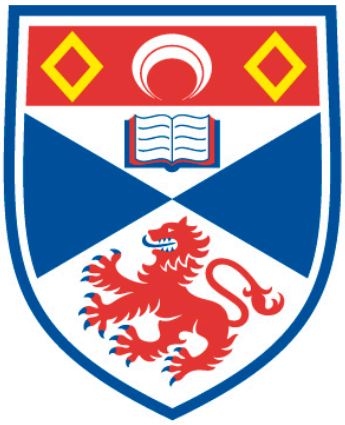
MANUFACTURING SELVES : THE POETICS OF SELF-REPRESENTATION AND IDENTITY IN THE POETRY OF THREE "FACTORY-GIRLS", 1840-1882

Suz Garrard

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews



2017

Abstract

This thesis is a transatlantic examination of self-representational strategies in factory women's poetry from circa 1848-1882, highlighting in particular how the medium of the working-class periodical enabled these socially marginal poets to subjectively engage with and reconfigure dominant typologies of class and gender within nineteenth-century poetics. The first chapter explores how working-class women were depicted in middle-class social-reform literature and working-class men's poetry. It argues that factory women were circumscribed into roles of social villainy or victimage in popular bourgeois reform texts by authors such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Caroline Norton, and were cast as idealized domestic figures in working-class men's poetry in the mid-nineteenth century. The remaining three chapters examine the poetry of Manchester dye-worker Fanny Forrester, Scottish weaver Ellen Johnston, and Lowell mill-girl Lucy Larcom as case-studies of factory women's poetics in mid-nineteenth century writing. Chapter Two discusses the life and work of Fanny Forrester in *Ben Brierley's Journal*, and considers how Forrester's invocation of the pastoral genre opens new opportunities for urban, factory women to engage with ideologies of domestic femininity within a destabilized urban cityscape. Chapter Three considers the work of Ellen Johnston, "The Factory Girl" whose numerous poems in *The People's Journal* and the *Penny Post* cross genres, dialects, and themes. This chapter claims that Johnston's poetry divides class and gender identity depending on her intended audience—a division exemplified, respectively, by her nationalistic poetry and her sentimental correspondence poetry. Chapter Four explores the work of Lucy Larcom, whose contributions to *The Lowell Offering* and her novel-poem *An Idyl of Work* harness the language and philosophy of Evangelical Christianity to validate women's wage-labor as socially and religiously appropriate. Ultimately, this thesis contends that nineteenth-century factory women's poetry from Britain and America embodies the tensions surrounding the "factory girl" identity, and offers unique aesthetic and representational strategies of negotiating women's factory labor.

1. Candidate's declarations:
I, , hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 80,000 words in length, has been written by me, and that it is the record of work carried out by me, or principally by myself in collaboration with others as acknowledged, and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.
I was admitted as a research student in September 2013 and as a candidate for the degree of PhD in June 2014; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2013 and 2017.

2. Supervisor's declaration:
I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of PhD in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.
Date …… signature of supervisor

3. Permission for publication: (*to be signed by both candidate and supervisor*)
In submitting this thesis to the University of St Andrews I understand that I am giving permission for it to be made available for use in accordance with the regulations of the University Library for the time being in force, subject to any copyright vested in the work not being affected thereby. I also understand that the title and the abstract will be published, and that a copy of the work may be made and supplied to any bona fide library or research worker, that my thesis will be electronically accessible for personal or research use unless exempt by award of an embargo as requested below, and that the library has the right to migrate my thesis into new electronic forms as required to ensure continued access to the thesis. I have obtained any third-party copyright permissions that may be required in order to allow such access and migration, or have requested the appropriate embargo below.

The following is an agreed request by candidate and supervisor regarding the publication of this thesis:

PRINTED COPY
Embargo on all or part of print copy for a period of 5 years (maximum five) on the following ground(s):

Supporting statement for printed embargo request if greater than 2 years:

- Publication would preclude future publication

ELECTRONIC COPY
Embargo on all or part of electronic copy for a period of 2 years (maximum five) on the following ground(s):

Supporting statement for electronic embargo request if greater than 2 years:

- Publication would preclude future publication

ABSTRACT AND TITLE EMBARGOES

An embargo on the full text copy of your thesis in the electronic and printed formats will be granted automatically in the first instance. This embargo includes the abstract and title except that the title will be used in the graduation booklet.

If you have selected an embargo option indicate below if you wish to allow the thesis abstract and/or title to be published. If you do not complete the section below the title and abstract will remain embargoed along with the text of the thesis.

a) I agree to the title and abstract being published YES
b) I require an embargo on abstract NO
c) I require an embargo on title NO

Date …… signature of candidate …… signature of supervisor ……

Please note initial embargos can be requested for a maximum of five years. An embargo on a thesis submitted to the Faculty of Science or Medicine is rarely granted for more than two years in the first instance, without good justification. The Library will not lift an embargo before confirming with the student and supervisor that they do not intend to request a continuation. In the absence of an agreed response from both student and supervisor, the Head of School will be consulted. Please note that the total period of an embargo, including any continuation, is not expected to exceed ten years.
Where part of a thesis is to be embargoed, please specify the part and the reason.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to my supervisors Dr. Gregory Tate and Dr. Christina Alt. Without their endless support, guidance, and excellent senses of humor, I'd never have been able to make it this far. Thank you for making me believe in me and my research, even when I didn't.

I would like to thank the faculty and staff in the School of English who tirelessly work to make students' lives easier and infinitely more interesting. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Susan Sellers and Dr. Sara Lodge for their professional advice and encouragement.

Of the scores of people who have supported me throughout my postgraduate degrees, I want to highlight a few people whose friendship and love have been truly invaluable: the hundreds of undergrads who gave me the privilege of being their mentor, friend, and confidant—thanks for laughing with me and reminding me that the world is bigger than my thesis; Toria has consistently kept me sane and confident, even when I fought her tooth and nail—you are my role model, and a constant source of comfort and joy to me; Valentina has made herself available for hugs and chocolate at some truly ridiculous hours—thanks for freaking out with me; Jamie, thanks for being the supportive and protective big brother I never had; Cal, you got me through the most difficult term of my academic career—thanks for making me celebrate my weirdness and being my best friend through everything, I love you Goose; Meme, Alex and AJ have been the best transatlantic cheerleaders a scholar could want. Finally, I'd like to thank my mom, Tammy. I owe everything I have and will become to you and your endless love and sacrifice. This thesis is for you.

Table of Contents

Introduction: Victorian Poetry, Factory Women, and Forms

Young Nelly was as sweet a girl
As e'er a shuttle threw,
And every time I met with her
My passion deeper grew.[1]

The *Dundee, Perth, and Forfar People's Journal*, a working-class newspaper that was popular across Scotland throughout the last four decades of the nineteenth-century, was known for featuring its working-class readers' poetry and offering criticism of their writing from the editorial staff. Headed by W.D. Latto from 1860 to 1898, *The People's Journal* became the primary publication to which power-loom weaver and poet Ellen Johnston, "E.J., The Factory Girl," submitted her writing from 1861 to 1864. The above lines were written in admiration of Johnston by another local poet. "Young Nelly" is constructed in relation to her industrial labor through the unnamed poet's assertion that she is the sweetest girl to ever throw a shuttle, a representation that ostensibly aligns with Johnston's chosen *nom de plume*. However, Johnston's description as a congenial weaver is less an empowering statement about women's industrial work, and more a convenient simile for the working-class readers of the newspaper who would recognize the industrial jargon. The bouncing iambic tetrameter and trimeter of the stanza further deemphasize politicized readings of Johnston's factory labor as a positive influence on her desirability thanks to the levity of their sing-song effect—the fact that Johnston happens to be a "factory girl" is ultimately irrelevant in the face of the poet's conventional statement of affection and admiration. "Young Nelly" is little more than an archetype of idealized femininity into which Johnston the poet and wage laborer is circumscribed.

[1] Anonymous, "Untitled," *Dundee, Perth and Forfar People's Journal*, January 17, 1863, 2.

The conventionality of Johnston's representation in the stanza is made more apparent when taken into context with the editorial commentary immediately preceding the quoted verse:

> "The Factory Girl" is a good girl apparently, but we would advise her against "wandering late" in "the fields and flowery braes" as it is very dangerous.[2]

Like the unnamed poet, the editor also employs a representation of Johnston in which she is merely a "type" of female factory laborer—a fact reinforced by the editor's appropriation of Johnston's moniker without any reference to her actual name. Though Johnston is "apparently" a "good girl," she ventures alone at night through the city and surrounding countryside which is considered both dangerous and morally objectionable. The editor's paternalistic concern exemplifies how ideologies and representations of the factory girl existed on the borders of social respectability. In both the poem and the editorial commentary, hegemonic typologies of the factory-employed woman dominate the representation of Johnston, the poet.

The generalized figure of "The Factory Girl, Nelly" in the admirer's poem and editor's comments invokes a two-dimensional factory-girl representation, one whose typology is a totalizing conflict between nineteenth-century gender and labor conventions. Each male writer attempts to cast her in terms of bourgeois, domestic femininity even while discussing her overtly working-class, non-domestic life. Despite the numerous poems by and growing popularity of Johnston in *The People's Journal*, the men's discussions of her are non-specific and without reference to the complex representation she constructs of herself in her writing. In Johnston's own writing, however, she represents her labor, class, and gender through a different set of interpretive frameworks. She depicts the identity of "The Factory Girl" to be dually liberating and restrictive. At various points, Johnston casts herself as a domesticated mother, a passionately tragic heroine, and an empowered industrial

[2] W.D. Latto, "To Correspondents," *Dundee, Perth and Forfar People's Journal*, January 17, 1863, 4.

laborer, attempting to weave together these identities into a cohesive and socially respectable representation.

In this thesis, I explore how factory-women poets such as Ellen Johnston crafted self-representations in their published poetry during the middling decades of the nineteenth century in conversation with and opposition to their construction in popular middle-class and male working-class writing. Though working-class women's writing has received increased attention in the past decade, this scholarly work has been primarily limited to historicist readings of these authors' individual social, political, and cultural environments, and is usually a small facet of larger analyses of writing by variously employed working-class women—industrial and otherwise. My argument, on the other hand, is based on close readings of poems by Scottish loom-operative Ellen Johnston (1835-1873), Manchester dye-worker Fanny Forrester (1852-1889), and Massachusetts mill-girl Lucy Larcom (1824-1893). By considering the aesthetic forms employed by these women in dialogue with the historical contexts of their lives and writing, I illustrate how seemingly ordinary and derivative poems—in terms of language, prosody, and content—by "minor" poets can be read as a site of subjectivity-making and social redefinition.[3] This is not to say that I consider the factory poets of my study to be avant-garde, transgressive writers whose revolutionary verses have been wrongly ignored. Rather, I argue that the overall conventionality of the subjects and forms of factory-women's poetry is neither consistent nor a particularly productive way of reading these texts. Defining marginally classed and gendered writers' texts as wholly conventional or groundbreaking only reinforces what Pamela Fox calls the "reproduction-resistance circuit" of cultural studies:

[3]See Giles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, and Robert Brinkley, "What Is a Minor Literature," *Mississippi Review* 11, no. 3 (1983): 13–33, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20133921. I define "minor" poet/literature as established by Deleuze, Guattari, and Brinkley in "What is a Minor Literature" (1983). Specifically, I draw from their assertion that minor literature "is not the literature of a minor language but the literature a minority makes in a major language" (16).

> Though usually well-intentioned, theories which categorically condemn the reproduction of dominant values and celebrate "counter-hegemonic" acts run the danger of obscuring or devaluing the desires of those who belong to such subcultures.[4]

Fox's analysis of twentieth-century, working-class novels attempts to avoid "the mistake of denying or simplifying" the adherence to literary and social norms in "minor" literature by recognizing how such reproduction can be an act of invested resistance to social norms.[5] By reading nineteenth-century women's factory poetry for both its conformity to and subversions of theme, subject, and prosody, I seek to provide a richer understanding of how factory-women poets positioned themselves in nineteenth-century poetics and society. Furthermore, my method of analysis acknowledges how poetry and the periodical press were essential mediums for identity creation and social development for multiple audiences and authors in nineteenth-century Britain and America. I identify moments of poetic and representational subversion, illustrating how the variously intersecting gender and class identities of factory-women poets can simultaneously merge with and rupture dominant typologies of self and genre. This is a study of the "factory-girl" poet—an identity that stretched across nations and cultures as much as class and gender boundaries—and how the women who wrote poetry and worked in factories navigated the social and aesthetic forms of nineteenth-century life and poetry.

Critical Approaches

Multiple critical lenses influence my readings of factory women's poetry; however, the two most significant approaches to my analysis are New Historicism and New Formalism. While both terms are complex and loaded, my brief overview of these methodologies underscores the ways in which they intersect and complement each other, providing a richer reading of factory-women's texts and contexts when placed into dialogue with one another. Like much of the existing scholarship on

[4] Pamela Fox, *Class Fictions: Shame and Resistance in the British Working-Class Novel, 1890-1945* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1994), 3.
[5] Ibid., 4.

working-class women and their writing, New Historicism provides the contextual foundation of my readings. Stephen Greenblatt's original description of New Historicism as a "poetics of culture" is apt considering the medium in which many factory women chose to write.[6] Greenblatt's discussion of the relationship between capitalism, history, and language is especially relevant to my argument:

> For capitalism has characteristically generated neither regimes in which all discourses seem coordinated, nor regimes in which they seem radically isolated or discontinuous, but regimes in which the drive towards differentiation and the drive towards monological organization operate simultaneously, or at least oscillate so rapidly as to create the impression of simultaneity.[7]

For Greenblatt, history is not a case of totalizing and stable narratives, but a series of intersecting forms of power. The way in which Greenblatt identifies the simultaneous coexistence and contradiction of the historical effects of capitalism on language and society embodies how I understand the dynamic plasticity of factory-women's representations in nineteenth-century texts. As I will show, representations of power and resistance concerning class and gender identities continually shift in factory-women's poetry. These shifts parallel factory-women poets' engagement with these dynamic identities depending on the audience and sociopolitical context of their writing. New Historicism's rejection of "a single, unequivocal political meaning" in scholarship enables me to embrace the tensions between my poets' material realities, their public wage-labor, and their oft articulated desire for some form of bourgeois femininity as integral rather than detrimental to their strategies of cohesive self-representation.[8]

In its vehement rejection of the ahistorical and textually insular analysis of the twentieth-century New Critics, however, New Historicism frequently fails to account for the text as an aesthetic object with unique forms that both provide internal structure and interact with the social and

---

[6] Stephen Greenblatt, "Towards a Poetics of Culture," *Southern Review* 20, no. 1 (1987): 3.
[7] Ibid., 7.
[8] Catherine Gallagher, "Marxism and the New Historicism," in *The New Historicism*, ed. Harold Aram Veeser (New York: Taylor & Francis, 1989), 37.

ideological frameworks surrounding its publication. It is here that more recent developments in New Formalism enrich my readings of factory-women's poetry by allowing me to explore how poetry and the working-class periodical as mediums are as essential to understanding working-class women's writing as the various strategies of self-representation within individual poems. Caroline Levine's definition and consideration of "forms" in literature and society prove especially fruitful for my project. In her study, *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (2015), Levine claims that forms—structures that organize "all ordering principles, all patterns of repetition and difference"—are an opportunity for literary scholars to highlight the connections between the social and the aesthetic.[9] According to Levine, pervasive categories such race, gender, class, nationality, rhyme, meter, and narrative are examples of forms that wield varying amounts of power over subjects, structures, and texts. Levine identifies four main types of forms that work on both aesthetic and social levels: wholes, rhythms, hierarchies, and networks. It is useful to quote Levine's definitions at length:

> These are by no means the only forms, but they are particularly common, pervasive—and also significant. Though we have not always called them forms, they are the political structures that have most concerned literary and cultural studies scholars: bounded *wholes*, from domestic walls to national boundaries; temporal *rhythms*, from the repetitions of industrial labor to the enduring patterns of institutions over time; powerful *hierarchies*, including gender, race, class, and bureaucracy; and *networks* that link people and objects, including multinational trade, terrorism, and transportation. All of these have resonant corollaries in literature and literary studies: the bounded whole has long been a model for lyric poetry and narrative closure; rhythmic tempos organize poetic meter and sometimes literary history itself; hierarchies organize literary texts' investments in certain values and characters over others; and networks link national cultures, writers, and characters.[10]

Per Levine, each form has a set of "affordances," a design term that indicates the "potential uses or actions latent" in a form.[11] Networks afford connectivity between writers, readers, and publishers; wholes afford inclusion or exclusion; rhythms afford temporal control and regularity, but can also

[9] Caroline Levine, *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (Princton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015), 3.
[10] Ibid., 21.
[11] Ibid., 6.

beget oppression; hierarchies can afford discriminatory classification to subjects, but can also help give recognizable structure to abstract ideas. Even more importantly, the affordances of forms can alter, expand, and transform when they intersect, collide with, or are brought alongside other forms. Levine asserts that forms are useful because they are portable across media and time; they allow scholars to trace large historical trajectories across multiple mediums and contexts. In the case of my analysis, forms such as the rhythm of factory labor and the hierarchy of Victorian gender collide, a collision that has aesthetic consequences for the rhythm, rhyme, and genre in factory-women's poetry. The daily rhythm of textile labor met with traditional periods of women's lives such as girlhood and motherhood—interrupting traditional, pre-industrial patterns of friendship, courtship, education, and labor for working-class women. Shaped by the competing expectations of gender and labor in daily life, factory women also negotiated these forms in their poetry through the joint adoption and reconfiguration of nineteenth-century conventions of genre and poetics—such as Ellen Johnston's employment of the heroic epic, Lucy Larcom's rhythmic embodiments of factory labor, and Fanny Forrester's reinterpretation of the pastoral poem.

On a larger social scale, the bounded whole of the factory—its material walls and the varying levels of power wielded by its inhabitants—is disrupted and altered by the network created and supported by the publication of working-class newspapers. This network of working-class readers and writers uncovered new strategies of self-expression, self-education, and large-scale class communication outside of the factory "whole" and its internal hierarchies of class and gender. Furthermore, this network of news and poetry also imposed its own rhythm of publication upon the seemingly dominating rhythm of factory labor, providing its working-class subscribers an alternative measure around which to schedule their lives. The analysis of forms—as defined by Levine—enables me to draw conclusions about factory women's poetry that go beyond viewing them as either transgressive or derivative by placing text and context in dialogue with one another.

Levine's articulation of New Formalism, however, is purposely broad and abstract, making few substantial assertions about how her approach enriches or interrogates the relationship between literature and society, and what this relationship says about the contemporary historical moment in which texts were published. It is here that New Formalist analyses by Susan Wolfson and Herbert F. Tucker are useful to my project. By close-reading Romantic poetry, Wolfson persuasively claims in *Romantic Interactions: Social Being and the Turns of Literary Action* (2010) that the "fine grain of reading, and reading against the grain" showcase the subtle politics within the language and forms of poems by authors such as William Wordsworth and John Keats.[12] Wolfson's analyses are hinged upon the "interactions" of multiple forms of social influence like the French Revolution, allowing her to make an argument for the Romantic poets' revolutionary resistance to formal conventions in their prosody; Wolfson interprets Romantic poetry as a conscious intervention into established forms of representation, prosody, and subjectivity. For example, Wolfson's reading of Wordsworth's autobiographical writing claims that his revisions "contend with the poetic text and its poetic 'self' as historically disjunctive forms prone to open-ended transformation, and confronts these transformations, in turn, as disclosers of new gaps and uncertainties in the imagined originary moment."[13] In other words, language and poetic form interject into hegemonic frameworks of identity, opening up new strategies of self-representation and poetic production. Wolfson's insistence on locating political forces within seemingly apolitical verse supports my identification of politicized narratives of gender and class within factory-women's poetry that is ostensibly conventional and depoliticized. Furthermore, Wolfson's mode of analysis foregrounds my conclusion that the

[12] Susan J. Wolfson, *Formal Charges: The Shaping of Poetry in British Romanticism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 8.
[13] Ibid., 49.

sentimentality of my factory-women poets is actually rooted in the poetics of Wordsworthian Romanticism, a poetics that was inherently radical and subversive.

Examining poetry for the ways in which its aesthetic forms embody its specific socio-historical context, Tucker refines Levine's definition of forms to make a persuasive statement about poetry's social-reform potential. In his formalist reconsideration of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "The Cry of the Children" (1842), Tucker reads the poem's metrical "degree of insistence, and its alternation of six-foot with four-foot trochaic lines" as a poetic expression of the factory work it was meant to represent, and signals an "analogy between the regulation of verse and of lives, metrical law and Poor Law, closure and curfew."[14] Tucker argues that his "more intimate" close reading of Barrett Browning's poem reinvigorates a neglected set of analytic tools, privileging aesthetic formal examination as a method of interpreting the poem's contemporary social and political history. Tucker brings his analysis to the rhythms of individual lines of poetry to highlight surrounding historical conflicts and movements. This strategy contributes to my insistence that close-reading of factory women's prosody is necessary to remove them from totalizing categorizations of conformity and subversion.

Both Wolfson and Tucker provide key evidence that formalist readings of nineteenth-century poetry can illuminate and uncover connections between texts and their historical context. Each critic's devotion to marrying the language of formalist analysis with dedicated historicism constitutes the backbone of my readings of nineteenth-century factory women's poetry, and provides a more concrete theoretical framework with which to make conclusions on cultural and textual levels. Ultimately, combining the language of New Historicism embodied by Stephen Greenblatt and Catherine Gallagher with New Formalism as practiced by Levine, Wolfson, and Tucker allows me to locate

[14] Herbert F Tucker, "Tactical Formalism : A Response to Caroline Levine," *Victorian Studies* 49, no. 1 (2006): 88, https://muse.jhu.edu/article/214244.

factory women poets within historical structures of poetics, as well as within their immediate socio-historical context of mid-nineteenth century Britain and America.

Working-Class Newspaper Poetry and its Forms

As the poems of Ellen Johnston, Fanny Forrester, and Lucy Larcom illustrate, the working-class newspaper was a vital medium for understanding how factory women poets from across Britain and America could disseminate and receive commentary on their poetry. While individual publications varied in their genre preference and the amount of poetry that appeared, most working-class newspapers from the 1830s to the 1880s contained dedicated spaces for full poems and many—such as the *Dundee, Perth, and Forfar People's Journal* and the Glasgow *Penny Post*—included a "To Correspondents" section that featured fragments of submitted poetry with commentary from the editors of the paper accompanying each stanza or poem. As critics like Natalie M. Houston, Kirstie Blair, and Michael Sanders have shown, both men and women contributed poetry to regional working-class newspapers and magazines. Sanders' work on the *Northern Star* highlights how Chartist poetry in working-class papers employed "metonymy and metaphor to invoke and evoke agency," providing Chartist poets a language of dissent in which they could identify and represent a "social force capable of securing the Charter."[15] His analysis illustrates how "changes in poetic strategy" were "symptomatic of changes in political strategy" during the development and ultimate dissolution of the Chartist movement.[16] I take Sanders's method of reading patterns and shifts in working-class poetics as political acts, and apply it to understanding how the self-representational strategies of working-class women reflect and subvert social and political identities.

[15] Michael Sanders, "Poetic Agency : Metonymy and Metaphor in Chartist Poetry" *Victorian Poetry* 39, no. 2 (2011): 111, doi:10.1353/vp.2001.0019.
[16] Ibid.

In his landmark collection of nineteenth-century working-class poetry, Brian Maidment asserts that the period of poetry following the final gasps of the Chartist movement in the late 1840s and early 1850s was characterized by working-class poets who were disenchanted with the fiery political verse popular throughout the 1830s and 1840s, and turned their attentions to establishing a poetics based on established poetic forms and classed cultural celebration. Maidment notes how "Parnassian" poets such as Edwin Waugh sought to show how the working-class community might be "defined and given moral values" that would validate them as respectable and, more importantly, "safe" in the eyes of the middle class and the government.[17] Martha Vicinus prefigures Maidment's assertions in claiming that post-Chartist poetry was less concerned with politicized rhetoric and more concerned with establishing "well-defined and stable communities" of workers.[18] Though these critics correctly note the shift in tone away from overt anger and political activism in mid-century working-class poetry, their analyses oversimplify the connection between a turn towards topical, light poetry and a general depoliticization of the working-class; additionally, these critics investigate almost no poetry by working-class women.

Where Sanders's and Vicinus's analyses end at the decline of the Chartist movement in the early 1850s, Blair's investigation of working-class newspaper poetry begins. Blair claims that:

> even when [working-class newspaper] poems seem at first glance to be derivative, conventional, and commonplace in form and sentiment, they repay further study because, when placed within the context of a newspaper column and located within a specific community of readers, they operate as sophisticated and often politically charged reflections upon current events, as well as upon the practice and purpose of poetry.[19]

[17] Brian Maidment, *The Poorhouse Fugitives: Self-Taught Poets and Poetry in Victorian Britain*, Carcanet (Manchester, 1987), 154.
[18] Martha Vicinus, "The Study of Nineteenth Century British Working Class Poetry," *College English* 32, no. 5 (1971): 555, http://www.jstor.org/stable/374259.
[19] Kirstie Blair, "'A Very Poetical Town': Newspaper Poetry and the Working-Class Poet in Victorian Dundee," *Victorian Poetry* 52, no. 1 (2014): 91, https://muse.jhu.edu/journals/victorian_poetry/v052/52.1.blair.htm.

Blair's analysis of the overlooked poems in the *People's Journal* importantly considers how these texts gesture to a larger network of working-class poets, including these writers' awareness of local events, national government, and each other. Blair's focus on the period after the collapse of Chartism investigates a period that has been neglected in investigations of poetry both by scholars of working-class writing and Victorian periodicals.

Judith Rosen illustrates the importance of the periodical as a mouthpiece for working-class authors by highlighting its ability to bypass the "increasingly professional and commercialized nature of the book trade at mid-century."[20] Unlike earlier laboring poets like Ann Yearsley and Stephen Duck who gained an audience for their poetry through wealthy or bourgeois patrons, mid-century factory women poets could feasibly circulate their poetry publicly through the working-class newspaper. One of the most fascinating aspects of newspaper poetry is that it blurs the line between public and private publication: though the newspaper is inherently a public text, many of the poems deal with local, topical issues or directly reference other poems that had appeared in previous issues of the paper. However, there is a coterie aspect to working-class newspaper poetry in that its contributors write to each other as if to a familiar, semi-private community of interested and supportive readers. Ellen Johnston, for example, holds intimate conversations about her life, love interests, and views on factory labor and poetry with other readers of the *People's Journal* with whom she never met. She even received a marriage proposal and carried out a long-term engagement with a working-class poet from Stirling solely through their verse correspondences in the *Penny Post*. Johnston's case embodies how the network of the working-class newspaper created opportunities for community beyond the whole of the factory by permeating the relentless rhythm of factory-labor with its own frequency of publication. Additionally, this public circulation of poems that narrate traditionally personal and private subjects

[20] Judith Rosen, "Class and Poetic Communities: The Works of Ellen Johnston, 'The Factory Girl,'" *Victorian Poetry* 39, no. 2 (2001): 208, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40002677.

also disrupts the bounded whole of domestic femininity by breaching an assumed privacy between correspondents.

By candidly discussing courtship, single motherhood, and wage labor in their poetic correspondences, factory women such as Johnston affirm Lauren Berlant's assertion that all "publics presume intimacy."[21] According to Berlant's *The Female Complaint* (2008), this "public intimacy" enables socially liminal writers and readers to cultivate a "culture of circulation" in which participants can "*feel* as though [the particular community] expresses what is common among them."[22] The feeling of identification and community provided by an "intimate public" simultaneously retrenches and subverts dominant representations of gender, genre, and self—though the depictions of romance and sentimentality in these correspondences seemingly conform to dominant idealizations of middle-class femininity, factory women's marginal class status and the public nature of the periodical redefine how such ideologies functioned in literature and society.

Newspaper poetry is further complicated by the editorial agenda of many working-class newspapers, as well as the larger culture of mid-century self-improvement. The 1850s and 1860s culture of self-improvement reconfigured the "self-taught worker" characterized in Samuel Smile's *Self-Help* (1859) by transforming him into the "heroic autodidact": a working-class citizen who employed their hard-won self-education to engage with and better their social and political surroundings.[23] According to Anne Baltz Rodrick, mid-century self-improvers turned their attentions "outward, to focus on their common responsibilities as citizens of their city, their country, and their

[21] Lauren Berlant, *The Female Complaint* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), vii.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Anne Baltz Rodrick, "The Importance of Being an Earnest Improver: Class, Caste, and 'Self-Help' in Mid-Victorian England," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 29, no. 1 (2001): 43, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25058538. See also: Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help; With Illustrations of Character and Conduct* (London: John Murray, Albermarle Street, 1860).

empire."[24] Poems about international political movements and British legislature/society were published alongside doggerels on city life, lamentations about factory labor, and contemplations on the act of writing poetry in a working-class context. The dialogues between poets and editors in working-class newspapers represent a multi-faceted network, one that exerted influence over the hierarchies of nineteenth-century class, gender, and publishing thanks to their emphasis on working-class participation, writing, and individual working-class experiences. The editors of working-class newspapers shaped the culture of self-improvement by adding their own comments and critiques to poems, shaping the development of working-class poetics by assigning or removing merit from various types of poetry—an outside pressure that affected each of my poets in various ways. Speaking of editor W. D. Latto's commentary to contributors' poems in the "To Correspondents" of the *People's Journal*, Kirstie Blair claims that the weekly segment "functioned as a humorous critical study of rejected poems that frequently took more column space that the 'Original Poetry' column," but also "guided his working-class readers towards writing particular kinds of poems."[25] Latto's ambiguous desire for poetry to be both self-improving and accessible reflects the evolving ideology of working-class political engagement, and the importance of newspaper poetry to its development. In the case of Lucy Larcom, the "guiding hand" of the factory overseers and religious leaders of *The Lowell Offering* is less overt, but nevertheless identifiable by the codes of behavior to which each factory woman was subject. The newspaper was a space that fostered communication and knowledge transference between publishing and editorial bodies dominated by middle-class men, and the working-class reader and writers of these regional newspapers.

[24] Baltz Rodrick, "The Importance of Being an Earnest Improver: Class, Caste, and 'Self-Help' in Mid-Victorian England," 43.
[25] Blair, "'A Very Poetical Town': Newspaper Poetry and the Working-Class Poet in Victorian Dundee," 97.

The poetry of Ellen Johnston, Fanny Forrester, and Lucy Larcom is made more complex by its publication in working-class periodicals and their appeal to working-class readers in industrial cityscapes such as Manchester, Dundee, Glasgow, and Boston. The working-class periodical provided not only a pathway to publication and circulation that was relatively accessible for factory women, but also an inherent audience of sympathetic readers. While each publication exerted and reacted to ideological pressures—such as the increasingly politically and socially divisive tone of *The Lowell Offering* just before the American Civil War—the mid-century, working-class newspaper and its poetry was a complex space of reaction, rupture, and resistance that was influenced by working-class women as much as their male peers.

Why the Factory-Girl?

Rather than investigate working-class women's writing more broadly, I have chosen to center my project on the poetry of women who explicitly labored in textile factories during the middling decades of the nineteenth century. The factory-employed woman has been a fraught social and literary figure from her first appearance in the newly built factories and mills of England in the late eighteenth century to the millions of women working in textile factories around the world today. The nineteenth-century "factory girl" was an especially contested and public figure in mid-nineteenth century Britain and America. Dye-worker, "bobbin-girl", and loom operator were just some of the positions that women held in textile factories, meaning that experiences of factory labor varied for women. Additionally, numerous types of textile manufacture (jute, cotton, dyeing, finishing, etc.) multiply possibilities for factory-women writers to craft narratives based on their unique experiences. Female factory labor increased exponentially throughout the century as machinery became smaller and the demand for manufactured textiles increased, leading to a sharp increase in women factory workers

due to the relative affordability of their labor.[26] Unlike female domestic servants or piecework seamstresses, women who worked in industrial factories were subject to similar standardized schedules, physical labor, and wage fluctuations as their male counterparts. More controversially, men and women often worked in the same physical spaces, leading to wide speculation by middle-class observers of the morality of women's factory labor. The overt overlap between men and women's "spheres" for factory laborers resulted in a workplace that threatened to rupture the Victorian ideology of separate "spheres," and challenged the patriarchal family structure of a sole, male breadwinner.

Women's work in factories also interrupted the boundaries of acceptable gender roles beyond the bounded whole of the mill. Thanks to the public nature of their work, factory men and women had access to a network of local working-class newspapers and magazines; furthermore, factory laborers were aware of the political and non-political organizations and associations available to them. As working-class political activism such as Chartism and the Ten Hours Movement took shape in the 1830s and 1840s, factory women were among the most likely to participate in organized protests such as strikes and walk-outs because of the relevance of these movements to their material working realities.[27] Meagan Timney asserts that the height of the Chartist movement saw working-class women that were "actively involved in organizing Chartist schools and Sunday schools and female Chartist organizations," and produced Chartist poetry in a bid to gain factory workers' rights.[28] Scholars such as Timney and Florence S. Boos illustrate how working-class poets such as "Marie" and E.H. voice their support for trade unions and working-class cooperation as a way of securing positive change, as

[26] Ivy Pinchbeck, *Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution, 1750-1850* (London: Frank Cass, 1977), 184.
[27] See Harold Benenson, "Patriarchal Constraints on Women Workers' Mobilization: The Lancashire Female Cotton Operatives 1842-1919," *The British Journal of Sociology* 44, no. 4 (1993): 115, http://www.jstor.org/stable/591413. Benenson highlights how early Chartist organizers recruited male and female weavers thanks to the "communal underpinning of artisan protest" during the early transition from domestic handloom to industrial steam-powered weaving, even though "power loom operatives, unlike the handworkers, sought improvement *within* the factories, not their destruction."
[28] Meagan B Timney, "'Of Factory Girls and Serving Maids': The Literary Labours of Working-Class Women in Victorian Britain" PhD diss. (Dalhousie University, 2009), 4–5.

well as showcasing their ability to speak on social and political matters as well as male Chartists. Boos, in particular, illustrates how Chorley dye-worker "Marie" blends support and praise of working-class movements with "rhapsodic" verse that seeks to level "class-hierarchies and other arbitrary social distinctions."[29] Boos's assertion is significant to my argument as it simultaneously underscores female factory poets' ability to write into dominant poetic scripts while engaging with larger class and gender politics.

However, the shared space of the factory and the similarities between men and women's factory labor and early Chartist activism did not create gender parity amongst the urban working classes. Factory men frequently encouraged women to leave industrial wage-labor to relieve the growing unemployment of urban, working-class men, and preserve the women's reputations—a plight vividly depicted in Elizabeth Gaskell's "Chartist narrative" *Mary Barton* (1848), embodied by John Barton's reluctance to allow his daughter to enter factory wage-labor.[30] Boos notes that "women were categorically barred from positions of active engagement or leadership in the [late] Chartist movement" and any other roles in "mass political movements" excepting the few that focused on women's issues.[31] Factory women's exclusion was frequently justified by reinforcing "fixed assumptions about women's lesser financial need" and "lower productive potential," resulting in the "segregation of women's political and economic roles" and the marginalization of their labor.[32] The tension between men struggling to gain higher pay and secure employment and the women who were seen as taking their positions in the factory caused a backlash against factory women. As I will address

[29] Florence S Boos, "The 'Homely Muse' in Her Diurnal Setting: The Periodical Poems of 'Marie,' Janet Hamilton, and Fanny Forrester," *Victorian Poetry* 39, no. 2 (2013): 258, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40002679.
[30] Pinchbeck, *Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution, 1750-1850*, 188–90.
[31] Florence S Boos, "Working-Class Poetry," in *A Companion to Victorian Poetry*, ed. Richard; Alison Chapman; Antony H. Harrison Cronin (London: Blackwell, 2008), 219.
[32] Joanna Bornat, "Lost Leaders: Women, Trade Unionism and the Case of the General Union of Textile Workers, 1875-1914," in *Unequal Opportunities: Women's Employment in England 1800-1918*, ed. Angela V. John (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 208.

in my next chapter, working-class men channeled their frustration with the failure of the Charter by envisioning a pre-industrial paradise in their writing, a poetic landscape in which working-class households were modeled on middle-class values: a male breadwinner and a domestic, non-laboring wife. The gap between the idealized working-class woman in male working-class writing, and the realities of factory women's lives is an intra-class hierarchy that affected factory women's writing in aesthetically and historically significant ways.

Along with restrictive and gendered representations constructed by working-class male writers, the female factory poet also faced ideological pressures "from above." Bourgeois, social-reform authors varied widely in their representation of the "factory girl," frequently contradicting themselves within their own writing. Participating in public wage-labor in an environment that also housed working men was a far cry from the demure behavior of the domesticated Lucie Manette in Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), or even the precariously situated governess in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847). Though both these characters travel and—particularly in the case of Jane Eyre—actively intervene in the novels' narratives, they are ultimately representations of bourgeois women whose lives are appropriately private and domestic. As I illustrate in my next chapter, the language of social-reform texts such as Gaskell's *Mary Barton* and the Parliamentary blue book reports from the 1830s vacillates between depicting the factory woman as a social threat and a victim of the *laissez-faire* industrial economy. My analysis builds upon the work of Patricia E. Johnson, whose examination of the working-class woman in Victorian industrial fiction highlights how factory-women were "hidden hands," figures whose material class markers have been deemphasized because their experiences destabilize the boundaries between private and public spheres.[33] Johnson rightly notes how female, working-class characters are depicted outside of the material space of the factory—such

[33] See Patricia E. Johnson, *Hidden Hands: Working-Class Women and Victorian Social-Problem Fiction* (Columbus: University of Ohio Press, 2001).

as Mary and Aunt Esther in *Mary Barton*—or quickly removed from factory-labor through circumstance or death as in Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna's *Helen Fleetwood*. She persuasively argues that much social-problem fiction and non-fiction sought to establish the authority of middle-class domesticity by featuring factory-women as immoral. Johnson's analysis, however, fails to fully examine the ways in which the figure of the working-class woman challenges middle-class authors structurally, as much as she does thematically. This is, partly, because Johnson focuses her analysis on fiction, and partly because her study is narrowed to middle-class, social-reform writing. Expanding the parameters of Johnson's argument, I highlight the "hidden hands" of working-class women in bourgeois poetry as well as fiction, showcasing how representations of factory-women destabilize these texts' formal aesthetics, disrupting how the meter, rhyme, and narrative trajectory function. Furthermore, I reverse the top-down direction of Johnson's analysis by centering my discussion on factory women's responses to middle-class representations of "the factory girl," creating a fuller picture of the social and literary landscape surrounding nineteenth-century industrialization and poetics.

Susan Zlotnick's *Women, Writing, and the Industrial Revolution* (1998) also foregrounds the way in which I approach female, working-class characters in canonical social-problem and domestic fiction. Zlotnick makes the compelling claim that middle-class women writers such as Harriet Martineau viewed the Industrial Revolution and the evolving social identity of "the factory girl" as positive ideological developments that could liberate women such as themselves to publicly work and publish. She examines novels such as Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848) and Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* (1849) as gateways for understanding how bourgeois women writers could craft working-class female characters in morally transgressive class and labor contexts because of their "sanguine belief that industrial capitalism promises women a brighter future."[34] As Zlotnick acknowledges, however, the

[34] Susan Zlotnick, *Women, Writing, and the Industrial Revolution* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 63.

ideology of a woman's "fortunate fall" into wage-labor as a way out of restrictive domestic femininity was more liberating for middle-class than for working-class women.[35] The final section of Zlotnick's study briefly explores how working-class women poets such as Fanny Forrester and Ellen Johnston interpreted industrialization and wage labor differently than their middle-class counterparts. She claims factory-women's poetry reflects a desire to both legitimize factory labor as socially acceptable, and express an ultimate wish to represent themselves within the framework of idealized, domestic femininity. I complicate Zlotnick's claims by underscoring the ambivalence towards the material reality of female factory-labor that undermines middle-class women's support for the evolving industrial society. This ambivalence is revealed in working-class women characters like Marian Erle in *Aurora Leigh* and Bessy Higgins in Gaskell's *North and South* (1855)—characters whose experiences of public work are portrayed as so physically, intellectually, and morally detrimental that they lead to the rape and physical abuse of the former, and the death of the latter. Though optimistic about the potential opportunity to pursue intellectual labor that they saw as being represented by industrialization, female middle-class authors were less certain about the moral and social implications of working-class women's factory-labor.

Chapter one explores how working-class women are represented in middle-class and male working-class literature in the nineteenth century. My examination in chapter one moves from early industrial fiction from the 1820s and 1830s to bourgeois literature from the politically and socially turbulent 1840s and 1850s. While my analysis is not exhaustive, the texts I have chosen exemplify their respective genres and periods of publication. Furthermore, the popularity of these texts throughout the nineteenth century stresses their significance in articulating and influencing representations of working-class women. I recognize a representational framework in and against

[35] Ibid., 62.

which the factory-working women poets of my study lived and wrote. Whether avoiding the representation of working-class women by choosing less controversial figures, adopting rhetoric from other humanitarian movements, or isolating their characters from wage-labor, nineteenth-century middle-class authors employ representations of female industrial wage-labor models to negotiate anxieties surrounding the social, political, and economic changes of the nineteenth century.

Seemingly caught at the crux of competing gender and class hierarchies, the factory-employed woman nevertheless composed and published poetry. The contradictions and restrictions inherent in representations of factory women by working-class men and middle-class reform authors are what necessitate analyses of these women's poetry and poetics. There are overt social and aesthetic forms at work in these women's lives and texts where the increasing network of working women meets the hierarchy of factory labor, the bounded whole of the factory is disrupted by the rhythm of newspaper publication, and the aesthetic wholes of nineteenth-century poetic convention collide with the self-representation strategies of class and gender marginalized factory women.

The Transatlantic Factory Girl

In addition to choosing my three authors based on their amount of extant texts, I have also chosen them because they provide a unique transatlantic perspective on understanding working-class women's experiences and writing. With this project, I seek to highlight the inherent connectivity and overlapping narratives of female, industrial poetry across national boundaries. The differing contexts and experiences of my poets "resist the easy portability of self-sufficient theory," however, the acts of writing and publishing poetry as a factory-employed woman are inherently cosmopolitan and, in many ways, transferrable—the rhythm of periodical publication meets a transnational network of urban and rural readers, both of which intersect the hierarchies of nineteenth-century class and gender in both

Britain and its former American colonies.[36] While not all regional, working-class newspapers or published volumes by factory women reached transatlantic audiences, the exchange of resources such as cotton, books, laboring populations, and industrial technology between Britain and America represents a material and imagined community. In his seminal essay on Atlantic history, David Armitage claims that transatlantic history enables scholars to draw "meaningful—rather than merely arbitrary—comparisons between otherwise distinct histories" because the nations around the Atlantic rim "already share some common features by virtue of being enmeshed within circum-Atlantic relationships."[37] The trans-North Atlantic context of my study is yet another form, one that is essential to understanding the nineteenth-century politics of class, gender, and literary representation.

Investigations into the transatlantic nineteenth-century world have increased over the last decade, with particular emphasis placed on the shared texts and literary conversations between American and Britain. I employ Tilar J. Mazzeo's definition of transatlanticism as "exchange and interpenetration culturally," as well as a term that can apply to "instances of Anglo-American hybridity, in which the possibility of 'both/and' exists" in terms of national identity.[38] Mazzeo highlights the manifold examples of transatlantic settings and subjects in Romantic literature of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century—a period of increasing emigration to the United States through the 1790s—but complicates this ostensibly simple relationship by exploring how "Romantic emigration literature" performs "a refusal of transatlantic identity."[39] By exploring the shared themes and language of Gilbert Imlay's *The Emigrants* and Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" in the context of growing anti-American sentiment after 1796, Mazzeo underscores how English, Celtic, and American identities

[36] Vinay Dharwadker, "Introduction," in *Cosmopolitan Geographies: New Locations in Literature and Culture*, ed. Vinay Dharwadker (New York and London, 2001), 3.
[37] David Armitage, "Three Concepts of Atlantic History," in *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, ed. David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 18.
[38] Tilar J. Mazzeo, "The Impossibility of Being Anglo-American: The Rhetoric of Emigration and Transatlanticism in British Romantic Culture, 1791–1833," *European Romantic Review* 16, no. 1 (2005): 60, doi:10.1080/1050958042000338552.
[39] Ibid.

were bounded wholes forced to adapt, expand, and reassert themselves in the face of a growing network of exchanged peoples, texts, and ideas.

Amanda Claybaugh's exploration of transatlantic reform literature in the nineteenth-century examines the role of social reform ideologies in nineteenth-century America and Britain. In *The Novel of Purpose* (2007), Claybaugh asserts that "social reform was crucially Anglo-American in scope" and that "reformers in each nation allied with those in the other in order to alter both."[40] Looking at texts by Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Anne Brontë and Harriet Martineau, Claybaugh shows how Great Britain and the United States constituted a shared and interdependent reading public, and that reformers active in Britain could frequently find their counterparts in America.[41] Where Mazzeo concludes that English identity was "increasingly represented [in Romantic emigration literature] as stable and organic," Claybaugh notes that the ties between Britain and America were more fluid and comparable in terms of political and social reform literature:[42]

> While the Anglo-American world was weakly centered in what would be called Great Britain, it was structured less by center and periphery than by affiliations that were partial, mutable, and overlapping.[43]

I, like Claybaugh, view the relationship between Britain and America as one of affiliation and lingering "interdependence," especially in terms of class and gender developments in each nation.[44] Like much of its historic culture and economic structure, nineteenth-century America took much of its industrial endeavors from established British examples. As I discuss in chapter four, American investors actively shaped the design of their factory cities to avoid what they saw as the mistakes of industrial cities such

---

[40] Amanda Claybaugh, *The Novel of Purpose: Literature and Social Reform in the Anglo-American World* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007), 2–3.
[41] See chapter one of Ibid., 10–30.
[42] Mazzeo, "The Impossibility of Being Anglo-American: The Rhetoric of Emigration and Transatlanticism in British Romantic Culture, 1791–1833," 69.
[43] Claybaugh, *The Novel of Purpose: Literature and Social Reform in the Anglo-American World*, 11.
[44] Ibid.

as Manchester, Glasgow, and London. Therefore, the politics and societies surrounding each nation's industrial projects were always already interconnected.

As Mazzeo's and Claybaugh's analyses underscore, literature and culture were shared, transatlantic endeavors between Britain and America. The North Atlantic literary exchange is further explored by Robert Weisbuch and Paul Giles. Weisbuch argues that nineteenth-century American literature imitates and reconfigures British literature because of an inherent anxiety about cultural inheritance.[45] The reproduction that Weisbuch reads in American literature supports my claim that American and British factory women shared similar literary traditions and, therefore, employed comparable strategies of subversive self-representation. On the other hand, Paul Giles takes Armitage's emphasis on the Atlantic as an ideological construction as an opportunity for authors from both countries:

> My main concern here is with points of intersection between the United States and Great Britain, looking at ways American writers from Herman Melville to Thomas Pynchon have compulsively appropriated and reinvented aspects of English culture to advance their own aesthetic designs. Conversely, I examine projections of American culture in the writing of British subjects […] to elucidate [the development of] mythic versions of American identity.[46]

Though he focuses on texts from the nineteenth through the late-twentieth century, Giles's interpretation of transatlantic texts in conversation with one another is crucial to my argument that working-class women were as much participants in the nineteenth-century, transatlantic dialogue as popular middle-class authors like Herman Melville and Elizabeth Barrett Browning—each of whom were published and reprinted in American and British contexts throughout the nineteenth century.[47]

---

[45] See Robert Weisbuch, *Atlantic Double-Cross: American Literature and British Influence in the Age of Emerson* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

[46] Paul Giles, *Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and the Transatlantic Imaginary* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002), 1.

[47] For example, Barrett Browning's "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point" was originally written for and published in *The Liberty Bell*, an annual abolitionist gift-book compiled by the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society in 1847.

By looking at texts from one Scottish, one self-identified Irish Catholic, and one American poet, I highlight how the Victorian world of the mid-nineteenth century was a transatlantic one for factory women, one with overlapping literary and cultural influences, representations, and aesthetic traditions. These corresponding affiliations contribute to my poets' creation of a self, authorial, and group identity in their writing, and encourage literary scholars to read these texts in terms of forms and reconfiguration rather than geographic and social isolation.

Ellen Johnston, Fanny Forrester, and Lucy Larcom

I have chosen to investigate the poetry of Ellen Johnston (1835-1873), Fanny Forrester (1852-1889), and Lucy Larcom (1824-1893) as case studies of my examination into the self-representation strategies of factory-employed women. Of the hundreds, if not thousands, of factory-women poets who wrote and published poetry during the mid-Victorian period, these three women are singular for several reasons: they each can be identified as the author of multiple poems, they submitted poems to local working-class newspapers and magazines, they each labored in textile factories at least part of the time while they were publishing, and each attained some measure of local fame as factory poets. Proving that several poems had the same author—much less that the author could be proven to be female—is a difficult task considering the medium and manner of publication for most urban, working-class poets. The poetry and "To Correspondent" sections of regional/local periodicals enabled working-class poets to submit single poems anonymously, or under initials or pseudonym. Furthermore, even a poet calling themselves a "A Glasgow Lassie" or writing in a distinctly feminine voice, often cannot be proven to be a female author. Johnston, Forrester, and Larcom's contemporary popularity, the availability of some biographical information on each author, and their choice to write under their own names makes these authors unique and invaluable to studies of working-class women's writing.

Convenience and amount of extant texts aside, Johnston, Forrester, and Larcom each engage with topical politics, factory life, working-class representation, and poetic identity in distinct and, I argue, significant ways. Firstly, I examine the newspaper poems of Manchester dye-worker Fanny Forrester as an entryway into a discussion of the politics of working-class poetic language, genre, and community. Brian Maidment, Susan Zlotnick, Meghan Timney and Florence S. Boos have each devoted sections of larger working-class analyses to Forrester's work, but there has yet to be as full a recovery and examination of Forrester's texts as I provide. Forrester submitted original poetry to a single newspaper *Ben Brierley's Journal*, during her nearly decade-long publishing history.[48] Throughout the 1870s, Forrester submitted dozens of poems to *Ben Brierley's Journal*, gaining so much popularity with the local readership that Brierley published a full-page biography and summary of her poems in 1875.

Brierley's journal was aimed at working-class readers in the Manchester area who sought to improve their personal intellect and remain connected to working-class life and activities in and around the industrial city. As I discuss, one of Brierley's primary concerns was to increase the respectability and relevance of Lancashire dialect and working-class life by publishing stories, poems, and serial novels that celebrate a culture hinged upon rural labor and traditional, patriarchal family structures—neither of which represented the material realities of Forrester or most Manchester factory workers. With this aim, Brierley preferred poetry that was either a satirical or humorous take on Lancashire culture and history, a lamentation on the plights of industrialization, or a sentimental pastoral about the splendor of English nature and the earnest people laboring within it. Forrester's *oeuvre* exemplifies the latter two categories as her poems typically skew towards narratives of urban, industrial tragedy or countryside fantasies of meaningful labor and idyllic scenery. These poems, however, are written

[48] It appears that Brierley shared some of her poetry with a few American and British journals—including *Eliza Cook's Journal*—but *Ben Brierley's Journal* remains the only publication in which—to my knowledge—she submitted original pieces.

entirely in Standard English, and feature a pastoral landscape that is not specific to any particular regional history.

I argue that Forrester's preoccupation with rural landscapes is not merely a consequence of her publishing surroundings, but a conscious effort to create a pastoral poetics that centered on the lives and experiences of working-class women. Though Forrester's depictions of the countryside conform to similar poetry produced by working-class male poets, the way in which she injects working-class women—particularly factory-employed women—into her rural narratives expands the affordances of the genre to include gendered voices. I will show how Forrester's pastoral and urban landscapes reverse the hierarchy of the gender binary by privileging how the female body relates to and behaves in the industrial city versus the arcadian country. The female working-class body continually disrupts the established meter of Forrester's poems, drawing attention to its social otherness. However, these disruptive factory women also showcase how Forrester's essentialized depictions of femininity can strategically expand the representational affordances of the working-class pastoral while remaining recognizable as acceptable to Brierley and his readership. Though she may have envisioned factory women in the same restrictive and reductive terms as many middle-class authors, Forrester always already questions the terms of their representation by depicting urban, working-class women within a traditionally conservative, distinctly non-urban genre.

My second author-specific chapter investigates the life and poetry of Ellen Johnston, the self-titled "Factory Girl" of Glasgow and Dundee. Johnston and her writing have received, perhaps, the most critical attention of all my authors—most notably from H. Gustav Klaus, Florence S. Boos, Judith Rosen, and Susan Zlotnick—and, considering the two editions of her collected poems that she published "by subscription" in 1867 and 1869, the relative ease of accessing her work is alluring.[49]

[49] The published collections of Johnston's poetry meant that her writing reached a larger audience than the readership of Scottish working-class newspapers, exposing her poetry to middle and upper-class readers for the first time. More

Johnston became a loom operative at a young age in order to help augment her mother and stepfather's income, and she continued to labor in textile factories across Scotland and Ireland until her death at the age of fifty-eight.[50] In the autobiography that accompanied her collected poems, however, she resists focusing on her identity as a factory laborer, in favor of presenting herself as romantic heroine whose eventful life included mingling "with the gay on the shores of France," feasting in the "merry halls of England," and dancing "on the shamrock soil of Erin's green isle" like "the Wandering Jew."[51] She even casts her unwed motherhood as a product of her dark and romantic destiny to be a "heroine of the modern style" like the ones she encountered in the novels of Sir Walter Scott.[52]

From the outset, Johnston's autobiography reveals intersecting ideological and aesthetic forms. Her reliance on the ideals of femininity represented in narratives like "Inglewood Forest" and *The Bride of Lammermoor* attempt to "write" her identity into a particular typology of femininity—one in which personal tragedy, passionate love, and poetic sensibility can work within the fabric of her working-class life. Having established herself as a romantic heroine, Johnston also refers to herself as a "self-taught scholar, gifted with a considerable amount of natural knowledge" contradicting David Vincent's conclusion that the project of working-class self-improvement, like the genre of

importantly, however, this medium reveals more overtly how she wanted to be read as a writer and woman rather than a "factory-girl," especially in the brief autobiography that appeared at the collection's beginning.

[50] H. Gustav Klaus, *Factory Girl: Ellen Johnston and Working-Class Poetry in Victorian Scotland* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1998). I, like Klaus, am cautiously taking the main points of Johnston's autobiography as a relatively factual narrative as there is very little evidence of her birth, daughter, or death available in the public record. The other most reliable bibliographic record comes from the narrative sequence of her poetry published in Scottish newspapers between ca. 1860 and ca. 1868. Klaus notes that a woman named 'Helen Johnstone' died in a sanatorium in Glasgow in 1873, and believes that this could have been Johnston as both 'Helen' and 'Johnstone' were more common names than Ellen and Johnston—making the lack of information surrounding her death a possible recording error.

[51] Ellen Johnston, *Autobiography, Poems and Songs of Ellen Johnston, the "Factory Girl,"* ed. Alexander Campbell, 1st ed. (Glasgow: William Love, 1867), 5.

[52] Ibid., 7.

autobiography, were the realms of male working-class authors who had the "self-confidence required to undertake the unusual act of writing" about themselves.[53]

Read in terms of forms, the bounded whole of the nineteenth-century romance genre—with its affordances of acceptable female passion and engagement in the public sphere—intersects the gender binary in the politics of working-class self-improvement and writing.[54] What results in Johnston's autobiography and, as I will illustrate, her poetry, is a poetics that harnesses Romantic descriptions of the "natural genius" as a way to reevaluate how factory women could speak about their lives, topical politics, and the larger working-class community of Scotland—intervening in the normal functions and expressions of all these. Johnston's popularity through the *Dundee, Perth, and Forfar People's Journal* and the Glasgow *Penny Post* garnered adoring fans and harsh critique from working-class readers, and illustrates the power of her overtly political poems such as "Welcome, Garibaldi!," "The Workman Forever," and "The Factory Exile" in reconfiguring and redefining the forms at work within and around them. I argue that as much as Johnston writes about local and international politics, she alters the boundaries of those same institutions with her intensely personal poetry and "factory girl" identity.

Finally, I turn to the life and work of Lucy Larcom, a woman who labored at the renowned Lowell Mill in Lowell, Massachusetts. Lowell was known throughout America and Europe from its inception in 1821 because of its conscious decision to employ mainly female operatives in its many factories. These women laborers lived within the confines of the mill-city and were subjected to a strict, Christian code of behavior to maintain their employment. For decades, the company only recruited operatives from rural Northeastern towns and villages to ensure that they were raised with

[53] David Vincent, "Love and Death and the Nineteenth-Century Working Class," *Social History* 5, no. 2 (2008): 226, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4284976.
[54] Fox, *Class Fictions: Shame and Resistance in the British Working-Class Novel, 1890-1945*, 152–53.

strict Christian morals, an attempt to avert Lowell from becoming a second Manchester or Glasgow—cities that the owners and investors of Lowell Mill felt had been corrupted by industrialization and immoral workers. American industrialization vastly differed from its predecessor in Britain in both demographics and motivating ideology. Melanie Archer and Judith R. Blau claim that nineteenth-century American classes were less distinct and more "characterized by heterogeneity" than their British counterparts.[55] Agreeing with Archer and Blau, Chad Montrie states that the working-class in nineteenth-century America was "in transition" and "occupied a key moment in the rise and maturation of industrial capitalism."[56] The movement of rural women into urban-esque mills and factories like Lowell led to "a form of alienation from nature that [these women] dealt with by drawing on inherited cultural traditions and rural values," but were experiencing this on a different scale to British factory workers because of America's size and its later progress to large-scale industrialization.[57]

Larcom moved into the factory town, with her family, as a young child after her father's sudden death. As a teenager, Larcom began to contribute to the primary operatives' magazine—*The Lowell Offering*—the official publication of a Christian self-improvement society at the mill. *The Lowell Offering* provided her with a platform to circulate her religious and morally-instructive poetry. A devout Evangelical, Larcom viewed her class, poetic talent, factory labor, and gender through the lens of Christian spirituality. I argue that this "spiritual lens" collides with both the rhythms of factory labor and the hierarchies of American gender. Larcom's understanding of her poetry as a product of faith reconfigures not only how her poetry can be read in the context of American industrial life, but also how her prosody can be interpreted as an act of social rerouting for working-class women seeking to

[55] Melanie Archer and Judith R. Blau, "Class Formation in Nineteenth-Century America: The Case of the Middle Class," *Annual Review of Sociology*, no. 19 (1993): 21, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2083379.
[56] Chad Montrie, "'I Think Less of the Factory than of My Native Dell': Labor, Nature, and the Lowell 'Mill Girls,'" *Environmental History* 9, no. 2 (2004): 277, doi:10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004.
[57] Ibid.

write and speak publicly. After leaving Lowell as a young adult, Larcom became known primarily for her teaching and her religious prose, which saw an overall departure of her work from

Combined with her longer period of publishing and her American context, Larcom's expression of religion, class, and factory labor set her apart from the other two authors of my study. However, the peculiarity of her social context, poetics, and life are what substantiate my claims that an analysis based on colliding and intersecting forms enables texts from widely different geographical and political contexts to be put into conversation with one another. The rhythms of factory life, the restrictions of gender, and the shifting landscape of class all motivated and shaped the lives of all my authors, just as each of their poems engages with and alters the function and trajectory of those forms. Though the authors of my study represent three exceptional examples, their writing and lives gesture towards the inextricable relationship between factory labor, gender, class, and nineteenth-century poetics.

> No wise beautiful
> Was Marian Erle. She was not white nor brown,
> But could look either, like a mist that changed
> According to being shone on more or less:
> The hair, too, ran its opulence of curls
> In doubt 'twixt dark and bright, nor left you clear
> To name the colour. Too much hair perhaps (3.809-15)[1]

Elizabeth Barrett Browning's epic novel-poem *Aurora Leigh* (1857) was a landmark text in aesthetic and representational terms. Written as a blank-verse epic, the narrative of the titular character represented a feminist *Künstlerroman*, the development of a female poetics in what Barrett Browning defined as a "full-veined, heaving, double-breasted Age" (5.216).[2] The reconceptualized epic traces the growth of Aurora from a geographically and culturally displaced orphan to a successful poet; however, the conclusion sees Aurora in the ambiguous position of social activist, professional poet, and soon-to-be bourgeois wife. Aurora's transformations, however, are built upon the narrative of Marian Erle, a character defined by her working-class suffering and social otherness. Marian and Aurora's meeting is a collision of social identities, one that is reflected in Barrett Browning's poetics and representational strategies. Aurora's initial descriptions of Marian are structured around what she is not; according to Aurora, Marian exists on the peripheries of vision and, by extension, social identity. Aurora's acknowledgement that Marian's appearance transformed "according to being shone on more or less" (3.812) embodies how middle-class representations of working-class women relied on ambiguity and liminality. For example, the meter of line 814 augments the indefinable "in-betweenness" of Marian's representation by placing emphasis on the oppositions "doubt" and "clear," "dark" and "bright." The run-on sentence ending on Aurora's inability to identify the color of Marian's hair meanders, reflecting Aurora's inability to concisely define Marian. Even though the scene is a discussion of Marian's

[1] Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh*, ed. Kerry McSweeney (London: Oxford University Press, 2008), 98.
[2] Ibid., 153.

physical appearance, I read it as a synecdoche for bourgeois Aurora's inability to overtly represent Marian as a recognizable working-class woman without constructing her as an immoral social villain. In attempting to create a character who could be redeemed into bourgeois femininity by the end of the poem, Barrett Browning could not even describe Marian's appearance in definite terms, much less her class status. Marian is both "there" and "not there," enabling Aurora to blend various class and gender typologies in her representation of Marian. In response to the conflicting social identities surrounding Marian's character, Barrett Browning crafts her to be adaptable to the reform goals of the author—at turns, privileging dominant class or gender typologies in appearance as well as social identity. Ultimately, Marian serves as a springboard for Aurora's self and poetic actualization, resulting in a female, working-class character who is a tool for negotiating the intersection of public and domestic spheres for Barrett Browning's female, bourgeois protagonist.

Aurora's representation of Marian exemplifies nineteenth-century bourgeois writers' dual resistance and inability to locate working-class women within dominant ideologies of class and gender. In this chapter, I examine the representations of working-class—particularly factory-employed—women in poetry and prose by popular nineteenth-century, middle-class authors. The working-class women in each of these texts are not subjective literary and social figures, but embodiments of the anxieties surrounding the evolving industrial society. I argue that working-class women in popular, middle-class poetry and prose are dichotomized as either social villains or victims. Neither mutually exclusive representations nor more characteristic of one medium than another, these restrictive and contrasting roles enable middle-class authors to make totalizing statements about Victorian society and the growing industrial economy. However oppositional their conclusions about working-class women are, each of these representational strategies serve to restrict the language with which working-class women can be characterized. Furthermore, as I will show, these polar typologies quiet female

working-class characters in the text, as well as the factory-women who were actively writing and publishing throughout the nineteenth-century.

"From want of forethought and domestic economy": The Factory Girl as Social Villain and Pinnacle of Failed Femininity

The shift from the domestic putting-out system of textile production to mechanized mass-production in urban factories and mills prompted mass geographic shifts in Britain's previously rural and agrarian demographics, with previously small villages such as Manchester and Glasgow changed into goliaths of industry and havens for a class of *nouveaux-riches* with investments in industry. For the working classes, however, this shift led to a redefinition of gender and class roles, as well as a new framework for understanding labor and social difference. Earlier divisions of labor between men and women were dominated by the domestic sphere where, as Nancy Cott has noted, "self-contained productive units prevailed," resulting in the "economic and productive interdependence of all members of a family.[3] Women's textile work prior to large-scale industrialization was subsumed within the normative rhythms of the household; working within the home on a typically seasonal basis, women's textile work was a supplement to the single-unit work of a family. From the late 1820s, however, women became increasingly important sources of labor to mills and factories as the machinery necessary to production was designed for smaller bodies and required less physical strength. Cheaper than men's labor, women's factory-work was notably removed from the domestic sphere, dictated by non-familial male overseers and investors, and resulted in an individual wage. Women's wage-labor and domestic lives became distinct entities, often meaning that their labor provided the primary income for working-class families.

[3] Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977), 22.

This shift in gender roles, I argue, propelled government sanctioned sociological inquiry in the 1830s as much as the demographic restructuring and hygienic issues caused by the rapid move of populations from rural villages to urban cities. James Kay-Shuttleworth's study, *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester* (1832) and Peter Gaskell's *The Manufacturing Population of England, its Moral, Social and Physical Conditions* (1833) were seminal studies into the lives and environments of the rapidly expanding industrial poor, and set the stage for the representation of working-class women as a malignant social problem that needed to be addressed by the increasingly influential middle-class. The language of these reports revolves around the morality and working conditions of working-class women. Kay-Shuttleworth bemoans the working-class family's failure to "entertain a laudable pride in furnishing their houses."[4] The focus of these critiques hinges upon an idealized domestic femininity—an ideology that was materially impossible for many factory women during the period. Kay-Shuttleworth goes onto further root his condemnation of working-class conditions in his description of the physical spaces in which the working-class man lived. He claims that working-men's houses were "ill furnished, uncleanly, [and] often ill ventilated" caused by "want of forethought and domestic economy."[5] Despite naming the working-class man, this evaluation implicates the working-class woman in the devolution of the working-class home thanks to the report's reliance on issues normally regulated by domestic wives and mothers.

Kay-Shuttleworth makes the connection between working-class decline and female public wage labor explicit when briefly noting that men faced long days of unhealthy factory labor only to return to a wife who is unable to cheer their remaining moments of leisure because she too has been "subjected to the same" inhumane labor conditions.[6] Locating the decline of the material home within

[4] James Phillips Kay-Shuttleworth, *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester* (London: James Ridgway, 1832), 7.
[5] Ibid., 11.
[6] Ibid.

a report on the degeneration of the morality of working-class families, Kay-Shuttleworth represents the industrially-employed woman as a social ill by absence. Women's absence from the domestic sphere and presence in factory labor is the foundation of working-class men's unemployment and the cause of uncertainty surrounding their masculinity. Peter Gaskell, husband of social-problem and domestic novel writer Elizabeth Gaskell, reinforces Kay-Shuttleworth's connection between women's factory wage-labor and the moral and physical decline of the wider urban, working-class:

> It is a singular fact that woman, plastic as she is in many of her relations, and readily as she accommodates herself to changes in worldly circumstances, yet, if suffered to pass a certain age, she shews [sic] her original coarseness much longer, and much more unpleasantly than her husband.[7]

Women are characterized as adaptable to life outside the domestic sphere; however, the long-term consequences of such public labor include a loss of normatively feminine behaviors and social respect. Both Gaskell and Kay-Shuttleworth's representations of working-class women establish public, industrial wage-labor as incompatible with domestic femininity.

Nancy Armstrong rightly argues that reports such as Kay-Shuttleworth's and Gaskell's helped to reconfigure the popular discourse of class from violent responses to working-class "combinations."[8] Transformed from a violent mob to a social problem, the working classes could be discussed in terms of stable, bourgeois reform. By remapping "those regions of society that fostered political resistance" onto the normative "sphere of the social where they can be observed and analytically mastered," reform authors could depoliticize the working-class, particularly the working-class woman whose gender identity was privileged over her material class realities in this discourse.[9]

---

[7] Peter Gaskell, *The Manufacturing Population of England, Its Moral, Social and Physical Conditions, and The Changes Which Have Arisen From the Use of Steam Machinery With an Examination of Infant Labour* (London: Baldwin and Cradock, 1833), 60.
[8] Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987). Armstrong gestures towards the Luddite Movement of the 1810s and early 1820s as a period in which violence and control dominated political and social language. She argues that the working-class was a symbol of revolution and otherness, and their uprisings and "combinations" were to be conquered to ensure peace and stability in Britain.
[9] Ibid.

The paradigm shift from a shadowy threat of working-class revolution to an empirical study defined by middle-class patronage simultaneously positioned working-class women and issues of domesticity at the center of sociopolitical discussion. Gaskell and Kay-Shuttleworth's studies, and the provocative images that accompanied them, propelled the 1833 and 1844 Factory Acts, but also provided a representational model of working-class women for prominent periodicals and newspapers, as well as fiction writers and poets of the period.

An 1852 *Times* article by Reverend Thomas Dale, an Anglican vicar, claims that working-class women are figures of "overtaxed labour," and have been "consigned […] to a state of mental and spiritual darkness," jeopardizing both their physical and spiritual well-being.[10] It is this perceived "spiritual darkness" that characterizes the female, working-class characters in early-industrial fiction such as Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna's *Helen Fleetwood: A Tale of the Factories* (1841). Originally serialized in *The Christian Ladies Magazine* between 1839 and 1841, *Helen Fleetwood* traces the effects of factory labor and urban living on an elderly matriarch and the several children under her care. The novel, according to Susan Zlotnick, was an attempt to "fling the doors [of the factory] wide open and bring the outside world into the home" by translating domestic values and behaviors into the industrial mill.[11] Tonna does not resist depicting women engaging in factory labor; however, each of her characters is an archetype, a moral lesson for her readers on the dangers of women's industrial wage-labor. With the characters of Helen Fleetwood, Phoebe Wright, and Mary Green, Tonna conveys to readers the detrimental effects of factory labor on working-class women, presenting Christian morality and a removal from factory labor as the only remediation. Helen is set up as a paragon of Christian feminine virtue, whose faith and benevolence both save her from the negative effects of the factory,

[10] Reverend Thomas Dale, "Early Closing Movement," *The Times*, March 1852.
[11] Zlotnick, *Women, Writing, and the Industrial Revolution*, 130.

and serve as a potential tonic to the factory's influence. For example, Helen expresses anxiety about Mary's behavior after working in the factory:

> But she saw the burden gradually increasing on her best earthly friend; she discerned in Mary a growing spirit of discontent and disobedience […] [Mary] wanted the wisdom and the strength that Helen derived from on high.[12]

Helen's adherence to the standards of domestic femininity and religious devotion allow her to survive the harsh and immoral world of the Manchester factory, while Mary succumbs to the deleterious effects of factory society, which leads her to adopt coarse language and unladylike mannerisms. This degrading society is epitomized by Phoebe Wright, a young factory-girl who uses bad language and engages in gossip:

> […] Phoebe loudly declared that if she had dared to enter their house that evening, or if, being obliged to go, [Helen] opened her lips on any topic connected with religion, or tried to lead Sarah to it, she would directly expose her to the family, and get her driven out, in disgrace, from the home she had intruded into.[13]

The faults in Phoebe's character focus on her lack of religion, and unwillingness to be converted by Helen's morality. Despite Tonna's willingness to showcase the harsh world of urban, working-class life and labor, *Helen Fleetwood* is ultimately a cautionary tale about the need for Christian, middle and upper-class reform in the lives of urban, working-class women. The removal of Helen and Mary from factory labor—the former through death and the latter through a return to rural countryside labor—underscores how Tonna's primary goal behind depicting the narratives of factory women was to promote the conventional ideals of Christian, domestic femininity amongst the growing working populations.

Public wage labor competing with the domestic duties of women is Tonna's main reform concern in the majority of her writing. Her *The Wrongs of Woman* (1843) was Tonna's attempt to portray

[12] Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna, *Helen Fleetwood* (New York: Baker & Scribner, 1848), 89.
[13] Ibid., 113.

the domestic consequences of women's factory labor by embodying the issues presented in newspaper and blue book reports into the fictional experiences of a single family. Blue book reports, in particular, were essential to what Oz Frankel claims was the inundation of Victorian society with "excessive factual material."[14] These reports were commissioned by "parliamentary committees and royal commissions" and were distinctive thanks to their blue covers.[15] Frankel asserts that the plethora of blue books during the early to mid-nineteenth century was the "Victorian state's massive entrance into print culture" and was its opportunity to consciously shape what was considered a "fact" to the growing literate public.[16] The powerful and pathetic representations of malnourished children and scantily-clad women working in the mines and factories preceding the 1833 Factory Acts in the blue books, therefore, became the dominant social constructions of the industrial working class for middle-class reformers and the general reading public alike.

For example, "The Forsaken Home" in Tonna's *The Wrongs of Woman* (1845) goes even further than *Helen Fleetwood* in adopting the language of the earlier blue book reports and royal commissions in representing working-class women as derelict wives and mothers thanks to their industrial employment:

> The great privilege of women in domestic life is certainly that of making man's home so attractive as to counteract the many inducements that may cross his path to become a rover from it.[17]

Gendered duties are privileged above working-class realities for Tonna whose prescription evades any material differences between individual women. In "The Forsaken Home," a wife and mother named Alice Smith must become the sole-breadwinner for her husband and children by engaging in factory

[14] Oz Frankel, "Blue Books and the Victorian Reader," *Victorian Studies* 46, no. 2 (2004): 308, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3830298.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid., 309.
[17] Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna, *The Wrongs of Woman*, 4th ed. (New York & London: M. W. Dodd, 1845), 64.

labor which, according to Tonna, drives from her the "grace of shame-facedness" and instills in her the "daily practice of compulsory indecency."[18] Though the working-class woman, like Alice Smith, may begin her life as an upstanding Christian mother and wife, factory-labor inevitably transforms her into an aberrant example of femininity.

Factory women's rejection of Christian morality and domestic femininity concerned Tonna and other early industrial, Christian reformers on multiple levels. Tonna's stark representations of factory-women's moral decline expressed a pre-Millenarian belief that "Christ would arrive before the Millennium" which gave Tonna and her largely female, Christian readership an "added layer of spiritual urgency" to their fiction and social activism.[19] However, it is the effect of factory women's negligent or lapsed domesticity on working-class men and children that is a central anxiety of Tonna and other early industrial reformers:

> By working every night herself [Alice], and fixing for Polly, she has kept the mending pretty well done; and on Friday evening she had, much against her will, washed out the linen, filling the little room with damp and discomfort while drying it; an annoyance so new to Smith, that he could not help grumbling a little, and declaring she must in future put it out to a neighbour to wash, or he should be obliged to leave home till it was over.[20]

As in the blue book reports on working-class life, the burden of working-class men's decline into immorality and unhappiness is placed solely on the working-class woman. Alice's inability to maintain the management of her house while working at the factory is phrased as a social problem of which she is the root. Though pushed into factory labor by necessity, Tonna's working-class women are, at best, an unstable and inconvenient social group and, at worst, a pernicious social evil that must be remedied to save them and their families.

---

[18] Ibid., 74.
[19] Ella Dzelzainis, "Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna, Pre-Millenarianism, and the Formation of Gender Ideology in the Ten Hours Campaign," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 31, no. 1 (2003): 183.
[20] Tonna, *The Wrongs of Woman*, 91.

The Christian reform efforts of Tonna's early factory novels positioned working-class women precariously between being an unfortunate byproduct of industrialization, and a major contributor to its negative effects on society by underscoring the domestic effects of women's factory wage-labor. Upper-class poet and social reformer, Caroline Norton solidifies this representation of the working-class woman as a derelict mother by shifting the focus from factory-women's failed domesticity to the moral and physical demise of her children. Instrumental in the passage of the 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act, Norton was already a popular literary voice by 1830 when she began to support her children and unemployed husband who would later abduct her children and attempt to divorce her. Mary Poovey argues that Norton "authorizes herself to speak" by writing within the conventions of melodrama in her writing against the restriction of women's maternal and property rights in divorce law:

> The melodramatic plot provides the terms, [Norton's] identification with other (male) defenders provides the means, and, in a dramatic moment, Caroline Norton becomes, not just innocence personified, but also judge, jury, and executioner all at once.[21]

By positioning herself as a victim and her husband and the legal system as immoral villains, Norton compellingly constructs a narrative in which she attempts to empower women by casting them as helpless "damsels-in-distress." The conventions of melodrama were useful to Norton because they enable her to craft controversial legislation in terms that evoked affective responses in her readers. Despite the increased subjectivity of women before the law that Norton supports, domesticity and motherhood are still the ideal roles for women. Norton was attempting to secure women the rights to maintain their domesticity even outwith the heteronormative marriage contract. While this objective seems an obvious and uncomplicated one, it privileges a bourgeois female figure for whom wage-labor would be socially unorthodox.

[21] Mary Poovey, "Covered but Not Bound: Caroline Norton and the 1857 Matrimonial Cuases Act," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 471.

Marriage and divorce legislation were not the only targets of Norton's reform efforts, however. In 1836, Norton published "A Voice from the Factories" which was written in support of the 1833 Factory Act and the controversial Ten Hours Movement. The poem ostensibly prefigures Tonna's *Helen Fleetwood* and *The Wrongs of Woman* with its critique of child factory-labor; yet, the poem goes even further than Tonna's novel in implicating the factory-woman in the moral and physical suffering of working-class children. Like Tonna's texts, Norton claims that as "Christians in a Christian land," the socioeconomically privileged of British society have a responsibility to reform the conditions of the urban poor; however, Norton's poem is narrated by an authoritative and privileged speaker presumably outside of the industrial working classes—it is more accurately a voice for the factories than a voice from them.[22] Where Tonna articulates Christian middle-class values through working-class characters, Norton speaks over and for the working-class characters she represents.

The focus of the poem is the juxtaposition of rural, pastoral labor and industrial factory-work. Factory children are depicted as leaving a "Paradise" (1.1) in the countryside to a "world of labour, death, and care" (1.2) in the mills of industrial cities.[23] Brian Maidment accurately describes urban/rural contrasts in industrial fiction as an "apparently untroubled 'escape' into both the countryside and introspection [that] is constantly shadowed by the unspoken, yet invariably implied, presence of the city."[24] As I discuss in later chapters, the pastoral was a popular genre for working-class women—particularly Fanny Forrester and Lucy Larcom—one that, I argue, enabled them to make subversive statements about their bodies and roles in industrial society. Norton's pastoral,

[22] Caroline Sheridan Norton, "A Voice From the Factories," in *The Broadview Anthology of Victorian Poetry and Poetic Theory*, ed. Thomas J. Collins and Vivienne J. Rundle (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2005), 136–40.
[23] Ibid., 136.
[24] Brian Maidment, "Class and Cultural Production in the Industrial City: Poetry in Victorian Manchester," in *City, Class and Culture: Studies of Social Policy and Cultural Production in Victorian Manchester*, ed. Alan J. Kidd and K.W. Roberts (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 150.

however, is a lost Eden for child factory-laborers, whose lives were rightfully supported by a domesticated mother figure in this idyllic, countryside space.

Norton employs antislavery rhetoric in referring to factory-employed children as "Poor little FACTORY SLAVES" (9.81). She, like Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Cobb, hoped that the political ire generated from the anti-slavery movement would serve to ignite factory and child labor reform. The Spenserian stanzas that comprise the poem invoke the gravity of Edmund Spenser's allegorical *The Faerie Queene* (1590), as well as that of nineteenth-century heroic epics that adopted its structure such as Lord Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812-1818). Unlike these earlier poems, however, Norton's "A Voice from the Factories" harnesses the stately drama and rigid structure of Spenserian stanzas to elevate a contemporary social issue like factory children's suffering into a subject worthy of poetry and, more importantly, securely contain that suffering within the bounds of the stanza with its alexandrine final line. For example, stanza fourteen describes how children's factory labor will ruin English society:

> Mark the result. Unnaturally debarr'd
> All Nature's fresh and innocent delights,
> While yet each germing energy strives hard,
> And pristine good with pristine evil fights;
> When every passing dream the heart excites,
> And makes even *guarded* virtue insecure;
> Untaught, uncheck'd, they yield as vice invites:
> With all around them cramp'd, confined, impure,
> Fast spreads the moral plague which nothing new shall cure. (14.118-28)[25]

Norton's warning is apocalyptic in scope, but is visually and linguistically contained within the bounds of the stanza. The following lines return to a more philosophical discussion of the effects of labor on the state of the soul, alleviating the readers' sense of imminent danger to their society. However, her representations of the working-class woman reignite the overwhelming social anxiety surrounding her

[25] Norton, "A Voice From the Factories," 137.

subject of children's wage-labor. Norton's reform-minded narrator carefully crafts a nearly silent working-class female figure whose presence haunts the poem's social critique:

> Where his remorseful Mother tempts in vain
> With the best portion of their frugal fare:
> Too sick to eat—too weary to complain—
> He turns him idly from the untasted share,
> Slumbering sinks down unfed, and mocks her useless care. (49.437-42)[26]

In these lines, the home serves as a social and material bounded whole—a whole so pervasive in Norton's lines that the woman never fully emerges from it into a subjective poetic presence. The working-class woman's existence in the poem is narrated through her relation to her children, and only partially emerges within the failed domestic sphere of the working-class home. The mother's faults are underscored by the iambic pentameter of the first four quoted lines with stress falling on negative terms such as "vain" (49.437) and "sick" (49.439), the meter compounding the limitations of the bounded whole of working-class domesticity. Rather than resourceful, the working-class mother is depicted as "remorseful" (49.437). Though she gives her child "the best portion" (49.438) her care is "useless" (49.442) and is an affront that is mocked even by her dying son. Much like her care, the working-class woman is useless to Norton outside of her inability to fulfill her role as a domestic wife and mother. Working alongside men and—per the factory commission reports—in various states of dress and cleanliness, the factory-woman was a much less sympathetic figure than the working-class child whose victimage provided an innocence that was beyond social controversy. Because Norton cannot reconcile the material realities of working-class women's lives with middle and upper-class discourses of "appropriate" motherhood, the working-class woman in "A Voice from the Factories" cannot fully emerge into the narrative of the poem or the sympathies of bourgeois reformers.

[26] Ibid., 139.

The factory-woman as an ephemeral figure who is both a victim and a cause of industrial social decline continued to be a pervasive representational strategy for middle-class reform authors, particularly throughout the political and social tumult of Chartism and its aftermath in the 1840s and 1850s. Elizabeth Barrett Browning's 1844 reform poem, "The Cry of the Children" echoes the subject and goals of Norton's "A Voice from the Factories" and originally appeared in *Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine*. The different contexts in which Norton and Barrett Browning's reform poems appeared is important. Published in a popular middle-class literary and political magazine, Barrett Browning's "The Cry of the Children" would have had a larger audience and more immediate impact on readers than Norton's "A Voice from the Factories" which was published as a more expensive book. Yet, despite the difference in medium, the poems are often compared in contemporary analyses because of their shared condemnation of children's factory labor and the inadequate response of the British government to pass legislation protecting these children.

Barrett Browning's "The Cry of the Children," unlike Norton's poem however, presents a more emotionally charged appeal for middle-class reform by narrating much of the poem as a chorus of suffering voices pleading with the reader for sympathy. Before the poem begins, Barrett Browning prefaces "The Cry of the Children" with a quote from Euripides's *Medea,* which in translation reads "Oh! What is the meaning of your glance at me, children?"[27] This quotation speaks to the average education of her middle-class readers, as well as the growing importance surrounding the role and representation of motherhood in Victorian society. In Euripides's tragedy, Medea slaughters her children to take revenge upon her husband. Barrett Browning prefaces her critique of children's factory labor with an accusation of the maternal figure, a statement that ineffectual motherhood is to blame for factory children's suffering as much as the callous forces of the industrial economic system.

[27] Euripedes, *Medea*, ed. Trans. David Kovacs (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994).

The poem itself is made of thirteen twelve-line stanzas, each of which are structured around three quatrains with alternating six and four-foot trochaic lines. Herbert F. Tucker, in his compelling New Formalist reading of the text, claims that this consistent yet uneven structure "obliges the reader to brace for each fresh heave" and portrays an "unusual degree of insistence" for Barrett Browning's message of reform.[28] Tucker argues that this insistent metrical design is "mechanically driven" and "merciless," reflecting and embodying the "industrial experience of the child worker on whose behalf Barrett Browning presumes to speak."[29] However, I also read the rhythmic insistence that Tucker identifies as a way in which Barrett Browning marginalizes working-class women's voices and vilifies women's factory-labor. This process begins in the fourth and fifth lines of the poem where the poet contains working-class women's identities within the roles and standards of conventional motherhood. She claims that working-class children "are leaning their young heads against their mothers, / And *that* cannot stop their tears (3-4)."[30] The factory woman as mother is, from the outset, a silent and ineffectual figure. Ending the lines with "mothers" and "tears," factory-women are implicitly connected with children's suffering; however, they provide no excuse or response to Barrett Browning's accusation. They are only representative insofar as her mothering has failed to protect her children from the horrors that the Parliamentary Blue Books described as characterizing factory labor. The final two lines of the second stanza further embody how Barrett Browning harnesses poetic meter to represent the negligence of the working-class mother as the children are "Weeping sore before the bosoms of their mothers, In our happy Fatherland (23-4)."[31] The trochaic feet force the stress to fall upon "sore" (3), "*bo*soms" (3), and "*mo*thers" (3), which are diametrically opposed to the masculinized "*ha*ppy *Fa*therland."

---

[28] Tucker, "Tactical Formalism : A Response to Caroline Levine," 87.
[29] Ibid., 88.
[30] Elizabeth Barrett Browning, "The Cry of the Children," in *The Broadview Anthology of Victorian Poetry and Poetic Theory*, ed. Thomas J. Collins and Vivienne J. Rundle (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2005), 74.
[31] Ibid.

Deirdre David asserts that the focus on "maternal nurturance" in "The Cry of the Children" is a unifying force in all of Barrett Browning's texts, which allows her to reconfigure normative ideals of domestic motherhood into redemptive and powerful positions for women—an aspect that is particularly prevalent for working-class Marian Erle in her novel-poem *Aurora Leigh*.[32] However, Elisabeth Gruner rightly notes that "maternity empowers […] in a circumscribed way" for Barrett Browning's female characters as their narratives "always conclude with a reward or punishment for the mother, determined at least in part by her maternal morality."[33] Shuffled behind the characterization of working-class children, the working-class mother in "The Cry of the Children" is a guilty victim within the poem, unable to stop the forces of an unregulated industrial economy but equally unable to adequately perform the role of domestic mother to her children. Like Caroline Norton, it seems that Barrett Browning could not inspire sympathy for factory-children without reinforcing the ideology of working-class women as incompetent and, potentially, immoral.

Though factory women characters do not directly figure in the poem after the initial six lines, they exist on the edges of the subject and forms of the poem. For example, Barrett Browning utilizes conventional nature imagery to exemplify the innocence of the children being exploited in factory labor:

> The young lambs are bleating in the meadows,
> The young birds are chirping in the nest,
> The young fawns are playing with the shadows,
> The young flowers are blowing toward the west—
> But the young, young children, O my brothers,
> They are weeping bitterly! (5-10)[34]

[32] Deirdre David, *Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy: Harriet Martineau, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, George Eliot* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 118.
[33] Elizabeth Rose Gruner, "Plotting the Mother: Caroline Norton, Helen Huntingdon, and Isabel Vane," *Studies in Women's Literature* 16, no. 2 (1997): 305.
[34] Barrett Browning, "The Cry of the Children," 74.

Factory-employed mothers haunt the language of the rhyme scheme in Barrett Browning's 'Cry' which sets up the image of the factory against images of an equally dismal working-class home, emphasizing the lack of maternal shelter factory-employed mothers are able to provide their children. The rhyme of "nest" (6) and "west" (9) might be expected to lead to "breast," but instead concludes with "weeping bitterly" (10). Though published more than a decade earlier, "The Cry of the Children" anticipates the "mother-want" (1.40) described in *Aurora Leigh*.[35] The "mother-want" in "The Cry of the Children" reinscribes popular conceptions about factory work's deleterious effects on the domestic skills of working-class women. Though not directly blamed, factory-women are an important section of the problem that Barrett Browning is attempting to reform.

The working-class woman and female, industrial labor serve as villainous scapegoats in many middle-class reform texts. As a propagator of working-class moral decline, the factory-woman was a convenient figure because her dual class and gender identities made her a liminal, aberrant figure, one whose role in society was uncertain and, therefore, able to be manipulated into the reforming needs of the bourgeois author. As is apparent in the texts I have discussed, however, the working-class woman was not a metaphor for pure social evil. Even in the harshest critique of her wage-labor or attempts at domesticity, there is an undercurrent of pity for the circumstances in which she lives. While this sympathy for working-class women is apparent in the parliamentary blue books, it is better suited to expression in reform poetry, particularly by women such as Barrett Browning. Angela Leighton claims that Barrett Browning "brings to the somewhat frozen postures of women's poetry in the early nineteenth century a sense of a reality beyond the claims of the heart."[36] By rejecting the "idea of feeling as a poetic end in itself" Barrett Browning—according to Leighton—can locate her poetry in

[35] Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh*, 6.
[36] Angela Leighton, *Victorian Women Poets: Writing Against the Heart* (New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), 80.

the contemporary world and "gives her real work to do in society."[37] In the case of "The Cry of the Children," this translates into a sentimentalism of reform, one that builds sympathy for factory children but, less overtly, also claims that working-class mothers are as complicit as the government for their suffering. In these poems, Norton and Barrett Browning are building on preexisting, gendered associations of sentimental poetry. The medium of poetry, therefore, provides an opportunity for more complex, plastic representations of working-class subjects than the language of Parliamentary blue books, or even popular prose, allows. It is the fluidity that the intersecting aesthetic and historical forms of poetry provide middle-class reform writers that results in a representation of working-class women in which she is as much a victim as she is a villain. The working-class woman as a potential conduit for disseminating hegemonic ideologies of femininity, domesticity, and self-representation resulted in a more submissive, and generalized characterization even within texts that provide a more individual and thorough narrative of a factory-woman. In the following section, I illustrate how working-class women's victimage became the dominant strategy for middle-class writers, and how the factory-woman as communally and individually powerless enabled writers to cast middle-class values onto the working-class.

"With Fingers Weary and Worn": The Factory Girl as Helpless Victim

Bourgeois authors who chose to craft working-class women as figures of total victimage frequently did so to create sympathy for these women, inspiring their middle-class audience to participate in social and political reform. One of the defining features of social-problem literature published in the 1840's and 1850's is the way in which middle-class authors seek to rehabilitate the typology of the working-class woman through death or the complete removal of her from working-class markers such as labor. This strategy shifts conversations away from the specifics of factory-labor,

[37] Ibid.

class-identity, or the practicalities of large-scale reform and, instead, privileges representations of bourgeois domestic femininity. What results is a female, working-class characterization that is "saved" from the trials of public wage-labor, so that she can be incorporated into a middle-class framework of representation whether through motherhood, social seclusion, or death.

Two of the texts that exemplify the working-class woman as victim are Thomas Hood's "The Song of the Shirt" (1844) and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* (1857). These poems were incredibly popular at the time of their publication, and each is structured around the narrative of a female, working-class character. These authors' texts sidestep the ideological contradictions of free will versus social determinism to construct a working-class female character that can emerge within the narrative as a subject who inspires sympathy, but is distinctly non-industrial, and ultimately domesticated. The ambiguous class positions of working-class female characters also allow these figures to dually embody the possibility of social mobility without indicting the morality of the free market system. Social-problem authors such as Hood and Barrett Browning could negotiate middle-class social values, political reform, and working-class experiences by eliding how gender and class intersect in these women's lives.

Published in 1843, Hood's "The Song of the Shirt" utilizes antislavery rhetoric and the language of Christian reform to represent a dying seamstress and the exploitative conditions under which she labors. Significantly, Hood's working-class woman labors from home rather than in a factory—as if portraying an actual mill-woman would transgress so much that his readers would be unable to sympathize with his character. Distanced from the factory of half-naked, dirty women laborers as portrayed by the Blue Books, Hood's female speaker is ambiguously classed. The poem begins by emphasizing the dismal condition of the woman's conditions:

> With fingers weary and worn,
> With eyelids heavy and red,

A woman sat, in unwomanly rags, (1-3)[38]

Hood dismembers the seamstress into the discrete parts of her body that her labor has affected, an effect underscored by the lines' meter. Though each line starts out with iambs, the concluding anapest—or two anapests in the final quoted line—force the reader to tumble to the final word of each line; this structure is a metrical reflection of both the woman's physical failure to complete her arduous work, as well as an aesthetic embodiment of the breakdown of the domestic woman under these labor conditions. The working-class woman is presented through the most ostensible manifestations of her class: a broken and tired body, and shabby dress. The third line is particularly revealing for what it suggests about Victorian femininity: if the cheap and worn clothing that the woman's labor can afford are intrinsically "unwomanly," then wage labor can be assumed to be inherently unfeminine. The anaphora of "Work! work! work!" (9) emphasizes the inevitability of labor, loss, and death in the working-class woman's unending suffering; however, it is suffering that is still contained within the domestic home, and is characterized by traditional women's domestic labor: sewing. There are no industrial machines or other laborers; therefore, the Hood crafts a working-class woman character who can easily be interpreted within the bounds of middle-class femininity. The location and manner of her labor make her a victim who is more easily recognizable than a "factory-girl."

The dismal continuum of the seamstress's life is compounded by Hood's exclamation against her relative slavery:

It's Oh! To be a slave
Along with the barbarous Turk,
Where woman has never a soul to save,

[38] Thomas Hood, "The Song of the Shirt," in *The Broadview Anthology of Victorian Poetry and Poetic Theory*, ed. Thomas J. Collins and Vivienne J. Rundle (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2005), 26.

If this is Christian work! (13-6)[39]

Similar to Tonna and Norton, Hood harnesses his readership's familiarity and involvement with the language of the antislavery movement and Christian reform to build sympathy for the working-class woman insofar as the type and reason for her labor can be aligned with conventional forms of women's work. Furthermore, Hood implies that women are the disseminators of Christian morality; however, working-class women's surroundings are like that of "the barbarous Turk" (14). The poem warns readers that if working-class women such as the subject of the poem are placed in the position of slavery to their labor, they are in danger of spreading that immorality. Hood's seamstress concludes her "dolorous" (87) plea for political and social mediation from Hood's more privileged readers by asking the reader for but "one short hour! / A respite however brief!" (73-4). Following this stanza, the poetic speaker narrates the rest of the poem, causing the seamstress's voice to fall away into the everlasting "Stitch! stitch! stitch!" (85) of her piecework. Though Hood's working-class woman speaks for a majority of the poem, she is rendered into a figure of permanent suffering brought about by her labor—her narrative is useful to Hood only when she is a figure of feminine, domestic pity.

The ambiguity surrounding the circumstances in Hood's "The Song of the Shirt" reveals how the working-class woman as victim could be used to inspire reform, while also recuperating these women's representations from social villainy. *Aurora Leigh*, however, represents an ambiguously classed female laborer to dually augment the subjectivity-making process of a bourgeois, female protagonist, and convey how women from various class backgrounds could be made socially acceptable through domestic motherhood. Marian Erle embodies the poetic version of the class ambiguity of mid-century female working-class characters. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, Marian's character moves throughout the background of much of the poem that is narrated by the titular character. Barrett Browning's overarching gender idealism and class reformism results in

[39] Ibid.

the subjection of Marian's voice and social position to constant interpretation and mediation from outside, primarily middle-class, narrative voices. Cora Kaplan argues that in *Aurora Leigh*, Barrett Browning propagates "a liberal 'separate but equal' argument which sometimes tangles with, sometimes includes the definition of women's sphere and the development of the cult of true womanhood."[40] Kaplan's argument corresponds with Susan Zlotnick's assessment that middle-class texts support social healing through reform, but maintain stable boundaries between middle-class respectability and working-class immorality.[41] However, neither of these critics expound on the consequences of Marian's class ambiguity upon the wider typology of working-class women. Abused by her working-class parents, engaged to philanthropic reformer Romney Leigh, raped due to the deception of aristocratic Lady Waldemar, and eventually patronized by middle-class Aurora, Marian is a pawn of her social betters throughout the poem. Defining her as "this Marian Erle of ours" (3.998) Aurora lays claim to Marian's representation, beginning a process of embourgeoisement that will allow Marian to be lifted from the sufferings of poverty by the conclusion of the poem.[42] Exemplary but helpless, the character of Marian affirms the ability of social-problem authors to narratively master the typology of working-class women by resisting definitive identification of her class status.

Marian's experiences are almost entirely narrated by the character of Aurora. Aurora notes that she grew "passionate" (3.847) when narrativizing Marian's life in a way that Marian would have resisted because she did not seek to make a "wonder of herself" (3.849).[43] Barrett Browning makes clear the subjective difference between middle-class Aurora and working-class Marian's narrative voices. Having Aurora relate Marian's story to readers, Barrett Browning affirms the necessity of middle-class mediation to represent working-class women. Marian's early life includes "Emerging

[40] Cora Kaplan, "Introduction to Aurora Leigh," in *Victorian Women Poets*, ed. Tess Cosslett (London: Longman, 1996), 74.
[41] Zlotnick, *Women, Writing, and the Industrial Revolution*, 76.
[42] Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh*, 103.
[43] Ibid., 99.

from the social smut of towns / To wipe [her] feet clean on the mountain turf" (3.960-1) and encounters with "The miller in his cart" (3.967), "The butcher's boy" (3.968) through which she "lived and learned / Endured and learned" (3.962-3).[44] Tramping from industrial centers to rural environments, Barrett Browning's Marian experiences multiple aspects of mid-Victorian working-class labor and society. Aurora notes that "T'was somewhat hard to keep the things distinct, / And oft the jangling influence jarred the child" (3.983-4) alluding to Marian's piecemeal working-class narrative, in which Marian "threw away the leaves that hurt […] And made a nosegay of the sweet and good" (3.990).[45] Marian's experiences that Aurora chooses to include in her narrative are not representative of a single class experience—rural or urban. Rather, Barrett Browning positions Marian in a precarious and ambiguous class position to later pluck Marian from this obscure suffering while still condemning working-class culture and living conditions.

Where Marian is touted by Aurora as being full of innocent "child's wonder" (4.170), the narrator makes certain to disassociate Marian from depictions of the working classes at large.[46] The famous description of the crowd present at the ill-fated wedding of Marian and Romney reveals the cultural imagination surrounding the working classes as a group rather than an individual character:

> They clogged the streets, they oozed into the church
> In a dark slow stream, like blood. […]
>
> […]
>
> We'll call them vices, festering to despairs,
> Or sorrows, petrifying to vices: not
> A finger-touch of God left whole on them,
> All ruined, lost – the countenance worn out. (4.553-4, 4.580-3)[47]

[44] Ibid., 103.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid., 116.
[47] Ibid., 127.

Aurora's description invokes language used to construct Hell in religious texts, an image made all the more unsettling by the fits and stops created by the uneven meter. Beginning with the description of the poor as a "dark slow stream" (4.554), the three stressed syllables create a dull, thudding pulse like the movement of blood in a distressed body. Kirstie Blair explores the Victorian preoccupation with the heart and potential heart disease, an assertion affirmed by Aurora's description of the lower-class wedding guests entering the church:

> […] the physicality of the heart, and its susceptibility to disease, might intrude upon a scene of love, and […] a little medical knowledge could be a dangerous thing. […].[48]

Blair claims that the heart is "sensationalized" and "subject to passion and emotion," and became a "standard poetic image" that "virtually every major and minor Victorian poet expresses anxiety about."[49] Though Barrett Browning is not directly referring to a heart in the quoted lines, she does characterize the movement of the urban poor as a kind of diseased pulse. Describing them as "festering" vices, further entrenches the medicalized language within the otherwise melodramatic and affective lines. Middle-class Aurora, therefore, employs the popular language of heart disease to diagnose the poor wedding guests as a social problem that can to be observed and cured, like a physical disease.

The urban poor are made wretched by their poverty, but there is a subtext of blame as the poor are described as nothing more than the "vices" engendered by their "despairs, / Or sorrows." David claims that the resulting scenes of working-class poverty and middle-class disgust solidify the class boundaries that Marian's character transcends.[50] Katie Peel argues that Aurora must "be an example for middle-class readers to identify with" therefore "it is important that she retain marks of

[48] Kirstie Blair, *Victorian Poetry and the Culture of the Heart* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 25.
[49] Ibid., 26.
[50] Deirdre David, *Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy: Harriet Martineau, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, George Eliot* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 100.

her class, as seen in not only her refinement but also her prejudices."[51] However, Barrett Browning's description of Aurora's prejudices against the mass of poor wedding attendees goes further than merely setting up Aurora as a relatable middle-class woman. The wedding scene entrenches Marian's social otherness as she is clearly not one of the "oozing" masses of the working-class, yet she is socially distinct from middle-class guests such as Aurora. Barrett Browning sets up Marian against the working and middle classes so that she may draw from both discourses in the character's later ascendency from working-class victimage to bourgeois motherhood.

After fleeing from the wedding, Marian is raped, fired from a position as a lady's maid for having an illegitimate child, and flees to Paris where Aurora finds her close to destitution. At the point of revealing Marian's "fallen woman" narrative, Aurora's voice retreats from the forefront as Marian's emerges to personally narrate her experiences to the reader. The sexualized nature of Marian's story makes it non-narrativizable to middle-class Aurora, a prime example of the ways in which sexual impurity was the "social lever" that prevented an alliance of middle and working-class women.[52] Marian can relate the controversial details of her narrative without damaging her social position because of the contradictory class identities with which Barrett Browning provides her. Neither factory girl nor domestic servant, Marian is an unstable class character whose very instability sanctions Barrett Browning to portray her as a working-class victim but redeem her into a middle-class identity. Marian, herself, destabilizes emerging nineteenth-century class boundaries when recounting Lady Waldemar's deception:

> She served me (after all it was not strange,
> 'Twas only what my mother would have done (7.8-9)[53]

[51] Katie Peel, "'Unsuitable for Narrative': Working Women in Victorian Literature" (PhD thesis, University of Connecticut, 2008), 12.
[52] Kaplan, "Introduction to Aurora Leigh," 74.
[53] Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh*, 223.

Marian subversively equates aristocratic Lady Waldemar's behavior with the actions of her abusive, working-class mother. These lines gesture to a project of inclusive femininity which indicts the cruelty of women towards other women, and supports cross-class relationships based on womanly support. Barrett Browning's gendered project in the narrative portrays Marian as victimized from all classes without a solid class identity to lay claim to for herself.

Barrett Browning resolves Marian's class status through motherhood. By the end of the poem, Marian is established in a microcosm of matriarchal power with Aurora in Italy. Barrett Browning shifts Aurora's narrative focus from the sin of general illicit sex to Marian's individual, naïve innocence in provoking her rape:

> O' crooked world,' I cried, 'ridiculous
> If not so lamentable! […]
> My Marian—always hard upon the rent
> In any sister's virtue! (7. 92-5)[54]

Aurora repeats her earlier-stated "My Marian," entrenching her ability to manipulate Marian's ambiguous identity to reflect her middle-class values and ideologies. Barrett Browning takes the familiar theme of the working-class woman's sexual indiscretion and reworks it in gendered terms to redeem Marian. Unlike that of Elizabeth Gaskell's titular Ruth, Marian's illicit sexual act was forced at the hands of a working-class perpetrator, allowing Barrett Browning to vilify working-class immorality without implicating Marian in the sin. Having accepted Marian as a victim and not a prostitute, Aurora connects Marian with the Madonna and Christ:

> Come—and henceforth thou and I
> Being still together will not miss a friend,
> Nor he a father, since two mothers shall
> Make that up to him. I am journeying south,
> And in my Tuscan home I'll find a niche
> And set thee there, my saint, the child and thee,

[54] Ibid., 225.

> And burn the lights of love before thy face,
> And ever at thy sweet look cross myself (7.123-9)[55]

Marian's material and social self has been overridden by Aurora's conceptions of idealized, bourgeois motherhood. Stripped of all remaining class markers, Marian is now representable only through the gendered language of female friendship and maternity. Barrett Browning can accomplish this transformation because Marian is already a character without a definitive class. The experiences that Barrett Browning ascribes to Marian remove her character from the tensions surrounding specific working-class identities—rural female labor, factory work, or urban non-working poverty—making Marian's incorporation into bourgeois respectability a smooth transition from isolated class victimage to feminine community. This incorporation, however, comes at the cost of a definitive working-class representation that directly engages with issues of women's factory labor, working-class women's artistic voice, or working-class self-narration. Barrett Browning's Marian reflects the growing typology of ambiguously de-classed, exceptional, female working-class victims in bourgeois, social-problem poetry.

"Ideal mill-girls" or Sexually Illicit Sufferers: Constructing the Factory Girl in Nineteenth-Century America

Compared with Britain, the United States entered into large-scale industrialization much more slowly and slightly later in the century; therefore, its development was always already shaped by England's industrial economy and culture.[56] Many of the representations of working-class women that emerged in the poetry and prose of the period echoed their counterparts in British, middle-class reform literature. However, the dichotomy between the factory girl as victim or as immoral social problem is shifted slightly in the American context. The reform literature during this period is less concerned with the problems that factory women have caused in society, and more concerned with

[55] Ibid., 226.
[56] I discuss the historical trajectory of American's New England industrialization in chapter four.

what their industrial labor means for the future of American femininity. Middle-class authors like Sarah Savage, Orestes Brownson, and Herman Melville are torn between condemning women's factory labor as distinctly unfeminine and immoral, and attempting to craft a representation that allows for the new opportunities presented by mills such as Lowell, a project that sought to remedy the ills of urban factory society by transplanting them into rural landscapes, and recruiting religious, rural female laborers.

One of the earliest examples, in fact, prefigures characters such as Marian Erle and Helen Fleetwood; Sarah Savage's *The Factory Girl* was published in 1814 and presents a conflicted and overtly negative view of the individual and social effects of female factory labor. Factory work, in fact, is ancillary to Savage's main exploration of how "formerly sheltered women react to the dramatic transition from the familiar to the unfamiliar" and "from the fireside to the workplace."[57] In the novel, a young woman named Mary Burnham desires to obtain factory work to support her ailing grandmother. Mary's grandmother has reservations about Mary entering the factory because Mary's late father made it clear to her that he did not want his daughter to be employed in industrial labor because it would harm her morally and stunt her spiritual growth as a Christian. However, Mary is eventually allowed to seek factory work in a nearby cotton mill. The novel's focus, however, is not Mary's mill work, but her continuing journey to practice and develop her Christian beliefs. In fact, there is only one description of Mary at work:

> She was summoned to her occupation the following Monday morning by the factory bell. Her employment, which was reeling cotton, was neither difficult nor laborious; and Mary thought if she had not been a stranger she would have felt quite happy.[58]

[57] Sylvia Jenkins Cook, *Working Women, Literary Ladies: The Industrial Revolution and Female Aspiration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 14.
[58] Sarah Savage, *The Factory Girl* (Boston: Munroe, 1814), 4.

This brief description of her labor then swiftly shifts to a discussion of the people that she meets in the town surrounding the factory, namely Nancy and Willian Raymond whom Mary teaches to read the Bible. After starting a Sunday School for the factory workers, Mary discovers that her aunt has fallen ill. She travels to the house of her aunt to care for her nieces and nephews, and is quickly married by the narrative's conclusion to a local pastor following her aunt's death. Despite the novel's title, *The Factory Girl* is a conventional domestic romance that more closely prefigures *Jane Eyre* than *Mary Barton*. As in Tonna's *Helen Fleetwood*, factory labor is proven to be incompatible with Christian, feminine morality.

Though factory work is not as vilified in Savage's novel as it is in some of the previously discussed British reform texts, it is intimately connected with sexual morality in Herman Melville's "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids" published in *Harper's Monthly* in 1855. Melville's narrator tours a paper mill and explores the effects of industrial labor on men and women. Tom Allen claims that Melville's text reconfigures mill women's sexuality:

> Tartarus' many images of fertility—from the tour guide named "Cupid" to the menstrual "Blood River" that runs through the mill—undermine the notion of a clean dichotomy between sexless maids and oversexed bachelors, and point instead toward a more uncertain and fluid relationship between different versions of sexuality. […] Melville's factory girls incorporate both America's celebration of technological progress and its deeply felt attachment to an anti-technological pastoral idea into their own inscrutable bodies.[59]

It is the intersection of representations of oversexed factory women and the American ideal of religious, hardworking mill women at experimental complexes like Lowell mills—the workplace of Lucy Larcom—that results in a frequently dichotomous representation of factory women. For example, Melville's narrator is shown the "rag-room" at the factory he is touring, where he sees a group of women working:

[59] Tom Allen, "Melville's 'Factory Girls': Feminizing the Future," *Studies in American Fiction* 31, no. 1 (2003): 46.

> I see it now; turned outward, and each erected sword is so borne edge-outward, before each girl. If my reading fails me not, just so, of old, condemned state-prisoners went from the hall of judgment to their doom: an officer before, bearing a sword, its edge turned outward, in significance of their fatal sentence. So, through consumptive pallors of this blank, raggy life, go these white girls to death.[60]

The "swords" of machinery with which the women work lend a dangerous, erotic overtone to the scene. The machinery is sexually illicit, yet its phallic qualities also underscore the potential fecundity of the young, female workers. Melville's scene embodies the conflict between representing American factory women as a promising new marriage between technology and traditional, domestic ideologies, or a frightening group of immoral, "Tartarus" workers whose labor causes "consumptive pallors."

The disparity between Savage's paragon of Christian morality and domestic femininity, and the precariously positioned "white girls" of Melville's short story suggests that the representation of factory women adopted popular tropes from British texts, but was made fraught by the different environment in which American factories were located, as well as the concerted efforts to recruit a particular "type" of "factory girl"—a practice that I discuss extensively in chapter four. One author who attempts to strike an objective balance between Savage's embrace of factory work as a potential space of women's spiritual growth and Melville's dystopian mills is Orestes Brownson. Brownson was a New England preacher, publicist, and intellectual who was affiliated with the Transcendental movement, and visited Lowell Mills. In a popular essay written for the *Boston Quarterly Review* in 1840 entitled "The Laboring Classes," Brownson critiques Thomas Carlyle's *Chartism* (1840).[61] Brownson asserts that Carlyle "looks down upon his fellows, and sneers at the masses."[62] He argue that it is important to critique Carlyle's work because "there is no country in Europe, in which the condition of the laboring classes seems to us so hopeless as that of England," which concerns other

[60] Herman Melville, "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids," *Harper's Magazine*, April 1855, 16.
[61] The essay was published as a stand-alone text the same year by Benjamin H. Greene.
[62] Orestes Brownson, *The Laboring Classes*, 3rd Edition (Boston: Benjamin H. Greene, 1840), 6.

industrializing nations like America.[63] Despite his general concern for the working populations of America, however, he expresses considerable anxiety over the state of female factory workers in America:

> We pass through our manufacturing villages; most of them appear neat and flourishing. The operatives are well dressed, and we are told, well paid. They are said to be healthy, contented, and happy. This is the fair side of the picture; the side exhibited to distinguished visitors. There is a dark side, moral as well as physical. Of the common operatives, few, if any, by their wages, acquire a competence. […] But the great mass wear out their health, spirits, and morals without becoming one whit better off than when they commenced labor. […] The average, working life we mean, of the girls that come to Lowell, for instance, from Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont, we have been assured, is only about three years. What becomes of them? Few of them ever marry; fewer still ever return to their native places with reputations unimpaired.[64]

Brownson cautions his readers that "the consequence of wage labor was a working class that would inevitably deteriorate" in material conditions and morality, and that factory women would be unable to be anything but wage laborers because of their association with mill work.[65] He even goes so far as to claim that factory work was "almost enough to damn to infamy the most worthy and virtuous girl."[66] Though Brownson's aims to reform the conditions of factory work rather than demonize female mill workers, the figure of the American mill woman hovers between a victimized and villainous figure.

Savage's novel, Melville's short story, and Brownson's essay embody the complexity and contention surrounding representations of factory women in America, and parallel many similar strategies of representation in British authored texts. What results is an American factory woman figure that is entirely removed from the factory as a reward for her Christian morality, or is driven

[63] Ibid., 7.
[64] Ibid., 11.
[65] Jenkins Cook, *Working Women, Literary Ladies: The Industrial Revolution and Female Aspiration*, 44.
[66] Brownson, *The Laboring Classes*, 11.

towards death by her oppressive and suggestively illicit mill work. Like their British counterparts, American will women inspired both the sympathy and the ire of middle-class reform authors.

"She saved the morsel from her lips": Working-Class Women in British Working-Class Men's writing

Nineteenth-century working-class women's lives were tied to public and private spheres of labor, often combining industrial or rural day labor with the responsibilities of childrearing and homemaking.[67] The intersection of private lives and public wage-labor was as controversial and nuanced in the writing of working-class men as it was in middle-class authors. Brian Maidment accurately notes that self-taught writers of the 1840's and beyond made use of the "language and forms available to them," adopting middle-class representational strategies to carve out a space for working-class poets in the larger sphere of Victorian poetry.[68] Frequently figuring female working-class characters as brave and resourceful in times of financial hardship, male working-class authors, like middle-class authors, isolate working-class women characters from wage labor. However, male working-class writers also construct working-class women characters that are particularly isolated from larger social communities. Late Chartist and Parnassian poems are dominated by working-class wife and mother characters who are only representative within the confines of the domestic sphere, figuratively and literally.[69] Maidment notes a movement from overt political dissent to the domestication of political reform in Late Chartist and Parnassian poetry (1846-1880's). This

[67]See Eleanor Gordon, *Women and the Labour Movement in Scotland 1850-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 137–68. Though women's paid rural and industrial day labor steadily increased, mid-century census categories came to define work as "regular" activity erasing many married women's employment that was, according to Eleanor Gordon, most likely to be "intermittent and invisible."
[68]Maidment, *The Poorhouse Fugitives: Self-Taught Poets and Poetry in Victorian Britain*, 99.
[69] Ibid.

movement in working-class literature, like the transition from early to mid-industrial literature, featured more individual narratives of working-class suffering and oppression rather than abstract and broad railings against economic and political oppression. While male working-class authors rarely shuffle working-class female figures behind broader causes in their poetry, they do subject female characters to a particular set of experiences that are contained within the walls of the home. The materially realistic depiction of the working-class household in working-class men's poetry is persuasive, but is not representative of the complex interweaving of public and private experiences of real working-class women.

Prominent Lancashire writer, Edwin Waugh traded on the popularity of traditional dialect poetry during the second half of the nineteenth-century. Writing in regional dialect imbued working-class authors such as Waugh with the history and culture of a region and class. Taryn Hakala affirms that dialect poetry was a "potent [and] productive" way in which working-class writers could legitimize their authority in representing working-class life.[70] Waugh utilizes the ideological authenticity provided by dialect language to inscribe a particular representation of working-class experiences and gender roles for working and non-working-class readers. Waugh's 'Come whoam to thi children an' me' (1856) appeared in the *Manchester Examiner and Times*, and was included in a collection of his poetry the following year. The poem consists of a conversation between a working-class wife and husband. In lamenting her husband's frequent absence from the family, the wife states:

> Aw've just mended th' fire wi' a cob;
>
> Owd Swaddle has brought hi new shoon;
> There's some nice bacon-collops o' the' hob,
> An' a quart o' ale-posset I' th' oon;
> Aw've brought thi top-cwot, doest know,
> For th' rain's comin' deawn very dree;

[70]Taryn Hakala, "A Great Man in Clogs: Performing Authenticity in Victorian Lancashire," *Victorian Studies* 52, no. 3 (2010): 389.

> An' th' har-stone's as white as new snow; —
> Come whoam to thi children an' me.

Waugh's 'Come whoam to thi children an' me' features a working-class woman who strenuously labors for her family, her work and her labor are entirely confined to the physical and social spheres of the home. The public actions of wage labor and trading are solely ascribed to the working-class male while the private, domestic labor of cleaning and child-rearing is left to working-class women in Waugh's poem. Susan Zlotnick gestures to the gradual displacement of skilled, male artisans with cheaper, unskilled female labor during the 1840s and 1850s. As female labor became more economical, male industrial workers were laid-off *en-masse*, transforming women in to the primary breadwinners for their families. Zlotnick argues that working-class husbands "recouped some of the authority lost in the process of being proletarianized by reinventing themselves as the family's sole economic support," despite the gap between this idealization and the actual trends in the labor market.[71]

Additionally, depicting the working-class woman as a domestic, motherly figure suggests a past halcyon for the working-class man that was lost with the emergence of industrial labor. By idealizing an imagined, pre-industrial paradise of paternalistic labor, male working-class poets depart from the industrial realities of female wage-labor. An especially stark example of this idealization can be seen in Thomas Cleaver's *Night*. Published in 1848, the same year as the failure of the Charter, the poem is written in a reflective mode and offers a view of a society by night. The poem moves from a tavern scene to an idealistic view of the home:

> See there the man debased—the spendthrift sot,
> While by his hearth, forsaken and forgot,
> Pines the lone form of her, the grief-distressed,
> Her cherub infant sleeping at her breast; (37-40)[72]

[71] Zlotnick, *Women, Writing, and the Industrial Revolution*, 91.
[72] Thomas Cleaver, "Night," in *The Poorhouse Fugitives*, ed. Brian Maidment (Manchester: Carcanet, 1987), 125.

As in Waugh's poem, Cleaver depicts a husband who has failed at being the breadwinner for his family and has abandoned his wife and child for the pleasures of the public house. As his description progresses, it turns into a celebration of the nuclear family and domestic wife:

> Turns her sad eye to days when all was bright,
> And weeps and watches through the weary night.
> In smiling contrast view the worthy sire,
> True to each noble aim, each wise desire,
> Seek at the evening hour the peaceful charms
> That sanctify his Home! Affection's arms
> Receive him with delight, no ills annoy,
> To banish from his hearth the light of joy;
> Here social converse cheers, devotion sways,
> And sweet ascends the voice of evening praise. (41-50)[73]

Written in Standard English, the pentameter couplets and detached tone of the poem recalls eighteenth-century, neo-classical models, a form that Maidment rightly reads as underscoring the conventionality of the social ideologies Cleaver depicts.[74] In terms of the working-class woman in Cleaver's poem, she is the moral pinnacle and ultimate comfort for her family. While Waugh's wife character speaks against her husband's "spree," the working-class woman in Cleaver's poem is nothing more than a silent ideal whose subjectivity is sacrificed in the name of Cleaver's admiration of her domestic role.

Pressures from middle-class ideologies also contributed to a shift in working-class women's typology. According to Brian Maidment, working-class male poetry was a way by which a community of writers "might be defined and given moral values."[75] Working-class male poets were attempting to socially remap the working-class after the collapse of Chartism. Working-class men's poetry that adopted more conventional, middle-class ideologies of labor, family, and gender had a better chance

[73] Ibid., 126.
[74] Maidment, *The Poorhouse Fugitives: Self-Taught Poets and Poetry in Victorian Britain*, 124.
[75] Maidment, "Class and Cultural Production in the Industrial City: Poetry in Victorian Manchester," 154.

of appealing to middle-class publishers and audiences. Therefore, Waugh's entirely domesticated working-class female character serves the dual purposes of securing male working-class wage labor and appropriating enough of middle-class culture to appear recognizable and, potentially, respectable.

Conclusions

The representation of working-class women in middle-class social-problem fiction and working-class men's poetry took many shapes; however, all of these representations render the working-class woman into a useful tool for establishing and solidifying class and gender identities, rather than a subjective speaking voice. Characterized as a dual villain and victim in popular poems and novels by middle-class authors, the working-class woman is vilified for her public wage-labor, and critiqued for her perceived inability to conform to the material and behavioral standards of domestic femininity. While the manifestations of these disparate typologies differ across texts, they each serve to define working-class women within the evolving class and gender ideologies of the industrializing nineteenth century. In working-class men's writing, working-class women appear as figures with middle-class values in working-class settings. Their domestication is frequently accompanied by an idealized, non-industrial setting in which they act as the foundation for the public, wage-earning masculinity of working-class men.

What all these texts fail to recognize are the self-representations of factory-women as expressed in their own writing. In the following chapters, I explore how Ellen Johnston, Fanny Forrester, and Lucy Larcom work within the typologies of working-class femininity established in bourgeois authored texts to create a class and gender specific subjectivity, emerging from their personal experiences of working-class life and labor. These poets respond to the preexisting forms of self-representation that I have discussed differently. However, I argue that they collectively reveal a rich and relatively unexamined poetics of nineteenth-century social identity.

Relocating Arcadia: Fanny Forrester in the Manchester Working-Class Press

As I saunter through the blossoms
Where the golden bees are humming,
Like a sunbeam in the distance
I can see my Phoebe coming—
She is dressed in snowy garments
Dappled o'er with pink and green,
And her teeth like tiny moonbeams
Glint her rosy lips between.
See, she pauses by the river,
With a timid fawn-like grace—
And the reeds and cresses quiver,
As she views her own bright face. (1-12)[1]

Fanny Forrester, a lifelong dye-worker and aspiring poet, published dozens of verses in *Ben Brierley's Journal* (*BBJ*) between 1868 and 1882. In fact, Forrester became such a popular contributor to the paper's poetry section in the 1870s that Brierley dedicated a full-page of the journal to a biography of her in 1875. The above stanza, from Forrester's "Youth and Summer" (1875), exemplifies how Forrester constructed singular class and gender representations within ostensibly conformist pastoral landscapes in the poetry she submitted to *BBJ*. The poem is written from the perspective of a male bard who claims that he and the natural world equally adore his beloved Phoebe; however, the boundaries between Phoebe and nature are indistinct: she is clothed by and consists of beautiful but inanimate objects like sunlight, snow, and moonbeams. Phoebe is ephemeral, inactive, and silent for much of the poem, and she becomes nearly inextricable from the natural world that surrounds her: her hair twines like the garland in her hair, her "dimpled breast" (18) reflects the shape of the "dewy violets" (17).[2] She is an icon of visual loveliness whose only described action is pausing by a stream. In fact, Phoebe can only gaze upon her own face via parted reeds and the river—she is only interpreted literally through nature in the poem.

[1] Fanny Forrester, "Youth and Summer," *Ben Brierley's Journal*, November 27, 1875, 388.
[2] Forrester, "Youth and Summer."

The narrative of the male, speaking poet praising a "woman-as-nature" figure in an idyllic setting stems from a pastoral poetic tradition stretching back to Roman antiquity, while the lush nature imagery underscores the continuing influence of Romantic locodescriptive poetry.[3] However, Forrester's rural arcadia and surveying male poet are disrupted during an extended comparison between Phoebe and the flowers she is gathering:

> Twine the lily pale and slender
> With the blue forget-me-not!
> And some humble flower, oh, gather,
> As an emblem of our lot. (29-32)[4]

The catalexis at the end of line thirty halts the meter, formally marking a departure from an idyllic scene of flower picking to a solemn reminder of class status. The privileged, separate space of the pastoral is further disrupted by the caesura in line thirty-one and the incomplete foot at the end of line thirty-two. Rhyming "not" (30) and "lot" (32), Forrester reveals the illusion of immateriality and social escape that the pastoral provides; no matter how much the bard constructs a landscape and female body as idyllic and atemporal, he cannot avoid his literal lack of social and economic capital, the reality of having "not a lot." A bleak reality intrudes further into the now compromised pastoral in the fourth stanza which contemplates the passage of time and the inevitability of death:

> Do not linger so, my darling!
> Time is flying! time is flying!
> And the flowers that you have gathered
> In your heated palm are dying!
> Let me clasp them ere they wither,
> Steeped in fragrance fresh and fair!
> Death, who stays those floral treasures,
> Rides upon the balmy air.
> He will touch their blooming faces
> With his chilly, chilly hand!
> And fair nature's fairest graces

[3] For a more thorough analysis of the pastoral genre and its historical evolution, see Annabel Patterson, *Pastoral and Ideology: Virgil to Valéry* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1987).
[4] Forrester, "Youth and Summer," 388.

Will be buried in the sand! (37-48)[5]

While contemplative discussions of death are typical of pastoral verses, the previous references to material struggle lend an immediacy to the quick progress of physical degeneration and death. If Phoebe is an extension of the natural world, then Death is rapidly disintegrating Phoebe as he touches the "blooming faces" (45) of the flowers. Again, Forrester's language illustrates the distinct non-reality of the pastoral and the restrictive way women are conventionally represented within it. The bard cannot keep the struggles of working-class life at bay in his rural arcadia, neither can he write outside of conventional, bourgeois representations of women's bodies and experiences. Whether or not Forrester intended to critique male poet's restrictive typologies of working-class women in the pastoral genre, her ventriloquization of a male, bardic voice speaks to how the fantasy of the pastoral landscape served specific gender and class desires, and what language and poetic identity was available for female factory poets to express them.

In the following sections, I analyze how Forrester's own complex identity—a poor, Irish-Catholic woman living and working in urban Manchester—intersects the politics of working-class newspaper poetry, nineteenth-century pastoral verse, and Victorian women's writing and publishing. In particular, I examine Forrester's pastoral verses, and how the idyllic landscapes she constructs reveal a preoccupation with the narratives and experiences of the working-class woman. Creating female characters and speakers—and occasionally speaking as herself—Forrester establishes her pastoral landscape as a space in which everyone from urban prostitutes to single mill workers to working-class wives and mothers can reexamine and sometimes remedy social sins, individual hardships, and feelings of dislocation. As I will illustrate, Forrester's female characters represent an attempt to dually incorporate working-class women into ideologies of bourgeois femininity and masculine-dominated

[5] Ibid.

working-class writing. Forrester's unvarying disparagement of the urban, industrial city in these women's narratives uncovers the underlying anxieties felt by working-class women about their bodies, labor, and experiences in the industrial cityscape—a perspective not represented to the same extent in verses by Forrester's male counterparts publishing in *BBJ*. Though several of Forrester's "pastoral dreams" overtly fail to provide any viable strategy by which female factory workers can escape their arduous labor and urban poverty—typically by resisting representing the female body in any type of wage-labor—they convey the extent to which female working-class writers effected and were affected by typologies of genre, gender, class, and space.

Not only does Forrester reconfigure how women could exist and speak within the Victorian pastoral landscape, she also redefines where the pastoral could be constructed. Building on Rachel S. Platonov's investigation of pastoral spaces in nineteenth-century Russian literature, I contend that Forrester crafts a pastoral landscape that does not solely rely on a rural setting and, instead, depends on the invocation of a feeling, experience, or understanding of identity and society. Platonov claims that the pastoral is as much a perceptual space as it is a geographical location:

> Delimited by a mode of perception, rather than limited to a specific setting, pastoral space may be found anywhere. Because it is underpinned by perception, pastoral space is both adaptable and transposable: it can permeate a range of microcosmic settings and, by extension, it can exert a powerful influence over those who share its particular world-view even as they move from one place to another.[6]

Forrester's emphasis upon communal relationships, working-class social rituals, and her willingness to blur the physical boundaries between the natural world and the factory fits Platonov's description. As a woman writing within a male-dominated genre, Forrester redefines how the gender hierarchy functions in the network of *Ben Brierley's Journal* contributors and readers, affording Forrester the ability to transplant the pastoral from the agrarian countryside to the urban, industrial cityscape that

[6] Rachel S. Platonov, "Remapping Arcadia: 'Pastoral Space' in Nineteenth-Century Russian Prose," *Modern Language Review* 102 (2007): 1107, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20467553.

surrounded her target readership of factory women. Inserting the pastoral into the material and industrial context of Manchester, Forrester interrogates the conclusion that all working-class pastoral poets were preoccupied with idealizing a preindustrial society and economy, and that the pastoral necessitated conservative gender ideologies in order to function.

I also consider how the interjection of working-class women and urban environments into the pastoral landscape is reflected by a literal disruption to the aesthetics of Forrester's poems. Her rhythm, rhyme, and line length shift to accommodate the representation and discussion of these subjects, showcasing, I argue, both the complexity of working-class newspaper verse, as well as the ability of working-class women to carve out a space in dominant poetic modes. Though the imagery and overarching forms of her poems are ostensibly conventional, the ways in which Forrester attempts to create an imaginative escape from the trials of urban life for factory women mark her work as crucial to studies of both nineteenth-century working-class and women's poetry.

The Nineteenth-Century Pastoral

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "pastoral" as a "literary work portraying rural life or the life of shepherds, esp. in an idealized or romantic form." [7] However, Annabel Patterson defines the pastoral as a genre that "propagate[s] by miscegenation," one characterized by rural, arcadian scenes that has nevertheless been adapted and transformed in every century since its Classical inception with Virgil.[8] Patterson claims that pastoral writing enabled the writer to "*protect* himself by dismemberment" through "a wickedly shifting authorial presence."[9] Beginning with ancient Rome, Patterson illustrates how the "simple" pastoral characters of the shepherd or rural laborer serve as counter identities to the

[7] "pastoral, n. and adj.". OED Online. March 2016. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/138625?rskey=T4mM70&result=1&is Advanced=false (accessed May 04, 2016).
[8] Patterson, *Pastoral and Ideology: Virgil to Valéry*, 7.
[9] Ibid., 4.

intellectual poet-speaker: the multiple voices allow the poet to discuss historically and socially relevant issues while maintaining a detached identity as a poet-intellectual. In other words, the various subjects within the seemingly apolitical pastoral landscape served particular functions for the poet who could transition between the "nostalgia and yearning" of the rustic and contemplative bard, and the immediate concerns of the rural laborer: the laborer can be critical of history and society because he is a worker, a marginal figure whose assumed influence is minimal, while the poet-as-speaker is free from censure for his potentially controversial views and is better able to contemplate humanity's existence and conceptions of death.[10] According to Patterson's argument, the pastoral genre not only enables, but was crafted to support the intersections of fantasy landscape, contemporary issues, and a multi-faceted authorial identity.

Despite its Classical origins, the newspaper pastorals of working-class poets were less inspired by ancient Greece and Rome, and more influenced by the locodescriptive nature poetry of eighteenth and early nineteenth century Romantic poets, such as William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. These poets adapted the traditional bucolic landscapes and meditations on rural labor and meditative life of the pastoral genre into the Greater Romantic Lyric defined by M. H. Abrams and aptly summarized by Nils Clausson:

> […] the greater Romantic lyric, which, as defined by Abrams, consists of a tri-partite structure: (i) the particularized description of a natural scene by a sensitive and usually solitary observer; (ii) an extended reflection or meditation, which the scene stimulates, and which may be focused on a private problem, or a universal situation, or both, leading to (iii) an insight or vision, a resolution or decision, which signals a return to the scene originally described, but with a new perspective created by the intervening meditation.[11]

[10] Two of the most well-known examples of the genre are John Milton's "Lycidas" (1637) and Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Adonaïs: An Elegy on the Death of John Keats" (1821). Though classified as pastoral elegies, a subset of the larger pastoral tradition, these texts exemplify how various representations of an arcadian landscape and agrarian labor are portable across time, and serve vastly different artistic and social purposes.

[11] Nils Clausson, "Pastoral Elegy into Romantic Lyric: Generic Transformation in Matthew Arnold's 'Thyrsis,'" *Victorian Poetry* 48, no. 2 (2010): 181, http://www.jstor.org/stable/27896672; M. H. Abrams, "Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric," in *The Correspondent Breeze* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1984).

Clausson adds that mid-Victorian pastoral poetry—specifically, Matthew Arnold's "Thyrsis" (1861) in his discussion—is a "generically mixed lyric" that combines "the conventions of the classical pastoral elegy" with what Abrams identifies as the Romantic lyric to create a verse that "experimentally fuses what appear to be two incompatible genres."[12] Arguing that "Thyrsis" is a pastoral elegy and a Romantic lyric at different points in the poem, Clausson asserts that Arnold creates an elegy that mourns both the death of poet Arthur Hugh Clough and "the larger changes transforming English society" as represented by the urban development surrounding Oxford and the Cumnor hills.[13] In fact, Clausson claims that through his reading of "Thyrsis" as a hybrid poem of both genres, he is able to make the poem "seem less like a 'throwback to an earlier, antiquated form" and, therefore, open up both the individual poem and the mid-Victorian pastoral genre up to new scholarly analysis.[14] The significance of Clausson's reading of "Thyrsis" for my own argument is the way it recognizes moments of generic hybridization and reconfiguration in its discussion of persistently evolving poetic forms. In this chapter, I read the pastoral poetry of Fanny Forrester, as an amalgamation of multiple poetic genres and social identities that redefine representational boundaries even as they seek to write within them.

Unlike Arnold and his Romantic predecessors, however, Forrester did not benefit from being middle-class, highly educated, or male. Furthermore, her audience and publishing environment were vastly different from most mid-Victorian poets; therefore, the legacies of Romanticism and pastoral verse surrounding Forrester affected how poetic form and social representation were expressed in her poetry. As I have previously discussed, the working-class periodical symbolized both a publishing opportunity for working-class writers and a medium by which a class-based poetics and

[12] Clausson, "Pastoral Elegy into Romantic Lyric: Generic Transformation in Matthew Arnold's 'Thyrsis,'" 174–75.
[13] Ibid., 177.
[14] Ibid., 176.

representational strategy was shaped. The narratives that were emerging in many working-class periodical pastorals were contending with not only overarching discourses of Victorian poetry, but particularly classed legacies of writing. Anne Janowitz claims that the parallel development of the liberal subject and the "lyric subject" in Romantic poetry was destabilized by "residual meanings of personhood and identity" in working-class poetry of the period:[15]

> For though the romantic lyric subject is also the liberal subject, the two arising together in aid of each other, there is also a movement of lyricism in this period which models another version of subjectivity. This path is one through which the subject of customary culture—a pre-capitalist, communitarian, plebian subjectivity—is dialectically engaged with the emerging volunatristic or unencumbered self.[16]

Janowitz contends that the identity of the poetic subject in earlier examples of laboring-class nature verse by poets such as Thomas Spence (1750-1814) was based on community action, group labor, and mutual engagement with society. Such a "communitarian strain" is frequently expressed through depictions of group, agrarian labor as in the landscapes of "thresher poet" Stephen Duck, or embodied by experiences of self-actualization through rural labor as in the poetry of milkmaid Ann Yearsley. Janowitz persuasively argues that this older strain of communitarian subjectivity in eighteenth-century laboring-class poetry intersected the emergence of the autonomous individual speaker in the Romantic lyric, resulting in a "version of identity which presents itself as conscious of social origins and aims" but is also invested in producing the privileged subjectivity of the poetic speaker. With these seemingly contradictory ideologies shaping their strategies of self and class representation, mid-century working-class poets turned to the preindustrial, arcadian landscape of the pastoral as seen through the lens of the Romantic poet-observer. The locodescriptive poetry exemplified by verses such as Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" (1798) helped to establish the natural world as a foundation for not only achieving poetic subjectivity, but revaluing the material, British landscape as a sublime space. No longer was

[15] Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour in the Romantic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 23.
[16] Ibid.

arcadia solely an environment populated by shepherds and satyrs seemingly outside of time; rather, the pastoral could be found in the forgotten ruins, vast fields, and sleepy villages of Britain.

The leisurely walks that inspired poets like Wordsworth, however, were often out of reach for the average working-class poet whose urban wage-labor typically restricted both the time available to explore the countryside, and the physical distance to it. Therefore, the natural world that inspired the authors of working-class pastorals was necessarily more intentionally crafted than, if heavily influenced by, the locodescriptive verses of bourgeois Romantic poets. Many mid-Victorian poets witnessed the seemingly exponential urbanization and industrial expansion of cities such as London, Manchester, Glasgow, Newcastle, and Dundee, and wrote poetry that reflects an often uneasy— and occasionally overtly hostile—relationship with the urban cityscape in which they now lived. Verses such as "My Own Hills" (1842) by Robert Story (1795-1860) demonstrate the nostalgia for a preindustrial landscape in its imagery of a lush countryside:

> In boyhood on my own hills
> I plucked the flower, and chased the bee;
> In youth upon my own hills
> I wooed my loves by rock and tree;
> 'Tis thence my love—to tears—they claim;
> And let who will the weakness blame,
> But when in sleep I dream of *them*,
> I would not wake *aught else* to see! (25-32)[17]

Story's pastoral landscape is focused on his ownership of the natural world. His countryside dream is centered on a perceived proprietorship of the land — "my own hills" (25), "my love" (29)—property that he can now only access in the space of the pastoral fantasy poem. Maidment asserts that Story's "My Own Hills" "links landscape with childhood, patriotism, and local pride in a half-apologetic statement of a modest local identity."[18] By writing of his humble, regional landscapes in the

[17] Robert Story, "My Own Hills," in *Love and Literature* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1842), 72.
[18] Maidment, *The Poorhouse Fugitives: Self-Taught Poets and Poetry in Victorian Britain*, 44.

conventional language of Wordsworthian Romanticism, Story attempts to elevate his working-class region of England to a subject worthy of sentimental, locodescriptive poetry.

The overall message of Story's poem aligns with Annabel Patterson's definition of the pastoral as a "magic circle of idyllic manners and aesthetic pleasure"—there are no calls for class-based uprisings or factory walkouts, rather, contemplation in idyllic scenery of what has been lost provides the backdrop for Story's poetic musing.[19] However, there is an underlying political critique of the ways in which industrialization has intruded on the idyllic space of which Story dreams. Though Story was an agrarian laborer and rural teacher for much of his life, he would have witnessed the mass changes to the social and environmental landscape of England. Rural labor provides an aesthetic framework for urban periodical poets such as Forrester, John Lawton Owen, and Ben Brierley, but also entrenches a set of historical values and identities that have been ostensibly "lost." This sense of dislocation and nostalgia is echoed in the forms of the poem: the catalexis of the first and third lines of the above quoted stanza force the reader to linger on "hills," the incompleteness of the final foot reflecting not only the loss of a preindustrial, rural way of life, but also the incompleteness of the pastoral genre to actually return the poet to his childhood home. Only in the act of retreating to his dreams in the final couplet, written in an even trochaic tetrameter, does Story achieve peace with his pastoral surroundings. Limited to his poetic musings, the boundaries of Story's pastoral are distinct; the newly urbanized and industrialized cities around his childhood home and the pastoral landscape he crafts in his poem are mutually exclusive.

The relative success of Story as a poet illustrates the potency of the narrative of pastoral idealization for working-class poets writing later in the century. Though not published in *BBJ*, Story's "My Own Hills" exemplifies the individualist and distinctly masculine poetic voice that typified

[19] Patterson, *Pastoral and Ideology: Virgil to Valéry*, 193–94.

working-class pastoral verse. The pastoral enabled working-class poets to "project a distinct cultural identity and authority for the working classes" by ostensibly grafting "middle-class domestic ideology onto working-class culture."[20] Through this strategy of literary grafting, working-class men could also evade many of the intra-class gender and economic tensions occurring in their urban, material lives by occluding the city in favor of countryside scenes, and abandon the factory in favor of agrarian labor. Appearing in *BBJ* in 1870, James S. Dawson's "Lancashire: Past and Present" laments how the industrial revolution has changed Lancashire from the idyllic place of Dawson's childhood, to a harsh and polluted urban environment:

> Like a dream of one departed,
> Or of home on foreign shore,
> Rises to the sorrow-hearted,
> Lancashire in days of yore;
> Rise her palaces resounding
> With the throstle and the loom;
> At their gateway teams abounding
> With the cotton they consume.
>
> […]
>
> Ah, how soon that vision passes;
> Now what darkly loom around?
> Huge, unwieldly, lifeless masses,
> Factories without a sound.
> Here and there, low-moaning madly,
> Shadowed—wrapt as in a pall—
> Stands the master gazing sadly
> On the record of his fall;
>
> Stands, beholds the vast erection,
> Shudders at the silent gloom,
> Thinks the world, in his dejection,
> One vast universal tomb;
> And that pile, his wealth remaining,
> Clasped within its cold embrace—
> Some Sarcophagus containing

[20] Larry McCauley, "'Eawr Folk': Language, Class, and English Identity in Victorian Dialect Poetry," *Victorian Poetry* 39, no. 2 (2001): 288, doi:10.1353/vp.2001.0014.

Ashes in its costly case. (1-8, 17-32)[21]

Like Arnold in "Thyrsis," Dawson observes the changes that have overtaken the Lancashire countryside with mourning as it has transformed from an idyllic space of dreamlike qualities to a "universal tomb" (29) populated with the "unwieldly, lifeless masses" of the factories and their employees. The "palaces" (5) in the poem are the Lancashire homes that used to support a cottage industry; however, the advent of large-scale factories has turned this dream into a nightmare landscape. Where the preindustrial Lancashire was a landscape dominated by light and working-class community, the modern-day Lancashire is its antithesis, an anti-pastoral both geographically and socially distinct from its past. As presented in Dawson's verse, the pastoral cannot be situated in the rapidly evolving urbanization and industrialization of mid-century Lancashire, and mid-century Lancashire cannot be considered as anything but the product of ominous mills and detached factory workers. Even Dawson's conclusion entrenches the urban environment as a space of total isolation from any of the idyllic pleasures of the pastoral landscape, including the formation of an individual and liberal self. Working-class families leave "their homes affrighted, / Weeping left their native land" (41-2), implying a severance of the communitarian culture of preindustrial life. Dawson's conclusion recalls the hurried resolution of Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1842) in which protagonists Mary and Jem achieve a Romantic, bourgeois communion with nature and each other only by leaving Manchester for the wilderness of rural Canada. As in Gaskell's reform novel, Dawson's poem both generalizes the urban, working-class experience, and regulates its representational and imaginative boundaries.

Dawson constructs limits for representing the pastoral in the context of, yet distinct from, industrial Manchester in his poem, appealing to a wide variety of readers with shared experiences of rapid urbanization. The significance of speaking to a large readership—most often working-class

[21] James S. Dawson, "Lancashire: Past and Present," *Ben Brierley's Journal*, February 1870, 2.

men—cannot be understated when discussing periodical verse. Working-class newspapers flourished throughout the decades of *BBJ*'s publication, but most of these publications were short-lived enterprises that lacked a broad enough readership, continued funding, or both. Therefore, poems that represented large sections of working-class society were typically favored for publication. In the context of Manchester working-class periodicals, this meant poetry that supported a proud, regional identity and language as it shaped the community of readers and writers it spoke to and for. When a specific working-class identity is emphasized in periodical verses, however, it revolves around the ideology of a self-improving, "natural genius"—a potent narrative for urban, factory poets whose frequent lack of formal education precluded most traditional pathways to knowledge and publication. Critics such as Susan Zlotnick rightly argue that pastoral verses reveal a simultaneous desire of laboring poets to weave their poetry into dominant literary scripts, and celebrate particularly working-class identities and experiences.

After the collapse of Chartism in 1848, the relationship between these desires grew more complex as working-class poets replaced fiery political radicalism with the imagery of idyllic, rural escape. In his extensive collection of nineteenth century laboring-class poetry, Brian Maidment claims that the plethora of pastoral verses written in the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s were characterized by a "Parnassian impulse" that was starkly less radical, if not less political, than their Chartist predecessors.[22] Maidment claims that these poets produced texts that frequently failed to "make sense of the contradictions and complexities of their ambitious working-class […] lives."[23] Pastoral poems by prominent working-class poets such as Edwin Waugh and Gerald Massey embodied the tradition of figures such as Duck. These verses attempted to craft a class poetics that remained, nevertheless,

[22] Maidment, *The Poorhouse Fugitives: Self-Taught Poets and Poetry in Victorian Britain*, 99–100.
[23] Ibid.

embedded in dominant, bourgeois literary codes: the nuclear family, economic self-sufficiency, a strong patriarch, and a domesticated wife and mother.

The politics and ideologies surrounding the Victorian pastoral, embodied in verses by more popular poets such as Robert Story and local writers such as James S. Dawson, were both classed and gendered. Traditional scenes of rural, idyllic splendor provided working-class poets with a preindustrial landscape in which their labor could be revalued, and they could privilege masculine positions in the social and economic life of the working-class. The periodical context of poets such as Dawson heavily influenced the representation of class and gender in the pastoral poems that appeared within them, and *BBJ* was no exception. In the subsequent section, I explore how Brierley's desire to publish a periodical that supported a specific representation of working-class intellectualism, politics, and poetry shaped the poetry that was submitted to the paper, and why such an environment makes Fanny Forrester's pastoral all the more singular and significant.

Ben Brierley's Journal

Manchester author and self-improver, Benjamin Brierley edited *BBJ* for the entirety of its thirteen-year publication span, and reportedly printed 13,000 copies at the height of the paper's popularity. Brierley's journal garnered enough popularity over the first years of its printing, that he increased the frequency of publication from monthly to weekly issues. He wanted his journal to reflect "the simple lives and experiences of the humble people" of Lancashire, elevating the educational achievements and regional dialect of his working-class contributors and readers.[24] Therefore, a large proportion of the poems that appeared in the journal were written in dialect—a language that Brierley felt encapsulated the best of historical Lancashire, and was the best framework to express its future. However, even poems written in Standard English focused on subjects that emphasized working-class

[24] Benjamin Brierley, "The Lancashire Dialect," *Ben Brierley's Journal*, December 1871, 3.

Lancashire culture, typically portraying it as rooted in a preindustrial, agrarian economy and society, despite the rapid increase in male and female factory labor in Manchester during this period.

The journal became known for light-hearted pieces such as the *Ab-o'th'-Yate*—short comedies by Brierley that celebrated the dialect and culture of rural Lancashire—as well as extensive advertising for local meetings, shops, and public events across the greater Manchester area. He states the purpose of his journal in a December 1871 article entitled "The Lancashire Dialect." In the editorial, Brierley is responding to an article in a competing "weekly contemporary" that criticizes the Lancashire dialect for being "boorish and uncouth," ultimately at "variance with social, moral, and political progress" of the region and of Britain.[25] Brierley responds to this detractor by asserting that the Lancashire dialect is the "most natural and forcible manner" in which a "humble Lancashire operative would speak."[26] To support his argument, Brierley compares Lancashire dialect writing to the language of working-class characters in canonical, bourgeois texts:

> In adopting this course we have only been imitating, in our own humble way, the example set by many writers who have gone before. Neither Burns, Scott, Ramsay, Dickens, Lover, nor even Tennyson (we could name a host of others), ever thought of putting into the mouths of their humbler characters the language spoken by a Cambridge scholar. They made them speak in their natural language, which may be called either a dialect or English very much broken up and ground down. And yet who dislikes these creations, or finds fault with their creators for their being such?[27]

The argument that Brierley invokes is based on conservative ideas of "authenticity" surrounding working-class identity and voice. Brierley's ideology of working-class expression relies upon a typology that is largely rural and male. Tennyson and Burns write of the working-class in romantic countryside settings as domestic servants and agrarian laborers. Even the urban working-class voices in works by authors Brierley cites—such as many of Dickens's texts—are typically depicted outside of factory

[25]Ibid., 308.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.

labor and ancillary to the movement of the central plot of the text. Drawing from the example set by canonical, middle-class authors, Brierley undermines his own desire to legitimate dialect writing as a marker of an authentic working-class culture with inherent aesthetic value. Furthermore, Brierley's dialect speaking "Scotch yeoman, Dorking coachman, or […] cockney serving-man" do not include the scores of women working in textile factories and mills, nor do they acknowledge the particular diversity of the laborers and workers reading and contributing to his own journal. Though Manchester was known for its industrial manufacture, there were large populations of other working-class peoples including domestic servants, coach drivers, and milliners. Despite Brierley's narrow interpretation of working-class "authenticity," poets such as Forrester could look to Brierley's journal as a publication that valued working-class literary efforts, and was committed to promoting local talent. Unlike other contemporary working-class newspapers such as the *Dundee, Perth, and Forfar People's Journal* or *The Penny Post*, *BBJ* almost always printed poetry in its entirety with little or no commentary from the editor. Fanny Forrester benefitted from the platform that *BBJ* offered her writing. Primarily appearing in a single, working-class periodical, Forrester can be considered as having a "typical" career for a female, working-class poet, as much as there is an identifiable path to publication for such a liminal social figure. Balancing poetic production with factory labor, factory women such as Forrester could more likely find literary notoriety through regional periodicals rather than published collections of their poetry which required social connections and, usually, considerable financial backing.

Forrester's first poem appeared in the journal in 1870 and by 1875 she had become so popular with the journal's readership that Brierley composed a brief biography and summary of her work, including a large engraving of the young poet (figure 1). Her pastoral poetry engages with the creation of urban pastoral spaces, the politics of writing in the diaspora as a child of immigrants, representations of working-class femininity, and writing in Standard English in a journal that overtly preferred dialect. I first examine how Forrester destabilizes established boundaries between urban and pastoral

landscapes in her poetry, and how this reflects an effort to incorporate both the idyllic pastoral into the urban realities of working-class readers, as well as subjective representations of working-class women into a traditionally restrictive genre of poetry.

Fanny Forrester

Born in 1852 to Michael and Ellen Forrester (née Magennis 1828-83), Forrester was the eldest daughter in a family of five children residing in and around Manchester. Her father, a stonemason, supported the family by taking a variety of building jobs in the greater Manchester area, while her mother, an employee in a textile factory, emigrated from Ireland to Liverpool a few years before Fanny's birth before moving to Manchester with her husband. Ellen most likely left Ireland from a combination of economic and political pressures; however, her pride in her Irish heritage and nineteenth-century Ireland's tumultuous political atmosphere continued to shape her identity and writing. This nationalism resulted in a collection of Irish nationalist poetry that Ellen co-authored with her eldest son, Arthur M. Forrester, in 1869 entitled *Songs of the Rising Nation*. Despite the constant factory labor, Ellen even published her own pro-Irish and pastoral poetry, *Simple Strains*, in 1863. Though unmarked in the original copy, some critics have claimed that Fanny contributed six poems to *Songs of the Rising Nation*, and that these poems were the first to appear in print for her.[28]

With the death of her father in 1864, Fanny's available time to compose poetry considerably shrank as she began to work in a local mill to help support her family. Soon after Forrester entered the mill, her mother was forced to retire from factory-labor due to ill-health, and her older brother Arthur frequently ran afoul of the law with his radical engagement with the Irish Nationalist Fenian

[28] The origin of Forrester's publishing career would be a serious debate for two readers of *Ben Brierley's Journal* in 1874, an embodiment of the importance and restrictions of patronage for working-class women poets in the nineteenth-century that I address later in this chapter.

movement in Dublin, Manchester, and Liverpool.[29] Being the next oldest and physically able child, Fanny became the primary source of income for her family at the age of thirteen. Forrester took up dye work in Salford, northwest of Manchester, a form of industrial employment that required no formal apprenticeship, and—according to available information—she continued this employment for the remainder of her life. Fanny died in 1889, a death most likely caused by a life spent in arduous factory labor and urban poverty.

During her publishing career in *BBJ* (1870-1882), Forrester became a "house poet" of the journal, and her poems were frequently reproduced in full. Appearing on June 23, 1875, Brierley's dedicatory editorial notes that Forrester was currently employed as a dye-worker in Pendleton, which he interprets as surprising because she creates scenes that are "especially beautiful" while working within an environment that would have "blunted even nobler aspirations."[30] Brierley attributes Forrester's popularity to her lush representations of Lancashire, and the working-class people living within it:

> She writes of fields and flowers as of things with which her earlier years were unacquainted, as treasures only reflected in books, or dreamt of in her dreams, and with which her soul yearns for companionship. We are assured that beyond the range of Peel Park, outward nature has hitherto been a sealed book to her; and that her studies of human life and character have been confined to the experiences of the mill and the dye-house. Yet how beautifully she writes of the things she aspires to behold, and of the conditions of life which her poetic instincts tell her must exist somewhere.[31]

[29] Arthur was detained by English authorities several times throughout the 1860s and 1870s, one of the most notable occurring after a "futile raid on Chester Castle" in Dublin, for which he was sentenced to a year in a Dublin prison, and a further arrest in Liverpool on December 16, 1869. After co-authoring a collection of Irish nationalist poems with his mother and serving in the Franco-German war, Arthur immigrated to America to avoid further legal trouble for his involvement in Irish revolutionary circles. In 1887, he became a "proofreader on a Boston paper, and afterward […] was employed in that capacity on *The New York Times*." During his time at *The New York Times*, Arthur remained dedicated to the cause of Irish separatism, and became self-taught in Irish history and culture. He died on January 22, 1895 at the age of forty-four. "Famous Irish Agitator Dies in Boston," *The New York Times* (New York: New York), Jan. 23, 1895.
[30] Benjamin Brierley, "Fanny Forrester," *Ben Brierley's Journal*, January 23, 1875, 37–39.
[31] Ibid., 37.

Portraying Forrester as a modest, but talented factory-girl, Brierley takes control over how Forrester and her poetry should be received. Brierley, however, was not the only voice to publicly discuss Forrester and her writing in *BBJ*. In 1876, local poet John Lawton Owen submitted a poem entitled "An Epistle to Fanny Forrester" in which he, like Brierley, applauds Forrester's ability to create beautiful landscapes:

> Just a few brief moments linger, oh! my gifted sister-singer,
> While my idle harp is tuning for song-messages from me;
> I am but a lowly singer, but it nerves my restless finger,
> To be softly, surely crooning on its minor chords to thee.
>
> […]
>
> Land of asphodel and roses, where the troubadour reposes
> Who was faithful to his mission when he trod a meaner sphere;
> Where the eye of nature closes never, mid the deathless roses;
> Life is there a fadeless vision, and the skies are ever clear. (1-4, 26-9)[32]

The "idle harp" (2) and figure of the reposing "singer" (3) are so conventional they border on irony; even the mention of "asphodel" entrenches the eternal and, consequently, atemporal, landscape in the tradition of an Elysian landscape created by poets.[33] However, Lawton Owen privileges the development of the male intellectual within a pastoral environment over more detached commentary typical of traditional pastoral poems, showcasing the influence of Romantic poetry and the liberal subject on nineteenth-century iterations of the genre. The middling stanzas discuss the meaning and utility of poetry and the poet in society, claiming that pastoral poets "add zest to simplest living" (32), and have the responsibility of composing the "correct" type of poetic beauty and representation. Lawton Owen ends the poem with a lesson for Forrester on poetic production, fame, and labor. He advises Forrester to pay "Little heed to too censorious" (110) critiques, and to let her "golden harp

[32] John Lawton Owen, "An Epistle to Fanny Forrester," *Ben Brierley's Journal*, March 11, 1876, 4.
[33] "asphodel, n.". OED Online. March 2016. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/11645?redirected From=asphodel (accessed May 16, 2016). The OED notes that "asphodel" has been used to refer to an immortal flower in Arcadia or Elysium since Homer's *Odysseus*, but was more recently employed in Tennyson's popular poem, *Lotos-eaters* (1842).

still win thee, never let its cords grow dull" (109), addressing Forrester as if she were his pupil rather than a "sister-singer."

Lawton Owen's interpretation of his artistic kinship with Forrester is further complicated in the final stanzas as Lawton Owen claims that he must close his "song of adulation" (114) for a "lapse uncertain" (115) because he must "give way to [his] vocation" (116). Lawton Owen presents an overt conflict between the labor of writing and the industrial employment of the author, one that must be physically separated from the rest of the poem by a series of asterisks—a visual break that reinforces the strict boundary between working-class wage-labor and the creative labor of writing poetry. By representing wage-labor and writing as mutually exclusive aesthetic and social spaces, Lawton Owen rigidly locates the pastoral, and therefore spaces that are fulfilling and desirable, firmly out of reach for the urban, factory poet. In fact, his reluctant retreat from poetry denies any potential coexistence of poetic and industrial labor for working-class writers and, by extension, negates the possibility of the pastoral landscape to be represented in urban, industrial landscapes. The poem is backward-looking—an idealization of a space and society in which he could give over his days to "fancy's fond creation" (116) in an agrarian society.

Forrester's representation in Lawton Owen's epistle is equally defined by social and aesthetic boundaries between the urban material and the idyll pastoral. He refers to her as a "natural genius"—a figure whose poetic talent is both drawn from and enhances the natural world rather than originating in formal education—in the same way he characterizes his own impetus for writing. Julie Cairnie rightly asserts that the "problem with the concept of natural genius" is that "it presumes that the poet is a kind of aberration, that poor communities cannot nurture creativity" because it relied on a poet whose knowledge existed in isolation of laboring communities who are frequently depicted as illiterate

or participating in agrarian labor in the pastoral, when they are represented at all.[34] In Lawton Owen's self-representation, this restrictive ideology translates into his ultimate dislocation from the poetic and pastoral in order to pursue necessary wage-labor. In his construction of Forrester, however, he resists depicting her as actively composing poetry or working in industrial labor; rather, she is part of the pastoral fantasy built by Lawton Owen. He claims that he will "fold [Forrester] to [his] bosom" (125) like a flower, effectively reducing her to an inanimate object. Lawton Owen's Forrester does not need to privilege poetic production above factory employment because she exists outside of both spheres and is, therefore, fully subjective in neither. Though his epistle was written to praise Forrester for her poetic skill, it ultimately highlights male, working-class anxieties about locating women as either poets or workers. In an era marked by increasing numbers of women in factory labor, male authors such as Lawton Owen harnessed bourgeois ideologies of domesticated femininity as a way to consolidate a male, working-class identity.

Two years before Lawton Owen's "Epistle to Fanny Forrester," a reader writing as Mrs. Fairley submitted her own verse in honor of Forrester. "To Miss Fanny Forrester" appeared in the November 21, 1874 issue of *BBJ*, and prefigures Lawton Owen's praise of Forrester:

> Sing, sing, sweet songstress, in the noisy mill,
> Not by the sparkling brook or lofty hill;
> Not where the birds, a vast and joyous throng,
> Would swell their anthems to inspire thy song;
> Not where the trees their leafy boughs would spread,
> Like chequered curtains, while above thy head
> The beauteous sun and blue unclouded skies
> Would meet the gaze of thy enraptured eyes.
> Thy strains we hear amidst the busy looms,
> Where queenly rose nor modest violet blooms;
> And yet their power, how soothing, sweet, and dear
> When falling sweetly on the weary ear!
> Sing on, sing on, and mother, child, and sire

[34] Julie Cairnie, "The Ambivalence of Ann Yearsley: Laboring and Writing, Submission and Resistance," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 27, no. 4 (2005): 353–64, doi:10.1080/08905490500444015, 356.

In years to come shall bless thy magic lyre. (1-14)[35]

Referring to these readers as "we," it can be assumed that Fairley is one of a devoted readership in one of Manchester's factories. Fairley instructs Forrester to compose her poetry in the pandemonium of the mills rather than in the idyllic countryside because that is where her verses are the most useful and the most well-received. Unlike Lawton Owen, Fairley briefly connects the pastoral with the urban factory as Forrester's readership hears her poetry "amidst the busy looms" (9). With Fairley's verse, there is a pronounced undercurrent of communitarian subjectivity and how it connects to the social benefits of poetry that is less present in Lawton Owen's more individualist and abstract contemplation. Forrester's poetry is conceived as providing a tangible social benefit for readers, rather than a cerebral commentary on the intellectual purpose of poetic production and liberal subjectivity. However, there is still a clear distinction between the pacifying and healing pastoral, and the demeaning and monotonous factory environment. This separation is underscored by the repetition of "Not" before descriptions of the natural world in lines two, three, and five, which acts as a lexical barrier between the pastoral and the reality in which Fairley is writing. As in Lawton Owen's poem, the idyllic and the material are mutually exclusive even as the two poets assert that the former can be used to recuperate the latter for urban, working-class laborers. Poems such as Lawton Owen's and Fairley's construct Forrester as a rural, pastoral poet whose urban factory labor shapes and restricts her intellectual and physical experiences.

Alongside readers of *BBJ* responding to Forrester through the medium of poetry, there were multiple questions and comments made in the form of opinion pieces submitted to Brierley's running "Editor's Corner." Prior to Brierley's 1875 article on Forrester, the "mill-girl poet" was the subject of a debate between Brierley and three readers of the journal. On July 11, 1874, a letter from Thomas J.

[35] Mrs. Fairley, "To Miss Fanny Forrester," *Ben Brierley's Journal*, November 21, 1874, 2.

Shiel accuses Brierley of laying false claim to being the original publisher of Forrester's writing. Shiel claims that Brierley has done a disservice to "the thousands of readers in England, in Ireland, and in America" who became aware of Forrester's poetry through Ellen and Arthur Forrester's 1869 collection of Irish nationalist poems, *Songs of the Rising Nation and Other Poems*:[36]

> Nay, there are thousands of readers to whom [Forrester's] name is very familiar, who do not know that such a journal as Ben Brierley's exists, since yours is only a local journal, and is not read "universally." I trust you will insert this in a corner of your next number, in justice to Miss Forrester.[37]

Shiel minimizes the reach of Brierley's journal, and takes it upon himself to educate Brierley as to his house poet's origins. He claims that the six poems that Forrester contributed to her mother and brother's collection are "very pretty," comments that position Shiel as an authority on literary merit and Forrester's publication history. Shiel's tone is adversarial and his letter is preoccupied with asserting his role as an arbiter of information on Forrester.

In response to Shiel, a man writing under the name "Lucus A No Lucendo" claims that Shiel has confused Forrester with her mother, Ellen:

> [Shiel] seems to have introduced a little Hibernian confusion into the subject. He claims for that lady the authorship of a volume of poems published in 1869, five years since, entitled, "Songs of the Rising Nation, and other Poems," by Ellen Forrester and her son […] Now, sir, these things are what no fellow can understand. I can see the possibility of an authoress, equally with an actress, retaining her maiden patronymic after marriage, but that "Ellen Forrester and her son" can be the "young lady" of our admiration implies a confusion of arithmetic as well as consanguinity very much in the nature of a conundrum. [38]

The author scathingly corrects Shiel's statements by employing ostentatious jargon such as "Hibernian," "patronymic," and "consanguinity." "Lucus A No Lucendo" is attempting to position himself in the role of the dominant male intellectual in the discussion. Shiel retorts by claiming that

[36] Thomas J. Shiel, "To the Editor of 'Ben Brierley's Journal'," *Ben Brierley's Journal*, July 11, 1874, 32.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Lucus A No Lucendo, "Fanny Forrester," *Ben Brierley's Journal*, July 25, 1874, 40.

"Lucus A No Lucendo" has "not rightly interpreted [his] letter, and has misjudged its motive" and that he has clearly not confused Forrester with her mother. The verbal sparring occurring in these editorials, however, has little to do with Forrester's publishing history, and more to do with these men's desire to frame Forrester and her work with a particular set of class and gender ideologies. By claiming that they knew Forrester's path to poetic popularity, the two contributors attempt to navigate why her writing is valuable, and how she should be received by readers of the journal. These editorials illustrate the extent to which working-class men sought to control both their individual importance in periodical or literary debates, and the representation of female working-class poets.

On July 18, 1874, however, Forrester interjects her own voice into the argument. In Forrester's only prose contribution I can locate in *BBJ*, she expresses gratitude towards Brierley's patronage, and that "until [she] wrote for [Brierley's] journal [she] had written nothing except a few short poems."[39] Unlike the accusations and adversarial tone of the two male contributors to the argument, Forrester couches her response in appreciation for the ways in which Brierley's publication and her readers' adoration has enabled her to find a receptive audience for her skill—a position that, I believe, demonstrates how working-class women poets participated in constructing their own identities, even if that identity is hinged upon bourgeois conceptions of female dependence and timidity. Judith Rosen rightly claims that working-class women poets "tended to be defined in less overtly political terms" and were presented in "elaborate frames to guard against" any subversive social or political associations.[40] However, Shiel, "Lucus A No Lucendo"—and Brierley indirectly—are presenting Forrester in political terms: she is a female, sentimental poet. With her humble and evasive reply to Brierley and the other male writers, Forrester also contributes to this framing that privileges her gender

[39] Fanny Forrester, "Honour to Whom Honour Is Due. To the Editor of Ben Brierley's Journal," *Ben Brierley's Journal*, July 18, 1874, 24.
[40] Rosen, "Class and Poetic Communities: The Works of Ellen Johnston, 'The Factory Girl,'" 210.

identity above her class. A submission by "Bessie" from the same year underscores the engagement of working-class women with their class and gender representation in working-class periodicals.[41] This letter is the only definitively female-authored letter to the editor about Forrester that I could locate during the years of Forrester's publication with the journal. Bessie wrote to reassure readers that "Miss Forrester is neither vulgar nor unladylike; but just a neat, shy, little person."[42] Her concerns are in establishing Forrester as a social peer of Forrester's "wealthier sisters."[43] In other words, Bessie wants to situate Forrester in a feminine, bourgeois literary tradition rather than a regional, working-class context.

In all these discussions of Forrester by contributors from both sexes—including Forrester herself—it is apparent that Forrester's appearance and reputation as a respectable Victorian woman are just as essential to the success of her poetry as the aesthetic qualities of her verses, if not more so. The engraving of Forrester that Brierley included in his editorial on the poet in 1875 (fig. 1) supports the view of Forrester as a middle-class, domestic woman rather than an urban factory worker. In the image, Forrester's hair is neatly coiffed at the back of her head, as she sits in three-quarters profile. Her face rests in a neutral expression, but is clean and framed by soft curls; her dress has a ruffled, high collar that is modest yet fashionable. In reality, Forrester would have most likely carried the physical effects of arduous factory labor: dyed hands, stained clothes, and a weary expression. By including a photograph of Forrester appearing as a middle-class woman, Brierley reinforces the importance of viewing the poet as a feminine poetic voice rather than a working-class bard.

The ways in which Forrester is presented in articles and poems by Brierley and other *BBJ* contributors encapsulate how space, class, and gender were carefully policed in both *BBJ* and working-

[41] Bessie, "Letter to the Editor," *Ben Brierley's Journal*, August 11, 1874, 74.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.

class periodical culture more broadly. It is this androcentrism and strict enforcement of imaginative perimeters on space that I believe is interrogated and redefined in Fanny Forrester's pastoral verses. As I will show, Forrester not only inserted her writing into the physical and aesthetic space of *Ben Brierley's Journal*, she equally injected female voices, bodies, and experiences into the pastoral genre.

FANNY FORRESTER.

ubt that our readers will accord to us their unanimous presenting them this week, along with a few biographical trait of one of our most popular contributors—Fanny y will be further pleased to learn that, so far as our own icerned, the engraving is a good copy of the photograph and which was taken by Mr. Hill, Windsor Bridge,

ht materials which have been furnished us respecting this gifted girl—for girl she is only—we do not gather has been either an eventful or a happy one. Born in poor parents, and parents whom misfortune seems to or its own, the cradle of her muse has been in the and vicissitude, as may have been gathered by an s noted the sombre tints in which most of her pictures d, and the deep sympathy with suffering humanity that every note of her music. She writes of fields and ings with which her ere unacquainted, as eflected in books, or r dreams, and with earns for companion- sured that beyond the k, outward nature has sealed book to her; udies of human life ve been confined to of the mill and the how beautifully she ings she aspires to he conditions of life stincts tell her must

twelve years Fanny fatherless; and she ut one of the family kind of employment btained for one so consequently thrust in the neighbour- , and continued to ly poetic atmosphere "At the age of r informant, "she r labour with poetic Whilst employed at rrote many of the ve made her name welcome to the rnal, often delaying of decent paper on m.

nember receiving the , and which, for reasons only known to editorial re inclined to throw aside. But glancing over the

general head of "Strangers in the city," and contained thirteen st "Dying in the City," followed in May; and we are inclined to this is the best. Readers in various parts of the country be inquire, "Who is Fanny Forrester?" "Where does she live?" the name a real one, or assumed?" Complimentary letters fo and so flattering was the general reception of her work, that w induced at once to accept the young lady as a constant contribu

The next poem, "The Poor Man's Darling," appeared in Ju is one of exquisite tenderness and pathos. The tone of the com will be gathered from the following four lines, which no on attribute to a girl of eighteen:—

"But we gather around the fire at night,
And the white walls gleam in the ruddy light,
There we see your cloak and your little chair –
But oh, my darling! you are not there!"

We rank this poem, which contains thirty-two verses, as o best which has yet emanated from Miss Forrester's pen.

The next contribution, which appeared in the number for one of an amatory characte its contrast to other effus cates the versatile natur author's genius. From this quote the opening lines:—

"I see thee at the little stil
One dainty foot the daisie
The stream reflects thy hap
Thy dimpled chin the wi
The golden sunbeams sport
On snowy neck and flutt
While through the trees t
stray,
And linger o'er thy tress

We would certainly have whole song had it not appe columns before.

The next, "An Old Tu reminiscence of the pa playing or singing of a appears to awaken. It co eight lines, two of which of a bright and playful p

"How glowing, how rare,
she made,
Half bathed in the sun
den in shade."

"After the Battle" and appeared in our jo ber. "Parted for ever," in the number for forcibly reminds us of t pathetic ballad by Lad

"I'm sitting on the
As we sat side

and though so like it treatment is so different, that we are obliged to ack see no shadow of plagiarism.

We hear nothing from our fair contributor until

Figure 1: Brierley, Ben. "Fanny Forrester." *Ben Brierley's Journal*. January 23, 1875.

"I sing to the maiden who toils all day:": The Intersections of Urban and Rural Landscapes in Forrester's Pastoral Poetry

The boundaries separating more traditional pastoral scenes of rural splendor from depictions of urban, nineteenth-century labor, poverty, and working-class culture are markedly fluid, and the permeability of these spaces manifests itself in different ways throughout Forrester's publishing history. The first three poems by Forrester that appeared in the journal were part of a series entitled "Strangers in the City," which appeared in the March, April, and May 1870 issues. Consisting of "Homeless in the City," "Toiling in the City," and "Dying in the City," the series narrates the story of Mary and her mother who have moved to an urban center of industry from their countryside homes in search of employment and income. From the outset of "Strangers in the City," Mary and her mother draw connections between their new life in the city and their cherished memories of the country:

> They are strangers in the city, and their thoughts are far away,
> Where the little brooks are singing through the valleys all the day.
> O! their hearts are in the meadows, though they tread the miry street,
> And the pretty dewy blossoms never kiss their weary feet. (1-4)[44]

Forrester defines Mary and her mother as others from the poem's first line; however, the liminality they feel is softened by their thoughts which are "far away" (1). The environment of their dreams is outside of industry and wage-labor as the joys of nature are seemingly unchanging and eternal. The exclamation of "O!" (3) forces the reader to pause, placing the distinctions between the meadows their hearts long for and the squalor of the streets they now walk into sharp relief. These introductory lines begin to illustrate Forrester's strategy of harnessing pastoral landscapes as direct remedies to the negative physical experiences of living in an industrial city as a working-class woman. She expands on this in "Toiling in the City" in which she depicts Mary at work in a local factory:

[44] Fanny Forrester, "Homeless in the City," *Ben Brierley's Journal*, March 1870, 1.

> O'er her work, from morn till evening, bends her sweet and saintly face,
> But her busy hands oft tremble, and the tears each other chase;
> For she thinks of pleasant rambles through the quiet lonely glen,
> And she wonders will she ever hear the birds' sweet song again.
>
> She is weary, oh, so weary! of the engine's deafening sound;
> Though her head is dazed and aching, still the mighty wheels go round.
> "Will they never cease their grinding?" oft the wondering maiden cries,
> As the straps go whirling round her, then go whizzing past her eyes. (4-12)[45]

These stanzas highlight the real dangers of factory work, as well as the psychological and physical tolls of long-term industrial labor, both of which are reflected in the poem's long lines and mechanical progression of the anapestic meter. For Mary, her "busy hands" (5) are a consequence and embodiment of her interpretation of the city: an environment that is seemingly fueled by the tedious and exhaustive decline of her mental and physical well-being.

All of Mary's physical experiences of the factory reflect anguish and suffering: her face hovers wearily above her work while tears spill down her face and onto her hands, she hears the pandemonium of engines and her own cries as her vision is clouded with spinning straps. All of her senses are assaulted by the actions of her labor. The two lines that mention a more idyllic landscape, however, convey how Mary was cared for physically as she freely rambles through quiet glens and hears the soft sounds of wildlife. Pastoral nature is a bodily and mentally liberating space for working-class women, an interpretation that opposes the depictions of rural life by male poets in Brierley's journal—including those in Brierley's own fictional writing. In one of the popular "Ab-o'th'-Yate" sketches, "Ab-o'th'-Yate in London: The Journey Up, and First Impressions," Ab offers his initial insights about life in "Lunnon" in a letter to his wife, whom he calls his "Dear Owd Rib":[46]

> Well, bless thee!—when theau'rt awhoam! for theaur't a reet un when thear'rt where wives should aulus be—upo' their own hearthstones. An' tho' women up here seem

[45] Fanny Forrester, "Toiling in the City," *Ben Brierley's Journal*, April 1870, 1.
[46] A popular Biblical allusion to the creation of Eve from Adam's rib, Ab's reference implies that his wife is an extension of him. As his wife, she has lost a separate identity through his adoption of the pet name.

> to be nowt short nobbut wings an' English tongues to mak' 'em into angels, aw'd rayther see th' pattern o' thy bedgeawn, and yer th' neckle ' thy clogs (never mind thi tongue), nur see "Rotten Row" i' full blaze, or yer a simperin' beauty, donned i' a full cut o'muslin, an' a fent or two beside—co me a "dear, funny old chaip!" an' ax me heaw mich aw'm going to "staind!" […] Whether it wur wi' watchin' trees an' heauses an' meadows an' hills fly past us as if they'rn runnin' races at Karsey Moor, or it wur bein' rocked like bein' in a kayther, aw dunno' know, but o' someheaw aw fund misel' dreamin' abeaut Walmsley Fowl, an' thee, an' th' childer […].[47]

For Brierley's "Ab," his rural Lancashire home is idyllic because of his ownership of a domestic ideal: a wife devoted to—and in many ways trapped within—the physical and intellectual space of the home. Brierley notes that his wife's tongue is excluded from the appeal of her simple beauty, restricting her representation to the fit of her dress and the sound of her shoes on the cottage floor.[48] The quickly passing and frequently changing landscape of London from his train window leads Ab to idly dream of his rural home; because he cannot physically control or imaginatively master the evolving environment of urban London, he retreats to a masculine pastoral landscape in which he defines the boundaries of beauty, appropriateness, and nature.

Unlike Brierley's "Ab" figure, Mary and her mother in Forrester's "Strangers in the City" series do not have the luxury of willingly embarking on travels or migration. Where Ab dreams of his position as a male head of house, Mary expresses her position as a female wage-laborer in different terms:

> Watch her count her scanty wages, turn each shilling o'er and o'er—
> "See, dear mother, each day finds us happier, richer than before."
> Is her cabin-home forgotten, that she looks so proud and glad?
> Ah, no! her lips are smiling, but her *heart* is sore and sad. (33-6)[49]

Contrary to reveling in the social and financial freedom that some factory-women writers praise in their poetry, Forrester denies that the allure of wages is enough to sustain the happiness that the

[47] Benjamin Brierley, "Dear Owd Rib," in *"Ab-O'th-Yate" Sketches and Other Short Stories*, ed. James Dronsfield (Oldham: England, 1896), 12–17.
[48] Ibid., 12.
[49] Forrester, "Toiling in the City," 1.

countryside brought to the women. Forrester's characters reject the ability of financial gain to replace the subjectivity and happiness that their rural fantasies provide. The three pauses in line thirty-four destabilizes the line's rhythm, making the statement about happiness coming from wages seem unnatural and forced. Despite the promise of labor and wages on offer to working-class women, the urban cityscape is unable to overshadow the pleasures of the pastoral or prevent its intrusion into its landscape. On her deathbed in the final poem, "Dying in the City," Mary claims that "'mid the noise, the smoke, and gloom; / Still she sees her native valleys, robed in autumn's richest bloom" (16-7).[50] Forrester claims that even in the throes of a death caused by urban poverty and factory labor, pastoral landscapes remain both a potential strategy of escape, as well as a form of subjective resistance for working-class women. While the industrial city threatens to overwhelm their physical and emotional experiences, idyllic nature imagery in pastoral poetry stands as a space of succor and resistance, even if it cannot remediate physical or material woes.

As Forrester submitted more poems to *BBJ*, she further developed the relationship between her pastoral landscapes and life in an urban factory city. "The Gloaming in the City" from August 15, 1874 narrates a common evening in the city:

> Steals the sweet romantic gloaming
> Sadly through the dingy street,
> Through the open windows roaming
> Like a ghost with noiseless feet.
> Not with summer-perfumes laden,
> Not with dewdrops on her breast,
> But like languid city maiden,
> Pale and weary, seeking rest,
> Bends she o'er the whispering lovers,
> And with dark, mysterious eyes,
> O'er their drooping heads she hovers,
> Listening to their tenderest sighs.
> Bolder grow their fond caresses,
> Meet their lips, they know not why,

[50] Fanny Forrester, "Dying in the City," *Ben Brierley's Journal*, May 1870, 1.

When her mist of shadowy tresses
  Veils them from the passers by.

[…]

"Dearest, how thine eyes are glistening
  At my wild, impassioned words;
Glows thy face while thou art listening;
  And thy hands, like fluttering birds,
Rest in mine; but, oh! our glances
  Through dark courts and alleys stray,
And our lovely, lovely fancies
  In foul vapours melt away.

"Wherefore hath thy cheek grown colder?
  Why these tears, my city flower?
Droops thy head upon my shoulder?
  Doth the cruel gloaming hour
Steal the scent from hawthorn blossoms,
  But to mock our longing hearts;
That the joys that thrill our bosoms
  May not live when it departs? (1-16, 49-64)[51]

The evening is represented as an active, thinking agent in the poem. The consistency of the trochaic tetrameter is a steady heartbeat behind the slow oncoming of the night, reflecting the dynamic city scenes occurring. This conceit supports a dual narrative in the poem: one takes aim at the poor living conditions of urban life, and the other highlights the disparity between middle-class narratives of romance and the material realities of working-class life. Forrester's depictions of the gloaming are an example of Ruskin's pathetic fallacy as it bends over and caresses the people on the street; however, the representation of the gloaming reaches beyond effusive sentimentality and into the realm of social critique. The gloaming roams through fields with "summer-perfumes laden" (5) in the preindustrial countryside, but must now "steal" (1) and slink through the "dingy street" (2) between the factories and overcrowded tenements of cities such as urban Manchester. There is a clear implication that industrialization is a social and environmental aberration that has perverted the natural world. To

[51]Fanny Forrester, "The Gloaming in the City," *Ben Brierley's Journal*, August 15, 1874, 2.

borrow from Gretchen Legler, "Gloaming in the City" blurs the dichotomy between human and nonhuman, "representing human/nature relationships as 'conversations' between knowing subjects."[52] The interactions between the natural world and the lovers, though unnoticed by the humans, are intimate if tainted by the industrial urbanization of the area. Though the imagery of the humanized evening as pure and natural when in rural settings and corrupted in rapidly evolving cities is conventional, Forrester's placid, trochaic rhythm layers a consistent and peaceful pastoral beneath the tumultuous factory town.

Alongside the undercurrent of the pastoral built into the structure of the urban-centered poem, Forrester creates an aspect of nature that also serves as an embodiment of the factory woman. The gloaming is significantly gendered female as, once again, Forrester has created an ostensibly restrictive typology of "woman-as-nature." Despite this, the feminized gloaming is not a passive figure; though she is like a "languid city maiden" (7) she moves through the city, shielding the tryst of a working-class couple from onlookers. However, her movement is not empowering, but prescriptive of factory women's lives. The gloaming is rendered in similar terms as those frequently employed to describe factory women: "pale and weary" (8), a figure of potentially illicit sexuality that moves alone through morally ambiguous areas like dark alleys. Formerly a maiden at peace with nature, the evening has lost its "self" in the city, becoming a phantom whose daily passage has been stripped of its "true" nature. By superimposing the industrial cityscape onto the female body, Forrester underscores not only the damage to the natural world that industrialization and urbanization have caused, but also how working-class women physically suffer in urban life.

The male speaker claims that, like the gloaming, his beloved has "grown colder" (49) as the gloaming mocks them by reminding them of a lost countryside. The speaker refers to his love as a

[52] Gretchen T. Legler, "Ecofeminist Literary Criticism," in *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*, ed. Karen J. Warren (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 229.

"city flower" (50), a strained combination of bourgeois standards of delicate femininity and the reality of mid-Victorian urban living. Susan Zlotnick—one of the few critics that has written on Forrester—claims that she attempts to grant her "working-class heroines a middle-class subjectivity of fine sentiments [by] kill[ing] them into art through her use of poetic clichés."[53] By portraying these women as wilted flowers deserving of admiration and romance despite their industrial labor, Forrester represents female factory workers within conventional bourgeois ideologies of feminine desirability and value, according to Zlotnick. I, however, read the gender normativity of Forrester's factory women representations as an attempt to interpret herself and her female readership as existing beyond the boundaries of the archetypally denigrated urban industrial worker—though it may render them into silent, sentimental figures it releases them from being automatically labelled unnatural, unfeminine, or immoral. Through intersecting urban and pastoral spaces, Forrester creates a pastoral that is as multi-faceted as working-class women's representations and lives.

Female Narratives and Male Speakers: Mediating Factory Labor, Femininity, and Poetic Production

Forrester's environment exists in-between the pastoral and the urban, enabling her to create working-class women that exist in-between Victorian class and gender boundaries. However, these female characters are repeatedly featured as silent figures whose experiences or representations are vocalized by male speakers. The way in which Forrester ventriloquizes working-class male voices in her poetry is both a complication and reaffirmation of the poet's desire to represent working-class women as exemplars of respectable femininity within working-class settings—both real and imagined. These male-voiced poems interrogate the extent to which the pastoral is a space dominated by male working-class poets. Forrester appropriates and adapts the male working-class voice to construct her

[53] Susan Zlotnick, "Lowly Bards and Incomplete Lyres: Fanny Forrester and the Construction of a Working-Class Woman's Poetic Identity," *Victorian Poetry* 36, no. 1 (2013): 26, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40003631.

interpretation of the working-class woman. With this masculine persona, Forrester provides factory women with the opportunity to be validated by a man whose songs influenced the surrounding culture.

One of the earliest examples of Forrester harnessing a male poetic voice is her poem "To Mary" from August 1870. In his 1875 editorial, Brierley describes this verse as "one of an amatory character," that gestures towards the "the versatile nature of [Forrester's] genius."[54] The poem is a narration of the speaker's fantasy rural life with Mary and, excepting the mention of their ideal nuptials in the fifth stanza, the poem avoids locating the speaker and Mary in any overt gender or class roles. Forrester's refusal to securely situate the characters of "To Mary" in recognizable social identities contributes to her establishment of the pastoral as a feminine space of reciprocity and communion with nature:

> Should sorrow cloud thy sunny brow,
> Though, one by one, thy friends depart,
> The magic spell that binds us now
> Would twine more closely round my heart.
> In stately hall or lowly cot
> Thy name would sound as sweet to me;
> The proudest throne would be forgot,
> Dear Mary, for one glance of thee.
>
> And what, though on our bridal morn
> No costly banners float on high;
> The wind will wave the rippling corn;
> The brooks will babble softly by;
> The birds will warble with delight,
> And hail us with their sweetest song;
> The spreading hawthorn, pure and white,
> Will shade us as we walk along. (25-40)[55]

The rhythm of the poem is interrupted in the second line of the fourth stanza, placing emphasis on "one," underscoring the transitory nature of human relationships and life. However, the isolation

[54] Brierley, "Fanny Forrester," 37.
[55] Fanny Forrester, "To Mary," *Ben Brierley's Journal*, August 1870, 102.

invoked by the caesura before "one by one" (26) is lessened by the stability of the iambic tetrameter, which also places emphasis on the second "one" and "friends," metrically counteracting the loneliness of the line's statement. The contradiction between the line's meaning and its rhythm position the natural world as an eternal remedy to individual abandonment caused by the implied ills of the urban cityscape. The speaker refers to the countryside as a "magic spell" (27) that "binds" (27) Mary and the speaker both sentimentally and physically; however, this sense of communion with each other and nature is always already a type of "magic," an illusion for which the pastoral genre makes temporary space. By negating the importance of either "stately halls or lowly cot" (29) Forrester inserts financial concerns into a landscape otherwise untouched by social or economic concerns. The pastoral realm depicted in "To Mary" self-consciously exists outside of Victorian class and gender structures, but also relies on the material realities and lived experiences of those structures in order to function as an escape for her working-class, female readership. The self-reflexivity of the poem is made apparent in the dream of a marriage between the speaker and Mary in the fifth stanza. Substituting "costly banners" (34) for corn, rivers, and blossoms, the speaker fully turns from social conventions and economic exchange towards an idealized community of nature and humanity. Nature reflects and intervenes in the emotions of the figures within it, particularly on their wedding day in which an idealized countryside becomes a substitute for more traditional consumer materials.

Continuing the unreality of Forrester's utopian economy, neither Mary nor the male speaker engage in any sort of rural labor, a departure from the distinctly working-class, pastoral tradition of depicting agrarian labor as the pinnacle of working-class—particularly masculine—respectability. Unlike the evaluating author-speaker in Story's "My Own Hills," Mary and the unnamed speaker in "To Mary" repeatedly emphasize the fundamental connectedness and reciprocity between themselves and the pastoral landscape. Forrester's characters do not survey and work the land, so much as seek communion with it. In the final stanza, the speaker envisions their lives after their marriage:

Our home shall be among the trees,
  Sweet woodbine climbing round the door;
Where clover scents the wooing breeze,
  Where peace shall dwell for evermore.
And e'en when night her mantle flings
  Across the river's wimpling breast,
The angels, love, will fold their wings
  Above our wee, secluded nest. (41-8)[56]

Nature is a dynamic force in how it shelters the couple as it climbs, scents, flings, and speaks, which implies a consent between natural host and human guests. Outside of monetary or social forces, the couple negotiates their physical and emotional needs alongside and through nature. Ecofeminist scholar Susan Griffin claims that the sort of relationship between humans and nature as showcased in Forrester's "To Mary" goes beyond a "sentimental notion" of conventional idealization of the rural to include "a meeting with nature rather than a transcendence from it."[57] Forrester reconceptualizes the financial lack of Mary and her partner as a method by which they could achieve communion with the natural world; by removing issues of labor commodification and material ownership, Forrester transforms poverty into an opportunity for pastoral transcendence. This final stanza elevates the pastoral landscape into a private utopia in which the boundaries between human and nature blur, each reciprocally nurturing the other. Though the "wooing breeze" (51) and "Sweet woodbine" (50) parallel scenes of the countryside in scores of other pastoral poems—working-class and otherwise—Forrester's idyllic landscape provides a source of escape that looks outward rather than backward, a space seemingly beyond urban suffering, intra-class gender roles, and factory labor. As materially impossible as it was for the poet or her readers to live "outside" of the geographical, social, and economic pressures of mid-Victorian Manchester, Forrester's "To Mary" imagines a way of living in

[56] Ibid.
[57] Susan Griffin, "Ecofeminism and Meaning," in *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture Nature*, ed. Karen J. Warren (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 222.

a pastoral that revalues the emotional experiences of working-class women separate from the domestic duties of wives and mothers.

However, the presumably masculine identity of the speaker complicates the subjectivity that Mary can derive from the natural world Forrester constructs around her. Throughout the poem, Mary is represented as an extension of nature—a conventional typology that threatens to render the female body into inanimate silence. The way in which Forrester positions relationships with the natural world as remedies to specific social problems is similar to the escapist desires that characterize male-authored pastorals of the same period. The difference between Forrester and her male peers, however, is the emphasis Forrester places on the particular female experiences of nature, urban life, and wage-labor.

This dedication to exploring female perspectives on working-class conditions is further explored in her 1875 poem, "The Sister and the Bard." In the poem, a poor, originally rural couple separate in order for the male speaker to earn enough money to finance his marriage to a woman named Agnes; however, the male bard was gone so long that his sweetheart fled to a rural convent to become a nun. On his return, the bard confronts Agnes at the abbey and convinces her to leave her holy orders to be with him now that he possesses fame and fortune. The Catholic overtones of the poem are a subtle nod to Forrester's Irish heritage; however, the more compelling issue concerns the financial options available to working-class women versus their male counterparts. Forrester's male bard accuses Agnes of having no faith in him, and having degenerated because of her time in the convent:

> "Why art thou here in this ghostly place,
> With that patient look on thy sweet, sad face?
> Have I sought thee, Agnes, to find at last
> But the mournful shade of my buried past?
>
> "I stretch my hand, for I fain would tear
> The unseemly veil from the golden hair
> I have kissed so oft in my boyish pride,

As we strayed through the abbey, side by side. (5-12)[58]

To the male bard, the abbey is a place for the dead, a space of infertility and age that renders his love a "buried" (8) part of his past, a literal non-existence as she is no longer accessible to him as a domestic wife and mother. Forrester's male speaker repeatedly brings the narrative back to his efforts to secure Agnes, reaffirming how he "sought" (7) her only to find that she is not available to be the prize of his efforts. Agnes is property to the speaker, who has since made his living as poet:

"I have pictured thee with a chain of pearls,
Like a moonbeam, coiled in thy shining curls—
With a diamond hung, like a fairy's tear,
From the rosy tip of each dainty ear.

"To win thee fame I have wildly sought
To create a soul in each burning thought,
Till the children born of my busy brain
Marched through the world in a noble train.

[…]

"Treading the veriest haunts of sin,
I have longed to fly from their vulgar din,
To the hushed retreat of some silent grove,
Where my soul could feast on its wondrous love.

"I have watched the months till they grew to years,
I have nursed my doubts till they grew to fears;
For with trifling ills is the heart opprest,
When the spirit craveth for peace and rest. (29-36, 45-52)[59]

The quotations that open each stanza are never closed, allowing the bard's voice to fill the narrative space of the poem, preventing Agnes from intruding on his plea for her to break her sacred vows. In dreaming of Agnes dripping with jewels bought with his newfound riches, Forrester's bard renders Agnes as inanimate as the trinkets with which he wishes to adorn her; Agnes is merely another

[58] Fanny Forrester, "The Sister and the Bard," *Ben Brierley's Journal*, October 31, 1874, 146.
[59] Ibid.

commodity that supports the social identity of the bard. The question is why Forrester allows the bard's voice to dominate the narrative of the poem, completely occluding Agnes's perspective. I argue that Forrester ventriloquizes a male voice—more specifically, a male poetic identity—in the poem to justify her writing and legitimate her poetic skill, thereby allowing her to more believably represent working-class women as respectable, bourgeois ladies. The dominance of male poets in working-class journals such as *BBJ* embodied the influence of masculine class and gender perspectives. The male poetic voice, to Forrester, allotted her both gendered authority and a wider range of typological expression.

In "The Sister and the Bard", Forrester's male speaker further underscores the disparity between options available to working-class men versus working-class women in romance, economic subsistence, and social respectability. The male bard travels far from his village to the city for fame and fortune, associating with people in the "veriest haunts of sin" (45), free to disseminate his poetry for a morally ambiguous audience. Despite his unsavory associations, he maintains an unblemished reputation, as he interprets his questionable behavior in language that echoes the husband in Edwin Waugh's "Come Whoam to Thy Childer an' Me" (1856) who claims that his nightly "sprees" with his factory wages serve a larger purpose of sustaining him emotionally and physically. The bard claims that he attains fame and fortune through his urban misdeeds, therefore, making them necessary in order to return to Agnes. The poet is celebrated rather than punished for his efforts to earn a wage in the urban environment. After his account of his time away, the poet questions Agnes about her life during their separation:

> "Hath not the mill-wheel, whirling round,
> Mocked thy tearless grief with its trivial sound,
> And delayed thy thoughts as they sought to soar

From the common things they had loved before (57-60).[60]

When her love departed, Agnes was faced with fewer options than her male poet. Entering the menial, cacophony of the mill, she became increasingly geographically and socially constrained. The poet draws attention to how factory labor stunted Agnes's imagination and emotional health, but tellingly fails to acknowledge the physical and mental strains of mill work and the financial restrictions of earning money as a single woman. Furthermore, by claiming that the repetitive sound of the mill is trivial, the poet devalues Agnes's wage-labor as less substantial than his own poetic achievements—an assumption that the mill environment precludes or stunts women's creativity and intellect. Considering the physically strenuous labor of mill work and the fluctuating cycles of boom and bust in the industrial economy, Agnes's decision to enter a convent is unsurprising and—in many ways—shrewd. While her lover roams the country with romantic thoughts of his awaiting beauty, Agnes must struggle to maintain her respectability and financial state by choosing between the din of the mill and the seclusion of the convent. The material realities of Agnes's experience of poverty and wage-labor haunt the margins of the poem, just as her silence weighs upon the bard's narrative.

In Forrester's most well-known verse, "The Lowly Bard" (1873), she extends her vocalization of the male bardic figure to discussing factory women in general. In "The Lowly Bard," a male speaking figure reduces the working-class woman to contradictory and artificial figures of "bourgeois subjectivity" and suffering working women while promoting working-class prosody and poetic identity.[61] Lacking the individual narrative of female experience in the majority of Forrester's poems, "The Lowly Bard" attempts to make a broader statement about working-class poetry by representing femininity as essential and uniform:

[60] Ibid.
[61] Zlotnick, "Lowly Bards and Incomplete Lyres: Fanny Forrester and the Construction of a Working-Class Woman's Poetic Identity," 24.

He tunes his lyre where busy wheels are grinding,
  And flying straps are never, never still;
Where rigid toil the buoyant limbs is binding
  That fain would wander from the dusty mill.
He hears the carol of the country maiden—
  Oh, welcome fancy! real-like and sweet!
The children bound, with trailing grasses laden,
  And fling their treasures at the rhymester's feet!

And while their eyes grow round with baby wonder
  His toil-stained fingers 'mongst their tresses stray;
But, lo! the engine booms like angry thunder,
  And frights the sympathetic band away!
Spindle and bobbin fill their vacant places,
  And o'er great looms slight figures lowly stoop,
And weary shadows cross the girlish faces
  That like frail flowers o'er stagnant waters droop. (9-24)[62]

The bard defines his verses as a humble but valuable gift to factory women, who are conventionally represented as victims, sufferers whose ability to be aesthetically pleasing background figures is stunted by the need of wages. Susan Zlotnick rightly argues that Forrester's "The Lowly Bard" "directly and dramatically stages her concerns about class, gender, and poetry;" noting that the bard's "incomplete lyre" is a double gesture towards the poet's "inferiority to the 'mighty dead' of the English canon" and the fact that Forrester is an "incomplete" male, a "female poet who lacks the masculine pen/penis of authorship."[63] Zlotnick goes on to stress that Forrester's multi-faceted discussion of working-class femininity cannot "successfully pass [herself] off as a man" because "Forrester's emasculated male poet writes like a girl."[64] In other words, Forrester's "sympathy links both Forrester and her male persona to the expressive tradition of Victorian woman's poetry" that is essentially conventional in its representation of affect, nature, and women.[65] However, the male bard portrays these women as participating in factory labor, even as the bard describes them as natural, fragile maidens. The "country

[62] Fanny Forrester, "The Lowly Bard," *Ben Brierley's Journal*, November 1873, 265.
[63] Zlotnick, "Lowly Bards and Incomplete Lyres: Fanny Forrester and the Construction of a Working-Class Woman's Poetic Identity," 23.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.

maiden" (13) that the bard hears is another example of Forrester's particular rural fantasy intersecting the realities of urban factory life. The "engine [that] booms like angry thunder" (19) is a natural/artificial hybrid of industry and pastoral just as the factory women are both classed workers and refined ladies.

By writing as a male poet, factory women can embody the same spaces as bourgeois women; however, her masculinized voice also invokes discussions of what the nineteenth-century bard was, and who could embody that title. Daniel Karlin examines the shifting definition of the bard in his study *The Figure of the Singer* (2013) in which he claims that the nineteenth century witnessed a bardic figure that was "divided," its reputation vacillating between that of a revered "classical singer" and a voice "lost in a crowd of scribblers."[66] Much like the factory woman, the bard was a shifting identity that was debated between poets and critics from different classes and environments. In "The Lowly Bard," Forrester presents the possibility that the bard may be a title held by a working-class woman—even if she is not speaking as one—and that its remaining influence may be harnessed to change the popular perception of factory women. Significantly, however, "The Lowly Bard" opts to represent factory women as conventionally fragile, suffering creatures of beauty and virtue. Forrester's bard questions the gender hierarchy of poetic voice while simultaneously reinforcing conventional gender ideologies.

Even masking as a male poet, Forrester continues to subversively destabilize the boundaries between the rural and the urban, ideal bourgeois femininity and nineteenth-century wage-labor. Additionally, the "toil-stained fingers" (18) of the bard gesture toward the destabilization of the limits between the male bardic identity, the factory labor of the women he describes, and Forrester's own identity as a worker in a dye-factory. The blurred lines between the speaker and Forrester reaffirm the

[66] Daniel Karlin, *The Figure of the Singer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 22.

position of the male poetic voice as authoritative, and connect the physical labor of dye work with the ink-stained fingers that accompany writing. Ultimately, Forrester's adopted male persona in "The Lowly Bard" represents her concerted effort to elevate factory women, their labor, and their writing to the level of poetry, and indirectly allow women to hold—if only indirectly—the title of "bard."

The male poets in each of the above poems take control of the representation of the female, working-class characters who lack a voice and an identity outside of difficult factory labor, giving them a voice that carries social weight in the working-class world. These masculine perspectives paradoxically underscore the restrictive and two-dimensional representations of working-class women by actual male literary voices of the period, while reinscribing idealizations of bourgeois femininity. Free to move about the city with impunity, the working-class men in Forrester's poetry embody the freedom that working-class women are denied; however, they only highlight the limited options that working-class women face in courtship, labor, and vocation.

Poetry as Vocation and the Limits of Forrester's Pastoral

Of the dozens of Forrester's poems that appeared in *BBJ*, "Magdalen—A Tale of Christmas Eve" (1875) and "The Poet's Treasures" (1882) exemplify the way in which Forrester weaves the pastoral into the urban in order to provide both an escape from and critique of industrial life for her female, working-class readership. The former poem began an annual tradition of Yuletide themed verses for Forrester, but this inaugural verse contains the most provocative narrative and themes. Magdalen, is a "fallen woman" who is wandering alone on Christmas Eve, contemplating the loss of community and respect from her family:

> Like a shadow she glides through the long narrow street,
> The lamp's sickly rays shining down on her face;
> E'en the snow seems to sport with her poor, naked feet,
> While the mocking winds howl round the child of disgrace!
> How sad are those eyes that once brilliantly shone!

Not one glimmer remains of their old witching light;
Every dimple and smile from the young face have flown,
And the cheek once so blooming is wasted and white!

Those pale lips once trembled with laughter and song,
Fond fingers once toyed with that damp, tangled hair;
That shrinking form moved through the gay giddy throng,
The gayest, the brightest, the loveliest there!
Those weary feet merrily tripped to the dance,
And when evening was solemnly fading away,
With hope in her bosom and love in her glance,
She knelt at the little white altar to pray. (1-16)[67]

The title of the poem recalls archetypal narratives of the famously reformed prostitute Mary Magdalen whose position in God's favor and, more importantly, society was recouped after her repentance to Jesus and devotion to his ministry. By calling Magdalen a "child of disgrace" (4), Forrester underscores Magdalen's illicit sexuality. This interjection is even more abrupt for the imagery that precedes and follows its aesthetic intrusion. Magdalen has been reduced to a "shadow" (1) in the "sickly" (2) urban streets as her pitiful health is further impaired by her "poor, naked feet" (3), all of which is underscored by the beauty and youth that "have flown" (7) from her face. The disparity between the accusation of Magdalen's actions and the pitiful descriptions of her physicality throw into relief the lived experience of being considered a "fallen woman." In fact, other than her symbolic naming, Forrester makes no more mention of the nature of Magdalen's sexual transgression. The rest of the poem depicts Magdalen's attempts to regain the respect of her peers and her rural family, as well as how her exclusion from the traditional Christmas gathering has hurt her parents and siblings:

Does that fond mother think of her guilty child still,
As an innocent lamb lured away from the fold?
When the snow like a shroud wraps the neighbouring hill,
Does she picture her lost darling out in the cold?
When her aged eyes turn to the one vacant place,
Which the fire's ruddy blaze far too vividly shows,
Does it call to her fancy a white, pleading face,

[67] Fanny Forrester, "Magdalen--A Tale of Christmas Eve," *Ben Brierley's Journal*, December 1871, 297.

And a blighted young life ebbing fast to its close? (25-32)[68]

Described through the eyes of her mother, the family is as much a victim as Magdalen. Unlike Thomas Hood's unnamed sufferer in "The Bridge of Sighs" (1844) who is a two-dimensional figure crafted to inspire sympathy from philanthropists and reformers, Magdalen is a daughter and sister whose search for redemption through returning to her rural, family home is not possible—a statement about the harsh and irrevocable consequences facing working-class women should they step beyond the bounds of social propriety. Though the trope of the fallen woman is conventional in reform literature and bourgeois poetry alike—particularly in popular works such as Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth* (1853) and Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Jenny* (1870)—Forrester's continual gesture towards the structural causes and larger social consequences of Magdalen's ostracization is more singular. The verse places the blame for Magdalen's predicament on the social and environmental space of the industrial city which, she believes, propagates a cycle of illicit female desire, punishment, and suffering. As in "To Mary," Forrester attempts to remedy Magdalen's situation through an escape/return to the country. Magdalen's mother pictures her daughter lost in the winter landscape of the countryside, not the city, while Forrester takes pains to separate the desperation of Magdalen in the city from her lost contentment in her rural family home:

> Now, colder and colder the cruel winds blow,
> Displaying their might on that poor little form!
> Still she hurries along, and her wasted cheeks glow
> As bravely she faces the pitiless storm.
> On, on, o'er the moorland, so barren and wild,
> Now and then driven back by the keen cutting blast;
> Still those sweet bells keep calling the wandering child,
> Till she stands in her own native village at last! (33-40)[69]

[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.

Magdalen literally moves from the city to the country, a celebratory moment despite the remaining chilling climate and her continuing bodily suffering. The "poor little form" (34) braving the storm is both vulnerable and strong. Not stumbling towards a desperate suicide, Magdalen is attempting to physically and socially relocate herself back into the network from which her illicit behavior has excluded her. The pastoral, however, has become as harsh to Magdalen as the city with the wind and snow pushing her "On, on" (37). By having Magdalen die at the doorstep of her rural, village home, Forrester brings her fantasy return to the pastoral to its inevitable, unsuccessful conclusion: once labelled as an illicit woman—sexually or otherwise—Victorian typologies of appropriate femininity render these women eternally outside of the communities that provided them with an identity outside of their "crimes." Magdalen can no longer cross the threshold of her childhood home because she no longer ideologically exists as the dutiful daughter and sister. Living in the urban environment has irrevocably severed Magdalen from Forrester's interpretation of the familial and subjective space of rural, working-class life. As different as the representations of the lives and deaths of sexually illicit women are in Forrester's "Magdalen—A Tale of Christmas Eve" and Thomas Hood's "The Bridge of Sighs," each poem can only reenter the fallen woman into acceptable society through death. Forrester cannot create a representative space in which an urban prostitute can access social forgiveness and reacceptance of her social sins in her pastoral fantasy.

By the end of her career, Forrester claims that her poetry provides a temporary literary escape from the drudgery of working-class life and the tragedy of the life depicted in "Magdalen," if not a more material change to working women's environments and lives. From 1882, "The Poet's Treasures" discusses Forrester's motivations to write and share her poetry, as well as her belief that the natural world provides her with inspiration and social utility for her writing. In the poem, nature has appointed Forrester as its chosen urban bard to disseminate the beauty and freedom of the pastoral to the women who must labor in cities:

The warbling birds are my minstrels all,
  And they know that I love them well—
For I hasten forth when their voices call
  To forest or leafy dell—
Like roving gipsies they come and go,
  Capricious, and wild, and free—
And I sing to the children of evil and woe
  The songs the birds sing to me! (9-16)[70]

She admires the flocks of "roving gipsies" (45) for being "Capricious, and wild, and free" (46), rather than celebrating aspects of nature that reflect a peaceful, contemplative, and static environment. There are no poets lounging beneath trees, but rippling rivers and a cacophony of singing birds. As in "To Mary," Forrester is in a reciprocal relationship with the pastoral landscape, as it provides her with inspiration and beauty, while her resulting poetry serves to inspire the less fortunate. Her pastoral resists, yet also exists alongside, the human domestication and planning of industrial cities. This extends to her conception of space in the poem as she shifts the focus from her relationship with nature to the meaning of her poetry for her readers:

I sing to the maiden who toils all day
  In the heat of the dusty mill;
Of wagons laden with new-mown hay,
  Of meadow, and heath-crowned hill—
And I sing her such strains of the wild red rose
  That the tears to her young eyes start;
While her pulses thrill, and her pale cheek glows
  As bright as its glowing heart.

She sings my songs, with her falling hair
  Half shading her cheek's soft bloom—
And, oh! but the lilies are pure and fair
  That trail round her busy loom.
She can see the gleam of a cloudless sky
  Where only black wheels whirl round,
And she hears in a dream, while the shuttles fly,
  The waterfall's tinkling sound. (49-64)[71]

[70] Fanny Forrester, "The Poet's Treasures," *Ben Brierley's Journal*, January 14, 1882.
[71] Ibid.

Forrester overtly states that she is writing to working-class women laboring in urban factories. Her readership is depicted as trapped within the stifling mills where dust deadens their bodies and their minds. The "maidens" (49) whose beauty "glows" (55) are only illuminated by the flora and fauna that Forrester's rural poetry provides. It is here that Forrester penetrates the urban cityscape with pastoral images of the countryside. The "pure and fair" (51) flowers that blossom around the loom afford dynamic life within the highly mechanized and artificial space of the factory. Forrester's pastoral replaces the whirling of "black wheels" (54) with the "waterfall's tinkling sound" (56), employing idyllic nature imagery to blur the physical and imaginative boundaries of the factory complex. Considering Forrester's position in a dye-factory, even the word loom is a self-conscious choice that invokes the pastoral by suggesting preindustrial hand-weaving rather than the industrial machinery of the mill. Depicting the urban lives of the factory women as claustrophobic and ideologically imposing, Forrester provides a remedy that is located in her dream of the natural world as a corrective to the devastating conclusion of "Magdalen"—as imaginary and remote as Forrester's pastoral world is to the material factories in which she and the women reading her poetry labored.

Despite the empowering escape that Forrester views herself as offering to factory women, the way in which she describes these same women and the nature that is meant to inspire them is, on the surface, aesthetically conventional and socially conservative. The factory women are characterized as appropriate maidens, but continue to work at their looms—these verses attempt to marry an idealistic, bourgeois representation of femininity and the reality of working-class, industrial labor without privileging either. "The Poet's Treasures" is less an attempt at conveying how factory women could be seen as respectable, middle-class "Angels in the House," and more about how these women could be represented as subjective and dynamic in pastoral poetry, as well as how pastoral landscapes could be opportunities for traversing trans-class typologies of gender and space. Rhyming "bloom" (58) with "loom" (60) and "cloudless sky" (61) with "shuttles fly" (63), Forrester swings between the natural

and the industrial until the separation between the pastoral dreams of the factory girl and the machinery around her becomes indistinct. "The Poet's Treasures" self-consciously gestures towards the artificiality of its own landscape and representations, thereby calling into question restrictive and divisive representations of factory women. Why does the pastoral have to be far removed from the realities of urban life? Do factory women need to choose between bourgeois femininity and necessary wage-labor? Forrester's approach to these questions, though couched in conventional language, attempts to redefine the relationship between pastoral poetry, working-class women, and the natural world.

Conclusions

The poetry by Fanny Forrester that appeared in *BBJ* during the 1870s and 1880s redefined representations of gender and class in the pastoral genre, even as it reaffirmed the conventions of idyllic rural landscapes and authoritative male speakers. Forrester's rise to the status of "house poet" in the journal led to the reproduction of her poetry in a few other periodicals and magazines including *Eliza Cook's Journal*; however, her writing never earned her enough income to abandon factory labor and devote her time to poetry. Despite the brevity of her publishing career, Forrester represents a significant contribution to working-class women's poetics during the middling decades of the nineteenth-century. Her intersecting pastoral and urban spaces indicate a complexity alongside the assumed conformity of working-class women's periodical poetry, one that elicited direct responses from editors and readers of the newspaper in which her poems appeared.

Unlike Forrester, Scottish poet and power-loom operator Ellen Johnston had a more unusual path to newspaper poetry fame, one that led her to the publication of two editions of her collected poetry, multiple marriage proposals, and a devoted and interactive audience across working-class Scotland. In the following chapter, I examine Johnston's poetry, poetic correspondences, and brief

autobiography to illustrate the outspoken and frequently subversive political and social views she expresses in her poetry, despite her paradoxical desire to abandon public factory labor for wedded domesticity. The wide range of poems published by Forrester and Johnston represent an unusual opportunity for scholars to examine how working-class women's poetic voices developed different strategies across geographical and social environments, while consistently illustrating aspects of aesthetic and thematic subversion in their newspaper poetry.

Constructing "The Factory Girl": Ellen Johnston, Scottish Nationalism, and Working-Class Correspondence

She's coming, ye bards, see the banners are waving
  High on the towers of the famed Penny Post;
And her fair sister, Edith, bright welcomes is saving
  To greet the song-queen you have made Scotland's boast.

[…]

She's coming—the lost one, the worn, and the weary—
  Whose sorrowful songs bound your hearts in a spell;
She hath fled from your factory so dismal and dreary.
  And she's coming among you her genius to sell.

She's coming, ye bards, and whene're you behold her
  The impress of care you shall read in each look
Oh, pray that good fortune with smiles may enfold her.
  And bring her success in her now finished book.[1]

Ellen Johnston, a Scottish poet and power-loom operative, gained regional fame thanks to her numerous poems and verse conversations in several working-class newspapers across Scotland. The poetry she submitted to these publications resulted in a publication-by-subscription of two editions of her collected poetry and brief autobiography in 1867 and 1869. Unlike Fanny Forrester's poetry, many of Johnston's verses are overtly autobiographical and vary in genre and style depending on their subject and her intended audience. Writing explicitly as "The Factory Girl," her identity is always already predicated on her dually classed and gendered experiences; however, her strategy of self-representation shifts between casting herself as a member and poetic voice of the collective Scottish, politicized laboring classes, and constructing her life and writing within the framework of bourgeois femininity and domesticity.

The above stanzas from her 1867 poem "She's Coming, Ye Bards," for example, exemplify how Johnston privileges her gender above her class in order to advertise her upcoming volume of

[1] Ellen Johnston, "She's Coming, Ye Bards," *Penny Post*, November 9, 1867, 4.

poems. She announces her return to Glasgow from Dundee to her fellow "bards" who read and submit poetry to the *Penny Post*; yet, the only named poet who welcomes her is "Edith," a lower middle-class schoolteacher who conversed with Johnston via the *Penny Post* from 1866 to 1868. Rather than locating her poetic identity in a community of working-class poetic voices, Johnston, instead, emphasizes the approval and welcome of a female readership symbolized by her "fair sister" (3) poet. This approach firmly situates her authorial identity within the representational framework of the nineteenth-century "poetess" rather than the working-class, self-improving bard. Virginia Blain notes that the term "poetess" was an "unstable term" that took on "different coloration according to context" throughout the century, being assigned to female poets as a neutral indication of the poet's gender, a signifier of the anxiety surrounding the "feminization of literature in general," and an association of women poets with "amateur dabblers."[2] Johnston's lines, on the other hand, invoke a more empowering definition of the poetess based on her belief in a shared community of women readers and writers.

Even the commodification of her "genius to sell" (29) contributes to her self-construction as a professional poetess: her upcoming collection is the method by which she hopes to permanently flee "dismal and dreary" (28) factory work for the "good fortune" and "smiles" (36) she predicts will result from her becoming a household literary name. Ostensibly, Johnston's representation aligns with what Richard Salmon identifies as a myth of the "working-class writer's 'tragic' inability to develop his literary talent" which results in an "image of literary martyrdom firmly rooted in an earlier Romantic iconography of the poet."[3] Johnston, however, does not appeal to "narratives of autodidactic self-culture," but to narratives of melodramatic female romance. This is compounded by her claim that

[2] Virginia Blain, "Letitia Elizabeth Landon, Eliza Mary Hamilton, and the Genealogy of the Victorian Poetess," *Victorian Poetry* 33, no. 1 (1995): 31–32, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40002517.
[3] Richard Salmon, *The Formation of the Victorian Literary Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 137.

she is the "lost one, the worn, and the weary" (25) in the vein of nineteenth-century melodrama. Combined with her appeal for readers to purchase a personal copy of her collection, Johnston's identity is located within distinctly feminine, domestic discourses of Victorian self-representation and literary professionalism. "She's Coming Ye Bards" showcases Johnston consciously underscoring her identity as a nineteenth-century woman by deemphasizing her working-class experiences—a representational strategy she employs throughout her poetry.

Building from the work of Judith Rosen, I argue that Johnston's shifting poetic identity demonstrates a way by which working-class women poets could attempt to reconfigure dominant modes of class and gender representation even as they wrote within these frameworks. Johnston's poetry challenges prevailing assumptions about the conformity of working-class women's texts to a particular genre or poetic voice, while also illustrating the extent to which the working-class periodical enabled women poets to carve out a physical and literary space for their writing. My reading of Johnston's self-representational strategies challenges Florence S. Boos's argument that Johnston refuses "to separate the identities of woman, worker and poet."[4] I illustrate how Johnston strategically privileges individual aspects of her social experiences as a way of creating a poetic identity that fits into preexisting structures of Victorian representation. Though she calls herself "The Factory Girl," Johnston resists or is unable to construct an authorial voice that simultaneously attends to the class and gender identity of this moniker. Emphasizing either "factory" or "girl," Johnston's poetry is built upon an identity that is as disjointed as it is appealing to multiple, diverse readerships.

I begin by examining the poetry in which Johnston associates her representation with ideologies of bourgeois womanhood. Working-class women writing their experiences as underprivileged extensions of middle-class femininity and domesticity has been discussed in recent

[4] Florence Boos, "The 'Queen' of the 'Far-Famed Penny Post': 'The Factory Girl Poet' and Her Audience," *Women's Writing* 10, no. 3 (2003): 507.

analyses by scholars such as Susan Zlotnick, Florence Boos, and Julia Swindells; however, I read Johnston's desires to claim middle-class social respectability as always already complicated by her frequent references to her illegitimate daughter, and outspoken critiques of working-class domesticity. I will show how the poetry in which Johnston diminishes her class status in favor of her gender identity embodies the dissonances between bourgeois gender ideals and the material realities of working-class women who write, and the ways in which Johnston attempts to negotiate these ideologies through her autobiographical portrayals of romance, marriage, friendship and motherhood.

I, then, examine the poetry in which I identify Johnston as speaking from a particularly political, classed perspective. There are fewer of these poems, and many of them have yet to be discussed by scholars. Their wide ranging topics include Giuseppe Garibaldi and the Risorgimento, women's factory labor, and the qualities desired in a factory owner or overseer. In order to portray an authoritative position on international and local politics, as well as particularly Scottish intra-class issues of labor and society, Johnston repeatedly asserts her membership in a collective—primarily urban and industrial—working-class, and downplays her gender identity. In these political poems, Johnston speaks as a celebrated and classed bard whose familiarity with factory labor and working-class culture is seemingly enough validation to override any perceived deficiency of gender. However, this validation is only achieved by subsuming the gendered experiences of women into a generalized working-class. Ultimately, I argue that Johnston's writing reveals how working-class women navigated and exploited their liminal position in their poetry, and were as central as their male and bourgeois women counterparts in shaping Victorian poetics, social ideology, and professional writing. Variously privileging if not dividing her multi-faceted identity, Johnston creates a poetic self that is as adaptable and resonating as it is generic and contradictory.

Ellen Johnston

Much of the biographical information known about Johnston is made available through the brief autobiography that accompanied both editions of her collected poems. While a large portion of this information cannot be historically verified—or is blatant exaggeration—the *way* in which she constructs her personal, poetic, and labor history is crucial to understanding her strategies of self-representation in her published poetry. Born in Hamilton circa 1835, Johnston was the daughter of a stonemason and milliner. Her father emigrated to America early in Johnston's life and, assuming his death, Johnston's mother married a factory tenter during Johnston's childhood. In the opening paragraphs of her autobiography, Johnston asks her readers to consider her particular social experiences before passing judgement on the events she will relate:

> I beg also to remind my readers that whatever my notions may have been, whether good, bad, or indifferent, that they were the results of instincts derived from the Creator, through the medium of my parents, and the character formed for me by the unavoidable influence of the TIME and COUNTRY of my BIRTH, and also by the varied conditions of life impressing themselves on my highly susceptible and sympathetic natures—physical, intellectual, and moral.[5]

These statements are not uncommon for women's autobiography in the mid nineteenth-century, but, the authors of these autobiographies are typically middle-class. Introductions such as the one from Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna's 1841 *Personal Recollections* also caution the autobiography's future readership:

> I have given my best consideration to the arguments by which you support the demand for a few notices of events connected with my personal recollections of the past.[6]

Each author claims that they reluctantly provide their biographical narratives at the behest of their reader. Johnston's and Tonna's statements attempt to mediate how readers will react to both the content of their lifewriting and these authors' belief in its literary use or importance. The similarities

[5] Johnston, *Autobiography, Poems and Songs of Ellen Johnston, the "Factory Girl,"* 4.
[6] Charlote Elizabeth Tonna, *Personal Recollections* (London: R. B. Seeley & W. Burnside, 1841), 1.

between Johnston's and Tonna's prefaces is significant because it speaks to the middle-class literary aspirations of Johnston. Though Johnston most likely never read Tonna's *Personal Recollections*, the autobiography of the "Factory Girl" accurately reflects Tonna's particularly bourgeois anxiety over the act of women's—particularly autobiographical—writing. In *Representing Femininity*, Mary Jean Corbett suggests that the anxiety of middle-class women autobiographers was rooted in concern about the inherently public act of publishing:

> Because nineteenth-century middle-class women derive their primary social and cultural self-definitions from their identification with the private realm, for writers to maintain their placement in that realm even as they symbolically move outside it through writing requires, above all, tact.[7]

Johnston's concern in preempting criticism concerning her writing and her choices seems unnecessary considering her working-class status. The "time and country" into which Johnston was born was a working-class home in a poor neighborhood of Hamilton—a fact she doesn't attempt to diminish as she titles the majority of the autobiography "How I Became the Factory Girl."[8]

David Vincent claims that working-class autobiographers reinforced the idea that "the actions of any individual could only be understood within the context of the social structure in which he lived," as this claim justified both their desire to record their lives, as well as any aberrant or unorthodox ideologies and experiences that these working-class authors relate.[9] By clinging to the peculiarity of their social class, working-class autobiographers—according to Vincent—attempt to confront potential criticism from non-working-class readers, and assert the exceptionality and importance of their class culture. However, Vincent analyses male autobiographers almost exclusively, and notes how these men's political and social activism served as the primary motivation of their lifewriting at mid-century. I argue that Johnston echoes the language of bourgeois women

[7] Mary Jean Corbett, *Representing Femininity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 58.
[8] Johnston, *Autobiography, Poems and Songs of Ellen Johnston, the "Factory Girl,"* 4.
[9] David Vincent, *Bread, Knowledge & Freedom* (London & New York: Methuen, 1981), 24.

autobiographers in order to distance herself from her working-class identity and market herself as a tragically situated, respectable Victorian woman. Johnston's inclusion of her experiences with labor and poverty, therefore, is not a show of class solidarity, but a way in which she can validate her more transgressive actions—such as her illegitimate daughter and industrial labor—that would have otherwise defined her as inexcusably immoral, an inappropriate poet and model of self-stated "sympathetic natures—physical, intellectual, and moral." [10]

This project of identity construction is encapsulated by Johnston's depictions of her mother. She states that her mother Mary, née Bilsland, married her father when she was eighteen, but gallantly refused to follow her father to America:

> But when all the relatives and friends had assembled at the Broomielaw to give the farewell kiss and shake of the hand before going on board, my mother determined not to proceed, pressed me fondly to her bosom, exclaiming—'I cannot, will not go, my child would die on the way;' and taking an affectionate farewell with my father, he proceeded on the voyage, and my mother fled from the scene and returned to her father's house, where she remained for some years, and supported herself by dressmaking and millinery.[11]

Johnston presents a scene of drama and romance—the impending sea journey, lovers parted, the uncertain future of a vulnerable child. Johnston's mother is a figure of self-sacrificing motherhood, a working-class embodiment of fetishized narratives of Victorian maternity. As the narrative progresses, however, Johnston describes a fraught relationship with her mother who failed to protect her daughter from her stepfather's abuse. After attempting to run away from home, Johnston describes her involuntary return to her parents:

> [He] compelled me to go with him to my mother, who first questioned me as to the cause of absconding, and then beat me till I felt as if my brain were on fire; but still I kept the secret in my own bosom. But had I only foreseen the wretched misery I was heaping upon my own head—had I heard the dreadful constructions the world was putting on my movements—had I seen the shroud of shame and sorrow I was weaving

[10] Johnston, *Autobiography, Poems and Songs of Ellen Johnston, the "Factory Girl,"* 4.
[11] Ibid., 5.

> around myself, I should 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.[12]

Though never explicitly stated, the "mystery" that Johnston withheld from her mother was her stepfather's sexual abuse. Unlike the mother who refused to take her child to America for fear of its death, Johnston's mother is now depicted as an enabler to her daughter's abuse, and an abuser in her own right. The transformation of her mother from heroine to villain establishes Johnston's identity as a product of acceptable femininity, and then highlights the tragic context of the poet's childhood.

The conflicting representations of her mother serve as counterpoints to Johnston's own desire to simultaneously embody the competing identities of domestic nineteenth-century woman and suffering, romantic heroine. Her self-stated love of Romantic writers such as Robert Burns and Sir Walter Scott allows her to represent herself as a mainstream literary heroine outside of a middle-class experience, transforming her childhood from a random series of traumatic events into a progressive narrative of melodramatic femininity and romantic subjectivity. Her early factory labor and unhappiness in her parents' home are cast as incidents that define her identity and set her up for future poetic success and emotional happiness—a working-class Jane Eyre or Aurora Leigh. This identity equally foregrounds the subjects and aesthetics of Johnston's poetry. Marianne van Remoortel claims that Romantic poets "embraced birth and maternity as master tropes of creativity;" in Johnston's case, her physical birth from her mother's womb and her "birth" as a poet intersect. Her complicated relationship with her mother is represented as both a nurturing and harming force that reflects the relationship between factory and literary labor that she depicts in her poetry.

Despite her emphasis on her mother's relationship, Johnston also describes her biological father despite the fact she never met him in real life. She claims that her stonemason father, James

[12] Ibid., 8–9.

Johnston, was a native of Dundee who allegedly helped to construct great houses for wealthy Scottish nobles. Julia Swindells alleges that Johnston's inclusion of her father's occupation reflects a "preoccupation with class" that reflects the practice of middle-class, male autobiographers.[13] However, Johnston stresses her father's innate literary skill more than his wage-labor. Johnston states that her father distinguished himself as a poet to the Duke of Hamilton—who "used to call [her father] Lord Byron" and took "special notice" of infant Ellen—when helping to construct the northern wing of the Duke's palace.[14] After finishing his contract with the duke, Johnston's father sought to "publish a volume of his poetical works" in America, being of a "somewhat ambitious, proud, and independent" disposition "with a strong desire to become a teacher."[15] Whether or not these claims are true, Johnston's inclusion of a poetically talented father indicates a desire to locate herself within a tradition of literary skill, presenting her as a natural heir to writing worthy of bourgeois patronage—even if that patronage recalls an older, aristocratic form of literary patronage. Furthermore, by portraying her father as a skilled worker and a talented poet, Johnston legitimates working-class wage-labor as a space of literary creation—she embeds both writing and wage-labor into typologies of feminine respectability.

After working in various factories for the majority of her adolescence, Johnston gave birth to a daughter on September 14, 1852 to a man she claims seduced then abandoned her before the child's birth. The mere inclusion of the circumstances of her motherhood are surprising. By confronting the circumstances of her motherhood, Johnston reframes her illicit sexual activity as an exercise in devoted Victorian motherhood. For example, Johnston moved to Belfast for work and her health, leaving her daughter, Mary Achenvole, under the guardianship of her mother for periods of several years. As I

[13] Julia Swindells, *Victorian Writing and Working Women* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1985), 126.
[14] Johnston, *Autobiography, Poems and Songs of Ellen Johnston, the "Factory Girl,"* 4.
[15] Ibid.

discuss later, Johnston viewed her maternal role as an empowering, subjectivity forming experience that gave her life and writing purpose. In reality, it must have been difficult for Johnston to support her daughter as, by 1861, she was also supporting her ailing mother. At one point, Johnston's health became so poor and her family's income so meager that she wrote a poem to a local factory owner to petition for emergency funds.[16] By refusing to be ashamed of her daughter, and willing to migrate in search of wage-labor to provide for her family, Johnston attempts to overdetermine readings of her behavior as virtuous and feminine rather than immoral and unorthodox.

Moving to Dundee to be closer to her family and seek work in the booming jute industry, Johnston began to submit poems to the *Dundee, Perth, and Forfar People's Journal* (hereafter, *The People's Journal*). Though she claims to have had poems published in multiple newspapers such as *The Glasgow Examiner* as early as 1854, Johnston began her first extended relationship with a newspaper in *The People's Journal* in 1862.[17] While in Dundee, Johnston was fired from Verdant Works jute factory for alleged immoral behavior, and she successfully took the factory to court after they refused her severance pay. [18] Around 1865, Johnston returned to Glasgow and shifted her place of publication from *The People's Journal* to the *Penny Post*, then under the editorship of Alexander Campbell. Johnston garnered so much popularity that Campbell patronized the publication of an edition of Johnston's collected poetry and poetic conversations in 1867. The collection gained enough subscribers that, which a few alterations, it went to a second edition in 1869.[19]

---

[16] Johnston claims to have written "An Address to Napiers' Dockyard, Lancefield, Finnieston," addressed it to Robert Napier, Esq., and forwarded it to him in Paris. She then alleges that Napier, having secured her good reputation from an employer, gifted Johnston ten pounds. Ibid., 12.
[17] Ibid., 11.
[18] Johnston claims she was fired because of misrepresentations brought forth by female coworkers jealous of her poetic skill. This proved to be a defining point in Johnston's material life and literary career, and I return to its impact when discussing her poetry later in the chapter.
[19] These alterations included changing the wording of certain titles and rephrasing certain sections of her autobiography, points I explore when the texts arise in my discussion of her poetry.

Johnston's depictions of her literary career are equally concerned with presenting her as a successful and respectable "poetess," one who has overcome the limitations of poverty rather than been defined by them:

> It is the favour and fame of the poetic gift bestowed on me by nature's God that has brought on me the envy of the ignorant, for the enlightened classes of both sexes of factory workers love and admire me for my humble poetic effusions, so far as they have been placed before the public, but I merely mention this to clear away any doubt that may possibly arise in the mind of any of my readers.[20]

Bravado and self-effacement compete in this statement in these statements as she claims that she is gifted amongst all of her factory peers, but is only successful thanks to God and the positive responses of her readers. As in her introductory statements, Johnston states her capability as a writer while also being cautious of the public nature of her writing and, by extension, her public identity. She is more concerned with her representation as a woman, rather than any limitations placed upon her by her class background such as her lack of formal education.

Despite the moderate success of her published collections and her continued status as a "house poet" of the *Penny Post*, Johnston never achieved enough commercial success as a poet to leave factory labor. Her health declined rapidly in the late 1860s and early 1870s and, though the exact circumstances surrounding her death are unknown, it is thought that she died in Glasgow circa 1873. Her identification as "The Factory Girl" poet in her autobiography is overwhelmingly constructed around ideologies of women's social and literary respectability rather than industrial wage-labor or working-class self-improvement. Though her account illustrates her transformation into "The Factory Girl," that persona is less a voice for the particular experiences and concerns of the working-class, and more a figure of romance and gendered poetic development—wage-labor and working-class status are plot devices in her larger project of poetic subjectivity-building in the brief *bildungsroman* of her

[20] Ibid., 14–15.

autobiography. The adaptability of Johnston's identity as "The Factory Girl" is as exemplified in her autobiography as it is in her newspaper and volume poetry. In the following sections, I examine how she shifts between privileging her class and her gender in her poetry, creating a divide between the overtly political, class-based poems, and verses containing more sentimental and domestic themes. I illustrate how such a malleable poetic identity is reflected in and embodied by the thematic and aesthetic forms displayed throughout her poetry, and what this strategy of self-representation indicates about the pathways to subjectivity and authorship for working-class women writers during the mid-century.

The "Girl" in "The Factory Girl": Johnston on Femininity, Domesticity, Romance, and Women's writing

Much of Johnston's published poetry features non-industrial themes such as dedications to her daughter, comments on the duties of female family and friendship, and semi-autobiographical depictions of her romantic relationships. Factory labor is less emphasized or entirely omitted in these poems, as Johnston seeks to align her experiences as an unmarried, working-class mother and poet with middle-class ideals of femininity, domesticity, and women's writing. Of the little in-depth scholarly work that has been done on Johnston's poetry, the ways in which she represents and reconfigures Victorian, bourgeois representational frameworks are the most discussed aspects of her work. Scholars such as Susan Zlotnick, Florence S. Boos, Julia Swindells, and Judith Rosen view Johnston's non-industrial poetry as an attempt to claim "the right to voice both private emotion and social critique," and reflect a "restless and troubled burden" of her identity within her poems.[21] These evaluations of Johnston's poetry assume that nineteenth-century sentimentalism represents an "anti-individualist ethos that emphasizes connective over autonomous relations" rather than a mode of

[21] Rosen, "Class and Poetic Communities: The Works of Ellen Johnston, 'The Factory Girl,'" 208; Boos, "The 'Queen' of the 'Far-Famed Penny Post': 'The Factory Girl Poet' and Her Audience," 521.

subjectivity creation.[22] Alternatively, Elizabeth Maddock Dillon has traced how modes of sentimental writing in nineteenth-century America represented a way in which women authors attempted to "move from felt experience in the material world to the universalizing claims of human rights and freedom," finding a community of supportive, like-minded readers and writers with which to share representational strategies and political opinions.[23] I explore how Johnston shifts the form and genre of her poetry to portray different models of Victorian femininity—from dedicated daughter to scorned woman. These generic shifts signpost how Johnston desires to be perceived by her readers in each individual poem, privileging particular gender representations in order to be read as a "successful" or appropriate embodiment of these social identities. For Johnston, sentimental modes of writing and representation enable her to cast her working-class experiences within middle-class ideologies of women's authorship and lived experience.

Perhaps the most surprising identity that Johnston discusses in her autobiography and her poetry is her role as a mother. As I previously mentioned, Johnston became an unwed mother to a daughter in 1852 when she was around seventeen years old, claiming to have been abandoned by a man who agreed to marry her and support her and their daughter. When relating this in her autobiography, Johnston quotes two stanzas of "When lovely woman stoops to folly" from Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766). The lines claim that women are ignorant of men's carnal ulterior motives and, should a woman become pregnant from an affair, "she must hide her shame from every eye" and "die."[24] Johnston's knowledge of the text is unsurprising as the book went through several editions throughout the nineteenth-century, and was alluded to in such popular

[22] Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, "Sentimental Aesthetics," *American Literature* 76, no. 3 (2004): 498. In particular, Dillon points to the work of Marianne Noble and Mary Louise Kete whose analyses of American women's letter-writing and representations of domesticity accentuate the communal aspects of sentimental writing, claiming that it undermines the creation of an autonomous self-representation and authorial identity for the individual, writing woman.
[23] Ibid., 500.
[24] Oliver Goldsmith, *Th Vicar of Wakefield* (London: R. Collins, 1766), chap. xxiv.

nineteenth-century novels as Jane Austen's *Emma* (1815), Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield* (1849), and Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* (1853). However, the response that Johnston provides to Goldsmith's text is unexpected in its frank opposition of the poem's advice for "fallen" women:

> 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 realized by becoming the mother of a lovely daughter on the 14th of September, 1852.[25]

Rather than frame her extramarital motherhood in terms of guilt or shame, Johnston interprets the situation as an opportunity for her to give and receive unconditional love and approval. Susan Zlotnick argues that Johnston "rejoices in the motherhood that brands her a fallen woman" as a strategy of "finding power and a transformational energy in her emancipation from the constraints of Victorian womanhood."[26] I, however, read Johnston's celebration of her maternity as a method by which she can more closely align her representation with middle-class values.

Her poem, "A Mother's Love," draws attention to the illicit sexual act that led her to become pregnant, to quickly overshadow her transgression with assertions about the sincerity of her devotion to her daughter.[27] The circumstances of the poem's composition parallel Robert Burns's "Welcome to a Bastard Wean" (ca. 1785). As in Burns' lines to his daughter, Johnston does not evade the social disapproval surrounding Mary's birth; however, the emphasis in Burns' poem is placed on his bold disregard for "An old wife's tongue" (11).[28] Burns' sestets, written in Scots, playfully criticize people's disdain of illegitimate children, and assertively promise that his daughter will be publicly claimed by her father. He places particular emphasis on his commitment to his daughter receiving the social privileges of education and financial support of any legitimate child, a concern that reflects an anxiety

[25] Johnston, *Autobiography, Poems and Songs of Ellen Johnston, the "Factory Girl,"* 11.
[26] Zlotnick, *Women, Writing, and the Industrial Revolution*, 218.
[27] In the 1867 edition of her collection, Johnston postscripts that she wrote the poem in 1858, but I have been unable to locate the poem in a newspaper setting.
[28] Robert Burns, *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*, ed. Thomas Duncan (Glasgow: Thomas Duncan, 1801), l. 11. Burns' published featured the poem under the title "Address to an Illegitimate Child."

over class limitations of education and social mobility. Johnston, on the other hand, writes in Standard English, and underscores the emotional effect that having a child has brought to her life:

> I love thee, I love thee, and six years hath now fled
> Since first on my bosom I pillow'd thy head;
> Since I first did behold thee in sorrow and sin;
> Thou sweet offspring of false love—my Mary Achin.
>
> […]
>
> I love thee, I love thee, thy beauty and youth
> Are spotless and pure as the fountain of truth;
> Thou'rt my star in the night, till daybreak begin,
> And my sunshine by noontide—my Mary Achin.
>
> […]
>
> I love thee, I love thee, though now far away
> Thou'rt nearer and dearer to me every day;
> Would they give me my choice—a nation to win—
> I would not exchange with my Mary Achin. (4-8, 17-20, 29-32)[29]

In content as well as form, "A Mother's Love" actively recasts Johnston's illegitimate child as an opportunity for her to incorporate her experiences into a larger narrative of idealized Victorian motherhood. Several lines of the poem are constructed around ambiphrachs such as "I love thee" with a concluding iamb—frequently, the name of her daughter, Mary Achin. Much of the imagery and language that Johnston employs also invoke the tradition of sentimental poetry that celebrated the loving, domesticated mother, such as Felicia Heman's "The Domestic Affections" (1808).[30] Johnston is consumed by her love for her daughter who is her "star in the night" (19) and "sunshine by noontide" (20). Johnston's rhythm accentuates controversial references to her illicit sexual activity

[29] Ellen Johnston, "A Mother's Love," in *Autobiography, Poems and Songs of Ellen Johnston, the "Factory Girl,"* ed. Alexander Campbell (Glasgow: William Love, 1867), 44–45.

[30] Hemans's lengthy poem about feminine domestic duty regardless of trials such as war is highly political, but nevertheless depicts a relatively stable middle-class family where the married woman serves as the moral figurehead. Felicia Dorothea Browne (Hemans), "The Domestic Affections," in *Domestic Affections, and Other Poems* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1812).

such as "false love" (8), "and sin" (3) and "of truth" (18). These stressed iambs constitute a type of moral progression for Johnston whose confession to engaging in extramarital sex transforms into an eternal love that is comparable to the love of a nation by the poem's conclusion.

Proclaiming that she would rather have her daughter than "a nation to win" (31), Johnston's final statement of her commitment to motherhood participates in a larger narrative of British politicized maternity in which the figure of the mother was perceived to be the caretaker of an empire of the home, a domestic existence that Johnston could not reasonably attain because of her class status. Her insistence, therefore, that her unwed motherhood is redeemed by her devout attention to her daughter is an effort to represent herself as an embodiment of Hemans's domestic woman who "dwells, unruffled in her bow'r of rest, / *Her* empire, home !—her throne, affection's breast!."[31]

Rather than the product of a sexual affair, Johnston describes Mary as the "sweet offspring of false love" (8) who is "spotless and pure" (17) despite her mother first viewing her through her own "sorrow and sin" (7). The pairing of "spotless and pure" (18) and "nearer and dearer" (30) compound Johnston's desire to assure her readers that, through her maternal devotion, she and her daughter are free of the social shame that accompanied mothers and their illegitimate children. "A Mother's Love" privileges the woman as loving mother, outside of class structures or moral conventions, leaving the reader sympathetic to Johnston's affection for her daughter and, significantly, the position of social shame that women of any class could face in the same situation. The subversion of an unmarried, working-class mother harnessing the conventions of sentimental, middle-class women's poetry is noteworthy, and may serve to explain why this particular poem did not, to my knowledge, appear in the periodical press. Ultimately, Johnston does not negate her classed experiences, but restrains them to claim membership in a community of bourgeois Victorian femininity.

[31] Felicia Dorothea Browne Hemans, *The Domestic Affections, and Other Poems* (London: T Cadell & W. Davies, 1812), 150.

While portraying her unorthodox circumstances of motherhood as an entrance into bourgeois respectability in "A Mother's Love," Johnston endeavors to define the behaviors of a "good mother" through a sentimental poem about her love for her own mother, Mary. Appearing second in her collected poems, "My Mother" commends the dedication and affection shown by her mother:

> She is—Oh! can I name her with a name—
> Too good, too great, too honoured for her worth;
> What do I own that she dare not claim?
> What gives me pleasure, fills her soul with mirth.
>
> […]
>
> She is—Oh! what is she? One that hath borne
> Trials and sorrows no language can express;
> Still she looks fresh as summer's flowery morn,
> Although her cup overflows with bitterness.
>
> She is—Oh! what is she? One that if dead,
> I might search the world and find no other
> That could a radiance o'er this bosom spread
> Like her that gave me birth—my loving mother. (1-4, 9-16)[32]

The numerous hyphens, exclamation marks, and enjambments prevent a smooth reading of the poem, visually isolating Johnston's questions from their answers. According to the poem, Johnston's mother was a paragon of beauty, grace, and domestic care. However, the poet's recurrent questioning of what her mother is coupled with her pointed inability to "name her with a name" (1) reveals the tensions between the poem's sentimental genre and Johnston's real-life experiences of her mother's parenting. The phrasing of "What do I own that she dare not claim?" is almost accusatory, undercutting the claim in the following line that her mother rejoices in her daughter's happiness. Outside of the poem, Johnston's mother did literally lay claim to the guardianship of Johnston's daughter, increasing the impact of the line.

[32] Ellen Johnston, "My Mother," in *Autobiography, Poems and Songs of Ellen Johnston, the "Factory Girl,"* ed. Alexander Campbell (Glasgow: William Love, 1867), 12.

Perhaps the most materially revealing lines, the third stanza references the financial and social hardships of her mother's life. However, the language suggests emotional struggles rather than material ones, as if Johnston is attempting to filter her actual experiences with her mother through more conventional, bourgeois ideals of a mother-daughter relationship. The poem's final stanza imagines the tragedy of her mother's death, a final, melodramatic commitment to her mother's goodness and importance in the poet's life. Yet, despite its laudatory final two lines, the reader is left unsettled by the dark suggestions of mortality, social struggle, and filial tension. Johnston's unstable history with her mother in real-life has resulted in a dedicatory poem that interrogates who could embody the figure of respectable motherhood, but only achieves this by evading depictions of working-class experiences while appealing to trans-class representations of gendered affect. I read "My Mother" as an exercise in grounding Johnston's familial history within dominant frameworks of Victorian, bourgeois representation, regardless of the authenticity of the mother figure she creates.

In many ways, "My Mother" presents a set of guidelines for the proper behavior for female family members: devoted interest and self-sacrifice for the benefit of your kin's welfare. Where the mother figure in "My Mother" is a successful embodiment of this role, Johnston's aunt in the autobiographical "Aunt Phemie" is a failure to acceptably perform these acts. The poem first appeared in the *Penny Post* on July 8, 1865, and was included in both editions of the poet's published collection.[33] In her autobiography, Johnston claims that she journeyed to her aunt's home in Dundee following her mother's death in 1861, noting that she had always been a favorite of this relation since she was a girl.[34] Despite this assumed family support, she notes that her time in Dundee was marked with financial and social turmoil, and she was unable to find consistent work or shelter for extended periods

[33] I quote from the version in Johnston's collected poems when necessary, as the extant copy of the *Penny Post* original is damaged. The variations between the two are primarily spelling alterations (e.g. "beguil'd" in the original becomes "beguiled" in her collected poems). The few more substantial alterations, I discuss in my analysis of the poem.
[34] Johnston, *Autobiography, Poems and Songs of Ellen Johnston, the "Factory Girl,"* 14.

of time. In the poem, Johnston explains that her aunt denied her assistance because of her status as a "fallen woman:"

> 'Twas well my future fate was veil'd from youth's bright golden view;
> I had the name of many friends, yet *friends* I had but few;
> For those that measured all my faults, they measured not my Wrongs.
> I've wept in secret solitude whilst others sung my songs.
>
> […]
>
> And Heaven alone can only tell my hardships in that land;
> Many a time I've passed thy door whilst thou at it did'st stand;
> When I was weary wandering, friendless, cold, and weak,
> Oh God! I've passed my own aunt by, yet could not, dare not speak.
>
> […]
>
> Dear aunt, thy heart is changed now—some spell has thee be-guil'd,
> Or thou wouldst ne'er have turned thy back upon thy brother's child;
> For couldst thou think as I have thought, and feel as I have felt,
> Yea, though thy heart was adamantine, my name that heart might Melt. (28-31, 36-39, 44-7) [35]

Executed in fourteeners, the poem invokes a tradition of sung, plebian poetry, making its form recognizable to *Penny Post* readers. The iambic feet are melodic, propelling the reader through the depictions of Johnston's suffering. Additionally, it reflects the more deliberately literary ballads of Romantic poets such as William Wordsworth, an effort that—as Kirstie Blair's examination of working-class newspaper poetry has shown—embodied the desires of periodical editors for "ideally short, lyrical […], harmonious, musical, and formally conservative" submissions.[36] The sentimental subject of the poem was also attractive to periodical editors whose interest in promoting more

[35] Ellen Johnston, "To My Aunt Phemie," *Penny Post*, July 8, 1865, 1.
[36] Blair, "'A Very Poetical Town': Newspaper Poetry and the Working-Class Poet in Victorian Dundee," 99.

"Parnassian" and less overtly political reform poetry in the post-Chartist period was pronounced, if not ubiquitous.

The overall content of the poem is concerned with representations of gender rather than class. Though Johnston directly refers to the classed experiences of being unemployed and homeless, her choice to include these descriptions serves to increase her gendered criticism of Aunt Phemie rather than speak to urban experiences of a female, working-class writer. Johnston's use of enjambment in lines twenty-eight and thirty, for example, force the reader to dwell on single word lines, and embody the poet's claim that her years in Dundee were marked by "misrepresentations" and "Wrongs" (30) that damaged society's "view" (28) of her as a woman.[37] The jarring isolation of the truncated lines is compounded by the multiple depictions of Johnston being within sight of the familial security that her aunt represented, but unable to enjoy it due to her aunt's prejudice.

The overarching message of the poem is that Aunt Phemie has failed in her performance as a mother figure. Her "haughty scorn" (49) has replaced a sense of duty to keep Johnston and her young daughter off the Dundee streets, a transformation that Johnston has attributed to her aunt's enjoyment of a "flowing plenty" (17) provided by an advantageous marriage. Even though Ellen Ross has gestured towards the important links "between women and their kin and neighbours" in urban, working-class areas, Johnston emotionally appeals to her aunt as a fellow woman rather than as a downtrodden member of the working-class.[38] The poem exhibits—what Sonya Andermahr has noted—a feature of the middle-class "family melodrama" as it "exploits women's vulnerability as mothers and their anxieties around mother."[39] Johnston views Phemie's move into a more comfortable

[37] Johnston, *Autobiography, Poems and Songs of Ellen Johnston, the "Factory Girl,"* 10.
[38] Ellen Ross, "Survival Networks : Women's Neighbourhood Sharing in London before World War I," *History Workshop*, no. 15 (1983): 5, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4288457.
[39] Sonya Andermahr, "Mourning, Melancholia and Melodrama in Contemporary Women's Grief Fiction: Kim Edwards's The Memory Keeper's Daughter," *Hecate* 31, no. 1 (2011): 27.

class position as the reason why she has abandoned her socially ostracized niece, a claim that implies dissonances between bourgeois standards of respectable femininity and the realities of working-class life. Johnston's depictions of working-class caregiving blend conventional representations of bourgeois motherhood into working-class experiences like urban poverty, unemployment, and domestic abuse, but do so by positioning gender as the primary framework for subjectivity-making.

In all of the poems in which Johnston directly discusses motherhood, depictions of and references to her and her family's working-class contexts are comparatively limited to discussions of her as a domestic mother. However, a number of poems privilege different facets of Victorian femininity—namely, romantic love and marriage. Johnston characterizes female desire, abandonment, and matrimony in ways that are contradictory, but still align her with dominant, bourgeois frameworks of gender representation. In "The Maniac of Green Wood," Johnston narrates the story of a girl whom she claimed to know as a child. The young girl, once free-spirited and innocent, falls in love with a rake who abandons her. By the poem's end, the unnamed woman has fled to the local woods and, in her despair, succumbs to madness and dies:

> Then I saw her when in womanhood,
> A fair and lovely flower;
> She sat alone in yon greenwood,
> Beneath a shaded bower.
>
> And she seemed as she was musing
> On some fair and lovely youth;
> All his vows her thoughts confusing—
> Whether they were false or truth.
>
> […]
>
> Then I heard her weeping sadly
> Within that same greenwood
> Where I heard her singing gladly
> In days of her childhood.
>
> […]

Poor girl! she was unshielded
From the spoiler's perjury;
To a villain false she yielded—
Now a maniac wild was she. (37-44, 53-6, 65-8)[40]

Written in twenty-six quatrains, the poem is one of the longest included in Johnston's collected poetry, but was not—to my knowledge—published in a Scottish newspaper. The events that transformed the carefree young woman into the tragic "maniac" closely match those that Johnston describes of her own history in her autobiography: a pleasurable childhood, passionate romance, betrayal, and social ostracization. The quatrains primarily are in trochaic tetrameter; however, the second and fourth lines of each quatrain vary from headless trochaic tetrameter, to iambic trimeter, and back to trochaic tetrameter. The metrical variation of the alternating lines echoes the lack of control that Johnston's protagonist has over her emotions, her male lover's actions, and her eventual insanity.

Such rhythmic instability, I argue, also reflects the unstable genre and narrative structure of the poem. For example, Johnston depicts the young woman sitting "Beneath a shaded bower" (44) as she contemplates the beauty of the man she loves. The image of a beautiful, contemplative woman lounging in nature is a staple of pastoral poetry; however, Johnston undercuts this idealized, seemingly timeless landscape with the female protagonist's anxiety about the veracity of her lover's vows in lines fifty-five and fifty-six. The "greenwood," once a place of idyllic play now represents a space of tragedy and suffering in the present. Johnston's landscape—echoing Fanny Forrester's reconfiguration of the pastoral—is less a changeless, traditional pastoral, and more a romantic canvas onto which she paints a conventional narrative of female melodramatic suffering.

[40] Ellen Johnston, "The Maniac of Green Wood," in *Autobiogrpahy, Poems and Songs of Ellen Johnston, the "Factory Girl,"* ed. Alexander Campbell (Glasgow: William Love, 1867), 15–19.

Johnston's familiarity with the tragic heroines of Sir Walter Scott's novels likely provided the framework for Johnston's "maniac": beautiful women whose passionate love frequently results in betrayal, disappointment, and death—whether murder or suicide. However, Johnston's decision to conform to this framework of representation is more complex than her mere knowledge of the genre. Chiefly, the genre was popular amongst working and middle-class women. In fact, the poem resists situating the protagonist or the speaker within a particular class, appealing to female readers of multiple backgrounds on the basis of a shared, gendered experience. The poem ostensibly aligns with Ellen Draper's assessment of the melodramatic genre, which she claims seeks "to locate its fiction in a world apart from the empirical reality that awaits the audience outside."[41] As in Draper's assertion, the landscape, the speaker, and the protagonist of Johnston's poem are seemingly set apart from history and geography as a way of making the protagonist both relatable and romantically unreal. However, Johnston's decision to compose a semi-autobiographical poem in the form of a melodrama is also rooted in her desire to simultaneously recast her experiences and distance her authorial self from them.

Johnston crafts the "fallen woman" as a sympathetic figure whose fate is the fault of a "spoiler's perjury" (66), rather than innate immorality. The eventual fracturing of her social and emotional self into insanity and death is depicted—like Thomas Hood's tragic heroine in "The Song of the Shirt" (1843)—as a consequence of a broken system. Unlike Hood, however, Johnston is calling for a revaluation of gender rather than class social structures. As in her autobiography, Johnston seeks to validate her own experiences with romantic desire and betrayal by appealing to the trans-class experiences of nineteenth-century women. "The Maniac of Green Wood" is Johnston's attempt to claim intimate affiliation with the popular, middle-class genre. Yet, by narrating the life of her protagonist rather than speaking as her, Johnston also distances her identity from the social shame of

[41] Ellen Draper, "'Untrammeled by Historical Fact': That Hamilton Woman and Melodrama's Aversion to History," *Wide Angle* 14, no. 1 (1992): 58.

pursuing a romantic relationship outside of marriage. She both petitions for a reconsideration of women who act outside the norms of respectable, bourgeois standards, while attempting to detach her writing identity from those illicit experiences.

"The Maniac of Green Wood" exploits melodrama as a way of positioning Johnston and her writing within bourgeois representational and generic frameworks. In her poem, "The Absent Husband," Johnston adapts domestic poetry on matrimony to her particular working-class experiences. Unlike "The Maniac of Green Wood," "The Absent Husband" is blatantly autobiographical, less melodramatic, and more geographically secure. Her autobiography states that she was deserted by her first love and betrayed by a second suitor who "offered [her] his heart—without the form of legal protection."[42] Left alone again, Johnston then moved to Dundee to find work to support her family. Another piece that I have been unable to locate outside of her published collection, the poem was excluded from the 1869 edition. I believe that is because this poem was too far a departure from the figure of the bourgeois poetess in working-class circumstances that Johnston's autobiography and many of her poems attempt to convey. The sentimental love poem about a man who was not her legal spouse, therefore, could be read as Johnston proclaiming her desire and unwedded motherhood as—not only justified—but acceptable social behaviors for women in love. The editorial decision to omit the poem in the second edition of the collection aside, "The Absent Husband" embodies a fascinating if stilted effort to manufacture a respectable poetic self-representation out of the illicit autobiographical events of Johnston's real-life.

As the speaker in "The Absent Husband," Johnston walks along the banks of the river in Dundee during the late evening—clearly positioning her in a specific time in her real-life narrative.

[42] Johnston, *Autobiography, Poems and Songs of Ellen Johnston, the "Factory Girl,"* 10.

The second and third stanzas, in particular, highlight the lengths to which Johnston goes to transform abandonment and deceit into romantic separation and eternal affection:

> 'Tis the wife of thy bosom—the loved of thy heart—
> That doth now call upon thee her love to impart;
> And with truth's golden fingers I'll strike Love's guitar,
> And the theme of my muse shall be thee—Samuel Carr.
>
> I am lonely and languid, my love, without thee,
> Like to one that's forsaken I roam by the Dee;
> But though distance divide us, death only can mar
> My heart's deep communion with thee—Samuel Carr. (5-12)[43]

The entire poem is a reassurance that Johnston's love is socially acceptable and reciprocated. Each quatrain consists of a single four-line sentence that ends in "Samuel Carr"—the repetition of her lover's name functioning as a consistent presence in each stanza. It is as if Johnston is assuring both the reader and herself that her "heart husband" is a real-life person and not just a poetic creation. She pointedly refers to herself as a "wife of thy bosom" (5) rather than a normal wife, and draws attention to the phrase "the loved of thy heart" (5) by offsetting it within hyphens. These identities underscore the distance between legal matrimony and the poet's own circumstances, and how she intends to legitimize those circumstances through the strength of her affection. In Johnston's logic, her romantic love for Carr is pure enough to make a legal marriage unnecessary and serve as her creative inspiration. In the tenth line, Johnston's comparison of herself to "one that's forsaken" is an interesting maneuver that forces the reader to call into question their knowledge of Johnston's real-life marital status and, therefore, her status as a "fallen woman." If she is "*Like* to one that's forsaken" (10), she has not actually been betrayed by her love, and is merely feeling the physical separation between them. The

[43] Ellen Johnston, "The Absent Husband," in *Autobiography, Poems and Songs of Ellen Johnston, the "Factory Girl,"* ed. Alexander Campbell (Glasgow: William Love, 1867), 27.

"deep communion" (12) of hearts between Johnston and Carr is made legitimate by the sheer force of Johnston's emotions.

"The Absent Husband" is unsuccessful in its attempt to resolve the tensions between Johnston's desire for a bourgeois marriage, and the known reality of her unwed motherhood and romantic disappointments. What it does do, however, is encapsulate the ambiguity of Johnston's social and literary positions. For example, the anapests of line eight stress "theme" and "muse," aesthetic terms that underline the literary, formal qualities of poetry. Like the legal and moral ambiguity of Johnston's "marriage," Samuel Carr is a liminal figure that is caught between the space of the poem, Johnston's imagination, and her real experiences in Dundee. Even the environment in which Johnston is composing her "love song" (26) is characterized by borders: the border between water and land, the space between the natural world and the industrial city, and the period between day and night. The various liminalities in the poem are the only "places" in which Johnston can make herself into a bourgeois woman while still being explicitly autobiographical. Like "A Mother's Love," "My Absent Husband" is a concerted effort to "market" Johnston's classed experiences of family and romance as events in the *bildungsroman* of an upwardly-mobile woman.

The various strategies by which Johnston speaks as a triumphant female poet and morally respectable woman result in poems that often achieve this representation at the expense of Johnston's working-class cultural, economic, and political contexts. Whether portraying herself as a mother, a figure of romantic desire, or a dutiful wife, Johnston concertedly diminishes her role as a working-class woman and poet in a way that she does not in her poetry on politics, nationalism, and factory-work, as well as many of the poems she shared with other working-class writers. The genre of sentimental, conventionally "female" poetry, therefore, serves as a tool by which Johnston can rewrite

her working-class experiences into a narrative of progression, upward literary mobility, and poetic genius.

Poetic Inspiration, Betrothed Lady, Cultural Critic: Johnston and her Periodical Correspondence Poetry

The correspondence poetry that Johnston shared with other writers through regional, working-class newspapers is some of the most unique in her *oeuvre* thanks, in part, to the opposing ways in which she constructs her self-representation from correspondent to correspondent. The shifts in her representational strategy are dependent on the gender of her conversant—when speaking to male poets, she crafts a contrasting self-representation than in her responses to women writers. With fellow women writers, Johnston's poetic identity is a dialogic parallel to the self-representation created in her domestic, sentimental poetry: she speaks from and to a gendered, affective community of readers and writers. As a collection of communicating, "minor" authors, Johnston and her female responders align with Gary Kelly's definition of a *coterie*:

> The term *coterie* describes a group of personally acquainted individuals, meeting informally and corresponding with each other, who advance certain shared social, cultural, and political interests.[44]

Based on Kelly's assessment, Johnston's network of female readers and responders can be labelled a *coterie*, one whose members advanced the idea of working-class women's capability to use poetry as a method of upward social and cultural—if not economic—mobility. Kelly's analysis, however, concerns the communications and personal connections of popular, bourgeois author Mary Shelley. Shelley—unburdened by industrial wage-labor and financial restrictions—experienced the benefits of travel, education, and a large circle of friends with which to share her writing. Johnston and her *coterie* reconfigured these conventions by utilizing the working-class newspaper as both a "meeting place"

[44] Gary Kelly, "Politicizing the Personal: Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and the *Coterie* Novel," in *Mary Shelley in Her Times*, ed. Betty T. Bennett and Stuart Curran (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 148.

and the primary method by which they could share their poetry. Julia M. Wright argues that the "literary *coterie* conventionally functions for a time in the interstices between public and private spheres."[45] The ambiguity between public publishing and private correspondence in the *coterie* of female, working-class poets—already destabilized by Johnston's candid depictions of her history in her stand-alone poems—is further subverted by the medium of the periodical. Typically placed in the "To Correspondents" column of the *Penny Post*, these conversations were likely to have been read by a large portion of the subscribers to the paper, increasing the potential political and social impact of the ideologies and representations supported by Johnston and her peers. By discussing obstacles to their creative processes and poetic production, Johnston's *coterie* interjected a gendered perspective into the class-centric space of the working-class newspaper.

In her conversations with poets such as "A Glasgow Lassie," Isabel, and Edith, Johnston's role as a mentor for female fans of her newspaper poetry is emphasized.[46] Johnston underlines the suffering she has experienced, figuring her class experiences as obstacles to her overall success as a poetess. Her responders support Johnston's stress on innate poetic skill and circumstance-specific morality by casting their own lives in a similar fashion. These women acknowledge the difficult and unorthodox circumstances of their experiences to gesture towards how Johnston has achieved literary respectability, providing hope for their own poetic endeavors. In particular, Johnston and her *coterie* write into a particularly middle-class ideology of self-representation and poetic success. "The Factory Girl" is more a replicable structure of identity for female, working-class poets that it is an "authentic" representation of Johnston's or her correspondences' experiences.

---

[45] Julia M. Wright, "'All the Fire-Side Circle': Irish Women Writers and the Sheridan-Lefanu Coterie," *Keats-Shelley Journal* 55 (2006): 65, http://www.jstor.org/stable/30210644.

[46] Though it is impossible to verify if these contributors were definitively women—particularly "A Glasgow Lassie" and "Isabel"—their style and content varies significantly from more identifiable male correspondents who wrote to Johnston. I follow scholars such as Susan Zlotnick and Florence S. Boos in analyzing these poets as women.

The first conversation with a woman writer that I could locate is from the *Penny Post* in June of 1866. Entitled, "Lines to E.J., 'The Factory Girl,'" the poem by "A Glasgow Lassie" praises Johnston for her skill, but also for how her continued presence in the poetry sections of popular newspapers has encouraged other factory women to write:

> Had I been gifted, gentle maid,
> With half thy sweet poetic fire,
> Then would I make the Muse my slave,
> And bid the heavenly-sounding lyre
> Extol thy praise till none should be
> So famed as Ellen of Dundee.
>
> But Fate so willed that thou shouldst sing,
> And I mute list to thy sweet strains,
> And thank kind Heaven for sending here—
> To dry our tears and soothe our pains—
> A creature womanly and kind,
> With gentle heart and sterling mind.
>
> […]
>
> O call me sister, and I will
> Give deep, unselfish love away;
> O call me sister, for, like thee,
> I weary toil from day to day,
> And feel sharp worldly thorns each hour,
> Yet gather, too, sometimes a flower. (1-12, 19-24)[47]

There is an irony to the claim that Johnston's poetic skill is greater than "A Glasgow Lassie's" being made in the context of a poem; yet, the timbre of the poem's message is not sardonic and competitive, but grateful and communal. Johnston's utility is described in similar terms as Fanny Forrester's desire for her poetry in *Ben Brierley's Journal*: a pleasurable distraction from the readers' wage-labor, made particularly relatable by Johnston's own factory work. However, "A Glasgow Lassie's" insistence that Johnston has stimulated the poetic talents of other factory women like herself is a subtle statement

[47] A Glasgow Lassie, "Lines to E.J., 'The Factory Girl,'" *Penny Post*, June 23, 1866, 4.

concerning the way in which Johnston's representation has been intercepted by her female readership— she is not the voice of the working-class, but a voice for disenfranchised, female writers.

The way in which "A Glasgow Lassie" represents Johnston's femininity is essential to understanding the type of engagement that the members of this *coterie* advocate. "A Glasgow Lassie" frames Johnston within a gendered rather than classed discourse: she is "Ellen of Dundee" (6) not "The Factory Girl," a figure whose songs act as a balm to her readers because of her "gentle heart" (12). The "poetic fire" (2) that Johnston possesses is "sweet" (2) rather than provocative and all-consuming, and "A Glasgow Lassie" hopes that they will primarily exchange affection and love through their correspondences. These women's industrial labor is not characterized as anything more than a shared burden, something that Johnston, according to her readers, has seemingly overcome thanks to her "womanly" (11) nature and "pretty songs" (13). As Parnassian as the imagery in the poem is, the conventional language of sentimental femininity in these exchanges reveals a greater interest in crafting factory women as "appropriate ladies" rather than working-class bards.

In Johnston's response, she apologizes for her late reply, and takes pains to underscore the importance of the readership that "A Glasgow Lassie" represents:

> Ah, believe me gentle sister, my soul thou dost enthrall;
> As the ivy leaves doth cluster around the ruined wall,
> So doth thy sweet revealings cling as closely round my heart,
> With fond endearing feelings that words can ne'r impart.
>
> Sister, why art thou mourning for bright poetic fire,
> Whilst heavenly light is burning around thy mystic lyre?
> Why midst oblivion's slumber dost thou linger lone and mute,
> Whilst thou with golden numbers canst tune thy silvery lute? (5-12)[48]

[48] Ellen Johnston, "The Factory Girl's Reply to 'A Glasgow Lassie,'" *Penny Post*, August 18, 1866, 4.

Adopting the term "sister," Johnston repeats the endearments of romantic friendship that "A Glasgow Lassie" extended to her in the original poem. Johnston transforms the "sweet poetic fire" from "A Glasgow Lassie's" poem into "sweet revealings" (3). What "A Glasgow Lassie" has revealed to Johnston is the existence of a circle of like-minded working-class women seeking to place themselves within the context of middle-class women's writing and representation—even the depictions of the "ivy leaves" (2) and "fond endearing feelings" (4) invoke both romantic nature imagery and the language of idealized, domestic femininity. As in the original poem from "A Glasgow Lassie," there is a divide between the material realities of, not only their factory labor, but their relationship. These women most likely never met in real life, and were only able to communicate with one another through the medium of the "To Correspondents" section of the working-class newspaper; however, they speak as if they were writing private letters to one another.

With Johnston and "A Glasgow Lassie's" poetic exchange, a new space of writing, feeling women was created in the *Penny Post*. Privileging gendered forms of emotional expression and representation, Johnston's correspondence poetry evidenced the existence of an active, writing community of working-class women, as well as this group's desire and ability to harness bourgeois forms of self-representation. However, it is her conversation with a woman writing as Isabel in late 1866 that overtly establishes Johnston as a literary mentor for other working-class women. On November 21, 1866, Isabel writes to praise Johnston's poetry:

> Dear Ellen, when you read these lines, O, throw them not aside,
> Oh, do not laugh at them in scorn, or turn away in pride!
> I know 'tis a presumptuous thought for me to thee to write,
> For, Ellen, feeble are the words that my pen can indite. (1-4)[49]

[49] Isabel, "Lines to Ellen, The Factory Girl, Chapelshade Factory, Dundee," *Penny Post*, December 1, 1866, 4.

Johnston is depicted as a beacon leading those women who previously believed they were "lone and mute" (8). Again, Johnston is presented as Ellen rather than "The Factory Girl," ascribing an intimacy to the writers' relationship that is undermined by Isabel's consistent effacement of her own poetic skill. Isabel, by claiming Johnston to be an arbiter of factory-women's poetic skill, positions Johnston and herself within the "discourse of patron and patronized," undermining the "prevailing emphasis on extraordinary (male) individuals, which has been traditionally associated with Romantic notions of genius."[50] Isabel's and, more subtly, "A Glasgow Lassie's" opinion that Johnston holds the aesthetic skill to judge other factory women poets implies that the role of the "Romantic genius" is one that could be embodied by a marginally classed and gendered figure, and that female newspaper poets could and did set the terms of their own system of writing and mentoring.

Responding to Isabel, however, Johnston reveals a more conservative interpretation of her role as a poetic mentor. The quatrains take Isabel and the reader along a series of Johnston's sufferings throughout her life.

> Hush'd now its song, and silence is pervading
> The weary world, that dreams in calm repose;
> Now thy sweet muses my languid soul doth laden,
> As dew-drops hail the summer morning's rose.
>
> […]
>
> Dear Isabel, thou fain would'st learn my history—
> Could'st thou feel joy to learn a tale of woe
> That's link'd with many a strange and cruel mystery
> Which God in heaven alone can ever know? (9-12, 17-20)[51]

The rhyme scheme is significant as it affirms Johnston's narrative of victimage by pairing "woe" (18) and "know" (20), but averts attention away from the non-romantic, classed particulars of her past by

[50] Erica Obey, "'The Poor Girl's Talent': Romantic Mentorship and Mary Colling's 'Fables,'" *Keats-Shelley Journal* 59 (2010): 67, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41409531.
[51] Ellen Johnston, "Lines to Isabel from the Factory Girl," *Penny Post*, January 1, 1867, 4.

rhyming "history" (17) with "mystery" (20). Johnston's apparent shame in her past is interesting because she elsewhere extensively discusses her childhood abuse, her unmarried motherhood, and her desires for an attractive male partner. Here, Johnston effaces the details of her life by removing her agency and replacing it with the control of Fate and God. Though she does not deny the role as a mentor and inspiration for her female readers, Johnston refocuses her response on her identity as a more conventional natural genius, an outsider whose past turmoil connects her experiences to a hermeneutic of conventionally male, Romantic subjectivity. Like Romantic poets such as William Wordsworth who link a "continuity between childhood and adulthood" to the achievement of sublimity in their writing and imaginative power, Johnston emphasizes her individual experiences to make herself exceptional amongst working-class women poets, even as she participates in creating that same community.[52]

The tensions between the representation of Johnston as a poetic mentor, successful working-class poet, and female sufferer are complicated further by her longest poetic exchange with a lower middle-class woman from 1866 to 1867. Writing as Edith, the poet claims to be a schoolteacher in Scotland who is an avid reader of *The People's Journal* and the *Penny Post*. While Edith's subscription to *The People's Journal* is unsurprising as it actively sought a working-class and middle-class readership with its moderate political reporting, it is interesting that she was a reader of the *Penny Post* as it had a more targeted readership of working-class Scots thanks to editor Alexander Campbell's radical-leaning political opinions. It is Edith's lower middle-class status that makes her conversations with Johnston extraordinary amongst the rest of Johnston's responders. I read these women's cross-class dialogue of over ten poems as evidence—not only of Johnston's desire for inclusion in the circle of dominant women's poetics, but a sign that her particular embodiment of social victimage, "natural genius," and

[52] Margaret Homans, *Women Writers and Poetic Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 67.

middle-class sentimentality effectively could embed her writing and identity within bourgeois ideologies of women's writing.

Edith initially contacted Johnston on March 18, 1866 to discover what in Johnston's life "'Mid steam and dust and ceaseless ring / Of cotton wheels in factory room" (3-4) inspired her to write and seek publication.[53] Edith attributes the genius of Johnston's verses to the 'Spirit of the Olden Muse' (9) who has used Johnston as a mouthpiece whose voice has been given by an outside creative force:

> They ask me, girl, what made thee sing
> 'Mid din of shuttle and of loom—
> 'Mid steam and dust and ceaseless ring
> Of cotton wheels in factory room.
>
> What made thee sing? Ask first the thrush
> That haunts the woods 'bove fair Dundee,
> And on her hills the breezes hush
> Till bird and breeze explain to me (1-8).[54]

Edith's conceptions of the factory conform to popular representations of factory labor as Johnston primarily labored within the jute industry and not with "cotton wheels" (4). Edith cannot relate to Johnston as a factory employee like "A Glasgow Lassie" and "Isabel" can, and speaks to Johnston through the clichéd language of the poetess as a singing bird, attempting to identify Johnston with what Susan Zlotnick has identified as a particular progressive, and middle-class view of women's factory labor. Zlotnick notes how bourgeois authors such as Charlotte Brontë and Elizabeth Gaskell compose narratives in which the "wage-earning factory woman was less a cause for concern than for celebration" because she had the potential to be financially independent from a patriarchal male figure.[55] Edith's celebration of Johnston's poetic skill is limited by her desire to "elude the intractable

[53] Edith, "Lines to the Factory Girl," *Penny Post*, March 3, 1866, 4.
[54] Edith, "Lines to the Factory Girl."
[55] Zlotnick, *Women, Writing, and the Industrial Revolution*, 63.

problems of class conflict and exploitation" that are apparent between Johnston and Edith[56] Edith claims that she is so enamored by Johnston's skill that, in later poems, she continually claims that Johnston's writing contains "grace to mine doth not belong."[57] In fact, one of Edith's final poems to Johnston calls her a "spirit rare" who Edith could know by her "minstrely" anywhere (18-9).[58] What results is a representation of Johnston that has been removed from the factory in order to be considered a moral and literary benchmark for fellow working-class aspirants.

In her replies, Johnston embraces Edith's sentimental, declassed representations of her and her writing by rarely mentioning her experiences with wage-labor in favor of echoing Edith's characterizations of her sublime talent:

> They ask thee, Edith, why I sing
> 'Mid factory din, its dust and gloom,
> And why I soar on fancy's wing
> 'Mid dreamland bowers and summer's bloom.
>
> […]
>
> Yet still I sung, though all in vain,
> While year in sorrow follow'd year,
> When all at once like magic strain
> My harp burst on the world's ear.
>
> Ah, gentle Edith, see me now,
> With hope's bright banner o'er me spread,
> Fame's golden wreath around my brow,
> Love's lyric crown upon my head. (1-8, 41-8)[59]

The first two stanzas reflect Edith's narrative of how Johnston became a poet, even echoing Edith's description of the factory as a dreary cacophony of monotonous work. As the poem continues, Johnston asserts that her poetic spirit "like the linnet" (25) was painfully caged in factory labor. Lines

[56] Ibid., 164.
[57] Edith, "Edith's Reply to the Factory Girl," *Penny Post*, May 19, 1866.
[58] Edith, "Lines by 'Edith'on Receiving the Cartes of Mr Russell and 'The Factory Girl,'" *Penny Post*, December 29, 1866.
[59] Ellen Johnston, "The Factory Girl's Reply to Edith," *Penny Post*, April 7, 1866.

forty-one through forty-eight gesture towards her position as a leading poetic voice of a community of sentimental poets, a community that includes non-working-class Edith. In fact, Edith wants more of her middle-class peers to read Johnston's poetry as an example for idle, young women:

> We with our weary years of 'Havet's Grammar,'
> With dates, astronomy, and dear knows what,
> And *parsing*, where the thoughtless often stammer,
> 'Mid mood and tense, and case, and this and that. (21-4)[60]

Like the pulse of the iambic pentameter in the final line, Edith's depicts the lives of her female peers as aimless and always already framed by a pedagogy that suppresses affect and individual experience. Edith's claim that Johnston's writing is a way of escape from this restrictive paradigm for middle-class women indicates that Johnston has successfully appealed to a cross-class female audience, but also that Edith views her and Johnston's exchange as representative of a more conventionally classed patron-writer relationship. Johnston is useful to Edith and her peers: she indicates that wage-labor is not necessarily corrupt, and that writing can serve as a tool for class mobility for poetic women.

For both women, sentimental writing was not just a mode of expression, but an opportunity for social and aesthetic reconfiguration. By embedding her language and self-representation within bourgeois ideologies of femininity, Johnston performatively transcends her working-class experiences to mobilize a collective of women newspaper poets. However, Johnston adopts a very different strategy of self-representation when speaking with her male correspondents. Rather than attempt to claim an identity as a middle-class poetess, Johnston either positions herself as a domesticated wife or an independent and pragmatic urban factory-worker and writer. In the earliest poetic exchange that I have been able to locate, a man writing as "La Teste" wrote a poem to Johnston entitled "My Bonnie Nell" in October 1864. Written in dialect, the poem praises Johnston for her physical beauty and

[60] Edith, "Welcome and Appeal for the 'Maid of Dundee,'" *Penny Post*, September 21, 1867, 4.

friendly manner, but claims that Johnston is exceedingly proud by judging him too old and too shabbily dressed for her taste. "La Teste" goes onto describe other local women who are more beautiful and would be more appreciative of his attention than Johnston, one of which, he is sure, will marry him to Johnston's great detriment.

Though humorous, the playfulness of "La Teste's" poem is also a revealing commentary on working-class gender roles. To the poet, Johnston is most pleasing when she is most objectified, her "smirkin' e'en sae blue" (3) and "hair o' lossy jet / Adoun [her] back in supple net" (6-7) are much more appealing than her laughter directed at the poet. When depicted as silent, Johnston's movements through the Dundee cityscape charm the poet. When she speaks, however, her rejection of the poet's admiration transforms her from a beguiling queen to a woman whose "saucy mood" (41) indicates that "La Teste" would have to "learn her hoo to love" (33). He cannot fathom a world in which Johnston would not be immediately honored by his attentions, despite his more advanced age, because he has the funds to allow her to be a domestic wife and mother. Despite the generally light tone of the verse, this stanza claiming his financial assets underscores the pervasiveness of bourgeois-derived typologies of feminine behavior, and draws attention to Johnston's position as a classed, unmarried wage-laborer. Even the repetition of "My Bonny Nell" continually lays claim to a sense of ownership over Johnston, even as he ultimately deems that she is not worth his attentions later in the poem.

"La Teste's" final claim that he will quickly be able to find a woman worthy of his love, is preceded by a warning of "the nicht is eerie, sae beware" (51) in the penultimate stanza. The potential physical and sexual violence underscoring this line is unsettling, but indicative of the way in which private, individual opinions of female working-class behavior and writing became public, literary discussion points in working-class periodicals. This line underscores Johnston's precarious social and financial position as an unmarried factory laborer. "My Bonny Nell" depicts a Johnston—and, indeed,

a working-class woman figure—who has not only transgressed appropriate gender boundaries by moving through the city at night and—more importantly—rejecting his romantic advances, but has also neglected to heed the particular class concerns that any—in "La Teste's" opinion—self-respecting factory-girl should, finding a stable and socially acceptable path out of public, industrial wage-labor. Ultimately, "La Teste's" Johnston is not only encouraged to be silent, but is depicted as morally and physically illicit on classed and gendered terms.

In her response entitled "The Young Man's Darling," Johnston playfully mocks "La Teste's" claims, echoing his use of Scots dialect and adopting the title of "bonny Nell." However, Johnston's poem recasts herself as a spirited, romantic heroine whose rejection of the material comforts that the aged "La Teste" could provide her is described as a virtue rather than pride:

> A crazy auld man whiles comes frae Lochee,
> An' he ca's me prood an' haughty;
> O, lack-a-daisy, he is courting me,
> And wants me to be his dawtie.
> He brags o' his gear an' boasts o' his lan',
> And wonders hoo I'm sae naughty,
> As no to gie him my heart an han',
> An' be his bonny wee dawtie.
> But I'll be a young man's darling,
> Though humble be my cell;
> I'll ne'er be the auld man's dawtie
> While I am bonny Nell. (1-12)[61]

The accents significantly fall on words that negatively associate with "La Teste's" offer such as "auld" (1), "brags" (5), and "ne'er" (11). Johnston differentiates between "La Teste's" "dawtie" and her desire to be a young man's "darling" even though the meaning of the words is nearly identical. Her use of "darling" at the end of line nine is especially noteworthy because it breaks the rhyme scheme set up by the previous lines. By asserting she will be a "darling" in a poem otherwise constructed in dialect,

[61] Ellen Johnston, "The Young Man's Darling," *Dundee, Perth and Forfar People's Journal*, October 22, 1864, 4.

Johnston is rejecting "La Teste's" idealized working-class domesticity as much as she is refusing his romantic advances. This movement towards criticizing "La Teste's" ideology of working-class femininity continues as she claims that his income is nothing more than "Mammon's gold sceptre" (18), a morally degrading force that would damage her physically and spiritually. Depicting herself as a "gouden treasure" (16), Johnston echoes "La Teste's" commodification of her, highlighting how women are restricted into particular ideals of beauty and value within working-class domesticity as they are within the bourgeois ideology of the "Angel in the House." Though Johnston clearly states her desire for a particular type of romance and domestic affection, she sets her own standards for her future partner.

Even the aesthetics of Johnston's poem seek to override "La Teste's" opinion in favor of her own desires as an independent, urban woman. For example, the longer length of Johnston's sentences and lines seem to confront "La Teste's" attempts to encourage her to speak less, and two of her three twelve-line stanzas directly contradict "La Teste" with an assertion that *she* is her own bonny Nell—free to reject him or any man she wishes, at least while she maintains her youthful good-looks. The commitment she has to embodying her own interpretation of the romantic, bourgeois heroine while also being an independent factory worker complexly intersect in this conversation—the line between interrogating working-class domesticity and earnest desire to experience an ideal of romantic love and marriage is blurry. What results is a response verse from Johnston that is at turns humorous, aspirational, and sharply critical of nineteenth-century socioeconomic and gender conventions.

Considering Johnston's interpretation of working-class domesticity, it is unsurprising that she would resist "La Teste's" offer; however, she does express a desire to become someone's "darling." In fact, Johnston did eventually accept a proposal from another working-class contributor writing under the name G. D. Russell, a reported working-class poet from Stirling. In her exchanges with G.

D. Russell, Johnston again embraces a type of bourgeois, domestic identity; however, Johnston actively downplays her position as a leading poetic voice. Russell first writes to Johnston on September 9th, 1865—at which point Johnston was most likely working and writing in Glasgow; however, it was his poem to her on October 24 that exemplifies his understanding of Johnston as a poet and a potential marriage partner:

> Dear high-souled girl, thy worth I prize,
> Admiration fills my heart
> While viewing thee with musing eyes—
> Best of womankind thou art.
> For who of all thy gentle race
> Would love a rival maiden's grace?(19-24) [62]

Throughout Russell's lengthy poem, his language is stilted, and his meter varies from trochaic to iambic tetrameter and features multiple catalexes—reflecting the disconnect between Russell's appreciation of Johnston's poetic skill, and what utility he believes that skill has for her future. Russell's poem begins with a humble appeal to Johnston's poetic skill and intellect. Unlike 'La Teste' who points to Johnston's socially disadvantageous position, Russell appeals to Johnston's skill as a poet. In fact, the entirety of Russell's poem deals solely with praising the sublime qualities of Johnston's poetry; however, this literary praise is rooted in the ideology that poetry has made her a better and more sympathetic wife. By claiming that a "soul like [hers] with beauties sown" (11) in the form of poetry would overshadow all other women's allure, Russell reduces the social and political potential of Johnston's writing into a feminine hobby of domestic improvement. Russell's desire for Johnston is ostensibly rooted in a different discourse of domesticity than "La Teste's." Yet, he undermines his love of Johnston's poetic skill by subtly stating she will have to give up her poetic work when she becomes his wife at the beginning of the poem:

> And who would still love as a brother,
> Him held be'ore in ties more dear?

[62] G. D. Russell, "Lines to E.J. 'The Factory Girl,'" *Penny Post*, October 24, 1865, 4.

Who would give counsel like a mother
    To cheer him as he journeys here?
Who'd still delight to hear the muse,
While reconciled the bard to lose. (7-12)[63]

Loving him as a sister and mother, Johnston is represented in language similar to bourgeois wives and mothers of the same period. Most importantly, Russell claims that Johnston is so good that she would still "delight to hear" (11) his muse, and would be willing to lose her own role as a bard in becoming his wife. The differences between "La Teste's" and Russell's representations of domesticity are ultimately subtle; to each man, Johnston is not a factory worker or poet, but a potential help-meet for each man's social or literary aspirations.

Among Johnston's many responses to Russell, the one that appeared in the *Penny Post* on November 4th, 1865 is perhaps the most indicative of the type of domesticity which Johnston seems willing to embrace:

St. Ninians bard, whate'er thou art,
    Fame shall sound through selling time
Thy lofty soul and loving heart,
    That's truly noble and sublime—
Thy gifted mind and glorious name
Hath twined a garland round my fame.

I cannot speak all that I feel—
    The loving thoughts that swell my heart;
Words are but weak even to reveal
    The gratitude I would impart;
But what are words for thy reward,
Thou noble hearted loving bard. (19-24)[64]

Echoing Russell's use of Standard English and elevated language, Johnston expresses gratitude for Russell's praise and his offer of romantic love and comfort. It appears that Russell is the "young man"

[63] Russell, "Lines to E.J. 'The Factory Girl.'"
[64] Ellen Johnston, "Lines to G. D. Russell, St Ninians, Stirling," *Penny Post*, November 11, 1865, 2.

to whom Johnston will be a "darling," in part, because of his poetic skill that she admires. She embraces her romantic love for Russell, and accepts that it would mean the end of her writing career. When writing to her female correspondents, Johnston depicts her writing as fueled by her passionate emotions, but she is unable to represent herself as—and eventually plan to materially become—a domestic wife, without surrendering her role as a leader and member of a community of regional, female poets. She notes that Russell understands her precarious situation:

> But knowest then stern fate hath cast
> A withering blight o'er my young life?
> My golden dreams of hope have past,
> And I may never be a wife.
> My best and truest friend is dead.
> And with him love and joy have died (25-30).[65]

Retreating from the self-confident and younger Johnston in her exchange with "La Teste," the Johnston in her 1865 exchanges with Russell gestures towards the hardships in Dundee that she frequently mentions in her other poetry including homelessness, unemployment, and social ostracization. In her "Lines With My *Carte De Visite* to Mr. G. D. Russell, Queensland" on June 6th, 1866," Johnston's tone is almost one of defeat. She even points to her awareness of women's objectification in the progress of Victorian courtship:

> Is she thy choice? then [sic] take this hand,
> This heart thou priz'st more than gold,
> By heaven's decree, by fate command.
> The Factory Girl to thee is sold (61-4).[66]

Again, Johnston commodifies herself as an object that can be sold, even if she maintains her right to choose the buyer. Yet, unlike her self-commodification in her poem to "La Teste," these lines read as

[65] Ibid.
[66] Ellen Johnston, "Lines With My Carte De Visite to Mr. G. D. Russell, Queensland," *Penny Post*, June 6, 1865, 2.

resigned rather than sardonic. Johnston acknowledges that by taking Russell's offer, she is sacrificing both her surname and her literary career represented by the name "The Factory Girl."

Johnston's representation in her correspondence poetry varies widely depending on the gender of her respondents. While repeatedly engaging with bourgeois ideologies of femininity and women's writing, Johnston refines her position within this ideology to emphasize either her identity as a poet, a domestic wife, or an independent urban woman. In these poems, Johnston does not discuss overtly class, national, or international politics. Nevertheless, they do exemplify many of the cross and inter-class gender tensions of her social environment, illustrating how a female, working-class poet could exploit the language and social conventions of middle-class gender representations despite these women's radically different material experiences.

The "Factory" in "The Factory Girl": Johnston on Industrial Labor and National Politics

The majority of the critical work done on Johnston's poetry and life have concerned her domestic poems in which, as I discussed, she attempts to cast herself in the same terms as an appropriate—if unorthodox—middle-class, female author. Several of Johnston's poems, on the other hand, include a more overtly political, class-conscious, and authoritative poetic voice. Though fewer in number, these poems are such a departure from the poetic subject and style of her other poems that they demand a thorough analysis of their representation strategies. These poems can be roughly divided between those that discuss factory wage-labor and those presenting Johnston's opinions on British domestic and foreign policy. Class is the perspective that ties these two groups together as, I argue, Johnston speaks not as a woman, but as the voice of a collective working-class in these overtly political poems. By emphasizing her experiences of factory labor, Scottish history, and awareness of broader social and political issues, Johnston deemphasizes her gender in order to make herself a leading "working-class bard" in the vein of Robert Burns, Elijah Ridings, or Edwin Waugh—poets

whose writings appealed to wide working-class audiences with poems that represented a distinct laboring-class culture and aesthetics.

Perhaps Johnston's most well-known poem, "The Last Sark" depicts a bleak domestic scene between a working-class husband and wife who have fallen on hard times:

> Gude guide me, are you hame again, an' ha'e ye got nae wark,
> We've naething noo tae put awa' unless yer auld blue sark;
> My head is rinnin' roon about far licter than a flee—
> What care some gentry if they're weel though a' the puir
> wad dee!
>
> Our merchants an' mill masters they wad never want a meal,
> Though a' the banks in Scotland wad for a twelvemonth fail;
> For some o' them have far mair goud than ony ane can see—
> What care some gentry if they're weel though a' the puir
> wad dee!
>
> This is a funny warld, John, for it's no divided fair,
> And whiles I think some o' the rich have got the puir folk's
> share,
> Tae see us starving here the nicht wi' no ae bless'd bawbee—
> What care some gentry if they're weel though a' the puir
> wad dee! (1-12)[67]

The poem's subject and use of dialect are very similar to the wildly successful 'Come Whoam To The Childer an' Me' (1856) by Edwin Waugh, and the similarities between these two poems about working-class domesticity are not, I argue, unintentional or insignificant. Waugh's "Come Hoam" was popular from the time of its original publication, so it is not unreasonable to suggest that Johnston and her peers would have been aware of it. However, unlike Waugh's narrative of working-class domesticity and tale of struggling male morality, Johnston's "The Last Sark" includes a female speaker who is less sentimental, and much more aware of the material realities that characterize acute Victorian poverty. The poem's rhymes are often awkward—"meal" (5) and "fail" (6)—or delayed by line breaks—"flee—

[67] Ellen Johnston, "The Last Sark," in *Autobiography, Poems and Songs of Ellen Johnston, the "Factory Girl,"* ed. Alexander Campbell (Glasgow: William Love, 1867), 100–101.

" (3) and "dee" (4). It is as if the speaker cannot collect the energy to speak poetically—a fact she confirms later in the poem when she nearly drops her child because she is so weak from hunger.

Though Johnston's speaker is a domestic wife and mother in "The Last Sark," her conversation is classed rather than gender-based, far removed from the sentimental maternal representations of family and emotion in poems such as "A Mother's Love" and "To Mary." The version of domesticity presented in this poem is not romantic, but brutally realistic in its illustrations of the fluctuating employment and wealth of the working classes. The speaker notes that the gentry do not care about the plight of the poor because the world is "no divided fair" (11), illustrating how the current socioeconomic structures result in a warped and almost dystopian domesticity for the working-class: the patriarchal, nuclear family is represented here with an unemployed father, a mother too weak to care for her children, and a starving child. The second stanza shifts the perspective from the individual, working-class home to larger, topical issues such as the depression of Scottish shipping and banking at the mid-century, with accusations aimed at both the industrial magnates and the bourgeois "merchants an' mill masters" (6) who continue to enjoy stable incomes despite the failure of banks and mass working-class unemployment. This sharp critique is made all the more effective by the female speaker whose infant is starving in her arms while she speaks. Taking the framework of Waugh's narrative to make a harsh social critique, Johnston politicizes a popular cultural text and harnesses regional dialect to make it applicable to the Scottish working-class context in which she lived and wrote.

Johnston's political poetry was not limited to representations of working-class domesticity. One of her most unusual poems, in fact, candidly discusses Johnston's personal experiences of and feelings towards factory labor. In "The Factory Exile," Johnston depicts her feelings of social and creative isolation after being fired from her job at Verdant Factory in December 1863. In her

autobiography, Johnston discusses the event as a pivotal point of her "trials, disappointments, joys, and sorrows" in Dundee:[68]

> Dear reader, were I to give details of my trials, disappointments, joys, and sorrows, since I came to 'bonnie Dundee,' they would be, with a little embellishment, a romance of real life, sufficient to fill three ordinary volumes. Suffice here to say, that after myself and child had suffered neglect and destitution for some time, I got work in the Verdant Factory […] on the 5th of December, 1863, I was discharged by the foreman without any reason assigned or notice given, in accordance with the rules of the work. Smarting under this treatment, I summoned the foreman into Court for payment of a week's wages for not receiving notice, and I gained the case.[69]

Though she successfully took the factory overseer to court, she claims that she became so envied by her "sister sex" in the factory for her talent and ability to "gain [her] rights" that they "several times dragged the skirts from [her] dress" in the street.[70] Johnston, by her own admission, interprets her own experiences as a romantic narrative; however, her version of romantic heroism includes her successfully winning a case against a male overseer, laboring in a factory, and publishing poetry in a widely-read working-class newspaper. This interpretation blurs the boundaries between the typically middle-class protagonists of romantic novels and her real-life experiences of poverty, labor, and social ostracization. Moreover, Johnston's characterization of her female factory peers contradicts the community of female laborers and poets that she represents in her sentimental and correspondence poetry. By claiming that these women acted out of jealousy of her poetic talent, Johnston manages to evade passing judgement on them based on their factory work while also making herself an exceptional figure amongst them.

"The Factory Exile" reflects an attempt to merge romantic narratives of poetic creation, and the material effects of factory labor:

> Thou lovely verdant Factory! What binds my heart to thee?
> Why are thou centered in my soul, twined round my memory?

[68] Johnston, *Autobiography, Poems and Songs of Ellen Johnston, the "Factory Girl,"* 14.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.

> Why dost thou hover o'er my dreams my slumbers to beguile?
> When falsehood of the deepest dye has doomed me an Exile.
>
> With tear-dimm'd eyes though fancy's veil I gaze upon thy
> walls;
> Their bright enameled golden tinge my bleeding heart enthralls,
> I deem I am what once I was, still bending o'er my loom,
> And musing on a lovely form of beauty's sweetest bloom. (1-8)[71]

The even iambic heptameter is reminiscent of both a steady heartbeat and the machinery in the factory from which she has been dismissed—an aesthetic embodiment of the material factory and the poetic affect. One of the more confronting images invoked by "The Factory Exile" is the depiction of Johnston's body "bending o'er [her] loom" (8). Again, the labor that Johnston is referring to is doubled: it represents her work as a weaver and her poetic labor. On the first count, Johnston actively participating in factory labor refutes Patricia E. Johnson's argument that actual 'factory work and the factory girl are at a remove' in Victorian industrial literature.[72] Unlike Elizabeth Gaskell's exhausted Bessy Higgins in *North and South* (1855) who is too unwell to work in the factories for much of the novel, Johnston characterizes herself as a body fully capable of participating in weaving and, in fact, longing for her industrial labor.

The physicality of creative labor also underpins the image of Johnston's hunched body. Her language highlights the actual labor of writing, as well as the way in which it is always already intertwined with the factory and working-class life. Poetic labor almost becomes material in the factory setting as she looks through "fancy's veil" (5), a literary device made material by its appearance in a textiles factory. Despite Johnston's seemingly harmonious representations, the state of fluidity between factory and creative labor, industrial and sublime, cannot be maintained ideologically or

[71] Ellen Johnston, "The Factory Exile," in *Autobiography, Poems and Songs of Ellen Johnston, the "Factory Girl,"* ed. Alexander Campbell (Glasgow: William Love, 1867), 25–26.
[72] Patricia E. Johnson, *Hidden Hands: Working-Class Women and Victorian Social-Problem Fiction* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2001), 36.

aesthetically. The final stanza brings the poem and Johnston's industrial fantasy to a melodramatic conclusion:

> Ah, me! that one so beautiful should own so cruel a heart
> As injure one who still to him did act a friendly part;
> What have I done that he hath wrung my heart with bitter
> woe?
> I was to him a faithful friend—Why has he grown my foe? (15-9)[73]

Whether or not Johnston is referring to an actual person is unclear. I, however, read these lines as Johnston speaking directly to the factory. She was a "faithful friend" (19) to the Verdant Factory, but it—like a lover in a melodrama—has betrayed her by casting her out of its walls. Despite speaking in the language of romance, Johnston's lines adamantly deny that she has done anything wrong based on her loyalty as a worker. Asking why the factory has grown to be her foe (19), Johnston interrogates the moral and legal bases on which she was fired. In "The Factory Exile," Johnston harnesses her experiences of unemployment and moral accusation in order to create a "factory girl" representation that inverts the traditional view of the factory as degenerative and immoral. "The Factory Exile" provides Johnston with the opportunity to create a representation in which the space of the factory can inspire passion, devotion, and romantic sentiment for the workers within it without rendering them apolitical and wholly sentimental.

In both "The Last Sark" and "The Factory Exile," working-class women voice broad class concerns relevant to laboring readers of all genders. In other words, Johnston legitimizes the social and political opinions of working-class women by basing her commentary in her own experiences of working-class femininity. Though gender is not the focal point of these poems, her feminine identity underpins how she articulates a knowledgeable "classed" voice. However, in her poems about Italian revolutionary Giuseppe Garibaldi—two of her most overtly radical poems— she completely evades

[73] Ibid.

her identity as a woman in favor of embracing her identity as a working-class, Scottish citizen. Garibaldi's planned tour of England and Scotland evoked both "conservative and radical responses" in Britain.[74] Lucy Turner Voakes argues that Garibaldi and the struggle for Italian Unification provided a moment for politically moderate British authors to "consolidate [and] celebrate […] British liberal culture and politics."[75] Outside of popular, middle-class authored poetry and journalism, the subject of Garibaldi proved a popular one to provincial and working-class poets and newspapers across England and Scotland. Publications such as *The People's Journal* represent Garibaldi as a champion of the working man and marginalized citizen rather than a moderate Victorian liberal. In September 1862, Reverend George Gilfillan—local personality and literary critic—campaigned for popular support for Garibaldi's revolutionary efforts, which were closely tracked in the journal. Gilfillan even compares Garibaldi's imprisonment to the historical wrongs of other national heroes:[76]

> And then came the cold-blooded *Times*—with its frozen lightnings and its hollow thunders, its loud-sounding lies, and faint-praised perdition—venturing to call Garibaldi a "criminal!"—although as justly might Austria have called William Tell a criminal; and although the same expression was applied with equal truth by Edward the First and his minions to William Wallace.[77]

Gilfillan Capitalizing on every mention of Garibaldi, the report in the *People's Journal* puts Garibaldi's individual accomplishments and personality as the core message of the article: Garibaldi should be seen as a hero of the downtrodden against the oppression of a distant tyrant.

---

[74] Marcella Pellegrino Sutcliffe, "Negotiating the 'Garibaldi Moment' in Newcastle-upon-Tyne (1854–1861)," *Modern Italy* 15, no. 2 (2010): 130, doi:10.1080/13532940903509674.

[75] Lucy Turner Voakes, "The Risorgimento and English Literary History, 1867–1911: The Liberal Heroism of Trevelyan's Garibaldi," *Modern Italy* 15, no. 4 (2010): 433, doi:10.1080/13532944.2010.506294.

[76] Gilfillan provided a foreword for Johnston's collected poems, as well as Glaswegian working-class poet Janet Hamilton's. He condescendingly takes care to point out her "great disadvantage" as a factory worker, and to ask readers to remember this when they note signs of "imperfect education" and "faults in her style" in her poetry as they are due to her "limited opportunities." *Autobiography, Poems and Songs of Ellen Johnston, the "Factory Girl,"* vii.

[77] George Gilfillan, "The Reverend Goerge Gilfillan on Garibald's Capture," *Dundee, Perth and Forfar People's Journal*, September 13, 1862, 2.

In Scotland, the *People's Journal* announced that Garibaldi's British tour would include a stop in Dundee to general excitement, and helped to solidify the political and ideological connections between a politically radical Garibaldi and working-class Scotland. For Johnston, his visit occasioned a dedicatory poem entitled "Welcome, Garibaldi." By this point in her career with *The People's Journal*, Johnston had garnered both admiration and criticism, and frequently appeared in the "To Correspondents" section of the paper which was often located just after reports on international affairs. Though I have been unable to locate either of Johnston's Garibaldi poems in *The People's Journal*, the specific event the poems discuss indicates it was most likely written sometime in 1864. The first poem, "Welcome, Garibaldi!" is a celebration of Garibaldi's impending visit, and is worth quoting in full:

> Thou art welcome, Garibaldi! to Scotland's sweet Dundee,
> Illustrious patriot warrior who set fair Italy free;
> To slaves of Inquisition a balm thou didst impart,
> And burst the galling fetters that bound thy nation's heart.
>
> Thou art welcome, Garibaldi! unto our brown-heath soil,
> To charm us with the beauty of thy bright and tranquil
> smile;
> A king uncrowned, a conqueror, we truly know thou art,
> Fame's diadem shines on thy brow, and glory jewels thy
> heart.
>
> Thou art welcome, Garibaldi! where sons of freedom toil,
> Ours may not be a land like thine, where sunshine ever
> smiles;
> Ours is a land of liberty, where Freedom's flag belongs,
> No slave is bowed beneath its yoke, no tyrant sings its songs.
>
> Thou art welcome, Garibaldi! with all thy faithful train,
> With heart and soul we hail thee, for freedom is thine aim;
> No king did ever wear a crown nor hold a court levee
> That we would make more welcome, brave warrior king, than
> thee.
>
> Thou art welcome, Garibaldi! fair Italy's saving star;
> Ah! we mourned thee as a brother, when thou from us afar
> Lay prostrate on the lonely couch exhausted, pale and weak,

Disabled by a traitor's ball, but never by defeat.

Thou art welcome, Garibaldi! thou didst endure the pain,
It placed thy life in peril, yet deathless was its aim;
Napoleon's greedy eagles were hovering near thy grave,
But God decreed that thou wouldst live some other land to
save.

Thou art welcome, Garibaldi! thou art the true-born type
Of our departed Wallace, who gained our country's right;
Defying every danger, he rushed amidst the strife,
And purchased Scotland's freedom with the ransom of his life.

Thou art welcome Garibaldi! hailed by one and all,
We'll give thee fare of cottage hearth, and feast of palace
hall;
Old Scotland hath no honour that she would not give to thee,
Thou art beloved in all her lands as thou'rt in Dundee.

Thou art welcome, Garibaldi! across our far-famed Tay,
We'll lead thee to our Baxter Park, where flowers are bloom-
ing gay;
The name of those who gave it, like thine own, can never die,
But live with fame immortal in a bright and cloudless sky.

Long life to Garibaldi! and when all thy warfare's done—
When thy task on earth is ended, and thy last victory won—
Oh, sweet shall be thy dreamless sleep, with angels for thy
guard,
And a glorious crown in Heaven shall be thy rich reward.[78]

The elevated language and lofty imagery in the ballad of both the general and Scotland suggests that Johnston is attempting to create an ode to the Italian revolutionary that marries Garibaldi's politics and military successes to a fierce pride of Dundee. "Welcome, Garibaldi!" conforms to the poetic structured favored by the then editor, W. D. Latto— it is short, rhyming, and topical; however, a closer examination of Johnston's characterization of Garibaldi reveals more complex political and social undertones to her romantic, heroic imagery.

[78] Ellen Johnston, "Welcome Garibaldi!," in *Autobiography, Poems and Songs of Ellen Johnston, the "Factory Girl,"* ed. Alexander Campbell, 2nd ed. (Glasgow: William Love, 1869), 28–29.

"Welcome, Garibaldi!" is distinctly Scottish and working-class in its imagery and outlook. "Welcome Garibaldi!" formally conforms to the overarching desires of the *People's Journal* editors to portray Garibaldi as a "patriot warrior" (2). From the first stanza, Johnston frames Garibaldi as a liberator, someone who has "set Italy free" from the "Inquisition" that was Austrian rule. Italy's common people are literally "slaves" in Johnston's poem, slaves who only needed the vision and organization of Garibaldi to free themselves from their foreign oppressors. Johnston's conviction in the radical potential of Garibaldi and her own writing aligns with Stephanie Kuduk Weiner's assertion that republican and radical poets believed that poetry "cultivated readers' ethical sympathies and opened their minds to a clear vision of the world as it is and could be."[79] Johnston's cosmopolitanism is based on— what she believes to be—a shared class experience between working-class Scots and revolutionary Italians like Garibaldi.

By invoking images of human enslavement, Johnston recalls the metaphor of factory workers as slaves that dominated social-reform literature from earlier in the century and Chartist literature from the 1830s and 1840s. Chartist writers such as Ernest Jones—who the *People's Journal* celebrated for his attempt to "yoke serious, purposeful radical journalism to popular cultural production"—drew upon the comparison of factory workers and slaves in order to garner some of the fiery and dedicated support of working and middle-class reformers engendered by the abolitionist movement.[80] Johnston's definition of the Italians as slaves under Austrian rule would be recognizable to the community of the *People's Journal*'s readers, ensuring sympathy for the Italian cause and—more importantly—laying the groundwork for Johnston to successfully transform Garibaldi from an Italian military leader into a potential champion of the Scottish working-class. Her connections between Italy and Scotland beg

[79] Stephanie Kuduk Weiner, *Republican Politics and English Poetry, 1789-1874* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 2.
[80] Sally Ledger, "Chartist Aesthetics in the Mid Nineteenth Cnetury: Ernest Jones, a Novelist of the People," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 57, no. 1 (2002): 62, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/ncl.2002.57.1.31.

the question that if the people of Italy were no better than slaves when under foreign rule, could Scotland's people be truly free individuals under English authority? Lines twenty-eight and twenty-nine transform Garibaldi into the answer for that question by claiming that he survived injury in Italy in order to "live some other land to / save" (24).

Johnston supports her argument that Garibaldi will be the beginning of mass social reform in Scotland by playing upon the social memory of Scotland, a kind of *Volksgeist* that allows identification with Italy and inspires Scottish nationalism. As a "king uncrowned, a conqueror" (8), Garibaldi is a nineteenth-century parallel to William Wallace, a metaphor made explicit in line twenty-six when Johnston directly compares the freedom efforts of Garibaldi with the historical freedom fighting of Wallace. Graeme Morton states that the "principal social memory [of nineteenth-century Scotland] coalesced around the mediaeval patriot William Wallace" and the fictional tales about him such as Jane Porter's *The Scottish Chiefs* (1810) and Sir Walter Scott's *Tales of a Grandfather* (1828).[81] According to Morton, the nineteenth-century Scottish attachment to a mythologized Wallace represented a shared community memory that "facilitated layers of experience to be added to pre-existing narratives," making it a malleable framework upon which working-class poets and newspapers could interpret nineteenth-century political issues through their own classed, national social memory.[82] In the autobiography that accompanied her collected poems, Johnston recalls being moved by Scott's romances and historical tales in her childhood. A prevailing "romanticism of Jacobitism" spurred on the fascination with a medieval liberator Wallace, providing a socially acceptable outlet for Scottish nationalism and working-class community pride.[83] It is, therefore, unsurprising that Johnston has called upon the same historical metaphor in her dual celebration and call-to-arms verse. Like William

[81] Graeme Morton, "The Social Memory of Jane Porter and Her Scottish Chiefs.," *Scottish Historical Review* 91, no. 2 (2012): 311, doi:10.3366/shr.2012.0104.
[82] Ibid., 313.
[83] Ibid., 317.

Wallace, Garibaldi is mythologized rather than humanized in Johnston's poem because he is meant to exemplify a radical zeitgeist.

However, Johnston is represented as a modern-day Sir Walter Scott as much as Garibaldi is a second William Wallace. The Scotland she depicts is a romantic nation of beautiful landscapes and proud people. The seventh quatrain, in particular, casts Johnston as a storyteller whose imagines Scotland as a romantic heroine and Garibaldi as her valiant knight. If Wallace was the one who freed Scotland by "Defying every danger" (32), Johnston is the voice that is calling his heir on behalf of her country. She is not a working-class woman in the first of her Garibaldi poems, but the voice of the collective Scottish working-class. She continues to represent herself as this patriotic, bardic voice in the follow-up poem "Mourning for Garibaldi." The Italian general returned to his island home on Caprera mere weeks after landing in Southampton with British officials claiming it was due to overexcitement and exhaustion that adversely affected Garibaldi's fragile health. However, many working-class publishers and individuals believed that Garibaldi's visit was cut short in London because of increasingly radical reactions to Garibaldi's visit by supporters and intellectuals. To these groups, Garibaldi could be viewed as a potential catalyst for mass social and political reform in Britain—much to the fear of the politically moderate Parliament and monarchy. Johnston's response took the form of a melodramatic lamentation that—though fitting the general requirements for acceptance and publication in the *People's Journal*—was not featured in the newspaper. While the exclusion of "Welcome, Garibaldi!" was most likely attributable to an inundation of Garibaldi poems from working-class contributors, I believe that "Mourning for Garibaldi" was possibly excluded for the radical working-class politics it promotes and its overtly anti-English language:

> Oh, England! Where now is thy fame-spreading story?
> Wrapt in a cloud of heart-bleeding shame;
> And where's Garibaldi, that hero of glory,
> In whose love-fraught bosom you've planted a stain?

And where is the throne where thy sovereign is seated
With the crown of royalty over her brow?
Can she deem for one moment we thus shall be cheated
By her lords, dukes, and earls, who basely did bow

To a foreign despot, and his dastard dictations?
Oh! woe to thee England, the deed thou hast done
Shall brand thee for ever the meanest of nations;
Thou'st lost in one hour what in centuries was won.

And where are the banners thou proudly unfurled
When thy gay halls re-echoed that patriot's hymn?
Oh, England, thou once wert the 'gem' of the world,
But now is thy glory grown tarnished and dim.

Dost thou remember that thou wert in danger?
Though no Garibaldi had e'er trod thy soil;
For the eagle-eyed vulture could be thy avenger,
He thirsts for thy blood, oh! trust not his smile.

Though thou has obeyed him, and sadly bereaved us
Of a hope which no language hath power to impart;
Though thy worthies conspired, and basely deceived us,
Garibaldi's dear form still dwells in our hearts.

Though we ne'er may behold him, his name we will cherish,
Our love-tears shall wash from his bosom thy shame;
And thy dastard insult ne'er in memory shall perish,
Thou hast snapt the gold link of our sister-wove chain.

Farewell, Garibaldi, though thou has departed,
Torn from our hearts by Napoleon's base tools;
Know'st though that old Scotland's a nation true hearted,
She ne'er shall be mocked by England's gay fools.[84]

Again, Johnston positions herself as an appointed mouthpiece for mediating Scotland's history; however, the joyful fourteeners of "Welcome Garibaldi" has given way to a rhythm marked with multiple caesuras, a formal embodiment of Johnston's grief and anger interjecting into the structure of the poem. The repetition of "we're," "we," and "our" situates Johnston in a community of Scottish

[84] Ellen Johnston, "Mourning for Garibaldi," in *Autobiography, Poems and Songs of Ellen Johnston, the "Factory Girl,"* ed. Alexander Campbell, 1st ed. (Glasgow: William Love, 1867), 29–30.

nationalists who, being set against the "lords, dukes, and earls" (8), are presumably working-class. In blaming the England for giving into the desires of a French "foreign despot" (9), Johnston interrogates narratives of English liberty. The ire she directs at Queen Victoria, in particular, aids in establishing her own poetic voice within a distinctly non-feminine, working-class identity, even if the poet frames the monarch's actions in the language of deceived romantic affection: Queen Victoria's actions have "snapt the gold link" (28) of affection between the two nations and "deceived" (23) the working people of Scotland. In fact, Johnston claims that the queen has bowed to the patriarchal forces of her high-ranking, male government in the first stanza, an accusation that questions the queen's skill in ruling her people on gendered terms.

As the poem continues, England's betrayal—Garibaldi's forced departure—becomes increasingly ambiguous. This ambiguity comes to a head in the climactic fifth stanza which asks if England remembers when it was in danger before "Garibaldi had e'er trod thy soil." While it directly gestures to Garibaldi's return to Italy, it also reads as a reminder of both the fraught historical relationship between England and Scotland, as well as the social upheaval and working-class violence that occurred during the Chartist movement in the 1830s and 1840s. French invasion, Chartism, and Jacobitism have put England in "danger" in the past, placing Johnston's allusions to these movements within a framework of violence and revolution. Johnston's poem of "mourning" is a poem of revolution and political turmoil, recalling the anger and overtly political writings of Chartist poets, placing her poetic identity on the same level of social and literary relevance as poets such as Ernest Jones and Gerald Massey.

In Johnston's Garibaldi poems, gender identity and factory labor are sacrificed in favor of portraying herself as a broadly appealing champion of Scottish patriotism and radical social change. These poems are an extension of the poems Johnston composed for local working-class men and

bourgeois industrial investors in which she strongly claims the right to speak for and of the working-class—rural and urban—based on her "natural genius" and her experience with laboring-class culture and society. In neither of these sets of poems does she, however, explicitly discuss her own factory work, or how it affects her poetic production as she does in "The Factory Exile." Her efforts to establish herself as a bardic voice for the working-class and Scotland produce poems that either actively distance herself from her identity as a nineteenth-century female writer, or depict her as the literary heir of male authors such as Sir Walter Scott—as in her two Garibaldi poems. In each case, Johnston precludes identifying with dominant female typologies of mother, wife, daughter, and female friend even as she proclaims herself to be the "Factory Girl," an identity inextricably tied to dominant ideologies of Victorian femininity. Though Johnston did write several poems exploring these aspects of her identity, she maintains a strict divide between femininity and class in her more large-scale political poems.

Conclusions

Ellen Johnston's life and literary career were unorthodox, even by the standards of working-class women's publishing; however, she embraces the complexity of her identity and experiences by privileging various aspects of her representation to present herself as an authoritative voice on a variety of subjects. Johnston's strategy of repeated self-refashioning resulted in a collection of poems whose styles and themes discuss everything from international politics to female, working-class desire. By selecting particular aspects of her identity from which to speak, Johnston appeals to multiple sections of Victorian readers including working-class men, factory women, and—based on the subscriber list included in her collected poems—regional gentry and members of the industrial middle-class. However, Johnston's shifting poetic voices also lead to an *oeuvre* that reads as disjointed and somewhat random when read together. While her poetry makes more narrative sense in the original periodical

space in which it was published, it still reflects a poet who never fully brought together her class and gender experiences into a cohesive poetic voice. Johnston's inability to legitimize her poetic voice on both classed and gendered grounds, however, is symptomatic of a literary and social tradition that discouraged multiply marginalized voices from intersecting. In my next chapter, I explore the poetry of Lowell factory-girl Lucy Larcom who, I argue, harnessed her devout Evangelical Christianity as a way for her to legitimize both her labor and her poetry in the early to mid-nineteenth century. Larcom's Christianity enables her classed and gendered voices to intersect. Larcom, unlike Forrester or Johnston, wrote extensively about her religious beliefs, with which she "wrote herself" out of factory labor and into a life of higher education with an income earned by her pen.

"The Highest Possible Poetic Conception": Lucy Larcom and the Poetics of American Christianity, Class, and Gender

"Come to prayer!" the last, low call.
Come, while evening spreads her pall.
Come! The blessed moments haste!
Thou must tread again life's waste.
Earthly care and strife and scorn,
Bury heavenly thoughts new born.
Come, and in the house of prayer,
Gather strength for every snare.
Prayer and faith thy foes shall quell;
Heed the Sabbath evening bell! (30-9)[1]

Lucy Larcom, poet and outspoken Evangelical Congregationalist, wrote and published original writing in national periodicals, factory magazines, and regional newspapers from her adolescence in the 1830s to her death in 1893. Best known for her autobiography *A New England Girlhood* (1889), Larcom composed poetry and prose that depicted her experiences with rural poverty, women's education, and childhood factory labor in early to mid-nineteenth century Massachusetts. Larcom's decade-long factory work in the industrial city of Lowell, her decision to remain unmarried throughout her life, her friendship with prominent American poets and philosophers, and her educational achievements are reflected in a series of doubled narratives in her writing, narratives in which the imagery, language, and ideology of an adapted Evangelical Protestantism mediate the tensions between hegemonic representations of domestic femininity, paternalistic traditions of theology, and factory wage labor. I argue that Larcom attempts to craft a complex and socially acceptable form of working-class femininity in her poetry by situating her authorial voice in a progressive tradition of Congregational Puritan theology and emerging Transcendental philosophy. By consistently privileging a doctrine of spiritual growth via personal experiences of nature, labor, and Scripture, Larcom narrates a spirituality that enables both female factory labor and women's public, sociopolitical engagement.

[1] Lucy Larcom, "Sabbath Bells," in *The Lowell Offering*, ed. Watson, Vol. 4 (Lowell, 1844), 275–76.

Larcom's poetry, read through the lens of her experiences at the industrial and boarding complex of Lowell, blurs the distinctions between domestic and industrial identities. Her theology disrupts how the hierarchies of nineteenth-century class and gender identities function in relation to each other. Rather than compete for representational prominence in Larcom's poetry, femininity and industrial labor are incorporated into a larger narrative of spiritual self-actualization. By defining labor and socioeconomic hardship as the focal points of spiritual development, Larcom transforms them from harsh, material realities to vital processes of moral self-improvement for women. Her articulation of labor equates multiple forms of work (industrial/creative, urban/rural, male/female), validating and empowering the voices of laborers regardless of their social class and gender through her interpretation of Christian theology.

Though her poetic forms are predominantly conventional in terms of genre, meter, and rhyme—sometimes to the point of cliché—Larcom's poetry provides a working-through of geographically isolated and economically marginalized women's spirituality. For example, the above stanza from her 1844 poem "Sabbath Bells" celebrates the solemnity of the local church bells at the beginning and end of every Sabbath for residents of a small town. Composed of ten-line stanzas of five couplets, the trochaic tetrameter and repeated "Come" embody the striking of the titular bells. The bells represent community and purpose for their hearers; however, "life's waste" (32) is only briefly held back by the spiritual sanctuary that the bells symbolize. Larcom admits that "Earthly care and strife and scorn" (35) will consistently "Bury" (36) the "heavenly thoughts" (36) inspired by the Sabbath service. Larcom published "Sabbath Bells" in the operative-run magazine, *The Lowell Offering*, during her decade spent as a "bobbin girl," spinner, and, finally, weaver in one of the primarily female-staffed factories of the Lowell Mills. The female readership of the magazine would have associated the ceaseless clamor of bells depicted in "Sabbath Bells" as much with their daily factory work in the

textile factories of Lowell as with the marking of the holy day of rest and religious contemplation.[2] In her history of the Lowell industrial scene, Hannah Josephson notes:

> At nine o' clock in the evening in Lowell the curfew rang; at ten, according to the corporation regulations, the keys were turned in the locks of the boarding houses, and the town was still save for the occasional ringing of the print-yard watchman's bells […] In the morning [the mill-girl] was wakened by bells again, tolling now from the mill towers along the canal, and her day advanced to their command.[3]

Josephson's statements are supported by a prose piece submitted to *The Lowell Offering* in April of 1841 in which a fictionalized, discontented factory worker named Ellen Collins seeks to leave Lowell to escape "the constant hurry of every thing."[4] Writing under the moniker "Almira," the unknown author states that Ellen's distaste for the strict scheduling and work patterns of the mills and boarding-houses was encapsulated by the metered tolling of the bells that marked each portion of a Lowell factory woman's day:

> Up before day, at the clang of the bell—and out of the mill by the clang of the bell—into the mill, and at work, in obedience to that ding-dong of a bell—just as though we were so many living machines.[5]

In the context of the ringing factory bells, the constant clanging of the church bells in Larcom's "Sabbath Bells" can be read as a more secular and oppressive presence—one rooted in an urban, industrial space as opposed to the freedom and flexibility of Larcom's natural world as represented in the penultimate stanza of "Sabbath Bells." With the stress falling on words such as "haste" (33), "waste" (34), and "care" (35), the Sabbath bells are made more fleeting and ephemeral, contrary to the ostensible reading of them as beacons of social and spiritual stability. The catalexis of each final foot results in lines that begin and end on accented syllables, sectioning the images depicted in each

[2] "Time Table of the Lowell Mills" (Lowell: Penhallow, 1853). Per a timetable from the Lowell Manufacturing Company, the springtime workday (Monday to Saturday) included a wake-up bell at 4:30 AM with work beginning at 6:20, midday dinner bells at noon and 12:35 PM, and the concluding bell at 6:30 PM.
[3] Ibid., 75.
[4] "Almira," in *The Lowell Offering* (Lowell: Watson, 1841), 113.
[5] Ibid.

line from each other. By beginning and ending each line with accented syllables, Larcom's poem reflects less the sounds of the natural world, and more the relentless clanging of factory machinery. Almost onomatopoeic, the description of the bells is literally structured by factory labor despite the rural imagery of the small, town church.

In the final stanzas of Larcom's poem, however, the natural world facilitates the worship of the individual Christian, one away from the relentless rhythms of factory labor and urban living. This opposition embodies the larger, evolving discussions within Protestantism concerning how Christians of varying genders and classes were included in the theology and regular practice of the religion. For example, the language with which Larcom describes the bells significantly destabilizes the relationship between their geographic location and their functional location in Christian practice and theology:

> When the morning breezes play,—
> Ringing in the sacred day;
> Pealing loud at noonday bright;
> Tolling through the gleaming light;
> Echoing along the shore,
> Drowning ocean's billowy war;
> Chiming from the city's spires;
> From the hamlet's altar-fires;
> Waking woods and lonely dells;—
> Pleasant are the Sabbath bells (41-50).[6]

The Sabbath bells, though meant for human ears, are also in conversation with the natural world. Nature enables the bells to echo to disparate people, acting as a force for spiritual education, community building and, significantly, a multitude of aural experiences for the listeners. Larcom has extricated the symbolism of the bells from an orthodox physical and imaginative space of religious practice, and relocated it in the natural world, a shift that is significant in religious, class, and gender terms. As a point of theology, Larcom's "Waking woods and lonely dells" (48) exemplify the message of Transcendental philosophers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson whose essay *Nature* (1836) "was a

[6] Larcom, "Sabbath Bells."

proof of nature's self-sufficiency, which freed his generation from reliance on the Christian tradition."[7] By rooting religious experience in an individual's experience of their surroundings, Transcendentalists such as Emerson destabilize multiple social boundaries—domestic and public, urban and rural, economically privileged and disadvantaged—by moving religious experience from the hierarchy of the pulpit and church congregation to the emotional experience of the individual worshipper in the natural world. Like Fanny Forrester, Larcom draws on a collective, imagined pastoral space; Larcom's pastoral, however, was a landscape freely available to most Americans in the northeast, making it even more effective for reconfiguring the representations of class, gender, and spirituality because of its materiality for Larcom's audience.

The movement from "city spires" to "altar-fires" marks a retreat from urban to rural and—more importantly—gestures towards an emergent American Transcendentalism by endorsing followers to sign-off "from society's expectations and institutions in favor of more inward calling." [8] By beginning "Sabbath Bells" with a depiction of men going forth "Not to business, or to mirth; / Not to strife for pomp or power" (6-7) and concluding it with a domestic hearth, Larcom privileges a threefold removal from the conventions of nineteenth-century American society: a removal from the internal hierarchies of traditional Protestant congregations, from the rhythms of the nation's emerging capitalism, and from the androcentric discourses of public speaking, publishing, and wage-labor.

"Sabbath Bells," like much of Larcom's poetry, reveals an effort to redefine the parameters of nineteenth-century femininity and class through a progressive articulation of American Evangelicalism. As a woman who published her writing, became an important lecturer at Wheaton

---

[7] Rose, *Transcendentalism as a Social Movement, 1830-1850*, 68. As I discuss later in this chapter, Emerson was an influential writer to Larcom who she quotes in *A New England Girlhood.* Additionally, Larcom states that she saw Emerson give a lecture at Lowell during her employment there. See, Lucy Larcom, *A New England Girlhood* (Cambridge: Riverside Press, Houghton & Co., 1889), 253.

[8] Phyllis Cole, "Women's Rights and Feminism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Transcendentalism*, ed. Joel Myerson, Sandra Harbert Petrulionis, and Laura Dassow Walls (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 223.

College, and maintained friendships with leading poets, Larcom defied the expectations of a female factory laborer. By harnessing the language of nascent Transcendentalism and the conventional aesthetic forms of devotional verse and Romantic nature poetry, Larcom develops a speaking identity that adapts all these discourses to her individual life experiences. Though Larcom's later writing retreated into more conventional narratives of pastoral landscape and devotional prose, her poetry published in *The Lowell Offering* and her verse-narrative *An Idyl of Work* represents a significant methodology for self-representation that approaches intersecting class and gender identities through religious philosophy.

Female Piety, Nineteenth-Century Christianity, and the Spiritual Use of Literacy in America: Critical Contexts

In *A New England Girlhood*, Larcom prefaces her narrative by claiming that the act of autobiography only has value "when it is looked at as a part of the One Infinite Life."[9] In other words, Larcom's Christian faith is not merely a motivator, but the guiding ideology that makes her publicly circulated writing an acceptable social act. It is, therefore, essential to situate Larcom's articulation of "wholesome Puritanic influences" within a larger tradition of nineteenth-century, American Christianity and devotional writing.[10] Protestantism can be read as a bounded whole in America in that it provided an organized, "constitutive outside" to the developing nation-state from the period of seventeenth-century colonization by English Puritans to the nineteenth-century context in which Larcom lived and wrote.[11] Protestantism, like Levine's descriptions of the nation-state or New Historicism, served as a powerful framework for American society and literature. However, as a bounded whole, it also provided the structure for "unending and uncontained plurality."[12] It is this concept of plurality that is especially pertinent to the relationship between Larcom's poetry and

[9] Larcom, *A New England Girlhood*, 6.
[10] Ibid., 10.
[11] Levine, *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network*, 26.
[12] Ibid., 30.

America's religious ideologies. Encompassing resistance and conformity, plurality within the bounded whole of American Protestantism enabled radical reconfigurations of class and gender performances even while it sought to establish normalized, hegemonic social identities and representations.

For example, in *Female Piety and the Invention of American Puritanism* (2016), Bryce Traister traces the liberal origins of Puritanism in America through the lens of public, female expression:

> As radicalized, mystical, extemporaneous, and ascetic linguistic and bodily sets of religious activity, female piety recalled and performed older, even ancient, spiritual practices notable for their intense commitment to a deeply religious worldview. At the same time, indeed sometimes in the very same activity, seventeenth-century female piety articulated and helped to imagine categories of personhood, cultural politics (including feminism), psychological realism, and even natural rights […] By reading the feminine back into Puritanism, we will also be reading religion forward into secularism.[13]

Traister claims that expressions of piety by women in early colonial America, such as the protest of Anne Bradstreet or the starvation and "spiritual" ascension of Abigail Hutchinson, created a space for multiple, public forms of female expression. In other words, women's devotion to their faith represented a way to confront the patriarchal hierarchy of the Puritan church in a way that was made socially acceptable through the very extremity of its religious display. Tying feminine voice and action to the developing narrative of "authentic religion" in America, women's public expressions of devotion are a key method by which Traister illustrates how the ostensibly strict social norms of early American Puritanism paradoxically offered opportunities for marginal social groups, such as women and dissenting churches, to expand the bounded whole of Christian social norms and identities by using individual interpretations of the Scripture to legitimize their actions.

While Traister is more concerned with how radical forms of seventeenth-century female piety solidified religion in American society while simultaneously leading to the twentieth-century

[13] Bryce Traister, *Female Piety and the Invention of American Puritanism* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2016), 11.

secularization of its culture, I transport his view of female piety as a "feminine performance" of radical autonomy and "self-governance" into a nineteenth-century, working-class context.[14] I argue that the ways in which Larcom defines her labor, writing, and self as processes of Christian intellectual and spiritual development complicate nineteenth-century American class and gender representations. Performances and reconfigurations of Christian devotional writing enable Larcom to recast her identity in, not only socially legitimate, but divinely sanctioned terms. By rooting her identity in the Puritan tradition of inscribed, radical female piety, Larcom establishes her ostensibly unorthodox and potentially transgressive representations and actions as, in many ways, normal within the bounds of American Protestantism. Therefore, her factory labor at Lowell, efforts to become a professional poet, and decision to remain single throughout her life can be read as dually traditional and transgressive in terms of her faith.

Even though Larcom claims affinity with a colonial, New England Puritanism, her beliefs also align with those of nineteenth-century Evangelical Congregationalism. Bruce L. Shelley defines Evangelical Congregationalism as a period of American Congregationalism from 1800 to 1860 that developed from the earlier Puritan desire to avoid a hierarchical, Anglican model of church organization that they saw as ineffective and overly permissive. Therefore, Puritans created a "gathered church" that was a "spiritual community with a well-defined constitution, proper offices, and gospel sacraments."[15] Shelley claims that this period of congregationalism gained its evangelical ideology thanks to the colonial Great Awakening that created a "fixation upon revivals as God's special instrument for 'reforming' the American people."[16] It is the emphasis on reform that is important for Larcom's nineteenth-century context as Evangelical Congregationalists became devoted to voluntary

[14] Ibid.
[15] Bruce L. Shelley, "Congregationalism and American Culture," *Fides et Historia* 21, no. 2 (1989): 39–40.
[16] Ibid., 42.

societies committed to broad social reform like abolition. Shelley notes that this empowered individual Christians to become publicly engaged and intimately linked to a "network of evangelical voluntary endeavors" outside of their immediate congregation, region, or state.[17] Larcom's interpretation of her individual place in this network of Christian reform is expressed in her description of her adolescence in *A New England Girlhood*:

> I was just beginning, in my questionings as to the meaning of life, to get glimpses of its true definition from the poets,—that it is love, service, the sacrifice of self for others' good.[18]

Larcom's "spirit of reform" is always already entwined with her belief that poetry is the best vehicle for articulating her Christian values. As for much of nineteenth-century America, Larcom's interpretation of community culture and identity were bolstered by a tradition of Christianity rather than a collective, national history.

Unlike Ellen Johnston in her Garibaldi poems, Larcom's motivation for writing—and her self-representation within that writing—transcend the ideologies of national identity in favor of an "eternal," divine purpose. In his study of antebellum American reading habits, Ronald Zboray claims that the United States "had a 'weak' national culture with an uncertain locus of authority" in the early decades of the nineteenth century:

> Ethnic, religious, and regional differences abounded. The country remained culturally oriented toward Europe and basked in the dwindling glow of the Enlightenment and its republican legacy […] Upon the diversity and factionalism of the early republic were thus overlaid yet more disjunctures of national experience.[19]

American writers, in other words, had to build a national identity from outside the historical cultural frameworks that were available to the longstanding nations in Europe. Protestantism became a main

[17] Ibid., 44.
[18] Larcom, *A New England Girlhood*, 177.
[19] Ronald J. Zboray, *A Fictive People: Antebellum Economic Development and the American Reading Public* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), xv.

locus of authority for the United States. After all, the earliest Puritan settlers were dissenting from the established Anglican Church in England; at its core, American Puritanism was a religion founded on dissension and the democratic ideals of group autonomy.

The substitution of a spiritual eternity for affiliations of earthly political and social identities was not, however, a wholesale rejection of the sociopolitical issues surrounding nineteenth-century American life; rather, Evangelical Congregationalism became a way to reframe the discourse of individual and group reform. It provided an established series of genres for American authors to write within, ones that did not require a long-standing national history or particular class status for the writer. The opportunities for representation in the American literary scene increased further thanks to nineteenth-century Evangelical Congregationalism's support of enhanced community literacy. Zboray underscores the importance of the nineteenth-century evangelical movement in reinforcing a shared *sola scriptura* across multiple Protestant denominations:[20]

> Yet, within American Protestantism, evangelicism did more than ever before for basic literacy. *Sola scriptura* survived the religious reformulation; old and new lights alike wanted to give every Christian the fundamental skills necessary for Bible reading […] With the nineteenth century's penchant for associations, such impulses gave birth in the cities to venture in interdenominational cooperation […].[21]

The belief that an individual's affective and intellectual relationship with God and the Bible defined their faith not only led to a decentralized, highly personal interpretation of religious experience, but also a privileging of reading and writing as spiritually beneficial. Zboray claims that "religious attainment thus overshadowed or at least accompanied economic motivation," explaining the overwhelming rates of literacy in America among men and women—particularly in the more densely populated regions of New England.[22] If national identity was rooted in theology and the personal

[20] Zboray, *A Fictive People: Antebellum Economic Development and the American Reading Public*. Zboray defines *sola scriptura* as "salvation aided by the individual Christian's confrontation with the word of God as presented in the English Bible."
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid., 89. Zboray notes that America's adult white literacy rate was 90% in 1850 while Britain's was only at 60% in 1851.

interpretation of the Scripture was imperative to salvation, then profoundly personal and intersectional writing represented a working-through of self and cultural representation in America. The overwhelming importance of reading for New England evangelicals extended class and gender boundaries as they viewed every human as equal before God and capable of salvation.

Larcom's published poetry in *The Lowell Offering* and her novel-poem about Lowell factory women, *An Idyl of Work*, harness nineteenth-century America's tradition of Puritan Congregationalism as a legitimating and socially equalizing force for factory women, while the intensely personal, spiritual, and affective discussions in these texts reflect and reconfigure the nineteenth-century growth of evangelical religious practices to speak on classed and gendered topics. In the following sections, I illustrate how Larcom's articulation of a Puritan-rooted, evangelical Christianity provided her with the pretense, the validation, and the language with which to create a markedly female, industrial representation and poetic voice.

Lucy Larcom

Born in 1824 in the village of Beverly, Massachusetts, Lucy Larcom was the daughter of Benjamin Larcom and Lois Barrett Larcom. Larcom was the ninth of ten children—all of whom aided in the running of their seaside household that was economically sustained by their father's employment as a shipmaster. Unlike the frequent migrations of Ellen Johnston or the urban squalor that characterized Fanny Forrester's life, Larcom's life was defined by rural community, borderline poverty, and devout Evangelical Protestantism. Much of the New England economy was still based in rural agriculture, with port cities such as Boston and New York providing the primary sources of urban, cosmopolitan goods and society. American industrial technology and infrastructure were in their infancy, and in 1814 there were only about twenty-five cotton mills in New England.[23] The distinctly

[23] Jenkins Cook, *Working Women, Literary Ladies: The Industrial Revolution and Female Aspiration*, 15.

non-urban location of many of these small factories and mills served as a midway point between the sprawling urban environments of international port cities and isolated villages.

In his seminal study of industry in Lowell in the nineteenth-century, Thomas Dublin claims that the "growth of manufacturing was stunted" in America by the rural economy of the United States and that the "extent of the domestic market was effectively limited by the high cost of transport."[24] In its earliest iterations in the 1820s, the structure of American industrialism was originally an extension of the textile labor completed by women within their homes. Dublin notes how women's work was almost "entirely confined within the home, and they rarely earned a cash wage for their labors," and the earliest mills attracted women because of their relative closeness to mid-size villages—there was one just outside of Larcom's birthplace of Beverly—and its extension of the textile work in which they participated in the domestic sphere.[25] The strict Protestant background of most rural women in New England was thought by mill-investors and overseers to ensure a non-proletarianized, rigidly moral workforce. New England mills, therefore, actively recruited particular types of mill-girls, ones who were "young, single" and worked for "repeated short stretches in the years before marriage."[26]

The founders of Lowell sought to create a factory town that combined the model of Robert Owen's earlier socialist experiment in Scotland with a strict cultural adherence to New England puritan values. Owen's New Lanark project offered evidence that decent wages, nearby housing, and safe working conditions led to a peaceable laboring community that was less inclined towards political agitation. In Lowell, the Associates enforced Evangelical codes of behavior to both shield the

[24] Thomas Dublin, *Women at Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826-1860*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 3.
[25] Ibid., 4.
[26] Ibid.

enterprise from censure by the still prominently rural communities, as well as reflect the upbringing of the employees.[27]

Benita Eisler notes that the women preferred by the Boston Associates—the investors and owners of Lowell Mills—for employment at Lowell were "robust young women, lured by the highest wages offered to female employees anywhere in America."[28] In fact, the typology of the "moral factory-girl" was the basis of the Lowell initiative, and was consistently utilized as a legitimizing factor for the existence and innovation of the industrial enterprise. Church attendance was mandatory and multiple denominations of Protestantism and Catholicism had congregations in Lowell. Eisler also asserts that the "opportunity for education through a series of evening classes, occasional lectures, and access to Lowell's circulating libraries" was a draw for rural women as it offered them the opportunity for further education.[29] Providing education and strict moral codes for the workers, Lowell investors simultaneously eased the women's transition from rural domesticity to urban factory-labor, and made efforts to meld the values of moral hard-work and capitalism into their workers.

Though their view of rural New England factory-women as demure, devout, and self-sacrificing young women proved to be totalizing and overly simplified, the founders of Lowell mills nevertheless set the precedent for how mill investors and owners could not only dictate the "character" of their workforce, but actively participate in the conversation surrounding women's industrial labor in society and literature. The Boston Associates were anxious to prevent the development of a working-class society like they saw in Manchester where the once sleepy village had already gone from

[27] Hannah Josephson, *The Golden Threads: New England's Mill Girls and Magnates* (New York: Sloan, Pierce, & Duell, 1949). In her discussion of the antecedents of Lowell Mills, Hannah Josephson asserts that Manchester afforded Francis Cabot Lowell a "view of weaving as well as spinning processes," but that his trip to view Robert Owen's New Lanark experiment provided Lowell with the inspiration to "make the working and living conditions at [Lowell] extremely attractive" to rural citizens.

[28] Benita Eisler, ed., *The Lowell Offering: Writings by New England Mill Women (1840-1845)* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1977), 18.

[29] Ibid.

a center "so unimportant that it did not send members to Parliament," to a "large town" replete with growing factories, shops, and housing by the 1830s.[30] As I discuss in chapter one, the conception of what made a "bad" factory girl in America was derived from characters such as Phoebe in British texts, as well as in texts by American authors such as Sarah Savage whose constructions of industrially-employed women as dangerously self-reliant compounded views of women's wage labor as deleterious.[31] More broadly, American essays like Orestes Brownson's "The Laboring Classes" (1840) claimed that wage-labor—particularly female factory work—would result in a working class:

> […] that would inevitably deteriorate, in terms of material welfare and oppression, to a status beneath that of chattel slaves, and whose moral condition would decline proportionally with physical circumstances and social status.[32]

Moreover, by actively recruiting women who the Associates viewed as having traditionally bourgeois, domestic values for their new factory town, the Boston Associates reinforced and legitimated dichotomous and conflicted views of women's factory labor in an American context. In other words, the anxieties surrounding gender and class in British texts were adopted and reconfigured by writers, and the emerging New England, industrial bourgeoisie for the unique American, nineteenth-century context in a reciprocal relationship between literature and society.

Evangelical morality as experienced in the lives of mill women like Larcom, however, was interpreted differently than its "utility" and economic potential to the urban, middle-class Boston Associates. For example, Larcom's description of her entrance into the religious practices of her community is inextricable from her experience of reading and poetry. Larcom claims to have learned

---

[30] J.C. Fischer, *J.C. Fischer and His Diary of Industrial England: 1814-51*, ed. W. O. Henderson (New York & London: Routledge, 2013), 140.

[31] Savage, *The Factory Girl*. See chapter one for a more extensive discussion of the factory girl in nineteenth-century British and American texts by middle-class authors.

[32] See Jenkins Cook, *Working Women, Literary Ladies: The Industrial Revolution and Female Aspiration*, 44. Jenkins Cook succinctly summarizes Brownson's essay, and highlights his oppositional stance to Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* in terms of ideologies surrounding the efficacy of wage-labor to be morally and intellectually improving to the poor. I discuss Brownson's opinions of Lowell Mills and *The Lowell Offering* later in subsequent sections.

to read by age three thanks to her love of hymns and the instruction of her Aunt Hannah, a statement that entwines spiritual development with education and poetry:

> I was much taken with the sound of words, without any thought of their meaning—a habit not always outgrown with childhood. The "sounding brass and tinkling cymbals," for instance, in the Epistle to the Corinthians, seemed to me things to be greatly desired. "Charity was an abstract idea. I did not know what it meant. But "tinkling cymbals" one could make music with. I wished I could get hold of them. It never occurred to me that the Apostle meant to speak of their melody slightingly. […] At meeting, where I began to go also at two years of age, I made my own private interpretations of the Bible readings.[33]

The "private interpretations of the Bible readings" that Larcom creates resist abstract concepts like charity in favor of personal knowledge grounded in physical and affective experience. Larcom's emotional response to religion, in other contexts, could be read as a gesture towards conventional feminine sentimentality. However, in nineteenth-century New England, it is also an assertion of the "immediacy of intuition […] and the equality, even superiority of the present generation to 'Peter, James or John' of the Bible," gesturing towards a budding American Transcendentalism.[34] Though Larcom does not define herself as a Transcendentalist or, in fact, a member of the Unitarian Church that spawned Transcendentalism's creation, the way in which she underscores the plasticity of medium and meaning to each individual worshipper, regardless of age or gender, reflects the Transcendental ideology of mutual self-improvement and the necessity of individual, emotional engagement with nature, society, and the Divine.

Larcom's Transcendentally-inflected Evangelicalism, therefore, enables her to not only reinterpret Scripture to her individual needs, but opens a space for a reinterpretation of the social structures based on that Scripture. In other words, Larcom's belief that each individual is a mediator of their own understanding of God and religion is symptomatic of a broader ideology in which

[33] Larcom, *A New England Girlhood*, 48.
[34] Rose, *Transcendentalism as a Social Movement, 1830-1850*, 47.

marginalized individuals are empowered to reconfigure how social identities affect their lives and representations. The way in which Larcom characterizes labor in her writing embodies how the flexibility of her spirituality affects her articulation of her class and gender identity. For example, Larcom prefaces the various forms of labor in which she participates at the beginning of her autobiography:

> We learned no theories about "the dignity of labor," but we were taught to work almost as if it were a religion; to keep at work, expecting nothing else. It was our inheritance, handed down from the outcasts of Eden. And for us, as for them, there was a blessing hidden in the curse.[35]

Larcom's claim that work is a divinely-sanctioned end unto itself legitimizes labor as not only socially acceptable, but socially desirable. Less overtly, this interpretation of economic labor as spiritual labor highlights Larcom's belief in the equality of men and women before God. She employs gender-neutral signifiers like "people," "elders," and "children," carefully avoiding gendered prescriptions for religious doctrine and behavior. Despite her target audience of "girls of all ages, and of women who have not forgotten their girlhood," Larcom harnesses language that is not explicitly directed at women or men.[36] Humanity replaces gender as the dominant way in which to view labor, identity, and community. This reinterpretation of labor enables women to be acceptably removed from "self-contained productive units" represented by individual households and assimilates them into creative and public forms of labor, such as factory-work and publishing.

Larcom's depiction of subsistence living and continual struggle as pathways to spiritual growth was not unconventional of nineteenth-century American Protestantism, and was shaped as much by texts such as John Bunyan's 1678 *Pilgrim's Progress* as it was by Emerson's *Nature*. However, the narrative that Bunyan's text represents is androcentric, hinging upon abstracted and allegorical figures

[35] Larcom, *A New England Girlhood*, 10.
[36] Ibid., 5.

rather than personal experience. Larcom's representation of labor, alternatively, is consistently drawn from self-reflection and personal knowledge, establishing both the significance of her narrative voice and a theology that represents gender and class marginality through the medium of the unclassed and ungendered individual:

> Rich or poor, every child comes into the world with some imperative need of its own, which shapes its individuality […] The highest possible poetic conception is that of a life consecrated to a noble ideal. It may be unable to find expression for itself except through humble, even menial services, or through unselfish devotion whose silent song is audible to God alone; yet such music as this might rise to heaven from every young girl's heart and character if she would set it free. In such ways it was meant that the world should be filled with the true poetry of womanhood.[37]

Larcom's perspective on work legitimizes women's public wage-labor as a song "audible to God alone," a stance that circumvents social criticism aimed at women's factory labor. Her validation of women's labor extends even further than her individual need to enter mill-work. Women's labor of any kind, whether domestic motherhood or public wage labor, is all part of a larger journey towards expressing devotion to God. The poetry of womanhood that Larcom describes overtly links femininity and work as a divinely sanctioned set of behaviors for women. Larcom's paradigm is inclusive of women from multiple classes and educational backgrounds. For poor, rural women, however, Larcom's praise of multiple forms of women's work would have sanctioned their often-necessary public, non-domestic work.

However, this progressive, spiritual view of female wage-labor, conflicts with the physical realities of Larcom's experiences of factory-work at Lowell. The relatively stable years of Larcom's early childhood ended with the death of her father in 1832. Shortly after her father's death, Larcom's mother arranged to move part of the family to Lowell to run a boarding house:

> After my father's death, our way of living, never luxurious, grew more and more frugal. Now and then I heard mysterious allusions to "the wolf at the door"; and it was

[37] Ibid., 11.

> whispered that, to escape him, we might all have to turn our backs upon the home where we were born, and find our safety in the busy world, working among strangers for our daily bread.[38]

The description of moving to Lowell as a literal and figurative turn from her domestic, rural childhood to escape potential poverty is interesting as it both confronts and resists overtly describing the minutiae of Larcom's real experiences with poverty. Though Larcom references the instability of her family's income in Beverly, she detaches her representation from the material markers of poverty by presenting it as a condition that her family ultimately avoided by moving to Lowell. Despite Lowell being a factor in saving her family from abject poverty, she presents her factory-labor and social life there in ambivalent—and frequently negative—terms. She notes that she "never cared much for machinery" and that the "buzzing and hissing and whizzing of pulleys and rollers and spindles and flyers around [her] often grew tiresome."[39] However, she positively viewed Lowell's provision of educational opportunities for its employees, and actively enjoyed her employment as a carder in her last years there. There is a contradiction between Larcom's conception of labor as a subjectifying, spiritual experience, and her experiences of factory labor as intellectually monotonous, restrictive, and physically demanding. This tension, I argue, is due to a division between the physical, material act of factory-work and the abstract concept of women's labor.

Though Larcom argues against abstraction in favor of personal experience in her discussions of theology, she claims that the reality of monotonous, daily factory-labor is inhibiting to creative production and, by extension, her spiritual and intellectual development. Larcom admits that she would have been better off at school than "making believe" she was learning on the factory floor.[40] The fact that the mill-women were often guilty of smuggling in Bibles, copies of their favorite poems, and periodicals, underscores the strict separation between the business of manufacturing and the social

[38] Ibid., 136.
[39] Ibid., 154.
[40] Ibid.

and religious structures at Lowell Mills. It was the latter aspect of Lowell life that provided Larcom with a remedy to the cacophony and monotony of the factory. Larcom actively participated in the improvement circle held at the Lowell Congregationalist Church during her free evenings. While the group met to discuss popular literature, the Holy Scripture, and contemporary social issues, their most substantial production was the monthly magazine first published in May of 1841. The Lowell *Operatives' Magazine* consisted of fictional narratives, non-fiction essays, and original poetry from the women of the improvement circle and ran from May to August 1841. The *Operatives' Magazine* later merged with the improvement group associated with the Lowell Universalist Church to create *The Lowell Offering* which began publication in October 1842. Larcom submitted poems for publication in *The Offering* until she left Lowell Mills in 1845.

Writing for *The Lowell Offering* was a positive experience for Larcom who writes that her contributions originated from boredom with her daily weaving. She claims that poetry was "a sort of pastime" that "gave evidence that [mill-women] thought, and that we thought upon solid and serious matters." [41] Larcom goes onto claim that the contributors to the magazine were "loyal to [their] Puritanic antecedents" in tone and content:

> [We] considered it all-important that our lightest actions should be moved by some earnest impulse from behind. We might write playfully, but there must be conscience and reverence somewhere within it all. We had been taught, and we believed, that idle words were a sin, whether spoken or written.[42]

The religious fervor of her fellow factory workers and magazine contributors proved to be a positive intellectual outlet for Larcom. Joe Lockard asserts that Larcom's autobiography underscores the liberating aspects of mill-work such as financial independence because she views her industrial experience "through an adult literary re-imagination" that "sought to find meaning and explanations

[41] Ibid., 211.
[42] Ibid., 212.

that had not been […] available to full expression during her late childhood."[43] He concludes that Larcom's reticence to describe her actual factory labor is an attempt to evade an "autobiographical definition based solely on economic productivity," reflecting Larcom's refusal to "remain classed as the poet laureate of the Lowell mill workers."[44] I complicate Lockard's claims by viewing Larcom's resistance, not only as an attempt to resist a totalizing authorial representation, but also as a desire to emphasize her theology over her class and gender identities—attempting to resolve the tensions between these identities by completely reframing them. Her desire to be couched in religious rather than industrial ideologies is her primary attempt to consolidate her class and gender identity beneath the umbrella of liberal, Christian devotion, while also establishing an identity outside of those terms—one that would position her in the continuum of leading poetic voices. The restrictions of actual mill-work on her creative output and spiritual growth, therefore, are what ultimately drove her away from Lowell despite the relative financial independence and preexisting group of supportive female writers it provided her.

In 1845, Larcom left Massachusetts to accompany her elder sister and brother-in-law from Lowell to the relatively uninhabited prairies of Illinois. During this period, Larcom attended Monticello Female Seminary, an institution of higher education for women. This new opportunity provided her with the formal education she desired, as well as a series of literary and publishing mentors. The frequency of Larcom's poetic publication decreased during this period, as much of her time was devoted to helping her sister's family and attending to her education. However, Larcom did develop a friendship with fellow poet and abolitionist John Greenleaf Whittier, who encouraged her to publish more aesthetically and thematically experimental pieces such as her *An Idyl of Work* (1875)—Larcom's semi-autobiographical, blank-verse treatment of Lowell mill-life—and numerous collections

[43] Joe Lockard, "Lucy Larcom and the Poetics of Child Labor," *ESC* 38.3, no. 4 (2012): 1–22.
[44] Ibid.

of her poems such as *Similitudes from the Ocean and Prairie* (1854), *Childhood Songs* (1875), and *Easter Gleams* (1890). Larcom was an instructor at Wheaton Female Seminary (later Wheaton College) from 1854 to 1862 where she was one of the founders of the *Rushlight Literary Magazine* for students. She became a regular contributor to journals and magazines such as *The Crayon* and *The Atlantic Monthly*; however, she was unable to earn an income solely from her writing, so frequently returned to teaching to supplement her income. Adding editor to her list of employments, Larcom edited *Our Young Folks* magazine from 1865 to 1873. Towards the end of her life, Larcom's writing turned increasingly towards prose theology. Larcom died on April 17, 1893 in Boston.

In the following sections, I divide Larcom's poetry into pieces published while she labored at Lowell, her verse-narrative *An Idyl of Work*, and her later, non-industrial themed poetry published in various collections and New England magazines and newspapers. This structure enables me to trace not only the development of Larcom's theology, but her shifting attitudes towards women's wage-labor and domesticity. Her shift towards a more conservative poetics focusing on the beauty of the American landscape in later life throws into sharp relief the unconventional and, frequently, transgressive gender and class representations in her earlier poetry. Positioning Larcom as an important if overlooked member of the canon of nineteenth-century poetry, I show how conservative language and poetics were utilized and subverted by working-class women in America as much as they were by their British counterparts.

Larcom in the Operatives' Magazine and The Lowell Offering: 1840-1845

In her study of the lives of the female employees at Lowell, Benita Eisler notes that "every aspect of the boarder's life outside working hours was made accountable," and symbolized an effort

of mill-owners to prove the "respectability" of their female workers.[45] Larcom recalls that for she and her fellow factory-workers at Lowell, "work, study and worship were interblended," and that mill regulations insisted that "everybody should go to church somewhere" as a condition of living and working in the industrial complex.[46] Several self-improvement groups and literary circles attached to the many churches in Lowell developed as a response to the strict regulations to provide the women with sanctioned outlets for their social and creative impulses. The *Operatives' Magazine* and, later, *The Lowell Offering* developed from these circles, and provided members with the opportunity to publish their creative texts and opinion pieces to a built-in readership of likeminded women who shared similar experiences.

Larcom recalls her early work in these magazines with amusement at her tendency towards "discontented fits" of dismal musings.[47] One of these poems is her "The Stranger Maiden's Death" which was published in May 1844. "The Stranger Maiden's Death" is a cautionary tale about an innocent rural girl who is lured by the novelty and adventure of an unknown city. The girl falls ill after working at a factory and dies alone, her only salvation her deathbed penitence and return to Christian faith:

> But from the distant city, rumors flew
> Of other scenes; and o'er her dazzled view
> Danced beaming phantoms, gay and golden dreams,
> Illumed by fancy's bright, deceitful gleams.
> She left her home, and here she trod awhile
> The beaten path of labor; and a smile
> Glowed on her cheek, and sparkled in her eye;
> Her hands their daily task wrought willingly.
> Of care and pain she lightly bore her share,
> For youth and health are buoyant everywhere,
> Not long she labored thus—for sickness came,
> Weak'ning the vigor of her youthful frame;

[45] Benita Eisler, "Introduction," in *The Lowell Offering: Writings by New England Mill Women (1840-1845)*, ed. Benita Eisler (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1977), 24.
[46] Larcom, *A New England Girlhood*, 209.
[47] Ibid., 213.

> Dimming the glowing lustre of her eye,
> Bidding the hues of health her features fly;
> Until, as 'neath the tempest sinks the flower,
> She prostrate lay beneath his tyrant power (19-34).[48]

While the allusions to the bustling industrial city of Lowell are undeniable, the poem leaves ambiguous whether it is the physical labor that has killed the once innocent heroine or the potential temptations of the city. In this aspect, Larcom's narrative prefigures Fanny Forrester's "Magdalen—A Tale of Christmas Eve" (1875) and even Thomas Hood's more well-known "The Song of the Shirt" (1843) in that women's social transgressions—ranging from extramarital sex to public wage-labor—are all represented as resulting in the same social disapproval, and each must end in the woman's eventual death or removal from society. Even more so than Forrester's text, however, Larcom's "The Stranger Maiden's Death" is specific to women's industrial work, and is a direct comment on the importance of religious faith for the young women at Lowell. Forrester's "Magdalen" is never identified as a factory laborer, it is only revealed that she chose to leave her rural home for the enticements of the city. In fact, Magdalen could be read as everything from a mill worker to an urban prostitute—enabling Forrester, like Barrett Browning with Marian Erle in *Aurora Leigh*, to make Magdalen an uncomplicatedly sympathetic and recognizable figure to a large cross-section of readers. Where Magdalen is a cipher for the plights of the urban, female wage laborer, Larcom's "Stranger Maiden" represents how worldly wage labor can be deleterious to women's physical health, but is not an indicator of their general morality. In fact, Larcom's protagonist is an admonishing figure for the powerful who "dwell in luxury and pride" (108). Her final realization that God and Heaven are the ultimate meanings of existence before her peaceful death stands as an accusation of middle-class

[48] Lucy Larcom, "The Stranger Maiden's Death," *The Lowell Offering and Magazine* (Lowell: William Schouler, May 1844), 149.

wealth, and not a condemnation of female factory labor. The perseverance and humble nature of the maiden's mill work is ultimately a virtue.

Mill labor as a method of self-improvement for women was, as I have discussed, a claim that the shareholders of Lowell advertised widely, and ensured this by attempting to create an environment that supported a "clean, prosperous, [and] virtuous factory life that should stand out splendidly against the grime and poverty of the great cities of England."[49] Furthermore, Larcom broadly praises the mills as places in which "independent and intelligent workers invariably [gave] their own character to their occupation," and where she had "no predisposition to a premature decline" due to her regular labor at the factory.[50] Rather, the death of the unnamed protagonist in 'The Stranger Maiden's Death' is attributable to a spiritual parable rather than a real, physical failing—a fact made more apparent by the girl's lack of a name. Even in her early poetry, factory labor is part-and-parcel of a working-class woman's spiritual development, as well as a model for humility, prudence, and morality.

In 1842, the *Operatives' Magazine* merged with the literary publication of a self-improvement group at the Lowell Universalist Church and became *The Lowell Offering*. The new magazine was published monthly, thirty pages long, and claimed to be "edited and written by factory operatives."[51] In *The Factory girls: a collection of writings on life and struggles in the New England factories of the 1840's*, Philip Sheldon Foner claims that the *Offering* was a "genteel" publication in that it sought literary aspirations rather than a reformist agenda.[52] Sylvia Jenkins Cook, however, rightly notes how Foner's label of "genteel" "makes an implicit association of literariness with bourgeois class" and alludes that this

[49] Allan MacDonald, "Lowell: A Commercial Utopia," *The New England Quarterly, Inc.* 10, no. 1 (1937): 37, doi:10.1073/pnas.0703993104.
[50] Larcom, *A New England Girlhood*, 146: 214.
[51] Eisler, "Introduction."
[52] Philip Sheldon Foner, *The Factory Girls: A Collection of Writings on Life and Struggles in the New England Factories of the 1840's* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 17.

publication could be read as a "betrayal of working-class loyalties."[53] Jenkins Cook goes on to claim that the "definite lack of a reformist agenda" made the *Offering* more than a "quaint working-class imitation of a middle-class norm" or a "tool of the [Lowell] proprietors":

> If [the *Offering*] did not encourage working women to engage in direct challenges to the political and economic authorities that dominated their lives, it did enable them to insert their voices into the intellectual and artistic debates of the day, to demonstrate that the "hands" had minds, and that those minds were vigorously involved in thinking about the identities that others were so ready to impose on them. It also permitted them to explore the efficacy of literature itself as an appropriate medium for members of their class and sex, and even to experiment in the development of new genres of writing and new modes of expression that might help them adapt this formerly "genteel" pursuit to their own interests.[54]

While Jenkins Cook rightly notes that the *Offering* underscores the participation of the Lowell women in the conversations surrounding the typology of female factory laborers, she does not illustrate how these reconfigured genres and typologies are expressed in the individual poems published in the magazine.[55] Larcom's poems in the *Offering*, in particular, participate in multiple ideological discussions that go beyond a "genteel" pursuit of literariness and question how language, spirituality, and labor are entwined for Larcom.

For example, Larcom's "To the 'Linnoea Borealis" appeared in the *Offering* in September of 1843, and exemplifies the Romantic Transcendental ideology of nature as both the ultimate expression of God, and a way in which Christians could articulate their own, individual process of self-actualization. The poem celebrates the heartiness and beauty of the *Linnaea* flower, and how it provides a lesson of perseverance and hope to those who view it:

> My sweet little flower: when valleys are drear,
> And brown all the hill-tops, the forest trees sere;
> When the flowers, that opened in summer, are dead,
> From earth, thy cold pillow, thou liftest thy head.

[53] Jenkins Cook, *Working Women, Literary Ladies: The Industrial Revolution and Female Aspiration*, 42.
[54] Ibid., 42–43.
[55] Jenkins Cook does, however, discuss Lucy Larcom's *An Idyl of Work* and its lack of precedent in American poetry, an analysis which I reference in my examination of the novel-poem in subsequent sections.

> […]
>
> I love thee, sweet flower: thou makest me glad,
> Like the smile of a friend, when the spirit is sad;
> And thy fragrance like words of affection when told
> By a heart that is true, when all others are cold.
>
> And, beautiful one, I will gather from thee
> A truth that shall cheer me when other joys flee;
> When earth has grown cheerless, and gloomy the skies,
> Even then may *Hope's* blossom be gleaned by the *wise*. (1-4, 9-16)[56]

Overtly Biblical language and abstract paradigms are replaced with romantic landscapes and pastoral nostalgia in the poem. The anapests that structure the poem give it a musical levity and, perhaps more importantly, make it ideal for memorization and recitation. The caesura in each line is an aesthetic reflection of the *Linnoea* flower which is colloquially known as "twinflower." Larcom extends the naturally twinned arrangement of the *Linnoea* flower to highlight a relationship between the flower and its human observer. As the *Linnoea* can thrive in temperate forests and boreal climates, viewers of nature are asked to embody this perseverance and take comfort in their "twinned" journey with the flower. Closing each line with rhythmic finality, the ending anapests narrate a quest from a material and emotional landscape of "sere" (2) decay, to spiritual enlightenment through tumultuous periods of life "when all others are cold" (12), to a final ascent to "the skies" (15) for those wise enough to head the lesson of the *Linnoea*. The connection between nature and humanity is both reflective and symbiotic—it is an embodiment of and aid to Larcom's spiritual quester whose journey through life's hardships is a journey towards religious communion with God and the natural world.

As a submission to the *Offering*, Larcom's poem would have an assumed audience of other factory women. Larcom's readership and peers at the factory were women whose backgrounds were

[56] Lucy Larcom, "To The Linnoea Borealis," *The Lowell Offering* (Lowell, September 1843), 279.

defined by the natural environment of the northeastern United States. The scene she depicts in "To The Linnoea Borealis," therefore, would have spoken to the homesickness of the factory women for their rural homes for, as Benita Eisler claims, "nostalgia has always been good business in America."[57] I read Larcom's poem, however, as more than a nostalgic escape into the preindustrial landscapes of these women's early lives. Rather, I view Larcom as harnessing a collective memory of rural New England to suggest a new way of learning and developing an individual identity in God. Cynthia Scheinberg's analysis of Christina Rossetti's "Consider the Lilies of the Field" echoes my reading of Larcom's "To The Linnoea Borealis":

> [The] poem suggests that along with being objects of beauty, women have a unique set of religious experiences, ideas, and lessons to teach, lessons that she perceives are rarely "heed[ed]" by men.[58]

The context of Larcom's classed audience complicates Scheinberg's evaluation of Rossetti's devotional flower poem because it not only calls for a reevaluation of women's personal religious experiences, but does so through an environment that was familiar and aesthetically significant to its readers. I argue that Larcom recontextualizes earthly suffering and the necessity of faith from male-dominated Biblical sermons into a landscape—both real and imagined—over which the female mill-workers at Lowell could claim a type of ownership. Furthermore, the *Linnaea Borealis* is—like the mill girl—exceedingly common in New England, yet each are representations of God's plan for the world. Though Rossetti's poem redefines the affordances of the "women-cum-flowers" metaphor, Larcom's text frames this metaphor with a community and class-specific landscape. If the common "twinflower" provides an important lesson to Larcom's primarily female readership, and the *Linnaea* is an embodiment of the reader-as-observer, then the poem elevates that audience of factory-employed women to the level of both spiritual quester and teacher. While not directly discussing factory labor,

---

[57] Eisler, "Introduction," 22.

[58] Cynthia Scheinberg, *Women's Poetry and Religion in Victorian England: Jewish Identity and Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 3.

"To The Linnoea Borealis" makes claims that even the commonest and most humble being has both a multi-faceted inner life, and an important divinely-sanctioned purpose.

Larcom continued to construct complex relationships between her authorial identity, the class context of her readership, Christian theology, and the natural world as she became an increasingly popular contributor to the *Offering*. Coming from rural backgrounds, Larcom's readership within the factory also responded to the lush description of America's landscape in her poetry. Furthermore, Lowell itself was intentionally situated in a pastoral-like, wooded area in the Merrimack Valley. The factory laborers would have been exposed to this environment even while laboring thanks to the many windows in each mill—one aspect of Lowell mills that enabled the investors to advertise factory labor as a healthy environment for women to work. For Larcom, the Merrimack River and dense woods surrounding the factory were inspirational for her writing; additionally, they shaped her articulation of gendered norms for herself and other women. For example, her poem "The River" from 1843 is composed of three stanzas that equate virtuous femininity with a river, and connect Larcom's inspiration to the natural world surrounding Lowell Mills:

> Gently flowed a river bright
> On its path of liquid light.
> Not like some rude torrent's course,
> Onward with impetuous force
> O'er its rocky pavement speeding—
> Passing beauties never heeding—
> But its noiseless way pursued
> Where the waving forests stood (1-8)[59]

The consistent rhythm of the flowing lines embodies the path of a quiet stream and offers a conventionally Romantic view of the river's attributes and surroundings: the river flows gently along a predetermined path of light, defined as much by its lack of meaningful impact on its surroundings

[59] Lucy Larcom, "The River," *The Lowell Offering* (Lowell, 1843), 21.

as its material existence. The river's course "was hid" (13) by "long branches" (17), and sheltered "from mortal sight" (29) despite being celebrated by the personified forces of "the zephyr" (28) and the "day-god" (30). The river continually progresses and evolves as it moves through nature, even though "Passing beauties" (7) fail to acknowledge it.

This initial stanza exemplifies Larcom's attempt to elevate nature to a dynamic and divinely chosen figure. The river is praised for its use as a mirror for angels and its love of "*heaven's* rays" (34) and significantly "shrank from earthly gaze" (35). Like the subject of "To the Linnoea Borealis," the titular river functions both as a teacher and a lesson for the reader. In the second stanza, however, the river is connected to gendered codes of behavior:

> Is not such a pure one's life?
> Ever shunning pride and strife—
> Never babbling her own praise—
> Passing happy, peaceful days,
> Noiselessly along she goes,
> Known by kindly deeds she does—
> Often wandering far to bless,
> And do other kindnesses.
> Though *herself* is seldom seen,
> Yet we know where she hath been, (42-51)[60]

Like the river, a virtuous woman is to be known through the effects of her influencing actions rather than her public actions or speech. Even her physical presence is counted against her as Larcom claims that this ideal woman is "seldom seen" (50). While this prescription invokes representations of the "Angel in the House," it is made more subversive by the subsequent stanza:

> Thus, by her own virtues shaded,
> And by glory's presence aided,
> While pure thoughts, like starbeams, lie
> Mirrored in her heart and eye,
> She, content to be unknown,
> All serenely moveth on,

[60] Ibid.

> Till, released from time's commotion,
> Self is lost in love's wide ocean. (58-65)[61]

Larcom's woman-cum-river reflects "pure thoughts" (59) received from above, she is neither static nor bound by the confines of time. In fact, the "starbeams" (60) that are "Mirrored in her heart and eye" (61) depict women as the chosen conduits of celestial "glory" (59). The representation of women as demure yet powerful disseminators of affective spirituality was well-established by the period of Larcom's writing; however, the classed context in which she wrote "The River" opens a more transgressive interpretation of the poem. The river that is the symbol of noble womanhood would have, to Lowell readers of *The Offering*, recalled a more materially concrete signifier. The construction and operation of the Lowell mills was made possible by the powerful flow of the Merrimack River that ran through its center. In fact, Larcom claims that "The River" was especially inspired by the Merrimack. Larcom recalled in her autobiography that the Merrimack was the supplier of her and her fellow employees' labor, but also that it also "added to [her] inspirations" and "blended itself with the flow of [the factory women's] lives."[62] Larcom's acknowledgement of the river as both the source of her labor and a representation of life's "beautiful course" for "lovely soul[s]" indicates a seemingly conservative gender representation that, nevertheless, collides with the industrial impact of the river for the industrial economy of New England. If the woman who is "content to be unknown" (62) is not domestic, bourgeois woman but a factory girl, then the poem reads as a call for factory women to be read as virtuous, moral, and socially validated. In "The River," the very conventionality of Larcom's gendered representation augments its subversiveness when viewed as intersecting her factory, working-class context.

[61] Ibid.
[62] Larcom, *A New England Girlhood*, 179.

The collision of middle-class femininity and working-class reality is also reflected in the poem's aesthetics. As the river structured the "flow" of the mill-women's lives from dutiful daughter to moral woman, it also structures the poem into a catalectic trochaic tetrameter. As in "Sabbath Bells," the first and final syllables of each line are accented, creating a reading that reflects the natural flow of a river, but also recalls the ceaseless regularity of factory machinery. Furthermore, the accented first and final syllables of each line create a defined set of "boundaries" for factory women's textual representation; giving extra meaning to lines such as forty-eight where the river/woman "Often" "bless[es]." These accented words make the factory woman an essential asset to society. The omnipresence of the river through "Cultured fields and woodlands wild" (12) can be read as both a statement of an ever-present, gendered community of women, and a statement about the perseverance and significance of factory-employed women to nineteenth-century American society.

In the final stanza, Larcom admits that the factory-woman-cum-river is "shaded" despite "her own virtues" of frugality, hard-work, constancy, and independence (58). The working-class and evangelical celebrated values of "useful toil," public work, and "plain dress" conflict with the typologies of an increasingly wealthy bourgeois class of domestic wives and mothers. "The River," therefore, subtly confronts the material class realities that are inherent—yet often unspoken—in idealized representations of nineteenth-century femininity. A privileged female spirituality rooted in the tradition of Protestant self-improvement and self-policing becomes Larcom's strategy in constructing a female figure that would appeal to the factory audience and the bourgeois, extra-Lowell audiences of the *Offering*.

In fact, the subscribers to the *Offering* outside of the immediate mill employees proved to be a key factor in the development and future of the journal. As previously mentioned, the *Offering* has been viewed by some contemporary scholars as an attempt of the female mill workers at Lowell to

replicate the publishing success and "literary" content of other magazines of creative writing and essays, such as the short-lived Transcendental magazine *The Dial*.[63] One of the reasons that scholars have concluded this is the widespread acclaim that the *Offering* received from popular middle-class reformers and writers. Larcom notes that the Lowell project attracted some of the most well-known literary and political figures as speakers and guests during her time there:

> Dickens visited Lowell while I was there, and gave a good report of what he saw in his "American Notes." We did not leave our work even to gaze at distinguished strangers, so I missed seeing him […] Many of the prominent men of the country were in the habit of giving Lyceum lectures, and the Lyceum lecture of that day was a means of education […] We had John Quincy Adams, Edward Everett, John Pierpont and Ralph Waldo Emerson among our lecturers, with numerous distinguished clergymen of the day.[64]

It was the efforts of author Harriet Martineau, however, that facilitated the national and transatlantic reception of the *Offering*. Martineau first visited Lowell in 1834 during an American tour, and was so impressed with the *Offering* that she "solicited a review" of the magazine in *The Athenaeum*. Maria Frawley illustrates that Martineau's efforts to popularize the *Offering* did not stop with a single review:

> [Martineau] also brought the magazine to the attention of one of her publishers, the enterprising Charles Knight […] Nearly fifteen years later, after negotiating with Henry Reeve to produce an essay on "Female Industry" for the *Edinburgh Review*, Martineau included the *Lowell Offering* in the series of texts under consideration […][65]

Frawley persuasively claims that Martineau's efforts reflect a multi-faceted, trans-class feminist network of writers and activists that stretched across the Atlantic Ocean and "linked a variety of readerships" not simply "those characterized as 'American' or 'British."[66] Rightly asserting that this

---

[63] A formative mouthpiece for Transcendentalist writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Margaret Fuller, *The Dial* was originally published between 1840 and 44. However, Emerson wrote to Fuller on August 4, 1840 that he would "not have [*The Dial* be] too purely literary," he wanted it to speak on everything from "the law on property, government, education, as well as on art, letters, & religion." For further discussion of *The Dial* by Emerson see: Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Letter to Margaret Fuller, August 4, 1840," in *Emerson's Prose and Poetry*, ed. Saundra Morris and Joel Porte, 1st ed. (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co., 2001), 549.

[64] Larcom, *A New England Girlhood*, 252–53.

[65] Maria Frawley, "Behind the Scenes of History: Harriet Martineau and 'The Lowell Offering,'" *Victorian Periodicals Review* 38, no. 2 (2005): 143, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20084059.

[66] Ibid., 144.

particular network of readers and writers—facilitated by middle-class Martineau—is representative of women's awareness of their authorial identities within the largely masculine dominated world of publishing, Frawley's argument revolves around the patronage and influence of bourgeois female authors on behalf of their working-class counterparts. This conclusion, however, fails to explore the reception and exchange of typologies and strategies of self-representation between networks of working and middle-class authors and texts. By focusing on Martineau's efforts to patronize the *Offering* and its writers, Frawley's analysis elides how the contributors to the *Offering* variously adopted and resisted the "factory girl" representation that authors such as Martineau were attempting to sell to American and British publishers.

For example, Martineau asserts that the greatest appeal of the *Offering* was knowing that it was produced in, what she viewed as, the ultimate context of female financial and social empowerment:

> […] so that in reading the "Offering," I saw again in my memory the street of houses built by the earnings of the girls.[67]

Martineau viewed the Lowell women's work as proof of "the invigorating effects of MIND in a life of labor," harnessing the *Offering* as evidence that women could both publicly labor and publish successfully.[68] Despite Martineau's intense promotion of the *Offering* on behalf of its creators, the factory girl in Martineau's letter is an opportunity for bourgeois, educated women to validate their own endeavors into professional writing. Larcom and the other women's poems in the *Offering*, however, indicate a desire to actively reshape how the factory-employed woman functioned as a social identity for working-class women within and outwith wage-labor, rather than what their labor meant for their middle-class peers. In other words, contributors to the *Offering* such as Larcom were primarily

[67] Harriet Martineau, "Letter to Charles Knight" (Tynemouth, 1844).
[68] Ibid.

concerned with how they could align their unique experiences with the conventions of bourgeois femininity and middle-class poetics.

An example of the tensions between factory women's appropriation of bourgeois typologies and their attempts to reparatively cast working-class women within them is Larcom's 1845 poem, "The Early Doomed." Written in blank-verse, the poem is a dramatic monologue in which the speaker—a dying young woman—wishes that her upcoming death will be a lesson in peace and Christian faith for her friends. The narrative of the poem is ostensibly conventional, and reaffirms representations of dying women as passively pious and accepting of their fate. However, "The Early Doomed" takes the typology of the woman as devout martyr and transforms it into an opportunity to validate women's labor, social reform, and an individual's experience of faith as integral to ideal femininity. Published in her final year at Lowell, Larcom's "The Early Doomed" circumvents the material requirements of wealth and social status required for domestic, middle-class femininity through an evangelical interpretation of "moral" labor.

As in "To the Linnoea Borealis" and "The River," Larcom positions the speaker's subjectivity in nature. She states that everything she sees, "The moon, the rainbow, and the evening star" (3) are her "familiar friends" (4) and serve as family to her.[69] Larcom reduces the distance between tactile and affective experience, by incorporating abstract notions of death and the afterlife into the descriptions of the girl's desire to live "to do good" (59).[70] However, it is the third stanza that makes a more provocative statement about class, gender, and religion. The third stanza discusses the speaker's intended plans for their life, and how an early death and God's will have altered them:

> Oh! I had thought to live for noble ends!
> My heart, my life, my all I'd offer up
> A sacrifice to Him who died for me.

[69] Lucy Larcom, "The Early Doomed," *The Lowell Offering* (Lowell, March 1845), 53.
[70] Ibid.

> And I had just begun to feel the bliss
> Of living to do good. How precious were
> The few sweet buds of promise I had plucked
> For my best Friend; —the holy thoughts half-waked,—
> Hands won to do some gentle charity,—
> Or feet to tread the shining way of life!
> Alas! not half my work is done. How much
> I have to live for! Yet it was His work,
> And He will finish it. He does not need
> My feeble service more, but bids me come
> And rest with Him. Why should I wish to live
> In this low world, when the GOOD SHEPHERD calls,
> Like a stray lamb, my soul into his fold? (55-70)[71]

Though the desire to live a life devoted to charity and good works was conventional in Christian devotional writing, both the publication context and Larcom's language offer a more nuanced reading of the text. The local readers of the *Offering* would have a dual definition of "work," and the "Hands" (62) and "feet" (63) that were wont to finish their charitable, spiritual work can be extended to the daily spinning and weaving of factory laborers. The God that calls the speaker to finish her "labor" early claims that He does not need her "feeble service more" (67); the female speaker's life—despite her earlier appreciation for nature and her community—is structured by her participation in useful labor. Embodying the philosophy of labor for all Christians present in Larcom's autobiography, "The Early Doomed" constructs a representation of virtuous femininity that is dependent on rather than opposed to labor. Significantly, this enables Larcom to advocate for multiple types of women's labor, from creative to industrial. This aligns with Martineau's interest in promoting the benefits of women's intellectual and public work, but also allows female factory workers to read their wage-labor as not only socially acceptable but a commendable, spiritual act. Like Martineau's promotion of the *Offering*, Larcom's "The Early Doomed" gestures towards an aspiring feminist network. However, Larcom's poem claims potential class fluidity in nineteenth-century America through religious as well as gender

[71] Ibid.

solidarity. Larcom's evangelical faith creates a socially legitimate space for women to actively reform and labor in her poetry. While that labor is not frequently depicted as overt factory labor in Larcom's *Offering* poetry, it nevertheless validates women's public labor as respectable and spiritually essential.

Both "The River" and "The Early Doomed" reveal Larcom's difficulties in creating a female factory representation that successfully marries the industrial class contexts of the Lowell mill women with the materially-reliant, gendered expectations of bourgeois society. By writing within a devotional, evangelical mode, Larcom reframes her subjective experiences of labor to legitimize mill-women's identities through dominant ideologies of Christian evangelicalism and self-improvement. Larcom's strategy of representation, however, frequently results in a female, working-class typology whose factory labor is implied, and whose material class markers—such as their clothing, wages, and boarding-house residences—are deemphasized in favor of how their spirituality incorporates them into a community of both domestic, bourgeois women and a larger group of male and female Christians in America. Nevertheless, Larcom's Lowell poetry exemplifies a method of discussing class and gender outwith their conventionally secular and opposing social contexts.

In the following section, I move from Larcom's poetry that appeared in the *Offering* to her epic verse-novel *An Idyl of Work* published in 1875—thirty years after she left both Lowell and factory work. *An Idyl of Work* is, in many ways, a working-class response to Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* and features subjective, intellectual, and emotionally dynamic factory women. Experimental in its poetics as well as its representations of class and gender, *An Idyl of Work* attempts to reconfigure how factory women could and should be represented in nineteenth-century literature and society, only to retreat into conventional narratives of sentimental romance and conventional typologies of working women by its conclusion. While Larcom's factory women characters in *An Idyl of Work* subversively combine middle-class religious morals and education with working-class

ideologies of labor, class solidarity, and self-improvement, they are circumscribed into the traditional roles of domestic wife, mother, or "fallen woman" by the end of the poem. In relation to Larcom's *Offering* poetry, *An Idyl of Work* is more concerted in its exploration of the influences of Christianity, education, and popular literature on specifically factory women at Lowell; however, it maintains a commitment to validating working-class women as moral, acceptable members of bourgeois society by writing them into the scripts of middle-class, domesticated Christian femininity. Based on her experiences at Lowell, *An Idyl of Work* makes overt the discussions of gender and class to which Larcom's juvenilia in the *Offering* only alludes through the distancing veil of sentimental spirituality and general Christian ethics.

An Idyl of Work

After a decade living, working, and writing in Lowell, Larcom left Massachusetts to live with her sister and brother-in-law in the sparsely populated plains of Illinois. Larcom's brother-in-law was a schoolmaster and small-scale farmer who saw the West as an opportunity to improve his failing health and educate the rural populace. Upon her departure, the editors of the *Offering* provided Larcom with a "testimonial in money, accompanied by an acknowledgement of [her] contributions during several years."[72] The receipt of this small testimonial was the first time Larcom received monetary compensation for her writing, an event so unexpected that she "did not know how to look upon it."[73] This payment represented both an opportunity and a shift in paradigm for Larcom because it marked a transition from the wages she received for factory work and the possibility of establishing herself as a professional, public author. The poetry that she produced in this period primarily consisted of pastoral reflections on her new environment; however, she simultaneously composed *An Idyl of Work* during this time—the completion and publication of which was supported by Larcom's mentor and

[72] Larcom, *A New England Girlhood*, 260.
[73] Ibid.

friend John Greenleaf Whittier who hoped the novel-poem would positively describe mill life and the possibilities it presented women. The resulting piece, however, was less a positive proclamation of female factory-labor, and more an attempt to transplant bourgeois narratives of women's writing and domestic romance into a working-class setting. Contrary to Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh*—even though Harriet Beecher Stowe reportedly considered Larcom an "American Mrs. Browning"—*An Idyl of Work* transposes bourgeois values onto the whole of the factory environment, rather than subsuming the complex hierarchy of nineteenth-century class difference beneath the gendered network of sentimental and domestic romance.[74]

Worked on for years and eventually published in 1875 by Osgood & Company, *An Idyl of Work* includes a dedication to "working-women" by "one of their sisterhood."[75] This dedication targets a similar audience to Larcom's later *A New England Girlhood* in terms of readership, yet the phrasing privileges a particularly classed community as opposed to a broader, trans-class appeal to women. Despite Greenleaf Whittier's continued support for the project, Larcom consciously chose to dedicate the work to the subjects of the poem rather than her literary peers and supporters—her dedication assumes a network of female working readers who share her cultural background in evangelical Christianity, New England culture, and factory labor. Based on his letters to Larcom, Greenleaf Whittier envisioned the poem to be a *Künstlerroman* of the factory-woman, one that conveyed a positive and, in many ways, romanticized narrative of women's factory-labor and working-class aspiration at Lowell—a modernized, American adaptation of Wolfgang von Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795) or the more recent and relevant *Jane Eyre* (1847) by Charlotte Brontë. Greenleaf Whittier's belief in the utopic aspects of Lowell and its workers was not unusual, even in the 1870s after much of the original Lowell workforce had been replaced with male and female immigrants from Ireland, a

[74] Quoted in Shirley Marchalonis, "Lucy Larcom (1824-1893)," *Legacy* 5, no. 1 (1988): 106.
[75] Lucy Larcom, *An Idyl of Work* (Boston: Osgood & Company, 1875), xvi.

fact illustrated by the popularity of Lowell mill-girl autobiographies such as Larcom's *A New England Girlhood* and Harriet Robinson's *Loom and Spindle, or Life Among the Early Mill Girls*, both published in the 1890s.

An Idyl of Work, however, is not a surrogate for the Lowell system of industry, nor does it align with other narratives of factory-labor more broadly in texts by authors such as Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna, Elizabeth Gaskell, and Charlotte Brontë. Rather, Larcom's *Idyl* is an exploration of factory-women's multi-faceted voices and typologies, and how the ideology of a moralistic, hard-working New England factory woman fails to capture the complex interplay of religion, gender, and class in these women's lives. Additionally, as noted by Jenkins Cook, *Idyl* "dares to imagine the female factory worker as the ideal citizen of a democratic America.[76] The novel-poem follows the story of four women working in an analogue to Lowell Mills, and depicts their relationships and daily lives over the course of a year. Very little scholarly work has been done on *An Idyl of Work*, the most notable analysis being Mary Loeffelholz's discussion of culture, autobiography, and class in *Idyl*. Loeffelholz claims that the poem is about the "material conditions not of industry but of literacy," an issue that "threaded its way through all of Larcom's working life, long after she left the mills behind."[77] Loeffelholz's analysis concludes that Larcom's "anthology-poem" was an effort to "claim the meaning of her own collective past and project it forward in to the national future."[78]

This effort is evident as early as the preface Larcom wrote to accompany the poem. In it, Larcom recognizes the labor that was needed to produce the poem, equating creative and factory wage-labor. In her chapter "The Working Woman's Bard," Jenkins Cook claims that *Idyl* had "no precedent in either American or English poetry as an extensive excursion […] into the lives and the

[76] Jenkins Cook, *Working Women, Literary Ladies: The Industrial Revolution and Female Aspiration*, 166.
[77] Mary Loeffelholz, "'A Strange Medley-Book': Lucy Larcom's an Idyl of Work," *The New England Quarterly* 80, no. 1 (2007): 7, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20474509.
[78] Ibid., 34.

values of working women."[79] She rightly notes that Larcom's object with *Idyl* was to consciously redefine the "spirit of national life," and position the factory woman as its moral epicenter.[80] Jenkins Cook concludes that *An Idyl of Work*:

> […] is politically conservative insofar as it avoids analyzing the factory women as victims of class or gender exploitation, or as disenfranchised members of the nominally democratic society the poem celebrates, but, Larcom's voice is confident in asserting its subjects' equality with anyone in the nation.[81]

The democratic ideal of the factory as a microcosm of a republican American society—as shown by the protagonists' varying economic, geographical, and religious backgrounds—supports Jenkins Cook's conclusion that the poem limits the norm of the ideal factory woman to that of "white, female, [and] Christian," but that it also enables her to be:

> […] fit for manual and mental labor, capable not only of serving the needs of industry but of settling the frontier, educating the citizens, aspiring to the highest ideals of life, and ultimately becoming the American poet.[82]

However, Jenkins Cook fails to examine how the language, representations, and poetics in *Idyl* construct a deeply conflicted and, I argue, self-serving typology of Lowell's factory women.

Like her discussion of the religious benefits of labor in *A New England Girlhood*, Larcom's preface to *An Idyl of Work* validates multiple forms of labor as socially acceptable:

> That any work by which mankind is benefited can degrade the worker seems an absurd idea to be met with in a Christian republic […] Labor, in itself, is neither elevating nor otherwise. It is the laborer's privilege to ennoble his work by the aim with which he undertakes it, and by the enthusiasm and faithfulness he puts into it.[83]

These statements define Larcom as a lifelong laborer despite her official departure from factory wage-labor several decades earlier and, more importantly, they explicitly recontextualize factory-labor within

[79] Jenkins Cook, *Working Women, Literary Ladies: The Industrial Revolution and Female Aspiration*, 167.
[80] Larcom, *A New England Girlhood*, ix–x; Jenkins Cook, *Working Women, Literary Ladies: The Industrial Revolution and Female Aspiration*, 170.
[81] Ibid., 170.
[82] Ibid., 187.
[83] Larcom, *An Idyl of Work*, vii.

a paradigm of Christian self-improvement and spiritual development. By emphasizing the laborer's role in defining the morality of almost any form of labor, Larcom denies associations of working-class labor with moral degradation.

Structurally, Loeffelholz suggests that Larcom gestures towards a poetic form that is more "complex, multilayered, and intertextual," such as Tennyson's *The Princess* (1847) or Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* (1856), texts that Larcom would have seen succeed critically and commercially.[84] In many ways, the structure and form of *An Idyl of Work* reads as an answer to many of the social issues raised in Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh*. The parallels between the two novel-length poems are significant, particularly concerning the "types" of characters in each text. In Larcom's work, Esther, the budding writer, is the factory-employed equivalent of the middle-class Aurora in Barrett Browning's epic. Attempting to achieve her dream of writing and publishing her poetry, Esther also serves as an arbiter of morality for her friends and colleagues—a morality that develops from her individual interpretations of the Bible and teachings from the religious leaders. In her approach to spirituality, Esther directly echoes Larcom's description of her own spiritual development in her adolescence and young adulthood. Like Aurora, Esther spends much of the poem attempting to reform the behavior of characters whose underprivileged history or illicit romantic choices have left them "in need" of rehabilitation from a more "appropriate" female subject. Though Esther is the moral head of the story, much of her narrative is more concerned with understanding the role of God in working women's lives than actual engagement with many of the social issues with which her compatriots are forced to deal. Jenkins Cook claims that Esther does not engage with any actual reform out of a fused "womanliness and idealism" that privileges internal revolution over militant activism.[85]

[84] Loeffelholz, "'A Strange Medley-Book': Lucy Larcom's an Idyl of Work," 6.
[85] Jenkins Cook, *Working Women, Literary Ladies: The Industrial Revolution and Female Aspiration*, 172.

For Jenkins Cook and Loeffelholz, Esther is a projection of Larcom's self-identity and is proof positive of the poet's ability to weave together the paradoxes of class, gender, and culture in factory women's lives. However, Esther's intellectualism and earnest idealism is ultimately subsumed beneath conventional bourgeois "womanliness" by the poem's close. Esther, like Aurora and Larcom herself, resists seeking marriage in favor of honing her poetic skills to earn a living; yet, Esther becomes a domestic wife and helpmate of a doctor who recalls the middle-class reformer Romney Leigh from Barrett Browning's text. Despite Larcom's attempts to write a mill woman who is a virtuous Christian, successful industrial wage laborer, and educated woman, Esther's narrative illustrates how the typology of the idealized bourgeois woman served as a central or even "default" identity for nineteenth-century women writers. Though Larcom chose to remain single, the marriage of the semi-autobiographical Esther underscores the poet's ultimate inability to construct a subjective female factory worker that does not ultimately align with the conventional archetypes of women in the sentimental, domestic narrative. Though Esther's factory labor—prefaced by her strong Christian values—empowers her to confidently claim that her wage labor is morally, intellectually, and spiritually beneficial, it does not provide enough social validation for Larcom to envision a narrative conclusion for her that is not a similar embourgeoisement to that of both Aurora and Marian Erle in *Aurora Leigh*.

The other heroines of *Idyl*—conceited Isabel and sickly Eleanor—are much more archetypal, made interesting primarily by their location outside of a domestic setting. While the different backgrounds and personalities of the mill women assert the individuality and richness of the women who work in New England mills, the chronicles of each character reflect dominant ideologies of middle-class femininity and retrench typologies of female factory wage labor. The narrative sees Isabel nearly ruined by a rakish visitor to the mills, and Eleanor contentedly awaiting death from consumption and her subsequent ascent to heaven.

By reading Esther as Larcom's fictional self, I complicate Loeffelholz and Jenkin Cook's assertions that an *Idyl of Work* is primarily a legitimization of American mill-girl culture by underscoring how Larcom's theology seeks to marry women's creative productivity, working-class community, and wage-labor into a cohesive and subjective spiritual identity that eventually collapses into representations of conventional, nineteenth-century femininity. To bind the multiple narrative threads that she sets into motion, Larcom must occlude the uniquely classed identities of her protagonists for a larger community of middle-class, Christian values.

Though initially set on a factory floor, Larcom embeds her characters—particularly Esther and Eleanor—within a paradigm of Christian domestic femininity:

> "Lady' or 'girl' or 'woman,'
> Whichever word you choose," said Esther, "each
> Means excellence and sweetness. 'Lady,' though,
> Can slip its true sense, leaving an outside
> Easy to imitate. (1.93-97)[86]

Esther then recites a full poem entitled "The Loaf-Giver" in which a kind woman who gives food to the poor is deemed a true "lady" in comparison with the vain actions of Venus, Minerva, and Juno. Larcom via Esther encapsulates both the material experience of working in the factory, and Larcom's larger project of redefining appropriate femininity through the devotional poetry of female communities. As a representation of life at Lowell, Esther's recitation of a poem would not have been uncommon on the factory floor. Larcom recalls that the overseer's desk was full of pages torn from Bibles, novels, and newspapers.[87] Furthermore, the group of women debating the definition of a lady and hearing Esther's recitation gestures towards a definition of femininity rooted in Christian ideologies, and mediated by working-class women. Jama Lazerow notes how Lowell women's

[86] Larcom, *An Idyl of Work*, 15.
[87] Larcom, *A New England Girlhood*, 181.

descriptions of memorizing texts for spiritual and self-improvement is a subversive comment on the oppressive measures taken to control the actions of factory women, and that these women continued to break the ban on Bibles in the factory even though "regular church attendance was a requirement for mill employees.[88] Therefore, Larcom's heroines are depicted circumventing the rules of the factory by making the effort to memorize devotional texts; by locating the episode in a factory, Larcom underpins her heroines' gendered debate on the correct embodiment of "good" femininity with a moment of class-based resistance.

Despite locating the women's bodies within the forum of their industrial employment in the first book of the poem, Larcom pointedly does not feature them working. Seeking to emphasize the "mind amongst the spindles" by depicting them in deep contemplation, Larcom resists depicting the three women physically laboring at their looms in this poignant opening scene—a factory scene without factory labor.[89] Following Esther's recitation of "The Loaf Giver," their colleague and friend Minta Summerfield offers to host Esther, Eleanor, and Isabel at her mountain homestead while the swollen river has halted the machinery's primary source of power and, thus, the women's labor. With one notable exception, the women are not depicted working in the factory for the rest of the narrative, but are described living within the urban center of Lowell or exploring the lush New England landscape. In the sixth book, however, the girls are unexpectedly depicted physically working at the looms on the factory floor:

> The door, swung in on iron hinges, showed
> A hundred girls who hurried to and fro,
> With hands and eyes following the shuttle's flight,
> Threading it, watching for the scarlet mark
> That came up in the web, to show how fast

[88] Jama Lazerow, "Religion and the New England Mill Girl: A New Perspective on an Old Theme," *The New England Quarterly* 60, no. 3 (1987): 439, http://www.jstor.org/stable/365024.
[89] Charles Knight, introduction to *Mind Amongst the Spindles: A Selection from The Lowell Offering, A Miscellany*, ed. Charles Knight (London: Charles Knight & Co., 1844). Knight entitles his edited collection of *The Lowell Offering* to showcase what Knight believed to be the unexpected intellectual capabilities of the women who labored in the Lowell factories.

> Their work was speeding. Clatter went the looms,
> Click-clack the shuttles. Gossamery motes
> Thickened the sunbeams into golden bars,
> And in a misty maze those girlish forms,
> Arms, hands, and heads, moved with the moving
> looms,
> That closed them in as if all were one shape,
> One motion. For the most part tidy they,
> And comely; wholesome-looking country girls.
> But now and then a stolid face, an eye
> That held a covetous glint, a close, cold mouth,
> Made emphasis for itself. And now and then
> A countenance eloquent with quiet thought
> And noble aspiration, shone out clear,
> A sun amid the cloud-like nebulae. (6.65-83)[90]

The women work as so many parts of a single unit, all contributing to a larger industrial goal. "Hurried to and fro" (1.66), the workers must pay close attention to the warp and weave of their looms to calculate the ever-increasing speed of their work. These lines underscore the mental and physical stress placed upon the women who operate the looms; however, they also underscore Larcom's commitment to representing a cohesive community of women laborers who invest value and beauty outside of domestic femininity. The elegant, rhythmic movement of the women exemplifies the communion of nature, poetry, and humanity that Larcom sees as integral to a Christian identity—their bodies, thoughts, and labor are contributing to a larger economic, social and, I argue, religious goal. However, this harmony between labor and the laboring body is undermined by the abrupt separation of "loom" (1.75) from the "Arms, hands, and heads" (1.74) of the previous line. Furthermore, the description of the looms closing "them in as if all were one shape" (1.76) is an ominous distinction between the female laborer and the machinery surrounding her like a cage. The "countenance eloquent" (1.81) that had a more "noble aspiration" (1.82) than her fellow workers asserts the ability of factory women to be exceptionally intelligent and virtuous, but does this by relying on stereotypes of the factory also

[90] Larcom, *An Idyl of Work*, 80.

housing "lesser" women with a "covetous glint" and "close, cold mouth[s]" (1.79). In this section, Larcom evades totalizing definitions of the factory as either a demonic beehive of work or an idyllic sanctuary of rustic labor and, instead, depicts it as an ambiguous space of potential spiritual becoming, in which the mill-workers are both a singular unit of labor and a collection of individual subjectivities.

Though subversive in its refusal to definitively categorize working women or factory labor as uplifting or denigrating, the scene is further complicated by the description of the masculine overseers of the factory. The superintendent of the women's mill examines his female employees with an outside male guest, presumably a potential investor or someone of social importance. He claims that he could show the visitor a "maiden worthy of Murillo's brush"—referring to the comely Isabel.[91] The women are literally being subjected to a male gaze that easily transforms one woman into the subject of an artificial portrait by a Spanish Baroque painter. In terms of the narrative's progress, the superintendent and guest are marveling over Isabel's beauty as it is revealed that she has had previous acquaintance with the visitor. While the men's objectifying stares appear to reduce the impact of Larcom's attempts to subjectify the female workers in the previous lines, they are, nevertheless, narrated by an omnipotent female narrator. Despite her tentatively empowering depiction of the factory as a space that contains a multitude of distinct individuals, the men's intrusion on this space reasserts the hegemony of an industrial gender and class hierarchy in the factory, one defined by powerful, wealthy men. Significantly, this scene could easily be transplanted from the factory into depiction of social politics within the middle-class home.

While book one contains a poignant discussion about femininity surrounded by industrial machinery, the following book shifts to a scene of idyllic nature. Eleanor and Esther are using their day off from mill-work thanks to the flooding of the Merrimack River to contemplate God in the

[91] Ibid., 81.

expansive woods surrounding the factory-city. In her praise of nature's beauty, Eleanor recites a poem about the violets lying upon the ground that exemplifies Larcom's devotional framework that structures her representation of working-class femininity:

> They neither toil nor spin;
> And yet their robes have won
> A splendor never seen within
> The courts of Solomon.
>
> Tints that the cold-rifts hold,
> And rainbow-gossamer,
> The violet's tender form enfold;
> No queen is draped like her.
>
> All heaven and earth and sea
> Have wrought with subtlest power
> That clothed in purple she might be,—
> This little fading flower. (2.60-71)[92]

Eleanor asserts that the beautiful petals of the violets have not been earned by the flowers through "toil or spinning" (60)—the activities that provide Eleanor with her necessary income—but are specifically created for the lowly violets by God. Even more significantly, the violets' beauty is represented by a gown of finest cloth. In these stanzas, Larcom—by way of Eleanor—has utilized the language of the textile industry to make a statement about idealized Christian femininity. The robes that "No queen" (67) possesses shield the violets from danger but are also a result of divine grace. If God provides for the violets, then the women who "must toil and spin" (72) are also working towards a "glorious raiment" (74). Eleanor's song parallels the message in Matthew 6:30:

> But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith![93]

[92] Ibid., 27–28.
[93] Matt. 6:30.

The main subjects of worth in Eleanor's song are not all of humanity, however, they are the working women of textile factories like Isabel, Esther, and herself. Religion and belief in God's benevolence in this poem in a poem serve as outside outlets of self-validation and individual success that cannot be measured by nineteenth-century class or gender standards. In fact, God is depicted as actively weaving the robes of glory for the working women as "His mighty shuttles fly" (79). Not only is God supporting the faithful female factory workers, he himself is a textile laborer. While they may not attain great riches through their humble industrial work, the female mill-workers are supplied with better clothes from the weaving God, the ultimate validation of factory labor as moral and appropriate.

Despite the overtly industrial language and context of Eleanor's song, the type of femininity supported within this poem within a poem is also highly conventional. Larcom privileges a woman-cum-flower who lives a demure and private life, a woman whose value is in her gentle expression of faith and her beauty to those around her. It is at this point that Larcom's overall narrative trajectory privileges a gendered narrative of female community, faith, and writing over class and associated factory labor. After concluding her song, Eleanor witnesses a young girl collapse near the banks of the Merrimack River. The protagonists and the reader are introduced to Ruth who is reacting to a letter she has received from a former paramour: [94]

> The silent girl, lost in her letter's fold,
> Heard hymn and bird-song as she heard the wind,
> Listening to none of them. Something she read
> Hurt her, as by a sudden, secret blow.
> It seemed to her as if a mist had fallen
> Among the trees; the pallid river ran
> Receding in gray distance. "Is it death?"
> She murmured. "If it be death, it is well."

[94] Elizabeth Gaskell's eponymous character in *Ruth* (1853) was left destitute and pregnant by her wealthy lover, and only recovers physically and mentally through the aid of the benevolent Christian support of strangers who grow to be considered her family. *Ruth* was one of Gaskell's most controversial and successful novels, and overtly dealt with the issues of female seduction and victimhood. Though there is no direct evidence that proves Larcom was familiar with *Ruth*, the connections between the two characters are significant.

> And sank in cold unconsciousness (2.82-90).[95]

Like Tennyson's "The Lady of Shallott," or Millais's "Ophelia," Ruth is depicted as melodramatically embracing death within a lushly described landscape—a Pre-Raphaelite tableau. Eleanor and Esther, however, save Ruth from drowning and take her back to their boarding house. It is revealed that Ruth was romantically involved with a young man who promised to marry her, but then abandoned her for reasons that are not entirely explained. While Larcom never clarifies if Ruth has been rendered a "fallen woman" by her previous relationship, the parallels between Ruth's narrative and Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth* and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* embody the transition of Larcom's text from a sketch of industrial life to a more conventional domestic romance. The character of working-class Marian Erle from Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh*, in particular, is an apt mirror to Larcom's Ruth. Both characters are poor and have been abandoned by men; furthermore, each woman is "redeemed" through her friendship with a morally and intellectually superior woman.[96]

A key difference between the physical and social rehabilitation of the working-class character of Marian Erle in Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* and Ruth in Larcom's *An Idyl of Work* is the representation of female labor. Barrett Browning portrays Marian Erle's various forms of wage-labor as the cause of her moral poverty and eventual sexual assault. Though Marian is praised for her desire to learn and read, Barrett Browning—by way of Aurora—does not depict this thirst for knowledge as an opportunity for Marian's catharsis or social repair:

> Her book-leaves, threw away the leaves that hurt,
> (First tore them small, that none should find a word)
> To fold within her breast, and pore upon
> At broken moments of the noontide glare (3.987-91).[97]

---

[95] Ibid., 29.
[96] For further discussion of Barrett Browning's representation of class and gender in the character of Marian Erle in *Aurora Leigh*, see chapter one.
[97] Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1857), 124.

Aurora acknowledges Marian's ability to parse through the scant samples of prose and poetry she encountered for the most morally uplifting passages and quotations. However, Aurora then swiftly turns her attention to more harrowing aspects of Marian's adolescence. Furthermore, the well-intentioned poet does not endeavor to engage with Marian's knowledge of canonical texts as a way by which Marian could locate herself within a framework of social representation. Esther in *An Idyl of Work*, on the other hand, uses canonical and regional poetry as part of the curative with which she approaches Ruth and her situation:

> A smile from Esther answered. She began
> Where her eyes fell. Laodamia's tale
> It chanced to be, with its heroic thoughts
> Climbing sharp crags of sorrow to high faith.
> Ruth listened, musing, till she heard the words,
> "Learn by a mortal yearning to ascend,
> Seeking a higher object." Then she sobbed.
> "it is too hard, too hard! Read something else;
> A song, a ballad, anything!"
> "Dear child,
> The time will come for this too," Esther said;
> "But now your nerves are strained, and you are ill;
> Of that I was too thoughtless."
> And she took
> Another volume from the hanging shelf,
> The three girls' library.
> The one she chose
> Was a strange medley-book of prose and rhyme
> Cut from odd magazines, or pages dim
> Of yellow journals, long since out of print;
> And pasted in against the faded ink
> Of an old log-book, relic of the sea,
> And mostly filled with legends of the shore
> That Esther loved, her home-shore of Cape Ann (3.80-103).[98]

The first verse that Esther reads to Ruth calls for individual morality and fortitude, qualities that Ruth feels that she fails to embody. Rather than abandon this verse for fear of upsetting Ruth, Esther assures Ruth that the time will come when she will be able to face this verse and the parables it contains with

[98] Ibid., 36.

humility and bravery. Esther's statement, though brief, is an assurance that poetry can and will be a necessary aid in allowing Ruth to work-through the reasons for her perceived "fall from grace."

The handmade, commonplace book that Esther decides Ruth can emotionally handle at this early stage of her recovery is further proof of Esther's—and, therefore, Larcom's—belief in the social utility of poetry as a spiritual tool for religious questing. Esther has been gathering the contents of the "strange medley-book" (97) for several years, in a practice that Larcom notes was very popular amongst the factory workers of Lowell.[99] The first poem Esther reads from this tome to Ruth is Larcom's "Peggy Bligh's Voyage," a poem in which a woman is accused of being a witch and is left in Boston by the transport ferry that was supposed to carry her back to her rural home. A story of divine revenge, the poem assures readers that unfounded prejudice against an individual will be met with dire consequences. It is easy to see from the subject of this poem the message that Esther was trying to impart to the patiently listening Ruth: the ill girl's uncertain past will be forgiven by the women at Lowell, even if the rest of society will not reciprocate the understanding. This forgiveness, however, is based upon a shared gender identity rather than a class one. Though the women all happen to be factory-workers, their sympathies for Ruth's plights extend beyond their class context.

Where Aurora in Barrett Browning's poem ultimately removes Marian from the harsh criticisms of nineteenth-century literary and popular society to a secluded villa in Italy to raise her illegitimate son, Esther seeks to ease Ruth back into the public consciousness through the medium of poetry and a reinterpretation of God's divine mercy. Poetry serves as an escape for the luckless Marian Erle while it represents a bridge to social normalcy and self-actualization for Ruth. This process is best highlighted by Ruth's revelation of her past to Esther at the beginning of the seventh book:

> And Ruth could sing herself, with pen and ink.
> She soothed her heartaches so, sometimes; though

[99] Ibid.

close
She hid her old portfolio full of verse,—
All sentiment, she knew; but only thus
Would grief translate the blurred text of chained
books
In her heart's crypt.

'T is no good place for songs,
Dungeoned in self. Birds in a darkened cage
Stop singing: a true hymn is born of light.
Still Ruth won some poor comfort from her grief,
Humming it over to herself alone,
Half hopeful of its taking wing at last. (7.9-22)[100]

The process of writing poetry proves a cathartic transition from introverted melancholy to extroverted self-representation. Unlike Marian's eventual isolation from individual public work, Ruth has been led on a path in which poetry has enabled her to recontextualize her actions as part of a larger journey to salvation amongst a female, religious community.

The emphasis on the importance of emotional morality over physical behavior is notable. Ruth is distressed because she has been emotionally compromised, a crisis of faith for an Evangelical woman. Zsuzsa Berend argues that Ruth's reaction is not uncommon for the New England women who were most intimately involved with religious revival movements. These Evangelical women's association of "spontaneity of feeling with true faith" led them to elevate the value of their own emotions as much as their spiritual devotion.[101] It is noteworthy, however, that Ruth is never clearly defined as having had an illicit sexual relationship with the man who abandoned her. This is significant because it means that her "wrongdoing" has been more of a disappointment than an actual social transgression, making her much easier to reincorporate back into respectable femininity. The treatment of Ruth as a "fallen woman"—when put into context with more popular representations of socially illicit women—forces the reader to not only regard the importance of women's emotions

[100] Ibid., 86.
[101] Zsuzsa Berend, "'The Best or None!' Spinsterhood in Nineteenth-Century New England," 937.

surrounding their self-identity, but question the very foundations upon which society labels a woman as illicit or inappropriate. By creating a fallen woman who does not conform to the traditional behaviors of that typology, Larcom highlights the vulnerability of working women as well as the complexity of their backgrounds and situations. The necessity of Ruth's work after her father dies—an autobiographical connection with Larcom's personal situation—is what enables her to independently care for her family, and ultimately achieve a closer relationship with God.

Significantly, Larcom's representation of the other fallen woman character—Isabel—is not mediated by poetry but by specific forms of labor. After Isabel runs away with a man called Willoughby to marry him, he summarily abandons her at an inn near Boston without notice as to where he's gone or when he will return.[102] At this point, Isabel's modesty and chastity are already considered conceded by the public:

> He left me, on arriving at an inn,
> Bonneted, waiting his return. Since then
> I have not seen him. That some accident
> Kept him, I feared. But the landlady laughed
> At such a hint, with knowing looks. My tears
> Awoke her pity, and she found me work (11.318-323).[103]

Isabel accepts the work claiming that she "would earn honest bread" (11.328) and "begged for any drudgery" (11.329). Contrary to Ruth's process of reincorporation to the social morality of the Lowell workers, Isabel's journey is begun by work that is hard to accept but necessary for survival. Once the aunt of the man who abandoned her—Miriam Willoughby—takes her in, she also pressures Isabel to keep her hands at work with "white sewing-work" (XI: 362). Unlike Marian Erle in *Aurora Leigh*, Isabel is saved by her work rather than further exposed to heartbreak and betrayal. Like poetry in Ruth's

[102] The betrayer's name, Willoughby, recalls the Libertine villain of Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) who entices Marianne Dashwood to fall in love with him only to abandon her for a wealthier woman. While I cannot find any reference to Larcom reading Austen's novels, it would not have been unusual for a woman with her education and fondness of reading to have encountered them.
[103] Ibid., 159.

case, work becomes a journey for Isabel to embody a Mary Magdalene progression of oppressed sinner to empowered, forgiven laborer. That Ruth is redeemed by poetry and Isabel is redeemed by labor stresses Larcom's commitment to weaving together the virtues of literary and manual labor. However, Isabel's work is entirely domestic and conventional. As a seamstress and milliner, Isabel is removed from the public sphere of the factory and placed into the confines of distinctly non-industrial domestic labor. Larcom's pathways to redemption for these women—though they equate different forms of women's labor—each result in a removal from public wage labor.

At this point, the narrative of *An Idyl of Work* collapses as Larcom must scramble to weave together the numerous plot threads she cast out throughout the poem. Esther is quickly engaged to Doctor Mann and Isabel moves to live permanently in the domestic female community of Minta Summerfield's home. Eleanor peacefully dies of her consumption, while Ruth finds a man who accepts her for her past and is quickly married. Larcom cannot reconcile her characters' factory work with the dominant tropes of domestic femininity and, therefore, must write an ending that is within the scripts of the canonical, domestic romance. Larcom's heroines are removed from factory labor but cannot be fully incorporated into dominant tropes of domestic femininity—a conclusion that echoes the abrupt removal of Mary and Jem from Manchester to Canada in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton*. However, this is an uncomplicated view of Larcom's ending which includes a passage about the futures of many formerly Lowell employed women:

> Turn forward, leaves of fate!
> There's one will go among the Cherokees,
> A mission-teacher. At the Capitol
> One will be seen, bride of a Senator.
> A country and a city parsonage
> Await those grave-eyed sisters. Alice, there,
> Will sail with her proud Captain round the globe,
> While little Ann paints pictures with her pen.
> That broad-browed, delicate girl will carve, at Rome,
> Faces in marble, classic as her own.

> And this, a millionaire's wife, will regret
> Her dear old factory-nook, and the clear gold
> The sunshine coined there, bringing her no care.
> Some will wear out in schools their faithful lives;
> And most be happy wives, in thrifty homes,
> Mothers of men and women (12.146-61).[104]

As one of the concluding stanzas to *An Idyl of Work*, these lines affirm Larcom's view that factory work was not a lifelong endeavor for most women, and that it should not be considered strange that "they should write […] or study, or read, or think."[105] According to Larcom, the factories at Lowell were places where moral women could come, earn money, and exercise their minds if they dedicated themselves to developing their religious sensibilities through study, conversation, and introspection. Of course, this progressive affirmation is interrogated by the departure of all her characters into heteronormative marriages by the end of the poem. Though Lowell represents a space of learning, perseverance, and morality to Larcom, she still cannot craft a narrative that does not resolve its female factory-employed characters into the neat lives outside of industrial labor. In *An Idyl of Work*, Larcom is caught between attempting to establish the goodness and subjectivity of the factory woman and incorporating these working women into the arc of a feminist *bildungsroman*. The unifying thread of the poem, however, is its expression of a female Christian identity that—though frequently idealized or articulated through archetypal figures—empowers working women to integrate their personal experiences of labor and society into a larger project of spiritual growth.

Conclusions

Despite the transatlantic acclaim of *The Lowell Offering* and the publication of the epic *An Idyl of Work*, Larcom's most famous poem is entitled "Hannah Binding Shoes." Originally published in the journal *Knickerbocker* without Larcom's knowledge and reproduced in *The Crayon* with her permission

[104] Ibid., 177–78.
[105] Lucy Larcom, *A New England Girlhood*, 223.

in 1857, the poem depicts a faithful wife who waits in vain for her husband to return from work at sea:

> Poor lone Hannah,
> Sitting at the window, binding shoes.
> Faded, wrinkled,
> Sitting, stitching, in a mournful muse.
> Bright-eyed beauty once was she,
> When the bloom was on the tree;
> Spring and winter
> Hannah's at the window, binding shoes.
>
> Not a neighbor
> Passing nod or answer will refuse
> To her whisper
> "Is there from the fishers any news?"
> Oh, her heart's adrift, with one
> On an endless voyage gone!
> Night and morning
> Hannah's at the window, binding shoes.
>
> […]
>
> Twenty winters
> Bleach and tear the rugged shore she views.
> Twenty seasons;
> Never one has brought her any news.
> Still her dim eyes silently
> Chase the white sails o'er the sea.
> Hopeless, faithful,
> Hannah's at the window, binding shoes. (1-16, 41-48)[106]

Larcom's "Hannah" is situated in a rural, coastal setting that is strikingly like Larcom's own childhood. Unlike Larcom, however, Hannah marries a local fisherman as a young adult. Once her new husband is presumed drowned while working away from home, Hannah is left to sit at the window "in a mournful muse" (4). Like the mythical Penelope, Hannah patiently attends to her domestic duties in

[106] Lucy Larcom, "Hannah Binding Shoes," *The Crayon* (New York: W.J. Stillman and J. Durand) no. 12 (4): Dec. 1857, 366.

the hopes that her husband will return from the mysterious reaches of the sea. Though the title of the poem revolves around Hannah's labor, it is wholly completed within the domestic sphere—binding shoes was an important form of household labor in rural, particularly, preindustrial economies. Furthermore, the poem harnesses her domestic labor as a metaphor for her commitment to sustaining the markers of her married domesticity for the remainder of her life. The poem's meter, however, is awkward and underscores the instability and social strangeness of Hannah's role and unending labor. For example, the multiple stressed words in lines such as "Poor lone Hannah" (1) emphasize Hannah's separation from not only her husband but her isolation from the normal rhythms of rural, social life. Rhyming "shoes" (2) with "muse" (4), Larcom familiarly places poetic language alongside labor. However, these two forms of labor do not intersect peacefully for Hannah, they disrupt the rhythms of her life as she labors in "Spring and winter" (7) without domestic validation from her husband or economic legitimization through wages from her labor. Furthermore, the community that answers Hannah's queries views her as a dependent even though she is the sole provider of her household. Gone is the opportunity for spiritual and intellectual growth for working women that Larcom promotes in her *Offering* poetry and *An Idyl of Work*, replaced by a representation of labor that serves only as a sentimental device in a pastoral melodrama. "Hannah Binding Shoes" marks Larcom's transition from a theologically rooted class and gender statement to a more apolitical and conventional representation of female domesticity in rural New England.

The popularity of "Hannah Binding Shoes" reflects a desire for a nostalgic view of preindustrial, rural life for Larcom's readership who idealized the early nineteenth century as a romantic period of traditional white, Christian gender and class values. By the poem's publication, the American landscape and economy was rapidly shifting from agrarian to urban and economically expansive. The experiences from which Larcom drew much of her inspiration and subjects in her earlier poetry were no longer available to her readers. By the end of Larcom's life, Lowell Mill was no

longer a tightly-controlled utopic vision of factory-labor, but a more traditionally run complex of mills where the cheap labor and low-risk of activism from Irish and Eastern and Southern European immigrants meant a demographic shift in the workforce. The earlier dream of rural women to gain an education and experience at Lowell evaporated with the growth of urban factories in cities such as New York and Chicago, and increasing participation in labor unions such as the Female Labor Reform Association and its associated magazine, *The Voice of Industry*, headed by former Lowell mill girl, Sarah Bagley.

Following the success of "Hannah Binding Shoes," Larcom continued to move away from the complexly theological poems of women's class and gender experiences that characterized her early work. Her most popular collection of poems, *Childhood Songs*, featured several of the poems she contributed to *Our Young Folks* magazine, a publication she also edited for several years. In it, Larcom narrates an idealized and starkly apolitical message to children, one that neither confronts nor subverts social or literary conventions. Featuring poems such as "Spring Whistles," "Gipsy Children's Song," and "Dumpy Ducky," *Childhood Songs* diametrically opposes the issues presented in *Idyl*, as if—though published in the same year—each volume marks the extremes of her engagement with poetry as a medium for social and religious reform and commentary. Larcom's increase in writing children's poetry in later life, I argue, reflects an increasing reticence and inability to encapsulate the evolving class and gender typologies of nineteenth-century New England. The rural, Puritan context of her childhood was rapidly being replaced by urban cosmopolitanism, while the Lowell of her adolescence was an increasingly secular, multicultural environment in which men and women labored. By dedicating her time to teaching, writing poetry for children, and producing strictly devotional poetry and prose, Larcom could write within a representational framework of which she had personal experience, and to a religious community of which she was still a relevant contributor.

Larcom's earlier work, on the other hand, provides scholars with a glimpse of both the complex class structures of early-industrial America, and how its theological and social traditions made it, in many ways, distinct from yet related to the parallel industrial systems of Britain. Harnessing the language of bourgeois devotional writers, Transcendental philosophers, and canonical women writers, Larcom crafted a working-class woman that attempted to remove work from its physical, material contexts and incorporate it into a larger ideology of religious and social subjectivity. Unlike the poetry of Ellen Johnston or Fanny Forrester, Larcom's writing does not seek outright "escape" from female factory labor, so much as it redefines the terms on which it should be viewed. By weaving wage-labor into a strain of religious teaching that emphasized individual sentiment and stressed the equality of all humans before God, Larcom—if not successfully—transforms the factory-woman into a legitimized and independent agent of Christian faith.

However, Larcom, Forrester, and Johnston share more than just their experiences of labor in textile factories. Though they come from different publishing, economic, and social contexts, each woman attempted to articulate their unique class and gender identities through poetry. Often published in periodicals and newspapers, these three poets reveal the tensions and freedoms that accompanied the intersection of these marginal social representations, even if the formal aspects of their poetry varied, and their interpretation of a "factory girl" identity differed. In my conclusion to this thesis, I underscore the parallels between these women's lives and texts, exploring how their poems—when read in the context of each other—reveal a female working-class narrative that adapts preexisting aesthetic and representational typologies from popular, bourgeois texts to make a distinct working-class women's poetics.

Conclusion

> I may not see you more on earth, but your sweet voice I hear;
> Its silvery tones are ringing now as music, mother dear:
> They soothe me when I'm feeling sad, when troubled thoughts are mine.
> When life seems blank they ring again, those silvery tones of thine. (1-4)[1]

Like Fanny Forester, Mary Harriet Smith was a popular contributor of sentimental and landscape poetry to *Ben Brierley's Journal* throughout the 1870s. Smith, however, does not directly refer to her involvement in any wage-labor, factory or otherwise. In fact, she signs several of her poems as Mrs. M. Harriet Smith, a signature that entrenches her identity as a married woman within the domestic themes of her poetry. The above lines begin Smith's "Ethel Grey," a poem about a young woman's nostalgia for her deceased mother and enduring faith in Christ. The forms and subject of the poem are highly conventional and, significantly, idealize a middle-class community of domestic, Christian femininity. The repetitive AABB of the fourteeners that structure each stanza reflect the comforting music that reminds the speaker of her mother. Published in a working-class periodical, Smith resists depicting labor or any distinct markers of working-class life; rather, she underscores her poetry and poetic identity with the discourse of immaterial sentiment, a world in which earthly troubles are redeemed in a classless, idyllic afterlife. The conventionality of Smith's "Ethel Grey," however, is complicated by another of her poems from two years later. Writing to Forrester in 1875, Smith states that society needs writers like she and Smith because:

> The world has need of singers, who can cheer
> Sad hearts, and wile away their pain and fear:
> With songs so sweet they cannot choose but hear. (13-5)[2]

Alongside the palliative effects that Smith views her and Forrester's poetry having on readers, the final line makes an empowering statement about how that sentimentality makes them influential. Within

[1] Mary Harriet Smith, "Ethel Grey," *Ben Brierley's Journal*, June 1873.
[2] Mary Harriet Smith, "To Fanny Forrester," *Ben Brierley's Journal*, January 30, 1875.

Smith's plea for Forrester to keep writing, there is an awareness of the conventions they employ and the effectiveness of those forms to resonate with their audiences.

Smith's assertion of her and other working-class women's places within nineteenth-century poetics encapsulates how I have approached the three factory-women poets of my analysis. By close-reading the primarily periodical and newspaper poems of Ellen Johnston, Fanny Forrester, and Lucy Larcom, I have uncovered a narrative of subjectivity and poetic identity for female factory writers that is more nuanced than what Pamela Fox calls the "reproduction-resistance circuit" in which "members of marginal or subordinate groups" redefine themselves against a hegemonic "center" while they mediate cultural and economic forces."[3] I have illustrated how moments of conformity in poetic form, subject, and self-representation in these women's poetry both harness and redefine the boundaries of bourgeois femininity and working-class identity. Writing within genres such as domestic romance, working-class pastoral, and Evangelical devotional writing, my poets attempted to lay claim to how they were read and published in nineteenth-century society.

Fanny Forrester's poetry in *Ben Brierley's Journal* harnesses pastoral poetry as a way of reconfiguring and, in many cases, escaping urban, factory life for working-class women. The ways in which these poems contrast with her representations of the hardships of working-class life in poems such as "Strangers in the City" and "Gloaming in the City" express a deep dissatisfaction with the opportunities and living standards provided by the industrial city for laborers, and heighten the escapist fantasy of Forrester's pastoral paradises in texts like "To Mary." As I have shown, the ostensible conventionality of Forrester's images and poetics provides her with an opportunity to redefine how working-class women's homes, labor, and bodies are represented. I have not, however, delved into how Forrester interprets and represents her identity as the child of Irish immigrants and

[3] Fox, *Class Fictions: Shame and Resistance in the British Working-Class Novel, 1890-1945*, 3.

the sister of a Fenian activist. Poems such as "Celt and Saxon" and "The Song of Returning Emigrants" present a nostalgic representation of Ireland—a country in which Forrester never lived. Future analysis is needed to explore how this nostalgia for Ireland affects both her poetry and the nostalgia for a rural Lancashire that is privileged in much of the poetry published in *Ben Brierley's Journal*. More research is needed into how Forrester and other writers of Irish descent in Lancashire represent national identity and Irish nostalgia, and how that is received and interpreted by other newspaper poets in English periodicals.

In Ellen Johnston's writing this intersection manifests itself in the range of genres she engages with as "The Factory Girl" in Dundee and Glasgow working-class newspapers. The way in which Johnston and her work react to and are affected by the news coverage and the community of newspaper poets enables her to adapt her poetic identity to include political and social activism, domestic marriage, working-class motherhood, and factory wage-labor. As I discuss, Johnston's poetic conversations provide a crucial entrance into the medium of the working-class newspaper and, in particular, the multiple modes of identity working-class women could harness. My analysis focused on the conversations between Johnston and other female, working-class poets, and how these exchanges embody the importance of the newspaper as a crucial context for constructing female, working-class identity and community. However, more work needs to be done on Johnston's poetic dialogues with male readers and writers. She received criticism, admiration, and even a marriage proposal from various male readers, whose positive or negative comments convey both how working-class women poets were viewed by working-class men, and how working-class women adapted their representations to respond to these men. Furthermore, more research into how Johnston's overtly political poems coincide with or diverge from popular political and social opinions in Scotland is needed. How does Johnston's approach to female factory-labor intersect with dominant representations of Scottish

national identity? Does national identity enable working-class women to deemphasize their gender in favor of a larger, political association?

For Lucy Larcom, national identity was less important than her identification as a devout, Evangelical Christian. Larcom harnesses her faith and budding Transcendentalist philosophy from writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson as a way of framing and legitimizing her factory wage-labor, publishing, desire for education, and decision to remain unmarried. By continually establishing the equality of humans and nature before God, Larcom reconfigures all forms of labor as opportunities for spiritual development, attempting to remove labor from conflicting class and gender paradigms surrounding different forms of work. Furthermore, her epic *An Idyl of Work* (1875) endeavors to represent factory-women as laborers, public social figures, devout Christians, and active writers. This working-class *bildungsroman* provides a unique and subjective series of working-class women characters, even though its conclusion retreats into the conventions of domestic figure—death, marriage, and escape from industrial labor. The way in which Larcom depicts religious devotion as both a class and gender empowering narrative, highlights the relative social fluidity available to American women in the nineteenth-century, as well how these women navigated an industrial landscape that varied widely from its social and political counterparts in Britain. Though research into Larcom has increased, much of her poetry, prose, and letters remain unstudied. Larcom's early work is frequently combined with overviews of *The Lowell Offering*. However, these analyses frequently fail to consider the specific representations and poetics at work in Larcom's poetry, and how these aspects establish a unique interpretation of working-class women and their lives.

Ultimately, my thesis establishes both the existence of factory women's poetry and its aesthetic and thematic diversity. The transatlantic scope of my analysis allows me to adapt my close-readings and critical approach to the individual circumstances of each author, while also providing an in-depth

snapshot of how working-class women could create subjective and dynamic poetic personae through publication in newspapers and periodicals. By examining factory-women poets whose work is well-represented in regional newspapers and periodicals, I have attempted to work outwith the "reproduction-resistance circuit" characteristic of investigations of "minor literature," and provide a method of reading marginal writers' work in a way that is both considerate of the hegemonic "canon" and the intimate community of factory-women poets and readers. Whether through Forrester's reconfigurations of the pastoral, Johnston's division between her labor and her femininity, or Larcom's invocation of Protestant Christianity, each of these factory poets exemplifies the ways in which marginal poets were writing within and against the grain of conventional, nineteenth-century poetics. Neither fully avant-garde nor entirely conformist, these poets crafted subjective and, therefore, subversive self-representations. Ultimately, these women reappropriate, reconfigure, and redefine who could write and how "the factory-girl" should be represented in nineteenth-century poetry.

Bibliography

A Glasgow Lassie. "Lines to E.J., 'The Factory Girl.'" *Penny Post*. June 23, 1866.

Abrams, M. H. "Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric." In *The Correspondent Breeze*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1984.

Allen, Tom. "Melville's 'Factory Girls': Feminizing the Future." *Studies in American Fiction* 31, no. 1 (2003): 45–71.

"Almira." In *The Lowell Offering*, 113. Lowell: Watson, 1841.

Andermahr, Sonya. "Mourning, Melancholia and Melodrama in Contemporary Women's Grief Fiction: Kim Edwards's The Memory Keeper's Daughter." *Hecate* 31, no. 1 (2011): 27–45.

Anonymous. "Untitled." *Dundee, Perth and Forfar People's Journal*. January 17, 1863.

Archer, Melanie, and Judith R. Blau. "Class Formation in Nineteenth-Century America: The Case of the Middle Class." *Annual Review of Sociology*, no. 19 (1993): 17–41. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2083379.

Armitage, David. "Three Concepts of Atlantic History." In *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, edited by David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, 11–27. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002.

Armstrong, Nancy. *Desire and Domestic Fiction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Baltz Rodrick, Anne. "The Importance of Being an Earnest Improver: Class, Caste, and 'Self-Help' in Mid-Victorian England." *Victorian Literature and Culture* 29, no. 1 (2001): 39–50. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25058538.

Barrett Browning, Elizabeth. *Aurora Leigh*. Edited by Kerry McSweeney. London: Oxford University Press, 2008.

———. "The Cry of the Children." In *The Broadview Anthology of Victorian Poetry and Poetic Theory*, edited by Thomas J. Collins and Vivienne J. Rundle, 74–77. Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2005.

Benenson, Harold. "Patriarchal Constraints on Women Workers' Mobilization: The Lancashire Female Cotton Operatives 1842-1919." *The British Journal of Sociology* 44, no. 4 (1993): 613–33. http://www.jstor.org/stable/591413.

Berlant, Lauren. *The Female Complaint*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.

Bessie. "Letter to the Editor." *Ben Brierley's Journal*. August 11, 1874.

Blain, Virginia. "Letitia Elizabeth Landon, Eliza Mary Hamilton, and the Genealogy of the Victorian Poetess." *Victorian Poetry* 33, no. 1 (1995): 31–51. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40002517.

Blair, Kirstie. "'A Very Poetical Town': Newspaper Poetry and the Working-Class Poet in Victorian Dundee." *Victorian Poetry* 52, no. 1 (2014): 89–109. https://muse.jhu.edu/journals/victorian_poetry/v052/52.1.blair.htm.

———. *Victorian Poetry and the Culture of the Heart*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Boos, Florence. "The 'Queen' of the 'Far-Famed Penny Post': 'The Factory Girl Poet' and Her Audience." *Women's Writing* 10, no. 3 (2003): 503–26.

Boos, Florence S. "The 'Homely Muse' in Her Diurnal Setting: The Periodical Poems of 'Marie,' Janet Hamilton, and Fanny Forrester." *Victorian Poetry* 39, no. 2 (2013): 255–86. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40002679.

———. "Working-Class Poetry." In *A Companion to Victorian Poetry*, edited by Richard; Alison Chapman; Antony H. Harrison Cronin, 204–28. London: Blackwell, 2008.

Bornat, Joanna. "Lost Leaders: Women, Trade Unionism and the Case of the General Union of Textile

Workers, 1875-1914." In *Unequal Opportunities: Women's Employment in England 1800-1918*, edited by Angela V. John, 207–33. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986.

Brierley, Benjamin. "Dear Owd Rib." In *"Ab-O'th-Yate" Sketches and Other Short Stories*, edited by James Dronsfield, 12–17. Oldham: England, 1896.

———. "Fanny Forrester." *Ben Brierley's Journal*. January 23, 1875.

———. "The Lancashire Dialect." *Ben Brierley's Journal*. December 1871.

Browne (Hemans), Felicia Dorothea. "The Domestic Affections." In *Domestic Affections, and Other Poems*. London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1812.

Brownson, Orestes. *The Laboring Classes*. 3rd Edition. Boston: Benjamin H. Greene, 1840.

Burns, Robert. *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*. Edited by Thomas Duncan. Glasgow: Thomas Duncan, 1801.

Cairnie, Julie. "The Ambivalence of Ann Yearsley: Laboring and Writing, Submission and Resistance." *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 27, no. 4 (2005): 353–64. doi:10.1080/08905490500444015.

Clausson, Nils. "Pastoral Elegy into Romantic Lyric: Generic Transformation in Matthew Arnold's 'Thyrsis.'" *Victorian Poetry* 48, no. 2 (2010): 173–94. http://www.jstor.org/stable/27896672.

Claybaugh, Amanda. *The Novel of Purpose: Literature and Social Reform in the Anglo-American World*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007.

Cleaver, Thomas. "Night." In *The Poorhouse Fugitives*, edited by Brian Maidment, 124–26. Manchester: Carcanet, 1987.

Cole, Phyllis. "Women's Rights and Feminism." In *The Oxford Handbook of Transcendentalism*, edited by Joel Myerson, Sandra Harbert Petrulionis, and Laura Dassow Walls, 222–40. Oxford: Oxford

University Press, 2010.

Corbett, Mary Jean. *Representing Femininity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Cott, Nancy F. *The Bonds of Womanhood*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977.

Dale, Reverend Thomas. "Early Closing Movement." *The Times*. March 1852.

David, Deirdre. *Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy: Harriet Martineau, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, George Eliot*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987.

Dawson, James S. "Lancashire: Past and Present." *Ben Brierley's Journal*. February 1870.

Deleuze, Giles, Felix Guattari, and Robert Brinkley. "What Is a Minor Literature." *Mississippi Review* 11, no. 3 (1983): 13–33. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20133921.

Dharwadker, Vinay. "Introduction." In *Cosmopolitan Geographies: New Locations in Literature and Culture*, edited by Vinay Dharwadker, 1–13. New York and London, 2001.

Dillon, Elizabeth Maddock. "Sentimental Aesthetics." *American Literature* 76, no. 3 (2004): 495–523.

Draper, Ellen. "'Untrammeled by Historical Fact': That Hamilton Woman and Melodrama's Aversion to History." *Wide Angle* 14, no. 1 (1992).

Dublin, Thomas. *Women at Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826-1860*. 2nd ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 1979.

Dzelzainis, Ella. "Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna, Pre-Millenarianism, and the Formation of Gender Ideology in the Ten Hours Campaign." *Victorian Literature and Culture* 31, no. 1 (2003): 181–91.

Edith. "Edith's Reply to the Factory Girl." *Penny Post*. May 19, 1866.

———. "Lines by 'Edith'on Receiving the Cartes of Mr Russel and 'The Factory Girl.'" *Penny Post*.

December 29, 1866.

———. "Lines to the Factory Girl." *Penny Post*. March 3, 1866.

———. "Welcome and Appeal for the 'Maid of Dundee.'" *Penny Post*. September 21, 1867.

Eisler, Benita. "Introduction." In *The Lowell Offering: Writings by New England Mill Women (1840-1845)*, edited by Benita Eisler, 13–42. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1977.

———. , ed. *The Lowell Offering: Writings by New England Mill Women (1840-1845)*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1977.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "Letter to Margaret Fuller, August 4, 1840." In *Emerson's Prose and Poetry*, edited by Saundra Morris and Joel Porte, 1st ed., 549. New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co., 2001.

Euripedes. *Medea*. Edited and Trans. David Kovacs. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994.

Fischer, J.C. *J.C. Fischer and His Diary of Industrial England: 1814-51*. Edited by W. O. Henderson. New York & London: Routledge, 2013.

Foner, Philip Sheldon. *The Factory Girls: A Collection of Writings on Life and Struggles in the New England Factories of the 1840's*. Urbana-Champagne: University of Illinois Press, 1977.

Forrester, Fanny. "Dying in the City." *Ben Brierley's Journal*. May 1870.

———. "Homeless in the City." *Ben Brierley's Journal*. March 1870.

———. "Honour to Whom Honour Is Due. To the Editor of Ben Brierley's Journal." *Ben Brierley's Journal*. July 18, 1874.

———. "Magdalen--A Tale of Christmas Eve." *Ben Brierley's Journal*. December 1871.

———. "The Gloaming in the City." *Ben Brierley's Journal*. August 15, 1874.

———. "The Lowly Bard." *Ben Brierley's Journal*. November 1873.

———. "The Poet's Treasures." *Ben Brierley's Journal*. January 14, 1882.

———. "The Sister and the Bard." *Ben Brierley's Journal*. October 31, 1874.

———. "To Mary." *Ben Brierley's Journal*. August 1870.

———. "Toiling in the City." *Ben Brierley's Journal*. April 1870.

———. "Youth and Summer." *Ben Brierley's Journal*. November 27, 1875.

Fox, Pamela. *Class Fictions: Shame and Resistance in the British Working-Class Novel, 1890-1945*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1994.

Frankel, Oz. "Blue Books and the Victorian Reader." *Victorian Studies* 46, no. 2 (2004): 308–18. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3830298.

Frawley, Maria. "Behind the Scenes of History: Harriet Martineau and 'The Lowell Offering.'" *Victorian Periodicals Review* 38, no. 2 (2005): 141–57. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20084059.

Gallagher, Catherine. "Marxism and the New Historicism." In *The New Historicism*, edited by Harold Aram Veeser, 37–48. New York: Taylor & Francis, 1989.

Gaskell, Peter. *The Manufacturing Population of England, Its Moral, Social and Physical Conditions, and The Changes Which Have Arisen From the Use of Steam Machinery With an Examination of Infant Labour*. London: Baldwin and Cradock, 1833.

Giles, Paul. *Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and the Transatlantic Imaginary*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002.

Gilfillan, George. "The Reverend Goerge Gilfillan on Garibald's Capture." *Dundee, Perth and Forfar People's Journal*. September 13, 1862.

Goldsmith, Oliver. *Th Vicar of Wakefield*. London: R. Collins, 1766.

Gordon, Eleanor. *Women and the Labour Movement in Scotland 1850-1914*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.

Greenblatt, Stephen. "Towards a Poetics of Culture." *Southern Review* 20, no. 1 (1987): 3–15.

Griffin, Susan. "Ecofeminism and Meaning." In *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture Nature*, edited by Karen J. Warren, 213–26. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997.

Gruner, Elizabeth Rose. "Plotting the Mother: Caroline Norton, Helen Huntingdon, and Isabel Vane." *Studies in Women's Literature* 16, no. 2 (1997): 303–25.

Hakala, Taryn. "A Great Man in Clogs: Performing Authenticity in Victorian Lancashire." *Victorian Studies* 52, no. 3 (2010): 387–412.

Hemans, Felicia Dorothea Browne. *The Domestic Affections, and Other Poems*. London: T Cadell & W. Davies, 1812.

Homans, Margaret. *Women Writers and Poetic Identity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980.

Hood, Thomas. "The Song of the Shirt." In *The Broadview Anthology of Victorian Poetry and Poetic Theory*, edited by Thomas J. Collins and Vivienne J. Rundle, 26–27. Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2005.

Isabel. "Lines to Ellen, The Factory Girl, Chapelshade Factory, Dundee." *Penny Post*. December 1, 1866.

Janowitz, Anne. *Lyric and Labour in the Romantic Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

1998.

Jenkins Cook, Sylvia. *Working Women, Literary Ladies: The Industrial Revolution and Female Aspiration*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Johnson, Patricia E. *Hidden Hands: Working-Class Women and Victorian Social-Problem Fiction*. Columbus: University of Ohio Press, 2001.

Johnston, Ellen. "A Mother's Love." In *Autobiography, Poems and Songs of Ellen Johnston, the "Factory Girl,"* edited by Alexander Campbell, 44–45. Glasgow: William Love, 1867.

———. *Autobiography, Poems and Songs of Ellen Johnston, the "Factory Girl."* Edited by Alexander Cambell. 1st ed. Glasgow: William Love, 1867.

———. "Lines to G. D. Russell, St Ninians, Stirling." *Penny Post*. November 11, 1865.

———. "Lines to Isabel from the Factory Girl." *Penny Post*. January 1, 1867.

———. "Lines With My Carte De Visite to Mr. G. D. Russell, Queensland." *Penny Post*. June 6, 1865.

———. "Mourning for Garibaldi." In *Autobiography, Poems and Songs of Ellen Johnston, the "Factory Girl,"* edited by Alexander Campbell, 1st ed., 29–30. Glasgow: William Love, 1867.

———. "My Mother." In *Autobiography, Poems and Songs of Ellen Johnston, the "Factory Girl,"* edited by Alexander Campbell, 12. Glasgow: William Love, 1867.

———. "She's Coming, Ye Bards." *Penny Post*. November 9, 1867.

———. "The Absent Husband." In *Autobiography, Poems and Songs of Ellen Johnston, the "Factory Girl,"* edited by Alexander Campbell, 27. Glasgow: William Love, 1867.

———. "The Factory Exile." In *Autobiography, Poems and Songs of Ellen Johnston, the "Factory Girl,"* edited

by Alexander Campbell, 25–26. Glasgow: William Love, 1867.

———. "The Factory Girl's Reply to 'A Glasgow Lassie.'" *Penny Post*. August 18, 1866.

———. "The Factory Girl's Reply to Edith." *Penny Post*. April 7, 1866.

———. "The Last Sark." In *Autobiography, Poems and Songs of Ellen Johnston, the "Factory Girl,"* edited by Alexander Campbell, 100–101. Glasgow: William Love, 1867.

———. "The Maniac of Green Wood." In *Autobiogrpahy, Poems and Songs of Ellen Johnston, the "Factory Girl,"* edited by Alexander Campbell, 15–19. Glasgow: William Love, 1867.

———. "The Young Man's Darling." *Dundee, Perth and Forfar People's Journal*. October 22, 1864.

———. "To My Aunt Phemie." *Penny Post*. July 8, 1865.

———. "Welcome Garibaldi!" In *Autobiography, Poems and Songs of Ellen Johnston, the "Factory Girl,"* edited by Alexander Campbell, 2nd ed., 28–29. Glasgow: William Love, 1869.

Josephson, Hannah. *The Golden Threads: New England's Mill Girls and Magnates*. New York: Sloan, Pierce, & Duell, 1949.

Kaplan, Cora. "Introduction to Aurora Leigh." In *Victorian Women Poets*, edited by Tess Cosslett. London: Longman, 1996.

Karlin, Daniel. *The Figure of the Singer*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Kay-Shuttleworth, James Phillips. *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester*. London: James Ridgway, 1832.

Kelly, Gary. "Politicizing the Personal: Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and the Coterie Novel." In *Mary Shelley in Her Times*, edited by Betty T. Bennett and Stuart Curran, 147–59. Baltimore:

Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000.

H. Gustav Klaus, *Factory Girl: Ellen Johnston and Working-Class Poetry in Victorian Scotland*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1998.

Kuduk Weiner, Stephanie. *Republican Politics and English Poetry, 1789-1874*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005.

Larcom, Lucy. *A New England Girlhood*. Cambridge: Riverside Press, Houghton & Co., 1889.

———. *An Idyl of Work*. Boston: Osgood & Company, 1875.

———. "Sabbath Bells." In *The Lowell Offering*, edited by Watson, Vol. 4., 275–76. Lowell, 1844.

———. "The Early Doomed." *The Lowell Offering*. Lowell, March 1845.

———. "The River." *The Lowell Offering*. Lowell, 1843.

———. "To The Linnoea Borealis." *The Lowell Offering*. Lowell, September 1843.

Latto, W.D. "To Correspondents." *Dundee, Perth and Forfar People's Journal*. January 17, 1863.

Lawton Owen, John. "An Epistle to Fanny Forrester." *Ben Brierley's Journal*. March 11, 1876.

Lazerow, Jama. "Religion and the New England Mill Girl: A New Perspective on an Old Theme." *The New England Quarterly* 60, no. 3 (1987): 429–53. http://www.jstor.org/stable/365024.

Ledger, Sally. "Chartist Aesthetics in the Mid Nineteenth Century: Ernest Jones, a Novelist of the People." *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 57, no. 1 (2002): 31–63. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/ncl.2002.57.1.31.

Legler, Gretchen T. "Ecofeminist Literary Criticism." In *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*, edited by Karen J. Warren, 227–38. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997.

Leighton, Angela. *Victorian Women Poets: Writing Against the Heart*. New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992.

Levine, Caroline. *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network*. Princton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015.

Lockard, Joe. "Lucy Larcom and the Poetics of Child Labor." *ESC* 38.3, no. 4 (2012): 1–22.

Loeffelholz, Mary. "'A Strange Medley-Book': Lucy Larcom's an Idyl of Work." *The New England Quarterly* 80, no. 1 (2007): 5–34. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20474509.

Lucus A No Lucendo. "Fanny Forrester." *Ben Brierley's Journal*. July 25, 1874.

MacDonald, Allan. "Lowell: A Commercial Utopia." *The New England Quarterly, Inc.* 10, no. 1 (1937): 37–62. doi:10.1073/pnas.0703993104.

Maidment, Brian. "Class and Cultural Production in the Industrial City: Poetry in Victorian Manchester." In *City, Class and Culture: Studies of Social Policy and Cultural Production in Victorian Manchester*, edited by Alan J. Kidd and K.W. Roberts. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985.

———. *The Poorhouse Fugitives: Self-Taught Poets and Poetry in Victorian Britain*. Carcanet. Manchester, 1987.

Marchalonis, Shirley. "Lucy Larcom (1824-1893)." *Legacy* 5, no. 1 (1988): 45–52.

Martineau, Harriet. "Letter to Charles Knight." Tynemouth, 1844.

Mazzeo, Tilar J. "The Impossibility of Being Anglo-American: The Rhetoric of Emigration and Transatlanticism in British Romantic Culture, 1791–1833." *European Romantic Review* 16, no. 1 (2005): 59–78. doi:10.1080/1050958042000338552.

McCauley, Larry. "'Eawr Folk': Language, Class, and English Identity in Victorian Dialect Poetry." *Victorian Poetry* 39, no. 2 (2001): 287–300. doi:10.1353/vp.2001.0014.

Melville, Herman. "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids." *Harper's Magazine*, April 1855.

Montrie, Chad. "'I Think Less of the Factory than of My Native Dell': Labor, Nature, and the Lowell 'Mill Girls.'" *Environmental History* 9, no. 2 (2004): 275–95. doi:10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004.

Morton, Graeme. "The Social Memory of Jane Porter and Her Scottish Chiefs." *Scottish Historical Review* 91, no. 2 (2012): 311–35. doi:10.3366/shr.2012.0104.

Mrs. Fairley. "To Miss Fanny Forrester." *Ben Brierley's Journal*. November 21, 1874.

Norton, Caroline Sheridan. "A Voice From the Factories." In *The Broadview Anthology of Victorian Poetry and Poetic Theory*, edited by Thomas J. Collins and Vivienne J. Rundle, 136–40. Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2005.

Obey, Erica. "'The Poor Girl's Talent': Romantic Mentorship and Mary Colling's 'Fables.'" *Keats-Shelley Journal* 59 (2010): 65–77. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41409531.

Patterson, Annabel. *Pastoral and Ideology: Virgil to Valéry*. Oakland: University of California Press, 1987.

Peel, Katie. "'Unsuitable for Narrative': Working Women in Victorian Literature." University of Connecticut, 2008.

Pinchbeck, Ivy. *Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution, 1750-1850*. London: Frank Cass, 1977.

Platonov, Rachel S. "Remapping Arcadia: 'Pastoral Space' in Nineteenth-Century Russian Prose." *Modern Language Review* 102 (2007): 1105–21. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20467553.

Poovey, Mary. "Covered but Not Bound: Caroline Norton and the 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act."

Feminist Studies 14, no. 3 (1988): 467–85.

Rose, Anne C. *Transcendentalism as a Social Movement, 1830-1850*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981.

Rosen, Judith. "Class and Poetic Communities: The Works of Ellen Johnston, 'The Factory Girl.'" *Victorian Poetry* 39, no. 2 (2001): 207–28. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40002677.

Ross, Ellen. "Survival Networks : Women's Neighbourhood Sharing in London before World War I." *History Workshop*, no. 15 (1983): 4–27. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4288457.

Russell, G. D. "Lines to E.J. 'The Factory Girl.'" *Penny Post*. October 24, 1865.

Salmon, Richard. *The Formation of the Victorian Literary Profession*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Sanders, Michael. "Poetic Agency : Metonymy and Metaphor in Chartist Poetry" 39, no. 2 (2011): 111–35. doi:10.1353/vp.2001.0019.

Savage, Sarah. *The Factory Girl*. Boston: Munroe, 1814.

Scheinberg, Cynthia. *Women's Poetry and Religion in Victorian England: Jewish Identity and Christian Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Shelley, Bruce L. "Congregationalism and American Culture." *Fides et Historia* 21, no. 2 (1989): 38–50.

Shiel, Thomas J. "To the Editor of 'Ben Brierley's Journal'." *Ben Brierley's Journal*. July 11, 1874.

Smiles, Samuel. *Self-Help; With Illustrations of Character and Conduct*. London: John Murray, Albermarle Street, 1860.

Smith, Mary Harriet. "Ethel Grey." *Ben Brierley's Journal*. June 1873.

———. "To Fanny Forrester." *Ben Brierley's Journal*. January 30, 1875.

Story, Robert. "My Own Hills." In *Love and Literature*, 72. London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1842.

Sutcliffe, Marcella Pellegrino. "Negotiating the 'Garibaldi Moment' in Newcastle-upon-Tyne (1854–1861)." *Modern Italy* 15, no. 2 (2010): 129–44. doi:10.1080/13532940903509674.

Swindells, Julia. *Victorian Writing and Working Women*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1985.

"Time Table of the Lowell Mills." Lowell: Penhallow, 1853.

Timney, Meagan B. "'Of Factory Girls and Serving Maids': The Literary Labours of Working-Class Women in Victorian Britain." Dalhousie University, 2009.

Tonna, Charlote Elizabeth. *Personal Recollections*. London: R. B. Seeley & W. Burnside, 1841.

———.*Helen Fleetwood*. New York: Baker & Scribner, 1848.

———. *The Wrongs of Woman*. 4th ed. New York & London: M. W. Dodd, 1845.

Traister, Bryce. *Female Piety and the Invention of American Puritanism*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2016.

Tucker, Herbert F. "Tactical Formalism : A Response to Caroline Levine." *Victorian Studies* 49, no. 1 (2006): 85–93. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/214244.

Vicinus, Martha. "The Study of Nineteenth Century British Working Class Poetry." *College English* 32, no. 5 (1971): 548–62. http://www.jstor.org/stable/374259.

Vincent, David. *Bread, Knowledge & Freedom*. London & New York: Methuen, 1981.

———. "Love and Death and the Nineteenth-Century Working Class." *Social History* 5, no. 2 (2008):

223–47. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4284976.

Voakes, Lucy Turner. "The Risorgimento and English Literary History, 1867–1911 : The Liberal Heroism of Trevelyan's Garibaldi." *Modern Italy* 15, no. 4 (2010): 433–50. doi:10.1080/13532944.2010.506294.

Weisbuch, Robert. *Atlantic Double-Cross: American Literature and British Influence in the Age of Emerson*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.

Wolfson, Susan J. *Formal Charges: The Shaping of Poetry in British Romanticism*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.

Wright, Julia M. "'All the Fire-Side Circle': Irish Women Writers and the Sheridan-Lefanu Coterie." *Keats-Shelley Journal* 55 (2006): 63–72. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30210644.

Zboray, Ronald J. *A Fictive People: Antebellum Economic Development and the American Reading Public*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Zlotnick, Susan. "Lowly Bards and Incomplete Lyres: Fanny Forrester and the Construction of a Working-Class Woman's Poetic Identity." *Victorian Poetry* 36, no. 1 (2013): 17–35. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40003631.

———. *Women, Writing, and the Industrial Revolution*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.