

**Relationality in Working Women's Autobiography**

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<1>Relational subjectivity, as a form of identity development particular to women, has presented an interesting avenue for distinguishing women's writing in life writing scholarship. Developmental theorists such as Carol Gilligan and Nancy Chodorow have discussed this unique gender development since the late seventies. Both contend women have a relational sense of self; that is, they understand themselves not as autonomous individuals but as members of a larger family. Social pressures encourage this form of development as a natural progression of gender identity. Life writing scholars have suggested relational subjectivity as a way to read women's subjectivity as fully developed in its relational form instead of adhering to the male centered theories of development which place higher value on individuation and autonomy. While this avenue does allow for more variety in legitimate forms of development, the theory essentializes women of all races and class statuses. By examining how women present themselves as working class subjects in autobiographical writings of Nineteenth century England, I argue that even as relational subjectivity is constructive for women in the middle and/or upper-classes, Nineteenth century working women's self-presentation as individuals mirror male centered subjectivity in notable ways due to their material circumstances. Working class women were socialized quite differently than middle class women, producing a hybrid subjectivity incorporating theories of both male and female development. Class and community consciousness is foregrounded instead of familial and other intimate relationships. In addition, their development is closely tied to the suffering inherent in the poverty stricken areas where they came of age. This is seen frequently in the survival instincts the women possess outside of their duties to others. In working women's autobiographies, the laborers cannot produce the bourgeois identity of an independent whole since they think of themselves as mass workers, simply one of many. However, they do integrate male features as well. A more nuanced conception of identity formation, different from bourgeois experience, needs to be adopted to take into account the various ways working class women develop subjectivity as both women and workers.

<2>The appeal of relationality stems from the universalization of male development. Understanding that through socialization or natural inclination, women progress through various stages of development apart from traditional male patterns is key to establishing multiple paths for full development. Relational subjectivity acknowledges the influence close relations have on women's development. Nancy Chodorow addresses this need in female development in *Family Structure and the Feminine Personality* stating: "...in any given society, feminine personality comes to define itself in relation and connection to other people more so than masculine

personality does” (145). Specifically, Chodorow looks at mother-daughter relationships and the indoctrination of feminine roles. Chodorow asserts female children learn sex roles from their mothers, who for the most part are responsible for child care. Women are therefore socialized to believe their responsibilities to others are paramount. The same goals of autonomy and separateness are not asserted for women. Guilt, also, develops as a facet of feminine personality owing to societal pressure: “As if the woman does not differentiate herself clearly from the rest of the world, she feels a sense of guilt and responsibility for situations that did not come about through her actions and without relation to her actual ability to determine the course of events” (152). Both aspects of women’s development challenge the male standard in important ways; however, the same tendency to universalize the male experience occurs by essentializing female experience. As I shall demonstrate, this aspect of female subjectivity does not suit working women of the Nineteenth century. Most have a clear belief in society’s culpability for their sufferings. A few even find fault in others of their class who accept the life and the oppression they were born into with only complaint but not action. However, even these women see the lack of control they and others in their position have in improving their place in society.

<3>In like manner, morality development for women is also connected to others. Carol Gilligan sets up a three stage system specific to women. As described by Meryle Kaplan, the stages account for the relationship and responsibility women feel towards others in their lives:

At Stage I, the Pre-Conventional level, women are concerned with their own survival. At Stage II, the Conventional Level, goodness is equated with caring for others; caring directly for oneself or asking for care from others is considered selfish. Despite its roots in traditional sociocultural arrangements, Gilligan stresses that this stage is psychologically inadequate and unstable. The move to stage III, the Post-Conventional Level, involves including the self in the equation of care; self-sacrifice becomes immoral as the ethic of care is extended to the self as well as to others. (Kaplan 16)

While the three stages do include the care of self as the last step, society requires, especially in the Victorian era, women cease development at Stage II. The ability to care for others is clearly the source of the Angel of the House ideal: “The Victorian ideal of womanhood centered on marriage and home. Women’s mission in life was to be the guardian of moral, spiritual, and domestic values” (Harrison 157). While this was always more of an ideal than a practical rule, the social mores influencing development would have promoted. Middle class Victorian women could not see themselves as separate from their family without fear of societal condemnation. Working class women writers did not have these same societal pressures to fear, and were thereby able to create an opportunity to discuss their own lives and feelings apart from others. As Hannah Cullwick states in her diary while explaining her wish to stay in her maid uniform, “I’d look’d as rough as the hampers, & I wound my way through the crowd o’ passing folk in Fleet Street & the Strand but they only star’d & pass’d on, thinking I dare say that I come from Covent Garden Market & it didn’t matter. That’s the best o’ being drest rough, & looking ‘nobody’ — you can go any where & not be wonder’d at” (274). They were forced, in many cases, to leave home at a very early age and work throughout their lives. Work often led them to various locations, making close relationships with anyone very difficult.

<4>Many theories of subjectivity disregard the differences created by class. Regenia Gagnier argues that, “Part of the problem in presenting subjectivity lay in the obvious material conditions: workers, as Engels pointed out in 1844, were not ‘heads’ but ‘hands,’ not *Homo cogitans* but *Homo laborans*; the conditions of their labor often mitigated against self-perception as an integrated, autonomous agent” (142). What they tended to see themselves as is one a many of their class. This is quite different from middle-class women who tend to identify themselves with the male members of their family and their accomplishments. They identify themselves as wife, daughter, and mother more than anything else. Working women’s identities were more connected to their material lives than a larger sense of individuality or autonomy. Kathleen Woodward notes this aspect of working-class subjectivity when she discusses her mother at the beginning of her autobiography:

The circumstances of my mother's life in no manner differed from the circumstances of the lives of those inarticulate people without number who compose the 'lower' classes. She was born in poverty; she was acquainted all her days with the insecurity and uncertainty which are the heritage of the poor. She knew, she said, only two certain things: death—and the landlord; and for her the dawn of each new day was cast over by the pale shifting face of want (1).

The very first lines of Woodward's autobiography posit class consciousness as the primary source of identity. In noting that her mother was one of those without number, Woodward is suggesting the power of class to create identity. She does not begin her autobiography with an investigation of the various members of her family, as Lady Fanshawe does; nor, does she begin with a more personal recollection of her first memories, as Harriet Martineau does. Rather, Woodward announces her heritage as a member of the lower-classes. While it will be clear later that she does not wish to mirror her mother's life, there is an idea that this aspect of her life history is paramount to any other consideration. Therefore, without acknowledging living conditions of working women, theories of identity fail to treat working women as full people, but rather as failed attempts at being bourgeois.

<5>What clearly needs to be added to this discussion, especially when the divide between the class statuses was so large, is an acknowledgement of the importance that class has on how these women developed and also how they choose to write about their lives. By ignoring the differences in class these working women's writing cannot be appreciated fully for what they add to our understanding of the Victorian era and the connection between class and the development of subjectivity. The connection between the material world and identity is noted by Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology*,

The production of ideas, concepts and consciousness is first of all directly interwoven with the material intercourse of man, the language of real life. Conceiving, thinking, the spiritual intercourse of men, appear here as the direct efflux of men's material behaviour... we do not proceed from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as described, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at the corporeal man; rather we proceed from the really active man... Consciousness does not determine life: life determines consciousness. (qtd. in Eagleton 4)

If indeed consciousness is based on life, then the lives of middle class and lower class women would have to create quite different senses of identity. While the lives of middle class women were based around social obligations and running the family household, including the finances and any household help, working class women had to deal with constant work inside and outside the home, horrible living conditions, and various other issues related to their class status. For the majority of working class people, they were workers first and gendered second. Being a woman did not protect most from working horribly long hours in deplorable conditions. The difference lies in the extra responsibility many had as wife and mother. The working women had no nannies or governess to help in the child rearing or maids and cooks to help with the other household duties. What they did have was more children than they could handle and little to no money to support the children or themselves. By understanding the various discrepancies between the lives of middle class and working women it is clear that they not only did not, but could not develop in the same manner.

<6>While this would clearly set the working women's life writing of this time apart from the middle class women, there is some question whether the working women's autobiography is inherently different from men of the same class. The question arises—what is more important in these cases of life-writing—gender or class? Linda Peterson does answer this query, at least as far as spiritual writings of the period go. In her argument the purpose of the writing trumps differences of gender, since there is a clear formula to follow as the author seeks redemption. This is also the case with more political autobiographies that are informed by their need to advance or promote their cause. Hannah Mitchell's autobiography is one such since it charts her awakening to the cause of suffrage and her activities within the group. Formulas, however, were not clearly available for working class women, unless they wished to try and emulate the upper classes, which tended to reflect badly for them. While I will not address the question in this piece, it is worthy of further study in Victorian autobiography.

<7>The differences between middle-class autobiographies and working-class autobiographies are based on the daily realities of the women. When middle-class women, who are much more subject to the Angel of the House ideal, decided to write about their lives they are more inclined to tout the accomplishments of the male family members since this allows them to present themselves in public without worry of societal censure. Lady Anne Fanshawe's autobiography, *Memoirs*, is an apt example of the restrictions placed on women and their writing. Her story begins with a genealogy, then discusses her husband's career, only to end with his death (Peterson 17-18). Through this format, Lady Anne is able to present herself as the good wife and mother required from women writers. Her autobiography was specifically written for the betterment of her son. There are many other autobiographies of middle and upper class women who put their own accomplishments behind those of their husbands or father in order to not be accused of not being the appropriate type of Victorian women. Many of these life-writings were also addressed to their children so that they could understand what their family had accomplished. In the case of writings to female children, there is usually the added responsibility of teaching them how to be proper housewives and mothers. A clear stated purpose for writing is not usually easy to identify with working-class autobiography as it is for many middle class versions.

<8>The limited scope of working women's life experiences and interest is highlighted when examined alongside middle class works. Harriet Martineau's *Autobiography* deals with a wide range of material which is not found in lower class women's writing. In her life she became a prominent writer of non-fiction and a literary critic. In her autobiography she does speak of her own accomplishments, but still spends a great deal of time discussing the male members of her family, who had some difficulties later in life. What stands Martineau's autobiography apart from many others is the focus on religion and how that affected her life. While many of the working-class women did go to church, and in Emma Smith's case related the event of being "saved," religion as a whole does not present itself much in their autobiographies. Many of the working-women did not have time to seriously contemplate religious issues due to their enormous workload. So, it is not surprising that many of them mention church only in their ability to go to Sunday school while young and hopefully learning to read. Martineau, on the other hand, was able to read at a young age and had the time to think about what her religion meant to her in life. Martineau, unlike Lady Fanshawe, does not open her story to a discussion of her husband's accomplishments; nor does she position herself within a certain class like many of the working women. What she does is try to recall her first memory and then discuss her religious leanings early on in her life: "While I was afraid of everybody I saw, I was not in the least afraid of God. Being usually unhappy, I was constantly longing for heaven, and seriously and very frequently planning suicide in order to get there" (45). Throughout her autobiography there are similar references to comfort found in God. Later on she discusses her confusion and change of religious ideas, but for the entirety of her autobiography there is a great deal of contemplating religious ideas and issues. None of the working-women's autobiographies available spend anywhere near this amount of time considering ideas that do not have some practical purpose in their lives. Working women in the 19th century could not create their personalities either through their relationship with their mothers or through other family relationships as many middle-class women. The autobiography of Emma Smith, *A Cornish Waif's Story* (1956) illustrates some of the difficulties with working class relationality. Emma Smith (pseudonym) was an illegitimate child who was abandoned by her mother, was unable to stay with other family members, and was sold to a child abusing street performer. At no point in her young life was there a consistent and stable relationship with which she could connect. Emma Smith's relationship to her mother lacked the closeness and stability to adopt traditional female sex roles as the care-giver. For, not only did she not have anyone to care for her, she did not have anyone to care for regularly. Her life is one of solitary suffering and upheaval. Smith reveals another discrepancy with middle class subjectivity and morality as she does not develop moral ideas based on her relationships with others. The two most prominent relationships are with her mother, even though she does not live with her she always feels the impact of her abandonment, and with the street performers she was forced to live with: the Pratts. Neither of these relationships fostered in Smith a sense of right and wrong. One striking example of the incongruity between Emma's moral development and that of her caregivers is when Smith discovers God at a revival:

After the service many people came round and spoke kindly to me. I felt good, clean, and full of determination that in future neither Pratt nor anybody else should rob me of my new found joy. The farmer and his wife both congratulated me in a kindly fashion in that I had, as they expressed it, been 'saved' that night. Pratt seemed pleased of the notice that was showered upon me, and I think I was justified in thinking that he would in the future leave me alone. Alas for my comforting belief! Through the farmer's kindness we slept in the barn that night,

and for all Pratt had seemed pleased at my being saved, he behaved in his usual way. (Smith 94-95)

Being “saved” as Smith discusses at various times in her story, allows her to develop her sense of morality completely separate from the people with whom she must associate. None of her family or the Pratts are described as especially religious, so this particular sense of religious morality Emma develops, which leads to Smith’s taking her survival as paramount to any responsibility she has to others, is created by herself alone.

<9>Since most working women spend an exorbitant amount of time at work, it could be argued that their form of relationality develops through their co-workers. However, by examining their writings, it is clear that the bonds between workers are not well-established for various reasons. Kathleen Woodward suggests this inability to attach strong emotional bonds with other workers in her autobiography, *Jipping Street* (1928), as she disparages the seeming acceptance of the social restrictions that have kept her co-workers in the clothing factory poor and hungry. Outside of these relationships, Woodward has created for herself a strong sense of how wrong the oppressive system is on the women that she associates with in the factory:

I had lost my dreams and I grew away from the people in Jipping Street who consoled my childhood, because they accepted without question, although with eternal complaint, a state of things I found intolerable. I could not reconcile myself; I was filled with unrest; I questioned and criticized; I raged and rebelled and knew that in acceptance came a measure of peace; only, I could not pay the price of such peace. Some uncontainable force spurred me on and on to where I knew not nor to what end. (86)

This sense of rage Woodward speaks of is not inherited from her mother, who as I shall discuss later was generally accepting of her station, or from her friends as they take solace in the small pleasures that their lives allow while ignoring the major social problems. In this way, the factory workers have eternalized the dominate ideology of the bourgeoisie. It is clear from Woodward's discussions at various sections in her life story that these views came from somewhere else. When Woodward discusses her mother, it is also clear that she did not experience the type of close bond that Chodorow mentions in connection to developing sex roles. Woodward's mother was in general a harsh woman who did not show any kind of affection to any of her children: "She sweated and labored for her children, equally without stint or thought; but utterly oblivious to any need we might cherish for sympathy in our little sorrows, support in our strivings. She simply was not aware of anything beyond the needs of our bodies" (21). Since Woodward's father was an invalid for most of her life, there was no one in her life with whom to create a strong connection. What Woodward was left with was a growing sense of the wrongs of the situation she found herself in and a need to find a place where she could be quiet and educate herself with the books that she loved. None of these ideas came from her family or fellow workers who saw their lot in life as set and unchangeable. Kathleen Woodward mentions this sense of acceptance right from the beginning of the text when she discusses her mother:

I like to think that mother once knew hope—when she had even white teeth and a laughing mouth and live, warm, eager lines, though she soon put away hope and fear and grew to

suffer life as it came each day with a fine, flinty endurance; hardened in suffering, without hope; enduring in proud obstinacy; without fear. Proud, obstinate, fearless, without hope and without that last noble extremity of courage which dares to hope. (4)

The idea that her mother is without a hope for change is what spurs Woodward on to try and better her situation through improvements at the factory she works at and in trying to conduct her life in a way that would not perpetuate the suffering she saw in her mother and others she knew. Much like Emma Smith then, Kathleen Woodward develops a sense of identity and morals separate from those with whom she has relationships.

<10> Many working class women never get past the first stage of development, laid out by Gilligan, since they are always aware of how fragile their survival is at any moment. Many of the women are clearly thinking of themselves alone in their reactions to the situations in which they find themselves. Emma Smith decides to escape from the hurdy gurdy man and his wife when the neglect and abuse escalate beyond her tolerance:

Then I fell ill. I had a nasty attack of chicken pox, which on account of the neglected condition of my hair became very serious. Sores broke out all over my head, and when I next made an appearance at school, I was sent home as not being in a fit state to be with the other children. This was to me the last straw. I felt now more disgraced and humiliated than ever before. Pratt's continuous nagging, on top of all the mental strain I had borne on his account, now drove me desperate. I could bear no more. I suddenly made up my mind I would run away. (105)

Survival, both physically and spiritually, is the only motivator for her abrupt decision. She knew they needed her assistance to add to the family income; however, the need to survive was key. She felt no guilt in making the decision since she knew she deserved better than what she had with the traveling performers.

<11> Another woman who chose to think of herself and not others is Hannah Mitchell, militant suffragist, as documented in her autobiography entitled *The Hard Way Up*. In the text, Mitchell posits herself as one of the few working-class women who joined the suffrage movement and was able to write about their experience. Mitchell's decisions throughout her life are shown to be due to her needs first and not her family. She feels no guilt in deciding to travel around England giving speeches for the movement even though she has to leave her husband and son for lengths of time. Her need, not physical survival but spiritual, was the guiding force that led her to be a noted name in the militant suffrage movement. Mitchell discusses her family as a burden, if she mentions them at all. She does not feel the need to take care of others, despite the understanding that her role should be as mother and wife:

Not being one of those happily constituted souls who enjoy cooking, I found no pleasure in it. My husband was one of a large family whose mother had been what is called a 'born cook'. Poor soul! I never knew her. Child bearing and cooking for twenty years, a widow with ten children to care for, the youngest mere babies, she must have been worn out before she died a

comparatively young woman. So I was definitely determined not to begin where she left off.  
(96)

There is no pause in Mitchell to ignore the traditional sex roles and to take care of her needs above anyone else's. The middle-class women who must pride herself on her abilities as a household manager for her social standing could not make this choice to forgo household accomplishments for more personal goals of reading and political change. In this way, middle class women in Victorian England faced a very real type of oppression that restricted their movements much more than working-women who had to take part in the public sphere to survive. As noted before, it is these discrepancies which make it impossible for working-women to develop identity in the same way as middle-class women.

<12>Other working-class women also took to running away from situations they found intolerable. Despite their roles as caregiver, these women chose to care for themselves above duties to others. Winifred Foley chose to escape from her situation as a young child (Burnett). Her employer, an elderly woman, refused her resignation, despite her many attempts to submit notice. Finally, in aggravation over her treatment she threw her belongings out of a window and absconded. Again, the desire to better her circumstances and not duty to her employer incites action: "The sight of the old lady nodding by the fire—her hands veined and thin as the claws of a plucked chicken—began to give me second thoughts, but she stirred and sharply ordered me to be back before dusk. I didn't answer—the fluttering feeling in my stomach was agitating my clipped wings back to movement. For a while, a little while, I could escape from servitude" (Burnett 234). Responsibility, which Chodorow notes as common to women, does not exceed the need to better their situation. If women's development required that sense of responsibility, Foley and many others failed to develop the full morality Gilligan espouses to women of all classes.

<13>Lillian Westall demonstrates another issue with the bourgeois sense of self as it pertains to the working class in the unstable nature of her work environment. Westall, according to her autobiography, had a period of her life where she changed jobs about every few months (Burnett). For various reasons, whether leaving of her own accord or being fired, she failed to stay anywhere for more than a year with a couple of times trying to leave after a week. How would anyone develop relational identity in the same manner as those who had close and constant ties during their development when financial situations mandated frequent relocation? What did last was their occupation. Other women had very similar lives of upheaval and instability. Lavinia Swainbank had at least four employers in seven years. She had the ability to further her education; however, through financial circumstances and the First World War, she was forced into service in various homes. Winifred Foley, at the beginning of her service at the age of 14, went to a number of employers lasting about three months each. Jean Rennie, scullery maid and cook, who also was denied better education for financial reasons, worked in seven different areas in five years. Numerous other examples exist, however, these situations problematize relational identity due to frequent moves and the lack of close bonds.

<14>If responsibility towards their employers was not evident, the question then is whether familial responsibility was prominent? Problems arise, though, since the families were forced to

consider individual survival due to extreme poverty. Children left for employment as soon as they were able; and parents tended to work quite long hours. Emma Smith's situation highlights the need for personal survival in many working families. Emma Smith's mother, Maude, loved her children and wanted to provide for them, including Emma. However, since her new husband wanted nothing to do with the daughter of another man, Maude was forced to give Emma away. Poverty prevented her grandparents as well as other relatives from offering shelter. Emma's abandonment was situational and not malicious; her family could only share what little extra they had to grant. When survival is not the prime objective, women could pursue selflessness to a much greater degree Victorian social mores especially encouraged this type of personal responsibility for others instead of individuality.

<15> Even in the lower classes, these ideas of family were quite important. This issue arises in the lack of material needs that families could provide for their children. As has already been discussed, lower class families were quite large, many women coming from families of six or more children. However, the close sense of responsibility towards each other was not there, as Emma Smith's life demonstrates. Kathleen Woodward notes this cycle of perpetual poverty due to an abundance of children while she observes co-workers at the factory:

I observed, painfully, that while their conversation was full of complaint and revolt, it seemed strangely to leave their conduct unaffected, and they produced children, disease, and 'women's complaints' with monotonous regularity, and continued to slave in the factory... And the women married, and remarried, and multiplied their seed, and their children came to meet them in the evening at the factory gates. (99)

Even with a rather high mortality rate for infants, many of the women were left with a number of children to rear while working strenuous jobs for little compensation. Men contributed very little to the childrearing, and were frequently to blame for their family's poverty due to drunkenness or abandonment.

<16>Problematizing the idea of relational identity is the notion of widespread feminine guilt. Chodorow's work includes the idea women will feel guilty for much of what happens to them and their close relations, whether or not they contributed to the situation. For the women I have been discussing, guilt is not a part of their moral development and identity in the same manner as middle class women. Emma Smith frequently acknowledges her victimization through circumstances beyond her control. Smith understands Mr. Pratt alone is to blame for the molestation she suffered. Furthermore, the prologue of her autobiography begins with acknowledgment of her mother's culpability: "...I have a mother living who in these latter years I have grown to love, and the last thing on earth I would wish to do would be to cause her pain; for, though most of the blame for what I suffered and endured lies at her door, I have in these latter years learned to be tolerant and can find many excuses for her" (13). It is quite understandable she would accuse her mother of causing her suffering, as it was her mother that abandoned her on a number of occasions. What is surprising, and this is true for other women as well, is the tolerance she feels towards her mother in her later years. Understanding the nature of their mothers' lives could very well encourage this type of acceptance later in life. One striking instance of this understanding is in the autobiography of Faith Dorothy Osgerby, whose mother

was quite clear about the unwanted nature of all of her children: "I have heard my mother say on more than one occasion in her middle age that if she had lived her life again and knew as much as she did then she wouldn't have had one of us. She told me she even took gunpowder to get rid of me, mixing it to a paste in a soapdish on her washstand every night" (79). Faith expresses no anger or resentment towards her mother for the failed abortion. The understanding her mother was unhappy in her life but could not escape helped develop a certain acceptance in Faith if not while she was young, surely by the time she wrote her autobiography.

<17>The lack of maternal bonds is not at all unique. Kathleen Woodward also relates stories of the lack of intimacy with her mother noting, "Six children she reluctantly bore, and she was in the habit of saying in a curiously passionless tone that if she had known as much when her first child was born as she learned by the time she bore her sixth, a second child would never have been"(6). This is very reminiscent of Faith's relation of the reaction her mother had to her life of drudgery. Hannah Mitchell relates a very similar attitude towards children that is expressed by her mother: "My mother had bitterly resented my coming into the world, but the birth of these last two children seemed to be more than she could endure and our home became more unhappy than ever" (40). What would seem like an unusual situation of mothers wishing their children away, actually is much more common to these women. Maintaining mothers such as these mentioned, who while working hard for their families did not focus on emotional needs, could have fostered the same kind of development Chodorow insists happens to women at a young as is not supportable. Tolerating rather abhorrent behavior from their mothers appears to support the idea of relationality in the close relationship the working women feel towards their mothers; however, the tolerance relates more to a need to accept their childhood and make peace with the suffering they have been through.

<18>The focus inherent in the relational identity position favors a completely gendered theory of identity forgoing any discussion of class. Furthermore, normalizing bourgeois identity impedes a full appreciation of working class autobiography. As Regina Gangier notes, "Subjects who did not assume creativity, autonomy, and freedom; who expressed themselves in individuated voices with subjective desires; who were regardless of family relations; and who narrated no development or progress or plot never appeared in literature courses" (28). Through this lens, working class autobiographies are read as inadequate representations of the self. While I am not attempting to promote these writings as superior to other forms due to the oppression they represent, ignoring them as a whole limits our understanding of how working-women lived and thought of themselves in Victorian England. Ignoring the impact of class and gender on these texts also inhibits our understanding of the multitude of identity formation possible. These texts fail to adapt the traditional progression of autobiography; childhood, schooling, and later family life. Instead, they focus what appears a random collection of jobs and adversity. Also, while middle-class autobiographies have a linear sense of progression, working-women's writing creates a sense of stream-of-consciousness formation. This also includes moments of correcting prior memories as new thoughts arise. Emma Smith does this many times as she writes about her life. Her method seems unstructured and haphazard if looked at from a bourgeois standard of life writing. However, there is no lack of clarity or misunderstanding created by the revisions. The autobiography of Emma Smith has these revisions from the beginning: "I have written earlier on that I could not recall ever having anything but cheese and bacon while living with the Pratts. It was just as I recalled the memory of that of that fishing village that our one alternative diet

presented itself to my mind" (43). There is no sense of need to go back and revise; rather, Smith simply corrects herself as needed. By writing in this manner, and about subject matter that was not proper, Smith's autobiography did not get the attention it deserved as being an inadequate representation of life writing. Subsequently, middle-class women tend to organize their autobiography through the accomplishments of a husband and/or father; working-class women describe the, usually, multiple occupations and difficulties inherent in their life.

<19>While it could be assumed working women did not have the time or opportunity to write, the very fact some texts survived suggests we might have already lost some valuable works. The sad lack of life writing texts available lies partly in the acceptance of bourgeois standards for valuation as worthy of scholarship. All of the texts discussed demonstrate how inadequate the middle class ideas of morality and identity are for working class Victorian women. Since their life experience was completely unlike middle class women, their development must be unlike as well. Evaluating working women's identity by middle class norms denotes a failing to allow the women full identities in their own right. Identity development is not stalled or incomplete for the women discussed; rather, we discover development affected by enormous poverty and hardship. We, as critics, must acknowledge class and gender distinctions affecting development in working class women and celebrate their unique writings not condemn them for failing to conform to middle class male standards.

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