SOCIAL SYMPATHY IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH PROSE NARRATIVES

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation traces a tradition of social sympathy in nineteenth-century British prose
narratives. Sympathy has a long history of affiliation with the natural power of attraction
and accordance. In the premodern European literature, sympathy meant gravity and
magnetism in the natural world. Eighteenth-century British moral sense philosophers
explained sympathy as an innate human aptitude to care about the pain and suffering of
other beings. This project examines an alternative tradition that defines sympathy as a
socially produced moral sentiment for fellows, hence, more as a society's moral capacity
than an individual's. I situate the beginning of this tradition in the late eighteenth-century
and follow its trajectory to the end of the nineteenth-century. I emphasize that reforming
society not an individual soul was the primary concern of the nineteenth-century British
literary imaginations of social sympathy.

My textual analysis opens with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), which
critically continues Mary Wollstonecraft's meditation of sympathy as a learned respect
for the equal fellow. By placing sympathy in the realm of culture, not nature, Shelley
wards off the possibility of sympathy to function as an exclusive fellowship among a
parochial circle of a kinship system. And she opens the potential to expand the boundary
of fellow and fellowship to even non-human creatures. Factory reform testimonies
written in 1832 and 1841, and Charles Dickens's *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841), which
my second and third chapters respectively discuss, reveal a vision of sympathy as a social

consensus about moral responsibility for certain forms of pain and suffering. These texts suggest that sympathy is a collective ethico-affective boundary that decides whose pain and suffering the society should be emotionally responsive to and morally responsible for. The authors of these texts understand their writings as cultural praxis to negotiate the existing boundary of sympathy and create a new structure of feeling to accommodate previously excluded forms of pain and suffering as a legitimate object of social sympathy. My last chapter on Thomas Hardy's "The Withered Arm" (1888) and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) investigates Hardy's tactile sympathy. In Hardy's works, the social nature of sympathy is highlighted by the tactility between the object and subject of sympathy. With the images of sympathy as a bodily touch and physical labor for connection, Hardy suggests that sympathy is the ontological connection that we live and perform rather than an inward fellow feeling of a subject.

By examining the underappreciated vision of social sympathy in nineteenth-century British prose narratives, my project questions the prevalent tendency in Victorian study to associate sympathy with the idea of a liberal self and its individual moral capacity to overcome egoism. I point out that the texts that this dissertation discusses reveal an awareness of the historicity of morality and the socially constructed nature of our moral sentiment for fellows. I further argue that, with the awareness of the social embeddedness of a self and its ethical relationship to others, these texts' meditations of sympathy engage more with the social reform than the restoration of a soul.

INTRODUCTION

SYMPATHY: THE NATURAL VS THE SOCIAL

Sympathy has a long history of affiliation with the "natural" power of attraction and accordance that connects things in the world and keeps them in order and harmony. The gravity and correspondence between celestial bodies and the coordination between internal organs, for example, used to be explained as the work of sympathy in premodern European literature. While the term gradually evolved to refer to a moral sentiment of fellow feeling around the end of the seventeenth-century, sympathy did not lose its connotation with the natural power of connection and harmony.

The third Earl of Shaftesbury, the founding figure of eighteenth-century British moral sense philosophy, for instance, relates sympathy to our innate moral sense and inborn disposition to virtue. According to Shaftesbury, our "inward eye distinguishes the fair and shapely, the amiable and admirable, apart from the deform'd, the foul, the odious or the despicable" and "these distinctions have their foundation in nature, the discernment

itself is natural and from nature alone."[1] Being the first principle of our constitution, the sense of right and wrong and our natural affection and benevolence for fellow beings cannot be altered or effaced by the second nature except in extraordinary cases. And even in such cases, Shaftesbury observes, the "nature we find is hardly mastered but lies sullen and ready to revolt on the first occasion."[2]

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[1] Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711; Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 326-27.

[2] Ibid., 179. Shaftesbury's idea of an innate moral sense is later inherited and elaborated by Francis Hutcheson, David Hume and Adam Smith. The degree of their optimism about the innate moral sense varies. Also, their explanations about the way that this moral sense operates are different. Nonetheless, it is fair to say that eighteenth-century British moral sense theorists shared a belief in our inborn aptitude for moral goodness and aligned this capacity more with nature than culture. See how the idea of morality as the nature, a bodily sense and a built-in moral faculty resonates in the following passages each from Hutcheson, Hume and Smith's treatises on morality. "By the very power of nature, previous to any reasoning or meditation, we rejoice in the prosperity of others, and sorrow with them in their misfortunes, as we are disposed to mirth when we see others cheerful, and to weep with those that weep, without any consideration of our own interest." Francis Hutcheson, *A Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy, in Three Books* (Glasgow: Robert & Andrew Fouli, 1747), 14. "Morality is, therefore, more properly felt than judged of (...) to have a sense of virtue is nothing but to feel satisfaction of a particular kind." David Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40; Oxford: Oxford UP, 1978), 471. "How selfish so ever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him (...) this sentiment like all the other original passions of human nature, is by no means confined to the virtuous and humane, though they perhaps may feel it with the most exquisite sensibility. The greatest ruffian, the most hardened violator of the laws of society, is not altogether without it." Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759; Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), 11.

While sympathy increasingly lost its efficacy as a concept for social cohesion in moral theories towards the end of the eighteenth-century, the belief in natural feeling and its regenerative power strongly survived in the literary field. As paradigmatically illustrated in Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740), in these literary renderings, the edifying power of natural feeling was associated with female moral influence and her championing of domestic ideals. The trope of the angel in the house became immensely popular and influential in Victorian literature. And it is primarily through this trope that sympathy retained the notion of natural goodness and the innate capacity for mutual intimacy and affection during the nineteen-century.[3]

This dissertation, *Social Sympathy in Nineteenth-Century British Prose Narratives* traces a counter tradition in which sympathy is defined as a socially produced moral sentiment and relationship, not as a natural human aptitude for moral goodness and interpersonal connectivity. I situate the beginning of this tradition in the late eighteenth-century and suggest that it continued to be in dialogue and tension with the tradition of sympathy as a natural power for connection and harmony throughout the nineteenth-century. And I demonstrate that the literary and non-literary texts that this project

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[3] For the reliable overview of the evolution of the eighteen-century culture of sensibility, especially its historical and philosophical background, see Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (New York: Methuen, 1986), 10-31. For a succinct summary of the way that sympathy was tied to the ideology of domesticity in Victorian literature, see Rachel Ablow, Introduction to *The Marriage of Minds: Reading Sympathy in the Victorian Marriage Plot* (California: Stanford UP, 2007), 1-16.

examines commonly reveal an understanding of sympathy as a man-made moral norm and mode of ethical engagement with fellow beings: hence, not a nature to be found and excavated but a second nature to be cultured and practiced.

Thus, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) defines sympathy as a culturally acquired universal fellowship against naturally given biological differences. Factory operators' testimonies, published each in 1832 and 1841 to support the cause of British Factory Reform, view sympathy as a communal consensus regarding whose pain and suffering the society should be emotionally responsive to and morally responsible for. Charles Dickens's *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841) goes so far to suggest that sympathy is a market commodity that we manufacture both for entertainment and moral education, and the market value and the moral value of sympathy are not necessarily incompatible. Thomas Hardy's "The Withered Arm" (1888) and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) foreground the social nature of sympathy by envisioning it as the proximity and engagement between the subject and object of sympathy, therefore, less an emotion than an existential connection that we live and labor to perform.

As a whole, these texts form a discourse of sympathy that counters the notion of sympathy as a natural power for moral goodness and harmony. They remind readers of the socially constructed nature of sympathy and emphasize readers' involvement in and

responsibility for the (re)formation of the structure of moral feeling for fellows.[4] By doing so, these texts raise awareness against the potential for sympathy to become a myth[5] functioning as exclusive fellowship among a parochial circle of a kinship system. Also, they open the possibility to expand the boundary of fellow and fellowship to the previously excluded objects of sympathy including sub-humans, non-humans and even non-sentient beings.

Tracing nineteenth-century British narratives which configure sympathy as a socially constructed moral sentiment and highlight our ethical involvement in the (re)formation of the moral sentiment of fellow feeling, this project has two main study

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[4] I use the phrase "the structure of moral feeling" with the intention of alluding to Raymond Williams's concept, "the structure of feeling." Williams introduces the concept as a way to recover the social meaning of "the personal" as "all that is present and moving" and an actually lived "this, here, now, alive, active, 'subjective'" dimension of experiences and consciousness. See *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977), 129. Williams calls this set of feeling and thinking in the lived dimension of personal experiences "the structure of feeling" not exactly because it is related to emotion but because it is a palpably felt structure that affects individual actions and lives but has not yet been recognized as a fixed structure such as a mode of production or an episteme. The structure of feeling is an emergent social structure that coexists with the dominant social structure creating a dynamic in the process of cultural transformation. Therefore, in Williams, social structure is not an extrinsic system independent from human actions and intentions but a conglomerate of human actions and intentions in the past, present, and future each as the residual, dominant, and emergent form of structures. In this chapter and throughout this project, when I refer to sympathy as a socially produced moral sentiment, I use "the social" as a synonym for Williams's notion of "social structure" which we create and inhabit.

[5] According to Roland Barthes, to transform "history into nature" is "the very principle of myth." *Mythologies* (1957; New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 129.

objectives. First, I aim to fill a gap in the existing studies of sympathy in nineteenth-century British literature. Sympathy in nineteenth-century British literature is an under-examined topic. There are only a handful of book-length studies that deal with the topic in depth and they almost invariably treat sympathy as a psychology of the sympathizer.

Two of the most recently published studies, Rachel Ablow's *The Marriage of Minds: Reading Sympathy in the Victorian Marriage Plot* (2007) and Rae Greiner's *Sympathetic Realism in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (2012) discuss sympathy as something other than a moral sentiment.[6] In these cases, still, Ablow's book investigates how sympathy functions as the psychological mechanism of identification during the reading practice. Greiner's book too examines the psychological and cognitive operation of sympathy that renders people to imagine a common reality by way of "'thinking of me thinking of you' and vice versa."[7] Earlier studies that focus on the side of sympathy as a moral sentiment tend to pay attention to the dis-identification process deploying in the sympathizer's mind. Underlining the hierarchy that often exists between the sympathizer and the sympathized these studies demonstrate how the sympathizer reaffirms and

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[6] For example, Ablow explains that her project departs from the previous "accounts of Victorian sympathy, which identify sympathy with pity or compassion." *Marriage of Minds*, 1. Greiner also introduces her book as an attempt to "write about sympathy in nineteenth-century fiction without writing about emotion." *Sympathetic Realism in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2012), 1.

[7] Greiner, *Sympathetic Realism*, 1.

reproduces the actual and psychological distance and distinction between the better off gazer and the gazed sufferer in the sympathetic encounter.[8]

I do not intend to evaluate the validity of each book's argument in this line of study. Instead, my project aims to bring attention to the underappreciated side of sympathy as a social convention that defines our sense of a fellow and ethics for the fellow. I contend that there were clearly traceable contemplations on sympathy as a social norm that guides and instructs our moral sentiment for fellows in nineteenth-century British literature. And I point out that these meditations engage more with questions related to the definition of a fellow and the boundary of a community's ethical accountability for the fellow rather than the psychological dynamics of an individual sympathizer.

For instance, sympathy that *Frankenstein*'s Creature desperately seeks for is less a commiseration than an inclusion to a society: i.e., the status as a fellow social member.

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[8] For an analysis of how scenes of sympathy served as a cultural medium for the Victorian middle class's identity formation by way of distancing and differentiating from the poor and the low, see Audrey Jaffe, Introduction to *Scenes of Sympathy: Identity and Representation in Victorian Fiction* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2000), 1-26. Amit S. Rai's *Rule of Sympathy: Sentiment, Race, and Power, 1750-1850* (New York: Palgrave, 2002) focuses on the colonizers' psychological maneuver of sympathy to naturalize the power relationship in the colonial context. David Marshall's *The Surprising Effects of Sympathy: Marivaux, Diderot, Rousseau, and Mary Shelley* (Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 1988) attends to the mental drama of the sympathizer as a spectator of the scenes of sympathy. Though it does not directly deal with sympathy, Daniel Born's *The Birth of Liberal Guilt in the English Novel: Charles Dickens to H. G. Well* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1995) is a classic example of a psychoanalytic criticism of the liberal humanism.

Likewise, when the authors of British Factory Reform testimonies ask readers to share their pain, they are not asking for readers' emotional identification with them. Rather, they are asking for readers' acknowledgement of moral responsibility for the factory operators' suffering and public endorsement of the responsibility in the form of legislation. Dickens's *The Old Curiosity Shop* is a daring, at the same time, vexed meditation about the possibility that we manufacture and sell sympathy as a market commodity to forge and cultivate public moral sentiment of sympathy. And in Hardy's works, sympathy is imagined as a state of tactility that enables intersubjective connections, henceforth, more an ontological and material condition for the connection than an individual moral feeling.

By bringing attention to nineteenth-century British literary imaginations of social sympathy, this project thus addresses an oversight in the current academic discussions of sympathy primarily as a psychology. In addition, I suggest that investigating the idea of social sympathy may offer a way out to the epistemological and ethical conundrums that the psychological approach to sympathy is currently facing. Understanding sympathy as a psychology, more specifically as emotional identification entails a problem of correspondence. Adam Smith's 1759 treatise on sympathy, which most famously articulates the notion of sympathy as imaginative identification with the suffering fellow, in fact, clearly prefigures the issue of correspondence between the subject and object of sympathy.

Like Shaftesbury, Hutcheson and Hume, Smith believes that sympathy is one of the "principles in his [human] nature"[9] that enables us to care about fellow creature's well-being. Yet, while other philosophers, especially Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, emphasize moral faculty's almost instinctual response to vice and virtue prior to reflections, Smith argues that the moral sense of sympathy is activated through representational mediation of our mind, i.e., our imagination. Largely due to this mediation process, the issue of correspondence that does not arise in the more mechanical and physiological model of sympathy looms large in Smithian theory of sympathy:

> As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation. Though our brother is upon the rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. They never did, and never can carry us beyond our own person, and it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations. Neither can that faculty help us to this any other way than by representing to us what would be our own, if we were in his case. It is the impressions of our own senses only, not those of his, which our imaginations copy. By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure

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[9] Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 11.

the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them. [10]

As is seen in the passage above, Smith repeatedly emphasizes that "we have no immediate experience of what other men feel" and "our sense will never inform us of what he suffers." What our imagination re-presents in our minds are, "the impressions of our own senses only, not those of his." Smith himself does not problematize this gap between the copy and the copied because he believes that the imagined suffering of the fellow yields the same desired effect of altruism in the sympathizer's mind. However, this gap has become a source of serious epistemological and ethical conundrums in current academic discussions of sympathy. As I will further discuss in my second chapter, "Melodramatic Sympathy: Factory Reform Testimonies," while the epistemological conundrum is related to the question "how do I know your pain as I am not you," the ethical conundrum revolves around the question "how do I feel your pain as I am not you."[11] The ultimate inaccessibility of other's experience that Smith highlights in the

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[10] Ibid., 11-12.

[11] For example, see David Marshall's following passage that emphasizes the impossibility of sympathy due to the ultimate inaccessibility to other's experience. "However, for actors and spectators in scenes of sympathy, their dependence on the appearances or representations they want to penetrate or disregard leads to a greater threat (...) the real threat is that faced with the impenetrable aspects of others, faced with the impossibility to knowing other people's sentiments except through acts of imagination, sympathy itself

passage above, in other words, has generated endless anxiety about the veracity of our

knowledge of other's pain and the authenticity of our fellow feeling for the paining other

in recent academic discussions of sympathy.[12]

The texts that this project examines offer an alternative vision of sympathy

where sympathy is located in the social, more specifically, in its ethico-affective

codes of conduct for fellows, not in the individual sympathizer's psyche.

Accordingly, in this mode of sympathy, the material and discursive contestations

surrounding the definition of a fellow and the boundary of a community's moral

accountability for the fellow is of great concern. Yet, the correspondence between

the imagined pain in the sympathizer's mind and the real pain of the sympathized

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might be impossible." *The Surprising Effects of Sympathy*, 181.

[12] In part, revived interest in the more physiological model of sympathy as contagious bodily power of connection is a response to this epistemological and ethical conundrum intrinsic in the psychological model of sympathy. Lorri G. Nandrea's exploration of the "extra linguistic" sympathy as an "eroticized physiological sensibility" in *Jane Eyre* is an illustrative example. See "Desiring Difference: Sympathy and Sensibility in *Jane Eyre*," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 37. 1-2(2003): 112-134. Though not exactly about sympathy, Adela Pinch's investigation of emotions in eighteenth-century British writings as "somewhat autonomous substances (...) as impersonal, and contagious, as viruses, visiting the breasts of men and women the way diseases visit the body" is a similar attempt. *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen* (California: Stanford UP, 1996), 1. The revived interests in sympathy and feeling in general as autonomous bodily capacity for "inter" and "trans" subjective connection and movement have also something to do with what Ruth Leys calls "the turn to affect:" the recent academic fascination with non-intentional, corporeal, and pre-subjective account of emotions. See "The Turn to Affect: A Critique," *Critical Inquiry* 37. 3 (Spring 2011):434-472.

and the sincerity of one's fellow feeling for the sufferer matters very little. Putting differently, the fact that a middle class industrialist may not know exactly how the factory children feel when they work sixteen hours a day and cannot share their pain as if it is his own is not a primary concern in this mode of sympathy. Instead, whether the industrialist can be made to agree with the fact that factory children are not the cheapest industrial raw materials to be consumed but members of his community to be protected from brutality and exploitation is crucially important.

Sharing pain, thus the idea of social sympathy suggests, does not need to mean identification; rather, it can mean an acknowledgment of the moral responsibility for the pain, and the registration of the responsibility at communal level. With this revised understanding of sympathy, the probing gaze into the individual psyche may be able to shift its attention away from the principally unanswerable question of authenticity. Instead, it may begin to ask what our social structure of feeling for fellows is and how it needs to be reformulated.

The second goal of this dissertation is to intervene in one of the key conversations surrounding a claim that Victorian novels functioned as an ideological apparatus to create an illusion of an autonomous self. The two most influential claims of this sort were published each in 1988 and 1989 respectively by D.A. Miller and Nancy Armstrong. *In The Novel and the Police*, for example, Miller contends that Victorian novels created a fantasy of self and community, most representatively family, whose capacity for self-

regulation and self-discipline keeps police away from its private autonomous space. Far from being free from the police, however, in this world where everybody polices themselves, Miller argues, police power operates ever more effectively through the self-policing subject and community and becomes an omnipresent panoptic gaze of the disciplinary system.[13] Nancy Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction* also analyzes how eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British domestic fictions formulated a kind of self who is "independent of the material conditions that have produced it" and can transform itself and others "without transforming the social and economic configuration in opposition to which it is constructed."[14]

Supported by voluminous criticisms that reproduced a similar view during the 1990s and early 2000s under the reign of the new historicism, the claim that Victorian novels propagated an illusion of an autonomous self and its self-regulative power has become almost a truism. Though not always explicitly articulated, the claim offered an important critical insight that the illusion of an autonomous self served the reproduction of the status quo by replacing structural socio-economic issues with individual moral issues. Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* (1843) and Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848), in which problems originating from the distribution of wealth are resolved

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[13] D.A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1988), 16-32.

[14] Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989), 94.

by the restoration of individual characters' souls rather than by reforming the way wealth is distributed can be illustrative examples that prove the relevance of this critique.

Nonetheless, there was a more problematic presumption underlying this claim that any form of a subject or subjectivity is the effect of ideologies through with the existing power relationship is exercised. This presumption is applied both to the production and consumption of the text as the writer literarily embodies the ideology and the reader imbibes the ideology and is called into the subject that the ideology intends to produce. According to this assumption, if an ideology fails to seamlessly reproduce itself, it is because of the internal contradictions, fissures, and slippages of the ideology not because of the critical interpretational intervention of the writers and readers. Introducing her methodology of literary criticism, Mary Poovey explains that her reading of the texts is informed by a shared assumption of post-structuralist, Marxist, and psychoanalytic paradigms that "signifying practices always produce meanings in excess of what seems to be the text's explicit design."[15] Poovey's remark well represents the theoretical atmosphere around this time in which the cultural praxis of the literary texts was found not in what the writer intends to deliver but where the text fails the writer's intention. And in the dominance of this theoretical paradigm, the autonomy of the signifying

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[15] Mary Poovey, *Uneven Development: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1988), 10.

practices seemed to successfully replace the autonomy of any subject along with its agency to reform itself and the world that it inhabits.

Victorian novel's strong affiliation with the idea of a liberal self is undeniable. Also, it is difficult to refute that in the mainstream Victorian literary imagination, sympathy was deemed as an individual moral capacity residing in the soul of a private self. Under the Victorian ideology of separate spheres, sympathy was tied to the private and the domestic not to the public and the social realm. The failure and success of sympathy was also dramatized mostly in terms of the corruption and restoration of a soul. Even in the writers of the texts that this dissertation examines, the idea of sympathy as one soul's innate capacity to resonate with the other frequently coexisted in tension and dialogue with the idea of sympathy as a socially constructed norm of a fellow feeling.

However, this study suggests that the complicated bifurcation of natural and social sympathy, which I will soon discuss in detail in the main body of the project, enables us to trace an awareness of the historicity of morality and the socially constructed nature of the moral sentiment of fellow feeling in nineteenth-century British literature. The chronological order of the texts that I analyze in the project does not reflect any evolutionary narrative. But the wide timespan of the composition from the beginning to the end of the nineteenth-century does speak to the fact that the meditation of social sympathy was a steady and strong undercurrent that constituted nineteenth-century British literary imagination of sympathy.

Developing in tandem with the awareness of the social embeddedness of a self and its ethical relationship to the others, my dissertation argues, the idea of an autonomous self and its capacity for moral regeneration in Victorian novels was not as comfortably endorsed and seamlessly reproduced as it has been argued by the new historicist critics. On the contrary, the texts that this study examines clearly reveal the recognition that moral sentiments are socially produced and forming and reforming moral sentiments necessarily involves changes at the social, not the personal, level. The agency that these texts imagined was accordingly less a soul's potential to overcome egoism than a subject's ability to engage in the changes of social codes of moral feelings and conducts. By shedding light on the idea of social sympathy, I propose that we reevaluate the claim that Victorian novels served as an ideological apparatus to produce the myth of a liberal self and its disciplinary mechanism of the self-policing. In addition, I illuminate how discourses of social sympathy remain cautious about the idea of an autonomous self and social determinism imagining world as what we create and inhabit at the same time.

My textual analysis opens with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* which critically continues Mary Wollstonecraft's meditation of sympathy as a learned respect for the equal fellow. Enlightenment and sympathy are the two most discussed themes of the novel in the existing criticisms of the novel. Yet, enlightenment and sympathy have rarely been examined together. My chapter "Enlightened Sympathy: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein,*" suggests not enlightenment and sympathy but enlightenment of sympathy is the key agenda that *Frankenstein* foregrounds and delves into. I demonstrate how

Shelley attempts to define sympathy as a culturally acquired universal fellowship regardless of naturally given biological differences. Also, I point out how by placing sympathy in the realm of culture, not nature, Shelley wards off the possibility of sympathy to function as an exclusive fellowship among a parochial circle of a kinship system. Shelley's view of language in the novel is especially important not only for the argument of this chapter but for the entire dissertation. Shelley reveals her belief in the critical potential of the culture to achieve the enlightenment goal of universal sympathy but also shows her awareness that the culture is a part of the prejudices that deter the ideal of universal sympathy. Still, my analysis demonstrates that Shelley embraces culture as the only realm that enables our critical intervention to redefine the meaning of a fellow and our moral sentiment for the fellow.

My second chapter reads two testimonies written by former factory operators in support of the cause of British Factory Reform. The focus of the chapter is on the way that the testimonies present sympathy as an acknowledgement of moral responsibility for the pain and suffering of the distressed rather than an emotional identification with the sufferers. Adam Smith's definition of sympathy as an ability to imaginatively identify with a suffering fellow was a dominant understanding of sympathy in Victorian literature. But the testimonies that this chapter analyses suggest that sympathy is more a response to the morality encoded in pain and suffering rather than a response to the pain and suffering itself. For example, audience cries when a virtuous heroine suffers but laughs when a villain suffers. In other words, it is not the suffering itself but the moral cue of the vice

and virtue that the audience responses to. Trying to turn the figure of a suffering young factory operator into a theatrical cue at which the audience needs to feel morally degraded and enraged, the two testimonies attempt to register the afflictions of the factory workers as the legitimate object of social sympathy, this chapter concludes.

The third chapter examines Charles Dickens's cultural politics of sympathy in *The Old Curiosity Shop*. I investigate how Dickens envisions a position for the writer and reader that accommodates two seemingly conflicting demands on the novel in the early Victorian period: a commodity that nurtures anti-market moral sentiments. The novel genre functioned as a Victorian amusement that was sold in the marketplace. At the same time, during the nineteenth century, it was a common belief that the novel could counter the depraved values of the marketplace by its ability to teach sympathy, a moral capacity to overcome self-interest and sympathize with others' pain and suffering. Reading *The Old Curiosity Shop*, I analyze how Dickens embodies and responds to the intrinsic tensions of the commercial novel as a commodity in the market, which tries to teach unselfishness through a form of self-interest: pleasure. More specifically, I focus on the initial narrator, Master Humphrey, and his double stance toward the young heroine, Nell, both as a philanthropist and a voyeur. While critics underline Master Humphrey's voyeuristic male gaze at Nell and regard his philanthropic side as a mask, I argue that the inseparable enmeshment of pleasure and sympathy, curiosity and altruism is what characterizes the peculiar position of Master Humphrey. The conclusion of the chapter is that as a commercial novelist, Dickens understood pleasure more as a condition of

possibility for novelistic sympathy in the marketplace than a limit per se. Dickens's meditation about the possibility of manufacturing sympathy as a market commodity to form and reform public moral sentiment is still one of the key issues in today's cultural politics of emotion, this chapter suggests.

My last chapter discusses Thomas Hardy's "The Withered Arm" and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* with a focus on how these two works represent Hardy's vision of tactile sympathy. The first three chapters investigate literary and non-literary texts that define sympathy as a moral sentiment that is socially produced, taught, and sold in the marketplace. In the first three chapters, I demonstrate how these texts were engaged in the discursive contestations and negotiations surrounding the definition of a fellow and the boundary of a community's ethical accountability for the fellow. Reading Hardy's novels, however, I show how Hardy expands the meaning of sympathy from a moral sentiment of fellow feeling to the existential state of physical tactility. Though slightly different from sympathy narrowly defined as a moral sentiment in the previous three chapters, this chapter contends that Hardy most radically envisions the social nature of sympathy by decentering it from the interiority of a feeling subject and re-centering it in the ontological state of being together in a specific time and space. By doing so, Hardy's sympathy continues what I call the tradition of the social sympathy in nineteenth-century British literature: a mode of sympathy situated in the exterior to a feeling self, namely, in the culture and society which, in turn, the self creates and inhabits.

CHAPTER ONE

ENLIGHTENED SYMPATHY: MARY SHELLEY'S *FRANKENSTEIN*

I

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) begins with Robert Walton's letter to his sister Mrs.

Saville. In the letter, Walton explains why he cannot give up his North Pole expedition

despite all the forebodings from his sister. According to his explanation, his determination

to forge ahead is based on the following two reasons: first, his desire to satiate his

curiosity about a land never visited by man and second, he wants to benefit mankind with

discoveries that his expedition would make. The familiar theme of *Frankenstein* that has

been often discussed by critics, an enlightenment project to expand human knowledge

and to enhance human progress, is hence clearly inferred from the beginning of the novel.

Notably, one of the mysteries that Walton anticipates his polar expedition will unravel is

"the wondrous power which attracts the needle"

and "the secret of magnet" (1818:7),[1] which is the definition of premodern sympathy as the mysterious magnetism in the natural world. In this way, another important theme of the novel, sympathy, is also introduced in Walton's first letter combined with the theme of enlightenment.

Enlightenment and sympathy are two of the most extensively studied themes of *Frankenstein*. Yet they are rarely examined together; they are instead treated as separate topics that the novel raises. While enlightenment has been mostly dealt with in relation to Victor Frankenstein's scientific experiment with artificial life, sympathy has been discussed in terms of the Creature's longing for social relationships. However, this chapter suggests that the enlightenment of sympathy, not enlightenment and sympathy as separate categories, is the key agenda that *Frankenstein* foregrounds and delves into.

Enlightenment is a too over-loaded and overarching term to use without some qualifying definition. In my discussion of the enlightenment of sympathy in *Frankenstein*, I use the term   as a synonym for secularization and iconoclasm, which began roughly in the mid seventeenth- century and reached its peak during the eighteenth century. I briefly trace the etymological history of sympathy from its premodern usage as the mysterious magnetism in the natural world to the modern one of

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[1] Mary Shelly, *Frankenstein; Or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818; New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012). Further quotations from the 1818 text are based on this edition. References are given in the text after quotations.

fellow feeling. I point out how the eighteenth-century transformation of the term disinherits and inherits the term's premodern notion as the mythic binding power in the natural world. And I propose that Shelley attempts to further the demystification of the term and to define it as an educated and acquired fellowship not as a naturally given and automatically operating fellow feeling in *Frankenstein*.

In examining the enlightenment of sympathy in *Frankenstein*, this chapter has three main objectives that respond to different needs from different levels of my study. In terms of the present dissertation project, which investigates the nineteenth-century British prose narratives that sees sympathy not as an innate but a culturally taught moral sentiment for fellow beings, I find the most important origin of this tradition in *Frankenstein*. At the level of *Frankenstein* scholarship, this chapter suggests that Shelley's approach to sympathy may revise the dominant reading of the novel as a critique of enlightenment ideals rather than an inheritor of them.[2] As is well known, Shelley's characterization of Frankenstein significantly changed from the 1818 text to the 1831 text. The more sympathetic rendering of Frankenstein as a benevolent scientist in the 1818 text is downplayed in the 1831 text and the newly added image of the

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[2] Both in academia and popular culture, *Frankenstein* became shorthand for an enlightenment scientific project that goes berserk. Anne K. Mellor's reading of the novel as a feminist warning against male "scientific hubris" best represents this line of interpretation that has been frequently reproduced. See "*Frankenstein*: A Feminist Critique of Science," in *One Culture: Essays in Science and Literature*, ed. George Levine (Wisconsin: U of Wisconsin P, 1987), 287.

blasphemous scientist overpowers his characterization in the later text.[3] Given the

strong possibility that censorship influenced Shelley's revision,[4] I propose that the

Creature's quest for sympathy, which remains the same in both texts, can illuminate

Shelley's less interrupted view of the enlightenment, which I will argue is more a

critical endorsement than a denial of it. Finally, this chapter briefly discusses the recent

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[3] Most importantly, in the preface for the 1831 text, Shelley describes Frankenstein as "the pale student of unhallowed arts" who mocked "the stupendous mechanism of the Creator." Later in the novel, Frankenstein too calls his experiment "unhallowed arts" twice when his youngest brother William, household maid Justine Moritz, and his friend Henry Clerval were either directly or indirectly murdered by the Creature. Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; Or The Modern Prometheus* (1831; London: Penguin, 2007), 9, 90, 189. (Further quotations from the 1831 text are based on this edition. Hereafter, further references from this edition are given in parentheses after quotations.) However, Shelley's and Frankenstein's straightforward indictment of the blasphemy was a new addition to the 1831 text that did not exist in the 1818 text. Rather, in the 1818 text, Shelley placed greater emphasis on the favorable side of Frankenstein's pursuit of scientific knowledge and eagerness to use it for human progress. For example, when Robert Walton rescues Frankenstein from the Arctic Sea and nurses him on his ship, Walton is impressed by Frankenstein's genuine interest in his North Pole expedition and ardent wish to make useful suggestions to improve the plan. In this initial portrayal by Walton, which is deleted in the 1831 text, Frankenstein is described as someone who almost "instinctively" tries to be useful for "the welfare of those who surround him" (1818: 16) even in the most wretched state near death. This deleted portrayal, not the added one of the mad scientist, is in fact more consistent with Frankenstein's younger self as a benevolent scientist who "thirsted for the moment" to "make myself useful to my fellow-beings" (1818:61), which is retained in both texts and repeated several times with variations.

[4] For the contemporary reception of the first 1818 text, which can be summarized as moral outrage about the heresy and impiety of Frankenstein's experiment, and how the reception influenced a more conservative revision of the 1831 text, see Chris Baldick, *In Frankenstein's Shadow: Myth, Monstrosity, and Nineteenth-Century Writing* (New York: Oxford UP, 1987), 56-62.

academic zeal for the transgressive power of body and matter, especially the one that has been vigorously expressed under the rubric of affect theory. I do not fully engage with affect theory. Yet, I point out the surprising resemblance between the concept of affect and the premodern notion of sympathy as the impersonal visceral energies that travel through and connect different bodies. And I emphasize Shelley's caution in *Frankenstein* about how the reliance on the spontaneous and involuntary bodily interaction as the unmediated and uncorrupted way of communication can lead to the end of cultural critique and intervention to change its arbitrary vectors.

While Walton's first letter introduces the novel's agenda with sympathy, to foster the enlightenment of sympathy and to navigate the possibility of learned universal sympathy against the naturally given differences among fellow creatures, the preface for the 1831 text provides the condition for the navigation. In the preface, Shelley recounts a Hindu myth in which an elephant supports the world, and the elephant stands on a tortoise. Then Shelley observes, "Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos; the materials must, in the first place, be afforded" (1831:8). In this way, Shelley gives up the idea of the mythic origin that holds everything together in order and harmony. Instead, the enlightenment of the sympathy that the novel pursues embraces the chaotic mire of what is given as the only material for the reformulation and remaking of the chaos.

II

Sympathy and Enlightenment: Historical Context

As an etymological history demonstrates, it was during the eighteenth-century that the modern usage of sympathy as fellow feeling was firmly established though the gradual increase of the same usage can be found in seventeenth-century literature as well.[5] Despite some variations in its usage, it is fair to say that sympathy referred mostly to the mysterious magnetism and gravity between things in the natural world before the eighteenth-century. The correspondence between the celestial bodies such as the moon and the earth or the coordination between internal organs like the heart and the lungs were, for example, explained by sympathy before the alternative explanation of modern physics and medicine was made available.

As a concept that explains "inexplicable" resonance and coordination in the natural world, the pre-modern and early-modern usage of "sympathy" is characterized by heavy reliance on the notion of a mythical binding power, either cosmic or theistic in nature. Once demystified by the language of modern science, though, the notion of sympathetic gravity and magnetism provided an attractive conceptual substitute to the

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[5] For a general overview of the etymological history of sympathy, see Eric Schliesser, Introduction to *Sympathy: A History,* ed. Eric Schliesser (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2015), 3-14.

notion of Christian love during a time of rapid secularization.[6] Instead of turning to theology, people began to think that the possibility of fellow feeling could now be explained by the physiological or physical law of our innate faculty. Consequently, various attempts to base the possibility of mutual human understanding and bond on human "science" characterized eighteenth century British moral philosophies.

Though he did not give up the idea of god as the author of the faculty, for example, Francis Hutcheson bequeathed a theory of moral "sense" as our innate disposition to virtue. Defining it literally as an "instinct" which is "implanted in our nature,"[7] Hutcheson claimed that our moral sense responds to virtue antecedent to any instruction, custom, or calculation of self-interest and operates independent of our will or judgement.[8] David Hume's naturalistic explanation of the moral sentiment as our inborn approbation and disapprobation to virtue and vice is another example. In *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40), for instance, Hume identifies our sense of vice and virtue with the sensation of pain and pleasure caused by morally disagreeable or agreeable views: "An action, or sentiment, or character is virtuous or vicious (...)

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[6] For further historical background on the secularization of the term, see Ryan Patrick Hanley, "The Eighteenth-Century Context of Sympathy from Spinoza to Kant," in *Sympathy: A History*, 171-191.

[7] Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1726; Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2012), 132.

[8] Ibid., 86-94.

because its view causes a pleasure or uneasiness of a particular kind."[9] Therefore, Hume believed that morality is what "is more properly felt than judg'd [*sic*] of"[10] and this disposition to morality is "so rooted in our constitution" that it is "impossible to extirpate and destroy" it. [11] Adam Smith did not adopt the mechanical model of Hutcheson and Hume in which our physical senses automatically react to the morally good or bad. Instead, Smith contended that it is by imagination that we can, indirectly and in a mediated manner, share others' pain and form the fellow feeling of sympathy.[12] Nonetheless, Smith was sharing the broadly biological orientation of the moral sense theorists of the time in that he saw the imagination as an innate human faculty like the moral instinct or sense of Hutcheson and Hume.

While distinctively secularized and rationalized, eighteenth-century transformation of the term "sympathy" from the inexplicable gravity in the natural world to fellow feeling in human society did not entirely banish the deeply ingrained mysticism of the word from its usage. Rather, the description of sympathy as an involuntary and spontaneous bodily response to fellow beings' misery retained much of the mystic association of the term from its premodern usage. Finding more continuity

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[9] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40; Oxford: Oxford UP 1978), 471.

[10] Ibid., 470.

[11] Ibid., 474.

[12] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759; Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), 11.

than breakage in the transition from the pre-modern and early-modern concept of sympathy to the modern one, Seth Lobis argues that the notion of the sympathy as the magical force of binding never completely disappeared throughout the term's history. According to Lobis, far from disappearing, the idea of the organic whole bound by mystic power survived well into the nineteenth-century and beyond in the form of the cosmic whole, Christian whole, and the political whole of a monarch and a nation-state along with the term's evolution.[13]

Eighteenth-century moral sense theorists' ironic disinheritance and inheritance of the mythic notion of premodern sympathy partly came from the conflicting need to desacralize and sacralize the ground of morality. In other words, it was the outcome of the need to humanize the ground of morality and at the same time to save that ground from arbitrary human laws and conventions: hence situating it in the realm of nature and its mechanical law. The quasi scientific and quasi mystical quality of sympathy during the eighteen-century was therefore reflecting as much anxiety about the solidity of humanized morality as growing confidence in the explanatory power of human science.

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[13] Seth Lobis, *The Virtue of Sympathy: Magic, Philosophy, and Literature in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2015), 16-35.

Enlightenment of Sympathy in *Frankenstein*: From Nature to Culture

Shelley's rendering of sympathy in *Frankenstein* reveals a critical awareness of the danger implicit in the essentially biological understanding of sympathy during the eighteenth-century. Shelley's two most articulated critiques center on sympathy's familial metaphor that emphasizes biological semblance and affinity among the same species and its identification of sympathy with involuntary bodily response. In his preface to the 1818 text, Percy Bysshe Shelley explains that the chief concern of the novel is to exhibit "the amiableness of domestic affection and the excellence of universal virtue" (1818:6). While "the excellence of universal virtue" is clearly propagated by the novel's promotion of universal sympathy, the novel's proclaimed advocacy of "the amiableness of domestic affection" needs to be questioned as the novel suggests the latter as a barrier to the former.

Two central families in *Frankenstein*, the Frankenstein family and the De Lacey family, are depicted as perfect examples of domestic love and harmony. As Frankenstein recollects, "no youth could have passed more happily than mine" (1818:21). His parents are indulgent and his siblings are amiable and they are "strangers to any species of disunion and dispute" (1818:20). The French exile De Lacey family is also portrayed as the domestic ideal with the young who perform "every little affection and duty with gentleness" towards their old blind father and the elder who rewards them "by his benevolent smiles" (1818:76).

Yet, Shelley overshadows the image of ideal domesticity with the claustrophobic and incestuous sense of self-confinement and self-reproduction. In the 1818 text, for example, Frankenstein's mother adopts Frankenstein's cousin Elizabeth Lavenza and considers her as Frankenstein's future bride "to bind as closely as possible the ties of domestic love" (1818:20). Within this domestic circle, Frankenstein's family members teach, nurse, and entertain one another and become playmates and lovers to each other, making a self-sufficient and self-reproductive enclosure. And as Frankenstein narrates, by spending his entire youth in this "remarkably secluded and domestic" circle, he ends up developing an "invincible repugnance to new countenances" (1818:27).

The De Lacey family is as enclosed as the Frankenstein family in terms of its self-sufficiency and self-reproductivity. Other than the irregular wage labor of the son Felix, most of the family's material needs are met by their gardening and collecting from nearby yards. Physical, emotional, and intellectual needs are also met by the familial members as they nurse, educate, and entertain one another like the Frankenstein family. Even the arrival of the Arabian woman, Safie, enforces rather than weakens the self-containment of the De Lacey family with her seamless assimilation into the family through Felix's linguistic and cultural instructions. Their domestic enclosure is a complete and solid one since "they loved, and sympathized with one another; and their joys, depending on each other, were not interrupted by the casualties that took around them" (1818:92).

What is described as especially problematic about this domestic enclosure is its failure to expand its boundary to outsiders. In fact, one of the goals of Frankenstein's education at Ingolstadt University is to leave his "youth cooped up in one place" behind and to "enter the world, and take my station among other human beings" (1818:27). Yet, the goal is not achieved since Frankenstein refuses to make any new associations in Ingolstadt. In fact, his scientific experiment to create an artificial life is also an educational experiment to see if he could create not only a new species but also a new relationship with it, but he utterly fails to learn it. Even near to his death, Frankenstein confesses to Walton how he is unable to make "new ties and fresh affections" since "the companions of our childhood always possess a certain power over our minds, which hardly any later friend can obtain" (1818:153).

The closed circuit of domestic affection also functions as an active exclusion and discrimination to its outsiders. In this regard, the characterization of the Creature as an artificial life that does not have any "relationships which bind one human being to another in mutual bond" (1818:84) is especially significant since this condition makes the Creature as a complete other to any existing kinship system. The Creature's quest to enter into the chain of relationship and to excite sympathy from different species thus signals what Shelley's agenda with sympathy in the novel is: to expand sympathy from the given to the acquired fellowship and from affection among the same to one among

the different.[14] Once the family refuses to open its circuit to outsiders, Shelley

demonstrates how the ideal domestic bond can be turned into "insurmountable barriers"

(1818: 102) to its others. When the Creature attempts to take Frankenstein's youngest

brother William hoping that his young mind is not yet tainted with prejudice and able to

learn to be a companion to him, for example, the boy screams and yells with horror and

invokes his father's name as the authority to punish the Creature: "Hideous monster! let

me go; My papa is a Syndic-he is M. Frankenstein-he would punish you. You dare not

keep me." (1818:100) The Creature's earlier attempt to seek sympathy from the blind

De Lacey elder also fails when Felix, out of fear for the unknown creature and

protective instinct for his father, dashes the Creature to the ground and beats him

violently with a stick. Though described as deeply understandable, William's and

Felix's instinctive fear and repulsion towards the Creature unmistakably overlaps with

the prejudices that the Creature desperately tries to overcome. And the family name that

William invokes for the protection and the filial love that drives Felix into blind anger is

identified with the insurmountable barrier that frustrates the Creature's longing for

sympathy and inclusion.

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[14] Janis Maclarren Caldwell also sees the "active accommodation of difference" as Shelley's main message about sympathy. See *Frankenstein*. *Literature and Medicine in Nineteenth-Century Britain: From Mary Shelley to George Eliot* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 45.

Shelley's critique is not focused on domestic affection itself though. As she expresses in her accusation of Jean Jacques Rousseau's abandonment of his five children to the orphanage in her biographical essay on Rousseau, Shelley believed that parental love for children constitutes "the first duties of life" and "the most characteristic part of man's nature."[15] The problem that she criticizes is the confinement of familial affection within the inner circle and its almost instinctive impulse to reproduce the same and refuse the different. The enlightenment of sympathy that the novel pursues hence aims to dispose of the term's long association with the familial metaphor of the one body and an organic whole. The Creature's quest to evoke sympathy solely by his rhetorical prowess without any biological ties to the existing chain of being therefore reflects the novel's project to envision an educated universal fellowship against the enclosed circulation of affection within the established relationship.

The novel's subtitle "The Modern Prometheus" has been invariably interpreted as the description of Frankenstein, not of the Creature. Yet, in this regard, the Creature is an equal innovator to Frankenstein since the Creature too challenges the law of biological reproduction with his quest to create affective bonds outside of the kinship system. In fact, through the well-known doppelganger effect, Shelley carefully

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[15] Mary Shelley, "Rousseau," in *Lives of the Most Eminent Literary and Scientific Men of France*, vol. 2 (London: Longman, 1839), 132, 134.

constructs an echoing image of desacralizing innovator between Frankenstein's arduous research to discover the "mystery" (1818:31) of life and the Creature's painstaking study to "unravel the mystery" (1818:77) of language.[16] If Frankenstein relies on modern chemistry to appropriate God's power to animate lifeless matter, the Creature depends upon "a godlike science" (1818: 77) of language to move hearers' minds and excite sympathy. While Frankenstein spends "days and nights in vaults and charnel houses (...) examining and analyzing all the minutiae of causation" (1818: 31) of life, the Creature spends "several revolutions of the moon in my hovel" until "by great application" (1818:77) he is able to understand and apply the signs of language.

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[16] The relationship between Frankenstein and the Creature as a double has been repeatedly pointed out by other critics. For example, Peter Brooks sees Frankenstein and the Creature as a Jekyll and Hyde couple who are engaged in a dialectic of desire "in which each needs the other because the other represents for each the lack or gap within himself." "'Godlike Science/ Unhallowed Arts': Language, Nature, and Monstrosity," in *The Endurance of Frankenstein: Essays on Mary Shelley's Novel,* ed. George Levine (Berkeley: U of California P, 1979), 214. Caldwell also finds a doppelganger image in the characteristic doubling of Frankenstein and the Creature and interprets it as Shelley's design "to evoke the fear of excessive similitude." *Literature and Medicine in Nineteenth-Century Britain: From Mary Shelley to George Eliot*, 38. Yet, few have paid attention to the common trait of this pair as the innovator of the enlightenment. One exception would be George Levine's reading of the Creature as an equal rebel to Frankenstein. However, Levine oversimplifies the Creature's ambition as something "really limited to the longing for domestic affection." "The Ambiguous Heritage of *Frankenstein*," in *The Endurance of Frankenstein*, 10. Levine's reading overlooks the most significant characterization of the Creature as an artificial life. The domestic affection that the Creature longs for cannot be the same familial bond based on the traditional kinship system by the given condition of his artificial being. And the importance of this setting, the Creature's quest for sympathy without biological ties, cannot be emphasized enough especially regarding the novel's thematization of sympathy.

Frankenstein's conversion from premodern alchemy to modern science is also reproduced in the Creature's awakening to the modern view of language and its arbitrariness, which has no "apparent connection with visible objects" (1818: 77): a departure from the premodern view of the language that presumes a unity of words and things.

While the domestic sympathy of the Frankenstein and De Lacey families is characterized by self-confinement and self-reproduction, the sympathy that the Creature seeks is enabled by changes and movement in these enclosed circles. And the only resource that the Creature can rely on is language. The single most important event that happens during the Creature's stay with the De Lacey family is his discovery and mastery of the human language. Observing the De Lacey family secretly through a crevice in the wood-sealed window, the Creature learns that "these people possessed a method of communicating their experience and feeling to one another by articulating sounds" (1818:77). The Creature also learns a more astonishing fact: this method of communication has the power to produce certain emotional and physical changes such as "pleasure or pain, smiles or sadness in the minds and countenances of the hearers" (1818:77). Among other things, it is this kinetic power of language that fascinates the Creature most and makes him ardently desire to learn its godlike science.

In the scene in which the Creature re-encounters Frankenstein in the Alps after Frankenstein's initial abandonment of him, Shelley fully delineates the power that she

confers on language and lets the Creature exercise in his pursuit of sympathy: the power of culture to move and change nature. When they meet again, Frankenstein demands the Creature "Begone! relieve me from the sight of your detested form"(1818:69). Responding to the demand, the Creature places his hands before Frankenstein's eyes and pleads, "still thou canst listen to me, and grant me thy compassion:"

> "Thus I relieve thee, my creator," he said and placed his hated hands before my eyes, which I flung from me with violence; "thus I take from thee a sight which you abhor. Still thou canst listen to me, and grant me thy compassion. By the virtues that I once possess, I demand this from you. Hear my tale (...) The sun is yet high in the heavens; before it descends to hide itself behind yon snowy precipices, and illuminate another world, you will have heard my story, and can decide. (1818:69)

By placing his hands before Frankenstein's eyes and entreating Frankenstein to be sensitized and moved by his story instead of his appearance, the Creature conjures the power of language to override the prejudices of visuality. In the passage, the sun sets to rise in the opposite side of the earth and to "illuminate another world". Literally and metaphorically synchronizing his story-telling to the movement of the sun, the Creature opens the space for the possible changes that his story may bring about. The future

perfect tense of "you will have heard my story, and can decide" is an enactment of the potential changes in the present moment of his enunciation.

Mary Shelley and Mary Wollstonecraft on Nature and Culture

Shelley's attempt to move sympathy from the realm of nature to culture and from the biologically tied kinship system to learned universal fellowship evokes, in important ways, her mother Mary Wollstonecraft's critique of Edmund Burke, especially his promotion of filial love as the most natural human moral sentiment.[17] In "A Vindication of the Rights of Men" (1790) written in the form of a letter to Edmund Burke, Wollstonecraft sharply points out how the idea of natural moral sentiment could be easily turned into a rhetoric to justify the status quo of the privileged. To Burke, who

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[17] While the nature of the influence is still a topic of debate, the formative influence of Wollstonecraft's intellectual legacy on Shelley has been well established. For biographical reconstruction of Shelley's lifelong interaction with Wollstonecraft's writings and philosophies, see Charlotte Gordon, *Romantic Outlaws: The Extraordinary Lives of Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Shelley* (New York: Random House, 2016). Charles E. Robinson provides a more focused discussion on the direct influence of Wollstonecraft's second *Vindication* on *Frankenstein*. See "A Mother's Daughter: An Intersection of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*" in *Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Shelley: Writing Lives*, ed. Helen M. Buss, D. M. Macdonald, and Anne McWhir (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2001). For Wollstonecraft's and Shelley's shared inheritance and revision of classical enlightenment ideals, see Esther H. Schor, "Mary Shelley in Transit," in *The Other Mary Shelley: Beyond Frankenstein*, ed. Audrey A. Fisch, Anne K. Mellor and Esther H.Schor (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993).

co-opted the idea of the innate moral sense in his defense of the old regime, Wollstonecraft asks how can we distinguish the filial love that Burke posits as the most natural feeling from "mistaken self-interest."[18] What if the natural "*feelings* should lead us to excuse, with blind love, or unprincipled filial affection, the venerable vestiges of ancient days" and keep us in "an immortal boundary against innovation"?[19] Would not that result in, Wollstonecraft conclusively asks, "the perpetuation of property in our [established] families" and confinement of "its benevolence to such a narrow circle?"[20]

Wollstonecraft thus refuses the idea of natural moral sentiment and affiliates morality with critical reason and culture, which can challenge the immorality of the naturalized social hierarchy. She sarcastically translates the idea of "natural" moral sentiment into the idea of the "heredity" of different social "station in which he was born" and by which he "has been changed into an artificial monster."[21] And she argues that not by naturalizing but by "de" naturalizing this heredity we can secure the fellow

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[18] Mary Wollstonecraft, "A Vindication of the Rights of Men" in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men and A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), 8.

[19] Ibid., 8, original emphasis.

[20] Ibid., 21.

[21] Ibid., 9.

feeling of sympathy "which can only be enjoyed by equals" and "founded on respect for justice and humanity."[22]

Nonetheless, Wollstonecraft's argument was vexed by the question of how critical reason can stay separated from hereditary hierarchy and its pervasive prejudices, in other words, how critical culture can maintain its autonomy over hereditary nature. Wollstonecraft is known as a militant advocate of reason and its power for human progress. Yet her writings are frequently overshadowed by her awareness of the restraints, if not limits per se, of the critical power of reason. Wollstonecraft's ardent call for the promotion of reason in the passage below thus reads not so much as a celebration of its power as a realization of the overwhelming condition that disables its capacity for human enlightenment and progress:

> Who will venture to assert that virtue would not be promoted by the more extensive cultivation of reason? (...) Who will pretend to say, that there is as much happiness diffused on this globe as it is capable of affording? as many social virtues as reason would foster, if she could gain the strength she is able to acquire even in this imperfect state; if the voice of nature was allowed to speak audibly from the bottom of the heart, and the native unalienable rights of men were recognized in their full force; if factitious merit did not take place of genuine acquired

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[22] Ibid., 9.

virtue, and enable men to build their enjoyment on the misery of their fellow creatures; if men were more under the dominion of reason than opinion, and did not cherish their prejudices 'because they were prejudices?'[23]

From the successive conditional sentences of "if only" and their breathless accumulation, it is hard to find Wollstonecraft's well-known optimism about the critical power of reason. Or if we do find it, it is line by line conditioned with multiple barriers that deter its realization. In her later writing, including the second vindication, "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" (1792), the same dilemma reappears without being resolved or elaborated. On one hand, Wollstonecraft asserts that "I build my belief on the perfection of God"[24] and the perfection of God-given reason. On the other hand, Wollstonecraft acknowledges that "such deeply rooted prejudices have clouded reason, and such spurious qualities have assumed the name of virtues, that it is necessary to pursue the course of reason as it has been perplexed and involved in error, comparing the simple axiom with casual deviations."[25] The question of how critical reason can be separated from pervasive prejudices thus remains unanswered in Wollstonecraft. She

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[23] Ibid., 33.

[24] Ibid., 82.

[25] Ibid., 79.

keeps oscillating between a belief in the transcendental perfection of God-given reason and acknowledgement of its immanent condition of being "perplexed and involved in error."

Shelley's rendering of sympathy in *Frankenstein* echoes Wollstonecraft's caution against the naturalization of moral sentiments. Sympathy in *Frankenstein* shares Wollstonecraft's insight that in nature we are not born as equals but are always born into hierarchy, and it is by cultural intervention that we acquire universal equal fellowship against the inborn power hierarchy.[26] Yet, *Frankenstein* does not inherit the precarious reliance on the transcendence of critical reason that lingered in Wollstonecraft. Instead, Shelley articulates and dramatizes the predicament of envisioning a cultural critique and

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[26] In the preceding years before the composition of *Frankenstein*, more specifically, between 1814 and 1816, Shelley read and reread Wollstonecraft's major writings including *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), *Letters from Norway* (1796), *Maria or The Wrongs of Woman* (1798) and a posthumously published collection of Wollstonecraft's other essays. See Mary Shelley's journal entries from August 17, 1814 to December 9, 1816. *Mary Shelley's Journal*, ed. Fredrick L. Jones (Oklahoma: U of Oklahoma P, 1947). In her journal, Shelley did not make any specific comments about sympathy or the idea of the innate moral sentiment from Wollstonecraft's writings. However, David Marshall points out the visible resemblance between the characterization of the Creature in *Frankenstein* and the dispossessed asylum attendant Jemima in Wollstonecraft's *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman*, especially in terms of both characters' longing for social sympathy and acceptance as an equal fellow. See *The Surprising Effects of Sympathy: Marivaux, Diderot, Rousseau, and Mary Shelley* (Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 1988), 199-200. About sympathy, I find the most notable resonance between Shelley and Wollstonecraft in their attempt to define it more as the right of equal fellowship than feeling for the fellow and, if it is feeling, more as an educated one than an innate one.

innovation with the same cultural medium by which we imbibe hereditary prejudices with her figuration of language in *Frankenstein*.

Language Acquisition: Empowerment vs Imprisonment

In her study of British female gothic literature and American slave narratives, Kari Winter notes the literal centrality of the Creature's narrative situated in the middle of the three-volume novel. Winter interprets the location as Shelley's intentional design to highlight the importance of the Creature's narrative and to empower the disenfranchised through the figure of the Creature who eloquently speaks for himself.[27] A monster with intelligence and eloquence is indeed one of the most powerful metaphors that *Frankenstein* created. And, as Patrick Brantlinger points out, the Creature's association with the politicized literate mass especially in the aftermath of the French Revolution and Luddite movement is unmistakable.[28]

However, Shelley's empowerment of the Creature through language acquisition is complicated by the other side of the language that reproduces the very prejudices that

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[27] Kari Winter, *Subjects of Slavery, Agents of Change: Women and Power in Gothic Novels and Slave Narratives, 1790-1865* (Athens: U of Georgia P 1992), 50-51.

[28] Patrick Brantlinger, *The Reading Lesson: The Threat of Mass Literacy in Nineteenth Century British Fictions* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1998), 63.

the Creature needs to break. Jonathan Jones persuasively demonstrates how the Creature, through his language acquisition, "imbibe[s] and reproduce[s] ideology" [29] by which he is alienated and marginalized as a monster. Observing the De Lacey family, the Creature not only learns their language but also internalizes the values imbedded in the language including the idea of beauty and ugliness: hence becoming "fully convinced that I was in reality the monster that I am" (1818:78-79). Emphasizing "the inescapable immersion of the individual with ideological structures" through "signifying practices," Jones thus reads *Frankenstein* ultimately as a novel about "cultural possession and assimilation."[30] James C. Hatch too attends to the similar side of language in *Frankenstein* as a medium of alienation and colonization by pointing out how language acquisition in *Frankenstein* necessitates the othering of the Creature while depriving him of his actual difference as the other. [31]

Language both as a medium of empowerment and imprisonment in *Frankenstein* can be seen less as a contradiction or ambivalence than Shelley's attempt to envision intrinsic changes within the culture without reintroducing transcendence. Instead of

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[29] Jones, Jonathan, "Hidden Voices: Language and Ideology in Philosophy of Language of the Long Eighteenth Century and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*," *Textual Practice* 19.3 (2005): 284.

[30] Ibid., 284.

[31] James C. Hatch, "Disruptive Affects: Shame, Disgust, and Sympathy in *Frankenstein*," *European Romantic Review* 19.1 (2008): 46.

innate approbation for virtue or the God-given power of critical reason, Shelley offers language as a medium for the potential change and reproduction of the status quo. In this regard, it is significant to note that in *Frankenstein* the Creature's empowerment and imprisonment by language often happens simultaneously. Through language acquisition, the Creature imbibes and internalizes the cultural values by which he is identified as a deformed monster. Nonetheless, that moment of cultural assimilation is the moment that the Creature begins to see his self from a relational point of view, in other words, to realize his social identity defined by his relationship with others:

> Every conversation of the cottagers now opened new wonders to me. While I listened to the instructions which Felix bestowed upon the Arabian, the strange system of human society was explained to me. I heard of the division of property, of immense wealth and squalid poverty; of rank, descent, and noble blood.
>
> The words induced me to turn towards myself. I learned that the possessions most esteemed by your fellow-creatures were, high and unsullied descent united with riches. A man might be respected with only one of these acquisitions; but without either he was considered, except in very rare instances, as a vagabond and a slave, doomed to waste his powers for the profits of the chosen few. And what was I? Of my creation and creator I was absolutely ignorant; but I knew that I possessed no money, no friends, no kind of property. I was, besides, endowed with a figure hideously deformed and loathsome. (...) Was I then a monster, a

blot upon the earth, from which all men fled, and whom all men disowned? (1818:83)

The transition from the first to the second paragraph in the passage above is the transition from the Creature's acquisition of knowledge about human society to the awareness of his status within society. The Creature's self-knowledge and the acknowledgement that "I was in reality the monster that I am" are, in other words, predicated upon his awareness of identity's social and relational nature: hence entailing not only the naturalization of his identity as a monster but also the potential for its "de" naturalization.[32]

The well-known multi-layered narrative structure of the novel in which Walton's narrative begot Frankenstein's and Frankenstein's narrative begot the Creature's, and conversely, each new narrative implodes the previous enveloping narrative's point of view and reliability can be seen also as part of Shelley's attempt to envision the possibility of intrinsic cultural changes within the given culture. Previous critics of

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[32] Reading almost the same passage, Jones also notes the "growing social awareness" of the Creature whose self-reflection is premised on "the realization of [his] social alienation." "Hidden Voices," 279. Reiterating his interpretation of the novel as a story of cultural possession and assimilation, however, Jones emphasizes how this growing social awareness eventually loses its politically transformative power as the Creature identifies himself with the socially eminent De Lacey family instead of other marginalized characters such as the family's servants.

sympathy in *Frankenstein* have almost unanimously read the novel as a story about "the failure of sympathy."[33] Sharing the same view, Lobis interprets the novel's last two words "darkness and distance" (1818:161) as the ultimate physical barrier that "sympathy cannot in the end transcend."[34] However, it is possible to interpret the "darkness and distance" as Shelley's resistance against transcendence. As Levine famously pointed out, "the whole narrative of *Frankenstein* is, indeed, acted out in the absence of God."[35] In *Frankenstein*'s universe without God, if something new is to be created or invented, it needs to be born from this darkness and distance, not from an uncorrupted clean slate. The final two words "darkness and distance" do leave the novel with pessimistic overtones. At the same time, Shelley's preface to the 1831 text revises this pessimistic overtone by suggesting that darkness is the only material for the new invention. If Shelley continues Wollstonecraft's agenda with sympathy in moving it from the realm of nature to culture and from what is given to what is to be acquired, Shelley thus furthers the secularization and demystification of this project by letting it be played out in a world without god or any other transcendence to rely on.

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[33] Marshall, *The Surprising Effects of Sympathy*, 181. Lobis also finds Shelley's final emphasis to be "on the failure of sympathy." *The Virtue of Sympathy*, 315. Caldwell too points out how the plot of *Frankenstein* "repeatedly dramatizes the failure of social sympathy." *Literature and Medicine in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 42.

[34] Lobis, *The Virtue of Sympathy*, 320.

[35] Levine, "The Ambiguous Heritage of *Frankenstein*," 7.

III

> Presentments are strange things! and so are sympathies; and so are signs;
> and the three combined make one mystery to which humanity has not yet
> found the key. I never laughed at presentiments in my life, because I
> have had strange ones of my own. Sympathies, I believe, exist (for
> instance, between far-distant, long-absent, wholly estranged relatives
> asserting, notwithstanding their alienation, the unity of the source to
> which each traces his origin) whose workings baffle mortal
> comprehension. And signs, for aught we know, may be but the
> sympathies of Nature with man.[36]

In *Jane Eyre* (1847), we reencounter the premodern notion of sympathy as a mythic

binding power and the idea of the original unity that underlies the ancient notion of

sympathy. Not only in *Jane Eyre* but also in other Victorian novels, the notion of

sympathy as mysterious gravity and magnetism keeps reappearing in various shapes as

an involuntary and uncontrollable power of interpersonal connection and interaction. In

Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* (1853), for example, sympathy takes the form of a

contagion as the novel's heroine Esther Summerson catches smallpox from a street

sweeper boy Jo due to her sympathetic touch with and nursing of the boy. In Thomas

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[36] Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (1847; London: Penguin, 2006), 254.

Hardy's *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874), sympathy is again figured as involuntary bodily contagion, though this time a romantic rather than threatening one, as the novel's male protagonist Gabriel Oak sees his soon-to-be lover Bathsheba Everdene yawn and "caught the infection and yawned in sympathy."[37]

Even when ambivalently presented as the source of both threatening and liberating class transgression as in Dickens, sympathy in Victorian literary figurations often carries a vision of an unmediated and unintended connection that nullifies separations. As frightful as it could be, the attraction and longevity of the term's premodern definition as a magical binding power lies in this very nonhuman nature that operates independent of human will and intention.[38] In other words, the idea that something larger than life holds us all and in it, the transient division does not hold has functioned as the essence of the term's own long-lasting gravity.

Interestingly, the recent academic zeal for affect as the visceral force that traverses through different bodies reveals a similar enthusiasm about the force's impersonal

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[37] Thomas Hardy, *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874; London: Penguin, 2000), 13.

[38] One of the most frightfully powerful examples of this unmediated inter-subjectivity in Victorian literature would be the bond between Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847). Catherine tells of Heathcliff, "He is more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same" and her unity with Heathcliff not only defies a physical boundary between them but also the boundary between life and death as she haunts him as a ghost even after death. See Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (1847: London: Norton, 2003), 63.

nature as is seen in the following definition of "affect" by Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg:

> Affect is found in those intensities that pass body to body (human, non-human, part-body, and otherwise), in those resonances that circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds, *and* in the very passages or variations between these intensities and resonances themselves. Affect, at its most anthropomorphic, is the name we give to those forces-visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion.[39]

Here, affect's similarity to the premodern notion of sympathy is striking both in terms of its resemblance to sympathy as the inexplicable resonance between different bodies in nature and its affinity with sympathy's nonhuman, almost mechanic power of connection and interaction. More importantly than the apparent similarity, the reason that the theory emphasizes affect's characteristic as a force "other than conscious knowing" and "beyond emotion" resonates with the 18th-century British moral sense theorists' mistrust of man-made morality and their need to place morality outside of human convention, hence in body and nature.

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[39] Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, "An Inventory of Shimmers," in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham: Duke UP, 2009), 1, original emphasis.

Brian Massumi, one of the earliest and most renowned affect theorists, explicates what the attraction of this visceral force "other than conscious knowing" and "beyond emotion" really is: a vision of the body that is not a discursive construction and is not contained in the gridlock of ideologies. In the following passage, Massumi first criticizes how recent cultural studies' approach to the body as mere positionality and cultural construction lacks "the very notion of movement as qualitative transformation:"[40]

> The idea of positionality begins by subtracting movement from the picture. This catches the body in cultural freeze-frame. The point of explanatory departure is a pinpointing, a zero-point of stasis. When positioning of any kind comes a determining first, movement comes a problematic second. After all is signified and sited, there is the nagging problem of how to add movement back into the picture (...) Movement is entirely subordinated to the position it connects. These are predefined. Adding movement like this adds nothing at all. You just get two successive states: multiple of zero.[41]

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[40] Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham: Duke UP, 2002), 3.

[41] Ibid., 3.

Massumi goes on to explain that his interest in affect as visceral energy and movement began "in response to these problems" of cultural studies and with an aim to put "what seems most directly corporeal back into the body"[42] thus identifying the visceral with the outside of the gridlock of ideologies.

In "The Turn to Affect: A Critique," perhaps one of the most frequently-cited critiques of affect theories, Ruth Leys also argues that the recent rise of affect theories in Western Academia has something to do with the "widespread reaction against what has come to be seen as the straitjacket imposed by the poststructuralist emphasis on language."[43] Leys finds the genealogy of affect theories in what she calls the anti-intentionalist paradigm of psychological science beginning in early 1960s. According to Leys, the most central claim of this paradigm is "the affects and cognition constituted two entirely separate systems and that accordingly the emotions should be theorized in anti-intentionalist terms."[44] The implication of this claim is pretty clear: our bodily reflexes and responses including emotions have autonomous dynamics that are independent of our cognition. From this claim, affect theories develop a line of division between intentions, meanings, reasons, and subjects, which are all constructions of signifying processes and ideologies imbued in the process and non-human, pre-

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[42] Ibid., 4.

[43] Ruth Leys, "The Turn to Affect: A Critique," *Critical Inquiry* 37. 3 (Spring 2011):440.

[44] Ibid., 469.

subjective, visceral, non-cognitive "intensities" that "influence our thinking and judgments but are separate from these."[45]

As Leys points out, the problem of this approach is not to find the outside of the ideologies in matter, body, and its corporeal and visceral energies but to situate the potential for changes in this "other than conscious knowing" dimension of existence: hence disabling the possibility of conscious human intervention in its supposedly autonomous vectors. The critique of this approach also comes not from the denial of the vitality and autonomy of the body and matter per se but from the concerns about placing hope for the better changes in the impersonal and amoral movement of the pre-subjective bodies and matters.

This chapter examined how eighteenth-century moral sense theorists tried to find the possibility of our moral sentiments in our bodies and nature, not in mind and culture, and by doing so, ironically inherited the premodern notion of sympathy as an inexplicable magnetism in the natural world. I demonstrated how Wollstonecraft and Shelley both acutely noticed and criticized the ideological payoff of the naturalization of moral sentiment: the end of critical intervention and the concomitant reproduction of the same, naturalized relationship. Moving further than Wollstonecraft, Shelley reformulates the reason for Wollstonecraft's prioritization of culture over nature. Like

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[45] Ibid., 437.

Wollstonecraft, Shelley co-opts culture as the place for sympathy and our moral sentiment for our fellows. Yet it is not because culture can enlighten the brute nature and ensure human progress but because it is the only realm where intentional changes and directed intervention can be imagined and tried.

Throughout the nineteenth-century, the notion of sympathy as a magical binding force and the idea of sympathy as culturally acquired fellow feeling continued to coexist and evolve in dialogue and tension with each other. While the former was often sustained by both skepticism about and the utopian desire for the possibility of unmediated intersubjective experiences, the latter gained its energy from gradual reformism by which once non-humans and sub-humans such as slaves, women, and children were elevated to the status of fellow humans, however compromised and circumscribed that elevation was.

After finding one of the most influential origins of the second tradition in Shelley's *Frankenstein*, my next chapter examines two factory workers' testimonial memoirs written to support the cause of British factory reform: *A Memoir of Robert Blincoe* (1832) and "A Narrative of the Experience and Sufferings of William Dodd, A Factory Cripple" (1841). Continuing my discussion in the first chapter, in the following chapter, I will demonstrate how these two testimonies understand sympathy as a community's moral responsibility for its members and try to register the suffering of young factory workers as the legitimate object of the social sympathy. As the title

"Melodramatic Sympathy" tries to imply, sympathy in this context means a response to the theatrical cue of vice and virtue, in other words, response to the shared signs of morality. Staging their damaged bodies in front of the public eyes, what the authors of these testimonies try to do is to turn the afflicted bodies of the young factory operators into the sign of vice, for which the audience should feel morally responsible.

CHAPTER TWO

MELODRAMATIC SYMPATHY: FACTORY REFORM TESTIMONIES

I

On July 18, 1840, 35-year-old William Dodd, a former factory child, had his right arm amputated at St. Thomas charity hospital in London. Having the surgery without help of anesthetics, Dodd was able to see the interior of his dissected arm with clear eyes. He recalled:

> On dissection, the bones of the forearm presented a very curious appearance-something similar to an empty honeycomb, the marrow also having totally disappeared; thus accounting at once for the weakness and pain I had occasionally felt in this arm for years, and

which, without doubt, may be clearly traced to the same cause as the
rest of my sufferings-viz. the factory system.[46]

Dodd's gaze at his own dissected arm is surprisingly analytic and unemotional. He describes the deformity of the bone and identifies its cause, factory labor since early childhood, but shows little interest in detailing his pain and fear related to the amputation.

Dodd wrote his autobiographical testimony, "A Narrative of the Experience and Sufferings of William Dodd, A Factory Cripple" (1841), from which the above passage is excerpted, to promote the British Factory Reform Movement. The primary goal of the British Factory Reform Movement during the first half of the nineteenth-century was to regulate hours of child labor and enhance their working conditions in factories. Dodd's "Narrative" aims to enlighten the general public and legislators about the harms of excessive labor in factories during childhood and mobilize sympathy and support for the Act. Dodd delineates the harms that factory labor did to his person from the chafed, bleeding skin to the dried-up bone marrow, his crippled limbs to malfunctioning internal

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[46] William Dodd, "A Narrative of the Experience and Sufferings of William Dodd, A Factory Cripple," (1841) in *The Factory System Illustrated* (1842: New York: A.M. Kelley, 1968), 316. Hereafter cited as "Narrative".

organs. He pleads with readers to "feel for the miseries of his fellow creatures."[47]

However, as is seen in the passage above, Dodd's description of the harm and pain

caused by factory labor is often more analytic than emotional. Dodd is more eager to

make childhood factory labor accountable for his pain and suffering than to share his

pain and suffering with the readers. Accordingly, as Dodd entreats his readers to "feel

for the miseries of his fellow creature," he seems to seek more for an agreement with

his moral judgment about the harms done by childhood factory labor than readers'

emotional identification with his pain and suffering.

This chapter pays attention to the way that Dodd uses sympathy or "feeling for

the miseries of fellow creature" more as an acknowledgement of moral responsibility

for others' pain and suffering than identification with the sufferers and their sufferings.

Along with Dodd's "Narrative," I examine another (auto) biographical testimony of a

former factory child, *A Memoir of Robert Blincoe* (1832),[48] which a journalist, John

Brown, transcribed for the illiterate Blincoe with the same purpose of promoting the

British Factory Reform Campaign. I read these two testimonies as exemplary texts in

which the sympathy that they try to evoke has more to do with endorsing moral

responsibility for fellow creatures' pain and suffering than sharing their pain and

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[47] Ibid., 318.

[48] John Brown, *A Memoir of Robert Blincoe* (1832; Sussex: Caliban Books, 1977). Hereafter cited as *Memoir*.

suffering. Throughout the reading, I demonstrate that in this mode of sympathetic exchange, pain and sympathy reside in the public realm of discursive contestations, not in the private bodies and psyches of the sympathized and the sympathizer. Also, I point out that in this mode of sympathy, communal consensus about whose and what pain society should be emotionally responsive and ethically accountable for matters more than the authenticity of one's altruistic feeling for the distressed.

My focus on the use of sympathy in these two testimonies as an acknowledgment of moral responsibility for fellow beings' pain and suffering responds to the more dominant critical view of sympathy as the capacity to imaginatively identify with fellow beings' pain and suffering. Throughout the nineteenth century and now, the dominant understanding of sympathy as a moral sentiment has been based on Adam Smith's definition of it as an ability to place ourselves in others' situation and imagine what they might feel in that situation. "Though our brother is upon the rack," Smith observes, "as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers."[49] However, Smith continues, "by the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in

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[49] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759; Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), 11.

degree, is not altogether unlike them."[50] The widely acknowledged Victorian belief in the novel genre as a moral educator relied on the same notion of sympathy that would enable readers to imaginatively identify with the fictional characters, thereby moving beyond one's self and caring about others. The moral faculty that Victorian novelists tried to cultivate was this very ability to feel others' pain as though it were our own through imaginative identification with the sufferers.

While the Victorian understanding of sympathy was predominantly based on Smith's definition of it, Elaine Hadley points out that there was another tradition of sympathy throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which had more to do with public exchange and endorsement of communal values than an individual's psychological identification with the sufferers.[51] Aligning this version of sympathy with what she calls the "melodramatic mode"[52] of representation, Hadley argues that while the Romantic and novelistic traditions find the site of sympathetic exchange in the individual psyche as in Smith's model, the melodramatic tradition finds the sites of sympathetic exchange in the public and interactive space of the theater. Taking part in the theatrical exchange of externalized symbols of vice and virtue and responding to the

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[50] Ibid., 12.

[51] Elaine Hadley, *Melodramatic Tactics: Theatricalized Dissent in the English Marketplace, 1800-1885*, (California: Stanford UP, 1995), 17.

[52] Ibid., 3.

shared moral cues to laugh or cry, the audience was constituted and constituted themselves as socially feeling subjects tied by a mutual communal relationship and sense of responsibility. Sympathy in the melodramatic mode, Hadley thus explains, denoted a recognition and endorsement of shared moral values and relationships rather than an individual altruistic feeling.[53]

By pointing out that a sympathetically feeling subject does not exist a priori but is constituted by public exchange and endorsement of common moral values and relationship, Hadley illuminates the discursive side of sympathy as distinct from the psychologized notion of it. Not every pain and suffering is deemed ethically accountable and socially responsible. When the virtuous prostitute Nancy's skull is smashed by her pimp Bill Sikes in Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (1838), both the fictional crowd in the novel and actual contemporary readers of the novel responded to the crime with absolute fury. But when Sikes's devilish dog Bullseye had his skull smashed on the rock as it tried to follow its owner, it is doubtful that many readers felt sorry for the dog though the beast was as abused by Sikes as Nancy was. In other words, sympathy is less a response to pain and suffering itself than a response to the moral codes of vice and virtue inscribed in that pain and suffering. Hence, the novel invites sympathy for the virtuous Nancy's suffering whereas the ferocious beast's suffering seems poetically just.

[53] Ibid., 13-17.

To register certain instances of pain and suffering as legitimate objects of communal sympathy inevitably involves their moral encoding. And in this discursive process, the phenomenological dimension of private pain that cannot be shared matters very little. Instead, to translate privately experienced pain into what Arther Kleinman calls "social suffering" which proves to have its origin "in the devastating injuries that social force can inflict on human experience"[54] and have the translation shared and acknowledged by the community is of primary importance. Similarly, to feel others' pain as if it is mine is not as critical as to acknowledge moral responsibility for that pain and suffering in this transaction between pain and sympathy.

Focusing on "Narrative" and *Memoir*, this chapter reads the two narratives primarily as testimonies rather than (auto) biographies. Put differently, this chapter pays more attention to the way that *Memoir* and "Narrative" construct socially accountable pain and sufferings of factory children than they construct subjectivities of two working class (auto) biographical narrators. I do not contend that there can be a clear distinction between emotional identification with the sufferers and acknowledgement of moral responsibility for the sufferers in the reading experience. Yet, I agree with Hadley in that sympathetic feeling does not exist a priori but is constituted by the shared moral codes and ethical relationship within a community. Also, my argument in this chapter borrows

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[54] Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das and Margaret Lock, Introduction to *Social Suffering*, eds. Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das and Margaret Lock (Berkeley: U of California P, 1997), ix.

Hadley's distinction between the Romantic and novelistic mode of sympathy and the melodramatic mode of sympathy. With their outright deployment of a paternalistic rhetoric and dichotomous staging of the innocent child worker victims and villainous factory systems, *Memoir* and "Narrative" are melodramatic in the most conventional sense. However, regarding sympathy, this chapter uses the term "melodrama" not to refer to a historically specific genre convention but to refer to a narrative mode that is concerned more with the external exchange of communal moral values and relationships than with the internal transaction between private pain and psychological identification with it.

In what follows, I first examine *Memoir* by focusing on how *Memoir* strives not only to reveal the unknown vice of child factory labor to public eyes but also to call for the presence of an emotionally and morally engaged public itself. Narrating Blincoe's experience of being consumed as the cheapest raw material in factories, *Memoir* provides a frightening insight that outside of the ethical relationship, human bodies are sacks of bone and meat and are not different from raw materials processed in factories. *Memoir* dramatizes the fine line between human suffering and human consumption and suggests that the memories of the consumption can be translated into the memories of suffering only when they enter into an ethically accountable relationship with their story's recipients. *Memoir*'s invocation of sympathy is, before anything else, an invocation of this relationship in which the pain of the factory children can be registered and acknowledged. In "Narrative," on the other hand, I look into how Dodd externalizes

the interior of his body and allegorizes the physical pathologies of his inner bodies into the moral pathologies of industrial society. The question "How do I know your pain as I am not you" which plagues the notion of sympathy as an identification is rendered pointless when Dodd displays his innermost paining body as an allegorized sign of the vice of child labor in factories. Instead, the question that "Narrative" presses forward is "Do you agree with my moral judgement about the pain in my body and agree to take responsibility for it?"

Memoir and "Narrative" suggest that sharing others' pain can mean entering into a morally responsible relationship with the pain rather than actually feeling it. Resonating with Blincoe's and Dodd's suggestion, this chapter proposes that current academic discussion of sympathy revolving around the issue of identification can be redirected to the issue of acknowledgement of moral responsibility for fellow beings' pain and suffering. By doing so, I claim that we can decenter discussions about sympathy from a feeling subject and re-center them on a feeling society. What matters would then be contestations and negotiations of the outer limit of the collective ethico-affective boundary rather than an authenticity of our feeling for suffering fellows.

II

Memoir of Robert Blincoe: A Testimony Looking for Its Audience

Robert Blincoe was born around 1792 and consigned to Saint Pancras workhouse in London in 1796 as a parish orphan. The identities of his parents are not known. At the age of seven, Blincoe was sent to Lowdham mill, a cotton mill near Nottingham as a parish factory apprentice with 80 other children from the same workhouse. In 1802, after the owners of Lowdham mill went bankrupt, Blincoe was sent to Litton Mill, another cotton mill located in Derbyshire and worked there as an indentured parish apprentice until 1814. Though *Memoir* takes a form of a biography starting from Blincoe's birth and ending with his marriage and self-establishment as a middle class business man, *Memoir* is mostly a record of Blincoe's time in these two early British cotton mills and the sufferings he went through as a first generation parish factory apprentice.

Compared to other testimonies written or narrated by former factory children during the Factory Reform agitation, the fame and popularity that *Memoir* enjoyed was rather exceptional. When it was first published in the radical newspaper *The Lion* in five installments in early 1828, working class readers waited for each installment "with a combination of excitement and morbid curiosity" and Blincoe's story was told and retold at inns, pubs, chapels and workshops until "its subject had become known

affectionately as 'Bobby'"[55] even among the illiterate local populace. Not only working

class readers but also Tory radicals and middle class reformers responded to *Memoir*

enthusiastically. As the issue of child labor in factories gathered pace once again during

1830s and 40s after a decade's dormancy in 1820s,[56] influential factory reform agitators

such as Richard Oastler, John Fielden, and Alfred Samuel Kydd among many others

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[55] John Waller, *The Real Oliver Twist* (Cambridge: Icon Books, 2005), 279.

[56] The first bill to regulate child labor in factory passed in 1802. One of the key features of the 1802 Act was to restrict the working hours of factory apprentices to 12 hours a day and 72 hours a week. In 1819, a second bill passed applying the same limit of labor hours to all children, both parish apprentices and "free" children working in cotton mills. Both bills proved to be utter failures, and during the 1820s the issue of child factory labor went dormant until a Tory paternalist and celebrated orator Richard Oastler revived the momentum in early 1830s with his inflammatory accusations on infant slavery in British factories. In fact, the publication timeline of *Memoir* precisely corresponds to the decline and revival of the Factory Reform Movement during this time period. John Brown first drafted *Memoir* in May 1822 after a series of interviews with Blincoe. Brown was planning to launch a newspaper called *Manchester Examiner* in the same year and publish Blincoe's story in the newspaper. However, without materializing his plan, out of financial and emotional distresses Brown killed himself in 1825 leaving the manuscript in pawn. Three years later, a radical publisher Robert Carlile retrieved the manuscript and serialized it in his working class newspaper *The Lion* in five installments from January 25 to February 22, 1828. Inspired by its instant popularity, Carlile and a Trade Unionist John Doherty soon published *Memoir* in the form of a single pamphlet and a book each in 1828 and 1832. From then on, *Memoir* maintained a strong currency throughout the 19th century and was especially widely circulated during the 1830s and 40s when the Factory Reform Movement was at its peak. For further details of *Memoir*'s publication history in conjunction with the evolution of the Factory Reform Movement between the early 1820s and late 30s, see Waller, *The Real Oliver Twist*, 245-336. Also for a brief summary of a history of British child labor regulation from 1780s to 1880s, see, Peter Kirby, *Child Labour in Britain, 1750-1870* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 103-105.

substantially cited *Memoir* in their pro-legislation arguments as shocking examples of brutal child exploitation in factories. In addition, Frances Trollope even wrote a novel *Life and Adventures of Michael Armstrong, the Factory Boy* (1840) based on *Memoir* while it has been persuasively argued that Charles Dickens wrote *Oliver Twist* partly inspired by *Memoir*.[57]

The unusual success of *Memoir* was largely due to the enormity of Blincoe's experience in early British textile mills. As Brown aptly puts it, *Memoir* is an account of how Blincoe and other apprentice children were "consumed as a part of the raw materials"[58] and discarded as waste products after being used up in early British factories. It is not surprising therefore that *Memoir* has been mostly cited, excerpted, and anthologized as the source material that testifies to the brutal reality of young factory workers both during its own time and in modern-day reception of the text as well.[59]

However, as Andrea Hasenbank insightfully points out in her study of the consequences of the modernity inscribed in *Memoir*, much of the trauma that *Memoir*

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[57] Waller, *The Real Oliver Twist*, 337-349.

[58] Brown, *Memoir*, 40.

[59] For a brief summary of the contemporary and modern day publication history of *Memoir*, see Andrea Hasenbank, "Giving Account: Robert Blincoe and the Consequences of Modernity," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 34:3 (2012): 202-204.

records is about the broken bonds of traditional community as it is about the extreme
violence that Blincoe went through as a first generation factory apprentice.[60] In other
words, what *Memoir* testifies to is not only the brutal reality of child labor in early
British textile mills but also the vacuum state of protective relationship for the
abandoned pauper children. The sense of abandonment and disconnection from the
"home" parish dominates the bitter tone of *Memoir* and while recounting the memories
of violence, *Memoir* repeatedly indicates the absence of the story's recipient and tries to
call for a new one. My reading of *Memoir* focuses on its attempt to find an emotively
and morally responsive recipient for its testimony rather than its testimonial content
itself, the suffering of the factory apprentices. Throughout my reading, I suggest that
Memoir is, first and foremost, a testimony that looks for its audience to acknowledge
their responsibility for the suffering of factory apprentices to which *Memoir* testifies.

From Wasted Lives to Abandoned Children

One of the prominent features that characterizes Blincoe's experience as a factory
apprentice is a series of disassemblies and reassemblies of the body, both as an
individual body of a child worker and the collective body of the parish pauper children.
An accident that Blincoe observes in the Lowdham mill dramatically epitomizes the

[60] Ibid., 207.

violent process of the unmaking and remaking of young bodies in factories. In this accident, a ten year old girl, Mary Richard was drawn into a machine[61] that she was attending and Blincoe saw:

her whirled round and round with the shaft-he heard the bones of her arms, legs, thighs, etc. successively snap asunder, crushed, seemingly to atoms, as the machinery whirled her round, and drew tighter and tighter her body within the works, her blood was scattered over the frame and streamed upon the floor, her head appeared dashed to pieces.[62]

According to Blincoe's account, Mary Richard survived the accident and was later sent back to the same mill to resume her work on crutches. Like Mary Richards who was drawn into the machine, shattered "seemingly to atoms," and remade into a disabled factory worker, other factory children went through dramatic physical transformations under the newly introduced manufacturing system. Not just by accidents but by the

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[61] More specifically, a machine called a drawing frame which was "made of rollers that straighten out and equalize fibers produced after the first and second stages of cotton manufacture." James R. Jr. Simmons, ed. *Factory Lives: Four Nineteenth-Century Working-Class Autobiographies* (Toronto: Broadview, 2007), 123, footnote 1.

[62] Brown, *Memoir*, 36.

work itself, malleable bodies of children were dislocated, disjointed, and realigned while adapting themselves to the repetitive movements of machinery. Joint deformities, flexures of bones, and short statures were common results of those adaptations. Blincoe's legs too were "grievously distorted" and his stature was made "diminutive"[63] due to excessive labor in factories during his childhood. And as Blincoe testified in front of the government examiner after showing his own deformed legs as proof of the harms of childhood labor in factories "there are [were] many, many far worse than me[him] in Manchester."[64]

Before the factory, however, there was another process of the disassembly and reassembly of bodies, this time of the collective body of the parish pauper children population. The transportation of pauper children between parishes and factory owners via factory apprenticeship was itself a larger process of dislocation and relocation of a body of the population that had emerged and been rendered redundant near the end of the 18th century.

In her study of British factory apprenticeship from the 1780s to the 1820s, Katrina Honeyman explains how this large body of pauper children was created and made into the first generation of industrial workers during the early stage of British

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[63] Brown, *Memoir*, 7.

[64] Robert Blincoe, "Testimony before the 1833 Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Factories," in Simmons, *Factory Lives*, 328.

Industrialization. According to Honeyman, there was a "colossal rise"[65] in the poor rates during the last two decades of the 18th century and a large proportion of these new parish paupers were young children. The birth rate that rose faster than the death rate was one of the major reasons for this phenomenon and the Napoleonic Wars from 1803 to 1815, which left many families without their male head, was another important reason for the increasing number of pauper children that the parish needed to support.[66]

Among other schemes to relieve the burden of these surplus children, apprenticeship was deemed especially preferable because of its training components and cost effectiveness.[67] The problem was that the supply of pauper children far exceeded the number of local masters who were able to and willing to take on apprentices. And it was at this conjuncture that factory apprenticeship was offered as an alternative to the traditional parish apprenticeship. Early water powered mills were built in sparsely populated rural areas for good water supply and the mill owners who were striving to secure a stable labor force were more than willing to take substantial numbers of pauper children as apprentices to attend their machinery. Satisfying both the parishes' need to

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[65] Katrina Honeyman, *Child Workers in England, 1780-1820: Parish Apprentices and the Making of the Early Industrial Labour Force* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 16.

[66] Ibid., 18-19.

[67] The average premium that a parish needed to pay to a master for seven years' apprenticeship was 4 to 5 pounds, which was about the cost of supporting a child in workhouse for one year. See Honeyman, *Child Workers in England, 1780-1820*, 22, footnote 51.

relieve the burdensome pauper children and the industrial market's growing need for labor, factory apprenticeship soon became a well-established practice and large numbers of pauper children were sent to mills outside of their home parishes as out-bounded parish factory apprentices.[68]

The parish pauper children who were made redundant in the pre-industrial economic system and supplied as disposable cheap labor for the emerging industrial market belonged to what Zygmunt Bauman has described as "'collateral casualties' of economic progress."[69] In his study of the wasted forms of human lives produced by modernization, Bauman distinguishes unintended victims of modernization from its intended victims. According to Bauman's distinction, while Native Americans or other aborigines killed for European settlement are targeted victims of modernization, the surplus populations made redundant and disposable in the extant form of an economic system to be "reassembled" and "recycled"[70] into a new form of labor are the unintended victims of economic progress. Though some components "are damaged beyond repair"[71] in this process of disassembly and reassembly of human labor, no one

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[68] Ibid., 33-54.

[69] Zygmunt Bauman, *Wasted Lives: Modernity and its Outcasts* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004), 39.

[70] Ibid., 39.

[71] Ibid., 39.

intends or plans this process and hence no one "bears the responsibility" for the damage caused during the process:

> No one gives the commands, no one bears the responsibility, as the baffled and desperate hero of John Steinbeck's Grapes of Wrath learned much to his dismay: wishing to fight, gun in hand, in defense of his no longer 'economically viable' farm, he could not find a single malevolent perpetrator of his torment and distress to shoot. Being but a sideline of economic progress, the production of human waste has all the markings of an impersonal, purely technical issue.[72]

Memoir narrates precisely this experience of being a collateral casualty of economic progress from the point of view of the damaged survivor. The transition in the mode of production and the relocation of population to accommodate the need of a new labor market was indeed an overdetermined structural change beyond individual plan or intention. Yet, what *Memoir* does is to morally encode this impersonal drama of economic progress by rewriting it into the story of abandonment and negligence. In its morally encoded narrative, the wasted lives of young factory workers as collateral casualties of economic progress are renamed as abandoned pauper children, and the

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[72] Ibid., 40.

story of the unmaking and remaking of human capital is translated into the story of victimization and exploitation.

Brown sets up the abandonment narrative from the beginning of *Memoir*. In the first, introductory chapter of *Memoir*, Brown bitterly criticizes British parochial institutions that consigned their parish pauper children to factories, which is, according to Brown, "a fate, far worse than sudden death."[73] Brown specifically accuses St. Pancras parish officers who did not take proper measures to protect parish apprentices including Blincoe after they sent these children to mills hundreds if miles away from their home parish in London. And he claims that these officers are "morally responsible for the unparalled [*sic*] sufferings to which they [factory apprentices] were afterwards exposed."[74]

Blincoe's own account echoes the same sentiment as Brown's framing abandonment narrative. Blincoe vividly describes how eighty children tightly cooped up in two wagons traveled through the uneven country roads for five full days to be transported from their home parish in London to Lowdham mill in Nottingham. And Blincoe's narrative soon reveals what this long journey means: physical and emotional severance from his home parish and whatever care and protection it had once provided.

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[73] Brown, *Memoir*, 6.

[74] Ibid., 40.

The sense of abandonment is especially highlighted when the first mill was closed due to bankruptcy and the parish apprentices needed to be sent back to their home parish in London. Recollecting the second transportation from Lowdham mill to Litton mill where he and other apprentices suffered most atrocious brutality, Blincoe narrates that he believes "the Messrs. Lamberts wrote to the parish officers of Saint Pancras informing them of the situation of the children"[75]when they decided to close the mill. Whatever the truth about the letter really was, the final transaction of a large number of parish apprentices between two mills is executed without any intervention from a regulative authority. And Blincoe's sense of abandonment culminates in the following, almost gothic description of the second relocation from the first to the second mill, this time disconnected not only from the home parish but also from "any human habitation":

> It was in the gloomy month of November, when this removal took place.
> On the evening of the second day's journey, the devoted children reached
> Litton Mill. Its situation, at the bottom of a sequestered glen, and
> surrounded by rugged rocks, remote from any human habitation, marked
> a place fitted for the foul crimes of frequent occurrence which hurried so
> many of the friendless victims of insatiate avarice, to an untimely
> grave.[76]

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[75] Ibid., 39.

[76] Ibid., 45.

As a bildungsroman and a biography, *Memoir'*s narrative moves from Blincoe's childhood hardships to his self-establishment as a middle class businessman. Yet, as a testimony, *Memoir'*s narrative is directed toward the recovery of a responsible relationship for these abandoned parish pauper children. Blincoe repeatedly tries to run away and reports the injustices in the mills to his home parish or the regional magistrate without any success: Blincoe is either caught on the way or the magistrate does not do anything to redress the situation after he hears Blincoe's plea. *Memoir* is written to find a hearer who will respond to and intervene in the situation on behalf of the unresponsive parish officers and regional magistrates. In the introduction chapter of *Memoir*, Brown explains that he went to meet Blincoe because he "was told of his [Blincoe's] earnest wish that those sufferings should, for the protection of the rising generation of parish children, be laid before the world."[77] After *Memoir* was published in 1828, perhaps because of its fame and popularity, Blincoe was selected as one of the eleven witnesses to testify for the 1833 royal commission delegated to investigate the condition of child labor in factories. Blincoe not only provided a sworn testimony before government officials but also sent a copy of *Memoir* to his examiner, Dr. Hawkins for further reference, telling the examiner "I have a book written about these things, describing my

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[77] Ibid., 7.

own life and sufferings. I will send it to you."[78] In the end, *Memoir* was enclosed in the commission report sent to Edwin Chadwick's central inquiry board in London and became a part of the final report which led to the passing of 1833 Act to Regulate the Labour of Children and Young Persons in the Mills and Factories, which is the most significant Act made during the 19th century in terms of the protection of child workers in factories.

In fact, the abandonment narrative that *Memoir* adopts is not historically well grounded. Due to the ambiguity of the settlement rules under the Old Poor Law, there was not a clear consensus on to what extent the parish was supposed to maintain a long term responsibility for the children once they were sent to masters in other parishes. As Honeyman puts it, "ambiguity and contradiction; complexity and variety; irregularity and unpredictability"[79] were what characterized the Old Poor Law and settlement rules were not an exception. The ambiguity did not pose a visible problem in the feudal community with a long term relationship between governing classes and the governed classes. But with the growing mobility of population caused by industrialization and urbanization, the ambiguity of the settlement rules surfaced as a vexing issue. And as Blincoe's case illustrates, this ambiguity was sometimes manifested as a virtual vacuum

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[78] Robert Blincoe, "Testimony before the 1833 Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Factories," in Simmons, *Factory Lives*, 328.

[79] Honeyman, *Child Workers in England, 1780-1820*, 25.

state of any governing authority, both in terms of protection and regulation, over a large body of the population. Hence, the problem lay more in the dismantlement of a parochial social system than in the moral failure and negligence of individual parish officers.

Nonetheless, even as a displaced form of an accusation *Memoir*'s abandonment narrative raised the issue of absent responsibility for the suffering that Blincoe and other parish factory apprentices were exposed to, and more importantly, brought public attention to the need to establish a new one. Assessing the British Ten Hour Movement, the ultimate goal of the Factory Reform Movement during the first half of the 19th century, Friedrich Engels harshly criticized the fact that the movement "was decidedly a false step, an impolitic, and even reactionary measure, and which bore within itself the germ of its own destruction."[80] While producing the most heart-rending pictures of child and female factory workers disabled and sickened by inhumane working conditions, Engels argues that the movement did not "ask that this infamous system should be done away with" but it "only asked to limit it in some degree."[81] In *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction*, Catherine Gallagher also points out how factory reform literature of 1830s and 40s portrayed factory workers often as a suffering little girl in

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[80] Friedrich Engels, "The Ten Hours' Question," *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels Collected Works*, vol. 10 (New York: International Publishers, 1975), 273.

[81] Ibid., 272.

need of permanent help and protection and unable to "grow and challenge the father's authority"[82] thereby depoliticizing and infantilizing the image of the laboring class. From Engels' and Gallagher's point of view, *Memoir*, which blatantly and mistakenly adopts an abandonment narrative and tries to recover a protective relationship can be seen as a reactionary text that asks for protection instead of fighting against industrial capitalism itself. At the same time, Blincoe's indiscriminate effort to have their story of suffering heard by parish officers, regional magistrates, working class radical journalists, and even political-economist government examiners addresses an ethico-affective dimension of social justice that is not entirely reduced to political and economic equality: in other words, the need for a morally and emotionally engaged audience whose existence will turn the story of human consumption into the story of human suffering. *Memoir*'s abandonment narrative was, though in a displaced form, a viable rhetorical option that enabled Blincoe to indicate an absent responsibility for a large number of out-bounded parish factory apprentices and call for a new one. And Blincoe's political agency lies in this position as a witness who demands a collective moral response for the sufferings that he and other factory apprentices went through.

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[82] Catherine Gallagher, *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction: Social Discourse and Narrative Form 1832-1867* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1980), 128.

Narrative of William Dodd: Moral Encoding of Pain

Unlike illiterate Blincoe, Dodd was not only literate but also an avid reader and one of the most prolific working class writers of his time. Other than "Narrative" (1841), Dodd published a book length report about the work and life of factory workers in northern industrial areas, *The Factory System Illustrated* (1842) and published yet another book, *The Laboring Classes of England* (1847) in the United States to which he eventually emigrated. Proving his wide range of reading, Dodd often adorns his writings with long quotations from a literary work such as Robert Burns's poem and a political pamphlet written by a reformist physician, James Phillips Kay. Allusions to other literary works and his frequent use of medical and scientific knowledge shows that Dodd's proud assertion that "I soon had the happiness to find myself in possession of a tolerable share of mathematics, geography, history, and several branches of natural and experimental [scientific] philosophy"[83] is not an exaggeration.

In "Narrative," Dodd dexterously uses the wide variety of knowledge and literary techniques that he gained from his readings to reveal the evils of factory labor and more specifically the evils of child labor in factories. Compared to *Memoir*'s emotionally charged description of suffering factory children, "Narrative" adopts a more objective tone to describe the harm of child labor in factories; it tries to provide

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[83] Dodd, "Narrative," 288.

scientific explanations for the damages that factory labor causes to the young operators and also pragmatic solutions to the problems. For example, Dodd's older sister, a child factory worker like Dodd, had her hand entangled in the machine that she was attending and was made disabled due to the accident. Describing a similar accident that happened to Mary Richard, *Memoir* made the scene dramatic and sensational with details about Mary's "blood scattered over the frame" and her skull "dashed to pieces"[84] trying to shock the readers about the horror of child labor in factories. On the other hand, "Narrative" takes more pains to explain the anatomy of the machine and how the danger of working with the machine can be offset by boxing off specific parts of the machinery:

> She had been working all night, and, fatigued and sleepy, had not been so watchful as she otherwise would have been; and consequently, had her right hand became entangled in the machine which she was attending. Four iron teeth of a wheel, three-quarters of an inch broad, and one-quarter of an inch thick, had been forced through her hand, from the back, among the leaders &c.; and the fifth iron tooth fell upon the thumb, and crushed it to atoms. (...) This accident might have been prevented, if the wheels above referred to had been boxed off, which they might have been for a couple of shillings; and the very next week after this accident,

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[84] Brown, *Memoir*, 36.

a man had two fingers taken off his hand, by the very same wheels-and still they are not boxed off![85]

In a similar manner, when Dodd describes illnesses or disabilities incurred by hazardous working conditions in factories, he emphasizes the causes of and solutions to such illness and disability rather than detailing the pain and suffering of the affected operators. Instead of depicting a coughing and blood-spitting factory girl, for instance, Dodd minutely details the process of carpet and rug making and explains how operators are made to inhale lime dusts and animal hairs used for the carpet and rug manufacturing all the time and as a result develop asthma and other respiratory illnesses. In another case, Dodd provides almost a full-page description of a specific posture of a type of operator whose legs are often crippled due to long exposure to the pose. The pain and suffering of factory operators in Dodd's descriptions are thus dissected into a series of identifiable causes and effects such as "pernicious ingredients"[86] lodged in workers' lungs, a pose in which the chief body weight "rests

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[85] Dodd, "Narrative," 285.

[86] Ibid., 284.

upon his right knee, which is almost always the first joint to give away,"[87] and fatigue
and exhaustion that make operators less watchful and hence more prone to accidents.

In his study of industrialism and injured worker's bodies in early Victorian
fictions, Mike Sanders explains how the notion of "accident" allowed industrial
capitalists to "admit the harmful consequences of industrialization (accidents are caused
events) without conceding its own responsibility (accidents are undesired
events)"[88]especially during 1840s and 50s, the peak time of British Factory Reform
agitation. According to Sanders, industrial capitalists who initially denied any liability
for the occupational injuries and illnesses of factory workers found an appealing
compromise in the notion of "accident" because it legitimated "the principle of
'accountability without culpability'"[89]when they faced increasing pressure to admit
employer's liability from Factory Reform agitators.

Detailing identifiable causes of illnesses and injuries among factory workers
and suggesting specific remedies, Dodd refutes what Sanders calls "the fiction of the
'accident'"[90] in the article mentioned above. By providing detailed causality of

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[87] Ibid., 277.

[88] Mike Sanders, "Manufacturing Accident: Industrialism and the Worker's Body in Early Victorian
Fiction," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 28. 2 (2000): 321.

[89] Ibid., 318-321.

[90] Ibid., 322.

accidents, Dodd demonstrates that the accidents are not unintended and unwished events that unfortunately happened but have clearly identifiable causes that can be prevented by shortened working hours, better ventilation, and fencing off the machinery etc.: hence claiming not only liability but also culpability of the employers and legislators. Dodd explicitly accuses manufacturers who try to "divest themselves of all blame" when the "distortion of the spine, contraction and other deformities of the limbs, &c., did not take place all in a minute, but that they were gradually on for years, and immediately under the eye of the manufacturers."[91] And he highlights manufacturers' agency in preventing the deformity by pointing out that the manufacturers "might have dismissed them [child workers] from the place, and thus have saved them from utter ruin."[92]

It is not clear how scientifically solid Dodd's analyses of the internal and external malfunction and deformity of factory operators are. Some of Dodd's diagnoses such as asthma due to dust in factories, and accidents caused by unboxed machinery were not his own but well established facts based on a series of government and other social reformist investigations. However, some of Dodd's pseudo-medical descriptions of the way that internal and external deformity is caused by factory labor raise questions about their reliability. The following long passage in which Dodd explains how bone

[91] Dodd, "Narrative," 302.

[92] Ibid., 302.

deformity and general ill-health of factory operators are caused by a specific working posture and its outcome, the bent legs, is one such example:

> One evil arising from the bending and curving of the legs is the state of the blood-vessels; for if the bones go wrong, the blood-vessels must go wrong also. Nature has provided a beautiful contrivance for propelling the blood to every part of the human frame. This is done, in a well-formed person, with perfect ease, without any appearance of difficulty whatever. But it is not so with us factory cripples. Our blood lodges, as it were, in little pools, in crannies and corners; and the apparatus for forcing it along, instead of being stronger, as in our case required, it is actually weaker, in consequence of our weak state of body. Thus, our very life (for life depends upon the circulation of the blood), at best, is only like the half-extinguished flame of a gas-burner, when there is water in the pipes-it jumps and flickers for a little while, and then pops out. But in order to keep it even in this state, we are obliged to have recourse to friction daily, and every day.

> One serious evil resulting from this imperfect circulation of the blood, is the drying up of the marrow in the bones. The bones then decay, as in my arm; amputation is resorted to, or life is lost.[93]

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[93] Ibid., 302.

Regardless of its scientific reliability, this passage could still be read as a part of Dodd's attempts to provide traceable and preventable causes for the disability of the factory workers. But this passage does more than to ask for preventive and interventionist measures such as regulation of working hours and workers' age as Dodd allegorizes the pathological body of factory workers as emblematic of the pathology of the factory system and of industrial capitalism itself. Right before this passage, Dodd presents a table that shows the weekly and yearly wages that he earned in factories for 26 years from 6 years old to 32 years old. Then Dodd observes "from the first day I went into the factories, till the time that I left (...) I have worked as many as 18 hours per day; and yet all I have received, whether as wages, over-time, perquisites, & c., does not amount, as the preceding table will show, to more than 550 l [pounds]"[94] For "this paltry sum," Dodd continues, "I have sacrificed my health, strength, constitution, nay almost life itself; while those who have been reaping the benefit of my labours, have been laying by their thousands yearly and every year, and are now wallowing in riches, but nothing awaits me except the workhouse."[95] Right after this sentence, without any connective conjunction, Dodd moves to the passage cited above. Whether Dodd intended it or not, it is hard not to read about blood that does not circulate and lodges in the corner of the body rendering the entire body deformed and enfeebled as a metaphor for the industrial

[94] Ibid., 299.

[95] Ibid., 300.

wealth that is not distributed fairly to its contributors "converting what ought to have been a national blessing into a national curse."[96]

Dodd's method of detailing the causes of illness and the disability of factory operators shares both the technique and the interventionist intention of realistic novels, or more broadly, the narrative tradition that Thomas Laqueur categorizes as "humanitarian narrative."[97] In "Bodies, Details, and the Humanitarian Narrative" Laqueur explains how detailed descriptions of the sufferings and deaths of ordinary people began to appear as a new narrative trend in the early 18th century especially in the realistic novels and social report genres. According to Laqueur, before and even during the 18th century, disastrous accidents and deaths and injuries that ordinary people suffered as the result of those accidents were customarily recorded in public documents as "mishaps" or "misfortunes" beyond "the bounds of human agency."[98] To investigate the social and naturalistic causes of the deaths and sufferings of common people and to detail them in the way that readers are emotionally and ethically implicated both in the causes of and ameliorative actions for the sufferings was, Laqueur explains, a new narrative tendency that appeared in 18th century and continued into 19th century. "The

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[96] Ibid., 297.

[97] Thomas W Laqueur, "Bodies, Details, and the Humanitarian Narrative," in *The New Cultural History*, ed. Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: U of California P, 1989), 177.

[98] Ibid., 191-192.

Humanitarian Narrative," a term that Laqueur uses to refer to the cluster of these new narratives succinctly captures its nature not only because they commonly betray "humane" concerns for the suffering of fellow beings but also because they express a new episteme in which not God, universe or fortunes but "humans" are deemed responsible for the pains and misery of their fellow beings. Detailed, analytic descriptions of the dead bodies or bodies in pain in these narratives were therefore an expression of a belief in human moral agency, and its capacity to identify the causes of sufferings and intervene in order to eradicate or alleviate them.

Like Adam Smith, though, Laqueue too relies on the identification model to explain how the details about suffering bodies can bridge the "gulf between facts, compassion, and [ameliorative] action"[99] by arguing that the "reality effect" built by minutiae on suffering bodies made readers feel "as if the pain were one's own or that of someone near."[100] Dodd adopts the technique of the humanitarian narrative delineating traceable causes and effects of illness and injury related to factory labor. He also shares the same intention of humanitarian intention to highlight human responsibility and agency both in terms of causes and remedies of sufferings. However, Dodd is not very interested in creating the "reality effect" that may enable readers to feel the pain of factory workers as if it is theirs. On the contrary, in Dodd's descriptions, workers'

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[99] Ibid., 179.

[100] Ibid., 177, 180.

bodies are dissected into worn-out, malfunctioning, and deformed parts of machinery and allegorized into a pathological body of industrial capitalism where nature's "beautiful contrivance for propelling the blood to every part of the human frame" went awry and made the entire body crippled and emaciated. In the scene where Dodd confronts his own dissected arm and sees its deformity, Dodd finds "the factory system"[101] that penetrated into his innermost body, the bone marrow. Instead of the reality effect of a lived pain and suffering, readers are thus given a bare anatomy of the exploitive relationship between industrial manufacturers and their employees. What Dodd asks readers to do is not exactly to feel the pain in his and other factory workers' bodies but to acknowledge their moral responsibility for the sufferings that he delineated. And by doing so, Dodd is staging his and other factory workers' sick body as a moral question in theater to which an audience can either respond to positively or negatively.

Dodd explains that he wrote "Narrative" to "draw the attention of every person who can feel for the miseries of his fellow creatures to this important subject"[102]and asks:

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[101] Dodd, "Narrative," 316.

[102] Ibid., 318.

Is it consistent with the character of this enlightened, Christian country, which has furnished such a proof of her benevolence and charity, in granting 20 millions of money for the abolition of slavery abroad, that we, who have exerted every means in our power in the production of the wealth of the nation and have therein sacrificed everything valuable in life, that we, worn-out, cast-off cripples of the manufacturers, should be left to perish and die of want at home?[103]

It is not coincidental that in the publisher's preface of *Memoir*, Robert Carlile also criticizes the "foreign nature" of the British abolitionist movement and asks if "the charity towards slaves should not have begun or ended at home"[104] The primary rhetorical energy in Dodd's and Carlile's invocation of "fellow feeling" and "charity" is invested in establishing a morally responsible relationship for a new social body of factory children bred and manufactured by industrial capitalism. The sympathy that *Memoir* and "Narrative" try to evoke is a communal agreement that the sentimental figure of a crippled factory child is a moral question about which we should feel sad and enraged. As the well-known abolitionist slogan "Am I not a Man and a Brother?" *Memoir* and "Narrative" ask if the factory children are a part of the "we" in relation to which society agrees to feel morally responsible and emotionally engaged.

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[103] Ibid., 318.

[104] Robert Carlile, Preface to 1828 edition, in Brown, *Memoir*, 3.

III

In "Language and Body: Transactions in the Construction of Pain," Veena Das introduces a thought experiment that Ludwig Wittgenstein invented to explain the meaning of my pain residing in another's body. In this thought experiment, Wittgenstein imagines a situation in which I feel a pain in my left hand and I say that I am in pain. With my eyes closed, though, when someone asks me to touch the painful spot with my right hand, I realize that I am touching my neighbor's hand to indicate the location of the pain. According to Wittgenstein, this is an example of my "pain *felt* in another's body."[105]

Wittgenstein's example of my pain inhabiting another's body should not be understood as pain's transferability from one body to the other though. Pain's residency in another's body in this context does not mean that the neighbor understands my pain or experiences it as her or his own. Instead, it means that the neighbor is invited to participate in what Wittgenstein calls a language game, a situation in which I ask for the neighbor's recognition and acknowledgement of the fact that I am in pain. Hence, what the neighbor feels in her/his hand is not my pain but the pressure of my claim to

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[105] Quoted in Veena Das, "Language and Body: Transactions in the Construction of Pain," in *Social Suffering*, eds. Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das, and Margaret Lock (Berkeley: U of California P, 1997), 70.

acknowledge the existence of my pain. And this is what Wittgenstein means by pain residing in another's body, Das explains.[106]

Calling upon Wittgenstein's example of pain residing in another's body and parsing out the socially embedded nature of pain within a language game, Das is making a detour response to the phenomenological approach to pain, which has gained wide popularity since Elaine Scarry's field defining study *The Body in Pain* was published in 1985. Scarry and other scholars in this vein have emphasized the absolutely singular and private nature of physical pain whose unsharability "not only resist[s] language but actively destroys it."[107] Responding to their emphasis on the unsharability of private pain, Das offers Wittgenstein's rendering of pain as a way to refocus our attention on the social dimension of pain that resides in language and in doing so pursues not the referentiality but the registrability of its being in the social realm. Instead of being an "inexpressible something that destroys communication or marks an exit from one's existence in language"[108] the pain in Wittgenstein's "pain felt in another's body" is thus characterized by its inhabitance in the communication and

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[106] Ibid., 69-70.

[107] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1985), 4.

[108] Das, "Language and Body," 70.

signals not an exit but an entrance of one's paining existence into language, Das emphasizes.

Das's attempt to shift the focus of pain study from referentiality to registrability and from the phenomenological to the social dimension of pain is suggestive in reorienting current academic discussions on sympathy. For the last thirty years or so, major discussions on sympathy as a moral sentiment have evolved around the issue of identification. Questions such as how we identify or fail to identify with suffering neighbors or identify with sufferers only to reaffirm and reiterate the distance between the sympathizing I and the sympathized others-in other words, eventually to disidentify with the distressed-dominated academic discourses of sympathy.

What is at stake in these discussions is the inevitable difference between the suffering imagined by the sympathizer and the suffering experienced by the sympathized. The gap is recursively posited as an epistemological, representational, and ethical limit of sympathy in these discussions. David Marshall's *The Surprising Effects of Sympathy* (1988) and Audrey Jaffe's *Scenes of Sympathy* (2000), two of the most influential studies of sympathy in 18th- and 19th-century Continental and British literature, well represent the polemics of current academic discussions of sympathy in this regard.

Marshall's argument focuses on the epistemological and representational limit of sympathy. According to Marshall's explanation, because sympathy is mediated by

theatrical "scenes," which he identifies with representations, the suffering as a spectacle is misconstrued at the level of expression and the spectator's imaginary identification with the suffering is again distorted at the level of impression. This condition "dictate[s] sympathy's failure" and sympathy cannot but be a series of misrepresentations and misinterpretations of suffering, Marshall argues.[109]

Jaffe too attends to the gap between suffering as a spectacle and suffering as an actual experience. Yet, Jaffe argues that from the sympathizer's point of view, this gap is not a limit to be overcome but a desired outcome of the sympathetic encounter. The objects of sympathy in Victorian society are its outcasts. When middle class spectators with respectable social identities encounter these social outcasts, they encounter "his or her social shadow, the negative image that respectability necessarily implies-the image that simultaneously invites identification (...) and requires dis identification."[110] The failure of identification that sympathy theories often present as "an inability to imagine the self in the other's place," Jaffe thus suggests, "may in fact be a resistance to doing so."[111]

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[109] David Marshall, *The Surprising Effects of Sympathy: Marivaux, Diderot, Rousseau, and Mary Shelley* (Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 1988), 216.

[110] Audrey Jaffe, *Scenes of Sympathy: Identity and Representation in Victorian Fiction* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2000), 12.

[111] Ibid., 14.

As is seen from Marshall's and Jaffe's arguments, once sympathetic exchange is understood in terms of identification, it becomes difficult for the discussion not to revolve around the epistemological, representational, and ethical conundrums surrounding the authenticity of the identification: how the sympathizer can know the pain of the sympathized, how the imaginative reproduction of the pain could accurately represent the original pain, what really motivates the psychological identification of the sympathizer with the sympathized, and how ethically justifiable the motivation is etc.

Wittgenstein's twist of the metaphor "my pain *felt* in another's body" from the matter of referentiality to the matter of acknowledgement and Das's resurfacing of the metaphor to shift the focus of pain discourse from the phenomenological to the social dimension of pain suggest an alternative direction to current discussions of sympathy. As this chapter has tried to argue, instead of an individual moral sentiment, it is possible to see sympathy as a collective ethico-affective boundary that decides whose pain is to be recognized and responded to and whose pain is to remain in oblivion and an object of indifference. Then, the focus of discussions about sympathy can also be redirected from the issue of identification with the suffering to the issue of registration of the suffering within this ethico-affective boundary of communal sympathy, which always involves an adjustment of the boundary itself.

In "The Boundaries of the 'We:' Cruelty, Responsibility and Forms of Life," Veena Das discusses "fragility of life," more specifically, "a human form of life" whose

status both as a human and a form of life is dependent upon our agreement.[112] When Das says that a human form of life is dependent on our agreement, however, Das is not just reiterating the constructionist wisdom that everything including the meaning of humanity and life is a cultural construction. More than that, Das tries to foreground the vulnerability of this agreement, which can be broken at an everyday level as is illustrated by examples of extreme violence done to human lives such as distortion of human bodies under torture or suicide bombing.[113] *Memoir* and "Narrative" are testimonies that foreground the fragility of human life forms whose status as a human and a life hinges upon the societal agreement that will distinguish human labor from raw industrial materials. Staging their injured bodies and narrating their stories of suffering, *Memoir* and "Narrative" reveal their recognition that outside of this protective communal bond and moral responsibility, human suffering is not different from human consumption. Sympathy or fellow feeling in these two testimonies is a name for this boundary in which my neighbor acknowledges the presence of my pain, and agrees to make it reside in her or his body in the very form of that acknowledgement.

My first two chapters examined texts that define and understand sympathy as a culturally taught and discursively constructed fellow feeling in contrast to the notion of

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[112] Veena Das, "The Boundaries of the 'We:' Cruelty, Responsibility and Forms of Life," *Critical Horizon* 17.2 (May2016): 169, 172.

[113] Ibid., 172.

sympathy as an innate moral sentiment and a moral feeling that exists a priori. My next chapter on Charles Dickens's *The Old Curiosity Shop* investigates Dickens's cultural politics of sympathy. I pay special attention to the way that Dickens embodies and responds to the seemingly contradictory demand given to the Victorian novel genre both as a market commodity for entertainment and a cultural medium for moral education. Openly and self-consciously embracing his role as an entertainment businessman and a moral educator, I argue, Dickens saw sympathy in the market not as a limit per se but as a condition of possibility and tried to "recreate" public moral sentiment through the novelistic "recreation."

CHAPTER THREE

SYMPATHY IN THE MARKET:

CHARLES DICKENS'S *THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP*

I

In response to the young, virtuous heroine Nell Trent's morbidly sentimental death in

The Old Curiosity Shop,[1] the Victorian critic John Ruskin expressed his disgust with the

commercialized death by commenting "Nell was simply killed for the market, as a

butcher kills a lamb."[2] At the same time, 19th-century American readers stormed the

piers in New York City anxiously waiting for the final installment of the novel to arrive.

They shouted to the sailors "Is Nell alive?" demonstrating the power of this

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[1] Charles Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841; London: Penguin, 2000). Hereafter cited as *OCS*.
References are given in the text after quotations.

[2] John Ruskin. *The Complete Works of John Ruskin*, ed. E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (New
York: Longmans, Green and Co, 1908), 275.

commercialized death in arousing passionate moral sentiments, compassion, and sympathy for Nell in the novel's readers.

While writing this unprecedentedly popular novel, Charles Dickens was well aware that the pity and compassion that *The Old Curiosity Shop* aroused were indistinguishably enmeshed with the voyeuristic and consumeristic pleasure of sitting in a snug living room chair while reading a story about a girl innocently suffering and dying. He was also sharply conscious of the dual vocation of the novelist as an entertainment businessman and a moral educator. In his 1841 preface to the novel, Dickens likens himself to the host of a public house "at which all persons are welcome for their money," and whose business success depends on "gratifying their palates, however nice and whimsical these may prove" (*OCS* 5). On the other hand, in the same year, at a public speech that he gave in Edinburgh on *The Old Curiosity Shop*, Dickens underlined a nobler side of his job, which is to create a sympathetic bond among a community of readers:

> I feel as if the deaths of the fictitious creatures, in which you have
> been kind enough to express an interest, had endeared us to each
> other as real afflictions deepen friendships in actual life; I feel as if
> they had been real persons, whose fortunes we had pursued together

in inseparable connexion, and that I had never known them apart from you.[3]

The economic relationship between seller and consumer that Dickens described in the preface is here replaced with an "inseparable connexion" and "friendship" created through compassion for "the deaths of the fictitious creatures." The money nexus that initially connects author and readers is turned into an emotional bond based on the audience's shared identification with the afflicted fictional characters.

Attending to Dickens's self-identification as an entertainment businessman and a moral educator, this chapter examines how, in *The Old Curiosity Shop,* Dickens envisions a position for writer and reader that accommodates two seemingly conflicting demands on the novel in the early Victorian period: a commodity that nurtures anti-market moral sentiments. As Rachel Ablow aptly summarizes in her study of the Victorian novel and sympathy, during the 19th-century it was a common belief that the novel could counter the depraved values of the marketplace through its ability to teach

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[3] Charles Dickens, *The Speeches of Charles Dickens: A Complete Edition*, ed. K.J. Fielding. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1960). 9.

sympathy, which makes readers forget about their self-interest and sympathize with fictional characters, or simply think about others beyond themselves.[4]

There is a huge body of literature on novelistic sympathy's efficacy and limits as an antidote to Victorian laissez-faire society. However, to discuss novelistic sympathy's potential or limit as catalyzing anti-individualistic, anti-market sentiment is not this chapter's purpose. Instead, I focus on the way Dickens embodies and responds to the intrinsic tensions of the commercial novel as a commodity in the market, which tries to teach unselfishness through a particular form of self-interest: pleasure. More specifically, I will focus on the relatively overlooked initial narrator of the novel, Master Humphrey, and his stance toward Nell as both a philanthropist and a voyeur. Perhaps because his philanthropic side is readily apparent, the few critics who pay attention to Master Humphrey tend to focus on his voyeuristic side and especially emphasize his erotic male gaze directed at Nell. The eroticization and romanticization of Nell and her suffering in the novel are indisputable. However, this chapter pays more attention to the way that Dickens pairs voyeurism with such moral sentiments as sympathy and compassion through the characterization of Master Humphrey. As I will argue, Dickens not only portrays a narrator who is voyeuristic and philanthropic but also invites, or

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[4] Rachel Ablow, *The Marriage of Minds: Reading Sympathy in the Victorian Marriage Plot* (California: Stanford UP, 2007), 4-9.

urges, readers to feel and act in the same way: feel attracted to and sympathize with Nell's fate.

The intervention that this chapter tries to make with regard to critiques of the commercialization of Nell's death and her suffering is a modest one; Dickens, at least in his early works including *The Old Curiosity Shop*, saw consumeristic pleasure less as a limit than a condition of possibility for novelistic sympathy, which has to be sold first to morally "influence" its readers. As Juliet John puts it in her study of Dickens's popularist and anti-elitist cultural politics, Dickens did not consider it a problem to "re-create" readers through "recreation."[5] Thus, to Dickens, pleasure is not simply a medium for morality nor is morality a mere mask hiding pleasure. Instead, I argue that the inseparable enmeshment of both is what characterizes Dickens's realistic but optimistic view of the commercial novel and the sympathy it teaches and sells in the marketplace.

II

During one of his habitual night walks in London, Master Humphrey, the initial narrator of *The Old Curiosity Shop,* is stopped by little Nell, who has lost her way and asks for

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[5] Juliet John, *Dickens's Villains: Melodrama, Character, Popular Culture* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001), 5.

his help. Pleased by her unsuspecting trust in him, he willingly guides her back home, to the old curiosity shop, before returning to his cozy bachelor's house. Though his philanthropic mission has been accomplished, the narrator does not feel reassured but feels anxious and restless instead. He is troubled by the fact that the child is sleeping "alone, unwatched, uncared for" (*OCS* 20) after her grandfather's suspicious nightly outing. But concern is not the only feeling that disturbs Master Humphrey. He also feels agitated by the curious image of Nell sleeping among grotesque old curiosities. He confesses that he is not sure if he "should have been so thoroughly possessed by this one subject, but for the heaps of fantastic things" (*OCS* 20) huddled together in the curiosity dealer's warehouse. In other words, if Nell was "in a common chamber with nothing unusual or uncouth in its appearance, it is very probable that I [he] should have been less impressed with her strange and solitary state" (*OCS* 22). Due to these fantastic things around her, Nell makes such "a curious speculation" (*OCS* 22) that Master Humphrey cannot dismiss Nell's image all night however much he tries to:

> I agreed with myself that this was idle musing, and resolved to go to bed, and court forgetfulness. But all that night, waking or in my sleep, the same thought recurred and the same images retained possession of my brain. I had ever before me the old dark murky rooms-the gaunt suits of mail with their ghostly silent air-the faces all awry, grinning from wood and stone-the dust and rust, and worm that lives in wood-and alone in the midst of all this lumber and decay, and ugly age, the beautiful child in

her gentle slumber, smiling through her light and sunny dreams. (*OCS* 22)

Master Humphrey's insomniac obsession with Nell's curious existence "in a kind of allegory" (*OCS* 22) as an angelic child beset by wild, grotesque figures lasts longer than that first night. Even after Master Humphrey disappears at the end of chapter three, leaving "those who have prominent and necessary parts in it [the story] to speak and act for themselves" (*OCS* 35), his anxious and fascinated gaze at Nell remains present until the end of the narrative. In fact, the image of Nell as an angelic girl sleeping among ruins, which provokes both anxiety and curiosity in Master Humphrey at the beginning of the story, is repeatedly reenacted throughout the narrative as a kind of leitmotif. If we compare the passage cited above from the first chapter with the following one from chapter fifty-three near the end of Nell's pilgrimage, we can see a stark similarity between these two passages despite the vast distance between the curiosity shop in London and a ruined church in rural England:

Some part of the edifice had been a baronial chapel, and here were effigies of warriors stretched upon their beds of stone with folded hands, crossed-legged-those who had fought in the Holy Wars-girded with their swords, and cased in armour as they had lived. Some of these knights had their own weapon, helmets, coats of mail, hanging upon the walls

hard by, and dangling from rusty hooks. Broken and dilapidated as they were, they yet retained their ancient form, and something of their ancient aspect (…) The child sat down in this old, silent place, among the stark figures on the tombs-they made it more quiet there, than elsewhere, to her fancy-and gazing round with a feeling of awe, tempered with a calm delight, felt that now she was happy, and at rest. (*OCS* 401-403)

The image of Nell as an angelic child surrounded by ugly age and decay, and gruesome ghostly figures in ruins is reproduced here long after Master Humphrey has disappeared. The scenes in which Nell lies among Mrs. Jarley's wax work figures which "stood one behind the other all about her bed (…) in their grim stillness and silence" (*OCS* 223) or Nell standing amidst factories and chimneys that surround her "screeching and turning round and round again" (*OCS* 340-41) are other variations of the same tableau of Nell beset by hostile figures.

The only difference is that Master Humphrey's place is now taken up by the readers. Master Humphrey's anxious fascination with Nell's curious and/but anxiety provoking existence as "the only pure, fresh, youthful object" among "a crowd of wild grotesque companions" (*OCS* 22) is reproduced by the readers. *The Old Curiosity Shop* is commonly read as Nell's quest for a home, which in her case is a grave among the ruins. From Dickens's point of view, however, the novel is his quest to place readers in the position of Master Humphrey and make them feel the same way Master Humphrey

feels toward Nell: to be attracted to Nell's story and disturbed about her insecure status as a child in distress, hence feeling restless and anxious.

Indeed, the intense national and transatlantic interest in Nell's death proves how successful Dickens was in placing readers in the position of Master Humphrey. Though Nell is the heroine of the novel, when they wept for Nell's death, readers clearly identified themselves with Master Humphrey's emotional disturbance about Nell's precarious status and untimely death and not with Nell's unearthly peace and tranquility "unaltered" (*OCS* 540) even on her deathbed.

Nell does not fear death. On the contrary, from the beginning of her vagrancy, Nell is attracted to graveyards feeling "a curious kind of pleasure in lingering among these houses of the dead" (*OCS* 134). When the old school master leads Nell to her new house in rural England and asks if it is not "a peaceful place to live in," Nell answers with enthusiasm "oh, yes (…) a quiet, happy place-a place to live and learn to die in!" (*OCS* 390). As becomes clear from the passage above, when Nell sits down in a ruined church, which soon turns out to be her crypt, it is not fear or sadness but "quiet" and "calm delight" that charge the scene. Nell feels that now she is "happy and at rest" (*OCS* 403). Thus, when readers passionately mourn Nell's death, they are viewing her not from Nell's perspective but from Master Humphrey's, whose sleep is hopelessly disturbed by the ominous and compelling image of Nell sleeping/dead among the ruins.

Master Humphrey's parental, concerned gaze at Nell as a child in distress is a paradigmatically Victorian one that we have inherited and naturalized. During the Victorian period, government commissioners, journalists, and novelists went to urban slums, factories, mines, and brothels with unprecedented zeal to document the dire situations of poor children and ameliorate their hardships. Along with the practical need to control and regulate the threateningly increasing young poor population and the social problems arising from them, the unprecedented interest in poor children was motivated by a new childhood ideal based on the notion of middle class childhood. As Hugh Cunningham explains, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the children of the poor were an essential part of household labor power and it was natural and proper that they work as early as possible.[6] However, from the early nineteenth century onward, people began to believe that all children have a universal right to "the kind of childhood which was being constructed in the middle class world."[7] The denial of a "proper childhood," which can be roughly defined as time free from the toils of labor and dedicated to leisure and recreation, was increasingly perceived as a condition to be morally regretted and to be intervened in at both an individual and public level. Thus, Caroline Norton in her poem "A Voice from the Factory" (1836) could argue that

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[6] Hugh Cunningham, *The Children of the Poor: Representations of Childhood since the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 2-3.

[7] Ibid., 3.

factory children's childhood too should be "hours of rosy mirth" free from "unnatural and hard the task."[8] Journalist Henry Mayhew also propagates the same sentiment as he finds it "cruelly pathetic" to see an eight-year-old street seller girl who "had entirely lost all childish ways and was, indeed, in thoughts and manner, a woman."[9] In fact, major Victorian social reforms, including the Factory Acts (1833) and the Mines Acts (1842) were initiated by and evolved in tandem with this new notion of ideal childhood. As a result, reformers tried to regulate child labor and secure recreational domestic life and educational opportunities for the children of the poor.

Master Humphrey, who rescues Nell from the perils of nighttime London streets and guides her back home, in many ways represents the sentiments of a typical Victorian advocate of children in distress. Watching Nell perform all the housework instead of being taken care of, Master Humphrey laments that "it always grieves me to contemplate the initiation of children into the ways of life" that demand "they share our sorrows" (*OCS* 14). Even though Nell is safely back home, Master Humphrey feels anxious and worried because Nell's grandfather seems to be more of a dependent than a guardian to Nell and with all the decay, lumber, and dust, the old curiosity shop resembles more a grave than a home. Thus, when Nell's grandfather asks Master Humphrey how to thank him for bringing Nell back home, he requests that the old man

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[8] Caroline Norton, *A Voice from the Factories* (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1836), 14.

[9] Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851-52; London: Penguin, 1985), 64.

takes "more care of your grandchild next time" (*OCS* 14). Also, after Nell's grandfather leaves home at night to go gambling, Master Humphrey lingers about Nell's house for hours worrying about "all possible harm that might happen to the child" (*OCS* 19). Feeling as if "some evil must ensue if I turned my back upon the place" (*OCS* 19), Master Humphrey stands "on the spot where he [Nell's grandfather] left me" (*OCS* 19), wishing to take the place of this deficient parental figure. Once the novel ends, Master Humphrey, who disappeared at the end of chapter three, reappears in *Master Humphrey's Clock*, a weekly periodical in which *The Old Curiosity Shop* was serialized from 1840 to 1841. He tells his friends that he is the Single Gentleman who led the search team to rescue Nell and her grandfather in the later part of the novel. Though often regarded as a clumsy device to justify Master Humphrey's sudden disappearance, this after-the-fact-explanation makes Humphrey's role as a savior consistent and reaffirms his philanthropic interest in Nell as a child in need of help.

However, as is clearly seen from the mingled initial feelings of curiosity and anxiety, Master Humphrey's gaze at Nell is not unproblematic. He guides Nell back home partly "for the purpose of gratifying my curiosity" (*OCS* 12). Fearing that Nell will recognize the neighborhood and run away, Master Humphrey deliberately avoids "the most frequented ways" and takes "the most intricate" (*OCS* 12) routes so that he does not lose the chance to satisfy his curiosity about Nell's secret night errand. Philanthropic concern is thus not the sole reason that he helps Nell. When he muses upon Nell's image as an angelic girl sleeping among grotesque old curiosities, Master

Humphrey also several times narrates how this image excites his imagination as "a curious speculation" (*OCS* 22) that he cannot quite dismiss. It is therefore understandable that critics who have paid attention to Master Humphrey, who has been generally overlooked because of his early disappearance from the story, tend to focus on his scopophilic and even pedophilic aspects.

Catherine Robson, for example, observes that the streets where Nell was walking alone at night and solicited Master Humphrey's help were "perilously close to Covent Garden, London's traditional red-light district."[10] This geographical detail implies Master Humphrey's possible association with the scandalous business of child prostitution. Robson also interprets his insomniac meditation on the image of Nell sleeping among old curiosities as an act of fantasizing about a girl "in her bed."[11] Similarly, Matthew Beaumont regards Master Humphrey as a dark character whose night walk embodies repressed sexual desires and aligns him with pedophilic figures like Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker in James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* and Humbert Humbert in Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*.[12]

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[10] Catherine Robson, "The Ideal Girl in Industrial England," *Journal of Victorian Culture* 3.2 (1988): 222.

[11] Ibid., 222.

[12] Matthew Beaumont, "The Mystery of Master Humphrey: Dickens, Nightwalking and *The Old Curiosity Shop*," *The Review of English Studies* 65.268 (2013): 118-136.

Indeed, it is undeniable that Master Humphrey's and the narrative gaze at Nell are frequently erotically charged. Nell is invariably seen not only as an object of sympathy but also as an object of attraction and suspenseful pleasure. When Nell works for Mrs. Jarley's wax work show and is surrounded by grim wax work figures, the novel presents Nell "as a part of the show of which she was the chief attraction" (*OCS* 221). The villainous character Quilp's lustful approaches that made Nell "shr[i]nk from him in great agitation, and trembled violently" (*OCS* 53) are another example. And when the narrator describes the scene in which Nell's grandfather sneaks into her bedroom to steal the money Nell hid for desperate times, his erotic gaze reaches an almost scandalous level:

> A figure was there. (…) it crouched and slunk along, groping its way with noiseless hands and stealing round the bed. She had no voice to cry for help, no power to move, but lay still, watching it. On it came- on, silently and stealthily, to the bed's head. The breath so near her pillow that she shrunk back into it, lest those wandering hands should light upon her face. (*OCS* 234)

With a disturbingly close-up description of a figure crouching and slinking along Nell's bedside – the groping hands and Nell's powerlessness in bed conjure the specter of potential rape–the gaze in this passage becomes not only voyeuristic but unmistakably

sadomasochistic and pedophilic. At this moment, Quilp, the most obviously villainous character in the novel, Nell's vampiric grandfather, and the voyeuristic gaze of the narrator and the readers are rendered indistinguishable from each other in terms of their predatory approach to Nell, either in an optical or a physical way.

When the erotic side of Master Humphrey's gaze is not manifest, there is still a more benign form of curiosity that drives his imagination back to Nell. In this regard, it is important to notice that the main purpose of Master Humphrey's night walk is to search for curiosities, or stories to appease the boredom of his secluded life. In *Master Humphrey's Clock* (1840-41) Master Humphrey introduces himself as a deformed lonely old man who lives in suburban London. The sole solace in his melancholy life is an old clock and "files of dusty papers" he keeps in the deep "bottom of the old dark closet"[13] of the clock. The dusty papers are stories that he, with other "men of secluded habits," collect on London streets at night "to beguile our [their] days with these fancies."[14] One night every week, they meet to share the stories that they have collected and Nell's story, within this initial frame of serialization, is literally one of these stories that Master Humphrey excavates from the city streets for the amusement of his weekly story club.

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[13] Charles Dickens, *Master Humphrey's Clock and a Child's History of England* (London: Oxford UP, 1966), 11.

[14] Ibid., 11.

The philanthropic side of Master Humphrey has been either simply overlooked by critics or regarded as a mask hiding "a far darker"[15] side of him as a voyeuristic pedophile, as Beaumont suggests. However, what makes Master Humphrey's position peculiar and significant in terms of Dickens's self-identification as a popular novelist who is an entertainment businessman and a moral educator is the narrator's simultaneous accommodation of the two roles of a voyeur and an altruist. Master Humphrey's enchantment with Nell's compelling image as an angelic girl beset by a hostile world is indistinguishable from his concern for Nell's safety and security as an endangered child in need of help. When Dickens leads his readers to this position, he does not turn the pleasure-seeking side of reading into a scandal. On the contrary, Dickens is surprisingly explicit about the nature of the sentimental transaction his novel offers: readers should make good use of their pleasurable tears. If Master Humphrey's double stance toward Nell was somewhat implicit, the omnipresent narrator in Nell's burial scene provides an almost stock summary of the transaction between readers and a novel. As if closing the curtain at the end of a show, in Nell's entombment scene, the narrator covers the vault and fixes down the stone over Nell's grave and asks viewers to leave Nell with God and go home and make a "hundred virtues rise, in shapes of mercy, charity, and love" out of Nell's innocent death:

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[15] Beaumont, "The Mystery of Master Humphrey," 118.

They saw the vault covered and the stone fixed down. Then, when the dust of evening had come on, and not a sound disturbed the sacred stillness of the place-when the bright moon poured in her light on tomb and monument, on pillar, wall, and arch, and most of all (it seemed to them) upon her quiet grave-in that calm time, when all outward things and inward thoughts teem with assurances of immortality, and worldly hopes and fears are humbled in the dust before them-then, with tranquil and submissive hearts they turned away, and left the child with God.

Oh! It is hard to take to heart the lesson that such deaths will teach, but let no man reject it, for it is one that all must learn, and is a mighty, universal Truth. When Death strikes down the innocent and young, for every fragile form which he lets the panting spirit free, a hundred virtues rise, in shapes of mercy, charity, and love, to walk the world, and bless it. Of every tear that sorrowing mortals shed on such green graves, some good is born, some gentler nature comes. In the Destroyer's steps there spring up bright creations that defy his power, and his dark path becomes a way of light to Heaven. (*OCS* 544)

The "lesson" that readers have to learn is that out of every tear that they shed on Nell's green grave, some good should come. Even Kit, once an errand boy at the curiosity shop who dearly loved Nell, and his young children do not fail to understand the nature of this transaction as they enjoy sharing the "story of good Miss Nell" and "cried to hear it [but] wishing it longer too" (*OCS* 556).

The inseparable enmeshments of pleasure and sympathy, romantic eroticization of suffering, and its use for moral education in Dickens can illuminate a debate over Dickens's life-long fascination with scenes of (urban) misery. It is well-known that Dickens was an avid city walker and was especially attracted to the dark and somber sides of inner city London such as slums, criminal dens, mental hospitals, and graveyards. The problematic fascination that Dickens himself called "attraction of repulsion"[16] has long been a topic of debate among Dickens scholars. Critics have explained Dickens's predilections either in terms of his reformist zeal to illuminate and cure social ills or his voyeuristic and almost touristic desire for romanticized and aestheticized scenes of poverty.

Raymond Williams, for example, finds in Dickens's urban writings a "benignant hand, which takes off the housetops and shows the shapes and phantoms which arise from neglect and indifference; which clears the air so people can see and acknowledge each other."[17] Similarly, Peter Ackroyd emphasizes that even as Dickens's expeditions to slums seem sometimes indistinguishable from his entertainment trips to gardens or

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[16] Charles Dickens, *The Uncommercial Traveller and Other Papers, 1859-70*, ed. Michael Slater and John Drew (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2000), 260. Dickens used a variation of similar phrases in various fragments. For the origin of the phrase and Dickens's other uses of it, see Efraim Sicher, "'The Attraction of Repulsion': Dickens, Modernity, and Representation" in *A Mighty Mass of Brick and Smoke: Victorian and Edwardian Representations of London,* ed. Lawrence Philips (New York: Rodopi, 2007), 54-55.

[17] Raymond Williams, *The English Novel: From Dickens to Lawrence* (New York: Oxford UP, 1973), 34.

zoos, Dickens was ultimately interested in reforming those poorest areas, not in watching them as a pastime activity.[18] Arguing that Dickens's artistic fascination with dirt and mud in the city cannot be separated from his desire to clean this space along with "mature pessimism"[19] about this overwhelming task, Michael Hollington too understands Dickens's interest in urbane dirt ultimately as a reformist passion.

In contrast, Philip Hobsbaum criticizes Dickens's position as a detached onlooker who is able to "pass through such scenes" of urban poverty and makes "artistic capital out of other people's misery."[20] Finding Dickens's "mellow" descriptions of "poverty, disease, workhouses, and the lower echelons of society" in general "a little bit unnerving," Hobsbaum evaluates Dickens's interest in the lower strata of society as a form of self-serving and self-indulgent "personal feeling"[21] rather than social indignation. Critics like Hobsbaum see city strollers in Dickens's writings not as social reformers but essentially as consumers whose main purpose is to find curiosities to appease their boredom. Even though their act is not totally devoid of social indignation, dandy strollers in Dickens find more pleasure than disturbance in exotic scenes of

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[18] Peter Ackroyd, *Dickens* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson Limited, 1990), 380-81.

[19] Michael Hollington, "Dickens the Flaneur," *The Dickensian* 77 (1981): 71-88.

[20] Philip Hobsbaum, *A Reader's Guide to Charles Dickens* (Thames and Hudson, 1972), 140.

[21] Ibid., 140.

poverty and therefore function more as aesthetically detached consumers than socially engaged reformers.

In Dickens, however, these two sides do not oppose each other, they rather qualify and condition each other. What characterizes Dickens's reformist zeal is his romanticization of the poor and their suffering while his aestheticization of the low and miserable is as strongly illustrated by his humanistic zeal for the amelioration and redress of social ills. These are not two different or contradictory sides of Dickens's work but are what together define Dickens's cultural politics as a popular novelist in the marketplace. Regarding himself both as an entertainment businessman and a moral educator, Dickens embraced his dual vocation and entertained his readers while trying to socially enlighten them. Dickens was not naïve about the commercial nature of his novels and their power to influence and mobilize a large public's mind and opinion. As Clair Wood points out, especially because of the format of the weekly installment publication, early Victorian writers could closely keep track of sales records and readers' responses to their stories.[22] Though Wood's emphasis is clearly on the monetary benefits Dickens gained from Nell's death, rising sales were also a clear sign of Dickens's influence as a powerful public demagogue. Thus, while Dickens's business success depended on satisfying customers' whimsical tastes, he was very much in a position to form and influence his readers' views. The coexistence or compatibility of

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[22] Clair Wood, *Dickens and the Business of Death* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2015), 61.

pleasure and sympathy, consumption and reform, aesthetic detachment and social engagement were what conditioned and structured Dickens's popular novels in the market place and the sentimental transaction they were involved in.

Twenty years after the first installment of *The Old Curiosity Shop* in 1840, Dickens wrote something like a meta-commentary on the scene in which Master Humphrey first encounters Nell on London's night streets. In a fictive rendering of Dickens's own autobiographical night walks in London entitled "Night Walks," the fictional persona whose name is "an uncommercial traveler" encounters a homeless youth during one of his night wanderings. What characterizes this encounter is a total lack of any of the romantic ambience, erotic pleasure, and aesthetic distance that fills Master Humphrey's first encounter with Nell. Instead of Nell's "soft sweet voice" that struck Master Humphrey as "very pleasant" (*OCS* 11) in the dark streets, the homeless youth that the traveler encounters, in fact has almost "trodden upon without seeing," lets out "a cry of loneliness and houselessness," the kind "of which I never heard."[23] While Nell "put her hand in mine [Master Humphrey's] as confidingly as if she had known me from her cradle" (*OCS* 12), the homeless youth "shivered from head to foot" as if he saw a "prosecutor, devil, ghost"[24] at the sight of the traveler. Nell and Master Humphrey "trudge away together" (*OCS* 12) on the street at night. However, when the traveler "put

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[23] Dickens, *The Uncommercial Traveller*, 154.

[24] Ibid., 155.

out my [his] hand to stay it" trying "to give this ugly object, money" the homeless youth "twisted out of its garment" and left the traveler "alone with its rags in my hand."[25]

This piece functions as a strange form of meta-commentary on the sentimental transactions that characterized Dickens's earlier novels such as *The Old Curiosity Shop*. In one way, this rewrite demystifies the sympathetic identification of readers with the suffering of fictional characters by showing how much sympathy relies on the safe distance of the viewer, which allows for the romanticization of the afflicted. On the other hand, the fragment is an acute observation of the very need for aesthetic distance and romanticization in engendering sympathetic identification. Without the mediation of aesthetic distance, there is no sympathetic identification between the participants in the encounter. Instead, both the traveler and the homeless youth are left utterly terrified by and disconnected from each other.

While Master Humphrey accommodates the roles of consumer and philanthropist without much internal conflict, in Dickens's other novels, especially in later ones, we rarely find characters whose stance toward the poor and miserable is altruistic and at the same time consumeristic. It is either just a flatly benevolent savior figure such as Mr. Brownlow in *Oliver Twist* (1838) and Esther in *Bleak House* (1852) or an exploitative predator whose panoptic gaze at the poor is not only sadistically

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[25] Ibid., 155.

voyeuristic but also policing and disciplining as in Mr. Tulkinghorn or Inspector Bucket in *Bleak House*. Dickens's experiments with different positions of readerly identification and his later rewriting of the sentimental encounter in *The Old Curiosity Shop* show that Dickens was not entirely at ease with Master Humphrey's position. Yet, as is paradoxically emphasized by the failed sympathetic encounter in "Night Walks," Dickens was realistic about the fact that romanticization of the poor and aesthetic detachment from them was what made novelistic sympathy possible in his fictions.

III

The Old Curiosity Shop is often categorized as an allegory and the story revolves around the allegorical tableau of an angelic girl, Nell sleeping among ruins, a scene Master Humphrey imagines and muses upon during a sleepless night. Attending to Dickens's self-identification as an entertainment businessman and a moral educator, I read the novel as Dickens's own quest for envisioning a narrative position that caters for consumeristic pleasure and altruistic social indignation and invites readers to share this position. In such a reading, Master Humphrey not only views the allegorical tableau of Nell but also is himself a part of a bigger allegorical tableau, which possesses Dickens and keeps him musing. To envision a stance that entertains readers and teaches them moral sentiments was Dickens's own subject of sleepless meditation.

Dickens was well aware of the consumeristic and voyeuristic pleasure of reading stories of romanticized sufferings. But instead of regarding pleasure simply as a limit or as an indication of a false consciousness, Dickens understood it as a condition for his production of novelistic sympathy in the marketplace and utilized it to influence his readers for philanthropic and reformist purposes. The previous attempts to identify him either as a reformist writer or as a commercial writer are therefore partial and limited. In Dickens, moral lessons and consumeristic pleasure, reformist zeal and aesthetic detachment, a romanticization of the poor and social indignation were inseparably connected. Dickens was both realistic and optimistic about the pairing of pleasure and morality in his novels and this realistic optimism is what defines Dickens's cultural politics of the novel and sympathy in the marketplace.

Reading *The Old Curiosity Shop*, this chapter examined how Dickens embodied and responded to the intrinsic tensions of the commercial novel as a commodity in the market, which tries to teach unselfishness through a form of self-interest: pleasure. I argued that Dickens saw consumeristic pleasure less as a limit than a condition of possibility for novelistic sympathy, which has to be sold first to morally "influence" its readers through my analysis of the initial narrator Master Humphrey in *The Old Curiosity Shop*. My last chapter on Hardy's tactile sympathy has a slightly different focus of argument from the other three chapters. My previous three chapters have investigated literary and non-literary texts that define and understand sympathy as a moral sentiment of fellow feeling that is culturally produced, taught, and sold in the

marketplace. In Hardy's novels, however, the meaning of sympathy is expanded from a moral sentiment of fellow feeling to the existential state of tactility between the subject and object of sympathy. Though different from sympathy as a moral sentiment of fellow feeling in the first three chapters, sympathy in Hardy continues what I call the tradition of social sympathy by decentering it from the interior of a feeling self and situating it in the social as the ontological condition for the intersubjective connection.

CHAPTER FOUR

TACTILE SYMPATHY:

THOMAS HARDY'S *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES AND* "THE WITHERED ARM"

I

In "The Science of Fiction" (1891), Hardy contrasts two forms of appreciation, one based on observations and the other based on sympathy. Privileging the latter over the former, Hardy maintains that "what cannot be discerned by eye and ear" can "be apprehended only by the mental tactility that comes from a sympathetic appreciation of life in all of its manifestations."[1] Paying attention to the expression of "the mental tactility" in which Hardy combines mind and body and knowing and touching, this chapter investigates Hardy's anti-dualistic epistemology of sympathy.

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[1] Thomas Hardy, "The Science of Fiction," (1891) in *Personal Writings*, ed. Harold Orel (Lawrence: U of Kansas P, 1966), 137.

"The Science of Fiction" was written primarily as Hardy's critique of literary realism or more precisely its "copyism"[2] of external reality. Given that Hardy sees a copy or verisimilitude of perceptible realities as a flawed apprehension and suggests "sympathetic apprehension" as its alternative, we may well ask what exactly distinguishes the latter from the former.

In the essay, Hardy does not offer a theorization of what he means by "a sympathetic apprehension." Instead, he explains the term poetically like "a sight for the finer qualities of existence, an ear for the 'still sad music of humanity'"[3]and uses it to refer to a mode of perception that is complementary to the perception based on mathematical observations of external reality. Reading Hardy's fiction and prose works, this chapter traces moments in which Hardy more fully envisions what he means by the mental tactility or sympathetic appreciation of life. I pay special attention to the moments in which Hardy posits physical contact as a condition for knowing or identifies an ontological state of being connected and engaged with an epistemological state of knowing. And from those moments, I attempt to delineate Hardy's anti-dualistic epistemology of sympathy in which, as I will demonstrate, knowledge becomes a state

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[2] Ibid., 136.

[3] Ibid., 137.

of encounter and engagement between the subject and object rather than mental properties that belong to either one of them.

The image of blurred boundaries between the subject and object in Hardy is too pervasive and prominent to have gone unnoticed. As early as 1971, for example, Terry Eagleton noted a pattern of imagery in Hardy where nature is imbued with "a quasi-human expressiveness" and becomes "a kind of language"[4] making the relationship between subjective human consciousness and objective natural reality ambivalent. As a Marxist critic, Eagleton interprets the imagery as Hardy's response to the growing alienation of body from mind and mind from body in the industrial age and sees it as Hardy's attempt to envision a "paradigm of creative and possible relations between the spirit and the flesh in a universe where those relations are continually disturbed or disrupted."[5]

More recent interest in the same imagery has tended to focus on Hardy's ecological vision of non-hierarchical relationship between humans and their natural surroundings. Though not exactly from an eco-critical perspective, for instance, Gillian Beer reads the frequent merging of man and the natural world in Hardy as a message for

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[4] Terry Eagleton, "Thomas Hardy: Nature as Language," *Critical Quarterly* 13(1971): 155, 157.

[5] Ibid.,162.

a "horizontal"[6] relationship between the two. William Cohen also interprets the "sensory melding of people and environment" in Hardy as his vision of "non-differentiation [of human being] from its environment"[7] highlighting Hardy's non-anthropomorphic view of nature and its ethical implication in eco-criticism. Similarly, Richard Kerridge attends to how Hardy accommodates "neglected non-human perspectives" in his narratives to show "they are constitutive of human life"[8] focusing on mutually dependent relationships between human and natural surroundings in Hardy.

My approach to the topic resonates more with the latter group's ethical concern for the non-hierarchic and reciprocal relationship between the knowing/acting subject and the known/acted upon object than with Eagleton's Marxist concern for the alienation between body and mind and the material and the consciousness. However, I expand ecocriticism's focus on the relationship between human subject and natural object to broader forms of encounter between the self and the other in Hardy. My primary interest lies in how Hardy uses sympathy as a key conceptual tool to envision his anti-dualistic epistemology and its ethical implications. Therefore, sharing eco-

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[6] Gillian, Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 232.

[7] William A. Cohen, "Arborealities: The Tactile Ecology of Hardy's *Woodlanders*," *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 19(2014): 1, 2.

[8] Kerridge, Richard, "Ecological Hardy," in *Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism*, ed. Karla Armbruster and Kathleen R. Wallace (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 2001), 135.

criticism's important insights on Hardy's reorientation of the relationship between the (human) subject and (natural) object, this chapter shifts the register of discussion from eco-critical concerns to Victorian sympathy.

This chapter aims to demonstrate that Hardy's sympathy is an epistemological and ontological interspace between subject and object. I suggest that Hardy's sympathy challenges the notion of a liberal subject as an autonomously feeling, knowing, and acting subject. Sympathy in Hardy functions as a conceptual tool to remind the reader of the material embeddedness of the mind and the social embeddedness of the self. As such, it serves not to produce and reproduce a feeling, knowing, and acting autonomous self along with its distance and distinction from the felt, known, acted other but to challenge the very hierarchical distinction and difference between the two.

Among Hardy's other texts, this chapter particularly focuses on "The Withered Arm" [9] and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*,[10] a novella and a novel that both deal with a story of wronged rural maidens. Apart from the main topic, "The Withered Arm" and *Tess* have other similarities that include both heroines' association with the supernatural,

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[9] Thomas Hardy, "The Withered Arm," in *Wessex Tales and a Group of Noble Dames*, ed. F.B. Pinion (London: Macmillan, 1977). Hereafter cited as WA. References are given in the text after quotations.

[10] Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891: London: Penguin, 2003). Hereafter cited as *Tess*. References are given in the text after quotations.

such as witchcraft and an ancient family curse,[11] and the narrative structure phased out by important events in the heroines' lives.[12] Yet, more important than these similarities, I chose and paired "The Withered Arm" and *Tess* because both stories foreground and problematize the issue of knowing in the way that they reveal Hardy's tactile epistemology of sympathy: an epistemology in which knowing presupposes physical touch and physical touch itself is frequently identified with knowing.

Therefore, reading "The Withered Arm" and *Tess,* two stories of wronged maidens, I stay away from the extensively discussed topic of Hardy's critique of or conspiracy with the patriarchy in which "the woman pays" (*Tess* 227) for any extramarital relationships and its outcomes. Instead, in *Tess*, I focus on how Hardy figures knowledge as a mode of connection and engagement and what the ethical implication of such intersubjective configuration of knowledge is. In "The Withered Arm," I examine the performative nature of such connection implied in Hardy's tactile epistemology of sympathy.

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[11] Also, conjuror Trendle, who plays a crucial role in "The Withered Arm," appears again in *Tess* when dairyman Crick mentions him as one of the real conjurors of the old times in chapter xxi. See, *Tess* 133.

[12] Suzanne R. Johnson also notices a similar function of titled chapters in "The Withered Arm" and titled phases in *Tess* and points out both serve to outline and set up major conflicts in heroines' lives. See "Metamorphosis, Desire, and the Fantastic in Thomas Hardy's 'The Withered Arm'," *Modern Language Studies* 23.4(1993): 138, endnote 4.

II

Knowing Tess: Knowledge of Proximity, Knowledge of Engagement

Despite the well-known subtitle of *Tess of the D'Urberville*s, "A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented by Thomas Hardy," *Tess* reads like Hardy's statement of inability to present a clearly identifiable heroine let alone to prove her purity. With her constant transformations and fluctuations from a being divinely larger than life to an abjectly insignificant sub-human creature,[13] Tess has frustrated over a century of critical attempts to classify and categorize her.

In fact, fluidity itself has become one of the most widely discussed features of the character Tess. Thus, Margaret R. Higonnet defines Tess as "a figure who seems to defy any classification" and "to exceed the boundaries of the language that describes her."[14] Michael Millgate too maintains that Tess is "made to fit many stereotypes" but "evades all such restrictive social classifications."[15] From a feminist point of view,

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[13] In the first case Tess is frequently compared to a goddess or divinity while in the second case she is mostly likened to animals, especially small and helpless ones under overwhelming circumstances. The image of Tess as a fly "on a billiard-table of indefinite length" (*Tess* 105) or "crawling over the surface" (*Tess* 285) of an immense field is a representative example. The fluctuation of Tess's image from something divine and abject is of course related to her ambiguous status as a sacred martyr and a debased fallen woman and the intentionally created ambivalence of her "purity" as a seduced or raped maiden.

[14] Margaret R. Higonnet, Introduction to *Tess*, xxii.

[15] Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist* (New York: St. Martin P, 1971), 280.

Patricia Ingham also points out Tess's elusiveness which "the males of the novel cannot, with the men's language at their disposal, define and place her."[16]

Varying in theoretical backgrounds and interpretations of the character's multi-faceted nature, these critics unanimously see the character of Tess as the source of her fluidity. The verbs that they use such as "defy" "exceed" and "evade" themselves clearly place the agency of elusiveness on Tess. However, the way Hardy constructs the fluidity of Tess reveals that the fluidity comes as much from the situational and conditional nature of knowledge (about Tess in this case) as the characterization of Tess as a growing character.

In the novel, Tess grows in a quite literal sense, and *Tess* is a story of different phases of her growth. One of the reasons that it is hard to classify and categorize Tess is because she is constantly in transition from one phase of her life to the other. When Tess is first presented as a sixteen year old girl with "all her bouncing handsome womanliness," for example, the narrator describes how "phases of her childhood lurked in her aspect still" with "her twelfth year in her cheek, or her ninth sparkling from her eyes and even her fifth...over the curves of her mouth" (*Tess* 15-16). After Tess is violated by Alec D'Urbervilles and became a mother of an illegitimate baby, she is again described as a person in transition such as "the girl-mother" (*Tess* 92) or "Tess

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[16] Patricia Ingham, *Thomas Hardy* (Worcester: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), 72.

Durbeyfield, otherwise, D'Urbervilles, somewhat changed-the same, but not the same."
(*Tess* 89).

As Higonnet points out, while Hardy was revising the first complete manuscript of *Tess* in the winter of 1890, Hardy was reflecting on characters as something constantly shaped and reshaped by the changing circumstances.[17] In his notebook written on December 4th 1890, Hardy records that he "is more than ever convinced that persons are successively various persons"[18] each time recreated by different circumstances. Then, Tess "who mentally and sentimentally had not finished growing" and on whom no single event can leave "an impression that was not at least capable of transmutation" (*Tess* 103) seems to clearly reflect Hardy's view on character around this time as multiple "persons" in constant (re)making.

Yet, not only Tess but also the observers' perceptions of Tess keep changing. Throughout the novel, Hardy foregrounds the contingency of observers' perceptions of Tess. Descriptions of Tess from the period of her stay at Talbothays provide illustrative examples. At the beginning of the dawn, as "the spectral, half-compounded, aqueous light" illuminates Tess, "Tess seemed to Clare to exhibit a dignified largeness both of disposition and physique, an almost regnant power" (*Tess* 130). But as the day "grow[s]

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[17] Higonnet, Introduction to *Tess*, xxii-xxiii.

[18] Thomas Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, ed. Michael Millgate (London: Macmillan, 1984), 241.

lighter" Tess's "features would become simply feminine; they had changed from those of a divinity who could confer bliss to those of a being who craved it" (*Tess* 130). Similarly, when she is surrounded by summer fog, with "minute diamonds of moisture from the mist hung (...) upon Tess's eyelashes, and drops upon her hair, like seed pearl," (*Tess* 131) Tess is seen both by the narrator and Clare as an unearthly spirit. Yet, as "the day grew quite strong and commonplace" Tess "lost her strange and ethereal beauty" and became "again the dazzling fair dairymaid only" (*Tess* 131).

The contingency of the perception largely comes from the fact that the observer, whether a character or the narrator, is not granted an omniscient viewpoint unaffected by the circumstances in which Tess is located and gazed at. Rather, the observers are present in the circumstance as involved parties with their perception conditioned by the same circumstance that brings about the changes in Tess. Thus, affected and awed by Tess's ecstatic faith in a baptism that she herself performed for her dying baby Sorrow, Tess's younger siblings too observe how Tess in that moment does not "look like Sissy to them now" but looks like "a being large, towering and awful-a divine personage" (*Tess* 95).

In the novel, Hardy does not depict these contingent and situational perceptions of Tess as false or mistaken impressions. When the enchanted gaze of the omnipresent narrator follows the augmentation of Tess as she walks into nature's "profusion of growth" (*Tess* 122), there is no disillusioning counter viewpoint that is often

characteristic in Hardy.[19] Instead, readers are invited to identify with the narrator's mesmerized gaze that witnesses Tess's immersion into nature's exuberance as her body literally gathers, is colored by, and covered with its "profusion of growth:"

> The outskirt of the garden in which Tess found herself had been left uncultivated for some years, and was now damp and rank with juicy grass which sent up mists of pollen at a touch; and with tall blooming weeds emitting offensive smells-weeds whose red and yellow and purple hues formed a polychrome as dazzling as that of cultivated flowers. She went stealthily as a cat through this profusion of growth, gathering cuckoo-spittle on her skirts, cracking snails that were underfoot, staining her hands with thistle-milk and slug-slime, and rubbing off upon her naked arms sticky blights which, though snow-white on the apple-tree trunk, made blood-red stains on her skin. (*Tess* 122-23)

The complexity of knowing Tess then lies in the fact that not only Tess transforms as the circumstances change but also the observer's perception of Tess changes according to the variations of Tess and the circumstances. As a result, it becomes impossible to decide to whom the knowledge about Tess belongs and of what

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[19] Hardy is especially well-known for his disillusioning reminder of the indifferent natural law working in the seemingly idyllic natural scenery. As Tess learns after she was violated by Alec, in Hardy's fictional world, it is frequent that "the serpent hisses where the sweet birds sing" (*Tess* 75).

that knowledge consists. It neither belongs to Tess nor to the observer or even to the changing circumstance alone. Rather, it can be said that knowledge about Tess is being constantly constituted by the participation of all three, the circumstance, Tess, and the observer, and therefore belongs more to the specific state of proximity and engagement of all three rather than any single one of them: hence, it is fluid and situational in its nature.[20]

In Hardy, it is not difficult to find similar moments in which perceptive agency is dispersed and disseminated across the subject and object of perception making the ownership of such mental property intentionally unclear and unidentified. For example, when Tess heads for the market in the middle of the night on behalf of her drunken father, she hears "the sigh of some immense sad soul, conterminous with the universe in space, and with history in time" (*Tess* 32) from the wind. Marty South, another girl breadwinner character in *The Woodlanders* (1887), also hears the sigh of trees as she

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[20] The dynamic relationship between the observer and the observed in Hardy makes a stark contrast to the static one in *The Old Curiosity Shop* that I analyzed in the previous chapter. As I discussed, *The Old Curiosity Shop* presents its heroine Nell Trent consistently as an object of sympathy and pleasure and situates readers in the position of Master Humphrey and his stance towards Nell both as a voyeur and a savior. The character Nell does not change throughout the novel and the narrator's gaze at Nell does not change to the end of the story, resulting in a static relationship between Nell and the narrative gaze. In fact, the leitmotif tableau of the novel, Nell sleeping among old curiosities, epitomizes the static relationship between Nell and gazes surrounding her.

plants saplings in the woods and narrates "how they sigh directly we put'em upright," as if "they are very sorry to begin life in earnest-just as we be."[21]

The poignancy of these two vignettes comes largely from the fact that it is not really clear who is hearing whose sighs in this moment of encounter. It can be the universe, which is awakened "at that hour, when every living thing was intended to be at shelter and at rest" (*Tess* 30), or the trees that are about to begin their life in earnest that sigh(s). Or, it is likely that Tess and Marty are projecting their own sadness to the natural objects and hearing their own sighs as if they are nature's. We should also mention that Hardy makes it plausible to suggest that both the girls and nature sigh in sympathy and resonance with each other's earnest toils in life.

In these moments of ambiguous perceptive agency, Hardy renders it impossible or pointless to ask who or what is hearing whose sighs since the sighs belong neither to the girls nor to the natural objects but more to the state of their engagement in the specific time and space of their encounter. As the perceptive agency is dispersed across the subject and object of the perception and into the time-space of their encounter, the epistemological state of knowing something is made inseparable and indistinguishable from the ontological state of being present, proximate, involved together in that particular moment and space. Hence, the narrator of *The Return of the Native* (1878)

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[21] Thomas Hardy, *The Woodlanders* (1887; London: Pan Books, 1978), 68-69.

also claims being present in the Egdon heath at a certain time of the day as the necessary condition to knowing "the particular glory of the Egdon waste":

> In fact, precisely at this transitional point of its nightly roll into darkness the great and particular glory of the Egdon waste began, and nobody could be said to understand the heath who had not been there at such a time. It could best be felt when it could not clearly be seen. Its complete effect and explanation lay in this and the succeeding hours before the next dawn: then, and only then, did it tell its true tale.[22]

Hardy's figuration of knowledge as a state of proximity and engagement carries a significant ethical implication as it denies the knower/the perceiver an omnipresent position that enables epistemological dominance and violence over the known/the perceived. It is not a mere coincidence therefore that the only character in *Tess* who enjoys a disembodied, omnipresent viewpoint over Tess is the perpetrator Alec. When Tess first begins her work at Alec's mansion at Trantridge, for example, Tess often feels someone's peeping presence "behind the bed" or "below the fringe of the curtain" (*Tess* 63), without ever being able to locate the hidden gaze of Alec. In the scene of Tess's excruciating labor on the threshing machine at Flintcomb-Ash farm too, Tess feels that

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[22] Thomas Hardy. *The Return of the Native* (1878. London: Penguin, 1999), 9.

Alec is "still on the scene, observing her from some point or other though she could not say where" (*Tess* 334). Without knowing the location of Alec, Tess had no way to hide herself, and the helpless, full exposure of Tess's stupefied body to the gaze of Alec in the passage below optically replicates Alec's initial rape of Tess in her drugged sleep at the Chase woods:

> She still stood at her post, her flushed and perspiring face coated with the corn-dust, and her white bonnet embrowned by it. She was the only woman whose place was upon the machine, so as to be shaken bodily by its spinning, and this incessant quivering, in which every fibre of her body participated, had thrown her into a stupefied reverie in which her arms worked on independently of her consciousness. (*Tess* 333)

As in Alec and Tess whose relationship as the observer and the observed is characterized by its non-reciprocal and hierarchical nature, Hardy generally depicts a vertical and unilateral relationship between the observer and the observed as a form of violence. In *The Woodlanders*, for example, the inanimate, fragmented tissue of John South's brain fixed under the microscope is depicted more as an object of crime and violence than "the study of physiology"[23] as the young doctor Edgar Fitzpiers claims it

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[23] Hardy, *The Woodlanders*, 136.

to be. When Fitzpiers invites his soon-to-be wife Grace Melbury to look into the tissue explaining what it is, Grace starts back partly from aversion and partly "with wonder as to how it should have got there,"[24] suspecting the doctor's possible body snatch of her dead neighbor. After starting back, Grace apologetically expresses her admiration for the doctor's hard work which she "know[s] from seeing your light at night."[25] However, at this point, the doctor's night study is unmistakably associated with darker, unethical potentials of his investigation making his gaze over South's brain tissue appear more appropriative than investigative.

Sympathy: Knowledge of Touch and Performance of Touch

As I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, most vigorous discussion about Hardy's vision of lateral and reciprocal relationship between the subject and object came from recent eco-critical readings of Hardy. The primary appeal of Hardy to eco-criticism is obviously Hardy's de-privileging of the human as a single dominant cognitive and active agent in the natural world and his reformulation of it as an interdependently networked part of the material environment.[26] Providing one of the most articulate

[24] Ibid., 136.

[25] Ibid., 136.

[26] In his 1910 letter to the Humanitarian League, a major Victorian association that advocated animal

arguments in this vein, William Cohen succinctly summarizes how in Hardy "humans are understood as material things in a world of things and the world as a collection of vital agencies and networked actors, of which people are but some" (5).

As has been rightly spotlighted by the eco-critical readings of Hardy, the emphasis on reciprocity and non-hierarchy is the key ethical element in Hardy's reformulation of the relationship between subject and object of perception. Reading *Tess*, I also demonstrated how Hardy's knowledge of proximity and engagement denies a privileged position of the knower to the known and logically preempts the potential of the epistemological dominance of the former to the latter. In the next half of this chapter, I illuminate another ethical implication of Hardy's anti-dualistic epistemology, this time with a clearer link to Hardy's peculiar use of sympathy as a faculty that performs the intersubjective connection. The relationship between Giles Winterborne, one of the native woodlanders in *The Woodlanders,* and trees growing in the Little Hintock woods provides a paradigmatic example of Hardy's notion of performative sympathy.

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welfare, Hardy himself clearly asserted his egalitarian and non-anthropocentric vision of the natural world ethically reinterpreting Charles Darwin's theory of a single origin of all species: "Few people seem to perceive fully as yet that the most far-reaching consequence of the establishment of the common origin of all species is ethical. While man was deemed to be a creation apart from all other creations, a secondary or tertiary morality was considered good enough towards the 'inferior' races; but no person who reason nowadays can escape the trying conclusion that this is not maintainable." Hardy, *Life and Work,* 377.

In the novel, Giles is described as possessing "a marvelous power of making trees grow."[27] Giles takes identical steps to plant saplings as any other journeymen do. Yet, trees that Giles plants thrive while one quarter of the trees planted by the journeymen die away within a half year. Explaining the mystery, the narrator describes "there was a sort of sympathy between himself and the fir, oak, or beech that he was operating on."[28] And the sympathy between Giles and trees turns out to be a form of knowledge that comes from their sharing of the same habitat:

> Winterborne's fingers were endowed with a gentle conjurer's touch in spreading the roots of each little tree, resulting in a sort of caress under which the delicate fibres all laid themselves out in their proper directions for growth. He put most of these roots towards the south-west; for, he said, in forty years' time, when some great gale is blowing from that quarter, the trees will require the strongest holdfast on that side to stand against it and not fall.[29]

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[27] Hardy, *The Woodlanders*, 67.

[28] Ibid., 67.

[29] Ibid., 68.

As Kerridge aptly points out, Winterborne's knowledge of trees is not the knowledge of tourists or visitors but the knowledge of the one who "inhabit[s] the woods."[30] By inhabiting the woods and sharing the same habitat with trees, Winterborne reaches a "level of intelligent intercourse with nature" that enables him "to read its hieroglyphs as ordinary writing:"[31] hence knowing the particular needs of the trees growing in the Little Hintock woods. Significantly, the sympathy between Giles and trees is not only gained by their sharing of the habitat but also is practiced and realized by Giles' physical touch with the roots of saplings. Thus, sympathy between Giles and trees takes the form of labor that performs the connection as much as a form of knowledge based on the connection.

In "Participial Acts: Working," Elaine Scarry notes the centrality of the connection that human labor aspires to create with the world in Hardy. According to Scarry, Hardy "so persistently called attention to the visible record of the exchange between the human creature and the world" by which "each alters the other's surface either by adding new layers to it or subtracting layers from it."[32] While these reciprocal alterations occur in almost any activity, Scarry observes, in Hardy's labor "they do not simply happen to occur but are consciously sought" and "they are not simply the

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[30] Kerridge, "Ecological Hardy," 137.

[31] Hardy, *The Woodlanders*, 331.

[32] Elaine Scarry, *Resisting Representation* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994), 51.

outcome of the activity but seem instead to constitute the very activity itself."[33] Even wounds and injuries often inevitable in this process of mutual alteration are depicted as the signs of the human beings' "very depth of engagement" in the labor and willingness to be "deeply altered"[34]to alter the object of the labor.

Scarry's observation on how human labor in Hardy desires mutual alteration and bodily grafting with its object as a goal and essence of the activity provides a valuable insight into the performative nature of Hardy's sympathy as labor. Like the sympathy between Giles and trees in *The Woodlanders*, sympathy in Hardy not only requires proximity and engagement as its condition for mutual understanding but also labors to create the connection by performing it. Gabriel Oak in *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874) who saw his soon-to-be lover, Bathsheba Everdene yawn and "caught the infection and yawned in sympathy"[35] provides another example as his sympathy functions not only as a receptive faculty for the infectious yawn but also a performative faculty that wills and produces the infection to create a connection with the loved one.

In fact, Hardy regards the creation of connection as the essential function of fiction. He offers sympathetic apprehension of life as the means to fulfil this function.

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[33] Ibid., 54-55.

[34] Ibid., 56.

[35] Thomas Hardy, *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874; London: Penguin, 2000), 13.

In "The Science of Fiction," Hardy introduces a story of an illiterate woman who "can see the ghost of that child"[36] in the face of a fellow woman who lost her child years ago. According to Hardy, though unable to read or write, this woman possesses "true means towards the 'Science' of Fiction innate with her,"[37] which he describes as a power of mental tactility or a power of sympathetic apprehension of life. And as is seen from the example, it is less a reflective than a generative power since above and beyond any material particulars that can be discerned by eyes and ears, the woman sees the ghost of the dead child, and through that sympathetic perception, brings the invisible loss of the fellow woman into life and creates a connection between the dead child, the fellow woman, and herself.

Hardy's theory of fiction resembles Walter Benjamin's notion of language as a mimetic faculty in its prioritization of language's function to connect us to the other over its referential function to reflect and mirror the world. In the fragment "On the Mimetic Faculty," Benjamin defines the ability to create connection between ourselves, the world, and the other as the most essential function of language. Like a child who "plays at being not only a shopkeeper or teacher but also a windmill and a train,"[38]

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[36] Hardy, "The Science of Fiction," 138.

[37] Ibid., 138.

[38] Walter Benjamin, *Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), 333.

Benjamin explains, our mimetic faculty enables us to recognize similarities in nature and more importantly actively produce them by imitating the objects in nature. Onomatopoeia can be seen, in this regards, as the most archetypical form of language as a mimetic faculty and its imitative impulse to create similarities and correspondence between the imitator and the imitated. Mimesis or mimicry is, according to this view, essentially an act of producing connection between self and others. What it desires and pursues is a contact with others, not a copy of them.

When Hardy denies literary realism's copyism of perceptible reality, calling it "artificiality distilled from the fruits of closest observation"[39] and advocates sympathetic apprehension of life as the true means of a science of fiction, he privileges connectivity over referentiality as the function of literary representation. "The Withered Arm," a short story about another ruined and wronged rural maiden written three years earlier than *Tess* can be read as Hardy's portrayal of representation whose primary function is not to reflect but to (re)create connections between characters. In my reading of *Tess*, I demonstrated how Hardy's tactile epistemology requires physical proximity and engagement as a condition for knowledge. Reading "The Withered Arm" in what follows I examine how re-presentation or mimesis itself becomes in Hardy a form of sympathetic touch that performs that connection.

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[39] Hardy, "The Science of Fiction," 136.

"The Withered Arm" revolves around a strange dream that the two female protagonists of the story have on the same night. The first one is Rhoda Brook who is introduced as "a thin, fading woman of thirty" (WA 56) living with her illegitimate son in the heath isolated from the community. Like her isolated living in the heath, her relationship with the nameless boy's father again highlights Rhoda's prolonged disconnection from him. The story does not reveal what actually happened between Rhoda and the rich local farmer Lodge in the past. But readers are told that Rhoda has raised her son by herself for twelve years barely surviving on her milking and the boy's poaching while farmer Lodge "ha'n't spoke to Rhoda Brook for years" (WA 57) and "took no notice of" the boy (WA 60) though clearly aware of his existence. The other one is Gertrude Lodge, farmer Lodge's new bride, "a rosy-cheeked, tisty-tosty little body…years younger than him" (WA 57), who just arrived at the town creating a pleasant fuss in the small community of Holmstoke with her beauty and freshness.

Though Rhoda never sees the bride and stubbornly refuses to do so, based on the descriptions from other milkers, neighbors, and her own son, she becomes capable of raising Mrs. Lodge's image as "realistic as a photograph" (WA 61) and one night even dreams of her. In Rhoda's dream, however, the bride appears as a threatening incubus who tries to suffocate Rhoda. Out of anger and a way of desperate self-defense, Rhoda grabs the antagonist's left arm and throws her to the floor before she wakes up gasping. Though it was a dream, Rhoda feels the "antagonist's arm within her grasp (…) the very flesh and bone of it" (WA 62) even after she wakes up. Surprisingly, the

next day, Gertrude visits Rhoda to give a new pair of boots to Rhoda's son whom she happened to see wearing all cracked, worn out boots in the street, of course without knowing the boy's identity as an illegitimate son of her husband. During their conversation, Rhoda learns that Gertrude also had a strange dream in which she visited an unknown place and had her arm shot by a sudden pain and was woken up by the vividness of the pain. As Gertrude uncovers her left arm, Rhoda sees "faint marks of an unhealthy colour as if produced by a rough grasp" on the "exact original of the limb she had beheld and seized in her dream" and fancies that "she discerned in them the shape of her own four fingers" (WA 64).

As Keys rightly points out, "The Withered Arm" purposefully generates and foregrounds "uncertainties"[40] about the supernatural event. About the spectral encounter of Rhoda and Gertrude in a dream and its aftermath, Gertrude's disfigured and withered arm, the story refuses to yield any final explanation but rather encourages readers' doubts about any explanation that the narrative gestures to provide. For instance, village people rumor that "Mrs. Lodge's gradual loss of the use of her left arm was owing to her being 'overlooked' [ill-wished] by Rhoda Brook" (WA 70). Rhoda herself wonders if she "exercise[d] a malignant power over people against my own will" (WA 64).

However, as much as it implies the plausibility of Rhoda's supernatural power

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[40] Romey T. Keys, "Hardy's Uncanny Narrative: A Reading of 'The Withered Arm'," *Nineteenth-Century English Literature* 27.1 (1985): 110.

and strong motivation to blight her enemy, the narrative creates equally strong disbelief and uncertainty about such a possibility. First of all, although village people have called Rhoda a witch even before Gertrude's inexplicable affliction began, Rhoda herself has never been aware of such power and does not remember that "such things as this ever happened before" (WA 64). Conjuror Trendle helps Gertrude identify the "enemy" (WA 69) who caused the blight by letting her see the egg white in a water glass and find any likeness of faces that she knows from the shape of the egg fluid. Gertrude murmurs an answer. Yet again, along with Rhoda who hesitantly agreed to escort Gertrude to the conjuror out of guilt and pity for Gertrude's accelerating ailment but is asked to wait outside of the conjuror's house, readers "see the opaline hue of the egg fluid changing form as it sank in the water" only in the position "not near enough to define the shape" (WA 69). Likewise, Gertrude's replying murmur is "so low as to be inaudible" (WA 69). Six years pass from the spectral encounter of the two, and Gertrude learns about the past relationship between farmer Lodge and Rhoda, who has left the village due to the rumor surrounding her witchcraft. Like the villagers of Holmstroke, now Gertrude also believes that the shape of the egg fluid that she saw in conjuror Trendle's house "undoubtedly resembled" (WA 71) Rhoda. However, the narrative further ironizes Gertrude's conviction by qualifying the undoubtable resemblance as "the *indistinct* form he had raised in the glass" (WA 71, my emphasis).

Keys interprets the uncertainties as the main theme of the story. According to Keys's reading, by refusing to provide any reliable explanation about the supernatural

incident and by leaving readers in doubts and uncertainties to the end, Hardy tries to defy the idea of an ordered universe that is responsive to human needs for causal explanation.[41] (106-107). However, I suggest that the story generates and encourages uncertainties to shift readers' focus from the factuality to the affectivity of the event. Whatever the real cause of Gertrude's withering arm is, the later part of the story develops in such a way that all four main characters, Rhoda, her son, farmer Lodge, and Gertrude are physically and emotionally re-connected by Gertrude's blighted arm.

After Rhoda disappeared with her son and after Gertrude vainly tried "bunches of mystic herbs, charms, and books of necromancy" (WA 70) to cure her arm for over six years, Gertrude revisits conjuror Trendle in a final attempt to find a cure. The remedy that the conjuror suggests is "to touch with the limb the neck of a man who's been hanged...just after he's cut down." (WA 72) Feeling much aversion to the idea, Gertrude still craves for the remedy and within a couple months of her visit to the conjuror finds herself praying each night "O Lord, hang some guilty or innocent person soon!" (WA 73). Gertrude's wish comes true, and she manages to arrange a chance for her to touch the broken neck of an eighteen year old boy whom the hangman believes to be innocently hanged as an example for the spreading arson cases. The moment Gertrude held her blighted arm "across the dead man's neck, upon a line the colour of an unripe blackberry, which surrounded it" (WA 80), Gertrude shrieks with fear and it is

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[41] Ibid., 106-107.

answered by a second shriek from Rhoda standing behind with the farmer Lodge next to her. It turns out that the hanged boy was the son of Rhoda and farmer Lodge, and they secretly came to the place to claim the boy's dead body for a burial. Perplexed and angered by the unexpected presence of Gertrude in the room, Rhoda, as in their dream, grasps Gertrude's blighted arm to thrust her into the wall. As Rhoda grasps Gertrude's arm which was touching the boy's broken neck, the wound of Rhoda as a ruined and wronged maiden, the wound of Gertrude's withering arm, and the circular wound in the boy's hanged neck are physically interwoven reconnecting the once detached and distanced famer Lodge as the common cause of their wounds.[42]

Whether the spectral encounter of Rhoda and Gertrude through the dream caused Gertrude's inexplicable ailment is not answered by the end of the story. And again the narrative focuses more on how the dream vision become a medium by which characters are connected than on any causality between the dream vision and its actualization. When the story encourages uncertainties about the causality and foregrounds the connectivity that the vision brings about, "The Withered Arm" gestures to privilege affectivity over referentiality as the primary function of re-presentation. The dream vision mimics reality since Rhoda becomes able to produce a mental replica of Mrs. Lodge as "realistic as a photograph" (WA 61) after hearing and thinking

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[42] Farmer Lodge not only abandons Rhoda and the boy but later also shuns Gertrude after she lost her beauty and grace due to the discolored and disfigured arm.

obsessively about the detailed descriptions of Mrs. Lodge. At the same time, the reality

mimics the dream vision as it actualizes what happened in the dream. But after creating

such distinct mutual mimicry between the dream vision and reality, Hardy mocks

attempts to establish a causal explanation between the two. Instead, he highlights how

the mimicry creates connections, thus promoting the idea of mimesis as a medium for

contact and connection not for reflection.

III

Reading *Tess* and "The Withered Arm" this chapter studied Hardy's anti-dualistic

epistemology of sympathy. In *Tess*, I demonstrated how Hardy situates knowledge in the

interspace of temporal, spatial, mental, and physical proximity and continuity between

subject and object not in either one of them. I also examined how Hardy's model of

knowledge denies a privileged position of the knower and observer over the known and

the observed by logically preempting the potential of the former's epistemological

dominance and violence onto the latter. In my analysis of "The Withered Arm," on the

other hand, I focused on the performative nature of the proximity and engagement that

Hardy's sympathetic apprehension of life requires as a pre-condition for knowing. If

Hardy's formulation of knowledge in *Tess* undoes the separation of the subject and

object of perception by locating knowledge in the interspace between the two, Hardy's

portrayal of representation in "The Withered Arm" blurs the boundary between knowing

and doing. If representation mimics reality, it is not to mirror it but to (re)create

connection between the copy and the copied, the reference and the referred.

AFTERWORD

SYMPATHY: THE PERSONAL VS THE SOCIAL

Hyper-sensitivity to other's pain can be a curse and possibly mean an inability to survive. Jude Fawley, the protagonist of Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895) suffers from such hyper-sensibility. When he is a boy, Jude cannot "bear to see trees cut down or lopped, from a fancy that it hurt them."[1] He tiptoes when he walks not to step on any earthworm and feeds "poor little"[2] crows grains that he is hired to protect from the birds. In his later life too, Jude never grows out of his despair about Nature's logic by which a mercy to one creature becomes a cruelty to another creature. And as the narrator predicts early in the novel, Jude suffers a great deal from "this weakness of character" until finally

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[1] Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* (1895; London: Penguin, 1998), 17.

[2] Ibid., 15.

"the fall of the curtain upon his unnecessary life should signify that all was well with him again."[3]

As much as the narrator is sympathetic to Jude's weakness of character, the narrator does not clearly valorize Jude's wish not to grow up and remain open to all the stimuli of the world that "hit upon the little cell called your life, and shook it, and scorched it."[4] Later in his life, Jude refuses to follow his practical wife Arabella's instruction to kill a pig slowly so that the pig can bleed longer and they can secure well-bled quality meat to sell. To Arabella who says "he ought to be eight or ten minutes dying, at least," Jude determinedly answers, "he shall not be half a minute if I can help it, however the meat may look"[5] and kills the pig as quickly as he can to shorten the suffering of the pig. This time, too, the narrator does not simply endorse Jude's humane decision by putting an equal weight on the animal's shriek of agony and Arabella's sober remark to Jude, "poor folks must live."[6]

Imagine that we see trees bleeding when we prune their branches as Jude does as a boy, or we hear screams of flowers as we twist their stems like Big Friendly Giant, a

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[3] Ibid., 17.

[4] Ibid., 18.

[5] Ibid., 64.

[6] Ibid., 65.

fictional character with a superhuman hearing ability in Roald Dahl's eponymous novel, *The BFG*. Furthermore, think that we can feel the pain of trees and flowers as if it is ours. In such a world, the commensurability of pain may yield more paranoia than altruism, and more paradoxes related to the nature's law in which a mercy to one creature becomes a cruelty to another creature than universal peace and harmony.

One way to think of the shareability of pain without being trapped by this paranoid or paradoxical situation is to shift the site of sympathy from the personal to the social level of interconnectedness and interdependence. Peter Wohlleben who worked as a forester in ancient German forests for over twenty years provides a fine example that helps us imagine what a social network of sympathy looks like. According to Wohlleben, in aged forests, stumps often survive for centuries after the main bodies of the trees were cut down. Without leaves to photosynthesize, it is nearly impossible for stumps to survive for centuries. Yet those stumps managed to survive for even four to five centuries because the surrounding trees sent sugar to them through the interconnected underground root system. Wohlleben explains that it is not very clear if the assistance is an active support or an accidental give and take due to the entanglement of roots underground. Whatever the real reason for the assistance is, the outcome of this networked root support system is the creation of a forest and an eco-system which a single tree can never create. Then, the forest now moderates extreme temperatures, stores sufficient water, and creates thick

canopies that protect trees from storms and winds that can uproot many of them. [7] In other words, once the forest is formed, it is the forest not an individual tree that protects and nurtures its members, sick or healthy and old or young. Within this system, a tree would not need to risk its own well-being to sustain its invalid neighbor. In the most anthropomorphic sense, to share a sick member's pain in this context would mean to remain connected to the root network of the forest community.

It is undeniable that nineteenth-century British literature understood sympathy primarily as an individual capacity for a moral sentiment of fellow feeling. George Eliot's novels, which relentlessly delve into the question of sympathy, probe into characters' minds and measure different scales of sympathetic capacity that each character possesses. In Eliot, according to their sensibility and receptivity to other's pain and suffering, characters' souls are differently graded from the state of "moral stupidity" to the "fanaticism of sympathy."[8] The main tension of the plot is also frequently built upon a protagonist's spiritual growth from the blind egoism to the recovery of heightened sensibility to other's pain and suffering. The narrator of *Middlemarch* famously acknowledges "if we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar

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[7] Peter Wohlleben, *The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate-Discoveries from a Secret World* (Berkeley: Greystone Books, 2016), 1-5.

[8] George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (1871-72; New York: W.W. Norton& Company, 1977), 146, 152.

which lies on the other side of silence."[9] Still, the narrator calls this inescapable lack of keen vision and feeling as moral "stupidity" that "the quickest [the most sensitive] of us"[10] cannot overcome. And under this ideal of clairvoyant sympathy, the principal moral energy of Eliot's characters is spent to introspect their moral stupidity, and then, exhausted by the realization that "our frames could hardly bear" [11] such omniscient knowledge of other's pain and suffering.

At individual level, as Eliot puts it, "the quickest of us" cannot but "walk about well wadded with [moral] stupidity"[12] since we cannot hear the roar of the world, and if we can, we would not be able to bear it. Yet at the communal level, to listen to all the roars would not necessarily mean a paranoid. In an ethical environment which is capacious and stable enough to support the weakest and the least productive members and even seemingly hostile species to the eco-system, the networked members would not need to choose options between moral stupidity and fanaticism of sympathy. In lieu of the guilt-laden introspection of one's mind, the de-psychologized vision of sympathy that this project so far investigated proposes that our moral energy can be spent to imagine and create such an ethical climate. Sympathy in this vision is not the clairvoyant

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[9] Ibid., 135.

[10] Ibid., 135.

[11] Ibid., 135.

[12] Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 135.

knowledge of other's pain or moral martyrdom to endure the same pain. Instead, it is the

capacity of the supportive network and individual member's ability to create the network.

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