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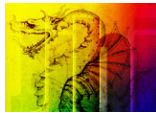
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Rendering Sociology
On the Utopian Positivism of Harriet Martineau and the 'Mumbo Jumbo Club'

by
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Rendering Sociology
On the Utopian Positivism of Harriet Martineau and the 'Mumbo Jumbo Club'

Matthew Wilson *

Among the Victorians who contributed to British sociology were the social theorist Harriet Martineau and a peculiar trio of Oxford students called the 'Mumbo Jumbo club'. Martineau published an English 'condensation' of Auguste Comte's Cours de philosophie positive *(1830-42), which introduced sociology to English readers. While under the watchful eye of the Oxford don Richard Congreve, Mumbo Jumbo read Martineau's study with great enthusiasm, and it shaped their course as first-generation sociologists.*

Using an intellectual history method, this essay argues that as the first female British sociologist, Martineau pioneered an abolitionist-feminist approach to the discipline in such works as Society in America *(1837). Meanwhile, on leaving Oxford, Mumbo Jumbo became the first British Positivist Society members. They not only translated but acted on the ideas in Comte's* Système de politique positive *(1851-4), which their leader, Congreve, described as the 'definitive construction' of sociology. Whereas Martineau's work offered an abolitionist-feminist framework for sociology, the Mumbo Jumbo trio—J.H. Bridges, E.S. Beesly, and Frederic Harrison—developed biologic-historical, socio-political, and urban-regional strands of sociological thinking respectively. While examining these sociologists' lives and complementary methods, this essay argues that theirs was a distinctly utopian if critical, imaginative, and optimistic sociology, just as some people suggested was the discipline at the founding meetings of the British Sociological Society. Thus, the works of Martineau and Mumbo Jumbo, from compatible Comtean perspectives, aimed to transform thoughts and feelings into social actions for resolving societal issues and personal troubles.*

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1. Introduction

It was once wildly declared at the Sociological Society in London that the single "meritorious gift" the French philosopher Auguste Comte (1798-1857) offered to the world was his "intensely personal Utopia of a Western Republic" (Wells 1907, 367-8).[1] For over a century, countless scholars have entered into Comte's utopian house of mirrors to sketch this white elephant. Most recently, it has been argued that the utopian system of modern life Comte envisioned—Positivism[2]—served as a catalyst for various world-making activities during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[3] Comte's systematic analyses, especially those appearing in the *Cours de philosophie positive* (1830-42), played a significant role in the advancement of the history of science, political thought, and modern philosophy.[4] Among other ostensible feats, this six-volume treatise introduced the modern discipline of sociology.

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[1] This paper draws on five archival sources. They are: British Library of Political and Economic Science, Harrison papers [BLPES-HP]; London Metropolitan University, London Trades' Council papers [LMU-LTC]; National Library of Scotland, Patrick Geddes Papers [NLS]; Oxford University Bodleian Library, Richard Congreve Papers [OUBL-CP]; and Surrey Heritage Centre, Vernon Lushington Papers [SHC]. I would like to thank a number of groups for their kind and constructive feedback to the contents of this essay. They are: the editors and reviewers of the Journal of Interdisciplinary History of Ideas; David Labreure, Michel Bourdeau, and Dominique Iogna-Prat, for organizing a lecture series enabling me to present my research for those affiliated to École des hautes études en sciences sociales, Centre d'études en sciences sociales du religieux, and Musée d'Auguste Comte; the members of the Society for Utopian Studies and Society for Utopian Studies Europe; and, finally, the members of the Proportion, (dis)Harmony and Identity Multidisciplinary Congresses.

[2] See: (Harrison 1908b, viii, ix). According to one of Comte's ardent British followers 'Positivism is not simply a system of Philosophy; nor is it simply a new form of Religion; nor is it simply a scheme of social regeneration. It partakes of all of these, and professes to harmonize them under one dominant conception that is equally philosophic and social'. Comte presented Positivism as a 'moral socialism' based on a 'synthetic scheme of philosophy' that attempted to mesh religion, politics, art, and industry via sociology. Also see (Bridges 1866, 19).

[3] See for instance: (Feichtinger, Fillafer, and Surman 2018; Wils 2005; Bevir 2002; Soja 2000; Scharff 1995; Sutton 1982; Bryant 1985; Woll 1976; Zea 1974; Woodward 1971; Simon 1963; McGee 1931; Gallo 2013; Gilson and Levinson 2013; Mitsunaga 1992; Wilson 2018b; Larizza 1989; Alengry 1900; Mumford 2000; Galison 1990; Wright 1986).

[4] See for instance: (Bourdeau, Pickering, and Schmaus 2018; Wernick 2001; Grange 2000; Bourdeau 2006; Petit 2003).

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It was the English novelist H.G. Wells who championed Comte's utopia at the meetings of the Sociological Society in London. In this 1907 narrative on the 'so-called science' of sociology, Wells was not referring to a 'gift' in the *Cours* but the one appearing in such works as *Discours sur l'ensemble du positivisme* (1848) and the four volume *Système de politique positive* (1851-4). In the *Discours,* Comte maintained that utopias were a subjunctive social necessity: 'every great social change has been ushered in, one or two centuries beforehand, by a similar Utopia'. Whereas Comte denounced the 'utopianism' of communists and metaphysicians, the Positivist utopia would be 'in constant subordination to [the] real laws' of society (Comte 1848, 280). And in relation to such laws, Comte's *Cours* had already outlined the Law of Three states, which holds that all social phenomenon evolves from a theological, to a metaphysical, and on to a 'Positive' state of existence. Along these lines, the social structures underpinning ancient titles, privileges, and empires were thus destined to collapse. Comte considered the founding of the French and American republics, for instance, as an example of such social phenomenon. It was the work of Positivist sociologists to carefully guide the total reorganisation of society for the 'Positive era' by creating a 'sociocracy' or moral government by sociology.

As such, Comte situated the *Cours* as the foundation for a modern Positive-era utopia, called the *République Occidentale*, which included: a new creed called the Religion of Humanity; a new calendar and festivities honouring the 'heroes' of humanity and celebrating the 'utopia of the Virgin Mother';[1] a new a flag

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[1] As with his previous works, Comte prefaced these books with a discussion of his private life. Comte's pining away from unrequited lust for a young woman named Clotilde de Vaux shaped his ideas about a 'utopia of the Virgin-Mother,' which was linked to his conception of the Great Being (Macey 2011, 70). The Great Being was the foremost element of the Positivist Trinity. Then followed the Great Fetish (the earth) and the Great Milieu (space). Thus, the Religion of Humanity was concerned with the veneration of space, earth, and humanity. Clotilde was not in the least attracted to Comte's egotistic philosophising-as-flirtation. And on her sudden illness and death, he reflected on the 'brutish sexual impulses of men' (Pickering 2009, 324). Seemingly inspired by Dante's 'Paradise' and the 'Festival of the Assumption' of the medieval Catholic church, Comte concocted a 'feminine utopia' that would free women from 'all coarse dependence' on men; it promised to emancipate them from 'servile reproduction' and male sexual pleasure (Comte 1877, 266-7; Alighieri 1814). Whereas Plato and his 'modern imitators' suggested 'real progress' was based on 'collective property and promiscuous intercourse,' Comte introduced the 'abstract worship of women' with a 'public festival of the Virgin-Mother'. It intended to replace the 'intellectual belief in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, the true embodiment of the religion of St. Paul' (Comte 1877, 266-7, 357-8). The osten-

and currency system; and, among other features, various types of Positivist architecture. The *République Occidentale* was to emerge over a century's time as a global confederation of 500 city-states or republics. Here sociologists would function as an independent, international, and scientific 'spiritual power'. They thus would hold influence over workingmen and 'moral capitalists' functioning as a separate 'temporal power' operating at the local level within the fields of commerce, agriculture, and manufacturing (Wilson 2018b, 43-51).

Effectively, Comte connected sociology to the creation of a utopia. And for such reasons, it seems, Wells argued that the creation and criticism of utopia was the 'proper and distinctive method of sociology'. Utopias enabled one to 'measure realities from the standpoint of the idealisation' of society Wells (1907, 367-8). This begs the question: had Victorians witnessed forms of sociological practice during their own lifetime? And to whose efforts might we turn to test such a premise?

This essay will analyse the lifework of four of Comte's British followers. They might best exhibit a link between the utopian sensibilities and sociological practice Wells suggested. Along these lines, this essay also builds on the work of intellectual historians, who have recently shown how various historical actors re-particularised philosophical ideas to suit locally-defined 'world-making' agendas during the nineteenth century (Bell 2009). In this regard, Positivism isn't presented here by way of a 'diffusionist model' of 'flows', 'influences', and 'transfers'.[1] It is instead extended though highly personalised and contextualised archetypes (Feichtinger, Fillafer, and Surman 2018, 3; Wilson 2018a). By way of examining these four protagonists' backgrounds and individual capacities, this essay thus seeks to reveal a deeper level of 'world-making', in which personal development interfaces with a common body of philosophical princi-

sible aim here was to enable women to fully 'develop physically, morally and intellectually' while realising the 'Christian dream' of 'human perfection'. That intersection of ideas for Comte was the possibility of pregnancy without sexual intercourse by using 'stimulants' if and when women desired, thus rendering sexual relations with men redundant (Pickering 2009, 324). Comte soon thereafter claimed that only 'truly virginal' women were 'fully worth worship' and emblematic of the Great Being (Armenteros 2017). A 'satisfactory institution of the worship of women', and the 'Utopia of the Middle Ages' was 'out of the question' otherwise (Comte 1877, 357-8).

[1] See for instance: (Simon 1963, 361; Harrison 1971; Rosenberg 1908; Soja 2000, xii-94; Mumford 1997, 351; Buder 1990, 34, 170; Weaver 1984, 31; Wilson 2018b, c, 2019).

ples, to produce unique intellectual and creative tendencies. As first-generation sociologists, Harriet Martineau assumed an abolitionist-feminist perspective, John Henry Bridges a biologic-historical outlook, Edward Spencer Beesly a socio-political stance, and Frederic Harrison an urban-regional framework. Thus, in terms of using sociology as a critical lens for social change, their works aimed to reveal to the public different links between the inner troubles and the outer issues of the world; and this approach, as we will see, is compatible with how contemporary scholars view modern utopianism. The main rationale for choosing these specific individuals, however, is that they were among the chief contributors to the popularisation of Comtism in Britain, by way of publishing English editions of Comte's oeuvre and acting on the philosopher's ideas about the potentials of science to drive social change. Thus this essay employs intellectual history as the interdisciplinary crossroads of the history of philosophy, political thought, sociology and utopianism.

While Harrison, Beesly, Bridges, and George Earlam Thorley were students at Wadham College, Oxford, they read Martineau's English 'condensation' of Comte's *Cours* with 'deepest enthusiasm' (Harrison 1911, 96). This group of eccentrics, then linked by the moniker 'the Mumbo Jumbo club',[1] left university life by the late 1850s. Barring Thorley, who became a Warden of Wadham, the remaining three-quarters of Mumbo Jumbo remained united by the intellectual and ethical spirit of Positivism. They were indeed among the founding members of the British Positivist Society created by their imperious Oxford tutor, Richard Congreve.[2]

Congreve was the immediate inspiration for the Mumbo Jumbo club. He had been trained at Rugby School, where he was instilled with the religious latitu-

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[1] At Wadham, Harrison, Beesly, Bridges, and Thorley enjoyed a Sunday breakfast of cold duck while discussing all things social, political, and religious, framed by the democratic and republican teachings of Congreve, Comte, and Martineau, among other thinkers. According to Harrison (1911, 101), the group 'was in obvious antagonism to the more hilarious spirits who glorified the Boat, the Eleven, sports, and convivialities'. The leader of one such group called "The Hares" (i.e. Hayers = Raggers, or Hazers) nicknamed the quartet 'Mumbo Jumbo' after the idol he believed they worshipped. Harrison explained that the 'cold duck was held to be the "fetish" in whose honour our pernicious rites were performed. [...] So was started, about 1852, the Confederacy of the Scholars of Wadham, which worked on for quite half a century, with common ideals and close friendship'.
[2] Congreve was responsible for translating the fourth volume of Comte's *Système* on the 'Theory of the Future of Man', among other Comtist works.

dinarianism, political liberalism, and ethical imperatives of the Broadchurch headmaster, Thomas Arnold. He proceeded to Oxford for an MA in *Literae humaniores* during the Tractarian movement and earned a reputation for his tenacious and forthright radicalism at Oxford Union and Decade Society debates. Congreve was regarded by conservatives as a 'very dangerous' infidel for his support of Irish emancipation, university reform, anti-imperialism, and Broadchurch thinking (OUBL-CP, MS.Eng.lett.c.185 f. 134; Hutton 1906, 18). On graduating first class and becoming an Anglican minister, he began his rise as an Oxford don. Lecturing broadly on various topics from a continental point of view, beyond those listed on the examination syllabus, Congreve was also popular among the students for engaging them at length on a personal level, and spending his summers with them touring Europe. He urged his pupils to critically assess current events, to question the veracity of historical and contemporary texts, and to make their own judgements. But behind his teachings were the ideas of Comte. By the time he left Oxford in 1854 for a new career as an independent scholar, the Mumbo Jumbo club were his 'apostles'. Alongside the student body, they were well aware of his fixation with 'French prophecies' (OUBL-CP, MSS.Eng.lett.c.181, f. 59). Two years after he began issuing controversial polemical texts as a Positivist in 1857, he founded his church of 'social action', the Positivist Society or Church of Humanity (to separate these groups is a common misnomer). The first few decades of the society's existence embodied the character of what, in the Victorian context, was a prototypal institute of applied sociology.

Notwithstanding, the history of the discipline of sociology in Britain centres around the founding activities of the Sociological Society in 1903. In terms of its intellectual forerunners, most historians overlook the contributions that the Positivist Society may have made to the discipline of sociology. Instead, they put emphasis on the numerical, analytical, and empirical survey methods developed by members of the Royal Statistical Society, the Social Science Association, and other groups.[1] When the Sociological Society came to fruition—owing to pro-

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[1] Leading members of such institutes either expressed disdain for Positivist sociology and largely ignored the works of Martineau and Mumbo Jumbo. These earlier scientific groups considered their own efforts as something between desultory fact-collecting and substantiating the theories of political economy (Branford 1914; Abrams 1968, 8-12; Renwick 2012; Harrison 1866; Wilson 2018b, 15-7; Bridges 1903). Affiliates to the British Positivist Society contributed to sociology via historical

posals circulated by the Positivist sociologist Victor Branford (1903; 1904)—it hosted debates supported by the Positivist Society and other groups. And these debates, scholars have argued, shaped the academic discipline of sociology in Britain. According to most accounts, these battles were waged between three main factions: eugenicists associated with Francis Galton, town planners under Patrick Geddes, and ethical evolutionists linked to L.T. Hobhouse, with the last emerging victorious (Abrams 1968; Kent 1981; Bulmer 1985; Halsey 2004; Scott and Bromley 2013).[1] The historiography of British sociology treats neither the protagonists under consideration here nor the subjects of Positivist sociology and utopianism with great interest.[2]

This neglect is likely rooted in the connotations of Comte's 'gift'—utopia. Recently, however, the sociologist Ruth Levitas (2011, 1) has defined the word utopia as 'how we would live and what kind of world we would live in if we could do just that'. It is in this light that this study applies the term to the protagonists of this study. One thus might think of utopia here as a mode of sociability seeking to negotiate improved relationships between the individual, society, and the environment. Along a similar vein, the esteemed scholar C. Wright Mills (1967, 4, 5-24) presented the 'sociological imagination' as a means to 'understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life [biography] and the external career of a variety of individuals [world history]. From a compatible perspective, the philosopher Charles Taylor (2004, 17) described a 'social imaginary' as one who engages with 'how things go on between' individuals and their fellows, and how 'expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie expectations'

and social analysis. See for instance: (Harrison 1913; Congreve 1855a, b, 1860, 1866; Beesly 1878; Wilson 2018d).

[1] Of these figureheads, Geddes was a member of the British Positivist Society. Hobhouse was also sympathetic to Comte's complete works, but he was not elected a member. Positivists such as Harrison and F.S. Marvin claimed Hobhouse as one of their lot (Collini 1983, 152n16). Hobhouse did after all attend meetings convened by the Positivist Society. He and Bridges spoke together, for instance, on the issue of forced labour in South Africa in 1902 (Harrison 1902).

[2] Abrams (1985, 191) observed that by engaging with Comte, Martineau 'found comfort in a sociological utopia of authoritative knowledge'. Elsewhere, Abrams has shown how members of the Social Science Association used the word 'utopia' to deny sociology as a scientific discipline (Abrams 1968, 82, 271). Also see (Annan 1959; Farmer 1967).

are carried out.[1] Such commentaries suggest that utopians do not live in a literary 'no place', but instead that utopians are actors and that utopianism is performative.

Effectively, this essay seeks to show that the intellectual and creative lives of Martineau and Mumbo Jumbo were distinct but complementary. It argues that their didactic works were tethered at varied lengths to Comte's sociological vision of an incipient modern utopia born of the coupling of enlightened science and moralised industry. Their efforts thus sought to stir a greater conscientiousness of social and environmental phenomena and to transform thoughts and feelings into positive interactions between space, earth, and humanity.

2. An abolitionist-feminist perspective

Throughout her life, Harriet Martineau (1802-76) challenged ideological assumptions that underpinned various forms of social oppression. Her works of fiction and nonfiction alike made Victorians knowledgeable of such pressing affairs as slavery, industrial capitalism, and the condition of women. Although her recent biographer does not use the word 'utopian' to describe her activities, Martineau was a 'daughter of the Enlightenment, committed to social progress and human perfectibility'. She was convinced of the transformative 'power of education' (Hoecker-Drysdale 1992, 21). Martineau's life as a writer—spanning from the ages of nineteen to seventy-four—extended beyond

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[1] A compatible language on the social imagination appears in Comte's *Cours*. Here, Comte described sociology as a 'complementary part of natural philosophy which relates to the positive study of all fundamental laws of social phenomena'. Sociology aimed at 'discovering or perfecting the exact coordination of all observed facts'. This process could open to the 'human imagination the largest and most fertile field' of existence, life on earth and its improvement (Comte 1839, 294).

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the Victorian boundaries of the feminine domain. Her lifework has consistently been the subject of scholarly enterprise since the second wave of feminism of the 1960s (Mann and Béres Rogers 2012; Roberts 2002; Bohrer 2013; Hoecker-Drysdale 1992; Yates 1985; David 1987; Sanders 1986; Pichanick 1980). And although largely ignored by sociologists in her own lifetime, her literary works were well-known in Britain, the Americas, and in Europe.

Harriet Martineau was born in Norwich, England on 12 June 1802 into a large Unitarian family led by the cloth manufacturer Thomas Martineau and his wife Elizabeth. Her only source of primary education were her parents, who offered little emotional support for her inability to hear, taste, and smell. Her earliest public intellectual and moral connections, the Norwich Unitarians, also shaped her life trajectory. They championed rationalism and empiricism, and they were activists for moral education and social welfare. They opened up to her the idea of woman as public figure (Yates 1985, 53). Martineau's first published piece, 'Female Writers of Practical Divinity', spoke admirably of Unitarianism as such (Discipulus 1822). Ultimately, she was among various Unitarians who expressed interest in Comte's sociological thinking, which for many served as a stepping stone to agnosticism (Wright 1986, 156-6, 229, 243).

From the 1820s, Martineau issued the six-part 'Essays on the Art of Thinking' series in the *Monthly Repository*. Here, Martineau surveyed the toll of superstition on religious perils, warfare, and the unquiet obedience of social powers that hindered the progress of science and philosophy. She upheld the 'right pursuit of truth' and the development of a 'noble faculty of Reason' towards an 'enlightened intellect' acting on its 'moral obligation' towards the gradual perfection of society (Martineau 1836, 62, 112-4). Such sentiments quietly resonated with Positivist ideas. As mentioned, Martineau helped to popularise Comte's work during the 1850s. Knowledge of Positivism came to her two decades earlier, with an introduction to the ideas of Comte and his master, Henri de Saint-Simon (Hoecker-Drysdale 2017, 86). The date was 1830, and the messenger was the French collectivist Gustav D'Eichtal, who was staying at the home of their mutual friend, William Fox. D'Eichtal was in fact Comte's 'apostle' and worked closely with him until the spring of 1828; he thereafter spent several months studying the 'socialist' experiment created by Robert Owen in New Lanark, Scotland (Pilbeam 2013, 33).

Of greatest interest for Martineau were Positivist ideas about the 'progres-

sive evolution of society, the goal of positivist systematic knowledge, and the proposal of a new discipline to study society' (Hoecker-Drysdale 2001). Along these lines, Saint-Simon and Comte argued during the 1820s that a scientific elite could assume a role of the medieval Catholic Church in Western society in which an independent spiritual power would thus 'discover and improve' the industrial, social, and moral arrangements' to improve the lives of the masses (Lengermann and Niebrugge 2007, 31). In such a scenario, science and industry could supplant ancient regimes and bequeath a peaceful, rational, and meritocratic system of life; some scholars have cast Saint-Simon as a proponent of 'social democracy' as such, but others think the philosopher's suggestions amounted to creating an 'industrial monarchy' (Rykwert 2000, 62; Howe 2009).

From 1832 to 1834, Martineau synthesised intellectual curiosities and creative talents, producing more than 3,000 pages for her popular *Illustrations of Political Economy* series. These novelettes outlined the impacts of mammon worship, rampant speculation, the condition of women, and necessity of the cooperation of male workers in exchange for 'domestic comforts' (Martineau 1832, x, 82-3). The most contentious story, *Demarara,* focussed on life in the West Indies, and it cast slavery as incompatible with capitalism, free trade, and morality. And as a result, Martineau was widely known as an ardent abolitionist. Above all, however, her series aimed to reveal to the common reader the rigid mechanics and so-called 'immutable laws' of capitalist or individualist system of 'political economy' laid out by Smith, Bentham, Mill, Ricardo, and Malthus, who she studied alongside such collectivist 'social economists' as Saint-Simon, Comte, and Owen (David 1987, 43-4; Harrison 1965, 41). Written during the era of the First Reform Bill, Martineau (2007, 691) relayed her altruistic intentions: 'I thought of the multitudes who needed it, and especially of the poor,—to assist them in managing their own welfare'.

The only non-fiction volume of the series, *The Moral of Many Fables,* outlined the ostensibly iron-clad theories of political economy and declared that 'we must mend our ways and be hopeful'. Echoing the utopian sentiments of Condorcet, Saint-Simon, and Comte, Martineau expressed hope for a state when 'society shall be *wisely* arranged, so that all may become intellectual, virtuous, and happy' (Martineau 1834, 141). Ethical social institutions, she argued, could achieve happiness for all by first addressing the 'long tragedy of pauperism' in which nine million people received legal charity annually. While the poor

were the 'object of primary attention' for various social leaders, the responsibility was left as 'almost the sole employment of women', complained Martineau (1834, 62). The development of women's intellectual and practical capacities as public figures, she maintained, was central to ameliorating the lives of the operative classes (Martineau 1877b, 297-8). She expressed support for aspects of the radical reforming Chartists' agenda of universal education, and perhaps would not have opposed their aim to establish an English republic by moral means (Holyoake 1848).

Martineau's next significant piece *How to Observe Morals and Manners* (1838) took a similar didactic approach. Written during her journey across the Atlantic to America, scholars consider it the first work on sociological methods (Martineau and Lipset 1968, 7). Martineau described it as a study on the 'science of morals', and she wished to kindle readers' awareness of how cooperation furnished moral progress (Martineau and Hill 1989, 15). With an interest in object-oriented ethics, similar to Bridges, Harrison, and Durkheim years later, Martineau delved into the 'study of THINGS'—'the eloquence of Institutions and Records, in which the action of the nation is embodied and perpetuated'. This 'DISCOURSE OF PERSONS' on 'THINGS,' not limited to 'architectural remains, epitaphs, civic registers, [and] national music', she claimed, afforded one more information on morals in a day than the testimony of individuals in a year (Martineau and Hill 1989, 73-4, 211-12; Madoo Lengermann and Niebrugge 2001). Such 'social objects' were positive evidence of the 'fraternal spirit' of cooperation and a signal of the morals and manners of individuals, nations, and humanity generally (Martineau and Hill 1989, 221).

Martineau subsequently published *Society in America* (1837), which systematically and comprehensively examined: the morals of American governmental policies; the economy of disparate climactic regions, including their agriculture, manufacture, and commerce; and the concomitant conflicts arising between indigenous peoples and European invaders (Martineau 1837a, 244, 262).[1] It explored the condition of children, the poor, and religion, and it provided ample

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[1] She wrote 'I should like to see every squatter frightened away from Indian lands, however advantageous their squatting may be upon lands which are unclaimed, or whose owners can defend their own property'. The natives were 'were spoken of in a tone of dislike, as well as pity, by all' (Martineau 1837a, 244, 262).

commentary on the political non-existence of women. She professed not only that women had been written out of the Declaration of Independence but that they were excluded from full, true democratic representation. The government held the power to unjustly take women's property and to enslave, imprison, punish, and execute them for offences. As such, Martineau (1837a, 152) proclaimed that women should not acquiesce to the rule of law. Along these lines, she criticised the insufficiencies of women's education. To American men, the education of women, in terms of the development of their critical thinking skills and practical training, was too often considered a 'dangerous', frivolous, or fanciful pastime. Women were denied the justice of gender equality and were pressured into learning little more than how to be a wife and a male companion in the so-called 'paradise' of indulgent male chivalry (Martineau 1837b, 226-8).[1]

In the same study, Martineau also clearly articulated abolitionist views and exposed the more insidious forms of racism in American life. While blacks were protected legally, they were not acknowledged as such in daily life. Their schools and homes were being torn down, and some were locked out of their hired church pews. 'They are thrust out of offices, and excluded from the most honourable employments, and stripped of all the best benefits of society by fellow-citizens', wrote Martineau (1837a, 145). Ever the idealist, however, she expressed ultimate optimism for the fate of the oppressed. Pointing to the work of some 800 abolitionist institutions in the Northern states, she expressed a belief that soon few would regard America as the 'country of the double-faced pretender to the name of Liberty' (Martineau 1837b, 368; 1837a, 148). Owing chiefly to the questions of slavery and women amidst the quiet assent of the clergy, Martineau (1837b, 369) concluded that the 'civilisation and the morals of the Americans fall below their own principles'.

Martineau's subsequent *Letters on the Laws of Man's Nature and Development* (1851), co-written with the geologist Henry George Atkinson, made her intellectual position even more explicit. Here, she controversially enticed Atkinson to explain his support for phrenology and his disbelief. Martineau enthusiastically claimed that his commentary had emancipated her 'from the little enclosure of dogma', and she championed making science the basis of all knowledge

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[1] As a result of restrictions on education, 'woman's intellect is confined, her morals crushed, her health ruined, her weaknesses encouraged, and her strength punished' (Martineau 1837b, 226-8).

(Martineau and Atkinson 1889, 289).[1] A self-confessed 'atheist in the vulgar sense', Martineau rejected 'popular theology'. Her faith resided in the 'positive method, and its uniform and reliable conclusions' (Martineau 1877a, 351; 1877b, 217). Unsurprisingly, her next turn was to delve into Comte's *Cours* , which according to Martineau scholars was the 'largest enterprise with which she was ever to be engaged' (Wheatley 1957, 315).

Martineau became further acquainted with Comte's ideas by way of Lewes' *A Biographical History of Philosophy* (1845). Comte's works became a 'singular means of enjoyment' thanks to an unnamed friend she visited in Yorkshire in 1850. By 24 April 1851, she was reading the *Cours,* and after two days of dreaming about translating it, she began planning out the project (Martineau 1877b, 366, 371-72). Comte's six-volume set of scientific lectures, each averaging over 750 pages, was full of repetitions written in a woolly style. Over a period of sixteen months Martineau condensed them down to two volumes totalling 1,056 pages. She introduced to English readers the hierarchical classification of the positive sciences, the Law of Three Stages, and static and dynamic sociology. Martineau relayed Comte's desire to bring all speculations under the auspices of the scientific method and to establish a rational basis for education. It was not a translation but an 'intellectual exercise', which brought her to tears of joy (Martineau 1877b, 391).[2]

Martineau's rationale for undertaking the project was that Comte's work 'ascertains with singular sagacity and soundness' a 'firm foundation of knowledge', as the basis for 'intellectual, moral, and social progress'. It was necessary reading, she thought, for the alienated and ethically adrift English working-classes (Martineau 1896a, xxiii-xxiv).[3] One can imagine that as a feminist Mar-

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[1] 'Knowledge gives us a more elevated poetry, gives us the chart and laws of mind to guide us, and will exhibit to us higher objects for reference', wrote Martineau and Atkinson (1889, 237).

[2] Her method was to glance 'over a page or a paragraph, and set down its meaning in the briefest and simplest way' (Martineau 1877b, 391).

[3] Because of his practice of *régime cérébral,* Comte only read a small portion of Martineau's 'condensation' of the *Cours.* He praised it, and described it as a 'faithful but free translation' (Comte 1903, 273). His eager approval of the entire study, it seems, was based largely on the 'unanimous' expression of satisfaction from his disciples in Ireland, Paris, and Holland. He thought the study might garner more followers, particularly women (Littré 1877, 637). Yet, later Comte claimed the *Cours* was really only intended for theorists. The people in France, and Western Catholics in particular, were more interested in witnessing the realisation of the social demands he laid out in the *Système*

tineau likely enjoyed recasting a work written by a misogynist who considered women less intelligent and more emotional than men (Pickering 2017, 175-204; 2009, 132-57; Webb 1960, 307; Hoecker-Drysdale 2001). Yet paradoxically, she did not omit Comte's references to women as 'the feebler sex' who were 'completely adapted' to their 'domestic destination' (Martineau 1853, 376). She instead omitted ten pages of the conclusion, within which Comte made reference to his future 'philosophical labours' including the creation of a Positivist church (Martineau 1896a, 16).

Some of Comte's suggestions thus betrayed Martineau's view of Positivism as a philosophy of science. It nevertheless seems that she considered her various studies of society as having been both independently validated by and reinforcing Comte's work. The philosopher's response to her condensation was to write a 'glowing letter of gratitude, expressing amazement that a woman should have had the breadth of knowledge necessary for the task', and although English reviews were 'extremely hostile', he had her study translated into French (Wright 1986, 66).

Martineau apparently rejected the Religion of Humanity, even though its affiliated utopia situated women alongside sociologists as the leaders of the incipient Positivist era. Instead she held faith in the broadest tenets of the positive philosophy set out in the *Cours*. She was thus a steadfast in defence of Comte and his contributions to Victorian life, which exacerbated conflicts between herself, her family, and her friends. Revealing that Comte's *Cours* had reinforced her observations of morals and manners in society did her few favours. Indeed, she stepped forward courageously to become a leading figure on such topics while forging an abolitionist-feminist approach to a utopian sociology aspiring to realise social change. This approach resonated with Comte's vision in the

(Comte 1904, 143). Despite Comte's boasts about the English-edition *Cours*, his other English followers, especially Harrison and Bridges, complained that his meanings and intentions had been lost in Martineau's edition. Bridges (1905) lavished high praise on Paul Descours and H. Gordon Jones for their more literal translation of the first two chapters of Comte's *Cours,* which appeared under the title *The Fundamental Principles of the Positive Philosophy* (1905). Bridges published a side-by-side comparison of the paragraphs of Martineau's effort aside this new translation to exhibit how her work suffered from some 'serious defects' based on 'erroneous conception'. Some significant paragraphs had been 'omitted entirely', he complained. Martineau's work nevertheless remained on the list of Positivist publications printed on the end leaves of the *Positivist Review.*

Système — to incorporate women and the proletariat into modern society. And after the Comte study appeared, Martineau continued to write on such controversial topics as colonial slavery and expansionist foreign policy for the *Westminster Review,* among other publishers, but with less ease, perhaps owning to her public affiliation to Positivism (Logan 2009).

3. A biologic-historical outlook

The educator, physician, historian, social justice advocate, and philosopher J.H. Bridges (1832-1906) has almost entirely fallen out of contemporary scholarship. Notwithstanding such members of the Sociological Society as L.T. Hobhouse and Victor Branford described Bridges as one of the 'Saints of Rationalism' and the 'cream of Comtism' (Owen 1975, 12). Bridges, as we will see, was one of the first complete British adherents to Positivism, and a distinct biologic-historical outlook framed his utopian sociology.

He was born at Suffolk, England, to Harriet Torlesse and the evangelist minister Charles Bridges. After receiving a preparatory education from his mother, Bridges entered Rugby School in 1845. Its mission was to create upstanding, common-sense Christian citizens devoted to public life. Here, he proved himself as an independent thinker, and in 1851 he won a scholarship to Wadham College, Oxford, where he joined the Mumbo Jumbo club. As Congreve's favourite student and closest follower, it is no surprise that he became the first of the club to detect Congreve's Positivism. Whereas Martineau could not bring herself to become a 'complete' Positivist, her work contributed to Bridges' adherence to Comte's Religion of Humanity in 1854 (Dixon 2008, 60). A vociferous reader and independent thinker already too set in his heterodoxy, Bridges displeased his *Literae humaniores* examiners. Although known as the 'ablest man' around, he took a tragic third-class degree (Bridges 1908, 70). Despite this setback, by

the late 1850s, he had begun his training as a physician at St George's Hospital, London. After taking a BMed at Oxford in 1859, he became a member of the Royal College of Physicians the following year.[1] Arguably, here Bridges was fulfilling Comte's requirement to practice as a priest-sociologist of the Positivist utopia.[2]

It should be added here that those who held the qualification of physician and fully accepted the Religion of Humanity stood as the highest-ranking male Positivists, as 'sociologists' proper, in Comte's utopia (1875, 539-40). One justification for this decision, offered by the Positivist town planner Patrick Geddes, was that 'explanations of divine will' relating to epidemic disease, biological calamity, and other disasters dissolved proportionate to the physician's study of the Positive environment (NLS, MS.10616 f. 191). Sociologists held 'moral and physical' providence over civic hygiene; they must engage with the 'Sociological Morality' of the streets, claimed Comte (1875, 539-40). Thus sociologists might be thought of as doctors of society.

Instead of making his motivations public, which would upset his family, Bridges emigrated to Australia with his cousin-bride Susan Torlesse in June 1861. After arriving at Melbourne, Susan fell ill and died of typhoid fever that December. During his three-month voyage back to England, Bridges locked himself up in his cabin and translated the 430 pages of Comte's *Discours sur l'ensemble du positivisme* (1848).[3] Published in 1865, the translation offered a complete view of Comte's teaching in its totality and served as the 'needed textbook for the young and growing Positivist school in England' (Liveing 1926, 122).[4] Here it was explained that sociology was compatible with 'benevolent affections,' as a result of it being founded on biology and history (Comte 1865, 98, 92). The former discipline emphasised the necessity of collective over individual

[1] During this time Bridges was living at Spring Gardens, a boarding house of John Chapman, the physician and editor of the *Westminster Review,* who hosted soirées with London's literary giants. Here Bridges mingled with Martineau, J.S. Mill, and George Eliot, among others (Liveing 1926, 62).
[2] Comte's *Système* outlined the ideal spatial organisation of a Positivist hospital, among other types of buildings. See for instance: (Comte 1877, 372-80).
[3] Quoting Tennyson's *In Memoriam,* Harrison described the process as 'a sad exercise, like dull narcotics, numbing pain' (Harrison 1908b, xii; Tennyson 1849, v).
[4] According to his colleagues, Bridges rendered a 'literal translation' and 'clear presentation' of Comte's cloudy 'philosophical dogmatism', which sold 'thousands of copies' in the first three editions (Harrison 1908b, viii, x-vi).

life for survival in nature, and the latter held that the progress of civilisation was the result of the combined efforts of socially-minded peoples.[1] For such reasons, Comte coined the word 'altruism' as an antonym to egoism.

In 1861, Bridges was appointed physician at Bradford infirmary, and he had now determined to indefatigably act on the Positivist maxim, 'Live for others'. For the next seven years, he delved into the intellectual, cultural, and industrial problems of the region. Fortified with death-rate statistics, facts he had acquired from independent sanitary surveys, and knowledge from operatives visiting his medical practice, Bridges lectured on the impact of industrial life: the steam engine, alcohol, the printing press, the factory, the rickety house, and soiled street.[2] Bradford ranked among the deadliest towns in England because of its poor-quality dwellings, workshops, sanitation, and its 'inconceivable and intolerably monstrous' canal system, he reported. Like Martineau, he suggested such objects indicated that Englanders 'had not yet reconciled our higher civilisation to a higher form of life' (Bridges 1862, 7-27; N.A. 1862). Bridges accordingly promoted Comte's altruistic theories as the basis of moral and material improvements in England.

Out of all the Mumbo Jumbo club members, Bridges arose as both activist and intellectual champion of Positivism during the 1860s. In *The Unity and Life of Comte's Doctrine* (1866), for instance, he issued an open rebuttal to J.S. Mill's strictures on Positivism as an ethical creed. He revealed the great extent to which the recent works of Mill (1865) aligned with Comte's system of ideas. Mill was indeed an inconsistent ally. Mill's study *On Liberty*, for instance, castigated Comte's turn to 'intellectual degeneracy' and his 'hatred for scientific and all purely intellectual pursuits' in the *Système* (Mill 1905, 30; 1865, 29). And he labelled despotic Comte's calls for 'unity' via an organised spiritual power. Countering the efforts of Mill and Martineau, Bridges argued that Comte's ear-

[1] The Positivist Vernon Lushington wrote a lecture explaining this line of thinking, and like Comte's British followers it was conspicuously mysogynist. See: (Wilson 2013).

[2] He entered into radical literary circles of the Jewish women's educational reformer Fanny Hertz, who described him as 'intellectually the most important man' she had known (Wills 1852, 81). He helped and encouraged Hertz to found the Mechanics Institute at Bradford. Inspired by the 'beautiful' theory and practice Martineau laid out in *Household Education* (1849) and Nightingale's *Notes on Nursing* (1959), Bridges lectured 'factory girls' and 'working men' at the institute on Bradford life, health and, controversially, Comte's atheistic philosophy (Liveing 1926, 91).

liest works of the 1810s through to his death expressed an enduring 'master-motive'—to provide a rational, 'renovated education' for modern world-making, guided by sociology. Here unity was a central theme, and it represented the creative interplay of physical, intellectual, and moral energies converging to invigorate the collective organism of humanity (1866, 28-34). The notion of unity, claimed Bridges, meant crushing neither the ego or selfish instincts as Mill had claimed, but learning the altruistic principle of subordinating the self to the common good. Bridges (1882a, 47) offered a most charitable explanation of how Comte was no despot; he reminded Mill of the philosopher's motto '*Conciliant en fait, inflexible en principe*'.

Despite his unsavoury Comtist affiliations, Bridges' activities as a physician were well-received. Elected FRCP in 1867, he became factory inspector for north Yorkshire in 1869, and from 1870 to 1892 he served as a metropolitan medical inspector for the Local Government Board. Among his causes were nutrition, artisan housing conditions, child hygiene, and the prevention of small pox and contagious diseases.[1] During this time Bridges issued what some people described as the 'most philosophical essays ever written on public health' (Wilson 1870, 42). In the 'Influence of Civilisation on Health' (1869), for instance, he confined himself to the 'study of the laws […] the constant relations which exist in social phenomena'.[2] Like Martineau, he situated political economy and its blind accumulation of wealth as *the* ideology of Victorian Britain, and thus the successor of military, civic, intellectual, and religious values. Owing to a lack of 'sympathetic instincts' in Britain, one could anticipate not a proper education but instead a morbidly dull, monotonous, and ultimately meaningless existence. This situation signalled a failure to harmonise individuality and community and to thus forge 'true civilisation', claimed Bridges (1869, 147-49). With

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[1] See for instance his Socratic pamphlet, *A Catechism of Health: adapted for primary schools* (Bridges 1868, 1870).

[2] In contrast to the speculations on nature and society discussed by Rousseau, Boerhaave, and Fielding, he referred to using Comte's 'method of Historical filiation, or the study of the laws according to which the acts of each generation affect the acts of its successors'. He argued following Leibniz's maxim '*d'abord la vertu, est puis la santé*' that virtue and health were inseparable and constituted the 'twofold object of human thought' (Bridges 1869, 141-42). In biological and sociological terms, health pertained to the 'harmonious action of each organ […] the combination of strong individuality with orderly co-operation' in 'continuous adjustment of an organism to its environment' (Bridges 1869, 143).

historical statistics and diagrams, he showed how England's deteriorating rural districts supplied its manufacturing centres with an abundance of workers. And, out of the blind chivalry Martineau despised, he desired to remove women from ostensibly too unsanitary, too unsafe, and too demanding manufacturing environments. He claimed that the 'greatest problem' of the nineteenth century was that religious and military communities had increasingly ignored the medieval notion of *noblesse oblige.*

Like Comte, Bridges called for a new 'kind of discipline, some supreme controlling influence' over the social environment: the recognition of new sensibilities in which industry and capital supplanted the military mentality, and the scientifically-trained intellect took the role once played by religion, acting on beneficent principles. He envisioned the 'consolidation and revision of our whole sanitary legislation' including the appointment of two hundred medical inspectors devoted to enforcing existing sanitary laws on housing, implementing a 'simple catechism of health' in primary education, creating new public parks, and drawing a tighter focus on the condition of the agricultural labourer. For Bridges (1869, 158-61) the scheme signalled the 'conscious direction and modification' of the social environment by the sociological 'wisdom and the foresight of Humanity'.

Bridges thereafter issued 'History an Instrument of Political Education' (1882), which contended that the purpose of education was to 'redeem modern industrial life from slavery by giving each worker a share in the inheritance of Humanity' (Bridges 1882b, 8). Here, Bridges argued that one could not understand contemporary conflicts without being familiar with their deep-rooted origins. Like a physician examining a patient, he claimed that the student of the past had to investigate the comprehensive history of the patient's life—their internal and external evolution, from their origins to the present. One must study their health as a long, dramatic sequence of religious, governmental, military, commercial, scientific, cultural, and industrial events. During this analysis, Bridges presented Eastern and Western cultures as unified by the shared etymology of various scientific words alongside common methods and ways of interpreting the physical world, the positive environment. Science was not conducive to shallow nationalism as such but was gradually producing a peaceful 'global commonwealth of states', as Comte forecast (Bridges 1882b, 30).

In 1878, Bridges became the first president of the English Positivist Commit-

tee organised by the Mumbo Jumbo triumvirate. It was a broader, less dogmatic offshoot of Congreve's Church of Humanity and offered various social, intellectual, and cultural activities (as a political education) in affiliation with Positivist clubs across the world (Wilson 2015). As mentioned above, such affiliates to Positivism initiated and supported the founding of the Sociological Society in London.[1] Here, Bridges spoke on 'Some Guiding Principles of the Philosophy of History' (1906). This continuation of his studies of social dynamics in evolution was propelled by the work of Mill (1843, 606) and Comte (1876). In a utopian manner, Bridges referred to how the creative or 'speculative faculties' were the 'most influential agent' of modern society. These faculties are based on intellectual and religious developments and drove affections and practical activities towards social change (Bridges 1906, 200-1). Drawing on Comte's Law of Three stages, Bridges traced the evolution of Western society in which fetishist-polytheistic and theocratic leaders relied on 'unseen and arbitrary' powers to advance 'civilisation' through warfare and slavery (Bridges 1906, 212). Examining Comte's utopia as a scientific epistemology, he expressed his belief that the third 'positive' stage of historical existence would emerge from the 'scientific examination of the laws of social concord and of social progress,' to create a social superstructure premised on 'justice, freedom and mutual service' (Bridges 1906, 220). When 'rightly interpreted' from a sociological perspective, historical study could disclose the 'secrets of destiny' for humanity, claimed Bridges (1903, 209).

Indeed, Comtean Positivism shaped Bridges' life. After taking a disastrous third-class degree at Oxford, Positivism provided him with the basis for an active and meaningful career. He was among the first Britons to act on Comte's suggestion that a true sociologist would believe in the Religion of Humanity, care for the city-space as a registered physician, and employ Positivist history to moralise society. Hence, he developed a biologic-historical strand of sociology. Bridges' desire to remarry after his wife's death, however, proved to be highly

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[1] The initial discussions about establishing a Sociological Society were held on 29 June 1903 in the rooms of the Statistical Society in London. In attendance were Bridges, Patrick Geddes, J.A. Hobson, L.T. Hobhouse, and Benjamin Kidd, among others. Bridges maintained that the aim of science 'is to discover natural laws, and by means of such laws to predict phenomena before their occurrence or before opportunity for direct observation of them has been afforded. Prediction, as Auguste Comte long ago explained, is the test of science' (Bridges 1903, 206).

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problematic to more devout Positivists such as Richard Congreve. This was one reason for the 1878 schism between the Mumbo Jumbo club members and Congreve, who was never fully convinced they truly adhered to or did enough for the Positivist cause.

4. A socio-political stance

Edward Spencer Beesly (1831-1915) was a controversial home rule advocate, Positivist sociologist, historian, and professor. His name sometimes appears within British political history and typically in good graces.[1] His death caused an outpouring of remembrances from trade unionists, social democrats, members of parliament, and public figures including H.M. Hyndman (1915), Robert Applegarth and Herbert Burrows (1915).[2] The *Sociological Review* recalled that Beesly's 'politics were derived from his sociology,' which was based on the 'premise of the historic evolution of humanity' (Swinny 1915).

Beesly was born 23 January 1831 at Feckenham, England, into the strict Anglican household of the evangelical clergymen James Beesly. Edward's earliest domestic interactions instilled in him a forthright moral and intellectual earnestness that he is said to have rarely betrayed (Harrison 1915). His stringent father taught him Latin and Greek and then sent him off in 1846 to live on the Isle of Man. Here he was under the unbending masters at King William's College, the unruly environment of which was portrayed in Frederic Farrar's *Eric; or Little by Little* (1858). Beesly gradually became a keen spectator of the political liberal advocacy of Richard Cobden and John Bright, and he was captivated by the upheaval of social structures during the 1848 European Revolutions

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[1] See: (Cole 1970, 385; Bevir 2011, 47; Biagini 2007).
[2] See: (Applegarth and Burrows 1915; Hyndman 1915).

(Harrison 1959b). The only book he knew well, however, was the Bible. And on this basis, the following year he entered the bastion of evangelicalism at Oxford University, Wadham College, with a Bible clerkship. His disciplined nature and ability to recall Christian verses with ease impressed the future leader of the British Positivist school, Richard Congreve.

Alongside his Mumbo Jumbo club affiliates, Beesly actively engaged in the Oxford Union, which was a debate club for training those interested in the public life of politics. Beesly served as the Union's librarian the year before he took his BA in 1854. Congreve resigned from Oxford that year, and took on the role of private tutor in Wandsworth, London, while publishing political tracts on home rule for Gibraltar and India; they brought him instant notoriety and shocked his closest followers. Notwithstanding, by this time Mumbo Jumbo had a reputation for using Union debates to defend manufacturing strikes, to 'attack the Tories', to uphold the principles of republicanism, and to promote prophetic visions of socialism, where workers 'have a direct share in the profits and the master be overseer and clerk of the works' (BLPES-HP 1/3, ff. 95-6).[1] Beesly engaged in such activities as he proceeded to an MA, taking a second class in *literae humaniores* in 1857.[2]

Although appointed in 1860 as the chair of History at University College London and professor of Latin at Bedford College, Beesly prioritised Positivist activism over all other things.[3] After the London masons went on strike in 1861,

[1] Beesly served as the Union president in 1862. Airing Positivist perspectives on contemporary affairs he argued that Giuseppe Mazzini, the ardent supporter of Italian unification, deserved the sympathy and respect of Britain. Controversially, he proclaimed that the 'Conservative Reaction' in England was a 'Conservative Delusion' (N.A. 1865, 46), and that the much antagonised radical politician John Bright was an 'enlightened and patriotic statesman' for his denunciations of the Crimean War (Kent 1978, 27). He also argued at the Union that the unification of workers as trade unions was not only necessary but that their conduct was a wise and justified response to employers' unions (N.A. 1865, 42).

[2] Despite this setback, he was appointed assistant master at Marlborough College under George Cotton, the headmaster and friend of Congreve. Beesly thereafter left for London in 1959, where he served as a principal for a University College London student residence hall.

[3] During this time Mumbo Jumbo was reunited in London. In 1859 Congreve established the first Church of Humanity in Britain at his Southfields, Wandsworth, London home. His first intention, it seems, was for the 'Church' to address the 'social war' between capital and labour, specifically the construction trades striking for the nine hours movement. Congreve presented the Religion of Humanity as differing from Christianity because it dealt 'directly with social questions'. The 'most

for instance, he signed an open letter in defence of trade unions that appeared in *The Times*,—the nationally syndicated newspaper he described as the 'mouthpiece of the masters' (Beesly 1861c, 275-6). Alongside such Christian socialists as Thomas Hughes, he helped to win a compromise between the striking masons and the master builders (Beesly et al. 1861).[1] Meanwhile, Congreve (1892, 181-4) prompted international Positivist Society members in Paris to express support for the London Building Strike (Magnin 1861). And from this point onward French workers were in continual correspondence with George Odger and others on trade union activities (Kun and Magnin 1913).

Along these lines, Beesly's 1861 essay 'Trades Unionism' for the *Westminster Review* aimed to align the ideas of New Model Unionism with Comte's theory of social economy (Harrison 1965, 17). Here, he encouraged unionists to form an 'industrial regime', to shape public opinion, and to make the capitalist 'doubt his morality' (Beesly 1861c, 275-6). Beesly claimed that workers felt that their trade union was 'something dearer, something more significant, than the British Constitution or the Established Church, aye, or than country itself'. He rather romantically believed that unionists were so loyal to one another that they formed a near equivalent to a religious community of worshippers, 'yearning for an ideal state of society' (Beesly 1861c, 275-6). Notwithstanding his hazy economic theorisations and conspicuous Comtist utopianism, he emerged as a welcome spokesperson for London Trades Council and the labour movement generally by the mid 1860s (LMU-LTC 1/2, ff. 6).

One of Beesly's main conduits of communication was the workingmen's newspaper, *The Bee-Hive.* Here, he published polemics against various popular conservative newspapers broadcasting the 'distortion of facts' regarding trade unions and their activities (Beesly 1861b; Beesly 1861a; Beesly 1863e, d; 1863b). He also promoted the pro-federal activities of the American North, agitated about the treatment of operatives during the Lancashire 'cotton famine,' criti-

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urgent of all' that required 'social action' was: 'How are the working classes to be made, in the fullest sense of the term, citizens; how are they to be incorporated into the existing social order, so as to have their due share of its benefits?' (Congreve 1874, 110).

[1] They amplified the sole, unheeded voice of striking masons who favoured neither the nine hours movement nor the hourly system in which masters hired labourers committed to 'systematically working 12 hours, and even more, per diem'. The strike committee demanded a standard five days of ten hours work with five and a half hours of work on Saturdays (Beesly et al. 1861).

cised the conscious consumption of the Royal Family, and argued that only a new religion could tame contemporary anarchy (1863d; Beesly 1863a, b; Harrison 1957). During this time Beesly was on close terms with such trade union leaders as George Odger and George Howell of the London Trades Council, as well as Robert Applegarth of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, which elected Beesly as its first honorary member. Along these lines, Beesly has been credited with organising a 'most significant and important [political] act' for country and humanity—the Working Men's Emancipation meeting on 23 March 1863 at St. James' Hall. Mumbo Jumbo stood alongside the statesman John Bright and trade union leaders, and they together expressed their full support for Abraham Lincoln, the Northern states, and the emancipation of American slaves (Beesly 1863e; 1863a). Beesly denounced the theories of political economy as the root evil of the international working classes (1863c).[1] French and British workers were also called on to extend support for Polish independence and Italian unification (Beesly 1864; Harrison 1864; Beesly 1863c). Beesly's efforts in particular, it has been suggested by several historians, paved the way for the First International,[2] which called for the economic 'emancipation of the working classes' in all 'counties in which modern society exists', in addition to the 'abolition of class rule', and the recognition of equal rights and duties (N.A. 1871, 3). But not all was lost to Marx. It seems Beesly was taking a wider outlook based on Comte's anti-imperialist ideas in the *Système,* which inspired an array of British socialists (Claeys 2010; Porter 1968).

While his friend Marx took the leadership of the International, Beesly was developing a sociological study of British imperialism in the 'uncivilised' wastelands, beyond Europe, where 'modern society' did not exist. His essay appeared in the volume called *International Policy* (1866), which as a matter of debate is either nothing new or the magnum opus of Positivist diplomacy (Porter 1968; Claeys 2010). Herein Beesly asserted that Britain's maritime supremacy was rooted in the immoral commercial activities of the Protestant middle class. With a policy based on a system of 'violence and injustice', British conduct abroad

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[1] 'Political economists tell us that labour is a commodity, and that like other commodities, if it is very cheap in one place it will have a tendency in the long run to sink in value in other places also. It is not our interest that labour should be here or anywhere else, much less that it should be absolutely unpaid,' wrote Beesly (1863c).
[2] See, for instance: (Bagenal 1883, 425; Gryzanovski 1872, 330; Harrison 1959a).

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was incompatible with modern European society. Like the forecasts of Saint-Simon, Comte, and Congreve, Beesly claimed that without a true 'Universal Church' embracing all aspects of modern life, Western civilisation was destined to collapse (Beesly 1866, 158, 168, 220-1). Critics likened Beesly's tone in *International Policy* to that of a moral martyr shouting platitudes about English hypocrisy. Some foreign journals called *International Policy* a 'remarkable book, a sign of the times', and they desired to see such a treatment for their own foreign policy. But the British press deemed its promotion of Comtist propaganda as both ridiculous and courageous owing to its highly 'uncommon and unpopular' nature (N.A. 1866b, a).

In 1867, Beesly stoked public indignation and gasps from the Commons for defending the Sheffield Outrages.[1] Branded 'DR. BEESTLY' in the popular press, he nearly lost his post at University College London when he claimed that the Outrages were no less immoral than the Jamaican Mutinies perpetrated by Governor Eyre (Beesly 1867a, b; Congreve 1867; N.A. 1867a, b). Among other conflicts, the Outrages stirred the government to declare that trade unions held no legal protection. When a Royal Commission was called to address the matter, Beesly described it as a 'symptom of the enormous social revolution' of modern times (Beesly 1867b). Beesly and Harrison, among others, prepared the Royal Commission minority report, which served as the basis of a new trade union law. Active between 1868 and 1906, this law granted unions the same legal protection as friendly societies. As a measure of appreciation, the London Trades' Council invited Beesly to deliver a lecture before their workers on 7 May 1868. Entitled the 'Social Future of the Working Class' Beesly argued that the year 1789 marked a purely political upheaval. The events of the year of 1848 spurred a social revolution, where such 'real forces' as the co-operative movement and especially its moral superior, trade unionism, could ameliorate the lives of the working class. Following Comtean thinking, Beesly held that unions could furnish posterity with happiness and comfort by teaching the 'possessors of power' how to use their influence for the 'interests of society'. Unions could pressure the state to raise taxes on the wealthy to help

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[1] The Sheffield Outrages were a string of violent or intimidating acts committed by trade unionists on low-paying employers and non-union workers. The Royal Commission found that the trade union leader William Broadhead coordinated and funded the attacks.

the working class 'arrive much nearer perfection, both moral and material'. And they could moralise capitalists to provide higher wages, facilitate working-class home ownership, and reduce working hours. They could enable the 'workman [...] to educate himself, to enjoy himself, and above all to see more of his family' (Beesly 1869, 1, 5-6, 14-15). Along these lines, Beesly's 'Programme for Trade Unions' during the general election of 1869 proposed to establish laws for the protection of union funds, to protect unionists from conspiracy charges, and to create public juries for trade offences. It also recommended an extension of the Acts preventing women and children from factory employment, a national system of compulsory secular education, and cuts in indirect taxes and military expenditure, alongside hikes in property taxes (Harrison 1967).[1]

In his subsequent writings Beesly suggested that applied sociology, when linked to the Religion of Humanity, could serve as the guide for implementing such initiatives for a broader social reorganisation (Beesly 1881, 18; Beesly 1870; Beesly 1886, 1887; N.A. 1915). Although he offered little detail here, he contributed to popularising Comte's utopia by translating the third volume of the *Système.* He also served as the president of the London Positivist Committee, founded the *Positivist Review,* and contributed over seventy of 558 biographical entries to the book called *New Calendar of Great Men* (1892).

Scholars have remarked that as a doughty knight of the Positivist faith, Beesly's efforts were rooted in disseminating Comte's 'conception of the nature of the proletariat and its "historical destiny"'—realising Comte's *République Occidentale* utopia (Harrison 1959b, 24; Thomas 1915). This vision called on Positivists to unite workers under the banner of trade unionism and to form, in the words of Comte (1901, 163), a 'systematic connection with the socialist movement towards internal regeneration'. For Beesly, trade unions were thus an integral part of Comte's sociological vision of modernity, where science and industry would supplant the order of church and crown as the new 'spiritual and temporal' powers. Beesly's utopian sociology was bottom-up and of a socio-

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[1] Along a similar vein, Beesly and his Positivist colleagues were keen champions of the Paris commune, and though severely criticised they considered it a working model for the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' Comte imagined decades earlier in the *Système* (Beesly 1871a, b). Scholars of Positivism have cast the commune as a case of 'the rule of the Democracy; of the exploited rather than the exploiter; of the workman than the employer; of the tenant rather than the landlord; of the hard-pressed debtor rather than the well-heeled creditor' (Harrison 1971, 8).

political nature as such and it aided his personal struggle to help those less fortunate than himself. It was perhaps the most controversial when compared to that of his colleagues. His interventions into political affairs, fortified by his Positivist morality, drove him to not only forge important events in labour history but to also stoke the sentiments of revolt, which nearly cost him his academic career.

5. An urban-regional vision

An unsettling and polymathic figure, Frederic Harrison (1831-1923) was the most well-known Mumbo Jumbo member. He managed to present Positivism more diplomatically than his colleagues, as something palatable if not entirely unsavoury to the Victorian public. He managed to entice such eminent Victorians as Charles Booth, George Eliot, Patrick Geddes, and John Ruskin to explore the world of Comtean thought. And as a sociologist and literary savant, he investigated the ethical nature, governance, and operations of cities past and present, especially the London region. As we will see, he imagined through an urban-regional framework how labour collectives could spur its transformation into an ideal Positivist republic or city-state.

Born on 18 October 1831 to a wealthy stockbroker and his wife Jane Brice, young Harrison's first memories were of the rolling landscapes of suburban Muswell Hill, London. Julia provided him with regular lessons in geography, history, and Latin. But following the pedagogical philosophy of Isaac Taylor (1838, 52), Harrison's first true 'classroom' was in the rural outdoors, which complemented his father's interest in gardening, art, and architecture. The young Harrison was particularly fascinated by his father's daily trips into London by stagecoach, from which one could witness broad panoramas of the city's dramatic roofscape of steeples and smokestacks.

On moving to 22 Oxford Square, London, at the age of nine, Harrison recalled taking half-hour walks into the 'quiet fields and pure air' of the countryside. In the city, he quickly became aware of his social privileges. 'I used to watch the climbing boys—"sweeps"—little children who were sent up chimneys to sweep them and rattle outside the pots,' he wrote; '[…] we looked on them with a strange compound of wonder, pity, and horror' (Harrison 1911, 19). He quickly developed a love for the classics and architecture as family holidays extended into the continent. He became captivated with French cities, gothic cathedrals, Romanesque churches. And he became fully aware of the marked contrast between the common people at home and abroad (Harrison 1911, 9, 29, 47).

In 1849 Harrison, then an eighteen-year-old Tory and devout Anglican who knew no other book better than the Bible, entered Wadham College, Oxford. Regarded as 'eccentric' if 'mad' for tastes and convictions uncommon to typical boys, the young scholar found solace in the teachings of the 'famous tutor', Congreve. As a Mumbo Jumbo club member, he encountered the new science of sociology and read the works of Martineau, J.S. Mill, G.H. Lewes, Émile Littré, and David Brewster. After taking a second class in moderations in 1852, he completed a *literae humaniores* the following year. Along these lines, the year of 1855 marked a certain turn in life for Harrison. The twenty-four-year-old graduate now considered himself a 'Republican, a democrat, and a Freethinker' (Harrison 1911, 95). After becoming aware of Congreve's Positivism, he visited Comte in Paris and returned to London thoroughly impressed with the philosopher's latest ethical ideas.[1] After assuming the position of tutor at Wadham College, he returned to London life, taught history and Latin at Working Men's College, and he studied law until called to the bar in 1858.

Similar to Beesly's, Harrison's various vocations were framed by Positivist thinking, and Bridges' demands 'social action'. While living in the Lancashire area during the 1860s, Bridges urged his colleagues Beesly and Harrison to investigate the 'cotton famine'. After various interviews Harrison published accounts on the oppressive nature of poor relief administration, exposed instances of church corruption, and criticised the indifference of the manufacturing aristocracy towards the plight of their former operatives (Verity 1863; Harrison 1863; Vogeler 1984, 55). He proposed a series of landscape projects to enable

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[1] The philosopher had recently finished outlining his utopian vision in the *Système.*

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the forlorn to recuperate their region with spaces of beauty and leisure (1863, 1865b, a; Vogeler 1984, 55; Wilson 2019). As a Positivist sociologist, Harrison documented the nature of life in regions across the nation. He collected information on the working conditions, hours, wages, education, pastimes, beliefs, and living conditions of trade unionists. He interviewed trade union leaders and documented the rules and procedures of their organisations. By publishing his various investigations on industry in scientific journals and parliamentary proceedings, Harrison aimed to legitimise, systematise, and strengthen the institution of trade unionism for some forty years. He plainly claimed in 1908 that such efforts were intended to help realise Comte's utopia (Harrison 1908a, 262). In this vision, trade unions were the modern equivalent of medieval guilds. In his lectures published as *The Meaning of History* (1862), for instance, he wrote that the medieval clergy provided guilds with the 'constant sense of each citizen having a place in a complex whole'. He praised Comte's aim to establish a similar Positivist sociability with city-spaces replete with 'centres of moral and spiritual education' (Comte 1875; Harrison 1894a, ii-iii, 54-8, 236). To imitate the relationship between the medieval clergy and guilds, the Positivist Society aimed to counsel trade union disputes with industrialists—to 'moralise capital' (Harrison 1884; Hyndman, Bradlaugh, and Beesly 1884; 1874a; 1874b).

Like Beesly and Congreve, Harrison not only lectured at the London Trades' Council and other labour institutes, but also invited workers to the Positivist Society meetings. During the 1870s, he incrementally laid out how trade unions could play a central role to social reorganisation, by way of creating a network of industrial city-states or republics. Harrison stressed that the defining attribute of the ideal industrial city was civil activity 'devoted to the welfare of the community itself'. Secular education was the 'first element' of 'the very conditions of the life of the citizen', and the Positivist Society 'temple' held education as one of its central imperatives (BLPES-HP 2/2, ff. 16-7; Harrison 1875, 236-7). A scientific and moral education, as provided by the Positivist Society, would engender a measure of 'equality' between citizens, giving them the 'liberty' to contribute to society. By merit alone could they gain full 'entitlement' to the 'gratitude and honour of their fellows', maintained Harrison (BLPES-HP 2/2, ff. 64-72).

More immediately, Harrison stated, 'present life is undermining our health, our sanity, and our civilisation,' which was a consequence of the haphazard

and 'incessant growth' of 'every city of the kingdom' (Harrison 1911, 2-47). The 'monstrous, oppressive, paralysing bulk of modern London is becoming one of the great diseases of English civilisation,' he wrote (Harrison 1894a, 242). London, he declared, was becoming a 'wilderness of houses' with 'huge areas of ugliness, and portentous piles of brick and iron which modern ideas of progress have given it' (Harrison 1886, 233-56). Britons could no longer experience a leisurely half-hour stroll out to 'open fields' to 'breathe the air of the country, or see its freshness' (Harrison 1911, 2-47).

Harrison believed that ethics and education should serve as the basis for restructuring of public service and industry. On the national level, he called for the municipalisation of the factory, post office and rail, road, harbour, pier, dock, bridge, and lighthouse. Extending the sanitary agenda outlined by Bridges, Harrison claimed the sovereign municipality should 'provide for its citizens air, water, light absolutely pure, unlimited in quantity and gratuitous to all' (Comte 1877, 267-8; Harrison 1898; 1894a, 244-51, 412-55). The community of trade unionism was important to protecting individual liberty because it could refuse to produce adulterated goods or poison the environment writ large (BLPES-HP 2/2, ff. 58-9). Like the Garden City inventor Ebenezer Howard, Harrison urged unions to use their strike fund to seek out and flatten the 'blind accumulation' of 'old, poisonous, and crumbling' suburban ghettos, thereby permitting the country to 'invade' the town, to create a civic province (Harrison 1894a, 244-51, 412-55; 1894b).

As an alternative to sub-urbanism, Harrison advocated urban surgery to 'economise space by loftier buildings'. The home, he claimed, was the fundamental 'spiritual' building block of social reorganisation.[1] Like Comte, who outlined a 'collective system' of mixed-use, multi-family housing blocks in the *Système*—as well as temples, schools, and salons—Harrison described 'the future working homes of our great cities' as 'a scientific system of tenements' (Comte 1877, 380; Harrison 1906, 284). Instead of 'cheerless, huge, monotonous barracks' Harrison proposed 'detached blocks of not less than five or six stories, each housing not less than twenty or thirty families' (Harrison 1894a, 414-31). These mid-rise buildings would also provide common spaces of education, medicine, and craft.

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[1] A common positivist trope was that the home was 'the natural school of the social virtues' (Swinny 1908; Wilson 2013).

Such semi-closed structures would plug into larger civic spaces, playgrounds, parks, and transport links. Harrison envisioned London becoming 'an aggregate of cities [...] real civic organisms of a manageable size' (Harrison 1894a, 414-31). 'Ideal London', replete with intellectual and moral institutions, would gradually emerge (Comte 1877, 267-8; Harrison 1898; 1894a, 244-51, 412-55). Heeding Comte's advice for creating Positivist republics in the *Système*, Harrison suggested that future London would be home to an average of two million people and have certain geographical limitations on its expansion (Comte 1877, 267-8; Harrison 1898; 1894a, 244-51, 412-55).

Along these lines, Harrison was a keen advocate of 'Home Rule All Around' following the Local Government Act of 1888. Over the next few years, the London County Council appointed him to lead the design of the Kingsway Boulevard, which permitted trade unionists to begin rebuilding the city. But he ultimately presented smaller Roman British towns, namely Bath, as both the original garden cities and a model for town planning and place-making, which indeed aligned with Comte's vision about the city-states of the *République Occidentale* (Harrison 1914).

Harrison developed an urban-regional strand of sociology, which being from a family of architects and builders suited his background. From early on in life, he seemed aware of his social privileges and felt a responsibility to use them for the greater good. His training as a historian and barrister as well as his career as a figure of letters facilitated his broad presentation of Positivism as offering improved moral and material comforts for modern life, which made the system of ideas more accessible to the public. Of Mumbo Jumbo, he was the least conform or appease Congreve's dogmatic views about the Religion of Humanity. For Congreve, the glum but unacceptable truth was that Harrison reigned in a large group of intellectual and literary sympathisers to the Positivist cause. But Congreve's strident demanded was that Mumbo Jumbo and others adhere to the letter of the Religion of Humanity, hence rendering all other efforts futile.

6. Conclusion

Martineau and Mumbo Jumbo shared commonalities that were not mutually exclusive to all Victorian sociologists, but these likenesses nonetheless seemed

integral to their Positivist outlooks. As utopians, they all believed social better-
ment was rooted in education and in the creation of an altruistic and rational so-
ciety, where science formed the basis of all knowledge. Martineau aimed to lib-
erate women from the oppressive spaces and servitude to patriarchal demands
within the home and their near-singular public role as Poor Law guardians. But
Mumbo Jumbo sought to keep the world of women and children apart from fac-
tory life and the suffrage. They considered women the objects of their Positivist
worship, and at the same time, leaders of the Positivist era. While Martineau
remained suspicious of trade unions, Mumbo Jumbo extended support for them
on the premise that they could acquire various social benefits for the common
good. Whereas they all took a critical stance on slavery, Mumbo Jumbo also
maintained an explicitly anti-imperialist position. Positivist ideas of history and
social unity framed their intellectual and creative work, and such convictions
propelled their practical activism offering distinct but unified responses to the
shifting currents of social and political events. Martineau, on the other hand,
chiefly took the role of a detached observer, perhaps owing to her disabilities,
turning from an intellectual to an all-encompassing social commentator aim-
ing to influence institutions. Whereas Martineau chiefly operated alone Mumbo
Jumbo united the voices of the British Positivist Society.

Apart from these differences, while Positivism informed their work, for Mar-
tineau it strictly remained a practice of a scientific method linked to hopeful-
ness about rational social change. She did not attend Congreve's Church of
Humanity. On the other hand, Mumbo Jumbo were believers in the destiny of
humanity, as laid out in Comte's *Système.* They considered their lifework as a
contribution towards realising the Positivist utopia. The translations of these
four actors helped to advance Comte as the founder of modern sociology and
aimed at resolving societal issues and personal troubles. Rooted in the socio-
logical imagination, their works thus furthered the institutionalisation of the
discipline in Britain. But in terms of their own lives, Positivism seemingly gave
them a unique voice and emotional identity. It may have solved their personal
problems but it seemingly amplified the fractures in their interpersonal rela-
tionships.

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