"You Can Never Work Facts as You Would Fixed Quantities": Political Economy's Failures in Thomas Malthus and *Mary Barton*

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English

Introduction

Political economy is a bit of a dusty term. First used in its modern sense in the 18th century, political economy is now associated with the scholars Adam Smith, David Ricardo, and Thomas Malthus (Groenewegen). How you make sense of the term "political economy" can say a lot about your politics. If told that political economy is "the branch of economics dealing with the economic problems of government," would you find this definition somewhat useless, assuming that all economic problems are political ("Political economy")? Would you, on the other hand, assume that economics is a science with its own logic that should remain as independent of politics as possible? At its most basic, the term has to do with the study of economics as applied to specific political and social contexts. The history of political economy tells the story of how the field of economics was born: how in the 19th century, economics separated itself from speculative theory and came to be seen as natural law.

Thomas Malthus's immediately influential and perpetually controversial *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798) is a foundational work of political economy which serves as a useful study of economics' tendency to reject dreams of utopian societies in favor of a science of facts. From the perspective of literary criticism, Malthus' *Essay* is particularly useful because of how writers such as Charles Dickens, Harriet Martineau, and Elizabeth Gaskell took up and commented on Malthus' ideas (Dzelzainis). Malthus' central claim, today referred to by

economists as the Malthusian trap, is that population necessarily grows faster than food supply. From this "law" of population, Malthus and his followers draw manifold implications, ranging from arguing against humanity's perfectibility, to dismantling 19th century Britain's Poor Law, to controlling reproduction. Most centrally, Malthus concludes that poverty and vice are inevitable aspects of the human condition and therefore cannot be solved by human effort.

In the way he formulates his argument, Malthus implies that his belief in the inevitability of poverty, unlike utopian visions of a society free from suffering, is based on fact. Early in *Essay*, Malthus positions himself as an unprejudiced lover of truth, not taken in by visionary speculation. In so doing, he differentiates his theory from unfounded "speculations on the future improvement of society" (Malthus 15). Malthus thus claims the territory of the unbiased, factual, and scientific for himself.

Drawing on critical work on the interaction of economics and literature in the 18th and 19th centuries, this paper analyzes how a belief in unalterable "laws of economy" surfaces in Elizabeth Gaskell's 1848 novel *Mary Barton*. As a novel that represents the relationships between the working poor and their employers, *Mary Barton* lends itself to analysis through an economic lens. Numerous critics working in the traditions of Marxist literary theory and New Historicism—Raymond Williams, Rosemarie Bodenheimer, and Catherine Gallagher foremost among them—have read *Mary Barton*'s critique of economic inequality in industrial England as incomplete due to structural problems with the novel. A novel about class conflict abandons its initial working-class hero and collapses into a marriage and emigration plot (Williams). Splits in perspective trouble a first-time novelist, "soften[ing] the novel's analysis of the middle-class and its institutions" (Bodenheimer 522). The tragedy of the working-class hero is suppressed first by melodrama and then by religious homily (Gallagher, "Causality versus Conscience"). Turning

away from problems of plot and narrative form, fascinating as they are, I instead read *Mary Barton*'s ideological disjunct through the lens of political economy's circulation within the novel. Unquestioning belief in economic laws narrows what kinds of evidence can be permitted as rational and precludes the ability to imagine alternative social structures. Specifically, I focus on what I see as the novel's culminating scene of class conflict—the conversation between the employer Mr. Carson and the working man Job Legh, in which the employer rehearses the logic of political economy while the worker appeals to his lived experience. This scene in Gaskell's novel poignantly pits the logics of political economy and lived experience against each other, calling into question what kind of facts count most.

Gaskell explicitly mentions political economy, albeit to deny her knowledge of it, in the preface to *Mary Barton*. Gaskell explains that she was driven to write *Mary Barton* by her reflections on the "unhappy state of things between those so bound to each other by common interests, as the employers and the employed must ever be" (37). Having selected a topic directly related to economic issues, Gaskell then offers a disclaimer, writing, "I know nothing of Political Economy, or the theories of trade. I have tried to write truthfully; and if my accounts agree or clash with any system, the agreement or disagreement is unintentional" (38). Given that her father wrote a series called "The Political Economy" in *Blackwood's* magazine and Gaskell herself regularly read periodicals that published articles on political economy, it is reasonable to conclude that Gaskell was at least superficially familiar with contemporary political economy, and more likely than not, with Malthus in particular (Niles). Nonetheless, through this disclaimer, Gaskell cedes authority on economic issues to the rarified theorists who understand it, performing the humility of a layperson regarding political economy. Consequently, Gaskell's novel recreates the shortcomings of Malthusian economic reasoning. Though the novel is critical

of factory owners' lack of sympathy, its narrator upholds the belief that there are economic laws, unalterable and beyond the layperson's understanding. Nonetheless, *Mary Barton*'s juxtaposition of the reasoning of master and man manages to exceed economic logic, highlighting the insufficient power of political economic "laws" in the face of the individual lives of the poor.

Thomas Malthus and the "Science" of Political Economy

Before economics calcified into a self-contained discipline, it was quite porous, drawing from economics, politics, history, moral philosophy, the natural sciences, and even travel writing (Hadley 8). Its practitioners did not always think of themselves as political economists, and even less so as economists in the current sense of the word, focused on rational actors and efficiency. Instead, thinkers like Malthus and Ricardo concerned themselves with "the proper relationship between theory and practice" in the study of wealth's generation and distribution (Walter 31).

While the problem of theory versus practice may seem like an age-old concern for academics, for thinkers writing after the French Revolution, theory smacked of the sort of progressive, utopian thinking that had galvanized revolutionaries, allegedly inspiring the Reign of Terror and the empire of Napoleon Bonaparte (Appleman). The challenge for conservatives such as Malthus was to show that theory still had a place in sound economic policy. As Ryan Walter, a historian of political economy, points out, "Malthus devoted an entire chapter to the defence of theory in every edition of the *Essay* except the first … The cumulative message was this: theory was inevitable, but its role was not to usher in a new millennium but to point out the modest prospects for improvement that actually existed" (63). For this reason, Malthus' writing is careful not to be too visionary. In order to slough off the association with dangerous and revolutionary ideas, Malthus presents his theory as moderate to conservative, rational, and firmly

based on practical experience and observation. "Crafting the figure of the theorist as someone whose intellectual comportment was indispensable to effective legislation" was a key part of this differentiation, heralding the creation of the economic policy expert (Walter 65). Thus, towards the end of the 19th century, political economy increasingly turned away from interdisciplinarity with the social sciences and instead developed into the specialized economics we know today, focused on the technical, quantitative, and ahistorical (Hadley).

In *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, Malthus uses the first chapter to situate himself in the contemporary debate over the perfectibility of man while performing an unbiased adherence to reason and fact. As the voice of the reasonable middle, Malthus rejects both "the friend of the present order of things [who] condemns all political speculation in the gross" and "the speculative philosopher [who] offends against the cause of truth … allow[ing] himself to indulge in the most bitter invectives against every present establishment" (17). Neither unthinking nor wildly speculating, Malthus declares himself unlike both the utopian radicals and the conservatives with nothing but precedent as their guide. Instead, Malthus carefully establishes his alleged rationality, stating that "in entering upon the argument … I put out of the question, at present, all mere conjectures, that is, all suppositions, the probable realization of which cannot be inferred upon any just philosophical grounds" (18). This is a man who believes the truth comes from "a collection of greater numbers of facts," facts which he painstakingly accumulated and added to his *Essay* in five subsequent editions (15).

The claim of rationality that Malthus performs alongside political economy's disciplinary development into "economics" comes with its own dangers. In his adherence to what he sees as "the inevitable laws of our nature," Malthus precludes the possibility that society could be significantly reorganized in the interest of lesser inequality and greater justice (72). Unable to

foresee the impending technological advancements of the unfolding Industrial Revolution and thereafter, it may well have been reasonable to state as law the impossibility of producing enough food for ever-increasing populations. Admittedly, food production is a concern that has repeatedly come back with urgency. However, the conclusions that Malthus draws from this are nothing short of murderous.

By always returning to his "law" of population according to which humans are condemned to scarcity, and reasoning that scarcity must necessarily lead to vice, Malthus concludes that all charity to the poor not exclusively focused on the increase of food production is nothing but harmful. Thus, Malthus concludes, "to prevent the recurrence of misery is, alas! beyond the power of man" (42). For all his alasing and alacking, Malthus' proclamations of the inevitability of suffering had real impact on policy decisions, and not merely to promote food production but to accept that the starving must die. Malthus' belief in the inevitable suffering of the poor becomes an all-too-ready willingness to sacrifice entire groups of people out of necessity, or at least for the greater good of the population.

While posited as a reasonable alternative to the dangers of more revolutionary thinking, the way that political economic thought such as Malthus' presented itself as natural law underwrote its power to regulate human life (Mitchell 17). Robert Mitchell argues that "those 'laws' and 'principles' discovered by new sciences such as political economy" enabled biopolitics in the sense of subordinating politics to economic theories of how populations should be regulated, such as by getting rid of attempts at social welfare like Britain's poor laws (17). By elaborating possibilities of "population-level economic behavior that could not be politically commanded," political economists like Malthus claimed exclusive knowledge of how bodies could be politically *regulated* for the public good of the nation (Mitchell 4). That is, while a 19th

century sovereign could not easily command their subjects whether or not to have children, the government could regulate access to welfare based on policy recommendations in order to discourage the idea that poor families would be able to feed their children through government support. The credibility of Malthus' arguments about population as guides for government policy hinged on their status as scientifically established laws.

Still, there are contemporary critics who complicate the heartlessly utilitarian and elitist caricature of Malthus. Read in comparison to rival political economist David Ricardo, Malthus is less abstracted and more interested in national circumstances and the bodies of the poor. In *The Body Economic*, for instance, Catherine Gallagher reads Malthus' ubiquitous focus on hunger as well as his scandalous emphasis on "the passion between sexes," which he used to argue that humanity would never have less interest in sexual procreation, as evidence that Malthus attended to the living bodies of the poor (Malthus 73). A scholar of rhetoric, Michael Longaker also points out that Malthus "mixed the economist's appeals to rational principle and empirical fact with the prudential consideration of local circumstance and national custom" (Longaker 152). Malthus did not see mathematical reasoning alone as sufficient to convince people of his theories. Addressing local circumstances would seem to align with Gallagher's emphasis on Malthus' attention to the bodies of the poor. However, Malthus did not attend to the poor in their particularity or on the level of the embodied lived experience of the individual. Accordingly, *Essay* presents the bodies of the poor not as suffering individuals to be helped but as a national problem to be expelled outside of the realm of social responsibility. Similarly, Malthus' attention to circumstance and custom remains on the national level of an anonymous and unspecifiable public. Malthus' alleged attention to local circumstance rings false to the ear of the sympathetic

individual, a problem that Gaskell's literary descriptions of the poor's suffering make all the more clear.

Malthus uses the endless variety of actually unfolding circumstances as excuses to reject the plausibility of any theory that hasn't yet been tested. With selective humility, Malthus writes, "so much friction and so many minute circumstances occur in practice, which it is next to impossible for the most enlarged and penetrating mind to foresee, that on few subjects can any theory be pronounced just, that has not stood the test of experience" (17). Too hesitant to admit the possibility of a society structured by different class relations, Malthus instead makes the blanket claim that "in every society that has advanced beyond the savage state, a class of proprietors and a class of labourers must necessarily exist" (95). Assuming class relations that make some people poor, Malthus is confident enough to proclaim both that "the poor … must live much worse, and many of them be reduced to severe distress" and that "the truth is that the pressure of distress on this part of a community is an evil so deeply seated that no human ingenuity can reach it" (24, 41). Malthus' conservative adherence to existing models of social organization, posed as inductive reasoning, leads to a catastrophic failure of imagination.

Thought Experiments in Self-Confirmation

Given the ongoing contemporary circulation of ideas already present in *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, it is worth examining an example of Malthus' inductive reason at some length. Not wanting to be distracted by visionary theory without basis in observed experience, Malthus states, "A theory that will not admit of application cannot possibly be just" and then elaborates a process of supposed inductive reasoning based on established facts (65). Malthus is responding to the utopian idea that, free from corrupting social institutions, humankind can live

in a state of equality. His subsequent thought experiment, meant to expose the impossibility of such utopian imaginings, is as follows:

> Let us suppose all the causes of misery and vice in this island removed. War and contention cease. Unwholesome trades and manufactories do not exist. Crowds no longer collect together in great and pestilent cities for purposes of court intrigue, of commerce, and vicious gratifications. Simple, healthy, and rational amusements take place of drinking, gaming, and debauchery. There are no towns sufficiently large to have any prejudicial effects on the human constitution. The greater part of the happy inhabitants of this terrestrial paradise live in hamlets and farm-houses scattered over the face of the country. Every house is clean, airy, sufficiently roomy, and in a healthy situation. All men are equal. The labours of luxury are at end. And the necessary labours of agriculture are shared amicably among all. The number of persons, and the produce of the island, we suppose to be the same as at present. The spirit of benevolence, guided by impartial justice, will divide this produce among all the members of the society according to their wants. (Malthus 65-66)

In addition to providing insight into what a utopian society looks like for a conservative parson at the end of the 18th century, namely a sober and pastoral utopia, this thought experiment reveals an almost storybook-like style typical of explanations of political economy for laypeople and children.

Through the lens of the law of population, this utopia transforms into a nightmare. Malthus puts a pin into the balloon of egalitarian fantasy, reflecting, “I cannot conceive a form of society so favourable upon the whole to population” (66). Assuming freedom of the sexes and goods flowing to all “according to their wants,” there would follow “extraordinary

encouragements to population," which food production could not keep up with even with the whole society focused on agriculture (66). Malthus continues:

> Alas! What becomes of the picture where men lived in the midst of plenty … This beautiful fabric of imagination vanishes at the severe touch of truth. … The temptations to evil are too strong for human nature to resist. The corn is plucked before it is ripe, or secreted in unfair proportions, and the whole black train of vices that belong to falsehood are immediately generated. (67-68).

In other words, cheating and stealing must necessarily follow from the inevitable reproduction of too many people. Excluding the possibility of functional birth control, the rational thinker might be able to follow Malthus thus far even with the benefit of hindsight. However, it is in the next link that Malthus' chain of reasoning becomes deliberately, brutally obtuse.

Assuming food scarcity from overpopulation encouraged by a society without vice, Malthus falls back on the pre-existing tools of societal organization that he sees as the only ways to contain social chaos. He writes, "It seems highly probably, therefore, that an administration of property, *not very different from that which prevails in civilized States at present*, would be established as the best, though inadequate, remedy for evils which were pressing on the society" (70; emphasis added). Malthus is willing to admit that the currently prevailing administration of property is inadequate, but he nonetheless sees the status quo as the only reasonable solution. More than that, he poses the status quo as that which would arise naturally by the laws of human nature's unfolding. From scarcity, Malthus infers the need for "two fundamental laws of society, the security of property and the institution of marriage," marriage for its efficacy in slowing the birth rate (71). From these two fundamental laws, "inequality of conditions must necessarily follow" (71). Confined by the desire to validate political economic theory as scientific and

distinct from dangerously revolutionary thought, Malthus can only admit of what he has already observed in application.[1] To maintain his pose of scientific rationality, he then concludes that inequality is necessary because a society will always develop as "civilized" societies already have. Here, Malthus summarily precludes even alternative social orders that do already exist by labeling them uncivilized. Meanwhile, what counts as civilized and what as "savage" is only precursorily explored. Malthus' definition of civilized suggests a tautology: a rational theorist can only approve of theories that have been successfully applied in "civilized" societies and "civilized" societies are those with the same administration of property, and its resulting inequality, already observable in Europe.

When used in this way, political economy becomes a method for proving that whatever threatens you is impossible. By clamoring for status as a natural science and then posing not only population growth in excess of food supply but also private property and marriage as fundamental laws of society, conservative political economy makes inequality itself appear rational and natural. A more equal society then becomes irrational, impossible. Malthus' thought experiment is an example of political economy in service of the status quo, a way of reasoning that "invariably means ignoring all the subtleties of real social existence and reducing everything to preconceived mechanical or statistical formulae" (Graeber 75). Like the contemporary bureaucratic reasoning that premises the impossibility of wealth redistribution, prison abolition, or functioning universal health care, Malthus' form of reasoning is characterized by the "willful blindness typical of the powerful" with "the prestige of science" (Graeber 82). No wonder, then, that we still hear businessmen and technocrats echoing Malthus' insistence on the laziness of the poor when offered welfare and on the necessity of vice when not checked by the security of private property.

Political Economy in *Mary Barton*

Outside of Elizabeth Gaskell's preface to *Mary Barton*, in which Gaskell professes her ignorance of political economy, the term appears one other time: on the lips of Job Legh, a self-educated entomologist and poor working man who serves as something of a foil to the more radical working-class character, John Barton. At this point, the penultimate chapter, most of the novel's plot is concluded. John Barton, a once proud patriarch, has been driven to murder, gone nearly mad at the injustice of the vastly unequal society he inhabits. Barton has shot and killed the son of the owner at the factory where he was formerly employed—a young man who was the callous leader of the faction refusing to give into the working men in labor negotiations. Having demonstrated that dangerous ideas like Trade Unionism and Chartism lead only to bloodshed, the novel then shifts from an exploration of class alienation to a search for redemption. This leads to a scene treacle-sweet with sentimentality, in which Mr. Carson forgives John Barton, now on his deathbed, for murdering his son. The scene is a paroxysm of Christian cross-class sympathy, and yet a few loose threads remain, such as how the rest of the workers will survive. To tie up these loose threads, Gaskell writes an additional scene of cross-class exchange. This time, Job Legh represents the working man's interests—a spokesperson who can be taken as credible since he never succumbed to John Barton's more radical political affiliations.

Mr. Carson summons Job to his house in the hopes of making sense of his son's murder. Job accordingly tries to explain how Barton grew to hate the masters' riches in combination with their indifference to the suffering of the poor. It is at this point that Mr. Carson interrupts, exclaiming, "That's the notion you've all of you got. … Now, how in the world can we help it? We cannot regulate the demand for labour" (Gaskell 456). Recognizing this language of helplessness in the mouths of the rich as a resort to political economy, Job responds:

> Not as much, I'm sure, sir; though I'm not given to Political Economy, I know that much. I'm wanting in learning, I'm aware; but I can use my eyes. I never see the Masters getting thin and haggard for want of food; I hardly ever see them making much change in their way of living, though I don't doubt they've got to do it in bad times. But it's in things for show they cut short; while for such as me, it's in things for life we've to stint. For sure, sir, you'll own it's come to a hard pass when a man would give aught in the world for work to keep his children from starving, and can't get a bit, if he's ever so willing to labour. I'm not up to talking as John Barton would have done, but that's clear to me at any rate. (Gaskell 456)

Echoing Gaskell in the novel's preface, Job refers to political economy only to say that he does not understand it.[2] He humbly agrees that Mr. Carson might be right that the masters cannot help the poor very much, but he still persists in juxtaposing the evidence of his own eyes with the laws of political economy. Coming back to the injustice of letting someone starve because they cannot find work, Job performs a humility towards the laws that may be beyond his understanding but refuses to agree that this justifies economic inequality unto death.

In contrast to Job's earnest observations based on lived experience, Mr. Carson's retreat into oversimplified abstraction reads as deliberately obtuse and noncomprehending. His style of arguing becomes akin to a children's story, in which he is the childlike audience insisting to himself that a factory owner cannot be held responsible when his workers starve. Mr. Carson reasons aloud:

> My good man, just listen to me. Two men live in solitude; one produces loaves of bread, the other coats, - or what you will. Now, would it not be hard if the bread-producer were forced to give bread for the coats, whether he wanted them or not, in order to furnish

> employment to the other? That is the simple form of the case; you've only to multiply the numbers. … - It's all nonsense talking, - it must be so! (Gaskell 456-57).

In the context of this conversation, and following the pitiful descriptions of filth, poverty, disease, and starvation that fill *Mary Barton*'s pages, this response is utterly inadequate. The juxtaposition of Job's careful explanation that the masters do not starve when times are bad while the workers do with Mr. Carson's thought experiment about coats and bread underscores the willful blindness of this form of reasoning. Perhaps sensing this, Mr. Carson stops himself short to proclaim, "It's all nonsense talking." He instead relies on political economy's status as law: "it must be so!". When Job asserts that "the duty of the happy is to help the suffering to bear their woe," Mr. Carson again responds with Malthusian anti-poor logic and credence in unalterable facts (457). He voices the Malthusian argument that welfare for the poor encourages carelessness and lethargy, claiming "facts have proved and are daily proving how much better it is for every man to be independent of help, and self-reliant" (457). This, coming after the novel has described children starving because of their parents' unemployment, is hardly convincing, nor does Job find it so. Instead, Job emphasizes Mr. Carson's reliance on alleged facts in something of an outburst: "You can never work facts as you would fixed quantities, and say, given two facts, and the product is so and so. God has given men feelings and passions which cannot be worked into the problem … be hanged to the facts!" (457). His own thoughts, based on lived experience as a poor man, simply "don't follow each other like the Q. E. D. of a Proposition" (458). In other words, Job will not reduce poor bodies to mathematical proofs on population. Here, Job makes the novel's most explicit statement that "facts" are not enough. Even facts and statistics cannot be treated like purely abstract mathematical numbers because they do not allow for people's feelings and passions, nor their cultural and ideological allegiances for that matter.

Conclusion

Elizabeth Gaskell may have hoped that a conversation between a capitalist and his employee could lead to a resolution sympathetic to both, resolving class struggle through individual sympathy. However, her novel's project of representing "the care-worn men, who looked as if doomed to struggle through their lives" successfully generates enough sympathy for working men that the supposed rationality of the employer appears unseeing and absurd (Gaskell 37). In the concluding chapters, Mr. Carson develops into a kind of capitalist reformer after his conversation with Job Legh, but this remains an individual solution to a systemic problem. Mr. Carson is just one factory owner in a brutal system of exploitative labor that extends far beyond him. In the end, it is Gaskell's ability to narrate her characters in all their particularity, demanding to be seen as more than manipulable quantities, that makes *Mary Barton* a radical novel, not Gaskell's intended happy ending, with minds and hearts transformed into liberal reformers man to man. In their vividly rendered experiences of human suffering, Gaskell's care-worn characters call for a broader form of redress—a restructuring of class relations in order to distribute the basic necessities of life more equally to all.

Political economy's insistence that things must be so does not satisfy the claims of the working people. Theories of economy, however rationally inferred from established precedent, cannot be mere mathematical equations because they are not balancing "fixed quantities" but who lives and who dies. Political economy began as an attempt to explain rapidly evolving relationships and conditions as new capitalist structures emerged in Britain. It developed into a science of abstraction and rationality beyond the understanding of non-experts, something people could point to when they couldn't themselves explain why something was the way it was. Rather than an explanation of origins, political economy became a tool to naturalize the felt irrationality

of industrial class relations and other violences under capitalism. The political impact was devastating. Believing mathematic clarity and natural law to be on their side, subscribers to 19th century political economy felt justified denying the claims of the poor, striking workers, starving Irish, and even young couples desiring to get married. They had facts on their side.

Today, Malthusian arguments about scarcity drive anti-immigrant rhetoric based on the idea that there is not enough to go around, so we had better discourage alleged hangers-on rather than try to produce more and distribute it more fairly. However, we do not live in the Malthusian trap. The world does produce enough food for everyone, made possible by incredible technological advances. Yet hunger persists even as there is no natural law that says some part of the population is doomed never to have enough. Rather than hide from this fact, thinking that the economic system we now have is the only way it can be, it's necessary to think beyond circular reasoning based on the status quo to imagine how this wealth of resources might be administered differently. While Elizabeth Gaskell chose to kill off her more radical character, a man advocating for political reform through the Chartist movement, and the Chartist movement was crushed historically, in time nearly every one of the Chartist's demands was carried out. Together, literature's invocation of the particularity of lived experience alongside history's revelation that once radical, even unthinkable demands can become the norm allow contemporary readers to look back on *Mary Barton* and see a call to action against systemic poverty that exceeds the narrower vision of its novelist.

Notes

1. Now that labor laws enshrining the 8-hour workday are widespread, a similar failure of Malthus' imagination appears all the more blatant. Malthus writes, "if the lower classes of society could agree among themselves never to work more than six or seven hours in the day, the commodities essential to human happiness might still be produced in as great abundance as at present. But it is almost impossible to conceive that such an agreement could be adhered to" (98).

2. Many critics have remarked on Elizabeth Gaskell's unwillingness to follow the line of reasoning that would extend from sympathy with John Barton's plight to a wholescale critique of industrial England's class structure. As Bodenheimer puts it, Gaskell retreats from her own intelligence, "allowing neither her narrator nor her character to challenge the authority that describes the world in middle-class terms" (517).

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