PHYSIOGNOMIC DISCOURSE AND THE TRIALS OF CROSS-CLASS SYMPATHY IN *MARY BARTON*

By Christie Harner

1. A Characterological Trial

"THE JUDGE, THE JURY, the avenger of blood, the prisoner, the witnesses – all were gathered together within one building" (306; ch. 32): at the melodramatic acme of Elizabeth Gaskell's 1848 *Mary Barton*, the reader's energies have similarly converged upon Jem Wilson's trial for the murder of Harry Carson. Yet despite the narrative significance of the courtroom testimonies,[1] once Jem has pled not guilty, the narrator unexpectedly mutes the prosecutor's opening speech and substitutes instead what seems to be a lowbrow debate about the defendant's physical appearance. The first speaker insists that any justly accused man will have "some expression of [his] crimes" in his face, and observing Jem's "low, resolute brow" and "white compressed lips," he comments that he has "seldom seen one with such marks of Cain on his countenance as the man at the bar" (309; ch. 32). The second observer disagrees, asserting that Jem's forehead is not so low as it might initially seem and is in fact rather square, "which some people say is a good sign" (309; ch. 32). He asserts that he is "no physiognomist" and proposes instead that Jem's agitated and depressed visage is less the sign of a depraved character than the result of inner turmoil and a bad haircut.

Instead of the predictable character testimonies, readers are confronted with a characterological trial – a trial that is doubly inconsequential both in its legal impact and because readers recognize easily that the second speaker is correct. Yet, if the veracity of Jem's guiltless appearance is so self-evident in the context of the novel, then why does this abbreviated physiognomic "trial" stand in for the opening of the criminal trial, with its as-yet-unknown conclusion? On the rare occasions when they have addressed this scene, previous literary critics, such as Roland Végsö in his 2003 article "*Mary Barton* and the Dissembled Dialogue," have marginalized it as a stock argument "debunking the myth of the readability of the criminal" and "the storehouse of physiognomical clichés" (176). This reading ignores the privileging of the conversation within the chronology of the courtroom drama. It also disregards the saturation of mid-Victorian culture with characterological debates that in 1848 had not yet become clichéd. The question here is thus somewhat broader than the one I posed above: if *Mary Barton* substitutes a physiognomic debate for the opening of its much-anticipated murder trial, then what significance might that dialogue have for our

705

understanding of classification and characterization? Moreover, how might the ambivalence surrounding the strategies of classification put forward by the sciences reshape the parameters of cross-class recognition and sympathy within the novel?

The first speaker finds security in the hermeneutic certainty that physiognomic science claimed to provide: the promised capacity, according to James Carson's 1868 *The Fundamental Principles of Phrenology*, "at first sight, to form a tolerably accurate estimate of the talents, peculiarities, and natural dispositions of those with whom we may come into contact, even although we have nothing but our eye to judge by" (28–29).[2] The speaker also applauds the claims of the sciences to provide strategies of preemptive policing. Much like the narrator of the 1856 *Household Words* essay "The Demeanor of Murderers," the clerk insists that "the physiognomy . . . [of a criminal should be] exactly in accordance with his deeds . . . [with] every guilty consciousness he had gone on storing up in his mind [having] set its mark upon him" (505). He is "watching the prisoner" and "trac[ing] . . . [his] features" in a way that suggests not only observation but also forensic surveillance (308–09; ch. 32). Because the speaker is most likely a legal clerk, and a representative, however minor, of the English legal system, he embodies in his official capacity both the pervasive belief that scientific physiognomy could detect human character and the perceived need to identify criminals and cordon them off from law-abiding (middle- and upper-class) society.

The second observer voices equally widespread concerns about the damaging prejudices and flaws that its critics argued were inherent to characterological science. Though he is actually more rigorous in his use of pseudo-scientific rhetoric – referring to the height and shape of Jem's forehead as alleged indices of character – he correctly disregards the physical "trifles" that led proponents of the sciences to characterize others inaccurately (309; ch. 32). Like Reverend Brewin Grant, a fervent anti-phrenologist who debated practitioner Dr Charles Donovan at the Birmingham New Odd Fellows' Hall in 1849, he suggests that the sciences are popular because of their "cheapness and supposed facility and ease"; "people who have not time or inclination for the deep study of human nature, can readily feel on the human head" and reveal the supposed truths they already expected to find (much like detecting criminality in a man already accused of murder) (6). The second observer scorns a so-called science that invites class prejudices such as those voiced by the other clerk: Jem's working-class features bear the "marks of Cain" while Mr. Carson's "stern and inflexible" physiognomy is "classical . . . [like] the busts of Jupiter" (308; ch. 32). He also refuses to make the so-called analytical leap required by physiognomic science: to use material evidence (the shape of a person's forehead, whether God-given or malformed by shoddy barbering) to determine character traits. He reminds us that circumstantial evidence – either a murder weapon or social prejudice – is fallible, and that human character witnesses and Jem's own "rapid recapitulation of his life" should carry more influence upon the outcome of the trial (308; ch. 32). His rebuttal of physiognomic science seems to carry some weight, and the narrative returns us to the witnesses' testimony after his speech.

The structure of the clerks' conversation replicates in brief the most common characterological controversies of early- and mid-nineteenth century England. The first speaker ventriloquizes a cultural fascination with the indexical sciences that claimed to read physical features as indisputable, empirical evidence of specific personality traits – and increasingly, as this scene demonstrates, of social class. For example, whereas famed eighteenth-century physiognomist Johann Lavater viewed small ears as a sign of "weak, effeminate characters, or persons of too great sensibility" (345), J. W. Redfield's 1852

Outlines of a New System of Physiognomy translated that system of signification into an assessment of social status: "the smallest ears," he stated, are found "among the most natural and uncultivated" lower classes (57).[3] On the other side of the debate, the second clerk voices a common condemnation of the materialism of phrenology, physiognomy, and related sciences. While he does not invoke a specifically religious critique, as numerous denouncers did, he does insist that material evidence (Jem's prison haircut and cheap clothing) might be the counterpart of circumstantial evidence in a murder trial: potential red herrings that obscure more genuine (if less immediately visible) proof of character. To such critics of the so-called sciences, like Reverend Sir Henry Thompson, who believed that "the soul influences the manifestation of intellect and feeling," it was "absurd" and even quite dangerous to discern character from material evidence (Thompson and Engledue 13).

Gaskell is not known as a proponent of characterological science, although she was certainly familiar with it; she was a reader of founding phrenologist Johann Spurzheim, as John Chapple notes in *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Early Years*, and she would have witnessed the shifting levels in the 1830s and 40s of the "English vogue for a new science" (390). She is rarely even acknowledged, as Charles Dickens is, as a casual user of physiognomic language, although in her 1853 "The Squire's Story," her narrator implicitly warns readers against any analyses of moral character that do not include "the expression of [a person's] countenance, or the shape of his head" (35).[4] And so my initial question bears repeating: why mute the opening words of what should be a tense courtroom drama and substitute instead a seemingly pedantic and strangely over-determined exchange on physical appearance?

Because we as readers hear the clerks' conversation rather than the prosecutor's speech, we picture ourselves positioned physically closer to them – as though their conversation blocks that which is spoken further away. The practical need for proximity, in other words, acts upon our imaginations. Furthermore, once we are imaginatively present in the courtroom, we are caught up in the charged atmosphere of that space – much like the narrator herself, so intensely focused on the legal drama that she only later thinks to tell us that she was not actually present on the day of the trial (312; ch. 32). This imaginative leap is not dissimilar to the acts of sympathy that the novel aims to inspire.

Persuasively or not, Gaskell's narrator proposes that the anguish of the Manchester poor – what early-Victorian social scientist Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth described as "the bitterest dregs of the poisoned chalice" of industrial capitalism (2) – stems not only from their workplace conditions and domestic poverty, but also from the lack of sympathy directed toward them (2). As Gaskell writes in the Preface, the "more I reflected on this unhappy state of things between those so bound to each other by common interests, as the employers and the employed must ever be, the more anxious I became to give some utterance to the agony which, from time to time, convulses this dumb people; the agony of suffering without the sympathy of the happy" (4). Frederick Engels, writing about industrial Manchester between 1842 and 1844, believed this sympathy to be a near impossibility; he found the interests of the middle classes and the "plain Working Men" to be "diametrically opposed" (9). The objective of the novel, then, is always already a herculean task: to model acts of sympathy toward the working classes that middle- and upper-class readers might be able to adopt.

Sympathy in *Mary Barton* is historically contingent and does not follow from the more familiar suggestion that one person feels condolence or charitable pity toward another – an act that is at best a "most distancing, externalizing" acknowledgement of the latter's distress and one that protects the former from necessarily feeling any semblance of it (Argyros 18).

Gaskell's novel has little respect for acts of charity that serve as substitutes for genuine sympathy, much like the out-patient order and five shillings that the Carson father and son respectively give to Wilson as negligible relief for the Davenports' needs. Instead, sympathy in the novel is defined by the same rhetoric that Adam Smith put forth in the opening chapter of his 1759 *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, appropriately titled "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. (3–4)

In Smith's analysis, neither the fact nor the witnessing of another person's distress produces sympathy; it is rather the ability to conceive that suffering as one's own. "By the imagination," Smith wrote, "we place ourselves in [the sufferer's] 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 degree, is not altogether unlike them" (4). Smith did not define imagination as a complete flight of fancy, and he did not discount the essential information that one would need to know about the sufferer and his torment. Instead, Smith insisted, only once we "take time to picture out in our imagination the different circumstances of distress . . . [taking] time to consider [the sufferer's] situation fully, and in all its parts," might we be able to envision ourselves into the position of the sufferer (16).

The imaginative act made in the courtroom does not ask readers to sympathize with the legal clerks, and it is not particularly demanding for readers – contemporary television has taught us that we are keen to consider ourselves active participants in a courtroom drama. The scene does demand propinquity with the legal clerks, however: both an imaginative leap for readers into the space of the courtroom and involvement in their characterological debate. Therein lies an answer to the questions I posed above. If the objective of *Mary Barton* is to inspire cross-class sympathy – a way for privileged readers to conceive of themselves enduring the miseries of the working poor, without risking a loss to their own identities – then the novel needs more than an imaginative leap: it needs a strategy to achieve that leap successfully and without threat to its middle- and upper-class readers.[5]

As I will argue, the pervasive debates surrounding the characterological sciences, both for and against phrenology and physiognomy, provide just that strategy. Gaskell's novel is not itself critiquing or advocating the principles of character science – principles so popular in the late 1840s that broadsides like Dr George Sexton's 1849 and 1860 "Alphabet on Phrenology" were displayed on street corners and train platforms to facilitate consumption. Rather, the narrative takes from the debates two thought-experiments with models of cross-class recognition and sympathy. For the first half of the novel, Gaskell's middle-class narrator tries to reverse the trend in the character sciences and invent a tactic of material analysis that would ease class biases (including her own) and make visible similarities between the classes rather than differences. When this experiment fails, and so reveals the immense gulf between

the classes and the radical imaginative acts required to bridge it, *Mary Barton* turns to the second clerk's rebuttal and to the threats inherent in purely material classifications. For the second half of the novel, the narrator stages a series of interactions that try to create a more metonymic and emotional fellowship between the people involved, a kinship of subjectivity that might inspire a lasting bridge of sympathy.

2. Characterological Ethnography

IT MAY BE TEMPTING to align the objective of *Mary Barton*, and, in particular, its interest in the daily trials of the laboring poor, with the efforts of numerous sociological studies, "charitable organisations and educational missions," established in Manchester in the 1830s and 40s (Wyatt 103). These reformist texts shared with *Mary Barton* a desire to generate a "new understanding of poverty and its attendant evils" (Wyatt 103): an understanding that was typically empirical and so confusingly coupled with character science.

Living in Manchester throughout her married life, Gaskell was undoubtedly familiar with the work of statisticians and social reformers. Indeed, she socialized with the pioneering statistician Kay-Shuttleworth, in whose home she met Charlotte Brontë. And, albeit in a rather simplistic way, the narrator in *Mary Barton* represents workers' living conditions in much the same way as reformist tracks did in the period. She is careful not to mask the disquieting details on which social scientists often focused: the "pent-up" darkness of the courts and the never-ceasing dampness of the floors in the cellar homes of the poor (a condition that Kay-Shuttleworth cites as depressing one's energies and predisposing the working classes to disease). As a contemporary reviewer in the *Westminster Review* proclaimed, the realism in the novel "calls upon our sympathy and pity" (59).

During the late Georgian and early Victorian periods, social scientists and statisticians took for granted the premise that a factual understanding of the living conditions of the laboring poor would be sufficient to awaken charitable feelings and benevolent actions toward them. The first inquiry of the Manchester Statistical Society (founded in 1833), titled "4,102 Families of Working Men in Manchester," distributed a questionnaire that included country of origin, rent paid, education of children, religion, and type of dwelling. The Society intended, as its first annual report averred, that this data would "assist in promoting the progress of social improvement in the manufacturing population by which we are surrounded" (qtd. in Kent 18). Most famously, in his 1832 *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester*, Kay-Shuttleworth included a range of statistical charts organized according to local Manchester districts: the number of streets paved and unpaved, the number of housing units requiring repair or privies, the number of pauper lodging houses, the acts of public relief per district, the number of establishments serving alcohol, and so on. He hoped that such overwhelming quantitative evidence, and the raw, disturbing information that it provided, might well "arouse the power and intelligence of society, to vigorous efforts for the improvement of the [working-class] condition" (3) – even if he provided no account of how this arousal would take place.

Many so-called Condition-of-England novelists and social reformers fully affirmed the perspective of Kay-Shuttleworth and the Manchester Statistical Society. In an oft-noted scene from his 1845 novel *Sybil, Or the Two Nations*, for instance, Benjamin Disraeli copies examples from statistical Blue Books almost word for word into a conversation between working-class characters Mother Carey and Dandy Mick.[6] In a five-line exchange, the two

characters voice a wide range of typical documentary information: Dandy Mick's mother lives in a back cellar (a particularly low-end working-class residence, often lacking in ventilation or sanitary facilities, and similar to the Davenport home in *Mary Barton*); the mother has an addiction to alcohol (a working-class affliction that Kay-Shuttleworth outlined extensively); the mother works fourteen-hour days; and Dandy Mick was mollified as a child, in the absence of sufficient nutrition, with treacle and laudanum. The conversation is nothing but "accretions of external facts," since the two characters have known each other for years and have no reason to reiterate long-known details (Lucas 154). A barrage of raw, shocking details, it seemingly attempts to jolt readers into feeling pity for the working classes.

The numerical calculations of working-class drinking habits and numbers of privies would have provided extensive quantitative information about this population and its living conditions, but this "wholly empirical" (Mill 339) perspective could not, in the minds of critics, capture a genuine or thorough knowledge of the characters, mentalities, and desires of working-class people – knowledge that might allow a middle-class reader to bring "the case home to himself" and, thus, to imagine experiencing the same anguish as laboring men and women (A. Smith 6). The statistical information listed in Bluebooks did not demand analysis; because any data to be indexed was already coded as working-class and degraded, it required merely accretion. Even if a middle-class reader ventured into "bad" neighborhoods, armed with Kay-Shuttleworth's appendix of blank tables to be used by amateur reformists, she had only to number the items observed (privies, alcohol establishments, etc.) (118).

The challenge of feeling sympathy was not, of course, limited to cross-class relations. A number of nineteenth-century thinkers, including Edward Bulwer-Lytton in his 1835 "On the Want of Sympathy," insisted that a compulsion toward sympathy is the "least rational and yet the most stubborn of all our delusions" (105). Given what Bulwer-Lytton perceived to be the "infinitely multiplied and complex" moral nature of a given person – "formed from a variety of early circumstances, of imperfect memories, of indistinct associations, of constitutional peculiarities, of things and thoughts appropriate only to itself, and which were never known but partially to others" (105) – it would be nearly impossible, such thinkers argued, for one person to comprehend in full or sympathize with the circumstances of another.[7] Scenes in *Mary Barton* like that describing the Davenport residence – the "cellar in which a family of human beings lived . . . on the damp, nay wet brick floor, through which the stagnant, filthy moisture of the street oozed up" (58; ch. 6) – may well capture the type of statistical data available in 1840s indexes. For Gaskell's novel, however, sympathy can only occur when an act of imagination – the creative thinking precluded by the worldview of social statisticians – allows one person to understand another's "imperfect memories" and "indistinct associations" (Bulwer-Lytton 105).

The first experiment in the novel is thus a complex one. It borrows from statistical studies and the character sciences a reliance on empirical observations of working-class men and women – the same precise observations that phrenologist Henry Turner claimed had the power to "enjoin compassion and forbearance towards the worst members of society" (3). It then rejects the tendency of statistical studies to yield only collective descriptions and insists instead on a type of personalized, individual analysis akin to those performed by practicing physiognomists and phrenologists. For *Mary Barton* and its ideology of sympathy, this is an important point; sympathy, defined as the act of imagining oneself into the experiences of another, functions most often within the novel in the communion of individuals rather than across communities. The experiment also borrows from critiques of the pseudo-sciences,

however; it agrees with the second speaker in Jem's trial and recognizes that physical analyses can be both callous and misleading. The initial experiment in Gaskell's novel is ambivalent, and it stands on both sides of the debate over character science: it is an attempt to fuse empirical observation with acts of imaginative identification.

Literary scholars have long aligned Gaskell's fiction and non-fiction with mid-century ethnography. Borislav Knezevic, for example, describes *Cranford* as "An Ethnology of the Provincial," and Malcolm Pittock refers to the narrator Mary Smith's role in that novel "as a sociologist . . . [to understand] the society and the people in it" (99). Maria Frawley argues in her 1998 "Elizabeth Gaskell's Ethnographic Imagination in *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*" that Gaskell draws upon "a range of tropes often associated with classic ethnography" (176): she uses "evocations of Brontë's surroundings [and] descriptions of Yorkshire and its customs and habits [as] 'evidence' with which to understand the subject at the heart of the biography" (180). These critics suggest that ethnography in these texts can work to dilute or efface class anxieties. Frawley argues that regional ethnography, bound to a rhetoric of internal colonialism and a "discovering" of the fringes of Britain, allowed middle-class readers "to represent themselves as 'elite overseers' of the 'quaint and primitive'" (182).[8] Readers could feel empowered by their newfound knowledge of others – knowledge that, in its focus on "quaint customs and rugged landscapes," was necessarily unthreatening (Armstrong, *Fiction* 175).

With good reason, these scholars do not cite *Mary Barton* as an example of Gaskell's ethnographic turn. Ethnography in this early novel does seek to ease class anxieties, but it does so not by heightening peculiar if fascinating differences between communities. Instead, as Gaskell wrote to her publisher Edward Chapman in March 1848, she was addressing a readership whose interest touched "at the present time of struggle on the part of work people" and that was "now so much absorbed by public work" (*Letters* 54) – an audience that, if not from Manchester or greater Lancashire, was already invested in the northern industrial region. Gaskell's narrator is not taking readers to a distant and curious fringe, but beyond the physical and psycho-spatial boundaries that separated Manchester factory workers from their middle- and upper-class neighbors. Whereas Engels stated in *The Condition of the Working Classes in England in 1844* that a person could live in the city limits for years, "and go in and out daily without coming into contact with a working-people's quarter or even with workers" (57), Gaskell's narrator accompanies her readers into the blind alleys, back lanes, and courts to which they would not normally be exposed and introduces them to people in their community whom, to their surprise, they might resemble.

In what are perhaps its more obvious vignettes, *Mary Barton* subscribes to a recognizable ethnographic program: Alice Wilson serves "the 'clap-bread' of Cumberland and Westmoreland" to Mary and Margaret "with the belief that her visitors would have an unusual treat in eating the bread of her childhood" (32; ch. 4); the Barton family dishes up Cumberland ham; the Mancunian women wear "a sort of Spanish mantilla or Scotch plaid . . . brought over the head and hung loosely down, or . . . pinned under the chin in no unpicturesque fashion" (6; ch. 1). Yet these examples in and of themselves work as accretions of fact rather than as calls for acts of imagination – and they are not examples of the type of hybrid ethnography that deserves more critical attention. Rather, in a series of case studies that spans approximately the first half of the novel, Gaskell's narrator blends statisticians' observations, physiognomic science, and linguistic analysis to create a unique ethnographic approach. She has three sequential objectives: first, to deconstruct existing class prejudices

that prohibit any sympathetic "leap" of kinship; second, to humanize the poor in such a way as to coax the middle classes to "adopt" their experience; and third, to limn existing ties of similarity that might invite readers to understand and take on the sensations and experiences of the working classes.

In the first of her visits to working-class homes, the narrator's ethnography borrows from the statisticians' lessons in indexing. She captures the details of the Barton home thus:

> On the right of the door, as you entered, was a longish window, with a broad ledge. On each side of this, hung blue-and-white check curtains, which were now drawn, to shut in the friends met to enjoy themselves. Two geraniums, unpruned and leafy, which stood on the sill, formed a further defence from out-door pryers. In the corner between the window and the fire-side was a cupboard, apparently full of plates and dishes, cups and saucers, and some more nondescript articles, for which one would have fancied their possessors could find no use – such as triangular pieces of glass to save carving knives and forks from dirtying table-cloths. However, it was evident Mrs. Barton was proud of her crockery and glass, for she left her cupboard door open, with a glance round of satisfaction and pleasure . . . Opposite the fire-place was a table, which I should call a Pembroke, only that it was made of deal, and I cannot tell how far such a name may be applied to such humble material. (14–15; ch. 2)

The paragraph is a curiously detailed map of the Barton home rather than an economical establishment of setting. The narrator's middle-class bias remains evident in her assessment of the deal table and in her claim that the family "could find no use" for such "nondescript" bits of crockery – and yet she has also looked closely enough, and with enough of an open mind, that she can account for the items' purpose "to save carving knives and forks from dirtying table-cloths." Even in the social scientists' act of recording domestic details, the narrator has taken an imaginative leap – indeed, a significant enough leap that she bridges the class divide and assigns typical middle-class rationales to the hanging of the curtains and the positioning of the geraniums as a "defence" from the outside world. The narrator's "index" of domestic items mingles objective observation (and even preliminary judgment) with imaginative acts of cross-class assimilation; it acts as a paradigm for undermining class preconceptions and suggests that domesticity exists as a shared value across economic lines.

The narrator's ethnography changes tack in a second case study: a visit to the home of amateur scientist Job Legh. Here, she borrows from the lessons of the physiognomists. Job's physical appearance signifies his allegiance with "a class of men in Manchester, unknown even to many of the inhabitants, and whose existence will probably be doubted by many, who yet may claim kindred with all the noble names that science recognizes" (37; ch. 5). As the narrator describes, "He was a little wiry-looking old man, who moved with a jerking motion, as if his limbs were worked by a string like a child's toy, with dun-coloured hair lying thin and soft at the back and sides of his head; his forehead was so large it seemed to overbalance the rest of his face . . . The eyes absolutely gleamed with intelligence" (38–39; ch. 5). The assessment correlates in part with standard physiognomic codes: Lavater popularized the idea that a "high smooth forehead" "speaks the powers of memory" and is "comprehensive, powerful, firm, [and] retentive" (128 and 441). The narrator's inclusion of specific physiognomic analysis is unusual in the novel, and it anticipates the more overt allusions to character debates in Jem's trial. Her assessment of Job's movements as akin to those of a mechanical toy also works through an imaginative simile, not unlike the metaphors

(scientific and/or creative, depending on one's view) that physiognomists used to link isolated features to personality traits and mannerisms.

Certainly, Gaskell's narrator uses Job's honorable features to distinguish him and his community of "common hand-loom weavers . . . equally familiar with either the Linnaean or the Natural system, who know the name and habitat of every plant within a day's walk from their dwellings" (37–38; ch. 5) from the base stereotype of factory workers held by the middle class. Given that Job seems to Mary one of "the strangest people she ever saw in her life" (41; ch. 5), the narrator seems to want that same strangeness to strike her readers and begin to dismantle their preconceptions. At the same time, in adopting the physiognomic paradigm – the art of finding affiliation between two such seemingly disparate things as patriotism and the bridge of one's nose (highlighted in Redfield's 1852 *Outlines of a New System of Physiognomy*) – the narrator models for her readers another type of imaginative leap. If a broad forehead can be linked to superior intelligence, and if Job Legh can "claim kindred" with noble scientists, then, the narrator suggests, we might also find ties of affiliation between his class and that of her readers.[9]

The narrator's third project extends throughout the first half of the novel, although it initially becomes apparent in a study of washerwoman Alice Wilson. Instead of domestic data or physical features, here the narrator focuses on spoken language. Just after Alice mentions that her nephew Will recently sailed for South America "at t' other side of the sun," and after the narrator notes that Mary, at least, had seen a "terrestrial globe" – both points that underscore the women's provincial background and that could be read as slight mockery – Alice asks Margaret to sing "The Oldham Weaver" (34; ch. 4). The narrator abandons for a moment her third-person address and speaks to the reader directly: "Do you know 'The Oldham Weaver?' Not unless you are Lancashire born and bred, for it is a complete Lancashire ditty." The inclusion of the unknown poem threatens to raise a barrier between reader and character, in its subject matter (the distress of the cotton-weavers), its geographical specificity, and its defiant use of dialect. Why would the narrator include a rather long, rather indecipherable poem that contributes nothing to plot development and threatens to alienate readers?

The poem works as a microcosm of the novel itself, and it asks readers to do one of two things. Either the reader is Lancashire "born and bred," in which case the narrator asks that he or she choose regional affiliation over class discrimination, or the reader must make an active effort to engage with the poem (34; ch. 4). Confronting the poem requires the reader to assess the evidence given (including the narrator's footnotes on dialect), assimilate that information imaginatively (i.e., through narrative),[10] and so become in some sense a member of the "Lancashire" community. This scene coaches readers in how to accept a similar pattern of didacticism throughout the first half of the novel: the narrator appends forty-eight dialect footnotes, all but seven of which appear in the first fourteen chapters, and the two chapters with the most footnotes (chapter 6, describing the living conditions of the Davenport family, and chapter 10, which narrates John Barton's journey to London) are arguably those that most threaten to alienate the middle-class reader.[11] The dialect footnotes provide the narrator with an opportunity to flaunt her own ethnographic "facility at moving between regions and communities" (Starr 389) – and indeed, Gaskell sourced the footnotes from her husband's research into the local dialect, as she wrote in an April 1848 letter to Chapman – but they also engage the reader in the literal act of understanding the working-class communities as they tell their own stories. The footnotes may refer to linguistic codes, in the same way that the

narrator's two earlier case studies gestured toward statistical indices or physiognomic charts, but they also shape an imaginative bridge between heralded English language (Chaucer, Jonson, and Shakespeare are given as examples of dialect usage in the footnotes), working-class speakers, and the middle-class readers who may be used to reading the former but who need to be taught to engage with the latter.

For a while, the ethnographic case studies seem successful. Alice and Job Legh are two of the most unreservedly sympathetic characters in the novel, primarily because they are affiliated with communities distinct from those of class. The narrator seems to foster a sense of Mancunian or Lancashire pride that embraces working-class characters and middle-class readers alike. And then, abruptly, the illusion of sympathy shatters. Plot wise, it is the mounting antipathy between the classes, the rejection of the Chartist petition, and John Barton's murder of Harry Carson that each underscore the persistent challenge of bridging the gulf between the classes. The narrator's ethnographic experiment collapses at the same time, destroyed not only by the events of the plot but also by the same controversies that once subtended it. When the narrator chooses to adopt the physiognomic paradigm for her initial experiment, she takes from it a model of imaginative metaphor: the linking of like and unlike to better comprehend an individual's character. She values the potential for deductive science to transform apparently objective observations of laboring men and women into sympathetic, imaginative associations.[12] What undermines her experiment is the contrary tendency within the pseudo-sciences, what was anathema to some of its most fervent critics: a propensity to interpret physiognomic codes as inflexible evidence of equally static personality and status, and to define those codes through what anti-physiognomists and phrenologists like Reverend Grant most feared, "passion, prejudice, love and hatred" (19).

In attendance at a meeting of the union delegates and factory owners, and presumably bored by the conversation, Harry Carson entertains himself by sketching caricatures of the laborers. The "admirable caricature" cannot imagine or capture the inner characteristics of the men, although it is undeniably physically accurate: the owners nod and "acknowledg[e] the likeness," and the workers readily admit that it is factually correct (179; ch. 16). It is a visual equivalent of the statisticians' indices, an accumulation of facts that are already coded as working-class. The caricature is also a mockery of those facts. It emphasizes one man's large (read: lower-class) nose, and inflects supposedly objective details – the pinning of a waistcoat, for example, to hide the absence of a shirt – with stereotypes and scorn. "It seems to me sad," one of the men sighs, "that there is any as can make game on what they've never knowed; as can make such laughable pictures on men, whose very hearts within 'em are so raw and sore as ours were and are, God help us" (182; ch. 16). The physiognomic signifiers used in the caricature may be physically accurate in most regards, but they are also cruel. The workers recognize their likenesses even as they are alienated by Carson's unsympathetic reading of them.

By mid-century, such caricatures were routine if debased inheritors of Lavater's physiognomic theories, and this process of degradation is significant to understand precisely how Carson's sketch functions within the novel. Lavater openly advocated the links between physiognomy and portraiture and insisted that any physiognomist who could not draw would be equally unable "to make, much less to retain, or communicate, innumerable observations" (66). His belief that scientific observations and portraiture were intertwined can be seen in the captioned sketches in *Essays on Physiognomy*, where he delineates precisely how each of the faces should be understood by readers. This notion of portraiture had an enormous

impact on nineteenth-century art theory: his "synthesis of figure-drawing schemes with . . . grammars of expression . . . and social semiotics of physiognomy was to transform the look and scope of later drawing manuals and establish their agenda for the next hundred years" (Woodrow 75).

If "physiognomy offered a way to infuse portraits with biographical information" and share that knowledge "within a well-known observational and artistic framework," however, then caricature went one step further (Pearl 87). As Sharrona Pearl argues in *About Faces*, caricature artists influenced by Lavater "presented exaggerated and caricatured features in order to emphasize the physiognomic messages that might not have been obvious to the casual observer" (87). Caricatures such as those sketched by renowned Georgian artist James Gillray, whom Pearl uses as a pivotal post-Lavaterian case study, were not technically false representations of their subjects, although they heightened key features that could be read easily by those with only superficial physiognomic knowledge. Gillray's 1798 "DOUBLŪRES of Characters; or Striking Resemblances in Physiognomy," for example, pairs straightforward portraits of seven Whig politicians with caricatures that only subtly alter their features. By invoking a set of physiognomic rules shared by artist and viewers alike, the sketch can insist on the accuracy (internal and external) of its depictions even as it invites viewers in on the joke and encourages them to mock the public figures depicted. By the Victorian period, even supposedly scientific handbooks had adopted caricature as a form of didacticism: the surest way of teaching readers to recognize features and perceive in them conventions about personality types and social communities. As a transatlantic physiognomist wrote late in the century: "illustrations . . . tell their own story too well to need much comment. We select extreme cases . . . in order to make the contrast as great as possible, and thus impress the fact illustrated upon the mind" (Wells 33).

Carson's sketch models itself on this tradition of "didactic" physiognomic hyperbole; although it is accurate (or only subtly exaggerated), it relies on existing biases to mock and dehumanize the men portrayed. With its clear Lavaterian inheritance, the caricature revivifies the controversies over character science. It reminds readers of pervasive criticism of the "unimaginative" and "prejudicial" sciences, prefiguring the second clerk's opinions in Jem's trial, and it undermines the narrator's initial experiment. "Carson's Shakespearean joke," as Catherine Gallagher has termed it, freezes "the imagination at the level of appearances" (71). It devalues any so-called empirical assessment of an individual and recalls claims, like that of Reverend Sir Henry Thompson in 1839, that it was "absurd" to use a materialistic science to decode human character (13). At this moment, then, amid the mounting anger of the trade union members and the murder of Harry Carson – at what is certainly the pinnacle of class hatred in the novel – Gaskell's novel largely abandons its unique model of ethnography and begins a second experiment.

3. Characterological Encounters

IN THEIR POPULAR FORM, phrenology and physiognomy marketed themselves as sciences on-the-go. Mass-produced broadsides, like Dr George Sexton's 1849 and 1860 "Alphabet on Phrenology," facilitated easy street-corner consumption and the instantaneous classification of strangers. Other texts, like Thomas Woolnoth's 1852 *Facts and Faces*, which counseled women on the hiring of servants by way of physiognomic assessments, pledged to lubricate common middle-class encounters by allowing practitioners to "gain knowledge of a stranger,

who and what he is" (Stewart 136). The character sciences anticipated routine street encounters and counseled readers on how to manage them propitiously. The only obligatory tool was the lexicon of codes, physical signifiers that each metaphorically stood in for some seemingly unrelated aspect of class status, personality, or mannerism. The primary objective was to turn the stranger into an object: a specimen of study who could be quickly evaluated and classified before being approached. The narrator's second trial in *Mary Barton* adopts this premise of a characterological encounter before inverting its two basic and only essential characteristics.

Literary scholars have suggested that the second half of Gaskell's novel is generically dissonant from the first – that whereas the first half of the novel is characterized by realism, the second half seems "contrived and melodramatic" (Fryckstedt 116). This modal shift is undeniable, although it is less a sign of narrative failure than critics have argued. It returns us to the question posed at the beginning of this essay, to the question of why a stock debate about physiognomy erases the opening of Jem's murder trial. When the narrator begins her second experiment and moves across the psycho-geography of Manchester in a sequence of street encounters, she shifts her own stance within the cultural debates surrounding character science. Instead of ignoring the debates, which would be a glaring denial of their existence, or simply arguing against the sciences, which might echo the naiveté of anti-phrenologists like S. Staniland, who feared that their empirical readings would supplant "the future existence of the soul" (5), she demonstrates the potential for reversing the basic principles of physiognomy and phrenology. Instead of borrowing the sciences' metaphorical lexicon, the narrator insists on metonymy: the street encounters rely on associative links between seeming strangers and familiar protagonists. Rather than objectifying the strangers, the public interactions produce new subjects – strangely magnetic individuals whom readers transform into protagonists (however minor) of additional plotlines. The inversion of the rules of traditional character science does not mean that the strangers are not in fact classified; they are. The narrator attempts in the second half of *Mary Barton* to reconcile what by the middle of the novel seems like two antithetical aims: to comprehend and classify strangers, in such a way that would be non-threatening to the middle classes, and to construct imaginatively the lives of those strangers in such a way as to produce sympathy toward them.

The first encounter interrupts the forward propulsion of class antagonism – just at the moment when John Barton, chosen representative of the factory workers, sets out to murder Harry Carson. Mired in his own "hopelessness and weakness," he hears a small Irish boy weeping in the streets (193; ch. 17). Barton's immediate task seems deductive, not unlike the police force's "collecting and collating" of evidence or the inquiries of a well-meaning social scientist (213; ch. 19); he pieces together "fragments of meaning from the half-spoken words . . . mingled with sobs" and "inquiries here and there from a passer-by" to figure out the boy's address and take him home. The deductive work seems not terribly unlike the character assessments so heavily debated at the time, and obvious classifications are made: the boy is Irish, most likely a recent immigrant, and of a similar if possibly lower economic bracket than that of John Barton. Yet Barton's mental activity is far from deductive or metaphoric, and he does not objectify the small child. In her essay "Brief Encounters: Street Scenes in Gaskell's Manchester," Sue Zemka suggests that it is Barton's own grief that "inspires generosity and forgiveness by transposing the beloved dead onto the living" (800); in other words, Barton's mourning for his "little Tom . . . the dead and buried child of happier years" gets displaced onto the Irish child and prompts an act of sympathy (193;

ch. 17). Heartache, Zemka argues, facilitates the "imaginative substitution" of one child for another, now long deceased (800). This is true, but it misses the structural implications of the scene. In his need to identify the Irish child, Barton chooses metonymy over metaphor; rather than deductively connecting like to unlike, he traces out contiguous links – both the urban spatial links that allow him to take the boy home and the emotive links of parenthood that tie him to the mother who gives an "eloquent Irish blessing" on the child's return (193; ch. 17). The "imaginative substitution" of one child for another also prompts the transposing of one storyline for another (Zemka 800). As much as this scene is an interruption of the dominant murder plot, it also creates space for an alternative narrative; we imagine the boy as the central pivot of his own tale, if only for a moment.

The central narrative is too urgent to remain suspended, however, and the proffered potential for a metonymic, sympathetic alternative is revoked. Barton is propelled further toward the act of murder, and the Irish boy is relegated to an alternative plot that continues only outside the frame. The narrator then stages a second street encounter, one which follows a similar outline to that of the first: Mary pities a young Italian child and, in her sympathy for him, shares her own meager provisions. Also like her father's, Mary's narrative is interrupted near its affective summit; turned away by Mrs. Wilson and blamed for Jem's arrest, Mary is hurtling swiftly toward the Liverpool assizes and her own emotional collapse. Here, though, the narrator forthrightly rejects the model of deductive reasoning. As Mary rushes into the "busy, desolate, crowded street," she hears hawkers "crying halfpenny broadsides," marketing murder to the crime-hungry masses (222; ch. 20). The broadsides are melodramatic, conjectural, and patently false; they represent everything that critics accused the deductive character sciences of being.

In rejecting outright the logic of the character sciences, however opaquely, Gaskell's narrator risks simplifying the debates – turning the two sides into Manichean opposites. Yet again in this street encounter, she complicates her apparent opening stance by inverting the two essential premises of the sciences. Like the Irish child, the Italian boy is classified; indeed, the signifiers employed to code the street performer as foreign are even more overt.[13] He has an "olive complexion" and "curled eyelashes," and he speaks in "pretty broken English," crying out in a "foreign tongue . . . for the far distant 'Mamma mia!'" (222; ch. 20). Mary's immediate reaction also structurally mirrors physiognomic analysis: she turns away and "rapidly pass[es] on," because her thoughts are elsewhere, and the scene appears to juxtapose two impossibly distant characters, like with unlike. The street performer with a "humble show-box – a white mouse, or some such thing" is strangely jarring when set alongside our female protagonist in her sorrow; their forced proximity is uncomfortably metaphoric. When Mary retraces her steps, however, and returns to the boy with "the scanty remnant of food which the cupboard contained" (223; ch. 20), she substitutes metonymy for the initial metaphor. She can transpose herself into the boy's place – she too has lost her mother and been hungry – and their suffering for that instant seems nearly contiguous. The boy is no longer an object of classification but the subject of his own temporary narrative (and I, for one, have often found him to be one of the most haunting, if unexpected, figures in the novel): how did he arrive in Manchester? Where is his family? Is there a place for continental immigrants in the social hierarchy of an industrial city? The alternative narrative, and the avenue that it creates for an imaginative sympathy, is again impermanent. Yet Gaskell's narrator has risked more in this encounter; she has rejected deduction outright and bared her intention to subvert physiognomic principles.

When a third encounter occurs, then, she takes a greater risk and shifts her definition of metonymy away from the contiguity of individuals – which is inevitably limited, and which in its transience has curtailed successes in the two earlier scenes – toward the metonymic repetition of empathetic experience. Just before the third scene, Mr. Carson has refused to forgive John Barton for the murder of his son: the latter's cry for forgiveness is met with an insistent demand for "vengeance" (354; ch. 35). The narrator upbraids Carson's behavior and insists that his are "blasphemous actions . . . all unloving, cruel deeds, are acted blasphemy" (354; ch. 35). The scene that follows is thus not only another plot interruption but also an insistent attempt to solve the dilemma of cross-class sympathy. Because Carson's middle-class blindness is itself ironic – he rose from a laboring background and should know better than most the workers' suffering – the need for continuing experimentation is even more urgent.

The characters in this third scene are more numerous than in previous encounters, and the narrator moves us away from the one-to-one logic of physiognomic analysis. Among the passersby on the crowded public street, a girl is skipping home with her nurse. The presence of the servant, in addition to the girl's "soft, snowy muslin" and "fairy feet," mark the child as distinctly middle-class (355; ch. 35). A "rough, rude errand-boy" knocks her down as he hurries past, and two adult witnesses mirror the unequal positions of the children. The nurse, however respectable, is a paid servant; Mr. Carson, "who had seen the whole transaction," is one of the few middle-class characters in the novel. The adults' reaction is predictably based in physical stereotypes about urban scamps, if not in actual physiognomic analysis, and it objectifies the nine-year-old boy as a stock criminal: "The nurse, a powerful woman, had seized the boy, just as Mr. Carson . . . came up. 'You naughty little rascal! I'll give you to a policeman, that I will! Do you see how you've hurt the little girl? Do you?' accompanying every sentence with a violent jerk of passionate anger." The narrator does not identify the speaker, and she elides their reactions as the shared perspective of the two adults. Because they are on opposing sides of the class divide, their unified reaction is telling: neither of them can transpose themselves imaginatively into the boy's position.

The girl's response is quite different: "Please, dear nurse, I'm not much hurt;" she proclaims, "'it was very silly to cry, you know. He did not mean to do it. *He did not know what he was doing,* did you, little boy? Nurse won't call a policeman, so don't be frightened.' And she put up her little mouth to be kissed by her injurer, just as she had been taught to do at home to 'make peace'" (355; ch. 35). The girl does not transpose her experience onto that of the boy; she reiterates the male pronoun, and there are no details that would suggest similarity between the two children. Instead, she adapts a moral learnt at home to structure the street encounter; the metonymy here is not between individuals but between a domestic lesson and its public application.[14] The contiguity the girl recognizes is between one situation and another and, only implicitly, between her playfellows at home and this stranger. The narrator's italicization of one phrase suggests a second metonymic link. "*He did not know what he was doing*" is a reformulation of Barton's appeal to Carson on the previous page and a slight modification of Christ's last words on the cross: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (*King James Bible*, Luke 23:24). The link is not merely that of a childhood moral and its application; it is also between lived experience on earth and Christian behavior.

In this encounter, Gaskell's narrator abandons the scaffold of physiognomic discourse and, seemingly, steps outside of the debates over character analysis. Literary critics have read this encounter as evidence of the author's "personal faith in a benevolent God" (Wheeler 31)

and as a call for readers "to replace what she sees as a rigid and reductive Old Testament ethic of justice with a charitable and compassionate New Testament ethic of charity" (Jenkins 94). This interpretation prioritizes Gaskell's own "specifically Unitarian position" (Wheeler 32) and ignores the structural consistencies between this scene and the two street encounters that preceded it. Even without the explicit language of physiognomy or phrenology, the narrator maintains her ambivalent inversions of the sciences' logic: the girl's admittedly Christian response is metonymic, based on a contiguity between domestic lesson and public application, and it makes the boy the subject of the clause and the possessor of his own intentions. The experiment is no longer explicitly physiognomic, but it is for this reason even more radical: the narrator is testing the limits of her model of the characterological encounter as a strategy of inspiring sympathy.

Mr. Carson, returning home after the encounter, adopts the girl's manner of thinking contiguously; "the child's pleading" recalls the "low, broken voice he had so lately heard, penitently and humbly urging the same extenuation of his great guilt" (356; ch. 35). The narrator, as well, persists in her trial of metonymy: "thought upon thought, and recollection upon recollection" bring Carson from the record of his son's death to the discovery of his murderer; Carson's turn "to the object of his search – the Gospel" is echoed in John Barton's "fitful intelligence" about his struggle to reconcile passages in the Bible with the "clean contrary" behavior of those around him (357; ch. 35); "all night long" (a phrase repeated twice at the start of consecutive sentences), the two men combat both their guilt and their ambivalence toward the other. The men move in parallel to the final scene, and Barton dies in Carson's forgiving arms. Like Mary, readers are meant to forget "in that solemn hour all that had divided her father and Mr. Carson," and the last encounter of the novel seems to endorse the narrator's success with metonymy (359; ch. 35). Carson models his behavior on that of the young girl, who herself has adapted a domestic, moral lesson for a public application; between the two of them, they have forged the necessary links between a middle-class, childhood lesson and the forgiveness of a working-class murderer. An otherwise impassable chasm, the narrator suggests, is bridged with a series of contiguous links.

The literary debate over the past several decades has focused on the relative success or failure of this deathbed reconciliation. The scene is for some critics "the weakest section of the novel" (Ganz 75), an oversimplification of sympathy between classes and at most "a one-time-only response rather than an ongoing social conversation" (Baldridge 125). These scholars suggest that what they take as a naïve invocation of New Testament Christianity is a salve for middle-class consciences and an attempt to convince readers that faith is a plausible substitute for empathy. Critics on the opposing side of the religious query have argued that the "ending of the novel . . . embodies much of Gaskell's Christian message" (Frycksted 116): a message that, in its Unitarian vocabulary about the "love of God, rather than the anger or judgementalism of God," is radical enough for its time (Millard 5). Yet other scholars, including Gallagher in her influential work *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction*, have noted the structural failure of this scene: Barton dies without any reconciliation of his "self-contradictory" tragedy, the suggestion that he is both a product of an unjust social system and a champion of free will (72).

Each of the scholars within this debate reads the death scene as a narrative conclusion (of Barton's plot) or as the narrator's last-ditch effort to achieve cross-class sympathy. According to both views, the novel pivots on this scene and either succeeds or fails; it either does or does not resolve the contradictions in Barton's trajectory, and it does or does not inspire

enduring sympathy in readers. To put the burden of proof on this single scene, however, is both to overlook the other moments in the novel where social contiguity, real and imagined, crosses established class boundaries, and also to ask what is both impossible and naïve. The majority of the scholars cited above not only demand that readers' sympathy be measurable and verifiable, but also ignore the rather obvious fact that the plot (and numerous lives within it) continues after Barton's death. It would be more accurate – and more forgiving, given the hopelessness of proving a swell in readers' sympathies – to suggest that the deathbed reconciliation is itself only one part of the narrator's ongoing experiments with form.

4. Conclusion

IN ADAM SMITH'S DEFINITION, neither the knowledge nor the witnessing of someone else's suffering can in and of itself produce sympathetic feeling. Rather, it is the ability to create from those facts an imagined scenario, where we "place ourselves in [the sufferer's] situation," that is effective (4). Carson's feelings of empathy toward John Barton, on the latter's deathbed, map structurally onto this explanation. Carson does not have any "immediate experience" of what Barton feels (Smith 3), and he has long proven himself incapable of recognizing the needs and distress of his less fortunate employees. On this occasion, however, he adopts the metonymic lesson of the previous scene: he moves contiguously from his own observations – of "the grinding squalid misery . . . in every part of John Barton's house" – to a realization of what the "honest, decent poverty" of his own childhood could have become (356; ch. 35). The "reverie" into which this brings him, the "unaccustomed wonder," is Smith's imaginative leap (356–57). Melodramatic as it may seem, when Barton's "departing soul" looks upon Carson, and when the former "lay a corpse" in the latter's arms (358–59; ch. 35), the master "enter[s] as it were" into his employee's body and so understands in some measure his situation (Smith 4).

The deathbed reconciliation mirrors the production of sympathy described by Smith, and it is successful, if only within the novel, in bridging the emotional and physical gaps between classes. It is successful in its own right, regardless of whether or not readers can reconstruct and repeat it – a significant point given both the impossibility of knowing the success rate of readers and recent critics' obsession with proving (or disproving) the impossible. It is also successful only because of the narrator's preceding experiments with form. Although Carson's sympathetic recognition of John Barton borrows from the young girl's metonymic forgiveness of the boy's actions, and so from the narrator's inversion of physiognomic principles, it also reminds readers of the novel's first experiment. Barton's "racy Lancashire dialect," even in his last words, gestures toward the narrator's attempts at indexing local speech patterns (357; ch. 35), just as Carson's view of the "grinding squalid misery . . . in every part of John Barton's house" recalls the narrator's revisionist, ethnographic approach to sociological studies and domestic visits (356; ch. 35). This scene is the outcome of two key experiments, each modeled on aspects of the physiognomic and phrenological debates prominent in the late 1840s.

Herein lies the answer to the question that I posed at the beginning of this article: why does an apparently risible argument over character science mask the opening speech of Jem's criminal trial? Physiognomy and phrenology in *Mary Barton* do not function as scholars of the period have too often led us to expect. Elizabeth Gaskell is neither a simple advocate nor a critic of the sciences, and neither is the narrator. The narrator does not analyze the facial

features of her characters, and neither do the characters engage in phrenological readings of one another. Instead, the narrator mirrors the cultural ambivalence toward the sciences: she adapts what proponents heralded as the imaginative, metaphoric capacities of the character sciences – so positive when used to create bridges between the classes – as well as a metonymy modeled on critics' derision of deductive science. If the deathbed reconciliation succeeds in the novel, it is not because it proves the veracity of phrenological and physiognomic principles, but because it channels the fervent debates surrounding them. Rather than trying to resolve the contradictory and competing discourses surrounding character science, the novel suggests that a tactics of cross-class sympathy lies precisely in their ambivalent interplay and negotiation. The significance of Carson's forgiveness, then, is not in the question of readers' future sympathy but in what *Mary Barton* has to say about analyzing the character sciences in early- and mid-Victorian culture: not as static bodies of knowledge to be affiliated with and read into the texts of authors/proponents, but as fluid objects of heated debates, debates that provided myriad foundations for experiments with narrative form and strategies of characterization.

Newcastle University

NOTES

1. Schor has argued persuasively that this scene exhibits a common Victorian literary trope of "character-testimony." She writes that Gaskell's novel belongs to a "particular cluster of novels, in which courtroom scenes and in particular scenes of testimony about character are central to the novel's thematic and plot concerns" (179).

2. In this text, I have used selections of physiognomic literature published in the mid-nineteenth century (1839–1869). This is not to say that similar texts were not published before or after this time, but rather that works within this period share a common vocabulary and seem to participate in the same cultural dialogue (for and against characterological science). The publication history of Lavater's 1793 *Essays on Physiognomy* charts the high popularity of physiognomic science throughout the early to mid-Victorian period: the third English edition appeared in 1840 (only the third edition in fifty years), followed by three more printings within the decade; four editions were published in the 1850s and four more in the 1860s; after 1869, no more appeared for a decade.

3. Redfield's physiognomic text was particularly elaborate and listed 136 discrete features. The precise characteristic "Relative-Defence, or the disposition to defend others," for example, was found in the middle of one's nose (3).

4. This story initially appeared in *Another Round of Stories by the Christmas Fire*, in *Household Words*, Extra Christmas No. (December 1853), pages 19–25. Its plot revolves around a deceptive man who, despite his popularity and marriage into a county family, is a highwayman and a murderer. The only scholarly source I have located that references Gaskell's use of physiognomy is Fahnestock's 1981 "The Heroine of Irregular Features: Physiognomy and Conventions of Heroine Description." She quotes the physical description of Margaret Hale's "round, massive, upturned chin" in *North and South* and argues that "the physiognomical message of [this chin] is that [its] owner [is] ardent and amorous . . . Margaret does . . . commit the great impropriety of throwing herself on the hero" (340).

5. As Jaffe illustrates in *Scenes of Sympathy*, a middle-class person's sympathy for a lower-class person could, in itself, be destabilizing to the former's identity. She writes, "The threat encoded in the sympathetic exchange is . . . the possibility that the spectator 'at ease' and the beggar might . . . someday, change places" (7).

6. Sheila Smith has demonstrated that *Sybil* draws upon a number of contemporary Blue Books, including the *First and Second Reports on the Children's Employment Commission* (1842 and 1843), the *Report from the Select Committee on Payment of Wages* in 1842, the 1843 *Report on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture*, and the *Report on the Commission Set Up to Inquire into the Plight of the Handloom Weavers* in 1844 (29).

7. For more extensive analyses of the "problem" of sympathy for Victorian culture, see Lane's chapter on Bulwer-Lytton in his 2004 *Hatred and Civility: The Antisocial Life in Victorian England* and Argyros's 1999 *"Without Any Check of Proud Reserve": Sympathy and its Limits in George Eliot's Novels.*

8. See Hechter's 1975 study *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536–1966* for the coining of the term "elite overseers." Armstrong also has an excellent essay on this subject: "Emily's Ghost: The Cultural Politics of Victorian Fiction, Folklore, and Photography" in *Novel: Forum on Fiction* (Spring 1992). Her 1999 *Fiction in the Age of Photography* contains a revised version of this essay.

9. As Endersby suggests in his 2009 "Sympathetic Science: Charles Darwin, Joseph Hooker, and the Passions of Victorian Naturalists," Job Legh's interest in botany demonstrates a similar paradigm. Because botany "referred to grasping the 'affinities' between living things" (300), it too modeled the possibility of "creating and maintaining sympathy" (309).

10. See Harrison, "How Narrative Relationships Overcome Emphatic Bias: Elizabeth Gaskell's Empathy Across Social Difference" for her argument about how the act of reading can produce empathy and reconfigure readers' notions of similarity.

11. See Gravil's 2001 essay "Negotiating *Mary Barton*" for his somewhat different argument that Gaskell's narrator uses dialect most often when she is frustrated with the upper and middle-class characters in the novel.

12. In *Fact and Feeling: Baconian Science and the Nineteenth-Century Imagination*, Jonathan Smith demonstrates the increasing use of deductive science in the Victorian period: a methodology that asserted that "truth is obtained through, rather than at the expense of, the creative imagination" (13).

13. Italian immigrants would have been extremely rare in Manchester in the 1840s. Sponza numbers Manchester's Italian community at 500–600 in 1891 but emphasizes that the population went uncounted and unrecorded until the 1870s (15).

14. The insistence of the novel that the most successful model of understanding comes from lessons taught at home anticipates Smiles's similar argument in his 1859 *Self-Help*: "The home is the crystal of society – the nucleus of national character; and from that source, be it pure or tainted, issue the habits, principles, and maxims which govern public as well as private life. The nation comes from the nursery" (222).

WORKS CITED

Argyros, Ellen. "*Without Any Check of Proud Reserve*": *Sympathy and its Limits in George Eliot's Novels*. New York: Peter Lang, 1999.

Armstrong, Nancy. "Emily's Ghost: The Cultural Politics of Victorian Fiction, Folklore, and Photography." *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 25.3 (Spring 1992): 245–67.

—. *Fiction in the Age of Photography: The Legacy of British Realism*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1999.

Baldridge, Cates. *The Dialogics of Dissent in the English Novel*. Hanover: Middlebury College P & UP of New England, 1994.

Bennett, Charles. *London People: Sketched From Life*. London: Smith, 1863.

Bulwer, Edward, Lord Lytton. "On the Want of Sympathy." *Miscellaneous Prose Works*, Vol. 2. London: Bentley, 1868. 105–11.

Carson, James C. L. *The Fundamental Principles of Phrenology are the Only Principles Capable of Being Reconciled with the Immateriality and Immorality of the Soul*. London: Houlston and Wright, 1868.

Chapple, John. *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Early Years*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1997.

"The Demeanor of Murderers." *Household Words* 14 June 1856: 505–07.

Disraeli, Benjamin. *Sybil; Or, The Two Nations*. Ed. Sheila M. Smith. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998.

Endersby, Jim. "Sympathetic Science: Charles Darwin, Joseph Hooker, and the Passions of Victorian Naturalists." *Victorian Studies* 51.2 (Winter 2009): 299–320.

Engels, Friedrich. *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. Ed. David McLellan. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999.

Fahnestock, Jeanne. "The Heroine of Irregular Features: Physiognomy and Conventions of Heroine Description." *Victorian Studies* 24.3 (Spring 1981): 325–50.

Frawley, Maria H. "Elizabeth Gaskell's Ethnographic Imagination in The Life of Charlotte Brontë." *Biography* 21.2 (Spring 1998): 175–94.

Fryckstedt, Monica Correa. *Elizabeth Gaskell's Mary Barton and Ruth: A Challenge to Christian England*. Stockholm: Upsala, 1982.

Gallagher, Catherine. *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction: Social Discourse and Narrative Form, 1832–1867*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1985.

Ganz, Margaret. *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Artist in Conflict*. New York: Twayne, 1969.

Gaskell, Elizabeth. *The Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*. Ed. J. A. V. Chapple and Arthur Polland. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1966.

—. Mary Barton. Ed. Shirley Foster. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006.

—. "The Squire's Story." *Gothic Tales*. Ed. Laura Kranzler. London: Penguin, 2000.

Gillray, James. DOUBLŪRES of Characters; or Striking Resemblances in Physiognomy. 1798. *Yale University, New Haven. About Faces: Physiognomy in Nineteenth Century Britain. Sharrona Pearl*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2010. 88.

Grant, Reverend Brewin, Ed. *Discussion on Phrenology; Between Charles Donovan, Esq. (The Eminent Phrenologist from London), and The Reverend Brewin Grant, B.A. (of Highbury Chapel, Birmingham), Held in the New Odd Fellows's Hall, Temple Street, Birmingham, on the Evenings of December 10th, 12th, 17th, and 19th, 1849*. London: B. L. Green, 1849.

Gravil, Richard. "Negotiating *Mary Barton*." *Master Narratives: Tellers and Telling in the English Novel*. Ed. Richard Gravil. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001. 126–47.

Harrison, Mary-Catherine. "How Narrative Relationships Overcome Empathic Bias: Elizabeth Gaskell's Empathy across Social Difference." *Poetics Today* 32.2 (Summer 2011): 255–88.

Hechter, Michael. *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536–1966*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1975.

Jaffe, Audrey. *Scenes of Sympathy: Identity and Representation in Victorian Fiction*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2000.

Jenkins, Ruth Y. *Reclaiming Myths of Power: Women Writers and the Victorian Spiritual Crisis*. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1995.

Kay-Shuttleworth, James Phillips. *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester*. London: Frank Cass, 1970.

Kent, Raymond A. *A History of British Empirical Sociology*. Aldershot: Gower: 1981.

The King James Bible. Cambridge Edition: 1769. *King James Bible Online*. Web. 12 Sept. 2014.

Knezevic, Borislav. "An Ethnology of the Provincial: The Social Geography of Gentility in Elizabeth Gaskell's Cranford." *Victorian Studies* 41.3 (1998): 405–27.

Lane, Christopher. *Hatred and Civility: The Antisocial Life in Victorian England*. New York: Columbia UP, 2004.

Lavater, Johann Caspar. *Essays on Physiognomy: Designed to Promote the Knowledge and the Love of Mankind. 7th ed. Trans. Thomas Holcroft*. London: William Tegg, 1850.

Lucas, John. "Mrs. Gaskell and Brotherhood." *Tradition and Tolerance in Nineteenth-Century Fiction: Critical essays on some English and American novels*. Ed. David Howard, John Lucas, and John Goode. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966. 141–205.

Rev. of *Mary Barton*. *Westminster Review* 51.1 (April 1849): 48–63.

Mill, John Stuart. "The Mind and Character of Jeremy Bentham." *Hard Times*. Ed. Fred Kaplan. New York: Norton, 2001. 338–40.

Millard, Kay. "The Religion of Elizabeth Gaskell." *Gaskell Society Journal* 15 (2001): 1–13.

Pearl, Sharrona. *About Faces: Physiognomy in Nineteenth-Century Britain*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2010.

Pittock, Malcolm. "*Cranford* and Cruelty: An Interpretation." *Cambridge Quarterly* 38.2 (2009): 95–119.

Redfield, J. W. *Outlines of a New System of Physiognomy. Illustrated by Numerous Engravings Indicating the Location of the Signs of the Different Mental Faculties*. London: Webb, 1852.

Schor, Hilary M. "Show-Trials: Character, Conviction and the Law in Victorian Fiction." *Cardozo Studies in Law and Literature* 11.2 (Winter 1999): 179–95.

Sexton, George. "Alphabet of Phrenology." 2nd ed. London: W. J. Golbourn, 1860.

Smiles, Samuel. Self-Help. 1859. New York: American Book Company, 1904.

Smith, Adam. *Theory of Moral Sentiments; To which is Added a Dissertation on the Origin of Languages*. London: George Bell, 1875.

Smith, Jonathan. *Fact and Feeling: Baconian Science and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1994.

Smith, Sheila M. "Blue Books and Victorian Novelists." *Review of English Studies. New Series* 21.81 (February 1970): 23–40.

Sponza, Lucio. *Italian Immigrants in Nineteenth Century Britain: Realities and Images*. Leicester: Leicester UP, 1988.

Staniland, S. Anti-Phrenology. *An Epitome of Two Lectures Given Before the Members of the Fareham Literary Institution*. Fareham: A. Nicholson, 1839.

Starr, Elizabeth. "'A Great Engine for Good': The Industry of Fiction in Elizabeth Gaskell's Mary Barton and North and South." *Studies in the Novel* 32.4 (Winter 2002): 385–402.

Stewart, J.. *Colloquies Imaginary Conversations Between a Phrenologist and the Shade of Dugald Stewart*. London: Parbury, 1838.

Thompson, Reverend Sir Henry and W. C. Engledue. *Phrenological Controversy. Correspondence Between the Reverend Sir Henry Thompson and W. C. Engledue*. Portsmouth: W. Harrison, 1839.

Turner, Henry. *Phrenology: Its Evidences and Inferences. With Criticisms upon Mr. Grant's Recent Lectures*. London: G. J. Holyoake, 1858.

Végsö, Roland. "*Mary Barton and the Dissembled Dialogue*." *Journal of Narrative Theory* 33.2 (Summer 2003): 163–83.

Wells, Samuel R. *How to Read Character: A New Illustrated Hand-Book of Phrenology and Physiognomy for Students and Examiners*. New York: Samuel R. Wells, 1870.

Wheeler, Michael. "Elizabeth Gaskell and Unitarianism." *Gaskell Society Journal* 6 (1992): 25–41.

Woodrow, Ross. "Lavater and the Drawing Manual." *Physiognomy in Profile: Lavater's Impact on European Culture*. Ed. Melissa Percival and Graeme Tytler. Wilmington: U of Delaware P, 2005.

Woolnoth, Thomas. *Facts and Faces: Or the Mutual Connection Between Linear and Mental Portraiture Morally Considered, and Pictorially Illustrated By a Series of Twenty-Four Graphic Heads Of All the Dispositions of the Mind; with a Dissertation on Personal Beauty, Showing What it is, and What is Mistaken for it, By a Comprehensive View of Constructive, Ornamental, and Expressive Beauty, and their Relative Importance to Each Other: Also, an Essay on Complexion of Character*. London: Thomas Woolnoth, 1852.

Wyatt, John. "The Inoffensive Philanthropist: The Way of Humility in North and South." *Gaskell Society Journal* 20 (2006): 102–14.

Zemka, Sue. "Brief Encounters: Street Scenes in Gaskell's Manchester." *ELH* 76.3 (Fall 2009): 793–819.