

WORKING WITH THE BODY: SUBJECTIVITY, GENDER, COMMODIFICATION AND
THE LABOURING BODY IN VICTORIAN ENGLAND

By

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Working with the Body examines representations of labouring bodies in circulation amongst working people from the 1830s to the end of the nineteenth century. It traces the mediating role of the literary in positioning the labouring body as a central signifier in the formation and destabilization of nineteenth-century working people's subjectivities. I argue that both literatures produced for and composed by working people construct working-class interiority by separating subjectivity from the labouring body that performs physical work. A nuanced relation of possession or denial of possession towards bodies that do manual labour informs working people's understanding of their own class, race and gender identity. The ownership of the body or its suppression develops importance as a contested zone of meaning in liberal discourses and working-class texts alike so that the ability to possess, exchange, critique, present or deny any relation to labouring bodies defines the liberal working-class subject. Such a subject/body duality results in a continuous flux between the attribution of interiority and the denial of interiority, production of the liberal individual and the production of mere bodies. This separation of subject and body is unstable, threatening to collapse into each other, so that the process of separation has to be constantly reinforced.

The dissertation's contrapuntal structure places middle-class texts against working-class texts. Chapter 2 traces anxieties surrounding labouring bodies in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* and Frances Trollope's *Michael Armstrong*. Chapter 3 discusses the depiction of colonized labouring bodies and bodies of European marginalized peoples in the *Penny Magazine* in the context of imperialism. Chapter 4 considers commodification of poor bodies in G.W.M. Reynolds' *The Mysteries of London* as aesthetic objects and as dead bodies. Chapter 5 reads the autobiographies of domestic servants Rose Allen, Mary Ashford, Florence White, Mrs. Layton, and "Factory Girl" Ellen Johnston juxtaposed with Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre* discussing how tropes of the body used seamlessly by the fictional Jane remain unavailable to these women so that the body and manual labour is suppressed. Chapter 6 discusses Hannah Cullwick's use of the sentimental tradition and the pornographic imagination in her diaries to foreground her body.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The Nineteenth-Century Common Reader and the Labouring Body

This project began when I first encountered the diaries of Hannah Cullwick, a remarkable woman and an extraordinary domestic servant of the nineteenth century. As I read through pages and pages of her handwritten diary, sometimes secretly scribbled in the servant's room, I was struck by the sheer volume of her writing. The subjects she wrote about spanned two worlds, seen as separate and antithetical by most contemporaries: the lives of middle-class masters and mistresses and that of the "lower classes"--domestics, milkmaids, footmen, butchers, grocers and scullery maids. Cullwick's descriptions of her daily life offered a different perspective on Victorian British society's "two nations" as described by Victorian reformers, novelists and political economists. Though Cullwick had a fifty-four year long relationship with gentleman, poet, barrister and man of letters Arthur Munby, in many ways Cullwick was "just" another Victorian domestic servant. She cleaned chimneys, scrubbed grates, swept floors and carried her mistresses on her back when they were tired or when they did not want to wet their skirts in puddles.

What interested me further were Cullwick's references to what she read or what was read to her. She mentions *Pamela*, *Clarissa*, and *Adam Bede* in this context in her diaries. Not only was Cullwick *in* a cross-class relationship, she was also reading and writing *about* cross-class relationships and fictional servants. Apart from managing her work, reading, writing and secret double love-life across class lines, Cullwick had a strong consciousness of proudly owning and managing something of immense significance to her: her big, strong body. She thus describes her body in a matrimonial advertisement put in the paper: "Hannah Cullwick country servant in

London--height 5 feet 7 & over--arm 13 inches round--can heave twelve stone easy--reckon'd good-looking in the country but hates fashion. Has saved money'" (159).¹

Cullwick's diaries closely connect writing with the act of foregrounding the labouring body. They also foreground the body in specific gendered and classed ways that show the influence of cultural forces at work in the society that she inhabits. Cullwick's strategies to construct her subjectivity through her writing, from her class position, became the starting point of this dissertation. Contemporary facets of Victorian optimism about commodity culture, the spread of reading, popular culture and the construction of subjectivity at the margins of the dominant British middle-class imagination seemed closely related to Cullwick's understanding of her body in her diaries. As I examined a range of texts read and written by members of the working population at the object position of the social imaginary like her, I saw that the labouring body was not only important to people of her class but it was also a central signifier in the formation and destabilization of important aspects of nineteenth-century culture. I realized that in order to understand Cullwick's treatment of her body in these private texts, one needed to place them in the context of what the vast section of the British population, differently labelled as "lower class," "working class" or simply the "working poor," were reading and writing around mid-century. Moreover, a consideration of descriptions of this amorphous mass of people in popular reading material circulated amongst the "lower classes," such as servants, seamstresses, criminals, miners, factory workers and milk-maids, was necessary to understand the context of their subjectivity formation. It was important to understand how working-class writers could articulate interiority in their writing in a cultural milieu that had difficulty imagining authorial subjectivity in connection with physically labouring bodies.

Copious amounts of nineteenth-century writing and public debates surrounded the condition of poor bodies. The physical deterioration of textile workers featured prominently in these discussions as did discussions of sanitation, health, contamination of food and alcoholism. Some of these, such as the reports made by Lord Ashley's Mines Commission in 1842 and the Mines Act the same year brought shocking accounts related to the condition of the labouring body into focus. Edward Chadwick's report on the sanitary conditions of the labouring population (1842) and growing concerns about urban poverty, prostitution and child labour popularized through reports in the social documentary mode, prominent amongst which was Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor*,² foregrounded human bodies in a way not seen in the previous century. Mayhew's *London Labour* shows only one of the many instances of how, while poor bodies became a subject of anxiety, they became a subject of voyeuristic enquiry as well. Novelists such as Dickens and Gaskell, to name a few, popularized the condition of working-class figures to common middle-class households while *The Times*, *Punch* and various other sources harped on the condition-of-England question through sentimentalized or caricatured descriptions and illustrations. While mainstream culture was obsessed with poor bodies, the underbelly of Victorian culture was also fixated on classed bodies. *My Secret Life*, subtitled *The Sex Diary of a Victorian Gentleman*³ has innumerable encounters between the writer, who calls himself "Walter," and domestic servants, farm hands, prostitutes and other poor women, eroticizing their bodies according to commonly accepted cultural ideas regarding lower-class women.

These reports that focused on the horrors of existence of the poor population in general and the conditions of the labouring population in factories and mines often targeted a middle-class audience. No doubt many working people were directly reading such literatures too. However,

ideas and illustrations regarding lower-class life were also being consumed in large amounts by poor people through cheap literatures--broadsides, penny dreadfuls, periodical literature, playbills or magazines specifically directed towards the moral edification of the poor, depicting working-class life. Pages and pages of literature consumed by the working poor make clear that working people as mass consumers of such literature were equally obsessed with poor bodies. At the same time, certain gendered representations of labouring bodies in the cultural milieu complicated working people's own representations of themselves in their own diaries, autobiographies, poetry and fiction.

Bombarded daily with thousands of pages and illustrations about "poor" bodies, how did individual members of the working poor see themselves? This study locates itself at the meeting point between these complex representations of working people in their contemporary cultural milieu and working people's own representations of themselves in their own writing. The contrapuntal structure of the dissertation considers representations of labouring bodies in popular reading material available to working people and working people's negotiation of these representations: the way they imbibed, appropriated and altered those representations to construct their identities in their own writing.

It is necessary to identify the working people whose subjectivity formation I am interested in in this study. Richard Altick's "common reader" is the target audience of the popular literature I examine. Much of this literature would have reached the domestic servant class, some of whose diaries and autobiographies are considered in the second part of this study. The first part deals with tropes regarding working bodies in popular literature and social problem novels. The concept of a "working class" in this period is ambiguous; an amorphous population variously labelled as the "lower classes," the "working poor," or identified according to their specific

employment as domestic servants, miners, pit workers, artisans or textile workers. Most of these people would not have identified themselves under a common umbrella term as “working class.” Altick describes his “common reader” as “humble people for the most part, mechanics, clerks, shopmen, domestic servants, land workers and their families; people who lived in the endless rows of jerry-built city houses and along the village street” (12). Gertrude Himmelfarb, while tracing the idea of poverty in the nineteenth-century, talks about the various designations according to which poor people were being classified at this time--the poor, the pauper, the ragged classes, the dangerous classes, the Gothic poor and the industrial poor, to name a few. Himmelfarb rightly points out that while the radical, often illegal newspapers of the 1830s spoke in the name of the poor, their actual voices were those of the reporters and editors, most of whom “were as middle-class as their colleagues on *The Times*” (14). With characteristic insight, Himmelfarb says that it would be “interesting to speculate what the poor made of all those fictional characters who purported to be like them, who appeared in the guise of artisans, labourers, servants, beggars, paupers and criminals” (16). While Himmelfarb rightly notes that the undifferentiated mass of the poor of earlier times became minutely differentiated in this period, the tendency to classify, identify and still see poor people as a mass became stronger than ever.⁴ Martha Vicinus points out that in an atmosphere where poor people were being seen as part of a “mass” in this sense, working people’s writing had to resist a bourgeois perspective where they would be constantly seen as part of an undifferentiated whole.

Throughout my dissertation, I have used terms such as “working people,” “labouring population,” “working poor” and the associated term “labouring body” to talk about people whose main source of livelihood was physical labour rather than the term “working class.” This population includes skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled labourers⁵ and also that population

considered in Victorian tracts as “labour”--people who had no specific occupation but worked with their bodies. While the industrial revolution and the Chartist radical consciousness in the thirties and forties show evidence of the existence of the concept of a “working class,” and while many scholars in our contemporary time use the term “working class” to designate factory workers, shop girls and even domestic servants in this period, the population that I examine was not necessarily influenced by a sense of a unified “working-class” consciousness. Therefore, wherever I have used the term “working class” I have used it in the sense that Victorian contemporaries would have used it, to designate people who engaged in manual labour.

My work draws attention to the labouring body as a central yet contested signifier in the formation of working people’s subjectivities. My study places representations of the labouring body in nineteenth-century novels against women’s diaries, autobiographies, popular genre fiction, illustrations and wood-cuts in the context of nuanced discourses of class, gender, imperialism and narratives of progress from the 1830s to the end of the nineteenth-century. I examine how discourses of labouring bodies helped shape literatures by and for working-class people and how literary representations of labouring bodies helped working people understand themselves. This study traces the mediating role of the literary in the process of inclusion of people who did physical labour, into a liberal model of the individual, through the construction of a proper kind of subjectivity. My focus is on the working-class body as a site centred around which subjectivity construction revolves in a process where working people accept, alter and incorporate these representations as readers and consumers of culture. This complicates the way they deal with their bodies in their own texts, as well.

I argue that both literatures produced for and composed by working people construct working-class interiority by separating subjectivity from the labouring body that performs

physical work. A nuanced relation of possession or denial of possession towards bodies that do manual labour informs working people's understanding of their own class, race and gender identity. The ownership of the body or its suppression develops importance as a contested zone of meaning in liberal discourses and working-class texts alike so that the ability to possess, exchange, critique, present or deny any relation to labouring bodies defines the liberal working-class subject. Such a subject/body duality results in a continuous flux between the attribution of interiority and the denial of interiority, production of the liberal individual and the production of mere bodies. This separation of subject and body is unstable, threatening to collapse into each other, so that the process of separation has to be constantly reinforced.

In the first part of the dissertation I explore middle-class authored texts such as Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848), Frances Trollope's *Michael Armstrong* (1840), *The Penny Magazine for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge* (1842 to 1845) and G.W.M. Reynolds' *The Mysteries of London* (1844 to 1848). In the second part I deal with the autobiographies of several women domestic servants juxtaposed with Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. The autobiographies considered are *The Autobiography of Rose Allen* (1847), *Life of a Licensed Victualler's Daughter* (Mary Ann Ashford, 1844), *Autobiography of Ellen Johnston, 'The Factory Girl'* (1867), *A Fire in the Kitchen: The Autobiography of a Cook* (Florence White, 1938) and *Memories of Seventy Years* (Mrs. Layton, 1931). I also consider domestic servant Hannah Cullwick's diaries (1854 to 1873) in a separate chapter.

Labouring Bodies and Subjectivities in Victorian Culture

The concept of the social body has achieved importance in the understanding of nineteenth-century cultural formations in terms of understanding representational abstractions that come into play while conceptualizing large masses of people such as the poor in this period. Mary Poovey observes that while present day critics and many contemporary Victorians were

aware that monolithic representations of nineteenth-century culture were really composed of competing or even contradictory constructs, the groundwork was laid between the 1830s and the 1860s for what would eventually be seen as a single “mass” culture (2). Various abstractions emerged to conceptualize the poor, prominent amongst which was the concept of the “social body.” The nineteenth-century “social body” carried with it connotations of the seventeenth-century “body politic,” a concept which did not see the poor as political subjects, unlike Members of Parliament and gentlemen, who were considered part of the “second body” of the king (7). By 1776, another term, “the great body of the people,” as used by Adam Smith, started being used either to refer to the poor in isolation or to British (or English) society as an organic whole. The ambiguity involved in the two usages, part and whole, allowed social analysts to treat one section of the population as a problem part while simultaneously gesturing towards a social whole composed of mutual interests as parts of the social body. The term social body carried with it traces of the body politic involving the political domain as well as new connotations of the economic domain to conceptualize this “great body of people” (7-8).

In the study that follows, I trace some of the nuances of such abstractions that conceptualize the poor as a mass, but as they appeared to those poor populations themselves. While I do not deal with the social body specifically, my work exposes close connections between abstractions that conceive of the poor as parts of systems, both economic and social, and abstractions that represent labouring bodies. The visibility of “real” labouring bodies and their closeness to these economic, political and social systems leads to the physicalization of these cycles or processes because they are seen as close to the physical bodies of the poor. Individual members of the working-class poor are forced to deal with these abstractions, closely related to their physicality, if they have to lay claim to subject positions similar to members of other parts

of the social body who have shared, mutual interests as parts of British society. While being aware that they are seen as bodies and parts of the social body in these abstractions, they have to find a subject position where they can belong to British society not as mere bodies. My work shows that texts composed by middle-class writers and working-class writers alike were dealing with the ambiguities involved in this process of including working people in the social body.

Common grounds regarding assumptions about the body between these economic and social domains and those of textual practices have been explored by Catherine Gallagher. Gallagher discusses the centrality of the body and its sensations, those of pleasure and pain, to political economy in the nineteenth century. In her recent book, *The Body Economic*, Gallagher discusses how nineteenth-century disciplines and “the relatively undisciplined textual practices we call ‘literature’” (3) were divided by common premises and how their attitude to each other shifted as those premises were revised. Political economists and their Romantic and Victorian critics developed what she calls a “bioeconomics” based on interconnections between populations, food supplies, modes of production and their impact on life forms developed from Malthusian ideas. Gallagher traces another phenomenon that she calls “somaeconomics” which dealt with sensual feelings such as pleasure and pain which were causes and consequences of economic exertion such as those involved in Benthamite utilitarian ideas. Gallagher’s analysis draws attention to the centrality of the body not only in political economy but in the plots of Charles Dickens and George Eliot.

My study shows that the body was also absolutely central and very problematic in texts circulating amongst and produced by working people. These bioeconomic chains, based on poor bodies, combining relations of production and consumption circulated amongst the poor and contributed to their self-perception. Many of the premises of such cycles, amongst poor

populations, and the accompanying anxieties related to them were the same as in the larger culture. However, they worked differently through identification with or distancing from labouring bodies in this different audience. Also, while middle-class Malthusian discourses treated the poor as subjects of sociological analysis by othering poor bodies, texts produced by working people could not easily assume such separation between their own identities and their subjects--poor bodies.

Amongst other kinds of texts, this dissertation explores autobiographies and diaries of domestic servants. Regenia Gagnier traces master narratives of larger culture that manifest themselves in individual lives and autobiographies in *Subjectivities*. She demonstrates how the construction of the “I” in autobiographical texts involves a distinct point of view which is understood in various ways in relation to what surrounds it. The autobiographical “I” is set up in opposition to others as it also becomes an object of enquiry in such texts. At the same time, the “I” also represents a “subjective” point of view as opposed to something else understood as objective (8). Gagnier examines autobiographies in an attempt to examine the subject, as she says, from the “bottom,” rather than the “top,” meaning from the point of view of individual subjectivities rather than from the point of view of larger culture, without merely reintroducing the concept of the autonomous subject (10). Gagnier stresses the idea that the self is not an autonomous subject but instead is intersubjective, dependent on the intersubjective nature of language and culture.

I have taken a similar “materialist, or situationally conscious” (7) approach to subjectivity in my work. In the texts I explore, the subject is set up in opposition to various other groups seen as its “Others” while at the same time, the autobiographical narratives I examine show awareness that the texts are subjects of curiosity as they expose working-class lives. The intersubjective

approach is especially useful because I examine these working-class texts, and the working-class subjectivities they produce, in relation to whole systems of social meaning-making that attach significances to working bodies and working-class subjectivities. My study examines the cultural conditions produced by popular texts in the way that they address working people's experiences related to labouring bodies. The interaction between individual subjectivities constructed by representations of the labouring body in Victorian culture, and generic forms already in existence, such as the middle-class novel, is manifest in working-people's autobiographical writings. In this sense, like Gagnier, I look at the history of subjectivities rather than an *a priori* self. As Nancy Armstrong traces the development of the first Bourgeois individual, the woman, in the domestic sphere, created through the domestic novel, I examine the history of subjectivities as centred around experiences of the body and relate this to literary texts understood in the broadest sense of the term.

This study examines the trope of the body, which performs manual labour, in the cultural imagination and relates this to subjectivities of labouring people. The cultural imagination, in this historical moment, is heavily informed by Victorian consumer culture which values objects as products. At the same time, in the same culture, gendered and classed (and racialized) working bodies are objectified, fetishized and often subjected to investigative sociological enquiry. While trying to understand what role labouring bodies, objectified in this way in the larger culture, play in the construction of working people's subjectivities, Jean Baudrillard's view of the body has proved useful. Baudrillard describes the body as the finest consumer object with respect to our own contemporary culture in *Consumer Society*:

the current structures of production and consumption induce in the subject a dual practice, linked to a split (but profoundly interdependent) representation of his/her own body: the representation of body as **capital** and as **fetish** (or consumer object). In both cases, far

from the body being denied or left out of account, there is deliberate *investment* in it (in the two senses, economic and psychical, of the term). (129)

Baudrillard goes on to state that in consumer culture this split first separates the body from the subject and then reappropriates the body, not for the autonomous ends of the subject, but in terms of a normative principle of enjoyment and profitability dictated by the codes of a society of production and managed consumption. In other words, he says, one manages one's body as one manages an investment, as "one of the many *signifiers of social status*" (131). My study reveals how, by myriad processes of separation and identification, nineteenth-century labouring people were participating in the gaze looking at labouring bodies while also often taking the blame for such objectification, so that the process of cashing in on their investment became a tightrope walk. The chapters that follow additionally focus on the nuances that emerge from the classed nature of this subject that deals with the body as a signifier of social status.

The construction of individual subjectivities is also linked to the representation of a whole class, as a collective. It is important to consider how and when, out of an infinite range of possibilities of social reality and its representations in a period, one possible understanding gains ground over others, says Dror Wahrman in *Imagining the Middle Class*. The demands of politics often create the driving force for choices to be made between several possible representations, but that does not mean that the other representations disappear. Wahrman talks about this in the context of how England came to see itself as a society centred around a propertied bourgeois class in opposition to earlier models, for example that of the landed aristocracy, roughly around the time of the industrial revolution. However, the autonomy and indeterminacy of politics also open up spaces for contingency and agency to be recovered in the process of translation from one historical process to another. The labouring population in this period came to be represented as either powerless, and worthy of sympathy, or as depraved and criminalized. Working people

either accepted these images of themselves or appropriated them in ways that opened up possibilities for agency. Shifting the point of view of examination of subjectivities from “below” rather than “above” makes such possibilities more prominent.

Examining the material and symbolic dimensions of the labouring body in the context of working-class subjectivities reveals how power is deployed in social relations capable of producing real effects. Elizabeth Langland focuses on the force of representation in Victorian daily life while exploring the Victorian icon of the “Angel in the House.” She discusses how this “social myth” had extensive economic and political functions concerning nuances involved in the role of the housewife hitherto seen as simply a passive subject of ideology. She focuses on the interactions between the material and mythic dimensions of Victorian women’s lives situating both in the context of class and gender. Langland examines the implications of this myth in women’s lives whose material circumstances may not have permitted them to lead the lives of such domestic Angels.

My study focuses on a similar phenomenon involving the mythic dimensions of the working-class body in the cultural imagination of Victorians leading lives of manual labour. Just as the passive Victorian woman of the myth was not really completely passive and performed important functions in the household through control of representation, working-class bodies were not really merely bodies for sociological enquiry or body parts capable of only performing certain kinds of routine tasks in an industrialized culture. Furthermore, working people did not simply accept the myths related to working bodies as passive observers. Such representations were altered and revised by the people who experienced these myths as they made sense of their own situations even in situations of extreme power imbalance. Since such representations were

ubiquitous, the control of representation by working people was also a process of constant engagement with them.

Such readily available representations, regarding working bodies, were an integral part of working people's experience of "reality." The body, in this context, becomes the important mediating link between the individual and her/his subjective worlds, not only for feeling and thinking but for acquiring and expressing a sense of identity. In this sense, my study focuses on individual participation in the process of such cultural formations as it does on larger cultural constructions. Norbert Elias explores the process of socialization through the body in *The Civilizing Process*. In order to survive in a complex society, he says, the exercise of self-restraint gets channelled towards more and more differentiation between behaviours of sections of the population, while disciplinary control is imposed less and less from outside. Elias talks about this in the context of table manners through which individuals become more and more separated from other bodies and their own bodily activities. In this study, I explore how many lower-middle-class working women deny talking about their bodies and manual labour to align themselves with middle-class status while Hannah Cullwick stresses her difference from middle-class body types to increase her value to her lover and herself in different ways. While differentiation between sections of populations through regulation of bodies gives rise to class identities, individuals are able to control these representations to an extent even though it is important to keep in mind that there still remains a huge power imbalance for working people in the process.

Regulation of the working-class body and regulation of its representation became an important aspect of liberal politics which attempted to include working people into the liberal model of the individual. The representation of the body in such a context becomes closely related to the concept of class. Patrick Joyce notes that often, the meanings of class turn out to be other

than political or economic. Such meanings might be moral or religious, for example, in a social hermeneutic system. These meanings attach themselves to certain external codes of 'objective' entities, such as the body or social codes of behaviour:

The hermeneutic tradition [of social reality] . . . invite[s] consideration how in everyday life people codify and categorize their worlds. The social can be understood . . . in the sense of human interaction, what was earlier termed inter-personal, and the inter-subjective. The term "sociality" suggests itself for this activity, which is inseparable from how people create meaning out of this human connection. (*Class 233*)

Hence it becomes important to see how class becomes actually available as a basis for people's cognition and their action. Liberal discourses dominate in social problem novels where the "combination" of the working classes, into trade unions and in terms of seeking rights rather than sympathy, is largely made unavailable to the workers in canonical texts of this period. For example, even as late as 1854, Stephen Blackpool can only be represented as a good "hand" because of his refusal to join the union and it is possible to refer to all working-class movement as a "muddle."⁶

Working-class people regulate their bodies in ambivalent ways in their own texts to construct subjectivities worthy of consideration by readers. By regulation of the private, the self, and the family, in Foucauldian terms, such regulation of the body also makes possible for governmentality to be conceptualised which forms the larger nation state. This is often a rationalizing mission of 'civility,' as Nikolas Rose argues, of nineteenth-century liberalism which governed persons in accordance with freedom by techniques invented for promoting and celebrating self-mastery which were simultaneous techniques for instituting sociality ("Towards a Critical Sociology of Freedom" 213-224). I argue that the relationship between the body and labouring people becomes an important locus where citizens and would be citizens watch and are in turn watched over, providing a material means of self-education for the working classes. This construct of the individual subject not only complicates the relationship between the labouring

subject and the labouring body, but also separates labouring populations, preventing commonalities from becoming visible. Working people in Britain, for example, are not encouraged to identify with illustrations of labouring people in the colonies in the *Penny Magazine*.

The texts considered in this study show either attempts to erase the body to reach an ideal, disembodied subjectivity or a stress on physically labouring bodies to emphasize group identity. There are nuances in these positions where poor bodies are Othered by working people themselves. This tension between group identity as a class that performs manual labour and individual identity becomes manifest in various ways in the texts dealt with in these chapters. Representational modes related to the labouring population tend to stress commonly accepted group characteristics. Texts by labouring people struggle to articulate individuality in opposition to or in conjunction with their identities as manually labouring men and women. In addition to this, for working women, articulating subjectivities outside their own domestic space provides special challenges.

Such discussions shed light on how the labouring population came to be seen in the nineteenth century. The public sphere in the thirties and forties is not only a bourgeois sphere but one where working-class identities are increasingly at issue with the Chartist agitations, the Reform Bills, the poor law debates and the general visibility of working people through parliamentary Blue Books, Henry Mayhew and James Kay-Shuttleworth's reports and various other versions of the condition-of England question. Pressure towards homogenization of private identities in the case of labouring populations had to deal with discourses that saw working people as a different race, as child-like or threatening. Those articulating arguments for rights or privileges of working people had to position them as similar to other sections of society in order

to gain recognition. For example, Eugenio Biagini in *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform* notes continuities between Chartism and popular liberalism and stresses the ‘community’ aspects of the latter. He draws attention to certain Chartist rhetoric which wanted the franchise for all “free-born” Englishmen, rather than for all Englishmen, drawing from language not different from the seventeenth century radical movement called the Levelers.⁷ For literary representation, while liberal ideals could define all men as the same, working people differed in the appearance of their bodies and also worked with their bodies. The working-class body became a contested zone for both reformers and working people alike where liberal politics could play out.

While discussing mainstream cultural representations of labouring bodies and the representation of labouring bodies by working people themselves, the literary critic has to deal with the problems involved in the process of representation. The difference between political and cultural representation has proved to be, in Peter Hitchcock’s words, something of a “knot” for cultural critics. An “expanded lexicon of labor in cultural critique,” according to Hitchcock, “that, while it will not convince working classes to build barricades in defiance of those who lord it over them, might just militate against the tendency to build barricades around workers through representation” (23). Hitchcock points to the difficulty of working-class representation as beginning with the fundamental abstractness of class. There is no way to understand the extraction of value from the working class under the sign of capital, without coming to terms with class abstraction, he says, following Amariglio and Callari (23). “Class is not a thing but a relation and one that puts a heavy burden on representation” (23). He says that although since the moment of Althusserianism most critics have pushed back the possibility of unearthing an authentic reality of the working class from the text, the disjunction between appearance and real of working-class existence is still a problem for critics. Even if the oppressed may not identify

people who are the cause of their plight, they continually resist those structures that lie at the root of their oppression and deplorable existence. Yet, this resistance is not merely reactive, according to Hitchcock, but working-class subjects engage creatively with such oppressive forces at their moments in history. Therefore, this dissertation draws attention to working-class subjectivity formation as a process which is not linear or inevitable but as a process of constant engagement with forces that attempt to shape working-class subjectivity.

Historical speculation is outside the scope of this work. However, pointing out a few trends in mid-century is not totally inappropriate here. Richard Altick is very optimistic when he says that “The history of the mass reading audience is, in fact, the history of English democracy seen from a new angle” (3). Altick points out the connection between the spread of reading, the press and its steadily enlarging reading public to the shift of power from a small oligarchy to a popular electorate. He says that behind the push for the Reform bills of 1832 and 1867 lay the spread of reading (4). According to Patricia Anderson, however, whether the immense consumption of reading material might be seen as an indication of the democratization of the reading public is a complex problem that does not have a clear answer in terms of the degree and the kind of education and reading habits they allowed. Even so, it is clear that the spread of literacy, the rapid proliferation of the book trade, the abundance of the periodicals trade due to advances in printing technology, and the rise of the self-made reader contributed to the formation of a mass-reading culture. I agree with Patricia Anderson’s idea in her recent work on popular magazines of the 1830s and the 1860s that the emergence of a formative mass culture in this period was not a result of a total wholesale repression or replacement of existing forms (4). As she says, this emergence should not be equated with a total democratization of culture, with the obliteration of the social, economic, aesthetic differences that set “high culture” apart. Simple ideas of

domination and control where a consistent middle-class culture was dictating terms of this emergent mass culture are also unsatisfactory, according to her. The clash of cultures that was being played out through popular periodicals and serial publications of the day centred on depictions of the labouring body.

Many studies have attempted to account for a gap in political development of the English working class from the late Chartist movement in the 1840s to the rise of early socialism in the 1880s. My study of the literatures of this period points towards a reason for this discontinuity through the formation of working-class subjectivities that were separated from engagement with the labouring condition. The period I explore mostly spans the Chartist period and the following decades roughly till the defeat of Gladstone's liberal government in 1874. E.P. Thompson's account charts the growth of working-class militancy up to 1832 while Eric Hobsbawm traces its developments from the 1870s onwards. Studies of the middle period are comparatively recent.⁸ My study provides another look at this gap in radical political discourse by locating the reason for it at the intersections of working-class popular culture and middle-class liberal politics through a study of working-class subjectivities.

Argument and Chapter Divisions

Most studies of this period, specifically about ideological constructions or receptions of working-class bodies, concentrate on texts written by or in circulation amongst middle-class people when they explore representations of labour. Representations of labouring bodies in circulation amongst working people have remained relatively unexplored. While many scholars who primarily deal with the labouring body concentrate on the dominant culture to trace how classed bodies circulated in the larger culture, I focus on the circulation of images regarding labouring bodies amongst working people themselves. I also focus on the literary construction of subjectivity and identity of labouring people in relation to working bodies including those

representations that working people create of themselves. I consider working-class subjectivity formation as a dynamic process within a cultural milieu where labouring people were being bombarded with images of people like themselves through popular culture and through images they were producing themselves in their own texts.

I trace the assimilation of dominant gendered and classed tropes regarding labouring bodies by people at the object position of the social imaginary, through a contrapuntal structure which puts autobiographies and diaries of working women in conversation with texts in popular circulation in contemporary culture, including penny fiction, illustrations, pornography and also middle-class-authored novels such as *Mary Barton* and *Jane Eyre*. I examine representations of labour in the context of several facets of British optimism in mid-century, such as mass production, consumerism and imperialism. Placed within a context of ideas of Victorian progress, working-class people reacted in different ways to their changing world even though many may not have shared the fruits of such development. My work considers labouring people's subjectivity formation as a dynamic process within a cultural milieu where such people were being exposed to images of labouring bodies, including bodies of colonized peoples at work. For working-class authors and readers, a nuanced relation of possession or denial of possession towards bodies that do physical work informs their understanding of their own class, race and gender identity.

Literatures produced by and for working people reflect and help construct interiority of working-class people.⁹ Such interiorities construct working people as capable of occupying independent subject positions by putting those subject positions in dialogue with the labouring body. In middle-class constructions of workers, imagining interiority in a physically labouring body proves extremely difficult and this often fails when attempted in the social problem novel.

A process of self-reification occurs where labouring bodies are seen as objects by working people themselves--a process which separates the subject from the body. However, this is not a phenomenon that occurs only in middle-class authored texts. Even autobiographical texts produced by working people see their own bodies as separate from their subjectivities. Interiority is constructed as separate from the body which performs manual labour and yet is dependent on the body as a source of value. In an increasingly material culture, labouring bodies are reclaimed as Othered objects through which working people define themselves as individuals in possession of bodies. The ownership of the body or its suppression develops importance as a contested zone of meaning which defines the class identity of labouring people. Bodies return as Othered material objects which have value attached to them in discursive systems which imbue classed and gendered bodies with specific social or economic significances.

Such a polarization of interiority and the body has special significance for working people. Since such people work with their bodies, articulating experiences in their texts show special difficulties in claiming interiority as a means of separation from physical experiences. The forms of these narratives show gaps whenever certain experiences do not fit ideological forms of narratives suited to articulating middle-class lives. In other cases, possessing the body as a material object becomes an important source of class identity and replaces the absence of the possession of material objects of value. Such an approach to these texts provides a fresh critique of dominant literary tropes in the period that incorporate working-class subjects into the British nation by rendering ineffective material class difference. The process of owning the body also places marginalized sections of the British population in an imagined relation of participation in national exploits as beneficiaries of nineteenth-century progress through possession of Othered labouring bodies. Such bodies in popular discourses are seen as those of labouring populations at

home or of people imagined as Britain's Others in Europe or the colonies. In some cases, separation from the physically labouring body also implies separation from working-class status and a claim to a higher class status. The ability to possess, exchange, critique, present or deny any relation to labouring bodies defines the subject. Literature performs a mediating role through which this process is facilitated. Such literatures make us realize that "popular literature" could not be simply pitted against "high culture" in an effort to see this process as a move towards democratization of the reading public and a removal of cultural domination and control. Also, discourses that directly attempt to inculcate liberal values like endurance and thrift in working-class audiences, such as those in the *Penny Magazine*, and those seemingly radical discourses which directly critique inequalities between the rich and the poor and satirize liberal reform, such as parts of the *Mysteries of London*, both separate working bodies from subjectivities as objects to be looked upon. A set of texts very different in nature, domestic servant women's autobiographies and diaries, which articulate individual rather than collective responses to similar situations of poverty and need, also use the body as an objectified thing to be looked at or hidden from view.

The rise of the liberal individual in the nineteenth century defined against "society" is facilitated by this specific kind of subject/ body duality in working people. The nineteenth-century witnesses the rise of the bourgeois liberal subject as we know it, a self-interested, self-contained individual in the public sphere, moving forward aided by his own merit. Catherine Hall, Keith McClelland, and Jane Rendall interpret E.P. Thompson's view of class struggle in the following terms:

How English workers responded to the industrial revolution and the social and economic transformation it wrought was not simply a consequence of the economic events and experiences affecting them. Rather, those changes were handled through the cultural resources both already available and newly created by working people. (17)

Within this milieu of change, I examine how discourses of labouring bodies helped shape literatures by and for working-class people and how literary representations of labouring bodies helped working-class people understand themselves in psychological terms. Class understood in terms of the body presented working bodies as something to be managed or handled or feared--an attitude that working people themselves needed to appreciate to enjoy popular literature. Moreover, working people accept, alter and incorporate such representations in their own texts as readers and writers of these materials. Ultimately, this becomes a move towards the creation of the liberal subject where the working-class subject emerges by erasing contradictions of class difference through a rationalizing project which erases the body which bears markers of economic difference and ravages of an exploitative system. At the same time, the body suppressed in this rationalizing project re-emerges as a useful thing, separate from the working-class individual.

I do not wish to imply that the production of this duality was ever complete or clear cut. Such a process of formulating the subject/body duality results in a continuous flux between the attribution of interiority and the denial of interiority, production of the liberal subject and the production of mere bodies. This separation of subject and body is unstable, threatening to collapse into each other, so that the process of separation has to be constantly reinforced. In the working-class women's texts, this shows the emotional cost at which the separation is attempted and how certain experiences of the body remain non-narratable as a result of this. One of the questions that this project attempts to address is how class affects the ownership of bodies and how interiority in the context of class marginalization is defined in relation to bodies. This is considered in the context of the transference and appropriation of ideas of objectification of working-class bodies from middle-class centres of dissemination to the working-class margins of

appropriation. This study also suggests that this kind of transference was not linear--it could reverse its direction, move from working-class sources to dominant discourses and get altered at every stage as it was appropriated by its context.

The texts I use have a broad range in terms of genre, authorship and audience to give an adequate literary representation, though far from exhaustive, of the way that different representations work against each other. Many of these texts come from very different positions with respect to their politics, but in the way that they use tropes of the body, work and gender, they disrupt and complicate the idea of class identity and class relations in the nineteenth century. Julia Swindells' words about working-class autobiographies seem appropriate here and can also apply to the other popular texts: "Working-class autobiography can, in this way, be seen as producing working-class consciousness as well as being produced by that consciousness" (122). The broad range of genre helps us see that even when the ostensible purpose of writing differs widely, the same tropes reappear producing curiously similar effects.

Chapter 2 traces anxieties surrounding the idea of including working-class men into the liberal state as ideal citizens. It shows that two social problem novels that critique the factory system, *Mary Barton* (1848) and *Michael Armstrong* (1840), which deal with representation in parliament and the ten hours bill, largely become about coming to terms with social issues through finding the ideal working-class male body. *Mary Barton* initially attempts to construct working-class models who possess both strong bodies and the promise of the existence of working-class subjectivity, but ultimately gives way to separating working people into mere bodies, or individuals with tractable interiorities with attenuating bodies. *Michael Armstrong* undermines the difference in bodies between the working-class boy and those of the middle class. The novel therefore attempts to put forward the idea that all bodies are the same but is

ultimately unable to sustain the idea of containing the adult working-class male within liberal society. They die or move out of England at the conclusions of these novels.

Chapter 3 and 4 look at literatures produced by the middle class but in wide circulation amongst the labouring population and the poor. Chapter 3 deals with *The Penny Magazine* (1832 to 1845) published by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. This chapter illustrates the incorporation of the British labouring population into the notion of the British liberal subject by making available labouring bodies of colonized peoples, whose bodies are made devoid of subjectivity for display, to the labouring population at home. I examine illustrations which incorporate the British labouring population as a part of the nation by attributing them the power to possess Othered labouring bodies. The *Penny Magazine* constructs its working-class audience as subjects who are beneficiaries of progress, at the peak of civilization, through the consumption of such bodies. This chapter traces strategies that prevent identification of the audience, which was largely working people, with these representations of labouring bodies. The chapter also explores strategies by which power offered to British working people is ultimately contained in such reformist rhetoric through several strategies that distance the British worker from appearing heroic. These strategies also distance working people from their own conditions of labour.

While the *Penny Magazine* aims at reform through the dissemination of “facts” and is primarily didactic in purpose, Chapter 4 considers G.W.M. Reynolds’ *The Mysteries of London* which was serialized fiction primarily written as entertaining literature, precisely the kind that the *Penny Magazine* denounces as capable of “inflam[ing] a vicious appetite” (“Preface”). *The Mysteries*, though so different in purpose and form, is also obsessed with bodies. Also widely circulated, *The Mysteries* positions readers as consumers of the spectacle of the exchange of poor bodies in a cycle of production and consumption in pernicious parallel economies which pollute

larger society. This text explores these cycles that turn poor people into bodies but often objectifies poor bodies in the process of being critical. Mass production leads to anxieties about the danger of exploitation of poor bodies through reproduction of images of bodies of poor people as aesthetic objects, transforming the poor into mere bodies, while images of body snatchers emerge as people conducting trade literally through circulation and consumption of dead bodies. Even as this system is critiqued, the poor themselves are implicated as principal figures in these processes. The audience, which was mainly a contemporary working-class audience, participates in this othering of poor bodies and shares in gazing at this spectacle as outsiders.

The last two chapters explore what it must have been like to be a working-class person living in a culture where the body that performed manual labour was so central and so anxiety producing. Chapters 5 and 6 consider a “view from below” by examining how tropes about working women’s bodies in circulation in the dominant culture are appropriated by these very women at the margins. These chapters explore the way working women appropriate and change anxieties related to gendered representations of labouring bodies in their own texts. Chapter 5 on *Jane Eyre* and the autobiographies of five women, out of which four worked as domestic servants, shows how the latter appropriate the novel’s narratives to erase or reposition physical work and the body within their texts, in order to align themselves with lower-middle-class status. Tropes used seamlessly by the fictional Jane Eyre remain inadequate models for articulating the lives of working women so that gaps, awkward transitions and silences show their texts “straining at the seams” to articulate experiences that middle-class tropes do not allow space for. Generic conventions dictated by middle-class forms such as the romance and the autobiography do not allow space for their experiences to be articulated. The autobiographies considered are

The Autobiography of Rose Allen (1847), *Life of a Licensed Victualler's Daughter* (Mary Ann Ashford, 1844), *Autobiography of Ellen Johnston, 'The Factory Girl'* (1867), *A Fire in the Kitchen: The Autobiography of a Cook* (Florence White, 1938) and *Memories of Seventy Years* (Mrs. Layton, 1931).

Chapter 6 explores the trials of domestic servant Hannah Cullwick to construct her subjectivity *vis-a-vis* a system that places so much value on her body. She attempts to foreground her body as a primary marker of her value as a servant, and yet has to resist objectification and homogenization as just a body in order to seem a special servant to her gentleman lover Arthur Munby. She draws on pornography and the tradition of the sentimental novel to construct a subject that gazes on her eroticized body and yet does not itself become a mere body. Constant reinforcement of the separation/identification duality is required to present her identity as a servant and as a woman in a relationship with an upper-class man. This constant flux is always a threat to her unified sense of subjectivity and identity because Cullwick's body as signifier ultimately has meaning in a larger signifying system she struggles to control from her class and gender position.

Notes

¹ According to Cullwick, this was written by Munby but put in the paper by her.

² *London Labour and the London Poor* originated in a series of articles written for the *Morning Chronicle* in 1849 and 1850. The articles were compiled into three volumes in 1851. A fourth volume was added in 1861.

³ Steven Marcus talks about the date of this work. "There is no date, but we can be reasonably certain that it was printed over a period of time in which 1890 can stand as a mid-point" (82). It was originally published in eleven uniform volumes.

⁴ Gertrude Himmelfarb describes how "the poor" who were equated with the "lower orders" earlier became differentiated as the "dependent" poor, the "independent" poor, the "pauper," the "laboring poor," the "residuum" and the "respectable poor" in discourses in this period (*Idea* 8).

⁵ John Burnett notes that historically, manual labourers fell into two distinct categories, skilled and unskilled, depending on whether the work required apprenticeship or not. From the late eighteenth century onwards, the intrusion of factory production on this hierarchy interposed a new class between the artisan and the labourer which

was referred to as ‘the factory operative’ or ‘the less skilled labour class,’ most commonly described as semi-skilled today. (23-24)

⁶ Stephen Blackpool is a sentimentalized power-loom weaver in Charles Dickens’ *Hard Times*.

⁷ Hall, McClelland and Rendall describe Biagini’s argument (28).

⁸ For a discussion of the decades between the continental revolutions of 1848 and the electoral defeat of William Gladstone’s Liberal government in 1874, see Margot C. Finn’s book *After Chartism*. Finn explores the “cultural and political construction of perceptions of class consciousness by radical activists, and the role played by radical, national, international, and class identities in mediating liberal popular politics after Chartism” (7). Finn also explores various viewpoints of Victorian labour history regarding this discontinuity of the political development of the English working class in these decades in the introduction.

⁹ One useful approach to the concept of interiority, for my purposes, can be found in Julian Murphet’s book *Literature and Race in Los Angeles*. Murphet quotes Stanley Aronowitz to state that interiority “presupposed the individual who was distinguished from the objects outside of her--or himself by consciousness, even if socially determined or conditioned” (qtd. in Murphet 77).

CHAPTER 2
THE SOCIAL PROBLEM NOVEL AND ANXIETIES REGARDING THE MALE
LABOURING BODY IN *MARY BARTON* AND *MICHAEL ARMSTRONG*

The Male Body in Liberal Society: Anxieties of Working-Class Manliness

The representation of the male working-class body in Victorian industrial novels reveals ambivalent attitudes on the part of the middle class towards the incorporation of the working class in the social body. The treatment of the male working-class body also reveals ambivalences about the representation of the working-class man in politics as a meaningful citizen. I read two novels in this chapter, which reveal this ambivalence in overlapping ways: Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848) and Frances Trollope's *Michael Armstrong* (1840). Both incorporate versions of Victorian liberalism which look for a common link between classes to conceptualise a coherent social body and a method of governmentality. An ideal working-class man is sought who is also in possession of an ideal male body which fits in with liberal ideals. Both authors show an awareness of the body as a social and political construct but both also attempt to depoliticise and essentialize the working-class body in different ways.

Industrial Novels of the 1840s which deal with issues of working-class representation in parliament, largely written by middle-class individuals, conceive of citizenship as male citizenship. Such conceptions often include certain models of masculinity which shape working-class identity. The visibility of working-class manliness in these texts is often an important part of rallying either respect or pity for working-class characters, achieved through the representation of the male body, which is inscribed by popular forms of bourgeois ideology. If the working-class man is to be a free liberal agent, he has to be economic and competitive in the public sphere and conform to the bourgeois ideal of manhood. In the case of the factory worker, the body is the principal instrument with which work is performed, so that the worker cannot enter the public/political sphere disembodied, as it were. So the social problem novel has to deal

with the working-class body and account for its visible difference with its middle-class counterpart. Liberalism often constructs a myth of progress which, as a social order or a philosophical outlook rather than a political doctrine, is more cultural than economic, often disseminated through popular forms. Hence the social representation of the difference of male working-class bodies from those of men of other classes becomes as culturally significant as the economic accountability for such difference. The liberal ideal of equality has to be reached through enumerating social relations rather than economic relations to provide moral justification and possibility for a unified social body in popular consciousness.

This chapter locates anxieties surrounding labouring bodies in liberal society in dominant discourses which show anxieties surrounding the idea of including working-class men into the liberal state as ideal citizens. It shows that two social problem novels that point out ravages of the factory system and ills of industrialization, Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* and Frances Trollope's *Michael Armstrong*, largely become about solving issues through finding the ideal working-class man in possession of the ideal body. The former novel deals with the working classes' political representation in parliament and the latter deals with the ten hours bill which would reduce work hours in factories as their most prominent political issues. *Mary Barton* initially attempts to construct working-class models who possess both strong bodies and the promise of the existence of working-class subjectivities, but ultimately gives way to separating working people into mere bodies, or individuals with tractable interiorities with attenuating bodies--sick, diseased or dying. *Michael Armstrong* consciously critiques visible differences in bodies between people of different classes by undermining the difference in bodies between the working-class child protagonist of the same name and men and boys of the middle class, pointing out the sameness of people of different classes. The novel therefore attempts to put forward the

idea that all bodies are the same but is unable to sustain the idea of containing the adult working-class male, who is no different from other classes, within liberal society. The novel initially uses various strategies to allay anxieties about potential masculine aggressiveness from strong working-class characters, but ultimately polarizes physical strength and intellect into different characters, employing strategies to render the strong man harmless and the weak man pitiable. The social problem novel about working-class masculinities makes the concept of labouring male bodies available in ambivalent ways to its audience.

Two of the major aims of the Chartist movement amongst the six points of the Charter, in response to the inequities remaining after the 1832 Reform Act, were universal suffrage for all men over twenty-one years of age and the abolition of the property qualification for becoming a Member of Parliament. The Chartists collected one and a quarter million signatures in support of the Charter and presented it to the House of Commons where it was rejected in 1839. A second petition with three million signatures was rejected in 1842 and the rejection of a third petition in 1848 brought an end to the movement. The rejection of the charter forms the backdrop of *Mary Barton*. Gareth Steadman Jones observes how Chartism, which primarily began as a political movement, failed because it no longer came to be perceived as a realizable institutional and political alternative. In Steadman Jones' words

Chartism began to fail when a gulf opened up between its premises and the perceptions of its constituency. Local and everyday awareness of difference in social position, of course, remained, but it was no longer linked across the country through the language of radicalism to a shared conviction of a realizable institutional and political alternative. Thus, if expressed hostility to the middle classes declined, despite the continuation of capitalist relations of production, this should be no occasion for surprise. For it was the product of a decline of a political movement whose expressed reasons for hostility to the middle class had had little to do with the character of the productive system itself (107)

Social problem fiction contained radicalism by portraying these issues as social and not politically or economically remediable, at least in this period. Manliness often forms a bridge in

social problem novels and masculinity becomes an important way of solving problems. Discourses of love, sentimentality and religion are used to dissipate political radicalism. Even though traditionally femininity formed a bridge between classes using discourses of love and sentimentality, manliness is often portrayed as a connecting idea in this way as well in this period. In the second-last chapter of Kingsley's novel *Alton Locke*, Alton answers Eleanor's question about whether he is still a chartist in the following lines:

If by a chartist you mean one who fancies that a change in mere political circumstances will bring about a millennium, I am no longer one. That dream is gone--with others. But if to be a Chartist is to love my brothers with every faculty of my soul--to wish to live and die struggling for their rights, endeavouring to make them, not electors merely, but fit to be electors, senators, kings and priests to God and his Christ--if that be the Chartism of the future, then am I seven-fold a chartist, and ready to confess it before men, though I were thrust forth from every door of England. (364-365)

Though Alton is a spokesperson for Kingsley's views and does not really represent working-class ideas, such an attitude shows the middle-class social problem novel's willingness to shift the political to the realm of feeling. When the middle-class novel does not portray this kind of tractable working-class man, by gendering working-class masculinity as effeminate or dangerously virile, fiction collaborates with political discourse to contain resistance.

The idea that gender can transcend class, in the case of masculinity, gives rise to anxieties about masculine agency and aggressiveness because of men's activity in the public and economic spheres. In conceptualising a coherent social body for purposes of governmentality, a commonality is sought in liberal society between widely disparate individuals who are different in terms of standards of living and the work that they do. Masculinity becomes a flexible concept which often serves as a link between members of a certain class which excludes other classes, but at times it is also used to suggest a link between classes. The ideal man, it is assumed, is the same for all classes in essence, at once the public, political/economic man and the private man in his domestic sphere as the head of the household.

Bodies of working-class men are inscribed by work or poverty related ills such as opium, machine-injury and alcohol. However, from the middle-class point of view, a positive model of masculinity has to be found amongst various representations of working men, as weak and diseased, for such men to enter the public space as good citizens. Even though *Mary Barton* seeks redress for workers by representing people who are ill because they work in these factories, healthy working class men also produce anxiety. Sympathy is only possible in the social sphere when male bodies are shrunk, diseased or feminised.¹ *Michael Armstrong* allays such anxieties by alternating between two contradictory images of masculinity by positing two children, Michael Armstrong and his brother Edward, as being in possession of these two ideals. They negotiate between contradictory models of masculinity of the feminised, angelic, intellectual model and the muscular, “manly” model. Both models initially attempt to register signs of work, disease or infirmity on the body, but ultimately, the novel cannot depict these children as grown men who develop healthy bodies living within the borders of England. Both novels transport their ideal working-class men to Europe or North America at the conclusion of the novels.

Mary Barton

Elizabeth Gaskell’s 1848 novel *Mary Barton* is set in Manchester during a period of rapid industrialization and economic depression. Mary is the daughter of factory worker John Barton, a member of a workers’ union and the major male character in the novel. Jem Wilson and Harry Carson are the other two male characters, both love-interests for Mary at different times. The former young man embodies certain positive working-class qualities and the latter is the depraved son of the owner of the factory where John works. John Barton represents the workers to deliver the Chartist petition to London and returns broken-hearted. The union takes a decision to murder Harry Carson and John Barton is chosen in a lottery to perform the act. Although Mary has an affair with Harry Carson, Jem Wilson wins Mary Barton after several twists in the plot

which involves a court-room scene where Jem is accused of Harry's murder. John Barton dies sick and repentant at the conclusion of the novel.

Anxieties about working-class aggression are evident in the preface to the novel. Gaskell prefaces *Mary Barton* with an appeal for sympathy on the part of the rich to sympathize with the working class, so that "whatever public effort may do in the way of legislation, or private effort in the way of merciful deeds, or helpless love in the way of widow's mites" should be done to alleviate their suffering (xxxvi). If this is not done, she warns the middle-class reader, the consequences might be dangerous. The image that she uses is a very aggressive masculine one, which, if applied to Victorian men of any other class may have seemed laudable, but applied to the working class, seems anxiety producing: "At present they seem to be left in a state, wherein lamentations and tears are thrown aside as useless, but in which the lips are compressed for curses and the hands clenched and ready to smite" (xxxvi). In the preface, Gaskell positions herself as a woman writer claiming that she does not understand anything of Political Economy or theories of trade and refuses to take sides. She positions the "belief in injustice" of the workers as having arisen from the neglect that the moneyed class has shown towards the working classes which has prevented them from "resignation to God's will" (xxxv). Hence Gaskell both allays fears regarding the idea that the novel has radical sympathies and naturalizes class difference as God's will while showing that contemporary conditions of working people were indeed unnatural.

Sutures between the novel's conscious intention of presenting a basic assumption of equality of rights and assumptions about some authentic truth about working people reveal interesting gaps in the ideological framework of the novel. Ironically, it is the depiction of feelings of animosity rather than anything else in the book that adversely affects contemporary

critics who represent the middle class.² Though *Mary Barton* is accused repeatedly by contemporary conservative critics of taking the side of the workers in a biased way, what the novel does through its construction of male bodies is to reveal unique identities based on the body's truth which seem to reveal a more basic and authentic truth about workers' identities. The novel begins by giving credit to the intelligence of John Barton and appreciating Jem Wilson's healthy, strong masculinity, especially in comparison to the dandy Harry Carson's. However, industrial injustice cannot be depicted on strong working bodies without employing strategies of rendering them powerless to gain sympathy of the middle-class reader. By shifting the focus from the strong worker Jem Wilson to the increasingly powerless figure of John Barton, the novel deals with its anxieties about healthy working-class male bodies who have the potential to become aggressive. By embodying industrial injustice, the worker's body serves both to resist and contain middle-class anxieties about the working class.

One of the problems therefore that Gaskell grapples with in *Mary Barton* is the problem of representation, both in the sense of representation in parliament (political citizenship) and in the sense of fictional representation. The differences in outward appearances of masters and workmen produce visible challenges posed by the body regarding novelistic representation; the anxieties the novel itself expresses about working-class bodies produce a challenge to a notion of a unified social body. Character in *Mary Barton* often becomes readable through rendering the body legible through conventional cues which function through popular constructions of different class models of masculinity. The possession of masculinity becomes expressive of power in social relations. Mary Poovey talks about the emergence of the "psychological" in the period and its relation to Gaskell's use of the form of the novel in *Mary Barton*. She says that the novel focuses on individual characters to engage readers imaginatively with the problems of the

poor. The body with its issue of hunger, pain and suffering becomes a social issue and the solution does not seem reachable through political economy but through an imaginative placement of the middle-class reader “into the homes and minds of the poor” (Poovey 143). In *Mary Barton*, I argue that a similar displacement occurs by displacing conflict from the realm of politics to that of the body of John Barton. The middle-class reader finds an idealized solution to social problems that acknowledges class differences but proposes the solution as a medical, religious or social problem, not a political or economic one.

While Jem Wilson is considered a responsible, hard-working man and a suitable suitor for Mary Barton, Harry Carson is a frivolous and rich womanizer who is a danger for working-class women. The depiction of the factory worker Jem as a masculine figure as compared to the master’s son Harry serves to admonish the middle-class male. Moral degeneration of Harry is linked to his physical effeminacy and Jem is favoured in this context as closer to the ideal of the true man. There is a strong anxiety that the upper classes are losing their masculinity through Harry Carson’s depiction. A chapter entitled “A Violent Meeting between Rivals” dramatizes this anxiety when Jem learns that Mary is having an affair with Harry. Jem meets Harry to find out whether his intentions about Mary are honourable. He remains polite to Harry until Harry makes an objectionable comment about Mary. Then we have the following scene where Harry literally brushes off Jem’s contaminating touch: “Jem put his black, working, right hand upon his arm to detain him. The haughty man shook it off, and with his glove pretended to brush away the sooty contamination that might be left upon his light greatcoat sleeve. The action aroused Jem” (108). While the reader joins the narrator in admonishing Harry’s irresponsible, shallow behaviour arising out of class snobbery, this scene carries certain class anxieties right below the tension of sexual rivalry. The black hand is both an indication of working-class masculinity as

well as a sign of threatened danger from a body made strong by labour if it is aroused. Harry's glove hints at an effeminate concern with dress which not only fits the novel's cues about Harry as the frivolous villain figure, but underscores anxieties about excessive concern with appearance draining upper-class masculinities. There is a recognition here that in their refusal to connect directly in any way with the process of industrial production, by brushing off soot, upper-class men are somehow not doing the job of being real men. Also, implicit in this comparison is the fact that Jem is protecting the heroine's honour. This is reiterated in the situation that follows, where Harry strikes Jem to make him get out of his way. But soon Harry, who initiates the violence, has to lie stretched on the muddy road in the conventional vulnerable feminine position "with Jem standing over him, panting with rage" (210). Masculine weakness in Harry is closely connected to duplicity and moral degradation. Both these character traits are shifted from the upper-class male to the male working-class body of John Barton by the end of the novel. Though the text at this point is supportive of Jem, there is an implicit fear or anxiety about the potential strength that Jem shows.

A simultaneous anxiety about loss of masculinity amongst the upper-classes is evident in the symbolical representation of the place where the two men meet. Jem is black, grimy, in dirty fustian clothes, but strongly built.

Along one side ran a fence, blackened over with coal-tar, and spiked and struck with pointed nails at the top to prevent anyone from climbing over into the garden beyond On the other side of the way was a dead brick wall; (206)

This is a symbolic representation of not only the characters of the two men in the novel but an acknowledgement of their outward appearance as well. The coal tar acknowledges the effects of labour on Jem which makes him more masculine. Even if the Freudian implications of the spikes and nails are not taken over-seriously, this model of the working-class man is represented as being able to protect the privacy of his own domestic space, the garden and beyond, which in

this context also means the sexual purity of his woman. The dead, brick wall also indicates the impotence of the middle-class man and his failure to live up to the domestic ideal. The characterization of Harry Carson in this novel is fairly stereotypical, so that anxieties are expressed more transparently than, say, in *North and South* where Gaskell sees factory owners in a more complex light. However, the depiction of the working-class man suffers a simplification in that text.

Immediately after the scene above, the text mentions that Jem overcomes the apparent superiority of Harry “in externals,” the elegant man in comparison to the poor smith, through a mental reference to Robert Burns’ poem “‘a man’s a man for a’ that, and twice as much as a’ that” (207). He is superior *because* he is inferior in outward appearance. Though Jem is favoured because the reason for which Jem seeks the confrontation seems morally the right thing to do, the strong black body of the worker remains struck with pointed nails, dangerously waiting to plunge on the upper-class man.

Jem’s black hand may be read as an objectification of his useful body part and therefore a reduction of him to that part of his anatomy. However, his masculinity prevents him from becoming just a body and it is Harry who is in danger of becoming superfluous as a breed of men who are not included in the system of production in a productive way. Catherine Gallagher observes this in her brilliant essay on Malthus and Mayhew, with respect to Malthusian ideas:

However, the short circuit of biological exchange favored by Malthus seems also to be the product of a circular logic. The body that labors is valuable insofar as its commodity can almost immediately be turned back into not just a body but a *valuable* body, that is, another body producing food. In other words, the value of bodies is not absolute but rather based on their ability to create a commodity whose value is only defined in relationship to its ability to create a commodity whose value is only defined by its ability to replenish the body And outside of this tight circle of production and consumption, a circle representing the most restrictive economy imaginable, is a network of exchanges that seems only to draw value away from its true site in order to dissipate it, often by attaching

it to the bodies of those who have been rendered valueless in Malthusian logic (Gallagher 96).

Though Gallagher is talking about agricultural production here, the same logic renders men involved in industrial production superfluous who actually do not work with their bodies. In their fascination with dress and outward appearance, they draw value away from the production of goods that could truly replenish the body and, like Mayhew's costermongers, cannot be trusted because of their appearance.³ The deceitfulness of Harry's appearance is a danger to working-class women, which the working-class man needs to protect them from in the novel. In *Michael Armstrong* though, another social discourse is used where working people's literal involvement in the process of production is horrifying. The bodies of children working in the factories get mangled in machines with the raw materials which are then callously converted into finished products for the luxury of the rich. The upper-class industrialist is also seen to be literally a physically abusive threat to young Michael, considering his body as nothing but property.

While on the one hand liberalism appeals to the bourgeois for the alleviation of the suffering of the poor based on a concept of the universal man who is the same in essence for all classes, it cannot do away with the worker's body. The working-class body is different in appearance from the masters' and is the source of a working man's identity because he works with his body. Healthy male bodies of workers pose a threat to the position of the capitalists through a growing awareness that the comforts of the middle-class depend on processes that maim or shrivel up the bodies of workers. Such labouring bodies stand in visible testimony to bourgeois guilt. This stands in direct contrast to bourgeois narratives of legitimation of progress and certain narratives, which Thomas Laqueur describes as "humanitarian," that accompanied the rise of capitalism. Laqueur observes that these humanitarian narratives have two key features. They are not only attentive to the sufferings of the poor but "firstly, [they] identify the

secularized and individuated body as the common bond between sufferers and relievers. Secondly, in [their] attention to both causality and human agency [they represent] ameliorative action . . . as possible, effective and therefore morally imperative” (Laqueur 177-78). These narratives assume that all capitalist groups have the same interest and that they are the agents of progress. They also reassure the masters that their actions are for the benefit and happiness of all. Such views seem optimistic in their understanding of causes of human distress--that causes of suffering such as diseases can be known and traced and that they can then be removed by human action. Such a measure of absence of pain could provide a yardstick to gauge the progress of new systems.

The overt message in *Mary Barton* is one of humanitarian aid to the workers of Manchester. However, it is the representation of the male bodies of the workers in the text which makes it possible to simultaneously acknowledge injury to the bodies of workers, through over-exertion and hunger, in a flawed process of industrialization and indict unionization of workers against systemic oppression. Such representation also distances guilt of the masters by displacing the reason for the deterioration of workers’ bodies to more manageable physical causes arising out of natural processes. These reasons are described as hunger and pain, the original causes of which remain obscured or moral processes which ultimately blame the worker himself. The trope of the body also makes it possible for the masters to become uncomfortably aware of their own kinship with workers through the physical body. The narrative employs a variety of ways to make the resultant anxiety about vulnerability and guilt tractable.

Humanitarian aid can only be provided when the bodies of workers have been divested of any agency and put in an infantilised dependent state. In such a state, need shifts from the political or economic sphere to the social sphere shifting the focus from an acknowledgement of

liberal “rights” to humanitarian aid based on liberal sympathies. This shift is important because the very facts of economics were often being turned on their head to serve the interests of capitalists under an assumption that all men were equal and therefore could take equal care of themselves. The argument was often shifted from the political to the domestic sphere where the sins of the working class became lack of thrift and frugality.⁴

The working-class man is proud of his masculinity and willing to protect its loss. To counter the mill owners’ indifference to the plight of the workers, a meeting is arranged between a few representatives from the workers’ side and some of the masters. Harry Carson, the owner’s son, is also present at this meeting. As the delegation of workers go to negotiate terms for higher wages, Harry Carson draws out his silver pencil and draws a caricature of them: “lank, ragged, dispirited and famine stricken” with a quotation underneath of Falstaff’s speech in *Henry IV*, an obvious reference to the line ‘No eye hath seen such scarecrows’ (216). The caricature that Harry Carson draws, not the rejection of the petition, ironically becomes the cause of the murder. It becomes a mockery of the masculinity of the workers originating in the caricature of John Slater’s big nose and the ridiculing of the way that he pins up his waistcoat, to hide the fact that he has no shirt on. This is in effect a mockery of their poverty and appearance. Also, as John Slater himself says, he would have appreciated the joke only if he was not as hungry as he was, and only if his family was not crying for food. This event expresses a duality of attitude of the narrator towards the working-class male. Representation depends on visibility and clothing, being one of the most visible aspects of the body, becomes closely related to masculinity. Masculinity is seen as an interior quality, not dependent on clothes or the body. The narrator is obviously appreciative of the workers’ lack of concern for dress as compared to the well-dressed Harry:

Had they (the workers) been larger boned men, you would have called them gaunt; as it was, they were little of stature, and their fustian clothes hung loosely upon their shrunk limbs. In choosing their delegates too, the operatives had had more regard to their brains, and power of speech, than to their wardrobes; . . . Some of the masters were rather affronted at such a ragged detachment coming between the wind and their nobility; but what cared they? (214)

The bodies of the workers, though shrunk, produce a counterpart to the strong, healthy body of Jem, the young worker and the hero of the novel, in many ways. The common point between these shrunk workers and Jem is that they are all true men. Their masculinity depends on a lack of concern for dress and the reason for their confrontation with the masters is their need to protect their women and children. Idealized as the father, lover, son or brother, the working-class man can appeal for sympathy because he fulfils his domestic roles properly. This is the primary reason why the workers take the petition to the masters in the first place.

The novel, within this ideological structure, begins with stunted but intelligent men such as John Barton and the older Mr Wilson, Jem's father. However, healthy working-class bodies pose a complex problem. The concept of healthy bodies in a liberal framework cannot accommodate stunted men as ideal. The novel shows other possibilities of male labouring bodies in the form of the healthy body of Jem. However, narratives of interiority related to working-class people, such as feelings of domesticity or intellectual capabilities such as a liking for reading books, when related to strong healthy bodies, lead to anxiety. Soon these strong working-class bodies become too anxiety producing to contain so that appeal for reform can only be made by infantilising, and making dependent John Barton's body until hierarchies are reinforced so that even bodily strength closely tied to masculinity rests with the elder Mr. Carson, the factory owner and Harry's father, at the conclusion of the novel. The shrunk intelligent models and the strong, moral, intelligent working-class models are rejected in favour of models that are powerful but

only affective and mindless, or diseased dying models emptied of all threat, remorseful and asking for sympathy.

John Barton literally walks into the novel carrying a baby. Though he is stunted because “in childhood he had suffered scanty living” his features are “strongly marked, though not irregular, and their expression [is] extreme earnestness; resolute either for good or evil, a sort of latent stern enthusiasm” (4). He is charged with the care of infants. He is shown not to depend on anyone but being depended upon. From such a depiction of working-class masculinity, the novel quickly moves to a depiction of the workers as strong but both passive and dangerous. Through the use of two metaphors, that of workers as monstrous which implies both a very powerful body, but only body without mind, and that of workers as steam that needs to be directed, we are alerted to the potential dangers of working-class organizations:

Combination is an awful power. It is like the equally mighty agency of steam; capable of almost unlimited good or evil. But to obtain a blessing on its labour, it must work under the direction of a high and intelligent will; incapable of being misled by passion or excitement. The will of the operatives had not been guided to the calmness of wisdom. (203)

Apart from the use of these metaphors, another strategy that the text employs is the use of a strategy of displacement. In a scene where Jem rescues his father from a burning mill, the narrator describes Jem’s brave feat as a work of as much nerve as of eye, meaning as much of a psychological challenge as the actual perception required to find the man amongst the debris. And yet, as the text progresses, any evidence of intelligence on the workers’ part is quickly displaced by the narrator from the brain to the body. Soon after this episode, the novel depicts John Barton’s “overpowering thought” about the fate of the separate lot of the rich and the poor on earth to a kind of bodily depression, of a morbid power which in turn has arisen from hunger through lack of food.⁵ The cause of his discontent, by being diverted to the body, is seen as a subject for ameliorative action. Yet, this does not prompt the bourgeois reader to take

responsibility. Within a few paragraphs of this description John's actions are likened to Frankenstein who does not know the difference between good and evil.⁶ Such metaphors depict common anxieties and attempt to resolve them in the imaginative sphere.

Susan Williams argues in *The Rich Man and the Diseased Poor* that the "monster" metaphor was a tool used by the upper classes to inflame public opinion and reassert dominance even as it encoded fear and perceptions of fragmentation:

The description of the poor as a monster of the Frankenstein type . . . acknowledged the people's strength. On the one hand, of course, it portrayed them as an aberration, amoral and savage, unworthy of treatment as humans. But, at the same time, it invested them with the power and determination of Shelley's monster--which destroyed its creator. (qtd. in Hall 52)

Though the Frankenstein image here is not used to marshal middle-class defences by portraying lower-class subjectivity as diabolic in any overt manner, there is definitely a fear that the working classes might turn on their oppressors in some way.

The Frankenstein image reinforces an image of a child-like mind in a powerful body which is only that, a body, but powerful enough to pose a danger if meddled with. The Frankenstein image also gives a certain sense of culpability to the masters who are responsible for the monster in the first place. One way this sense of guilt is dealt with is seen in the repetition of descriptions, in both fictional and non-fictional texts, of images where Frankenstein is used as a metaphor for workers followed by a description of the workplace that reminds one of pandemonium or hell.⁷ The likeness of the factory scene to a kind of burning purgatory where all kinds of licentiousness goes on due to the proximity of members of both sexes seems to have fascinated Victorian moralists. Connecting the worker with moral degradation seems to have been one way of grappling this guilt. This is the description of the foundry where Jem supervises a casting before he is arrested, reminding one of the fallen archangels in pandemonium in *Paradise Lost*:

Dark, black were the walls, the ground, the faces around them, as they crossed the yard. But, in the furnace-house, a deep and lurid red glared over all; the furnace roared with mighty flame. The men, like demons, in their fire-and-soot colouring, stood swart around, awaiting the moment when the tons of solid iron should have melted down into fiery liquid. . . . the policeman stood awed with the novel sight. Then, black figures, holding strange-shaped bucket shovels, came athwart the deep red furnace light, and clear and brilliant flowed forth the iron into the appropriate mould. (261)

Though the plot tells us that Jem is being arrested unfairly for the murder of John Barton, the description of the foundry gives an impression not of innocence but of fascinating, but potentially dangerous masculinity. However, projecting images of such lusty manhood is balanced out in the text through the simultaneously attenuating body of John Barton.

The text also uses strategies to displace the reason for the workers' discontent to biological causes that are naturalized by being located on the worker's body. One such cause is hunger, a bodily phenomenon I mentioned earlier. Another notable cause is expressed by drawing an analogy between reading and drinking or smoking in the case of the working-class men. In a meeting of workers that follows the delegates' meeting with the masters to raise wages, the workers are offered pipes and liquor. "As the man who has had his taste educated to love reading, falls devouringly upon books after a long abstinence, so these poor fellows, whose tastes had been left to educate themselves into a liking for tobacco, beer and similar gratifications, gleamed at the proposal of the London Delegate" (219). Such a representation is in direct contrast to the narrator's earlier admiring representation of working men as self-educated, reading Newton and botany and entomology.⁸ By this point in the novel the workers become mere smoking and drinking bodies without intellect.

Depiction of bodily pain and suffering in the text serves a similar purpose of containing the political. Ann Cvetkovich in her work on the sensation novel talks about how "a discourse of affect serves to contain resistance, especially from women. Rather than leading to social change, the expression of feeling can become an end in itself or an individualist solution to systemic

problems” (Cvetkovich 1). Arguments such as these, when extended to other powerless groups, such as the labouring classes in this period, tied in with humanitarian bourgeois narratives that attempted to measure social health by a measure of absence of pain. If the industrial system was flawed because it produced physical maiming or disease, an expression of physical pain and its cure could become an end in itself in the case of the working classes.

John Barton’s moral and physical pain towards the end of the novel is brought on due to his own moral guilt because of the murder. Displacement of guilt also takes place in an episode in a chapter entitled “Masters and Workmen” where the masters decide beforehand that they are not going to grant the demands of the delegation of workers. This decision is based on the fact that the workers have proved more like “wild beasts than human beings,” having thrown acid on a defector. The gruesome description of the worker’s body that had been beaten to an almost unrecognisable shape by the workers supplements the other suffering bodies that are maimed by machinery in a flawed system of industrial production depicted in the novel. The acid-burnt body obscures the suffering of workers and makes them culpable once more when this body comes up again right before the decision of the murder of Harry Carson. After a graphic description of the man’s death, John Barton proposes to a crowd of workers that their real target should not be other workers, who have little to choose between vitriol and death, but the masters themselves. The maimed body of the man serves two purposes. It emphasizes the vulnerability of the masters: “It would give th’ masters a bit on a fright if one of them were beaten to an inch of his life” (222). It also becomes a visible testimony of the savagery of the working class which gives the narrator the authority to pass moral judgement. The ease with which the crowd, at the meeting, gets persuaded and transfers the locus of their vengeance from the suffering body of the worker to Harry Carson shows that the workers are completely moved by affect and are not

really ideologically radical. The crowd is enraged not because Harry has engaged in a political move to deny the workers, but because he has ridiculed them through his caricature of their bodies. Such affective behaviour obscures the political cause of the murder and portrays the workers as irrational.

After this decision to murder is taken, the text shifts from images of health and power while treating working-class bodies, particularly those that depict Jem as the hearty working-class man, to those of the weakening body of John Barton.⁹ Soon after he is released, Jem sees what can only be described as the shadow of John Barton.

a form had glided into sight; a wan feeble figure, bearing . . . a jug of water . . . It went before Jem, . . . passed into the broad, calm light; and there, with bowed head, sinking and shrunk body, Jem recognized John Barton. . . . No haunting ghost could have had less of the energy of life in its involuntary motions than he . . . (406)

John Barton has not only become passive, but totally drained of the steam-like energy that he had earlier. Though attention has not quite shifted back to him from Jem yet, he is soon to become the entire focus of the closure of the text. Towards the end, John Barton effectively becomes this ghostly, yet childlike figure, totally dependent. Once he is back at home with Mary, he answers “her questions . . . by monosyllables, and in a weak, high, childish voice; but he [does] not lift his eyes; he [cannot] meet his daughter’s look” (419). John Barton has to give up his strength and his ability to take care of himself and others, which is an evidence of his masculinity, to become fit for bourgeois pity. Instead of him taking care of his daughter as he was shown to do earlier, he becomes dependent on her.

It is not simply that the novel becomes a domestic novel in this part, where John Barton can only be either a father or an assassin.¹⁰ In the domestic sphere, John’s action, devoid of all political implications, can only be seen as immoral. Towards the end, John’s shrinking body, coupled with the biblical language of the last few pages, becomes an evidence of his moral

“guilt.” Apart from being guilty alone for the murder,¹¹ his guilt is also a failure of masculinity in not taking good care of his daughter. Once he is shown to be repentant, and once his working-class body is not left capable of any physical strength, John becomes an object of pity in the social sphere, which can become the object of domestic sentimental philanthropy since it does not have any implications of the political attached to it. When John Barton is too ill to stand, his requirements no longer remain higher wages or the Charter and his stuntedness no longer seems to be due to industrial injustices.

Apart from murder being a Christian offence, that having transgressed against god he suffers, John Barton is also described as having fallen prey to opium and a morbid disposition after the murder. His own culpability, earlier symbolized by working-class culpability embodied in the acid-burnt body of the worker, is repeated here by the epigraph to Chapter 35: “He would on himself have wreaked such penance as had reached the height of fleshly suffering” (424). Political reasons shift to the moral and religious spheres where the masters are no longer guilty and John himself is made culpable for his fate.

The move from intelligent, shrunken but strong and aggressive bodies, to strong passive bodies, or childlike weak bodies get completed when the working-class bodies are emptied of all threat at this point in the novel. John Barton, who disappears for a while after the murder, is found ill and dying and is cared for by Mary. Harry Carson’s father comes to visit John Barton when he is under Mary’s care, having learnt that John is the murderer of his son. The older Mr Carson cannot forgive John for his son’s death initially. The scene where the wronged father Mr Carson faces the dying man John is described in detail. The text reaffirms bourgeois power through the physical description of the two men who face each other. John Barton’s head droops and droops toward the ground until he reaches this point:

Her father [John Barton] was standing behind his habitual chair; holding by the back of it as if for support. And opposite to him there stood Mr Carson; the dark outline of his stern figure looming large against the light of the fire in that little room. (428)

Mr Carson, who had almost been an invalid earlier, so weak that his daughters had not thought it fit that he hear the news of his son's death, becomes a large looming figure now. In a reversal of the scene where Harry lies stretched below Jem in a powerless position in the first half of the novel, John Barton is crushed as Mr Carson stabs him metaphorically: "He [John] lay across the table, broken-hearted. Every fresh quivering sob of Mr Carson's stabbed him to his soul" (432). At the same time, Mr Carson, depicted as an unsuccessful head of the family and an irresponsible factory owner earlier, is redeemed somewhat through this feminization, which presents Mr Carson as strong physically but emotional and capable of tears.

The idea of feminization of the industrialist as a solution to systemic problems is reinforced in an episode that follows. Mr. Carson walks out of the house and reaches the road to go home, unable to forgive John Barton for his son's death. On the road, he sees a little girl walking with a nurse on the street knocked down by a "rough, rude errand-boy." When the angry nurse catches hold of the lad and he is afraid of the policeman, the girl implores the nurse to forgive him, since "*he did not know what he was doing*" (434). John Barton had asked for Mr. Carson's forgiveness earlier echoing this same phrase that is italicized for emphasis in Gaskell's text. The frequent repetition of the biblical phrase, that John Barton did not know what he was doing, as the boy did not know what he was doing, reduces the working class to the state of the boy and John Barton's action to one stemming from ignorance and a childish lack of maturity. The girl child symbolically represents the upper class while the boy is described as looking like a "giant" beside the "fairy child," a lower-class boy who is physically big and strong but needs guidance. Religion collaborates with class to infantilize the working class as the big-bodied, awkward boy mitigating a fear of threat from the workers. At the same time it constructs the

upper-class girl as a disembodied moral force. This episode teaches Mr Carson the value of Christian forgiveness.

Mr Carson's earlier lack of control over his own household, when he fails to control his son's irresponsible behaviour at dinner, with his daughters present, is forgotten in favour of this new image of maturity in relation to a reduced John Barton. The figure of the little white clad girl, who is weaker physically but stronger mentally, authorized with a religious legitimization of ruling over the working-class boy, serves as a metaphor of Mr Carson's power, and by implication the legitimization of the power of the masters over the factory workers, while simultaneously replacing Mr Carson's own masculine aggressiveness with the power of the moral, feminine position. The girl child also signifies fears of middle-class loss of masculinity and vulnerability to class aggression. These fears, however, are allayed and middle-class guilt is absolved by evoking the idea of innocence and moral superiority.

The gendering of class here as feminine legitimizes class superiority as innate, natural and moral in a liberal atmosphere where such naturalization of superiority could no longer be taken for granted. Mr. Carson learns a Christian lesson of forgiveness and goes back to see a dying John Barton in this chapter entitled "Forgive Us Our Trespasses". As John Barton dies, Mr Carson lifts up his powerless frame. This episode is not only an example of bourgeois paternalism but also an example of the complete obscuring of the political. Mr Carson gets to represent the masters' point of view in the concluding pages of the novel. Mr Carson now admits that even though masters suffer as much as workmen during events that "god alone can control," working people suffer more. He argues that "facts" show that the poor can be self-reliant. Yet it is the reality of John's suffering body that prompts him to look further into the poverty as a social ill. It is only when the workers do not pose a political or an economic threat that they can

become the subject of Mr Carson's pity. Such middle-class humanitarian narratives aimed at a middle-class audience subtly shift political questions to the body and make working-class people responsible for their own condition.

Liberalism, therefore, can make an appeal to do away with the oppressive differences in bodies between workers and masters by appealing to the body as a common bond. However, this can only be done when this body is placed in some common domestic relation that conforms to a middle-class model of the family rather than challenging any power structure in the public sphere. The closure of the novel therefore remains an uneasy closure for two reasons. Problems of citizenship and redress by action, through political representation, which the novel had addressed in the first part remain unresolved. Secondly, the only other working-class body which was healthy and remains healthy in the novel--that of Jem Wilson--cannot find a place within this new vision of the manufacturing town. Jem marries Mary and emigrates to Canada to live a life of domestic bliss at the conclusion of the novel.

Michael Armstrong

The story of *Michael Armstrong*, subtitled *The Factory Boy*, begins with the description of the showy mansion Dowling Lodge, the home of factory owner Sir Matthew Dowling. Sir Matthew and his household are depicted as funny, exaggerated caricatures of callous industrialists in the initial part of the novel. Sir Matthew is married with innumerable children but has a comic liaison with Lady Clarissa, a local aristocrat with no money--a mutually beneficial relationship--one aspiring to money, and the other class, through this acquaintance. In a comic scene, when the two are taking a walk in Sir Matthew's grounds, a cow appears in front of them and a very young factory boy, who is passing by, Michael, saves Lady Clarissa from her feigned damsel-in-distress situation. Lady Clarissa makes Sir Matthew promise, both as a reward to the boy and as a proof of affection for herself, to adopt Michael. Sir Matthew privately hates

doing this, but soon conceives of this plan as a political move to make an image for himself, which would be useful for his aspirations to become a Member of Parliament through this act of “benevolence.” He mistreats Matthew in private but puts on a great show of feeding and clothing him in public.

There are four other important characters in the novel--Edward, Michael's invalid brother, Martha, Sir Matthew's daughter, Miss Brotherton, a local bourgeois heiress who is Sir Matthew's neighbour, and Fanny, a girl who works at the horrible “Deep Valley mill” where Sir Matthew sends Michael surreptitiously once he is done with him. Miss Brotherton suspects Sir Matthew's treachery and attempts to save Michael from this sweatshop but has to bring back Fanny instead under the misapprehension that Michael is dead. Miss Brotherton becomes the benefactress who takes care of both Edward, Michael's brother, and Fanny for a few years. Several twists and turns in the plot bring the characters together after a lapse of several years. Michael runs away, forgives a dying Sir Matthew at his deathbed under changed circumstances, and finally goes to Italy where Miss Brotherton has already moved with Edward and Fanny to give them an education. She decides to educate Michael as well. Fanny and Michael, who are grown young people by this time, decide to marry. What comes as a surprise in a Victorian novel is that a union between the benefactress Miss Brotherton and her ward Edward is hinted at in the end.

While trying to find a link between classes, *Michael Armstrong* focuses mainly on the domestic sphere. As the author claims in the preface, dealing with working-class organizations might be counterproductive to her cause. Trollope fears that writing about working-class agitation might be seen as siding with “deeds of violence” and causes that are subversive to social order (iv). Such an approach might not be fruitful, especially in the light of the urgent

necessity of such evils to be remedied. Therefore she omits the adult life of her hero and limits her story only to the first of the two phases she had originally planned--the state of infancy and boyhood of young Michael. *Michael Armstrong* deals with the poor living conditions and the poor working conditions of child workers. The protagonist, as a child, helps draw maximum sympathy while containing the threat of working-class aggressiveness. The depiction of the working-class child also emphasizes working-class dependence. In a culture where women cannot be depicted at work doing “unwomanly” jobs, such as working in factories or in coal mines, the working-class child might represent such hard labour. However, Michael is not simply a child in the novel but embodies qualities of manliness as a brother and son, qualities absent in upper-class adults in the novel.

The introduction of the working-class child into the bourgeois home is a political move both directly and indirectly on the part of Sir Matthew. Directly, Sir Matthew’s adoption of Michael is a means to impress Lady Clarissa who is an aristocrat, and move up in the social hierarchy by adding class to his new wealth. Indirectly, this is a move to set the countryside talking about his benevolence. The novel ultimately collapses boundaries between public and private by making a matter of benevolence to a child a part of public discourse. The novel points out how benevolence becomes a parody of itself when a private virtue achieves public currency. The idea of making the upkeep of a child, whose rightful place should be in the domestic space, a matter of public concern, is criticized. This criticism is made explicit by a constant comparison of Sir Matthew’s insincere concern about Michael with the genuine relationship of love between Michael, Edward and their mother.

Visibility is an important aspect of benevolence and keeping acts of benevolence private is what makes it valuable. In the novel, it is Michael, his brother and their mother who value

privacy. Middle-class characters such as Sir Matthew and his assistant Dr. Crockley peep into his decrepit home, and clothe and unclothe him multiple times violating his most private possession, his body. The way that the matter of “practical benevolence” is set up emphasizes the importance that the unethical bourgeois lay on the public enactment of privacy. It is Michael who embodies genuine bourgeois values of family and privacy and Sir Matthew corrupts the idea of benevolence by turning a private virtue into public currency.

Like the showy house itself, the Dowling children are taught from childhood that it is not enough to have wealth, but to make wealth visible. In such a culture that emphasizes on visibility, Michael’s Armstrong’s body becomes a matter of concern once it is introduced into the bourgeois domestic space. From the very first moment that Michael walks into Sir Matthew’s mansion, he moves from room to room where people look at him including servants, ladies, the family doctor and the children. So long as he is in rags, he is recognizable as a working-class boy in a middle-class household. However, the moment he is given the clothes of one of the children of the family to wear as a sport, he becomes unrecognizable as a person of a different class and becomes difficult to spot. In fact, the children think he is an upper-class child who has come to play with them until they hear his lower-class dialect.

The inability to identify Michael as lower-class without his rags causes extreme anxiety in Sir Matthew. When Michael is taken to the factory in fine clothes, he stands out as different from the other factory children. Michael rushes forward to embrace his brother Edward who is in factory clothes. An illustration dramatizes this moment where two children embrace, one in finery and the other in rags. The moment satirizes Sir Matthew’s benevolence by pointing out the necessity of keeping the children separate in terms of outward appearance for his benevolence to work. At the same time it constructs class as something present only as a function of external

appearance so that people, at least children, can move in and out of performing class, as it were, smoothly. At the obvious level the novel points out that the very ideology of benevolence is double edged. It encourages the welfare of the subject who receives it but at the same time demands that the working-class man be separate from the middle class for benevolence to function. The novel underscores the theatricality of class benevolence by having the whole set of events staged, quite literally, in the form of a private play performed by Lady Clarissa, the children and Michael repeating the episode with the cow. At a more subtle level, the novel hints at the anxiety that liberal discourses suffer in this period to fix the meaning of class difference on the working-class body through Sir Matthew's anxieties. It is important to uplift Michael through benevolence, but at the same time it is important to identify him, even without clothes, as a working-class boy who has received the benefit of benevolence. The paradox is, of course, that by definition, this desire is antithetical to the very spirit of benevolence and liberal equality.

In its treatment of the body of the working-class child, the text shows hidden anxieties about liberal ideals of achieving some common, ideal form of the body. It also satirizes people like Sir Matthew who literally distance themselves from working people. Though Michael is a child, he is often described as manly. The text also changes its mode of depiction of Michael from man to boy and from boy to man, often going incongruously back and forth. Such an approach underscores the attempt to gain sympathy and limit anxiety and portray the working-class child as more responsible compared to the middle-class adult men at the same time. He is only nine years old at the beginning of the novel. Michael is described as a very young child, whose manliness is emphasized when he shoos the cow away. He is "by far the stoutest and the tallest of the two boys" who "[stands] manfully astride . . . [and] flourishe[s] his ragged hat on high" (15). When Sir Matthew Dowling is forced to take the young Michael under his wing, the

boy is summoned to pay a visit to Sir Matthew in his house. When Michael comes too close to Sir Matthew, he is extremely conscious of the boy's body. Sir Matthew is already depicted as somewhat lecherous through his treatment of the maid Peggy. In a scene reminiscent of the scene where Harry Carson ridicules the workers in their rags, Sir Matthew ridicules the manly Michael, who is now depicted as a defenceless child, about the incongruity of his clothing. But soon, looking becomes a metaphor for power:

Sir Matthew gazed at him for a moment with a sort of sneer . . . An inch of clean dowlars, piece of span new green baize for a patch, a pair of bony legs without stockings, and magnificent shoes; one I suppose won in battle from a giant and the other from a dwarf. . . . As he jeered the little fellow, his eye wandered malignantly over his person . . . while the child, as if he felt his eye palpably crawl, like a reptile over him, shuddered he knew not why. (48)

However, immediately after this scene, proximity makes Sir Matthew spring back because he is afraid of infection from the "lump of rags." Soon, though, a project dawns upon Sir Matthew to amuse himself. He decides to clothe the factory boy in the clothes of one of his younger sons, presumptuously named Duodecimus Dowling, expecting to derive some amusement out of the incongruity between body and clothes. The way that Sir Matthew dresses him and the way that he constantly looks at him is sexually loaded:

Considering the loathing and disgust manifested by Sir Matthew towards the person and the poverty of his *protégée*, it was extraordinary to see the amusement he derived from dressing him up. Though the alert and obedient Peggy stood close by to do his pleasure, it was his own large hands that thrust the little limbs of Michael into the clothing he chose they should wear, and it was amidst shouts of laughter from both that the ludicrous act was completed. (49)

Apparently caressing but really pushing him forward for display later on in the factory, Sir Matthew's large hands occupy a significant portion of the narrative. Such language which constantly borders on sexual molestation of the working-class child underlines not only the vulnerability of the weaker boy in the middle-class household, but emphasizes the private nature of the exploitation which is also an act of public outrage. Sexual exploitation is the perfect

metaphor for such a situation because it is secret and can be interpreted as love/benevolence by an innocent onlooker, successfully depicting the theme for the part of this novel, which is the contradiction between public and private appearances. Later on, when Sir Matthew's benevolence becomes popularly known, he secretly sends the boy off to the inhumane Deep Valley mill. For him, the child is a property both as an object of benevolence and as a body to be exploited for labour.

The results of dressing Michael after the episode above are unexpected. In a semi-comic semi-ironic scene, when Michael does not look stupid but looks very much like an upper-class child in his changed clothes, Sir Matthew feels irrationally terrified and accuses Michael of being capable of deception. The boy's changing shapes is what particularly affects him: "I'll bet a hundred guineas that with a few lessons, he would forge any writing you could show him; and before he is twenty, he will have taken as many shapes as a Turpin" (49). In the first part of the novel, these changing shapes of the factory boy who accidentally finds himself in a middle-class household becomes both a matter for concern and a means of social criticism. He is very obviously presented as being a cause for anxiety to Sir Matthew, who represents the bad capitalist in the novel. Sir Matthew has no basis for fearing this child and Michael himself hardly understands, leave alone solicits his benevolence. Yet, the potential of this ability to perform in different forms, as currency, is comically acknowledged when in answer to a question about where Michael should be kept and shown, "Parlour or kitchen, school-room or factory, drawing-room or scullery" Sir Matthew's friend and advisor Dr. Crockley answers: "He must be here, there, and every where, and the thing will fly like mad" (57). Michael's visibility is important everywhere to give them the required publicity which would ultimately prevent strikes and increase Sir Matthew's hopes of entering politics. Ironically, however, this also requires Michael

to be immediately identifiable as a factory boy in nice clothes. The frustration of Sir Matthew's attempt to fix Michael's body as a signifier of class drives him crazy with anxiety.

The relation between the appearance and reality of the body is a strong theme in the text. Arabella, the eldest Dowling, is a beautiful girl, especially as compared to Martha, the ugly but only good Dowling. She speaks prettily but is also insensitive. Arabella is a "born lady" according to Dr Crockley because she embodies the "physiology of wealth" (56). In accordance with popular ideas about the new rich, the display of wealth is stressed in relation to the Dowling children:

Every child was taught, as soon as its mind became capable of receiving the important truth, that not only was it agreeable to enjoy and cherish all good things that wealth can procure, but that it was their bounden and special duty to make it visible before the eyes of all men that they could, and that they did have more money spent upon them, than any other family in the whole country; but Martha felt that all this could not apply to her. (53)

Making class visible on the body is what separates class from class. The need for love and sympathy is constantly stressed as missing elements from Sir Matthew's benevolence. Without these elements, the simple fact of feeding and clothing only underscores the falsity of the whole enterprise of benevolence and becomes a parody of the real thing.

In a culture that stresses appearances, people find it hard to reconcile Michael's image with that of a factory boy in fine clothes. At the same time, the negative characters in the novel expect Michael's body to be naturally identifiable as lower class. In fact, when Sir Matthew wants to make a trip to the factory to show off the object of his benevolence, Michael refuses to visit Edward there in his fancy clothes, because it would make Edward feel that they could not be brothers any more. However, Martha becomes the spokesperson for the liberal ideal by saying "do you think a fine jacket could separate brothers?" (73). The text begins by locating the effects of poverty simply on clothes, but it later focuses on the body itself as a locus of political inscription. At the same time, the text consciously critiques the interpretations put on the body by

showing that the body is not an essentialized entity but a discursive creation. When Michael is introduced into the schoolroom and everyone is looking at him, Dr Crockley notes that since Sir Matthew has ‘dressed the little scamp superbly,’ nothing but the “vulgar dark complexion” could make one know that he was not one of his children.

“Why yes, there is some difference in the skins I must say,” [he said] . . . looking with most parental complacency on the fair skins, flaxen hair, and light eyelashes of his race.

Difference indeed! ’Tis Africa and Europe. . . . Hasn’t he got a sort of slavish, terrified air with it? . . . I should not be at all surprised to find , when the march of philosophy has got a little further, that the blackmoor comes along with the condition , and, that the influence of wealth and consequence is as quickly shown upon the external appearance of men, women and children as a field of clover upon the inferior animals...(55/56)

This comparison of working-class people to the racial other, more particularly the black slave in America is not uncommon in this period. But the text underscores the absurdity of comparing Michael’s complexion to the racial other, especially because Dr Crockley is portrayed as a complete hypocrite, so we know that the comparison is not to be taken seriously. The text satirizes Dr. Crockley’s anxiety that the ubiquitousness of wealth has made bodies unidentifiable by external markers when he himself and Sir Matthew are as much a danger to society through this process as Michael.

Most of the time, it is the fact that Michael is so much *like* Sir Matthew rather than unlike him that produces anxiety. Sir Matthew’s anger stems both from a consciousness of wasted property at having Michael spend his days idly in his house, and from bourgeois guilt at considering children property. The narrator emphasizes this fact on the reader’s first visit to the factory where we are told that the “delicate forms of young children are made to mix and mingle with the machinery from whence flows the manufacturer’s wealth” (79). The text emphasizes the artificiality of turning resources that go to sustain the body into property, by turning the body

itself into property, as an ethos of the bourgeois. Sir Matthew sees Michael as nothing but property:

Upon my soul, I never hated anything so much in my life. In the first place, it is disgusting to see him dressed up, walking about the house like a tame monkey, when I know that his long fingers might be piercing thousands of threads for two shillings a week; and it is neither more nor less than loathsome to see him eat, at luncheon, sometimes when we have had him in before company, exactly the same things that my children eat themselves; and then upon the back of it all to know that the ungrateful little viper hates the very sight of me (116).

The similarity of Michael's body to his own body elicits a hysterical reaction which arises both out of guilt and a "guilty" desire that arises out of sameness because of similar bodies:

I don't believe, Crockley, that any good can come of all this, equal to what it makes me suffer in the doing. It is perfectly unnatural to see him close within an inch of my own legs. I'd rather have a tame toad crawling about by half...I should never hate the sight of a girl as I do the sight of this boy. (116)

Then Sir Matthew goes on to talk to Dr.Crockley, his confidante, about his almost desperate need to physically abuse the boy:

But if I tell all, I can let you into a secret . . . The long and the short of it is, that I can't keep my hands off him . . . if he were to take it into his head to go about the country telling every thing that I may have happened to say or do to him, when his nasty ways have pushed me further than I could bear, I don't think the history of the charity job would do much good doctor. (117)

This anxiety about the positioning of the working-class boy in the middle-class household is not simply a matter of criticism located in Sir Matthew's domestic space. The second half of the text dealing with Miss Martha Dowling and Miss Brotherton's generosity can be seen as a repetition, with a genuine intention, of an experiment in "practical benevolence" that almost goes wrong. Miss Martha trusts that Sir Matthew means well and persuades Michael's mother to sign papers that has Sir Matthew send him as an apprentice to the horrible Deep Valley Mill. Miss Brotherton goes out in search of Michael but under a misapprehension that he is dead, brings back Fanny, a factory girl from Deep Valley. She educates both Fanny and Edward Armstrong

together because his mother dies, while Michael remains in Deep Valley. Miss Brotherton's benevolence to Edward can be seen as an ironic repetition of Sir Matthew's line that "I should never hate the sight of a girl as I do the sight of this boy" earlier in the text when he sees Michael in his house. It is possible to see Edward as a comfortable subject of bourgeois benevolence. Edward is the stereotypical feminized, angelic, boy disabled because of the factory system, through injury and malnutrition. When both boys are children, Michael's manliness and protective nature towards his older brother and mother are evident while Edward's sweet nature is the focus. The process of saving Edward from poverty and his education as a completely passive object of benevolence is depicted without any irony in the text. In this way at least, the text unconsciously reinscribes what it set out to critique.

Michael stays in Deep Valley for several years, contracts a terrible disease but escapes death and finally escapes from Deep Valley. He takes up work with a farmer for a few more years which is skipped in the text. From this point onwards, in the last few pages of the text, Michael is depicted as an emotional man whose affect does not have potential to be disruptive but serves as an end in itself. Michael comes back as a young man in search of his mother to his old town when he is acquainted, on the way, with handbills summoning workers to meetings demanding rights:

Very powerful was the male and simple eloquence with which many of these unpretending compositions appealed to the paternal feelings of those they addressed; and such terribly true representations were found of the well remembered agonies of his boyhood that Michael *was fain to put his spread hand before his face to conceal the emotions they produced.*[my italics] (312)

When Michael joins a procession of working men, the "dark and mighty current" of men is described as "a peaceful tumult." Though Michael asks questions at the beginning, "the men were too intent upon the object of their expedition, to converse idly respecting it [the protest]-- and by degrees our hero grew as silent as the rest, and trudged on without any other communion

than his own thoughts” (314). Resistance is depicted as organized and peaceful and without threat. Michael’s body is described as a body prone to the strongest of emotions in this phase of his life. He trembles like an “aspen leaf” as he lays his hand upon the door of the room where he reunites with his brother Edward, Fanny and Miss Brotherton. When he sees Fanny, his reaction is described thus: “Michael’s manhood almost forsook him, and large tears gathered in his eyes, which he was fain to hide by turning round again. . . .” (374).

The last phase of the novel concentrates on an ideal reconciliation between classes. In order to do this, working-class identity keeps shifting from the manly Michael to either Edward or Fanny whose bodies bear no signs of either class oppression or potential class aggression once they are saved from their situations. To begin with, Fanny is depicted as a conventional self-sacrificing figure who bears suffering silently. Edward’s body also does not pose a threat because he is sick and incapable of doing physical work. Identity shifts in their case from the body to a self that can be modelled and shaped in the domestic household under the guidance of a female figure like Miss Brotherton who symbolizes the right kind of bourgeois paternalism. This is also an alteration of a larger rhetoric, which, as Dorice Elliot notes, is about solving class problems by teaching factory workers domesticity. Similarly, Elliot describes that middle-class women were supposed to teach domestic values to their servants in the house, a trope that is repeated many times in social problem fiction by women.

Dependence remains a key issue at the conclusion of the novel. Miss Brotherton takes the two children, Fanny and Edward to Europe and educates them. They develop refined manners but remain completely dependent on Miss Brotherton. Michael asks leave of his farmer master and goes to his old town in search of his mother where he meets a dying Sir Matthew. Though Michael does not completely forgive him, he is still loyal to him. Sir Matthew is redeemed

because the focus shifts from his rapaciousness to the rapaciousness of Lady Clarissa, the aging, impoverished aristocrat who has married him for his money. Michael's manliness is evident again when he saves Martha from the clutches of Lady Clarissa's machinations, arranges for Sir Matthew's last rites and finally takes Martha along to Europe where he meets his brother, Fanny and Miss Brotherton. The dependence is facilitated by the feminization of Michael's body in this part of the novel. He prefers embowered places to read letters, changes colour and blushes often. When Miss Brotherton asks Michael to address her by name like an equal, Michael's blush redeems the familiarity of the act. The meeting between Edward, who is brought up on the classics in the continent and Michael, grown up in the healthy, English countryside is reconciled through constant change in colour in Edward and Michael's faces. The blushing, feminized body does not pose a threat to Michael's manliness. The dependence of all three on Miss Brotherton is finally obscured when love relationships are hinted at between the couples. While the bad paternalism of Sir Matthew towards Michael had bordered on sexual abuse because he had gloated over Michael's dependence, the issue of dependence of two working-class men on an upper-class woman is resolved through a heterosexual relationship between the heiress Miss Brotherton and her ward Edward through marriage.

The novels considered in this chapter show how the body was absolutely central and absolutely problematic in discourses that considered the condition of industrial workers. Throughout the hungry forties, the social problem novel used the body as a locus for expressing industrial injustice but even as such novels criticized the system, they often reinforced such anxieties. Hence, even literature that was expressly critical of the condition of workers could not escape the anxieties surrounding labouring bodies. While such novels could express the ravages of the industrial system on older, diseased bodies such as John Barton's or on young children's

bodies such as Michael's and Edward's, they could not comfortably imagine able-bodied working men as part of the British population.

Within such a context of anxiety regarding working-class bodies, the next two chapters will look at two different types of middle-class authored literature consumed by working people, which were two of the most dominant forms that influenced popular perceptions of bodies and became part of popular culture. The first kind considered is serialized literature with a didactic purpose for the edification of the masses and the second is serialized literature whose primary purpose was entertainment. *The Penny Magazine* presents labouring bodies as non-threatening objects to a working-class audience as "facts" while *The Mysteries of London* shares anxieties regarding working-class bodies in the larger culture. While the didactic literature aimed at reform allays anxieties regarding working bodies by objectifying them, entertaining literature expresses anxieties similar to the ones in the larger culture. At the same time, such literature explores these processes that turn poor people into bodies but often objectifies poor bodies in the process of being critical.

Notes

¹ Mary Poovey talks about the gradual disaggregation of a distinctly social domain in the last decades of the eighteenth century. The social sphere became distinct from the political and economic domains characterized by an effort to understand, measure and represent poverty in this period (8).

² See for example W. R. Greg's comment:

There are representations made--at least impressions left--by the book before us, which we have signalized as inaccurate and full of harm. Some of these we must proceed to notice; and first amongst them, the exaggeration of describing an animosity against masters and employers, as the common quality and characteristic of the operative population. The narrative imports that the angry and vindictive feelings by which the soul of John Barton is absorbed, are constant and pervading. (502)

³ Gallagher points out that Mayhew's costermongers represent the absolute physicalization of the marketplace. They are strong bodies but do not contribute to the system of production in a valuable way (Gallagher, "Body" 99-105).

⁴ See Greg again, for example:

The language which every true friend to the working man will hold to him, is this: "Trust to no external source for your prosperity in life; work out your own welfare; work it out with the tools you have. The charter may be a desirable object, the franchise may be worth obtaining; but your happiness, your position in life will depend neither on the franchise, nor on the charter, neither on what parliament does, nor on what your employer neglects to do; but simply and solely on the use you make of the fifteen or thirty shillings which you earn each week, and upon the circumstances whether you marry at twenty or at twenty-eight, and whether you marry a sluggard and a slattern or a prudent and industrial woman." We are as certain as we can be of anything that, if the factory operatives and mechanics were possessed of the education, the frugality, the prudence, and the practical sense which generally distinguish their employers, no change whatever, either in the regularity or the remuneration of their work, would be needed, to place them, as a body, in a state of independence, dignity and comfort. (510)

⁵ The first three short paragraphs at the beginning of Chapter 15 show this shift from John Barton's disappointment in London to "bodily privation." The same state of feeling which John Barton entertained, if belonging to one who had leisure to think of such things, and physicians to give names to them, would have been called monomania"(197-198).

⁶ "The actions of the uneducated seem to me to be typified in those of Frankenstein, that monster of many human qualities, ungifted with a soul, a knowledge of the difference between good and evil" (Gaskell 199).

⁷ The description of the poor as a monster of the Frankenstein type was used to build public opinion against the poor and reassert dominance. Susan Williams' discussion of this idea in *The Rich Man and the Diseased Poor* is mentioned by Donald Hall (52).

⁸ The beginning of Chapter 5 mentions "a class of men in Manchester" and "all over the manufacturing districts of Lancashire . . . common hand-loom weavers" who read Newton, are familiar with the "Linnaean or the Natural System," and "the preface to Sir J.E. Smith's life" amongst various other scholarly texts.

⁹ At the level of proving domestic manliness, though, Jem's masculinity is restored at the murder trial. The trial, according to critics, is anyway about proving masculinity than proving innocence. Lisa Surridge argues that Jem Wilson's trial replays the "confrontation between Jem and Harry and poses again its key questions: 'Which of these is the man? Which of these is a man?'" Also, when Mary chooses Jem she says: "Perhaps I liked Mr Carson once--I don't know--I've forgotten; but I loved James Wilson, that's now on trial, above what tongue can tell." Though Mary's statement does not vindicate Jem as to the murder charge, on the contrary it "strengthen[s] the supposition of his guilt," it vindicates his manliness, and after it Jem stands "erect and firm, with self-respect in his attitude" (Surridge 340).

¹⁰ Note Mary's reaction to him: She feels "a dread of him as a blood shedder, which seemed to separate him into two persons--one, the father...the other, the assassin, the cause of all her trouble and woe" (Gaskell 408).

¹¹ There is no mention any more of the small group of workers who had conspired to kill, especially in the light of the fact that John's being the murderer was simply the result of an arbitrary lottery.

CHAPTER 3
“THE BENT OF CIVILIZATION IS TO MAKE GOOD THINGS CHEAP”: IMPERIALISM
AND THE LABOURING BODY IN THE *PENNY MAGAZINE*

Material Culture and Labouring Bodies in the *Penny Magazine*: Overview and Argument

Optimism about the inclusion of an educated working-class population in the British nation was evident in the efforts of many liberal organizations in the eighteen-thirties. Their efforts involved educating working people through reading, acquisition of knowledge and access to proper education regarding “high” culture such as familiarity with works of art and architectural buildings. Such efforts were evident in the reformist endeavours of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK) and one of its most prominent editor figures, Charles Knight. Knight was the publisher of important works brought out by the SDUK such as *The Library of Entertaining Knowledge* and the *Penny Magazine for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge*. In its 1 January, 1828 prospectus, the society declares that its objective was to impart useful information to all classes of the community, “particularly to such as [were] unable to avail themselves of experienced teachers, or maybe prefer[ed] learning themselves” (“Prospectus” 7). Throughout the prospectus and the address of the committee, the society reiterates that in its publications, “truth” was the primary object. It also states that beneficial effects on all classes through the increase of “mental enjoyment and the proportionate diminution of gross and degrading indulgences, and the consequent advances of morality and religion” were its main considerations (18-19). In the context of the publication of such treatises as *The Library of Entertaining Knowledge* which dealt with subjects of “natural philosophy,” the society was specifically interested in the dissemination of facts rather than “vague and diffuse generality” which was to be avoided at all costs even in the case of history and biography (“Address” 16).

Starting four years after this address, the *Penny Magazine*, published by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, from 1832 to 1845, proved to be one of the first illustrated serial publications to attract a readership of one million or more. Remarkably, this was achieved despite the absence of fiction as the subject matter. The *Penny Magazine*'s audience included shopkeepers, clerks, some professionals and country gentry, but it also had a fairly faithful working class following who were the intended audience for liberal reform. The preface to the 1832 American edition proudly declares that "such a work could not exist ... except in a country where civilization is carried forward to a high degree of perfection" ("Preface," 18 December 1832, 1: iv). It goes on to detail how publishing 160,000 copies, which was required during the first month after publication, was dependent on extensive knowledge of chemicals, of machinery and a communication system between London and the rest of the country which was there to serve the "existing race of readers." Though race appears as a chance term here, throughout its pages, the magazine clearly constructs a readership which consists of working people of a civilized nation at the peak of progress benefiting from advanced knowledge and material goods from all parts of the world. The journal repeatedly publishes articles delineating the process of printing, making stereotypes and the immense labour involved in making the woodcuts. Editor and publisher Charles Knight already had the necessary level of mechanization through the use of steam power and stereotyping, having published *The Library of Entertaining Knowledge* for the SDUK earlier, to embark on such a large scale venture. By December of 1832, The *Penny Magazine*'s circulation had climbed to an unprecedented 200,000, a figure which Knight claimed was really 1 million in the Preface.¹

A consideration of the *Penny Magazine* at this point reveals significant ideas prevalent in contemporary culture regarding the way organizations such as the SDUK were attempting liberal

reform by imagining ways in which working populations could be incorporated into the mainstream as part of the British nation. In the magazine, consumerism was seen as a result of progress and was directly linked to the spread of knowledge and the uplifting of the working man. The targeted working people were quite directly imagined as consumers, at the peak of progress in common with other sections of the British population, enjoying the benefits of material production and Britain's commercial exploits around the globe. A fairly typical quotation from a "natural philosopher" in an 1836 article on "Hints and Cautions on the Pursuit of Knowledge" is designed to lead working-class readers towards an appreciation of their contemporary advantages:

Remember there are ships crossing the seas in all directions to bring me what is useful from all parts of the earth. In China men are gathering the tea-leaf for me. In the West India islands they are preparing my sugar and my coffee. At home powerful steam engines are spinning and weaving for me, and making cutlery for me, and pumping the mines to supply me with coals. If I write a letter there is a mail ready to carry it for me...I have rail roads, canals, bridges...I have editors and printers to inform me of what is going on over all the world. I have books, the wonder of all wonders, that carry me to all places and to all times . . . (27 August 1836, 5: 335)

The combination of material benefits regarding goods and services is juxtaposed with means of transport such as the railways and waterways. The writer of this piece is clearly aware of the connection of such material means of communication with discursive systems such as those sustained by editors and printers.

The paper, the print and the woodcuts lend a version of materiality to the text that was probably apprehended by Victorians to an extent that we cannot imagine today. Large and laboriously detailed woodcuts of animals, architectural buildings, peoples and maps are accompanied with descriptions of not just machinery in general but illustrations of printing technology and even woodcuts of the office of the SDUK. However, unlike the mainstream *Illustrated London News* which was full of illustrations of objects such as exotic weapons and

artefacts in the roughly similar decades, the *Penny Magazine* had woodcuts of British machinery and depictions of exotic peoples, often labourers at work in scenic poses or in primitive settings in lieu of descriptions of exotic articles of antiquity. Peter Sinnema observes how, in the *Illustrated London News*, such archaic depictions of Chinese artillerymen, for example, provided British readers with a sense of military superiority and power. In the *Penny Magazine*, technological expertise in the production of goods in England is presented as far more advanced than the rough and rude implements shown as being used by labourers in other parts of the world. The illustrations of the peoples themselves serve as commodities that provide absolute knowledge of an industrially progressive nation about peoples in these areas. In the absence of material goods such as artefacts from colonized regions that the middle class can aspire to, the working-class reader in the *Penny Magazine* gets to possess these commodified bodies imaginatively, obliterating the reality of material class difference as members of the imperial nation. In addition to the materiality of the process of production itself, the magazine presents knowledge itself as something material which the advantages of civilization has made possible to be disseminated effectively. The acquisition of knowledge also sets British working people apart from less civilized nations.

The illustrations, in the form of woodcuts, occupy a very significant part of both the content and the attraction of the magazine. While the textual content deals with a variety of subject matter, a substantial part of the content of the illustrations is about labouring bodies both domestic and foreign. The depictions of these bodies are often used as a connecting thread to string together its serialized form. These include such illustrations as those which serve as cover pictures for the monthly almanacs, illustrations that accompany the “Labourers of Europe” series, illustrations of colonized ethnic groups or reproductions of figures of antiquity, and

reproductions of works of art depicting scenes from “low” life. These woodcuts give the impression that the magazine is conveying a message regarding labour and labouring bodies in the context of the body as a consumer object that could aid the sale of the magazine itself. Narratives of progress related to imperialism, mechanization and burgeoning consumption express themselves through the possession of knowledge about labouring bodies and the audience’s participation in the possession of these objects.

Material illustrations of labouring bodies become crucial aspects of Victorian material culture producing working-class identities in this magazine through the magazine’s close connection with the celebration of the spread of knowledge through reading. The *Penny Magazine* incorporates its working-class audience into its liberal project of British nation building by presenting working people as both contributors to and beneficiaries of progress through their monetary contribution towards the production of these illustrations as buyers, and their ability to consume these images from the point of view of the imperial connoisseur. The ability to consume other labouring bodies in this way is used to emphasize the superiority of the British working-class audience in comparison to their Others, docile labouring populations who are locked into its pages through illustrations and commodified descriptions, giving the illusion of control over them by their British counterparts, regardless of whether that audience is upper class or working class. This illusion takes away from the idea of material class difference between the imperial ruling class and its working-class Other. This is achieved by positioning both as the opposite of Britain’s European and colonial Other, where both middle-class and working-class British people seemingly partake of the fruits of imperialism. The necessity of self-discipline for working people is emphasized repeatedly so that they do not degenerate into their Others even as they consume their images, goods and services.

The possession of the power to consume labour is intricately woven in with the phenomenon of consumption related to the material culture of print and paper in the magazine. For example, a typical illustration published on 31 January, 1834, of the “swimming couriers of Peru” depicts the torso of a naked man above water swimming towards the shore (Figure 3-1). The man’s face has ethnic features related to his origin. The point of view of the illustration refers to a passing reference in the text that the reader is the beneficiary of an efficient postal system for which people in colonized regions contribute their labour. At the same time, the naked torso of the courier is an object on display for the viewer. While the subjects of the magazine deal with such varied regions of the world, the *Penny Magazine* itself is presented as a cheaper commodity that civilizes through inculcating reading habits on a large scale, holding the working man to his fireside rather than the pub, a fact referred to several times in articles that delineate the merits of reading for the working man, especially in the initial years of the magazine’s life.

A consideration of these illustrations will expose a certain attitude on the part of reformers about expectations regarding the reception of these images. These expectations would involve prospects regarding the audience’s ability to identify with or distance themselves from the subject matter of these articles. In the magazine, the illustrations imbue the working-class audience with the same values as its middle-class counterpart--the audience is able to gaze on Othered bodies through a shared experience of the ability to gain knowledge and benefit from the labour of these bodies. A shared experience of the ability to gaze on these bodies as parts of a project of knowledge gathering defines working-class readers as fit subjects of reform by aligning them with interests similar to their middle-class counterparts as people who read and know about the world. At the same time, these illustrations, through a variety of strategies,

distance the reader from any shared experience of work they might have with the people depicted working in the woodcuts, sometimes engaged in occupations such as spinning or doing heavy physical work, work the readers might have been very familiar with themselves. Objectification also makes these illustrations material objects at several levels: quite literally they serve as objects for circulation, sometimes merely tangentially related to the text and meant to attract attention as cover pictures. At other times they supply a body of knowledge developed through “civilization” and printing technology as part of a process of objectification of labour itself that benefits British populations at home through its imperial commercial machinery. This imaginary practice, however, stipulates limits as it bestows power to the labouring class at home. Apart from facilitating a self-alienation in terms of not recognizing commonalities with others like themselves based on situations of work, the illustrations allow workers limited access to discourses of heroism common in contemporary culture with respect to labouring bodies.² The celebration of machinery in Britain in the text dwarfs the worker at home, quite literally in the illustrations of goods producing factories, celebrating progress and machinery and reducing the importance of labour.

This chapter will explore certain strategies found in the illustrations that follow from reformist tendencies aimed at the working class in early mid-Victorian culture which imbue foreign bodies with objectified material value and put those values in a relation of possession *vis-a-vis* working people at home (Britain). In the process, such practices attribute imagined social and economic prestige to working-class readers making them fit members of imperial Britain’s imagined community. The chapter will initially focus on the expressed commercial nature of the *Penny Magazine* enterprise. The magazine makes it clear that it was proud to see itself as part of an emergent commodity culture facilitating an optimistic view of progress through

mechanization and a commercial venture which was bringing the nation together. The chapter will then focus on the magazine's illustrations of European labouring bodies as the British population's rural, primitive Other, as a group of discrete populations devoid of a sense of nationalism and primitive in their technology. Part of this section will also depict the representation of idealized, idyllic bodies that present labour as ideal and decorative for the magazine's purposes. This chapter will then go on to explore the depiction of non-white bodies of colonized labour. These bodies serve as both primitive Others and as contributors towards the production of goods and services that all British people including working people enjoy. Rather than acknowledging their labour, such privileges define the reader as technologically progressive, participating in industrialization while they define these "primitive" peoples as merely agents in a chain of imperial commerce or as mere curiosities.

The next section of this chapter explores strategies by which power deployed to British working people is ultimately contained in such reformist rhetoric through several strategies that distance the British worker from appearing heroic. These strategies also distance working people from their own condition. The male worker's body is especially made powerless and female workers are depicted as feminine women engaged in occupations that seem close to domestic work. Heroism is shifted to the realm of "savage" or "primitive" bodies or bodies of antiquity imagined as labouring bodies. Illustrations depict male workers dwarfed by machines or feminine women in lady-like postures operating machinery, implicitly countering discourses of inhumane working conditions that the condition-of-England debates were generating in contemporary society. The final section explores how reproductions of art dealing with "low" life or poverty are depicted apparently as cautionary tales for readers against the ills of drunkenness or moral depravity. However, these illustrations follow strategies that prepare these

woodcuts to be circulated as objects served up for the voyeuristic gaze just as illustrations of poverty meant for middle-class readers are consumed as objects.³ This gaze is taken up by working people through a process of complete alienation by which the readers do not identify any part of the pictures as their own condition. Upliftment for working people means they must fashion subjectivities based on shared values with middle-class people, including attitudes towards themselves as imagined masses, divorced from any recognition of their own material condition. This prevents readers from imagining relations based on common conditions of labour with the ethnic groups depicted in the illustrations. Such a process encourages the formation of subjectivities based on middle-class models of self-regulatory practices such as avoiding drunkenness and cultivating reading habits while the working-class readers' material conditions remain very different from such models.

The Penny Magazine: Background, Content and Readership

Patricia Anderson, who has worked on weekly illustrated magazines and popular culture in the nineteenth century describes how, in March of 1832, editor and publisher Charles Knight walked to town with neighbour Member of Parliament, Matthew D. Hill, when the idea of providing a “wholesome and affordable literature for the masses” struck them (P. Anderson 50). Knight immediately approached the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, for which he was already the official publisher, got that society's minimal sponsorship, and then adopted the role of publisher and editor for this magazine which was supposed to be an illustrated magazine. Knight was certainly successful in combining the principles of a profit based commercial enterprise with his ideals of reform. Apart from being a commercial venture, the magazine was also “his mission into the field of popular education” (P. Anderson 53). As Anderson notes, Knight shared certain views of most members of the SDUK about fears of worker unrest and the threat to social stability of the radical press. He did not like the general quality of literature

available to poor readers and sympathized with working people's demand for access to such establishments of art and "high" culture as the British Museum, the Tower and Kew Gardens. There seems to be some disagreement amongst critics as to who had more influence over the magazine's content--Knight or the SDUK. While Celina Fox believes that the magazine's content stemmed from the utilitarian ideals and social purposes of the SDUK, Anderson believes that Knight's profit motive had more influence because he controlled both the finances and the formal characteristics of the magazine. But the studious avoidance of radical political discourse and the use of art to educate seem to have been a common theme between the two sources of influence.

The general content of the magazine dealt with short factual articles about plants and animals, architectural structures, peoples, places and processes of chemical manufacture. Often, the magazine published series of articles over time under general categories, such as the labourers of Europe, Hogarth and his works or London areas. Frequently the first article in the series would give an estimate of the number of engravings that were already planned for the whole series, clearly a major selling point. Sometimes natural history and geography was made more useful by combining ideas regarding the "docility" of Icelandic mice, the "parental solicitude" of storks or the "frugality" of Swedish peasants, as Anderson notes. A general theme running through the articles was the superiority of British manufacture and the high point of "civilization" reached by Britain. Another major strand running through the articles was its reproduction of major works of art and engravings and Hogarth featured prominently amongst these illustrations. The magazine's editorial policy changed in 1837 and then again in 1841. Articles lengthened, the subject matter decreased and didacticism on industry, self restraint and

other such topics disappeared. Towards the end, the magazine was dominated by descriptions and illustrations of manufactories in Britain.

The *Penny Magazine* had a very generous amount of illustrations, the most common ones being those of rural scenes, architecture, antiquities, animals, birds and machinery. An important consideration for this chapter is the magazine's illustrations of peoples: British labour and "exotic" peoples from both Europe and the British colonies. Scott Bennett has done an excellent statistical study of the content of the *Penny Magazine*, classifying the percentage of articles and illustrations devoted to various subjects such as travel, zoology, modern history, geography, literature and other such topics. However, the depiction of peoples does not feature as a separate category in his study. Though this oversight could be a result of many factors, one of the reasons readers might miss the magazine's study of peoples as a separate category could be because this treatment was so successfully presented as facts- as lessons in geography or culture delivered as nuggets of information for working people along with lessons in the natural sciences such as botany or zoology.

The illustrations were the pride of the magazine, occupied key positions in the text and were of generous size. These illustrations were sometimes closely related and sometimes only tangentially related to the text. Often, the illustration was only a means to a section of moralizing prose that had little to do with the text. The articles were usually very brief with a wide variety of subject matter. According to Bennett, minor subject matters are responsible for a total of 40% of the magazine's total subject matter. This means that minor subjects occupied a significant position in the magazine and the variety of material dealt with was vast. Almost 80% of the articles (text) had some geographical colouration. Bennett states that there was almost three times the number of articles (text) on Great Britain than those that were concerned with the rest

of Europe or with the non-European world. However, 90% of the illustrations had geographically locatable subjects and only 57% of the illustrations had British subjects. This corresponds to my impression of the woodcuts--that there was more representation of geographically located illustrations and illustrations of the non-British world than their representation in the textual subject matter. This fact will prove significant for my purposes here because it shows that the selling point of the magazine and its reception could have depended largely on this attraction of exoticism conveyed through the illustrations. Considering that the magazine was published every Saturday, any one strand of articles makes a substantial body of text and pictures in the total thirteen years of life of the magazine.

Evidence suggests that the *Penny Magazine* had a working-class readership. The magazine's readership seems to have come from those sections of the working people who were not radicalized. The *Penny Magazine's* audience included shopkeepers, clerks, some professionals and country gentry. Anderson interprets Scott Bennett's compilations from print-orders of the magazine, which was 187, 000 in 1833, to claim that there must have been a fairly faithful working-class following. The figures become compelling when compared to the sales of the supposedly representative working-class paper, *Poor Man's Guardian* which sold at most 15,000 copies in the same year and declined to 3000 copies in two years. Scott Bennett computes the number of copies of the *Penny Magazine* sold to the total population of the United Kingdom to surmise that one copy was sold for every 138th man, woman and child in the country, a claim which certainly puts the magazine amongst the first mass-market periodicals published in Britain. Other evidence, such as letters to the SDUK from workers, working-class autobiographies, the magazine's distribution in working men's coffee houses and the appeal of the illustrations to the literate and the semi-literate supports the view that the *Penny Magazine*

was widely known and read despite its large scale rejection by working people who were influenced by radical consciousness.

One attitude that readers may have had can be seen in Scott Bennett's comment on the audience for this magazine. Scott Bennett identifies the readership as "the people" who did not have specific ideological leanings about where the social order was taking them. "What these massive number of readers most wanted was a magazine that did nothing more--but also nothing less--than document the broad horizons of the new order and explain without ideological freight the inter-relatedness of the people and things that filled their world" (Bennett 138). While the readers themselves may not have had a higher goal than broadening their horizons, the way that the magazine made them view "the inter-relatedness of the people and things that filled their world" might not have been free of ideology. At the same time, the huge sales of the magazine suggests to me that the ideology of the magazine must have struck a chord in the non-radicalized part of the working-class population, delivering what was already a part of their cultural understanding of imperial Britain's world view. Sometimes the viewpoints related to "facts" propagated by the magazine's publishers and editors and the cultural views of a vast section of the audience--that they were imbibing "factual" knowledge--is taken at face value even by some very discerning critics today. At one point, even Anderson says that the *Penny Magazine* could not have propounded the middle-class point of view because "the greater part of the magazine's content . . . aimed to be broadly informative" (P. Anderson 79).⁴ With such a huge circulation, the "facts" that the magazine promoted, on which ideas of "inter-relatedness" was based between peoples and things, were not only influenced by ideological views, but could have helped construct these "facts" as well.

Bringing Together the Nation: Paper, Print and the Magazine as Commodity

David Lloyd, in his essay “Nationalisms Against the State,” discusses ideas of ‘good’ vs. ‘bad’ nationalisms and ‘legitimate’ vs. ‘illegitimate’ nationalisms. Good nationalism, according to him, is that which is always seen as those practiced by ‘progressive’ states vs. ‘separatist’ tendencies observed amongst people seen as local and reactionary. Industrial society produces economic conditions for national consciousness and imperialist ideas produce antipathy towards “other” nationalisms in a centre/periphery based structure. According to Leela Gandhi, “The nation, then, is the product of a radically secular and modern imagination invoked through the cultural forms of the novel and the newspaper in the godless expanse of what [Benedict] Anderson calls ‘homogenous empty time’” (104-105). Several strands in the *Penny Magazine* show the process of indoctrination of its working-class readers with the values of an imperialist, nationalist state through teaching them the value of the British nation. Working people’s contribution to and stakes in the form of the nation is made to matter by aligning the coherence of the nation with structures of systems of knowledge dissemination. Knowledge, however, is not marketed as an abstract concept to working people but as a very material product of an industrial society through technology, as the next section explores. At the same time, other peoples are shown as not only technologically backward but intellectually inferior, producing bad literature through bad technical knowhow, thereby aligning them with the primitive. The body of European and colonial labourers appear in the illustrations to anchor these ideas, objectify them, set off British workers as better off and also put British workers in the position of the beneficiaries as the consumers of such labour.

The *Penny Magazine* itself was a commodity and its illustrations were objects which enhanced its saleability. This is very clear in the magazine’s celebration of its use of printing technology and large scale production of paper. Paper and the printed text become crucial

aspects of Victorian material culture producing working-class identities in this magazine through its close connection with the celebration of the spread of knowledge through reading. The *Penny Magazine* incorporates its working-class audience into its liberal project of British nation building by presenting working people as both contributors to and beneficiaries of progress through a contribution towards the production and consumption of paper, print and illustrations. At the same time, paper making is used to emphasize superiority of the British working-class audience in comparison to its Others, docile labouring populations who are locked into its pages through illustrations and commodified descriptions giving the illusion of control by their British counterparts. The possession of the consuming power of knowledge is intricately woven in with the consumption of the material culture of print and paper in the way that the *Penny Magazine* constructs its audience, which is tied in with the language of imperialism as a means of nation building. There are several references in the early issues regarding the idea that while ancient civilizations such as those of the Indians may have acquired the skills of parchment making, the British working-class is the principal gainer of modern technological progress bringing in material goods from all over the world culminating in paper manufacturing. At the same time, the *Penny Magazine* itself is presented as a cheaper commodity that civilizes through inculcating reading habits on a large scale, holding the working man to his fireside rather than the pub. Articles dealing with the need for the establishment of libraries for working men repeatedly posit reading as a preventive activity against drinking habits.

On 23 September, 1833, a new series begins which is called “The Commercial History of the Penny Magazine” (2: 377). This series delineates the magazine’s plan to publish four supplements accompanied by 20 woodcuts emphasized by the phrase “the bent of civilizations is to make good things cheap,” a phrase repeated multiple times in the series. The magazine

counters allegations by “shallow and prejudiced” reasoners that its cheapness must necessarily indicate bad quality. The article goes on to enumerate the number of pages printed, the number of copies sold and the use of “science” in its production. It asserts that the greater number of sales in fact ensures “the greater power of commercially realizing the means for a liberal outlay upon those matters upon which the excellence of a book chiefly consists- its text and illustrations” (2: 378). The context clearly indicates that text does not just mean thematic content but the quality of print as well.

For the reader, romancing the physical sexuality of the Other and being able to experience it through mystifying the materiality of the paper on which the magazine is printed combines the desire to possess the Other and experience self affirmation as more civilized. A significant question is asked in an article which is the first of a series of articles that describe the production of the *Penny Magazine*, not from the point of view of its origin in terms of ideas, but from the point of view of its production from rags to paper. How is the immense demand for paper, or the rags that go into making paper, met for such a large scale venture as the *Penny Magazine*? In order to answer this question, the writer cannot but help some spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: “The material of which the sheet of paper which the reader now holds in his hand is formed, existed, a few months ago, perhaps in the shape of a tattered frock, whose shreds, exposed for years to the sun and wind, covered the sturdy loins of a shepherd watching his sheep on the plains of Hungary . . .” (28 September 1833, 2:379). The text goes on in this vein to imagine the straw plaiter of Tuscany, the farmer of Saxony, the sailor of Italy, the burgher of Hamburg until it comes to the London Tailor. The article goes on to inform its reader that native manufacture does not produce a fifth of the rags needed for the amount of paper required. The rags arrive from various parts of the world marked by alphabets that denote their respective

quality. Soon, though, the discourses of perceiving self vs. objectified Other gives way to perceiving the Other as less civilized:

The linen rags of England are generally very clean . . . the Sicilian rags, on the contrary, are originally so dirty, that they are washed in lime before they are fit for the foreign market. The greater portion of rags from the north of Europe are so dark in their colour and so coarse in their texture that it is difficult to imagine how they could have formed a part of any inner garment; while those . . . collected at home evidently belong to a people who are clothed in “fine linen” every day. (28 September 1833, 2:379).

The obliteration of material class difference at home leads to the speculation that as civilization progresses more, not only will it make rags more abundant, but increase a demand for rags indicating the rootedness of the spread of reading on its raw material. If however, “the demand for books, not only in England but in all civilized countries, should outrun . . . the power of each individual to wear out linen and cotton clothing to supply the demand, paper must be manufactured from other substances than rags” (379).

Often, civilization’s primitive Other serves as a dubious rhetorical model, waiting to be civilized through the spread of printing technology. One exemplary article on 31 March 1832 talks about how the people in the Mohammedan world never throw away the smallest bit of paper and even though it would be absurd to posit Mohammedans as models, there might be something in the story. Another 1834 article entitled “Mohammedan Schools” talks about the peculiar reading habits of the Mohammedans, especially in Persia, where the demand for knowledge is high. Young boys gather around a master repeating texts after him in a high pitched voice. After a long description of this habit, the author concludes that this is because they have only a few texts; few people can read their manuscripts which is a sort of “short hand” with “many styles and flourishes.” The reason for such a peculiar habit is the absence of printing technology which would free them from a feeling of inferiority. This is the source of their hatred of the “infidels” and fatalistic approach to life. A footnote mentions that it is “scarcely worth

while to mention the feeble operations of the press at Constantinople and Egypt as exceptions” (3 November 1834, 3: 434-435).

Interestingly, while the profit motive in the *Penny Magazine*'s context of spread of useful knowledge is celebrated as progress, the same motive is disdained in the case of sensational literature in other countries. For example, in an 1835 article, Russian wood cutting is described as the coarsest and the most uncouth method in the world. Their wood cuts which are terribly sensational, find a ready sale throughout the Russian emperor's dominions, based on religious topics from the Old Testament, where even the number of drops of blood lost by redeemers become a subject of “circumstantial enumeration” (4: 443). Various examples are provided, amongst which is the description of a large map of the world, which includes Paradise. America is described, in the map, as discovered by the French and the Spanish “Niezmy” or “dumb persons as the Russians designate all foreigners,” inhabited by people who are 500 years or older and are subjects to the French and Spanish monarchs. The writer of this article is sensitive to nationalist enculturing forces: “After all, this map is cunningly devised with reference to the traditions current among an ignorant and superstitious race; any attempt to break in upon them would be but “cutting blocks with a razor” (443). In other instances, the writers of articles take on the sole right to distinguish between good and bad paper. A detailed extract from an 1818 travel narrative describes paper making in Tibet through mostly non-mechanized processes using eddies in the river. The last line of this extract claims that such paper is not as smooth as that made in “Hindustan.” In a different article on a comparison between English and American newspapers, (professed to be an extract from a pamphlet on newspaper stamp and duty upon paper), the local nature of American papers is emphasized, which is as easy as “raising a log hut,” against the *Penny Magazine* which keeps the news of the Empire in mind.

The preface to the 1832 edition stresses the active involvement of its working-class audience in its success as consumers. “It was considered by Edmund Burke that there were about eighty thousand *readers* in this country . . . the sale of the Penny Magazine [has shown] that there are two hundred thousand *purchasers* of one periodical work” (“Preface,” 18 December 1832). The subtle shift from the word reader to the word purchaser, both put in italics for emphasis, is significant. The feeling of celebration of consumption might be seen in an article from December 1842 on a shoe-blackening factory which compares contemporary conditions of boots with those in the previous century. It proudly mentions, without the slightest bit of irony, that even though the streets are more “miry” for the contemporary reader than they were in the eighteenth century, “we are a more cleanly people than our ancestors--[that] the boots and shoes of 1842 are more resplendent than [those] of 1742” (510). In such a context of optimism, educating working-class people about the proper way to share the benefits of progress becomes extremely important.

Inculcating reading habits and a taste for “culture” are necessary for working people to share the fruits of knowledge. However, for working people, such fruits of knowledge are perceived as very material. One 7 April 1832 article on the British Museum is designed to educate working people about visiting the museum. “Do not fear the surly looks or impertinent glances from persons in attendance” it encourages its readers but also instructs, in point form, as to what they are not supposed to do while inside, such as not talk loudly, bring very young children, and not talk to people who are sketching there. One of these points tells working people in detail how they are not supposed to touch or scratch material on display. Some of the material, such as the Elgin Marbles, will already seem mutilated badly, but this is because the Turkish soldiers who kept the Greeks under subjection destroyed them because they did not know the

value of art. Would the British working people do the same? Within this setup, other articles talk about the material nature of the benefits of knowledge consumption itself. An article compares the benefit of buying books as opposed to buying articles of furniture. Books never wear out if properly used, they are the cheapest forms of amusement available, and while exchanging furniture periodically would not benefit anyone at all, books unlike chairs, might be used by many families through exchange.

The 1832 preface attributes the success of *The Penny Magazine* as much to the spread of literacy as to the high point of industrial progress made at home. “‘Penny Magazine’ could not exist in its present state- and its present state is dependent upon its large scale – except in a country where civilization is carried forward to very high degree of perfection. The vast number of the existing race of readers . . . might be supposed to warrant this assertion” (“Preface,” 18 December 1832). Knight mentions the stereotype foundry and the process of chemical manufacture as “high accumulations of knowledge” that has made the magazine possible. He also talks about the effective means of transportation that has made distribution on such a large scale feasible: “The number that goes to press on the 19th of December is sold in the whole country on the 1st of January and in remote areas on the 3rd or the 4th latest”(1: iv). The preface goes on to say that the communication between London and the country and between large towns in the country and the remote areas is now so perfect that wherever there is a sufficient demand for any commodity there will be a supply. The steam boat, the canal, the railway, the quick van and the stage coach have all made it possible for the magazine to reach remote locations. Despite all this, the magazine is still available for a penny, a fact which is an evidence of the highest state of civilization that the country has reached. The networks of retailers and publishers have made this possible making the working man the beneficiary of progress--still making the magazine

available for a penny. The preface then vehemently declares that the magazine “*survives on commercial principles alone*”--its sale alone because it receives very little support from the SDUK. The preface constructs the magazine as a process of knowledge production made possible by “civilization” but supported by a principle of consumption where both the consumers and the contributors (through monetary support) are working men. It gives a sense that the whole nation has come together through channels of communication that unify working people through production and consumption facilitated by technological progress and means of transportation.

Technology and Imperialism

The Penny Magazine is full of illustrations of coloured peoples depicted as individuals and in groups from the British colonies in Australia, India and the Americas. These illustrations express the rhetorical function that primitiveness performs as a measure of civilization. As in other forms of liberal rhetoric, civilization is judged against the situation of the “savage” in general or against their methods of industrial production.⁵ Often, these illustrations are closely juxtaposed with detailed illustrations and descriptions of machinery that are the product of the British industrial revolution. The body of the primitive or the “savage” is always in stylized postures, often bare, to be read and interpreted and recorded in great detail standing in for facts that the magazine claims to provide the working class with. Often, labouring bodies that belong to non-white, non-European races are in indolent stances or in the position of operating machinery that the text notes is already dated and ineffectual. Their nakedness, usually in sharp contrast with the neatly clothed bodies of British industrial workers in contiguous articles both invites the voyeuristic gaze, marks them as vulnerable, and fixes these people as backward and rooted to their geographical location. They are therefore unable to participate in the movement towards homogenization that industrialization brings to urban spaces. Such homogenized spaces are essential to remain connected through channels of communication that ultimately lead to a

national consciousness. The people depicted in the illustrations often provide essential services that get used up in such communication channels. They never benefit from these services themselves.

Sometimes the articles serve as excuses to deliver sketches providing details of exotic mannerisms of people. At other times the articles discuss the method of manufacture of familiar materials in traditional modes in distant places, and then compare the increased quantities of production at home through the use of machinery. In Volume 2 published in 1833, an illustration on weaving in Ceylon accompanies a comparison of the arts of nations of high antiquity with those of nations whose civilization is of a more recent date (Figure 3-2). The article speculates that civilizations such as those of the Chinese and the “Hindoos” have manufactories that require manual skill and patience which is equal, if not superior to those of the Europeans. The “Hindoos,” however, appear “incapable of improvement” because of the lack of machinery. Similar tasks, if attempted amongst the British in the same way would either lead to starvation or make the price of labour such that it would put the articles produced beyond the reach of the richest of consumers. The illustration depicts two weavers in traditional dress with a traditional loom working in a shed. The authenticity of the depiction is emphasized early on when the writer states that he had detained these weavers for several hours for taking this sketch. The sketch is accompanied by detailed description of the mannerisms of the weavers. The text describes how the weavers took pride in weaving with their eyes closed and the way they showed respect by knocking their head on the ground several times because they were of a lower caste. While the alleged purpose of this article is to educate the reader about methods of weaving used in Ceylon, part of the real purpose is to deliver the sketch, made by the artist, to the readers of the magazine.

Detailed information about the labour involved in the production of the sketch itself ensures that the quality of the illustration, which is meant for consumption by the reader, is of a good quality.

Along with such illustrations of non-white workers, there are other conventional illustrations of “primitive” peoples. Groups of “native” peoples such as the “Sandwich Islanders,” the “natives of Nootka Sound” or various Australian or New Zealandish indigenous peoples are shown in indolent postures in groups not working at all. Their bodies are usually huddled together, unclothed, either dangerous or simply bearing no markers of “civilization” or progress. For example, one 1835 illustration (Figure 3-3) shows the “Chinese mode of fishing with Cormorants.” The illustration has the bare muscular upper body of a Chinese fisherman in focus, training the birds to catch their prey, while another man, also bare bodied, is shown handling the fish in the foreground. The text details the curious modes in which the cormorants are trained and prevented from swallowing the fish they catch. Colonial labour is shown as part of a triumphant, global chain of work that provides services to the reader as seen in a whole series of articles about how the mail travels through different parts of the world. One illustration in one of these articles is that of the “swimming couriers of Peru” (Figure 3-1). The illustration has the unclothed body of a man in focus, partly above water, swimming towards the shore, while the person bearing the mail is shown swimming on the side. Technological progress is always seen to have its centre in the heart of empire. In an educational article on a series on the Mineral Kingdom which explores the coal resources in Britain, the wonder at having made progress is tied to the language of imperialism: “At this moment a steam vessel is exploring the interiors of Africa never before visited by civilized man; the harbinger . . . of future civilization . . . Are we then not fully justified in saying that these great results, involving the future destinies

of the human race, may be traced to the discoveries of beds of coal placed by nature in our little island?" (12 January 1833, 2: 11).

Industrial progress and its links to imperialism are clearly delineated in many other articles. Ironically, some articles also clearly state the economic reasons why other peoples should be studied and civilized. Such articles repeat certain imperialist notions over and over again. Contrary to the notion that the *Penny Magazine* is simply trying to disseminate facts, these articles show that it attempts to reinforce these notions through frequent repetition, so that these ideas take firm root in its working-class audience. For example, the relationship between superiority of machinery and the African conquest is made clear in an article entitled "Progress of African Discovery" published on 2 February, 1839. The article states that before the products of any British manufacturing industry could find their way into native markets, it would be necessary to research the kind of products that would be demanded, and also the products that would be offered in exchange. But, the writer says, something more would be needed than an acquaintance with the physical geography of the place. The habits and tastes of the inhabitants would need to be studied and the tastes of "the most savage people" must be consulted. He suggests that a set of explorers would be required to examine the "condition of the country, its capability and production . . . social condition of the inhabitants, their arts and policy, their origin and relation to other races, their language and religion and general intellectual capacity"(2 February 1839, 8: 41). In this way, when a deficiency in their processes of production would be found, the British traveller could offer his industrial knowledge when a permanent market could be opened and consuls appointed to keep a watch over it. The permanent market would then open its "civilizing influence" far and wide. At this point, the writer is careful to state that the explorations are guided by a spirit to extend the boundaries of science and knowledge as much as

they are driven by commercial principles. Another article says that there is something intrinsic in the nature of the Oriental character that makes them incapable of taking up commercial progress: “There is in the inertness of Oriental character a great impediment to commercial development. The habits of the people are opposed to activity and motives which elsewhere lead to the gradual, however slow, accumulation of property are faint and insufficient” (16 January 1841, 10: 19). While these comments reveal already prevalent ideas in the British imagination, they also suggest their fragility in a complex cultural matrix where such comments need to be repeated frequently to remain valid. The ideas also inculcate working people with a sense of their own stake in such industrial and commercial imperialistic moves.

The Depiction of “The Labourers of Europe”

The “Labourers of Europe” is a set of articles that recur through several years of the magazine. Each episode deals with a single European population such as the “Norman peasant,” the “Labourers of Greece,” the “Northumberland” peasantry and the “Norwegian” peasantry. This series combines documentary, ethnographic modes of description with illustrations of various non-industrialized ethnic groups of Europe. The articles compare these peasants implicitly or explicitly to the better living conditions of the British population at home in many episodes. The descriptions also compare these populations to each other providing qualitative judgment from the writer’s point of view, presenting them as objects of knowledge from an imperial standpoint. The narration is often supported through quotes from alleged travel narratives or historical “scholarly” sources that seemingly provide authenticity. Large and intricate illustrations of the people discussed show that great pains were taken to create the woodcuts. Often these labourers are shown to be backward in the use of technology in farming as compared to the British. One typical attitude might be seen in the description of “The Labourers of Europe” series, number 4, an article that closely follows the preface that same year, dealing

with the labourers of Spain. The Spanish peasants are rhetorically constructed as Britain's primitive Other through an external gaze that takes up the authority to describe their bodies ("well made and robust") and comment on their seemingly positive qualities of thrift and endurance.

They are generally well made and robust, very frugal and patient under privations, naturally solemn and taciturn, high-spirited and brave. An exclusive love of their country, and a dislike to foreigners, are with them traditional feelings connected with their religion, ...at the same time they have so little idea of the construction of the social and political body, that they even lately did not know the meaning of the word *nation*, and they applied their corresponding word *nacion* to designate foreigners exclusively and indiscriminately. They had never heard of the 'Spanish nation until the constitution of 1820 . . .' (24 November 1832, 1: 41)

At the same time, their love of their country is naive, based on their religious beliefs rather than an allegiance to the nation, and most importantly, on a sort of xenophobia which is supported by the inscrutability of their persons. The whole paragraph exhibits a confusion in logic that shows the writer's own ideological biases. The same quality valued in the British population (love of one's country) is seen as a bad quality in these Spanish populations because such love is accompanied by questionable sentiments (mistrust of foreigners). At the same time, the whole passage is an expression of the xenophobia experienced by the article writer himself:

Their good qualities are obscured by prejudices, their sternness degenerates at times into ferocity, as their piety does into superstition. ...Although uninformed, they are far from dull. (1: 41)

This attitude to foreigners provides a clear contrast to lines in the preface from Milton a few pages earlier that describe the British people as "' a nation not slow and dull, but of a quick, ingenious and piercing spirit, - acute to invent, subtile and sinewy to discourse'" ("Preface"). The frugality and patience of the Spanish peasants are part of an ethnographic discourse that presents foreigners as tractable, easily led and positions the reader as superior. However, the accompanying anxiety about the Spanish peasants' religious difference is immediately contained

by positioning their “love for their country” as stemming from a naive lack of knowledge of the social and political body which the British reader is sure to have. This allows for the contradictory use of words such as “sternness” and “ferocity” on the one hand and “patient” and “solemn” on the other.

In addition to this, even though the text describes the Spanish peasants as healthy bodies, the illustration to this article tells a different story (Figure 3-4). In the “Spanish Muleteers,” the central figure has his/her head bent towards the left of the viewer, sitting on a mule, led by another figure with head bent in the same direction. While the three mules in line give an impression of motion, the central figure gives a sense of passivity being led on, either a young boy or a short-statured woman. The other two figures with shaded eyes are suspicious figures in dark cloaks. The cross on the left corresponds to the declaration in the text that their religious otherness is a cause for their distrust of foreigners. The cloudy atmosphere in the background adds to the sense of ominous mystery with the cross looming to the left of the frame of the illustration. These peasants are passive, yet threatening and mysterious.

The text employs familiar ethnographic discourse to categorize, classify and subject to statistical analysis several European groups and also compares them to each other accompanying these descriptions with comments about what is good and bad about the population studied. A typical passage will distinguish between local groups and then describe the economic hardships of the peasants under oppression under some local system or people. When such a situation is compared to the apparently self-regulatory situation of the British workers in factories that other illustrations depict, a point dealt with later in the chapter, it can be appreciated that the intended reader is expected to feel a sense of well being and superiority. For example, a very typical sentence is one that describes the Portuguese peasants in an 1833 article: “The Portuguese

labourers and peasants differ considerably in their appearance from their neighbours of Spain, and especially from the Castilians” (3: 4). The article notes how their language is less sonorous and how their bearing is less solemn. It comments on the healthy glow of the Spanish, their manly look and bearing as compared to the “mean” appearance of others in the area. The writer then talks about the wretched state of some of the Portuguese peasants who are under the oppression of speculators who advance them money on the rent. The condition of the labourers of Europe is usually described as deplorable due to lack of technology. The comparative primitiveness of the agricultural methods and implements adopted by the Portuguese, for example, in the same article above, fixes them as primitive. They consult the almanac for their rural labour and sow the same seed year after year in the same field as their forefathers did before them. Their plough and harrow are very heavy and drawn by bullocks and their carts are remarkable for their clumsiness and produce a grating noise. It takes the bullocks a whole day to drag a pipe of wine six or seven miles with two men alongside to prevent the cart from overturning.

Human labour is wasted because of the lack of roads, means of transportation and fixity to a geographical location in the lives of these European labourers. The oppressed condition of these rural populations is emphasized repeatedly. The deplorable condition of the French peasantry is often ascribed to the French revolution in the text. The text often goes into detail to describe how the French peasants are oppressed and the British peasants are far better off compared to the French. In a subsequent episode, the contemptible state of agriculture in France is allotted to the fact that machinery and methods have to be imported from abroad. Similarly, in an 1835 article on the education of female children in Russia, the writer concentrates on the condition of the children of the lowest classes who are treated like slaves by the nobles. While

criticizing the condition of these peoples, such geographical spaces also open up possibilities for emigration. The text encourages the imperial gaze of an industrialized nation as suited to the necessities of a working-class population at home. For instance, one article on the condition of the Greek labourers who are not familiar with machinery also talks about the possibilities of emigration to Greece: “if the produce of the land was so abundant with their careless mode of tillage, what may not be expected from the same soil, when we see applied to it the results of our more advanced agricultural knowledge and experience, combined with the use of machinery of which the Greek peasant knows not the existence” (2: 239).

In the context of rural or agricultural labour, there is a strong strand in mid-nineteenth-century discourse that uses the contemporary condition of agricultural labourers as a critique of the condition of factory labourers based on a country/ city duality.⁶ However, the *Penny Magazine* does not put the description of these agricultural labourers in dialogue with the condition-of-England-question. The separateness of these rural populations from industrialization is never shown to benefit them when it depicts contemporary European groups. The magazine also follows another mode of depiction of rural labour. These are illustrations which depict pastoral figures in idyllic poses as commodified objects for aesthetic appeal distanced from real conditions of work for the contemporary reader. The magazine depicts pastoral labour as beautiful set pieces, as cover pictures for its monthly almanacs, for example. “The Monthly Almanac for March, 1839” subtitled “The Lambing Season” has the illustration of a young highland shepherd in focus from the side leaning on a huge rock, in a calm mood of contemplation, holding his staff (Figure 3-5). His sheep dog is to the left, looking up at him and the sheep are to the right of the frame reaching far into the distance up to a vanishing point. The text that follows celebrates the coming of March in a stylized language. These illustrations are

usually large engravings, of the same stature as images of antiquity, architectural buildings, images of London and reproductions of paintings that provided much of the attraction of the magazine. They show immense labour in their production and are often much more detailed than other illustrations. The labouring body in a pastoral setting is considered an art object to be provided to working people. The central position of the image, the stylized language of the paragraphs that follow, and the way it stands out from other illustrations in intricacy and detail show that the image of the shepherd is clearly an object which embellishes rather than simply illustrates the magazine.

The condition of female labourers often becomes fit subjects for such set pieces. The treatment of women as subjects worthy of pity is seen in the illustration of the “Peat Gatherer,” for example, which depicts an old woman with a basket on her back looking far into the horizon presenting a kind of autumnal calmness (Figure 3-6). Speculations about her being all alone in her wretched cottage are accompanied by references to “Goody Blake” and Spenser. Often, the pitiable condition of women labourers in other countries is considered in detail through a description of markers of hardship on their bodies. A focus on the deplorable condition of women in other European countries implicitly serves as a measure of progress made at home. In the 12 December, 1835 issue of the *Penny Magazine*, there are two big illustrations of a “Norman fruit woman” and a Norman (male) peasant (Figure 3-7). Both are side profiles where the man is shown carrying a burden of a bundle of hay or sticks on his back and the woman is depicted sitting on a rough wooden bench with her fruits visible in the background. Compared to the man, the woman’s physical appearance merits much more space in the text. The author notes that their transition from youth to age seems almost instantaneous because of poverty. Such women work at “servile” occupations out of doors or lounge about expecting charity from

passers by. A Mrs. Stothard's account is used for authenticity to read markers of outdoor labour on the woman's body as those which also mark her as strange: "'Thus,' proceeds the lady, 'their faces and necks are always of a copper colour and at an advanced age more dusky still; so that for the anatomy and colour of witches a painter needs look no farther'" (4: 484-485). The magazine often deals with French peasantry, showing an awareness that their laws were being constantly compared to British laws that dealt with peasantry. An emphasis on the treatment of women in France, therefore, becomes a measure of their lack of real improvement. "The women, however, have more than their due share of the labour,--they reap, bind, and load. They soon therefore lose every appearance of youth in their face; they look old and wrinkled; and the old peasant women of France are absolutely frightful" (2: 476).

Despite this disparaging attitude towards French peasantry, some discussions regarding French working people, their laws and taxes exhibit real desire for reform at home in Britain. At the same time it reveals a broad historical and cultural milieu that reveals the complexities, fragilities and anxieties of British attitudes towards a comparison of working people in the two countries. The curious progression of an article on the arrangements of public conveniences for washerwomen in Paris exhibits the *Penny Magazine's* desire to discuss some of the positive aspects of French public facilities for working people. Yet, it also shows a pretty transparent attempt to contain the working-class reader's discontent at her or his own condition at home. The article describes how arrangements have been made for washerwomen to access the water of the Seine very effectively for their work. It also notes though, without any intended irony, that this activity is possible only because the French have no sense of privacy. They do not object to having their clothes washed in public. The central focus that the article could have given these

washerwomen in the article is undermined by the illustration which depicts puny washerwomen dominated by the Pont Notre Dame bridge behind them (Figure 3-8).

The women and their work are embedded in a narrative concerning foreign architecture and customs and systems of labour, discussed in great detail in the text. After a few paragraphs of such discussion, unable to contain anxieties associated with depicting female manual labour as positive, the article shifts to a description of the chemical composition of soap. In this discussion, the poor are shown to be beneficiaries of a consumption based manufacturing system, a fact that the British labouring population is expected to identify with and feel satisfied about. The article goes on to describe the history of soap manufacture from its first mention in Pliny to its chemical composition and the number of soap manufacturers in England and the amount of duty levied on the item itself. The following line delineates the importance of soap to the poor: “The cheapness of soap and alkali has enabled even the poorest classes to avail themselves of those articles which aid their labour in the most effectual and economical manner” (5: 493). Ultimately, the value of labour is undermined and put in the service of an efficient system of production through the use of scientific methods. The discovery of Prussian Blue in Berlin and the abolition of the duty on starch merit the following discussion: “These apparently unimportant changes are of great consequence to the mass of the people as through them . . . manual labour is facilitated, and the task of each individual rendered lighter and more agreeable” (493).

Heroism and the Male Body

Tim Barringer talks about a tradition in Victorian discourses of labour which presents male working-class bodies as central heroic figures while figures from other stations of society are made peripheral in his discussion of Ford Madox Brown’s painting *Work*. In the *Penny Magazine*, such heroism is unavailable to workers. A spirit of heroism, however, is made available at an ideal level, effectively distanced from the contemporary world, to male bodies of

antiquity or to the colonial/racial other through images that pose no threat. Such heroism is not shown in illustrations that depict European labourers, one speculates, because of fears of intractable working-class subjectivity too close to home. These heroic male figures are never shown at work but are presented as individualized figures that show no social connections to other people. The African “Hottentot” and the “Bushman,” already prominent figures in the British imagination, return several times in several issues. Such figures express ideas of contemporary competitive imperialism with respect to the Dutch settlers in Southern Africa. The text frequently delineates the deplorable conditions of these people because of their forceful dislocation to the interiors because of the encroachment of European colonists. The “Bushman” is a positive heroic image throughout the *Penny Magazine* because he is seen as a victim of the Dutch settlers and also a victim of the slave trade, the British having abolished the trade in their own country and aligned themselves with discourses of emancipation by this point.

One illustration depicts the “Bushman” in his conventional pose sitting with his javelin and his quiver in a regal posture (Figure 3-9). His cloak is apart from the middle so that his legs are exposed to the viewer. The caption reads “Wild Bushman” and is accompanied by a poem. The poem describes the “Bushman” as the “Lord of the Desert Land” and that the buffalo, the wild horse and other animals bend to him. Nature’s bounty is what supports the “Bushman.” Labour is absent from this setting and this is seen as part of his regal stature:

I plant no herbs or pleasant fruits,
Nor toil for savoury cheer.
The desert yields me juicy roots,
And herds of bounding deer. (22 September 1832, 1: 248)

One of the most remarkable images of the male body seen in the context of heroism in the *Penny Magazine* is the illustration of the third-century BC statue of *The Dying Gladiator* published in January 1832 (Figure 3-10). As Patricia Anderson points out, this illustration was

meant to serve as a role-model for the worker, the gladiator having endured suffering in a manly way. The author of the text repeatedly points out how fortunate the contemporary worker is because he does not live in an unstable, uncivilized and thoroughly un-English world like the gladiator. I contend, however, that this image goes beyond providing a simple role model. It provides the gorgeous male body of the dying gladiator as the cover picture of the issue, commodifying it as an object that enters circulation, taking up the signifiers that get attached to it in the circulation process. Between the text and the image, the worker's body becomes the hero's body, tragic, heroic and yet non-anxiety producing because it is a figure of antiquity. It allows the writer of the text to quote and interpret, having the sole authority to decide what is important:

It is thus described by Winkelmann (vol ii. P.241, French ed.):-'It represents a man of toil, who has lived a laborious life, as we may see from the countenance, from one of the hands, which is genuine, and from the soles of the feet. He has a cord round his neck, which is knotted under the chin; he is lying on an oval buckler, on which we see a kind of broken horn*.' The rest of Winkelmann's remarks are little to the purpose. (2: 9)

The body of the gladiator in the illustration is quite literally contained by a chord round his neck. The male body is provided as a spectacle to be read authoritatively as the body of toil by the reader supported by quotes from Ctesilaus, Pliny and other classical writers while the male body, understood as the worker's body, is restrained. The commodified object serves merely an aesthetic purpose, not eliciting either identification with or resistance to its implicit ideology on the part of the reader.

Masculinity, Femininity and the Machine

Even though the male labouring body can achieve tragic proportions through images of antiquity and even as the advancement of "civilization" is celebrated through descriptions of machinery and the high quality of the objects produced, male workers' bodies are downplayed throughout the magazine. Workers only come in when parts of the stages of manufacture of an article are required to be demonstrated through illustrations. The later issues of the *Penny*

Magazine devote several series of articles on different manufacturing industries spread out over various parts of England. An illustration which appears on the *Penny Magazine* accompanying the article “A Day at the Westminster Gas Works” has a subject matter which necessitates the depiction of two men feeding the furnace (Figure 3-11). This article demonstrates how these workers’ bodies are completely made devoid of any heroism in both the text and the illustration. As Barringer discusses in his consideration of Ford Madox Brown’s secular altarpiece, *Work*, work at the furnace could be considered masculine and heroic in contemporary discourse. This illustration, however, depicts a depressive view of such work as merely a part of the description of the process of manufacture. The text describes that the architectural structure of the retort-house has an iron roof and an iron floor with no windows and that the walls are “speckled” with iron work. The constant supply of gas required, its minute variations in amounts at various times of the day, the valves, pipes and machinery are described in detail. The workers merit little consideration except in two sentences which describe the constant necessity of the furnaces to be heated and therefore the necessity of having labourers do twelve hour shifts, including nighttime. The illustration, entitled “End-View through Retort-house” (February 1842, 85) depicts two labourers in the act of operating or feeding the furnace. The point of the viewer is somewhere from the side, as though the viewer has chanced upon the operation. The arch of the retort-house dominates the view and the workers seem puny. They seem crouched in the middle, facing away from the viewer, arms and knees bent. The whole place seems squalid and yet the illustration does not invite any sense of empathy. This is fairly typical of a lot of illustrations in the magazine where huge machines dominate the puny workers.

The illustrations of men in manufacture in these articles are of two different types. One set of illustrations depict neat little figures in caps, sometimes wearing special apparel meant for the

specific kind of manufacturing industry. They are shown at work operating machinery. Typically, the men are tiny compared to the machines (Figure 3-12, Figure 3-17, Figure 3-18). Bigger illustrations of men show neat figures embodying efficiency and uniformity devoid of individuality--puppet-like and homogenous (Figure 3-13, Figure 3-14, Figure 3-15). The second type of illustrations, more and more common in the forties, with Knight's decision to run long articles on these manufactories, inevitably necessitate the need for the use of depiction of men controlling machines or using potentially dangerous implements like the hammer. "The Coppersmith's Shop.- Messrs. E. and W. Pontifex's Factory" is a typical example (Figure 3-16). The men are made as small as possible, almost ant-like figures holding hammers that look like sticks. The middle of the frame is dominated by the two huge cylindrical structures which are probably pipes and fixtures that the factory manufactures for other industries, as the text says. Cleanliness, a marker of respectability, is emphasized in the close-up illustrations and also in the text. For example, an 1842 article on a day at "Day and Martin's" shoe-blackening factory emphasizes cleanliness. The writer triumphantly mentions that the contemporary person has now been able to dispense with the services of the shoe-black because of this new product. Yet, the reader must not be misled by the nature of the product into thinking that the shoe-black producing factory is a dirty place: "If anyone were to picture to himself a dark and dirty room, containing a few tubs and coppers, and half a dozen men mixing up and bottling a black liquid--their faces and garments vying with the tubs and floors in blackness . . . he would be somewhat surprised at witnessing . . . the scene presented at 'Day and Martin's' factory in Holborn" (December 1842, 510). Architectural structures dominate illustrations of such factories, especially the roof of the interiors, giving an impression of depth and grandeur while making the

workers parts of the process. The workers' bodies are never humanized enough to elicit empathy on the part of the viewer.

The depiction of the female labouring body is difficult in Victorian culture because labour itself is associated with masculinity and the feminine is constructed by virtue of being divorced from bodily labour. While depicting female labour, therefore, *The Penny Magazine* uses various strategies to grapple with the discomfort of presenting female labour as an essential part of the manufacturing process in various industries. One remarkable instance of the way British femininity is retained under such labouring conditions for women is seen in an illustration which accompanies an article describing spinning wheels. The British female worker is defined in relation to her female colonial Other, a "Hindoo" woman weaving at her loom. The article, dated 9 July 1836, is entitled "Household Spinning Wheels and the First Spinning Machines" and claims to be from Andrew Ure's work on cotton manufacture. The two illustrations of the two women, juxtaposed together on the same page, express visually the magazine's stance about labour, female labour, labour in the colonies and mechanization. The first illustration shows a fully clothed British woman sitting at the spinning wheel while the second depicts "A Hindoo Woman Spinning Cotton Yarn on the Primitive Wheel of India" (5: 268-269). The British woman is fully dressed, hair pinned up under a frilled cap, head bent down demurely, eyes concentrating on the spindle on her lap, left hand holding the yarn. She wears a light coloured apron and a dark coloured full sleeved dress and her right hand holds the jersey wheel. She faces the viewer and yet has her eyes averted, though her whole posture is meant to be viewed. The floor is visible but the background is devoid of any objects. The second woman, the "Hindoo" woman, sits cross legged, left hand outstretched, holding the thread, one breast exposed, eyes focused at some point to the left of the viewer. The expression on her face is passive. On the

following page is an illustration of Hargreaves' spinning Jenny in its "most improved form" (5: 269). The text explicates how the "big wheel" or the "wool wheel" in Britain used by spinsters is an improvement on the ancient spinning wheel of "Hindostan" and how the spinning jenny has been built upon the same concept. The illustration of the machine is labelled in detail using alphabets but does not show any human being in view operating it.

Both illustrations of women have very little role to play in the text, the main article really being about the Spinning Jenny. The posture of the British spinster is not very different from illustrations of Victorian women employed in domestic embroidery, pretty but not sexualized, devoid of any ravages of work or privation on her body. The second illustration, with its background of leaves and ferns, is much more locally attached and the body of the racial other is sexualized without seeming threatening. The British woman represents "civilization," the "Hindoo" woman represents primitive industry, while they are both made subservient to the much bigger illustration of the spinning jenny on the next page which corresponds to the text. The text mentions the women only in its introductory remarks leading to the discussion of the machine. The British woman benefits from industrial progress and needs to put in less effort at spinning because the technology she uses is more evolved. She does not invite the voyeuristic gaze as her Indian counterpart. At the same time, the Indian woman embellishes the article as a sexualized object. However, both women are ultimately made subservient to the other detailed diagrams of machinery making their own labour ultimately seem superfluous.

The later issues of the *Penny Magazine*, especially the ones after 1843, reduce the variety of articles but increase the length of each piece. The number of articles based on particular manufacturing industries, such as silk mills, lace manufactories and electroplate factories become very common. The illustrations of female workers in these industries depict either

individual women in the mode of the British woman discussed above or they show groups of women at work. The workers in these illustrations are arranged in neat geometrical lines and the women are all depicted as young, pretty and clean. There are rarely any supervisors shown so that the women seem to be working independently. In an illustration that depicts Nottingham lace manufacturers at work, pretty women sit working next to the hearth while silk doublers at the Derby silk mills are all aligned in a line, their faces half in light and half in shade holding the thread demurely (Figure 3-20). The alignment suggests the synchronization of a dance movement, effortless and appropriate for women. Labour is made as obscure as possible in these pictures. Older women feature rarely in such illustrations.

Poor Bodies in Reproductions of Works of Art

While labouring bodies are either absent when depicting machinery or rendered inconspicuous, poor bodies are comfortably depicted in reproductions of works of art in the *Penny Magazine*. In fact, reproductions of paintings with their subject matter as the poor or “low” life occupy a substantial portion of the total number of works duplicated. It is important to realize “that in its thematic use of art reproductions, the magazine was not merely serving its own idiosyncratic social purpose. Rather, there is clear evidence linking its view of art to an established aesthetic tradition: that body of thought which equated art with intellectual and moral elevation and advanced civilization, and artists with virtue and industriousness” (P. Anderson 67). In addition to these reasons which involved moral elevation of its audience and the use of these illustrations as examples of industriousness, the reproduction of great works of art through engravings was one of the big selling points of *The Penny Magazine*.⁷ Apart from the profit motive though, Knight seriously believed that the poor should have access to “high” culture. Reproductions of famous paintings such as those by Titian or sculptures such as *The Laocoon* seem to suggest a relatively wide selection of works of art for the readers. Hogarth seems to be

one of the most prominent single artists selected. Anderson believes that the reason for Hogarth's popularity was that he was English, his works reproduced easily and that his subjects were openly moralistic through negative example, such as reproductions of *Beer Street*, *Gin Lane* and *The Rake's Progress* which had subjects dealing with the ills of drunkenness or lack of industriousness. Published on 31 May 1834, *Industry and Idleness* has a quote from *Proverbs* underneath, "The drunkard shall come to poverty, and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags."

While I agree with Anderson that these reproductions were meant as cautionary tales, and even while this may sincerely have been Knight's purpose, this may not necessarily have been the way these illustrations were received. The mass medium both alters images based on ideological beliefs of the culture and those images take on additional meaning in transmission. Even as the text tries to limit meaning in many cases by accompanying the illustrations with moralistic prose, for a first-time viewer, the reaction to these woodcuts may have been one of spying into a sinful spectacle regardless of the individual's origin in terms of class. *Idleness and Industry* deals with two apprentices in a factory setting, one wasted away and the other healthy and glowing, representing these two types of workers. The text is designed to set an example, bringing in references from classical writers to support the moralistic subject matter. However, there are other works by Hogarth which do not send such clear moral messages, such as *The Election*, *the Canvass*, *the Polling* and *the Chairing*. This work depicts the confusion in the mob and the corruption that accompanies the process of election. The evils depicted are licentiousness, drunkenness and bribery. While the readers would agree with a statement such as "Does the picture before us represent a past state of society? We fear not" followed by some moralizing, it would be difficult to imagine any of the audience identifying with any of the

people in the crowd (4: 12). These spaces are ultimately fictional spaces, an idea underscored by the author too when he says that one of the fat women in the picture represents women of the type of Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor*.

Another of Hogarth's works that represents the ills of drunkenness might not have been received as the moral lesson it was meant to be. Hogarth's *Gin Lane* shows the effects of drinking. A woman in the foreground sits in a drunken state while a baby topples down from the staircase she is sitting on (Figure 3-21). Another figure, greatly emaciated, looks up at her. There is a crowd in the background engaged in various activities. The text, however, talks about the passion for drinking amongst the "Indians of North America" and several examples of what ills afflict that population because of this habit. After several instances of the horrific effects of drinking such as murder and self destruction amongst the "Indians," the writer comes to the moral of his story: "We have selected from the scanty records of savage life these striking examples of the effects of drunkenness, to point out how the same vice produces exactly the same evils in what is called civilized life" (4: 82-83). The illustrations serve as spectacles of poor spaces, already distanced as evils that afflict distanced populations, which are consumed by the viewer. Poor people seem irrational, licentious, drunken or strange in these representations but the imagined reader does not necessarily identify with the problem-people depicted. This idea of consumption of poor spaces and poor bodies is underscored by other paintings that objectify the poor, the most remarkable one being the reproduction of Murillo's *The Young Beggar* in *The Penny Magazine* issue of 1834 (Figure 3-22). Such aestheticized images of the poor body reveal that even though the text might mean to be exemplary, the illustration positions the viewer as someone who has the same distanced, aestheticized attitude towards poor bodies as does a middle-class reader distanced from the material conditions of poverty.

Barringer discusses how histories of labour in the mid-nineteenth century have acknowledged the importance of labour in Victorian culture. According to him, the representation of the male labouring body provided the most powerful and significant formulation of work as the nexus of ethical and aesthetic value. Barringer also discusses “The Transept” from a series of large chromolithographic views of the Great Exhibition, *Dickinson’s Comprehensive Pictures*, where a series of objects such as silks, fountains, chandeliers and carpets can be seen, which are the products of labour. Various kinds of people, machine operatives, rural handicraftsmen, artisans and others are represented in the scene by their work. Despite these objects, manual labourers are conspicuous by their absence. In his words, “the works of industry of all nations could more comfortably be pictured than the workers who made them” (4).

The *Penny Magazine*, serving a different audience, also imagines the reader’s identity in a certain relation to mechanization and commodity production. In many ways, like the objects in the exhibition, the *Penny Magazine* is also about things defined broadly--birds, animals, buildings, machines, facts, figures and statistics. Yet, the human body is also one of its subjects and, as this chapter shows, the way that it is treated as a subject is not all that different from these various objects. The bodies do not invite identification but serve as commodities themselves in a process of meaning-making that the *Penny Magazine* seems to endorse. This chapter illustrates how the body of the labourer in such a process is objectified, or substitutes the object on display, that is in the process of being manufactured. This phenomenon acquires further complexity when the implied audience belongs to the labouring class himself/herself, inviting the reader to take up the gaze from a position which is separate from his/her own class position. The intended reader is constructed through an imaginary practice which minimizes the working-class reader’s sense

of identification with the labouring body. Any sense of identification with people performing similar tasks is also minimized through the illustrations thereby constructing fit subjects that are not anxiety producing for liberal reform.

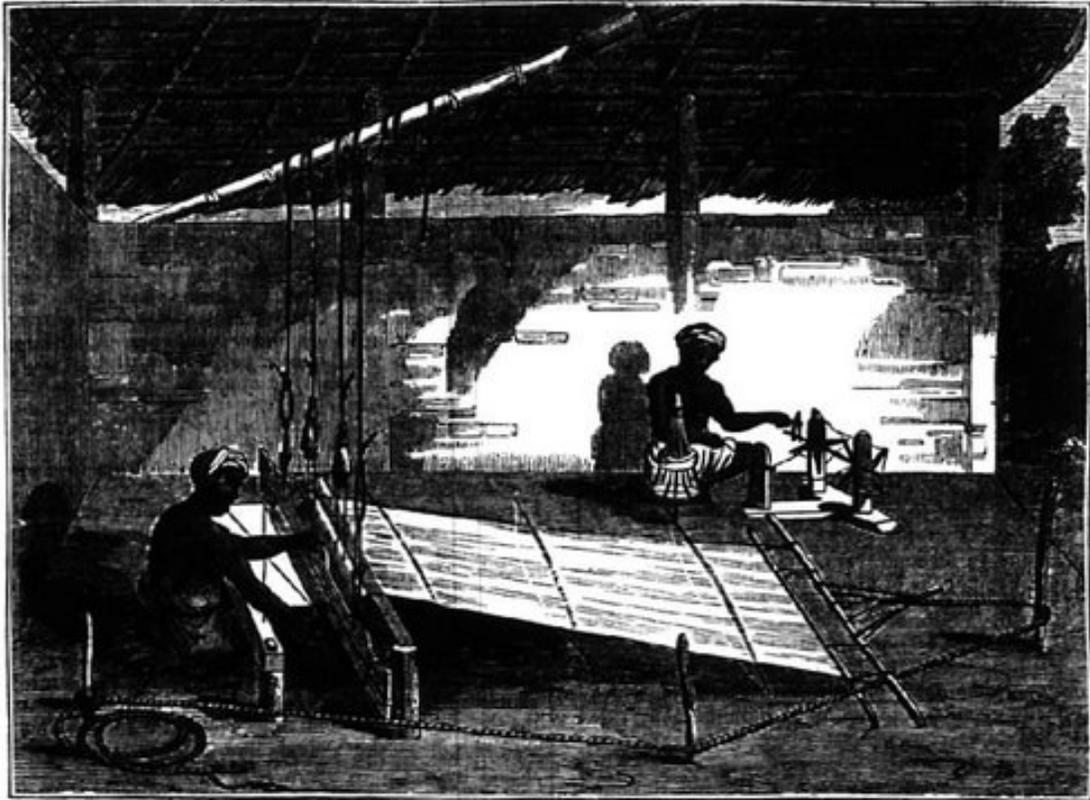
The *Penny Magazine* represents the kinds of literature that middle-class authors wrote with the express purpose of educating the industrialized working-class population. While educating working people about distant peoples and places, various industries and even works of art, this magazine fixes the meaning of labouring bodies as non-threatening objects while it also distances the working-class audience preventing identification with these bodies. The *Penny Magazine* was opposed to literature which the preface denounces as sensational, which could “inflame a vicious appetite” (“Preface” 1: iii). The next chapter explores a very different kind of popular literature--*The Mysteries of London*--the very kind of sensational literature this magazine cautions against. Such literature aimed at the working classes for entertainment, not edification, also helps working people distance themselves from poor bodies, not by establishing a relation of possession as in *The Penny Magazine*, but by feeling the same anxieties regarding the danger of exploited poor bodies coming back to pollute society as larger culture experiences at the time.



[The Swimming Couriers of Peru.]

Figure 3-1. "The Swimming Couriers of Peru," *Penny Magazine*, 1834

WEAVING IN CEYLON.



[Process of Weaving by the Cingalese.]

Figure 3-2. "Process of Weaving by the Cingalese," *Penny Magazine*, 1833



Cormorant fishing in China.

THE PENNY MAGAZINE.
CHINESE MODE OF FISHING WITH CORMORANTS.

[FRONTISPIECE 29.]

Figure 3-3. "Cormorant Fishing in China," *Penny Magazine*, 1835

THE PENNY MAGAZINE

OF THE

Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge.

41.]

PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY.

[NOVEMBER 24, 1832.]

THE LABOURERS OF EUROPE.—No. 4.



[Spanish Muleteers.]

Figure 3-4. "Spanish Muleteers," *Penny Magazine*, 1832

Monthly Supplement of
THE PENNY MAGAZINE

OF THE
Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge.

443.1

January 31 to February 28, 1839.

THE MONTHLY ALMANAC FOR MARCH, 1839.

THE LAMBING SEASON.



[Highland Shepherd and Dog. From an original Sketch.]

Figure 3-5. "Highland Shepherd and Dog. From an original Sketch," *Penny Magazine*, 1839



[The Peat-Gatherer.]

Figure 3-6. "The Peat-Gatherer," *Penny Magazine*, 1841

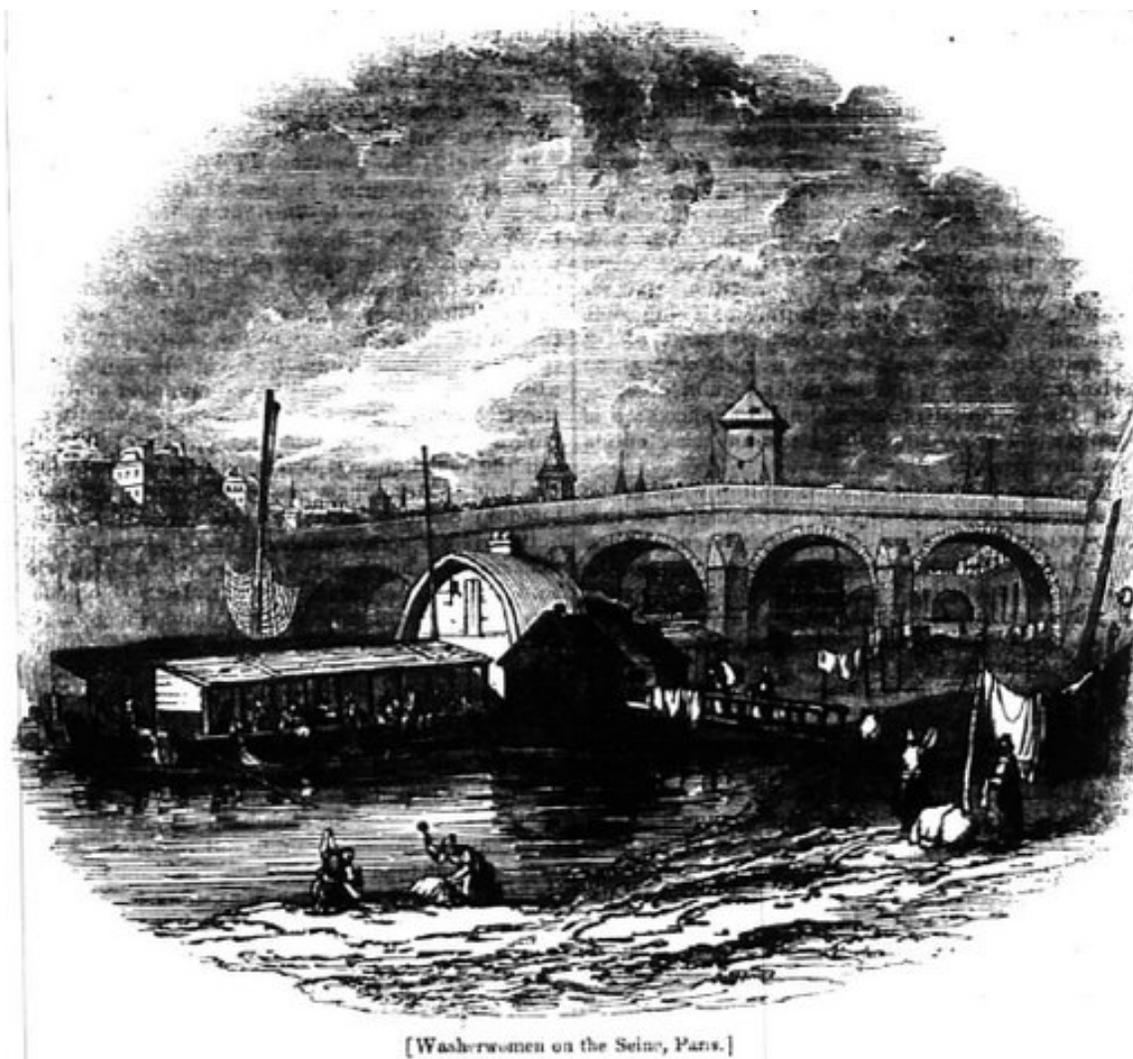


[Norman Fruit Woman.]



[Norman Peasant.]

Figure 3-7. "Norman Fruit Woman" and "Norman Peasant," *Penny Magazine*, 1835



[Washerwomen on the Seine, Paris.]

Figure 3-8. "Washerwomen on the Seine, Paris," *Penny Magazine*, 1836

SONG OF THE WILD BUSHMAN.



[Wild Bushman.]

Figure 3-9. "Wild Bushman," *Penny Magazine*, 1832

THE PENNY MAGAZINE

OF THE

Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge.

50.]

PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY.

[JANUARY 12, 1833.

THE DYING GLADIATOR.



Figure 3-10. "The Dying Gladiator," Penny Magazine, 1833



[End View through Retort-house.]

Figure 3-11. "End View through Retort-house," *Penny Magazine*, 1842

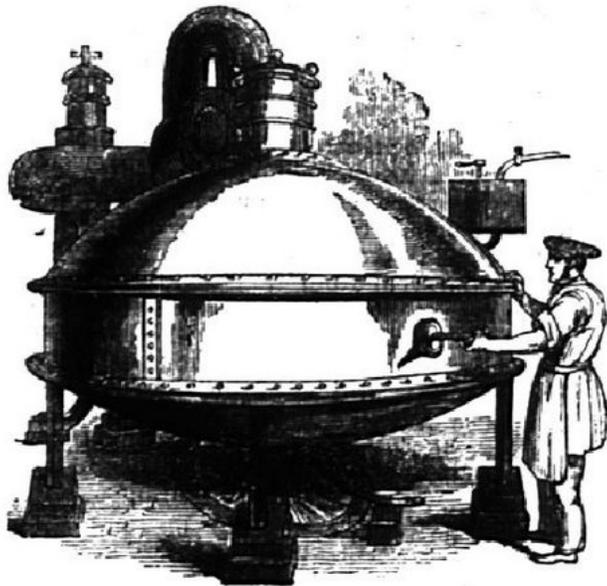


Figure 3-12. A worker in a sugar refinery, *Penny Magazine*, 1841



Figure 3-13. A worker making an axle, *Penny Magazine*, 1841

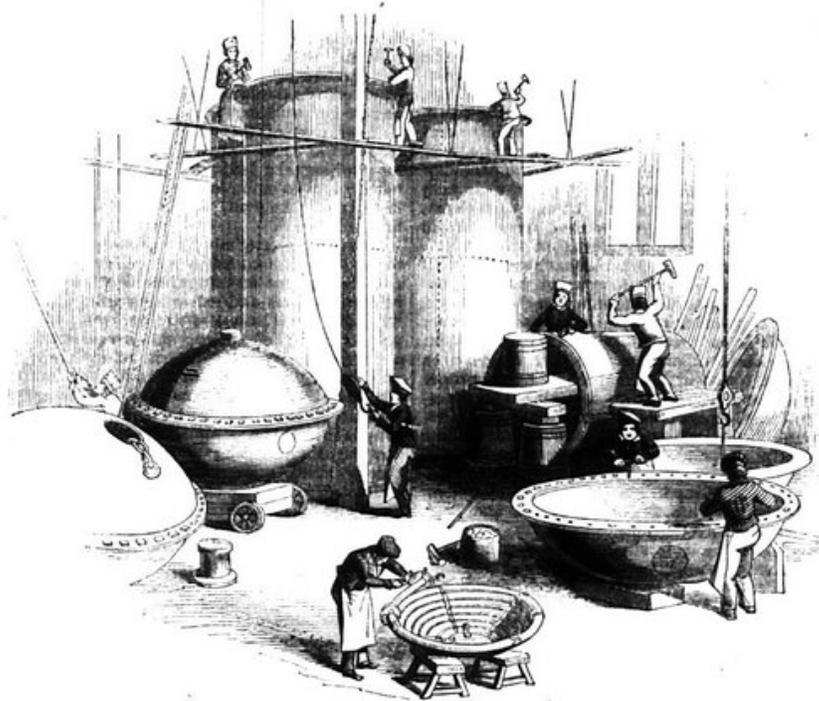


Figure 3-14. A worker blowing glass, *Penny Magazine*, 1841



Figure 3-15. A worker making cigars, *Penny Magazine*, 1841

A DAY AT A COPPER AND LEAD FACTORY.



[Coppersmith's Shop.--Messrs. E. and W. Pentifex's Factory.]

Figure 3-16. "Coppersmith's shop--Messrs. E. and W. Pentifex's Factory," *Penny Magazine*, 1842

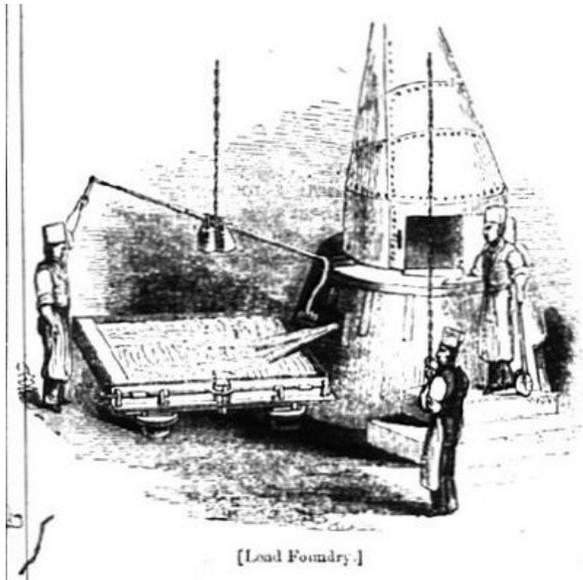


Figure 3-17. "Lead Foundry," *Penny Magazine*, 1842

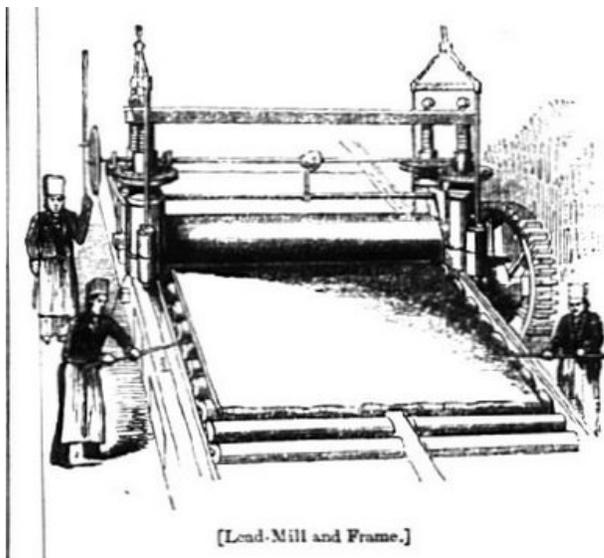


Figure 3-18. "Lead-Mill and Frame," *Penny Magazine*, 1842

HOUSEHOLD SPINNING-WHEELS AND THE FIRST SPINNING MACHINE.
(From "Dr. Ure on the Cotton Manufacture.")



[The Jersey Wheel—A and B are the hand-reefs and rollers of savings.]

of household wheels have been used by
substituting from time immemorial; the first is
called in this country the big wheel, from the
of its rim, or the wool-wheel, from its being
the spinning of sheep's wool; it is repre-
sented in the figure. It was equally well adapted to
from the analogous operations. At the
the end with the finger and thumb of the
the wheel till the thread had acquired the
the wheel, and proper giving-in of the left

to which by one fly-wheel, while a moveable frame, re-
presenting so many fingers and thumbs as there were



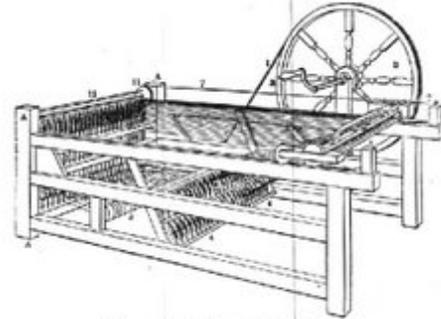
[A Hindoo Woman spinning cotton yarn on the primitive wheel at India.]

operation—one which was suggested to him, if it said,
by observing a common wheel continue to revolve after
it was accidentally thrown down on the floor with its
spindle turned up.

Hargreaves contented himself, for some time after
making the jenny, with spinning soft, with the assist-
ance of his wife and children, for supplying his own
house, according to the custom of the weavers of that
period, who received their warp from the wholesale man-
ufacturers. The secret at length insinuated, through
an insinuation of female vanity, and excited such a
ferment among the spinners, and their partners, of the
neighbourhood, that they broke into his house in a
violent manner, and destroyed the hared roof of their
fingers. Finding the fruit of his ingenuity, toil and
privation blasted, and his further prosecution of the
plan impossible amidst an enraged populace, who even
threatened his life, he emigrated to Nottingham in 1794,
where he found in Mr. Thomas James, a joiner, a
partner willing and able to assist him in erecting a
small spinning-mill upon the jenny plan. For this
invention he obtained a patent in the year 1790, under
the following title: "For a method of making a wheel
or engine of an entire new construction, and never
before made use of, in order for spinning, drawing, and
twisting of cotton, and to be managed by one person
only, and that the wheel, or engine, will spin, draw, and
twist sixteen or more threads at one time, by a turn or
motion of one hand, and a draw of the other." One

Unhappily for this inventor he
was poor, and his patent was sold
before the date of his patent; so that
beginning to be rightly appreciated,
as owing to procure him a recompense some-
times to his deserts, he found, while his
extensively copied by the manufacturers
that it could not be contained in a court of
evil hour also be refused to accept the
which the delegates of these manufacturer
him for permission to use his machine;
a somewhat larger sum, which was refu-
sally he got nothing, his attorney had
the prosecution from a conviction that
judgment would not be obtained in a
Hargreaves died in 1796, a few years af-
terwards, but he did not fall a victim
some have erroneously stated. The spin-
ning of which he was a partner went on toler-
ably enabled its author to live in humble com-
and to leave a decent provision for his
widow.

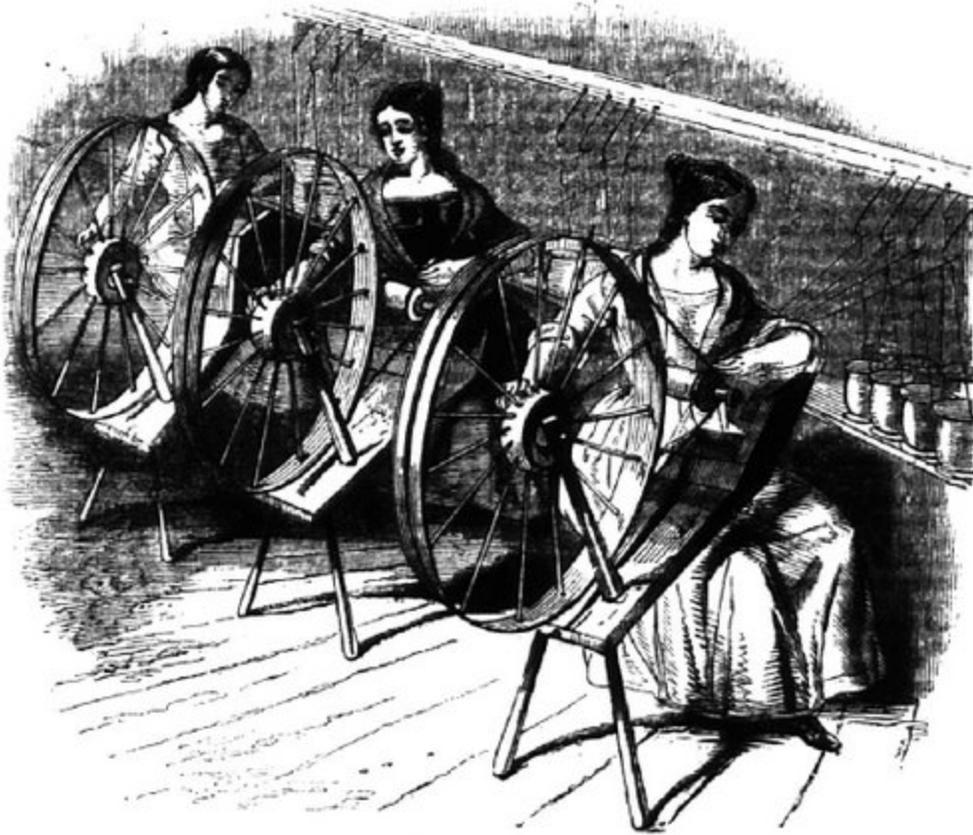
The jenny received some slight im-
provements from Hargreaves, and afterwards from
others; but in fact it is too simple a
thing to afford much scope for modifica-
tion; the celebrated inventor of the
mule spin uses one of the original jennies
in the year 1790. The following figure and
diagram



[Hargreaves' Spinning Jenny in its most improved form.]

Figure 3-19. Household spinning wheels and the first spinning machine consisting of three wood-cuts: "The Jersey Wheel," "A Hindoo Woman spinning cotton yarn on the primitive wheel of India," and "Hargreaves' Spinning Jenny in its most improved form," *Penny Magazine*, 1836

A DAY AT A DERBY SILK-MILL.



[Silk-doublers at work.]

Figure 3-20. "Silk doublers at work," *Penny Magazine*, 1843

HOGARTH AND HIS WORKS.—No. XI.



[Gin Lane.]

Figure 3-21. "Gin Lane," *Penny Magazine*, 1835

THE PENNY MAGAZINE

OF THE
Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge.

127.]

PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY.

[MARCH 29, 1834.

MURILLO



[‘The Young Beggar,’ from Murillo.]

Figure 3-22. “‘The Young Beggar,’ from Murillo,” *Penny Magazine*, 1834

Notes

1 For a discussion of this point, see P. Anderson, *Printed Image* 80. Anderson compares print-orders which averaged 187,000 with Knight’s claim that the magazine’s circulation was 200,000.

2 Tim Barringer discusses “instrumental” and “expressive” theories of work. Proponents of the former theory were John Stuart Mill and Adam Smith who conceived of work as the opposite of liberty and happiness, relating it to bodily discomfort and mental irritation. In contrast to this, the “expressive” theory talked about by writers such as John Ruskin related work to imagination and thought (Barringer 28). Barringer discusses Ruskin’s idea to demonstrate how, according to Ruskin, a “working creature” “is made a man” through work.

3 Many of the illustrations of poor people in Mayhew's London Labour serve this purpose. For complex ways in which pictures of poor children were circulated and received, see the discussion about Dr. Barnardo's philanthropic drives to rescue children from the streets in Seth Koven's *Slumming*.

4 Anderson rejects the supposition that the *Penny Magazine* represented a "middle-class" point of view. According to her, Knight considered himself and other social and educational reformers to be part of an intellectual elite who believed in "high thinking" and were dedicated to "duty not pleasure." Also, according to her, there is no substantial body of evidence that shows that there is a monolithic set of cultural, social, political and moral values that can be defined as "middle class" in the early nineteenth century. See introduction to *Printed Image*.

5 In this sense, the *Penny Magazine* provides a trickledown effect of the ideas of Adam Smith, Andrew Ure and other similar people. *The Penny Magazine* definitely takes the side in the debate whether industrial progress is retrogressive for the arts or not by making clear that it is on the side of technological progress.

6 See Barringer's idea (see note 2 in this chapter). Also see Joseph Bizup's discussion of Ruskin and Morris in *Manufacturing Culture*.

7 Reproduction of art in *The Penny Magazine* gave rise to criticism. One writer in the *Morning Chronicle* did not believe that there was a "Penny Magazine road to the fine arts." Knight responded to such criticism in many ways, but one of his major beliefs was that popularizing art and replacing popular taste for the "old red and blue prints" was important. P. Anderson discusses this issue (*Printed Image* 74-75).

CHAPTER 4
THE DEAD AND THE BEAUTIFUL: COMMODIFICATION AND CIRCULATION OF
POOR BODIES IN G.W.M. REYNOLDS' *THE MYSTERIES OF LONDON*

“A Phenomenon of Book Production”: *The Mysteries of London*

George William MacArthur Reynolds' penny number novel, *The Mysteries of London* and its sequel, *The Mysteries of the Court of London*, was a “weekly soap opera”¹ that proved to be a best seller for twelve years from October 1844 to its final instalment in 1856. A combination of the ‘mystery mania’ of the 1840s along with elements of sensationalism, illustrations of climactic moments, lifestyles of the rich and famous, voyeurism on the underbelly of society, popular politics, Gothic horror and life in the metropolis, *The Mysteries* proved an instant success amongst the newly literate urban “common reader.” In a postscript to the conclusion of the final volume in 1856, Reynolds remarked that he had published a number every week, without any gap, for twelve years, taking only an average of seven hours in composing each number.² He vehemently denied the allegation that was sometimes levied, that an army of writers was employed behind the scenes. Because it was far more popular than its sequel, in this chapter I consider only the original *The Mysteries of London*, series one and two, a four volume work, published from 1844 to 1848, where the characteristics of the form were “most sharply defined.”³ Reynolds was a journalist, editor and popular novelist who had sympathies for the causes of the poor. He also had an active political career for a part of his life. Reynolds took part in Chartist meetings both at Trafalgar Square and Kensington Common in 1848 and served as representative for Derby at the Chartist convention the same year. Though he continued to be a member of the National Charter Association, he played only a minor role subsequently in the movement. It is no surprise that the ostensible purpose of *The Mysteries* is shaped by the political conscience of the writer which expresses itself in the form of authorial narration from time to time drawing attention to social inequalities.

Though it is difficult to make an assessment regarding the number and nature of readership of *The Mysteries*, sales figures give us some idea of its popularity. Trefor Thomas mentions that very soon after the penny numbers started, *Reynolds Miscellany* claimed that national sales were 30,000 copies a week. The popularity of the *Mysteries* with the working-classes was a national phenomenon, not just restricted to London. *The Mysteries* had sales of 1000 to 1500 copies each week in the Manchester region alone. The audience was mainly the working classes who seem to have been attracted by the ‘links of a story’ as leisure reading. In 1851, *The Mysteries of the Court of London* was selling 1500 copies each week in the north-west of England. Abel Heywood identified people who bought penny fiction as “a spreeing sort of young man’, the type who visited taverns and ‘put cigars in their mouths in a flourishing way” but he also claimed that “a great many females were buying *The Mysteries of London*” (Thomas xv). Trefor Thomas speculates that the taste for reading *The Mysteries* must have existed more widely across classes than one might imagine. *The Mysteries* was also translated into French, German, Italian and Spanish. An estimate of its immense popularity can be made by the fact that it also achieved fame in its German version in the Russian black market.⁴

Since *The Mysteries* was read by all classes of people and had characters from many walks of life, it is difficult to identify the popular consciousness it reflects as conservative or reactionary since there is a convergence of too many genres, narrative modes and stereotyped characters. The weekly numbers of eight pages each had an audience that was used to a collective reading practice and the illustrations were an integral part of the reading experience for the semi-literate or the illiterate public.⁵ Mayhew mentions a similar reading audience while describing the “literature of costermongers” where he says that ten or twelve young men and women would gather around a literate working man who would read aloud while the rest would

engage in an active reading practice asking questions. Thomas points out that it would be a mistake to assume that the lower-class urban readership of *The Mysteries* was incapable of sophisticated or complex responses to the text. For example, at some level, when *The Mysteries* depicts scenes of Gothic horror, the scenes are to be taken literally for effect but sometimes these Gothic scenes parody the genre itself and the readers of the time were probably sensitive to this effect.

The intended readership for *The Mysteries* must have been of the type that was explicitly addressed in the *London Journal* and *Reynolds's Miscellany* as the “industrious poor”--“the class of respectable but productive poor--the cotton spinner, the clerk, the skilled artisan” who served as the audience for such texts (qtd. in Thomas xvii). Thomas rightly points out that in putting sensational fiction side by side with detailed informative accounts of etiquette, popular history, temperance tracts and family reading, in juxtaposing real Gothic horror with characters with faintly ridiculous names such as “Tidkins,” *The Mysteries* achieves closeness to popular consciousness representing the complexity of the audience. It is also important to not take every stereotypical character or situation in the text at face value. Many strands in the plot in terms of their topic can be interpreted as self-subversive. The weekly form allowed the publisher and the author to respond quickly to audience expectation through sales figures and also through columns dealing with queries in the *London Journal* and *Reynolds's Miscellany*. In a letter in the *Reynolds's Miscellany* on 30 January, 1847, Reynolds says:

I have received, both in my capacity as editor and author, innumerable letters from the correspondents among you . . . This interchange of communications has led to results extremely gratifying to myself. Not only have I been able to ascertain that my humble efforts to entertain and instruct have experienced success, but I have also received many valuable hints and suggestions which I have never failed to adopt and follow . . . (qtd. in Thomas xiii)

The main story of *The Mysteries of London*, used as some sort of unifying principle for all the multidirectional plots of the series, is couched as a conventional morality tale of virtue rewarded and vice punished. Two brothers, Eugene and Richard Markham, part ways when Eugene, the bad one, quarrels with the father and leaves home. They decide to meet under an ash tree every year, but this does not happen until the very end when Eugene dies repenting his sins, having reconciled with his brother, and his mistress-turned-wife and their baby. Eugene goes through myriads of adventures, adopts a series of pseudonyms, becomes a fraudulent financier, a seducer and even a Member of Parliament before his final downfall. Richard, the good brother, has many adventures too: he helps poor people, meets the Gypsy king Zingary, is wrongfully thrown into Newgate, becomes a hero when he joins the freedom struggle in the Italian state of Castelcicala and marries the Princess Isabella. But this is a loose plot which is interrupted by the stories of hundreds of characters of a different type who come in: cheats, frauds, criminals and petty thieves such as Anthony Tidkins, the Resurrection Man, Crankey Jem, The Rattlesnake, the body snatchers and many others. One could also list some other plots: the story of Ellen Monroe, the seamstress who goes through a host of “dishonourable” professions; Eliza Sydney/Walter, who has to cross dress in significant parts of the text; the details of the licentious Marquis of Holmsford; and the story of the pot boy Henry Holford who sneaks into Buckingham Palace. Some of the characters above are only loosely related to the main plot. There are many unrelated short stories and monologues which break the major narratives to simply present digressions or provide the backgrounds of major characters. Lengthy sections of direct authorial voice also come in with social commentary on the theme of the polarities between the rich and the poor. The series, however, goes far beyond the structure provided by this authorial voice or by the plot of the two brothers. As is characteristic of Reynolds’ longer works, the general impression

created is that of a loose, “baggy monster” in the sense that no single narrative or any one particular genre achieves predominance.

We now know that in contrast to the earlier understanding of Victorian culture as one which repressed the body, recent criticism has been able to show that the body is in fact central to our understanding of Victorian subjectivity and society. The poor body is central to social discourses in the second quarter of the nineteenth century because it performs bodily labour and is also a source of concern because these large masses of population are seen as disease producing or sexually licentious. This embodiment of poverty subsequently transfers to the social body. As a part of the social body, the poor are either seen as an undifferentiated mass, the source of disease and immorality, or idealized as suffering figures of virtue usually in the form of figures of women and children in the mode of social problem novels. As a result of ideas of social reform and a popular understanding of political/market economy, the representation of the poor as a body takes on certain complex characteristics in the mid- to late-forties. In this chapter I shall take a closer look at the anxieties generated by the literal and representational commodification of poor bodies that contribute to a larger understanding of the attitude of the different classes towards the poor as a collective group, and as part of the social body.

The Mysteries of London positions readers as consumers of the spectacle of the exchange of poor bodies in a cycle of production and consumption in pernicious parallel economies which pollute larger society. Mass production leads to anxieties concerning the danger of exploitation of poor bodies through reproduction of images of bodies of poor people as aesthetic objects, transforming the poor into mere bodies. The text also shows images of body snatchers which emerge as depictions of people conducting trade literally through the circulation and consumption of dead bodies. Even while these cycles are critiqued, the poor themselves are

implicated as principal figures in these systems. The audience participates in this othering of poor bodies and shares in the process of gazing at this spectacle as outsiders. Regardless of class status, the audience of the text in these sections has the opportunity to pass moral judgment on the objects and perpetrators of these processes, distancing themselves from any class affinity they might have with the people involved on either side. Poor bodies as things lose all subjectivity or agency in a system of exchange and enter a process of economic circulation as commodities. Two strands of the plot represent this commodification in two different ways. One plot represents the poor body as a mass produced aesthetic commodity in the tale of the changing professions of a character called Ellen Monroe. The other plot involving the tale of the body snatchers represents poor bodies quite literally as dead human bodies being sold.⁶

The economy of circulation of poor bodies in *The Mysteries* serves as a critique of this soulless process of exchange and serves to construct that exchange at the same time. Deriving from a popular perception of Smith's *laissez faire* capitalistic economy and a popularized Malthusian idea of the poor as a teeming, multiplying body, the poor become mere bodies being circulated. Individuals become homogenized as their bodies are replicated and made into mass-produced aesthetic objects or they enter circulation as dead bodies to be bought and sold. The people directly responsible for this exchange are the criminalized section of the poor themselves or the "foreign" other in the heart of London practicing his trade. Such representation helps construct the poor as devious, criminal or simply heartless--one part of the poor becoming responsible for the commodification of the other. The cycle of exchange which commodifies poor bodies is initiated by the depraved poor themselves forming a pernicious, parallel economy of bodies. This is accompanied by an anxiety that larger society stands in a danger of being polluted morally or literally by these poor bodies because this alternate economy "feeds into"

larger society. Science and aesthetics of larger society quite literally stand on the dismembered bodies of the poor in the text. Representational strategies that divide the “lower classes” at this time into the poor, the pauper and the criminal, the deserving and the undeserving, “those that will work” and “those that will not work” breed anxiety about the implications of this alternate economy.⁷ Such a marginal economy of exchange of bodies places the reader in a position where s/he can experience voyeuristic pleasure while looking at this spectacle even while experiencing bourgeois guilt and fear. The readers, who might be poor themselves, see these representations as separate from themselves, participating in the gaze that others and objectifies, helping subjectivity formation through competing and intersecting ideologies.

Circulating Bodies: Body Snatchers, Dead Bodies, Deformed Bodies, Poor Spaces

The bodies of poor people are depicted in several modes to be consumed by the reader in the text. One mode of representation is the idealized, sentimentalized representation of poor women and children’s bodies in the mode of social problem novels such as the portrayal of seamstresses and the pot-boy Henry Holford. Coded as middle-class because they, in some ways, have no signs of the ravages of exploitative physical labour on their bodies, these characters elicit sympathy from the audience. However, poverty and want are concretized in this text by a focus on a different set of poor bodies which literally embody the ravages of a harsh economic and social system. The text and the illustrations are littered with emaciated, mangled and deformed bodies and body parts. Such representation of poor bodies is often blended with the spaces they occupy, spaces that breed crime and disease, radiating outwards towards other parts of the city. Illustrations of characters such as The Old Hag represent bodies that are dangerous and threatening, looking to prey on idealized bodies in the centre which are middle class or coded as middle class (Figure 4-1). In the illustrations, the interaction between these two types, the threatening poor body/ies in the margin and the body coded as middle-class in the centre

serve to encourage the voyeuristic gaze of the reader. The reader gazes on the middle-class figure in the centre while the poor body at the margin seems dangerous. This happens, for example, in the illustration depicting The Old Hag tempting Ellen Monroe to join a “dishonourable” profession.

One narrative thread consists of the episodes regarding the ghastly adventures of the body snatchers who return several times through the series. Embedded in the text between the other stories, these episodes stand out as contributing to the sensational aspect of the narrative. For example, an illustration depicting the body snatchers taking a female body out of the coffin where the girl’s body is in the centre depicts the body snatchers as dangerous (Figure 4-2). The body snatchers come back many times at pivotal moments in the plot or events turn on the discovery of a hidden living, dead, or distorted body. The names of some key players in these events are significant because their names are generic, drawing on figures already existing in the popular imagination. The Resurrection Man, for example, is a specific character here but his type was already a popular figure a little more than a decade earlier before the passing of the Anatomy Act when body snatching was big business. There are people in the text called the Gibbet and the Mummy, names that draw attention to the physicalization of these characters. Some of these characters have sections devoted to their monologues which tell us their real names and the dehumanizing society which has transformed them into their present incarnations. Some body snatchers are characters who are either minor figures who appear nowhere else, or they are important characters such as the Cracksman, the Buffer and the Resurrection Man who are seen elsewhere as criminals or villains as parts of the major plots. In the body snatching episodes, these men are seen stealing into cemeteries at night, exhuming corpses and selling them to apothecaries or surgeons. In the book, these characters represent the shabby, dangerous,

more physicalized aspects of the London criminal world of the likes of Dickens' Bill Sykes and Fagin.

In one of these numerous episodes, in a chapter entitled "The Body-Snatchers," three men--The Resurrection Man, the Cracksman and the Buffer--reach Shoreditch churchyard. Here, they are met by a surgeon, enveloped mysteriously in a long cloak. The night is pitch dark, the men whisper to each other and they scale the wall to get in. Failing to open the door with a skeleton key, they see through the padlock. The surgeon waits outside during this time as "feelings of aversion . . . the same as he would have experienced had a reptile crawled over his naked flesh" affects him (Reynolds 69). The body snatchers signal to each other in low growls and sharp whistles. The surgeon identifies the grave which is only a day or two old. He remembers how he had claimed the body for dissection at the funeral but was refused. He requests that the body snatchers should remove all traces of their work because if the broken padlock is discovered, a search would be held to ascertain whether this was the work of thieves or resurrectionists. The main focus of the episode is a detailed description of the work of the body snatchers, how they examine the joints and mortar of the flagstone in candlelight, how they use the pointed end of a lever to lift the stone and use a log to keep it raised. The expertise of the body snatchers is seen by their ability to determine exactly whether they have entered the right grave or not. Indeed, the surgeon, inexperienced in the trade, would have been quite helpless without their ghastly skills. After preparations are complete, the Resurrection Man, who is the leader of the party, ascertains the fact that they are seeking an elm coffin, from the surgeon. He then thrusts a long flexible rod into the vault, draws it out and tastes the point which penetrates the lid of the coffin. Having done this, with admirable expertise, he confirms that this is indeed the right grave.

The illustration accompanying the chapter reveals the voyeuristic angle of this scavenging (Figure 4-2). The body of a young girl of about sixteen is exhumed. The illustration shows a fully clothed girl being dragged out of the coffin by a man whose hands are clasped just below her breasts from behind and two men look on, one of whom looks rather grotesque. The description varies a little from the illustration: “The polished marble limbs of the deceased were rudely grasped by the sacrilegious hands of the body-snatchers; and, having stripped the corpse stark naked, they tied its neck and heels together by means of a strong cord. They then thrust it into a large sack made for the purpose” (72). Even as the body snatchers consume the bodies, the readers consume the act for voyeuristic pleasure. Finally, all traces of the crime are removed during which time a thin brown powder is used with expertise to make the mortar look the same shade as the original one used at the funeral. Then, after handing each man ten sovereigns, the surgeon takes leave in his vehicle.

In *The Mysteries*, body snatching is a well developed, specialized, though sinister trade which hardens the people involved in it to be completely unconscious of the ghastliness of their surroundings and the object of their trade. A body snatcher meticulously makes coffee by heating it in a fire fuelled by human flesh and bones (2: 325). In a different episode, two body snatchers discuss the million and a half people who die every year in the city with detailed description of the heaped coffins in chapels that come in as a consequence. The facts provided in this conversation consist of statistics and evidence which seem to have some valid source, perhaps backed by Reynolds’ knowledge of contemporary Blue Books. The merits and demerits of this trade from the point of view of society are discussed in detail. The body snatchers assert that their body snatching indeed does a good turn to society by making space for new graves by burning up the old coffins. One grave robber observes that the deposit from the gases that come

out of these dead bodies cover the walls of the people who live close to them with a thick, fatty fluid with a horrid smell. To this Reynolds himself adds a footnote discussing the poisonous nature of these gases. Despite this palpable evidence from these sources, the speaker is amazed that people passing by second-hand coffins in furniture shops or people seeing the sight of coffin nails at the marine store dealers' never realize how they got there (1: 326).

The interconnectedness of trades, whether legal or illegal, benign or ghastly, is stressed from a disturbing angle. The specialization required in the body snatching trade is expressed constantly. One of the participants seems to talk "like a book" because he knows the technical jargon associated with this trade, such as the phrase "*tapping the coffin,*" a phrase which he meticulously explains to his ignorant helpmate (1: 326). Just as in many other trades, everything about human death is reusable and everything is part of a cyclical economy. The body snatcher is a parody of the contemporary specialist in his trade applying specialized skills and marketing acumen to his ludicrous but horrifying trade. As in other trades of the time, there is also corruption involved in these trades dealing with the dead. For example, an undertaker steals in measurements in cloth meant to cover the dead and an undertaker father scolds his young charge when he shaves the wood on the cover of a coffin to make it plain so that he can save as much wood as possible (2: 288).

Money exchanges hands as corpses exchange hands. In the process, society, relationships and the treatment of people are dehumanized. In Trefor Thomas' words, the body snatchers are "modern urban entrepreneurs" (68). In that sense, they represent the degenerated physical aspect of the soulless economic system of which the real entrepreneur, the bad brother of the main plot disguised as Greenwood, is the counterpart. Greenwood makes money from investors through fraudulent schemes. In one way, he makes money out of nothing at all. The body snatchers in the

text have a highly developed scientific means of exhumation, profound knowledge of dead bodies and coffins and contacts for distribution. The Anatomy Act of 1831 had replaced an older tradition where bodies of criminals were given up for dissection. This was replaced with a new act where poor people in workhouses, who could not pay for their funerals, would have their bodies sent to hospitals.⁸ Although the body snatching trade was not common by the mid-1830s, the body snatchers lived on in the popular imagination. In this economy, as one body snatcher remarks casually, a dead body is much more valuable than a living one. Also, there is no place for human feelings or propriety in this trade. The body-snatching episodes serve as a critique of this system that commodifies bodies. They also show the negative aspects of the contemporary form of capitalism in which authorization, routinization, a kind of division of labour and specialization has led to dehumanization of not only the object of the trade but also of the subjects themselves, obscuring ethical questions. This has larger implications for society. For example, the Resurrection Man is forced to join this trade, when he is young, by his father. At one point, they exhume a body together to sell it when the son discovers that it is the body of his sweetheart. Much later, he takes revenge on his father for making him do this as a youngster when, instead of spending money for his father's funeral after his death, the Resurrection Man *makes* money by selling his father's body.

Even as Reynolds' text criticizes the trade in bodies by exposing the horrors of the body snatching trade, by locating the perpetrators of the act and the object of the act as poor people and poor bodies, it homogenizes that section of society as being both the object and the agent of commerce in bodies. Apart from the moral implications for society, this clinical detachment towards dead bodies has a more specific context located not just in the treatment of bodies, but specifically in the treatment of poor bodies. Ruth Richardson observes that the study of anatomy

and surgery in the 1830s develops this attitude of detachment and objectification with comparative ease with reference to dead bodies that are studied. However, when this objectification is carried over from the dead to the living, there exists a real danger that the individuality of the patient is at some risk. Richardson observes that in the case of charity patients, the danger was heightened to the extent that the very existence of the person under the knife was put at risk (50). This clinical detachment and disregard of the individual as a person could be seen as equivalent to treating workers as “hands.” The nonchalance of the body snatchers in the present context is something similar. The surgeons and apothecaries are present, but the authority figures in these scenes are the lead body snatchers--their expertise taking over the focus and the responsibility of these scenes. The reader is meant to get a voyeuristic pleasure out of witnessing these scenes of unnatural acts but is meant to empathize with the horrors experienced by the apothecaries who also look on the scene as though they are inexperienced parties.

Richardson’s research shows that the bodies which were stolen were mostly poor bodies. This was simply because it was easier to access their graves. Also, the “pit burials” of the poor placed bodies in bulk in one place in the ground, in thinner coffins, and in more accessible burial grounds in the city, which made removal of corpses easier. The rich took precautions by using patented coffins which were difficult to open and by choosing burial grounds far away from the city. Hence, the crimes of the grave-robbers were primarily against the poor. The image of the body snatchers as responsible for the trade in dead bodies is a fact that has some basis in the contemporary popular consciousness. In reality, such body snatching episodes had become almost obsolete by the time *The Mysteries* were being published. As Ruth Richardson discusses in her book, *Death, Dissection and the Destitute*, the Anatomy Act of 1832 made grave robbing

less common because the surgeons had a confirmed supply from “unclaimed” dead bodies from workhouses. Many relatives of the dead who depended on parish burials because they were poor could no longer claim the bodies of their relatives after the passage of the Anatomy Act. At the time of the passage of the reform bills, however, there were still riots in several places in England in protest against the stealing of bodies to be sold for dissection. Some of the antipathy towards these Resurrection men clearly survived in the popular imagination a little more than a decade after 1832 when *The Mysteries* started appearing in print (1844). At this time, Richardson notes, the corpse had a peculiar legal status in the nineteenth century, legally defined as non-property. However, there existed a small but important portion of the community, the apothecaries and surgeons whose economic existence depended on the investment of property in the human corpse. Hence, because of this lack of legal status, though stealing a body from the grave could not be technically regarded as a theft, popular consciousness demanded redress.

In *The Mysteries*, the body snatchers are mainly culpable for the trade in bodies, not so much the surgeons. The former also rob graves, not out of necessity, but because they are naturally depraved. The Buffer, Tidkins and the Resurrection Man all have criminal pasts and some even go on to murder. Body snatching is just a trade in passing for these people. In reality, very few body snatchers had serious criminal pasts as Ruth Richardson shows. This conflation of criminality with the body-snatching trade in *The Mysteries* is part of a popular consciousness that made the body snatchers culpable for this trade so that depravity rather than necessity became the reason for their action. This conflation occurs due to a popular fear and some actual incidents, for example, one where an old woman and children were actually suspected of having been murdered for their bodies.⁹ Even though there was mistrust on people’s part about the body snatchers, the actual riots took place against the anatomists and the surgeons. There were riots

recorded in prisons which revolved around bodies of prisoners being given up for dissection to anatomists, the prisoners previously having “sold” these anatomists the rights. When the surgeons would come to claim the bodies, there would be popular agitation against the desecration of the dead. *The Mysteries*, however, shows the surgeons as marginal figures--the focus being taken up by the immediate perpetrators of the act--the body snatchers. Even though the monologues of the Resurrection Man or his girlfriend, the Rattlesnake emphasize their poverty as a means of social criticism within the narrative, in this context, the criminalized section of the poor remain responsible for the trade in bodies of poor people.

On the one hand, the body-snatching episodes represent the absolute physicalization of the marketplace and on the other hand they emphasize the abstraction of the individuality of the poor into homogenized bodies at the level of representation. Catherine Gallagher traces the representation of the body of the poor in her essay on Malthus and Mayhew. She traces the close connections between economy and biology in Malthus where Malthus draws links between individual poor bodies and the social body. Biological drives such as the sexual instinct and misery and vice are reconceived as economic categories in Malthus’ logic. Malthus expresses a general distrust of far-ranging attenuated economic circuits. In the centrality of the literal body to his theory, the most productive labour is that which can be immediately converted back to the labouring body--namely food or clothing or shelter or some such commodities. “Malthus argues that the more a society believes that exchangeable value equals value in general, the more enfeebled the value of labor becomes” (Gallagher 94). In this logic, people who earn their living by circulating goods or selling services are suspect, such as Mayhew’s costermongers. Mayhew, who Gallagher shows, shares this cultural assumption, calls urban and suburban “wanderers,” people with moving occupations “parasites” who prey on the social organism. Mayhew describes

this wandering population of costermongers, prostitutes, sailors and others as preying on the productive part of the population. Gallagher notes that Victorian social discourse often presents two distinct types of lower-class physiques--the enfeebled bodies of productive workers and the excessively hardy body of the nomads who are explicitly associated with circulation and exchange, rather than the production of commodities. The Victorians who share Mayhew's anxieties often desire a complete disjunction between these types, dividing the working-class into productive bodies out of which value is extracted and non-productive bodies onto which it is added. However, this distinction often collapses when confronted with the "ubiquitousness of the marketplace . . . and at those moments Victorian social discourse nauseates itself with biological obsessions" (Gallagher 91).

In this context, the body snatchers are bad because they do not produce anything but are only making money, as Mayhew's costermongers do, through circulation and exchange. They are doubly culpable because the product they circulate is the human body itself. The marketplace is not embodied, as in the costermongers, by the display of goods on the body carried for sale, which tempts the passer-by and takes money out of his or her pocket. The marketplace is physicalized through the object traded. The dead body itself becomes a fundamental signifier of value. In this world of sensational underworld activity, when exchange value is equated with value in general, the concept of labour and specialization is problematized because the body snatchers literally feed off bodies. Their labour cannot be considered true labour according to this logic.

In the essay, Gallagher also traces the dark side of the connection between money and changing market forces. In the earlier part of the Essay, Malthus traces the problematic nature of the healthy body which is not necessarily an indication of the prosperity of a country because it

leads to the problem of population through reproduction. In the latter part of the *Essay*, the concepts of labour and economic categories seem rooted in biological needs such as sex and hunger: that is population and food. Money, for Malthus, can have both productive and non-productive uses. Money can represent accurately the relation of exchange between commodities but it also gives a false measure of how many labouring bodies a country can sustain. I have observed that economy and biology are conflated effectively in the dead body as commodity in *The Mysteries*.

Ironically, if Malthus' living biology is the source of all value and replenishing the body of the labourer is important, then the ultimate use of the dead body as commodity is the absurd logical extension of this argument. Malthus criticizes conflating value in general with exchange value. The value in this sense, attached to the corpse, is the symbol of the ultimate degradation of the system because the dead body becomes the locus of both exchange and production, more so than the living one. In this ghastly economy, the body loses its absolute value by not breaking down into its component parts, which are used to sustain it, such as food and clothing as in the Malthusian system. Because these are dead bodies, the literal dismemberment and distribution of their valuable parts is possible--a phenomenon which parodies the reproduction of labour which produces more valuable bodies. The dead body, therefore, both brings to focus the horrors of objectification of the body of the poor through this process of exchange and dislocates it at the same time by representing them as dead bodies.

The discomfort with assigning any real commercial value to dead human bodies can be seen by examining the context of the Anatomy Act of 1832. Richardson observes that the final text of the Anatomy Act did not address the commercial value of corpses. She analyzes contemporary debates to show that part of this is a deliberate omission, for publicity surrounding

the commercial value of corpses was too great to be disregarded. The debate cantered on a need for positive legislation to outlaw commerce in human remains. One side of this debate viewed the reduction of the human corpse to a mere thing, and the existence of a trade in bodies between anatomists, resurrectionists and murderers, as extremely dishonourable to the medical profession. This side believed that the assignment of any value to the corpse would be an incitement to crime. Therefore they propounded that prohibition of the trade, rather than allowing unbridled market forces to operate in bodies, should be the basis of the new law. Hence there was no reiteration of the negative property status of the human corpse. On the flip side, because no value could be attached to the corpse, this argument resulted in the unintended consequence that there would be nothing to ensure that the transfer from the “executor” to the anatomist would be free. This allowed for the motive of body snatching for money to continue. As Richardson’s discussion shows, one unspoken intention of this process was also to ensure that even though this alternative supply from body snatchers would undercut the market with cheap goods, in the event of a scarcity from legitimate sources such as workhouses, such a move would ensure a supply to anatomists.

The generic difference of *The Mysteries* from tracts such as Malthus’ and Mayhew’s makes it closer to the popular consciousness of the labouring population. While the poor are subject to Mayhew’s apparent impersonal and objective observation hiding a power imbalance, Malthus reduces the poor to a loss of individuality as “population.” Reynolds’ depiction, though often stereotypical in the same way as that of dominant Victorian discourses, complicates poor stereotypes. Character traits of the same character do not remain the same, often going through vast changes impossible in other genres. Because this is not a unified text, stereotypes are undermined by other opposite types and characters. Narrative threads and modes play out against

each other so that no one kind predominates. Characters marginalized in the narrative as The Rattlesnake or The Mummy are allowed to speak their own monologues, where they are central, comprising whole episodes. The characters in the monologues sometimes seem very different from the same characters in the main narrative. In this last respect they are different from Mayhew's characters who also speak their monologues, because the purpose and audience expectation seem more complex, and always in flux, in *The Mysteries*. The intrigues of these almost semi-archetypal figures, such as The Resurrection Man or The Old Hag, produce much of the horror of the text. At the same time, however, their very names suggest that they are taken to be larger-than-life stereotypes. Popular ideas about spaces of labour that breed crime and not just suffering are replicated through the monologues that talk about the genesis of these characters from ordinary people. For example, The Rattlesnake is a woman born to a miner mother who has an adulterous relation with a married man who she works for. The Rattlesnake's mother ultimately murders his wife with the man's help. She herself is murdered by him much later. When The Rattlesnake speaks her history of the inhuman conditions she was exposed to as a child in the mines, her monologue incorporates discourses which are common in tracts and parliamentary reports that depict the physical and moral condition of miners.

Mayhew has similar passages that describe the condition of miners. But one would expect that compared to Mayhew's audience, Reynolds' readers would be more familiar with the inhuman conditions of work and its effect on bodies, even if work was not experienced in the mines. However, despite this experience, the sympathetic, yet voyeuristic gaze works well with urban lower-class readers only when they look *upon* the miners rather than identify themselves with them. According to Trefor Thomas, reading penny fiction was also a collective practice, not just a private activity. It was a common practice for one man to read such literature aloud to a

literate or semi-literate audience. In such a scenario, therefore, when lower-class pubs and eating houses are described voyeuristically or the population visiting such places is criminalized, subjectivity formation of the lower-class audience is achieved through a series of identifications and marginalizations on the part of the audience/reader, which work with and away from the dominant Victorian middle-class discourse. For example, a lower-class working person might identify with the suffering sempstress figure but look upon her as a curiosity when she becomes the fraudulent mesmerist's medium, much like a middle-class reader. A lower-class pub might be described from the point of view of the good brother Richard of the main plot, which is certainly an outsider's view of horror at the depravity of the people inside. In such a scenario, the audience, which would probably have been used to such pubs rather than used to socializing with the likes of Richard, might still identify with him and distance themselves from the people described as frauds and criminals.

In these spaces, poor people are characterized as having unnatural relationships and poor spaces are seen as being populated by animalistic humans. Not only are the dead bodies of fathers sold by the sons and children beaten up mercilessly if they do not bring back what is expected of them through begging, mothers blind their daughters with cockle shells so they can beg even more money. The deaths of children are also monetarily useful. A story related by The Cracksman at a pub talks about how The Buffer subscribes to half a dozen burying clubs as soon as his child is born. He then tortures the child for two years, flings it downstairs, and finally murders her by administering laudanum with medicine with the intention of making money from the burying clubs. However, when one of the secretaries of the burying clubs gets suspicious, The Buffer is caught. The Cracksman, who is relating the story in a pub, is quite certain and

nonchalant in his knowledge that parents often make forty or fifty pounds this way through funeral clubs or burial societies (1: 190).

While the bodies of dead children can be transformed into money, dead bodies in general become part of the materiality of the text which has potential to be transformed into something else which can be exchanged in turn. The material obsession of the text, therefore, is closely related to the human body. The text is obsessed with things and classification and itemization of things, and with things being exchanged for money, even though the structure of the text is rather chaotic. There are many charts and statistics as parts of the narration, statistics given by characters in the text, details of shops and what they sell, details of clothes people wear or clothes being sold for others things and other such descriptions of material goods. Richard Maxwell Jr. observes how secrets become material things in this text, such as letters and engravings. Letters are opened by people or even by the post office to make events turn. Secrets become commodities to be traded or stolen to bring about changes in power or status. There is a constant give and take between secrets which signify surreptitious, subjective information and that which is rational and demystifying. Also, in the series, the metropolis becomes the most objective or subjective of environments

What is not intrinsic to Maxwell's argument but can be seen as an extension of it is that in many places, such material things come in the form of human bodies. The body snatchers' tales are the most obvious examples of this phenomenon. Another episode, one of the short stories unrelated to but inserted into the major narrative, entitled "The History of an Unfortunate Woman," illustrates how the discovery of a human body reveals secrets ((2: 115). This is the account of a curate's daughter who goes as a junior teacher to teach in a Ladies' school in London. One of the upper-class, senior girls who has a liaison outside the school tricks her into

going out walking with her to the park. Both women develop relations with two noblemen who also walk in the park, and both are betrayed. The school-girl gets pregnant, has a child in the junior teacher's room and the latter volunteers to dispose of the body of the child which is born dead. She hides it in her suitcase for the night but the next morning, when some silverware is found missing, the junior teacher, who is treated worse than the servants, is fired when her suitcase is searched and the body rolls out. An illustration dramatizes the situation with the women looking at the body in horror (Figure 4-3).

Poor spaces are characterized by the horror of the supply and demand and consumption of animal bodies. In a chapter entitled "A Den of Horrors," neighbourhoods of West Street (Smithfield), Field Lane and Saffron Hill are described. Some areas of Cow Cross and Castle street are full of a fetid odour because horses' flesh is boiled here to provide food for cats and dogs (1: 43, ch. 17). Animal bones are hung outside windows to bleach. More than sixty horses a day in the last stages of disease are frequently slaughtered to provide for this demand, but should demand lessen, the flesh rots, producing a smell. In the backyards of these houses people keep pigs. In one instance, the account mentions that when a child died in one of these houses, a pig came in and feasted upon the dead child's face. One is reminded of this as a literalization of Malthus' biological economy where cattle "eat" men. Malthus' logic is that surplus money makes an increased demand for meat amongst the rich so that more areas of fertile land earlier reserved for crops are devoted to cattle. Since these other crops provide food for the poor rather than meat, in this loop, the poor die because cattle are fed.

Another place in the text where the human body is literally on display is the hangman's cell. Richard, the good brother in the main plot comes upon the Hangman's cell with a policeman in pursuit of Tidkins, the criminal who is perpetually getting Richard into trouble through the

series. The walls of the room are covered with ghastly pictures, including scenes in the lives of criminals in myths and classics who ended their lives on the scaffold, such as one of “Sawney Bean and his family feasting off human flesh in their cave” (Reynolds 2: 6). A puppet is hung from the roof in the imitation of a man hanging. The walls are covered with educative designs of various kinds about different kinds of improved executions meant for the hangman’s son to learn and practice his father’s ghastly art. On the mantelpiece is a miniature gibbet on which a mouse is hung “most scientifically with a strong piece of pack-thread” (Reynolds 2: 6).

The son, who is called Gibbet, is made to practice the art of the father following those diagrams scrawled on the wall. In this urban, efficiency-related world where specialization and abstraction distances value away from the well-being of bodies, the shock value of such cynical portrayal of the use of a body for specialization critiques the corruption of young innocent minds such as the boy’s. The boy himself embodies the ravages of such dehumanization. Gibbet bears on his body visible signs of the ‘degenerate’ (both racial and animal). He is described thus:

The hump-backed lad . . . was about seventeen or eighteen years of age, and so hideously ugly that he scarcely seemed to belong to the human species. His hair was fiery red, covered with coarse and matted curls a huge head that would not have been unsuitable for the most colossal form. His face was one mass of freckles; his eyes were of a pinkish hue . . . his large teeth glittered like dominoes between his thick and blueish lips. His arms were long like those of a baboon; but his legs were short; and he was not more than four feet and a half high. In spite of his hideous deformity and almost monstrous ugliness, there was an air of good-nature about him, combined with an evident consciousness of his own repulsive appearance, which could not do otherwise than inspire compassion--if not interest. (Reynolds 2: 6)

The deformed body of the poor is also in focus to characterize places peopled by the poor (Figure 4-4). For example, an illustration depicts a figure sitting on a chair in the centre with two stumps for legs and a pot belly. Two women of questionable appearance surround him, one kneeling on his left and one standing a little away from him with a stalk in her mouth that she holds with a hand. Some packs of cards lie on the floor and the place looks crowded in the

background. The women's pose can be seen as sexually suggestive but because the deformed man in the foreground is presented as grotesque, it adds to the characterization of the pub as a place full of criminals and thieves.

The deformed body is used by the poor themselves as a commodity. For example, when Richard Markham and a police officer go into a den called 'The Rat's Castle' in pursuit of the criminal Tidkins, the policeman points out the various questionable characters in the den to Markham. He discloses ways in which the various men make money by appealing to people's sense of charity by using their bodies. This is a sardonic depiction of the specialization that these "trades" have achieved. One man conceals his right arm under his clothes and pretends to be disabled, another puts a black patch over a perfectly good eye, one bends his left leg back and uses a wooden one to support his knee while another crawls along the street with two iron supporters in his hand and yet another goes about in a sort of van or chaise. The whole world believes he has no leg at all because the vehicle hides his legs while he uses false stumps. One man is reputed to have been seventeen years in the business and is said to have been to prison twenty eight times. This particular man could act everything from a clergyman to a Tory to a father of crippled children as and when the act required. Mistrust of exploitative systems that deform the body is displaced onto the body itself which embodies a distrust of the market.

One encounters tables and charts depicting the daily diets for the poor frequently in the text. Some make diagrammatic representations of the sumptuous food of the rich versus the frugal meals of the poor. Others represent dietary charts of workhouses and prisons. In a footnote Reynolds says, "It is too frequently the habit to throw the blame of the diabolical nature of some of the clauses of the New Poor Law upon the masters of workhouses; whereas the whole vituperation should be levelled against the guardians who issue the dietary-tables, from the

conditions of which the masters dare not deviate” (1: 309). In other places, corruption is located in the food that the poor eat. For example, it is noted that sugar is adulterated with Plaster of Paris and beer is strengthened with tobacco-juice and ‘*cocculus-indicus*’ after being adulterated with water. These are areas where Irish families are crowded together in small back rooms, where husbands and fathers gorge themselves at the expense of broken hearted wives and famishing children, and Italian masters beat up children after an unsuccessful day with their organs, white mice or monkeys. These are spaces peopled with the most horrible forms:

The visitor to the Polytechnic Institution or the Adelaide Gallery has doubtless seen the exhibition of the microscope. A drop of the purest water, magnified by that instrument, some thousands of times, appears filled with horrible reptiles and monsters of revolting forms.

Such is London.

Fair and attractive as the mighty city may appear to the superficial observer, it swarms with disgusting, loathsome and venomous objects, wearing human shapes. (46)

The scientific metaphor physicalizes these spaces as the disease producing parts of the social body, and displaces the economic even as it critiques the optimism about progress of contemporary proindustrial rhetoric. When the poor themselves are seen to trade in bodies in a parallel economic system, part of the guilt for these inhuman conditions of existence can be shifted to the shoulders of the poor themselves, instead of seeing them simply as victims, because they are perpetrators of the chain as well. The text makes the perpetrators of this evil system who trade in bodies also physically repulsive because they bear effects of poverty on their bodies which make them “ugly.” Through such representational strategies, bourgeois guilt for these deformed bodies is lessened by a conflation of ugliness and deformity with moral and economic vice. Poor areas are described objectively in the social documentary mode as disease-producing, morally degenerate or in the need of aid through the depiction of bodies.

Subjectively, the poor areas are represented as dangerous when the gothic horror mode is

adopted. Bodies can disappear by falling through trap doors or a living body can appear instead of a dead one. In these areas, it is easy for Eliza Sydney, an important character who adopts disguises for various reasons, to cross dress. Women quarrel with women and bite and scratch each other without any apparent reason and a crowd soon gathers around them at the very outset of the series. The disposition of the poor is naturalized as violent, ferocious, dangerous and animalistic.

The Aesthetic Object in Circulation: Ellen Monroe's Several Occupations

The long circuit of economic exchange that Malthus is suspicious of because it does not produce valuable commodities that would sustain the body of the labourer leads to transforming the body itself into a product that circulates with the aid of art and modern technology. The alternate economy of the body snatchers feeds into larger society by providing it goods that it needs to function with, polluting the social body both symbolically and morally. Similarly, the tale of Ellen Monroe's several occupations in *The Mysteries* serves as a testament to the symbolic corruption and evidence of guilt of bourgeois society by showing how society symbolically consumes her body. Labour and mass production are both problematized, putting the locus of exchange on the body unifying value and the body of labour.

Ellen's story begins in a cold room as she is embroidering flowers in a shawl with "her delicate taper fingers--with those little white hands which seemed never made to do menial service . . ." (81). Her narrative begins as the conventional suffering seamstress' tale because she is paid a pittance for this work. She is beautiful, morally virtuous and heavily exploited. Ellen is shown to constantly ward off temptations from The Old Hag, who offers to provide her ways to solve her predicament. She brushes off the old woman without completely understanding what the temptation is. However, when her father is ill and going to the workhouse becomes imminent, she is forced to seek situations through the old woman. The Old Hag suggests

prostitution at first, but at the look of horror on Ellen's face, the Old Hag gets her a host of other curious employments. Ellen goes through a series of situations from being a statuary's model, a sculptor's model, a painter's model, a photographer's model, a mesmerist's medium to a ballet dancer on stage. At different points in the text, which come after these transformations, she does various things in keeping with the complicated but incidental plots that form *The Mysteries*. She performs one act of prostitution wherein she is seduced by Greenwood, who is really Eugene Markham, the bad brother in the main plot. Ellen has a child by him and manages to blackmail Greenwood into a secret marriage with her. Then she becomes the subject of a corrupt reverend's lust, outwits him and finally meets her dying husband, and a welcoming family in Greenwood's brother and his wife.

The earlier part of Ellen Monroe's career is important for analysis here. Ellen Bayuk Rosenman has traced Ellen Monroe's story as conforming to Victorian conventions of objectifying the female body displayed for the voyeuristic male gaze in her article "Spectacular Women." She also traces how the text both subverts such objectification and provides pleasure for the female in the text and female readers of the text. My focus here is on how this same story exemplifies the transformation of Ellen Monroe's body into a circulating product in the marketplace. As Gallagher points out

Outside the tight circle of production and consumption [production of and consumption of articles that add to the body of labour such as food and clothing], a circle representing the most restrictive economy imaginable, is a network of exchanges that seems to only draw value away from its true site in order to dissipate it, often by attaching it to the bodies of those who have been rendered valueless in Malthusian logic [people, for example, involved in circulation or services] (Gallagher 96)

This economy, of which Ellen's transformation is a part, is a suspicious economy because this is a valueless economy too.

The aesthetic objectification of Ellen's body begins with the transformation of parts of her body into parts of statues. In her first job, Ellen sells her countenance to an Italian statuary. A cast is made of her form in Plaster of Paris. The statuary's room is a strange assembly of images where "Heathen gods [seem] to fraternize with angels, Madonnas and Christian saints . . . Cupid point[s] his arrow at the bosom of a Pope . . . that strange pell-mell of statues [is] calculated to awaken ideas of a most wild and ludicrous character . . ." (85). In this unnatural marketplace, the description of the statuary's cool survey provides the first step towards a divorcing of value from the human body and transforming the body itself into a product.

The statuary was Italian; and as he spoke the English language imperfectly, he did not waste much time over the bargain. With the cool criticism of a sportsman examining a horse or a dog, the statuary gazed upon the young maiden; then, taking a rule in his hand, he measured her head; and with a pair of blunt compasses he took the dimensions of her features. Giving a nod of approval he consulted a large book which lay open upon a desk; and finding that he had orders for a queen, an opera-dancer, and a Madonna, he declared that he would take three casts of his new model's countenance that very morning. (85)

So Ellen is laid stretched on a table and the imprint of her face is taken on moist clay. No obvious labour is performed on her part because this process transforms her face itself into a commodifiable product. The illustration accompanying this page shows her and her statue side by side, naked up to the waist, the breasts of the statue being measured with an instrument by the fully clothed statuary (Figure 4-5). The objectification aided by technical specialization of the marketplace takes away the guilt of voyeurism, much like in contemporary popular shows where bodies of the dead or the living are probed by forensic experts and "specialists," in *CSI*, for example. In this way, Ellen's body becomes a mass-produced commodity to be seen everywhere, belonging to Madonnas in Catholic Chapels, opera dancers, actresses in theatrical pubs and as parts of public buildings and insurance offices.

The problems of mass-production, the ubiquitousness of the marketplace, and the dehumanizing effects of such economic exchange and commodification is seen in Ellen

Monroe's next occupation as a painter's model in Bloomsbury Square. As she moves through her series of professions, she exposes her body more and more. She earns more and more money but becomes more and more corrupt morally, though the author observes that "in body she remains chaste," making it clear that she is still not sexually "used." She is compelled to show a naked bust, a naked arm or a naked leg in this job. The artist is a portrait-painter as well as a painter of classical subjects. When he is employed to paint the portrait of some vain and conceited West End aristocrat's daughter, "it was Ellen's hand--or Ellen's hair--or Ellen's eyes--or Ellen's bust--or some feature or peculiar beauty of the young maiden, in which the fashionable lady somewhat resembled her, that figured upon the canvas" (87).

In a literal, parodic exemplification of Gallagher's process where value is drawn from one body and embodied in another, the West End aristocrat claims Ellen's body parts as her own when she boasts to her friends. This cycle, however, is sterile in both source and destination, morally depleting both. In keeping with the anti-aristocratic sentiment of the text, Ellen's body is literally dismembered to provide parts of the body of the painting of the older aristocratic woman. This phenomenon not only serves to commodify Ellen's body by dismembering it, but it also emphasizes the covetousness of the older, decaying rich woman, reinforcing gendered and classed stereotypes pointing out the dehumanizing nature of commodification of working-class bodies. Later on, in a climactic moment in the text, Greenwood, who has seduced Ellen, finds out that the statue of Venus he possesses has body parts which have been really modelled on Ellen's. The ubiquitousness of Ellen's body emphasizes commodification of the body but the phenomenon does not prove anxiety producing for the characters while such events probably have the reverse effect on the readers. This is because instead of anxiety at the body becoming a product, the copies of her body are seen as aesthetic objects that, much like reified commodities,

obscures the moral exploitation, if not physical labour, which is involved in the process of production. At the level of reading, aestheticism and scientific distancing justifies the reader's voyeurism.

Ellen's sequence of jobs is seen as progressive degeneration so that after her downfall to this stage of modelling, Ellen now devotes a lot of time to coquetry and to enhancing her charms. She is convinced that her beauty can fetch her a comfortable livelihood, if not a fortune. The narrative voice notes the irony that when she had laboured as a seamstress she had earned nothing while these easy occupations earn her money. "Ellen, who few months previously, had been accustomed to work for seventeen or eighteen hours without ceasing, now took a cab to proceed from the neighbourhood of St. Luke's to Leicester Square"(175). There is an underlying preoccupation with a mistrust of this economic exchange where mass production and an efficient chain of distribution causes a decline of morality, drawing value away from what Malthus would call productive labour--that which would sustain the labouring body and not provide embellishments for the non-productive, debauched aristocrat. When Ellen asks for honest labour as a nursery governess from the very person whose portrait was being painted with Ellen's body parts, the lady is so astonished as to require recourse to her scent bottle to recover from the shock.

For her next employment, Ellen, who has been corrupted enough to read novels and romances now, goes to a French 'man of science' who is a photographer. The Frenchman takes nude portrait pictures and pays handsomely. He shares the same objective interest in bodies as the statuary:

the Frenchman was at work. He was . . . entirely devoted to matters of science, and having no soul for love, pleasure, politics or any kind of excitement save his learned pursuits. He was now busily employed at a table covered with copper plates coated with silver, phials

of nitric acid, cotton wool, pounce, a camera obscura . . . and other materials necessary for photography (88).

This kind of clinical distancing makes it possible for the reader to share the voyeurism as a scientific curiosity while naturalizing this practical attitude to nude photography as a quality of the foreigner.

At the end of this process, Ellen is completely commodified:

Suffice it to say, that having sold her countenance to the statuary, her likeness to the artist, and her bust to the sculptor she disposed of her whole body to the photographer. Thus her head embellished images white and bronzed; her features and her figure were perpetuated in diverse paintings; her bust was immortalized in a splendid statue; and her entire form is preserved, in all attitudes, and on many plates, in the private cabinet of a photographer at one of the metropolitan Galleries of Practical Science. (89)

Throughout *The Mysteries*, the polarization of wealth and poverty is emphasized with authorial interpolations that lend structure to the narrative. This polarity is ironically bridged through the circulation of working-class bodies by an implicit assumption that all bodies are essentially the same regardless of what class they belong to, and could be interchangeable. In the case of female bodies, when they are the object of voyeurism or sympathy, whether as dead bodies or live bodies, beauty is an essential commodity. Beauty for women, in these contexts, is coded as middle-class. The emergence of femininity as an ideal in the eighteenth century, which continues into the nineteenth, is linked with “the habitus of the upper classes, of ease, restraint, calm, and luxurious decoration,” as Skeggs notes while discussing Mary Poovey’s ideas (Skeggs 129). This liberal idea of sameness, seen through the commodification of Ellen’s beauty, across classes so that bodies can be interchangeable, ironically, is possible through the homogenization that commodity production brings. Ironically also, Ellen manages to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor by literally selling her body. Both the arts and the sciences that are highly valued in society are criticized for using beautiful images that are divorced from the seaminess of their origin.

This critique can be contextualized within contemporary rhetorics of industrialism which conflates aesthetics with industrialism. Joseph Bizup notes that there were a number of indirect rhetorical strategies to associate the words “culture” and “civilization” in ways that did not seem to conform to the antithesis which often occurred in this period in the way that “culture” was used as an alternative to the *laissez-faire* ethos of industrial civilization (8). Bizup also cites the use of metaphors of “cultivation” by several important Victorians to show that this word was preferred to the use of words like “development” or “advancement” to show that culture was not opposed to civilization but that it was the means through which the “fruits” of civilization might be realized (11). “The rhetorical task confronting the liberal proponents of industry was to make this association seem self-evident, since then the idea of culture as a “rallying alternative” to industry would itself become logically suspect” (13). People such as Charles Babbage anticipated later ideas of elevating pure efficiency into an aesthetic ideal (14). Bizup reads the Great Exhibition of 1851 as a confluence of many of these ideas. The dominant interpretation of the exhibition as an expression of English nationalism and an important moment in the genealogy of modern commodity culture is well known now. But more important than this, Bizup stresses, is the idea of joining all classes into one harmonious whole through this rhetoric of the culture of industrialism. Ellen’s dismembered, sexualized body made devoid of all individuality, that transcends location and class, serves as a critique of these ideas which aestheticize efficient production. Mass production efficiently reproduces her body as aesthetic objects and makes the exploitation involved in the process obscure. The body as aesthetic commodity also cannot sustain the evidence of the ravages of poverty. Ellen ironically achieves the aesthetic ideal through mechanized processes of reproduction as her wan cheeks fill up through her moral degradation.

The text exposes the “Ideology of the Aesthetic” as Eagleton would call it, critiquing the idea that the aesthetic object could connect all classes and sanitize itself from the reality of class differences. *The Mysteries* parodies the ambitions of such a process by making the body of a person belonging to the margins as the aesthetic object, tracing the ghastly process of dehumanization when such a body becomes the emblem of beauty. In this very early representation of Adorno’s “Culture Industry,” the consequence of the modern form of capitalism which provides the same product every time as something new in an endless process of exchange, Ellen’s identity is subsumed into various forms of mass produced generality. Ironically, the original does not remain distinguished as more valuable through mechanical reproduction but loses status because of class difference between the original Ellen and the use of her copies. Both traditional forms such as “classical” sculptures and paintings and more modern forms such as photographs are implicated in this process because they “have” parts of Ellen’s body.

Apart from the obvious voyeuristic pleasure that Ellen’s body provides, Ellen’s body is an example of a criticism, in essence, of Smith’s theory that separated value from the labouring body, and located it in the commodity, because in this case, the body *is* the commodity. As this female body enters circulation, it is only apparently, not really desexualized through the objective processes of commodity formation which makes it possible to measure and quantify this body (in fact the major titillation comes because of the tension between the objective exposure and the apparent desexualization). Chapters such as the one entitled “The Road to Ruin” detail Ellen’s degradation which enables the audience to participate in passing moral judgment. In Dracula fashion, the more she falls morally, the more healthy her body becomes. This effect also exposes and extends the anxiety about healthy bodies that Malthusian ideas had

introduced into contemporary discourse. Healthy bodies were an indication of prosperity of the population earlier. In contrast to this, contemporary rhetoric came to see healthy bodies as a threat to prosperity by being able to destroy food and supplies through their stronger capacity for reproduction. Also, as stated earlier, this discourse divided the poor population into the unnaturally hardy bodies of the parasitical nomads involved in circulation and exchange and the weak bodies of the labourers. The apparent health of the body could not be trusted as a test for the health of the nation. In the old Malthusian sense, if the value of a commodity is determined by how much it can replenish the body of the labourer, the mass production of Ellen's body is a ghastly parody of this process because it reproduces Ellen's body without her labouring at all but by dismembering her body and creating images of it. The ubiquitousness of the marketplace ironically frees the body of class markers by making it a commodity. These images then permeate society everywhere and produce moral enfeeblement of society in general, from public buildings to government offices, such as when Ellen's statues are displayed outside insurance offices as classical figures. This discourse of the social body being polluted in this way parallels the Victorian anxiety about individual bodies being permeated by a host of foreign elements. These episodes in *The Mysteries* illustrate that the more society believes in abstract exchangeable value, the more weak the position of the poor becomes. Ellen's story illustrates this problem of abstraction by locating the body in the sphere of aesthetics, "science" and "art."

While tracing the history of the idea of poverty in the first half of the nineteenth century, Gertrude Himmelfarb notes that the concept of poverty changed very rapidly in this period. "[T]he "optimism" of Adam Smith gave way to the "pessimism" of Malthus and Ricardo, the bitterness of the 1830s to the social consciousness of the 1840s and to the spirit of reconciliation

and “equipoise” of the 1850s” (12). Vigorous battles were being raged at the same time between Malthusianism, the New Poor Law and Chartism. Even as a common view was sought to reach a consensus about what was moral and what was immoral in the formulation of social problems and social policy, there was a strong desire to de-moralize political economy, to convert the old “moral philosophy” into an economic science and the old “moral economy” into a market economy. Poverty came to be conceptualized differently from the old idea of being a natural condition and a moral responsibility to a social or a state responsibility with real effects on the solutions provided. Several terms are used in the discourse of the period to come to grips with the problem and decide on the deserving poor. Many followed Burke’s distinction between the independent labourer and the pauper, but conflated these terms; others distinguished between the poor and the pauper. Sometimes these distinctions depended on whether the object of benefit was able-bodied or not, but often the abstract classification rather than the real condition of the people was dominant. Approaches to poverty were also different depending on whether “objective measures” of poverty were posited, such as economic measures, or on whether poverty was seen as a social ethos.

The reiteration of images of the body that appears in this immensely popular text makes sense against a backdrop of these discourses. Written by a Chartist, *The Mysteries* shows obvious sentiments regarding injustice and social inequalities, but even as it exposes these inequalities, it reveals an ambivalent attitude towards the poor. The poor body becomes the locus on which these various discourses about poverty play out and are critiqued. The idea of *laissez faire* is criticized through the “free market” of bodies, but the text is also fascinated by the spectacle of production that is possible as a result of it. Embedded in a more central narrative strand of virtue-rewarded-and-vice-punished story involving the upper-/middle-class brothers of the original plot,

these strands involving lower-class characters attract the reader through the very forbidden pleasures it warns readers against. Moral judgment takes a back seat while the images of efficiency, the play of the rules of the market and the blatant absence of morality itself become a spectacle. At the same time, representation *creates* these circulating bodies and poor spaces, positioning the consumers of these texts as separate from these systems regardless of the class status of the audience.

Despite its obvious sympathies for conditions of the poor, the language of class works in ambivalent ways in the text when it exposes social horrors. While contextualizing misery in the realm of vice and the forbidden, the text ultimately removes these problems to imagined spaces for popular consumption. The text produces imagined communities of readers, even as this literature is created by their tastes. The readers consume the spectacle and see the system of circulation as located amongst other people who might be a threat to themselves. In this way, this community of readers does not need to share either responsibility or a sense of victimization in this exchange.

This could be seen as an ironic parallel, as the poor man's equivalent of Seth Koven's idea of "slumming" in the nineteenth century, where people of wealth and social standing would go to poor areas for charity, research, social work, investigative journalism or Christian rescue work while their experience would be accompanied by hints of sensationalism and sexual transgression. *The Mysteries* suggests a reshaping of the subjectivity of the poor audience by these dominant discourses about the audience's own immediate experiences by the way these experiences are characterized. Himmelfarb mentions Reynolds' text in passing in the introduction to *The Idea of Poverty* (1984) as having a popularity that rivalled Dickens, Disraeli and Gaskell. She says that

Other novels . . . [apart from the canonical novelists' mentioned earlier] provided a dramatically different image of the poor and a radically different view of the popular culture. The most successful of these, *The Mysteries of London* by G.W.M. Reynolds, portrayed the poor as so brutal and degraded that it seemed to make of them not so much a lower class as a lower species of being--and this in spite of the fact that Reynolds was a militant Chartist who periodically interrupted his tales to plead the cause of the oppressed poor. (13)

This reaction itself tells us that even for a discerning reader like Himmelfarb, the authorial interruptions about social inequality regarding the poor had less impact than the actual portrayal of the poor in the stories themselves. It is an evidence of the power of discourse to shape the subjectivity of groups that the poor themselves consumed a text that portrayed poverty in this way. Popular taste, values and beliefs amongst the poor reinforced dominant class attitudes problematizing simple ideas of democratization of culture through the spread of reading in this period.

The next two chapters explore what it must have been like to be a working-class person living in a culture where the body that performed manual labour was so central and so anxiety producing. Chapters 5 and 6 explore the way working people negotiated representations of working-class bodies in their own autobiographies and diaries.



Figure 4-1. The Old Hag tempting Ellen Monroe (Reynolds 78)

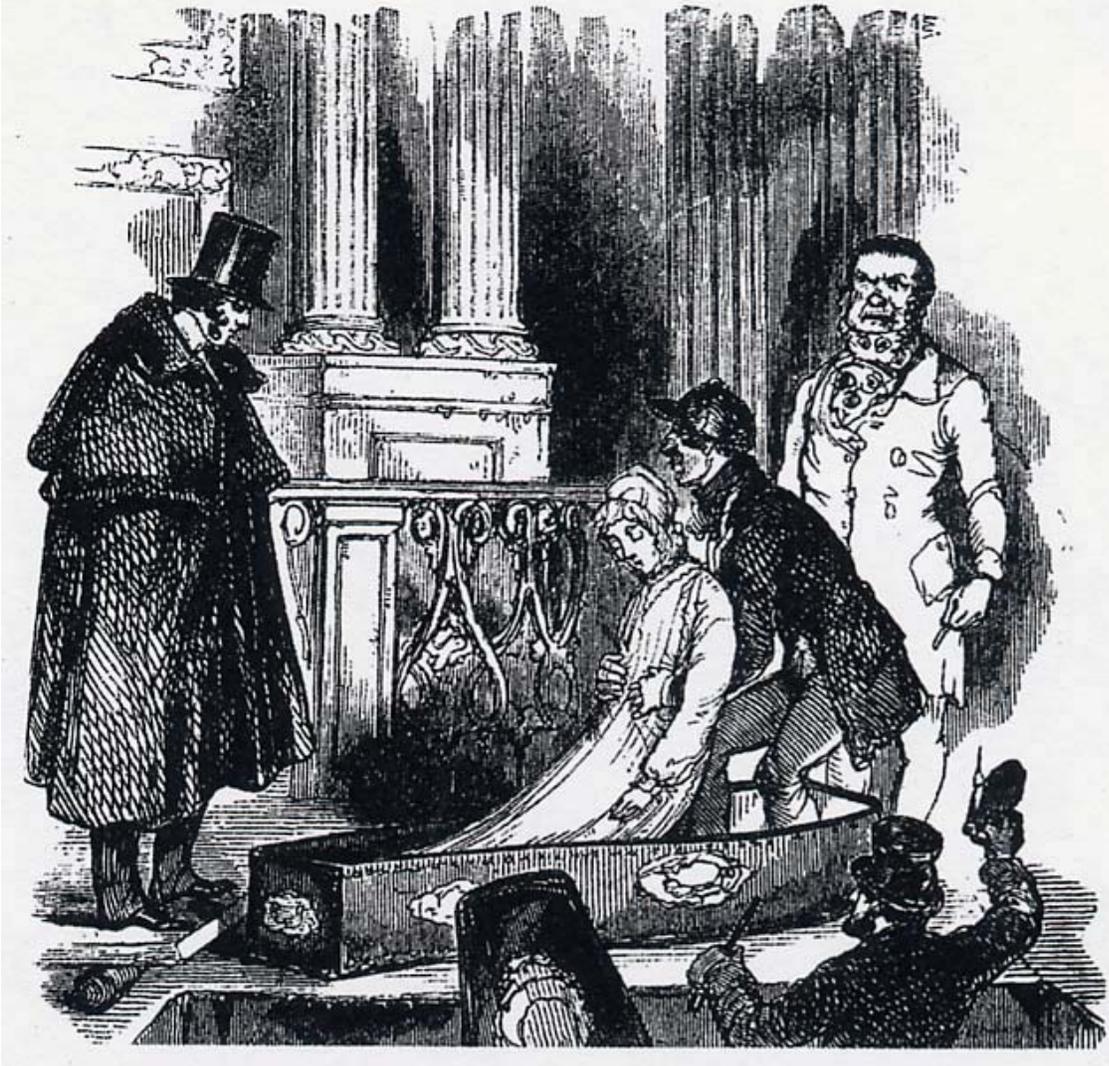
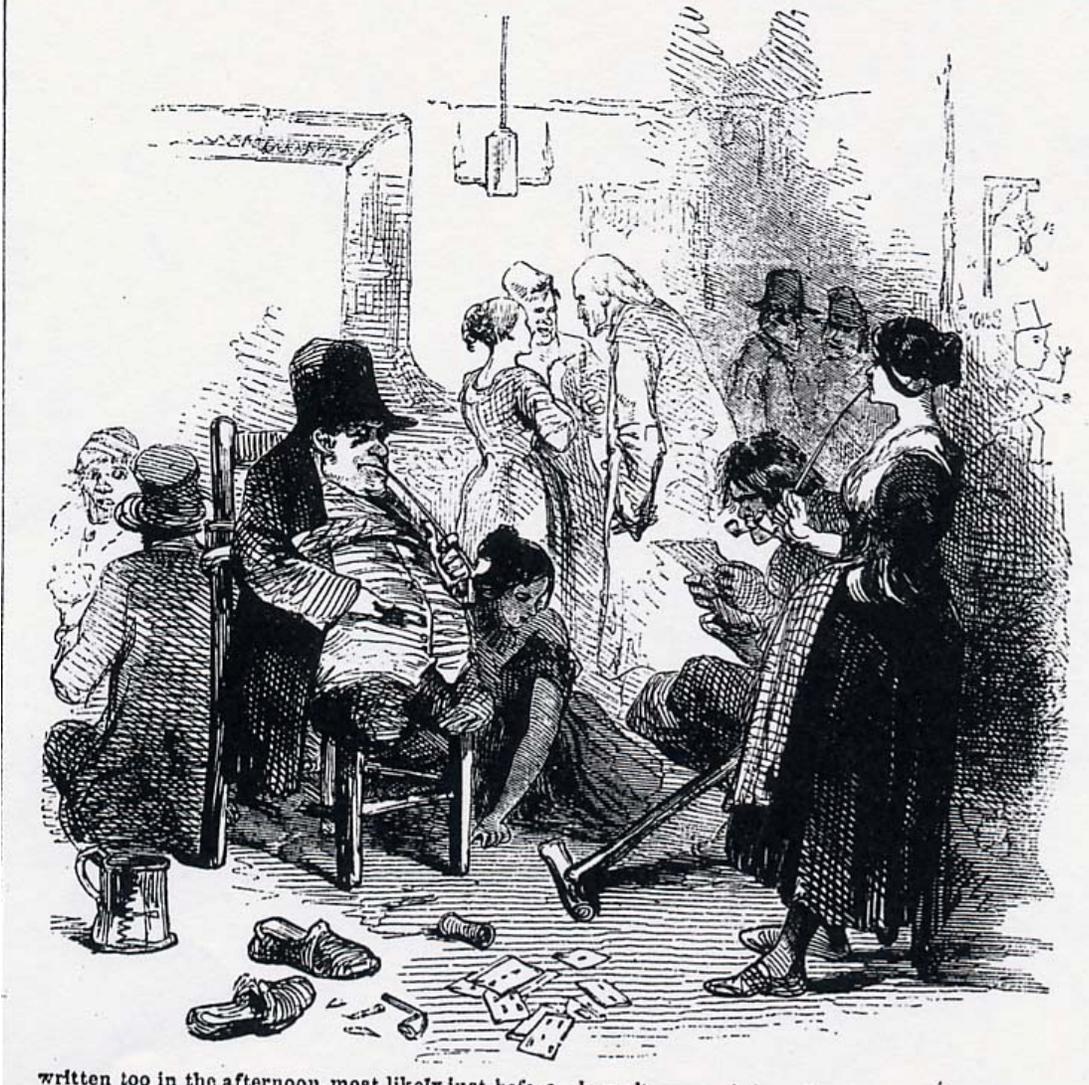


Figure 4-2. The Body Snatchers taking a female body out of the coffin (Reynolds 72)



ing glance which she darted upon me, as I followed her, was

Figure 4-3. A new-born child's body rolls out of the teacher's trunk (Reynolds 2: 121)



written too in the afternoon most likely just before

Figure 4-4. A pub in a poor area (Reynolds 3: 65)



Figure 4-5. The sculptor measures Ellen's breasts with a pair of blunt compasses (Reynolds 1: 169)

Notes

While referring to *The Mysteries*, wherever I have mentioned a volume number as well as a page number, the reference is from John Dicks' nineteenth-century edition. When only a page number is mentioned, the reference is to Trefor Thomas' 1996 edition of selections from the text.

¹See Thomas vii.

²See Thomas viii.

³ See Thomas x.

⁴ See Rosenman “Spectacular”; and Thomas.

⁵ Thomas discusses Mayhew’s mention of the “literature of the costermongers” to illustrate this point.

⁶ There are other kinds of representations that consider exploitation of the poor body such as the sexual exploitation of women but those images will not be the main focus here.

⁷ See Himmelfarb, *Idea* for terms used to describe the poor in this period. Many of these categorizations can be found in Mayhew.

⁸ For a discussion of “body snatching” as a trade and the Anatomy Act, see Richardson, *Death, Dissection and the Destitute*.

⁹ For a discussion of murders committed for bodies, see Richardson’s chapter ““Trading Assassins”” in *Death, Dissection*.

CHAPTER 5
NOVEL EXPERIENCES: AUTOBIOGRAPHIES OF FOUR DOMESTIC SERVANTS AND A
FACTORY GIRL

Autobiographies of Domestic Servants and Patterns of Denying the Body

The chapters that follow deal with one specific kind of working-class people: female domestic servants working in middle-class households. Not only did domestic servants represent the largest single occupation taken up by working women in this period, but they had to work within the domestic space performing domestic duties that required manual labour. In their published autobiographies, the writers and editors of these texts had to grapple with anxieties regarding labouring bodies. Women, especially, had to grapple with ideals of middle-class domesticity while they worked in situations that did not provide the material means of the lives of domestic Angels in the House. Because the few domestic servants whose autobiographies are available were lower-middle-class women who slid down the class hierarchy, their texts express greater anxiety to distance themselves from the labouring body. Working within the domestic household, they were also often under greater surveillance and suffered from greater control through middle-class “moral” standards. Even women working in factories had to adhere to these standards if they had to publish their autobiographies.

This chapter focuses on the autobiographies of several working women to trace how tensions regarding the construction of subjectivity in relation to the working body play out in the lives of women who are doubly marginalized by their class and gender positions. Working-class women’s autobiographies, especially those of domestic servants, are relatively rare throughout the nineteenth century though they start becoming more common around the turn of the century. Sometimes, the account of a working woman’s life might serve as prefatory material to a collection of poems, such as factory girl Ellen Johnston’s autobiography or cottager Ann Candler’s autobiography, with an introduction by the publisher. At other times, they are

published on their own but usually preceded by a preface written by a middle-class editor or publisher. In this chapter, I deal exclusively with the autobiographies of women who did physical work to earn a living. Almost all of these autobiographies considered here are by women who were domestic servants for significant years of their lives. Even when they did not work in a domestic setting, such as in the case of the autobiography of Ellen Johnston, they had to deal with ideals of domesticity as part of the role they were expected to live up to.

I deal with autobiographies of five women, four of whom worked as domestics for at least parts of their lives, often starting out as lower middle-class figures. Whereas their male counterparts could include themselves under the larger group as working class, working women tended to identify themselves by their gender roles combined with the work they did according to their specific partial identities as the cook, the factory girl, the schoolmistress or the governess as is evident in the titles of these works. The autobiographies considered are *The Autobiography of Rose Allen* (1847), *Life of a Licensed Victualler's Daughter* (Mary Ann Ashford, 1844), *Autobiography of Ellen Johnston*, *'The Factory Girl'* (1867), *A Fire in the Kitchen: The Autobiography of a Cook* (Florence White)¹ and *Memories of Seventy Years* (Mrs. Layton)². In passing, I also touch upon two other autobiographies, the memoirs of the life of Ann Candler, "A Suffolk Cottager" (1803) and *A Plate-Layer's Wife* by Mrs. Wrigley (1931)³. Other than Ellen Johnston, nothing is known about the lives of these women except what can be learnt from the autobiographies themselves. Julia Swindells mentions most of these autobiographies in her book and comments on the arbitrariness of her selection of working women's autobiographies depending on what could be found. Swindells observes that her list is by no means comprehensive and "relies to a certain extent on the arbitrariness of that which was available,

given limited resources” (125). Out of the autobiographies she mentions, I have selected mainly those by domestic servants.

Apart from Johnston, who worked in the factory, the rest of the women who were domestic servants occupied the diffuse boundaries between what is now seen as the lower middle class, often in situations when they did not have to work for pay and at other times having to work as domestic servants or in other occupations for pay. All these texts were written for publication and in that sense, were written as public documents. Even though many servants could read and write, diaries and autobiographies of domestic servants in the early and middle part of the nineteenth century in England are very rare. Those few that exist are written by women who had some exposure to learning in their early life because they began as “lower-middle-class” women. By the early part of the twentieth century, this situation became somewhat different because the women whose autobiographies are extant had more diverse lives and different class backgrounds. They chose domestic service for short periods only because it was easily available for women.

The domestic servant occupied a curious position, both within and outside of the bourgeois family, highly structured in its system of hierarchies both among servants in the household, and also in relation to other working women outside the household, people we conventionally identify as the working class: the factory girls, seamstresses and coal miners. Spatially too, within the house, the ideal servant had to be present but remain invisible, most servants being relegated to the understairs or the attic or the kitchen. Middle-class women as the managers of the household were supposed to look after the moral well being of the female domestic servants and therefore they often attempted to “manage” the lives of domestics working under them. Most female domestics worked until they got married though some returned to service when their

husbands died or when they faced hard times. By about mid-century, there are instances of unionisation amongst domestics, though not large in scale, and of servants going to court to demand outstanding wages.⁴ A few such cases became famous by mid-century as cautionary tales to both classes. By the turn of the century, the scarcity of servants as well as the social problem of single women started drawing attention. This became the subject of many tracts in this period advising both mistresses and servants about how to employ ladies as domestics who may have moved down the class ladder due to economic hardship. As a class, domestics in this period are heterogeneous, some people sliding down from the lower-middle class into becoming domestic servants while others are born to people traditionally seen as the working class.

The autobiographies of domestic servants from the turn-of-the century and later show more willingness to express anger and discontent regarding their situations. The body is also more central in these texts. Pamela Horn notes that there was an increased reluctance amongst young girls to enter domestic service between the years 1900 to 1914. Among those who did enter service, Horn notes that Charles Booth noted that “a more independent spirit often prevailed” (Horn 151). From 1891 onwards, there were fresh attempts at unionization among domestic servants which continued into the early decades of the twentieth century. During the course of the First World War, the number of female domestic servants fell by about a quarter while women found other occupations such as factory work, bus conductress positions and shop assistant situations. There was an increase in the number of female munition workers at the same time. But as Horn notes, among those who did remain in service, the demand for labour was so great that they could pick and choose their employers (167).

Based on these autobiographies that were available, this chapter traces how working women who did physical work participated in discourses which constructed femininity,

subjectivity and interiority by denying any relation to the labouring body, in their texts, in order to create subjects fit for autobiographical writing. The genres that these women emulate in their texts in order to narrate their stories do not allow adequate space for suffering through physical work or labour to be articulated. The first two autobiographies dealt with in this chapter, those of Rose Allen (1847) and Mary Ashford (1844), are juxtaposed with Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre*--another autobiography of a fictional woman of mixed class heritage published in 1847. Similarities and differences in the use of tropes of genre and the body in all three texts express the similarities and differences that class makes in the treatment of the body and work.

Working women are aware that their physical work is the source of their value. In writing their autobiography, they are aware that any interest they might elicit from their subscribers would be by virtue of the fact that their autobiographies would tell the story of a working woman. Yet, to gain value as women, they also have the paradoxical task of distancing themselves from their bodies because if they came too close to their own physicality in their narratives, their texts would not conform to gendered and classed norms of autobiographical writing for women in the 1840s. As Julia Skeggs points out in the context of present day working-class women, working women have to align themselves with the proper appropriation of "taste" and distance themselves from vulgarity, seen in close association with sexuality while presenting their bodies. This is difficult in the case of these domestic servants since their stories are about struggle to find and keep work, about money, deaths of children and constant physical exertion. Therefore, working women have the difficult task of representing their own stories of manual labour that is the source of material as well as cultural value while at the same time distancing themselves from their bodies.

A tension emerges in these narratives between the autobiographical subject's attempt to develop a narrative of interiority through the use of middle-class modes of narration and the material conditions of the labouring body. The autobiographical self and her body are repeatedly separated with great strain on the narrative only to re-emerge in various ways. Hence, various patterns emerge in these works: in those autobiographies where the body is most completely suppressed, women completely erase their own physical experiences of work and bodily suffering by making their autobiographies about the stories of other people who embody the suffering not described in their own lives. The autobiographical subject's gaze controls what is to be valued in other characters in terms of sexual behaviour or taste--thereby distancing the working-class woman from her own class status and aligning her with middle-class values. There are attempts to gloss over gaps and silences where this distancing cannot be performed, as in the case of deaths and difficult pregnancies or disability in the narrator's own life. There are awkward appropriations of interior discourses of domesticity or love, unavailable in these women's situations, which show the narrative struggling to fit experiences of physical hardship into forms which do not make space to accommodate their experiences. Many of these women are fully aware of a larger system of social signification that objectifies working women as bodies. The women constantly attempt to distance themselves from their bodies against a constant threat of existing pressure towards collapsing their subjectivities into mere bodies.

In Rose Allen's autobiography (1847), all of these trends above are most clearly visible. In Mary Ashford's narrative (1844), attempts to foreground the suffering body through physical hardship, hunger and violence co-exist with attempts to access middle-class stature by establishing a non-working-class lineage, so that there are some striking instances where the body is central to this text and some where it is erased. In Ellen Johnston's text (1867), the

silencing of the body is achieved through the use of Romantic language and literary allusions but the gaps themselves stand out as awkward, but highly agonized, eloquent lacunae in the text. Florence White (1938) uses discourses of domesticity and motherhood, which are absolutely unavailable to her in her material situation, to make herself seem non-transgressive as a single woman working for a living. Mrs. Layton's life-story (1931), published under the Women's Co-operative Guild, deals with the problem of the body more directly, though it still does not talk about the body freely. Even though the relationship that these women have with their bodies in these texts shifts historically, the body still proves to be a problem in the later autobiographies.

***Jane Eyre* and Rose Allen's Autobiography**

Several critics such as Regenia Gagnier and Julia Swindells talk about how, in the absence of models of autobiographies of public self-development that were available to working-class men, working-class women had to have recourse to literary tropes such as the romance narrative to articulate their lives. In the autobiographies I consider, these women often emulate a certain kind of female bildungsroman narrative to organize their stories. Such genres, however, require the development of an interiority which needs to be expressed in terms of discourses that place this interior self in relation to society, but also in relation to female bodily experiences, albeit expressed in accordance with ideals of middle-class femininity. *Jane Eyre*, published in 1847, the same year as the publication of Rose Allen's autobiography, tells us what some such models were.

It is no longer necessary to prove that the body is certainly at the centre in *Jane Eyre*. A comparison between Rose Allen's text and the fictional *Jane Eyre*'s text will show how models of bodily suffering posited by the middle-class governess figure presents difficulties for articulating the sufferings of a domestic servant. Despite *Jane Eyre* being fictional and Allen's text being a "real autobiography," Allen uses literary tropes that draw from the same cultural

situation (as does Ashford). Tracing the similarities and differences between the novelistic representation of a fictional governess' life and the representation of a domestic servant's life by herself makes us realize the cultural models available to the latter woman to represent her own life, the reality of which was very different from what those models allowed. Hence, the gaps and silences within these tropes used by Allen reveal the inarticulable parts of her life that cannot be expressed through this dominant discourse. Looking at Rose Allen's text in this way shows that Jane's meritocratic individualism not only depends on the smothering of the voices of female racial Others, as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has shown, but also on the silencing of some women from a different class status as well. Reading her and other women's autobiographies against *Jane Eyre* shows the impossibility of Jane's choices being made by women who do physical labour but also work within the domestic space as servants. Certain tropes used seamlessly by the fictional Jane's text show these other texts straining at the seams to depict them.

The section that follows delineates Allen's use of the romance genre, a form predominantly used in the middle-class novel form in this period. It also shows Allen's use of some conventional gendered tropes such as the use of the middle-class disembodied mother figure, to bridge some difficulties that she encounters while fitting her story in forms that are not conventionally suited to articulating her situation. By adopting the narrator's gaze in her text, Allen takes up the power to discriminate between true and false gentility, thereby adopting a middle-class sensibility herself. This also allows her to be able to distance herself from sexual vulgarity aligned with lower-class status, by becoming a guardian of middle-class sexuality herself, through control of description. Her text also poses the idea of a unity between classes,

servants and mistresses, in the realm of feeling, chiefly through her ability to sympathize with the situation of some middle-class characters through sentimental narration.

The body, with its unsavoury appetites, through its “hunger, rebellion and rage” is at the centre in *Jane Eyre*. As Diane Hoeveler has noted, Jane’s *bildungsroman*, apart from being the story of her psychological development, is also about finding a balance between the uncontrollable body and the taming of the body by rejecting models that are either too physical or too spiritual.⁵ At the same time, the novel is about privileging the needs of the body, whether they be sex, hunger or strong emotions, within a setup that controls it. In the novel, Jane ultimately rejects institutions that starve her physical body such as not only Lowood school, which starves her literally, but also St. John River’s religious, patriarchal control of bodily appetites. She favours a life of physical fulfilment with Rochester within matrimony.

Many turning points in Jane’s life come about through the changes in her own body, either positive or negative. Jane’s head bleeds when she is hit by her cousin John Reed and is sent to the Red Room, where she has a kind of fit. This rite of passage and growing into puberty sets the wheels rolling for her liberation from her aunt’s oppressive house.⁶ This episode is also couched in language of rebellion. At Lowood School, hunger and starvation are the chief forms of oppression. Hunger and starvation are emphasized again when Jane leaves Thornfield Hall and when Jane wanders in the moors for three days. Throughout, her physical inferiority to her social superiors is emphasized while her inner superiority to these very same people becomes evident. “Plain, poor and little” plain Jane, the “elf” and wraithlike girl, is preferred to the big, buxom and potentially threatening bodies of Bertha, Blanche Ingram and Rochester’s continental mistresses. As Diane Hoeveler also notes, the bodies in *Jane Eyre*, therefore, bear sexual, class

and racial signs. Jane defines herself by drawing from these types as well as by distinguishing herself from them.

Such a model of feeling polarities of bodily experiences through her own body is not available to Rose Allen in her text. This is the case even though she is a clergyman's grandchild entering domestic service. One would have thought that such a class position would have offered at least as much scope for articulating bodily experiences as the fictional autobiography of a governess of mixed class heritage. Allen lives in the country when her father, a clergyman's son, dies when she is sixteen. The family experiences a flux in class situation when the eight children are dispersed. The oldest son, who consumes almost half the family's net money, continues his studies at Cambridge while the two oldest daughters enter domestic service. The rest of the family, including Allen, has to move to Liverpool at this point where their hardship begins due to extreme poverty. Finally, Allen too enters domestic service while some of the other brothers and sisters are also dispersed. From this point on, Allen's autobiography becomes basically the stories of the people she works for interwoven with her accidental encounters with a man called Grant, a man she ultimately marries. In terms of class, her family spans a huge spectrum. Her oldest brother becomes an independent minister of the church and marries a clergyman's daughter while one brother goes to sea, another becomes an under teacher and several sisters enter domestic service but finally marry well-off farmers.

While Jane Eyre's interiority is defined through her individualism and by her resistance to institutional domination through intense somatic experiences, Rose Allen can only claim some kind of interiority by separating herself from her body rather than by aligning herself with it. She sets up models who stress mental powers rather than physical work. Her intense experiences are memories of inclusion in institutions such as her own family rather than exclusion from them

or experiences of physical sufferings of other middle-class figures such as idealized employers or governesses, women and children, not herself. Her claim to middle-class status is affected early on when she recreates the image of an ideal childhood with descriptions of an idealized house and garden. Allen's father stresses the cultivation of mental powers while physical household work is not mentioned. Allen's autobiography creates this interiority by making her autobiography basically a description of other people, both people who influence her life and people that she works for. All the female figures she describes are idealized, posing either as positive or negative models, such as her mother or the woman inspector who helps out poor families, Miss Evelyn. These are perfectly disciplined female bodies in the same mode as Helen Burns or Miss Temple in Bronte's novel.

Allen's story begins like a novel with the ideal father and mother, a father who kept them "simple" in their "tastes." Several hints are given here to point out the middle-class nature of the family unit. Allen's father's health begins to fail and the situation of the family consequently deteriorates because the family can afford only one servant in the house. Poverty and want cannot be articulated as the cause for both parents' deteriorating physical health as this jars with the middle-class image of Allen's origin. Hence, what Allen tells us is that her father's health fails because he is little suited to labouring outdoors. Distancing Allen's parents' bodies from either physical labour or bodily wants such as food and hunger is important to create the bourgeois self that justifies the autobiography itself, facilitate its publication and circulation, and also draw sympathy towards the situation of lower-class women.

However, at times, it becomes difficult for Allen to narrate physical suffering without talking about her own body and her own material situation. Allen uses the romance genre to gloss over the difficulties of narrating her physical suffering without collapsing into merely a

representation of disease and infirmity. Allen goes to a concert of sacred music but catches a severe cold in the rain on her way back. She carefully controls the reader's reaction in case a concert is seen as inappropriate amusement for a working woman: "I did not think such amusements suitable in our circumstances, and would have declined but my mother urged my accepting the invitation" (80). After a description of the concert using heightened sentimental language and description of feeling, Allen goes outside while it is raining heavily. While she waits in the corridor, someone suddenly wraps a shawl around her and there is a voice from behind which tells her that his sister sent it to her. This is Grant's voice, the man who is destined for Allen. When she turns around, he is gone. This is a moment appropriate for the romance genre. The romance takes up attention while Allen mentions in a few lines how the cold is so violent due to an inflammation of the lungs that her life is in danger for three days. However, the language and style moves from the description of this romantic moment to a description of her mother whose angelic presence helps her through the crisis. From this point, her narrative moves on to other modes of narration that do not follow simple autobiographical documentation--a hint at a possible romance for one of her sisters is a kind of foreshadowing and a mention of her dreams about her father who is already dead is ominous. The memory of the suffering is submerged in the memory of her mother who reads her Psalms every night. The very reason this illness can be described is because it originates at a middle-class leisure activity, going to a concert, rather than, say, originating due to subsequent lack of medical attention.

Another pattern that emerges in Rose Allen's narrative which privileges Allen's interiority is her ability to observe other people. Suffering, which Allen herself must have suffered too, is projected onto other bodies. Allen's mother is depicted as an "Angel in the House," a disembodied figure and yet, paradoxically, bearing all the material effects of poverty. Allen's

mother grows weaker and weaker through the narrative and loses her eyesight through sewing at night in dim light to make ends meet. Through the narrative, her mother's increasing blindness through fine work becomes the motif for the patient suffering body which also represents Allen's gentility. Allen explicitly mentions that her mother teaches her to patiently wait for their money and never complain if not paid on time. This mother figure, hence, is distanced from heavy, physical work throughout but shows the ravages of an exploitative system through the mother's body in a form which is acceptable to bourgeois humanitarian narratives.

Rose Allen has to walk a tightrope while depicting her material condition of abject poverty and while presenting the role of her mother as the moral centre of the family to meet middle-class standards of motherhood. The difference between the ideal and the reality becomes apparent in Allen's struggle to depict an incident in that phase of her life when her family moves to Liverpool after her father's death. The younger children become weaker and weaker because of changed circumstances and Allen mentions her struggles to make a little money go a long way in buying food. The body retreats as Allen stresses that her mother is silent about such suffering or that she feels that the lack of country air makes the children ill. Finally, one of the youngest children, Susan, falls so ill that a doctor is called who advises that she needs good food and fresh air. The next day, Clara Herbert, the daughter of Mr. Herbert, a clergyman, who is a well-wisher of Allen's family, visits them. When we realize that later on in the narrative, Allen's eldest brother, who is in Cambridge, marries Clara Herbert, we can appreciate the full spectrum of the flux in class position that the family goes through. At this point, Allen has the difficult task of conveying the fact that a decision was taken to send off Susan as a servant with the Herberts and that her mother consents to this. The following extract will make clear how Allen struggles to maintain her mother's image while conveying the memory of an incident where her mother

might have appeared to not conform to an image of nurturing motherhood. Lack of desire to climb up the social ladder becomes an important element in constructing the mother figure as a good woman. In the process, physical necessities of food and health for the children are removed from focus. At the same time, this extract shows Allen's own struggles in coming to terms with her class position.

Clara then questioned of all that had passed since we last met, and ended with asking us to let take Susan back with her: but my mother at first refused; though sorely tempted by her present illness, she did not wish her little girl to live, even for a short time, so differently to the manner in which her future life must be spent.

When Mr. Herbert came in, he seconded Clara's request, saying, he thought my mother's objection sensible; but he would propose treating her from the first as one of their servants, and bringing her up to be one. This was a tempting offer,--to think of her as under their kind care, in the country, and with the prospect of living with them as a settled servant: but we still hesitated, because she was so young, and Mr. Herbert was far from rich . . . Both father and daughter said it would only be a trifling addition: and my mother, not having the false pride which shrinks from receiving kindness from even real friends, at last thankfully consented . . .

I tried to be grateful for the great blessing we had received; but the sight of these associates of by-gone times . . . would bring thoughts that I too had a father to care for every wish (13-14)

Allen's mother continues to be her moral guiding force through the narrative. This moral force also, significantly, helps Allen distance herself from sexual temptation which might be seen as one of the dangers of loss of class. In fact, this moral force serves not only to articulate her distance from sexual vulgarity as might be supposed from her class position, but it also helps her safeguard other people's sexual relationships. Whenever Allen is in doubt as to whether some action that she performs is right or wrong, or when she wants to construct it as right, her mother's assent serves as the ethical voice. For example, when Allen helps a Catholic and Protestant romance by delivering letters secretly in one of the places she works for, she later asks her mother if she did the right thing. Allen's mother serves very much like the figure of the moon in *Jane Eyre* with regard to sexual temptation which has been interpreted as a mother figure in

the novel that inspires Jane to make the right choice.⁷ The moon appears at critical points in *Jane Eyre* to guide Jane, one remarkable point in the text being the point where Jane is tempted to stay with Rochester after the wedding ceremony breaks up. The moon appears and tells Jane, “My daughter, flee temptation.” While the moon controls Jane’s sexual transgression, in Rose Allen’s autobiography, Allen’s mother serves to mitigate any anxiety of class transgression that might be seen in her own romance with Grant, a man of a higher class.

Allen’s romance with Grant is almost part of a fantasy plot based on a series of coincidences including mysterious gifts and an inheritance. In one of such coincidental meeting, Allen meets Grant at a place called Bootle where the governess of one of her most recent employers, Miss Janson, goes to recover her health after being overworked and ill fed by the employers. Allen suspects that the friends Miss Janson says she would meet there are the Grants. Therefore, she absolves herself from any active interest in meeting him by mentioning her mother and finally making the visit her mother’s decision rather than her own:

It was not until late in the evening that I found the courage to ask my mother’s advice about my visit to Bootle. I told her all my wishes, hopes and fears. She advised me to go, not for a week, but for two or three days, which she thought were due to Miss Janson, and reminded me that I could not be sure that she alluded to the Grants . . . I was much relieved by her decision, and in a few days went to Miss Janson. (125-126)

Grant declares his love for Allen, an incident which is mentioned accompanied by a subtle shift in language which addresses him as “Edward.” Allen’s acceptance of Grant is couched in a language that distances her as far as possible from any sexual interest. Allen does not deny her interest in the relationship but says that she would not say more until the year was up, which was the time period when Grant would become “his own master,” inheriting his uncle’s money. Allen does not get into an engagement despite “entreaties, arguments and protestations” (127). After this description, Allen goes on to say that her mother approves of her conduct and having unburdened herself to her, she goes on to other matters. After descriptions of other events that

happen through the next year, Allen mentions, all of a sudden, that she has received Grant's letter. One might suppose that other communications with Grant have been left out in this part of the narrative. Allen tells Grant of her mother's increasing blindness in her reply and that she was going to leave her situation to be with her. Allen takes care to mention that her mother had forbidden Grant to interact with Allen until the year was up. Allen is interested in Grant but the mention of interest is immediately contained: "I now permitted myself to think of him, and was surprised to find how much I seemed to know him, when I considered how seldom we had met. But I was engrossed with my mother, whose general health was not good" (149).

Allen's autobiography reveals the ambivalence inscribed in this model of middle-class femininity defined as an inner quality that tries to show that gentility can be achieved through the embracing of proper femininity regardless of material conditions. Hence, potentially, it can be achieved by anybody. While the fictional Jane Eyre can describe certain middle-class feminine models who are her teachers or role models seamlessly in her narrative, Rose Allen can only describe Miss Evelyn, the "inspector" who comes to train the family in how to live economically in a large industrial town, as an outsider. The same is true of her description of Miss Janson, the governess. The class markers are inscribed on the body of the class Other, as in Allen's case, at the cost of erasing her own body because she cannot lay claim to economic or cultural capital. To appreciate the materiality of this angelic model which is really class bound and inaccessible to women in Allen's position, one might consider Jane's description of Miss Temple, the Principal at Lowood school, when Jane sees her for the first time in broad daylight:

Seen now, in broad daylight, she looked tall, fair and shapely . . . a fine pencilling of long lashes round, relieved the whiteness of her large front; on each of her temples her hair, of a very dark brown, was clustered in round curls, according to the fashion of those times, when neither smooth bands nor long ringlets were in vogue; her dress, also in the mode of the day, was of purple cloth, relieved by a sort of Spanish trimming of black velvet; a gold watch (watches were not so common then as now) shone at her girdle. Let the reader add,

to complete the picture, refined features; a complexion, if pale, clear; and a stately air and carriage, and he will have, at least, as clearly as words can give it, a correct idea of the exterior of Miss Temple (47)

Diane Hoeveler notes that “the humanely disciplined Miss Temple, complete with lovely gold watch and secreted sweet cakes, is hopelessly out of Jane’s reach” (119-120). The purple dress worn in the fashion of the day with black velvet trimmings and the emphasis on the watch as an uncommon luxury indicate signs of class worn on the body. Miss Temple, in reality, could not have been in possession of much money since she had to work for a living. However, her class, inscribed on the refined features of her body indicates her intellectual superiority from the other teachers. In other words, embodiment naturalizes her class superiority which indicates interior qualities such as learning and superior self-control. Ironically, Miss Temple’s curls do not jar with her depiction as someone who also has complete sexual self-control because of class superiority, while poor girls at the school have to be regimented by Brocklehurst through cutting off long curls in a staging of a punitive mechanism that has been seen as sexual disciplining of lower-class girls.

Miss Temple’s class situation as compared to the lower middle-class working women considered in this chapter allows her to defy certain conventions of depiction of the middle-class woman’s body. This does not take away from her idealized status but the flexibility of discourse is such that it adds to her self-discipline rather than takes away from her stature as a role model. For example, Miss Temple does not blush in the face of Brocklehurst’s insults.⁸ Helen Burns, another idealized figure, does not blush when she is flogged by a teacher in the text. Refusal to blush indicates superior self control and a well-developed intellect, moral superiority as compared to feminine follies and foibles while inscribing femininity all the more on the body. However, Miss Oliver, the woman in love with St. John Rivers towards the end of the text, who is a conventional depiction of Victorian angelic womanhood with none of the inner strength of

these other characters, blushes all the time. Hence the blush, which is conventionally read as the pure, innocent and yet somewhat passive woman's sign can be suppressed at will by the strong characters in *Jane Eyre*. Rose Allen, however, in her autobiography, does not have the freedom to defy convention. Hence, though her body is absent in all other respects in the text, she and her sister blush many times, not only as a convention of romance, but as a sign of gentility as well. The very conventions which can be denied by the essentially middle-class heroine of *Jane Eyre* are used by working-class women in the same period to present themselves as women whose lives are worthy to be read. Thus, though the models of middle-class identity through which the bourgeois achieved hegemonic power remained the same, women from different classes made use of those models in different ways. Moreover, as the next several paragraphs show, Allen projects such gentility onto other bodies so that her own sense of worth is determined not by her ability to become those models but by her ability to recognize class markers when she sees them. But this also means she has to omit her own physical body in the process to avoid recognition as being lower class.

How does Jane Eyre deal with these models of the female body that are posed for her? Plain Jane's progress, through the novel, not only involves mental or psychological development but also involves developing the perfect bourgeois body. Diane Hoeveler says that *Jane Eyre* "presents the ideological constructions of the 'feminine' within alternating loci of disciplinary power: clinics and doctors, schools and asylums, families and prisons" (117). Bronte suggests that gender and class issues do not alone determine social status. The bourgeois can achieve social and economic hegemony by cultivating the perfect bourgeois body. If status is based on material possessions or inheritance, Jane is worthless and so, Hoeveler shows how Jane's refusal to eat as a child at the Reed household is a form of self-abuse and self-discipline. For example,

right after being hit by a book by her cousin John Reed as a child, Jane speculates that she would run away to escape oppression or if that failed, she would never eat or drink more and let herself die. The lower middle-class woman's body is disciplined through a number of apparatuses of actual punishment, as Elaine Showalter and others have shown, through an analysis of the Red room episode and the punishment rituals at Lowood School. The routines at Lowood School keep the girls hungry by subduing the body through starvation, discipline, closely controlled uniform dress, hair styles and actual physical punishment. Hoeveler notes that lower middle-class women are produced in this system to serve an emerging industrialized culture. This culture is emphasized in the text through repeated references to time, clocks, silence, discipline and a selection of culture over nature in this phase of Jane's life.

Throughout, Jane encounters a number of figures in her life that have been grouped into two kinds beginning with Gilbert and Gubar's analysis of the novel. There are the ethereal figures of Miss Temple and Helen Burns on the one hand who symbolize the successful incorporation of this disciplinary apparatus and the animalized figure of Bertha Mason and the sexualized figure of Blanche Ingram who are depicted continuously as "big, brown and buxom" on the other. These figures reflect Jane's sexual, class and racial anxieties. Hoeveler classes the idealized figures under a term used by Norbert Elias, *homo clauses*, as individuals who make biological self control a private matter- an individual who experiences the rising thresholds of shame and embarrassment about bodily functions as an endorsement of increasing personal restraint. This is in opposition to the physicalized characters who represent Bakhtin's "carnavalesque" bodies which enact essentially "feminine" values through an intense release of emotion which destroys authoritarian structures and challenges political and religious systems. Jane is attracted to both these types and finally the *homo clauses* body turns on the carnivalesque

and wins. Hence, throughout the text Jane is an elf, a sprite, a wraithlike white ghost in the mirror in the Red Room but she bleeds and is full of hunger and rage through the text at the same time. Jane Eyre negotiates these two types, rejects them and moves towards a companionate marriage which involves taming of the flesh in the case of both the male and the female protagonists.

In its overall structure, Rose Allen's autobiography conforms to the same model. Hardship in early life leads to working for pay and then finally marriage to a man of a higher class. Rose Allen too moves between loci of disciplinary powers but these are not represented as repressing or binding but are stressed as sources of her claim to gentility, namely her exposure to figures such as her mother and Miss Evelyn. Like Jane, material possessions cannot define Allen's worth. But unlike Jane, her worth is underscored not by her power to develop a perfect body, which is her own body, but by her power to observe, judge, approve or disapprove and regulate other bodies. In the process, her own body has to recede as far as possible and her story has to be taken up by other people's stories. For example, Miss Evelyn, the "inspector" in Rose Allen's autobiography, is defined as genteel by her ability to help without doing actual charity. For example, she asks Allen to put a letter in the post for her and pays her when she guesses that the family is doing very badly. Miss Evelyn's inner qualities are symbolized by the whiteness of her hair: "She looked as lovely as I expected . . . her hair was perfectly white and the union of dignity, sweetness and mind, in her countenance, was beautiful to look upon" (83).

Miss Janson, the governess, is another such figure who represents interiority against the superficiality of the Dacres, a household Allen goes to work for. Miss Janson's gentility is described by her inability to work in a household where only dress and outward trimmings are valued to be kept up without any money so that food and the servants' wages suffer. Allen takes

up the authority to judge and comment upon true and false gentility. In the process, she is able to distance herself from the kind of superficiality without interiority that the Dacres represent. “It makes me almost shudder to look back to that period of my life: besides plain work, mending under garments until they would no longer hang together, repairing household linen, making caps, gowns and bonnets, there was endless trouble and time expended in perpetually remaking and altering, to keep up with the rapid changes in the fashion . . . yet my own troubles seemed almost light when compared with those of Miss Janson, the miserable, unhappy governess. . . . her face was deeply marked with care, want and sorrow ”(104-105). Rose Allen is able to present her own gentility by being able to distinguish between true and false gentility. The servants are seldom paid and the family survives on heavy pudding to satisfy hunger. They have two pale faced teenage girls who are taught by Miss Janson, waiting to be introduced into society. According to Allen, that would “release them from further bondage under their home system” (106). Allen says “I used to pity these girls but not as I pitied Miss Janson” (106). Miss Janson’s accomplishments are never appreciated in this family. Miss Janson is the middle-class figure of the ailing governess who progressively fades away out of some mysterious illness caused by exertion, having to work in this household, until her brother, who is a gentleman, discovers her state and takes her home.

The contrast between exteriority and interior superiority in terms of class is emphasized throughout by Allen’s ability to distinguish between naturalized class superiority and acquired class through obsession with dress. In another striking incident, one of the Dacres borrows a silk dress from Mrs. Evelyn on the pretext of giving it to a servant but wears it herself. At one point they accuse a servant unjustly of stealing a dress and discharge her without pay, refusing to give her a character. Food and dress form two ways of replenishing the body, the Dacres trying to

achieve one at the cost of the other. By denying the body and stressing clothes, Miss Dacre has understood class divisions only superficially, a fact symbolized by her putting on Miss Evelyn's gown. However, at the same time, Miss Janson's fading body due to forced starvation becomes a symbol of the true middle-class woman, much like Helen Burns' starving body in *Jane Eyre*. Allen develops a narrative strategy by which she shifts the focus from her own problems about hunger, starvation and loss of class to the starving body of Miss Janson. In the process, because Miss Janson, the truly genteel figure, favours Allen, Allen becomes privileged and more genteel than Miss Dacre, her mistress.

A similar pattern of Allen's control of description is seen in her description of the Barkers, another household she works for. Whereas the Dacres are obsessed with clothes and social visits, the Barker sisters discourage any display of emotion. They are stereotypical characters, one short and plump, and the other tall and thin who do not allow music in the house. In both these households there are young men who get Allen's sympathy because they would rather not follow these rules. While the Dacres represent feminine attraction which is false because it is on the surface only, the Barker household represents too much control over pleasures which extend to symbolic sexual control of young people. Rose Allen's approbation or censure, as a narrator, is final in this respect, carefully modulating what is vulgar and what would be seen as too much control, maintaining the right balance of taste which is the prerogative of true class superiority. Beverley Skeggs talks about how, while representing their own bodies, working-class women have to distance themselves from sexuality on the one hand, seen as "vulgarity" and align themselves with "taste" in order to be acceptable. Neither anger nor sexuality as bodily experiences, therefore, has a place in Allen's narrative, both of which drive *Jane Eyre* onwards in her autobiography. Rose Allen's oldest brother Charles is supported at Cambridge with a

substantial part of the family's money when the mother and sisters work at sewing or at domestic service. This brother stays away from home, only comes back from time to time in the narrative, marries the clergyman's daughter and does not seem to contribute to the family in any way. But the reader has to unearth this by reading between the lines. Allen's narrative goes to great pains to avoid blame or anger.

The ambivalence that this ideal body is natural and that it can be achieved by anybody is also, paradoxically, used to present a conservative rhetoric which shifts the focus from material bodily needs to that of the realm of feelings, apparently between equals. Defining the working-class woman through her inner qualities such as "feeling" privileges her gender position and hence emphasizes sameness with her mistresses but obscures material difference and contains resistance. Ironically, the leisure to compose an autobiographical document is dependent on the fact that Allen has two servants of her own at the end of the text. This is part of the last paragraph of her autobiography:

I have written these sketches of the different situations I have filled, hoping that they may suggest to those, who may not *always* pay due attention to the welfare of their households, the duty of consulting their servants' feelings, which are so often the same as their own . . . *Very strong* are the mutual bonds of duty and obligation between servants and their employers. At all events, very pleasant may their mutual intercourse be rendered, when servants give themselves up with heartiness and good-will to the performance of their various duties as when their employers remember that kindness and consideration are as much done to their feelings as is attention to their bodily comfort, or the punctual payment of their wages (161/62)

For the modern state to function, maintaining social hierarchies is important despite the apparent ideal that everyone can be potentially equal. The editorial preface, by "A Lady," to Rose Allen's autobiography expresses an anxiety about whether Allen's autobiography is disrupting social structure. "If the language or sentiments of Rose Allen should sometimes appear rather above the position in which she is represented by peculiar circumstances to have been placed, the defect must rest on the Editor, who in endeavour to avoid one extreme, may

perhaps have unintentionally fallen into the other ” (“Preface”).The editor of the 1803 autobiography of Ann Candler, a cottager, anticipates a similar anxiety: “Ann Candler . . . is in the plainest and humblest sense of the word, a cottager: she had never had a higher station, or, in this world, a higher aim” (1).

Physical labour is an important category that distinguishes the genteel from the non-genteel, the unfeminine from the feminine. Representing domestic labour as physical labour is problematic for women who have to work for their living. Charlotte Bronte’s own letters show details of the work that she had to perform as a governess. The letters delineate how a governess’s work, apart from teaching, involved many of the duties that a nursery maid would have to perform, such as cleaning the children’s smutty noses, giving the baby a bath morning and night, repairing their clothes and doing needlework.⁹ This is a cause for both indignation and distress for Bronte. *Jane Eyre*, by contrast, does not mention any manual labour at all. Jane never harbours nurturing feelings towards Rochester’s ward Adele for most of the novel. Even intellectual work for pay, which Jane considers beneath herself, such as teaching in St. John Rivers’ school, is couched in the language of Christian toil. However, while such traditional feminine roles are avoided by Jane until the very end of the novel, working women stress their nurturing roles. Almost all the women considered here take care of their own younger siblings in childhood when their mothers go out to work but the work is rarely physicalized. While the deaths of their own children are rarely described in detail, physical sufferings of younger children under the care of domestic servants in the households they work for serve to depict the negligence that the women themselves suffer in disorganized households. Rose Allen takes care of a child with palpitations of the heart when her mistress neglects her daughter and uses dreams and foreshadowing to describe in detail the death of Miss. Evelyn’s grandchild.

Physical work is pushed off the centre of the text by domestic servants in their published autobiographies. However, while manual work cannot be represented, there is little to replace it because intellectual labour such as reading and writing is seen as equally inappropriate for domestic servants. Mary Ashford faces this problem when she is refused a job because the mistress is afraid that she would spend too much time reading romance novels. At another place, the only writing Ashford can do is write her invitations for her mistress, which she experiences as very oppressive. Ironically, this is how Rose Allen sees her own writing in the last paragraph of her autobiography:

My story is now concluded. I did not return to service . . . Edward and I were married at Hale Church . . . Edward is much engaged with business, and our two nice servants leave me, just now, much leisure. To beguile some of the long afternoons, while waiting for Edward, I have written these sketches of the different situations I have filled (161-162)

The whole autobiography is written at a time when Allen is married and has two servants of her own to do her housework so that writing serves to “beguile long afternoons.” It makes invisible the exploitation through which labour as manual labour is replaced with a more mystified form, writing, and both are made invisible and inconsequential because they are women’s work. To all intents and purposes, Rose Allen’s narrative ends like a “novel.”

The sheer physical effort involved in writing in the situations in which working women compose their texts, and the reasons for composition, which are erased in Allen’s concluding pages, might be appreciated in another working woman’s account of her life. The autobiography of Ann Candler (1803) brings attention to the whole material effort involved in the process of working women’s writing: “I hope you will be pleased to make allowances for my many errors and bad writing.; but I have been obliged to write the greater part by candle-light, as I have very little leisure by day ” (15). Very often, published autobiographies are also written for material rewards by these women. The book of poems that Candler publishes gets her out of her poor

house to a furnished lodging procured by her friends. Her editor says, “At the time of writing the above, Mrs Candler had not a hope of being enabled to remove out of the house of industry; but, about eight or nine months after, several of her poems have been read and approved, in polite and literary circles . . . ” so that she can be “supported by her own industry” (16-17). The slippage between the terms industry in “house of industry” as manual labour, and “industry” as writing shows that non-physical labour is privileged by both Candler and her editor. This, of course was probably because of the sheer inhumane nature of the manual labour performed. However, it also implies that writing, as an activity, allowed little opportunity for the expression of manual labour, often presented as its antithesis by a process of mystification as a non-manual activity.

Controlling the representation of respectability in relation to the structure of the family remains common to *Jane Eyre*, *Rose Allen* and *Mary Ashford*’s narratives though the mode of representation plays out differently. One of the ways in which *Jane Eyre* defines herself and fights against class oppression is by remaining, quite literally and figuratively, outside family or other social structures until she attains equality. This happens quite literally at her aunt Reeds’ at the start of the novel, where she is caught reading by her cousin, enclosed in the window space behind the curtains.¹⁰ At Thornfield Hall she is never part of Rochester’s parties but is depicted as watching them from outside. At St John River’s place, Moor House, she observes his two sisters and their servant from outside the window. Jane takes up the power of the gaze by remaining outside these spaces and developing the ability to narrate what goes on inside. While Jane’s separation from the people inside family structures has to be delineated carefully because her class position is not that different from theirs, Allen’s class position does not allow her to stress her difference. Working women’s narratives construct a middle-class identity by utilizing

the domestic servant's unique position at the margins of the home to watch over and be guardians of middle-class conduct. By being champions of morality, these women often present their own middle-class gendered sensibilities. This is a sort of reversal of the middle-class woman's role to watch over her servants and inculcate middle-class morality in them. Allen refuses to work in a place because the whole family is music-mad and the daughter is an actress. Mary Ashford refuses a lot of money and gives notice when she learns that the lady she works for lives alone as a housekeeper to a single gentleman, a judge, and when a subsequent employer turns out to be a "kept lady" and is also half starving servants, she leaves once more.

This shift of focus from the servant to people of a higher class is so complete in Rose Allen's autobiography that the text is merely a description of the series of different households she has worked for interspersed with the recurring incidents of her meetings with Grant, her future husband, which reads like a romance. Part of the reason for this shift is because the literary tropes that Allen has access to do not allow her to articulate her own predicament as a servant and as a woman. While working men are confident enough that their narratives of progress through joining trade unions and political careers might have some intrinsic value, the earlier working women's autobiographies lack this confidence. Hence, in the absence of models, Allen is probably convinced that her story has no value but from the fact that others stories might be learnt from it, whether they are the stories of her brothers or that of the people she works for. This self-effacement may result from the belief that a servant's life is only important for the facts that it reveals. This attitude can be seen in editors too. For example, in Elizabeth Ham's autobiography, a woman who identifies herself as a schoolmistress, the editor mentions in the preface that he omits 5000 words of "maudlin self pity" and "inconsequential gossip" from the autobiography, claiming that it is important only for graphic portraits of England, Ireland etc.

and for the “the author’s childhood in Dorset [which] may serve as a pendant to *The Trumpet Major* or *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. The remainder could, without too much exaggeration, be sub-titled ‘Elizabeth Ham in Search of a Husband’” (7).

Mary Ashford and the Ambivalent Re-emergence of the Body

Mary Ashford’s childhood story is one of hunger and deprivation. Her narrative of seventeen years of domestic service is very different from Rose Allen’s in that it reads less like a sentimentalized account of people she works for and more like details of a domestic servant’s life, with details about her various jobs, where her own role is delineated more than that of her employers’. Her suffering body is foregrounded as is the physical suffering of other people related to her. However, even this text glosses over and suppresses important experiences in Ashford’s life and privileges other experiences. In this sense, Mary Ashford’s narrative articulates physical suffering more directly than Rose Allen’s, but even then it uses some of the same middle-class tropes to articulate experiences which only fit those models awkwardly. While her own motherhood is not sentimentalized, her own mother’s image is idealized. Ashford shows a desire to narrate bodily sufferings explicitly while showing a desire to gloss over bodily experiences such as sexuality at the same time. Yet, her narrative is more obviously angry at the conditions of servants than many other texts of the period. Mary Ashford often fights for her rights and the rights of other people in the text, even to the extent of making sure her husband gets his rightful money after being dismissed from work.

Ashford uses the suffering body to vindicate her position as a servant but has to distance herself from that class position at the same time. The first one-third of Mary Ashford’s text deals with not her own life but that of her parents’ love affair, their marriage and the birth of their first child, as part of the self effacement practiced by working women in their autobiographies. A detailed account of their courtship also gives Ashford the opportunity to show that her mother

was of a class higher than what her own class identity might suggest. Early on, Mary Ashford describes an incident in detail where her father as a young boy is hit with a shoe by his master. The silver buckle hits him and makes him bleed and her father has to run out. Such an image of blood and the suffering body returns later when Ashford catches a violent cold after getting wet in the rain, carrying her parcels while changing houses she works for. She mentions in passing that even though it was raining and late at night, the mistress asks her to leave immediately. Even her boxes have to be brought from somewhere else because her mistress does not allow servants to keep boxes in the house for fear of London bugs. Ashford's descriptive powers bring to life the horrors she suffers after this. She gives details of an earache that follows after she gets drenched in the rain, when someone gives her a drop in her ear. She feels excruciating pain, there is a sound like a gunshot in her ear and her nightcap and handkerchief get soaked in blood. Yet she hides this and goes to work where she has to work with cold water again. Another incident is described from her childhood when Ashford describes her father's violent asthma. Her father bleeds from the disease which leads to dropsy, an ailment from which he finally dies when Ashford is a child.

Despite this, Ashford is not completely comfortable about her class position as a servant. The first part of Mary Ashford's narrative shows the pattern of establishing an origin of respectability by depicting a family consisting of a mother and father who fit the roles of ideal caregivers. Ashford attempts to detach herself from her class position as a servant by calling her text the "Life of a Licensed Victualler's Daughter" though she works as a domestic servant for seventeen years and most of her autobiography is about these years. She justifies the choice of name in her preface by saying that seventeen is not even a third of fifty seven, at which age she is writing her autobiography. While the story of the cross-class marriage of middle-class heroine

Jane Eyre's parents can be relegated to a time before Jane's narrative begins, a huge portion of the first part of Mary Ashford's narrative is about her parents' romance. Ashford's mother is of a higher class than her father and hence her family objects to the match. The couple is finally able to marry when Ashford's maternal grandmother dies. Ashford's mother is a fairly idealized figure who dies of "brain fever," attending to a sick father, broken hearted because of poverty and debt. Ashford's mother suffers silently like a true woman: "Could she have found relief in tears . . . the fever would not have settled so heavy on her;" (15).

However, within this narrative, certain events cannot be articulated and hence they provide awkward gaps, even remarkable improbabilities in logic that seem like sudden sutures in the text. For example, a very significant event in Ashford's early life needs to be mentioned. Ashford's mother gives away her child not once, but twice. She gives away her first child to the nurse and when Ashford is born when her mother is a little over eighteen, she gives away their second child to the same nurse as well. The older daughter dies in infancy, but Ashford feels the need to suppress any hint of negligence:

I must now mention some things which weighed heavy on my future lot, even in infancy. When my mother was confined of her first child, she had a monthly nurse, who acquired a complete ascendancy over her; she prevailed on her to let her take the infant to Brentford, to nurse, when a few months old; she and her husband living there at the time; and the little girl died at eleven months old, which I do not mean to say she could help; but she took care to remove, it seemed, close to London, before I was born . . . I was weaned, and taken off by Mrs. Long. Thus, at four months old, I was taken from the paternal roof. (11)

The responsibility shifts to the figure of the nurse and absolves her mother, making her mother free of any culpability and Ashford free of the unfilial sentiment of blaming her mother. Ashford is writing within a framework of middle-class sensibilities with its implications of morality, femininity and motherhood which clearly did not function in the same way in the life of her poverty and disease stricken teenage mother.

Hunger as a physical need is a significant part of working women's lives. Articulation of hunger, though, in the autobiographical text, poses a problem because it can align the autobiographical subject too closely to the body. In *Jane Eyre*, food and hunger, apart from being material and physical things that nourish the body, serve a symbolic function. John Reed tells Jane, "You can't eat the same meals as us," because she is a dependent. When Jane leaves Thornfield Hall and wanders about in the moors, she is reduced to the most basic physical needs. She is forced to beg for food, something which she was most scared of doing as a child because it would signify a loss of class. Finally, she is tempted to steal bread out of starvation while wandering in the moors after leaving Rochester's house. For Jane Eyre, the physical, often quite directly, signifies inward qualities--moral battles to be fought or bodily needs to be overcome which leads to moral or intellectual improvement appropriate to winning class status. For example, as Hoeveler notes, after Jane starts excelling at drawing in Lowood school, she stops dreaming of the "Barmecide supper of hot roast potatoes, or white bread and new milk" and starts picturing ideal drawings and dreaming of translating French in her mind. As she explores, this inner drama, played out and won, of the intellect against physical needs is another way of producing the perfect bourgeois subject. In the case of the female subject, especially in Jane Eyre, food and hunger also serve as metaphors for sexual needs quite directly and their regulation serves as a regulatory apparatus for female sexuality.

Working women cannot begin from an assumption that a description of how they overcome their material wants, such as those of hunger, would characterize them as worthy of an inner drama to justify their worth or femininity. In other words, they do not have a class/gender position to begin from to articulate their loss of class which would describe their hardship. Hence, Rose Allen takes recourse to a fantasy plot, distanced by a fairy-tale like repetitive motif,

of the appearance of the inspector Miss Evelyn and the hero Grant from time to time, to relieve situations where food becomes scarce in the family. Throughout, whenever the family faces hardship, mysterious gifts of supplies arrive in the house which, in keeping with the fiction-like plot, is discovered to be from Grant, perhaps through his accidental initials in the corner of the wrapping paper which are discovered by Allen's mother.

Ashford, however, is more forthcoming while depicting hunger. Her narrative does not attempt to create interiority by distancing her bodily needs or overcoming them but uses those needs as a means to point out larger social injustices. This comes out through Ashford's ironic narrative style. In one situation, the mistress leaves Ashford at home and does not leave her enough food. The woman tells Ashford that she serves small portions because she had seen a famine in childhood. Ashford replies with sarcasm that she would always think of a famine when she thought of her place. Ashford relates another mistress' attempt at control of the body with control of knowledge explicitly. Ashford wants to learn how to play the spinet from her mistress but the mistress tells her that she would teach her only if Ashford ate less because learning was not possible on a full stomach. Ashford's cheeks were, apparently, too large. In another place, Ashford admits to eating off of a block of cheese given to her for safekeeping in storage by a lodger when she was a servant at a lodging house. The lodger complains to her mistress that Ashford has stolen because she is underfed. Ashford is quite frank about the incident and does not show evidence of guilt: "I could not resist the temptation of cutting divers little bits, which, as he did not dine at home for some time, made, I must confess, for some time, sad inroads into it" (32). Unlike *Jane Eyre*, hunger is not a category for staging an inner struggle. Instead, it directly indicates class oppression and a simple physical need which could become a serious

problem in adolescence for servants. More than once, when Ashford is a teenager, she is discharged in favour of older servants who would eat less.

Ashford's narrative shows how much difficulty women autobiographers have to face to express some of their most intense physical experiences. Ashford takes recourse to literary devices such as foreshadowing, much like Jane Eyre's dreams of young children, to predict a physical calamity. Her experience of premature childbirth, brought on by negligence and unfair bureaucracy in the hospital, regulated by a committee of gentlemen who refuse her admission and ask her coarse questions, is foreshadowed in a dream where a porcupine bursts to reveal a cross, ugly face, that of one of the gentlemen. She is taken ill after walking back and the next day her child is born. While her experience of premature childbirth is described in detail, the deaths of her children are mentioned only in passing. This is a trope seen in Ann Candler, the cottager's autobiography too with a difference, where deaths of children due to poverty and disease are not seen as appropriate topics to be dealt with in detail as compared to her moral struggles. As one reads, one finds out that Candler's eldest daughter, who is born after the agonizing incident above, must have died at some point while her text was involved in detailing her moral dilemmas during the next few years.

While Rose Allen uses the romance form to bypass certain episodes of physical suffering in her life, Ashford simply mentions her marriages as practical choices in a very matter-of-fact tone which leaves out descriptions of emotions. Ashford's narrative underscores the difference of romantic ideals from her material situation. Affective experiences are removed from the text as far as possible, showing a different system of prioritization of experiences in her text. This lack of description of emotion is seen in Ashford's account of how she met one of her husbands. When Ashford is about to be out of a job and goes looking for linen to darn next door, the old

soldier living there dissuades her from taking the linen. Since his wife died some time ago, he says, he needs a wife. When Ashford agrees to marrying him, all that she mentions is that “he seemed much rejoiced, but said that he had put so much pepper into his saucepan the day before, while talking to me, that he had spoiled his dinner”(53). Much later, after six children and the death of this husband, Ashford marries her husband’s acquaintance: “He proposed marriage to me, as he said he knew I should do my duty by him, and he could assist me in rearing his old comrade’s children. I thought this was true, and that it would be a mutual benefit” (76).

Romance is not seen as an appropriate topic by Mrs. Wrigley either, who is a plate-layer’s wife and a member of the Women’s Co-operative Guild. The control of sexuality that these women experience, even explicitly, in their day to day lives becomes clear in certain instances. Mrs. Wrigley mentions that she first saw her husband at school on a Sunday afternoon, and when her mistress learnt about this young man, she stopped her going out altogether. The lack of expression of romantic affect in these texts is due to disciplinary mechanisms that see working women’s sexual lives as anxiety-producing. There are gaps in Mrs. Wrigley’s narrative too: “I was sorry to give up such a good home, and they was sorry for me to leave, but my young man wanted to get married for he had no mother. I had a good send-off with many presents.” (60). This is the only explanation ever given for the young man’s desire to marry Mrs. Wrigley.

Performing physical, domestic work bears a social stigma that many women have to face while choosing domestic service as their occupation. While Rose Allen’s mother makes many choices for her, Mary Ashford shows some agency in choosing service in the face of immense opposition from her relatives. They even agree to subscribe enough to pay for her apprenticeship to a dressmaker or a milliner when her father dies so that she does not have to become a servant. An old friend of Ashford’s father, Mrs. Bond, however, advises her that while it was “all very

well for those who have got a home and parents to shelter them when work is slack, . . . many clever women find it, at times, a half-starved kind of life” (20). A cousin who is the wife of a bank clerk makes it quite clear that Ashford could not be introduced by her or any other respectable friends if she became a servant. Historian Bridget Hill mentions that there was more behind this opposition to domestic service for women than appears at first. An out of place servant sometimes became a dependent, either a kin-servant or even worse, someone no better than a prostitute. Rose Allen feels extremely lonely in service because she cannot be acknowledged by friends. Mary Ashford feels that she has “lost caste” by being a servant.

Silencing the Body: Ellen Johnston’s Autobiography

The use of literary conventions to erase the body from the text is very clear in working-class factory-worker poet Ellen Johnston’s autobiography. Ellen Johnston’s father is a stonemason and she is a factory worker who aspires to be a poet. Johnston’s father leaves for America when she is young and her mother marries again. Johnston has a hard childhood when she suffers physical abuse from her stepfather, runs away from home multiple times, is introduced to factory work at eight, has an illegitimate child and finally becomes a well known as a poet. She creates controversy by dragging a foreman to court for discharging her without reason, wins the case but has to go into ‘factory exile’ as no one hires her and even her co-workers, both men and women, forsake her. Johnston uses literary conventions such as romantic language and the figure of the poet to bridge gaps in her narrative where she cannot articulate her bodily sufferings and transgressions in this account of her life that precedes a collection of her poems. However, her text gives the impression of being very aware of the power politics involved in the silencing process several times.

Johnston’s autobiography gives us the bare facts of her life, not always in a chronological order. She constantly draws attention to the silences in her text, which very often amount to an

erasure of her body at moments of physical abuse or physical transgression. She talks about troubles but never makes explicit what those troubles really might have been. Very often, she uses literary figures to convey what she cannot describe: “Like Rasselas, there was a dark history engraven on the tablet of my heart . . . a dark shadow . . . shutting out life’s gay sunshine . . . a shadow which has haunted me like a vampire” (6). At one point, not being able to bear her sufferings, she is about to drown herself when she hears the voice of her young lover and comes back. Her ability to silence what she calls her “secret” multiple times helps her talk about her physical sufferings. The text draws attention to this “secret” many times but never articulates what it means. Paradoxically, by drawing attention to the erasure of her body from the text at these points, Johnston refuses to be silent about abuse. Once, when she runs away, she is brought back by her uncle and beaten by her mother:

till I felt my brain was on fire; but still I kept the secret in my own bosom. . . . had I seen the shroud of shame and sorrow I was weaving around myself, I would then have disclosed the mystery of my life, but I remained silent and kept my mother and friends in ignorance of the cause which first disturbed my peace and made me run away from her house for safety and protection. (8-9)

Johnston creates romantic moments in the model of her favourite writer, Walter Scott, to organize her story. Johnston constructs her character as that of the romantic poet or adventurer but the contrast between the material situation of the Romantic writers and her own situation prevents smooth transitions between passages of heightened language and description of what happened in her life: “Yes, gentle reader, I have suffered trials and wrongs that have but rarely fallen to the lot of woman. Mine were not the common trials of every day life, but were those strange romantic ordeals attributed to the imaginary heroine of ‘Inglewood Forest’” (5). Johnston is the Wandering Jew who has feasted on the merry halls of England, she is Rasselas, she has waited and watched the sunset on the banks of the Clutha. In lines reminiscent of *Tintern Abbey*, Johnston talks about her childhood years “Yes, years that passed like a dream, unclouded and

clear. Oh that I could recall them . . .”(6) The irony of these lines and their function in obscuring her real childhood experiences so that she can present herself as a poet becomes apparent when these lines are immediately followed by very prosaic lines that talk about her mother’s second marriage and her removal to her stepfather’s house. The disjunction between bodily experiences she is supposed to narrate, and bodily experiences that she has really had is made apparent by her in her juxtaposition of Goldsmith’s poem “When lovely woman stoops to folly,” a poem which ends with the suicide of the “fallen” woman with the following lines:

I did not, however, feel inclined to die when I could no longer conceal what the world falsely calls a woman’s shame. No, on the other hand, I never loved life more dearly and longed for the hour when I would have something to love me- and my wish was realised by becoming the mother of a lovely daughter on the 14th of September 1852. (10-11)

Mrs. Layton’s Foregrounding of the Body

Several autobiographical pieces in *Life as We Have Known It*, by Co-operative Working Women (1931) edited by Virginia Woolf and Mrs Llewelyn Davis approach bodily suffering much more explicitly. Some of the tropes in the earlier texts survive in these much later ones including tropes of motherhood, deaths of children and some forms of bodily suffering. These images, though used very differently, do not show that the women are completely comfortable with depicting their own bodies and their class position, and often project suffering on other bodies. Discourses of motherhood and domesticity sometimes help to articulate situations similar to the earlier texts while at other times such discourses function more radically. One of these autobiographies is the autobiography of Mrs. Layton, a member of the Women’s Co-operative Guild. Mrs. Layton too begins her autobiography with a memory of her mother, but the lines that she uses to describe her do not sentimentalize the image. In fact, Mrs. Layton physicalizes motherhood and thereby critiques contemporary practices. “I was my mother’s seventh child, and seven more were born after me--fourteen in all--which made my mother a perfect slave” (1). She

says at one point that her mother's good nature was her downfall because it undermined her constitution. She ran into debt continually to get food for her family or for a sick neighbour. "When I think of my poor overworked, tired mother I wonder that she lived as long as she did" (8).

Mrs Layton, far from removing the body from her text, makes the body of primary importance and criticizes the ignorance that results from not knowing about childbirth. The image of women suffering during childbirth returns again and again in her narrative. At one point, she thinks the 'unfeminine' thought that she would never have a child if her hands and feet were not to be washed for days like that of many women she saw. She becomes a registered midwife later on in life but when she is fifteen, she has her first experience of seeing childbirth. The mother dies of puerperal fever a few months after the child is born and this is how she expresses her reaction to the incident: "I knew nothing of the facts of life regarding childbirth. I asked a woman who came to work questions concerning childbirth and her answers were so crude and very often disgusting. She seemed to look on the function of giving life as a joke. There was no one else I could speak to" (25).

When her own first baby is born, the description is quite devoid of idealized sentimentality: "My baby, a boy, was born on September 3rd, 1883. I had rather a bad time as I had to be delivered with forceps and had nothing to lull the pain, so had to feel all that was going on. The baby was small and puny and very cross" (37). The physical side of motherhood is not idealized, including that of her own mother. When Mrs Layton's baby dies, she uses a matter-of-fact tone which brings out the harsh conditions under which she has to struggle. She locates the reason for this in the material conditions and does not conceal facts behind the language of metaphor. "My baby was delicate from birth and was ill for some months before he died. I was

insufficiently nourished during pregnancy and nearly lost my life through want of nourishment and attention during my confinement and lying-in period” (37). An autobiography entitled “A Plate-Layer’s Wife,” in the same collection, talks about her experience of childbirth:

I found out my condition, and to prepare for that time, I took more sewing in, and worked night and day to save a little, working the machine and washing, anything to save a shilling or two. Just a week before my baby came, I made eight print tight-fitting jackets for ¼ each, to get a little more to what I had saved. I had to suffer for it after. I went about with a little pillow under each arm for three months with gathered breasts . . . While I was away, my husband was taken ill, and I nearly lost him. (61)

Critics warn us that to read working-class women’s diaries, traditional strategies of interpretation have to be revised. Repetition, silences, gaps and the volume of writing are these women’s strategies to make their voices heard. In the excerpt above, material details such as “eight print tight-fitting jackets for ¼ each” seem as important as details such as “my husband was taken ill, and I nearly lost him.” Trained in traditional ways of reading which invest greater importance in interiority than exteriority, one tends to assume that this emphasis is disproportionate. Such an approach exposes our own critical limitations as well as the limitations of our expectations of the autobiographical genre, the assumption that it will deliver an interior narrative. In a similar way, Mrs. Layton’s childhood memories are memories of her material condition--the smell of cows, the flies, the water closet, the refuse, epidemics of fevers and smallpox and cholera.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Layton still idealizes her mother as a way of separating herself from physical transgression. A very strong memory is candidly described when she is offered money by a man for sexual services. Her dilemma reflects the difficulties of expressing her temptation and the means of overcoming it. She finally refuses because she is reminded of her mother.

One day I was tempted to do wrong. A gentleman who had seen me about with the children met me out alone one evening and offered me 10/- to go with him into a house for a short time. I thought of what 10/- would buy and how long I had to work for 10/-. And then I thought of my dear mother. Her poor tired face came into my mind and I felt that if I had been tempted to do wrong with the promise of &10,000, I would not for my mother’s

sake. I have had many temptations during my life, but my mother's face always seemed to stand between me and temptation (26).

Adoption of discourses of domesticity also helps obscure material conditions. Many working women are in no position to lead family lives by the standards of discourses that idealize domesticity. For instance, despite her candidness about some matters, Mrs Layton too claims middle-class gentility based on her ability to hide bodily needs. "I was very poor, but no one outside my door ever knew how often I was hungry or how I had to scheme to get my husband nourishment" (37). Ideals of domesticity, family and motherhood cannot be achieved, for example, by Florence White, who never marries. For Mary Ashford, her multiple marriages do not yield financial security. Many working women have physically ill husbands, such as Mary Ashford, Mrs. Layton or Mrs. Wrigley, whose husbands die after leaving the responsibility of many children on the shoulders of their wives.

"I Am an Old Maid": Domesticity and Motherhood in Florence White's Tale

Florence White's autobiography shows how these ideals of domesticity and motherhood are incorporated by a woman who is neither married nor a mother. Her text shows the flexibility of bourgeois discourse which engulfs differences and organizes people's experiences through metaphors of the home and family which make different material conditions of people seem homogeneous or simply dependent on inner states of mind. White uses these discourses in her text until she herself becomes the vanguard of these states of mind and by implication, of a middle-class status which includes single working women like herself. But this state she achieves remains agonizingly unstable for her. In order to align herself with a domestic occupation, Florence White calls her text "The Autobiography of a Cook" despite the fact that she serves as a cook for a fraction of her life only. White begins with a kind of genealogy of her family but the narrative really begins with her mother, who dies very early in the narrative. White attempts to

present an idealized picture of the father and an ideal parent-child relationship, but the narrative is strained. It struggles to resolve the apparent contradiction between two ideas that need to be presented to maintain this image of the happy family--an ideal love between the parents, which is eternal, and revealing what actually happened--that her father married the nurse as soon as her mother died. The trope of the evil stepmother in a Cinderella story pattern is introduced and all hardships lose their economic reasons, as in the fairytale, and get concentrated on the stepmother. When she is sixteen Florence's stepmother hits her and blinds her in one eye, and she states that she becomes so "ugly" that she never receives a marriage proposal in her life. White occupies different positions through her life including being a teacher and a "journalist" freelancing and sending recipes to newspapers. She is in domestic service as a cook for almost six years in a series of households, from 1916 to 1921 and values her work strongly: "it did seem to me that now was the time to act up to what I had always preached, that is, no occupation was so good as domestic service, and no service so valuable to the nation as good cooking" (276).

White struggles to maintain her identity as a woman who is not part of a family working in a domestic space. In the following extracts from her autobiography, we see her handling anxieties about single women's sexuality outside the domestic space, women's work for pay and lack of maternal feelings, all of which she had to deal with being an unmarried working woman. While expressing the importance of her work, White has to stress her femininity, which is often defined in terms of domesticity against threatening desires outside the home. Since White does not have access to the domestic ideal, she constructs alternate non-transgressive ideals while talking about her work:

The longer I live the more convinced I become that the home and its work are the most important, as well as the most interesting, things in life, and the kitchen fire the hub of the

universe, far more important than any mere parliamentary vote, which might well be left to men.

Despite this claim, White stresses her contentment with her single life, making sure that any sexual anxieties that her single status might arouse are allayed:

This didn't, and doesn't mean that I think 'any marriage is better than no marriage.' Not a bit of it. I am an old maid, a very happy old maid, whose proud boast it is that I've never had an offer of marriage in my life- thanks to my step-mother.

I really mean that 'thanks'! As an old woman of seventy-four I am convinced I should have hated married life. What I should have liked would have been to be a cook in the kitchen of some strictly enclosed Contemplative Order of Nuns, or perhaps better still to have been an anchoress like Dame Juliana of Norwich. . . . I regard the convents and monasteries of the Contemplative Orders as generating-stations of spiritual activity.

From this point onwards, White goes on to define home as an inner state, which can be achieved anywhere, in any situation, obscuring material difference. At the same time, she makes space for single women like herself to forge an identity based on domesticity even while being working women with no family. By an ingenious turn of logic, she makes single women in her position the vanguards of domesticity:

Marriage is a great discipline and may be a great help on the soul's journey, but it is not necessary to marry to be disciplined by life, or to have the opportunity of exercising a motherly instinct if one happens to possess it. This I know from personal experience. There is nothing I care for more on earth than home, and I can make one in an attic or a basement with only the barest necessities; and the home is the starting place of world service of every kind. The love of mothering people was born in me; it is, as Roman Catholics would say, 'no merit' of mine. My happiest memories have been when I have been mothering somebody; and there have always been plenty of people to mother- men and women, boys and girls. I have never expected anything in return; but have had wonderful happiness in serving others. There is nothing in the world equal to it, and it isn't as if I have never known worldly pleasures. As a journalist I have done every worldly social thing that was worth doing, and a few that were not!

The first person I mothered was my own father . . .

.....

Any one will easily understand that, feeling and thinking as I do, it became of the first importance to me that every one else, especially girls and women, should realize the joy of domestic work done as a labour of love.

‘A servant by this law makes drudgery divine.’(283)

In this process, White manages to erase labour performed in the home for the family as a “labour of love” while also erasing the labour of domestic servants like herself because it is performed within the home.

Yet, the apparent freedom from material situations of these ideals of domesticity and motherhood is unstable and White’s text reflects her struggle to negotiate and overcome her doubts. In the following extract, the description of the kitchen overlooking a paved garden and flower beds gives it the semblance of a home. Yet, the tin spoons make clear the difference of her situation:

My little maid and I lived in the kitchen where comfortable chairs had been provided. The windows looked on to a paved garden with beds of flowers, and the church walls were covered with Virginia creeper. At first I hated the thick kitchen cups and saucers and metal spoons and forks, yet I would not use the dining-room ones because it would have made my little maid discontented, but I never really became used to tin spoons. We were happy together, my girl and I, and made the kitchen, which was very pleasant, a real home.

White realizes that her class position interferes with her reception as a woman. She can only deal with this situation by treating her position as a servant as role playing, a situation she has entered into voluntarily. Her hysterical reaction at the end of the act shows the psychological cost at which she manages to obscure class difference:

I shall never, however, forget the first time I went into the dining-room to wait on those men. Of course, they remained seated while I handed round the plates of meat and vegetables; No man had behaved so discourteously to me before; And then I remembered that I had placed myself in the position of a servant, and that it was up to them, as well as to me, to play the game. When I went back to the kitchen I flung myself into an armchair and laughed till the tears rolled down my cheeks, the little maid looking on in astonishment.¹¹

.....

By the end of fifteen months I had put the whole house in order but was too used up to dare risk another winter. I therefore gave up the job, took a fortnight’s rest... (279-80)

The text ends with the domestic ideal translated to White's own unmarried working life.

However, the paradox of this domestic ideal is that even while servants have to be made to feel that the home is really theirs, hierarchies have to be maintained:

It takes more than one person to make a home for 'weans and wife.' Marriage isn't always 'all beer and skittles,' but domestic service may be the ideal life for a woman who does not marry. It depends, of course, on the mistress of the house. What is needed for her to make friends, real friends, of those she employs, and to make them feel they are definitely members of the family, that the home is really theirs. This doesn't mean they must necessarily have meals with the family. On the contrary, it is much better and more convenient that they should not, both for masters and mistresses and for the servants themselves. (292)¹²

These autobiographies give us a greater understanding of how and why some working women choose to erase their bodies from their texts while others bring their bodies to the foreground to deal with their material conditions of existence. However, the adoption of middle-class discourses of "femininity" by working-class women is not always as passive a process as some of these ideas might suggest. Often experience is organized in these texts by adopting or working against tropes from dominant discourses creatively. Ways of reading need to be revised to discover the erasures and give greater importance to the details and modes of writing which may be different from that needed to articulate middle-class experience.

Moving on from women who practice such strategies of distancing themselves from labouring bodies, Chapter 6 explores the diaries of Hannah Cullwick who does not distance herself, but foregrounds her body, using discourses related to working-class women in the larger culture stressing her identity as a servant.

Notes

¹ The period Florence White was in domestic service is described by her to be from March 1916 to December 1921. The autobiography was first published in 1938.

² This text was published in *Life as We Have Known It*, by Co-operative Working Women in 1931. This is a collection of working women's writing edited by Margaret Llewelyn Davies with an introductory letter by Virginia

Woolf. All the women who contributed to the collection were members of the Women's Co-operative Guild which was founded in 1882. Margaret Llewelyn Davies was the Secretary of the Guild from 1889 to 1921.

³ This short autobiographical piece was also published in *Life as We Have Known It*.

⁴ For a discussion of such cases where servants demanded their wages in court, see Pamela Horn's chapter on 'Employer-Servant Relations' in *The Rise and the Fall of the Victorian Servant*. Some specific cases are mentioned on page 116.

⁵ I am indebted to Diane Hoeveler for an analysis of Jane's situation from the point of view of disciplining institutions in relation to the body. Hoeveler suggests that "In her fictional presentation of various bodies, Bronte suggests that gender and class alone do not determine one's ultimate social status. Only by cultivating the perfectly disciplined body . . . can one achieve bourgeois 'salvation'--that is, social and economic hegemony" (116).

⁶ Even though Jane is only ten when she is shut up in the Red Room, its "deadly and bloody connotations, its Freudian wealth of secret compartments . . . has strong associations with the adult, female body" (Showalter 70). Showalter has interpreted this episode as a "passage into womanhood" (70).

⁷ One of the early essays that noted the importance of the moon as a symbol of a mother figure in Jane's life was Adrienne Rich's essay, "*Jane Eyre: The Temptations of a Motherless Woman*."

⁸ "Miss Temple had looked down when he first began to speak to her; but now she gazed straight before her, and her face, naturally pale as marble, appeared to be assuming also the coldness and fixity of that material; especially her mouth, closed as it would have required a sculptor's chisel to open it, and her brow settled gradually into petrified severity" (63).

⁹ See, for example, Charlotte Bronte's letter to Emily Bronte, June 8, 1839.

¹⁰ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak notes that Jane's progress can be "charted through a sequential arrangement of the family/ counter-family dyad" (179). The final sequence of the novel is a community of families with Jane, Rochester and their children at the centre.

¹¹ An excerpt from Arthur Munby's diary shows how he speculates on a similar situation as well: "Are the relations of the sexes really inverted when three men sit at table, with hands delicate and jewelled, and a woman stands behind and waits, offering the dishes with so large coarse a hand that makes her master's look almost ladylike?" (qtd. in Stanley, 20).

¹² Hannah Cullwick's diary brings out a similar dilemma when a servant is expected to behave like a lady would in a domestic setting and yet, remember that this space is not really her own:

Still, I felt that nothing could be done without self-possession, & which I've found out is a great difference 'twixt a lady and a servant, & which I must own too is scarcely possible for a thorough servant to *have* except in her own kitchen. And even there she must be what I call a presumptuous one except with the servants under her, 'cause it shows that she forgets that the kitchen is *not* her own. Yet I pity the servants who always remember it, no one can tell her feelings who *does* remember that & forgets that she's working and earning all her wages. I went out to service too soon, before I really understood the meaning of it. (282)

CHAPTER 6

“THE BEAUTY IN BEING NOTHING BUT A COMMON DRUDGE”: DIRTY WORK, DIRTY BODY AND THE PORNOGRAPHIC IMAGINATION IN HANNAH CULLWICK’S DIARIES

Hannah Cullwick’s Diaries and the Woman Servant’s Body

Hannah Cullwick is minor-canonical now amongst scholars of the nineteenth century as a domestic servant who has left copious amounts of writing in the form of diaries. The publication of Derek Hudson’s biography of Arthur Munby, *Munby: Man of Two Worlds* in 1972 brought critical attention to the diaries and letters of Cullwick and her gentleman lover Arthur Munby, and their unique relationship. Though a large portion of Munby’s writings in the archives at Trinity College, Cambridge, is about Cullwick, the biography is basically from Munby’s point of view. It was in 1984 that Liz Stanley’s edited extracts from Cullwick’s diaries drew attention to Cullwick’s own writings. This text still remains the only published source of Cullwick’s diaries though the entire manuscript is available on microfilm now. This collection has Cullwick’s handwritten autobiography, her 16 volume diary and 850 letters to Munby. This is a significant amount of writing even though it is only a small portion of the entire collection. In this chapter I look at Cullwick’s diaries, which she kept at Munby’s request regularly from May 1854 until January 1873, right after she got married. I also look at two overviews of her life, written by Cullwick: “Hannah’s Places” was written in 1872 and “A Servant’s Life” was partly written after her marriage in 1873. The latter piece talks about the period from 1866 to 1872 in detail. There has been a recent resurgence of interest amongst critics on Cullwick’s diaries since three powerful studies were published as parts of longer works by three important scholars of the Victorian context--Elizabeth Langland, Ann McClintock and Leonore Davidoff.¹

Cullwick’s diaries offer an interesting locus to observe how power plays out in the construction of working women’s identities. For the most part of her life, Cullwick served as a

lower servant, mostly as a maid-of-all-work though she was also a cook, a char, a pot-girl, a housemaid and a housekeeper at different points in her life and also served fish at her brother's stall in the market briefly. Unlike the autobiographies that we have seen so far, a very significant portion of her diaries consists of description of work such as cleaning grates, sweeping stairs, washing, cleaning chimneys and doing other kinds of heavy physical work. The diaries also contain details of her secret eighteen-year courtship with Arthur Munby who was a gentleman, poet, barrister, social-worker and who moved in the highest literary circles of his day. They married in 1873, a marriage that remained a secret except to a very few close friends of Munby though Cullwick's own relatives were aware of the union. Munby's diaries and poems deal with this relationship extensively as well. At Munby's request, Cullwick wrote diaries about her daily life that she posted to him from time to time with details of her work. As Liz Stanley notes, there is no evidence of any sexual relationship in the genital sense in this material, but the diaries show that she blackened her face and licked his boots often, called him "Massa" affectionately, dirtied her clothes before she met him and made him sit on her lap. She wrote the diaries secretly, met Munby secretly and wore a chain and padlock round her neck to which only Munby had the key. However, there was always the danger of being discovered either by fellow servants who often shared a room with her and saw her writing or saw the padlock, or by the master or mistress who saw her with Munby. This is information that we get from the diaries themselves.

Amongst other things, Cullwick's diaries are definitely an erotic document meant to please her gentleman-lover, Munby. Considered as erotic documents, the diaries are not simple texts that show a unidimensional power structure whereby Cullwick serves up whatever Munby wants to read. In the process of writing, it becomes clear in places that she writes for herself and that she experiences pleasure herself. In this context, while trying to study how Cullwick's subject

formation plays out in the text as woman and as servant, it is profitable to see what discourses are available to her while constructing this document. Placing Cullwick's document in a series of texts that talk about sexuality in this period is useful in understanding how individuals in the object position of the social imaginary construct their subjectivity. Cullwick's sexual imagination deals with the cross-class relationship by drawing on existing tropes that talk about love and the body in the context of class difference in heterosexual relationships. I have observed that Cullwick's diaries can be placed within two kinds of traditions of writing: the tradition of cross-class erotica or pornography of the Victorian period, and the tradition of the sentimental novel of the previous century which also dealt with master-servant relationships.

Hannah Cullwick's diaries demonstrate how a person at the margins of social power structures is able to use tropes related to her class and gender position that are common in the dominant culture in ambivalent ways to gain power within a situation of extreme power imbalance. In this chapter I explore how she attempts to foreground her body as a primary marker of her value as a servant, and yet has to resist objectification and homogenization as just a body in order to seem a special servant to her lover Munby. She draws on pornography and the tradition of the sentimental novel to construct a subject that gazes on the body and yet does not become a mere body. Constant reinforcement of the separation/identification duality is required to present her identity as a servant and as a woman in a relationship with an upper class man. This constant flux is always a threat to her unified sense of subjectivity and identity because Cullwick's body as signifier ultimately has meaning in a larger signifying system she struggles to control from her class and gender position.

Cullwick foregrounds her body throughout as an erotic object drawing on contemporary classed stereotypes of working women in Victorian pornography, closely relating this to her

physical work, so that work and erotics become inseparable often. At the same time she places herself in a literary tradition of the literature of sentiment using the text as an instrument of bodily surveillance by which she takes up the power of narrating her own body, albeit in problematic ways. By the play of various discourses about servants, women, women servants, racial Others and physical domestic work in a very unique context, Cullwick's text is able to construct a sense of her own subjectivity which makes apparent her agency in the relationship. This is not to deny the extreme inequality of power relations between Munby and Cullwick and the hegemonic nature of the discourses that place her in the object position of the social imaginary. The discursive practices used often do not allow Cullwick to narrate certain experiences which have to be recovered from their erasures. These narrative modes make her highlight stereotypical aspects of her own body and work repeatedly. However, to define any servant and woman in a heterosexual relationship with an upper class man as unambiguously powerless is to emulate the very relations of power and dominance that such criticism seeks to challenge. The question that this chapter explores is how marginal individuals negotiate relations of power under situations of extreme power imbalance and construct their subjectivity. Thus, while Langland believes that the proud and intelligent Cullwick "pursued distinction not by climbing the social ladder" but by "enacting a fairy tale plot of love and marriage with a man her social superior" enacting "a social script already laid out for her" (214), I see her as a more active agent not only in manipulating those discourses but in revising them significantly.

Regenia Gagnier talks about the cost of bourgeois familial or gender ideology on working-class men and women not permitted bourgeois lives, who seek to write their lives as middle-class narratives, sometimes as a therapeutic act. Although these women attempt self-analysis, their experience cannot be analyzed in terms of their acculturation. The gap between ideology and

experience leads to disintegration of the narrative and of the personality the writer hopes to construct. In the case of working-class women, certain enlightenment narratives of self-development are unavailable, so they have to take recourse to literary genres. The romance narrative is one of the genres that Gagnier mentions which expresses working-class women's experience. I examine Cullwick's text against the literature of sentiment combined with the romance genre such as Richardson's *Pamela* which she uses to bridge the cross-class nature of their relationship. I also examine some Victorian pornographic texts to get an idea of what kinds of concepts existed about the construction of desirability related to the working-class woman's body. In the context of these texts, I examine how Cullwick creates her erotic fantasies by manipulating the representation of her body through these tropes and other symbols that are privately agreed upon by Munby and Cullwick. Her own pleasure in complicity and sense of power in such sexed and classed tropes, as well as her simultaneous discomfort in such participation, lends us an insight into how dominant tropes are appropriated by a person at the margins to construct a sense of subjectivity and make herself desirable at the same time through textual representation. The added dimension of stress on work--and work specifically through the body—is a strong statement of class identity. However, at the same time, this identity is something that gets consumed erotically in the flexibility of discourse. The eroticization of Cullwick's body in a cross-class relationship is constructed through textuality itself in the same way as it is constructed in Richardson's *Pamela*, the classic example of a fictional master-servant romance.

Nancy Armstrong mentions how this cross-class love plot of the eighteenth century becomes non-narratable in the novel in the nineteenth century even though such instances of class transcendence might be found amongst real people later in the century. Cross-class

relationships, however, are quite abundant in a genre which seems to be at the other end of the social spectrum, though often read by the same people: pornography. Pornography, primarily catering to men, depicts working-class women's bodies from the point of view of men and from the point of view of the dominant discourses about class and gender (and race) in this period. Placing Cullwick's diaries within a context of these discourses gives us a deeper insight into how these same discourses were appropriated by Cullwick to compose an erotic document quite consciously. At the same time these discourses also construct a subjectivity that gives her a sense of her own class and gender identity.

A public/private divide is clear in Cullwick's diaries where her love for Munby is part of her private sphere and kept a secret from the public. However, contrary to class being homogenized in the private space, class relations are replicated for Cullwick in her private sphere and this class difference becomes a source of attraction. Ironically, the domestic sphere, seen as the private sphere in the Victorian world, is absent because the couple never really set up house together. Munby always comes to meet Cullwick secretly or she goes to meet him. Hence, the language of sentimental love constructs this sphere for Cullwick in the context of class difference which is a recurring theme through the texts. Cullwick identifies herself as a servant in the public sphere and as her "Massa's" servant in the private sphere, seeing no contradiction between the status of wife and servant. However, the corollary situation does not work for Cullwick because even though she can see herself as his wife/lover in private, the public acknowledgement of these roles through marriage becomes hard to deal with. The concept of marriage and the idea of being a wife, as also the idea of being a woman, seem class bound and incompatible, even undesirable for her.

Surveillance and Private Life: Cullwick's Texts as Diaries

Cullwick's daily records need to be examined from the point of view of their form: the diary. As compared to the autobiographies of lower-middle-class/ working-class women which I have considered in Chapter 5, which were meant for public consumption, Cullwick's diaries offer an insight into how commonly available class stereotypes about working-class women play out in the private lives of individuals in the object position of the social imaginary. Under Munby's surveillance, Cullwick constructs a private document meant to be read only by him and herself. She constructs a narration where dirt, physical labour and her own body are eroticized. In the process, she deploys available middle-class discourses about the working-class female body quite consciously. Work, the physical body and sexuality are some of the main parameters that stabilize and destabilize the self constructed in their diaries. Since these diaries are not self-consistent narratives but records of her everyday life, entries on certain days show her uncritical acceptance and participation in these discourses, while on other days there is clear evidence of doubt.

Cullwick's diaries deserve special attention and need to be set aside from the first-person narratives of the other domestic servants I consider in Chapter 5 for several reasons. Firstly, they were written at the specific request of Munby and hence are more specifically geared towards a consideration of him as the audience rather than a general middle-class public. The manuscripts also show that Munby had the authority to edit and excise these diaries. Since these were private documents, Cullwick and Munby did not need to consider the tastes of a middle-class reading public. His private erotic desires played a strong part in directing what he liked to read and therefore what Cullwick had to write. Secondly, as compared to the autobiographies of the other working women, Cullwick is able to express her erotic fantasies freely without the fear of them being edited and excised for publication.

These fantasies bear interesting comparisons with Victorian pornography which were published specifically for their erotic content. Cullwick has to show a middle-class understanding of femininity with respect to cultural constructions of attractiveness for her middle-class lover. At the same time, she has to be a servant to satisfy his special attraction for women of her class. She has to highlight the difference of her bigger body from middle-class women's bodies to impress him and also differentiate her body from his smaller, fragile one, thereby effecting a partial gender reversal. Also, she has to emphasize contrasts within her own body that highlight her body like a collage--a mixture of contrasts of the middle-class feminine ideals contrasted with the ideals of the "masculine" female working-class body that Munby liked to see. Cullwick's diary seems to be a brilliant case for examining how a working-class subjectivity that is not free of the concept of gender is being moulded by disciplinary power. Munby seems to be quite aware of this phenomenon when he says: "I told him [a certain host of a party in Munby's dream] of my love for her, and her's for me, of the cruel discipline by which I had educated her, of the degradation which had purified her spirit and how all that she had done and suffered for me had (as I knew it would) increased my love tenfold" (qtd. in Atkinson 119). Strategies of reading that challenge the unitary subject and expose conflicting ideologies resist the disciplinary power of Munby's surveillance and the surveillance of larger disciplinary institutions in Cullwick's historical and social context.

The fragmented nature of the diary especially lends itself to this kind of analysis because the daily events mentioned do not necessarily add up to a unitary self. Elizabeth Hampsten's study of turn-of-the-century diaries of women in mid-western United States talks about how women's diaries use strategies like encoding, repetition and deletion to shape what is and is not said in these texts. Most of Cullwick's diaries are full of descriptions of her work. She gets up in

the morning, cleans the grates, shakes the carpets, cleans boots, sweeps the stairs, cleans the outside steps, cleans the chimneys and cleans the kitchen. She describes these activities in great detail over and over again everyday. These entries show how important this work is to her and Munby and how work shapes her writing. Her diaries give a sense of accomplishment at having completed these chores. Critics warn us that to read working-class women's diaries, traditional strategies of interpretation have to be revised. Repetition, silences, gaps and the sheer volume are these women's strategies to make their voices heard. Her repetition of these chores has to be read within her material context.

Analyzing Cullwick's diaries in the context of working women's autobiographies is complex because the significance of these very repetitions, deletions and silences is hard to determine. Some repetitions are for Munby's benefit while some others may have special significance. Sometimes her ideas seem to contradict each other, having been entered at different periods of her life or simply even on different days, depending on her mood. Her attitude to writing is one such case in point. She sometimes complains that she does not enjoy writing while at other times she says she enjoys it but is clearly trying to please Munby. At yet other times she seems to be enjoying it for herself. Also, though the sheer volume of her diaries is striking, she does not write them for herself, but writes because she has been asked to. Therefore therapeutic reasons for which working women often write their diaries may not apply completely to Cullwick's case. In fact, according to Liz Stanley, her refusal to write for Munby becomes an act of protest, rather than the writing of them, as theories of therapy might suggest.

Cullwick and the Sentimental Tradition

Cullwick emphasizes her class differences from Munby throughout her diaries and the language of sentimental love is often used to bridge over this difference in station. Rather than class difference being a deterrent, it is seen as a source of secret pleasure. Cullwick shows the

ability to narrate events in her life by taking recourse to generic conventions such as when she refers to certain dramatic elements in her “romance” with Munby. She uses dramatic foreshadowing to talk about key events in her life. For example, she describes seeing her “Massa’s” face in the fire the day before she actually meets him for the first time on her twenty-first birthday. She describes their meetings in detail such as one where she describes “the grand gentleman and the lodging house drudge” meeting on the road (70). The meetings, like the repeated cleaning acts, are a common recurring theme through the diaries. The descriptions of cleaning follow a mode of realism while the love theme provides an opportunity for an internal exploration of Cullwick’s mental states. Cullwick must have been familiar with novels which dealt with cross-class romantic themes. She records at one point that Munby reads *Pamela* to her and at another point that he makes her read *Clarissa*. *Adam Bede* is also mentioned in passing.

For Cullwick, the stolen nature of their love, because of a difference in class, is a source of pleasure. One of Munby’s few friends who is told of this affair, Mr B (the similarity of the abbreviation to *Pamela* is co-incidental), comes to talk to Cullwick and almost persuades Cullwick to give up Munby. Cullwick tells Mr B, “ours is like a *stolen* love you know, & when it’s known it seems like a *shame*, it seems as if the *charm* was broken” (251). But this artificial difference between the public and the private is subverted because Cullwick conflates wife and servant in her mind and therefore thinks this would vindicate her position to Mr B: “I did tell Mr B that I’d bin a servant all my life and ought to o’ told him how low Massa had always kept me but I forgot it” (251). Cullwick defines the woman’s role as wife in the domestic sphere and as servant also in the domestic sphere as complementary categories, not competing ones to an extreme extent and thinks that the better the servant she is, the better the wife. In private, public hierarchies of power are replicated and this is what makes the relationship legitimate for

Cullwick. This is also what Munby would like to read about and this is what she thinks would impress Mr B. ²

Cullwick records details of her everyday chores as well as her emotional reactions to various situations in her diaries. The metatextual nature of the form of the diary creates a separation/identification duality throughout as she narrates events. Sometimes it is clear that she does not always enjoy writing. It gets her into trouble professionally when others find out that she writes secretly.

This is the last day o' the month and Massa only wishes me to write till the end. And I am glad of it somehow, for I've got so thoroughly tired o' writing what I think to most people must be very tiresome & certainly disinteresting. I hardly think I shd care to read one lady's diary of twenty years standing tho' of course their'n would be more varied than a servant's can possibly be. (279)

In her discussion of *Pamela* Nancy Armstrong states that Pamela reminds us at every turn that we are witnessing a process of writing. The language of sentiment in *Pamela* that bridges the class gap is a novelistic convention which is used to construct a text that is to be guided by and be under the surveillance of Mr.B, who is in a privileged position with respect to class and gender. Cullwick's text bears some remarkable parallels with Richardson's *Pamela* which is also the story of a romance between a gentleman and a servant. According to Armstrong, sexual relations are above all a linguistic construct in the novel and starting from *Pamela* to the middle of the nineteenth century, the middle-class woman was progressively stripped of her class position and defined in terms of her inner qualities. Competing discourses of class and gender continued from the long eighteenth century onwards, until class lost out and gender became paramount in locating the middle-class subject. This subject was also female, defined in terms of the domestic space and also in terms of sexual relations.

In the working-class diaries/autobiographies, the process of internalization of this subject seems not to be so clear-cut, even where the women are trying to write themselves into their

diaries and autobiographies in terms of middle-class discourses of gender and the private sphere. In these instances, class and gender are not competing categories in the production of the self but have to be somehow complementary categories in order for the text itself to have some currency. This is because the working-class status of these women has to be important to arouse curiosity about their lives as well as to vindicate their lot in life in some way in these autobiographies. In the “public” autobiographies I examine in Chapter 5, this depends on the status of the text itself, a text that needs to be circulated in both a working-class and a middle-class market. Hence they have to stick to some middle-class norms to get published. Also, the importance of these texts derives from the fact that the person it depicts is a working-class person, often with clear working-class sympathies. Yet, because the writer is also a woman, gender norms have to be adhered to even when the trajectories of these women’s lives do not allow them to have the privilege of the domestic space or domestic duties. In the case of Cullwick, her diary cannot achieve currency by stripping herself of her class identity for she is well aware that this is precisely her attraction for Munby. However, she is expected to adhere to middle-class morality and religious beliefs and express her work and sexuality in middle-class terms even as she articulates her difference.

Even as Pamela records her emotional responses to an unscrupulous man in the novel, she is afraid that her daily records will turn out to be a romance. In Cullwick’s case, she records her own emotional responses in accordance with what would be approved by her “Massa.” Since Pamela keeps the records of the events, her resistance against the coercion of rank and fortune depends on the written word. “The more Mr B persists in his attempts to possess her, the more he subjects his behaviour to Pamela’s view and the deeper she penetrates into the heart of the dominant culture to appropriate its materials as the stuff of her own subjectivity” (Armstrong

119). Cullwick not only records emotional responses but describes the difference of her own body with Munby's and other women's. In the process Cullwick is able to construct her own body in a positive light as bigger and stronger and is also able to talk about her own subjectivity as rooted very deeply in her ability to do physical work.

Armstrong goes on to show how the most erotic scene in *Pamela*, therefore, is not the scene of attempted rape, but the scene where he looks for and gets hold of Pamela's letters hidden on her person. Although Mr B cannot penetrate Pamela's body, sexual desire is gratified when Mr B has permission to pry into the secrets of her written self, to spy on her every act of writing and to intercept her letters. Only by so deflecting eroticism away from the material body onto writing could Richardson develop procedures for reforming libertine desire. In Cullwick's diaries too, eroticism is constructed through the written word by using common cultural tropes and by allowing Munby's gaze access to these scenes for erotic gratification. However, Cullwick gets an opportunity to construct these scenes with his gaze in mind thereby gaining some control over the means of such gratification. However, Cullwick's control is only limited because far from changing Munby's status in any way, she has to go back over and over again to her dirt and emphasize her inferiority.

In *Pamela*, by casting struggle between competing interest groups in a country house as a sexual relationship Richardson aims desire away from the aristocratic body into a world of private gratification anyone can enjoy. Because the point is to do away with political categories, the potential for interpreting Pamela's behaviour as subversion is to be contained and transformed within her letters. As Armstrong notes, the language of power must be ever present as interpretive possibility if Richardson is to dramatize Mr B's conversion to Pamela's sentimentality. In Cullwick's case, the possibility of subversion through the written word, of the

political category of class, is contained by deflecting subversion to the realm of race. By calling him “Massa,” by blackening her face and by wearing a chain and padlock Cullwick performs roles of master and slave fetishistically in the private realm of erotic game playing. By doing this, Cullwick apparently removes the implications of the inequality of class from her relationship. This depoliticization takes away from the subversive potential of Cullwick’s scrutiny. McClintock notes many of these ideas in her reading of the incorporation of racial role-playing in this relationship but I would like to point out that these roles are played within the conventions of sentimentality in these diaries.

Munby’s power over Cullwick’s diaries is clear in that he gets to edit, excise and write headings and classify them. Apart from this, the power of his gaze makes sure that Cullwick behaves appropriately according to her class and gender position by penetrating into places that private writing takes him. She stresses her happiness in her servitude constantly and also in the “purity” of her love and her womanhood, probably because the contrast between dirt and purity probably excited Munby.

Despite what these ideas of Munby’s control over Cullwick’s writing suggests, she is often quite in control of narration. Her control over the gaze as she depicts her own body might be seen in an episode where she is cleaning the chimney and recording her task in her writing:

I’d a *capital* chance to go up the chimney so I lock’d up & waited till the grate was cool enough. . . . Stripp’d myself quite naked & put a pair of old boots on & tied an old duster over my hair & then I got up into the chimney with a brush. There was a lot o’ soot & it was soft & warm. Before I swept I pulled the duster over my eyes and mouth, & I sat on the beam that goes across the middle & cross’d my legs along it & I was *quite safe & comfortable & out o’ sight*. I swept lots o’ soot down & it come all over me & I sat there for ten minutes or more . . . & I lay on the soot a minute or two thinking, & *I wish’d rather that Massa could see me*. I black’d my face over & then got the looking glass & look’d at myself & I was certainly a fright & hideous all over , at least I should o’ seem’d so to anybody but Massa. (139)

We see here how Cullwick is controlling the reader's reaction, both showing her enjoyment in doing what he wants her to document and giving his gaze an exclusivity and penetrative quality that gets to see what nobody else does. Yet, Cullwick's gaze into the looking glass brings in a competitive, alternate gaze, which is hers. It highlights her own physical pleasure. It can be argued that this is the physical "pleasure" of women objectified in pornography, highlighting their pleasure in complicity. However, the alternate gaze controls the objectification by commenting on the absurdity of Munby's (and also her own) taste. Even though "Massa's" opinion of her appearance is given privilege, also perhaps his appreciation of her "hideousness" seen as a token of "love," this is not the only gaze that depicts her. In this way, she does what he likes her to do but in transforming this to writing, she gains control over her own subjectivity. But this control is different from the way Richardson's Pamela gains control over her own writing in that Cullwick's erotic writing is informed by her work as a signifier of her class. Also, if Munby's gaze objectifies her as Cullwick the drudge, desirous of seeing her playing these roles, her subjectivity emerges through a consciousness that this is only role-playing. Desire is constructed in the texts of these diaries not free from class identity, nor against class hierarchy, but through the ability to gaze on one's own body by first separating it from the subject and then controlling the gaze.

Dirty Work and Dirty Body: Identity and the Pornographic Imagination

The juxtaposition of contradictory class and gender attributes projected by Munby's imagination on Cullwick's body, such as masculinity/ femininity or lady/wife/ servant makes her sexually attractive to Munby. Ellen Bayuk Rosenman in her book on Victorian "unauthorized pleasures" talks about the strategies used by Victorian men in an urban setting to counter anxieties about their urban susceptibility, specifically sexual susceptibility. While talking about the way these men use pastoral ideals to look at urban lower-class women while still retaining

the position of the sovereign spectator, she quotes a long passage from Munby's writing. The passage has important implications for my analysis here, especially when it is compared to excerpts from Cullwick when she writes about her own experiences with respect to her body. The context of this excerpt is that Munby makes Cullwick wear a fancy ball dress because he wishes to see her dressed as a lady. The contrast between her working-class body and the lady's dress is emphasized under Munby's gaze. But moving on from this point the contrast gets localized onto Cullwick's body itself.

She hesitated to profane the Missis's things by touching them, much more by wearing them; but to please me, she consented. She put off her own servant's dress and put on that of her mistress. It was too short and too narrow for her and it would not suit her healthy rustic waist; . . . Thus she stood before me to be looked at; smiling and slightly blushing; feeling awkward and strange, in that unknown garb, but not looking awkward at all, but most graceful. (qtd. in Rosenman 82-83)

Munby notes the difference in colour between her hard working arms and her bare shoulders looking into a full-length mirror:

I gazed on her in a kind of rapture: so lovely a figure was she, so ladylike, so sweet, and "I longed to take her away from her slavery" and make her a lady indeed. "And now dear" at last I said, "turn round and look at yourself". She wondered what I meant; for she had forgotten that behind her stood a long, cheval glass, capable of showing her from top to toe. But she turned round and saw herself reflected at full length in the mirror. The effect of this revelation was startling. . . . now for the first time she noticed that her neck and bosom, and even her shoulders, were bare. Dazzling white, they seemed, by contrast and her hard working arms, which of course, were also bare; *but in an instant, they were suffused, like her face, with one universal blush.--celestial rosyred. Love's proper hue.* She shut her eyes, turned sharply from the glass, and suddenly flung herself into my arms- "that I might feel rather than see the beating of her heart." "Oh Massa," she whispered, "I am naked!" (qtd. in Rosenman 82-83)

The emphasis on contrasts seems to be a common trope in contemporary sexual imagination.³ This fragmentation of Cullwick's body is necessary for Munby to be able to disassemble and then reassemble Cullwick's sexual identity, choosing the most vulnerable attributes of both classes. The implicit strength of Cullwick's working-class arms is reconceived as innocent and bashful because they are unused to being bare like their upper class counterparts.

At the same time, the blushing arms signify the proper hue of modesty that is the attribute of middle-class women. However, in the final analysis, Cullwick is enticing because this makes her vulnerable to him:

Never before had I felt so strongly the need for self control in her presence: never before, or since, have I been filled with a more passionate ardour of love and reverence for that pure innocent soul, who had trusted herself so utterly to me. (qtd. in Rosenman 82-83)

The mirror scene and Cullwick's sense of nakedness when she looks into it can bear a parallel with *The Way of a Man with a Maid*, a contemporary pornographic text, where the middle-class narrator pursues, and what can only be seen as violent rape, forces her to look into the mirror as the act takes place. In the second part of this text, the same servant-girl enjoys sexual encounters with him, blushes and acts coy. The similarity of these situations brings to light the violence hidden in the reading of Cullwick's body through the blush. The blush signifies a middle-class femininity and Cullwick's dependence. The covering of her body in a lady's dress--the unveiling of her body which is different from a lady's and somehow more pure because it is not a lady's--is alluring to Munby. The subsequent bringing back of the working-class intractable female body to its feminine dependent position under the sovereign male gaze is what lends excitement to the scene. The language of sentimental love aids this process.

In Cullwick's entries in her own diary for corresponding incidents it is obvious that she feels strange putting on a lady's dress and feels relieved while taking it off. A lot of disagreements in their relationship towards the end when Munby wants to make her a lady stem from the fact that Cullwick does not want to dress like a lady. She hates wearing gloves, does not wear her scarf and is often reprimanded by Munby for not doing this. In fact, as a servant, she has a disdain all along for other servant girls who love finery. Later, under Munby's instructions, when Cullwick does have to dress and act like a lady for a while, she is not comfortable. In a passage she describes herself sitting down with two gentlemen, Munby and his friend, and

pouring out tea. She reflects that having self-possession is the main difference between a lady and a servant but it is not possible for a servant to have self possession except in her own kitchen and even then she must remember that the kitchen is not her own.⁴

Cullwick has to walk a tightrope between being a servant and being a woman, two concepts that often seem mutually exclusive. Marriage is an institution which is the domain of “women,” by which Cullwick often means ladies. Therefore, marriage as an institution is often quite meaningless to Cullwick in her own specific context. The sexual relationship defined as service and that defined as love do not combine well together. In one entry, Cullwick reveals that she is not overly excited when Munby shows her their marriage license and asks her, “[d]osen’t this show you how much I love you”:

I cared very little for the license or being married either. Indeed I have a certain dislike to either, they seem to have so little to do with our love & our union . . . And yet of course I respect it as a duty, which ought to be done on Massa’s part. Not as a reward to me for I want no reward, but as a simple duty he owes to himself. . . For I canna be with him nor serve him as a servant nor a helpmeet for him as I ought without it, ‘cause of my name. (253)

In another entry, Cullwick is seen grappling with the concept of being a woman, being married, working, and attempting to reconcile these ideas with the idea of class difference.

I like the life I lead- working here & just going to M when I can of a Sunday . . . better even that I think than a married life. For I never feel as if I *could* make my mind up to that- its too much like being a *woman*. . . Still I think it’s hard that the *world* shd so interfere and mar one’s happiness if it chances to *know* of love ‘twixt two different in station like we are. However, it always was the way o’ the world, and will be I reckon till it’s levell’d, when the new earth is made. So let it be, only I don’t wish the world to see me anything else nor a servant, but M’s love I couldn’t do without. (170)

This complex attitude to class and cross-class love is apparent in another incident that Cullwick mentions on 2 January, 1860 involving a Mrs. Davis. In the conversation where she records her reaction to Mrs. Davis’ attitude towards cross-class marriage, Cullwick makes it clear that she does not want to be raised in rank through marriage or expect material benefits

from such a situation. Mrs. Davis is a friend of the housemaid Mary, an erstwhile nurse who has been pensioned off. Mrs. Davis mentions an incident, also mentioned by Munby in his diary, which is the subject of a lot of gossip. A contemporary aristocrat, Lord R. Montagu's is said to have married his nursemaid. Mrs. Davis sees this in a positive light in the sense that it is a fine thing to marry well. Though Cullwick is not judgmental of Mrs. Davis' attitude, she takes care to frame the woman's statement with her own comment that love and honour are more important than marrying for material benefits. Cullwick says: "Mrs. Davis, poor woman, seems as worldly minded as possible & rather vulgar I think. I call'd her Ma'am of course & said good-bye & came out with the tea things" (115). Worldly mindedness and vulgarity, love and honour, though class bound terms, are redefined by Cullwick to make her own love for Munby free from seeming driven by economic necessity. However, it is important to remember that Cullwick is not merely repeating a script laid out for her as she says this. As her behaviour shows, Cullwick constantly resists Munby's attempts to transform her into a "lady."

Cullwick has to lay stress on her body as a servant's body in order to attract Munby. At the same time, she has to resist homogenization as a servant, which might be a logical result of such objectification, in order to be *the* servant-woman for Munby. This was a difficult task to perform. In the construction of her subjectivity, Cullwick's work and Cullwick's body are the two most significant ideas that stand out. Work, amongst other things, serves to highlight the difference of Cullwick's own body in a way that reinforces and destabilizes constructions of the body in terms of gender and class. Victorian cultural formations of gendered class were constantly shifting to make space for alternate constructions of identity, but for people at the margins, this amounted to experiencing a sense of fragmentation of identity. Though at times Cullwick resists this,

ultimately such resistance is reappropriated so that it is always an uphill task for Cullwick to maintain a sense of self worth.

Ironically, Cullwick uses dirt as a signifier of self-worth as she describes her daily life but as she does this, she often runs into problems. Such problems expose the difficulties of appropriation of these cultural formations for a servant-woman. The repetition of daily chores emphasizes the importance of jobs such as cleaning and scrubbing in her daily life but at the same time they are valued because Munby wants to read about them. Dirt has erotic potential when it spreads on her body despite, or perhaps because of the description of discomfort: “[I] took the carpets out . . . & the dust flew back all over me, till I could feel it down my throat & my neck & all, quite uncomfortable” [Saturday 1 April 1871]. Seth Koven talks about the illicit potential of dirt in the Victorian middle-class cultural imagination when men and women went “slumming” and spent time in the poorer parts of London in the context of urban reform, philanthropy and investigative journalism. In the women’s writings, the metaphor of dirt served to focus on the “relationship between dirt, dirty bodies, and dirty desires” and they left copious written accounts of these experiences in the form of memoirs, diaries and other forms of writing (21). One way of looking at Cullwick’s descriptions of dirt is to see her as using this trope to chalk out her own identity. In Cullwick’s case, dirt also marks her as a servant in a very physical way. For example, when she describes in detail how, despite repeated scrubbing, the dirt which has penetrated the cracks in her palms does not go away so that she cannot wear gloves even in the cold weather to see the ladies. Cullwick uses dirt as a fundamental signifier which marks her as a servant. At other times she purposely dirties herself at Munby’s bidding. However, it becomes very hard for her to maintain a balance with respect to how dirty she should look to seem attractive to him because such markers always walk a narrow line between seeming

erotically attractive to seeming simply repulsive. It is clear that she sees her dirty appearance as part of an erotic game playing, not a symbol of real degradation; Cullwick is distressed when Munby really pities her. For example, when Cullwick goes to meet Munby in her dirty frock and apron “that he may see *how* dirty [she] got,” the cracks in her hands are ingrained with dirt, so that even scrubbing would not clean them. Expecting to impress him, Cullwick is hurt and thinks her “Massa” is changed because after telling her to come to his chambers in her dirt, he tells her to take off her apron and wash herself. “It seems he began to think I *was too low* & degraded & that he really pitied me” (61-62). Cullwick is confused because she is unable to gauge his reaction. There are instances when dirty work is combined with hidden romance. For example, in one instance, when no one is looking, Cullwick crawls out of the window and asks Munby to fill her bucket and notes her pleasure at being helped by her “Massa.” The secrecy with which this help is given adds to the eroticism of the scene for Munby and Cullwick.

Alternatively, Cullwick eroticizes cleaning work by describing herself cleaning in the full view of someone--man or woman. In a lot of places Cullwick describes how, cleaning outside in different postures, especially in full view of men is pleasurable for her because it emphasizes her inferiority. For example, on 27 April 1872 Cullwick describes how she crawled on the pavement with her face close to the ground with her hands on the flags. When Munby observes, with satisfaction, how this must have made the footmen think that she was inferior, she answers “of course they do.” However, it is hard to know how pleasurable this is for Cullwick herself even when she says so. In her diary of September 1873 Cullwick mentions her discomfort while being stared at when she is cleaning: “i don’t pretend to know they are there, & so i can go on without feeling confused, for of all things i hate to feel i’m being stared at--that’s what i could not get used to a cleaning the steps” Munby has Cullwick’s picture taken in several postures of

cleaning as Cullwick mentions in her diary--cleaning a pair of boots, kneeling on the steps with her pail and things and then shaking a mat. In another instance, a gentleman stares at her while she cleans the steps, walks past her, walks back again and then asks her if she would work for him. Cullwick is in the peculiar position of having to document her degradation as a significant part of the erotic scenes, de-emphasize her humiliation as discomfort and present the gentlemen/footmen's gaze in such descriptions as one that Munby can identify with or Munby can observe as a voyeur. There are many similar instances where Cullwick states that she should not feel discomfort, not because she is only working but because she is doing this for "Massa." For example, in a section written in September 1873 which comes after the section where she says she enjoys "Massa" helping her, Cullwick says that she never looks at folks who pass: "i don't pretend to know they are there, & so i can go on without feeling confused, for of all things i hate to feel i'm being star'd at"

The erotic scenes not only involve men looking at her while she cleans outside but also ladies looking at her while she is cleaning inside. Usually, this provides an opportunity to emphasize the difference in appearance between herself and the ladies-- emphasizing her blackness or her rougher, stronger working body. Cullwick uses already available erotic discourses in her culture to construct herself as desirable. One such erotic scene has overt orientalist overtones in her diary of 31 May 1864, which happens to be her 31st birthday. Cullwick looks at a dirty picture of herself as a drudge and thinks for a moment that she would like to show the Miss Knights, her mistresses of the moment, how dirty she looks. However, she soon decides against this because she is afraid that they would think of this as one of her odd ways. So she notes how they saw her at her blackest sweeping out the chimney:

i thought of the contrast when i was on the hearth & they must 'o thought of it too- me a dirty creature all black & in the soot as i was & Miss K. lying on the curtained bed looking

like i've seen pictures of Eastern ladies lolling about, & the other sitting by & both looking at me & saying how horrid it was to get so black--but i didn't think it was horrid, but i was glad to do it, & for them to see i wasn't afraid o getting black.

The Eastern image makes the two Miss Knights part of the objectification as well as Cullwick. Their leisurely stance is both un-English and therefore to be censured as compared to Cullwick's hard labour. Cullwick's own blackness, like the slaves of the Eastern princesses in the British imagination, is to be prized for its sexual appeal. But the entire scene is painted to be consumed, a fact which contains the value that is attached to Cullwick's labour. There are many more instances where Cullwick juxtaposes herself against ladies in this way.

Cullwick sometimes controls the erotic gaze of the reader in conventional ways. Another scene between a lady and Cullwick is described in her diary entry of June 1870. Cullwick describes an incident when she enters the bedroom of a lady who is still in bed. The lady asks her if she is a married woman. When Cullwick assures her that even though she is not married she is not shocked (because the lady is naked in bed), the erotic potential of the scene is exploited fully when Cullwick has to reach over and under the sheet to turn off the bedclothes and rub the lady's back. The lady admires Cullwick's "monstrous foot," good big arms and hands and Cullwick boasts to her that her arms are 13 inches and a half round. After she rubs her neck and feet and shoulders Cullwick notes that she has seen pretty near all of the lady. At one level then, the juxtaposition of Cullwick against the ladies is a direct mode of eroticization for the male gaze and positions her as a male gazing.

However, the language of class when Cullwick juxtaposes herself against the ladies works in a complex way, as the recounting of a familiar dream on her thirty-first birthday shows:

I dreamt as I saw a lady stoop on her knees and lick her husband's boots cause he was going away for a while and so I thought surely if she does such a thing for love I needn't think too much in licking Massa's boots. I shall do it the more. I thought of when I went to him as I used to and licked his boots so many times and so joyfully that Massa wondered what it meant. (Atkinson 127)

Cullwick overcomes her anxiety about the legitimacy of the act of boot-licking by following a gender inscribed model that is also classed. Because a lady can do it, she should not have any doubts either. It is difficult to determine here how much Cullwick's anxiety is because she is uncomfortable highlighting her own physical pleasure and how much of the discomfort stems from an unwillingness to perform the act. While Liz Stanley does not deny the similarity of elements in the relationship with what we call sado-masochism, she says that such a model does not fully explain the complexities involved in this relationship because power is not exercised in a strictly dichotomised fashion:

The question that needs to be asked is whether strong, stubborn, independent, assured and competent Hannah was powerless within the elements of her relationship that might be termed sado-masochistic. My answer is an emphatic no, for I believe that Hannah used and encouraged Munby's needs and obsessions--with dirt and squalor, subservience and mastery, whiteness and darkness--to establish and maintain their relationship. In other words, she used "powerlessness" to achieve "power" over him so as to confirm his need for her and thus the relationship; for there was little else that could have bound him to her in any permanent fashion. (14)

Stanley's observation shows that Cullwick had greater control in the relationship than the amount of power that the masochist has in merely being the willing party in a relationship. Having acknowledged the truth of such reading, it still makes sense to remember the larger power dynamics in the relationship. Helen M. Buss notes that while reading women's personal documents, one should be aware of the power systems operational in the economy of a culture. "We need to explore language's ability to maximize some conditions of existence, to make them real in the economy of a culture, and its ability to suppress and absent other conditions, to repress their existence into powerlessness and inarticulation"(229). Cullwick derives pleasure in complicity but this pleasure is derived through the careful guidance of Munby, who is in a privileged position in terms of gender and class, as overlooker:

He [Munby] has taught me . . . the beauty in being nothing but a common drudge & to bear being despised by others . . . I have hardly ever met with a servant yet who wasn't ashamed of dirty work & who wouldn't be glad to get out of it...but I wouldn't get out of it if I could, nor change from being Massa's slave...I've been a slave now 9 years and worn the chain and padlocks 6 years- I don't hide them now from Mary for she saw 'em every night at Brighton this time. (125-126)

Being a servant is to “bear being despised” and be ashamed of dirty work. The slave metaphor and the chain and padlock show her complete allegiance to Munby. However, the erotic dimension of this picture takes away from the authenticity of class subservience and makes it fit for consumption. This is especially true in the light of other extracts from her diary where Cullwick explicitly asserts her pride in being a servant not because it is degrading but because it is economically and socially liberating. This makes the class dynamics somewhat ambivalent, though ultimately Munby's control outweighs her power.

However, sometimes such role playing becomes exploitative for Cullwick. Cullwick's frequently refers to her love of dirty work--that she doesn't mind doing such chores for Massa. Such chores included Cullwick blackening her face, boot-licking and other such activities which are often not mentioned matter-of-factly, but with tags that say that she loves doing them, or doesn't mind doing them, or is doing them for love. Such lines reveal her discomfort even though she attempts to see such episodes as signs of love. For example, on 13 May, 1865 Cullwick writes that after a long kiss and some boot licking, Cullwick has to hide herself under the writing table while a servant brings his beef tea:

I . . . was quite out o' sight with my back up again the table and my head hanging down like a sheep...It was very cramping...made my head ache else the degradation I of course didn't care for cause Massa says he was sorry but couldn't help it. (qtd. in Atkinson 140)

Cullwick is articulating her discomfort but using an animal imagery that would appeal to Munby because we know, from his writings, that he felt excited, at least in one instance, when he mistook working women in the field for sheep. At another point Cullwick sends Munby a

valentine which shows a dog with a chain round its neck. Sometimes Cullwick is quite aware of the exploitativeness of such erotic game playing. "I don't fret about it . . . I don't want to be thought his equal anywhere, only its so unsociable to walk apart and yet together--belonging and yet not seeming to belong to one another. It is worse than if I was a real dog" (Atkinson 140). Hence, while pleasure in complicity gives her some amount of power in the games, they also make her the objectified drudge. To see this as the way marginalized women must gain power has its accompanying problems because it never essentially disrupts power structures. However, in this instance, Cullwick has power in a limited sense. Cullwick has the power to represent herself and their relationship in her diaries and the overviews of her life, though this remains still under Munby's surveillance.

The way in which Cullwick portrays herself draws on contemporary discourses about the working-class woman's body as an erotic object, for example, as that found in pornography. Victorian pornography has many instances of encounters between middle and upper middle-class men and boys and woman servants. Lisa Sigel, while tracing pornography and social change in England between 1815 and 1914, says that

Pornography as a source material provides insight into the social imaginary of sexuality. Pornography does not state the problems of sex --like disease, prostitution and bastardy--as some government reports, tracts and religious sermons do. Instead, it elaborates the possibilities of sex. Pornography is not tied to the tangible (what people do with their bodies) but to the imaginable (what they can imagine doing). (2)

Siegel uses the term "social imaginary" to talk about pornography, which, she says, describes the realm of the possible. She draws on cultural theory to note that this is a system of representations which allows us to understand the basic mental structures of a particular society at a particular time. Siegel talks about the shifting formulations of pornography. In the nineteenth century, the definitions of pornography, obscenity and indecency depended on access. Some people, for example artists, were supposed to be able to look at representations with limited

emotional, social and legal consequences while others could not. Because of these shifting definitions, Siegel focuses on all material as “pornography” which involved literature, drawings and photographs which were tied together not only by the commonality of the idea that they focused on sexuality, but were also collected, published, printed or legislated under that term in the nineteenth century. To the modern reader or viewer, these might or might not appear to be pornography but this underscores Siegel’s point that pornography as a culture changes as the symbolic meanings in a particular culture change. Seen from this perspective, even though some extracts from Cullwick’s diaries might seem pornographic and some might not to the modern reader, the similarity of tropes between some texts classified as pornographic in the nineteenth century and Cullwick’s diaries would justify the use of the term in the case of these diaries. They certainly give an insight into the “social imaginary” of nineteenth-century sexuality since it is evident that Cullwick derived many tropes from it.

Not unexpectedly, many of the pornographic texts of this period, and without exception amongst the ones I have looked at in the British Library, are from the male perspective. Most, whether in description or sketches, adhere to the general ideals of the Victorian tenets of attractiveness in terms of body types or age. For example, most talk about teenage girls and men in their thirties. The ideal of beauty as far as the body type is concerned for women is the same as one would expect to find in a Victorian novel. There are some texts where the specific source of pleasure comes from a reversal of these details, as when older women are paired with teenage boys. The boys, though, are restored to the position of power ultimately though there may be some ambiguity in gender roles that lead to this situation. The almost complete absence of any female perspective makes Cullwick’s text more valuable looked at in this way because she is

both the subject and object of the pornographic imagination. She writes the diaries for him to read and edit, but in the process she makes space for her own pleasure.

The cross-class nature of Munby and Cullwick's relationship is not a novelty as far as real Victorian life is concerned. There seems to have been a few cases of gentlemen marrying their maids such as when Lord R. Montagu marries his nursemaid, an event discussed in Cullwick's diary. But while considering how such relationships get transformed in the erotic imagination of society, it pays to look at the way female servants are depicted in Victorian pornography and then seeing how Munby's obsession with them is handled by Cullwick. There are many differences in the way female servants are depicted in pornography. They form a significant part in the growing experiences of young lads in middle-class to upper-class households as early experiences of sex. The famous fictional documentary account of the protagonist Walter's sexual experiences in *My Secret Life* has him emotionally involved with only one of the innumerable servants/working women that he is shown to have sexual encounters with. Apart from this, almost all books that have servant-girl characters always involve at least one incident of the use of force and scenes amounting to rape or near rape as an assertion of masculinity. For example, one text depicts the pornographic version of the sexual awakening of a boy through sex with his aunt, maid and finally his mother. In a long scene, once he learns the art from his aunt, he uses force to overcome resistance on the part of his maid. In *My Secret Life* too, almost all the encounters are with lower-class women but force used is most specifically against servants and farm hands.

Because pornography deals with stereotypes, the titles themselves often reveal what the books will be about. Apart from some texts, such as *The Way of a Man with a Maid* and *Memoires D'Une Femme De Chambre* (Memoirs of a Chambermaid) that deal exclusively with

characters who are servants while the narrator is not, many others have one or more than one encounter with a maid as part of a man's growing up experience, such as *Forbidden Fruit: Luscious and Exciting Story of a Boy Seduced by his Pretty Young Aunt, then his Nursemaid and Chambermaid, and Finally Lays in the Arms of his Beautiful Mother* (1898). The more famous multivolume *My Secret Life* has many encounters of the upper class protagonist with servants. Other cross-class encounters include sex with prostitutes, farm hands and other poor women. Although the depiction of sex in these encounters is often a replication of larger power structures, the man wielding power because of gender and class, the depictions sometimes become more complex. As in Munby's reading of Cullwick, the bashfulness of these servant figures always alternate with their sexual desires. The outward bashfulness is only superficial hiding class bound sexual desires. Sometimes this contradiction is not only titillating but justifies force because the bashfulness is ultimately seen as a class ambition or pretence on the part of these lower-class women to achieve the sexual status of middle-class women. At other times, the male protagonist enjoys the sense of dominance in presenting the lower-class woman as resistant. The discourse of "love" differentiates Cullwick's diaries or Munby's depiction of the same incidents in his diaries from these pornographic texts. However, the discourse of love glosses over discomfort or uncertainty on Cullwick's part and distances Munby from acknowledging erotic interest directly. When some aspects of stereotypes are reversed, such as when Munby is depicted as smaller and more fragile sitting on Cullwick's lap, one is reminded of similar tropes in Walter's text when he has sex with a bigger, older servant as a teenager. The reversal, then, in the way that the trope is consumed, serves the same purpose of enjoyment by moving away from the norm but stressing the existence of the norm all the same.

Cullwick's diaries share many other tropes with these books. Just as Cullwick writes her diaries for only Munby to read, a common trope amongst these pornographic texts seem to be one where men discover either women's memoirs or young women reading "forbidden books" which in turn might be a memoir. For example, one text depicts a young girl reading a forbidden memoir under a tree where the narrator finds her. She gives up the book to him fearing that her reputation will be spoilt if people know that she reads such books. The narrator gets some sexual favours in return for keeping her secret as well as the book itself. That book then becomes the present text. Secrecy and sudden forceful discovery of a woman's sexual memoir from another woman reading it by a man seems to be a trope used more than once in these pornographic narratives. Such a trope absolves the male narrator and the male reader from the guilt of reading forbidden material because the book is snatched away as part of a punishment for the woman reading such explicit material. At the same time the guilty secret also serves to reassert masculinity by establishing power and allows the male reader to forcibly explore the most secret recesses of the female subject with the male narrator. This becomes an important part of the pleasure of the text.

Sexual scenes are often depicted from the point of view of the voyeur in a number of these texts. What is remarkable, though, is the desire to document this memory and hence gain greater control over the scene which often translates into a greater control of the woman/women's bodies. This is part of a larger fascination with facts, statistics and exact documentation in the public sphere of the Victorian world that influences the private world of Walter's sexual imagination, as he expresses in the introduction to *My Secret Life*:

I had from youth an excellent memory, but about sexual matters a wonderful one. Women were the pleasure of my life. I loved cunt, but also who had it, I liked the woman I fucked and not simply the cunt I fucked, and therein is a great difference. I recollect even now in a degree which astonishes me, the face, colour, stature, thighs, backside, and sung of well

nigh every woman I have had, who was not a mere casual, and even of some who were. The clothes they wore, the houses and rooms in which I had them, were before me mentally as I wrote, the way the bed and furniture were placed, the side of the room the windows were on, I remembered perfectly; and all the important events I can fix as to time, sufficiently nearly by reference to my diary, in which the contemporaneous circumstances of my life are recorded...Where I fail to have done so, I have left description blank, rather than attempt to make a story coherent by in sorting what was merely probable.

The desire to document these acts accurately in writing is part of the objectification and control over these servant women as repeated patterns show in the text. The ability to document lends superiority to the writer. In Cullwick's case, though, Munby has taught Cullwick herself to put her daily activities into writing. Though this lends her the ability to document her own life, this is clearly still under Munby's control. Therefore Cullwick's own voice and Munby's ventriloquized voice through her co-exist in these diaries just as in some of Munby's poems Munby writes in the first person representing the voices of various working women including poems dealing with Cullwick's herself.

As in pornography where one part of the body might be emphasized over and over again fetishistically, Cullwick emphasizes her strong, big hands repeatedly. In Cullwick's own writing, her big biceps are not a source of sentimental love but a source of strength and work. At the same time, the exaggeration of her class markers is a source of eroticism for Munby. In one entry, Cullwick notes that she rubs her hands against brass to make them harder inside though the process is anything but pleasant for her. At the same time, she notes that she is giving him an account of this process in writing because it would please him. In "A Servant's Life 1855-72" Cullwick records her trip to Mr Stodart's who photographs her in her dirt at Munby's request. She wants to come out black all over in the picture and hence rubs lead all over herself but to her disappointment, the actual picture does not come out black enough. Then she is advised by Mr Stodart to cover herself with yellow. Mr Stodart tells her to come back again to be taken as

Magdalene and Una, the latter figure a part of Munby's private mythology. As Magdalene, she is made to wear nothing but a white skirt and her discomfort is obvious:

I had to strip off my servant's things- to my shift, what I hardly liked, but still I knew there was no *harm* in that, & Mr. S was a serious sort o' man & we neither one of us laugh'd or smil'd over it. He took me in a kneeling position, as if praying, with my hair down my back & looking up. The side face was good for it but the *hands* was too big & coarse he said, so it wouldn't do as a picture. And so its best for me to be done as a drudge what I am, for my hands and arms are tho' chief of *me*, to get my living with. & I don't care about my face if Massa likes it...

When I was tripped for the Magdalene I was a little confused, having my steel chain & padlock round my neck...

The pictures that were taken here are very similar to some of the nineteenth-century pornographic images in Siegel's book. Cullwick is confused because the hands, which are an important part of her identity and a source of erotic attraction for Munby do not have a place in this idealized setting. Yet, a description of the fact of the rejection in words brings the focus on her difference from such ideals, stressing her working-class identity. A feeling of discomfort and regret at rejection co-exists with a feeling of pride at the difference of her arm from middle-class ideals.

Munby's fascination with Cullwick's stronger and bigger body-type might be placed in a tradition of fascination with working-class women's bodies that men of Munby's class felt for women who did physical work. The protagonist of *My Secret Life* finds two types of servants sexually attractive. One set of female servants are younger and depict the conventions of attractiveness of Victorian middle-class women on the surface, such as virginity, bashfulness or the ability to blush. However, it soon becomes clear that they are really quite raunchy behind the façade of modesty. It requires some coaxing or force, even rape, all part of the titillation of the text, to bring this out. Meeting these lower-class women also break the monotony of encounters with women of the middle/ upper class. Walter talks about this in the introduction in Volume 1:

What strikes me as curious in reading it [the text, *My Secret Life*] is the monotony of the course I have pursued towards women who were not of the gay class; it has been as similar and repetitive as fucking itself; do all men act so, does every man kiss, coax, hint smuttily, then talk bawdily, snatch a feel, smell his fingers, assault, and win, exactly as I have done? Is every woman offended, say 'no,' then 'oh!' blush, be angry, refuse, close her thighs, after a struggle open them, and yield to her lust as mine have done?

However, there are a different set of lower-class women, whose bodies are big and strong and do not conform to Victorian middle-class women's ideals of beauty. In the section of a chapter entitled "The Big Servant's History" Walter encounters Big Sarah, a domestic. Sarah's history is described in great detail. She comes to the city with a man she is about to marry who first forces her and then, threatens her. In fear of losing her place and "character," Sarah has to continue having sex with this man a few more times. Walter wants to see her private parts after hearing this story but cannot manage to do so because she is "as strong as a horse." However, soon, he manages to have sex with her and then, by jeering at her "mock modesty" he manages to persuade her to have sex with him again. These kinds of episodes are very typical of this text. The pleasure of the text arises from the play of middle-class ideas of modesty against what is seen as only pretensions to it by a servant. Force is justified by the fact that the woman is of a lower class and a lot of the pleasure in using force arises from the class difference.

So again I got savage. I had conquered by my anger two hours before, and now took to damning and cursing her mock modesty. Then she began again to whimper. "Oh! you do frighten me,--you do 'bust' out so,--I'm quite afeared,--it's not nice to have your thing looked at. . . . He didn't,-- he didn't,--not that I know of." By abusing I got her consent. Pulling open her thighs I saw her quim. Had she been gay, she would have taken care to turn her bum from the light; but she laid her arm across her eyes, as if to hide from herself, the sight of a man investigating her love-trap. (ch. 9, vol. 4)

The last gesture, like Cullwick's bashfulness at her bare arms earlier, is part of the erotic attraction common in Victorian nude paintings as well. This is followed by a description of her body after a paragraph devoted to the description of her bleeding private part:

She was great in bulk, but poor in symmetry. Her bum was vast, but she was thick up to her waist, and had large breasts as firm as a rock. Her thighs were lovely, but her knees so

big, that no garter would re-main above them, and she was clumsy in ankle and foot. (ch. 9, vol. 4)

Placed in this context, Munby's fascination with working-class women, especially big women seems to be part of a larger class issue. Being attracted by bigger women and then asserting masculinity by subjecting them to sexual control is part of the fascination with such cross-class interaction. The language of sentimental love is used to tide over difficulties in such representation in Cullwick's diaries whereas direct force is used in pornographic literature of the period to achieve a similar end. Cullwick talks about the fact that she is much bigger than Munby in size and often describes him sitting on her lap or her carrying him around. To Barry Reay, the contrast between the femaleness of lower-class women and their "masculine" appearance, that fascinates Munby, seems a part of the fascination with monstrosity that prompted Munby to trace out working-class women, never men. One case of a noseless woman that he befriends is quite prominent in his writings and sketches. He also feels excited when he mistakes workers (female ones) in the field for cattle.

In one way this seems to be at least a continuation of Armstrong's idea that the representation of female monstrosity in the Victorian text was a strategy to divert bourgeois guilt. However, this reverses that strategy in that monstrosity, if it is monstrosity at all in this context, rather than stripping away all political (class) identity from the working class as in Armstrong, is dissolving gender boundaries precisely because these are working-class people (and also women). Barry Reay connects this Victorian fascination with the dissolution of gender boundaries and with female masculinity and with the fact that "Munby married one of his hybrids." This is important for the cultural construction of homosexuality in the second half of the nineteenth century and with the idea that Munby was fashioning ways of being masculine in the world according to Reay (142). This, even if it explains Munby's representations of working-

class women in his texts, does not, I feel, explain Cullwick's own self-representation in her own writing, even though part of the purpose of her own writing is to attract Munby.

While at times Cullwick herself does not feel that she is the marrying type because that is being too much like a woman, she does not consider herself a woman in so far as she feels that the term describes upper class "feminine" women. Cullwick does not wish to conform to middle-class feminine ideals of the body. However, she sees herself as extremely desirable not only to Munby but to her fellow servants. Cullwick takes pride in her strength, often carrying ladies around. Similarly, ideas of masculinity are constantly defied when Munby is depicted as frail, his white small hands contrasted against her big red ones. Munby writes in his diary, "Are the relations of the sexes really inverted when three men sit at table, with hands delicate and jewelled, and a woman stands behind and waits, offering the dishes with so large coarse a hand that makes her master's look almost ladylike?" (qtd. in Stanley 20). Even though this feminization has its dangers of making the upper class man appear powerless, Cullwick is clever enough to portray this difference of the men of Munby's class from working-class men in a positive light. She does this through the discourse of love which she sees as a prerogative of upper class men, as the following excerpt shows. In this section, written soon after their marriage, Cullwick speculates as to the reason why she does not like a working-class man:

Should I have felt such pleasure for a common working man? I might if I had found a working man as could love as purely & be as Massa is ...I made my mind up that it was best to be a slave to a gentleman, nor wife & equal to any vulgar man, still with the wish and determination to be independent by working in service and without the slightest hope of being rais'd in either in place or being married. And so at last after nearly all these twenty years...I am as I am. A servant still, & a very low one, in the eyes o' the world. I can work at ease. I can go out & come in when I please, & I can look as degraded as ever I like without caring how much I'm despised in the Temple, or in Fetter Lane or in the streets. (272-273)

Love as a form of servility and work as a form of freedom can co-exist through this sentimental discourse guided by class dynamics. The outward degradation is a sign of inner

worth which is validated by love and the lack of aspirations is an affirmation of class as well as an assurance to Munby. Even though in other entries Cullwick describes her lack of interest in marriage, in the following entry, the idea of love leads to the idea of marriage. However, soon after expressing her satisfaction in being married, Cullwick describes the difference of her own body, which shows the signs of being a “true servant,” from his. In her representation of their relationship, the status of wife is reinforced by the status of being a servant.

And with all that I have the inward comfort o’ knowing that I am loved & honoured & admired & that I am united in heart & soul as well as married at church to the truest, best, & handsomest man in my eyes that ever was born...But Massa would not sleep in his own room, but downstairs in the kitchen bedroom with me & we talk’d till two o’clock. And in the morning he noticed how rough my knees are. They feel like a nutmeg grater, so different to his, & M. was so pleas’d to feel ‘em ‘cause he said, it was such a true sign of being a servant. (273-73)

In *Nobody’s Angels*, Elizabeth Langland enumerates how the imaginative value that Cullwick places in “difference” bespeaks her culture’s imaginative investment in class and other markers. Cullwick later elaborates that difference through entwined race, class and gender inscriptions. She defines herself as Munby’s “slave” to free herself from the dependence dictated by compulsory heterosexuality within a class matrix. In other words, her bondage as a servant liberates her from her bondage as a woman within marriage. The last few lines above show that the difference is actualised in the material body which is different for Munby and Cullwick. The stable, “true sign of being a servant,” the body, paradoxically makes class difference bridgeable through emphasis on attraction through difference whereas being married is seen by Cullwick as a desire to be raised in rank, and hence something which threatens to obliterate the very difference that Cullwick draws her value from. This helps Cullwick come to terms with her own marriage, and by extension, makes her combine servanthood and wifhood together through a religious language of duty. However, in the way that she perceives the body, Cullwick also

manages to reverse physical attributes of masculinity and femininity, which are in turn class determined concepts.

Cullwick makes use of her culture's imaginative investment in contrasts to define herself as a hard-working woman and eroticize the difference by placing her body against those of women of a different class. The contrast between the brown working hand and the milky white breast of working women seems especially to have fascinated Munby. Barry Reay, while analyzing Munby's fascination with working women, shows how the contrast of working women's masculine bodies including their trouser clad legs, and their female selves may have seemed like cross dressing to the Victorians. From Cullwick's perspective, there is another contrast that comes up again and again, that of the contrast between her large coarse hands and the feminine hand of some lady or the contrast between her hands and Munby's small white ones. The details of this contrast are sometimes given to present her own body at an advantage because this would appeal to Munby.

At the same time, these descriptions make use of contemporary discourses to go beyond this and give Cullwick a positive sense of her own identity about her class and gender position. For example, when the Countess of Shadbroke bids the servants goodbye, she shows Cullwick her paintings and then "sh[akes her] rough hand in her very delicate one, & sa[ys] goodbye. It [is] the first & last time too that a lady like her touch [es her] hand" (41). Much later, Cullwick recounts: "My hands are very coarse and hardish, but not more so than usual. Mrs. J has very white hands & often she comes and lays her hand lightly on mine for me to feel how cold they are- we say its to show the difference more than anything else" (111). This contrast is a polarization emphasizing difference, class-difference, but also difference of gender roles. The juxtaposition gives us a clue to Cullwick's method of self-fashioning. It is dependent on

conventional preferences in popular discourse for the small white hand in contrast to the working hand. It raises Cullwick's desire for the very role that Mrs. J or the countess occupies but her identity is defined against the roles of these women in preference for her working hand. The preference is clear because this contrast lies within a larger framework of images of frail upper class women in contrast to Cullwick's strong body and her preference for her own strength. She frequently refers to the fact that Munby sits on her lap, that she escorts ladies at night and carries them with one hand and that she pities the ladies because they cannot do the work that she does because of their frailty:

She was so fussy and whining like, & yet so small and feeble. It seemed so hard to be provoked by . . . one as I could crush with one hand almost & I so much taller nor her. But she knew she was the lady & I knew I was her servant & I pitied her too, for not being well through a love affair, that I never forgot my place . . . and I think she did not dislike me. (89)

It is significant that the ranks are not disrupted. The naturalization of class through the body is made likable by disguising it in a language of sympathy and dislocating it to the realm of sentiment. This contains anxieties about working-class anger and disruption of order in the middle-class reader but also makes Cullwick internalise class difference through a gendered language of common experiences. The language of love makes Cullwick's place seem like a matter of her choice. When ladies kick her while she is working on the floor, she notes this in her diaries because of the erotic potential of the scene but assimilates it as erotic game playing, not as a real insult. An earlier version of the same incident above shows a more rebellious spirit before it was re-written:

He (Munby) thought I wasn't good 'cause I never answered the letter he sent me o' Friday about my Missis saying I was insolent....Massa thought I was naughty . . . I was tired and I felt rebellious...I couldn't bear Massa to take their (the employers') part against me, & I told Massa how it was to feel – a great big wench & strong as I am, as could *crush* a weak thing like Miss Margaret is, with one hand (tho' of course I *wouldn't*) . . . for her to trifle with me about going out...And play with me as if I was a child (166)

The re-writing of this diary entry for a later memoir shows how the language of sentiment is used to rein in the anger that the temporally earlier version exposes.

Cullwick's body, according to her, is a cause for envy amongst both ladies and fellow servants. She says, "I've thought it was from me being so much taller and stronger nor them & me not minding what work I did, & never caring to be drest up myself & for saving my wages more than they did." In Cullwick's language, her larger body is an asset and her lack of concern for dressing is something to be envied. The dirtier she is, the more respect she gets, perhaps because it shows that she works better. "I think Mr Stodart & his sisters respected me at last, for all I had show'd myself as a real drudge & common servant" (77). The language of competition with other women separates her as an individual preventing class or gender solidarity, but the language that she uses to express her own identity is dependent on class. That Cullwick likes her life as a servant is reiterated again and again in the diaries and is, I think, to be taken seriously. Though initially Munby inculcates a puritan ethos of work in Cullwick, he wants her to try to become a "lady" towards the latter part of their relationship. By this point, Cullwick is really proud of being a servant and is uncomfortable in having to attend tea parties as a lady because Munby wants her to. Her indifference to marriage and her refusal to give up being a servant because she wants to maintain her freedom shows real resistance and is cause for disagreement between the couple. In one entry, Cullwick speculates that it would be nice to have some accomplishments like a lady but immediately writes about her satisfaction in being a servant. When Cullwick meets a maid on a trip to the continent with Munby dressed as a lady, she feels the irony of the situation. In another entry Cullwick describes her conversation with her sister Polly where they discuss whether Polly would like to live a lady's life. The conversation ends with Cullwick's assertion that she would not wish to be anything but a servant.

Competing and contradictory discourses play out in Cullwick's diaries to construct the self. In the context of middle-class discourses, Armstrong expresses the idea that the prominence of domestic fiction in this period suggests that the Victorian novel's transformation of household space into an instrument that could be used to classify any social group, regardless of class, created a cultural hegemony that did not depend on juridical or economic means, but on the notion of the family, on norms of sexual behaviour, polite use of language and regulation of leisure time (201). In order to displace political resistance onto the primitive and the criminal, novels had to contain "other" cultural materials and class sexualities, as happens at the very end of *Jane Eyre* or *Mary Barton*. Working-class women's diaries, even though they are a different mode of texts entirely, would be influenced by this ideology. However, they seem to indicate that this middle-class ideology, creating and being created by the novel, is used very differently in the case of working-class individuals to make sense of their lives and relationships. By their very fragmented nature, the diaries challenge any one unitary idea of self. Hence, by revealing the interaction of various ideologies, they prevent any one representation of the subject that competes to represent the female subject. Other cultural materials co-exist with the materials acceptable within the dominant discourse. In Cullwick's texts, the gaps are visible between these competing discourses which allow us to trace them. At times it is possible to see this as subverting middle-class ideology that attempts to create the working-class subject. Cullwick's subjectivity, as present in her diaries provides a complex understanding of how such political language is incorporated and reconstituted in the construction of the self of the working-class other.

In Cullwick's own self-fashioning, her own sense of her identity is deeply rooted in both her class and gender situation. Unlike the fictional Pamela, whose identity depends on her sexual

purity (not class stature as servant) which helps her not to be currency in a system of exchange amongst men, and forces the realization in the reader that such a political system that authorizes the exercise of power is to be condemned (Armstrong 115), Cullwick's *separation* from this kind of ideal of femininity, which has middle-class attributes, is the source of her power. Whatever she is in Munby's photographs or diaries, in her own diaries she is a woman conscious of her class and her strong body and she derives her sense of worth from these – her independence through her work and strength. Here is a matrimonial ad that Munby wrote for Cullwick and Cullwick sent out, "just for fun": "'Hannah Cullwick country servant in London- height 5 feet 7 & over- arm 13 inches round – can heave twelve stone easy- reckon'd good-looking in the country but hates fashion. Has saved money'"(159). Though Munby wrote this out for her, Cullwick notes this herself in her own diary and is quite coy when she says she doesn't want people to really answer her. Cullwick sees this as an attractive description expecting people to like her.

Understanding how Hannah constructs her own identity as a woman and as a servant based on her work and her body under the constant surveillance of Munby gives us an understanding of how one servant woman comes to understand and experience reality and how identity can be moulded. Hannah takes up and rejects contradictory discourses about class-based femininity to construct an erotic text that uses modes of narration of sentimental love to bridge gaps between classes. Hannah understands herself as a subject of discursive practices, uses available discourses but by no means remains a passive object to them. Unlike published autobiographies of domestic servants that try to avoid descriptions of dirt and work and of the body to construct their subjectivity, Hannah's diaries show that her sense of selfhood arises from these very parameters that define her class identity.

Notes

The references to Cullwick's text are mostly from Liz Stanley's selected edition of her diaries. These references are documented in the chapter by the use of page numbers. Wherever I have not used a page number but only a date, it means that I have quoted directly from Cullwick's diaries. In such entries, I have maintained Cullwick's use of the lowercase "i" to denote the first-person pronoun.

1 Langland looks at the impact of the middle class domestic ideal of the woman in the formation of Cullwick's subjectivity in *Nobody's Angels*. McClintock discusses how Cullwick and Munby came to terms with their class situations in the relationship by imaginatively transferring those ideas to the realm of racial role-playing in the context of private fantasies of Empire. Davidoff and Hall discuss the themes of fantasy and the manipulation of symbols in the relationship to class, gender and sexuality in *Family Fortunes*.

2 At one point Hannah writes this: "While I made the cigars I sat 'tween his knees & heard Massa read some verses he's made up for me. They was very nice & all just as I should o' said if I could o' made 'em, for they was wrote as if I was saying it, & I'd to kiss Massa at all the best parts- about going up the chimney & all that" (138).

3 The Victorian pornographic text, *My Secret Life* has instances where Walter, the protagonist, looks at the reflection of his servant-girl partners in the mirror and observes the contrast between their apparent reluctance to have sex, which is seen as a modest attribute, in contrast to the "reality" of their working-class selves which is usually imagined to be on sexual overdrive.

4 I have mentioned this passage in Chapter 5, note 12.

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