“Fraud, Fun, and Feeling”: Slavery, Industrialism, and the Mother-Machine in Frances Trollope’s Fiction

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FOR Frances Trollope, the nineteenth century was defined by what she perceives to be a pervasive mechanization of emotional life, a phenomenon similar to what Tamara Ketabgian has recently described as the “industrialization of affect” in this period.[1] At the center of this phenomenon, for Trollope, is the disquieting specter of the mother-machine, a figure in whom the processes of mechanical production and maternal reproduction collide. The figure originates, in Trollope’s fiction, in the character Juno, an enslaved woman whose alienation from her children under slavery serves as a major plot point in her groundbreaking 1836 antislavery novel *The Life and Adventures of Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw; or Scenes on the Mississippi*. That figure is then reworked in the violent relationship between children and machines Trollope would go on to depict in her 1839–40 novel, *The Life and Adventures of Michael Armstrong, the Factory Boy*, one of the first industrial novels published in Victorian England. In these early fictions, Trollope documents what she perceives to be the mechanization of the maternal body under, alternately, slavery and industrialism, and its consequences for both the work and experience of care under nineteenth-century capitalism in its varied forms.

Elissa Marder has urged us to rethink the biological category of “motherhood” as the technological category of the “maternal function” that haunts cultural products, ranging from writing and photography to agriculture and factory labor, which are linked to childbearing by their connection to what she calls “principles of reproducibility.”[2] In her depictions of mechanical maternity, however, Trollope suggests that it is not just the “maternal function” in general but enslaved maternity more specifically that haunts modern mechanical reproduction, and

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especially the mechanical productions of early nineteenth-century factory machinery. In Trollope's depiction, the enslaved mother not only evokes but *becomes* a kind of mechanical technology. Marder's description of the "maternal function" can also help us see how slavery's dehumanizing co-optation of maternal reproduction and destruction of generational kinship bonds run parallel to the destruction of "aura" that Walter Benjamin attributes to the mechanical reproduction of the work of art, whose "uniqueness," Benjamin writes, "is inseparable from its being imbedded in the fabric of tradition."[3] For Benjamin, "in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation," mechanical reproduction "reactivates the object reproduced."[4] Ultimately, Trollope, too, explores the possibilities for "reactivating" the mother, and the enslaved mother in particular, as a novelistic character capable of wielding her own mechanization to radical ends.

The first part of this essay contends that Trollope's depictions of emotional mechanization across *Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw* and *Michael Armstrong* establish an imagined genealogy whereby the experience of alienation under industrial capitalism can be traced to the originary (and more violent) alienation of parent and child under the slavery system. Britain abolished slavery in its colonies in 1834, two years before the publication of *Whitlaw*. But Trollope locates slavery's "afterlife" in the deprivations of physical and emotional care that mark English industrial life in the decades that follow.[5] Historians have uncovered a wealth of evidence that attests to Atlantic slavery's economic impact on the early industrial revolution in England.[6] Yet Susan Zlotnick has argued that Trollope was unique among industrial novelists in alluding to these connections, linking the production of British textiles directly to cotton produced by enslaved people in the American South. Trollope was, as Zlotnick points out, no doubt inspired to do so by the time she spent in America, which began with a trip to Nashoba, an experimental (and ultimately disastrous) antislavery commune started by Trollope's close friend Frances Wright. Consequently, Zlotnick argues, Trollope hoped to avoid the hypocrisy of railing against what she calls the "suppression of production" at home while ignoring the role slavery played in enabling that production abroad.[7] I argue that Trollope's depictions of the historical and economic bonds between slavery and industrialism go further, however, to suggest that slavery could be read as offering a genealogy for the emotional and embodied experiences of factory labor. Slavery, in this model, becomes not merely a link in a larger chain of economic exploitation whose effects are felt both at home and abroad, but also,

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more importantly, a causal force behind the embodied and affective conditions of life that appear to be created by industrialization.

In this interpretation, the act of enslavement, for which England was responsible on a scale unmatched by any other nation in the preceding century, creates an amorphous and mobile form of generational violence that over time returns to England to erode the lives of the legatees of those responsible for slavery. England's slow inheritance of the effects of slavery's violence is radically different from the generational violence enacted by slavery whereby the status of slave was passed from parent to child through the maternal line in Anglo-American slavery societies. My aim in recovering Trollope's imagination of this history is not to suggest that these distinct forms of violence might be comparable (as Trollope herself does). Rather, it is to make the case that across *Whitlaw* and *Armstrong*, Trollope created a narrative ecosystem that cast the British Empire's former imbrication in the slave trade as responsible for the mechanization of human feeling that Trollope perceives to be one of industrial capitalism's most troubling effects.

In her seminal study of industrial fiction, Catherine Gallagher has shown that metaphorical comparisons of workers and enslaved people were a central feature of the rhetoric industrial reformers used to advocate on behalf of British workers. This rhetoric, Gallagher notes, could alternately align with anti- or proslavery positions; what remained consistent was that reformers debated the terms under which workers could be understood as "free." Slavery, for Gallagher, therefore emerges largely as a rhetorical trope against which various interpretations of freedom could be defined, often against the rhetoric of capitalist "free labor" that many English liberal antislavery advocates celebrated. The novels of Frances Trollope provide a useful contrast to this framework for two reasons: first, because her fiction actually examined plantation slavery in all its complexities and, second, because when she draws on this examination to understand English industrialism, she does so less as a metaphor against which to define freedom than as a historical genealogy through which to understand alienation. Gallagher does acknowledge that the factory system could have evoked the particular embodied and affective conditions for which slavery was known: "[Factory hands] were physically confined and had to work long hours according to the rhythms of the spinning machines; alertness and diligence were too often maintained by corporal punishment, and the sheer size of many textile mills, with their accompanying impersonality, reminded reformers of the vast plantations worked by indistinguishable slaves."[8] By portraying these

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resonances as the outcome of a generational inheritance of violence, rather than as mere parallelism, Trollope invites us to read the resulting mimesis of slavery and industrialism as evidence of a causal connection that links the factory system backward to the slave trade.

In this way, Trollope's fiction offered a new perspective on what Marcus Cunliffe describes as an ongoing "familial" conflict between Britain and America in the first half of the nineteenth century over matters of slavery and freedom. As Cunliffe recounts, Americans bristled at criticisms of slavery from British observers because such criticisms implied that Britain could "presume still to occupy the role of parent or guardian" to its former colony.[9] Trollope featured in these debates, Cunliffe recounts, in part because her exposé of British wage labor in *Michael Armstrong* provided useful propaganda for Americans who wished to claim that it was British industry rather than American plantations that practiced slavery—to such an extent that Trollope's work was extracted in American texts on this theme.[10] For Trollope, the "familial" tensions Cunliffe describes could at times also operate somewhat differently, however, with slavery serving as the progenitor to English industry.

Trollope exposes these connections, moreover, largely through an examination of how the slavery system produces economic value through the exploitation of family life, the reproductive body, and the parent-child relation as well as the consequences this history has for economic and human value in nineteenth-century culture more broadly. In this sense, Trollope's fiction offers a striking counterexample to the separation of public and private life in nineteenth-century realism, a separation that most industrial novels, Gallagher argues, could bridge through metaphor or metonym but never wholly dissolve. Trollope's antislavery fiction clearly details how the maternal body and the parent-child bond are transformed into sites of (literal) economic production under slavery; when she turns, then, in *Michael Armstrong*, to analyzing industrialism's effects on childhood and child mortality, she does so, I argue, to illustrate how the exploitation of family and alienation of emotional labor under slavery remain embedded in some experiences of factory work as well. It is perhaps because Trollope locates the family as a site of direct economic production, rather than as a representational field for politics, that her fiction remains largely beyond the scope of Gallagher's study.

Framing slavery's relationship to industrialism this way allows Trollope to provide a nuanced account of slavery's afterlife. But that account proves difficult to take seriously because of Trollope's tendency

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to mix sympathetic critique with moments of melodramatic exaggeration and comedic treatments of slavery that are tonally jarring and ethically contradictory. Rather than read Trollope's tonal unevenness as merely an incidental lapse into bad style, however, I read these occasions of uneveness instead as the stylistic consequences of the very mechanization of emotional labor under slavery that plagues Trollope. In the second half of this essay, I will argue that Trollope's understanding of slavery and its afterlife influences these novels' style and tone. Moments of comedic automatization in *Whitlaw* and mechanistic melodrama in *Armstrong* transform human mechanization into a literary style; they also illuminate a different dimension of slavery's industrial afterlife, one that takes shape at the level of genre, as the industrial novel inherits from the antislavery novel a stylistics of mechanization. The effects of these stylistics vary widely between these two texts, however. In *Whitlaw*, the comedy of mechanization helps propel the mother's quest for justice while at the same time reifying her inhumanity. In *Armstrong*, the mechanics of melodrama are also integral to its characters' quests for justice. But as the novel's melodrama shifts readerly attention toward the figure of the vulnerable, white working-class child, it also helps deflect readers' attention away from the interconnectedness of slavery and industrialization, the enslaved mother and the factory child, from which the novel's mechanical style has arisen. Though industrialism inherits the problems of emotional alienation and human automation from slavery, this inheritance obscures as much as it reveals in the transitions from mother to child and from comedy to melodrama as we move from *Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw* to *Michael Armstrong*.

1. Frances Trollope's Mother-Machines

While guiding readers through the property of wealthy mill-owner Matthew Dowling early in *Michael Armstrong*, the narrator reaches a fork in her path. To the left is the Lodge, home to the Dowling's "very numerous progeny," where food is in such abundance that it rots, uneaten on its plates.[11] To the right, the factory, "which was the source and head-spring of all the wealth that flowed over, and irrigated with its fructifying stream, meadows, parks, hot-beds, and flower-gardens, till it made itself a prodigious cistern in the depths and heights of Dowling Lodge" (22). In Trollope's description, Dowling Lodge seems not just fecund but impregnated by the wealth that gathers into a womblike cistern from which the Dowling's material and procreative excesses seemingly spring. It is only

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later in the novel, however, that we discover the hidden source from which this wealth is extracted: "the low-priced agony of labourine infants" who are "made to eke out and supply all that is wanting to enable the giant engines of our factories to out-spin all the world" (236). The industrialist landscape, in other words, is nourished by the unseen bodies hidden within the factory walls. The dying children whose "baby sinews" are fed to the factory engines return to fructify the bountiful pastures and fertile bodies of the wealthy (142). The productions of the factory thus come to seem like maternal reproduction in reverse: the machine destroys the body of the living factory child whose killing labor in turn re-impregnates the system that spawned him. The factory town in *Michael Armstrong* is strangely pregnant with the wasted bodies of its workers.[12]

This opening scene highlights Trollope's preoccupation with the tragic resemblances between the biological reproductions of the maternal body and the mechanical reproductions of the factory machine. If industrial production could be mistaken for a destructive variation on the human reproductive process, however, it is because the factories in *Michael Armstrong* are haunted by another kind of unseen body: that of the enslaved mother. While Trollope explicitly compares wage labor to chattel slavery throughout the novel, she often seems to do so, as critics have noted, in order to deny the significance of slavery's legacy—as, for example, when Trollope declares that the "labor and destitution" of child workers in England is "*incomparably more severe*, than any ever produced by negro slavery" (219, emphasis original).[13] But in *Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw*, published just four years before *Armstrong*, Trollope documents a slavery system that is perhaps most striking for the way in which it refashions enslaved mothers into machines for the "mechanical" reproduction of Atlantic slaves, suggesting that slavery, and more specifically the production of enslaved people, might represent its own kind of industrial technology. In doing so, Trollope's earlier novel lays the groundwork for reading the factory and its child-killing machines as an outgrowth of the slavery system, particularly its transformation of human reproductive processes into a mechanism for human destruction.

Recent accounts of kinship under slavery have argued that maternity was not just disrupted under New World slavery but also transformed into a crucial mode of production. In her essay "The Fourth Dimension: Kinlessness and African American Narrative," Nancy Bentley defines "kinlessness" as the condition inherited by slaves who, in the process of being born to an enslaved mother, are at the same time denied kinship

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bonds. This process, Bentley argues, not only signifies the "social death" that Orlando Patterson has argued attaches to the natally alienated enslaved but also the claims that the slavery economy makes on the reproductive functions of the enslaved in order to secure the continued production of labor and the perpetual reproduction of the social conditions of slavery:

> By appropriating a woman's "future increase," the law relies on the facts of birth and descent even as it refuses to accord any bonds of belonging to that birth. Kinlessness is thus a condition that regimes of power have imposed in order to isolate and extract the sheer materiality of a human population—their bodies, labor, and reproductive capacities—from the sphere of the familial. . . . Kinlessness thus isolates the reproductivity of slavery (enslaved women, Douglass reminds us, "had *many children*") as the site for extracting biopolitical matter, the denuded human "increase" that defines and perpetuates a class of infrahuman beings.[14]

In Bentley's account, slavery transforms the biological reproduction of enslaved bodies into a mode of economic and social production and, specifically, results in the extraction of a commodified human from the living bodies of the enslaved.

In one sense, this process resembles Karl Marx's account of estrangement; for Marx, the commodity is endowed with "life" that "confronts [the laborer] as something hostile and alien" because that commodity object mediates the extraction and commodification of labor from the worker's body.[15] As Ann Cvetkovich points out, despite Marx's occasional tendency to "sensationalize" this process as an embodied one, Marx intended for this process to be understood as an immaterial one that neither extracts flesh nor creates new life in any literal sense.[16] This distinction weakens, however, when the "commodity object" in question is a human person. Saidiya Hartman and Stephen Best argue that slavery represents not only the commodification of particular bodies but also the amplification of the logic of commodity itself, by collapsing any distance between the commodity form and the laboring body within the commodified corpus of the enslaved. "The commodity," Best writes, "celebrates becoming human in the slave."[17] Under slavery, in other words, not just the labor power of the enslaved but the body itself becomes a commodity, collapsing the distinctions between commodity object and human body that Marx wants (but at times fails) to maintain. Taken together, these theories provide a framework for reading the labor of biological reproduction under slavery as one example of how chattel slavery

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systems materialized the abstract forms taken by alienation in Marxist theory.

Trollope similarly imagines parallels between the alienation of the capitalist laborer and the commodification of the human under slavery; however, she uses these parallels to suggest that the slavery system might be responsible for what she sees as the most pressing material outcomes of the factory system: the deaths and damaged bodies of children. These outcomes are only imaginable, for Trollope, because the factory system has been built out of a world in which the exploitation of reproduction and the commodification of children have already been taken to the most extreme ends under slavery. In this sense, slavery abroad becomes, in Trollope's imagination, a kind of "progenitor" for the factory system at home in mid-Victorian England.

When Trollope introduces her readers to the slavery plantation in *Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw*, she repeatedly emphasizes that the consumable objects which the slave system exists to produce are the bodies of the enslaved themselves. Slaves, Whitlaw imagines, "must sweat into dollars uncountable," while Trollope describes the trade as a "traffic in the muscles and sinews of the poor negroes."[18] When Juno visits the Steinmarks' plantation, which is not worked by enslaved people, she immediately notes that the plantation is characterized by a notable *absence* of the signs of reproductive and reproduced bodies: "'Where,' thought Juno, 'do they keep all the children?—Maybe they don't hire breeding servants—and then I expect the little ones don't roll and tumble about the other stock, like ours'" (185). By contrast, on the slavery plantation, the production of enslaved bodies blends into and overtakes the cultivation of land:

> there is no feature more remarkable in a regular slave-peopled plantation or farm than the manner in which the children (the multiplication of this branch of produce being one of the most profitable speculations) are seen lying about in the homestead, some half, some wholly naked, all well fattened and fed, but bearing little more resemblance in attitude and action to the being made in God's own image, than the young swine with whom they associate. (185)

Trollope depicts the plantation as a space in which the reproduction of enslaved people is substituted for the production of livestock, imagining, in turn, the enslaved body as "fattened," as if it were a comestible.[19] In the same way that the factory machines in *Armstrong* transform laboring children's bodies into the "fructified" pastures of the Dowling Lodge, slavery

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turns children into agricultural produce for the consumption of southern planters. By comparing enslaved people to livestock, Trollope dehumanizes them by depicting the enslaved not just as akin to animals or to food, but also as a collection of indistinct, interchangeable bodies. However, she also complicates her own act of dehumanization by attributing the abrogation of enslaved children's humanity to the enslaved mother's compulsory transformation into a technology for the production of human commodities. The enslaved mother lingers in the passage as the unseen source from which the wealth of the "slave-peopled plantation" is materially extracted. But because she has been reduced, in the eyes of the slave traders and financiers Trollope ventriloquizes in her parenthetical aside, to an abstraction—a "multiplication" of produce rather than a mother of children—the bodies she produces come to seem more like inert corporeal matter than individuated human subjects. If enslaved children seem like exchangeable objects available for the consumption of planters, it is, she suggests, because human reproduction has been transformed into an instrument of production.

When Trollope ultimately shifts her attention from the enslaved mother as abstraction toward the enslaved mother as character, she does so in part to narrativize the conditions whereby this transformation of a living person into an abstract process of "multiplication" could take place. The plot of *Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw* centers on its eponymous villain, a cruel overseer who works on the sprawling plantation of Colonel Dart, one of the wealthiest in Louisiana. When two disinherited slaveowners, Lucy and Edward Bligh, learn that Phebe and Caesar, two people formerly enslaved on their father's plantation, have been receiving cruel treatment on the Dart plantation, they travel to Louisiana and attempt to help them escape. To do so, they must evade the machinations of Whitlaw, who has been tasked with rooting out plans for insurrection among the enslaved. Crucially, they receive aid in this mission from Juno, a mother enslaved on the Dart plantation.

Though a relatively minor figure in the novel's central plots, Juno receives the most substantial attention among the enslaved characters who inhabit the novel, and much of that attention focuses on her experience of maternity under slavery. Juno, we learn, received a literary education while enslaved in the home of a wealthy New Orleans family early in life and went on to become the concubine of two men, to whom she bore children many years prior to the events that take place in the novel. As Trollope narrates this backstory, she draws on an idiom of industrial production to describe the harrowing form Juno's maternity takes:

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> After ten years of cohabitation, this man [Juno's master] died, leaving her and her eight children still slaves. His executors sold them all to the highest bidders; and it was said that Juno never inquired to whose hands fate had consigned her offspring. For the third time, she became the favourite of her owner, and again bore children; but she performed this task, as she did all others assigned her, much more like a well-regulated machine than a human being, never giving any outward indication whatever of either will, wish, or affections. (128–29)

Trollope's descriptions of Juno emphasize not only her inevitable alienation from the children she produces but also the way in which that alienation reproduces the maternal body as strangely mechanistic. Given the enslaved mother's inevitable separation from the children she produces, the maternal body, in Trollope's description, bears an uncanny resemblance to the "well-regulated machine" found on the factory floor. Trollope thus invokes mechanical reproduction in order to describe the maternal reproductions that characterized, in Trollope's view, "one of the most profitable speculations" of the slavery economy.

Throughout *Whitlaw*, Trollope makes visible to readers the ways Juno's masters have conscripted her to intimate relationships and the pleasures of maternal care only in order to facilitate the painful extraction of the children those relations produce:

> She remembered the wanton development of all the faculties in herself which had opened so many new avenues of torture to her heart. . . . She recalled with maddening truth the first warm touch of her dear infant's lips upon her bosom,—the last agonizing kiss that she was permitted to press upon them as she was torn away from her, the savage transfer of her loathing person to another—the brutal force that kept her soul and body in a subjection that seemed to make every breath she drew a poison to her nature. (268)

In Trollope's description, Juno's memories of motherhood are reduced to the bodily sensations of the "warm touch" and "agonizing kiss" that in their very pleasure become "new avenues of torture" when those attachments are disrupted. Juno thus embodies the process whereby family feeling is remade, under slavery, into a far more precarious collection of corporeal gestures and impressions that cede, at the instant that mother and child first touch, from expressions of love to another mechanism of brutality. As Juno undergoes a "savage transfer" out of motherhood and back into the economy of the slave trade, she not only experiences a painful separation from her child but also comes to realize that her parental love has been turned into a weapon, one that

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transforms child into commodity, breath into poison, kisses into agony, the heart into an object of torture. Alienated from both the children she bears and the emotional effects of her motherhood, what is left, Trollope suggests, is a mother remade into a machine for the endless reproduction of her own pain.

Just three years later, Trollope turned her attention from black women enslaved on the American plantation to the plight of white child laborers in the English factory town with the publication of *Michael Armstrong*. The novel centers on Michael, a young boy who, along with his brother Edward, works grueling hours inside of the local factory. After his brief adoption by Matthew Dowling, the factory's cruel owner, he is sent off to serve as an "apprentice" at the cotton mill of Deep Valley—a place so degraded that the child workers infamously compete for scraps from a pig trough outside the mill. Michael eventually makes his escape and reunites in Germany with his brother and his patron Mary Brotherton, a daughter of a local mill owner who has learned about the evils of the factory system from a local reformer, Mr. Bell. In the novel, Trollope engages in an explicit comparison of slavery and industrialism and deems the effects of factory work the "*more severe*" (219) of the two. Yet the novel nevertheless continues to yoke together industrial labor and plantation slavery (and particularly slavery as Trollope had depicted it in *Whitlaw*) in ways that suggest that English industrialism's relationship to slavery was more complex than Trollope's dismissive comparison of the two betrays. In *Michael Armstrong*, the effects of slavery abroad are "brought home" to England in the form of the abandoned child laborer, whose abandonment represents a larger absence of familial care and an erosion and exploitation of emotional labor more broadly, which Trollope finds when she investigates life in the rapidly industrializing English countryside. By focusing her attention on the child worker, Trollope imagines industrialism as a system whose destructiveness might be rooted in a prior destruction of parenting bonds. For Trollope, the originary source of this fracture lay in the slavery system, and specifically the mechanization of maternity that system produced.

Though Trollope declares the factory to be more degraded than the slavery plantation, her depictions of the factory at times evoke those same plantations. When a young girl, Nancy Stephens, dies inside the Dowling factory, the owner asks his factory overseer to explain what happened; their conversation takes a strange turn toward symbols of the slavery plantation:

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> [Dr. Crockley] *did* see Nancy Stephens, about a month ago, and all he said was, "she do look a little pale in the gills, to be sure, but a dance would cure her, I have no doubt." "A dance!" says I, "Doctor, and please to tell me," says I, "how the work is to get on, if the factory boys and girls sets off dancing?"
>
> "Maybe you haven't got a fiddle?" said he.
>
> "Maybe I haven't," said I.
>
> "Well then," says he, "if it don't suit you to let them dance to the fiddle, I'll bet ten to one you'll be after making 'em dance to *the strap*." And with that, if you'll believe me, sir, he set off capering, and making antics, just as if there had been somebody behind a-strapping him. To be sure, it was fit to make one die of laughing to see him; but that's not the way you know, sir, to do one any good as to finding out the real condition of the people." (44–45, emphasis original)

Dr. Crockley's "comedy" notably thwarts "finding out the real condition of the people" (45). But it does point toward the "real condition" of another corpus of workers: those enslaved on American plantations, where the juxtaposition of the forced "play" of fiddling and dancing with the violence of the whip would have been a quotidian sight. In *Scenes of Subjection*, Saidiya Hartman argues that the coercive "amusements" in which enslaved people were made to take part—amusements that regularly centered on forced music-making and dancing—reveal how slavery's violence rested as much upon slaveowners' determination to exploit and enjoy the emotional capacities of those they enslaved as the more recognizable forms of physical torture the whip represents.[20] By turning play and spectacle into forms of violence, slaveholders demonstrated that their power rested upon their imagined right to extend their domination to the entire emotional spectrum of the lives of those they enslaved, not merely through a wielding of pain alone. In *Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw*, Trollope in fact emphasizes the ways slavery seeks to make a spectacle of the suffering of the enslaved by coercing them into a performance of pleasure. When Whitlaw attempts to assault Phebe and she insists that she will not willingly sleep with him, he suggests that her resistance is merely a performance, insisting "Why, there isn't a copper to choose between you and the play-actors at New Orlines" (80). As a punishment, however, he insists not that she stop performing but that she engage in a different kind of performance—a performance of pleasure that he knows to be bound up with her suffering: "If you won't behave yourself as I would have you, and let me see you jump for joy into the bargain," then, he tells her, he will whip her severely (80). When Whitlaw returns the next day with an overseer to exact this punishment, the pair encourage her to first run away from them, making

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her impending pain into a spectacle of excitement and anticipation for themselves.

In the British slave colonies, moreover, the performances of pleasure amid suffering that enslavers coerced from the enslaved could intersect directly with the machine culture Trollope decries in *Armstrong*. These intersections are visibly represented by the rhetoric surrounding the use of the treadmill, a penal device that won its notoriety largely from James William's detailed descriptions in *A Narrative of the Events since the First of August 1834, by James Williams, an Apprenticed Labourer in Jamaica*, published in London in 1837. The treadmill consisted of a large wooden wheel covered in slats; prisoners, whose hands were bound to a bar above the treadmill, would turn the wheel by stepping on the slats, a movement Williams described as "dancing" the treadmill.[21] Those who employed the treadmill as punishment turned the bodies of the enslaved into a component of a machine that is clearly meant to evoke an engine of mass production. At the same time, they used the language not of punishment or work but of pleasure and play—the "dance"—to describe that transformation. In so doing, they made explicit that slavery's violence could not only transform human pleasure into a site for punishment but also that it could lead to a hybridization of human and machine. What makes Trollope's description of Nancy Stephens's "dance" resonate with the slavery plantation, then, is not merely its details (the fiddle, the overseer, and the strap) but also the exploitation of pleasure as a location of coercive violence—one whose end could be, on the plantation and in the factory alike, a more secure binding together of human and machine.

Throughout *Michael Armstrong*, descriptions of the relationship between human and machine in the factory similarly echo the modes of production particular to slavery that Trollope depicts in *Whitlaw*. For example, metaphors of bodily extraction pervade *Michael Armstrong*, mirroring the "traffic in the muscles and sinews of the poor negroes" (60) that Trollope describes in *Whitlaw*. Explaining his determination to supplant British agriculture with the factory system, Dowling proclaims,

> think how we shall suck in—that is we the capitalists, my man—think how we shall suck in gold, gold, gold, from all sides. The idea is perfectly magnificent! The fat Flemings must give up all hopes of ever getting their finical flax to vie with our cotton again! . . . Crockley, they don't understand spinning in Flanders: they don't know yet how many baby sinews must be dragged, and drawn out to mix as it were with the thread, before the work can be made to answer. (141–42)

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On one level, Dowling's description animates the process of commodification Marx describes: labor must be "drawn out" or extracted in order to produce thread, which is then converted to industrial capital or "gold." The relation between capitalists and workers' "sinews" is mediated and obscured. Looked at another way, however, Trollope's metaphor undermines the stability of this mediation—it takes little imaginative effort to move from "sinews" and "suck" to comestible bodies being fed straight to the insatiable mouths of captains of industry, short-circuiting the stable distance between productive bodies and consumable goods.

These metaphors of extraction thus recall the unmediated structures of corporeal consumption Juno finds among enslaved children on the plantations of *Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw*—a point Trollope highlights when Bell argues, "That marvelous machinery of which we make our boast . . . is not more perfect in its power of drawing out the delicately attenuated thread . . . than the system for reducing the human labour necessary for its production to the lowest price is, for degrading the moral nature of the helpless slaves engaged in it" (237). Machinery can extract "slaves" from ordinary workers as easily as it extracts thread from the cotton the enslaved ordinarily produce. Both the factory owner and the factory machine itself appear to extract labor from the body of the worker in a process that looks like a form of feeding. They also recall, through a strange process of inversion, Juno's mechanical maternity. The factory seems to invert and amplify the relationship between reproduction and destruction that *Whitlaw* describes; whereas in *Whitlaw*, Juno gives birth to children who are doomed to a life of physical anguish and dehumanization, in *Armstrong*, injured and dying children are seemingly reimplanted within the womblike, "fructified" pastures that surround the factory town.[22]

This process of impregnation in reverse is shadowed by the disruptions to reproduction and maternal care that the factory seems to demand. Trollope's novel deals with a protagonist who, following his adoption into the Dowling household, is separated from his mother (who will die before he frees himself) and brother, whereupon relations of kin are exchanged for the relations of domination that structure his experiences in the Dowling home and as an apprentice at Deep Valley. When Mary Brotherton protests that slavery is qualitatively different from industry because "the negro slave . . . is the *property* of the master" (235, emphasis original), Bell counters that the factory child "too is a *property*," though not of the master but of his parents, as he goes on to explain: "nor is it the least horrible part of the evil which noiselessly

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has grown out of this tremendous system, that the beings whom nature has ordained throughout creation to keep watch and ward over the helpless weakness of infant life, are driven by it to struggle with, and trample down . . . even the love of a parent for its offspring" (235, emphasis original). The distinction between forms of natal property is a crucial one to Trollope: whereas the enslaved child is produced as a property for the benefit of the slavemaster, the transformation of child into property within the factory system serves the economic survival of his parents. In the case of the factory workers, the parental bond is not severed so much as redirected from affective to economic ends. Its result is the bodily destruction of the factory child, as Bell explains:

> If some sad accident, preceding birth, disturbs the beautiful process by which nature prepares the noble being she has made to be lord of all, and an abortive creature comes to life, curtailed of all its fair proportions, both of mind and body, all within reach of the hapless prodigy shudder as they mourn, and the best and wisest among them pray to God that its span of life be short. . . . [T]he effect which the factories of this district is producing upon above two hundred thousand of its population, is beyond all calculation more deplorable, and many a child is born amongst them whose destiny, if fairly weighed against that of such a one as I have described, would appear incomparably more severe. (238)

If the factory draws on the bodies of workers to "fructify" the local economy, in other words, it does so at the expense of supplanting reproduction with an abortive destruction. The result is a vision of reproduction in reverse: the machine "aborts" the living factory child, whose killing labor in turn reimpregnates the system and the "blood-stained fortune" (246) that spawned him. As Trollope notes, "It is for children, children, children, that the unwearied engine calls" (238).

As we have seen, Trollope implies that these forms of child appropriation are perhaps "more severe" than the appropriation of the enslaved child by the enslaver. At the same time, it is clear that Trollope only comes to imagine the engine as a reversed reproductive body after she has imagined the enslaved mother's body as a coercively constructed engine, one in which the mechanical production of the commodity and the destruction of the human subject are tragically combined. Trollope's two novels thus allow us to reconstruct a genealogy whereby the physical degradation and emotional alienation of the industrial worker can be traced backward to the slavery system and the appropriation of human reproductive capacity perfected therein. That Trollope insists on turning this *genealogy* into the grounds for a *comparison* that

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allows her to judge its effects to be more severe for white British workers than for enslaved black subjects betrays an ideological commitment, in *Armstrong*, to wielding black suffering as merely the grounds for reforms centered on the recuperation of the white working classes. But while Trollope confuses genealogy with comparison, we perhaps need not do so. When taken on its own, the genealogy Trollope establishes allows modern readers to see more clearly how the fact of slavery's exploitation of human reproductive capacities provided a template for the imagination of the factory engine, the laboring body, and the emotional work of the factory system in the industrial novel.

2. A "Queer Mixture of Fraud, Fun, and Feeling": Comedy, Melodrama, and the Style of Victorian Antislavery Sentiment

In Trollope's imagination, the effects of widespread mechanization encompass not only the reproduction, consumption, and automation of bodies but also a transformation of affective work. In *Armstrong*, children are not merely injured as a result of widespread disruptions in parental care, they also become unwilling participants in an economy of stilted emotional labor. Michael spends the first volume of the novel forced to perform in the increasingly elaborate spectacles that Dowling devises. These coercive scenes reach their climax when Dowling forces Michael to take part in an onstage performance dedicated to celebrating his "benevolent" adoption. When Michael takes the stage, he intends to deliver a speech celebrating, in essence, his natal alienation, extolling the way in which Dowling and his family have taken the place of Michael's mother and brother: "My mother's dear, and so's my brother too, / But dearer still are your papa and you" (127). Michael, however, finds himself unable to get through the speech and, before his final lines, breaks down in vehement sobs, mirroring the "sobbing excess of emotion" that Dowling had performed just moments before. Mary Brotherton comes to realize "That child is suffering from an agony of terror" (127). Soon thereafter, she determines "to become acquainted with what was passing *behind the scenes* respecting Michael Armstrong" (132, emphasis original)—an impulse that leads her to discover Michael being beaten offstage. Bodily violence extends beyond the factory floor to the family home, where it causes emotional excess to emerge at the moment when the child laborer's emotional capacities are most thoroughly alienated and exploited by the factory owner. The body's interpenetration by the machine has now been transformed into a regimented

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emotional performance, in which Michael's sobs of terror are repurposed, on stage, as evidence of his affection for Dowling. When Mary uncovers the violence that underlies this transference of emotion, Trollope returns to the idea that within the factory system, play could be exploited as a site of pain and punishment, as it was on the slavery plantation. The result, however, is a fictional scene that can read alternately as a moment of tragic excess or comedic exaggeration, which might invite a kind of laughter from modern readers through its play on Michael's perfectly timed eruption of unintended sobs.[23]

This moment unveils that under industrialism, as under slavery, emotion has become a form of work performed under and twisted by coercion. As a result, Michael's real emotion becomes nearly indistinguishable from the performance of gratitude Dowling demands. It also becomes indistinguishable from a stock performance of melodramatic excess we might expect from Victorian reformist fiction.[24] In this sense, the scene is also clearly metatheatrical, calling attention to the ways in which Trollope's own narrative asks its readers—for whom Mary Brotherton, looking on, serves as a surrogate—to look "behind the scenes" of the novel's melodramatic moments to understand the underlying economic and social processes that have turned genuine emotional life into a disturbingly alienated, rote performance. As we have already begun to see, understanding these processes entails a return to the slavery plantation. In this section, I will argue that understanding the melodramatic performance of emotion that surfaces as a result of those processes likewise requires us to return to the antislavery style of *Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw*. If *Michael Armstrong*'s melodramatic excesses risk provoking laughter, *Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw*'s style is more explicitly defined by its deviations into comedy. The novel's comedic notes may at first seem surprising, given that Trollope devotes so much of her attention to exposing slavery's emotional injustices. Indeed, these comedic notes exemplify what Elsie Michie has described as the "genre problem" *Whitlaw* posed to the reviewers who first encountered the novel, insofar as the novel "combines issues that readers would associate with history or polemical essays with heightened incidents that belong in fiction."[25] For modern readers, however, the tonally discordant comedy of slavery in the novel might be read not as a contradiction but instead a culmination of the novel's exploration of mechanical maternity. This comedy also serves as the progenitor of the melodramatic style of *Michael Armstrong*. Examining the surprising continuities between comedy and melodrama, as well as their disjunctions, can help us see how slavery's affective

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genealogy extends to the tonal and formal properties of Trollope's fiction—even as, on their surfaces, these properties work to obscure rather than elucidate the relationship between antislavery style and the genesis of industrial fiction.

Throughout *Whitlaw*, Juno exploits Whitlaw's fears and those of the plantation's other white men, who come to believe that she is endowed with mystical powers that could be turned against them at any moment. These fears are steeped in stereotypes about the supernatural inhumanity of the enslaved. But Juno openly courts stereotype in order to distract and manipulate Whitlaw in the interest of protecting a younger enslaved woman, Phebe, and Caesar, a fugitive whom Phebe loves. The resulting performances are often cast, in the narrative, as a form of comedy. Early in the novel, Juno appears before Whitlaw and Colonel Dart, who, "comfortably seated at breakfast, [were] amicably discoursing upon the number of stripes that a female slave might safely receive without permanent injury to herself or her future progeny" (158). As the men engage in a debate about the very modes by which the maternal body might serve as a conduit for both pain and the production of progeny, Juno enters:

> This queer mixture of fraud, fun, and feeling, never enjoyed herself more than when she saw the savage, blood-thirsty Colonel Dart fawning upon her as gently as a lamb when bleating to its mother for food. She knew—for her comfort—that she had been his torment and his torture for the fifteen years that he had possessed the estate, making him dream by night and meditate by day on plots, poisonings, and assassinations without end. (158)

Trollope's description of Juno's performances as a "queer mixture of fraud, fun, and feeling" makes explicit the ways in which Juno's tricksterism represents another transformation of "feeling" under slavery, but this time in the interest of producing a subversive form of "fun." That Juno wills herself to undergo this transformation in order to protect another young, enslaved woman in a passage overlaid with references to the enslaved maternal body suggests that for Trollope, Juno's exploited maternity and her exploitation of her own "feeling" to forestall Whitlaw's violence might be closely linked.

Indeed, though Juno's performances ostensibly grant her the power to protect Phebe by terrifying Whitlaw and Dart, these performances ultimately serve to reinforce Juno's resemblance to the factory machine. In her description of Juno's theatrical gestures, Trollope goes on to emphasize her body's jerkiness and its exaggerated expressiveness, as it moves

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abruptly between animation and deformation: "Her pace was a singular mixture of activity and decrepitude, every step being something between a jump and a hobble. When she reached the door, she turned to see if he whom she had summoned were following her; and on perceiving that he still stood beside the girl as if undecided, she twisted her uncouth features into a most portentous frown, and raising her bamboo, seemed to be drawing figures with it in the air" (88). In its indeterminate movement between "activity" and "decrepitude," liveliness and debilitation, this depiction of Juno's body highlights the similarities between her performed mysticism and her ambivalent status as a kind of machine. When Juno returns once again to protect Phebe later in the novel, Trollope writes, "It would be tedious to recount the glidings and slidings, the creepings and crawlings, the unseen exits and the unsuspected entrances, by which Juno learned all she wanted to know . . . the effect of her agency may be easily traced without all the intricacies of the machinery she employed" (131). While Trollope intends to describe Juno's willful machinations, these descriptions of her body, lively yet repetitive, also render Juno machinelike. Though Juno has long since ceased to produce children, she continues to produce performances in which she takes on the automated quality of a body remade as a machine. Once her body has been instrumentalized such that it might be seen as analogous to a mechanical technology, in other words, Juno likewise becomes a vehicle for the production of automated, iterative spectacles that slide unstably between tactical fraud, comedic fun, and melodramatic feeling.

In her "singular mixture . . . of activity and decrepitude," Juno's mechanistic mode of gestural expression exemplifies what Sianne Ngai, in *Ugly Feelings*, refers to as "racial animatedness." "Animatedness," for Ngai, constitutes a state of "being moved" that, over time, took on a specifically racialized meaning as it came to define an aesthetic of the "overemotional racialized subject, unusually receptive to external control."[26] In making the subject "come alive," artists' representations of racialized subjects in states of "animation"—liveliness, zest, but also agitation—at the same time underscored the ease with which those subjects might pass back into an inert state. The "animated" figure is one who appears overly active but whose activity, spurred on as it is by the application of an outer force or agent, remains shadowed by its fundamentally lifeless interior state. Blending repetition and spontaneity, animatedness is underwritten by a kind of automatization, linking the racialized subject not only to the inert or lifeless condition of a body without a soul but also

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to the industrial machinery of the mechanical age.[27] Both the body's animation and its automatization lend it the appearance, in Ngai's reading as in Trollope's depiction of Juno, of being at once comedically vibrant and grotesquely inhuman.

By linking the tragedy of maternity under enslavement and the comedic "fun" of Juno's performances, however, Trollope ultimately suggests that Juno is less a lifeless subject than one whose emotional life is so estranged that she becomes unpredictable. This opacity proves strategically useful to Juno within the course of the novel, as she ultimately redirects this stilted energy toward organizing a violent revolt that ends in Whitlaw's death at the hands of her fellow enslaved characters. As Juno watches Whitlaw's gruesome death, Trollope notes that "The ghastly spectacle [of Whitlaw's murder] wrought no change in the feelings of Juno" (379). Tamara Ketabgian has argued that in Charles Dickens's industrial fiction, "monotonous and obedient actions" associated with mechanistic production "convey a destructive and deeply emotional potential for revolt, on the part both of machinery and of other nonhuman and subordinate groups," including colonial subjects.[28] Similarly, once Juno has become a kind of automaton—a process Trollope portrays as tragic—her character also becomes seized with new possibilities for explicitly nontragic modes of action, including subversive comedy and violent revolt, both of which share the quality of seeming simultaneously mechanical in their emotional estrangement and yet serving as vehicles for a serious form of justice, or at least revenge, delivered by Juno on behalf of the enslaved.[29]

But while Trollope may have intended to produce a heroine who could wield comedy in the interest of subversion, accepting or even enjoying Juno's comedy requires that readers also accept the premise that the exploitation of the enslaved woman's reproductive capacities might in fact succeed in mechanizing her emotional life and her body in a thoroughgoing way. In a recent introduction in *Critical Inquiry* entitled "Comedy Has Issues," Ngai and Lauren Berlant write that in comedy, "supremacies are reproduced, preserved in the aspic and aspect of pleasure."[30] Readers who are confronted with the comedy of Juno's body are similarly asked, or perhaps compelled, to take pleasure in this imagined mechanization and in doing so are granted their own simulacra of power, in this case the power to take enjoyment in the emotional contortions slavery demands of the women under its dominion. It is only because slavery depends on a radical exploitation of feeling that subversion and revenge might—or, indeed, must—take the form of "fun" within the novel.

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By contrast, depictions of injustice and its redress in *Michael Armstrong* tend to revolve around melodramatic effusions rather than the forms of comedic energy that help propel Juno's justice in *Whitlaw.* But this form, too, can come to seem inflected by mechanization. After Michael's adoption by Matthew Dowling, Dowling takes him to his factory, where Michael's brother, Teddy, continues to work. Once inside the factory, Trollope exposes the "spectacle" of children's bodies intermingling with machines. The first child whom Dowling settles his attention on is a young girl whose job "was to collect incessantly from the machinery and from the floor, the flying fragments of cotton that might impede the work" (99). To do so, Trollope explains, "the child was obliged, from time to time, to stretch itself with sudden quickness on the ground, while the hissing machinery passed over her; and when this is skillfully done, and the head, body, and outstretched limbs carefully glued to the floor, the steady-moving, but threatening mass, may pass and repass over the dizzy head and trembling body without touching it" (99). The child not only becomes a part of the machine but also becomes a victim of the sexualized assault threatened, but never fulfilled, by the machine passing its heavy body mechanically over her flattened, frightened body. As if to underscore the machine's sexual peril, Dowling determines that Michael will take advantage of the girl's prone position to "Take scavenger, No. 3, there, round the neck; now—now—now, as she lies sprawling, and let us see you give her a hearty kiss" (99). Michael, of course, refuses to attack the girl, and Dowling is forced to settle for watching him give her a polite kiss on the cheek after the machine has passed.

Shortly thereafter, Dowling takes Michael up to the floor where his brother works to stage a joyful reunion between the two in yet another public celebration of his benevolence. As Teddy leaves the machine he works at to hug Michael, Trollope reports that "Every labourer in the factory, within sight of the spot where this meeting took place, forgot all standing orders in their astonishment, and stood with gaping mouths and eyes fixed upon the astounding spectacle," while Sir Matthew "looked round with great contentment on the multitude of wandering faces which he saw peering over the machinery in all directions, to gaze on the sight he had prepared for them" (102). In a repetition of Michael's performance in the masque, however, he botches the performance Dowling has so meticulously staged, replacing his expected performance of joy with real tears of sorrow: "the two boys, who still stood locked in each other's arms, were both weeping bitterly" (102).

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These two scenes, coming one upon another, provide parallel examples of the way Trollope links melodrama to machine in *Michael Armstrong*. In both instances, Dowling prepares a spectacle whose emotional notes he anticipates he will be able to control, as he expects to take pleasure in watching Michael's suffering forcibly transmuted into first sexual transgression and then a celebration of his success in front of his brother. In each case, Michael disrupts the performance by exhibiting "real" emotion—sympathy for the factory girl, sorrow upon seeing his brother—and yet that emotion, too, conforms to the dictates of melodrama by confirming the novel reader's expectations that Michael's inherent goodness will outstrip Dowling's machinations. The melodrama staged here thus works on two registers: (1) the scene Dowling attempts to stage and (2) the more complex but still emotionally fulsome spectacle Trollope stages beyond Dowling's grasp. Even as Trollope strives to break free from the rote emotionalism Dowling believes he can elicit from Michael, her melodrama, too, can only be understood in relation to the machines that surround the characters throughout this scene on the factory floor. On one hand, Michael manages to break out of the mechanical responses Dowling expects from him, refusing the parallel between man and machine Dowling sets up when, for example, he encourages Michael to exploit the scavenger girl in parallel to the machine's exploitations of her body. Yet these scenes, coming just a few chapters before Michael's performance in the masque, and coming close on the heels of one another, exhibit such a set pattern—Dowling coerces a performance, Michael participates, Michael disrupts through an outburst of real emotional effusion—that they, too, can begin to seem rote. This juxtaposition of emotional effusion and mechanical repetition seemingly comprises the character of emotional life for those who, trapped within the world of industrial capitalism's machinery, find themselves doomed to repeat a form of coercive emotional labor from which they cannot escape.

The mechanical quality of *Michael Armstrong*'s melodrama demonstrates that slavery's afterlife extends beyond the factory to influence the tonal qualities of the factory novel. In her essay "Postmodern Automatons," Rey Chow points to the comedy of industrial labor in Charlie Chaplin's film *Modern Times* as the culmination of the machinery embedded within melodrama as a genre. The film, Chow argues, presents an "*automatizing* of the human body" that "fulfils *in a mechanized manner* a typical description about a debased popular form, melodrama, that its characters are characters 'who can be guaranteed to think,

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speak, and act exactly as you would expect.'"[31] "Cinema," she concludes, thus "allows us to realize in an unprecedented way the mediated, that is, technologized, nature of 'melodramatic sentiments.' The typical features of melodramatic expression—exaggeration, emotionalism, Manichaenism—can thus be redefined as the eruption of the machine in what is presumed to be spontaneous."[32] Trollope similarly reveals to us a genealogy in which melodrama, comedy, and the "eruption of the machine" into human expression are indelibly linked, but she traces this genealogy backward to the mechanization of the human under slavery, which mimics the comedic automatization of the body Chow describes before the advent of film technology. If melodrama presages the confrontation of body and machine on film, perhaps it does so because it has inherited an even earlier practice of human automatization perfected under slavery—one that the novel, as a different technology of mass reproduction, can begin to capture. Trollope does not merely complicate our assumptions about the rote properties of comedy or melodrama; she also suggests that their machinelike qualities are of value to fiction in themselves because they alone can adequately formalize the experiences of automation that slavery and industrialism demand of those who live in their societies.

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While *Michael Armstrong* might help us see how slavery's afterlife pervades the novel's tonal and affective properties, it also enacts a shift not only from comedy to melodrama but also from adult to child and from subversion to vulnerability. Trollope makes this distinction clear in her preface to the novel, where she establishes that *Michael Armstrong* will seek to avert any portrayal of insurrectionary violence of the kind found at the end of *Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw*. Trollope explains:

> When those in whose behalf she hoped to move the sympathy of their country are found busy in scenes of outrage and lawless violence, and uniting themselves with individuals whose doctrines are subversive of every species of social order, the author feels that it would be alike acting in violation of her own principles, and doing injury to the cause she wishes to serve, were she to persist in an attempt to hold up as objects of public sympathy, men who have stained their righteous cause with deeds of violence and blood. (3–4)

Consequently, while Trollope initially intended that in the second half of the novel, Michael "should have been seen embarked in those perfectly

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constitutional struggles for the amelioration of the sufferings of his class, in which many of the more enlightened operatives have been for some years engaged" (3), she has since "determined that the existence of her hero as an operative shall close with his childhood," lest adult violence mar her attempts to alleviate the sufferings of "infant labourers" (4).

In one sense, then, we might think of *Michael Armstrong* as a kind of abortive fiction, one that cuts off in childhood the story of labor just as the novel's factories cut off the lives of the "infant labourers" who toil within them. This decision is particularly striking in contrast with the lawless violence that comes at the end of *Whitlaw*. There, Trollope seems to celebrate the violence that makes political action and Michael's adulthood alike untenable in *Michael Armstrong*. Juno's acts of violence are inherently unsuited to the plight of the British worker, who needs readers' care and "sympathy," not their "outrage" or the spectacles of "lawless" subversion Juno provides.[33] With the working-class radical, Trollope also, implicitly, casts a figure like Juno outside the bounds of working-class reform as she imagines it, to shift decisively away from the "subversive" back toward the realm of melodrama, with its firm bounds of good and evil, and its embrace of the vulnerable who suffer and endure rather than fight back.

This shift can help us better understand how the story of slavery's legacies that Trollope tells across these two novels plays out at the level of the novels' tonal registers as well as their depictions of labor. More importantly, it reveals how Trollope imagined the experience of emotional alienation might transform as it moved from the slavery plantation to the factory floor—and, crucially, from black bodies to white ones. While Trollope closely examines the exploitation of maternity under slavery, she rarely turns her attention to the impact this exploitation has on children. One of the novel's few exceptions is Selina, Juno's granddaughter. Raised in England, Selina only learns of her African American heritage when she returns to America; she commits suicide soon thereafter. Selina, like the children of *Armstrong*, experiences the world before her return to America primarily as a white child; indeed, Trollope explains that through her acts of interracial reproduction, Juno had managed to become "the progenitor of a white and beautiful free race in England" (173). In *Armstrong*, finally, Trollope extends this maternity further to establish Juno as a metaphorical progenitor of the "white . . . race" of ostensibly free laborers whose status as children underscores, for Trollope, the fragility of that freedom. In *Armstrong*, in contrast to

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Whitlaw, moreover, mothers themselves are strikingly absent. Michael's own mother is too infirm to help her children survive outside the factory, and her brief appearances in the novel center on the Dowlings tricking her into allowing Michael to be apprenticed away from her; more often, the mothers of the novel's factory children go unseen.

This shift from mothers to children, from comedy to melodrama, entails a shift from interrogating complex forms of power borne from powerlessness to an emphasis on the vulnerability that lurks behind the presumption of self-possession integral to the construction of British whiteness. Trollope's decision to enact this shift across these two novels might reflect the changing ground of the early-Victorian novel, which would begin to focus acute attention on the figure of the orphaned, impoverished English child throughout the late 1830s and 1840s. In Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (1837–39), published in between *Whitlaw* and *Armstrong*, the child protagonist can only find his innocence restored after his protectors have pursued his villainous brother to the former slavery colonies, suggesting that Oliver's trials might have come about as a result of the same forces responsible for the trials of the formerly enslaved who remain offstage. In *Armstrong*, Trollope extends this logic even further to suggest that the ultimate product of the alienation of maternity under slavery, in the broadest sense, seems to be the victimization of the white child. While the automatization and alienation of emotional labor under slavery ultimately strengthens the enslaved mother, it renders whiteness itself as fragile as a motherless child. In the course of indicting slavery, Trollope cultivates a newly sympathetic form of *whiteness* in need of redress.

By ultimately directing this form of care toward the white child, *Armstrong* helps erase as much as it emphasizes the history of human mechanization under slavery that has made such care imperative. Though Trollope uses the figures of mother and child to establish a genealogy between slavery and industrialism that more firmly binds their histories together, these figures also separate out the enslaved from the white working classes, marking the former as adult, beyond the need for protection, and the latter as childlike in its vulnerability.[34] The culmination of this story of inheritance is, finally, a world in which slavery has helped make *whiteness*, not blackness, more fragile and more in need of care. Though counterintuitive, this shift aligns with what Robin Bernstein has characterized as the racialization of childhood innocence in the nineteenth century: "Childhood innocence—itself raced white, itself characterized by the ability to retain racial meanings

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but hide them under claims of holy obliviousness—secured the unmarked status of whiteness, and the power derived from that status, in the nineteenth and into the early twentieth centuries. Childhood innocence provided a perfect alibi: not only the ability to remember while appearing to forget, but even more powerfully, the production of racial memory through the performance of forgetting."[35] In her attempts to evoke readers' pity for the innocent and wronged child through comparisons to African American slavery, Trollope, too, participates in an act of memory that is also an act of forgetting, transforming slavery's legacy into a story about the trials of working-class whiteness. These transformations can help us see more clearly, finally, how the story of mechanical maternity Trollope tells across these two novels might ultimately fail to produce a meaningful imagined coalition between the formerly enslaved and industrial workers, and instead enables Trollope to resort to conventional comparisons between the two that seem apposite to the story of their intertwined alienations she simultaneously unfolds. But though Trollope ultimately wields this genealogy in the service of a story that revolves around whiteness, these novels, taken together, nonetheless provide compelling evidence that slavery's afterlife inflected not only the economics of industrialization but also its affects and its narrative modes. Though the significance of slavery to the story of Victorian modernity Trollope intends to tell is in some ways fleeting, her fiction nevertheless illuminates the ways in which narrative modes rooted in the realities of slavery shaped the early Victorian novel.

Notes

I would like to thank the reader for *Victorian Literature and Culture* for their invaluable suggestions and Emily Hainze, John Kuhn, and Sarah Salter for their comments on earlier versions of this essay.

1. Ketabgian, *Lives of Machines*, 5.
2. Marder, *Mother in the Age*, 3.
3. Benjamin, "Work of Art," 223.
4. Benjamin, "Work of Art," 221.
5. In *The Fugitive's Properties*, Stephen Best has offered an illustration of how the slavery system could have an "afterlife" or could continue to exert a shaping force on law, economics, and culture after slavery's formal abolition in America, in his reading of intellectual property law as a site where slavery law's influence lived on after slavery's

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abolition. Here, I adopt this term to examine how slavery was understood to structure both economic institutions and the affective and embodied experiences of those institutions in post-abolition Britain.

6. In his landmark 1944 study, *Capitalism and Slavery*, Eric Williams argues that British abolition represented less a moral cause than an economic one, motivated both by a newfound belief in free trade, which rendered the monopolies operating in the West Indies unpopular with industrialists back home, and by the growing irrelevance of colonial plantations to a British economy dominated by domestic industry—a development funded by the wealth earned in the mercantile slave trade in the previous century. More recently, Joseph Inikori has defended Williams's thesis, arguing that the structural and technological changes which define the industrial revolution in England were driven by international trade carried out in the circum-Atlantic markets supported by slave labor and by the expanding demand for slave-produced commodities this market helped create. See Inikori, *Africans and the Industrial Revolution*, 478–81.
7. Zlotnick, *Women, Writing, and the Industrial Revolution*, 135.
8. Gallagher, *Industrial Reformation*, 11.
9. Cunliffe, *Chattel Slavery and Wage Slavery*, 41.
10. Cunliffe, *Chattel Slavery and Wage Slavery*, 43–44.
11. Trollope, *Michael Armstrong*, 11. All subsequent references to this edition are noted parenthetically in the text.
12. Zlotnick argues that Trollope participated in the "Victorian conflation of production and reproduction" (156) but that she does so as a representation of the sexual impropriety of men and women working together in the factory and of Malthus's claims that the root of poverty lay in workers' lack of sexual restraint and the proliferation of children in the working-class family that resulted. See Zlotnick, *Women, Writing, and the Industrial Revolution*, 152–57.
13. Priti Joshi, for example, suggests that Trollope's invocations of slavery present a characteristic example of "the charge that attention to those abroad came at the cost of those at home" ("Introduction," xvi).
14. Bentley, "The Fourth Dimension," 271.
15. Marx, "Estranged Labor," 108.
16. Cvetkovich, *Mixed Feelings*, 179. By contrast, Elaine Scarry has argued that the process of alienation which Marx describes disrupts a largely corporeal practice of human making that encompasses not only the

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production of material objects that seem imbued with the worker's sentience but also the production of sentient humans themselves. The central conflict that Ann Cvetkovich highlights in her critique of Scarry turns upon the extent to which labor, and thus its alienation, is in fact materialized or abstracted in Marx's account of the production of the commodity. See Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 242–77; and Cvetkovich, *Mixed Feelings*, 187–91.

17. Best, *The Fugitive's Properties*, 2. Hartman writes, "The relation between pleasure and the possession of slave property, in both the figurative and literal senses, can be explained in part by the fungibility of the slave—that is, the joy made possibly by virtue of the replaceability and interchangeability endemic to the commodity—and by the extensive capacities of property—that is, the augmentation of the master subject through his embodiment in external objects and persons. Put differently, the fungibility of the commodity makes the captive body an abstract and empty vessel vulnerable to the projection of others' feelings, ideas, desires, and values; and, as property, the dispossessed body of the enslaved is the surrogate for the master's body since it guarantees his disembodied universality and acts as the sign of his power and dominion" (*Scenes of Subjection*, 21). In other words, the body of the enslaved itself becomes the object that is invested with an alien "life"—the "feelings, ideas, desire, and values" of the enslaver—in its transformation from person into commodity.
18. Trollope, *Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw*, 49, 60. All subsequent references to this edition are noted parenthetically in the text.
19. As Charlotte Sussman has detailed, the "tendency to imagine laboring bodies as the food they labored to produce, or as the food whose consumption fueled their labor" was common across eighteenth- and nineteenth-century social thought, but particularly in abolitionist rhetoric, where writers hoped to encourage the sentimental consumption of (often dehumanizing) images of laborers' pained bodies in place of the economic consumption of the objects those laborers produced. See Sussman, *Consuming Anxieties*, 115, 116–23.
20. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 42–47.
21. James Williams writes, "[T]hey put me on the treadmill along with the others: At first, not knowing how to dance it, I cut all my shins with the steps; they did not flog me then—the driver show me how to step, and I catch the step by next day; But them flog all the rest

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that could not step the mill, flogged them most dreadful" (*Narrative of the Events since the First of August 1834*, 10).

22. In *The Vulgar Question of Money*, Elsie Michie argues that Trollope drew implicit connections between appetite for consumption spurred on by the industrial revolution and other "appetites" including "hunger and sexual desire," connections made explicit in the political economy of Thomas Malthus (66). For Michie, Trollope's tendency to cast the wealthy female consumer as "a larger and more vivid presence than her spiritual antithesis" (68), the impoverished woman, suggests that she embraced, or at least acknowledged the irrepressibility of, these appetites as much as she critiqued them.
23. In my reading, Michael's performance, and the uneven tonal affects it produces, echoes and anticipates the aesthetic effects of late capitalist modernity's exploitation of affective labor that Sianne Ngai describes in *Our Aesthetic Categories.* For Ngai, this aesthetics, which by definition cultivates an ambivalent response, develops precisely because domains of human sociality, including "affect and emotion" and "intimacy and care," have been "increasingly encroached on by capitalism over the past half century," most notably in the affective flexibility and responsiveness late capitalism demands from the modern worker (13).
24. Gallagher argues in *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction*, for example, that in *Mary Barton*, a key work of Victorian reformist fiction, Gaskell deploys a "formal eclecticism" (67) mixing "tragedy, melodrama, domestic fiction, and . . . religious homily" (70) as she "searches for a mode of realism adequate to her subject matter" and seeks to create "false conventions for contrast" in order to establish a "truer" realist perspective. Trollope seeks a similar effect here, contrasting the stock melodrama of Dowling's coercions to the probing perspective of Mary Brotherton, but she also indicates that melodrama offers a form of realism insofar as it reflects the mechanization of the human she sets out to critique.
25. Michie, "Morbidity in Fairyland," 234.
26. Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, 92. Juno also resonates with Rey Chow's description of the "postmodern automaton," another figure whose comedic and melodramatic liveliness similarly betrays an automation that ultimately signifies lifelessness.
27. Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, 92, 100.
28. Ketabgian, *Lives of Machines*, 48–49.

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29. Christine Sutphin has shown how comedy and revolt also coexist in Trollope's later slavery novel, *The Barnabys in America* (1843), arguing that a "successful revolt . . . erupts and disrupts, but does not displace, the comic ending" of that novel ("'Very Nearly Smiling,'" 226).
30. Berlant and Ngai, "Comedy Has Issues," 242.
31. Chow, "Postmodern Automatons," 105, emphasis original.
32. Chow, "Postmodern Automatons," 105–6.
33. Indeed, Carolyn Betensky has argued that *Michael Armstrong* centers on the "moral capital" that accrues to middle-class female characters who seek to know about and therefore sympathize with the poor, though without necessarily intervening on their behalf. See Betensky, *Feeling for the Poor,* 43–45.
34. In his 1829 letter "Slavery in Yorkshire," Richard Oastler similarly casts the British working classes as inherently vulnerable, stressing that the mills against which he protests are "magazines of British Infantile Slavery" (transcript printed in Hargreaves and Haigh, *Slavery in Yorkshire,* 9–10), while the enslaved Africans to which he compares these workers are cast more often as implicitly adult in that they are beyond the need of further protection. Trollope's son Thomas Adolphus Trollope recounts in his biography, *What I Remember,* that he and his mother had seen Oastler speak on factory reform during a trip to Lancashire in 1839 where Trollope undertook to prepare notes for *Michael Armstrong* (11–13). My thanks to the anonymous reader for *Victorian Literature and Culture* for directing me to this information.
35. Bernstein, *Racial Innocence,* 8.

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