Newgate Narratives

The History of George Godfrey, Written by Himself

Edited by
Gary Kelly

ROUTLEDGE

NEWGATE NARRATIVES

CONTENTS OF THE EDITION

NEWGATE NARRATIVES

Edited by Gary Kelly

Volume 3
The History of George Godfrey, Written by Himself

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2008 by Pickering & Chatto (Publishers) Limited

Published 2016 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

British Library Cataloguing In Publication Data

Newgate narratives Part 1, vols. 1–5
1. Newgate (Prison : London, England) – Fiction 2. Newgate (Prison : London, England) – History – Sources 3. Prisons – England – Fiction 4. Prisons – England – History – 19th century – Sources 5. Crime – England – London – Fiction 6. English fiction – 19th century
I. Kelly, Gary
823.8'0803556[F]

ISBN-13: 978-1-85196-812-1 (set)

Typeset by Pickering & Chatto (Publishers) Limited

CONTENTS

Taylor & Francis
Taylor & Francis Group
http://taylorandfrancis.com

INTRODUCTION

Thomas Gaspey's Life and Literary Career

Though Thomas Gaspey had an active and prolific career in newspaper journalism, magazine writing and the belles-lettres, very little is known of his life.[1] Nevertheless, it is possible to reconstruct the major features of the world he worked and lived in. He was born at Hoxton, then just north of London, on 31 March 1788, son of William Gaspey, naval lieutenant; he had an older brother William, born 3 Aug 1778, who also became a writer. A William Gaspey was commissioned as navy lieutenant on 18 October 1759 but, given the number of years between that event and Thomas's birth, this may have been Thomas's grandfather or another relative. At a young age Gaspey became a parliamentary reporter on the *Morning Post*, a distinguished newspaper that had employed such writers as Samuel Taylor Coleridge and James Mackintosh. One fellow journalist on the *Morning Post* in Gaspey's day was William Jerdan (1782–1869). Another, and also a parliamentary reporter, was Walter Henry Watts (1776–1842),[2] originally an artist who took up journalism to eke out a living, later editor of the *Annual Biography and Obituary* (1817–31) and art critic on the *Literary Gazette*, for which Gaspey wrote short pieces. Gaspey worked on the *Morning Post* for sixteen years.

Some years later, Gaspey gave a few particulars of his life as a parliamentary reporter in an essay mainly about the assassination of the prime minister Spencer Perceval in 1812.[3] Since Gaspey states in the essay that William Pitt had already died when he became a reporter, Gaspey's assumption of his duties can be placed some time after 1806. The reporters from the various papers followed the debates in the House of Commons from the back row of the visitors' gallery, treating this space as theirs of right. Among Gaspey's contemporaries in the gallery was Vincent Dowling (1756–1825), journalist with *The Times*, originally an Irish bookseller and patent medicine vendor. Another was Edward Turnly Quin (1762–1823), proponent of reform and emancipation of Roman Catholics from the limits on their civil liberties, proprietor of three weekly newspapers, and later editor of an auctioneers' newspaper – perhaps a source for the anecdotes of

auctioneering in Gaspey's novel *The History of George Godfrey, Written by Himself* (1828). While following the parliamentary debates, the journalists amused themselves by playing pranks on the visitors in the gallery, answering their questions and identifying prominent politicians for them and, when the Commons business became tedious, taking walks together along the river Thames.

Most newspapers then supported in general terms what they understood to be the interests and politics of their readership and advertisers – those who enabled them to make a profit and stay in business.[4] When Gaspey entered journalism, newspapers, especially in London, were in transition from being partly make-work enterprises started by printers as speculations, with few or no journalists as such, to businesses in their own right, in an increasingly competitive field, where active newsgathering and freshness of the news were major selling points. The newspapers' readership being predominantly upper- and middle-class people or the property owning, business, and investing classes, their access to fresh and accurate news, domestic and foreign, could be vital to business decisions, as well as an important medium for communicating among themselves and with customers. Inevitably, politics were a major feature, since government policy and action (or inaction) were important conditions of commerce. Of course the reading public was not monolithic or homogeneous and different elements of that public understood their interests differently at different times. In the late eighteenth century, the time of Gaspey's youth, there was a convergence of various social, economic, religious, and other groups calling for reforms of various kinds in institutions and legislation that they felt impeded their interests and their 'rights'. The *Morning Post*, founded in 1772, had generally supported the political opposition in parliament, until the paper was bought by Daniel Stuart (1766–1846) in 1795, at the high point in the British debate over the French Revolution, in the midst of an economic crisis in Britain and at the turning of the propertied classes' opinion against reform. Reform was now associated with the 'excesses' of the French Revolution and, even more threateningly, with political mobilization of elements of the working classes in coalition with elements of the commercial and professional middle classes and even some of the landed gentry and aristocracy. Moreover, under Stuart, who recognized that culture and the arts were also a field of struggle for public opinion, the *Morning Post* sought new voices among young intellectuals and professionals including Romantic writers such as William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey, themselves once sympathizers with the Revolution and reform.[5] Stuart sold the paper in 1803 and it came into the hands of a succession of proprietors. It was this *Morning Post* that Gaspey joined in the first decade of the nineteenth century and in addition to his accounts of parliamentary debates he also wrote drama reviews, political parodies, and reports of treason trials. A few years after Gaspey

joined the paper, Eugenius Roche (1780 or 1786–1829) joined the paper and then in 1817 became its editor, a post he held as long as Gaspey worked there.

An issue of the *Morning Post* comprised four pages, of which the first page-and-a-half and the last page comprised advertisements. The front advertisements were for skilled trades and services, professional situations wanted by those such as teachers and governesses, legal notices, advertisements for theatre performances and art exhibitions, notices of public lectures and society meetings, properties for sale, notices to stockholders, lost articles, new publications and so on. Advertisements on the back page were largely for domestic servants and auctions, another connection between newspapers and Gaspey's novel *George Godfrey*. The *Morning Post*'s editorial matter resembled that of other upmarket newspapers. It consisted of a summary of French papers; 'Police intelligence'; 'Offences, Accidents, &c.'; letters 'To the Editor'; one or more editorial opinion pieces; foreign news, consisting of extracts from foreign newspapers; accounts of parliamentary business (Gaspey's department); notices of upcoming assizes or criminal trial sessions; information of the 'Fashionable World'; pieces of 'Original Poetry'; theatre reviews; news of agriculture and other economic activities; prices of stocks; 'Ship News'; and a variety of news on particular subjects. Of these different kinds of news, many would be incorporated in Gaspey's nine novels.

Having embarked on this journalistic career, on 1 September 1811 Gaspey married Anne Camp, who was five years younger than he.[6] They had at least four children; William (1812–88), Thomas (d. 1871), Louisa (*c.* 1821–1901), and Emily (b. *c.* 1826). Besides being a full-time professional journalist, Thomas Gaspey dabbled in the increasingly professionalized and commercialized belles-lettres published in newspapers and magazines. Gaspey published poems and prose pieces in such miscellanies as *Literary Recreations; or, Magazine of General Information and Amusement*, edited by Eugenius Roche in 1807 and 1808, and the *Literary Gazette, and Journal of Belles Lettres, Arts, Sciences, etc.*, edited by William Jerdan from the periodical's beginning in 1817 to 1850. Such periodicals, whether short-lived like the *Literary Recreations* or long-lived like the *Literary Gazette*, served as cultural entertainment and information for the educated middle classes. By the late eighteenth century there were many literary miscellanies publishing verse, prose fiction, essays and all forms of the belles-lettres which the educated middle classes associated with a genteel literary culture. For the most part, the contributors to these miscellanies were amateurs and were not paid. Such work was distinct at once from learned writing by highly educated people – almost always men – for an elite and well-to-do readership and from 'merely' commercial writing, regarded as hackwork produced in 'Grub Street', the fictitious habitation of wretches churning out shoddy writing for rapacious publishers. By the late eighteenth century, however, 'men of letters',

led by such figures as Samuel Johnson, were attempting to raise the status of professional writers and the intellectual and artistic quality of writing for a wider middle-class public. An indication of this transition was the creation in 1790 of the Literary Fund (from 1842, the Royal Literary Fund), to assist professional writers in temporary financial distress; Gaspey joined the board of the Literary Fund at some point in his career and served on it for many years. A more obvious sign of literary professionalism by the early nineteenth century was the increasing number of weekly, monthly and quarterly periodicals offering literary varieties by writers who were paid for their work. Such writing, too, was a form of journalism and the work published in these periodicals often reflected and reflected on issues of the day that were treated in a different but contiguous journalistic discourse in the newspapers. Gaspey's 'literary' work in the miscellanies, though more occasional and in different modes and registers than his newspaper work, was continuous with it. As with Charles Dickens a generation later, this relationship between journalism and 'literature' would also prove to be the case with Gaspey's writing as a novelist.

The *Literary Gazette* was a sixteen-page weekly, published every Saturday morning at a shilling stamped, or with the government-imposed tax paid, and eight pence unstamped. The paper consisted of about eight pages of 'Reviews of New Books'; an 'Analysis of the Journal des Savans' (a leading French cultural journal), usually occupying the better part of a page; 'Original Correspondence', or readers' letters on a variety of topics; a part column of news of 'Learned Societies'; a column or so on 'Fine Arts'; a section of 'Original Poetry', where Gaspey's contributions would have appeared; news of 'The Drama'; a section called 'Varieties', or news on various literary and scientific topics; a 'Meteorological Journal' recording the weather during the week; and two pages of 'Miscellaneous Advertisements', most announcing recently or soon to be published books. The *Literary Gazette* was the predecessor of such modern weeklies as *the Times Literary Supplement*.

Gaspey's sideline in belles-lettres became more prominent in 1821 with *Takings; or, The Life of a Collegian: A Poem*, with twenty-six finely hand-coloured illustrations by Richard Dagley, published by the conger of John Warren and G. and W. B. Whittaker, 1821). Warren, active in the early 1820s, was a small-scale, upmarket publisher of poetry, 'literary' drama, the *Etonian* magazine and a few other books. His most notable publications were the early poems of Letitia Elizabeth Landon and William Hazlitt's dramatic criticism. G. and W. B. Whittaker were much more active, though only recently so, publishing the novels of the American James Fenimore Cooper, numerous other novels, poetry, history, travels, educational books, maps and the fashionable literary magazine *La Belle Assemblée*. Gaspey's name did not appear on the title page of *Takings*; the star of the production was in fact Dagley, as was made clear in the Dedication, Adver-

tisement (or preface) and 'Miscellaneous Observations on the Ludicrous in Art', all by Dagley. In the Advertisement Dagley indicated that the illustrations came first and then were given poetic narrative expression, though he also assured the reader that 'The Gentleman who has undertaken that part of the publication, has long amused the town both in prose and in verse; but without offering himself by name as a candidate for their regard' (p. vi). The work as a whole is based on the meaning of 'taking' as a sketch and is dedicated appropriately 'To the Admirers of those hasty Productions of the Pencil called Sketches', suggesting a genteel and fashionable casualness. The illustrations all use the word 'taking' in the title, as 'Taking Leaps', 'Taking Advice', 'Taking Physic' and so on.

Takings the poem is in six 'Cantos'; cashing in on such humorous mock-epic poems in cantos as Byron's *Don Juan*. Like Byron's poem, Gaspey's is a novel in verse, in this case six-line pentameter stanzas, recounting the adventures of a well-meaning young wastrel. Gaspey's story is also reminiscent of features of Pierce Egan's hugely popular *Life in London*, in which one of the protagonists is also a Tom and which had begun serial publication in 1820. Like Egan's Tom, Gaspey's young Tom Takeall is down from Oxford University, ignores his father's advice to settle down, and sets about pursuing fashionable vices such as womanizing and gambling. He loves the virtuous Eliza but consorts with the amorous Delia, and runs off with and attempts to seduce the impressionable Charlotte. His escapades lead to debt and to a duel with Charlotte's brother in which Tom is wounded and carried to a cottage inhabited by none other than the neglected Eliza, who tends his wound but conceals her identity. Back in London and recovered, Tom searches in vain for Eliza and, now penniless, contemplates taking up a profession. He considers highwayman, tradesman, stock jobber and auctioneer, but rejects them as ungenteel. He then considers becoming a lawyer, physician, apothecary and clergyman, but rejects them as too demanding. He settles on highwayman but then catches sight of a gibbet with two hanged felons and turns from that, too. In London, he is instructed by his friend Captain Flykite in ways to make a genteel appearance with little expenditure – an episode that anticipates a similar passage in Gaspey's novel *George Godfrey*. Tom then has a further adventure trying to pawn his watch so he can travel to Margate and seek financial support from some relatives. At Margate, he is shunned, however, and takes up portrait painting to make ends meet. His flattering portrait of a City merchant's wife, Mrs Bosky ('bosky' was slang for 'tipsy'), is a success but she is his only client. Back in London, he helps a drunk Alderman back to his house, thereby gaining a patron and friend from a good deed, and rents a garret and sets about becoming a writer. At length he produces a poem entitled 'The Contest', depicting the debate between the passions and the feelings over which has the pre-eminence in drama; Love wins the contest. Takeall reads the poem to his friends, they praise it and he leaves, but once he has gone they agree in condemn-

ing it. Buoyed by the praise, however, Takeall seeks a publisher, but to no avail. He publishes the poem himself but sells just twenty-five copies, loses money and is thrown in the Fleet prison for debt. In prison, he is urged by his friend Flykite to marry the rich widow Vernal, but declines; he is then made various offers to write for hire something erotic, or in support of atheism, or libelling the king. He refuses them all. In this desperate moment, his father appears, convinced that adversity has taught his son strength of character, and brings the devoted Eliza who, no longer poor, has come to rescue the man she loves. They are married and the narrator of the poem points out that this is where, by convention, he should stop, but he won't and proceeds to tell that nine months after marriage Eliza bears a son. Her female friends urge her to disguise the fact that she has recovered from child-bearing, so that she can enjoy prolonged leisure and being pampered. She follows their advice and her doting husband indulges her because, as the poem's last line puts it, he considers 'women's rights the dearest care of man' (p. 184).

This was a book-making project for the market in elegant and amusing illustrated belles-lettres and Gaspey was not even the star participant, or named on the title page. For Gaspey, such work remained a sideline rather than a higher literary sphere to which he would advance from journalism.

From the 1820s on, Gaspey also published occasional pieces in the *Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction*, a weekly miscellany started in November 1822 and published by J. Limbird. It sold for twopence an issue comprising sixteen pages. Each issue opened with a lead article, ornamented with a half or full page wood engraved illustration, on some factual topic such as a notable country mansion, a historic church, an exotic animal, a foreign custom and so on. There might be other original prose pieces, such as biographical sketches of public figures and so on. There was a section titled 'Spirit of the Public Journals', consisting of extracts from other papers and magazines; a section titled 'The Gatherer', comprising short anecdotes from various sources; a section titled 'The Novelist', which reprinted tales and extracts from fiction of the day; one or more pieces of original poetry, usually humorous; and sometimes a few advertisements of new books. Later there would be sections such as 'The Selector; or, Choice Extracts from New Works'; 'The Topographer', which offered descriptions of various picturesque or historical spots; and an occasional section titled 'The Spirit of the Annuals', which included excerpts from the Christmas season's various annual gift book anthologies of belles-lettres and elegant engraved illustrations. Generally, the *Mirror* was a compilation of reprinted pieces, mostly anecdotal in nature, often humorous or depicting oddities, paradoxes and eccentricities. Its character as a 'mirror' was presumably as a reflection of the times, or at least of the ephemeral publications of the times.

In addition to his journalism and belletristic writings, for most of the 1820s Gaspey devoted his efforts to a rapidly produced succession of novels designed to cash in on current literary trends and topical subjects. All of Gaspey's novels will be treated in more detail later in this introduction. Those of the 1820s included *The Mystery; or, Forty Years Ago* (1820); *Calthorpe; or, Fallen Fortunes* (1821); *The Lollards* (1822); *Other Times; or, The Monks of Leadenhall* (1823); *The Witch-finder* (1824); possibly *Richmond* (1827); and *The History of George Godfrey* (1828). These novels inserted topics of current news interest into popular fictional forms of the day, from the sentimental novel to the historical romance, and had a modest success. The first five were published by the energetic partnership of Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown; the next two by the enterprising and unscrupulous Henry Colburn. These were 'triple-deckers' or in the standard three-volume format of the time and most of the print run would have been purchased for commercial circulating libraries. Such libraries charged readers a subscription and a rental fee per night for each volume borrowed, for at this time novels were considered largely subliterary and ephemeral reading matter and seldom worth purchasing for a private library. Though Gaspey managed to publish seven novels in eight years while carrying on his profession as journalist, he would not return to novel writing for another eight years after publishing *George Godfrey*, when he published *The Self-Condemned*.

In the mid-1820s Gaspey was living at 21 Walnut Tree Walk in Lambeth,[7] south of the Thames and a convenient walk away for a journalist from the Houses of Parliament and the political centre of empire. About this time Gaspey also switched newspapers, leaving the *Morning Post* to work as subeditor on the pro-government *Courier* evening newspaper, which had established itself as an important journal during the Napoleonic wars and was part owned by Daniel Stuart.[8] The *Courier* sold for seven pence and in its format and news coverage resembled the *Morning Post*. The first of its four large pages carried advertisements, perhaps addressing a somewhat more well-to-do readership and market than those of the *Morning Post*. The *Courier*'s advertisements included notices of company meetings and share offers for railways, turnpikes, shipping and so on; charity subscriptions; coach services; public lectures and theatre performances; services of teachers and physicians; household furnishings; wine; lottery tickets; and matrimonial openings. There was also a section of 'Estates for Sale' and such properties as the advowson, or right to appoint the clergyman to a particular parish and its living, or income. There followed advertisements for books 'Published This Day'. The editorial content usually commenced around the middle of the second page with an opinion piece, news from French papers and news from various parts of the United Kingdom. Page three would contain such matter as news from the law courts and country assizes, news of the army, 'Naval Intelligence', extracts from New York papers, an occasional original

poem, 'Ship News', agricultural news, prices of company shares and government stock and of shares in foreign government loans, grain and cattle prices, 'Sporting' news, theatre reviews, news of interesting wills and coroner's inquests and a couple of columns of short news items featuring the odd and alarming. The last page would carry items such as 'Field Sports', fashions, advertisements for stock flotations, 'Public Sales' and auctions, and advertisements for medicines, cures and therapies of various kinds. From 1817 the *Courier* was edited by William Mudford (1782–1848), who was removed in 1828 by Stuart over a difference in the paper's editorial support for the then prime minister, George Canning. In his novels of the early 1820s, Gaspey himself indicates some sympathy for Canning's politics.

In 1828 Gaspey's career took an upward turn when he bought a share in the *Sunday Times* newspaper and went to work there as an editor. The paper had been launched in February 1821 as the *New Observer*, and was renamed the *Sunday Times* in October 1822. Gaspey was credited with being an active editor, increasing the paper's quality by employing well known writers. One was Horace (Horatio) Smith (1779–1849), playwright, parodist and prolific social novelist. Another was the Rev. Thomas Dale, the first professor of English language and literature in England at the new University College, London; Dale was an Evangelical and argued that literature should have a moral purpose and effect. Another was 'Alfred Crowquill', pen name of the brothers Alfred Henry (1804–72) and Charles Robert Forrester (1803–50), the former mainly an illustrator and the latter mainly a novelist. A later contributor was Edward Litt Leman Blanchard (1820–89), editor, journalist and novelist and author of numerous stage pantomimes and farces. There was also Gilbert À Beckett (1811–56), comic writer and police magistrate.

According to business directories of the time, Gaspey seems to have had other investments in these years besides his share in the *Sunday Times*. He may have been partner in a bookselling firm or shop, for in 1831 the partnership of Phillip East and a Thomas Gaspey, booksellers of Tavistock Street, Covent Garden, was dissolved.[9] Gaspey's novels had shown a persistent interest in business and commerce and through his career in journalism Gaspey would by now have been well connected to and knowledgeable about the capital's political and financial networks and so confidently able to invest in London's redevelopment. Gaspey's role in such enterprises could have been to ensure a good press for the projects and advise on steering any necessary enabling legislation or licenses through parliament and the administration.

In 1832 a Thomas Gaspey was one of the directors of the company that had just established a cemetery for London on ground purchased at Kensal Green, north-west of London; London's churches and churchyards had already run out of room to bury the dead.[10] The General Cemetery Company was a mixed group

and included a few characters who could have featured in Gaspey's description of the world of shady finance in his novel *George Godfrey*. As was desirable, chairman of the board of directors was a nobleman, viscount Ingestre, son of Earl Talbot. Deputy Chairman was Sir John Dean Paul (1802–68), described in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* as 'banker and fraudster'; in later years it transpired that he and his bank partners had been systematically stealing from clients since 1816. Other directors besides 'Thomas Gaspey, Esq.' included a naval captain, George Evans, perhaps through some connection with Gaspey's father, who had been a naval lieutenant. Evans was connected to London's powerful system of societies for social philanthropy and control. He was on the committee of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, a subscriber to the Central Committee for Education and, more ominously, one of the guardians of the Strand Union, which managed a number of central London workhouses for the poor and elderly. There was C. Lushington, Esq., probably Charles Lushington, former employee of the East India Company, a political reformist and Member of Parliament. There was James Morison, Esq. (1770–1840), at this time proprietor of the 'College of Health' and the manufacturer and aggressive marketer of health pills that were, however, acquiring a dubious reputation. In 1834, several of Morison's agents were convicted of manslaughter in deaths caused by the pills and Morison and his wife had to flee to France. Perhaps anticipating failure in his business of ostensibly promoting life, Morison wished to invest in the business of death and joined the board of the General Cemetery Company. Somewhat more respectable members of the board were R. W. Siever, Esq. (1794–1865), engraver, scientist and well patronized sculptor of memorial statuary and monuments, and Andrew Spottiswoode, King's printer and MP and an associate of G. F. Carden (1798–1874), lawyer and energetic founder of new cemeteries; in fact, Spottiswoode may have been acting for Carden here. There was Andrew Macklew, an energetic and wealthy gentleman. According to various directories of the time he was the acting secretary of the Royal Asiatic Society, a manager of the Society for the Suppression of Mendicity or public begging, holder of £1000 in East India Co. stock and owner of £4000 in Bank of England shares. There was another military man, Col. A. A. Purchas. There was J. H. Langston, MP for Oxford City, a Fellow of the Statistical Society of London and a director of the Haytor Granite Company, which owned a quarry twenty miles from the city of Exeter – a useful connection for a cemetery company with a constant need for memorial stone. Another MP was Sir Robert Price – as with the Greek loan company described in Gaspey's *George Godfrey*, it was useful to have MPs to add respectability and, more important, help shepherd the enterprise through Parliament and past any government obstacles.

Two years later, in 1836, a Thomas Gaspey was one of the directors of the Holborn Level Company which proposed to build a viaduct connecting Hatton

Garden with Snow Hill, with a capital of £350,000 comprised of 14,000 shares at twenty-five pounds each. Also in 1836 a Thomas Gaspey, Esq., attended a shareholders meeting of the Brighton and London Railway Without a Tunnel company.[11] In 1837, a company for the manufacture of elastic rope and rigger bands used for driving machinery, in which a Thomas Gaspey was a partner, was dissolved.[12] The company had included Robert William Siever, inventor of improvements in power looms and the same man who was on the board of the General Cemetery Company. In 1839, a partnership of R. Willoughby and T. Gaspey, senior, of Tavistock Street, printers, was dissolved, though Gaspey would later publish work with the firm of Willoughby and Co.[13] Later, in 1846, a Thomas Gaspey was one of those thanked by John Martin in his comprehensive 'Thames and Metropolitan Investment Plan', a proposal for disposing of sewage and supplying clean water to London.

If, as seems likely, it was Thomas Gaspey the author who was engaged in some or all of these endeavors as well as working on the *Sunday Times* newspaper, it is understandable that his production of novels underwent a hiatus until the appearance of *The Self-Condemned* in 1836. According to a later obituary of Gaspey, he was at this period editing the evening edition of the *Morning Chronicle* newspaper, where a fellow staffer was Charles Mackay (1812–89), author of *Memoirs of Extraordinary Popular Delusions, and the Madness of Crowds* (1841).[14] In 1836 Gaspey also wrote a 'serious drama' entitled *Bletchington House; or, The Warning Voice* for St James's Theatre, London, though it was never published. A summary appeared in the *London Dispatch* on new year's day, 1837, which stated that the play was 'founded on an event which really took place during the wars between the Cavaliers and Roundheads':

> Colonel Windermere (Saville) is in the interest of the King, and is at the commencement of the piece in command of a place of some strength, which remains faithful to the Royal cause. The Colonel is most desirous of holding out to the last extremity, but is prevailed on, by the entreaties of his wife, Isabel (Miss Alison), to send a flag of truce to the enemy. Most favourable terms are offered by the besiegers, and eagerly accepted by the Colonel. He finds, when too late, that the King's troops were near at hand when the capitulation was signed, and that he is suspected of treason. He is tried and condemned to death. The King, however, only intends going through the forms, for example's sake, and directs that his pardon should be pronounced at the last moment. The waving of a white handkerchief has been appointed as a signal to the soldiers, and by a sad fatality they mistake the paper containing the pardon for the sign agreed on, and fire. Isabel falls dead on receiving the intelligence, and the piece ends.

The reviewer also reported that 'one of the ancient pieces, called "Drolls," was introduced in the course of the piece', and there was a set purportedly representing the Red Bull theatre, recalling Gaspey's references to these points from

theatre history in *The Witch-finder*. The *Dispatch* did not like the play, commenting, 'Nothing but excellent acting could save so meagre a subject as this; but the performers did but little for the piece, and the piece did nothing for itself'. The reviewer found the play 'feebly written', though the author was 'a clever writer, and has written other pieces which succeeded admirably'. On the second night, when the reviewer attended, the audience strongly showed its disapproval.[15]

St James's Theatre, where Gaspey's play was mounted, was new, having been built the year before in King Street in the fashionable district of St James's with a neo-classical front and 1200 seats. Until 1843, theatre licensing legislation restricted presentation in London of the 'legitimate' drama, or full-scale classic and new plays, to two companies. Others, such as St James's, were left to put on variety entertainment which in fact audiences increasingly preferred. These included music, readings, burlesques, magicians and similar diversions, classic plays featuring musical performances, and a form of drama known as the burletta, very diverse in form but usually short and featuring songs. The St James's owner and manager, John Braham (1774–1856), was Jewish and made a point of being known as such, and had a career as a tenor opera star across Europe. He built the theatre for £18,000. His reputation and presence on stage were presumably intended to attract audiences to the new theatre but his voice was past its prime and he had to give up the direction after a few seasons. Had Gaspey's play succeeded this could have been a profitable new line for him. As it was, in the following year, 1837, Gaspey joined the band of contributors to the new *Bentley's Miscellany*, initially edited by Charles Dickens, and published by the enterprising Richard Bentley, publisher of many 'Newgate novels'. The *Miscellany* also published over some years the fiction and essays of another 'Newgate' novelist, Charles Whitehead.

Thomas Gaspey the novelist is sometimes credited with writing the historical notes to *Tallis's London Street Views* (1847). This was a series of ground level front views of important London streets, published in eighty-eight parts, and was essentially an advertising project as large firms paid to have the names of their businesses inserted on the views. The series was revised and augmented in 1847. The modern editor of the *Street Views* asserts, however, that the author of the notes, which 'seem largely to have been a scissors-and-paste job', was 'probably' William Gaspey, 'who certainly wrote the notes for the 1847 edition and was later employed by Tallis for some of his other publications'.[16] One of these was the weekly *Hackney and Stoke Newington* newspaper. In the mid-1850s, however, William Gaspey was confined in a lunatic asylum.[17] Thomas Gaspey was also involved in later publications by Tallis, as was his son, Thomas William Gaspey. Given this apparent family involvement with the Tallis firm, it seems that one or more of the Gaspeys, probably Thomas the elder, had financial as well as authorial connections with the publisher.

According to the 1841 census and the Post Office London Directory of the same year, Gaspey was living at 6 Tavistock Street, near Bedford Square, with his wife Anne; a daughter Louisa, aged twenty and another daughter, Emily, aged fifteen; two women of 'independent means', named Barbara and Maria Willett, both aged forty; a twenty-five year old surgeon named Hugh Houston; and two female servants, Eliza and Emily Lash, aged twenty. Gaspey's Tavistock Street, not to be confused with the street of the same name near Covent Garden, was the western half of what is now Bedford Avenue, south of Bedford Square, off Tottenham Court Road. Gaspey's neighbours were a diverse lot and included the households of a merchant, a military man, several clerks, a dressmaker, the artist William Gill, a naval officer, a grocer, a plate worker, a baker, a draper, the artist George Sayer, a musician, the artist John Higham, two music 'professors', a surveyor, an architect, an engraver, a boot maker and several people of 'independent means'. Off Tavistock Street in Tavistock Mews lived, as might be expected, several coachmen, presumably serving the well-to-do households in Bedford Square, as well as a cab proprietor, a saddle maker, a smith and a fringe maker.

The 1841 census reported Gaspey's profession as 'author' and by this time he may have been well enough situated financially to become more of a man of letters, though tending still toward the popular, the current and the commercial. In 1842 he was recorded as a member of the Camden Society, founded in 1838 and dedicated to publishing editions of important historical manuscripts and scarce early books. For the next decade Gaspey published a succession of literary and historical works; in fact the 1851 census recorded his profession as 'author, writer of history, &c' and the 1871 census recorded his profession as 'historical writer'. In 1842 Gaspey collected many of his published and unpublished prose and verse pieces in *'Many Coloured Life'; or, Tales of Woe and Touches of Mirth*. It was published by Hugh Cunningham, who had started in the trade with John Macrone (1809–37). Macrone was typical of the early nineteenth-century entrepreneurial and swashbuckling publisher. He had had some initial success in emulating the Bentley firm's production of fashionable three-volume novels for commercial circulating libraries but he went on to over-reach himself and died young. Cunningham continued under the Macrone name after the latter's death and then published under his own name. Cunningham took over from Macrone the Newgate novelist William Harrison Ainsworth, publishing several of his novels as well as *Ainsworth's Magazine*. Cunningham specialized in the lighter belles-lettres and published comic sketches by William Makepeace Thackeray and others, a three-volume pseudo-biography of the French bandit Cartouche written by the playwright Charles Brinsley Peake, some volumes of light verse, the newspaper editor James Grant's *Impressions of Ireland and the Irish* (1844), a manual on etiquette 'by a member of the royal household', a manual on fashionable ballroom dances, and similar works. Gaspey's collection of 'tales of woe and

touches of mirth' was characteristic of Cunningham's list. Some of the pieces were republished from over several decades and a variety of more or less ephemeral sources. These included the literary annuals *The Amulet*, the *Winter's Wreath* and the *Poetical Album*; light literary periodicals such as *The Literary Gazette*, the *Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction* and the *Library of Fiction; or, Family Story-Teller*, edited by Charles Whitehead; more upmarket periodicals such as *Fraser's Magazine* and *Bentley's Miscellany*; and book anthologies such as Richard Dagley's *Death's Doings: Consisting of Numerous Original Compositions in Verse and Prose* (London: J. Andrews and W. Cole, 1827).

In his early novels, Gaspey had combined fiction and history and at this point in his career he took up historiography as such, though still with a popular and commercial aim. His first excursion into history writing was with George Moir Bussey, an energetic adapter and reviser of popular books, both in his own right and with others. At the time of his collaboration with Gaspey, Bussey had already produced an anthology entitled *Tints of Talent: From Many Pencils* (1837); a popular version of *The Arabian Nights* (1839) from Edward Forster's version; a collection of *Fables, Original and Selected* with J. J. Grandville (1839); a *History of Napoleon* (1840); and a version (1841) of Oliver Goldsmith's popular eighteenth-century sentimental classic novel, *The Vicar of Wakefield*. Bussey would go on to publish a collection of *Bible Stories* (1850) and an adaptation of Oliver Goldsmith's *Natural History* (1852). Together, Gaspey and Bussey produced *The Pictorial History of France and of the French People: From the Establishment of the Franks in Gaul, to the Period of the French Revolution*, published in two volumes in 1843 with London firm of W. S. Orr. The volumes were embellished with seventy-four illustrated plates and 'enriched with four hundred designs by Jules David'. In fact, as Bussey and Gaspey's Preface acknowledges, the work is a translation and adaptation of 'Theodore Burette's Pictorial History of France', actually the *Histoire de France depuis l'établissement des Francs dans la Gaule jusqu'en 1830,* (2 vols 1840) by Théodose (not Theodore) Burette and Victor Joseph Chevin, which also had 400 designs by Jules David. This book was in turn based on Louis-Pierre Anquetil and Théodose Burette's *Histoire de France depuis les Gaulois jusqu'à la mort de Louis XVI* (1837–8) which covers the same period as Bussey and Gaspey's book. The close connection between the French and English productions, especially the illustrations, indicates a cross-Channel collaboration in book-making. Both the French and English productions, too, were a combination of coffee-table book and history text for young readers – an earlier version of the *Histoire de France* advertised itself as '*à l'usage des colleges et des gens du monde*' – 'for the use of colleges and fashionable society'. With *The Pictorial History of France* Gaspey was less a historiographer than an adapter.

He continued with the firm of Cunningham, however, who was now in partnership with Mortimer and published *The Life and Times of the Good Lord*

Cobham, (2 vols 1843), a biography of one of the principal figures in Gaspey's earlier historical romance, *The Lollards*. Gaspey's interest in this historical precursor of the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation indicates a certain dedication to the established Church of England, which issued from the Reformation. This church was under attack in Gaspey's day, as many thought, from Protestant Dissenters, or those who chose to remain outside the established church, on the one hand, and from Roman Catholics on the other. Cobham was not a religious, ecclesiastical, or theological hard-liner, however, and Gaspey's own position on the 'church in danger' seems to have been moderate, with a willingness to concede to Protestant Dissenters and Catholics just as much as necessary in order to maintain national unity and social stability.

With *Glory: A Tale of Morals Drawn from History* (1844) Gaspey turned to the field of writing for children or youth – another major field of book-making. The book was part of the series 'Young England's Little Library', described in an earlier advertisement as 'A Batch of Christmas, New year, and Birthday Gift-Books, for Children',[18] from the firm of W. S. Orr and Co. The firm published a wide array of educational books, a number of instructional and utilitarian periodicals, manuals for various applied arts, popularizations of subjects such as psychology, reprints of popular classics in the belles-lettres, anthologies of light literature, novels by Charles Lever, and humour. *Glory* deals with one of Gaspey's recurring topics – the horrors of war. It recounts M. Le Blanc's attempt to cure his son Philip of belief in the 'glory' of war, exemplified in the career of Napoleon, by calling on his friend, former sergeant Louis Fitz-James, to tell his war experiences. Fitz-James recalls the horrors of the siege and capture of Badajoz in Spain by the British during the Napoleonic wars and hardly spares the details of the pillage and rape that went on in the town for days afterward. Philip is shocked, but persists in his idea of national 'honour', to which his father responds:

> 'A great nation, where all the useful arts are successfully cultivated, has more to gain from science than from battles. War, at the end of a quarter of a century, left France weak and humbled; peace, during a quarter of a century, has rendered her mighty, and placed her among the greatest nations of the earth.'[19]

Fitz-James then refers to the resistance of the Spanish guerillas, which Le Blanc considers to be true glory because it is motivated by patriotism. Fitz-James goes on to recount the even worse horrors of the campaign in Russia and the retreat from Moscow, during which he witnessed one heroic deed, when a soldier pulled a boy from the freezing river; this, Le Blanc comments, is again true glory. The story closes with Philip agreeing with his father and friend on the evils of war.

Five years later Gaspey published a last work of fiction. This was *The Dream of Human Life*, published from 1849 to 1852 in twenty serial parts of forty-eight pages each, in bright green paper covers, each part accompanied by an engraved

illustration. It was published by the firm of John and Frederic Tallis, with whom Gaspey may have had a financial connection. The first part of the novel was given free with the last part of Sarah Stickney Ellis's serial work, *Social Distinction; or, Hearts and Homes* (1848–9).[20] In accordance with the Tallises' distribution method at this time, *The Dream of Human Life* would have been sold to subscribers, probably including commercial circulating libraries, by door-to-door salesmen across Britain and Ireland and possibly the United States. Presumably the Tallises aimed to promote Gaspey's novel using the subscription list for Ellis's to start off. The Tallises' most promoted works at this time were an atlas, a history of Ireland and a history of the British colonies, all in serial parts, and a *Dramatic Magazine*, but they also sold a small number of serialized fictional works.

In 1852 Gaspey published *The History of Smithfield*, a short book exhibiting his long-standing interest in London and its history; this had earlier been published serially in the *People's Magazine*. The publisher of the book was Willoughby and Co., likely connected with the R. Willoughby whose printing partnership with Gaspey was dissolved in 1837. Willoughby was associated in some publications with the Tallises. Together, these associations suggest that Gaspey may have had a financial as well as authorial involvement with the two firms. The firm of Willoughby and Co. produced a variety of entertaining and instructional books in the 1840s and 1850s. These included reprint translations of Alain René Lesage's popular picaresque rogue novels *Asmodeus: The Devil on Two Sticks* (1840) and *Adventures of Gil Blas* (1841). They also published *Heads of the People; or, Portraits of the English* (1841–2), illustrated by Joseph Kenny Meadows and written by a number of people, including the 'Newgate novelist' Charles Whitehead. They published William Gaspey's humorous *The Physiology of 'Muffs'* (1840s); *Coombe Abbey* (1843), a historical romance by the prolific Selina Bunbury; *The Child's Fairy Book* (1845); John Francis's *History of the Bank of England* (1845); Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*; and periodicals such as *The Juvenile Museum of Entertainment and Instruction* and *People's and Howitt's Journal*.

In the same year as his *History of Smithfield*, Gaspey contributed the section on the political life of the Duke of Wellington to another publishing venture, *The History of England; Continued from the Reign of George the Third, and Comprehending the Restoration of the Empire in France, the Great Exhibition of the Industry of all Nations, and the Death of the Duke of Wellington,* (4 vols, 1852). Though commercial rather than scholarly, the work continued to show up in sales of gentlemen's libraries through the 1860s and 1870s. The work was a continuation of David Hume's eighteenth-century *History of England* and was issued by the London Printing and Publishing Co., a firm that, like J. and F. Tallis, published on both sides of the Atlantic. In fact, there was some commercial connection between these two firms. The list of the London Printing and Publishing Co. included a few long established popular classics such as *The Pilgrim's*

Progress and Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, and the odd sentimental romance such as *The Gipsey Girl; or, The Heir of Hazel Dell* but they specialized in large illustrated books such as *The Complete Works* of William Hogarth, *The Cartoons of Raphael*, the *Family Devotional Bible*, James Orchard Halliwell-Phillips's *Complete Works of Shakespeare*, a new edition of *Tallis's Illustrated London*, an account of the Crimean War and picture books on the Indian and Chinese empires.

By this time Gaspey was in his sixties and had become a suburbanite, living at 4 Ordnance Terrace, Shooter's Hill, Woolwich. Woolwich was then home to a large naval dockyard and arsenal and a military college. According to the 1851 census returns, Gaspey's household included his wife Anne; two 'visitors', Emily Carr and Annie Wilson; and a young housemaid, Susannah Higgs, aged nineteen. Gaspey's neighbours in Ordnance Terrace were, at number 1, the family of John Morton, 'clerk to the market, stock exchange'; at number 2, two married house servants and at number 3, the family of John Francis, clerk in the Bank of England. Nearby, in Woolwich Common, were a number of military quarters housing officers and their families and others associated with the military college, and the large household of John Parker Home, 'fundholder', or person with investments in government stock, with nine servants. Nearby the other way, in the more crowded Ordnance Place, were three households of brick makers, three of Chelsea pensioners, two of grocers, two of gunners in the artillery and the households of a groom, a sawyer, a gunner in the horse artillery, a builder and sawyer and a journeyman carpenter. The census recorded Gaspey as 'author, writer of history', a profession that in status could be located alongside that of men working in the world of finance (in which he himself seems to have been heavily involved) and between the worlds of the stockholder of Woolwich Common on the one hand and on the other the artisans, military and small business people of Ordnance Place.

Gaspey was by now a well established literary man, so much so that, when a dispute led by Charles Dickens and his friends broke out in the Royal Literary Fund, as to whether only authors should be proposed for election as the Fund's officers, Gaspey was nominated to the Council on both the establishment list and the opposing, Dickens, list.[21] Gaspey went on to other writing and publishing ventures. In 1856 a series of monthly volumes at two pence each entitled the *Companion Library* was advertised, published by Henry Lea. The first volume was to be *Ivan the Immured* by 'Thomas Gaspey, Esq.', originally published serially in the *People's Journal* in 1848 as *Ivan; or, The Immured*;[22] it was to be followed in the series by other works earlier serialized in the *People's Journal*, including a translation of Heinrich Zschokke's *Jonathan Frock*, John Saunders's *The Autobiography of a Thief*, Isabel Munro's *Rose Linwood* and George Sand's *Little Fadette*.[23] The Companion Library may not have been published, however, as no such editions can be traced. Two years later Lea republished Gaspey's earlier novel *Other Times* and in

1858 his *The Witch-finder*. The *People's Journal* was published by Willoughby and Co., with whom Gaspey had other literary and possibly financial connections, and the magazine also published work by William Gaspey.

The 1861 census returns for his area of Woolwich were lost but in the 1871 returns Gaspey was still at 4 Ordnance Terrace with his wife Anne, his granddaughter Lucy Lane (child of Gaspey's daughter Louisa) and a 'general servant', Caroline Bardwell, aged twenty-nine. Lucy Lane was described in the census as 'magazine writer', aged twenty-three (in fact she was twenty-five); as Lucy Clifford (1846–1929), she became a writer herself, and in her novel *A Flash of Summer* (1894) incorporated her childhood memories of Shooter's Hill. Gaspey died 8 December 1871 and was buried nearby at Plumstead, Kent. His death was reported in brief notices across England and Ireland. His estate was worth less than £300 and in 1875 his wife had to apply to the Royal Literary Fund for relief. She died 22 January 1883. The Gaspeys' son Thomas William obtained a PhD from Heidelberg university, directed an 'English Institution for Young Gentlemen' there, wrote books on English for Germans, translated German books, and wrote books on the Rhine and Heidelberg; he died in 1871. He is often confused with his father in library catalogues and bibliographies. Another son, William, who died in 1888, was also a writer. Gaspey's fame, such as it was, was not lasting: in 1884 Charles Mackay, who had once worked with Gaspey on the *Morning Chronicle*, remarked in an anecdote about him that his 'many novels are now completely forgotten'.[24]

Thomas Gaspey's Novels: The Novelist as Journalist

This introduction to Thomas Gaspey's novels aims to illustrate their major features, apart from the two included in this series of *Newgate Narratives – Richmond* (Volume 2) and *George Godfrey* (Volume 3) – which are examined in the introductions to those texts. The major feature of all of Gaspey's novels, however, is their merging of news of the day and popular novel forms. Thomas Gaspey was a capable and adventurous writer in a wide range of forms – poetry, drama, historiography, journalism, essays and of course fiction, but it could be said that as a novelist he was a good journalist. His novels, regardless of the times and places in which they are set, merge certain kinds of traditional and current fictional genres, such as the picaresque romance, the sentimental novel based on the form of romantic comedy, the mystery of identity novel, the novel of self-fashioning or novel of education and the historical romance. These incorporate certain kinds of non-fiction, such as travel literature, antiquarian researches and history, but especially issues of the day as they appeared in the newspapers Gaspey wrote for and edited. Gaspey's novels were addressed to the kind of readership who bought those same newspapers. As a practitioner of the belles-lettres, Gaspey

would have been familiar with novelistic forms popular at the time; as a well connected professional journalist and editor in the capital of empire when the United Kingdom had just become the world superpower, he would have been familiar with national, imperial, and global issues of the day.

His first novel, *The Mystery; or, Forty Years Ago* (3 vols, 1820) clearly sets the pattern. It takes a stock sentimental novel form based on romantic comedy, or story of mysterious parentage and obstructed courtship ending happily, and fills it with some discussion of and satire on current issues of abuse and fraud, with a large chunk of fictionalized travel literature dealing with Britain's position in West Africa.

The Mystery is in third-person narration and opens with Sir George Henderson and his young protégé, Charles Harley, of uncertain parentage – hence the novel's title – at Sir George's country estate. In chapter 3, Sir George and Harley discuss issues of the day, around 1780, and in particular Britain's Indian empire, though of course this issue had new relevance in 1820. Sir George declares himself a supporter of Britain's role in India as one of protecting its peoples from each other; he deplores the way imperial power corrupts colonial administrators, making them oppressors in turn; and he foresees some future administrator seizing power and establishing a personal tyranny, but feels that Britain is secure with its constitution. In London, Sir George and Harley get caught up in the Gordon anti-Catholic riots, during which Newgate prison was burned, and have a close call with the rioters. This episode precipitates a discussion deploring religious fanaticism and mob psychology. Harley feels that Sir George has a special interest in him but when he asks Sir George for the hand of the latter's daughter, Amelia, he is refused, and he decides to seek a naval posting. After some encounters with cheats and fraudsters, including the dishonest funeral director, Mr Shovelem, Harley is assigned to a ship sailing for the Gambia, in West Africa. In volume 2, Harley has arrived at the Gambia, where he is befriended by a Major Houghton, based on a historical character. He hears that his parents have died in India, leaving him wealthy and free to woo Amelia, and learns from Houghton of the cruelties practised by the local governor, Wall. While on a naval expedition, Harley is forced by the appearance of a French frigate to flee inland; meanwhile, back in London Amelia and her father hear that Harley has been lost. The rest of volume 2 and half of volume 3 recount Harley's numerous adventures and narrow escapes in the hinterland of West Africa, including his encounter with a fanatical missionary named Smithers, who dies miserably rather than compromise his objective. Back in England Sir George and Amelia are overjoyed when Harley, whom they believed dead, suddenly reappears, but Sir George indicates that, because of Harley's birth, 'Amelia never can be yours'. It seems Sir George believes that Harley is his own illegitimate son, but when this 'mystery' turns out to be untrue, the romance resolution quickly imposes the happy ending.

As may be seen from this summary, Gaspey the journalist used *The Mystery* to editorialize on a number of topics. These include administration of India, political reform, Catholic emancipation or the extension to Catholics of certain civil rights hitherto denied them, the 'Irish question' and the danger of popular or 'mob' violence. In addition, *The Mystery* also deals satirically with a variety of smaller-scale cheating and fraud – to become an important topic in Gaspey's Newgate novels, *Richmond* and *George Godfrey*. These topics are related in various ways through the broad issue of reform – political, institutional, social and moral. Gaspey may have had a personal connection with India, since his father, a naval lieutenant, may have served there, and Gaspey seems to have had business connections with officers or former officers of the East India Company. Publicly, India was much discussed through the 1810s, after consolidation of British power there under the governor, the earl of Mornington (later Wellesley). In 1813 a new charter was imposed on the East India Company subjecting it to the power of the Crown, or United Kingdom government, withdrawing most of the Company's trade monopoly, and opening India to foreign missionaries. Political reform, which often attracted large public demonstrations of support and even instances of violence, encompassed a wide range of issues at the time. One of these issues was the East India Company and colonial administration more generally, which was seen by many as part of a vicious circle of political patronage and corruption, in which profitable colonial positions were obtained by favouritism or bribery and then abused to enrich the office-holder, who contributed further to the system of corruption back in Britain when, after his return, he used his ill-gotten riches to buy social position and political influence. Reform also encompassed the issue of Catholic emancipation, which was linked to the Irish question because the majority of Irish were Catholics. The Irish and British parliaments had been joined by the Union of 1800, but social and political instability persisted in Ireland, where the Catholic peasantry protested their exploitation by participating in economic violence and even open revolt, and parts of the Protestant minority practised a form of terrorism against Catholics to maintain their own ascendancy. Catholic emancipation was highly contentious and divisive in public opinion and among the political class, and only began to achieve parliamentary resolution in the late 1820s. Furthermore, the public debate in Britain on its empire often linked India and Ireland, Britain's oldest and newest colonies, each with an indigenous population with history, culture, religion and language different from those of Britain itself.

It may be that Gaspey originally planned to make India both the main setting of his hero's adventures and the major journalistic theme of his novel, but switched locales when West Africa became topical in the late 1810s, for almost half of *The Mystery* is set there. In the Preface to his next novel, *Calthorpe* (1821), Gaspey confessed, 'It was by many thought that a Preface ought to have been

given with the former novel, to state that many of its details were not fictitious'.[25] In its entirety, *The Mystery* is a fictionalized version of events and relationships in the life of the Scottish explorer Mungo Park (1771–1806), and also adapts many details from Park's *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa . . . in the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797* (1799), one of the most popular books of exploration of the time. Park had followed and gathered details of the unfortunate expedition of Daniel Houghton (1740–91), who set out in 1790 to reach Timbuktu from the coast but perished in the attempt; Gaspey's hero meets Houghton when he first arrives at the Gambia. Another possible inspiration was *The Narrative of Robert Adams* (1816), an American sailor wrecked on the coast of Africa and held captive by desert Arabs for three years, but Park's narrative was Gaspey's main source. Park had explored the same terrain of the Gambia and Senegal rivers in West Africa that is traversed by Gaspey's fictional hero, but had died on a second voyage on the Niger. Like Park, Gaspey's Harley has a patron, though a landed gentleman rather than a surgeon, and named Henderson rather than Anderson; he falls in love with his patron's daughter, named Amelia rather than Allison; he joins the navy, though as a lieutenant rather than as a surgeon; and marries his sweetheart after an adventurous voyage, though to West Africa rather than to the East Indies. Harley, like Park, does explore the interior of West Africa, and many of Harley's adventures are drawn from Park's *Travels*, including his solitary wandering, his variety of temporary companions, his destitution and thirst, his stays with or confinement by various African tribes he encounters, his courage and inventiveness. In going to a travelogue for material Gaspey was mining the second most widely-read form of book at that time. Travels and novels had long been in constant dialogue, borrowing from and enriching each other.

In 1820, Park's *Travels* and West Africa also had renewed topicality, which Gaspey and his publisher clearly intended to exploit, for according to the *Monthly Review* the novel was advertised 'as containing matters of fact in the particulars relative to Africa and to Major Houghton'.[26] In the years between Park's death and Gaspey's novel, public interest in West Africa in general and the Gambia in particular had intensified for several reasons. The abolition of the slave trade in 1807 and Britain's defeat of Napoleonic France had left the United Kingdom to police the seas and stop the illicit trade in slaves, of which West Africa was the main source. Forts established at the mouth of the Gambia were to be a base for such policing. At the same time, there was increasing commercial interest in developing and exploiting free labour and other economic resources of the region, both as an end in itself and in order to palliate concerns that abolition of British participation in the slave trade, and even more so abolition of slavery itself, would harm British home and colonial economic interests. As Robert Thorpe declared in *A View of the Present Increase of the Slave Trade* (1818), 'Surely every true British breast will glow with delight at the termination

of slavery in British territory' – slavery, as distinct from the slave trade, was not abolished until 1833 – 'while the colonies themselves will become renovated, from this mode of its termination'; and, Thorpe pointed out, 'We have already one settlement in the Gambia, one at Sierra Leone, and eight on the Gold Coast, from each and all of which free labourers might be procured'.[27] There was at the same time increasing interest in the region and in Africa generally by missionary societies in Britain and the United States, despite accounts of the hardships and suffering experienced by missionaries who had already ventured there. The American Colonization Society was promoting creation of a colony for freed African-American slaves in West Africa, established in 1821 as Liberia. In addition, after the defeat of Napoleon, Britain returned to France its interest in a station in West Africa at the mouth of the Senegal river, and in 1816 the French government had sent Gaspard-Théodore Mollien (1796–1872) to explore the Senegal river and the interior; he returned in 1818 to national rejoicing in France and great interest and perhaps concern in Britain: his account of the voyage, published in 1820, was immediately translated into English.

The Mystery was sold in three volumes for the relatively high price of a guinea (£1/1/–, or about £71 in 2005 using the retail price index). Most of the print run would of course have gone to commercial circulating libraries who rented 'books of the day' to those who could afford the quarterly or annual subscription plus the rental per volume per night – few novels were considered artistically worth purchasing to keep. The publisher was the very active partnership of Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown – the same firm that published Robert Thorpe's *A View of the Present Increase of the Slave Trade*. Gaspey was well positioned to know that this was an appropriate publisher for a book combining sentimental fiction, travelogue and issues of the day. The firm's list over the decade centred on 1820 included a great deal of travels, as well as history, public affairs (national debt, the Catholic question, and so on), science and technology, biography and autobiography and the public affairs serial the *Annual Register*. The Longman consortium also published a good deal of both the new Romantic literature and more mainstream popular forms. These included the poets William Wordsworth, Thomas Moore and Robert Southey; the London editions of the novels of the enormously popular Walter Scott and the relatively obscure but innovative James Hogg; novels by Byron's friend John Polidori, the eccentric Sir Egerton Brydges, and R. C. Dallas; and many women, including the historical novelist Christian Isabel Johnstone, the sister historical romancers Jane and Anna Maria Porter, the respected domestic novelist Amelia Opie, moral and sentimental novelists such as Mrs Ross, Adelaide O'Keeffe, and Ann Raikes Harding, and new editions of the Gothic pioneer Ann Radcliffe. In addition, there was Thomas Bowdler's *Family Shakespeare*, or Shakespeare purged of bawdry and rendered 'suitable' for the home reading circle, and some of the leading

writers of moral fiction and instruction for 'youth', including Barbara Hofland, Elizabeth Helme, Eliza Fenwick and Elizabeth Sibthorpe Pinchard. Gaspey's *The Mystery*, with its fusion of familiar forms and topical issues, would seem at home in such a list but for the fact that the majority of the novelists there were women and, despite the success of Walter Scott and the artistic innovations of other male novelists, novel-writing was still not considered serious literary work for a man. Perhaps for this reason, among others, Gaspey, like Scott, kept his name off the title page of his novel.

The Mystery was fairly well received by its few reviewers, in view of the fact that it was a first novel. The fashionable miscellany magazine *La Belle Assemblée* found it an 'amusing, interesting, though not faultless novel', 'well told' though 'needlessly spun out' and too heavy on the travel narrative.[28] The *Monthly Review*, too, disliked the African adventures and thought the 'mystery' disclosed at the end was 'revolting', but thought the Gordon Riots were well described and that the work showed 'some talent'.[29]

Undaunted by this tepid reception, Gaspey ploughed on. *Calthorpe; or, Fallen Fortunes* (1822) was published less than a year after *The Mystery*. Gaspey tried to change publishers, to the more prestigious John Murray, who was also a major publisher of travel literature and of leading Romantic writers, such as Byron. Gaspey may also have felt that the Longman partnership's fiction list, dominated by women writers, was not suitable company for his work. Gaspey employed his friend and fellow journalist William Jerdan as agent in this attempted move but after a long delay withdrew the work from Murray and published once again with the Longman partnership.[30] *Calthorpe* is a complex novel, with several plots, many characters and numerous incidents. As the subtitle suggests, it is about social class in relation to property. It is set in the period just before the defeat of Napoleon at the battle of Leipzig in October 1813, the beginning of the end of the French Emperor; and just as *The Mystery* had its section on West Africa borrowed from travelogue, so the middle third of *Calthorpe* takes place in Germany over much of Greater Saxony, between Hamburg, Leipzig and Berlin. This novel, too, could have been titled *Mystery*, or *Mysteries*, for there are many, they persist through most of the novel, and the actual relationships and identities of characters are not disclosed until near the end.

The novel opens with the discussion between lawyer Burleigh and his son Henry about a case the elder Burleigh has just won in court, which resulted in the ruin of the claimant. To prepare his son for a career, Burleigh places him for training with an apparently successful self-made merchant, Hanson, who turns out to be a dishonest and snobbish social climber who tries to use Henry for his own ambition. Disillusioned, Henry is befriended by another of Hanson's employees, the cynical Pierrepoint. Meanwhile, Sir James Denville, apparently a cultivated gentleman, woos Henry's sister Harriet but is rebuffed. Henry is

alarmed by an account of an attempted abduction of his sister, thwarted by a stranger who eventually turns out to have been Pierrepoint. Then news arrives that Henry's father appears to have killed himself in anticipation of disclosure of some crime, and his property has been confiscated. Henry's uncle Lord Burleigh offers to get him a post at Sierra Leone in West Africa but Henry declines on grounds that the colony is governed tyrannically. Disgusted with the Hansons and wishing to support and protect his sister and mother, Henry determines to seek his fortune in Canada, but a virtuous shoemaker, Kendal, gets him a place with a commercial house at Hamburg in Germany. On the voyage there, Henry meets a merchant, Brinkman, and when the firm at Hamburg turns out to have been destroyed in a fire, he decides to accompany the man and his daughter Louisa to Berlin. Meanwhile, a complicated series of events are unfolding back in England, involving Pierrepoint, Henry's sister Harriet, her abductor Denville, and the mysterious Calthorpe, who has some secret power over Denville. The story returns to Henry and the Brinkmans, who have traveled to Leipzig and become caught up in the confusion before and after the great battle there. At this time, Brinkman reveals that years earlier he was rejected as a suitor by Henry's mother because of his supposed involvement in dark deeds during the French Revolution; he also reveals that Henry's father was murdered. The action then turns to Harriet, imprisoned in a tower by Denville, who intends to rape her. The action turns again, to Pierrepoint, who has some papers that Calthorpe and Denville desperately want, but Calthorpe dies before the reason can be revealed. Back to Harriet, who is about to be raped by Denville when Pierrepoint suddenly appears and rescues her; back to Henry, who is sent to England by Brinkman to ruin a scoundrel: it transpires that Denville murdered Henry's father and then tried to kill Brinkman. Denville manages to get Pierrepoint falsely imprisoned for debt, but he is freed and suddenly appears to prove that he and Denville were exchanged at birth by Calthorpe for his own interest and that Pierrepoint is the real inheritor of the Denville estate. With this startling disclosure, the plot is rapidly wound up: Denville-Calthorpe is condemned for murder, Henry recovers his property and has his father's remains finally buried in consecrated ground, Brinkman, having seen justice done, dies, Pierrepoint-Denville and Harriet are wed and Henry hopes that in time Louisa will lose her shame over her father's crimes and marry him.

Once again Gaspey has taken the framework of the late eighteenth-century sentimental novel, or romantic comedy and filled it, if less obviously than in *The Mystery*, with material of current public interest. In this case, the issue was the annexation by Prussia of parts of Saxony in 1816, after the fall of Napoleon, with whom Saxony had been allied at the battle of Leipzig. By 1820, many thought that this annexation had in turn caused an economic depression in British manu-

facturing towns, with resulting social distress and political disturbances. As the Earl of Stanhope declared in a speech to the House of Lords in that year:

> . . . the continental commerce of this country has received a deadly wound, by the consequence of an event which I always reprobated as unjust, which I always regretted as injurious to our interests—the annexation to Prussia of part of the Saxon dominions. . . . The cessions of territory which were made by Saxony, have nearly surrounded Leipzig with the Prussian frontiers, over which no goods are allowed to pass without paying heavy transit duties; such, I am informed, as amount almost to a prohibition . . . . It must have been known, that the heart of British commerce on the Continent was at Leipzig, from whence, through various streams and channels, the produce of British industry was carried, not only over the greatest part of Germany, but over many of the neighbouring countries.[31]

This issue does not come directly into Gaspey's novel, which merely uses the region as a background during the period that set the stage for the economic dislocations felt by the time the novel was published.

The Lollards: A Tale, Founded on the Persecutions which Marked the Early Part of the Fifteenth Century was published in spring 1822, just over a year after *Calthorpe*. If it took a little more time to produce than its predecessor, this may have been because Gaspey laboured on it more, assembling a wide range of historical and antiquarian information. Though this novel, too, is built around major contemporary issues, it takes a somewhat different form, that of the historical romance, merging the news with antiquarianism. It narrates the adventures of a number of historical and fictitious characters during the second decade of the fifteenth century from just after the accession of Henry V (1386/7–1422) to the throne of England in 1413 to the peace negotiations between France and England in 1419. The novel opens with the imprisonment of the historic character Sir John Oldcastle, known as lord Cobham, for his Lollard views – an early form of Protestantism based on the teachings of John Wyclif (also other spellings; died 1384). Cobham escapes, to popular rejoicing and the rage of Henry V and the archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Arundel (1353–1414). Cobham seeks refuge with his old friend, Sir Thomas Venables, whose daughter Matilda loves Cobham's son, Edward. Venables shelters Edward and Cobham's daughter Alice while Cobham hides out in a cottage on the Welsh borders. The timid Venables is leery of Cobham's Lollardy, however, and Matilda is designed by her aunt, Lady Mary Walworth, for Octavius, son of the impoverished Earl Powis (based loosely on Edward Charlton, Baron Powys, 1370–1421). Arundel's successor as archbishop of Canterbury, Henry Chichely (or Chichele, 1364–1443) urges the king to war with France, and Octavius goes off to seek glory. Edward and Alice seek refuge with their father's friend Whittington, brother of the famous Sir Richard Whittington (*c.*1350–1423), merchant and Lord Mayor of London, while the Bohemian reformer John (or Jan) Huss (*c.*1370–1415) arrives to meet

Cobham and collect Wycliff's writings to take back to Prague. While seeking Cobham, the party encounter an assassin for hire, Roderick of the Red-hand, and some outlaws, but get away. Cobham and Huss discuss contemporary affairs and Edward and Alice then accompany Huss to Prague, for greater safety. Once there, Edward is introduced to the still secret art of printing – in fact, a historical anachronism – while one of Huss's followers, the French nobleman de Marle, falls in love with Alice. Huss is then summoned to the church council at Constance (1414–18), convened to adjudicate the claims of two rival popes. The council's adjudication is set forth at length and attention then turns to Huss. Though given safe passage by the Holy Roman Emperor, Sigismund (1368–1437), Huss is imprisoned, tricked into expressing his criticisms of the church, and then arraigned as a heretic.

Volume 2 opens with three chapters on the trial and execution of Huss, described in horrific detail and emphasizing Huss's dignity, pious resignation and heroism. The novel then turns to Edward in England, where he is distributing copies of the English Bible to Lollards. With Whittington in London, Edward witnesses various events and ceremonies, fully described in antiquarian detail by the narrator. Disguised as an astrologer-physician, Edward gains access to Matilda and urges her to fly with him; they are surprised by her father, Sir Thomas, however, and Matilda shelters in a convent. The novel now turns to Alice, protected by one of Huss's followers after the reformer's death, but she is separated from him and travels disguised as a youth, Florio. While travelling to England, she becomes lost, and encounters de Marle, who is on his way to join the French army on the eve of the battle of Agincourt and who perhaps discovers her female identity, but who leaves her in the protection of his general's wife Madame D'Aumont. So effective is Alice's male disguise that Madame D'Aumont becomes infatuated with 'Florio' and proposes an illicit relationship. Alice flees, encountering the retreating remnants of the defeated French army and traversing the horrors of the aftermath of battle. She meets Huss's follower de Marle, who has been rescued from among the wounded by Octavius, and they retreat to de Marle's mansion. Here Octavius proposes to 'Florio' that they seduce some nuns, whereupon Octavius discloses that he knows Florio is a woman and advances on her. She reveals she is Cobham's daughter, however, and Octavius is thunderstruck into respectfulness. The novel turns for a chapter to Edward, recounting his further adventures in London, the English victory celebrations and his condemnation of war, before returning to Alice. The winter passes, and the English again prepare to invade France. The volume closes with news that Cobham has been betrayed by Earl Powis for money, horrifying, shaming and alienating his son Octavius.

The final volume opens with a retrospective account of Cobham's capture, despite stout resistance, by Powis and Roderick of the Red-hand; the episode is

based on a historical event in 1417. The scene then shifts to London, where the dying Sir Thomas Venables extracts a promise from his daughter Matilda that she will not marry without the consent of Chichely, the archbishop of Canterbury, and where Edward confronts Chichely to defend his father against the charge of heresy. When Chichely haughtily asks what Cobham considers true religion, Edward replies, 'He taught that humble carriage before men, that gratitude to heaven for blessings proved, and resignation under hard affliction, deserved that name; but chiefly did he contend for peace and amity between man and man, convinced that love of God was best evinced by kindness to his creatures'.[32] Edward's arguments are fruitless and Cobham's execution is described, again in horrific detail. Edward himself is arrested for sorcery, for circulating identical copies of the same book, supposedly only possible with the devil's aid, and judgment is about to be passed when Octavius appears with an order from king Henry summoning Edward to France. The novel now enters its last movement. Edward and Octavius go to France, having changed clothing to keep the English crowds from mobbing Edward as son of their beloved Cobham; Matilda and Alice follow. In France, Octavius is stabbed by an assassin, pretending to be a guide, who is himself wounded by Edward and escapes. Matilda and Alice encounter Madame D'Aumont, who apologizes for her approaches to 'Florio' and who tells them Edward is dying. When they catch up with Edward and Octavius, however, the young women find that it is Octavius who is dying, and comfort him in his last moments. Edward leaves to attend the king, but Earl Powis appears and accuses Edward of murdering his son. The party proceeds to the meeting place of the French and English, who are negotiating a peace, but as they arrive Powis reaches them and accuses Edward of murder before King Henry. Edward is about to be condemned when Madame D'Aumont arrives with the real murderer, Roderick of the Red-hand, who has confessed his crime. When Powis learns that his own agent murdered his son, he loses his mind. Still facing the charge of sorcery, Edward is exonerated when de Marle appears with an account of a meeting he overheard in Prague, when Edward was instructed in the secret art of printing. Convinced that the identical books have been produced mechanically rather than diabolically, King Henry doubts that such a powerful device 'can be discreetly entrusted to the common sort'.[33] Edward is absolved, Chichely grants Matilda permission to marry him, and de Marle and Alice are wed at the same time. The novel closes with the observation, 'De Marle was still a catholic, Alice remained a protestant, but each animated by the sacred love of virtue, found no bar to its unrestricted exercise in the forms prescribed by the religion of the other.'

Although Gaspey's first novel, *The Mystery*, was set in the past, or as its subtitle states, 'forty years ago', with *The Lollards* Gaspey went back four centuries, engaging fully with one of the most popular, influential, characteristic and

controversial novel forms in the 1820s, the historical Romance. As the novel's subtitle indicates, it is 'founded on the persecutions which marked the early part of the fifteenth century', and as its title makes clear, it deals with the period of 'Lollardy', a late fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century English movement for church reform among clergy and laypeople. The novel's Preface positions the work in the relatively new genre of historical romance and in relation to the main issues in the debate on this recently developed form. These include the balance between historical fact and fiction, the 'correctness' of the historical information and representations, whether historical fiction debases history and historiography or renders them more accessible and attractive and hence useful, the relation between the novels' narratives and the historical sources used, the tendency to lard historical romances with antiquarian matter extracted from history books and dropped in chunks into the fiction, and the problem of convincingly representing dialogue from periods when the English language had a substantially different form. Finally, the Preface takes a potshot at novels that lead their characters to exotic places when scenes and incidents of interest lie close to home, that is, England and London.

The most important issue, however, and one which the preface does not raise, was the use of historical fiction, along with new historiography of the past, to comment directly or indirectly on issues and controversies current at the time of the novel's publication – the relation of news and the novel. Nevertheless, this is once again the salient feature of Gaspey's novel. The Preface tries to obscure the fact, however, locating the novel's methodology midway between learned history and antiquarianism on the one hand and the belles-lettres on the other. The Preface claims that the novel gives correct representations of historical events and figures, and characterizes the author as a 'compiler', using fiction only to connect the historical events. Certain documents are declared to be authentic, and sources for them indicated. The dialogue is acknowledged to be modernized so as to be comprehensible to the reader, implying that the author could have rendered dialogue in accurate early English – in fact there are a few pages where two characters swap favourite passages from early English versions of the Bible. The Preface states that the author considered identifying historical sources and references by footnotes but opted, for readability's sake, to list the sources in the Preface; these sources are given by last name of author only, appearing to assume the reader's easy familiarity with such learning. Readers familiar with recent publishing activity might have recognized that Gaspey could find almost half the cited sources in the bookshop of his novel's publisher, the Longman partnership, and most of the other sources had recent editions. With the Preface's emphasis on historical accuracy and antiquarian authority, however, the large admission is made that 'It has not been thought necessary rigidly to adhere to chronology'[34] and a lengthy justification is offered as to why the date of the

introduction of printing has been represented as almost a half-century earlier than documented. All this tends to suggest that *The Lollards* is an antiquarian novel, in the line of Joseph Strutt's *Queen-hoo Hall* (1808), in which Strutt had tried to make his extensive researches on early English culture more accessible by casting them as a sentimental historical romance.

Ostensibly, then, *The Lollards* is about religious controversies and political issues of early fifteenth-century England and Europe, centred on the rise of Lollardy and similar movements challenging the character and authority of the Church of Rome. The Lollards were inspired by the writings and teachings of John Wycliff (died 1384) and criticized what they saw as abuses in the church, the elevation of the church hierarchy and clergy over the laity in terms of religious authority, the excessive wealth of the church, the meddling of the church in secular matters, such institutions as the Papacy and monasticism, the power of the clergy to absolve sins, the transformation of bread into Christ's flesh in the ceremony of the Eucharist, the church's suppression of translations of the Bible into vernacular languages, excessive veneration of images, and the elevation of ceremony over the scriptures, or Bible authority. This movement was picked up by like-minded people on the Continent and eventually issued in the Protestant Reformation of the early sixteenth century. Implicitly and by application, however, the novel is about several related issues of the early 1820s – the character of the new monarch, George IV; the issue of religious toleration and the emancipation of Roman Catholics and Protestant Dissenters from their civil disabilities; religious and ecclesiastical schism; freedom of the press and advances in printing technology and the accessibility of books; relations between Britain and the Continental powers; and the nature of English 'national' character, history, and global destiny.

Henry V (1387–1422) plays a major role in the novel. As theatre-goers of Gaspey's day would know from Shakespeare's often performed play *Henry V*, the king had spent a wild youth before ascending the throne and pursuing a brilliant career in wars against France and achieving a dynastically and diplomatically advantageous marriage with the French royal house. Henry V also supported religious orthodoxy, and the campaign against the Lollards. As Gaspey's readers would know, George IV had been crowned king a year before the novel was published, after a long course of extravagance and debt; a disastrous marriage that almost precipitated a popular revolt; unrelenting personal opposition to religious tolerance and Catholic emancipation, threatening to cause rebellion in Ireland; notorious political corruption; government suppression of dissent, religious or political; and what seemed to be the squandering of Britain's international position after the hard-won and costly military victory over Napoleonic France. The similarities between the two monarchs across four centuries were suggestive, and the contrast striking.

The situation of Catholics and church reformers across the four centuries had of course reversed, but many even of those who opposed religious toleration in either period believed such toleration was necessary in order to avoid civil strife or even war. The novel's position is stated clearly in its last sentence, where the reader is told that the Lollard Alice and the Catholic de Marle retain their separate faiths within their marriage. The historical Henry Chichely (or Chichele, *c.*1364–1443), bishop of St David's and then archbishop of Canterbury, strongly represents religious intolerance and persecution in the novel, contributing to the death of both Huss and Cobham. At the time *The Lollards* was published, both the bishop of St David's, Thomas Burgess (1756–1837) and the archbishop of Canterbury, Charles Manners-Sutton (1755–1828), were energetic promoters of the established state church and opponents of Catholic emancipation. The novel is not clear on whether its characterization of Chichely is meant to allude to one, both, or none of these, or another altogether, but the character of the unyielding, politically powerful, and intolerant churchman had been commonplace in British political debate for decades, especially since the rise of the reform movement in response to the French Revolution in the 1790s, asserted with renewed vigour in the late 1810s and early 1820s. Reformists' polemics of these decades often referred to the Lollards' calls for a more open and egalitarian church hierarchy, toleration of doctrinal difference, taxation of church wealth, wider popular access to the Bible and so on; a major difference between the early fifteenth-century and early nineteenth-century churchmen was that both Burgess and Manners-Sutton were strong promoters of distribution of vernacular Bibles. A broader ecclesiastical issue raised in the novel with resonance in the early 1820s was church schism, or division. In the early fifteenth century, as represented in the novel, the Church of Rome was divided by rival claimants to be Pope and threatened with internal division between reformists and supporters of the status quo. In the early 1820s, the state church of England was facing several challenges at once. It was strongly resisting extension of certain kinds of civic rights to Catholics and to Protestant Dissenters from the state church; its entrenched power-holders were resisting calls from so-called Evangelicals for spiritual, liturgical, and institutional reform and renewal; and it had lost sections, such as the Methodists, through secession. 'The Church in Danger' was a slogan used by opponents of reforms of various kinds, and it was a slogan repeated often at the time Gaspey's novel was published.

As *The Lollards* clearly aims to show, for centuries issues of reform in church and state had been related to the issue of freedom of the press and other freedoms. New dimensions to these issues were given by developments in printing technology in the early nineteenth century, developments of which Gaspey, as a newspaperman, would be well aware. Several developments converged to increase speed and decrease cost of printing in the two decades before Gaspey's

novel: development of mechanical papermaking by the Fourdrinier brothers in 1803 and 1804; introduction of the iron lever press by Earl Stanhope in 1804; Stanhope's development of stereotyping in 1805; Friedrich König's development of the steam-powered printing press in 1812, adopted by *The Times* newspaper in 1814; and Augustus Applegath and Edward Cowper's development of the cylindrical press as an adaptation of the König press. As technology made printing faster and cheaper, however, government and established interests strove to restrict and censor print in order to control the circulation of opinion, doubting, as Henry V puts it in Gaspey's novel, 'if powers so vast [as print] can be discreetly entrusted to the common sort'. Accordingly, parliament passed legislation restricting expression of opinion, and both government and vigilante societies brought prosecutions against those expressing opinions they considered 'seditious' or 'libelous'. Newspapers and advertisements in them were taxed, to increase the cost to readers and presumably restrict readership. The government had long influenced press opinion directly through subsidies and intimidation, of which Gaspey would have direct knowledge. Government and establishment interests sponsored cheap forms of print to counter or displace publications thought 'dangerous' or 'seditious'. The churches also embarked on massive programs of cheap print to the same ends. Protests against all of these measures coincided with demands for reforms in church and state. The year before Gaspey's novel was published saw two editions of Robert Hall's 1793 book, *An Apology for the Freedom of the Press and General Liberty*; the publication of Jeremy Bentham's libertarian pamphlet, *On the Liberty of the Press and Public Discussion*; and the sale of *Suppressed Defence: The Defence of Mary-Anne Carlile to the Vice Society's Indictment against the Appendix to Thomas Paine's Theological Works*. Paine had famously attacked religion in the 1790s and Mary-Anne Carlile, sister of the radical reformist publisher Richard Carlile, continued to operate his business while he was imprisoned by the government; the Society for the Suppression of Vice had been founded in 1802 as a middle- and upper-class supported vigilante society, mainly interested in the 'vices', including dissident opinions, of the lower orders of society.

By the late 1810s and early 1820s issues of freedom of the press and circulation of public opinion were related to Britain's increasingly conflicted relationship with the Continental powers which had, as allies, defeated Napoleon in 1815. From the 1815 Congress of Vienna, these powers, with Britain, had attempted to settle and stabilize the postwar situation of Europe, at a series of similar diplomatic congresses. But Britain and especially British public opinion were increasingly alienated by the determination of the so-called 'Holy Alliance' of absolutist monarchies – Russia, Prussia and Austria – to support or impose governments similar to theirs across the Continent, and to suppress political, religious and other kinds of liberalization, by force if necessary. And so, at the

Congress of Troppau in 1820, Britain and France had found themselves at odds with Russia, Austria and Prussia over the popular revolution in the kingdom of Naples, and the declaration by these powers of their right to suppress such revolutions anywhere. The process was carried further at the follow-up Congress of Laibach (present-day Ljubljana in Slovenia) in 1821. Gaspey's novel alludes to these international issues through its representation of the historical Council of Constance from 1414 to 1418, called by the Holy Roman Emperor, in which bishops from across Christendom, including Britain, met to adjudicate ecclesiastical, theological and political issues of Continental concern. Particularly under discussion were schisms within the church caused by rival claimants to the Papacy and religious heresy as represented by Lollardy. Just as the Congresses of Vienna, Troppau and Laibach had proposed to settle and direct the political and religious state of Europe, so too did the Council of Constance, represented in Gaspey's novel. Moreover, Britain's representative at the post-Napoleonic Congresses was one or other of the two bitter political rivals, Canning and Castlereagh, who undertook the contradictory tasks of trying to influence the European powers, and especially the reactionary ones, while keeping Britain at a distance from them. This resembles the task of the historical character Chichele, archbishop of Canterbury, as portrayed in Gaspey's novel.

Though unstated, then, the aim of *The Lollards* is to novelize and comment on the news, or certain major pressing issues of the day, as much as in Gaspey's previous novels. Apart from the historical analogies that the novel adduces and implies between events, issues and personages of the early fifteenth century and those of the early nineteenth, the novel's display of antiquarian, historiographical and linguistic learning may seem designed merely to obscure this purpose and to exploit yet another fashionable form of the novel of the day. In fact, however, in reeling off a list of sources in the Preface and manifestly dropping chunks of antiquarian sources into the narrative, Gaspey was attempting to recruit certain kinds of antiquarianism to another issue facing Britain at the time the novel was published, and related to those already discussed here. This was the struggle over formation of a 'national' identity, culture, history and destiny, for the immediate political purpose of consolidating or transforming social hierarchies, institutional structures, political processes, economic relations, state apparatuses, international commerce, imperial power and so on. Engaged in this struggle was a wide range of those in the arts, culture, education, scholarship, and other fields, including historians, legal scholars, educational writers, journalists, poets, novelists, dramatists, editors and booksellers. In the last group, one of the most active was the Longman partnership who published *The Lollards*. How *The Lollards* participates in the project of national identity formation is disclosed by closer examination of the list of sources mentioned, with affected casualness, in the novel's Preface.

The Preface of *The Lollards* identifies the sources merely by author's last name, apparently assuming that the reader is educated and informed enough to recognize the references. This list may seem bewilderingly diverse. It includes two eighteenth-century antiquarian-historians. One was William Maitland (*c.*1693–1757), author of a *History of London, from its Foundation by the Romans to the Present Time* (1739), which had a new edition in 1791–1800. The other was Thomas Pennant (1726–98), author of *Tours* of Scotland and parts of England, such as *The Journey from Chester to London* (1782), and more pertinently of *An Account of London* (1790), republished as *Some Account of London, Westminster, and Southwark* (1820, illustrated), and *The Antiquities of London: Comprising Views and Historical Descriptions of its Principal Buildings; also Anecdotes of Eminent Persons Connected Therewith* (1814; 1818). There are two notable topographers. The first, James Peller Malcolm (1767–1815), was author of *The Beauties of England and Wales* (1801–16), of *Londinium redivivum; or, An Antient History and Modern Description of London* (4 vols, 1802–7), and of three major works published by Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown – *Anecdotes of the Manners and Customs of London during the Eighteenth Century* (1808), *Miscellaneous Anecdotes Illustrative of the Manners and History of Europe* (1811), and *Anecdotes of the Manners and Customs of London from the Roman Invasion to the Year 1700* (1811). The second topographer, James Baker, was author of *The Imperial Guide: with Picturesque Plans of the Great Post Roads, Containing Miniature Likenesses, Engraved from Real Sketches of the Cities, Towns, Villages, Seas, Islands, Mountains, Public Edifices, and Private Buildings* (1802). There is the still active antiquarian and collector Francis Douce (1757–1834), author of *Illustrations of Shakespeare, and of Ancient Manners*, published by the Longman partnership in 1807, and editor of *The Customs of London, otherwise Called Arnold's Chronicle* (1811). There is the antiquarian and linguist Francis Grose (1731–91), author of *The Antiquities of England and Wales* (1772–87), *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (1785), *A Provincial Glossary, with a Collection of Local Proverbs, and Popular Superstitions* (1787), *Military Antiquities* and *A Treatise on Ancient Armour* (1786-88), and *The Antiquarian Repertory* (1807–9). There is the widely respected historian Robert Henry (1718–1790), author of a massive *History of Great Britain, from the First Invasion of It by the Romans under Julius Caesar* (1771–93), republished in 1814 by the Longman partnership. There is the Protestant apologist William Gilpin (1724-1804), author of *The Lives of John Wicliff and of the Most Eminent of His Disciples; Lord Cobham, John Huss, Jerome of Prague, and Zisca* (1765). There is the German historian of science and technology Johann Beckmann (1739–1811), author of *A History of Inventions and Discoveries* (*Beyträge zur Geschichte der Erfindungen*, 1782, 1805; in English: London, 1797, 1814), republished in 1817 by the Longman partnership. Finally, there are some widely known early antiquarians,

chronologists and Protestant hagiographers. Enguerrand de Monstrelet (died 1453) was author of French chronicles of the years 1400 to 1440, later extended to 1516, a thirteen-volume translation of which was published in 1810 by the Longman partnership as *The Chronicles of Enguerrand de Monstrelet*. There is the well known Raphael Holinshed (*c.*1525–80), author of *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1577; 1587), republished in 1807–8. Finally, there are two early Protestant martyrologists whose works were edited, adapted, and amalgamated in the early nineteenth century–John Foxe (1516–87), author of the biographies known as the *Book of Martyrs*, republished in 1819 as *The Lives of the English and Foreign Reformers*; and Samuel Clarke (1599–1682), author of *A General Martyrology* (first published 1640) and *The Marrow of Ecclesiastical History* (1650).

In fact, as invoked by Gaspey in *The Lollards*, this apparently bewildering diversity of 'sources', supposedly informing and interpreted by the novel, comprises a grand historical, topographical, social and cultural text for English 'national' identity formation in the early 1820s. It is revealing that almost all of these sources were available to Gaspey in recent editions and a good proportion of them, as indicated here, from the publisher of Gaspey's novel. However early the first versions of many of these works would be, such as Holinshed, Foxe, or Clarke, they were in effect aligned with sources more recent or almost contemporary with *The Lollards*. As assembled by Gaspey and appropriated and interpreted in the novel, these sources are made to represent English identity as an ongoing project rooted in permanent yet changing rural and urban space, shaped by historical events such as religious conflicts, influenced by intellectual inquiry, changed by technological innovation and commercial enterprise, expressed through cultural and social practices, informed and sanctioned by a particular religious faith and engaged in a global network of relationships and conflicts.

The mega-text comprised of the novel's declared sources is complemented and elaborated through the use of epigraphs at the head of each chapter, as snippets from literary or other texts. This is a novelistic device that came into prominence in the late eighteenth century in such novels as those of Ann Radcliffe, and had several uses. Epigraphs suggested to the reader what was upcoming in the chapter that followed, indicated the author's command of a certain literary and learned culture, dignified an otherwise low status genre – the novel – with lardings from more respected forms of writing such as poetry and drama, and could indicate the ideological or political tendency of the work. The chapter epigraphs in *The Lollards* come from a wide range of sources, including Shakespeare and Jacobean drama; Restoration drama; early English poets such as Lydgate and Chaucer; recently revived early poets such as Donne and Chapman; sentimental poets such as Falconer, Goldsmith and Burns; 'classic' English poets such as

Milton and Dryden; the obscure early poet Robert Roche; and contemporaries such as George Croly and Thomas Colley Grattan; and there are a few instances of that favourite of writers stumped for a source, the 'Old Ballad'. Together, these references invoke a 'national' canon of English literature, augmented by antiquarian knowledge, informing the novel, aligning the novel with it, displaying the author's literary knowledge and hence authority, and collaborating with the historical, topographical and antiquarian sources named in the Preface to imply an historical English identity persisting over time, from past through present, documented and expressed in various ways, but particularly powerfully, as the novel shows, through print – Gaspey's own profession.

Readers of the time might also notice, however, that an important potential reference that Gaspey does not mention was Henry Hallam's *View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages*, published as recently as 1818. Hallam's *View* defined the Middle Ages as the period AD 486–1495, and so it covers part of the historical terrain and issues represented in Gaspey's novel. The second volume of the *View* also deals with many issues later dealt with in *The Lollards*, including the power of and divisions within the church, Anglo-French relations, and social and cultural conditions such as the scarcity of books, popular superstition, changes in religious opinions, the rise and refinement of the English language, and the invention of printing. The *View* focuses on and promotes themes of economic progress, constitutionalism, religious toleration, international relations, freedom of thought and discussion, the diffusion of knowledge, the development of commerce and towns, the concomitant advance of 'liberty' – a word that rings frequently through Hallam's book – and the distinctive form of English liberty. Because of this focus, the *View* had established Hallam as the leading reformist historian of the early nineteenth century. Together, the *View* and Hallam's later and even more influential *Constitutional History of England* (1827) would be the major statements of the 'Whig' reformist and constitutionalist view of English history and national identity in European context. The absence of Hallam's *View* from Gaspey's references constitutes a presence, implying that the 'view' presented in *The Lollards* differs from Hallam's. In many ways *The Lollards* is a novelization of Hallam's *View*, centred on England and a briefer span of time, but while Gaspey's novel is clearly critical of monarchic and ecclesiastical despotism, excessive wealth of the church, violence and warfare, religious intolerance and popular ignorance, it is silent on the topic of political liberty; in contrast to the emphasis on the advance of 'liberty' in Hallam's *View*, the silence of Gaspey's novel on the topic could have seemed remarkable to many of its readers.

The answer may lie in the politics that can be inferred from Gaspey's writings together with his position on the mildly reformist, patriotic, pro-government *Morning Post* newspaper, which would make Gaspey a liberal or progressive conservative, rather than a 'Whig' reformist like Hallam. It is reasonable to assume

that, at this point in the 1820s, Gaspey felt that the 'political nation', or those with a stake and an influence, electoral or otherwise, in the state, should be those like himself and those with the means to buy the *Morning Post* and to rent *The Lollards* from a circulating library, and with the education and knowledge, derived from newspapers and novels among other things, to understand them properly.

Other Times; or, The Monks of Leadenhall (3 vols), published by the Longman partnership around early April 1823, continues Gaspey's experimentation with the historical romance. A Preface once again takes up the problems of handling this form, complaining that much research is necessary for a historical romance yet the author is not thanked for it but blamed either for intruding too much antiquarian information to keep the narrative interesting or for providing too little to make the representation of 'other times' convincing. The Preface insists that its representation of the depravities of the period represented are accurate, and that the historical accuracy may be verified from chronicles and collections such as the Harleian manuscripts. Though the Preface refers to no other sources, most of those Gaspey had announced in the Preface to *The Lollards* would have served him again in *Other Times*. Furthermore, there are significant parallels between the periods in which each novel is set. *Other Times* is set in the last years of the reign of Henry VIII (1491–1547), as the Protestant Reformation instituted by the king is running its course and his assumption of supreme authority over the church in England is provoking resistance of various kinds, from passive acceptance through open dissent to violent rebellion. In the novel, Lord Erpingham follows the first policy, though a close friend of Sir Thomas More (1478–1535), executed for open dissent by refusing to reject the authority of the Pope. Other characters in the novel choose or are drawn into the rebellion known as the 'Pilgrimage of Grace', which took place in 1536.

The story opens with Erpingham's ward, Edmund, escorting his friends Ferdinand and Mariana to Canterbury to witness the festival of the raising of the body of St Thomas Beckett (1118–70), victim of an earlier conflict of church and state. The incident is depicted in such a way as to demonstrate the superstition and fecklessness of the common people at that time. It transpires that Ferdinand and Mariana are 'South Americans', that is, from Mexico, and he is bringing her, purportedly his niece, to England to enter a convent, though she is unwilling. In Canterbury, Edmund encounters his friend Clifford, who has had his ears cut off for a crime, though he insists on his innocence. They also encounter a group of coarse revelers led by Nicholas Bray, former court jester to Cardinal Wolsey (1470/1–1530), who had fallen foul of court intrigues and the king's power. Erpingham, mindful of the fate of Wolsey and his friend More, has retired from court. He arranges for Edmund to marry Elinor, a daughter of Sir Geoffrey Brandon, but Edmund has fallen in love with Mariana, and she

with him. Edmund is relieved of his unwanted engagement when Elinor elopes with her lover, and while Mariana enters St Helen's convent, Edmund has chosen to enter the monastery of Leadenhall, presided over by Abbot Egbert, who had secured Clifford's conviction. Ferdinand meets Erpingham and becomes his personal secretary, though he seems to have a mysterious suspicion of and aversion to his employer, and questions him about his time in Mexico during the Spanish conquest of that land by Cortes. In the monastery, Edmund is praised for his piety by Egbert and meets Bray, who discloses Egbert's secret venery and false accusation against Clifford, who had also discovered them. Edmund determines to escape and denounce the abbot, and Bray is leading Edmund out by a secret passage when they encounter Egbert and a nun planning to bury a dead infant born of a liaison between a monk of Leadenhall and a nun of St Helen's. Attempting to hide, Edmund loses his way in the dark passages and is seized.

The second volume opens with Edmund imprisoned before, in Gaspey's characteristic method, the story shifts to Clifford, who encounters the lost Elinor and plans to emigrate with her and their child to the New World. Several chapters then recount Edmund's attempts to escape, opposed by another monk, William de Broke, envious of those of high rank, and assisted by Bray. Edmund and Egbert have a lengthy debate on piety versus the fleshly pleasures and the abbot anticipates revels at St Helen's convent, conveniently connected underground to Leadenhall monastery. Egbert then tells Erpingham that his ward is dead, while Bray warns Edmund that the abbot has been poisoning him, and arranges for Edmund to escape by the secret tunnels as a crowd gathers outside. Egbert is summoned by the prioress, who is enraged at Mariana's resistance to participating in the nuns' orgies, and he pretends to sympathize with Mariana and then offers to protect her if she becomes his mistress. He is about to force himself on her when the crowd, drawn by rumours of the monks' and nuns' revels, attack the convent and beat Egbert, while Mariana escapes. Having got the couple out of their confinement, the narrator turns briefly to Clifford, who is discovered and reproached by Elinor's father, Sir Geoffrey Brandon, but loyally defended by Elinor, and the couple again resolve to take refuge in the New World. The volume closes as Ferdinand reproaches Erpingham for having betrayed his early love, Mariana's mother, whereupon Erpingham realizes that he is Ferdinand's father and Mariana his lost daughter. Ferdinand refuses to believe him and raises his dagger in vengeance, when a sight causes him to start back, ending the volume.

The last volume opens with one of Gaspey's characteristic devices, the retrospective narrative explaining what has just happened. Edmund and Bray rejoin each other and the latter tells of the crowd's assault on the convent, attacking Egbert and freeing his apparent lover. Edmund rushes off to see his guardian and bursts through the door in time to startle Ferdinand as he is about to stab

Erpingham. Erpingham is then allowed to tell his story, convincing Ferdinand of his innocence. Meanwhile, Mariana wanders into dangerous situations but is eventually discovered by Bray, who takes her to a house for safety. But Mariana observes her hostess communing with a shriveled head in a cabinet and flees. She encounters a man, who turns out to be Clifford, who informs her the woman is Mrs Roper, daughter of Sir Thomas More, who retrieved her father's head from its place of public exhibition after his execution. Mariana returns to the benevolent Mrs Roper, and Clifford leaves for the New World; but when Mrs Roper learns his name, she realizes he has been exonerated by Egbert's fall and his wealth can be restored. Erpingham is ignorant of these events and initiates a search for Mariana, led by Bray, who hears that a nun has headed north, where a popular Catholic rebellion is underway against the king. The king, however, is persuaded that Erpingham has joined the conspiracy, has a spy interview him and has him arrested for denying the royal supremacy over the church. Clifford and Elinor, who have learned of Egbert's fall and also been set ashore from their ship by mutineers, arrive at the rebels' camp as Bray and Edmund show up in search of Mariana. They are told that Erpingham has been executed, and, outraged at this injustice, Clifford and then Edmund join the rebels. Battle between the rebels and the king's forces is delayed by floods, the rebel force begins to melt away, and a peace is negotiated. But Clifford and Edmund are excluded from the amnesty and Egbert turns up with some armed men. Elinor persuades Clifford and Edmund to flee, and Egbert attempts to seduce her, but Bray intervenes and Egbert himself is arrested. The story turns back again, to Erpingham, who refuses Sir Geoffrey Brandon's pleas to submit to the king, a refusal which ironically works in his favour as the king pardons him in admiration of his firmness. However, false information that Erpingham is linked to the rebels Edmund and Clifford again raises the king's ire. The story turns to Edmund, Clifford and Elinor, on the run and in hiding for some months, guided by Bray. They are accidentally discovered, however, and are taken to await execution in the Tower of London.

The final movement of the narrative is a convergence of public and private destinies characteristic of historical romances of this time. Clifford and Elinor take a fond farewell of each other while Egbert, imprisoned with them, takes poison to avoid death by beheading. They then learn that Edmund and Egbert have been pardoned by the king and Egbert desperately tries but fails to counteract the poison. Clifford goes to face execution and Edmund returns to Erpingham, followed by a supportive crowd. A death knell is heard at a distance and they conclude that Clifford has been executed. Clifford then appears; the knell was for the king, who suddenly died, and the royal council, unwilling to begin a new reign inauspiciously with an execution, pardoned Clifford. The novel closes with Elinor's sobbing declaration that bliss such as this anticipates heaven.

Though set in a specified period and larded with antiquarian descriptions of London, political and cultural events and public figures, *Other Times* clearly deals with issues similar to those in the news at the time the novel was published and repeats the work of its predecessor in novelizing related issues current in the early 1820s. These are principally the 'Catholic question', the monarchy and reform, with the additional issue of Latin America. In its use of setting, *Other Times* moves from one period of religious schism to another, from Lollardy to the Protestant Reformation that Lollardy and an authoritarian monarch helped precipitate. In the earlier period, the reformists were suppressed and persecuted – wrongly, *The Lollards* suggests. In the later period, the traditionalists are suppressed and persecuted – rightly though excessively, the new novel indicates. The application to the situation of the early 1820s would have been clear, with demands for 'Catholic emancipation' linked to calls for political reform to enable this to happen, accompanied by large crowd demonstrations and the possibility of violent revolution, resisted by the king allied with political and ecclesiastical elements associated with what reformists called 'Old Corruption'. The situation of Catholics vis-à-vis Protestants was reversed in each successive period, but the structure of the situations was similar. *Other Times*, like *The Lollards*, also makes its position on this complex situation clear. As the narrator of *Other Times* comments, 'Zeal seldom accomplishes the reform which necessity demands, without going further . . .'.[35] And later the narrator comments more tartly that 'patriots [that is, reformists] of the present talk with rapture of that state of freedom' of olden times, 'but few of the blessings of a liberal constitution were tasted by Englishmen at the period identified with this narrative'.[36] The narrator's and presumably the author's position is that of a conservative reformism.

As in *The Lollards*, foreign affairs are not overlooked in *Other Times*, though they are perhaps more tangential to Britain's global situation in the early 1820s. The plot of Ferdinand and Mariana, children of a 'South American' mother and an English father, brings in the topic of Spanish America. The novel represents the Spanish conquest and rule of the New World as the British liked to view it – needlessly cruel and despotic, purporting to civilize and Christianize but doing so in a barbarous and unchristian manner – quite different, supposedly, from British conquest and rule of its empire. Moreover, Spanish America and particularly Mexico were much in the British news in the early 1820s, as part of the problem of Britain's relation to Continental Europe and its colonies and former colonies in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars. The occupation of Spain by Napoleon had created a power vacuum and favoured movements for independence in many sections of Spanish America. A group of Mexican nationalists declared independence from Spain in 1810, and the separation was finalized in 1821. Weakening of Spanish power and independence in other parts of Latin America opened the way for British capital and power to begin to dominate the region.

Meanwhile, Latin American affairs and relations with Continental Europe were preoccupying British public opinion, which favoured nationalist movements and opposed intervention by reactionary monarchic powers in liberal revolutions across Europe. These issues had already been commented on obliquely in Gaspey's earlier novels, especially *The Lollards*. By the early 1820s the issues were dividing the British government. George Canning (1770–1827), a former moderate reformist and now member of the government, tended to side with public opinion on these issues, but saw foreign affairs and parliament dominated by the different views of his rival, Viscount Castlereagh (1769–1822). Canning had decided to retire from the scene to become governor-general of Bengal, when Castlereagh's suicide in August 1822 opened the door to power for Canning.

It is Canning's views that seem to be reflected in Gaspey's novel. Canning may even be the figure behind Gaspey's semi-fictional character Lord Erpingham. The character seems based on a historical figure not from the period of *Other Times* but rather of *The Lollards*. The principled and popular Sir Thomas Erpingham (*c.*1355–1428) was a follower of Henry IV before he seized the throne from Richard II, and was made an advisor of the new king, but retired from court and its dangerous intrigues, just as the fictional Lord Erpingham does, and as, in a different way, Canning decided to withdraw from politics in 1820. Sir Thomas Erpingham then advised the Prince of Wales, later Henry V, the king who features in *The Lollards*, and was given office on his accession to the throne, but once again retired from court to concentrate on local administration and philanthropy. It is through Lord Erpingham that Gaspey represents his support of Canningite liberal conservatism, and perhaps Canning himself, who had become foreign secretary in the government by the time *Other Times* was published. Like Canning, Gaspey seems to have supported certain reform issues, such as abolition of slavery, moderate Catholic emancipation and a liberal foreign policy, while remaining leery of 'the mob' and of parliamentary and electoral reform.

In his next novel, *The Witch-Finder; or, The Wisdom of Our Ancestors: A Romance* (3 vols, 1824), again published by the Longman partnership, Gaspey as usual filled a popular novel form with references to and comments on issues of public moment at the time the novel was published. The novel opens in the late summer of 1659 with Challoner, a supporter of the Restoration of the monarchy, contemplating the ruins of St Albans abbey, symbol of a former period of religious intolerance and strife – the Protestant Reformation in England and the suppression of the monasteries. Soon after, Challoner observes a mob pursuing a wretched cow supposedly enchanted by a local witch, dame Neville. With these thematic foundations laid down, most of the first volume advances the plot little, but rather is devoted to introducing various characters whom Challoner meets as he moves about the country and in and out of London, seemingly on a secret

mission to forward return of the monarchy. Among those he meets is Thorpe, a believer in witchcraft. Others are the two actors Tom Green, probably intended to be the historical Thomas Greene who in fact died in 1612, and the historical John Lowen, who died in 1653; they look forward to the re-opening of the theatres once the Puritan Commonwealth, seemingly on its last legs, is swept aside. These characters reappear through the novel and there are discussions on theatre and dramatic performance set into the story, enabling Gaspey to draw on his journalistic involvement with theatre news and reviews. In contrast to these representatives of a merry England suppressed by the Puritan Commonwealth is the sinister figure of George Johnson, government agent and once a fanatical republican but now scheming to prepare his position for the return of monarchy. Challoner also meets young Lesley, son of a royalist stripped of his estate during the Commonwealth; Challoner tells Lesley that for certain reasons he cannot sanction a match between Lesley's sister Celia and Challoner's protégé Albert, whom he rescued as an infant from a bloody Irish rebellion and had the Thorpes raise to manhood. When Challoner meets lady Sophia Maitland, however, she tells him that Albert is not, as Challoner thinks, the illegitimate son of lady Maitland's sister and the woman Challoner once loved. Meanwhile Albert, who had protected dame Neville from an angry superstitious mob, meets another historical personage, Witch-finder General Matthew Hopkins (an anachronism, as Hopkins died in 1647), who discloses his activities in provoking such hostility against those he considers enemies.

Gaspey at last begins to thicken the plot in volume 2, which centres on the multiple and interlocking schemes of Johnson, the government agent. He plans to undermine Albert and Challoner, marry Lesley to a middle-class vulgarian, and have his daughter Henrietta seduce Albert into marriage. He also plans to marry Celia Lesley himself so as to form an alliance with a royalist family in anticipation of restoration of the monarchy – and of royalists' estates. One of Johnson's catspaws is another historical person, the astrologer William Lilly (1602–81). Johnson also schemes successfully to obtain some mysterious papers, an apparently incriminating 'Bloody Bond'. By the end of the volume, Johnson seeks to solidify his future prospects by disclosing to Albert that he is son of the infamous Guido (or Guy) Fawkes, a Catholic who tried to blow up parliament in 1605, and by disclosing to Challoner that he intends to humiliate Witch-finder General Hopkins.

At the beginning of volume 3, public and private destinies again converge. Dame Neville reveals to Challoner that she is his youthful love, Emma, and tells of her adventures. Meanwhile, Johnson pursues his schemes, and though his daughter Henrietta tries to help Albert, and is killed trying to do so, Johnson succeeds in getting Albert and Challoner arrested and condemned to death. The real historical figure Thomas Fairfax (1612–71) fails to get them away, and

Challoner nobly offers to die in Albert's place, as Johnson exults, when the government suddenly falls and Johnson is arrested and himself condemned to death; in a final interview with Challoner, Johnson reveals that his daughter's ghost enjoined him to restore Challoner's wealth and discloses its location. Soon after, Challoner sees Johnson's dismembered corpse among others of those executed by the new government. A final chapter winds up the destinies of the various characters: by luck Lesley inherited the earldom of Wellborough, but this only made him haughty toward his former friends, and he refused to allow his sister Celia to marry Albert until Challoner revealed that Albert was the rightful earl of Wellborough.

The allusions to contemporary issues made by *The Witch-finder* are complex but interconnected – once again they are the Catholic question, Ireland, empire and reform. These allusions are centred on a historical analogy, commonplace in commentaries by Gaspey's contemporaries, between the late seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries. Referring in particular to the *Witch-finder*'s scenes celebrating the theatre of Shakespeare's day and of the Restoration period, one reviewer pointed out that Gaspey's novel seemed to coincide with the recently published first volume of William Godwin's *History of the Commonwealth of England* (1824) in its view of the culturally stifling effect of the mid-seventeenth-century Puritan government: 'It is clear, from the representations of both these writers, that the drama, the fine arts, civilization itself, sickened and declined under the Commonwealth; that they recovered on the restoration of the monarchy; and that the drama, though, during the profligate reign of Charles II., tainted with the profligacy of that sovereign's court, flourished again in its pristine vigour when England became once more thoroughly herself.'[37] Gaspey's own Preface acknowledged that his novel dealt with events in a period recently brought attention to. This may refer to Godwin's *History*, though this was a very recent publication, or a number of other historical novels of the early 1820s set in the seventeenth-century religious-political conflicts, or such works as the *Memoirs of the Protector, Oliver Cromwell, and of His Sons, Richard and Henry* (2 vols, 1820), a celebratory biography by a descendant of Cromwell's, and also published by the Longman partnership, going through three editions by 1822.

Further, the seventeenth-century sectarian religious conflicts had their parallel in Gaspey's day in several dimensions – between mainstream and Evangelical factions within the state Anglican church, between the established church and the various sects of Protestant Dissenters, and between Protestants and Roman Catholics. By the early 1820s it was clear that an aspect of the latter conflict was the demand by Catholics in Ireland, where they were by far the majority, for civil and political as well as religious rights, under the broad and growing national campaign led by Daniel O'Connell and his Catholic Association, founded in 1823. Even many of those against Catholic emancipation felt that it was necessary

in order to prevent a violent revolution there – a prospect made more imminent by the series of rebellions and revolts in Ireland from 1798 to as recently as 1822, and continuing rural economic violence there. Many in Britain and Ireland felt, however, that such rights for Catholics and other excluded groups, such as Protestant Dissenters, would not be obtained without major political reforms, since deeply entrenched institutional interests opposed Catholic emancipation. They felt that this and other changes would undermine the established state church and thus the state itself, would threaten the landed class in Ireland (who were predominantly Protestant), and would allow elements possibly loyal to a 'foreign' authority – the Papacy – to hold state and military offices from which they had hitherto been barred.

The contemporary issue of reform is clearly indicated in the subtitle of Gaspey's novel, 'the wisdom of our ancestors' – a phrase frequently used in the public debates over any kind of reform in the years preceding publication of *The Witch-finder*, at times positively, at other times ironically and satirically. Opponents of reform used the phrase positively, in defence of the existing order, and proponents of reform sometimes used it positively, to attack what they portrayed as 'modern' corruptions of what that wisdom had originally set up. Jeremy Bentham, relentless iconoclast, used the phrase satirically and frequently in his *Book of Fallacies*, published in the same year as Gaspey's novel, especially in the section 'Fallacies of Authority'. Here he castigates the class of people that 'habitually exalts the past for the express purpose of depressing and discouraging the present generation'. It is characteristic of such persons and such a system of politics 'to idolize, under the name of wisdom of our ancestors, the wisdom of untaught inexperienced generations, and to undervalue and cover with every expression of contempt that the language of pride can furnish, the supposed ignorance and folly of the great body of the people', what such people call a 'Burdett mob', or supporters of the prominent reformist, Sir Francis Burdett.[38] Gaspey's subtitle to his novel is also ironic, like Bentham's use of the phrase, for the novel ridicules the superstition of many of the supporters of the Puritan Commonwealth and exposes the self-interest of some of its leaders. But Gaspey does no less for the Restoration monarchy in the small part at the end of the novel taken up with it, as he has Challoner witness the newly restored Charles II, a notoriously decadent and selfish monarch, administering his supposedly miraculous powers as monarch to cure the 'king's evil', or scrofula, by touching credulous sufferers from the disease. The viewpoint of Gaspey's novel is not identical with Bentham's utilitarian reformism, however. Rather, *The Witch-finder* takes the view of many moderate reformers at this time, that certain peoples, such as Irish Catholic peasants, black Africans, and probably also the English lower classes, were as yet too much in the grip of 'superstition', clearly indicated by belief in

such practices as witchcraft and astrology, to be entrusted with full civil rights, let alone the vote.

Though Thomas Skinner Surr has usually been credited with authorship of *Richmond; or, Scenes in the Life of a Bow Street Officer* (3 vols, 1827), it has also been attributed to Gaspey and there is good reason to think it is his. It came from the same publisher, Henry Colburn, who published *The History of George Godfrey* (3 vols, 1828) as well as the *Sunday Times* newspaper, which Gaspey acquired part interest in and began to work for in 1828. *Richmond* also resembles *George Godfrey* in form, and like Gaspey's other novels, both incorporate major themes from the news of the day. These novels are discussed in more detail in the introductions to the texts in this series. It is likely that the *Sunday Times* and other interests, as well as failure to achieve any outstanding success as a novel writer, turned Gaspey's interests to making other kinds of commercial books. He had at least three more novels in him, however.

Gaspey returned to novel writing in 1836 with *The Self-condemned: A Romance*, in three volumes, published by the firm of Richard Bentley, former partner of Henry Colburn, and also a leading publisher of fashionable fiction at this time. Bentley was setting up a new periodical, *Bentley's Miscellany*, and recruiting contributors, and it may be that publishing this novel by Gaspey was a way of bringing him in; Gaspey did contribute to the *Miscellany* from its beginning in 1837. In form, *The Self-condemned* seems to abandon altogether the kind of novels Gaspey had published with *Richmond* and *George Godfrey*. It returns to the historical novel form and the third-person omniscient style of narration that Gaspey had used in his novels of the early 1820s, but it eschews their humour and playfulness. Rather, as its full title would suggest to contemporary readers, the *Self-condemned: A Romance* has elements of the Gothic. Nevertheless, like all its predecessors it novelizes certain issues in the news, in this case particularly, and once again, Ireland.

The novel opens with Edmund Nagle, an Irish chieftain, and his sister Grace discussing the appointment of Sir George Carew (1555–1629), a historical figure, as lord president of Munster, the south-western province of Ireland, in 1600. This is the region that, historically, the English had tried to 'plant' with Protestant English settlers on lands expropriated from the Catholic Irish gentry and nobility. Grace Nagle urges her reluctant brother to attend Carew's banquet at Cork. At the banquet, Nagle discusses with other Irish there their causes of discontent, he is overheard and imprisoned but a mysterious figure, Cormack Scath, helps him escape. The crafty Carew, who prefers to deal with the rebellious Irish by diplomacy and intrigue rather than by confrontation and force, sends the honest English soldier Wilmot, disguised as a Spanish emissary, to seize Nagle in his castle. As Wilmot proceeds on his mission, the scene shifts to lord Roche and his wife Lady Catherine, in the novel the daughter of the historical Gerald fitz