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978-0-521-37412-5 - The Muses of Resistance: Laboring-Class Women's Poetry in Britain, 1739–1796

Donna Landry

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A cottage girl shelling pease.

W. R. Bigg Pinxit/P. W. Tomkin Sculpt./30 May 1787

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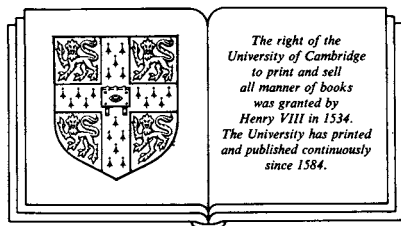
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The Muses of Resistance

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Department of English, Wayne State University



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'I certainly esteem myself a steady, reasonable kind of body,' she said; 'not exactly from living among the hills and seeing one set of faces, and one series of actions, from year's end to year's end; but I have undergone sharp discipline, which has taught me wisdom: and then, I have read more than you would fancy, Mr. Lockwood. You could not open a book in this library that I have not looked into, and got something out of also: unless it be that range of Greek and Latin, and that of French; and those I know one from another: it is as much as you can expect of a poor man's daughter.'

(Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*)

She would notice her; she would improve her; she would detach her from her bad acquaintance, and introduce her into good society; she would form her opinions and her manners. It would be an interesting, and certainly a very kind undertaking; highly becoming her own situation in life, her leisure, and powers. . . . [Harriet's] early attachment to herself was very amiable; and her inclination for good company, and power of appreciating what was elegant and clever, shewed that there was no want of taste, though strength of understanding must not be expected.

(Jane Austen, *Emma*)