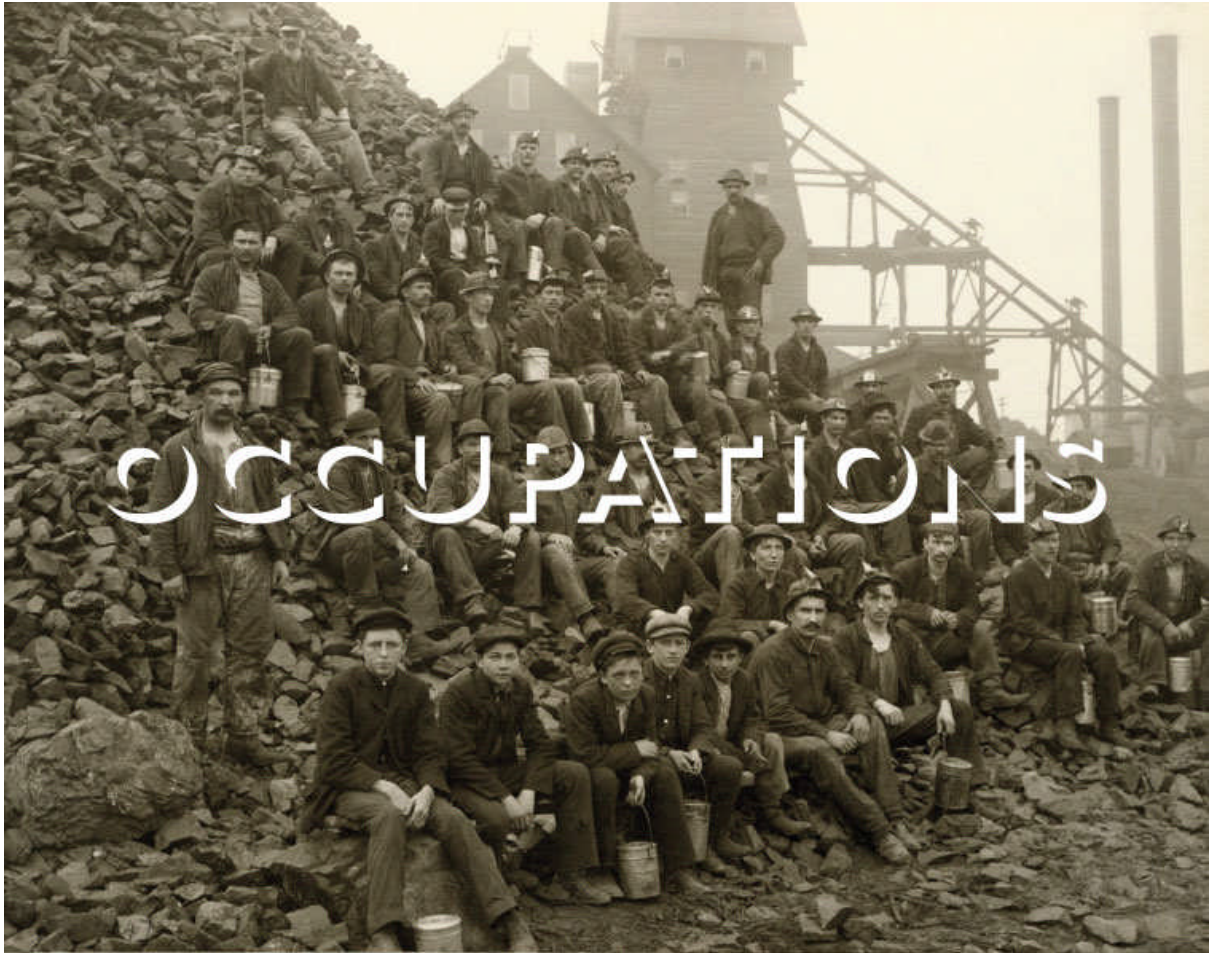


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Robert Stearn, 'A Monstrous Ideal: Early Modern Servant Emblems and the Skilfulness of Methods, Animals, and Cyborgs'

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A Monstrous Ideal: Early Modern Servant Emblems and the Skilfulness of Methods, Animals, and Cyborgs

Today, the word ‘skilful’ is commonly used either to describe an action done by a person (a skilful pirouette), or to describe a person in relation to a repertoire of actions (a skilful dancer). A member of a companion species undertaking a task with humans might also be called skilful—for example, a dog rounding up sheep. Attributing skill to the dog and their activity in this way could be thought to stretch our sense of what skill is. It renders the dog more minded, animate, or aware than we would otherwise consider them (Chen, 2012). Early modern writers thought of their servants as uncertain candidates for skill in a similar manner, but used a significantly different idea of skill when doing so. Servants were denied skill

because their 'office' or 'condition' was neither trade nor occupation and their labour was conceived of as a work of fidelity without practical expertise (Haywood, 1743, p.9). Yet servants were not tools: their activity could be brought into contact with skill by their masters, in virtue of the property that masters had in their services and the jurisdiction they enjoyed over their persons. This essay draws on graphic and textual sources in order to explore how early modern English society thought about servants' unequal participation in skill. It asks: by what oblique and figurative means were servants placed in relation to skill? How do the meaning, mode, and technique of this placing change through 150 years from the late sixteenth century? What shifts in the formulation of master-servant relations, the constitution of servants' personalities, and the configuration of the concept 'skill' do these changes register and promote?

Section one outlines some early modern senses of 'skill'. It looks closely at one use of the word 'skilful' and sketches how skill was understood to be distributable across companionate assemblages of animals, methods, and traditions, as well as human persons (Puar, 2012). Section two then examines what place seventeenth-century servant owners considered their expertise to have in relations between masters and servants. It considers what points of tension there are between the ways of using 'skilful' that have so far been traced. Section three turns to prints and paintings, concentrating on a few emblems that depict 'ideal' servants as cyborgs made of human and non-human animal parts attached to instruments of domestic service. It suggests that transformations in the mode and content of this series of images present graphically some shifts in the ways that skill was related to servants and their work, which resemble uses of the concept explored in the first half of the essay. Finally, the essay makes some arguments about the relation of alterations in the verbal and visual languages of skill to transformations in the framework of early modern employment law and the social and economic position of servants. In so doing, it hopes to restore historicity to skill and provide a novel perspective on the period's practical division of knowledge, the attention it paid to the affective component of social hierarchy and conflict, and the part played by skill in constituting other early modern categories, especially 'women' (Riley, 1988; Scott, 1986; Weil, 1999; Wiseman, 2006).

I. Skill, Skilled, Skilful

Unlike ‘property’, or ‘contract’, ‘skill’ was not a key word in early modern philosophical and legal lexicons; it was pivotal, but untheorised. Where ‘art’ had caché ‘skill’ was a form of knowledge or capacity whose outline and mode of acquisition remained fuzzy. ‘Art’ and ‘skill’ might be synonyms, or they might be used to distinguish a discipline or trade from a way of operating: one might be skilled in an art, but not vice versa. Drafting *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* in 1671, Locke considers how we come to have ideas of substances:

several persons extend the same name to a collection of a greater or smaler number of sensible qualitys proportionably as they have been more or less acquainted with or accurate in examining all the qualitys of any subjects which comes under one denomination v.g. a skilful horsman would deny that the name horse belongd to that which another would cal horse because the collection of sensible qualitys or simple Ideas which he thought belongd to the word horse were found in that which the skilfull horse man cald mule (Locke, 1990, p.9).

Here, the skilful horseman is not just a very good horseman. The primary sense is that he knows a lot about horses and so can speak with authority about them. (In his *Essay*, following early modern legal formulae, Locke says that we evaluate the likely veracity of testimony according, among other criteria, to ‘the skill of the witnesses’ (Locke, 1975, p.656)). Skill means knowledge garnered through careful study of, or conversance with, a typical object, body of learning, or locale. Skill was not something of which one person might possess several: it is not that the horseman has gained a few different, qualitatively distinct, or transferable skills in the course of looking after horses. The horseman has skill because he is better acquainted with his object than other people, but not in a way that produces knowledge specific to a discipline. Moreover, to be ‘skilled in’ a certain subject or area did not necessarily imply the ability to perform actions with the body or manipulate material objects. Skill was an intellectual as well as manual capacity. It was rarely used simply for practical know-how. Often, to be skilled in the management of political, commercial, or personal affairs implied deviousness: skill as ‘cunning’ (Locke, 1692, p.2).

Early modern writing about the skilfulness of people may less crisply be distinguished from ways of talking about the skilfulness of (personified) disciplines: both hold information gathered from experience around a set of things and remain

tied to those things.¹ Henry Swinburne's handbook on canon law pushes on this commonality:

These Distinctions betwixt words of the *present* and *future* time, and likewise betwixt words signifying the *beginning* and *execution* of any Act ... may well be compared unto the Thred which *Ariadne* gave unto *Theseus* ... By Distinctions we discern the Scent and Foot-steps (as it were) of each Man's purpose and intent, thereby, like Blood-hounds, we are taught to trace and hunt out the very Center of each Man's thought, so far as it is possible with Human Industry, though the way be never so intricate:... Hence it is, that Distinctions are termed (of some) the next Neighbours of Truth, being skilful and faithful Guides whereby Men escape the Erroneous By-paths of False Opinions (Swinburne, 1686, pp.65-66).²

Distinctions are introduced as facts about words, but at the same time 'Distinction' is the name of the activity that Swinburne practises in the text. Then 'Distinctions' become a helping instrument, given by a helping person (Ariadne; the later 'faithful Guides'). These skilful distinctions are animated by Swinburne. They are part of a scene: part Minos' labyrinth, part hunt, part topographical allegory for the conduct of the understanding and the soul. This scene contains Swinburne and his readers: he identifies the plural first person with bloodhounds, searching out a quarry. These dog-like companions of distinctions—we who are guided in and out of the labyrinth that both contains personified intentions and is itself the tangled landscape of intention—are also possessors of specifically 'human' industry. Just as these figures are both the animal attachments of 'Distinctions' and their human users—servant and served; pupil and collaborator—so their 'Distinctions' are the thread and its donor together: both guide and instrument, part of a sketched-out neighbourhood of personified concepts. Distinctions are a property of language, an activity, and a method informed by tradition (part of scholastic logic). They are skilful because they are used to aid discrimination (an activity that is skilful and done by people who are skilled), but also because they are repositories of the knowledge and experience of people with skill and the product of these people's activities. They can be called skilful when in use, when their skilfulness is recognised and unfolded by practitioners with a corresponding skill. Skill is a capacity distributed among qualitatively different elements arranged together and arising from their collaboration; it animates objects. These valences Swinburne affords the word 'skilful' are characteristic of the seventeenth century and find a correlate in the servant emblem contemporary with them discussed in section three.

II. Servants and Masters

Drawing on Swinburne's sense of 'skilful', this section sketches an account of servants' (lack of) skill and the kind of skill or knowledge masters were supposed to have in governing servants. Across the period, service was understood both in a broad sense, as a founding institution of society in which all subjects were either servant or served and power was the ability to command service; and, more narrowly, as naming an occupational group with a historically variable composition, organisation, and status (Neill, 2000, pp.19-20; Kahn, 1999, p.85; Steinfeld, pp.56-59). By circa 1700 the latter usage had eclipsed the former. Servants were everywhere, making up between eleven and thirteen per cent of the population (Laslett, 1972, p.152). However, the idea of having skill in their occupation was not part of seventeenth- or eighteenth-century culture's understanding of what a servant was, nor part of servants' public understanding of what they did (Shepard, 2008; Shepard and Spicksley, 2011). Service was not a trade: it laid claim to no particular expertise and servants (narrowly construed) were regarded as a dependent and servile class. Concomitantly, from the mid seventeenth-century onwards, servants were mostly women, mostly young and (in London) mostly migrants (Kent, 1989 p.115; Earle, 1989, pp.343-45; Meldrum, 2000, pp.17-19).

Several durable and popular handbooks set out the duties of servants that followed from their servile and unspecialised state. *A Present for Servants* explains that what servants owe to their masters is not expertise, but love and fidelity, and a scrupulous refusal to waste the time their masters pay for. Servants' time belonged to their masters for as long as they had contracted to be occupied about their business (Mayo, 1693, 1726, 1794; cf. Haywood, 1743; Zinzano, 1725). Doing whatever they are asked to do with genuine love comes to be the whole definition of their work and evacuates the possibility of their own skill.³ This feature of servants' work is more emphasised from the late seventeenth century onwards, as the population of servants written about shifts from gentlemanly serving men towards menial servants.

Unsurprisingly the skill of masters is not as neglected as that of servants. Lancelot Andrews writes that the duty the master owes the servant is precisely, '[s]kill in governing' (Andrews, 1650, p.353). Walter Blith adds an affective counterpart for masters to the fidelity demanded of servants:

carefull ingenious Overseers of the Labourers ... will awe men more with their wise industrious oversight, and skill in mens frame of Spirits, and wise designing each man to his place and work, that al of them shal be as members of the Body, co-adjutors to the whole, one take it from another, so as no work be done twice over, nor one mans labour bear out another mans sloth, but each be helpfull to another, so as to advance the main. I tell you this is a mystery (Blith, 1652, p.64).⁴

‘Mystery’ is another term in the orbit of skill, often used for the craft expertise gained through apprenticeship in organised trades (Rule, 1987; Simonton, 1998). Throughout the *Improver*, it is the word Blith uses for the methods of improving the land that he has pursued, modified, and now recommends: an experimental knowledge like the overseer’s skill. That skill, moreover, is in both the social relations of the labour process and the psychological tendencies of its human parts (‘skill in mens frame of spirits’) and also in the specific practicalities of the task at hand (the overseer will have, as Blith has not, ‘particular experience in each work’). The work itself, as a process, a configuration of tasks, and an object—allotted by the overseer, who ‘sorts all his works’ into the labourers hands—is an arrangement with humans in it, figured as an animal with the capacity to work and to convey itself, in need of tending and oversight (later Blith uses the phrase ‘a work in its geares’, which refers to a horse in harness and tackle ready to pull (*OED*, 1891)). Overseers’ skill, for Blith, is what puts people, knowledge, attitudes and capacities to work as one, so that labourers collaborate in the work and are moments in the whole wisely-designed activity—members of a mystical and political Body. Without the overseer, there would be no skill in action. Here is an idea of how skill distributed within a configuration of agents and objects, figured as an animal—as in Swinburne—might look when its components are persons and the matter of rural agriculture. However, skill in Blith is not distributed equally: the overseer (an artisan, not a labourer) is a privileged locus of skill in a way that Swinburne’s heroic bloodhounds are not (Rule, 1987, p.109).

III. Skill Depicted

The rest of the essay looks at how shifts in the way servants are depicted and described in a series of emblems present a graphic correlative to the ways of thinking about skill that the first two sections have traced through written materials. In two mid-seventeenth century political satires, an old European emblematic tradition of the good servant combines with a sixteenth-century set of

visual allegories displaying the discord fermented by litigation. Elements from the two collections of figures furnish the features of a composite servant-monopolist, the target of the satire. This section questions what is at stake in this convergence and looks at two subsequent related depictions of ideal servants (one late seventeenth, one early eighteenth century), in order to map some shifts in the conventional relation between servants and skill and the ways in which this relation was presented.⁵

The production of emblems of the good or trusty servant is a French tradition dating from at least the fifteenth century (Burnett, 1992, pp.247-49; Godfrey, 1925, p.210; Madden, 1852, pp.12-13). A French woodcut, *Le bon serviteur* depicts a monstrous ideal servant-animal (Anon, 1597) [Illustration 1]. The verses underneath state that one who wants to serve well:

Must have the ears of an ass,
 Feet of a deer and snout of a pig.
 Not to spare one's flesh or one's skin,
 To work all the time without feigning

The image and its gloss initiate the very slowly changing framework of qualities within which skill is related to servants. The figure appears in England in 1577 (Jones, 2010, p.311); in the 1580s John Hoskyns had a similar emblem, *The Trusty Servant*, painted on the wall by the kitchens of Winchester College, to which he added a Latin expansion of the French verse (Burnett, 1992, p.244). The image has a pig's snout (meaning it is not fussy about food), ass's ears (because it bears its master's anger patiently), stag's feet (because it is quick on errands), and padlocked lips (because it knows how to keep secrets). It was repeatedly repainted and is still extant. Unlike Mayo's book, it is also continually altered and its clothing updated into the nineteenth century (Burnett, 1992, p.251). The tools in his hands (trowel and poker in the repainted image) are no longer individually as specifically symbolic as those of *Le bon serviteur*; they indicate just that he is 'apt to labour'. The figure that will be combined with the good servant is *Lis* (litigation, litigiousness), which appears in a Dutch series of eight engravings, *Litis Abusus* (The Abuses of the Law), dating probably from the 1580s (Goltzius, 1597). *Lis* has press screws for legs, a wolf or fox's head, fish hooks for hands, and a hell-mouth and lion's maw for a torso: it consumes, predated, pressurises and damns.

In 1641 there are printed two images which select from the repertoire of parts and qualities found in these two strands, in order to make a moral and political

point. They are both topical satires on merchants and nobles who were caught out by Parliament's official cessation of monopolies in 1641 (Pierce, 2008). The first is an etching, *Picture of a Pattenty* (Hollar, 1641)—subsequently redone with verses in Dutch and English (Danckerts, 1641)—and the second is *The Complaint of M. Tenter-hooke the Projector, and Sir Thomas Dodger the Patentee*—a broadside featuring a woodcut of the tenterhook figure that is clearly based on Hollar's patentee, with verses by John Taylor (Taylor, 1641). The verses beneath the Hollar etching [Illustration 2] tell us that the figure (almost identical to *Lis*, including press-screw legs, and festooned with cash and bags of the goods for which he has patents) is one 'whose Hogs-head now doth vent / Naught but Peccavies, since the Parliament', but also describes him as a 'wolf-like devourer of the Common Wealth'. Obviously not a pig's, the figure's head is not clearly that of a wolf either. The labels indicate that the figure had a monopoly on wine, so the hogshead as measurement may refer to that, or it could be that the verses are meant to remind the viewer of the ideal servant (with pig's head) print as well as the etching to which they are affixed. Through alluding to the established iconography of devoted service, the print points up the contrasting rapaciousness of the patentee, 'him that hath scru'd us all' (Pierce, 2008, p.94).

That rapaciousness is folded back in to the ideal servant emblem in Mr. Tenter-hooke's speech in *The Complaint* (a link to this image is provided).⁶ The predatory servant-patentee figure of Hollar's etching is split into master and servant/apprentice: an index of the potentially sinister qualities of the ideal servant emblem, made visible in the context of political conflict over corruption and arbitrary power. Both are called 'monster' and 'vermin'. Although the cyborg's head is still that of a fox or wolf, Taylor's verses clearly refer to the *Bon Serviteur*-type emblem: 'I put a *Swines face* on, an *Asses eares*'. Now that a hierarchy is established between two figures (the projector and the patentee), that relation dictates that the dependant one must be the composite: the name of 'patentee' (the cyborg in Hollar's etching) is now attached to the superior, who is an undivided human. The attitude of the two figures, the richer clothing of the patentee, as well as the supplicatory verses that the projector speaks here ('I tooke the pains ... / For you'), makes clear his dependency on the patentee (he hopes for his protection, as a retainer might). Tenter-hooke is the patentee's 'Spanniell' and 'journey-man', who brings the material to be made into saleable garments: 'I found *Stuffe*, and you brought it so about / You (like a skilfull Taylor) cut it out'. He is a servant as well as a made figure: a composite, not built of the stuff of patents, but to which is attached that stuff,

including bags labelled ‘raggs’ and ‘pynns’ in Hollar’s etching. He has been put together and shaped by his master the patentee’s skill (he also refers to himself as a ‘Scarcrow’). The familiar emblematic animal features have a different value attached to them, now indicating not laudable deference and humility but unprincipled service of a private interest. The press-screws’ significance has also changed. They are part of Tenter-hooke’s service to his master and bolstering of his person: ‘Screwes, to raise thee high or low’. Tenter-hooke claims that he was ‘Screw’d up too high’ (under pressure to overreach) at the patentee’s command. So, as well as to fears over the treachery and ‘domestic enmity’ of servants who aim only at their own gain and are liable to bring down households and larger polities (Neill, 2000, pp.40-45), the print (and the method of its adaptation, splitting Hollar’s single figure in two) also speaks to contemporary efforts to define the bounds of good service: when is it admissible for a servant to resist the unlawful directions of their master (Evet, 2005, pp.109-32)? The print renders these anxieties in the figure of a servant whose antisocial potential is expressed and carried out through a cyborg body shaped by the skill of his master.

This Age’s Rarity: Or, The Emblem of a Good Servant Explain’d (Anon, 1682) [Illustration 3] has the hind’s feet of the trusty servant emblems, but apparently greater access to skill through the tools he holds in his hands. The image is newly cut for the late seventeenth century: the coat with minimal collar and low horizontal slits for pockets that the chimera wears was then a new style. *Rarity* has some skill: he holds in his hands the instruments of some high status arts or trades whose proper use depends on a skill that is not conventionally servants’ (unlike *The Trusty Servant*, who holds a shovel and poker: instruments of service). As well as a faintly masonic compass and set square (recalling personifications of geometry, one of the seven liberal arts (Cleyn, 1645)), *Rarity* has a mallet, ruler, and chisels. He has the accoutrements of painting (one ‘skill’ among the ‘useful arts’ Locke says he would prefer young gentlemen to learn in order to increase their ‘dexterity and skill’ (Locke, 1996, pp.153-54)). Since *Rarity* has a face—though not a wholly human head—his person is a more viable locus or repository of skill than earlier images. In this way, the form of his relation to skill seems closest to the one found among Swinburne’s Distinctions-enabled guides and hunters: he is not only an instrument, but a user of them. However, that ‘he’ is liable to be dispersed, since these are tools proper to his master’s business, not his own: through the instruments he holds, the servant depicted in *Rarity* participates in skill by carrying out the intention, knowledge, and expertise that are supposed resident in his master, but which can only emerge when servant and instruments are assembled with the master and

used. Early modern employment law provides an armature for the idea of skill lent to a servant in virtue of their relation with a master. In no sense a doctrine of explicitly ‘free’ labour, it couched masters’ control over servants’ work both in terms of masters’ ownership—servants leasing their labour to masters, who have a property in their services—and of their jurisdiction over the persons of their servants. It understood servants to put into action the unused capacities of their masters, so that they had no property in or rights over the products of their labour (Steedman, 2009, pp.45-64; Steinfeld, 1991, pp.55-85; Tully, 1980, pp.108-17).

Other aspects of the class and gender presentation of the servant complicate this account of his skill, however. The coat he wears was designed for everyday wear, which also provided less occasion for obvious class distinction—but the neckwear is notably sparse, and if he wears a wig it is not an imposing one (Cumming, 1984, pp.111, 117)). He seems to be wearing a livery coat—an immediately recognisable form of occupational clothing that doubly sets him apart from most servants, the majority of whom were women working in small households (Styles, 2007, p.51, 296). He wears what looks like a scold’s bridle. The explanatory verses say it is to make him slow to speak and call it a muzzle (taking up Hoskyns’ addition of a padlock to the French woodcut): if this saves him from feminisation, it is at the expense of his re-expulsion into non-human animality. Although the print is about the generic male servant it indicates what is worse about women, who are not even candidates for the ideal servant.⁷ The image describes itself as an emblem (as do Hoskyns’ verses to the Winchester painting and descriptions of the European ‘good servant’ tradition), but holds the popular form of the broadside emblem at a distance, claiming to date from the time of Alexander the Great and to be a self-portrait by Apelles—an ancient Greek artist said to have been court artist to Alexander (Madden, 1852; Deeds, 1915). Yet the verses, which again closely follow *Le bon serviteur*, interpret the painter’s tools the servant holds just as indicators of his unceasing labour, like the implements of Hoskyns’ painting: ‘His Hands here Pictur’d full of Tools, express / That he should not be given to Idleness’. Is he a seventeenth-century manservant (in the narrow sense) or servile patronised artisan (a servant in the broad sense), only allowed to paint the picture of his own servitude? In sum, the class, gender, species, and temporal position of the servant depicted is ambiguous, as is his relation to skill.

In the final print this essay looks at *Moll Handy. With a Letter of Recommendation to a Service* (Bickham, 1740)—the servant holds a broom, but the relation that the image posits between her and skill is more indirect than in the

seventeenth-century print [Illustration 4]. Bickham's etching is a labelled depiction of a servant-figure whose body is made out of bellows, cooking-pots, quart mugs, trencher brushes—all the objects with which a housemaid carries out her tasks. The humanoid form that is made out of the arrangement of things indicates the absent servant, whose mobility would animate them. The labour of a servant with a face is not visible in each object, but a representation of it emerges when they are taken together. The image is not a depiction of an imaginary machine: the almost-automaton's limbs are not obviously articulated and there are no joints shown that might allow a viewer to imagine its movement. To this extent, the components of the image retain some allegorical character, albeit as pastiche. However, the figure of a servant as subject in this print again disappears even as it is found. While each household object needs a servant's body and activity to make it do what it is supposed to do, they are all also objects with explicit functions: 'Dusting Cloths'—not just cloths—fill the space where the indicated human figure's shawl and shirt sleeves would be. As a result, an observer who recognises what these configurations of wood, metal, and bristles are, also knows what activities will be demanded of the person who picks them up, fills them, swabs them, grates nutmeg with them, or washes clothes with them (Steedman, 2009, pp.342-56); they are objects whose proper use is clear. The servant figure is not such an observer: rather than possessing a body and mind that might recognise the functions of the objects depicted in the print through the narratives of their use, she is simply the aggregate of those narratives (Ingold, 2011, p.56). She is moved through them by the writing which frames the print: discourse between mistresses, whose oversight and wages demand the objects' use (the character beneath the image is addressed to Lady Crosspatch from Margery Makefree). Only the fact that these objects are placed in the shape of a servant's body enables the viewer to distinguish them from the other implements in the image (mops, brushes, pails) that present themselves to the figure, as well as to the viewer, for use as tools. The sense of any human personality—the servant's body and intellect as a possible locus of skill or volition—disintegrates into an outline of a function that follows the dictates of objects and does what they and its master tells it to.

Being made of work-related objects, her composite being shaped by another, *Moll* seems more like the projector-patentee figure than the good servant. But her being made just of those objects, emerging from them without a humanoid figure moving within them, is an innovation. At the same time, the print engages a different representational strategy to indicate a potential site of servant subjectivity, which shifts onto a specifically gendered sexual terrain. The letter of

recommendation says that Moll has 'had the Misfortune by a fall to be Crack'd & is become Pot Belly'd'. She is pregnant: the utensil that makes up the shape of her lower torso has a crack and a shallow dent in the place where her vulva would be. Moll's physical shaping by her employer now has little to do with skill: modulated into a register of sexual threat, it concerns instead the power that allowed masters and their sons frequently to rape and sexually assault their female servants, and is expressed in the mode of misogynistic satire against procuress mistresses and innuendo about supposed sexually available maidservants, liable to become whores if dismissed from service (Gowing, 2001; Steedman, 2009, pp.135-51).

All the materials through which this essay has followed the elaboration and contraction of skill participate in a conflict within the system of relations that constitutes the concept itself and determines how, of what objects, within what kinds of writing and images, and by whom it can be used. A hierarchical localisation of skill in masters, authorised by the law, pushes against a participatory and imaginary sense in which skill might be distributed across arrangements of humans, animals, and methods. Concurrently, a separate conflict sees temporally freighted broad and narrow conceptions of service mobilised by opposed interests both in order to defend skill and to defend against it. *This Age's Rarity*—in which a servant holds the tools of high-status arts in which one might be skilled, but servants were not—occupies an intermediate position between the emblematic servant of the sixteenth to mid-seventeenth century (whose capacities and attributes are expressed by the conventional significance of animals and tools) and the joke almost-automaton maidservant of the eighteenth and nineteenth, in which the composite servant body made up of the outlines of household objects—around which and through which the work of domestic service takes place—figures the energy of the living servant that puts the objects in motion. *Moll Handy* shows how these depictions of servants are traversed by heterogeneous pressures. That Moll is a woman and less apt to be skilled indirectly reflects the changed composition of the domestic workforce as well as moral and aesthetic norms constituting 'women': an alignment of the increased interest in depicting lower class servant figures in eighteenth century prints, the greater likelihood that such servants would be women, and the denigration of women's skill that follows from their status as subordinate individuals (Steedman, 2009, p.40; Earle, 1994, p.125; Kent, 1989, p.119; Phillips and Taylor, 1980). Some shifts in significance are definitive: around the same time *Moll Handy* is produced, the Winchester *Trusty Servant* becomes an item of antiquarian interest, when an engraving of it appears in *The History of*

Winchester (1749) (Deedes, 1915). (It continues to be reproduced anew and is an object of scholarly fascination throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries (E., 1812; Madden, 1852; Deedes, 1915; Chitty, 1924)). However, it is not the case that servants' skill is simply more recognised in the seventeenth century print, in a moment between the oppressive desire-constituting bonds of service under paternalism and alienated eighteenth-century service work governed by the cash nexus. Nor is there a simple relation between the degree of skill attributed to servants and the number of human qualities depicted in servant emblems: the ideal Elizabethan retainer, who would 'shew his skil, to delight his Maister' in hawking or hunting (Markham, 1598, sig.C2r), is figured by Hoskyns, 'Girt with his sword, his shield upon his arm', with an pig's head (E., 1811, p.114). Rather, transformations in this series of emblems illuminate alterations in early modern society's sense of what is grotesque in its vexed and awkward attempts to render unobtrusive servants' volition to just the correct degree, without producing monsters, so that the condition of 'servant' is not collapsed into 'slave' or 'beast'.

Notes

¹ This essay only affords space for one example. However, serial translations of Plutarch's *Lives* also corroborate the historical particularity of this usage (cf. Plutarch, 1579, p.941; Plutarch, 1693, p.2; Plutarch, 1798, p.117).

² Written c. 1620s.

³ There are exceptions: William Basse writes about upper servants' skill in service (Basse, 1602, sigs.A4v, Cr, D3r). However, he is an exceptional figure, not only servingman to the nobility, but a poet published in manuscript and print, part of extensive literary networks, and head of his own household while in service (Crabstick, 2015).

⁴ In this period, 'labourers' were only inconsistently distinguished from 'servants' (Shepard, 2008; Steinfeld, 1991, pp.1-13, 29; Kussmaul, 1981, pp.5-6).

⁵ The following discussion draws extensively on Burnett (1992) – who discusses written materials about the trusty servant which inform Hoskyns' portrait, its significance and its afterlife – and Jones (2010, pp.310-15), who constructs the series of images discussed here, minus *Moll Handy*. Pierce (2008) deals extensively with graphic satire about the monopoly system.

⁶ *The Complaint of M. Tenter-hooke* is available from:

https://imagesonline.bl.uk/?service=asset&action=show_zoom_window_popup&language=en&asset=25144&location=grid&asset_list=25144&basket_item_id=undefined.

⁷ The title might allude to Juvenal's sixth satire, *locus classicus* for early modern antifeminism: a good woman is *rara avis in terris*: like a black swan, a rare bird on earth (Nussbaum, 1974, pp.77-92).

Images



Fig. 1. Anon, 1597. *Le bon serviteur*. [Woodcut]. Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Estampes et photographie. Copyright Bibliothèque nationale de France. (CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0).



Fig. 2. Hollar, W., 1641. *Picture of a Pattenty*. [Etching]. London: British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings. Copyright The Trustees of the British Museum. (CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0).



Fig. 3. Anon, 1682. *This Age's Rarity: Or, The Emblem of a Good Servant Explain'd.* [Engraving]. London: British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings. Copyright The Trustees of the British Museum. (CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0).



Fig. 4. Bickham, G., c. 1740. *Moll Handy. With a Letter of Recommendation to a Service*. [Hand-coloured etching]. London: British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings. Copyright The Trustees of the British Museum. (CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0).

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