this way of thinking seems to have flourished in response to the publication of Henri Bergson’s *Creative Evolution*, translated into English in 1911. Bergson’s vision of the creative *élan vital* struggling to overcome the limitations of matter resonated with a whole generation of biologists. This included figures sympathetic to the spirit if not the letter of Lamarckism, including the Aberdeen biologist and prolific popular science writer J. Arthur Thomson. But it also included some of the new generation of Darwinians, including another great populariser, Julian Huxley. Bergson was explicitly writing against Darwinism, but what he meant by the term was the progressionism of Haeckel and Spencer. As Darwin himself had shown, one can see natural selection as opportunistic and innovative, and this was how Huxley now began to understand it. To get a moral from the process, you have to exploit the element of open endedness and tell inspiring stories about particular innovations.

This is precisely what the next generation of biologists proceeded to do in their popular writings. The *Popular Science* series issued by Lord Northcliffe’s Amalgamated Press in 1911-13 uses explicitly Bergsonian language to describe the advance of life as an experimental process, but also brings in a Darwinian element by stressing nature’s indifference to those who lose out in the race to innovate. J. Arthur Thomson’s *New Natural History* of 1926, talks of the ‘invasion of the land’ by the amphibians and the ‘conquest of the air’ by the birds. Thomson (who always wrote effectively about animal behaviour) even stressed the innovative mental powers of modern amphibians to suggest that their distant ancestors had the capacity to press ahead into the new environment. The same language occurs throughout his popular writings, including a book suggesting the moral lessons to be learnt from *The Gospel of Evolution*.

H.G. Wells’ *Outline of History* of 1921 has introductory chapters on evolution, written in collaboration with Lankester, which stress the episodic nature of evolutionary innovation following mass extinctions. Here again we have the terminology of the ‘invasion of the dry land’ coupled with the somewhat less aggressive metaphor of a ‘liberation’ from the water. In *The Science of Life*, which Wells wrote in collaboration with Julian Huxley later in the decade, there is a whole chapter entitled ‘Life Conquers the Dry Land’, telling the story of how the amphibians responded to the challenge of a world cursed by drought. There is again a stress on the episodic nature of the great advances in life, all of which arose through response to challenges imposed by geological disturbances.

The use of this kind of dramatic language to describe key episodes in the progress of life represented something quite new in popular descriptions of Darwinism. Unlike most evolutionary epics from the 19th century, it implies that the course of development was not predetermined or predictable, but was contingent on responses to dramatic external challenges. It represents the true flowering of the style of evolutionary narrative used by Kingsley but largely ignored by contemporaries obsessed with the image of inevitable, law-like progress.

Peter Bowler is Professor Emeritus of the History of Science, Queen’s University, Belfast, and a Fellow of the British Academy.
'Thomas Fowell Buxton' functioned almost as a 'brand name' that could be utilised by other family members. For example, Priscilla did not merely act as her father's amanuensis, she undertook correspondence in his name. She noted with amusement Thomas's confusion when William Lloyd Garrison, the American abolitionist, thanked him for a letter which he had sent to *The Liberator*. Thomas was unable to recall the letter as it was she who had written it. This appears to have been a common practice within the family. It was the cause which mattered, and individual identities were subordinated to it.

Priscilla and Anna’s confidence in writing under Thomas’s name (and his acquiescence in this process) suggests that it was perceived by the family not to signify simply his own individuality, but to be rather representative of a corporate political project. Just as the franchise might be regarded as a piece of family property, so too might the career of a politician be viewed as a channel for the furtherance of family political objectives. The Buxtons’ assumption of a collective familial identity was integral to this process. As Priscilla put it, 'we are all doing good by wholesale'. The subtleties of this phenomenon may be discerned by exploring a particular instance of Buxton family collaboration: the composition of an extensive monograph on the slave trade, *The Remedy*.

Published in 1840 and bearing the authorial signature of ‘Thomas Fowell Buxton’, *The Remedy* was a sequel to *The African Slave Trade* (1839). The work insisted on the need to augment the British naval presence and for diplomatic initiatives to be undertaken with African chiefs to ensure the cessation of the slave trade. It was an audacious, expansionist vision of imperial rule which included extensive plans for agricultural and commercial development. Although it represented a reversal of many strands of existing colonial policy, remarkably, many of its arguments were to be accepted.

Whilst Thomas appears to have been responsible for the general scheme of the work and an initial draft, Sarah Buxton and Anna Gurney were both closely involved in its composition. A letter to them from Thomas finds him very pleased with the sections they have sent and especially that on cruelty: 'what an argument it is for Missionaries'. It was Priscilla, however, who bore the brunt of the work. In the winter of 1839 she wearily explained to her sister Richenda that she had been working 'night & day' on the publication, going through the proofs and making extensive alterations so as to render it more accessible. Although she felt a responsibility to adhere to the substance of her father’s plans for the work, Priscilla clearly felt she had the authority to substantially rewrite much of it, confessing: ‘my only fear & doubt is whether my father & you all knowing it so well, will not feel it strange’.

The authorial signature of ‘Thomas Fowell Buxton’ thus silenced the fact that this was a work with an intricate history of collaborative composition. This does not mean to say that it was a process devoid of conflict. Thomas charged Priscilla with finishing the work when he was in Italy unwell, yet he found it difficult to relinquish control. He acknowledged that Priscilla’s revisions, which had overturned ‘the whole existing arrangement of my book’, had greatly improved it – although characteristically he claimed he too would have made similar changes. Priscilla wrote to Anna in desperation at her father’s refusal to resign command of the project. Her father mocked her anxiety, writing to Edward that she should ‘trot along a little more soberly’. Priscilla’s frustration is understandable. Whilst her father reassured her that she should not have paid any attention to his ‘nonsensical’ suggestions for alteration, he nonetheless requested that his ‘brilliant’ passage on racial prejudice be reinstated. Her faith in providential destiny provided her with a means of justifying her exasperation. Observing that her father was duty-bound to be in Rome because of her mother’s health, she noted: ‘I feel for myself the truest faith that all this mighty work is under the closest care of Providence – it seems to me that we are bound to trust the *Master & Doer*. If servants are dismissed for a time (which I firmly believe my Father is providentially) they must bear to be passive – such is the required service.’

The family’s firm belief in providential destiny helped to abate somewhat the emotional demands of working with the often imperious Thomas. He could be considered not as a dominant political agent for whom they offered services – but rather as another humble servant working in God’s name. Even so, Thomas’s gendered self-positioning as paterfamilias was interwoven into the family’s identity as a collective political unit.
WHEN THE painter Benjamin Haydon executed his ambitious study of the world anti-slavery convention which met in London 1840, he was at pains to include women in his portrayal. However, they were situated as – literally – borderline figures. The dramatic centrepiece of the work focused upon the veteran campaigner, Thomas Clarkson, who is surrounded by a host of male anti-slavery crusaders. Women are positioned around the edges of the great painting. Whilst some famous female activists are clearly visible, such as Anne Knight and Elizabeth Pease, the woman who was given the greatest prominence in the work, just to the left of Thomas Clarkson, was Mary Clarkson. Tellingly, she had not achieved prominence due to her grass-roots campaigning. Rather, her status derived from the fact that she was Clarkson’s daughter. Haydon’s image encapsulates many of the themes of Dr Gleadle’s book. Women occupied an enduring but peripheral location within the contemporary political imagination. Their status within the world of public politics remained problematic throughout this period – even in campaigns apparently deemed suitable for female activism, such as anti-slavery. Family identities, moreover, remained crucial to the representation of women as political subjects even if, as Dr Gleadle demonstrates, there were alternative routes for middle-class women to achieve political status – particularly within their own communities.