ELIZABETH STONE'S WILLIAM LANGSHAWE, THE COTTON LORD AND THE YOUNG MILLINER AS CONDITION-OF-ENGLAND NOVELS

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I

In the opening paragraph of his essay Chartism (1839), Thomas Carlyle warned the British public about the "Condition-of-England Question":

A feeling very generally exists that the condition and disposition of the Working Classes is a rather ominous matter at present; that something ought to be said, something ought to be done, in regard to it. And surely, at an epoch of history when the 'National Petition' carts itself in wagons along the streets, and is presented ... to a Reformed House of Commons; and Chartism numbered by the million and half ... breaks out into brickbats, cheap pikes, and even into sputterings of conflagration, such very general feeling cannot be considered unnatural! To us individually this matter appears, and has for many years appeared, to be the most ominous of all practical matters whatever; a matter in regard to which if something be not done, something will do itself one day, and in a fashion that will please nobody. The time is verily come for acting in it; how much more for consultation about acting in it, for speech and articulate inquiry about it!²

The "articulate inquiry" Carlyle called for in his pamphlet had, however, already begun in the work of several novelists, especially of women writers. Among these were Frances Trollope with Michael Armstrong, The Factory Boy (1839), Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna with Helen Fleetwood (1839-1841), and, even earlier, Harriet Martineau with The Rioters (1827), The Turn-out (1829),

¹ The author wishes to express his gratitude to the Research Foundation of the University of Tulsa and to the librarians in the Local History Division of Manchester Central Libraries for assistance in the preparation of this article.

and *A Manchester Strike* (1832). Carlyle's indictment of the New Poor Law (1834) and of statistics records some aspects of England's shift from a rural "domestic" system of production to an urban "factory" system during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. His exhortations in *Chartism* were heeded by succeeding writers, prominently Dickens, Kingsley, and Mrs. Gaskell.³

One writer who contributed to Condition-of-England fiction has been largely ignored in appraisals of the tradition of the industrial novel.⁴ In the early 'forties two novels were published by the native Mancunian Elizabeth Wheeler Stone, *William Langshawe, the Cotton Lord* in 1842 and *The Young Milliner* in 1843. Readers familiar with *William Langshawe* believed that *Mary Barton*, published anonymously in 1848, was written by Elizabeth Stone. Mrs. Gaskell, confusing Elizabeth Stone's married and maiden names, recorded her reactions to this attribution:

Marianne Darbishire told me it was ascertained to be the production of a Mrs. Wheeler, a clergyman's wife, who once upon a time was a Miss Stone, and wrote a book called 'The Cotton Lord'. Marianne gave me many proofs which I don't think worth repeating, but I think were quite convincing.


To her publisher Edward Chapman she added: "I find every one here has most convincing proofs that the authorship of Mary Barton should be attributed to a Mrs. Wheeler, née Miss Stone, and authoress of some book called the 'Cotton Lord'." Despite some resemblances between William Langshawe and Mary Barton, it appears that Mrs. Gaskell had not read Stone's novel. In the tradition of industrial fiction William Langshawe and The Young Milliner are transitional between the earlier writing of Trollope, Martineau, and Tonna, and the later achievements of Gaskell and Kingsley.

Elizabeth Wheeler Stone was fortunate in having several factors favour her development as an industrial writer. Born into a prominent Manchester family in 1803, the influence of her father and her brothers formed one aspect of her practice as a writer, for her family was characterized by "inquiry". Her grandfather Charles Wheeler (1751-1827) was founder of the Manchester Chronicle, which first appeared in June 1781, and was in that year the second newspaper in the city. The paper was to remain under the editorship of the Wheelers until June 1838. In 1783 Charles Wheeler published a monograph, *A Description of Manchester, by a native of the town*, which exhibits the interest in Mancunian growth that several of his grandchildren were to inherit. Wheeler's son John, Elizabeth's father, assumed the management of the Manchester Chronicle in 1827 on his father's death. Elizabeth Wheeler's oldest brother Charles Henry was born in 1800; other brothers were Thomas, John, and James, all of whom achieved distinction. Charles Henry published in several journals, including *Blackwood's Magazine*. In March 1821 his "Brief Sketch of the Rev. Josiah Streamlet" appeared in *Maga*, a fictional character-sketch of a well-known Mancunian eccentric minister, the Rev. Josiah Brooks. This interest in Manchester types with their

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6 Manchester Cathedral *Register* records her christening on 25 April 1803.

7 Information on the Wheeler family is included in the following: *Manchester School Register*, vols. 2 and 3 (*The Chetham Society*, 1868, 1874); T. Swindells, *Manchester Streets and Manchester Men* (Manchester, 1907), 91-95; and *Manchester Collectanea*, vol. 2 (*The Chetham Society*, 1877), p. 110. Charles
hard-edged individuality was to appear in Elizabeth Stone's novels, especially in *William Langshawe*. James Wheeler wrote *Manchester: Its Political, Social and Commercial History* in 1836 and edited a collection, *Manchester Poetry*, in 1838. This anthology included poems by Samuel Bamford, Harrison Ainsworth, John Byrom, and the Rev. William Gaskell, the future husband of Mrs. Gaskell. Wheeler's *History* was sufficiently known to be quoted in the guide *Manchester As It Is*, issued in July 1839, which Elizabeth Stone used for information in *William Langshawe*.

James Wheeler's two books were especially influential in his sister's approach to industrialism. In his Preface to the *History* he notes that "Manchester has had no continuous modern historian". He is especially pleased to use information supplied by the Statistical Society, founded in 1833: "The Author ... is content that in his statistical details he has opened valuably productive mines hitherto unexplored" (p. vi). In his *History* he includes tables comparing male and female wages and a commentary about the growth of the cotton industry during the 'thirties. In the *Introductory Essay to Manchester Poetry*, he gave his sister a programmatic statement that became important to her as a novelist. He stresses "the peculiar properties which characterize a 'Manchester Man'" and the process of assimilation by which "the learned professions are crowded with the aspiring scions of commerce". This interest in the personality of the

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8 See *Manchester As It Is* (1839; repr., Didsbury, Manchester, 1971), pp. 24-26, where Wheeler's *History* is quoted. Stone probably used this work, p. 27, for its reference to morality in the southern counties. This guide book is discussed by Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (New York, 1965), p. 106.


Mancunian and his assimilation to respectability is reflected in *William Langshawe*, while his commentary on wages and his factual accuracy led to *The Young Milliner*. Wheeler’s inclusion of poetry by Samuel Bamford (1788-1872) indicates that the family was concerned with social issues, since Bamford had been imprisoned for twenty months following the Peterloo Massacre in 1819. Stone quotes a letter from Bamford in the first volume of *William Langshawe*. In the History Wheeler details several strikes that suggest aspects of *William Langshawe*.

In both novels, but especially in *William Langshawe*, Stone adopts the tone of her brother’s Introductory Essay in *Manchester Poetry*. They are both presenting Mancunian ways of life to a curious but sceptical audience of English men and women for whom Manchester is a foreign country. Wheeler writes:

“Manchester Poetry!” exclaim doubtless the majority of those who may chance to bestow a passing glance upon the book—

‘Bless us! what a word on

A title-page is this!’—

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

Both James and Elizabeth Wheeler are motivated to present Manchester in a more balanced account than exists in prejudiced accounts by outsiders. Rather than record the history of industrialism like her brother, Elizabeth Wheeler Stone in *William Langshawe* and *The Young Milliner* selected the novel to discuss its effects on the managerial and the working classes. Her brother’s work had suggested both method and background, and she undertook her first effort in the early ‘forties.

II

As Monica Fryckstedt notes, *William Langshawe* is important because its author “was the first Manchester resident to write a novel about the manufacturing districts”.¹² Published in two volumes, as *Mary Barton* was to be later, *William Langshawe* exhibits several distinct qualities. One of these is the difficulty

¹² Fryckstedt, op. cit., p. 17.
of distinguishing its author from its narrator. With footnotes appended as authentications and with its chapters editorializing about Mancunian habits, *William Langshawe* virtually ignores such separation. As the daughter of a middle-class family, but one not involved in the manufacturing interests of the city, Elizabeth Stone is both observer and commentator in her narrative, emphatic, for example, about women's education and the lack of domestic training among female operatives. She is a careful observer of social change in *William Langshawe*, with her details about the transitional status of hand-loom weavers, the divergent characters of sons of industrialists, union agitation, trade depression, factory conditions, and assimilation. A reviewer in *The Athenaeum* criticized *William Langshawe* as "an attack on the social circles of Manchester," but this represents a mis-reading of Stone's intentions. These objectives she clarifies in her Introduction.

Stone appears as both guide and documentarian in the Introduction to *William Langshawe*. The Introduction merits attention because in it she shows that she is aware that she is the innovator presenting a fictional account of the city. In its opening paragraphs she established a scene deliberately conforming to the reader's expectations:

The scene of our tale lies in the manufacturing districts.
Cotton bags, cotton mills, spinning-jennies, power-looms, and steam-engines; smoking chimneys, odious factories, vulgar proprietors, and their still more vulgar wives, and their superlatively-vulgar pretensions; dense population, filthy streets, drunken men, reckless women, immoral girls, and squalid children; dirt, filth, misery, and crime; — such are the interesting images which rise ... at the bare mention of the "manufacturing districts:" vulgarity and vice walking side by side; ostentatious extravagance on the one hand, battening on the miseries of degraded and suffering humanity on the other; and this almost without redeeming circumstances — we are told. Is it so?14

Her final query is a key to her intention in *William Langshawe*. Stone presents the "familiar" image of Manchester in order to "defamiliarize" it in the sense advanced by Shklovsky.15 The

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14 *William Langshawe, the Cotton Lord* (London: Richard Bentley, 1842), i. 1-2; subsequent references parenthetical to volume and page number.
purpose of the Condition-of-England novelist, as she conceives it, is not to supply the familiarity which breeds contempt but the unfamiliarity which arouses concern. This purpose is evident as the Introduction continues, for she devotes much space to the “North/South” opposition, noting:

In many of the southern counties, peculiar costumes and antiquated customs present themselves on every hand, and would give the idea of habits transmitted through many generations, even if tradition and history did not attest the fact. In Lancashire this is not the case. (i. 2-3)

While she can acknowledge that mercantilism brings “in many instances, a degraded population” (i. 8), she attacks the charge of Northern immorality:

The “hot-beds of vice,” the manufactories, are, perhaps, not more redolent of crime — in proportion to the numbers congregated — than are the potato-tracts and harvest-fields in those counties where a great proportion of out-door work is still done by females ... With strict regard to the simple question of the morality of the manufacturing districts as compared with the agricultural, there is perhaps less difference than is generally imagined. (i. 9-10)

In a characteristic manner she supplies this footnote:

Some experience, both in a manufacturing town and a secluded agricultural county, has led us to form this opinion, which, however, we should scarcely have obtruded here, but that, as we believe, the statistical records bear us out. (i. 10)

This emphasis on statistics, shared with her brother James Wheeler, reflects her Mancunian disposition.

Having dealt with a preconception of Manchester in the Introduction, she explores the idea of industry as a subject for fiction in her first chapter:

Mr. and Mrs. Langshawe lived in the manufacturing districts. He was a cotton-man, and —

“A cotton-man! the manufacturing districts!” — what a host of unpoetical, unromantic associations does the very term excite in the mind, vapoury and wearisome as was the lengthened and unwelcome vision of Banquo’s descendants to the aching eye of Macbeth!

“The manufacturing districts!” — A cotton-man!” exclaims some parvenue, when she opens her monthly importation of novels, and glances over the first page of each — “What can Hookham have been thinking of to send this? it must go back immediately.”
"But," remarks a companion, "you desire him to send everything that comes out."

"Certainly, everything readable, but who can read this?" (i. 12-13)

This passage echoes the Introductory Essay of James Wheeler for Manchester Poetry. As her brother intended to reveal a different facet of the city, so Elizabeth Stone intends to defamiliarize Manchester to her readers. She imagines a Marchioness unpacking her books with the same chagrin as the parvenue. However, she retains the novel when her lord comments, "There'll be some fun in that; — the Cotton-bags enacting the sentimental!" (i. 13-14). Stone asks her reader "not to follow the example thus nobly set you, and to patronise the plebeian publication" (i. 14).

Her belief that industrial fiction demands observation and factuality corresponds to the Manchester Statistical Society in Wheeler’s History. Aware of readers’ scepticism, she appeals to authentication. Whether dealing with labour issues, the nature of the town, or Mancunian social customs, this evidence is forthcoming. When she describes the hovels of the poor, she immediately dissociates them from the slums of London, defamiliarizing them:

Nowhere do extremes meet more glaringly than in London, where houses that might almost vie with Alladin’s palace in splendour, do absolutely touch upon dens of the utterest filth, misery, wretchedness and crime. But these are peculiarities, and are marked as such, when known; in Lancashire this contrast is so evident a consequence of “the system” and is of such universal occurrence that it is hardly remarked. (i. 156-157)

No cabin in Lancashire is without its fire, unlike the similar dwellings of “the wretched Londoner”.¹⁶ When discussing strikes she notes:

Readers who have not happened to reside in the “Manufacturing Districts,” may be surprised to learn that, on an intimation from the leaders of the “Spinners’ Union”, who may have some cause, real or imaginary, of dissatisfaction with some of the masters, “all hands” will strike. (ii. 160)

¹⁶ H.J. Dyos, “The Slums of Victorian London,” Victorian Studies, xi (September 1967), 27, notes: “The condition of the houses of the poor ... was a reflex of the allocation of political power and economic resources in society at large”.
That her experience of striking is personal is validated by a subsequent footnote:

This picture is not in one iota exaggerated — rather otherwise. I and mine are totally “innocent of cotton”; I have not, I never had, a relative connected with the manufacture. Yet has it been my lot more than once to see my father, a man of unimpeachable honour and of great humanity, go out when my mother has been all but hopeless of his safe return; and I remember frequently the whole front of our house being shuttered and barricaded, and soldiers or policemen quartered in the hall, whilst we were huddled for safety in the breakfast-room at the back of the house. This was during the tumults and riots consequent on different “strikes”. (ii. 164)

Later she testifies, “In the foregoing sketch of the administration of the oath to a Unionist I have invented nothing” (ii. 174). She refers the reader for corroboration to the Character, Object, and Effects of Trades' Unions of 1834, a pamphlet later used by Disraeli for Sybil in 1845.17

When Stone develops her characters this same documentary testimony is included, often to defamiliarize. When Nancy Halliwell’s seducer, John Balshawe, Jr., is exposed just as he is to marry Edith Langshawe, Nancy defends herself by saying, “He kept putting off; and at last he said he would marry me at once if my baby proved a boy” (ii. 200). Stone appends this note, which prevents any “familiar” reaction by the reader:

This custom is not even yet quite exploded in the remoter districts of Lancashire. A loving couple take hands and vow to be faithful to each other for a year and a day: if the woman have a son the man is bound in honour to marry her, and generally does so; but if she be child-less, or only have “a wench, which goes for nought,” their previous connexion is no way binding on him. (ii. 200)

By this addendum, the seduction of an operative by the owner's son, a staple of industrial literature, is defamiliarized. The same applies to the climactic murder of Henry Wolstenholme by strikes at the novel's conclusion:

Let not my readers image that this awful incident has been invented for the nonce. A few years ago a young cotton manufacturer of the highest respectability, and most excellent character, was murdered even so, and as suddenly, as we have described, by order of the Spinners' Union. (ii. 305)

Stone alludes to the murder of Thomas Ashton in 1831, recorded in her brother's History. Subsequently it was used by Mrs. Gaskell for the murder of young Carson in Mary Barton.\textsuperscript{18} The emphasis on observation is continual: "At all events we describe what we have seen" (i. 56); "The regions of aristocratic and fashionable life are a terra incognita to us" (i. 57); "This improbable-looking incident is fact" (i. 121). She transcribes a letter from Samuel Bamford to validate her portrait of the hermit William Bladow (i. 101-106).

Because her brother's History terminates in the mid-'thirties, Stone set her novel in the period c.1828-1831 rather than later in the decade or in the early 'forties. This may also be an attempt to differentiate her work from Frances Trollope's Michael Armstrong or Charlotte Tonna's Helen Fleetwood. It indicates a reliance on her brother's record of such events as the first Manchester Musical Festival in October 1828, which she used in volume one, chapter nine; the first volume occurs on the eve of Catholic Emancipation, as she indicates in chapter ten. It is useful to compare her treatment of Manchester during this period with a monograph like James Kay's The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester, published in 1832. Kay's emphasis corresponds to Stone's:

We have avoided alluding to evidence which is founded on general opinion, or depends merely on matters of perception; and have chiefly availed ourselves of such as admitted of a statistical classification.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{18} Easson, Elizabeth Gaskell, p. 72.
Her desire to refute the "general opinion" of Manchester Captains of Industry in *William Langshawe* is apparent in her Introduction. Several aspects of life at this time she may have drawn from Kay's report. The lack of domestic science among female operatives (i. 197) is mentioned several times in Kay:

Domestic economy is neglected, domestic comforts are too frequently unknown. (p. 25)
The early age at which girls are admitted into the factories, prevents their acquiring much knowledge of domestic economy. (p. 69)

Referring to the Halliwell family's dispersal to the factory, she notes: "Alas! all who were old enough now went to the mill; they had no looms at home" (ii. 263). This comment is in line with Kay's observation: "The hand-loom weavers," he states, are still "existing in this state of transition" since the introduction of power looms (p. 44). This view was reinforced in the Report from the Select Committee on Hand-Loom Weavers' Petitions of 1835. Kay's monograph treats several other issues which appear in *William Langshawe*, including financial distress (p. 80), the pressure by labour agitators for workers to join unions (pp. 107-108), and unsanitary housing (pp. 38-39). It is likely that Stone and her brother James Wheeler knew this widely-circulated monograph. Above all, Kay's document indicates that it was the transitional nature of the late 'twenties and early 'thirties that attracted both the novelist and her brother.  

*William Langshawe* was conceived over several years. In describing a conversation Stone appends this note:

This sketch was written some three years ago, when a periodical work was in circulation which defeated its own benevolent and honourable ends by the exaggerations of its statements. These exaggerated horrors were drawn, it is said, from a very scarce pamphlet ...

Into the mouth of my cotton-merchant in the text I have put sentiments and opinions, not such as might appertain to the hero of a novel, but such as I believe a great portion of his class to possess. (i. 188)

The pamphlet to which she refers is the *Memoir of Robert Blincoe*, first published in 1828 and reissued in 1832 in Manchester. It was

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an important source for Frances Trollope in *Michael Armstrong*, and Stone's note may be refuting Trollope's condemnatory attitude toward industrialists. When Mr. Ainsley defends the employers, she adds:

This chapter (then intended merely as a part of a slighter sketch) was written some time ago, and consequently before those fearful and disgusting discoveries of the nature of coal-mine labour which have recently been elicited in Parliament, to the horror and disgust of every thinking person. (i. 190)

Her awareness of the *First Report of the Children's Employment Commission* indicates that her emphasis on observation and evidence is sincere. Out of the large body of material available to her, she selected two elements of industrialism to examine in a transitional state: the process of assimilation of the Cotton Lords and the situation of women in the managerial class. Her concentration on 1828-1831 reveals that for her, as it was to be for George Eliot in *Middlemarch*, the pre-Reform years were decisive in England's cultural and economic development. The premises and methodology expressed throughout *William Langshawe* were directed to studying two facets of transition.

III

Behind Elizabeth Stone's analysis of the industrial magnate in *William Langshawe* is Carlyle's mythologizing of Richard Arkwright in *Chartism*. Carlyle describes Arkwright as the man "that had to give England the power of cotton" (p. 212), a man who will become "mythic like Arachne" (p. 213). She, however, is not concerned with Cotton Lords as mythological figures. Instead, she wishes to demythologize them. This objective is evident in her complete title, which emphasizes both the individual character and his type "The Cotton Lord". She may, in fact, be noting Cobbett's mockery of the term in *Rural Rides*. In his study *The Captain of Industry*, Melada notes that the period


22 William Cobbett, *Rural Rides* (Baltimore, 1967), pp. 117-118, where the cotton manufacturers are called "Lords of the Loom".
1830-1850 was characterized as a second stage in the depiction of
the magnate, considering him as "benefactor," "enemy of the
people," or symbol. In presenting the Cotton Lord to her
readers Stone depicts three industrialists: William Langshawe,
his contemporary John Balshawe, Sr., and Ainsley.

The type to be studied in William Langshawe is marked
distinctly:

The magnificence of the cotton lords has become a theme for general
satire, deservedly so; still it is admitted on all hands that their magnifi-
cence, however ostentatious, is real ... The rising generation, educated in
a better style and habituated from childhood to more civilized usages,
may redeem this flaw in the character of the race, if, indeed—and this is
the opinion of many well qualified to judge—if, indeed, gentlemanly
habits, delicate feelings, and cultivated minds, are not inconsistent with
success in Manchester trade ... And so long as the cotton trade exists,
it is very possible that the gentleman will be surpassed in the race by
the low-born mechanic, whose powers of calculation are not checked.
(i. 137-138)

However, she advises, there are subdivisions of Cotton Lords:

While a great and characteristic resemblance may be traced through the
whole, there are yet such varying circumstances appertaining to it as
almost to divide it into distinct and separate classes. Though by the self-
same steps, and in the same—to speak technically—"line of business," all
have risen from a low rank in life to one of wealth and power, and
influence; yet light and darkness are scarcely more dissimilar than is the
low-lived and ignorant, though shrewd, mill-owner of some outlying
district, from the cultivated denizen of the town ... Between these
extremes there is a third class, a connecting medium, partaking in some
degree both of the vices of the one and the refinements of the other. (i.
182-183)

This interest in classification is shown in her chapter titles, "Two
Cotton-men," "The Hero and a Cotton-man," or "The Rise of the
Cottonocracy." She links her three Cotton Lords, since Balshawe
is an old associate of Langshawe's, and Ainsley is the uncle of
Edith Langshawe's suitor Frank Walmsley.

To understand Stone's interest in the Captain of Industry and
his assimilation, it is instructive to look at her short tale "The

23 Ivan Melada, The Captain of Industry in English Fiction 1821-1871
(Albuquerque, 1970), p. 49; Melada discusses William Langshawe briefly on
pp. 115-117.
Widow's Son" of 1844. In following the career of Tom Multon, albeit not in an industrial situation, she presents the course of assimilation treated extensively in William Langshawe: work, gradual success, final respectability. The schoolmaster Mr. Fenton expresses the credo of the upwardly mobile: "The habit, the very early habit of industry and usefulness, is what you must try to give your child; and that habit alone is the best fortune he can have". "For his perseverance in well-doing" Multon eventually becomes a clergyman, even marrying Fenton's niece Rose. The career of William Langshawe, involving work, success, setback, renewed success, gradual assimilation, and respectability, is summarized in the few pages of this short work. In William Langshawe Stone's achievement rests in the precision with which she depicts the assimilation of her three industrialists.

The titular character is a synthesis of the other two industrialists: he has shed some of the crudity of Balshawe, Sr., and has acquired some taste in the manner of Ainsley. Langshawe advises his daughter not to marry a gentleman:

"I've earned all my money by the sweat of my brow; I don't care who knows it; I began the world an errand-boy, and not a shilling of what I've so hardly gained shall go to pamper any idle gentleman or fashionable spendthrift; so mind what you're about". (i. 18)

On the other hand Balshawe, Sr., is described as "proprietor of one of the largest mills in the country ... a tyrant to his wife, a despot over his workpeople, and a person of no slight influence around" (i. 131). She stresses the two men's dissimilarities so the reader avoids a "familiar" reaction:

He and Mr. Balshawe had begun life together, and he knew well that such in acquirement, in style, and in manner, as Mr. Balshawe was now, had nearly all the peers of the Cottonocracy been in youth; though many like himself, from the circumstances of much travelling ... and from perpetual intercourse with the intelligent inhabitants of the principal manufacturing towns, had become civilized in manners and usages; while some few had taken flight, and become in fact and in habit gentlemen ... Mr. Balshawe ... oftener enacted the tyrannical despot

25 Balshawe is also a local magistrate, and Briggs, Victorian Cities, p. 91, notes: "The industry determined not only who had wealth and who had no wealth but who was listened to and who had to listen".
than the considerate master ... Such was Mr. Balshawe, and such Mr. Langshawe knew him to be. (i. 123-124)

Stone's third industrialist, Ainsley, differs from both Balshawe and Langshawe, as his differing name indicates. When his nephew Frank Walmsley reveals his attachment to Edith Langshawe, Ainsley criticizes her family:

"Far be it from me to depreciate Mrs. Langshawe's actual worth ... but with all this she is vulgarity personified ... Mr. Langshawe is a shrewd and worldly man; his calculating head and his busy fingers have told a golden tale for him; but his heart and soul are wrapt in his counting-house and ledger, and he looks with feelings not very remote from contempt on such a dreaming youngster as yourself". (i. 65)

For Ainsley work and financial success were part of a programme of assimilation to respectability: 26

"I have a considerable fortune, acquired, as you know, in the trade of the times; but hand-in-hand with riches have I striven to gain those habitudes, tastes, and acquirements which alone can make riches respectable". (i. 66)

He desires Frank to choose another bride from the Cottonocracy: "I do not want you to step out of your sphere, Frank, I merely wish that you should maintain in all respects an elevated position in that sphere" (i. 70). Stone's precision extends to the next generation: Frank Walmsley is college-educated and destined for the bar; John Balshawe, Jr., the seducer of Nancy Halliwell, is "a low-lived libertine, carrying ... shame and sorrow to the lowly hearths" of his father's operatives (i. 124).

Elizabeth Stone's precision in depicting industrialists in William Langshawe distinguishes her from other Condition-of-England novelists. She would have dissented from studies like those in Frances Trollope's Michael Armstrong or Charlotte Tonna's Helen Fleetwood. To her the factory-owner Sir Matthew Dowling, his cruel superintendent Joseph Parsons, and the mill-owner Elgood Sharpton of Michael Armstrong, or the callous Mr. Z of Helen Fleetwood, would represent stereotypical and familiar

26 Ainsley reflects a special type of Cotton Lord. Richard Faber, Proper Stations: Class in Victorian Fiction (London, 1971), p. 30, notes: "Provincial industrialists were hardly regarded as gentlemen—unless, which was unusual, they happened to be gentlemanly by birth or education—but they did not necessarily care".
presentations of capitalists. On the other hand, she avoids the canonizing of the mill-owner Robert Wallace of Harriet Martineau’s *The Turn-out*, or the similar treatment of the Cheeryble Brothers by Dickens in *Nicholas Nickleby* (modelled on the Grant brothers of Manchester). Since all of these works could have been known to her, it is possible that *William Langshawe* is a response to these treatments. In spirit she is closest to John Galt’s portrait of Mr. Cayenne in *Annals of the Parish* (1821). She may have known Galt’s novel, since her brother Charles Henry’s *Maga* essay immediately preceded an instalment of Galt’s *The Steam-Boat*.

She links her study of the assimilative process to the issue of women’s position through Langshawe’s relationship with his daughter Edith. When his business suffers reversals, as many did in the difficult times from 1826 to 1830, Langshawe forces Edith into an alliance with Balshawe, Jr. Stone heightens the consequences of this young man’s seduction of Nancy Halliwell, since she is Edith’s second cousin. Nancy Halliwell allows Stone to present an operative and her family, and the fact that Nancy and Edith are related is Stone’s indication that assimilation is gradual and does not ensure insularity from the lower classes. If, as Wanda Neff has observed, “The working woman was not independent of the female leisure class,” Stone demonstrates that the opposite is also true when Edith must promise herself to the seducer of her second cousin. “Woman’s lot is on her, and she will yet be proved by suffering ... this is woman’s heritage,” the author observes (i. 21). Edith is more polished than her parents since “the rising generation enjoy advantages to which their parents had no access” (i. 23). Edith, however, is educated, and like George Eliot in *The Mill on the Floss*, Stone has little favourable to say of women’s education:

> Edith Langshawe was habituated to think like a responsible being, and to behave like a gentlewoman ... The worthlessness of accomplishments as the great end and aim of education seems to be the perversion of everything reasonable, at least for the middle classes of society. (i. 25-26)

Edith, in fact, superintends the factory school.28

In *William Langshawe* Stone pioneers the portrayal of mothers

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27 Wanda Neff, *Victorian Working Women* (New York, 1929), p. 188; subsequent references parenthetical to page number.

28 For George Eliot’s attitude, see Neff, p. 221.
and daughters of the managerial class. Mrs. Langshawe's origin is lower than her husband's: "Her manners were in some degree polished by society, and by constant intercourse with others; but the calibre of her mind was precisely of its original dimensions" (i. 24). This is revealed when Mrs. Langshawe confronts Edith about marrying Balshawe, Jr.:

"Now mother," said she, "tell me what all this means: speak to your child".

"I have nothing to tell you, love, nothing".

"Why, then, do I see you in this distress, mother?"

"Because your father's distress increases".

"And why conceal that from me? Why not speak to your daughter, your own child, of that?" (ii. 35)

Mrs. Langshawe asks Edith to marry Balshawe, Jr., "to save us from ruin":

"Mother, is your wealth really dearer to you than your child?"

"Edith!" said Mrs. Langshawe in amazement.

"You were not always rich, and yet I have heard you say you were always happy. You had once but a humble, miserable cottage, and yet I have heard you say that the day was always too short for you ... I am young, strong, and healthy, well-educated, not unqualified to earn some addition to our income, if it be requisite ... Why cannot we be happy together in a cottage?"

"And have you, Edith, you, my own child, judged of your mother thus? do you, indeed, suppose that my happiness depends on these things: How little do you know me".

Edith looked at her mother with surprise, and with a feeling of respect which she blushed to think she had hardly hitherto accorded to her. (ii. 37-38)

This is a bitter but sensitive commentary on both the situation of women and the familial discrepancy caused by the assimilative process. 29

Mrs. Balshawe fares no better with her husband, who verbally abuses her in public. Stone had already noted he was "a tyrant to his wife" (i. 131). When the two industrialists are conversing, Mrs. Balshawe "continued her attendance without remark, the husband expecting it as a matter of course" (i. 119). When she finishes, Balshawe barks: "That'll do ... Now, make thysel'
scarce; go to roost, and, I say, Mag, mind th’ parlour’s ready in good time i’ th’ mornin’; and stir your chalks, woman” (i. 119). Later Stone reveals her strategy for survival:

Mrs. Balshawe’s hospitality during the remainder of the year had a less conspicuous but a more valuable range. Her proud elevation of purse had not in the least affected the natural simplicity of her character; and her former co-mates were always sure of a welcome and a meal at her fireside; and her charity to the poor was, like that of numbers of her class, unwearied and unbounded. Thus she held on her way. (i. 140)

By showing the persecuted Mrs. Balshawe, Stone makes her son’s seduction of an operative more plausible, since Balshawe, Jr., has witnessed his father’s persistent abuse of women in his own home. In scenes involving women in the novel Stone achieves what was praised by the reviewer in The Examiner: “The book itself is in no want of extremely clever passages”. 30

Stone’s desire to view life factually influences the conclusion of her novel. She denies Edith Langshawe any happy marriage, against the reader’s expectations. Frank Walmsley marries Bianca, the daughter of an expatriot manufacturer Luttrel, who lives in Italy. The woman dies of consumption when Frank returns with her to England, but Stone refrains from having Edith marry Frank, although it would be possible. If one considers that Frances Trollope’s wealthy heiress Mary Brotherton marries a factory hand she has herself educated and saved in Michael Armstrong, it is clear that Stone introduces a new honesty to Condition-of-England fiction with William Langshawe, which eluded Disraeli subsequently in Sybil with his marriage of Egremont to Sybil Gerard. She will not gratify a reader’s “familiar” expectation. A similar refusal to accommodate the reader is the fact that the seducer Balshawe, Jr., suffers very little; he will assume a seat in “a reformed House of Commons” (ii. 315). Jem Forshawe, the working-class lover of Balshawe’s victim Nancy Halliwell, ends as an incurable in a lunatic asylum. Although Stone attributes this to Jem’s union initiation, the episode is not ludicrous: Jem Forshawe would not have been so easy a prey to union agitators had not his master’s son seduced the woman he loved. James Kay mentions “mental anxiety” (p. 19) as a significant plight of the operatives, and both Jem Forshawe and

30 The Examiner (5 November 1842), p. 709. The reviewer saw more promise than achievement in the novel.
Nancy's father Joe Halliwell suffer acutely from her seduction. Stone recognizes that mental as well as physical suffering pervades the working class in *William Langshawe*, anticipating later developments of this idea with John Barton in *Mary Barton*, Will Leigh in *Lizzie Leigh*, and the protagonist of *Alton Locke*.

On its appearance in 1842 *William Langshawe* received little notice, apart from reviews in *The Athenaeum* and *The Examiner*. It is valuable for its presentation of Mancunian life by a native, and for its emphasis on assimilation and on the position of women in the managerial class. In the demarcation of her Cotton Lords, Stone achieves some of her strongest effects, with some credible experiment in dialect. The fact that she read the *First Report of the Children's Employment Commission* after writing *William Langshawe*, while it did not alter her presentation of factory life in the novel, did influence her to study a workwoman in her next narrative. It was to dress-making that she turned her attention later in 1842.

### IV

To readers of *William Langshawe* the fact that Elizabeth Stone would undertake a novel about milliners was not surprising. In that novel, when the visitor Frances Halling tours Ainsley's factory, she questions the arduous duties of the operatives. Ainsley replies that while "hands" in factories work difficult hours, other trades are worse:

"I need not remind you of the proverbial endurance of the milliners and straw-bonnet workers; they are usually apprenticed at the very age when, if ever, the youthful female requires relaxation and relief; their hours of work are said to be twelve, but for three parts of their time these young females are kept fourteen, sixteen, seventeen hours closely sewing, and they are not infrequently detained all night. For this spirit-breaking health-consuming toil, the apprentice receives nothing, literally nothing but on the contrary frequently pays a high premium. But the business is *genteel*, and is therefore preferred to that of a factory operative". (i. 193-194)

In the Introduction to *The Young Milliner* Stone admits that her awareness of this situation is not accidental. She remarks that,

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after the publication of her book *The Art of Needlework* in August 1840, several people admonished her that there was an "omission" in it. While it discussed the craft of sewing, it had not dealt with the plight of the women in the trade. She declares that "The 'opportunity neglected' however, she has endeavoured to redeem in this volume". This is her avowed purpose in *The Young Milliner*:

It is an attempt to awaken attention to the miseries which a great number of people—and those often the weakest and most unprotected portion of the community—endure in their exertions to gain their daily bread,—viz., the Milliners' Apprentices, and other Needle-workers, of London, more especially.

The Narrative itself is, of course, fictitious; but the circumstances adduced are unexaggerated and strictly true. The Authoress has availed herself of facts which she drew from private authentic sources; but her statements are fully borne out by parliamentary documents which have been published since her story was written. (pp. iii-iv)

Just as she had acknowledged the *First Report* in *William Langshawe*, she now recognizes the *Second Report of the Children's Employment Commission*, which had appeared on 30 January 1843, with its exposure of the dreadful conditions of dress-makers. 33

Although she wrote *The Young Milliner* without the *Second Report*, several incidents during 1842 probably aroused her awareness of working-class distress. The Second Chartist petition had been rejected in May, and in August Manchester endured the Plug Plot riots later used by Disraeli for the conclusion to *Sybil*. In July Edwin Chadwick’s *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain* had appeared. Its pages included such data as the following:

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34 Edwin Chadwick, *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain*, ed. M.W. Flinn (Edinburgh, 1965), p. 176; the work was also used by Disraeli for *Sybil*. 
### Tabular Statement of Deaths from Disease of Milliners and Dressmakers, in the Metropolitan Unions during the year 1839, as shown by the Mortuary Registers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Number of Deaths</th>
<th>Average Age</th>
<th>Number of Deaths from Consumption</th>
<th>Average Age</th>
<th>Number of Deaths from other Lung Diseases</th>
<th>Average Age</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 20</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>70</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of 52 deaths in the year, 41 of the deceased attained an age of 25. The average age of the 33 who died of lung diseases was 28.

The same year saw the publication of William Dodd's *The Factory System Illustrated in a Series of Letters to Lord Ashley* (again used by Disraeli) and the *Truck Report*. Referring to "milliners and seamstresses," Engels in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* noted "the extraordinary barbarity with which they are exploited by the greedy middle classes".³⁵

Stone's *The Young Milliner* is distinct from most literature dealing with seamstresses because it did not use the *Second Report*, but it is part of a large body of literature (and painting) that appeared after January 1843. Charlotte Tonna drew on the *Report* and quoted it verbatim in Part I, "Milliners and Dress-makers," of *The Wrongs of Woman* (1843-1844). As Wanda Neff observes, the significance of the *Report* was that "for the first time the non-textiles shared with the textile industries some of the public attention" (p. 88). Neff continues that the challenge to novelists to present such occupations was considerable:

Non-textile workers are even more scantily represented in literature than those in the textile trades ... They offered more difficult technical problems to the author, their lives were equally barren of romantic interest, and were more completely hidden from public scrutiny. (p. 114)

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The Second Report contained such quotations as these from Richard Dugard Grainger's Introduction:

“No men would sustain the labour which is imposed on these young and delicate women”. “No slavery is worse than that of the dress-maker's life in London”. “No men work so long. It would be impossible for any animal to work so continuously with so little rest”.  

Such comments led to Thomas Hood's “The Song of the Shirt” in the Christmas issue of Punch, 1843; Camilla Toulmin's “The Orphan Milliners” (1844); Tonna's The Wrongs of Woman; G.W.M. Reynolds's “The Seamstress” (1850); and Mrs. Gaskell's Ruth (1853). In 1844 Richard Redgrave painted The Sempstress. Stone could have known the 1841 Census which stated that of 106,801 persons in dress-making, only 563 were males.  

For The Young Milliner she had a specific audience in mind, the middle-class women who patronize dress-makers:

Fashionable ladies,—individually kind and good, and exemplary,—are collectively the cause of infinite misery to the young and unprotected of their own sex. Of the existence even of this misery, they are, it may well be believed, scarcely aware; of its frightful extent, utterly unconscious.

Should this Narrative meet their sight, it is hoped that its appeal will not be made in vain. (p. iv)

For understanding her range of characters and her emphasis in The Young Milliner, this passage is important. At least half the narrative is devoted not to the situation of its suffering seamstress, Ellen Cardan, but to its “fashionable” young lady Marian Godfrey. Although the reviewer in The Athenaeum (May 1843) is correct in believing that Marian Godfrey is included to interest middle-class readers, she also exists to give them a figure with whom to identify, not always in an appealing way. While good-natured, Marian is oblivious to the suffering of Ellen Cardan. At the conclusion of the novel, when Marian Godfrey discovers that she and Ellen are cousins (a situation paralleling that of Nancy Parlian, Papers (repr., Shannon: Irish University Press, 1968), 1843, 14.F30.


Halliwell and Edith Langshawe in *William Langshawe*), Stone's symbolic linking is evident: consanguinity reflects economics.

The *Young Milliner* is a complementary text to its predecessor *William Langshawe*. While the latter concerns the managerial class in Manchester, the former involves the shabby-genteel millinery world of London. Edith Langshawe is a more admirable and observant fashionable woman than Marian Godfrey. The misunderstandings of mother and daughter in *William Langshawe* are replaced by a young woman growing up with no mother at all. Whereas Stone criticized women's education in *William Langshawe*, in *The Young Milliner* Ellen Cardan is economically an outcast because she lacks any education. Ellen's friend Bessy Lambert, seduced by Marian's father Frederick Godfrey, becomes a prostitute, unlike Nancy Halliwell, who remains in a caring family. Like Langshawe, Godfrey suffers business losses, but these have both economic and retributive consequences in *The Young Milliner*. Stone sets *The Young Milliner* in the 'forties, not distancing the narrative as she had in *William Langshawe*. The two novels present the beginning and ending of a decade of transition. She believes that there had been considerable change but little progress.

The artistry of *The Young Milliner* represents an advance over its predecessor. The intrusive narrator/author of *William Langshawe* is virtually eliminated. The only footnote to the text occurs when she cites Ellen's work hours:

This circumstance will no doubt appear to many readers a gross exaggeration. I beg merely to refer them to the "Report and Appendices of the Children's Employment Commission," lately presented to Parliament, and published since these pages were written.40 (p. 289)

However, it is typical of the narrator of *William Langshawe* that the one note in *The Young Milliner* concerns authentication. *The Young Milliner* was published in a single volume, which suggests not only her advance in condensation of narrative but also the rapid composition that her reforming intention required, an objective reflected in her characters' names. *Cardan* suggests the carding of fibre before spinning; *Godfrey* the opium-based drug administered to infants (much condemned by the Second

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40 *The Athenaeum* reviewer, (loc. cit.) either did not read Stone's note or ignored it, since this critic states Stone is "following the lead" of the *Report."
The beneficent Thomas Brummage, who aids both Ellen and the Godfrey family, is the half-brother of the girls' mothers. His name, suggesting the slang form of Birmingham, alludes to the upward mobility made possible by industrialism.

Orphaned at the opening of *The Young Milliner*, Ellen Cardan is utterly without skills beyond those of her needle. The landlady Mrs. Baring and the curate Mulgrave discuss possible occupations for her, including that of governess:

"Hard work, Mrs. Baring; hard and miserable. A housemaid is happier, more independent, and—better paid. A governess is perpetually exposed to circumstances which are torture to the soul of a high-minded woman; and, moreover, she may toil unremittingly from sixteen to sixty, without having been able to realize a home or a shelter for her last years".42 (p. 6)

Ellen is bereft of "accomplishments": she cannot speak French, make tapestry, or do fancy work. They finally decide to apprentice Ellen with the milliner Sally Minnow (now "Sarina Mineau"), sister of Mrs. Baring's friend.43 To Stone the situation of the impoverished genteel woman is a cul-de-sac: if educated, to be a governess; if not, to be an apprentice dress-maker:

So Ellen was sent to London, that great charnel-house of withered hopes, and subdued aspirations, and tamed energies; to London, where of all the busy myriads hurrying to and fro, not one individual should be found to smile on her ... There, amid the constant passing of thousands, to learn what it is to be lonely."44 (p. 22)

Ellen, because she has some experience, is quickly made an "improver," often the case, as the *Parliamentary Papers* attested, of girls from the country. Her work day is twelve hours if she is lucky.45

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43 In Cobbett's *Rural Rides* "Baring" is the name of a banking family. Stone may be slyly lowering their status by giving this name to the landlady.
44 Ellen travels by coach. J.A. Banks, "Population Change and the Victorian City," *Victorian Studies*, xi (March 1968), 283, notes: "The general effect of the railways on the pattern of migration was negligible" so far as distance was concerned.
45 On the conditions of apprenticeship, see Pinchbeck, op. cit., pp. 288-289.
The seamstress’s hours of labour occupy an important place in *The Young Milliner*, as they were to do in the *Second Report*. Ellen tells her friends the Lamberts:

“Though the season is not at the height, we have sat up three whole nights every week for some weeks past, and worked eighteen or twenty hours the other days; but Madame Mineau is not to blame: she is kind to us—kinder than most are, I believe—as much as she can. But she cannot refuse work; she dare not disoblige her customer”. (p. 122)

Echoing Stone’s Introduction, Ellen declares that the fault rests with “the ladies themselves. You cannot imagine ... how unreasonable they are; how little thought they have for us” (p. 122). Stone conceals the worst details of the life until later in the novel, when the reader has developed sympathy for Ellen Cardan:

It was very bitter—it was almost unbearable. Sometimes, in the earlier part of the season, she had stood to her sewing throughout the night and had thereby been enabled to repel the advances of sleep more effectually; but this she could no longer do, for her ankles swelled ...  
On Sunday morning, about ten o’clock, she retired to bed, after being (for it had been a dreadfully busy week) at work for upwards of seventy hours consecutively. (pp. 288-289)

Conditions even worsen: “Sometimes they sate up three nights in the week, sometimes four; sometimes they sate up the whole week, taking it in turns to lie down for two hours out of the twenty-four” (p. 337).

Marian Godfrey is callous to her dress-makers, and even Madame Mineau reproves her. To Marian it is “the old-tale—that her people are worked to death. Not that she meant me to believe that, or half of it, of course. I dare say the poor wretches have a tiresome life enough, but it is their business you know”. Her brother Arthur retorts, “Their business to be worked to death!” (p. 347). When Marian learns of the “extreme toil” and “constant deprivation of rest” that her cousin has endured, “did not every dress which Miss Godfrey, with the usual insouciance of spoiled vanity, had ordered to be made in an unreasonably short time—did not every one rise like an accusing spirit before her now awakened eye!” (p. 374). This comment carries Stone’s sharpest rebuke to her reader in *The Young Milliner*. There is no solace for Ellen: “Her funeral was plain and simple; anything else would have been a mockery of her fate” (p. 387). By giving Ellen a family
at the conclusion, Stone rescues her from the sure anonymity of thousands, especially before the publication of the Second Report.

Stone does not confine her study of the urban poor to the genteel. Since all establishments left their employees to their own devices on Sundays (often with disastrous consequences, as the Second Report demonstrated), Ellen Cardan’s visits to the Lamberts allow Stone to show even worse states of degradation among the “ungenteel” poor. Mrs. Lambert recounts the vicious competition among middlemen (“butties”) that makes life hell for pieceworkers:

“It is not the employers themselves, my dear; it is not the respectable employers themselves ... The people whom they employ take a vast deal more than they can do, and give it out to others, such as myself; and as they, of course, make their profit out of the price given to them ... we, who come second or third-hand, are ground down to the earth ... it can hardly be called living”. (pp. 135-136)

This poverty eventually drives Bessy Lambert to become the mistress of Frederick Godfrey, Marian’s father. In treating this very old subject, Stone’s achievement is the presentation of the gradual process of Bessy’s yielding: the first notice of Godfrey, the surveillance by his servant, the worsening competition, the near-starvation, and the capitulation. By the time she keeps her assignation with Godfrey, Stone’s London has become desolate: “No policeman was there, however; they seldom are when they are wanted” (p. 240); “A cab would drive furiously past, and bespatter the well-drest pedestrian with mud—London mud” (pp. 243-244). Mrs. Lambert keeps a vigil all night for her lost daughter:

And the hours passed—how drearily who shall tell? Morning broke: it was bright day in the open streets, but in this dingy alley the lamp had

48 Donald J. Gray, “Picturesque London,” The Indiana University Bookman, xii (December 1977), p. 56, cites a text from 1775 with the line “Lords with milliners debating”.

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hardly begun to pale beneath the first beams of light. The inhabitants knew, however, that it was day elsewhere, and they were stirring. (p. 249)

Although Brummage rescues Ellen from the millinery trade, it is he, ironically, who calls for policemen to remove the distraught Bessy from Ellen’s graveside: “shrieking and fighting, she was borne by force to the station-house” (p. 388). Stone leaves her readers with the man of charity and the woman of wretchedness juxtaposed over their common friend’s burial. Brummage’s charity does not save Ellen and does not extend to her friend, the prostitute Bessy Lambert.

While Stone’s presentation of the millinery world in the novel is convincing, her treatment of the upper-class milieu is derivative and prescriptive. Marian Godfrey does not achieve the individuality of Edith Langshawe. The business reversals which develop Edith’s character come too late in The Young Milliner to alter Marian’s nature; both she and her brother Arthur escape the consequences of her father’s profligacy. In several instances Stone seems to draw on Jane Austen. Lord Henry Woolford aids Marian’s cousin (and lover) Charles Seymour to obtain a naval commission in a manner similar to the assistance given by Henry Crawford to Fanny Price’s brother William in Mansfield Park. When Marian rejects Lord Henry, she does so in accents that recall Elizabeth Bennet in Pride and Prejudice: “I knew not myself, until yesterday, that I had no heart to give you” (p. 219). Charles Seymour imitates Frederick Wentworth hastily writing in a crowded room to Anne Elliot in Persuasion: Marian recalls “how Charles had been writing on the book-table that evening; and how, when questioned, he had hurriedly and hastily huddled away his papers” pp.204). Marian attending a concert with Lord Henry parallels the similar episode in Persuasion involving Anne Elliot and her cousin William. While Stone’s balancing of the classes is necessary and crucial for The Young Milliner, her artistry is strongest in depicting urban suffering.

Since The Young Milliner was published in 1843, it is instructive to compare it with the other well-known study of milliners that year, Charlotte Tonna’s “Milliners and Dress-makers,” Part I of The Wrongs of Woman. The latter based her information on the testimony contained in the Second Report, which she had used the same year for her powerful social analysis The Perils of the Nation,
written at the request of Lord Ashley. \(^{49}\) Her purpose in writing is similar to Stone's *The Young Milliner*:

The privilege is great, but not less so the difficulty of tracing what we desire to bring before the educated females of England—the actual wrongs sustained by those of our sex whose lot has been, providentially, so cast as to render their life necessarily one of labour; and so to fix their attention upon this interesting, helpless class, as to rouse the best feelings of womanly nature in their behalf. \(^{50}\)

Tonna quotes chapter and verse from the *Second Report* about meal times, continuous work, and symptoms of disease, to reinforce her study of Ann and Frances King. \(^{51}\) The milliner Ann dies, the dress-maker Frances is seduced and becomes a prostitute, corresponding to the fates of Ellen Cardan and Bessy Lambert in Stone's novel. Tonna is adamant about the loss of religion among workers, a subject Stone barely touches in *The Young Milliner*. \(^{52}\) With the *Second Report* the former is able to record minutely the disease that wastes her milliner, while the latter cannot supply similar data. On the other hand, Tonna's outrage and exclusive focus on the *Report* cause her to ignore any presentation of the patrons of milliners. The result, while full of conviction, lacks the context and balance Stone achieved in *The Young Milliner* by juxtaposing her two worlds. Tonna's focus likewise prevents her from showing gradations of suffering in "Milliners and Dress-makers," while Stone casts perspective on Ellen Cardan by creating the Lamberts. Her use of consanguinity to represent economic interdependence among the classes is superior to Tonna's compartmentalized appraisal of her characters' distress. Stone's note concerning the *Second Report* encourages readers to undertake further investigation.


\(^{52}\) On the role of religion and the result of the 1851 Census, see David M. Thompson, "The 1851 Religious Census; Problems and Possibilities," *Victorian Studies*, xi (September 1967), 87-97.
The reviewer of *The Young Milliner* in *The Athenaeum* believed the book would not “do much good or harm”. In fact *The Young Milliner* and *The Wrongs of Woman*, along with other studies of seamstresses, did not remove such evils quickly. Although the first chapter of Mrs. Gaskell’s *Ruth* is set in the early nineteenth century, the conditions it describes of a milliner’s shop were applicable in the year of its publication, 1853. In 1856 Richard Grainger believed that the situation of apprentice dressmakers was worse than ever before, and the Parliamentary reports of 1864 recorded the continued suffering of milliners. In *All the Year Round* for September 1863, twenty years after *The Young Milliner*, an essay focused on “The Point of the Needle,” complete with quotations from the Second Report concerning hours, conditions, and overwork. It notes that the Association for the Aid and Benefit of Dress-makers and Milliners had failed to remedy the problem. Women were being thrown more to needlework as machines supplanted their labour in trades like envelope-folding and shoe-binding. Then the writer adds:

The ladies of England never did, and do not yet, as a body, thoroughly perceive how much it rests with them to improve or maintain the unhappy condition of the milliners’ workwomen.

The writer echoes both Tonna and Stone in this protest. Later authors like Mrs. Gaskell in *Ruth* and Kingsley in *Alton Locke* and *Cheap Clothes and Nasty*, and journalists like Henry Mayhew, worked in a tradition of which Stone’s *The Young Milliner* is a part.

*The Athenaeum* of 19 June 1858 reviewed Stone’s *God’s Acre; or, Historical Notices relating to Churchyards*, observing: “We are sorry that we cannot speak in higher terms than we have done of a lady’s volumes, particularly when they are announced as her last work”. If this marks the date of her death, it also marked the descent of her work into obscurity. *William Langshawe, the Cotton Lord* and *The Young Milliner* do not deserve this obscurity, for

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53 *The Athenaeum*, p. 437.
54 One wonders if Mrs. Gaskell had perused *William Langshawe* by the time she wrote *Ruth*, since the hypocritical manufacturer there is a Bradshaw.
55 See Neff, op. cit., p. 140.
they mark a transition from the strident protests of Frances Trollope and Charlotte Tonna to the disciplined work of Mrs. Gaskell. One cannot argue that Stone was an artist of the calibre of Mrs. Gaskell or Kingsley. With William Langshawe and The Young Milliner she responded early but earnestly to Carlyle's call for "articulate inquiry". These novels provide enduring analyses of two facets of the "Condition-of-England Question," records worthy of the Wheeler family of Manchester.