

**Kerri Andrews, *Ann Yearsley and Hannah More, Patronage and Poetry: The Story of A Literary Relationship*. London: Pickering and Chatto, 2013. Pp. 188. £60. ISBN 9781848931510.**

Kerri Andrews' wonderful new book on Bristol's 'milkmaid poet' Ann Yearsley and her one-time patron Hannah More should be mandatory reading for anyone interested in late-eighteenth century women writers. The fraught relationship between Yearsley and More, a relationship that ended in acrimony not long after it began, has already been examined by Mary Waldron, Donna Landry and Tim Burke. But in an attempt to open up 'new areas for critical exploration beyond the well-mined few months of More and Yearsley's literary collaboration' (8), Andrews deploys a wealth of new archival material to illuminate the complex nature of patronage in the Romantic era. In so doing, she presents a portrait of these two writers—one an unapologetic champion of radical causes, the other a darling of the conservative establishment—that is at once more nuanced, more detailed and more sympathetic than previous studies.

Andrews begins by exploring the relationship between More and her own patron, the actor and theatre manager, David Garrick. Although More's early attempts at writing for the theatre have come to be overshadowed by her later (and more successful) ventures into conduct literature, Andrews suggests that the relationship between More and Garrick played a foundational role in the way in which More subsequently came to view patronage. More was an unmarried young woman when she was taken under Garrick's protective wing. But More and Garrick deftly managed the inherent dangers of the male-female patronage relationship by explicitly situating it as a father/daughter relationship, a move wholly endorsed by Garrick's wife Eva. Garrick and More had an affectionate and productive partnership, but Andrews suggests that this relationship was successful, at least in part, because More was happy to place herself in an infantilised, daughterly role.

Andrews suggests that the complexities of any type of patronage relationship in the eighteenth century become more apparent when this male/female model of patronage is transferred over to a female/female model. In Chapter 2, she re-examines More's relationship with Yearsley, who had come to her notice as a milk-woman and poet who was struggling to support her young family. Driven by complex motives, More championed Yearsley's cause by bringing her to the attention of her influential London literary friends and set about organising the publication of Yearsley's first volume of poems. However, Andrews suggests that unlike other patrons, whose support of a writer was designed to enable 'them to work independently as a professional writer' (29), More deliberately withheld this power from her protégée. Yearsley was none-too-happy to be denied access to the money earned from her literary efforts and the relationship dissolved into acrimony.

Donna Landry and others have argued that a large part of More's behaviour towards Yearsley can be explained by the class position occupied by each woman. But in Chapter 3 Andrews takes this argument a step further by looking at the complex networks of gratitude that lie at the heart of the patronage relationship and exposing the pitfalls of this aspect of the relationship for both Yearsley and More. Andrews writes that both women had a lot at stake, professionally and personally, in the volume's success because 'the bonds of patronage existed not only between More and Yearsley, but extended from both women to all those who had supported the project to put Yearsley's poetry into print' (58).

One of the more interesting aspects of the Yearsley/More relationship is the way it evolved from admiration into open rivalry as the patronage relationship broke down. In Chapters 4 and 5, Andrews examines how the 'literary careers of both More and Yearsley converged in interesting and unexpected ways' (82) in the years immediately following the end of their association. Chapter 4 examines two poems inspired by the burgeoning abolition

movement and published within months of each other, More's *Slavery, a Poem* and Yearsley's *A Poem on the Inhumanity of the Slave-Trade*. Chapter 5 presents a welcome examination of both women's forays into the world of novel-writing. More's instructional novel *Coelebs in Search of a Wife* was, of course, more successful than Yearlsey's radical work, *The Royal Captives*, but the very fact that both women chose to move into fiction writing at almost the same time reflects the deep and abiding connection between their careers.

The final chapter of the book examines the literary circle that coalesced around the Bristol bookseller, Joseph Cottle in the mid to late 1790s. Not much has been written about Yearsley's situation during this period, but in a welcome move, Andrews positions Yearsley as a significant member of a group of radical writers that included, at various times, Robert Southey, Charles Lamb, and William Wordsworth. Of course, at the same time as Yearsley was being radicalised (perhaps by her treatment by More, it is difficult to know for certain) More's growing conservatism was to culminate in the publication of her *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799).

This is a carefully researched and beautifully written account of two important but under-appreciated writers and their literary milieu. It will shape accounts of Yearsley and More for years to come.

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