

## VII

### William Moraley, Watchmaker, of Newcastle (1699–1762)

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Wm. Moraley, *The Infortunate*, ed. Susan Klepp and Billy Smith, Penn State Press, Pennsylvania 1992.  
Cloth \$25, paper \$12.95.

WILLIAM MORALEY was, it seems, an idle fellow. Or so he goes to some pains to have us believe. His father paid for an education rather above William's expectations in life—Latin, Arithmetic, Music and Dancing—and the youth profited little from it. Again his father secured him a Clerkship with an Attorney in the Lord Mayor's Court and William spent his time 'vapouring' about the streets of London. After two years of this his father wrote off the law as a career for young William and took him as an apprentice under his own eye, but, as will be seen, even at that William did not stay the course. And yet William drew something from his education, his endless rebuffs, and his arduous peregrinations; he did write a readable and, on the whole, credible autobiography. Sociable, impulsive, imprudent, an idle apprentice and a spendthrift, cast up at last in middle age on the banks of the Tyne, he proved at least articulate.

William Moraley came, he claims, from a family with some pretensions, his father being the third and youngest son "of a Gentleman, Chief of an ancient Family and considerable Estate, descended from the Barons *Morley*, of *Swanton Morley*, in *Norfolk* . . . he held Lands in *Northumberland*, bearing his Name." As a younger son, his father had been apprenticed to the great Tompion and later worked for him as a journeyman clockmaker. Through his mother William claimed kinship with the family of Sonds, later Earls of Faversham. He was born in London in 1699.

Of William's education we have already written; it was designed for a youth of better

expectations than he proved able to justify. Meanwhile disaster struck; his father had invested in the South Sea Company and, when the bubble burst, "was bit to the tune of £800, which somewhat impaired his Fortune, and being advanced in Years, proposed to my mother to settle at Newcastle, where he had many Friends." From London they travelled to Newcastle by sea and made their first harbourage with a Mr. John Morley, presumably a relative, at his house next to the Black and the Grey, in the Bigg Market. Perhaps the father was not wholly satisfied with William's application to his trade, or possibly he held doubts about his son's prudence, as he presently made his will leaving his whole estate to his wife, leaving to William only his working tools and twenty shillings. Shortly thereafter he inopportunately died and William found himself with an uncompleted apprenticeship and without funds sufficient to set up in trade on his own account.

His mother, Martha, who evidently had attractions, married again (and indeed later a third time). Unsuccessful in persuading his mother to yield him what he regarded as his due inheritance, in 1728 William set off to London to seek his fortune. Here he was equally unsuccessful, so, impecunious and hungry, he sold himself to serve for a term of years as an indentured servant in the American plantations. Apart from some account of his continuing efforts to wring something out of his mother, William rather glosses over the miseries of his year in London, but he gives a vivid account of the transaction by which in 1729 he entered into the indenture, as also of the

hardships of the Atlantic crossing in the ship *Bonetta*. Arrived in Philadelphia, he was sold to Isaac Pearson, a smith and clockmaker at Burlington, New Jersey. "He was a Quaker", writes William, "but a Wet one". For Pearson William worked as clockmaker and smith, but after three years, becoming restless, he ran away. Hauled back as a runaway, he was presently generously released from serving the remainder of his term. After some intermittent employment in Philadelphia, he was reduced to being an itinerant clock and watch repairer and cleaner.

Despairing of his fortunes in America and anxious to escape from his creditors William accepted a job as cook on a ship bound for Ireland. Thence he secured passage to Workington where he landed in December 1734. Ragged and penniless and in inclement weather he made his way on foot to Newcastle. There he first sought refuge with the Mr. Morley who lived in the Bigg Market. Three weeks later he was evidently reconciled to his mother with whom he lived for her remaining years. When she died in 1740 her estate was found to be left to be administered in trust for William's benefit. Inevitably he made misguided but characteristic attempts to upset the execution of the terms of the will.

His autobiography ends with his statement of case against the executors, leaving the impression that his main motive in writing was to offer the world an *apologia* for his misfortunes. He remained in Newcastle for the rest of his life and was buried in St. Nicholas Churchyard, described in the register as "Watchmaker".

The text of Moraley's autobiography has been made accessible to us by an edition published by the Pennsylvania State University Press, edited by Susan E. Klepp and Billy G. Smith. The autobiography has been little known, partly because of the extreme scarcity of copies. It was first published in Newcastle in 1743 by the author, though there is a suggestion that the 1743 edition is an expanded version of an earlier edition. It seems probable that very few copies of the pamphlet were printed, that it was issued unbound, and that it did not achieve a wide circulation as only two

surviving copies are known to the editors. Of these one, formerly the property of Thomas Bell, is now in the Clements Library of the University of Michigan. The other is in the Newcastle Central Library, for which we must be grateful. It is from Thomas Bell's copy that the present text is derived.

A wider circulation was achieved in the 19th century when the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* published an abridged and edited version. An enquiry from a correspondent had led to a note on Moraley by a book-collector identified only as "W.D., Newcastle." This version was printed from W.D.'s copy of the 1743 edition, which from his description there can be little doubt is the copy now (since 1972) in the Newcastle Central Library. The major departures in the *Weekly Chronicle* version from the 1743 text are the omission with the consequential editorial changes of three inserted short stories and of a plagiarised version of a poem about Philadelphia, which William claims to have composed, and the introduction of headings dividing the work into chapters. The poem and stories are all quite extraneous to the autobiography, and are presumably late additions designed to pad the work out to a publishable length. Apart from these, there are a score of literal changes, a few of hyphenation, an extremely random policy (obviously dependent on the compositor) about reproducing the original capitalization, and some half-dozen word-changes, one an obvious bowdlerization (mess for piss). This version was immediately (1884) reprinted in the *Delaware County Republican*. Now in 1992 we have the present edition.

Of this we may state unreservedly that the editors and publishers have put us very much in their debt. They have made accessible to us a very rare text, they have added a character to the scene of 18th century Newcastle, they have drawn our attention to another production by John White, one of the greater of Newcastle printers, and they have given us an autobiography which, though no work of genius, records experiences of considerable interest with something of the raciness of a picaresque novel. The presentation of their edition is admirable, in-

deed generous, with six maps and seventeen illustrations mostly from contemporary sources. The editing is thorough and particularly full on Moraley's experiences in Pennsylvania, for them naturally the primary interest of the work. Their researches on this side of the Atlantic add useful verification of many of the author's claims. There are eight appendices and an index. What more could be wished?

There are one or two things, quite modest things, which would have been useful. The editors do not state how extensive were their enquiries for other copies, so we cannot be certain how absolute their rarity may be. They give no physical description of the copy now in Michigan which is the source of their text: this would be of particular interest to students of printing in Newcastle. They do reproduce the title-page, but it would have been valuable to have in addition a reproduction of a page of the text. More importantly they seem to have missed the note by "W.D., Newcastle" which preceded the publication in the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* of that paper's version.

The reviewer's knowledge of this note must be credited to the industrious Richard Welford whose characteristic book-plate appears in a slim guard-book into which have been pasted newspaper cuttings and which is now in the library of the Newcastle Lit. & Phil. Society. A note had appeared in "Annals of the North" in the *Weekly Chronicle* to the effect that William Morley, or Moraley, watchmaker, had been buried in St. Nicholas churchyard in Newcastle on 19 January 1762 and goes on to request further information about him. To this "W.D. Newcastle" replies referring to his own copy of *The Infortunate* which he describes as "wanting four leaves which are made good in manuscript."

This raises the possibility that the copy in Newcastle Central Library was W.D.'s copy though it lacks not four leaves, but four pages (leaves E2 and E3, pages 35–38) replaced by six pages of m.s. "The work" he continues, "is one of the rarest of our local publications. I have only seen one perfect copy of it, and that was in the collection of Mr. Thomas Bell."

Towards the end of his note W.D. adds a

dimension to our image of Moraley as an author by stating that he later published two pamphlets, namely:

*The Orphan, or Revived Fugitive.* Humbly dedicated to the Right Hon. the Lord Mayor of London. By William Morley, Gent. Printed for the Author in the year 1753 (Newcastle).

*The Proceedings and Humours of a Late Election in the City of Sandberg. With an Authentic List of the Illustrious Personages who honoured it with their Presence. Published at the Request of several Persons of Distinction. By Wm. Thompson, Gent. To which is annexed A Humorous Letter, sent to Fugitive Hottentot, Esq., Fellow of Lunatick College,* printed in the year 1754.

There are apparently no surviving copies of these pamphlets known in Britain so we can only surmise what they might contain by the implications of their titles.

As Moraley was himself an orphan in 1753 and by his own account had on several occasions been a fugitive it would seem probable that the first of these publications is a recapitulation of his grievances; that it is a sequel or restatement of his claim that his father's will should have been proved in the Lord Mayor's Court is suggested by the dedication of this pamphlet to the Lord Mayor of London. If a copy could be traced its interest to us might well lie in some extension of our knowledge of W.M.'s life in the interval since he wrote "The Infortunate". The second title suggests some interest in local politics at a level of apparently rather puerile satire. Their publication indicates that the author was sufficiently in funds to pay for their production. The titles bear out our view that William was highly articulate and reinforce our doubts about the maturity of his judgement. The lack of known surviving copies is consistent with the printing of only a very short run, as must have been the case with "The Infortunate" before them.

The copy of *The Infortunate* in the Newcastle Central Library (L920/M828) is conveniently available for examination. It is an octavo

(20 × 12 cm) of 64 pages in sections (A to H) of 4 leaves, with E2 and E3 missing, as already described. It was printed for the author by John White in Newcastle in 1743 in the Small Pica Roman and Italic of William Caslon on a laid paper, the watermark of which is only partially visible, but it could be a fleur-de-lis. From the condition of A1 and H4 it seems that the pamphlet was issued unbound. The date of the present binding is not known to the reviewer. The annotations are as described by Klepp and Smith on their page 148 n1. In addition on the fly are scrawled some initials, possibly JF. Despite the confusion between leaves and pages this was probably the copy owned and described by W.D. in the 1880s.

It would be faint-hearted to leave this aspect without some attempt to identify "W.D. Newcastle". With his interests he was likely to have been an active member of our Society. We have had fewer members with the straight initials W.D. than might be expected. One possibility offers itself from our list of officers—William Dodd was our Treasurer from 1865 to 1890. He is best remembered now for the very attractive *Specimens of Early Wood Engraving* he published in 1862, but he also prepared in 1863 a catalogue of the books in our library and in 1881 published an *Index to Brand's History of Newcastle upon Tyne*. The account of him in our Centenary Volume (1913) may be quoted to demonstrate with a probability hardly short of certainty that he is our man:

William Dodd was a born bookseller, lived all his life among books, and only relinquished them when the infirmities of age interfered with his devotion. He was apprenticed to the Charnleys, the great Newcastle bibliophiles, who for fully a hundred years dominated the book trade of the town and district, and thought little of issuing a catalogue of twenty thousand old and new books for sale. When the Charnleys practically died out, Mr. Dodd acquired the business, carried it on for some years at their old shop in the Bigg market, finally removed to New Bridge Street, and there, shortly before his death, he retired from the trade. He was treasurer to our Society from 1865 till his death, which occurred on the 15th January,

1890, at the age of 79. Among other projects in local compilation he contemplated the issue of a most comprehensive bibliography of works relating to Northumberland and Durham. He issued a tempting prospectus which, however, did not attract a sufficient number of subscribers to warrant him in undertaking the work.

This surely establishes not merely the identity but the authority of W.D.

*The Infortunate* is not a work of genius, the accession of which is a great addition to our literature. It cannot challenge comparison with the works of Defoe or Fielding, but even so it makes a good read. In one respect it differs strikingly from comparable narratives of the period—the few opportunities of sexual adventure that occur are never exploited. The editors in their introduction hover round this aspect without tackling it directly. They present William as a religious man. It is true that he shows a heart-felt concern for the down-trodden, but his professions of religion smack of the stock sentiments with which it was then customary for an author to give a respectable tone to his work. They sort ill with his easy-going lifestyle, and it is difficult to find them convincing.

Of special interest to us are the local aspects of the publication. The forms Morley and Moraley seem to have been used indifferently. We could perhaps regard Moraley as reflecting pronunciation with a rolled Northumbrian "r". William's relatives in the Bigg Market, Newcastle, evidently used the form *Morley*. If we suppose it was they who attended to his burial, this would account for the entry in the register of S. Nicholas being in that form. Did Moraley and his father use the Moraley spelling to reinforce their claim to be Moraley "of that ilk"? See the title page of *The Infortunate* which describes our author as "Of MORALEY, in the County of Northumberland, Gent". And if so, of which Moraley? There are at least two in Northumberland. First there is Moralee, a farm by a ford on the Gofton burn in the township of Warksburn in the parish of Wark, and there is Morralee in the Deanraw township in the parish of Warden. If it is true, as William claims, that they

were kin to the Ridleys of Willimoteswick, the latter Morralee would seem the more probable. As a surname Morley or Moraley appears from time to time in the annals of Northumberland, but never seems to have been very widely held.

Another aspect of local interest is that the pamphlet was printed in 1743 by John White (1689?–1769), one of the most considerable of Newcastle printers. His production best known to us is Bourne's *History of Newcastle*, a sophisticated piece of book-work. In drawing our attention to Moraley's other pamphlets it makes us aware of two other candidates to fill the considerable gaps in our knowledge of White's productions.

A minor side-light is to note some of the words that require to be glossed for a transatlantic reader. These include dram, farthing, pence, quirks, perquisite and byre. It is salutary to bear in mind that of these farthing and dram may soon be as much a thing of the past in Britain, and that "byre" would probably require to be glossed for a reader south of our northern counties. There are one or two trifling errors. By printer's error on page 13 the date of burial is given as January 9th, elsewhere the correct date, the 19th, is given. On page 42

"Canti" is glossed as Cambridgeshire instead of Kent. As in the history of Newcastle publishing there have been or are a *Monthly Chronicle* and an *Evening Chronicle*, it would be well to indicate in Appendix A that it is the *Newcastle (Weekly) Chronicle* (1764–1953) to which reference is made.

A further point of only potential relevance may be added. It will be remembered that William's father lost much of his fortune in the South Sea Bubble affair. In March 1720 a William Morley of St. Mary Ax (late one of the Directors of the South Sea Company) swore *A Particular and Inventory of his Lands and personal Estate* (Tonson Lintott *et al.*, London 1721; available Lit & Phil. Soc., Newcastle in *Tracts Folio ser.* Vol 36, No 11-042/4). This William Morley, judging by the inventory, was a man of considerable estate, with substantial interests as a venturer in Spanish-American trade, and with a vastly greater stake in the South Sea Company than the holding of William's father. Was he one of the well-to-do relations of whom William boasts? Had his concern in the South Sea Company any influence on the unlucky decision of Wm. Moraley senior to choose this investment?

