

«You're obliged to have recourse to bodies» Corporeal Proliferation, Class, and Literary Taste in M.E. Braddon's Revision of *The Outcasts*

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Abstract The sensation novel was frequently criticised for its corporeality and vulgar depictions of physical violence. M.E. Braddon was identified as a prime offender in this respect, yet Braddon's anonymous writing for the penny fiction market displays considerably more explicit emphasis on corporeality than any of her relatively restrained three-volume novels. In contrast to her middle-class novels, where, as her character Sigismund Smith advises, the emphasis should all be on «one body», Braddon's penny bloods proliferate bodies, in the dual sense of corpses (referred to by Smith in my title) and also through extensive casts of characters and multiple plot-lines. An analysis of the revisions Braddon made to her penny serial *The Outcasts* before its publication in 3 volumes as *Henry Dunbar* elucidates mid-Victorian perceptions of the «vulgarization» of taste and the «classed» nature of genres. Bourdieu's theory of «impure taste» is employed to assess the ways in which Braddon's treatment of «bodies» engages questions of literary taste and negotiates the different generic conventions operating between the penny serial and the 3-volume novel.

Keywords Bodies. Class. Mary Elizabeth Braddon. Taste.

Disgust is the paradoxical experience of enjoyment extorted by violence, and enjoyment which arouses horror. This horror, unknown to those who surrender to sensation, results fundamentally from removal of the distance, in which freedom is asserted, between the representation and the thing represented, in short, from *alienation*, the loss of the subject in the object, immediate submission to the immediate present under the enslaving violence of the «agreeable».

(Pierre Bourdieu)

During the 1860s, British literary critics and reviewers conducted a hostile campaign against sensation fiction, a sub-genre of the novel centred on crime and mystery, which was enjoying an unprecedented popularity with readers of all classes. Novels by Wilkie Collins, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Ellen Wood, Rhoda Broughton and others were attacked for their perceived immorality, their aesthetic deficiencies, and for «preaching to the nerves» of the reader (Mansel 1863, p. 482). Janice M. Allan notes that the «determination to 'recognise' and expose sensation fiction as a low and 'coarse'

form is a prominent feature, not only within the reviews of Braddon, but of the genre as a whole» (Allan 2013, p. 93). An important factor in the denigration of sensation fiction by Victorian critics was their assumption that the genre's emphasis on the physical – that is, on 'sensation' – necessarily rendered it inferior to literature which focused on more cerebral or indeed, spiritual concerns.

Of course, the basis for such an assumption lay in the Victorians' inheritance of a theory of aesthetics codified during the eighteenth century and promulgated by influential thinkers such as the third Earl of Shaftesbury and Immanuel Kant. During the period in which Mary Elizabeth Braddon began her literary career, the key tenets of Kantian aesthetics were being upheld and developed by cultural authorities, men such as G.H. Lewes, Matthew Arnold and John Ruskin, who were rich in symbolic capital. Moreover, as the novel became an increasingly significant form of imaginative literature, cultural mediators like Lewes and Arnold proceeded to apply judgments of taste based on the artistic ideal of the aesthetic to contemporary fiction, as part of a wider campaign which sought to define and protect a high culture tradition. In *Culture and Anarchy*, for instance, Arnold promotes the disinterestedness of Kantian aesthetics in his theory of culture, arguing for society to be «permeated by thought, sensible to beauty» and, as Allison Pease argues, his «cultural aesthetic continues the project of modern aesthetics to bring individual bodies into the realm of reason through a universal subjectivity based on the idea of culture» (Colini 1993, p. 79; Pease 2000, p. 43). The controversy over sensation fiction during the early years of the 1860s can be seen as part of this appropriation of Kantian ideas of disinterestedness by influential cultural mediators and intellectuals intent on drawing firm boundaries between a nascent yet encroaching mass culture and a high culture tradition of *belles lettres*.

In *Distinction*, Pierre Bourdieu argues that the concept of «pure» taste is based on a negation of the pleasure of the senses and a refusal of *aesthesis*, which literally translates as sensation (Bourdieu 1994, p. 486). He writes:

The denial of lower, coarse, vulgar, venal, servile – in a word, natural – enjoyment, which constitutes the sacred sphere of culture, implies an affirmation of the superiority of those who can be satisfied with the sublimated, refined, disinterested, gratuitous, distinguished pleasures forever closed to the profane. That is why art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfil a social function of legitimating social differences. (p. 7)

The mid-Victorian sensation novel – with its emphasis on physical action, the baser aspects of human experience, and sensual pleasure (of the characters and of the reader) – falls inevitably on the wrong side of this opposition between pure and impure. Sensation fiction was frequently criticised

for its insistent corporeality and unwholesome depictions of physical violence and sensuality. Margaret Oliphant, a staunch opponent of sensation fiction, identified Mary Elizabeth Braddon as a prime offender in this line and complained generally about the «fleshly and unlovely» portrayals in women's novels, with their «intense appreciation of flesh and blood, this eagerness of physical sensation» (Oliphant 1867, p. 259). Oliphant's comments are directed at Braddon's acknowledged three-volume novels, rather than the anonymous and pseudonymous productions she penned for the penny (and halfpenny) fiction market, which few people beyond Braddon's intimate circle were aware of. Yet these penny bloods display considerably more explicit emphasis on corporeality than any of Braddon's relatively restrained three-volume novels. Not only do they exaggerate the physicality of her more 'respectable' circulating-library fiction through a heightened emphasis on violence, rape, murder, suicide, and seduction, but Braddon's penny bloods proliferate bodies, through extensive casts of characters and multiple plot-lines, as well as in the sense of corpses. Her first novel, *The Trail of the Serpent*, for example, which began life as an obscure penny-part fiction entitled *Three Times Dead*, betrays these origins by the sheer number of corpses that litter its pages. And, as Mark Bennett has astutely noted of this novel: «Braddon's bodies lose any discrete meaning through their very excess within a textual world wherein suicides, factory accidents, murders and the presence of waterlogged corpses in a river [...] are all normative expectations» (Bennett 2011, p. 42). This is typical of penny bloods more generally and the very corporeality of such works is inextricably bound up with the classed experience of their target readers. As Sally Powell has argued, «Penny fiction writers followed the example of social commentators and were keen to evoke in their sensational urban expositions the sights and smells of the human and animal body that pervaded the buying and selling in slum areas» (Powell 2004, p. 47). In this article I will briefly discuss Braddon's relationship to the penny fiction market, before examining *The Outcasts*, a penny serial later revised for the circulating library market as *Henry Dunbar*, and consider the ways in which Braddon's revision of this text (chiefly through the eradication of surplus «bodies») engages questions of class, literary taste, and generic conventions.

The influence of sensational penny fiction, published in working-class periodicals, on the three-volume novels of Braddon, Wilkie Collins, Ellen Wood and other sensation novelists of the 1860s has long been noted. However, the precise nature of this relationship is rarely interrogated, with the result that our current understanding of the dynamics involved remains necessarily limited. For most conservative Victorian critics of the sensation novel, the influence was one of straightforward debasement on the standards of middle-class fiction; an unwelcome intrusion into the drawing room of gratuitous physicality, melodrama, and excess.

W. Fraser Rae admonished Braddon for publishing her «stories of blood and lust, of atrocious crimes» in «three volumes in place of issuing them in penny numbers». By doing so, Rae famously suggested, Braddon had made «the literature of the kitchen the favourite reading of the drawing room» (Rae 1865, p. 204). J.R. Wise in the *Westminster Review* similarly warned that the sensational «virus» was «spreading in *all* directions», yet the trajectory he describes is significantly a linear and an upward one: «from the penny journal to the shilling magazine, and from the shilling magazine to the thirty shillings volume». The source of «disease» is implied to issue upwards from the lower sections of society (Wise 1866, p. 268).

Yet, the extensive revisions Braddon made to her *London Journal* serial *The Outcasts*, before its publication in three-volumes as *Henry Dunbar*, intimate that her relationship to different markets and reading communities in the 1860s is suggestive of a more complex dynamic at work than a simple linear conception of influence. I also want to suggest that corporeality is central to Braddon's respective approach to various classed forms of fiction. Braddon, perhaps more than any of her contemporaries, bridged the gap between the penny fiction and circulating library markets by writing simultaneously for both. Moreover, her publishing practices in the 1860s also belie the linearity implied by Wise's comments, given that the movement of her fiction between various classed formats takes different paths on different occasions. The textual alterations between different versions of her work illuminate Braddon's (and perhaps also wider cultural) views about the differing characteristics and conventions operating in respective sections of the mid-Victorian periodical press.

Serializations of Braddon's fiction appeared in a number of periodicals, ranging from her partner John Maxwell's largely unsuccessful ventures into the working-class market – the ill-fated *Robin Goodfellow*, *The Sixpenny Magazine*, *The Halfpenny Journal*, and *The Welcome Guest* – through more established and popular penny weeklies such as the *London Journal*, to Maxwell's middle-class shilling monthlies *Temple Bar*, *St. James's Magazine*, and *Belgravia*. In addition to the serializations, her three-volume novels were usually followed relatively quickly by cheaper reprints, including the two shilling «yellowbacks» and one volume editions priced variously from 2s 6d to six shillings. Such a range of publishing practices and modes not only testifies to the rapid expansion of the mid-Victorian publishing industry in Britain, but also points to the way in which Braddon's fiction appealed to and was consumed by a wide cross-section of Victorian society, arguably undermining the idea of a strict segregation between the fiction consumed by the working classes and the middle classes.

Braddon's involvement in the penny fiction market was neither as limited nor as straightforward as it sometimes appears. The anonymous serials for her partner, John Maxwell's *Halfpenny Journal* – *The Black Band*, *Oscar Bertrand*, *The White Phantom*, and *The Octoroon* – do not constitute

the full extent of her contribution. *Lady Audley's Secret* began life as a serial in the *Sixpenny Magazine* (after the collapse of *Robin Goodfellow*); it then became a three-decker before going back down the social scale to become a serialisation in the penny weekly *London Journal*. *Aurora Floyd* also ran as a serial in the *London Journal*, subsequent to its appearance in three volumes, and *Run to Earth*, *Rupert Godwin*, and *Three Times Dead* were all penny serials before Maxwell repackaged them for a more upmarket readership.

The novel I focus on in this article, *The Outcasts*, was written as a serial specifically for the *London Journal*, before being reshaped for relatively polite consumption as the three-volume *Henry Dunbar* in 1864, and its journey from one medium to the other is instructive about mid-Victorian class assumptions.¹ It could be argued that by publishing in the working-class journals, and especially by publishing (essentially) the same work as both penny serial and three-volume novel, Braddon justified the hostile critics' assessment of her work as nothing more than what they derogatively termed «kitchen literature». A brief advertisement in the *Standard* in 1863 is succinct in its disdain: «Miss Braddon has commenced writing for the *London Journal*. Her new tale is called 'The Outcasts'. Miss Braddon has found her proper sphere» (Anon. 1863, p. 3). A much longer review of the revised *Henry Dunbar* in the *Examiner*, scathingly entitled «Kitchen Literature», was quick to point out the novel's less than respectable origins:

This is a highly-seasoned dish of tainted meat that has been already contrived and served up for a kitchen dinner by the great chef of the kitchen maids, and is now brought upstairs for the delectation of coarse appetites in the politer world. The story has been appearing in a penny journal for the kitchen under a title relishable [sic] to the readers of Penny Pirates and Female Highwaymen as «the Outcasts». (Anon. 1864a, p. 404)

The metaphor of Braddon's work as «meat» for «coarse appetites» was one which was employed regularly by reviewers to align such fiction with a debased (and debasing) concept of taste. Food and eating metaphors (and particularly reading as the consumption of adulterated or «tainted» food) in contemporary critical reviews also underlined the sensation novel's perceived vulgar corporeality – what Kant referred to as «the taste of the tongue, the palate and the throat» (Meredith 2006, p. 32). As Pamela Gilbert demonstrates, in her seminal study of Victorian women's popular

¹ *The Outcasts: Or, The Brand of Society* ran as a weekly serial in the *London Journal* between 12nd September 1863 and 26th March 1864. It was serialized almost simultaneously in the San Francisco literary magazine *The Golden Era*, from 25th October 1863 to 8th May 1864.

fiction, *Disease, Desire, and the Body*, sensation novels «are presented alternately as food and poison, medicine and illicit drugs, and finally the erotic body and the contaminated body. In all of these metaphors, the text is a substance that enters the reader and has an effect on him or her» (Gilbert 2005, p. 18). Moreover, it is not only the body of the reader which is constructed as permeable and open to contamination; boundaries between different classes of texts and readers are seen as permeable too. The distinct class boundaries implied in many of the reviews of sensation fiction were becoming increasingly more fluid and less stable within the mid-Victorian publishing market, hence the anxieties that arguably underpin the condemnations of Braddon, who was uncomfortably highlighting such fluidity in reading practices and tastes. Recent work by scholars, notably Andrew King, has demonstrated that the readership of the popular penny magazine *The London Journal* was probably more class-diverse than is sometimes assumed; Jennifer Phegley, for instance, has characterised the *Journal* as «a magazine that catered to upwardly mobile working- and lower-middle-class readers» (King 2004; Phegley 2011, p. 63). The extensive debates over sensation fiction during the 1860s reflect, in part, such anxieties regarding cross-class reading habits and shared literary tastes.

In an 1862 letter to her literary mentor, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Braddon admitted «I do an immense deal of work which nobody ever hears of, for Halfpenny and penny journals. This work is most piratical stuff, and would make your hair stand on end, if you were to see it» (Wolff 1974, p. 11). What is interesting about Braddon's statement here is not so much her acknowledgement of the literary shortcomings of such work, but the seemingly confident assumption that Bulwer would not see it, which points suggestively to the perceived fixed separatedness of the markets for working-class and middle-class periodicals, even if this was not always the reality. In supplying details of the kind of penny fiction she is engaged in writing anonymously, Braddon symbolically performs an action of cross-class circulation of literary material. Furthermore, she merely assumes that Bulwer would not be reading low-brow magazine fiction and the conjecture is a questionable one given the increasing mutability of mid-Victorian reading practices discussed above. As Louis James has noted of penny blood fiction:

Although its sensationalism could be cruder than middle-class reading, it is increasingly difficult to identify such literature as 'working class', in part because by the late nineteenth century the divisions between classes were easing. The 1870 Education Act, in particular, brought a more uniform literacy, and mass publication pulps [...] were aimed at a broad audience. (James 2011, p. 875)

Braddon's early career coincided with the initial stages of these shifts, and perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of her literary production

in the 1860s and 1870s is the way in which it straddled different types of literary markets, thereby reaching wide readerships across class and economic divides which, while not wholly unique, was distinctly unusual. During these decades, as Gilbert points out, «the carnivalesque popular cultural forms of the broadsheet and the ballad begin to give way to half-penny and penny-dreadful literature which cannot be separated in content from the circulating library novels of the middle classes, although the packaging remains ostentatiously distinct» (Gilbert 2005, p. 17). Braddon's repackaging of her penny fiction for a more upmarket readership uncomfortably highlighted this fact, since the content between the two genres remained essentially the same, despite her substantial revisions.

At the same time that Braddon was revising *The Outcasts* for publication as *Henry Dunbar*, she was also writing *The Doctor's Wife* (1864), her first bid for serious artistic recognition and the novel by which, so she informed Bulwer, Braddon felt she must «sink or swim» (Wolff 1974, p. 25). This is an interesting juxtaposition because *The Doctor's Wife* contains an extended self-reflexive meditation on the writing, production, and consumption of print culture, which I would argue feeds into her revision of *The Outcasts*. In *The Doctor's Wife* Braddon introduced Sigismund Smith, a penny fiction author whose entertaining views on the literary marketplace offer interesting insights into contemporary perceptions about the different generic conventions governing classed forms of literature. Smith enjoys his work, producing sensational reading for the masses, though he ruefully admits that «the penny public require excitement», a predilection which means «you're obliged to have recourse to bodies». Such excitement becomes addictive, Smith implies, so that «in penny numbers one body always leads on to another, and you never know, when you begin, how far you might be obliged to go» (Pykett 2008, p. 194). By contrast, he tells us, the middle-class market is satisfied with one corpse, and it is Smith's ambition to become the author of «a legitimate three-volume romance, with all the interest concentrated on one body» (p. 194). Significantly, in turning her own penny serial, *The Outcasts*, into a «legitimate» triple-decker, Braddon follows Smith's prescriptions to the letter. By eliminating a number of central characters and virtually half of the plot of the serialized version (including a second murder narrative), Braddon ensures that in the 'respectable' three-volume *Henry Dunbar* the focus is all on «one body». Smith's various observations on fiction writing and the expectations of different types of readers can be read therefore as a self-reflexive commentary on Braddon's concurrent revision of *The Outcasts* and the beliefs governing that process. In both novels she is arguably reflecting on her own positioning within Victorian print culture and wider questions about sensational literature and the author function.

The increasing fluidity of Victorian class distinctions, apparent in Braddon's reissuing of a penny serial as a three-volume novel, is also present as a thematic concern within *The Outcasts* and *Henry Dunbar*. Indeed,

the performativity of class is crucial to the plot, since the story hinges on the lower-class criminal, Joseph Wilmot's ability to successfully pass for a man of superior social position when he assumes the place of the rich banker, Henry Dunbar, whom he has murdered. The novel is also preoccupied with questions of identity, which feed in to the issues of textual identity produced by Braddon's rewriting. For example, when Joseph Wilmot transforms himself from shabby reprobate to respectable gentleman, class identity and social position are implied to be merely outward signifiers which may be assumed at will. Wilmot has his beard shaved off and «his ragged moustache trimmed into the most aristocratic shape»:

So far as the man's head and face went, the transformation was perfect. He was no longer a vagabond. He was a respectable, handsome-looking gentleman, advanced in middle age. Not altogether unaristocratic-looking. The very expression of his face was altered. The defiant sneer was changed into a haughty smile; the sullen scowl was now a thoughtful frown. (Beller 2010, p. 36)

Braddon implies that, rather than simply disguise himself outwardly with the signifiers of upper-middle class appearance, Wilmot actually inhabits a differently classed social body or even, in Bourdieu's terms, habitus. As Gilbert has suggested, «[t]he body, uncertainly poised between nature and culture, practices and signifies identity» (Gilbert 2005, p.15). Wilmot epitomizes this process, his social identity throughout the novel contingent on the outward appearance, manner, and conduct of his body. He completes his identity transformation by donning a new outfit of clothes, carefully selected for their conformity to upper-middle class notions of good taste:

He chose no gaudy colours, or flashily-cut vestments [...] It was the dress of a middle-aged gentleman; fashionable, but scrupulously simple, quiet alike in colour and in cut. [...] The man's manner was as much altered as his person. He had entered the shop at eight o'clock that morning a blackguard as well as a vagabond. He left it now a gentleman; subdued in voice, easy and rather listless in gait, haughty and self-possessed in tone. (Beller 2010, p. 37)

Just as Wilmot performs an identity that is socially superior to the one allotted to him, Braddon's text similarly assumes a 'higher' social status in its journey from penny serial to circulating library three-decker. Echoing Wilmot's metamorphosis, Braddon strips her *London Journal* serial of the most obvious indicators of its lower-class origins (which I will discuss below), thereby highlighting the idea that genre itself may be simply a question of external packaging, wherein the essential textual substance remains much the same.

While the three-volume version of the story retains the tropes of class performativity and the instability of social roles, what is significantly reduced in the revision process is the original text's emphasis on corporeality and the proliferation of bodies (both living and dead). The revisions Braddon made to her story, before its release as *Henry Dunbar*, were all designed to make the three-volume novel less melodramatic and supposedly more suited to middle-class tastes. The most important of these changes is the elimination of one of the main plot strands in the *London Journal* version, involving Laura Dunbar's husband, Philip Jocelyn. In *The Outcasts*, Jocelyn is one of the main characters and the serial's first instalment is concerned solely with him. He is also the heir to an Earldom, and in the course of the serialization becomes Lord Haughton – a literal rags-to-riches story, given that the opening chapter finds him living in poverty in a London slum with his gin-addicted wife. This melodramatic plot strand involves Jocelyn's secret first marriage to a woman of inferior social position, and the murder of his wife on the eve of his marriage to the wealthy Laura Dunbar. The young son of this ill-fated first marriage is stolen, and restored to his father in time to be identified as the rightful heir to the Earldom, just before Philip Jocelyn dies. Braddon cut this entire part of the plot and later used it for her short story «Lost and Found» (1866). Other variations include the character of Major Vernon who, in the *London Journal* serial, goes by the more comically melodramatic pseudonym Herr Von Volterchoker, and is responsible for hiding Lord Haughton's son, while blackmailing the Earl over his first wife's murder. The name change is characteristic of Braddon's more general eradication of overly melodramatic elements common to the penny serial. Additionally, the fact that Vernon / Von Volterchoker becomes a much more minor character in the revised three-volume version of the novel (as does Philip Jocelyn) helps to focus the preponderance of narrative attention on to one protagonist, the eponymous Henry Dunbar, alias Joseph Wilmot. The significance of this shift will be considered below.

Recalling Sigismund Smith's comments that the penny fiction reader demands numerous corpses, *The Outcasts* features two separate murders, a gruesome fatal horse-racing accident, the shooting of a horse, and a number of natural deaths of both minor and central characters. Moreover, there is a decided focus on the physical aspects of death in contrast to the revised *Henry Dunbar*, where the one murder that is retained is not described for the reader but rather happens 'off-stage'. In *The Outcasts*, bodies are insistently brought under the reader's gaze in a way that emphasizes the text's preoccupation with corporeality. Characters in *The Outcasts* are also regularly forced to an awareness of the physical, in the same way that Braddon's readers are unable to avert their gaze from the spectacle of bodies. Laura Dunbar describes to her new husband Philip Jocelyn the horror of viewing a woman found dead on their wedding day, un-

aware at this point that the dead woman is actually her husband's first wife:

He [...] led me out from this house into the dark night, and led me on until we came to a stream of black, troubled water, and on the flat shore beside that troubled water there lay the body of a woman, drowned, Philip—drowned, poor wretched creature. The moon had been hidden by the clouds until that moment, but in that moment the clouds swept away, and I saw the woman's face. (Braddon 1863-1864, vol. 40, p. 105)

Despite the darkness of the night, the movement of the clouds and the brightness of the moon illuminate the woman's corpse at the crucial moment, and this may be seen as figurative of the text's voyeuristic tendencies more generally. Braddon's serial works on the visceral emotions of the reader, inviting somatic responses of disgust, excitement, revulsion. In Bourdieu's theorization of taste, the cultured «taste of reflection» occurs at the level of the intellect rather than embodied materiality (Bourdieu 1994, p. 490). Braddon's novel, where the bodily appetites of both the characters and the readers are foregrounded, is therefore relegated to the space of the impure and vulgar because it lacks the necessary distance from the corporeal that defines «pure taste».

By contrast, the murder in *Henry Dunbar* is treated quite differently to that of Agatha Jocelyn in *The Outcasts*. Where the moonlight illuminates the dead woman's face in the latter, forcing Laura Dunbar to view the horror, in *Henry Dunbar*, the corpse of the murdered banker is preserved suggestively from the reader's eyes: «All this time the body of the murdered man lay on a long table in a darkened chamber at the Forester's Arms. The rigid outline of the corpse was plainly visible under the linen sheet that shrouded it; but the door of the dread chamber was locked» (Beller 2010, p. 71). Undeniably, this episode retains the sensationalism of penny bloods, as it similarly continues the emphasis on corporeality. However, here the corpse significantly is «shrouded» and located in a «darkened» place. Although the outline is «plainly visible», physical death is yet distanced and shielded from the reader's direct gaze. Just as the middle-class sensation novel eschews the working class slums for a more genteel and domestic milieu than penny bloods, so too does Braddon's revision here imply that sensational fiction that aims to masquerade as so-called respectable literature must veil the more sordid and vulgar aspects of life to a greater degree. The «shrouded» corpse in *Henry Dunbar* operates as an effective metaphor for the cosmetic alterations that occur between Braddon's penny fiction and her circulating library work.

It is not just in the matter of corpses that *The Outcasts* inscribes its 'vulgar' status, but in a graphic insistence on the body and degradation more generally. In the opening chapters, Philip Jocelyn tramps home to his filthy garret in a slum, with bread and meat for his young son who is at the point

of starvation. The descriptions of the London slums, the humble garret, and the characters themselves, all focus on the corporeal. For instance, the first introduction to Jocelyn's wife, Agatha, insistently emphasises the physical aspects of her degradation: «A woman was lying on the bed – a woman who was young and had once been pretty, but whose bloated face bore upon it the most horrible evidence that a woman's face can bear, the fatal stamp which brands the besotted countenance of a drunkard» (Braddon 1863-1864, vol. 39, p. 162). These early chapters are marked by «the sights and smells of the human and animal body» referred to by Powell as characterizing the penny blood (Powell 2004, p. 47); Braddon details the physical sensations of extreme hunger, and the smells and sounds, as well as the visual dejection of the Jocelyns' hovel, where the «besotted wretch [Agatha, is] sleeping off the fumes of gin» (Braddon 1863-1864, vol. 39, p. 162). Faces and bodies bear the imprint of their physical sufferings; the narrator states of Jocelyn that «[d]espair was stamped as plainly upon the man's face as if the letters that make up the word had been branded upon his forehead by a red-hot iron» (vol. 39, p. 162). And in a trope that is carried through (in a more modified form) to the revised three-decker, identity is repeatedly shown to be inherently bound up with the physical body. A prime example of this in *The Outcasts* is Philip Jocelyn's decision to get Herr Von Volterchoker to tattoo his young son, Georgey, with an earl's coronet and the initials G.J. Only by literally inscribing the boy's true identity on the body can Jocelyn later reclaim his son and prove his claim to the Haughton title and wealth. By eliminating Philip Jocelyn's story from the revised version of the novel, Braddon eradicates these scenes and, in doing so, significantly alters the milieu of her text. The filthy slums and gypsy camps of *The Outcasts*, more familiar territory for the penny blood, are removed to leave the respectable London banking house and country estates of *Henry Dunbar*.

The change to the title itself is also significant. The plural title of *The Outcasts* is fitting for the serial, reflecting the extensive cast of characters and multiple plot threads more typical of penny fiction; the plurality of bodies signifies the way in which proliferation and excess are the keynotes. The shift to the singular *Henry Dunbar* can arguably be read as an attempt to contain the text, to limit its dangerous proliferation. For the revised text's focus on one body (as Sigismund Smith prescribes) applies not only to the one corpse (the murdered Henry Dunbar, as opposed to the multiple deaths and murders in *The Outcasts*) but also to one protagonist, thereby providing a focus on the individual subject more appropriate to middle-class forms of the novel. This is epitomized, for example, in the popularity with the Victorians of the *bildungsroman*, which as Michael Minden has argued, is «overt in its representation of the humanist subject» (Minden 2011, p. 12). Braddon's eradication of surplus bodies, therefore, might be read as a shift from the penny blood's emphasis on collectivity

rather than individualism, and on proliferation (of bodies and identities), to a centralizing of the liberal humanist subject typical of the bourgeois novel. That Braddon deliberately revised her penny serial to conform to these tenets suggests her acceptance of the dominant middle-class views about the aesthetic ideals and function of the novel, as well as her desire to position her own (revised) work within a genre marked by superior cultural capital. As the 1860s progressed, Braddon's assessment of the differing generic conventions and tastes operating within the mid-Victorian literary marketplace became progressively challenged, leading to an increased scepticism regarding the supposed different tastes of the respective classes.

In the early 1860s, Braddon had few illusions about the nature of her hack work for the *Halfpenny Journal*; to Bulwer she complained that «the amount of crime, treachery, murder, slow poisoning & general infamy required [by the penny serial reader] is something terrible» (Wolff 1974, p. 126). Increasingly, though, she came to realise that this was perhaps also true of many of her more «respectable readers», since she despondently acknowledged to Bulwer Lytton that *Henry Dunbar*, which she herself saw as aesthetically inferior, sold more copies than *The Doctor's Wife*, to which she gave her «best thoughts» (p. 28). In a later letter, Braddon is found complaining about the «circulating library reader whose palette [sic] requires strong meat, & is not very particular as to the quality thereof» (p. 14). The comment suggestively echoes her earlier stigmatisation of the penny-fiction reader and implies Braddon's increasing scepticism of conventional views concerning the differing tastes of the classes, as well as dominant claims regarding the essential distinction between penny fiction and more middle-brow forms of literature. As Andrew King has suggested, «Braddon was suspicious that the zones were not after all separated in terms of literary techniques – which renders all the more urgent the discovery of a way to keep them apart so as to justify their differing cultural status» (King 2004, p. 40).

Despite the concessions Braddon made to what she clearly assumed were the different conventions and tastes operating between the penny serial and the three-volume novel, not all reviewers appreciated her efforts. A critic for the conservative *Morning Post*, in a more general discussion of Braddon's work, signalled his preference for the earlier penny serial version *The Outcasts* over the later, more respectable *Henry Dunbar*: «'The Outcasts' (for it would be unjust to Miss Braddon to refer to the mutilated edition published under the title of 'Henry Dunbar', in order to disguise the odour of popular penny literature from aristocratic nostrils in the western world) was a great achievement of genius» (Anon. 1865, p. 2). The reference to «aristocratic nostrils» is surprisingly suggestive of the reviewer's scorn for the disdain in which penny fiction is held by the cultural élite. It is perhaps even more unexpected that a middle-class reviewer would

uphold Braddon's original penny serial as a work of «genius», while dismissing the revised three-volume version as «mutilated». Similarly, some critics who were seemingly unaware of the previous incarnation of *Henry Dunbar* in a penny magazine did not perceive any significant difference between this novel and those novels Braddon had written with a middle-class readership firmly in mind. Indeed, a reviewer of *Henry Dunbar* for *The Times* concluded that: «In spite of haste, and in spite of mistakes, we are inclined to think that this last novel is not in any respect inferior to the same author's previous works, while in method of treatment and in moral elevation it belongs to a higher style of art than she has yet approached» (Anon. 1864b, p. 4). This validation of a work originally written for the penny fiction market, by reviewers in middle-class London newspapers, arguably complicates dominant scholarly views of the monolithic nature of the attacks on sensation fiction, which are primarily based on the more famous and often-cited critiques by W. Fraser Rae in the *North British Review* and Henry Mansel in the *Quarterly Review*. Examination of reviews and articles outside of the élite quarterlies suggests that middle-class views about literary sensationalism were far from uniform. One reviewer was content to pronounce *Henry Dunbar*

one of the happiest efforts of this talented writer [...] unquestionably taking higher ground as regards artistic construction and skilful delineation of character. Its superiority in these two important essentials to the majority of Miss Braddon's earlier attempts in the same direction, is indeed [...] marked. (Anon. 1864c, p. 697)

The reference here to Braddon's «artistic construction» and «skilful delineation of character» contrasts sharply with the *Morning Post's* reviewer's complaint about the «mutilation» of the original serial version. Such disparity of critical opinion points to the complexity of the mid-Victorian aesthetic discourse on the novel and the frequently overlooked lack of consensus about the aesthetic position of sensation fiction within the larger literary-critical establishment. It is intriguing that of all this text's multiple identities - as a serial in the *London Journal*, a serial in the *The Golden Era*, a three volume novel, plus multiple theatrical dramatizations of both versions (for example, an adaption of *The Outcasts* by Hazelwood and of *Henry Dunbar* by Tom Taylor) - the most respectable version (*Henry Dunbar* in 3 volumes), for the *Morning Post* reviewer at least, is the «mutilated» version. One might suggest that the literary construction of the humanist subject of middle-class fiction is reliant on such a mutilation, if not eradication, of bodies.

Braddon's revision of her penny serial into a circulating novel for the middle classes illustrates that the key difference between the two classed genres was largely cosmetic rather than a matter of intrinsically divergent

tastes. An emphasis on corporeality – on bodies, in the double sense of physical bodies and textual bodies – is arguably a primary connecting feature between working-class penny bloods and the 1860s sensation novel; the distinction is simply a matter of the degree of prominence. Braddon's revision process demonstrates her adherence at this point in her career to commonly held beliefs about the aesthetics of the novel in the period, and, by reducing the number of «bodies» in her three-volume novel, she attempts to conform to those principles. However, the decidedly mixed reception of *Henry Dunbar* by middle-class critics points to the complexity of literary discourse in a crucial period of transition for the novel. With the rise of mass readerships and a more competitive and commercially-driven publishing industry, the perceived vulgar taste of the 'lower' classes was feared to be infecting the middle-class literary body. In the 1860s, theories of culture – of the function of literature and of criticism – and notions of culture as a political concept were in their infancy. The sensation fiction controversy contributed to the formation of such ideas and authors like Braddon, who came to represent the vulgarization of middle-class literary taste, often suffered, in terms of their critical reception and reputation, as casualties in the nascent war for cultural control.

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