish People 1560 - 1830 (Glasgow, 1969), p.472 - 473

attempt to found a free press at the Cape, Fairbairn, Pringle and Greig, had come into confrontation with the High Tory Lord Charles Somerset, perhaps the very embodiment of the forces of aristocratic patronage and privilege to which they were opposed.<sup>23</sup> Somerset, in addition, was intimately connected by ties of patronage with those groups of Dutch notables who had been influential in the power structures of the VOC at the Cape.<sup>24</sup> The establishment of a rational public sphere at the Cape, therefore, had to take place against a background of absolutist Governorship.

Habermas's notion of the bourgeois public sphere, explored above, stresses its conflict with the absolutist state as crucially determining its nature. The two notions of political control were conceived of in completely different ways: "In its clash with the arcane and bureaucratic practices of the absolutist state, the emergent bourgeoisie gradually replaced a public sphere in which the ruler's power was merely represented before the people with a sphere in which state authority was publicly monitored through informed and critical discourse by the people."<sup>25</sup> Aristocratic notions of power put forward the concept of the presence of the state within the body of the ruler: "As long as the prince and the estates of his realm 'were' the country and not just its

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<sup>23</sup> For an account of Lord Charles Somerset's cultural background and of his activities at the Cape, and elsewhere, see Kendal, A. M. Plantagenet in South Africa: Lord Charles Somerset, (London and New York, 1965)

<sup>24</sup> Rayner, 'Wine and Slaves', p.189

<sup>25</sup> McCarthy, T. 'Introduction' to Habermas, The Public Sphere, p.xi

representatives, they could represent it in a specific sense. They represented their lordship not for but 'before' the people. The staging of the publicity involved in representation was wedded to personal attributes such as insignia (badges and arms), dress (clothing and coiffure), demeanour (form of greeting and poise) and rhetoric (form of address and formal discourse in general) - in a word, to a strict code of 'noble' conduct."<sup>26</sup> Power, therefore, was explicitly lodged within the domain of the body. As explored in chapter three, this notion was rejected by the bourgeois conception of the public sphere which displaced power from the realm of the body and emphasised the importance of disembodied abstract conceptions of authority. As part of its rejection of aristocratic notions of power, the Advertiser, therefore, stressed the importance of excising the body from the realm of legitimate political activity, whether it be in the form of ostentatious female dress, aristocratic notions of trial by combat, or personal references in ideological debate. The Advertiser rejected the idea that aristocratic culture was representative of the general achievements of humanity. In an editorial, which is referred to in chapter one, which emphasized the disembodied 'Spirit of the Age' and rejected the individual achievements of those traditionally seen as the 'Great Men' of history, it concluded:

"A knowledge of the real character of man, then, is not to be obtained from history, technically so called; seeing it is chiefly occupied with the paltry intrigues of Courts, the rage, the falsehood, and treachery of party men, or the ravages of military violence. From this body of Actors, however contemptible in number, and generally in intellect, compared with the mass of mankind, and the calm retired

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<sup>26</sup> Habermas, The Public Sphere, p.7 - 8.

observers, Orators, Moralists, and Divines have been accustomed to draw all their opinions and their commonplace topics of abuse respecting the depravity of our nature, while those on whom their reproaches should have fallen, took advantage of their concessions, making them arguments for imposing every species of coercion and restraint on a creature thus naturally depraved and prone to mischief. ... Matters are now completely changed. The people are now united and combined together by ten thousand ties which no created arm can break asunder, and can, if so disposed - and, owing to their intelligence, no cause but a good and great cause can so dispose them, - in a few hours put into motion a degree of strength which no created wisdom can evade or defeat."<sup>27</sup>

Rational and legitimate political debate, therefore, was seen to be in the charge of "the People", rather than resting with "the paltry intrigues of Courts". The Advertiser's concern with rejecting aristocratic culture indicates that culture's importance as a frame of reference against which colonial identity was constructed. Middle class identity was based on a rejection of both aristocratic and popular culture, as has been stressed throughout this account. This rejection, however, was always complicated by the alleged inclusiveness of the bourgeois democratic project, which sought political representation for "the people". The Advertiser's conception of 'the people' or 'the public' as explored in chapter one, was one which was limited according to the doctrines of liberal political philosophy ascribed to by men such as Fairbairn, but its limitations were not often explicitly spelled out.

Stallybrass and White have stressed this ambiguity of inclusiveness and exclusiveness in middle class political culture: "bourgeois democracy emerged with a class which, whilst

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<sup>27</sup> SACA, 25 February 1824

indeed progressive in its best political aspirations, had encoded in its manners, morals and imaginative writings, in its body, bearing and taste, a subliminal élitism which was constitutive of its historical being. Whatever the radical nature of its 'universal' democratic demand, it had engraved in its subjective identity all the marks by which it felt itself to be a different, distinctive and superior class."<sup>28</sup> The methods of social separation, outlined throughout this thesis, and especially in chapter two, were therefore crucial to the construction of middle class identity at the Cape, despite that class's agenda of social incorporation through its civilizing projects.

The universalist imagery which imbued middle class political, and social, discourse, tended to deny this élitism by refusing to acknowledge the hierarchies of discourse which sustained their specific identity: "The bourgeois mystified the interconnections of domains"<sup>29</sup> and explicitly refused their hierarchies in the name of democracy and equality. Indeed the radical democratic project was nothing more nor less than this process, in which a 'neutral', 'middling', 'democratic', 'rational', subject was laboriously constructed by a rejection of all specific and particular domains. Surveying all the motley and partial languages of the Court, the aristocracy, the Church and the low populace from the privileged perspective of the public sphere,

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<sup>28</sup> Stallybrass and White, The Politics and Poetics and Transgression, p.202. Original Emphasis.

<sup>29</sup> Stallybrass and White conceived of the 'domain' as the site of the production of a discourse which is generally class-specific.

the rational democratic subject of bourgeois reason was constitutively unable to see that it was this process which made 'him' what 'he' was. Thus whilst the 'free' democratic individual appeared to be contentless, a point of judgement and rational evaluation which was purely formal and perspectival, in fact it was constituted through and through by the clamour of particular voices to which it tried to be universally superior. It is on this account that the very blandness and transparency of bourgeois reason is in fact nothing other than the critical negation of a social 'colourfulness', of a heterogeneous diversity of specific contents, upon which it is, nonetheless, completely dependent."<sup>30</sup>

As this extract stresses, middle class identity was dependent, at the symbolic level, for its construction upon precisely those Others which were excluded at the social level. As this project has stressed throughout, the clamouring of discordant voices resounds throughout the Advertiser, disrupting attempts to construct a stable middle class colonial identity. The presence of critical foreign visitors, of troublesome and dangerous dogs and slaves, of dissenting women and of disruptive slaveholders in the text of the Advertiser consistently undercuts its self-confident discourse of social reform. Despite this disruption, however, the drive to establish a political force at the Cape which might be deemed worthy of a representative government, was strongly influenced by an attempt to gather other groups into its social fold, a point which will be considered below, even if this

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p.199

inclusion was to be on the terms of the exclusivity which Stallybrass and White stress was so crucial a part of the middle class's sense of itself.

How exactly did the Advertiser define the nature of the 'people', and what political movements and actions did it look to as points of reference, or role models, in its own attempt to construct legitimate political activity at the Cape? The Advertiser dismissed what it called "crazy speculators in democracy"<sup>31</sup> and "the many-headed mob"<sup>32</sup>; its notion of the 'public' being set up against the image of the mob. As examined in chapter one, the Advertiser's conception of the public was one which was strictly limited - not all people deserved admittance to this group. Quoting the Courier of 14 July 1831 on "THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE", the Advertiser claimed:

"In a constitutional monarchy there is one voice which the chief ruler and his ministers are bound to obey - the voice of the public - that public being understood as the majority of the wealthy and intellectual inhabitants of the country. This is an acknowledged principle. Demands for changes in the institutions of the state, which are made by a minority, respectable for its character in society, are entitled to the attention and respect of those in power; and if they are founded in reason, ministers will do well to lead the public mind generally to approve of their adoption; but all demands from the turbulent, the disloyal, or the irreligious, are to be firmly resisted."<sup>33</sup>

Only those who were prepared to abide by the rules of rational political debate, therefore, only "the wealthy and intellectual inhabitants of the country", deserved the right to have their

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<sup>31</sup> SACA, 12 October 1831

<sup>32</sup> SACA, 21 September 1831

<sup>33</sup> SACA, 26 October 1831

voices heard by the monarch.<sup>34</sup> The Advertiser saw special circumstances to be present at the Cape, whereby the terrors of popular tumult could be avoided by the fact that only the respectable dared to take political action. When the Colonial Government banned the public meetings of slaveholders during 1831, the Advertiser spoke out confidently against the fear that the untutored masses might take political action:

"Public Meetings at the Cape differ very much in character from Public Meetings in England and Ireland, when political questions are to be submitted to the unqualified mass of the people. Here only men of property and education, holding a respectable rank in society, and personally known to all their fellow citizens, assemble, or presume to make their voices heard. We have no fear of tumult, rash or discreditable resolutions, or any of the vexatious movements by which demagogues too often succeed in embroiling the wisest counsels, and bringing contempt on the best of causes. Such persons in this Colony are most effectually extinguished, whenever the respectable portion of the community are permitted to assemble and express their opinions freely."<sup>35</sup>

This extract seems to indicate that the colonial context, according to the Advertiser, allowed for the easy removal of undesirable individuals from the political public sphere. Interestingly enough, this editorial was written after the Stellenbosch riot in April of 1831. The Advertiser was plainly trying to gloss over the disturbance, just as it attempted to delegitimize the political actions of the Stellenbosch slaveowners, as examined in chapters three and four. As will be considered below, Fairbairn did not long retain this confidence in the inviolability of the public sphere at the Cape. One reason

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<sup>34</sup> The Advertiser clearly supported the concept of a constitutional monarchy, praising the French for keeping to this model during the aftermath of the July Revolution of 1830.

<sup>35</sup> SACA 25 May 1831

for this belief might lie in the very reasons given by the colonial government for denying a Legislative Assembly to the colony. Rodney Davenport summarises the main objections as follows: "a feared incompatibility between British and other cultural and legal traditions, the unresolved problem of slavery, the smallness and dispersal of the population, and the numerical imbalance between the business elite and a much larger class of people without political experience."<sup>36</sup> This lack of political experience amongst the majority of the people at the Cape might have been seen, by the Advertiser, as something which would prevent them from daring to act in a public sphere to which they did not deserve access. A further factor may lie in the Advertiser's perception of the lack of class links between the under and upper classes explored in the previous chapter. As the Advertiser put it, "[t]here exists not in this town that perfect chain of intermediate links, as in England, between him [the white labourer] and them [the 'upper classes'], through which they can sympathize without impairing the just distinctions of rank."<sup>37</sup> The separation between that group which might legitimately act within the public sphere, and all other groups, was seen to be so absolute at the Cape as to prevent any pollution of the public sphere by undesirable elements.

As Davenport's list of metropolitan objections to a representative government indicates, in order that such an

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<sup>36</sup> Davenport, R. 'The Cape Liberal Tradition to 1910', in J. Butler et al (eds.), Democratic Liberalism in South Africa (Cape Town, 1987)

<sup>37</sup> SACA, 10 August 1831

institution be granted, political education was certainly needed - the ranks of enlightened political actors had to be swelled. One means of the Advertiser's conducting this public education in the proper principles of political action, while avoiding the "Spirit of Radicalism" which the paper so vehemently denied to exist at the Cape,<sup>38</sup> was the use of overseas role models.

An extremely strong influence in this process was the revolution which took place in Paris in 1830, and which was reported with great prominence in the pages of the Advertiser of that year. This revolution might have been made to order for the ideological needs of the Cape's middle class, for, while it opposed the Court rule which they rejected, it also did not represent unrestrained social disruption. The Advertiser, therefore, saw it as an example of the proper operation of social change:

"the dispatches from Paris throw for the present all other topics into the shade.

That beautiful city has been made the theatre of another sanguinary REVOLUTION. ... they [the Bourbons] have once more ventured to bring to an open issue the grand question between the Divine Right of Kings, and the Divine Right of Mankind. The latter have in the present instance proved the most divine of the two; and the King of France, if still alive, is at this moment a fugitive and a vagabond. So perish all the enemies of FREEDOM!

The immediate cause of this Revolution was an attack on the LIBERTY OF THE PRESS, and a violation of that section of the Charter which was meant to secure the Freedom of Election, and the integrity of the Representative Branch of the Legislature. Nothing short of the most positive and direct evidence could induce us to believe that any set of men, capable of reading, or even of understanding the meaning of words, could have remained for years in the centre of civilized Europe without perceiving, that a human hand may as easily pluck the sun and the moon out of heaven as the privilege of Political Discussion from thirty millions of people, who have been so far enlightened by the exercise of it as to be fully sensible of its value. ...

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<sup>38</sup> SACA, 31 March 1824

The sentiments of the whole of France had been distinctly pronounced by the issue of the recent Elections. ... Liberal principles were every where triumphant, and the whole nation was filled with joy and exultation. Never did a Tyrant, devoted to the Infernal Gods, set up his standard at so inauspicious a moment; and never was the defeat of a legitimate monarch so sudden, so complete, and so irretrievable.

This it is probable will terminate the series of Revolutions under which France had gained so much, but at so high a price, and amidst so many fearful risks. ... There is something sublime in the re-appearance of the old Marquis DE LA FAYETTE, rearing his venerable head above the storms of another Revolution. For nearly half a century his name has stood high among the first on a bright roll of those who have fought and conquered in the cause of Liberty, Civil and Religious. The friend of WASHINGTON and FRANKLIN, he witnessed the progress and the triumph of those imperishable principles among the wilds of America".<sup>39</sup>

The Advertiser explicitly opposed the concept of "Court" to that of "People" and "the Divine Right of Kings" to "the Divine Right of Mankind". It invoked appropriate images of the American Revolution - the name of Franklin (rather than of the radicalism of Thomas Paine), which for Fairbairn had strong symbolic resonances. The fact that the social upheaval had been partially caused by the suspension of press freedom made it doubly useful to the Advertiser, as was examined in chapter one. The strong middle class element in the 1830 revolution also made the events attractive to the Advertiser and its supporters, who set them up in contrast to the Revolution of 1789. The Advertiser emphasized that the general education and enlightenment of the populace had brought about this change. As the editorial quoted in chapter one indicates, the paper stressed that there was "now no terror in the word Revolution", because, unlike the revolution of the

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<sup>39</sup> SACA, 23 October 1830

previous century, there was now a free press in France.<sup>40</sup>

In honour of the "HEROES ... who fought and fell, or fought and conquered, in the Battle of Paris"<sup>41</sup> a public dinner was held in the Commercial Room by "[a] number of gentlemen of Cape Town and its neighbourhood, who admire the principles and the conduct manifested by the French people in the late ever-memorable vindication of their Liberties".<sup>42</sup> This event indicates the importance which the middle classes of the Cape attached to the events in France as well as the use to which these events were put in process of the construction of a proper political identity at the Cape. The Advertiser gave a detailed account of the events of the dinner:

"On the evening of Thursday last a numerous company, comprehending nearly all, if not all the Merchants, and other independent and respectable Inhabitants of the Cape Town, met in the Commercial Hall, for the purposes of celebrating the recent triumph of the French People over the enemies of God and man, and of expressing publicly their attachment to the principles of Liberty and Order, the basis and the bulwark of Civil Society. After dinner the usual toasts, the King, Queen, &c., were given and welcomed with the greatest cheerfulness and enthusiasm; and then, - prefaced with an admirable speech from the Chair, most ably filled by Mr. Collison - 'LOUIS PHILIP I. KING OF THE FRENCH' The whole proceedings of the evening were worthy the occasion, and the inspiring sentiments expressed by the different speakers seemed to fill every soul with ineffable delight, to make every bosom throb with a new species of pleasure - a delight and a pleasure which men, capable of appreciating the value of such sentiments, can alone enjoy or comprehend. To the latest hour of our lives, every one of us will remember with pride, an honourable and patriotic pride, the splendid avowals, the manly and dignified declarations in favor of *Principles*, of Independence, of devotion even to death to the cause of LIBERTY, which the

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<sup>40</sup> SACA, 10 November 1830. See chapter one, page 40.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid

<sup>42</sup> Ibid

conduct of the People of Paris drew from the lips of our assembled townsmen. It was a memorable evening in South Africa."<sup>43</sup>

Occasions such as this, discussed in chapter two, served to draw together like-minded men in the colony in the celebration of the political principles held by them. It stressed their status as patriotic men of rational political feeling and emphasized the importance of expressing this publicly. These dinners formed part of what might be termed the proto-political activities of Cape Town's middle classes, who were otherwise denied a formal role in the public sphere they were taking such pains to construct. That the political importance of the dinners was recognised by the participants is evident in the controversy which attended the composition of this particular meeting. While Fairbairn asserted that it was "not a political dinner"<sup>44</sup>, no Civil or Military officer of the colony attended the meeting, a fact which the Chairman noted with derision during his speech to those assembled.<sup>45</sup> 'A Civilian' wrote to the paper in response to the reported speech of the Chairman, and attacked this viewpoint as denying 'Liberty of Opinion':

"Who could have imagined that at the present day men should thus be held up to public notice, for having exercised their undoubted right to attend or not, at a professedly political dinner, as they thought proper?"<sup>46</sup>

The controversy over the political nature of the dinner is

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<sup>43</sup> SACA, 20 November 1830

<sup>44</sup> SACA, 10 November 1830

<sup>45</sup> SACA, 20 November 1830

<sup>46</sup> SACA, 27 November 1830

significant, for as previous chapters have stressed, the formal public dinners held at the Commercial Exchange by the men of the city's upper middle class, played an important function in the forging of the combination of masculine, national, political and class identity which was necessary for the colony to achieve self-government. Failure to attend such dinners, as well as failure to be included in them, constituted exclusion from the project of rational social reform in which the Advertiser was involved. At the same time, however, in a colony where representative government was explicitly denied to the colonists, the holding of a meeting which might be explicitly called 'political' might be deemed unwise in the colony which was to some extent a refuge for reactionary Toryism and militarism,<sup>47</sup> an attitude of government which, as noted in chapter one, extended beyond the personality of Lord Charles Somerset at the Cape, and was characteristic of the general political tone of the Second British Empire (1780 - 1830).<sup>48</sup> The political activities of Cape Town's middle classes, therefore, had an ambiguous status in the colony, their undoubted political content being both denied and asserted, according to the needs and attitudes of those concerned.

The speech of Francis Collison, acting as Chairman at the meeting to celebrate the French Revolution, stressed the "moderation" of France's actions and the importance of "rational Freedom". He gave voice to the strictly limited sense of social reform held

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<sup>47</sup> Meltzer, 'The Growth of Cape Town Commerce', p.34

<sup>48</sup> Bayly, Imperial Meridian, p.8

by those attending the dinner when he noted: "By the Revolution we are not now to lead our ideas to the unbridled license of popular fury."<sup>49</sup> Speakers at the meeting made direct links between the attitudes of the revolutionaries and the middle classes of the Cape, even to the extent, in the case of Mr P. Wynch's speech on The Freedom of the Press, of obliquely giving them credit for what had occurred:

"I would beg to congratulate the gentlemen present on the late glorious events of which we have lately received intelligence. If our meeting be not so numerous as might have been expected, in respectability it views, I believe, with any ever convened in this Hall, and I know not by whom the head could be more appropriately taken on the present occasion, than by the Members of and Subscribers to the Commercial Exchange of this Colony - Commerce and Freedom should ever be united".<sup>50</sup>

The dinner, therefore, sought to establish the link between a class, its economic activities, and the task of reforming society. Apart from the example of the Parisian revolution, another overseas event upon which the Advertiser focused its attention was the progress of the Reform Bill through the British Parliament.<sup>51</sup> The Advertiser drew strong connections between the parliamentary reform in England and the reform of the colonial government:

"One objection, which has been repeatedly urged in the

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<sup>49</sup> SACA, 20 November 1830

<sup>50</sup> SACA, 24 November 1830

<sup>51</sup> The 1830 general election in Britain had itself been influenced by the July Revolution in Paris. As D. Fraser puts it: "It may have been a Tory myth that the election itself was influenced by the July Revolution, but it was certainly true that after the election events in France helped to maintain the political excitement already created." 'The Agitation for Parliamentary Reform' in Ward, J.T. Popular Movements c.1830 - 1850 (London, 1970)

course of these debates, referred to the Government of the Colonies. It seems, according to the Anti-Reformers, that the Colonies are at present Represented in Parliament by means of the Rotten Boroughs. Gentlemen connected with the Colony, who would not otherwise get admission into the House, were sent by Aristocratic Patrons to watch over our Interests, and to take care that our Petitions should be duly attended to, our grievances redressed, and our reasonable requests complied with. That a close connexion has existed between the Proprietors of Rotten Boroughs and the Colonies cannot be denied. It nourished one of the most productive plants of ministerial influence; but to the Colonies its fruits were poison. Incapable Governors enjoying extravagant emoluments - despotic measures to protect them from exposure, - and all the miseries of a Close and Corrupt System of Government have sprung, and continue up to this moment to flow from this species of Colonial Representation ... On this System hung the misgovernment of the Colonies, and we hear with infinite pleasure, but without surprise, the present ministers speaking of a speedy Reform throughout them all, as the natural consequence of Reform at Home. ... To the Colonists this is of course the most inviting of all the features of the Bill, and we trust it will have the effect of turning the attention of every man in South Africa, seriously and in earnest, to the preliminary measures necessary on their part, for entering with honor on the glorious course about to be opened to them."<sup>52</sup>

The successful passage of the Reform Bill, therefore, was seen as a step nearer to the attainment of representative government for the colony, now suffering under "all the miseries of a Close and Corrupt System of Government". In preparation for this passage of the Bill, this editorial stressed, the "preliminary measures" of reform within the colony had to be dealt with by the colonists themselves. It was thus that the Advertiser conceived of this:

"The most important of these preparatory steps is a cordial and unfeigned Union among all classes of the inhabitants. We do not believe that the wicked attempts of a few selfish and narrow-minded men to sow jealousy and distrust between the Dutch and the English Colonists, have succeeded to any great extent. It is too distinctly seen by all men of sense that the interests of both classes are in every respect the

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<sup>52</sup> SACA, 17 September 1831

same - that in prosperity and misfortune they are inseparable, and that the general welfare of the Colony is and must be the main object of both - this we say is too plain to admit of any thing more than a *temporary* disunion, notwithstanding all the misrepresentations and inflammatory falsehoods so industriously circulated by the pitiful faction alluded to. Yet a complete Union is so indispensable in a small community like this, if we expect to reap any solid advantages from our approaching Reform, that we cannot but wish the influential persons, particularly among the Dutch, would exert themselves to the utmost, and with true patriotic zeal, in thwarting those emissaries of strife and confusion."<sup>53</sup>

Political union between the Dutch and British colonists was considered a prerequisite by both the Advertiser and the Colonial Government to the establishment of representative government at the Cape. The Colonial Government had explicitly listed the lack of political union between Dutch and British as one of its objections towards the establishment of representative government at the Cape. The paper recognised that the 'community', by which they no doubt meant those who might be expected to attain the franchise and take political action within the bounds of a Legislative Assembly, was a small one. To swell the ranks of the enlightened classes, the presence of the Dutch was necessary.

As considered throughout this study, the middle class's sense of its own exclusiveness was juxtaposed with a sense of inclusiveness whereby any individual, given a proper education, could join the ranks of the elect, be this defined in terms of income, politics or cultural attributes. This optimism at the progress of reform through the social world has been dealt with in chapter one, and the Advertiser was a firm believer in both

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid

the malleability of the human spirit, and the power of education and moral regeneration. As it stated against the objections given in Britain to the Reform Bill:

"When such men as PEEL and WETHERELL talk of the ignorant populace, they seem to imagine that the world has been asleep for more than two hundred years, and that Truth and Knowledge still lie at the bottom of a well, to be come at only by the most expensive apparatus. They pretend to be ignorant of the couching process which Education and cheap Books have been performing on the eyes of the *People*. They suppose that those who were born blind could never be made to see - that poor and rich were natural distinctions - that mankind were created in classes, and not as individuals. This delusion is not confined to a few. Late events in more than one civilized country show that the mass of the people can and will assert their just claim to respect, and that virtue as well as knowledge - virtue in the most dignified and formidable sense of the term - has taken up her abode in the mind of an educated population."<sup>54</sup>

As explored above, the Advertiser considered itself to be of major importance in this public education. This emphasis on the reformability of individuals, and the flexibility of the class system, however, belied the Advertiser's ultimate commitment to the social status quo. The Reform Act, with which the Advertiser identified its own efforts, had the effect of wedding the middle class to the existing political system, rather than causing a complete disruption of its assumptions.<sup>55</sup> To increase its political influence within the colonial context, however, the middle class sought to draw other groups into its ranks, bolstered by its belief in the transforming power of enlightened social reform.

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<sup>54</sup> SACA, 12 October 1831

<sup>55</sup> Fraser, 'The Agitation for Parliamentary Reform', p.50

The Cape Dutch were the perhaps the main target group for inclusion into a rational, enlightened and reform-minded middle class. There is no evidence, in the years under discussion, of explicit attempts to incorporate blacks into the ranks of the respectable colonial elite. This is perhaps one reason why racial issues do not find a prominent place in the paper, during these years, with reference to the social reconstruction of Cape Town. This issue became more prominent in the Advertiser in later decades, when the nature of the franchise qualifications for the new Legislative Assembly came under discussion.<sup>56</sup> The Advertiser sought to create such a colonial middle class from settlers of both Dutch and English extraction, although this was to be very much upon its own terms, rather than upon the terms of those it sought to incorporate. From the very beginning of its publication, the Advertiser sought to advance the unity of Dutch and British in the colony:

"The sentiment of contempt or scorn towards our fellow-men is perhaps of all others the least consonant, either with just philosophy or genuine religion. It prevails most among weak, ignorant and worthless men. ... Men hate each other, in short, chiefly from ignorance and selfishness. Whenever they attempt in good earnest to understand and assist each other, their scornful dislike immediately gives place to mutual respect and good will. If this observation is applicable to nations and races of men the farthest removed from each other in lineage, manners and polity - how much more to the two kindred classes in the Colony of Emigrant English and Austral-Africans? Are we not men of one blood - members of one community - subjects of one sovereign - followers of one faith? Our country - our character - our interests are one.

Let us then do away with all narrow-minded party prejudices, combinations and coteries; and cordially unite our efforts in promoting great and good objects, whether they originate with Dutch or English. Let us forget the paltry prejudices of sect, party, and birth place, and estimate the minor distinction of Whig and Tory -

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<sup>56</sup> Andrew Bank, personal communication.

Episcopalian and Presbyterian - European and African - according to their true importance. Let us hate nothing but vice, and scorn nothing but baseness."<sup>57</sup>

This unity of interest which the Advertiser put forward as existing between the Dutch and the British settlers was fundamentally sound, as both stood to benefit from the representative government which was the ultimate goal of the Advertiser's reform agenda. The presence of settlers of different ethnic origins, however, complicated the assumption of the specific colonial identity which the Advertiser deemed necessary for the establishment of representative government at the Cape<sup>58</sup>, for the attempt to forge a union between English and Dutch floundered upon the obstacle of slavery, to be further considered below.

The Advertiser initially denied that there was a substantial division of interest between the English and Dutch in the colony:

"That some shades of difference in the feelings of the inhabitants of this Colony are to be discovered, we have no reason to doubt. That there is a great difference of opinion as to the best means of attaining every desirable end, every one knows to be the case; and so it ought to be. But we maintain that , on every important point connected with the public interest, there is only one wish entertained by the Honest and Independent, from one end of the Colony to the other. For instance: - every one wishes

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<sup>57</sup> 17 March 1824

<sup>58</sup> G. Paquet's and J.P. Wallot's conception of Canada, a colony which was also subjected to two successive waves of colonisation by two distinct ethnic groups, forms an interesting parallel to that of the Cape. They stress the development of limited regional, ethnic and cultural identities at different rates, in a description which might be fruitfully used to describe the colony as a whole in the early nineteenth century, even before the onset of the Great Trek. 'Nouvell-France/Québec/Canada: A World of Limited Identities', in Canny and Pagden, Colonial Identities.

to see an individual of liberal principles, of exalted family, and independent fortune, and, if possible, without much family influence at home - and a Civilian - placed at the head of the Government. Every one wishes that the power of the Governor to infringe on Private Liberty, as well as the influence of the Government, may be reduced as far as is consistent with the public safety. Every one desires to know, at least, the Laws by which we are to be governed in future, and to see them administered by an independent, as well as an enlightened and impartial Bench of Judges. Everyone wishes to see the Revenue derived from the least objectionable sources, and the expenditure reduced to what is necessary, on the most economical scale, for the support of a respectable establishment, and especially of a strict Police. For we have no partiality, at the Cape, for the Roudies, Dirkers, and Gougiers, of the Backwoods of America. But, above all, in order to secure these advantages when we have got them, and to guard against abuse of every description, every Honest man desires that Public Measures may be open to discussion, and that it may be lawful for him to speak or write what he pleases, so long as he does no injury to his neighbour; or, in other words, that the Liberty (not the Licentiousness) of the Press may be protected by Law."<sup>59</sup>

The needs of order and civilization were to be served by bringing forth a union between those classes at the Cape which could participate in, and profit by, a representative government. If the Cape was to avoid comparison with the barbarous "Backwoods of America", it was essential that this union be brought about. In order to achieve this goal, the Advertiser stressed that "[t]here is no passion that exerts a more baneful influence on the affairs of men than Contempt"<sup>60</sup> and it condemned the account of the Dutch colonists given by Barrow and other critical observers, stressing that their effect "is very unfortunate; because it tends to keep alive national distinctions and jealousies, and retards that cordial and complete amalgamation of the Dutch and English Colonists, which is so accordant to the

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<sup>59</sup> SACA, 7 April 1824

<sup>60</sup> SACA, 17 March 1824

wishes of our paternal Government, and so essential to the future interests and well-being of both."<sup>61</sup>

Certain Dutch colonists had clearly involved themselves in the Advertiser's reform enterprise. DuToit and Giliomee have stressed that important sections of the Afrikaner community, especially in the Western Cape, willingly co-operated with the British from the very beginning of their occupation of the Cape, with several prominent families becoming anglicized fairly quickly.<sup>62</sup> Many individuals, such as W.S. Van Ryneveld, and Andries Stockenstrom advanced to prominent positions in the colonial government, "and were much involved in the British attempts to establish law and order more effectively. ... Because they favoured firm government they were largely in sympathy with the general aims of British rule and the reforms of the old order."<sup>63</sup> The role that such individuals played in attempting to bring about a union between Dutch and British along the lines of an enlightened society are evident in the Advertiser. At the "Anniversary Dinner of the Mercantile body of Cape Town", held in the Commercial Exchange on 20 April 1831, Stockenstrom, and other colonists of Dutch extraction, were to be numbered amongst the "gentlemen of distinction" who attended. Before the Chairman, G. Muntingh began his address, he apologized for his lack of proficiency with the English language, and after praising the roads of the colony, in

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<sup>61</sup> SACA, 5 May 1824

<sup>62</sup> DuToit, A. and Giliomee, H. Afrikaaner Political Thought: Analysis and Documents. Volume One: 1780 - 1850 (Cape Town and Johannesburg, 1983), p.25

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, p.79

a speech which was quoted in chapter two, he noted:

"There was another circumstance to which he (the Chairman) would allude, that was, the Governor's kind demeanour to the old inhabitants: this conduct was most judicious, and had opened the way to that amalgamation of the people which was essential to the general happiness of the community. (Approbation.)"<sup>64</sup>

The "general happiness of the community" was seen, by the Advertiser, to be strongly dependent upon a unity of interest being constructed between Dutch and British. The paper was aware of the importance of both English and Dutch participating in the colony's proto-political activities of Public Dinners and Associations:

"the habit of assembling ourselves together for benevolent and public objects being thus acquired, a general Object will naturally command a general Union. In this way a Community ripens for *Self-Government* in the widest sense of the term. It becomes an organised body, in which each member performs with ease:- its relative functions, and all its powers, without overstraining any part, can be exercised at every moment for the good of the whole."<sup>65</sup>

Education, just as it was seen as an important means of creating a respectable labouring class at the Cape, was also considered a powerful tool in the construction of a class unity between English and Dutch. As one correspondent said of the South African College:

"It is *Unity* of purpose that we want. Every thing excellent for Society languishes, withers, and dies at the Cape of Good Hope, for want of *Unanimity* among the People; and the only solid Exception which at present strikes my mind during the last ten years is the erection of the College - an exception which clearly establishes my argument. And as this consummation, so devoutly to be wished, can only be

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<sup>64</sup> SACA, 23 April 1831. See chapter two, page 66, for the rest of this speech.

<sup>65</sup> SACA, 14 December 1831. See chapter two, page 75, for a general examination of the importance of public associations.

looked for in the Rising Generation, I again hail the formation of that inestimable Institution, the SOUTH AFRICAN COLLEGE. "<sup>66</sup>

The Dutch and British middle classes at the Cape had most to gain from the creation of legislative government at the Cape, and they were also in the financial and social position to attempt to convince the colonial government of the colony's being worthy of self-government. An established unity between the Dutch and British middle class could forestall accusations that there were insufficient people of at the Cape who might be able to act properly within the political sphere, as well as accusations that their disunity might allow the colony to fall into internal strife. Those members of the Dutch community within Cape Town who had accepted the hegemony of British culture in the political life of the colony were at pains to stress the unity between Dutch and British. Thus did Mr. Cloete, at a Public Meeting held on 16 July 1831, attack the idea that the people of the Cape "were not ripe" for Self-Government:

"Still the cry is - 'You are not ripe.' It is said there is not yet a sufficient amalgamation of the several Classes, and that a Representative Assembly would be productive of only discord and anarchy. At this time of day he was surprised and disgusted with such shallow subterfuges. Not ripe! and not amalgamated together! Why, in sooth? He would tell these objectors:- because we are without a Free Assembly, where the people would meet, and soon understand each other's interests. The Colonists should be cautioned; these objections came from the Advocates of the System so long and banefully followed here - '*Divide et impera*'.

The Cape Dutch were essentially English. Their habits, their intermarriages, their general improvements, all exhibit and prove this fact. And it was rank folly to consider their interests as disunited. Was there an Englishman present who would not feel ashamed of not competing with a Dutchman? In short, nobody now-a-days

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<sup>66</sup> SACA, 31 August, 1831, letter from 'A Shareholder'.

could be misled by such objections."<sup>67</sup>

While stressing the importance of a Legislative Assembly in the creation of unity, rather than as the result of unity, Cloete is at pains to emphasize the fact that British and Dutch at the Cape can already be seen as one people. Significantly, however, it is the Cape Dutch who are English, rather than the English who are Cape Dutch. Union was to be strongly on the terms which were put forward by 'enlightened' institutions such as the Advertiser, the cultural orientation of which was strongly directed towards Britain, despite the shifts brought about by local conditions.

The optimistic assertions of men such as Cloete were not borne out by the general tone of the Advertiser in 1831. Unity between English and Dutch was to founder during the course of the 1830s, primarily upon the obstacle of slavery, as explored in the previous chapter, and this was to cause Fairbairn to temporarily set aside his previous forthright calls for a representative government only a year after Cloete had proclaimed the Englishness of the Cape Dutch.

The issue of slavery was one which needed to be resolved before the Cape could achieve representative government. The Advertiser was extremely clear on this point, stating that:

"It is useless and pernicious to conceal the fact, that Negro Emancipation, - or a provision for it within a reasonable period, - is the *sine qua non* of our own Emancipation from a Close and Ruinous System of

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<sup>67</sup> SACA, 20 July 1831

Government."<sup>68</sup>

The issue of slavery was the prime cause of the break-down in the move towards social unity between English and Dutch which the Advertiser was so anxious to achieve. Fairbairn was well aware of this fact, and, as the previous chapter has examined, he sought to keep the debates over slavery, amelioration and emancipation at the Cape within the bounds of calm and rational political expression partly because he feared the disruptive effect that such debates would have on the relationship between Dutch and British.

Du Toit and Giliomee see Cape Afrikaners as being relegated to the position of a minority group by the British colonial government in the early nineteenth century, and express a retrospective surprise that, apart from the issue of slavery, no political action was taken against this.<sup>69</sup> Resistance to amelioration and emancipation, was, however, strong. In its stress on the disunity caused by resistance to the British state on the issue of slavery, the Advertiser clearly saw these actions as indicative of a rejection of the concepts of enlightened society which the paper was attempting to spread through the colony. With De Zuid-Afrikaan acting as "spokesman and apologist

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<sup>68</sup> SACA, 23 July 1831

<sup>69</sup> DuToit and Giliomee, Afrikaner Political Thought, p.24. They explain this lack of resistance in terms of the strong British military presence at the Cape, the legacy of grievances held against the Company and the economic benefits which British rule had for many Dutch at the Cape. Ibid, p.25.

for the slave-owners"<sup>70</sup>, much of the Advertiser's invective was directed towards this paper, as stirring up disunity and preventing the moral reformation of the Cape by holding out an alternative world view to its readers.

Watson has considered the views on slavery of De Zuid-Afrikaan and the Advertiser to be almost analogous: "[i]n each case property rights were assumed to be sacred; humanity and expediency required that slaves be freed, but only if owners were properly compensated. It should happen gradually. This basic similarity of view suggests that the tempest over emancipation was based not on philosophical differences over slavery, but on a division more fundamental in Cape society: the ethnic conflict between Dutch and English."<sup>71</sup> At De Zuid-Afrikaan's very inception, it had outlined those groups to which it stood in opposition: "Wy beginnen met FREE-PRESS humbug, - (want dit is de paramount of non plus ultra van alle humbugs) de PHILIPSH-humbug. Vestigt, vooreerst uwe geheele aandacht op deze vier voorname humbugs".<sup>72</sup> Given this declaration, it is not surprising that the Advertiser considered De Zuid-Afrikaan to be setting out to destroy what the former paper had attempted to create within the colony. The Advertiser considered De Zuid-Afrikaan to lie behind much of the slaveholder agitation in the early 1830s, providing them with a forum for their social discontent and

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid, p.24

<sup>71</sup> Watson, The Slave Question, p.134

<sup>72</sup> De Zuid-Afrikaan 9 April 1830, quoted in Botha, John Fairbairn, p.73

influencing their political activities.<sup>73</sup>

The Advertiser, therefore, regarded De Zuid-Afrikaan as an undesirable influence on the construction of colonial identity and as a force fashioning the image of the Cape in the minds of metropolitan observers. That it feared and despised this role of the rival paper was made clearly evident in its own pages:

"It is of the last importance to have judicious and able friends in London, who can watch the intentions of Ministers before any decisive measures are adopted: and we ardently pray that the ignorant, seditious, and disloyal writers, who have lately labored (we hope in vain) to misrepresent and dishonor the Colonists, may not deprive us of the benefits which we might otherwise expect from their good offices. We can affirm with confidence in this place, because our Colonial readers know the fact, that the people of this Colony are loyal and peaceable in their dispositions, and that they obey the Laws with a ready and rational submission. But suppose any Member of Parliament were to read in his place a few extracts from the *Zuid Afrikaan* Newspaper, recommending Resistance to Authority, insinuating that nothing but the dread of an armed force induced the inhabitants to submit to the ordinary proceedings of the Courts of Justice, and all but directly approving of assassination on the mere ground of personal dislike - suppose such extracts were read; and suppose it were added that some seventy or eighty persons in Cape Town not only tolerated and countenanced, but actually subscribed and paid their money to feed and clothe the Authors of such abominations - what reply, we ask, could the best friends of the Colony make to the implied charge? We can make a satisfactory reply here, by simply stating what we all know to be the fact, that the respectable part of the Community look on such proceedings with scorn and abhorrence - but it would not be so easy to satisfy the minds of the People of England, that such was the state of the public mind at the Cape. For the sake of the Colony, whose salvation at this moment depends upon its character, we trust this state of things will not continue much longer, and that all, who are not under the dominion of the worst passions of our nature, will see the necessity of protecting themselves from all appearance of union, from all suspicion of having approved of such insane and fatal proceedings."<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Botha, John Fairbairn, p.87 - 88.

<sup>74</sup> SACA, 16 October 1831

Newspapers are seen as the creators of colonial reputation, whether this be good or bad, and their power in the construction of colonial identity is made clear. As this extract stipulates, the 'salvation' of the Cape was considered, by the Advertiser, to rest upon its 'character'. The importance of the proper construction of colonial identity is here made manifest: the attainment of representative government rested upon the approval of metropolitan Britain which could only be forthcoming once the rational society which Fairbairn envisaged at the Cape had been brought forth by the actions of institutions such as the Advertiser. Not only did Fairbairn feel that representative government would not be forthcoming without social reconstruction, representative government was also not desirable without social reconstruction.

During the course of 1831, Fairbairn and C.J. Brand, the editor of De Zuid-Afrikaan embarked upon a bitter personal feud over their views on slavery, emancipation and representative government, a feud which was reflected in the attacks launched by each paper upon the other.<sup>75</sup> The press war between the Advertiser and De Zuid-Afrikaan, as well as the Stellenbosch riot, intensified tension between English and Dutch during 1831. Things came to a head the following year when a group of Koeberg slaveowners wrote a letter which was published in De Zuid-Afrikaan in which they threatened resistance to the British state should the Order in Council of 1831 be enforced at the Cape.

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<sup>75</sup> Botha, John Fairbairn, p.172

Tensions between the two papers rose to even greater heights, with the Advertiser accusing its rival of stirring up revolt in the colony. These factors had a decisive effect upon Fairbairn's attitude to representative government at the Cape. Referring to the present colonial government under the British King, he stressed, "[w]e dislike the despotism of one, but we dislike the despotism of 50 Koeberg Boers - 50, 000 times worse."<sup>76</sup> The fear that both the English and the coloured members of colonial society would have their rights ground underfoot by those Dutch whom he had been so confident of amalgamating into a force of social reform a few years before caused the Advertiser to temporarily set aside its campaign for a Legislative Assembly in the colony, considering that its establishment at the Cape at that stage of its development would not be advantageous to the paper's long-term reform aims.<sup>77</sup>

It is at this point that the chronological limits set by this study end. A brief note on the developments after 1831 is, however, appropriate. Ethnic tension between Dutch and British subsided fairly quickly after emancipation, despite the disruption of the Great Trek. Botha stresses that the animosity so prevalent in 1831 had largely been laid to rest by 1841. One reason for this, apart from the resolution of the slavery issue, was the establishment of municipal government at the Cape: "[e]strangement between the two groups might undo the initial success, achieved with the institution of municipal

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<sup>76</sup> SACA, 30 June 1832

<sup>77</sup> Botha, John Fairbairn, p.172

administration, as a definite step on the road to representative government"<sup>78</sup> and prominent Dutch individuals in Cape Town, as well as institutions like De Zuid-Afrikaan, joined the Advertiser in pleading for co-operation between the two language groups. These pleas apparently fell on receptive ears, for the mutual class interest of English and Dutch became generally accepted. After the establishment of a Legislative Assembly at the Cape, this co-operation found expression in the election of Fairbairn as Member of the Legislative Assembly for the predominantly Dutch, agricultural district of Swellendam.

This chapter has sought to put forward in general terms the position which the Advertiser considered that the Cape should be playing in a world-wide economy of reform bound together by the disparate colonies of the British Empire. Taking up this position was considered to be part of the attainment of a rational civil society which would lead to the establishment of representative government at the Cape. That certain articulate and literate members of the colony were not, at this stage, prepared to abide by the Advertiser's rules for proper political expression or to accept that paper's conception of colonial identity, caused it to temporarily set aside its demands for what it considered to be the basis of its reform attempts, a Legislative Assembly at the Cape. The Advertiser's programme of social reconstruction had not therefore, been sufficiently successful by 1831 for the colony to have 'ripened' for self-government.

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<sup>78</sup> Botha, John Fairbairn, p.181

## CONCLUSION

An examination of The South African Commercial Advertiser reveals its importance as an historical source which illuminates the construction of colonial identity in Cape Town during the early nineteenth century. In its self-consciously expressed desire to re-make the social world of the colony, it provides crucial information on the cultural underpinnings of the city's transition from an agrarian to a mercantile economy, as it became established in its position in the expanding British Empire, and on the colony's gradual move towards the establishment of representative government.

This study has attempted to demonstrate that previous examinations of the Advertiser have not used the text to its full potential. Despite its own name, the paper is far more than simply a 'Commercial Advertiser'; it is a cultural document which eloquently expresses the world view of both its writers and its intended audience. As the previous chapters have indicated, the editorial interests of John Fairbairn were extensive - as wide-ranging as the changes he sought to instil, by means of his paper, in the cultural expressions of the Cape colonists. While the paper has been used extensively by those writers who have examined the intellectual developments in the colony around issues such as commerce and slavery<sup>1</sup>, a close reading and

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<sup>1</sup> Meltzer's 'Growth of Cape Town Commerce' uses the Advertiser as its main source material. As the references in the previous chapters to this thesis indicate, it does not ignore the cultural world view of the colonists and of the paper, but its main focus lies on general economic developments. Watson's 'The

detailed analysis of the text reveals its importance as a vehicle for the expression of the unconscious cultural assumptions which underpinned the world view of the dominant classes of the period.

This study therefore attempts to fill in some of the detail to the broad socio-economic changes which were outlined in the introduction, by trying to increase our sense of the rich cultural texture of changes in the past. It also seeks to stress that these broad changes should not be seen as depersonalized forces acting on Cape society, but as historical trends which were in themselves sites of struggle, and which texts such as the Advertiser sought to control according to their own desires and ambitions. The Advertiser is an extremely useful text with which to examine these processes because of the extremely self-conscious nature of its contents. Fairbairn was well aware that the colony was undergoing a series of structural transformations during this period; it was, as he put it "on its march of Good or to Evil"<sup>2</sup>, and he was seeking, through the pages of his newspaper, to direct this change according to his own cultural assumptions about the nature of a civilized society.

These assumptions were informed by his roots in middle-class Britain, and especially by his links with Edinburgh during the

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Slave Question', deals at length with the debates over slavery which appear in the Advertiser, but beyond the broad diffusion of ideas on liberty and property, pays very little attention to the cultural assumptions which underlie the debates over the labour system, and which are addressed by this thesis in chapter four.

<sup>2</sup> SACA, 28 May 1831.

Scottish Enlightenment. The previous chapters have attempted to indicate the ambiguities, contradictions and disruptions which resulted from the transferral of these attitudes to the colonial context of the Cape, and the chronological limits set by this project finds the Advertiser's agenda of social reconstruction still unrealized in 1831, despite its many self-confident editorials. The paper, however, had definitely had its successes, as has been explored above, and with the establishment of a Legislative Assembly in 1853 it was finally to prevail, although the troubling undercurrents in the text of colonial self-confidence which have been addressed by this study remained with the colony even after this supposed middle-class apotheosis.<sup>3</sup>

Some of the themes explored in this study also demonstrate that an historiographical method which employs the close textual analysis of a single source over a limited space of time can disrupt some of the assumptions a historian might bring to the examination of a certain historical period. The previous chapters have indicated that, despite what one might expect, race was not an issue which the Advertiser often addressed directly in the years 1824 and 1830 - 1831. This is especially true of the material which refers to the situation in Cape Town, which is the main object of study in this thesis. The editorial quoted above, page 160, which attacks the absorption of European labourers into a racially heterogenous underclass, is not typical of the general attitudes of the paper expressed during these years. In another editorial, Fairbairn defined the "Lower Orders" as "the

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<sup>3</sup> See Hall, M. 'Fish and the Fisherman, Archaeology and Art'

laboring Poor, the Slaves and the uninstructed Natives", and made no racial distinction between them as objects for reform.<sup>4</sup> In the Annual Report of the Committee of the South African Infant Schools, it was noted:

"The Committee conceive, that it is to the child of the poor, - of whatever nation<sup>5</sup> or colour, - whose infancy, but for this institution, might prove only the seed-time of vice, prove so incalculably beneficial to himself, and the public, in implanting the seeds of those good principles, which they trust, under the Divine Blessing, will never perish."<sup>6</sup>

As noted in chapter four, therefore, class divisions were more commonly invoked than racial divisions in the reformation of the working class of the colony. Race was a more important concept in discussions of the situation on the eastern frontier than with reference to debates about labour in Cape Town itself, and it became a more frequently invoked concept in later decades<sup>7</sup> This analysis of the Advertiser, however, has demonstrated that one cannot assume that concepts such as race were a constant concern in the lives of those who were responsible for creating such texts, however important they may have been in the longer term.

As stated in the introduction, therefore, this thesis has attempted to demonstrate the usefulness of a particular historical approach to the question of the construction of middle

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<sup>4</sup> SACA, 18 June 1831.

<sup>5</sup> Nation, during this period, was commonly used to designate what in modern usage would be termed 'tribe'. Andrew Bank, personal communication.

<sup>6</sup> SACA, 26 March 1831.

<sup>7</sup> See Bank's forthcoming PhD on the subject of Ideologies of Race at the Cape of Good Hope c. 1800 - 1850.

class identity in early nineteenth-century Cape Town. Dominick LaCapra's conception of the way in which the historian should treat the texts of the past stresses that "[o]ften the dimensions of the document that make it a text of a certain sort with its own historicity and its relations to sociopolitical processes (for example, relations of power) are filtered out when it is used purely and simply as a quarry for facts in the reconstruction of the past."<sup>8</sup> I have not, therefore, tried to use the Advertiser simply as a "quarry for facts" about an external reality which the text more or less accurately represents to the historian.

LaCapra's conception of the nature of the text has been useful in this approach to the contents of the Advertiser. As he puts it, "the very opposition between what is inside and what is outside texts is rendered problematic, and nothing is seen as being purely and simply inside and outside texts. Indeed the problem becomes one of rethinking the concepts of 'inside' and 'outside' in relation to processes of interaction between language and the world. One of the more challenging aspects of recent inquiries into textuality has been the investigation of why textual processes cannot be confined within the bindings of the book. The context of the 'real world' is itself 'textualized' in a variety of ways".<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> LaCapra, D. Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language (Ithaca and London, 1983), p.31

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p.26

The relationship between the text of the Advertiser and the context of Cape Town is not, therefore, a simple one. Both affected the other, and both were equally important in the social reconstruction process. For example, the images of a clean and rational city expressed by the paper were no more or less important than the city's physical dirt and disorder which made its way into the text of the Advertiser. Both were equally 'real' to the inhabitants of Cape Town, and both played their role in the process by which the colony approached the establishment of representative government.

This can be said of many of the other ambiguous representations in the Advertiser, relating to issues such as gender, labour, social space, literature and colonial identity, which have been dealt with in this thesis, and I have tried, therefore, to read the Advertiser and the context in which it was imbedded with sensitivity to the processes of 'intertextuality' rather than treating the paper as a static reflection of a 'real' historical context.<sup>10</sup>

Although this study cannot begin to hope to offer a definitive account of the making of middle class identity in early nineteenth century Cape Town, it has tried to point out the issues which merit exploration, and which will be more fully addressed in the wider study of the topic which will follow on from this thesis. The Advertiser merits the greater and more

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<sup>10</sup> Kramer, 'Literature, Criticism, and Historical Imagination', p.115

detailed attention of historians of the Cape colony in the nineteenth century, as a rich repository of the cultural assumptions upon which the transition of the colony to one which merited the status of a Legislative Assembly was based.

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