Reign of the Beast

The Atheist World of W. D. Saull and his Museum of Evolution

Adrian Desmond

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Cover illustration: A spoof of the "Devil's Chaplain", the Rev. Robert Taylor (left, on the podium). His patron, the atheist Richard Carlile, is seen on the right, landing a punch. The wine merchant W. D. Saull funded both men and grounded his evolutionary talks in their dissident sciences. Such pastiches reinforced the prejudices of pious readers, by depicting the moral rot caused by irreligion. The wall posters on the left advertize contraception manuals and licentious memoirs, and a lecture by "Miss Sharples", Carlile's common-law "wife". Taylor's character is being impugned by portraying the mayhem caused by his infidel oratory. Beyond the brawling and debauchery, thieves are shown in the audience (bottom right) and a dagger-wielding agitator (centre). In reality, Taylor's congregations were respectable and attentive.
Etching, in the author's possession, entitled "The Triumph of Free Discussion" (the motto of Carlile's Fleet Street shop selling subversive prints). The caption reads, "A Sketch taken in the Westminster Cock Pit on Wednesday the 24th. of September 1834. Subject A Lecture by the Revd R. Taylor, A.B.M.R.C.S. 'On the importance of Character'."
Cover design by Jeevanjot Kaur Nagpal

22. British Aborigines

In Mantell's regional museum, visitors were invited to imagine the past in their vicinity. Antiquity and locality linked the artefacts; the depth of time being less important, they allowed the antiquarian and geologist to rub shoulders. Saull was now to follow suit, but for different reasons, and with different results.

In the 1830s, the border between geology and archaeology was porous and unpatrolled. The very name of the uppermost geological deposits, *Diluvium*, indicating gravels left by the Flood, showed why they piqued antiquarian interest. Above these lay the alluvial silts and clays with their human remains. But the lines were blurring. In 1839, the Diluvium was re-named *Drift*, because it was now thought that this rocky debris was dropped by ocean icebergs, not stirred up by God's wrath. This broke the biblical time-marker. By this point, drift and alluvium were also being seen as products of the same natural causes: erosion and deposition.[1] Moreover, geologists by the early 1840s were turning up extinct mammal remains in cave drift deposits, alongside stone tools, even if the latter were dismissed at the time as remnants of later human burials.[2] As geologists pushed up from deep time, so antiquarians were drilling down through shallow time. This was especially evident from the 1840s as the Danish Three Age System of pre-Roman history—Stone, Bronze, and Iron Age—slowly began to take hold.[3] Collectors, like Mantell, now wandered across this porous border,

1 Rudwick 2008, ch. 13. A growing reciprocity was also evident. Geologists such as Lyell used classical temples familiar to gentlemen on their Grand Tour to gauge the rate of earth movement (Warwick 2017), while antiquarians used estimates of geological movement to judge the age of burial sites (Torrens 1998, 51). For a later attempt at precision dating the junction between the oldest human history and latest geological deposits, see Gold 2018.

2 Grayson 1983, 69–77.

3 Rowley-Conwy 2007.

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amassing all things local, fossils *and* antiquities. But Saull would have a specific reason for trenching on the more recent past.

Saull was working in the years immediately preceding the arrival of this Danish chronology. Even so, Owenite imperatives led him equally to order the prehistoric past, to push back human pre-history, and to set up his own pre-Roman cultural stages, without biblical reference points. Apparently, he was one of the few London archaeologists interested in the pre-Roman Celtic past.[4] But, then, he was probably the only card-carrying socialist. It helped, too, that, by the late 1830s, interest in Celtic barrows was beginning to eclipse the focus on the Celtic language.[5] This favoured Saull the collector, because the resulting burial remains could be integrated into the museum's evolutionary display.

This porous interface meant that Saull's slide from rising fossil life in the 1830s to rising 'savage' life in the 1840s was easy. One was the continuation of the other, with an over-arching Owenite perfectibility doctrine knitting the lot into a whole, and an environmental determinism seamlessly running the process. The resulting museum narrative was a beguiling speculative sweep to compete with the best "corrosive fiction" and sensationalist broadsides favoured by working class audiences.[6] 'Savages' had been on the cards at least since Saull first encountered Davy's dream in *Consolations*. In his 1833 monkey-man talk, he envisaged "our ancestors" as originally "naked savages", establishing their ascendancy over the brutes "by the use of clubs, or other rude weapons".[7] From this point on, the ascent continued as an intellectual climb, and it was this human mental advancement that Saull now pursued. When he said in the Harmony years that he was giving up political meetings,[8] he probably meant that he was freeing up time to devote to this growing 'aboriginal' interest.

By the late 1830s, Saull's geology talks were bleeding off into 'primeval archaeology', as it was called, and given a narrowing, localized focus. The unshaven monkeys were making advances in civilization and mind, learning how to shave. He was setting the pattern for the

4 Rowley-Conwy 2007, ch. 4.
5 Morse 2005.
6 A. Buckland 2013, 64–66.
7 *Crisis* 3 (5 Oct. 1833): 37.
8 *NMW* 10 (19 Feb. 1842): 267.

next decade, which would largely be spent examining the successive ancient dwellings found during City demolition works. The oldest 'homes' discovered, "composed of mere sticks, or turf, mixed with the debris of the most simple culinary and other utensils", provided his material *entrée* into a study of the "aboriginal inhabitants of Britain". These people had lived "the precarious life of the wandering savage". They were the barbarians encountered by Caesar, and thought by him uncivilizable—the Romans viewing them, said Saull, as the Australian aborigines "are to-day, as compared with us."[9]

Such a reversal of perspective—having the civilized Romans look at 'us' as barbarians—was precisely the kind practised in socialist schools. Here, children were encouraged to view themselves from the outside, to understand how accidents of birth and education had given rise to their attitudes. It was designed to induce a moral relativism, to quash chauvinistic ideas that their own "national peculiarities" were "the standard of truth". They were taught to put themselves in another land (or, in Saull's case, another time) to see that we should have "escaped neither its peculiarities, nor its vices", indeed that "we might have been Cannibals or Hindoos, just as the circumstance of our birth should have placed us". By lessening "uncharitable or intolerant" attitudes,[10] Owenites were attacking growing racial supremacist ideology but also providing the means to unseat presentist views, by which standards of the modern age were used to judge the peoples of the past. Owenite cultural relativism made looking at our aboriginal roots a more egalitarian exercise. Saull saw no discrete stocks, no separate human species to be disparaged but, rather, humanity's rise as a co-operative endeavour. And just as 'we' had risen by dropping "Druidical superstition" through cultural exchanges with the Romans and Phoenicians, so would indigenous peoples rise in co-operation with us. There was nothing irreclaimable about Australian aborigines, any more than ancient British ones.[11]

9 Saull 1837.

10 R. D. Owen 1824, 47–48.

11 Saull 1837. Morse 2005, 35, on how historians came to associate the Celts with Druidical religion. But Saull, *qua* freethinker, constantly downplayed this priestly influence.

Reacting in part to the breakup of Owenism, and the rise in racial ethnology, Saull saw the move to aboriginal archaeology as an act of reclamation. And reclamation in a more material sense benefited his repository, which filled up with a new set of objects. The second phase of museum development mirrored his new emphasis in the 1840s, with incoming exhibits on archaeology, ethnology, and London prehistory. Ostensibly, there was nothing new in this. Almost all contemporary museums were omnivorous. Gideon Mantell's in Lewes also had its Roman pots and Sussex grave goods.[12] Likewise, Saull stored local Roman ware, English vessels, coins, and so on; and his choice artefacts, like Mantell's, ended up after his death in the British Museum.[13] Such mixed collections were the rule. Whether the Piccadilly Hall in London or the Ashmolean in Oxford, their contents ran from stuffed birds and strange fossils, to amphorae, coins, and tribal booty—curiosities that were literally that, curious.[14] In this respect, Aldersgate Street superficially resembled a miniature British Museum, which Cobbett had described as "the old curiosity-shop in Great Russell Street."[15] Actually, the fossils in the British Museum's North Gallery occupied only a fraction of the museum's portfolio. (In 1853 the keeper G. R. Waterhouse's 'inventory'—no inventory at all, but a tour of the interesting or typical non-invertebrate fossils—occupied a mere ten of the 270 pages of the museum's content *Synopsis*.[16]) Not only did Saull have more fossils, but the exhibits were not so much bric-a-brac, and their arrangement had an inner logic.

12 Walters 1908, 157, 159, 253, 269, 344, 365, 421; Cleevely and Chapman 1992, 354 n. 76. Mantell 1836, 37–40 for the list of antiquities in the upper back room of his museum, ranging from the pavement from Lewes Priory to funereal relics of South Downs tumuli, plus the usual swords, spears, skulls, and amulets. See also *Lancet* 2 (29 June 1839): 506–07, for his "interesting assemblage of antiquities, urns, vases, lachrymatories, celts, coins, &c. &c., British and Roman, collected in Sussex". Mantell's first publication was actually on the discovery of a Roman pavement and he never lost his interest in antiquities (A. Brook 2002).

13 Walters 1908, 324, 372, 435.

14 Yanni 1999, 21, 25–27; Pandora 2017.

15 Cowtan 1872, 64.

16 *Synopsis of Contents of British Museum* Sixtieth Edition (1853), although this was better than the four and a half pages in the 1842 *Synopsis*.

Reclamation

Saull's collecting, dictated by his political interest in ancient British life, was also constrained by pragmatic factors. Unaccountably, the City Corporation had no museum itself and saw no need to preserve London's antiquities. This despite pleas by the Romano-British expert Charles Roach Smith, who realized that many were being lost.[17] As an example, Smith noted that a small Roman altar, found during the excavations at Goldsmith's Hall and consigned to a rubbish heap, was only saved by the efforts of Saull and solicitor Edward Spencer, a fellow geologist, numismatist, and antiquarian, resulting in it being preserved in the Hall.[18] Just as strange, the Society of Antiquaries had no museum,[19] so artefacts of interest—and there were plenty as London's Roman wall was revealed during the metropolitan improvement works of the 1830s and 1840s—ended up with Saull in Aldersgate Street. But despite the emergency nature of this ad hoc preservation, it still served Saull's purpose. He was using primeval archaeology to take the geological story to modern humans. So, for all the eye-catching spears and skulls, there was less randomness than might be supposed, and more structure to fit his narrative of progression from pre-Roman aboriginals through Roman civilizers to commercial man.

What antiquarian artefacts were in Saull's museum in the mid-1840s? The travellers' guides in their surface scratching leave little clue. Booth's *Stranger's Intellectual Guide* (1839) mentions only a "good collection of Anglo-Roman remains", adding that they "throw much light upon the domestic habits and manners of the Romans during their residence in Britain, and have done much to illustrate the topography of ancient London."[20] In truth, burgeoning City works had thrown up huge

17 C. R. Smith 1854, iv.

18 C. R. Smith 1848, 1: 130, 134; 1859, 48. Even *Ainsworth's Magazine* 6 (Oct. 1844): 363, argued that Roman antiquities were not of "such immediate interest as those of later time". Spencer had long known Saull, having proposed him for the Geological Society in 1830.

19 A. Booth 1839, 15. DeCoursey (2013, 49–53) sees the society split between those studying texts and the more field-inclined monuments specialists. Sloppy financial management meant lack of funds, and those they had were earmarked, not for expensive preservation, but the library, which was recognised as superb. The society was recording rather than preserving.

20 A. Booth 1839, 15.

numbers of artefacts, many deposited with Saull. They were arriving from the mid-1830s as a result of the sewers being laid in Newgate Street. The excavations had gone down thirty feet, "underneath the whole of the foundations of the ancient cities". The navvies had revealed the "successive debris of the British, Roman, and later London"—and at the lowest depth, above the "diluvium" left by the ancient Thames, traces of "cinders and charcoal, the probable remnants of the destruction by fire of the rude wigwams or wooden huts, forming the first settlement of our British ancestors, where likewise a great quantity of human bones were found." Here was the beginning of Saull's evidence for ancient Britons. Above these were found

> Roman and Samian pottery [Samian was a very fine pottery made of Samian earth, and characteristic of Roman sites], consisting of vases, lachrymatories [tomb phials supposed to contain tears], amphorae [wine jugs], &c, many of which are in a fine state of preservation, retaining in legible characters the names of the makers. Coins of the Emperors Constantius, Constantinus Pius, Antoninus Pius, Nero, &c, a large quantity of vitrified tiles, &c.[21]

From the excavations for a new school in Honey-Lane Market came ancient human bones as well as Saxon coins. As a trustee of so many coins, Saull would take an active part in the foundling Numismatic Society (founded 1836) and become one of its scrutineers. In 1838, the President portrayed numismatics as that "branch of art" which was "the awakener of taste" in even the humblest (because everyone handled coins). As he did so, Saull was exhibiting flat, circular fossil nummulites from his museum at the Society because they so resembled coins (*nummulus* is Latin for a small coin), showing that nowhere was outside the reach of his fossil proselytizing. This caused the President to lapse into medieval panegyrics about this metaphoric anticipation, and to exclaim: "Nature herself would almost appear to have intended that numismatists should become the Honourable of the earth".[22] But it was below the coin-bearing layers that Saull's primary interest lay.

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21 *New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, 46 (Feb. 1836): 270–71; *Morning Post*, 6 Jan, 1836. Although London was the primary focus, the museum also housed Saull's Roman finds from his native Northampton (*JBAA* 4 [1849]: 396–97).

22 *Proceedings of the Numismatic Society* (1836–37): 89; (1837–38): 213, 250. As with fossils, so it was with coins; Saull often acted as a go-between. He would exhibit

How to assess the aboriginal inhabitants of this deeper past? The 1830s saw a more racially-inclined development of phrenology. The empire's expansion led to a new urgency in classifying its colonial subjects, often based on skull shapes. And, increasingly, phrenologists were imputing generalized cultural and psychological traits to these hierarchically-ranked 'races'. Such racist stereotyping, extending outwards, would, by the 1840s, also be extended *downwards*, into the Celtic deep past, as the degree of "savageness" of barrow skulls was used to define the relative age of the burials.[23] Already in the 1830s, a simplistic racial craniometry was being applied to Saull's collection. Thus, in a Cheapside excavation, in

> what is supposed to have been the ruins of a Human dwelling, was found a skull, now in Mr. Saull's collection, in a remarkably fine state of preservation, but which, phrenologically speaking, from the absence of the intellectual and great predominance of the animal organs, can give no exalted ideas of the moral character of the people to which the possessor belonged, the head being more like that of a Carib [indigenous West Indian people] than of one of the natives of modern Europe.[24]

Although Saull did not join the London Phrenological Society until 1844,[25] the museum's skulls were already having their bumps read by reporters in 1836 to show the 'savage' sloping-forehead of our ancestors. But there is no evidence that Saull himself had any great interest in phrenology. Indeed, the self-help science left many Owenites hopelessly conflicted. The worry was that it gave too little scope for "the modifying influence of external circumstances", which left it inadequate as "the

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Northampton provincials' medals at the society: *Proceedings of the Numismatic Society* (1851–52): 20; *Numismatic Chronicle* 15 (Apr. 1852): 104–05.

23 Morse 2005, ch. 6; Goodrun 2016; Desmond and Moore 2009, ch. 2 on racial craniometry.

24 *New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* 46 (Feb. 1836): 270–71; *Morning Post*, 6 Jan. 1836. In *Archaeologia* 27 (1838): 150, only "a black wide-mouthed earthen pot" is mentioned from the Cheapside excavations. It, too, went into Saull's museum.

25 *Zoist* 2 (Apr. 1844): 30. His attitude towards phrenology is unrecorded, as it is towards that other self-help science mesmerism. According to Wiener (1983, 252), Saull attended demonstrations of mesmerism at the City Hall in Chancery Lane in 1841, given by William H. Halse, a self-proclaimed "Professor of Animal Magnetism" newly arrived from Torquay. These were arranged by Carlile, which might explain Saull's presence; as might the fact that Halse's galvanic experiments in revivifying drowned puppies were reported in the *NMW* (9 [27 Feb. 1841]: 132); Morus 1998, 144ff; 2011, 84–85; Winter 1998, 113, 369 n. 20.

basis of education and social and moral reform".[26] Despite the odd suggestion that Harmony residency should depend on a phrenological test of suitability, others agreed with William Godwin that the notion of inborn evil faculties, unchangeable, was "a libel upon our common nature". Owen himself ultimately discarded character-reading from bumps as an invidious restraint diluting the power of circumstance on the formation of character.[27] Yet the seemingly scientific measurement of skull-shapes—craniometry—remained beguiling. While Saull arranged his cultural artefacts in a "connected series of illustrations",[28] this probably meant in chronological order. We do not know whether he was himself using craniometry to produce a graduated sequence towards modern man. But it is telling that, in all of Saull's writings and reports, I cannot find a single mention of the word 'phrenology', so we have to be cautious with any craniometric imputation.

Saull's developing sequence, from savage Britons to civilized Romans, played a strategic role. Much of his work centred on the unearthing of London's Roman wall during the building of the French Protestant Church at the bottom of Aldersgate Street, close to his museum. Navvies uncovered the wall's foundations in December 1841, with Saull obviously on site. Freshly elected to the Society of Antiquaries (4 February 1841),[29] he made the wall the subject of his first (and only substantial) paper to the Society, in February 1842. He was qualified at this interface of geology and archaeology. He showed how a compacted flint base supported angular uncut blocks of Kentish ragstone (greensand) and ferruginous sandstone, probably brought in by Roman engineers from the Maidstone area. Outside of this defensive wall was a deep ditch containing Samian pottery, bones and horns of ruminants, as well as "handles of amphora, three glass lachrymatories, and an urn of a peculiar shape". All presumably ended up in his lower gallery. Saull's research helped give this wall its "celebrated" cachet, so that locals came to Aldersgate Street to see the remains of what the *Gentleman's Magazine*

26 *FTI* 1 (1842–43): 113.
27 Cooter 1984, 233; W. Godwin 1831, 370.
28 *New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* 46 (Feb. 1836): 270–71; *Morning Post*, 6 Jan. 1836.
29 *GM* 15 (Mar. 1841): 301.

assumed was the enlarged later Roman city of Londinium Augusta.[30] Since the wall was subsequently built over, Saull's was one of the few extant accounts and thus a constant source of reference.[31] With Saull's museum right on the spot, it was a port of call for anyone interested in Roman London.[32]

A Hotbed with a Heritage—Finsbury Social Institution

As with his geology, so Saull's antiquarian and political spheres were never totally discrete. Having started to rub in the contiguity between palaeo-evolution and aboriginal progression, he now made the antiquarian crossover more explicit. He extracted the moral of ancient history at another of his favourite radical haunts.

Aldersgate Street ran north into Goswell Road, and at the top was Finsbury Social Institution, with its compact 300-capacity lecture hall and coffee and reading rooms.[33] Finsbury had long been one of the most radical boroughs with its Spencean under-belly. The Spenceans had taken a harsh revolutionary line on agrarian democracy, demanding, in the aftermath of the French Revolution, that the land be reclaimed and apportioned.[34] One of them, Arthur Thistlewood, had responded to the

30 *GM* 22 (Nov. 1844): 506; *Illustrated London News* 1 (14 May 1842): 12, 16. Saull (1844) for his foundational paper. For the press coverage: *Times*, 3 Mar. 1842, 6; *Court Gazette*, 5 Mar. 1842, 1013; *GM*, 17 (Mar. 1842): 305. See also *Antiquarian and Architectural Yearbook for 1844* (1845), 81–82; *MC*, 4 Mar. 1842, 6. Saull's geological expertise came into play in other archaeological arenas, for instance, when analyzing cromlech granite engravings in Brittany (*Literary Gazette* 1624 [Mar. 1848]: 168).

31 More wall was shortly discovered (*GM* 19 [Jan. 1843]: 21–22), and a further 70 or 80 feet in the 1870s, which confirmed Saull's description (Price 1880, 20–21; 1881, 407–09).

32 Soon additions from other locations were added. The first indications of Roman habitation in West Smithfield—an urn containing the burnt bones of what Saull took to be a child, along with tell-tale Samian ware—also ended up at 15 Aldersgate Street: *GM* 19 (May 1843): 520.

33 *NMW* 12 (23 Dec. 1843): 208; capacity: *NS*, 18 Sept. 1847; *UR*, 8 Sept. 1847, 82.

34 Prothero 1979, 116–31; Chase 1988, 91, 117–20. Saull the urban merchant probably had little to do with agrarianism. About as far as he went was to help mitigate the plight of unemployed agricultural workers in the "Labourers' Friend Society" (founded 1832), which established allotments and cow pastures countrywide for the destitute, against the resistance of farmers and estate owners: *The Second General Report of the Committee of the Labourers' Friend Society*, 1833, 36; also *Third General Report*, 1834, 25; *The Labourers' Friend Magazine*, ns (Dec. 1836): following

bloody Peterloo Massacre in 1819, when peaceful demonstrators were cut down by the cavalry, by organizing the Cato Street conspiracy in 1820. The group planned to assassinate Cabinet ministers as a prelude to a general uprising. For his part, Thistlewood was hanged. But living in Goswell Road near to Saull was an old Spencean, his long-time friend Allen Davenport, now old and infirm.

Completely unschooled, Davenport had been successively a groom, soldier, and shoemaker before becoming an "out and out Spencean".[35] But he had moved on with the times, like Saull coming under the influence successively of Carlile, Taylor, and co-operation. He was also a radical bard, and, like all 'attic' poets, cripplingly poor. His "scientific and philosophical poem" *Urania* had been published by Watson in 1838, as a fund-raiser for the destitute old man. Urania was the muse of astronomy, so the poem's dedication to Saull was appropriate.[36] Davenport's poetic flights on "uncouth" man, making his debut on the earth, was a subject being fleshed out in more prosaic form by Saull. This proto-human, "Stood naked and alone in open space"

> Wherein no apples of temptation grew,
> No tree of knowledge met his longing view!
> He labor'd hard subsistence to obtain.
> And purchas'd days of joy with years of pain;
> So liv'd, so far'd the father of mankind.
> There tam'd wild animals & till'd the ground,
> And huts arose with moss and rushes crown'd.
> Thus Man created by his energies,
> Ere he enjoy'd his wretched paradise![37]

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page 234; *NMW* 4 (23 Mar. 1838): 174–75. Not all were happy with this society. Some asked what right the rich had to patronize the poor by buying up and "letting out small portions of land", when labour exchanges were clearly the way to liberation (*PMG*, 10 Mar. 1832; *MC*, 25 Mar. 1833). Saull also supported the Agricultural Employment Institution (founded 1833) (*Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 30 Mar. 1833, 1).

35 *NS*, 5 Dec. 1846; Davenport 1845, 46–48; McCalman 1988, 193–94.

36 *NMW* 4 (11 Aug. 1838): 340. Saull and Davenport also frequented the Finsbury Mutual Instruction Society in Bunhill Row and the South Place Chapel. Saull lectured here, for example, on his Owenite theme: "The Influence of Scientific Knowledge in forming the Character of the Future Generations of Mankind" (*PM* 1 [29 July 1837]: 322; Davenport 1845, 71).

37 *The Man* 1 (28 July 1833): 32, extract called "The Origin of Man" from the unpublished "Urania". Janowitz 1998 on Davenport's "interventionist poetics".

Davenport had been running (well, limping) with Saull for a long time. They could be found together, in the old days, at the Optimist Chapel, itself in Finsbury, and the BAPCK, as well as at Owen's Labour Exchange. In later times, they met up at the Tower Street Mutual Instruction Society and, here, at Finsbury Social Institution.[38] Davenport was an agrarian polemicist, who wanted "the land, rivers, mines, coal-pits, &c," to be nationalized, and for all taxes to be paid out of the subsequent land rental, with the surplus to be returned to the people. Effectively, landed aristocratic wealth would be redistributed. He remained a popular draw and *The Origin of Man and the Progress of Society* (1846) comprised his talks critiquing private property.[39] He had gravitated to Chartism and, as President of the East London Democratic Association, had mentored the firebrand red republican Julian Harney—the "little man with the pen of a Marat".[40] Davenport was as one with Saull on freethought and universal secular education, but poverty now forced him to rely on whip-rounds arranged by Harney and Holyoake.

Another old Finsbury Spencean and friend of Saull's, George Petrie, had died in 1836. A plebeian bard himself, his lauded poem "Equality" remained pinned on a door in Saull's museum.[41] Other Petrie remains, more mortal than literary, ended up in Aldersgate Street, as we will see, suggesting that the radical galleries went far beyond traditional ammonites-and-amphora visitor attractions.

In short, Finsbury was a hotbed with a heritage, which put Saull at the centre of continuing agitation. Thomas Wakley was Finsbury's doctrinaire radical MP, for whom Saull would periodically deputize at meetings. In the 1840s, Finsbury remained one of the most active socialist branches (No. 16), with Davenport on its Council. Its members had a choice of meeting places: Watson's nearby Mechanics' Hall of Science—where Saull still lectured frequently—and now Finsbury Social Institution.

Finsbury Social Institution itself evolved with Saull's lectures. Owenite branch 16 had taken over the building in 6 Frederick Place,

38 *PM* 2 (5 Aug. 1837): 8; 24 Feb. 1838, 248.
39 Davenport *ODNB*; Davenport 1845, 67.
40 McCabe 1908, 42; Claeys 1987, 160; dagger: *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, 3d. ser., 48 (1839), 33.
41 *NS*, 31 Oct. 1846, 3; Chase 1988, 160–61.

Goswell Road, during the Owenite boom in December 1840. As a local Hall of Science, it was not big; in fact,

> The lecture room is rather small, but is very well fitted up; and there is connected with it another room of equal size, well adapted for a coffee or refreshment room, with two kitchens, and a committee room. The whole forms a very complete little institution.[42]

In February 1841, a "festival"—a *conversazione* or *soirée* to the middle classes—had inaugurated the Institution. Its Sunday lectures on socialism attracted largely "mechanics and tradesmen".[43] Science was favoured from the outset, and Finsbury had a policy of running scientific talks weekly from 1844.

Bourgeois radicals were now welcomed as teachers. The medical practitioner in a Quaker's hat, Dr John Epps—whose phrenological work had long been interesting to co-operators[44]—talked on human physiology here in 1843–44.[45] Epps had his hand in many reforming pies, and could often be seen alongside Saull on committees.[46] As for radical sciences, Epps' latest interest got him nicknamed the "Homoeopathic Napoleon," for he had the stature "of the 'Little Corporal.'"[47] He was doing the rounds of the socialist halls, proselytizing phrenology and homoeopathy, and lecturing on human physiology, at a cheap rate (tuppence a lecture).[48] Finsbury's extensive sixteen-lecture course on physiology was about the biggest Epps delivered.

Owenite women were particularly active in Finsbury. There was a women-only mutual-instruction class, a woman on the Council, and another, Mary Jenneson, who was secretary of the branch and (almost

42 *NMW* 9 (27 Feb. 1841): 134; 8 (5 Dec. 1840): 368.
43 *NMW* 11 (29 Oct. 1842): 146–47.
44 *British Co-Operator* 1 (May 1830): 40 passim.
45 *NMW* 12 (16 Mar. 1844): 303. On Epps' medical radicalism: Desmond 1989, 166ff; J. F. C. Harrison 1987, 205.
46 Both had been on the Council of the National Political Union (*Destructive* (Hetherington), 1 [16 Feb. 1833]: 23); both were members of the Radical Club, and of the Metropolitan Parliamentary Reform Association in 1842–43 (Rowe 1970b, document nos. 71, 129), and both could be seen sitting on the stage at the opening of Lovett's Hall of the National Association (*National Association Gazette* 1 [30 July 1842]: 243).
47 Linton 1894, 160.
48 *NMW* 11 (5 Nov. 1842): 154.

uniquely) a delegate to the Owenite Congress.[49] Tellingly, come the 1848 revolution in France, a public assembly at Goswell Road sent an address to the "Citoyens François" applauding their "glorious accomplishments". It was signed off by "M. William Devonshire Saull, l'un des plus zélés partisans des *droits de la Femme*". This was enough for his fraternal greetings to be published in Eugenie Niboyet's pioneering feminist-socialist daily, *La Voix des Femmes*,[50] run exclusively by Parisian women and leading the call for women's enfranchisement.

Saull regularly gave cheap or free talks in the Finsbury Social Institution. What stands out is how many of them now spelled out the meaning of antiquities for freethinking socialism.[51] We only have titles or a précis, but they are indicative. They revolved around what Mary Jenneson called Saull's "favourite antiquarian topic, 'The condition of the Ancient Britons during the Roman occupation of these islands'".[52] Even Saull's levelling word "aborigine" for *Britain*'s "first inhabitants"[53] was itself shocking, given that the term was sneeringly associated in the public mind with those imperial 'throwbacks': the "wild and formidable"[54] African 'Caffres' and New Zealand Maoris.

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49 Mary Ann Wiley married (1843–44) the tailor Charles Jenneson, himself on the pro-working-class wing of Owenism and a lecturer on the rights of women: *NMW* 10 (25 June 1842): unpaginated advert after p. 424, "Lectures at the Finsbury Social"; Frow and Frow 1989, 118 n. 24; Claeys 2002, 181. Charles Jenneson and Saull worked together to establish a non-sectarian, 2*d*-a-week Owenite day school in Whitechapel, *NMW* 12 (9 Dec. 1843): 192; (30 Dec. 1843): 215; *Movement* 1 (16 Dec. 1843): 8.

50 *La Voix des Femmes*, 27 Mar. 1848, 2; *UR*, 12 Apr. 1848, 39.

51 Some of Saull's slated lectures here are untitled, for example, *NMW* 12 (16 Mar. 1843): 303; 13 (21 June 1845): 426; *Reasoner* 1 (8 July 1846): 92. All of his titled lectures concern aborigines, except one, "On the Analysis of Opinion" in 1842, which covered the origin of prevailing "philosophical, political, and religious opinions": *NMW* 11 (29 Oct. 1842): 146–47; *NS*, 27 Feb. 1847; *UR*, 24 Feb. 1847, 26. Otherwise, his activities at Finsbury took in chairing a meeting to petition the Queen on the country's distress, backing Walter Cooper's stand on the wickedness of blasphemy laws, and collecting funds to see Owen off to America: *NMW* 10 (19 Feb. 1842): 271; 13 (13 Sept. 1844): 93–94; (5 Oct. 1844): 118.

52 *NMW* 13 (1 Mar. 1845): 287.

53 Saull 1845, 1.

54 Lindfors 1996. Even to have a humanitarian interest in modern "aborigines" could be written off as "mischievous and morbid sentimentalism", and there is some evidence that Thomas Hodgkin's sympathies (he was at that moment founding the Aborigines' Protection Society) helped lose him a Physician's post at Guy's Hospital in 1837: Kass and Kass 1988, 292, 377.

Some might have called his usage cynical. If it did not exploit, it certainly fitted in with the exotic peoples increasingly being exhibited in theatres, fairs, and music halls—peoples being marketed as 'savages' in the expanding imperial vernacular of the age.[55] London impresarios, by creating a clientele for viewing living "aborigines", could only have increased the audience for Saull's lower gallery. Not that Saull was the first to label the early Celts as aborigines or "savages".[56] But his usage was provocative and tailored to radical venues dedicated to cutting the plumed aristocracy down to size. As a piece of social reductionism, it sat in the Carlile-*Oracle* tradition of giving noblemen the same dirty roots as hod-bearers.[57] So his first Goswell talk, in February 1843, called "Customs and Manners", illustrated the aborigines' "history from the remotest antiquity, by the remains of their houses, furniture, dresses, implements, &c.", specifically to highlight the "changes which have taken place in the circumstances" *surrounding* "the inhabitants of these isles".[58] This circumlocution was meant to suggest that it was the Romans who changed the circumstances of the aboriginals they conquered. As such, it proved a test case of Owen's headlining maxim that "The Character of Man is formed for Him,—Not By Him", familiar on the masthead of the *Crisis* and *New Moral World*. Alter the conditions, and you alter the character, which is what the Romans did to civilize the aboriginals, and what Owenites were attempting to do to the Old Immoral World.

Notitia Britanniae

Now that debates following lectures had started up again, drawing the crowds, Saull made great use of them. One lesson he had in mind was stressed in these to-and-fro discussions. His talk on "British Antiquities" posed a question for the audience in September 1844: "Is the evidence of

55 Qureshi 2011.

56 This ethnographic analogy went all the way back to the seventeenth century, when reports of native peoples in America led to such "savages" becoming stand-ins for early Celts. The notion however was obnoxious to nationalist Celtic historians (Morse 2005, 17, 56).

57 The word "aborigine" does not appear, for example, in a parallel but contrasting work to Saull's *Notitia*, Akerman 1847. More conventional in structure, Akerman's tome described the types of ancient monuments rather than delineating a progressive trend. Saull's bent betrayed his Carlilean-Owenite heritage.

58 *NMW* 11 (11 Feb. 1843): 267.

Facts to be preferred to Written Testimony?", meaning should truth come from artefacts or sacred texts? And the next talk, in November, followed suit: "Will Antiquarian researches remove Traditionary Superstition?"[59] He was urging his listeners to treat "all the accounts descriptive of the earlier races of man" (read sacred and other texts) with "great suspicion" because of their unreliable hand-me-down nature. There was no contemporary written record, only word-of-mouth turning into untrustworthy folklore, which often ended with scribes "servilely copying one another, and repeating tales".[60] By contrast, an Owenite in a Pestalozzian object-teaching environment saw *artefacts* provide a spy hole into the past, from which more accurate historical insights might be had.

This was elaborated in Saull's short book in 1845, *Notitia Britanniae; Or An Enquiry Concerning the Localities, Habits, Condition, and Progressive Civilization of the Aborigines of Britain*. In it, he used a common aboriginal base for all peoples to let him oust fallen angels and racist demons alike. The Romans were the 'improvers' of their day, and Saull defended "the grand Roman plan of colonization" for the changes it affected in these aboriginal Britons.[61] *Notitia* was an expensive book, at 3*s* 6*d*, and obviously not aimed at plebeian socialists so much as wealthy antiquarians, among whom Saull was trying to establish his credentials. It was the fruit of three years spent visiting hut remains, tumuli, and barrows, as well as Roman villas and forts, and collating provincial accounts by private museum collectors, the guardians of so many relics. Much local lore, too, resided with the clerical antiquarians—it was the parsons, posted off to their rural diocese, who had the education and leisure to indulge a tastes for ancient civilization. Saull visited sites with one and all.

Ironically, it was a one-armed scriptural literalist who proved Saull's key source. The evangelical Scottish Presbyterian Dr George Young of Whitby was the last person one might imagine rambling amicably with the blasphemer, yet hut circles and fossils were a grand mediating point

59 *Movement* 1 (7 Sept. 1844): 328; (13 Nov. 1844): 424.

60 Saull 1845, 50; he was cleverly quoting from W. D. Cooley's new preface to *Larcher's Notes on Herodotus*, 1: 107, knowing that it applied *mutatis mutandis* to the Bible.

61 *NMW* 13 (1 Mar. 1845): 287.

and the two hunted happily together on the windswept moors. Dr Young (the 'Dr' was an honorary title from Miami College, Oxford, Ohio, in 1838, the year he published *Scriptural Geology*) was a mainstay of Whitby Literary and Philosophical Society, and a pastor who could publish tracts against infidelity and papers on ammonites with equal ease.[62] He had turned up the largest number of ancient hut remains in Yorkshire. Forty ancient British villages were to his credit, the huts signalled by circular depressions in the ground with stone surrounds. These beehive houses in their day were presumed to have had sod-packed walls and branch roofs. The inhabitants, according to Young (and Saull), were then on a cultural 'level' with the present day "Caffres" of South Africa.[63] At Harwood Dale, Saull and Young investigated fifty or sixty of these hut depressions, often characterized by charcoal remains in the centre where fires had been.

These 'primitive' hunter villages, successively occupied through the generations, provided Saull's baseline for his cultural levels. They were "rude abodes" with no signs of pottery or coins. Even in London, at the Cheapside sewage excavations, Saull found, on descending the shafts to the lowest point, similar concave remains of huts with central fireplaces, from an age when London was densely forested. Above this 'hunter' state was the next cultural level, the 'shepherd' society, with its fortified stations to hold the newly domesticated livestock. Saull could point to these in his native Northampton, in Long Buckby where his nephews lived. He visited another with a local vicar in Chipping Warden, although the biggest fortified complex, spread over 150 acres, occurred at Daventry.[64] This gave him two social 'strata', which sat at the base before the "momentous aera" ushered in by the Romans.

Coastal forts along the Channel were already "advanced in intelligence" before Caesar's arrival because of their contacts with Gaul, judging by the arms and crude money. This information came from Saull's "esteemed friend", the Devon antiquarian Captain Shortt. It had to be rather prised out of his texts, for W. T. P. Shortt's infuriating thickets

62 *Geological Curator* 7, no 7 (June 2002): 4–30; Cleevely 1974, 469 n. 48. Saull exchanged fossils and London Roman artefacts with Whitby museum, of which he was an honorary member: *Sixteenth Report Of The Whitby Literary And Philosophical Society*, 1838, 13; *Twentieth Report*, 1842, 15.

63 Saull 1845, 3–7.

64 Saull 1845, 13, 18–25.

of cataloguing detail and "discoursive" style belied his Oxford classical education. He had turned up coins in Exeter from Greek cities in Syria, Asia Minor, and Alexandria, and even an Isis bust with hieroglyphs, showing the extent of the early tin trade in Cornwall and the reach of Mediterranean trading vessels.[65] It was Caesar's arrival which extended this advanced cultural contact to the rest of the country.

Caesar found the inhabitants behind their bank and ditch hill forts, but the Romans brought these aboriginals down to the lush vales where they absorbed the "arts of civilization". The Romans introduced iron to replace the Celtic brass, drained the low lying "impassable swamps" and built the roads to establish wider communications. Again Saull, on home ground, described Daventry's Roman Road, twenty-feet wide, which was made of small stones with grouting. The locals learned from the Romans to cultivate and grind corn—allowing the next 'farming' phase. Log or board houses, cemented and tinted inside, replaced the old sod-and-branch huts. Villas were warmed by flues and hypocausts. Temples changed the "religious feelings" of the natives: glorious temples with tessellated pavements producing the effect of paintings. Saull's museum had some, found in Maiden Lane. Fine Samian cups and dishes were introduced, now made in Britain. And with decoration—of gods, musicians, hunting scenes and gladiators—came lettering, which was itself introduced to the natives. Saull's museum had some fifty pieces of this Samian pottery impressed with their makers' names. The art of stamping or coining money, with lettering again, was an innovation, as was glass, mode of dress, cremation, and urn burial.[66]

These social phases were the theme of *Notitia Britanniae*. Much of the information was culled from the knowledge of fellow antiquarian and private museum keeper, Charles Roach Smith. Roach Smith was a chemist in Finsbury, and the leading authority on Roman London. He was a passionate collector who descended the same shafts and examined the same excavations as Saull. They shared a similar serendipitous

65 Saull 1845, 26, 55–56. That Celts had advanced in civilization in Cornwall through commerce with Phoenicians was commonly accepted (Morse 2005, 90). Saull believed that Exeter was the site of a Phoenician colony, trading in tin, centuries before the arrival of the Greeks and Romans: Shortt n.d., iv. C. R. Smith 2015 [1886], 2: 257 on Shortt's disastrous prose.

66 Saull 1845, 26–48; on his digs in Northampton turning up Roman remains for his museum: *JBAA* 4 (Jan. 1849): 396–97.

approach, which relied on news of civic works and the navvies' good will. Road widening and sewer laying attracted them, and the dredging operations as the Thames was deepened at London Bridge, which revealed bronze statuettes and coins.[67] It was Roach Smith's dedication in scouring these public works that had already earned him the title "the Discoverer of Roman London".[68] The new sewerage shafts were particularly useful. The City had connected 11,200 houses (out of 16,200) to a City-wide sewerage system by 1852. This offered tremendous scope for antiquarians willing to descend shafts up to eighty feet deep during the building, and both Roach Smith and Saull took full advantage.[69]

In the end, it was up to these enthusiasts to store their sewer finds, at least until the laissez-faire state took a more interventionist interest. Roach Smith's huge cabinet would eventually become the foundation of the British Museum's Romano-British collection. Saull's, by contrast, had an ignominious fate.

When Roach Smith helped found the British Archaeological Association in 1843, Saull was on board immediately. He became a member ("Associates", they were called), later shared a seat with Roach Smith on the General Committee and attended the yearly congresses.[70] Roach Smith was influenced by the Comité des Arts et Monuments in Paris (an offshoot of a commission set up by Guizot, when Minister of Public Instruction), and he originally planned to emulate the Comité's series of illustrated works on France's heritage, to make a similar story of Britain's progress from "the earliest primeval period in which the first rude efforts of the hand of man might be traced, down to the latest

67 C. R. Smith 1854. They occasionally re-identified showmen's items. For instance, in 1848 Saull re-assigned a "Roman" harpoon dredged from the Thames as a modern whaler's: *Literary Gazette* 1657 (Oct. 1848): 700.

68 T. Wright 1845, 129. Thomas Wright was co-founder with Roach Smith of the British Archaeological Association, and Wright's chapter on the "Romans in London" in his *Archaeological Album* was based largely on Roach Smith's museum and publications.

69 *Archaeologia* 27 (1838): 140–51; 29 (1842): 145; *Literary Gazette* 1883 (Feb. 1853): 181; *MC*, 29 Jan. 1853. 5. J. White 2007, 50.

70 He attended from the first: *Times*, 16 Sept. 1844, 3; and yearly thereafter. Committee: *JBAA* 3 (1848): 133; *Lancaster Gazette*, 17 Aug. 1850, 4; *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, 31 July 1851; and in subsequent years. Here Roach Smith would often comment on Saull's papers, date his Roman findings, and identify the Roman stations subsequently mentioned in *Notitia*. This forum allowed great scope in understanding Roman Britain and its relation to 'primeval' archaeology.

division of the middle ages."[71] Although never carried through, it would have fitted Saull's agenda perfectly. Guizot had also instructed the Comité effectively to *preserve* French antiquities, and this emphasis on preservation was paramount in the Association.[72] This onus on saving, coming from the French, justified Saull's storage facility, which was now tilting heavily towards local Roman antiquities.

But still Saull had a deeper agenda. Even before *Notitia* was published, he was detailing his "primitive" to "pastoral" cultural sequence at the first annual meeting of the Association at Canterbury in 1844. In the "primaeval section" (it was divided into sections like the British Association for the Advancement of Science), presided over by Roach Smith and the geologist William Buckland among others, Saull described three Roman encampments near Dunstable, on the chalk Downs. One appeared to have been a "primitive" hill fort that had been extended later by the Romans, possibly as a forward observatory post, whence it became a "pastoral" camp.[73]

That transition was the novelty. This was not armchair archaeology but relied on legwork if not spadework[74]—Saull, like Roach Smith, was always on site and toured the country examining and collecting. But, to those indisposed to his philosophy, Saull's conclusions could be written off as armchair dilettantism. Sarcasm marked the *Athenaeum* review of *Notitia*, which excoriated the book from the first line: "Mr. Saull is one of the Pegge genus, but of an inferior species, since the latter did know something of what he was writing about." (A sly dig: the Rev. Dr Samuel Pegge was an eighteenth-century barrow specialist who "diligently collected the errors of his predecessors while adding another to the list".) The review went downhill from there, demanding Saull "prove who the 'Aborigines' of Britain were". There was widespread belief that the monuments based around these depressions were sepulchral, and

71 *JBAA* 2 (Jan. 1847): 302; *Archaeological Journal* 1 (1845): 71.

72 Individuals like Saull and Roach Smith remained the driving force. A Parliamentary Select Committee in 1841 did discuss the preservation of monuments, but only of "illustrious individuals" (Swenson 2013, 57). The state's hand was ineffectual compared to French government efforts.

73 Saull 1845, 54; *Times*, 16 Sept. 1844, 3.

74 For modern sympathetic ways of reimagining Victorian "armchair" prehistorians, see Sera-Shriar 2016; Barton 2022.

the *Athenaeum* reviewer doubted that the so-called "huts" were anything other than tombs.[75]

More resistance to the hut hypothesis came from the Archbishop of York's son, the Rev. Leveson Vernon Harcourt. He was a collector of lore to support, in his book's title, *The Doctrine of the Deluge; Vindicating the Scriptural Account from The Doubts which have recently been cast upon it by Geological Speculations* (1838). Two volumes, running to 1100 pages, proved a thousand times over that every ancient tradition was susceptible to "Arkite" reinterpretation (that is, pointing to the biblical Flood). The Flood waters were already receding from geology back into Sacred history, but Harcourt's work would be thrown in Saull's face. Harcourt's double-decker was overkill to many, with such attenuated evidence as to strain the patience of readers.[76] But it was his method that would have exasperated Saull. Harcourt side-stepped geology and amassed Pagan mythology, tapping "the memory" of the ancients "derived from their traditions, their superstitions, their monuments, and their usages", to show how Flood folk-lore was kept alive "till it was finally enlisted in the service of true religion", Christianity. Even the hill-top cromlechs and cairns were reinterpreted as monuments built by Noah's descendants. They commemorated a rejuvenated mankind's rise from "the purifying waters of the Deluge".[77] The mounds next to the depressions were sacred, for sacrifice and celebration, while the stone-sided pit-cavities were not houses, but water-holding tanks.[78] Looking at Harcourt's monster tome, one understands Saull's tactics, asking in Finsbury discussion forums whether "Facts" were not better guides than garbled Creationist "Testimony", his "facts" being artefacts, from visual fossil sequences to pot-shards.

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75 *Athenaeum* 932, 6 Sept. 1845, 876 (the slashing review was by Samuel Astley Dunham); *Monthly Times*, 8 Sept. 1845, 7. On Pegge: *Archaeological Journal* 4 (1847): 30.

76 Even the reconciler Rev. Dr John Pye Smith (1839, 106)—so beloved of the *Patriot* (26 Apr. 1852, 270)— saw Harcourt "weakening an argument by an excess of amplification", while George Eliot thought he "rather shakes a weak position by weak arguments" (Kidd 2016, 14–15). By contrast, the appreciative *GM* 61 (Dec. 1841): 617–19, advised geologists to pay as much attention to this mass of testimony as they did to their physical evidence.

77 Harcourt 1838, 1: 9; 2: 469.

78 *GM* 40 (Aug. 1853): 183; (Oct. 1853): 389. This was Harcourt at the breakaway Archaeological Institute of Great Britain, with which Saull had nothing to do. See also Harcourt in *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 7 (1854): 32.

Saull's dry factual presentation might have chimed with the incipient positivism of those flashing young blades joining Holyoake's secular circle,[79] but his socialist implications went down badly with traditionalists. It was this twist at the end of *Notitia* that caused the public furore and atrocious reviews. Saull was warned by friends vetting the manuscript not to push these implications. But that was the whole point, the "portion of it, which I deem the most valuable".[80] At John Street, Saull had actually admitted to the socialists that he continued his connection with the learned societies precisely to extend Owenism into the bourgeois world.[81]

After the failures of the labour exchanges and co-operatives, and the loss of civic power bases in the Halls, it seemed that wealth and power would have to be redistributed voluntarily (at least in Owen's view), to produce a harmonious society. Although for those like Saull with a radical edge, the learned bourgeoisie could still be chivvied, and that was *Notitia*'s aim. From the opening talk of human cultural phases, "the hunter, (or rudest) state, the nomadic, shepherd, or pastoral state", proving that "man always has been—is now—and, by direct inference, ever will be, an advancing or progressive being", to the final lines, the evangelical Owenism stayed in. Those final lines might not have meant much to the archaeologists, but they repeated the aphorism on the mastheads of the *Crisis* and *New Moral World*, "If we cannot reconcile all opinions, let us endeavour to unite all hearts". Saull's aboriginal antiquarianism was used to point up "the universal law of nature and necessity" proved by geology,[82] that fossil and social progress must continue through "every gradation of mind" as society levels, equilibrates and perfects mankind.

Hence came Saull's call to scientific gentlemen to stop prostituting their talents. It was more muted than in Carlile and Chilton, but it was

79 Ashton 2006, 138. The rise from savagery was easily accommodated by Owenites themselves. Every socialist bookshelf would have had Minter Mogan's *Revolt of the Bees* (1826), which turned Manderville's fables on their head and chronicled the rise of the bees. As such it made a familiar allegory of "progression from a noble savagery through pastoral occupations, farming, and industry, to a fifth revolution pioneered by 'the wise bee' [Owen]", who would fairly redistribute wealth and knowledge: Armytage 1954, 1958.

80 Saull 1845, unpaginated "Introduction".

81 *Reasoner* 16 (5 Feb. 1854) Supplement, 97–98.

82 Saull 1845, 49, 57–58.

still there. The missionary Saull was calling for conversion. Despite integrating into learned bodies and attending elite *soirées*, Saull never really appreciated the depth to which a gentleman's gloss on science reflected his political, religious, and social beliefs, and that a scientific shift would prejudice these and thus his privileged position. Were a gentleman to step out of line, he would be immediately reminded that his *character* was at stake. And since, for a gentleman, knowledge without character was nothing, his authority would be shaken, his caste doubted. Character was the guarantor, it was the key chink that the Tory *Quarterly* looked to constantly when 'bad' science reared up. Threats to a gentleman's stature ensured conformity, as Lawrence and so many others discovered. Saull was calling for the Good and Great of science to act as social traitors. The freethinking future would be ushered in by 'unbiassed' men of science:

> Those only who are imbued with the love of science and philosophy, and who are consequently the disinterested advocates of free inquiry, have now ... momentous duties devolving on them: for to such minds appertain the execution of the task of supplanting the various antagonistic and conflicting opinions [that is, religion], which so materially tend to distract and mystify our common humanity; those alone who adhere to such principles can meet on common and neutral ground; for science recognizes none of the petty distinctions of sect, party, or persuasion; its effects on the mind being to establish universal philanthrophy [*sic*] in our communications with our fellow men, knowing, that the higher they advance in intelligence, the more perfect and enduring will be that congeniality of sentiment so much to be desired, and so worthy of their strenuous efforts for its accomplishment...

Such a coded Owenite request, to admit materialist implications, was doomed to fail because this would involve a total unpicking of a gentleman's social and religious standards, all of which were tacitly integrated into what became a block-box of belief in the truth of their science.[83] Hence the vehemence of the response.

The urbane *Gentleman's Magazine* in its apoplectic attacks on atheism, as the "delirium of a sick and suffering soul", pictured such godlessness as "spiritual leprosy" spread by Owenism, which itself sucks out every "patriotic conviction" of the heart. In the *Notitia*, it saw straight through

83 Latour 1987, 61.

Saull's anodyne snipe at retarding influences. The *Magazine* tried to retain its decorum, hoping that the author's intention was not "to say that the reign ... of the goddess of reason will supersede the great truths for our direction in time, and guidance to the mansions of eternity, to be found in the Bible." Were it the case, then this philosophy "of Voltaire and Rousseau, has been tried and found something worse than mere speculation. Take away the certainty of rewards and punishments which revealed religion announces, the social obligations are dissolved in an overwhelming flood of misery and crime".[84] Given that dusty antiquarian descriptions were so often dismissed as "dry, pedantic, and repulsive"; given, moreover, that the socialist Saull's approach was atypical at the time in stressing progressive transitions from aboriginal or 'primeval' to Roman, it is not surprising that polite readers found the results "curious" when not absurd.[85] But then Saull had come in at an idiosyncratic angle. Davy's dream had been fulfilled. The rise from savagery had been fleshed out in context-rich detail, with geological methods being used to locate archaeological remains at their correct developmental level,[86] all in aid of Owenite social ends.

Saull continued promoting this progressive social development at the more appreciative venues. But these were now changing rapidly. As a further sign of Owenism shrinking, the Finsbury branch of the Rational Society was re-launched as the Finsbury Literary and Mechanics' Institute in 1846. Wakley was to have chaired the inauguration, but Parliament kept him so Saull stepped in on 29 July. With Saull on the platform were figureheads of Owenism (Fleming), freethought (Holyoake), communism (Goodwyn Barmby), Christian radicalism and phrenology

84 *GM* 23 (Apr. 1845): 397–99; 35 (May 1851): 519–23.

85 *Leicester Chronicle*, 22 Feb. 1845, which contains an appreciative review, and commented on the "perfectly justifiable" geological approach to dating the stages; *Spectator* 18 (15 Feb. 1845): 162.

86 History transcended Saull's contingent Owenite meaning and used his first-hand descriptions as a resource, whether in the new anthropology of the 1860s, accepting the hut-circles of Young and Saull (*Journal of the Anthropological Society of London* 3 (1865) lxii), or later in the *Making of London* by Sir Lawrence Gomme (1912, 38), who uncritically quoted Saull's accounts of his London hut discoveries in the sewerage excavations. Saull's study of the immediate pre-Roman period, which would come to be called 'Late Celtic', though atypical for its day in that it tried to show sequential steps through to the Roman period, is now used as part of the backdrop from which the work on this transition by Augustus Lane Fox and Arthur Evans could be assessed (Hingley 2008, 294–95).

(Dr Epps), popular poetry (the former *Morning Chronicle* journalist Charles Mackay), as well as a trades-advocating ex-Unitarian minister (F. B. Barton), showing that, just as Saull was reaching out, so were the institutions.[87] He continued lecturing here on "The Earliest Histories of Man",[88] even as the Literary Institution underwent yet another relaunch under a new proprietor in 1847 and cast its net still wider in an effort to attract an audience. By now, the once-proud Owenite branch had shed its old mantle, as the new manager claimed that "it will be conducted upon principles entirely devoid of anything of a party or sectarian nature". The open-arms, clerk-receptive policy emphasized "comfort and convenience" and efforts to keep it "select, orderly, and respectable." Saull and the usual radical group were present at the re-opening, but there was no denying that the institutions had lost their Owenite exclusivity.[89]

With the loss of an ideologically-constrained base, Saull found himself buffeted by unexpected winds. Tensions at the Mechanics' Hall of Science were racked up by the 1847 intake. In came a new crop of acerbic freethinkers. At this point, Saull probably met Robert Cooper, and he certainly knew the ethnologist Luke Burke.[90] Holyoake's widening of his Utilitarian circle inevitably resulted in some discordant voices, but none more so than Burke's.

Luke Burke was a new-style 'ethnologist'. He wanted "ethnology" to be stripped not only of its "Hebrew chronology" but also its Christian obsession with the brotherhood of man, and what remained he would puff as a new science essentially untainted and data-driven.[91] 'Ethnology' for him, idiosyncratically, meant study of the "physical

87 *Reasoner* 1 (29 July 1846): 136; *NS*, 25 July 1846.

88 *UR*, 16 Feb. 1848, 24. He retraced the ground in "A Critical Examination of Ancient History" at Finsbury Hall, Bunhill Row, where the Finsbury radicals also met (*UR*, 13 Oct. 1847, 92); and the "Natural Law of Progress" at the newly formed and quickly forgotten Zetetic Society at his Mechanics' Hall of Science: *Reasoner* 1 (7 Oct. 1846): 256.

89 *UR*, 8 Sept. 1847, 82; *NS*, 18 Sept. 1847.

90 *UR*, 16 June 1847, 57; 6 Oct. 1847, 89; 13 Oct. 1847, 91. Another who came was well known to Saull, Walter Cooper, the Chartist tailor with Christian Socialist sympathies (and brother of the Chartist poet Thomas Cooper): 12 Jan. "1847" [1848], 13.

91 Desmond and Moore 2009, chs. 6–7, for the new attacks on J. C. Prichard's beliefs in the Adamic brotherhood of all mankind.

peculiarities of races",[92] in other words, what would later be called "Anthropology". As a deist keen to kick Moses out of science, he appealed to the Utilitarians. But by making the "races" unalterable, immune to any environmental modification, unchanged since the beginning, and by denying the "natural equality of men", his views clearly heralded the Victorian move from xenophobia to racism.[93] Unlike Saull, he had no truck with transmutation. "The primary differences are those which were established by the Creator at the origin of humanity," he announced in his *Ethnological Journal*. Therefore, utopian schemes of social improvement resting on the premise "That all men are of one genus, of one species, and of one family, brothers of the same blood, descended from one common father" were doomed. "Unity, equality, fraternity" to him were Christian chimaeras. Social revolutions based on them will fail because they ignore the "great and permanent diversities among mankind". This put him at loggerheads with Saull. Even worse, for Burke, some races were superior, and those "must be the rulers of the world."[94] A few activists, notably Southwell and Robert Cooper, found their own emphasis on discrete human stocks gaining strength from Burke's racial extremism. But it was abhorrent to Saull. By associating an environmentally-driven ascent from a common stock with Christianity's Adamic brotherhood, Burke was upping the ante. He might have been meeting the new imperial mood, but this was throwing the cat among the fat Owenite pigeons.

In widening secularism's remit to include racists, Holyoake was deepening the tensions. Burke's Utilitarian talk on 'savage' mythology might have piqued Saull's interest, given his aboriginal researches,

92 *Ethnological Journal* (June 1848): 3. That this was an early sign of a growing trend, note the parallel racial structuring that same month being promoted by Dr Robert Knox (E. Richards 1989; 2017, ch. 10; 2020, ch. 3) and sympathetically treated in the *Medical Times* (17 June 1848): 97, 114.

93 Lorimer 1978, 17 passim.

94 *Ethnological Journal* (June 1848): 5, 7, 29; (Mar. 1849): 470, 474. Burke had long attacked J. C. Prichard's environmentalism and Adamic brotherhood: e.g. *People's Phrenological Journal*, 2 (1844): 3, where Burke railed against those who believe circumstances have "converted fishes into reptiles, reptiles into quadrupeds, quadrupeds into monkeys, and monkeys into men; and, even at the present day, few persons can see any difficulty [because it might "harmonize with prevailing religious views"] in their blanching the negro, or blackening the Caucasian, in their converting the savage to civilization, and every civilized man into a philosopher."

even if Burke's "Demonstration of Deity" did not. Burke's indictment of converging ancestries as Christian spawn could only have outraged Saull. Burke's separate-origins pluralism sat better with Southern racists (Burke's "valued friends"[95]), whose science sustained the anti-black, pro-slavery ethos in ante-bellum America. And, as if to prove the point, Burke reviewed their works extensively in his *Ethnological Journal*.[96] Burke's views could hardly be avoided. In 1847, he was running courses at John Street and the City of London Mechanics' Institute in Gould Square, and emphasizing racial permanence.[97] But his anti-socialist, anti-environmentalism sat uneasily at the Utilitarian Society. This still had its Owen supporters, like Saull, and Burke was giving their social-amelioration policies and scientific environmentalism the lie direct. It was a sign that, as xenophobia hardened with imperial expansion into racism, and the sustaining Owenite community crumbled, a gradational blood-brother evolutionism based on the old Holbachian environmental sciences would lose its traction. The ground was being cleared. It now awaited the new Malthusian capitalist explanation of evolution to take on Burke, which the reclusive Charles Darwin still had under wraps.

95 *Ethnological Journal* (Feb. 1849): 438. The influential American pro-slavery pluralist, or what would shortly be called "polygenist", J. C. Nott, was actually fired by the "Gospel according to Luke Burke": Barnhardt 2005, 294–96; Desmond and Moore 2009, 168ff.

96 *Ethnological Journal* (Sept. 1848) 169ff.

97 *UR*, 31 Mar. 1847, 35, 36 et seq. and (26 May 1847): 52; *Howitt's Journal of Literature and Popular Progress* 2 (4 Sept. 1847): 160, for Gould Square.