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Novel multitudes: credit, capital, and collective subjects in the victorian novel

Joshua Aaron Gooch
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NOVEL MULTITUDES: CREDIT, CAPITAL, AND
COLLECTIVE SUBJECTIVITY IN THE VICTORIAN
NOVEL

by

Joshua Aaron Gooch

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of
Philosophy degree in English in the Graduate College of The University of Iowa

May 2010

Thesis Supervisor: Professor Garrett Stewart

ABSTRACT

This dissertation uses the works of Joseph Conrad, George Eliot, Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, and Anthony Trollope to examine how the financial developments of the mid to late Victorian period led authors to consider the potential social productivity of labor that both political economists and its critics had labeled “unproductive.” These novels, as part of an emerging mass culture, express a fascination with how different kinds of labor—including the labor of narration—can increase a society’s productive power by creating new collective subjects, whether economic collectives like the joint-stock company, rhetorical communities premised on modes of address or forms of language, or character systems like the interlocked narrative roles of minor characters in the multiplot novel. These novels serve as an entry point for an archaeology of immaterial labor—that is to say, labor that does not produce an alienable commodity but rather ideas, signs, and affects. In the twenty-first century, immaterial labor marks the increased dominance of intellectual and service labor to post-industrial economies. In the nineteenth century, such labor was economically productive not just in authorship but in the burgeoning service sector of the post-1850 British economy, which included the British imperial project, international finance, corporate administration, shipping and insurance work. Moreover, although classical economics excluded domestic service and so-called women’s work excluded from economic productivity, the British novel implicitly recognized the role of such labor in social production, albeit not in economic terms. This work considers the thematic intersection of these different modes of unproductive labor, and their frequent portrayal as forms of criminal or fraudulent action, as an awareness and rethinking of a world marked by a highly socialized mode of production. On the one hand, it examines what qualifies as productive labor in political economy, marginal utility theory, and Marxist economics. On the other hand, it examines changes in narrative form and rhetorical construction within the novels themselves in

light of such economic work to describe the proliferation of minor characters in these novels as well as their reliance on sentimental modes of recognition within narrative construction.

Thesis Supervisor

Title and Department

Date

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Graduate College
The University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

PH.D. THESIS

This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

Joshua Aaron Gooch

has been approved by the Examining Committee for the thesis requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in English at the May 2010 graduation.

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To my grandfather, who kept me in books.

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INTRODUCTION

Free time—which is both idle time and time for higher activity—has naturally transformed its possessor into a different subject, and he then enters into the direct production process as this different subject. This process is then both discipline, as regards the human being in the process of becoming; and at the same time, practice, experimental science, materially creative and objectifying science, as regards the human being who has become, in whose head exists the accumulated knowledge of society.

Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*

The Victorian novel contains an economic substrate overlooked by contemporary historicist criticism that only a return to Marx can illuminate. Although the industry of economic criticism in Victorian studies has burgeoned over the last two decades, its marginalization of Marx leaves the field open to critique from a poststructural Marxist perspective. The historicist marginalization of Marx takes three forms, roughly represented respectively by the work of Mary Poovey, Regina Gagnier, and Lee Erickson: one, by bracketing Marx as outside the discursive purview of British political economy and its popularizers; two, by lumping Marx under the heading of political economy via his use of Ricardo and Smith; or three, by dismissing Marx as the remnant of a failed ideology. Far from being anachronistically trained in my chapters, which examine novels contemporary with Marx's own writing, recent neo-Marxian work in Continental theory can help to recover the historically embedded force of Marx's work by engaging with Marxism's *bête noire*, unproductive labor, as the basis for a new form of surplus-value beyond the labor theory of value. In the process, unproductive labor—labor that does not produce (surplus-) value or an alienable object—becomes a modality of labor that is potentially able to produce value without a material product, a labor that is no less productive for its product being immaterial. Such labor is directly engaged in the production of social relations—from signs, ideas, and language to affect and care—and this albeit nebulous category spans creative production, financial services, retail trade, and the domestic service economy. Where historicist criticism turns toward the

marginalist revolution to explain the rise of consumer culture through a desire-centered economics, I argue that Marx's work on immaterial labor allows one to turn the classic narrative of the rise of the individual bourgeois subject on its head as the mere epiphenomenon that accompanies a broader shift in the production of social relations themselves. Although Marx's work in this field is often understood to be focused on the centralization and expansion of the industrial means of production, it is the centralization and expansion of production through technological innovation that depends upon the interchanges made possible by the unproductive or "immaterial" labor of scientists, intellectuals, and technicians, as well as the bureaucrats and financiers who manage the financial system at the heart of the global economy. Nineteenth-century Britain was the epicenter of this system, and offers a picture of an intensive mode of capital accumulation prior to so-called Fordist regimes of intensive accumulation (cf. Aglietta).

Hence unproductive or immaterial labor in the nineteenth century at once points toward the regimes of accumulation to come while maintaining its own specificity. This is perhaps clearer when one considers that immaterial labor is a category best understood in the context of post-Fordist production, where the accumulation of capital no longer depends upon the construction of larger and more intricate machines but upon the development of human labor as a form of fixed capital, whether in terms of knowledge production or the production of human relations. Such a situation is marked by a shift in the hegemonic form of labor from industrial production, i.e. the factory model, to the production of services, a more diffusive model premised on the increased production of social relations. This is why Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue that, because immaterial labor is "oriented toward the creation of social forms of life," it is uniquely "biopolitical" (Hardt and Negri 2004, 66), and the biopolitical nature of immaterial labor is immediately apparent in its dual articulation between signifying and affectual production. Knowledge production increases the modes of potential social interaction by increasing the power and potential of what Marx calls the *general intellect* by producing

concepts, language, and images, as well as other signifying practices and systems. Yet if knowledge production increases possible intellectual interactions, then affectual production increases possible emotional and physical interactions. Affectual production, which endeavors to produce affects such as satisfaction and well-being, at once takes account of the centrality of service labor in the so-called New Economy of the post-industrial world while also embracing the productivity of domestic labor and other unsalaried female labor (an approach that draws from 1970s feminist thought on the economic impact of domestic labor, and, of course Friedrich Engels's claim that woman is the original proletariat in *The Origin of Private Property, The Family and the State*).

Yet it is important to note that immaterial labor's hegemony depends upon its intersection with the financialization of the world market that began in the 1970s and continues through the present—that is to say, not only with the rise of neo-liberalism but also with the dismantling of the welfare state as the mediating point between capital and labor and the simultaneous diffusion of social ownership as pension funds were driven away from defined benefits plans to defined contribution plans open to market manipulation (e.g. the rise of 401K plans and Roth IRAs in the 1980s). This has two important components, both highlighted by the economic turmoil of 2008-2009, that two contemporary strands of Marxism could help explain. On the one hand, David Harvey's work on the interaction of financial markets with real estate and Keynesian infrastructure investment speaks to the manner in which finance in contemporary capitalism has permeated immovable goods (e.g. real estate's entrance into the derivatives trade), and points to the manner in which the totality of global capital is engaged in a crisis of over-accumulation, a process of accumulation, investment, crisis and devaluation. One might understand this as part of the objective state of exploitation in late capital as working class expenditures and debt on expensive consumer goods like houses and cars has become a central component in the capital's devaluation (amortization) of its fixed capital, the weakened strength of collective wage negotiations for the working classes,

and the continued degradation of social safety nets that serve as implicit forms of a social wage—this is the reality of finance capital as parasitism described by Marx. On the other hand, the works of Marxists like Hardt and Negri, Paolo Virno, and Christian Marazzi emphasize the construction of subjects equal to the new state of capitalist exploitation, positing that an increase in the social power of production occurs outside capital and potentially resistant to such production. Hardt and Negri have emphasized the role of the poor in this respect while Virno focuses on the emotional tonalities of immaterial labor itself. Marazzi, a Swiss economist, by contrast, illuminates the relation between the monetization of immaterial forms of capital like software and the rise of the securities market as pension funds found it increasingly important to increase their value in order to combat inflation. This interaction between securitization and immaterial labor becomes the exacerbating factor in what Marazzi describes as the New Economy's central antagonism within production, what we might recognize as the classic under-consumptionist argument transposed into immaterial terms: while the new mode of production demands more and more of the laborer's lived time—extending beyond work time into non-work time—the products of such immaterial labor can only be consumed during non-work time by the laborer in his role as consumer. On first glance, Marazzi's account does not seem to take enough notice of Marx's differentiation between departments of production in *Capital 2*, i.e. department one, means of production, and department two, consumer goods. However, Marazzi concludes that the growth of the war economy and the surveillance state in the early twenty-first century is a kind of military Keynesian solution to the crisis of under-consumption, which transposes under-consumption in consumer goods into over-consumption of military means of production. Between Harvey's over-accumulation and Marazzi's under-consumption, the two central facets of the 2008 economic crisis—the financialization and manipulation of the real estate market and the massive drop in consumer spending marginally counter-balanced by government investment—begin to take shape.

If such readings of economic crisis recall the late nineteenth and early twentieth century work of the Second International—specifically J.A. Hobson and Rosa Luxemburg—that is no coincidence. While industrial production was an important component of the British economy in the nineteenth century, a substantially revised picture of Britain’s economy between 1850 and 1914 has lately emerged, largely championed by historians P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, who take up in modified form much of the Second International’s work on imperialism and finance—though with an overemphasis on Rudolf Hilferding, whose financialism is perhaps too easily amalgamated into contemporary thought on finance¹—and Cain has written a separate study on Hobson’s intellectual development (cf. Cain). Cain and Hopkins argue that from 1850 on, a robust service sector economy of “gentlemanly capitalism” emerged as the driving force behind imperial investment and expansion. Such an account of the intersection of money capital and high finance is not so much at odds with Marx’s work as it might appear, even if it seems to refute a direct connection between industrial interests and imperial policy. Rather, it points toward the increased prominence of interest-bearing capital on imperial policy in Britain. Such historicizing of empire and finance resituates Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s claim in *Empire* (2000) that “the world market might serve adequately [...] as the diagram of imperial power” (190), and leads one away from their context of post nation-state sovereignty and rather embeds the market in the construction of imperial power as such. David Harvey argues that financial capitalism operates in conjunction with industry, which produces surplus value, and the state, which allows surplus value to be realized via its maintenance of a central bank (321-328). One need not subscribe to Giovanni Arrighi’s notion of systemic cycles of accumulation, which moves from phases of material expansion to financial expansion, to note the existence of such a shift in both Britain during the mid-nineteenth century and the United States in the late twentieth.

The history of the nineteenth century speaks to this interaction of finance, industry, and the state. While British industry after 1850 stagnated in comparison to U.S. industrial expansion following the Civil War, Britain's service sector—finance, insurance, transport, communications, and imperial administration—expanded, due largely to the stability of sterling and Britain's financial system in general, which was exemplified by Britain's nascent sense of a central bank's role in managing a national economy. Investment expanded during this period, extending beyond the general holding of Consols (which were themselves eventually surpassed by the century's end by Walter Bagehot's creation, the Treasury bond), as well as moving into insurance as a form of investment, as Timothy Alborn has recently shown. Such financialization certainly did not reach its contemporary scale, where workers' savings now fuel financial markets and are consumed by them, and it is not my contention that one can or should draw a teleological line of capitalist development from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. Rather, this resonance of finance, capital, and the state allows us to examine the specific historical effects that occur when service and administration begin to dominate capitalist production, and what this means for the construction of collectivities. Indeed, Hardt and Negri recently noted in light of contemporary economic developments that finance is itself "an elaborate machine for *representing* the common" through various mechanisms of abstraction that at once depend upon and mystify common relationships and networks (Hardt and Negri 2009, 157). It should not be forgotten that Marx's work—as well as the work of those who follow Marx's analyses—is a critique of *political* economy, especially given this view of the economic terrain. Marxist theory is a theory of social production, that is to say, the rationalization of the production of social relations themselves. While Foucault's well-known panopticism attempts an objective description of biopolitical struggle in the nineteenth century as a specular division of space, Marx's work explores the subjective ramifications of such production, what he calls in the epigraph to this introduction both a *discipline* and a *practice*. Far from being a mere theorist of industrial

production, Marx theorized the growing subjective power of social production and its disparate irrational distribution.

In the following chapters, I have approached the Victorian novel as a point of entry for an archaeology of immaterial labor using canonical works of British fiction to examine the ideological impasses uncovered by the novel as it engages with a thematic nexus of unproductive labor, collective subjectivity, and finance. These include Joseph Conrad's *Nostromo* (1904), George Eliot's *Silas Marner* (1861) and *Brother Jacob* (1861), Charles Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend* (1864), Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* (1868), and Anthony Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* (1876). With an understanding of Marx as a theorist of social production, I focus on the Victorian novel's nascent figuration of immaterial labor as a response to the increasingly productive potential of classically understood unproductive labor and its effects on the novel's form. Such an approach leads to the question of how collective subjects are made, whether as the kinds of economic collectivities that appeared in nineteenth century finance such as limited liability joint stock companies, as rhetorical communities constituted by group address, or as the interlocked narrative roles of minor characters in the construction of these multiplot novels. In one sense, this project historicizes Alex Woloch's theorization of the role of the minor character in the Victorian novel as an effect of changes in social production. Woloch's narrative work describes the implicated relationships between the protagonists of the realist novel and the minor characters that surround them (Woloch 2002). Such minor characters tend to fall into two categories, the worker, whose labor as a character aids the construction of the narrative and the consistency of the novel's protagonist, and the eccentric, whose incongruity disrupts the movement of the plot. In their centrality to the construction of narrative, Woloch argues that these "*minor characters are the proletariat of the novel*" (27). With unproductive labor increasingly seen as potentially productive, I would argue that an early notion of the immaterial laborer appears in the mid-Victorian novel as a proliferation of minor-ness in narrative.

Such a confrontation with the limits of de-centralization in nineteenth century realism operates through a multiplication of narrative parallels, a repetition that Tzvetan Todorov calls a narrative structure of “the-same-but-different.” This construction around repetition marks a shift from fiction dictated by repetitive conceits determined by a protagonist toward the construction of a social world in which the protagonist is titrated out by a series of repetitions that render him exemplary rather than primary—a situation that *Our Mutual Friend* exemplifies. Gilles Deleuze would likely recognize this movement as a becoming-minor of the protagonist and a becoming-protagonist of the minor character. *Silas Marner* reveals the kernel of this structure in its tightly paralleled tales of Godfrey Cass and Silas Marner, while a delirious repetition of narrative marks *The Moonstone*, pushing its realism to a formal limit. By contrast, *The Way We Live Now* avoids formal innovation, constructing a narrative from nearly pure thematic resonance as book reviews, paper IOUs, stocks, dinner tickets, and title deeds circulate across different milieus as part of a larger social totality. While each chapter focuses on the mechanisms within a specific text, I expand on these ideas and their relation to narrative theory in the dissertation’s conclusion.

In addition to such narrative concerns, my project also traces the confrontation between mid-Victorian novels and unproductive labor as both the constitutive basis of mass-market literature and as a potentially disruptive means of creating new social agents by following the development of immaterial labor as a problem immanent to the content of these texts as well as to nineteenth century political economy. While Conrad’s *Nostromo* describes the involution of economic and linguistic production as central not just to the novel’s rhetorical and narrative construction but also to the imperial project of global capitalism itself, Eliot’s *Silas Marner* returns the project to the middle of the nineteenth century in order to detail the problems that unproductive labor poses for both Eliot and nineteenth-century political economy. The central disjunction of Eliot’s work—that is to say, between her attempts to represent pastoral society and the social separation

of her narration from this pastoral world—appears in this text as an emphasis on material labor’s role in the constituting a social world even as her literary project reveals its reliance on the rhetorical construction of sympathy. By contrast, Dickens’s *Our Mutual Friend* disseminates the position of the unproductive laborer across a society of impostors and con-men, which imbricates the production of falseness and fiction. Indeed, Dickens even goes so far as to use imposture itself to redeem the novel’s tainted characters. The problematic distance between narrated world and narrator in Eliot becomes in Dickens a portent of immaterial labor, a near utopic space of falsehood that becomes monstrous with Bradley Headstone’s murderous impersonation of Riderhood. Collins’s *The Moonstone* dislocates the problem of unproductive labor into a new and specifically linguistic register by shifting the weight of its narrative work onto the novel’s servants. Here class and narrative labor begin to generate a directly productive social subject: such labor at once recognizes its economic inscription and tries to imagine a space beyond yet only manages to find this space in death. Trollope’s *The Way We Live Now* at once fully elaborates and dismisses the potential productive power of new social subjects created by this inchoate notion of immaterial labor as the corrupt financier Augustus Melmotte, the vapid scribbler Lady Carbury, and the manipulative letterwriter Winifred Hurtle prove to be productive laborers for British society yet remain unredeemable excesses generated by social production but inassimilable to society as such. In all the novels that I examine here, there is a tension between a fantasy of collectivity generated by the power of rhetorical communication and a terror of the disruptive social agents produced by immaterial labor, both within the novels and in the labor by which they are formed.

Authorship and Combination: Babbage and an Authors’

Union

In *On the Economy of Machinery and Manufactures* (1832), Charles Babbage is mostly interested in explicating the processes and economics of early nineteenth century

manufacturing. Yet late in the text, there is a curious slippage in Babbage's attitudes toward unions or "combinations." This was itself particularly freighted term given the rise of large national unions from 1831 to 1834 following the passage of the 1825 Combination Act overturning the Combination Laws of the eighteenth century, passed in response to Jacobin wage and political agitation in the working class (and these unions were instrumental in the formation of Chartism) (Briggs 250-251). Babbage draws a causal link between technological innovation and unionization, in essence building from David Ricardo's 1817 argument that improvements in machinery decreased the demand for labor, which made "the discovery and use of machinery [...] injurious to the laboring class, as some of their number will be thrown out of employment, and the population will become redundant compared with the funds which are to employ it" (Ricardo 238). While Ricardo noted this as an aspect of economic development, Babbage brings out the political consequences of this economic shift, by noting that "the improvements which are often made in machinery in consequence of a 'strike' amongst the workmen, most frequently do injury, of a greater or less duration, to that particular class which gave rise to them" (297).² Babbage's attitude toward combinations mixed such economic observations with a general fear of the multitude. He concedes that "the working classes [...] have the right, if they consider it expedient, to combine for the purpose of procuring higher wages" (305) while he conjures a paranoid vision of the mob that led to the repressive violence of the 1819 Peterloo massacre: "the strong arm of the law, backed, as in such cases it will always be, by public opinion, should be instantly and unhesitatingly applied, to prevent them from violating the liberty of a portion or their own, or of any other class of society" (305). In this, Babbage's positions in "On Combinations Amongst Masters or Workmen against Each Other" are unremarkable indications of the liberal manufacturing class's view of combinations.

Yet in the following chapter, "On Combinations of Masters against the Public," Babbage modifies his position. After a brief survey of the kinds of infrastructure

monopolies generally held by joint stock companies—water, gas, railroads, docks, and canals—he puts forward the widely accepted view that such companies should be subject to restrictions in order to limit price-gouging. In a strange turn, though, Babbage chooses to explicate the problems of monopoly capitalism by examining the British publishing industry as a combination of printers, publishers, and booksellers against authors (e.g. producers) and not readers (e.g. consumers). It is this slippage, and not the choice of commodities, that is surprising, since Babbage has, throughout the text, used the book to illustrate different points in his argument. He explains in the preface to the second edition that “wherever I could, [I] employed as illustrations objects of easy access to the reader; and, in accordance with that principle, I selected the volume itself” (vi). Indeed, although his account of the publishing industry has a number of lacunae—including the exclusion of circulating libraries in the economics of Victorian publishing³—Babbage offers a lucid account of nineteenth century publishing’s pitfalls from an author’s perspective and covers the three prevailing methods of author compensation. Writers publishing “on commission” should beware of printers charging exorbitant paper rates that they would not charge a publisher (320). Those working under a “half profits” arrangement should beware of publishers making excess impressions of a book while paying profits on a smaller run. Finally, those ready to sell their manuscripts outright should reconsider: “he should by no means sell the copyright” (323).⁴ Indeed, Babbage’s preferred mode of publication, if the author “is a reasonable person, possessed of common sense, would be to go at once to a respectable printer and make his arrangements with him” (322). From an advocate for the consumers of monopoly goods, Babbage’s use of the publishing industry shifts his attention to cultural production and leaves consumption to one side.

However, the object of Babbage’s ire is not so much publishers as booksellers, arguing “that the profit in retailing books is really too large” (327) given that, as an effect of a seller’s cabal, booksellers “do not advance capital, and incur very little risk” (323). The inflated profits of the booksellers, Babbage claims, are due to the fact that “some

time ago a small number of the large London booksellers entered into such a combination” and “one of their objects was to prevent any bookseller from selling books for less than ten per cent under the published price” (327). Given the substance of the previous chapter, Babbage’s proposed solution is rather surprising:

In order to put down the combination of booksellers, no plan appears so likely to succeed as a counter-association of authors. If any considerable portion of the literary world were to unite and form such an association; and its affairs were directed by an active committee, much might be accomplished. The objects of such an union should be to employ some person well skilled in the printing, and in the bookselling trade; and to establish him in some central situation as their agent. Each member of the association would be at liberty to place any, or all of his works in the hands of this agent for sale [...] The duties of the agent would be to retail to the public, for ready money, copies of books published by members of the association. [...] Such a union would naturally present other advantages; and as each author would retain the liberty of putting any price he might think fit on his productions, the public would have the advantage of reduction in price produced by competition between authors on the same subject, as well as of that arising from a cheaper mode of publishing the volumes sold to them. (331-32)

Unlike the workmen’s combinations that he opposed, the authors’ union that Babbage envisions does not attempt to bargain collectively with the retail trade but creates instead what can only be called a kind of publishing cooperative, printing and retailing the work of its members in a newly autonomous circuit of literary production. Babbage’s union attempts to create a collective agent of production large enough not only to oppose the combination of London’s retail booksellers but to compete with them. Indeed, one might note, by way of contrast, that working class political economists were also taking stock of collective constructions of counter-power in the 1830s. For example, John F. Bray posited in *Labour’s Wrongs and Labour’s Remedy* (1839) that the construction of working class joint stock companies would be the easiest first step toward communal ownership and the establishment of a more just society able to care for the young, elderly, and infirm, as well as to address issues of unemployment, food production, and standards of living.

Babbage, in this brief construction of a collective agent, deploys some useful rhetorical distinctions. While his discussion of worker unionization appears in “On Combinations of Masters or Workmen against Each Other,” his author’s union appears as in response to “Combinations of Masters against the Public.” This classification turns the writer’s union into a kind of metonymy for the public in general while simultaneously shading together production and consumption, a movement that binds linguistic production to a realm of commonality beyond contemporary class distinctions. On the one hand, Babbage’s imagined union confronts the monopoly conditions in the publishing industry as an attempt to create effective competition in order to break up the monopoly—after all, monopolies were understood to be part of an older mode of production in the mid-nineteenth century. On the other hand, the linkage of linguistic production not to a particular class interest but to a common public resonates with contemporary Marxist work on immaterial labor and capital’s attempts to capitalize on a common and potentially autonomous social intellect (this approach is largely due to Antonio Negri’s early analysis of the Keynesian planner state as the emergence of factory-society [cf. Hardt and Negri 1997; Negri 2005]).⁵ Such labor would have been understood as unproductive in both Marx and nineteenth century political economy, but, as Negri asserts, the distinction between productive and unproductive labor operates in Marx as a political rather than theoretical distinction, one that binds social and economic class with educational privilege and distance from production (Negri 1991).

Babbage’s view of authorship as a post-class form of production circa 1832 is, of course, ideological, and the kind of perspective that only someone holding a privileged class position could easily assume. No laborer seems so fully in control of the means of production as an immaterial laborer. To temper this view, however, Babbage’s initial attempts to publish his manuscript, recounted in the preface to the second edition, reveal in part the potentially antagonistic relation of the worker and the means of (re-) production. In the first edition, a footnote describes the concerns of some manuscript

readers that Babbage's sections on publishing might create trouble from the book trade, and Babbage opined in reply that "the booksellers are too shrewd a class to supply such an admirable passport to publicity as their opposition would prove to be if generally suspected" (333). By contrast, his preface to the second edition details that:

A short time previous to its completion, I thought it right to call [the publisher's] attention to the chapter in which the book-trade is discussed; with the view both of making him acquainted with what I had stated, and also of availing myself of his knowledge in correcting any accidental error as to the facts. Mr Fellowes, 'differing from me entirely respecting the conclusions I had arrived at,' then declined the publication of the volume. (vii)

Babbage's prior advice to authors to avoid publishers and hire a printer is prescient given his final means of publishing, even as it reiterates the mentality of an industrialist confronted by an antagonistic industry: when the men who control the means of production thwart you, simply buy (or rent) the means of production. For this reason, Babbage's initial construction of an ideal author's union is perhaps more notable not as a means of confronting the publishing industry, but as an attempt to imagine the existence of such rhetorical resistance as a form of collectivity.⁶

Babbage's imaginative construction of a collective agent of immaterial production foreshadows capital's subsumption of the writer's seemingly privileged position. By the 1860s, the situation has become more pronounced, not only due to the dominance of lending libraries like Mudie's, which expanded fiction's middle-class audience, but also because of the emergence of the working class readers of newspapers, periodicals, and cheap fiction that Wilkie Collins claimed to have first discovered in 1858 and termed "the unknown public" (16). A number of events in the mid-century period allow for the realignment of collective agents in social, political, and economic senses. The repeal of the stamp tax on newspapers in 1855 certainly played a part in this (Best 224). Moreover, as historian Alexis Weedon notes, the abolition of the paper duty in 1861 mostly aided the least expensive publications that used the most inexpensive paper available (68). Combined with industrial innovations such as cylinder printing (Weedon 160), this period

saw an even more extensive growth of the market for cheap reprints of novels, allowing George Routledge to begin publishing sixpenny novels in 1867, i.e. at half the cost of his one-shilling “Railway Library” begun in 1848 (Eliot 51-52). The mid-century period from 1860-1875 roughly corresponds to the gap between N.N. Feltes account of Thackeray’s *Henry Esmond* (1852) and Eliot’s *Middlemarch* (1870)—that is to say, in the shift between what Feltes terms the commodity-book, a literary production determined in its form such as the triple-decker novel, and the commodity-text, a literary production produced by a professional author able to confront publishers as an antagonistic means of production. It is hardly a coincidence that rapid growth and a growing diversity of the marketplace for the printed word appeared during the century’s second debate over electoral reform for the working classes, the Second Reform Act (1867), which extended the franchise to the majority of male heads of household. Moreover, the unrest in Hyde Park surrounding reform that led to Matthew Arnold’s *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), marked a turn toward the social necessity of culture. As Arnold claimed, “Through culture seems to lie our way, not only to perfection, but even to safety” (180).

Substantial changes in economic production accompanied such social and political shifts. Terry Eagleton notes that “the social relations of the [literary mode of production] are in general determined by the social relations of the [general mode of production]” (50). While I would argue that such shifts are part of a total constellation of effects and not a pure economic determinism, these changes in literary production and politics occurred alongside a shift in the economic organization of capitalism as finance and credit became increasingly collective concerns due to legal changes regarding joint stock companies and limited liability in the 1862 Companies Act and the 1863 Companies Clauses Act. Substantial work in the history of Victorian finance over the last twenty years has expanded the scope of any investigation into the effects of finance on Victorian literature (to name a few works from an ever-expanding field: George Robb’s

White-Collar Crime in Modern England: Financial Fraud and Business Morality, 1845-1929, Timothy L. Alborn's *Conceiving Companies: Joint stock Politics in Victorian England*, Margot Finn's *The Character of Credit: Personal Debt in English Culture, 1740-1914*, and Nancy Henry and Cannon Schmitt's collection of essays, *Victorian Investments*). While joint stock banks existed prior to this period, their incorporation slowed significantly after the attempt to regulate them with the Joint Stock Bank Act of 1844 (Robb 57). These restrictions were peeled back by the Limited Liability Act of 1855 and the Joint Stock Company Act of 1856, which marked a return to the *laissez-faire* ideology of deregulation. In "Limited Liability, Market Democracy, and the Social Organization of Production in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Britain," Donna Loftus details the discussions surrounding limited liability during this period and their use of the concept of limited liability as a discursive mechanism to bridge the gap between classes in a post-Chartist Britain, in effect constructing hegemony by folding together the male working classes with the ownership classes in an imaginary collective agent.

The 1862 Companies Act amalgamated these loosened restrictions and subsequently opened joint stock companies and limited liability to "all companies consisting of more than ten persons associated for banking purposes, or of more than twenty persons associated for the purpose of carrying on any other business" (qtd. in Digby 5), with exceptions for companies formed under Act of Parliament (e.g. railway companies), patent letters (previously incorporated joint stock banks), and, for esoteric reasons, tin mining companies in Cornwall.⁷ Between the extension of limited liability and the Consolidated Companies Act—roughly 1856 to 1863—over 2,500 new companies were launched, and another 4,000 appeared in the following six years (Robb 26). Historian David Kynaston described the ensuing period as "a unique decade: capital, goods, and labour flowed almost unhindered round much of the known world in unprecedented quantities, the nearest we would ever come to a fully liberal free-trading system" (167). It should be noted that Kynaston made this claim in 1994, not taking into

account our recent past, which has aspired to—and reaped the bitter rewards of—the same expansive attitude toward the self-regulating abilities of the financial markets and disregard for the ability of corporate entities to police themselves according to neo-classical notions of self-interest and risk.

It is of no small consequence to the increasingly international tendencies of capital that the growth of collective agents in the world of finance coincided with this period of high liberal economic policy. While joint stock companies had previously been widely incorporated for large-scale infrastructure projects, their blossoming in the 1860s did not exert hegemonic influence on industry but on finance: 108 banks and finance companies incorporated in the years immediately following the 1862 act and the financial crisis of 1866 (Robb 69). Indeed, as Cain and Hopkins note, the British economy after 1850 was not dominated by industrial production as generally believed but rather by the service sector (113), so that even as Britain began to post negative balances of trade, its economy saw continued growth in what they term “invisible trade,” e.g. business services, shipping, and insurance (170). They argue that British imperial and economic growth are attributable to “gentlemanly capitalism,” a class-conscious form of white-collar work in the fields of finance, insurance, and shipping, and imperial policy, and that by the 1850s, Britain’s industrial growth had substantially plateaued, leading to a situation in which gentlemanly capitalism—the reorganization of production through collective financial and bureaucratic subjects—became capitalism’s hegemonic form. In finance, such a shift was due in part to limited liability, where prior to the change shareholders in joint stock banks would be liable for their entire fortunes should the banks come into difficulty (Crump 27-28). With this change, the banking industry opened to speculation, and lead private banker and eventual Chancellor of the Exchequer in the 1890s, George Goschen, to complain:

Joint stock enterprise has been less anxious to invent fancy branches of commerce, or to find mysterious and recondite sources of wealth, than to get the highest rates for their capital by *lending* it

to foreigners. To satisfy the foreign demand for capital in all its forms seems to be the leading idea. (qtd. in Kynastion 225)

The growth of international banks in London during the 1860s was matched by a shift in the bill market begun in the 1850s. Domestic paper drawn on country banks and loaned to national industrial concerns gave way to “acceptance credits” and other means of financing international trade (King 182). While the rise of joint stock finance in the 1860s was followed by an almost immediate crash in 1866, with a bare 16% of companies weathering the tumult (Robb 71), the groundwork for the creation of larger banks had been laid as had the extension of branch banking and greater internal organization of banking assets in place of the domestic bill market (King 273; Quinn 164). Beginning in 1870, foreign banks began to set up branches in London (Quinn 148), in part due to the London money market’s shift toward international finance, but also because London served as a safe haven for investment, whether for U.S. investors during the civil war (Kynastion 217) or for Continental investors during the Franco-Prussian war and its aftermath (e.g. the Paris Commune, the Risorgimento), and, again, after the collapse of the Vienna stock exchange in 1873, which inaugurated the long depression that ended the century.⁸ As Quinn notes: “by 1877, foreign bank deposits were £107 million or one-fifth size of all deposits in British commercial banks, and London was even being used to finance trade that never passed through Britain” (148).

While Karl Marx would note in *Capital* 3 the extent to which such institutions were engaged with another form of immaterial production—the production and distribution of fictitious titles to payment, including stock-shares and bills of exchange—money as the mechanism of exchange also underwent an important shift during this period. The Bank of England began to adjust its discount rates with an eye toward directing market activity, and this series of maneuvers led to the development of centralized banking practices central to State-planned Keynesian-style capitalism (cf. Hardt and Negri 1994), as well as late capital’s push for the liberalization of capital markets in contemporary neo-liberal policies (cf. Harvey 2006). In 1935, financial

historian W.T.C. King noted the resonance with this shift in policy and Keynesian policies:

In a sense, it might be said that the Bank management now does scientifically what its predecessors of the 'fifties and 'sixties were beginning to do empirically. The fundamental principle of both policies is the same: the practice of today has evolved directly from, and is a perfection and refinement of, the earlier period.
(168)

After the liquidity crises of 1857-1858, the Bank began to follow, albeit unconsciously, the practice of maintaining a discount rate above the market rate as part of its attempt to realign its relation to the credit markets and to note issue. Importantly, this move also included suspending discounting facilities in 1858 for bill brokerage firms. The following discussion provides a brief historicization of this move, but I would first emphasize that by noting this alignment of the production of fictitious titles, rentier capitalism, and monetary policy, I am not drawing a simple homology between money as a mechanism of exchange and language. After all, as the regulation school of Marxist economics asserts, the central problem of finance in capitalism is the contradiction between money's role as a measure of value and as a mechanism of exchange (cf. Harvey 2006; Aglietta). Fictitious capital tries to overcome a difficulty in exchange, yet when let loose on its own affects money's ability to measure value. In contemporary capitalism, where we no longer follow the gold standard (or not yet, given the increasingly precarious situation of the petrodollar), this appears via movements of inflation and deflation. Under the gold standard, the devaluation of fictitious capital would send investors scurrying for gold, and leave them to hoard the material substance of money precisely because its function as a measure of value had become in a crisis of more importance than its function as a mechanism of exchange.

We see a similar contradiction when we turn to language. In fictitious capital, language is directly money qua exchange mechanism. In immaterial labor, however, language directly produces value. It is my contention that these two polarities of

language—medium of exchange and producer of value—are already in tension with one another in the mid-Victorian novel and its interest in finance. As for the question of centralized banking, my interest here falls squarely on how the contradiction between money as measure of value and as mechanism of exchange dislocates itself into a further means of exploitation. This is what Rosa Luxemburg saw as the necessity of external markets to capitalist production, and what David Harvey, by taking into account the emergence of Empire, a headless global capitalism that no longer has an exterior to plunder, describes as a process of internal disinvestment via monetary policy, austerity measures, and inflation (Harvey 2005). This discussion thus attempts to redress literature's role in constructing the institutional mechanisms necessary to the functioning of international finance and global capital.

The Bank's changing relationship to the credit markets came as a final repudiation to the monetarist perspective that created Peel's 1844 Bank Act. Monetarist political economists viewed the Bank of England as a bank like any other that simply also had the sole legal right to issue bank notes.⁹ With the Bank Act, the Bank was split into two departments, one devoted to banking, the other to note issue, with notes limited to £15 million and all notes issued in excess to be offset by Bank purchases of gold at a standard rate of £3 17s 9d (Jevons 116, 222). By separating discount facilities from note issue, the two departments often acted against one another's interest during credit crises: gold reserves drained away from the Bank as investors scrambled to get their hands on money as the measure of value, while the issue department subsequently *recalled* notes from circulation for destruction precisely when acceptable forms of money were most needed in circulation. The Bank's schizophrenic relation to its role as lender of last resort has been well documented, first and foremost by Walter Bagehot, whose polemical *Lombard Street* (1873) put forward a number of reforms meant to ensure the Bank's stability and mostly focused on its reserve policies. (Indeed, the so-called "Bagehot Rule" of open lending at high discount rates during a credit crisis has reappeared as a potential solution

to contemporary credit markets [cf. Rorty].) Without rehearsing the entirety of the Bank's history, which is itself bound up with the rise of the British military (cf. Bender), it is necessary to return to the beginning of the nineteenth century when the Bank suspended note convertibility from 1797 until 1821. During this period, provincial joint stock banks came to rely on the Bank to rediscount bills when they found themselves short of cash, something the Bank was willing to do given its inability to redeem notes for gold. Rediscounting during a crisis would allow banks to realize bills they had on hand but that the credit crisis had effectively devalued (i.e. money as a medium of exchange) in exchange for Bank notes (i.e. money as a measure of value that could also serve as a medium of exchange). However, when the Bank resumed note convertibility, it halted rediscounting since it saw no reason to aid its banking competitors (Quinn 65). During the liquidity crisis of 1825, country banks, accustomed to operating with small reserves and turning to the Bank for rediscounting facilities, foundered. Those banks that survived 1825 realized that if the Bank was unwilling to act as a lender of last resort, they would have to keep larger reserves on hand, something they had been loathe to do before as it kept down shareholder profits (King 37).

In 1830, the Bank decided to extend rediscount facilities once more, but not to joint stock banks. Instead, they offered rediscount facilities to other discount firms, e.g. companies dedicated to the buying and selling of bills of exchange at discount, with London's oldest and foremost being Overend, Gurney, and Co.¹⁰ Such a move placed the Bank in the position of lender of last resort while obscuring its role in the marketplace. Bill brokers used their access to the Bank's rediscounting facilities to mediate liquidity for Britain's banks through the widespread use of "call loans," in which discount firms accepted large deposits from banks that would be available for the banks at "call" while earning interest for the banks (King 48). Eager to increase their profitability, banks deposited their reserves, and brokers used the influx of cash to purchase bills as they saw fit while repaying call loans when necessary by cashing out short-term bills and relatively

stable investments like Consols, and rediscounting bills at the Bank of England. By the 1850s, this arrangement had created what W.T.C. King termed a system of “excessive rediscounting, incautious granting of acceptance credits, and reckless creation of accommodation bills” [foreign loans] (182). Indeed, the entire system depended upon the functionality of the credit system, since a disruption of credit would effectively eliminate all of Britain’s banking reserves. The joint stock banks that engaged in such speculations did not keep any reserves on hand, having deposited them at “call,” while the brokers, though ostensibly flush with readily sold bills, “kept no reserve at all” (183).

When financial turmoil in the U.S. led to a series of liquidity crises in Britain, this system of over-speculation and little cash reserves forced the Bank of England to suspend the Bank Act in 1857 and 1858 in order to ease the perception of a liquidity crisis.¹¹ Determined to limit access to easy credit, the Bank cut off rediscounting facilities to bill brokerages in 1858, which created a situation of deep animosity between the Bank and the bill brokers. As King noted, the following years “were marked by a pronounced lack of co-operation between the Bank [of England] and the bill brokers” (215), which often took the form of direct conflict between monetary forms, with the bill brokers trying to undermine the Bank note as money able to measure value while the Bank pretended to be indifferent to the function of bills as a mechanisms of exchange. In 1860, Overends expressed its displeasure with the Bank’s change in policy by organizing the withdrawal of £1.65 million in £1000 notes over the course of a single day in an attempt to drain the bank of its reserves, and force the institution to change its discount policy (King 213). The Bank’s Governors were unswayed by Overends’ threats or their subsequent action, and Overends apologetically returned the notes the next day. Kynaston surmises that their contrition “may have been affected by the imminence of a parliamentary question to be asked on the subject of the sharp drop in the Bank’s reserve” (201). Whatever the case, the incident left ill will between the Bank and Overends, whose recent generational shift

in management with the retirement and deaths of the firm's Quaker founders had changed the ethos of the organization (King 246-247).¹²

In 1865, Overends incorporated as a limited liability company in an attempt to recapitalize the firm, limit its liabilities, and sell off its bad assets. However, as its stockholders noted in their post-bankruptcy lawsuit, the firm's prospectus made no mention of these liabilities. In May 1866, the overextended Overends found itself unable to raise enough cash for its daily operations, and, after the Bank refused to intercede, the house smashed. Overends's crash set off a liquidity crisis that again necessitated the suspension of the Bank Act. George Robb called the ensuing crisis "a watershed for the English banking community" (71), with the world of British banking significantly slimmed by bankruptcy.¹³ Interestingly enough, this also affected the publishing industry, bankrupting a number of publishing firms and slowing the expansion of inexpensive print culture until the mid-1870s, when it began an expansion that continued through the end of the century (Weedon 158). The Bank's policy shifted again in the wake of this crisis, as it made available rediscounting facilities to banks in times of crises (Quinn 167), and the void left by Britain's oldest discount house was largely filled by the National Discount Co., a joint stock house created in the wake of the Companies Act, and about ten other firms formed after the demise of the House on the Corner. The evolution of the Bank's monetary policy was and is a policy aimed at keeping credit and capital moving through complex institutions that, from the time of such a policy's inception, were conceived of and acted as collective subjects with various degrees of agency in the world market.

Literature and Economics: Victorian Studies, Critical
Theory, and the Retreat of Marxism

My project takes up the effects of such increasingly dematerialized social agency on the novel's attempts to construct different figures for collective will. These social

subjects appear juxtaposed with financial forms of collective agency as well as with political economic attempts to theorize such agents. Indeed, the collective subjects constructed by Victorian fiction tend to be elicited in contrast to existent figures of cooperative endeavor and the diffusion of social connections through representational mechanisms like bills of exchange, cheques, and joint stock company shares. My work here tries to bridge the historical, discursive, and theoretical approaches that mark the discipline's attempts to read the intersection of the literary and the economic. Victorian studies often seem split between the historical and the discursive. New Historicist critics craft discursive readings of literary texts alongside political economic texts to draw conclusions about particular epistemic constructions in which the literary, economic, and social flow across a single plane. Catherine Gallagher's *The Body Economic* (2006) exemplifies this approach as she tracks historical articulations of value and its relation to life by examining different modes of political economy and literary production. Using Malthus to guide her readings, Gallagher maintains a Malthusian emphasis on the body and life by focusing on food and sex, tracing two divergent strains through the development of economics and literature: one focused on the limits of earthly production, the other on the limitlessness of humanity's urge to reproduce. Gallagher's subsequent discursive history of economics uses these two tendencies in Malthus to follow the shift from political economy's a focus on production, which she terms "bioeconomics" for its emphasis on the body, to marginal utility theory's focus on consumption, which she terms "somaeconomics" while reclaiming a subset of political economic thought that reaches back to J.R. McCulloch.¹⁴ In a similar vein, Regina Gagnier's *The Insatiability of Human Wants* (2000) examines the epistemic intersection of Victorian aesthetics and marginal utility theory in order to argue that "literary and cultural critics may make a particular contribution to economic knowledge by showing how people come to 'choose' what they do, by showing how tastes and choices develop and, just as important, are constrained" (10).¹⁵ Gagnier begins with Walter Pater's aesthetics and traces the

discursive diagram of the fin de siècle via the non-productive aspects of *l'art pour l'art*, marginal utility economics, and non-productive sexuality.

However, a growing number of critics, in response to the critical hegemony of New Historicism in literary studies, are working from a perspective that can perhaps best be described as post-Foucauldian cultural studies, combining sociological and historical approaches to illustrate the production, dissemination, and consumption of texts.

Although Mary Poovey's earlier *Making of a Social Body: British Cultural Formation 1830-1864* (1995) operates within the paradigm of discursive analysis, Poovey's recent *Genres of the Credit Economy* (2008) exemplifies this turn away from discourse analysis in her examination of the construction of multiple literary and economic genres of writing and their methods for ensuring the specificity of such work by determinate exclusions.

Arguing that literary writers tried to create a notion of *literary value* via style, that is to say by privileging the connotative over the denotative function of language (306), Poovey brings forward the machinations by which literary writers tried to generate a specifically literary value. While Poovey's reading resonates with my focus on the changing nature of unproductive and immaterial labor in the nineteenth-century novel, Poovey's focus is squarely institutional: how did literature take on its specific disciplinary forms, and what is the relation of such a disciplinary form to the economic? Alongside the creation of literary value, Poovey considers the angst of literary writers confronted by Collins's aforementioned "unknown public" of some three million working-class readers (309).

Literary value, Poovey argues, is a concept created by the literary community itself in attempt not only to dictate the content of reading but the very mode of reading itself.¹⁶

Two recent works gesture toward the changed critical emphasis that Poovey displays. Claudia Klaver's *A/Moral Economics* is influenced by Poovey and emphasizes the discursive construction of the social using popularizations of political economy in the nineteenth century and their subsequent reification of notions of the social (what she terms "a Foucauldian reading of this quintessentially Marxist moment of theoretical

reification and mystification” [xvii]). On the other hand, Boris Knezevic turns toward literature’s engagement with finance capital as an imaginative figure in novels of the 1840s and 1850s, leading to a project that is more Bordieu than Foucault—an achievement in itself given the field—and that takes into account the economics of literary production while focusing primarily on the historical period as determined by Cain and Hopkins’s “gentlemanly capitalism,” often in the figure of the bourgeois rentier.¹⁷

In general, however, both ends of the critical spectrum focus on the construction of the novel as mechanism for modeling the emergence of a subject appropriate to market society. Catherine Gallagher’s *Nobody’s Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1820* (1994) examined the emergence of the novel as a construction premised on exchange, debt, and the Nobody of an emerging capitalist market—which led in turn, however obliquely, to her discursive examination of political economy. In a similar vein, Deidre Shauna Lynch’s *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning* (1998) argues that novelistic interiority in the eighteenth century novel acts as a method of social identification meant to preclude certain forms of popular social identification. Regina Gagnier’s work takes up this thread at the fin-de-siecle as a question of the subjectivity constructed by marginal utility theory, Paterian aesthetics, and finance capital. The recurrent thread in these studies is the construction of a consuming subject able to navigate the marketplace—the emergence of the middle-class consumer. It seems almost inevitable, then, that these studies often return to the question of the construction of the literary as an academic discipline, even if the narcissism of the construction—where do subjects like us, novel readers, come from?—grows out of a sense that novelistic discourse is itself an invasive disciplinary construction, as John Bender (1987) and D.A. Miller (1988) have argued. Mary Poovey’s claim that fiction simultaneously used and marginalized financial concerns to naturalize economic behavior while differentiating the literary from the

economic (Poovey 2008, 124) at least has the merit of allowing multiple subjective forms to appear. The construction of a capitalist subject was not a certain or accomplished fact at this date, nor is it today.

For this reason, the studied avoidance of Marxian discourse in the field has become a glaring lacuna.¹⁸ The editors of the recent collection *Victorian Investments* reject Jonathan Rose's label of "capitalist criticism" because they claim that the analyses of their contributors

make the inequities and inhumanity of the system they examine central to their analyses, but like Rose we do recognize the emergence of an approach to the Victorian economy at once more wide-ranging and more fine-grained than those version of Marxist critique focused on industrialism have fostered (2).

It is difficult to agree with such an assessment of the usefulness of Marxist theory, especially this attempt to equivocate Marxist critique and industry. Work by contemporary Marxists on immaterial labor, general intellect, and social production have reached beyond such limited notions of labor for at least thirty years (*Autonomia* 2007; Virno and Hardt 1996; Negri 1977, 2008; Virno 2004; Hardt and Negri 1994, 2000, 2004). Moreover, as I will argue at length below, any attempt to address the inequities and inhumanity of capitalism that fails to take into account the Marxist critique threatens to fall into the kinds of apolitical ethical questions that mark the turn toward consensus democracy and a poorly understood notion of human rights to which a broad range of critiques in contemporary critical theory give the lie (Agamben 1991, 1997; Badiou 2001, 2005; Deleuze & Guattari 1991; Rancière 1999).

Yet it is easy to understand the urge to avoid Marx in the context both of Victorian studies and economic thought. English departments have long been considered the last bastion of Marxism. The economist Deirdre McCloskey is reputed to have said, in English departments, knowledge of economics begins and ends with Marx. Moreover, the prevailing penchant of modern academic economics to excommunicate heterodox thought has long kept Marxian economics—and as recently demonstrated even once

widely accepted Keynesian economics—far outside the neoclassical mainstream.¹⁹ By way of contrast, one should note that prior to the rise of efficient market purists in economics and finance, Keynesian and heterodox economists like Pierro Sraffa and Joan Robinson read Marx in light of Keynes, and considered Marx’s macroeconomic approach and theory of demand as bearing upon Keynes’s theories of effective demand, unemployment, and inducement to invest as much as earlier attempts to refute Say’s law by Malthus and Chalmers.²⁰ Moreover, the explosion of French critical theory texts in the aftermath of May ’68 and through the 1970s muddied the waters with economic critiques barely grounded in Marx, let alone contemporary economic thought, including Deleuze and Guattari’s *Capital and Schizophrenia* series (1972; 1980), Jean-Francois Lyotard’s *Libidinal Economy* (1974) and *The Differend* (1983), Jean Baudrillard’s *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (1972) and *The Mirror of Production* (1973), and Jacques Derrida’s *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money* (1979). While at times insightful, these responses are culturally specific to the rigidity of the French Communist party, its indifference to the student movement, as well as political and philosophical questions concerning the role of the party and Stalinist diamat (dialectical materialism). By bringing forward libidinal/desiring production, these texts critique a Marxist-Leninism still fraught with the process of de-Stalinization and its uncertain future. The question of a realm prior to or outside of capitalism weaves through these texts in a variety of forms, from Baudrillard’s attempts to describe a “gift economy” outside of capitalist exchange to Lyotard’s pre-existent “libido” or Deleuze and Guattari’s “desire.”²¹ Such responses were more a philosophical counter-argument to the hegemony of the Hegelian dialectic in Marxist thought than a flat rebuke of Marx, and seem largely attempts to move beyond Hegelian mediation, a position that Gilles Deleuze perhaps expressed in its strongest form as a philosophical interest in “firstness,” a term borrowed from American philosopher C.S. Peirce, and is perhaps more recognizable as the “singularity” that Lyotard argues political economy elides. In Deleuze’s work with Felix

Guattari, “desire” acts as a name for firstness, the potential to relate (as opposed to secondness, the realm of relations, and thirdness interpretation of relations), and it operates on a plane of immanence prior to the differentiation of life and death. Desire is in effect a Spinozist notion of positive being that stands in contrast to the negativity at the heart of the Hegelian dialectic.²² While Deleuze’s philosophy—which Lyotard both critiques and extends—theorized firstness as an intensive expressivity (Deleuze 1968, 228-232), in *Anti-Oedipus* this idea became a “desiring-flow” that enters into a series of a machinic relations, e.g. secondness (Deleuze and Guattari 1972). In its emphasis on the productivity of desire, use-value and consumption come forward as potentially excessive forces that tend toward a delirium of connectivity with otherness and an expression of irreducible singularity.²³ It also represents an attempt to reveal the ignored base, the desiring multitude overlooked by a Marxism focused on production, the Party, and the industrial proletariat.

By contrast, one might argue that the work of Jacques Derrida is an attempt to think through in different form the consequences of Hegelian negativity. For this reason, Derrida’s relation to Marxism could be seen to be full of promise as a means of considering the excluded or to be beside the point given its indifference to perspective or the composition of new subjects (i.e. class composition, a critique recently made by Negri [Casarino et. al. 87]). Derrida’s early engagement with gift economies in *Given Time*, a seminar convened in the late 1970s, reveals that when the standard Derridean move of uncovering a trace of the unrepresented in a discursive construct is applied to economics, it becomes an inevitable state of indebtedness. Derrida’s subsequent deconstruction of the gift economy marks the impossibility of a gift outside reciprocity even as the notion of the gift is retained as a kind of ideality, a situation that he compares to Lacan’s notion of love—that which is given by someone who doesn’t have it.²⁴ In this respect, it may be useful to consider that the works of Baudrillard, Lyotard, and Deleuze and Guattari appeared in the late 1960s and early 1970s, while Derrida’s critique of the gift economy

appears almost ten years later at the beginning of the neoliberal era.²⁵ In the interim period, Richard Nixon had opted out of the Bretton Woods system, the U.S. economy shifted toward financialization with petrodollars, and there was an increased drive to liberalize trade, policies that Thatcher and Reagan brought to prominence while beginning the dismantling of the welfare state (cf. Harvey 2005). Perhaps this is why Derrida's work seems little more than a meditation on the inescapable state of free market capitalism, and his conclusion, such as it is, creates a broad homology between exchange and capitalist exchange.

With the fall of the Soviet Union, Derrida found a historical moment for deconstruction to reply to Marx in an extended lecture at the University of California at Riverside, later published as *Specters of Marx* (1992). Here the Lacanian notion of love was replaced by a quasi-religious messianism, and Marx becomes little more than the promise of a different path deferred to an apocalyptic horizon.²⁶ A host of alternately barbed or generous critiques of Derrida's work appeared—many collected in *Ghostly Demarcations* (1995)—but Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's critique, published in *Diacritics*, is perhaps the most pointed (barring Terry Eagleton's dismissive savaging of the argument). For Spivak, Derrida's response to Marx is indifferent to the content of Marx's thought. Derrida's series of rhetorical deconstructions only demonstrate his lack of awareness of Marx's development over time—Derrida expends much energy on Marx's work pre-*Capital*—and a general disinterest in the difference between the production and distribution of surplus-value, and that between industrial and finance capital (Spivak 1995). Such indifference, I would argue, was already apparent in *Given Time*, and is largely an effect of what Alain Badiou has properly labelled Derrida's sophistry: "Philosophy is always the breaking of a mirror. This mirror is the surface of language, onto which the sophist reduces all the things that philosophy treats in its act. If the philosopher sets his gaze solely on this surface, his double, the sophist, will emerge, and he may take himself to be one" (Badiou 2008, 25). This is not to say that sophistry

cannot offer useful critiques of totalizing systems, but in the case of Derrida, even the very insights that such deconstructive sophistry might lead to when applied to Marx—e.g. a consideration of what capital excludes, as in Spivak’s work—are nowhere to be found in *Specters*. This is what Spivak finds so distressing about Derrida’s attempt to engage Marx, and it is largely why I have found little if any recourse to Derridaean thought throughout the dissertation.

Given the changed economic and political environment, however, these increasingly hermetic theoretical skirmishes in Marxist and post-structural thought following the end of the Soviet Union seem more and more removed from reality. As the mere existence of Derrida’s *Specters* attests, the environment made it increasingly easy to declare Marx’s work a historical remainder, and the continued discussion of Derrida’s intervention—rather than Marx’s actual work—only serve to confirm such declarations. As Marxism’s hegemony in literary studies waned, a growing desire for work on economics and literature to be accepted by academic economists led to studies with a tortured relationship with Marx. Deirdre McCloskey’s rhetorical interventions in economics in *The Rhetoric of Economics* (1985) marked the beginning of this rapprochement between literary critical theory and economics with a surprisingly simple argument drawn from poststructuralist critique: economists use language to convince one another, and this language should be subject to examination in order to reveal problematic assumptions within the arguments themselves. Yet while McCloskey introduced the problem of language into economic discussions, this appearance of an anti-foundationalist economic critique did not concern the *content* of economic theory so much as the problematic assumptions that appear given its linguistic construction (Browne & Quinn 1994). Indeed, the application of anti-foundationalist/poststructuralist thought to economics should not be mistaken for a continuation of Marxist-inspired work by other means. The “mere” anti-foundationalism of McCloskey, which can note metaphoric exchange and a decentered subject without making such decentering a

fundamental aspect of economic theory, may have seemed maddening to Browne and Quinn in 1994, but trends in behavioral economics like the multiple-selves model or the development of concepts like reference points and framing devices indicate economics' ability to embrace poststructural thought without taking on any particular political awareness (Wilkinson 2008).²⁷ While it is certainly necessary to be aware of trends in economic thought, the generally homogenous nature of economics as a discipline means that a closer relationship between the literary critic and the economist will likely not lead to the proliferation of ideas but rather to their limitation.²⁸

Even so, the attention to language in economics resonated with the general thrust of the popularized Derridean deconstruction of literary studies, as well as the nebulous French critique of Marx, and led to the work of Jean-Joseph Goux (Goux 1990) and Marc Shell (Shell 1977; Shell 1980) on the relation of money and language as mechanisms of exchange that at once question the construction of a general equivalent while raising it to a kind of ontological status. Such indifference to the production of value fit nicely into the New Historicist critical paradigm and allowed literary critics to address the interchanges of metaphoric construction between discourses, including a focus on discursive histories of political economy and its rapport with literary production and consumption. Indeed, these maneuvers had their own unique institutional value since economics has remained relatively indifferent to the history of its development, and this allowed literary critics to extend their work in an interdisciplinary fashion without much of a challenge from the discipline being "inter"-ed.²⁹ This is the context of the work of Gallagher, Poovey, Gagnier, Klaver, and Knezevic, as well as Deirdre Lynch and Gordon Bigelow. This is not to dismiss the importance of such work, but to note the history surrounding its appearance. For example, Gagnier's work with John Dupré certainly helps to reorient our understanding of the economic by returning with empirical precision to its beginnings as a counter to the vague gestures of the French philosophically Marxist "economics." Yet

such work also has an institutional and discursive history that is certainly marked by the deep incursion of free market ideology in contemporary consciousness.

Yet Marx remains unavoidably present even in the background of literary studies' engagement with economics. Catherine Gallagher's *The Body Economic* uses Malthus's attempt to refute Say's law in his *Principles of Political Economy* in order to trace a pre-history of Keynesian effective demand.³⁰ Since the concept of effective demand has been out of fashion with supply-side economists for the last thirty years who essentially took Say's law as given, this initial resistance becomes for Gallagher a countervailing economic force for her discursive history that points toward Marx via Keynes without any of Marx's baggage. As Joan Robinson notes, Marx's work "provides the elements of a theory of effective demand" (43), which she claims was blocked by his commitment to the crisis theory of the falling rate of profit. Similarly, Poovey's use of popular economic literature in England allows her to omit Marx while turning her attention to John F. Bray, a working class economist who formulated concepts of surplus-value and irrational exchange prior to Marx, and whom Marx discusses at length in *The Poverty of Philosophy* (74-82) and the *Grundrisse* (136, 303, 560, 805, 871). Yet Poovey's interest in Bray centers not on his relentless focus on surplus-value, the inequality of capitalist exchange, or joint stock companies as counter-powers for the working class, but rather for his brief attempt to formulate a different means of distributing value through representation (Poovey 213-218), a problem that in different form appears as the heart of Marx's critique of the commodity form and the relative autonomy of money. Marx haunts these texts in footnotes where he comments from afar on primary sources, reduced to an observer from a counter-historical period that is simply too problematic to broach. Worse still, where he has not been omitted, he has been lumped into classical political economy for his use of the labor theory of value. When Regina Gagnier makes this claim (3), it carries echoes of Michel Foucault's derivation of Marx's critique of political economy from the same epistemic construction as Ricardian political economy in *The Order of*

Things (260-262). Even though Foucault writes that “Marxism exists in nineteenth century thought like a fish in water” (262), it seems fair to say that Foucault was not indifferent to Marxist critique and would at least admit that Marx’s work opens up what Deleuze, Foucault’s friend and contemporary, would call a plane of consistency, one in which the concepts of political economy are rearticulated in a new fashion, one that dislocates the concepts of classical political economy into terrain that would not be approached by economists until they were confronted by the potential downfall of capital in practice with the crisis of 1929. Indeed, it is certainly possible to critique Marx’s conception of surplus-value in light of British marginal utility theory’s more ephemeral notion of value as desire, which Deleuze and Guattari playfully take up in “The Apparatus of Capture” section of *A Thousand Plateaus* even while maintaining an emphasis on the primacy of the productive class and Marx’s description of the exchange’s derivation as a system that occurs between cultures, not within a culture. Yet such dismissal not only overlooks the continuing usefulness of Marx’s critique of attempts to derive price, profit, and interest rates from an impersonal market in *Capital 3*, or his groundbreaking macro-economic approach to the different departments of production picked up by Keynes and his followers in *Capital 2*, but also completely misses Marx’s attempts in the *Grundrisse* and *Capital* to grapple with the creation of surplus-value *beyond the labor theory of value*.³¹ If one takes seriously attempts to redefine the Victorian era as one of financial and bureaucratic reorganization rather than an increase in industrial capacity, then it is necessary to move beyond conceptions of Marx as yet another political economist and to attempt to understand his unique contribution to the analysis of society’s reorganization by economic demands both in terms of material production and in immaterial social production of knowledge itself. My project acts with an eye on this gap in the understanding of Marx.

Although Marx is often considered a theorist of industrial production, this is a gross oversimplification of a body of work that examines the increased power of the

social world that capital's reorganization of production amplifies and feeds upon. It is the social relation that matters in determining whether labor is productive or unproductive, and this position led Marx to note in volume one of *Theories of Surplus Value* that

these definitions are therefore not derived from the material characteristics of labour [...] but from the definite social form, the social relations of production, within which the labour is realised. An actor, for example, or even a clown, according to this definition, is a productive labourer if he works in the service of a capitalist (an entrepreneur) to whom he returns more labour than he receives from him in the form of wages; while a jobbing tailor who comes to the capitalist's house and patches his trousers for him, producing a mere use-value for him, is an unproductive labourer. (157)

Indeed, Marx's tendency to reject service labor as unproductive throughout *Capital* (as well as later in this chapter of *Theories*) depends upon this simple differentiation of labor's exchange with capital and revenue. One form of labor produces surplus value, the other does not. When Marx later cuts service labor from his presentation, the move is of a piece with Smith's decision to exclude service labor because, as Marx notes, "if he included it, this would open the floodgates for false pretensions to the title of productive labor" (172). Thus it is far simpler *rhetorically* to equate productive labor with labor that produces commodities, a situation that explains why Marx's usage of "unproductive labor" often seems of a piece with Smith's categorization. Moreover, it is useful to note an important lacuna in Marx's view not just of unproductive labor but of its role with capital's subsumption of society. Unproductive labor here largely refers to personal servants, and when Marx imagines that "capital conquers the whole of production [...]" it is clear that the unproductive labourers, those whose services are directly exchanged against revenue, will for the most part be performing only *personal* services" (159). Marx's work here is at once aware of capital's ability to exploit service labor to productive ends, yet oblivious to the possibility that capital's subsumption of society would lead to the subsumption of personal services as the object of capitalist development. One need only think of the growth of working class holiday towns like

Blackpool during the latter half of the century to realize how wrong this instinct was (cf. Bennett).

For this reason, it is important to return to Marx's work on the creation of surplus value. Marx's central insight regarding surplus value's production was that it did not simply consist of the extraction of a surplus amount of labor time (i.e. absolute surplus-value) but could also consist of the extraction of surplus labor through technological innovation (i.e. relative surplus-value). Regimes of accumulation that focus on relative rather than absolute surplus value are known as *intensive* regimes, rather than the extensive regimes of absolute surplus value. Marx approaches the problem of unproductive labor following this line of thought, and he saw that the shift from absolute to relative surplus value in the development of capitalist production did not form its absolute horizon. Rather he identified at least two immediately apparent forms of intensive accumulation. In *Capital* 1, he discusses the production of a deskilled proletariat stripped of any laboring specificity, and given a degraded supervisory role controlling of machinic production (493-639). However, in the *Grundrisse*, Marx reveals the degree to which the concentration of productive power in technology shifts the basis of wealth's production from labor to knowledge (704), and how in the process capital reclaims certain forms of unproductive labor as part of the production process. It is Marx's engagement with the potential direct productivity of knowledge that most informs my project. In the *Grundrisse*, Marx argues that the reorganization of production operated by a shift toward the production of relative surplus-value undermines the labor theory of value: "the *theft of alien labour time, on which the present wealth is based*, appears a miserable foundation in the face of this new one, created by large-scale industry itself" (Marx 1973, 705).³² In the face of a continually diminishing quantity of surplus value derived from an increasingly marginal quantity of labor time, capital begins to rely on the increased productivity of machinery. On the one hand, the production of fixed capital—e.g. technology, machinery, and scientific improvements in production—becomes an end

in itself (710). On the other hand, the time set free by improvements in fixed capital—“disposable time” (708)—becomes wealth’s measure as humanity becomes the ultimate form of fixed capital. I reproduce here the epigraph from Marx above:

Free time—which is both idle time and time for higher activity—has naturally transformed its possessor into a different subject, and he then enters into the direct production process as this different subject. This process is then both discipline, as regards the human being in the process of becoming; and at the same time, practice, experimental science, materially creative and objectifying science, as regards the human being who has become, in whose head exists the accumulated knowledge of society. (712)

Marx at once posits the ability of workers to reappropriate their free time as part of a potential revolutionary process and as a means of continuing capitalist production beyond the realm of labor into the instrumentalization of social free time.

This section of the *Grundrisse*, known as the “Fragment on Machines,” opens a path for the theorization of cultural production that differs significantly from the Frankfurt school’s critique of the culture industry and free time. This mode of critique, perhaps best characterized as the critique of alienation, is often considered “Marxist” in contemporary criticism, yet it displays little in the way of a Marxist engagement with either the production of capital or social relations.³³ When Theodor Adorno initially approached the question of free time in *Minima Moralia* (1951), he sees it as a kind of instrumentalized caesura in the cycle of work time, a space of boredom that is “the complement of alienated labour, being the experience of antithetically ‘free time,’ whether because this latter is intended only to restore the energy expended or because the appropriation of alien labour weighs on it like a mortgage” (Adorno 2005, 175). Much like Marx, in the essay “Free Time” (1966), Adorno traces the conception of free time back to the increased productivity of fixed capital (Adorno 1991, 188), but Adorno insists that free time’s instrumentalization by the culture industry ensures that individual use of such time is inherently unproductive and given over to various forms of “pseudo-

activity,” which testify to a “misguided spontaneity” (194). Yet in hilarious contrast to such pseudo-activity, Adorno adds this personal aside:

On the other hand I have been fortunate enough that my job, the production of philosophical and sociological works and university teaching, cannot be defined in terms of that strict opposition to free time, which is demanded by the current razor-sharp division of the two. [...] If free time really was to become just that state of affairs in which everyone could enjoy what was once the prerogative of a few—and compared to feudal society bourgeois society has taken some steps in this direction—then I would picture it after my own experience of life outside work, although given different conditions, this model would in its turn necessarily alter. (189)

Adorno’s failure to reflect on his own experience of free time reveals the manner in which free time can become generative: as the generation and dissemination of knowledge and affective capacity. While Adorno’s notion of a well-wrought use of free time mirrors Marx’s hope that free time’s reappropriation by the worker would give rise to “the free development of individualities” (Marx 1973, 706)—with a sense, however, of individualism that is quite alien to the petty bourgeois notion of individuality that inhabits Adorno’s work—his refusal to consider the idea that capital may be able to instrumentalize *his* free time in order to increase the social production of knowledge reflects a general assumption that not only are the means of production beyond the worker’s reach but that the knowledge to create the means of production are as well. Adorno’s indifference to production leads to a view of the worker as abject labor rather than productive power, and this recourse to abjection remains a significant function of critical theory to this day.³⁴

By contrast, work by Italian and European Marxists in the 1960s and 1970s used Marx to elaborate the contradictions of the Fordist mode of production and theorize the effects of a post-Fordist mode by engaging with the productivity of living labor. While their use of the *Grundrisse* during the Soviet era differentiated them from the Soviet-backed Communist party and its adherence to *Capital*, this selection served more than an ideological purpose. Where a Keynesian economist like Joan Robinson could argue from

Capital that Marx's use of the law of the tendential falling rate of profit is undercut by the continual development of knowledge alongside the accumulation of capital (Robinson 38), the "Fragment" revealed that Marx was not only aware of such objections but had considered them as part of an alternate path for capitalist development.³⁵ Negri's work in the late 1970s provides an important hinge between Marxist theory, the French anti-foundational critique of Soviet-style and party-focused Leninist-Marxism, and the changed economic, political, and historical circumstances of the late twentieth century. Building from the philosophical work of Deleuze, Negri reads Marx's work in the *Grundrisse* from a position of immanence—that is to say, insisting that labor and capital are entwined and operate on a single plane—a maneuver that turned Marxist discourse away from an often excessively Hegelian understanding of dialectical materialism as well as the increasingly problematic differentiations of base, superstructure, and ideology. Louis Althusser's Lacanian rearticulation of Marx had nuanced these distinctions without rendering them dynamic.³⁶ This assumption of immanence brought the productive desiring nature of the proletariat into a position of primacy able to confront the productivity of capital directly as well as the potential development of capitalist production in excess of fixed capital. Capital thus moves from its central position of productivity and recomposition to become an apparatus of capture able to appropriate the productivity of the working classes.³⁷

Negri turns Deleuze's emphasis on desire's productivity and its potential to overflow as a delirium of consumption into the basis for new collective subjects constituted through the interaction of desire and exteriority. In his reading of the "Fragment on Machines," Negri uses Marx's reading of the inverted relation between fixed capital and labor power to bring out the changed nature of collective production and its effects on the working classes themselves: "*the compression of necessary individual labor is the expansion of necessary collective labor* and it constructs a 'social individual,' capable not only of producing but also of enjoying the wealth produced" (Negri 1991,

145). The emphasis on enjoyment is central to Negri's argument, and perhaps more revolutionary in impulse than it is descriptive. Social individuals created by capital's ever increasing expansion of necessary collective labor are not simply productive automata attached to fixed capital but new collective subjects with the capacity to enjoy the wealth they produce. That is to say, new political engagements become possible when workers seize the free time technological innovations in production make possible by increasing the productive capacity of society in general, a situation that the unemployed Italian youth demonstrated during the *autonomia* period (or in the twenty-first century, the ability to constitute new collective political agents via technology, itself the product of increased social knowledge). The focus on free time and desire reveals a vision of the law of surplus-value overturned. Labor time not only ceases to be a substantive measure of value for workers or for capitalists but its refusal becomes the perspective of the worker: "Non-work, the refusal of work becomes the worker's point of view, the basis from which the law of value can be inverted and the law of surplus-value reinterpreted" (Negri 1991, 148). In Italy, the refusal of work began to supplant wage agitation and became a new demand for workers as direct confrontations between the workers and the Italian state gave way to localized attempts to create independently controlled spaces in light of the failures of the welfare state (Castellano et. al. 1996).

Negri's reading of Marx grew out of the failures of the welfare state during the 1970s (which also led to the emergence of Chicago-school economics). Negri's work on the relation between the working class and the State grows out of his early engagement with Hegel's philosophy of right and the State (cf. Casarino 2008). Negri argued that capitalism recognized the working class as a political economic problem under the name of "effective demand." While Keynesian economics tried to redress inequities through state intervention, this move simultaneously revealed that "capital is now obliged to move to the *social* organization of that despotism, to diffuse the organization of exploitation throughout society, in the new form of a planning-based State that—in the

particular way in which it articulates organization and repression throughout society—directly reproduces the figure of the factory” (Hardt and Negri 1994, 45). Yet as the State increasingly binds capital’s effectivity to the rate of interest in an attempt to control unemployment, the conjunction of the State and capital focused on controlling labor leads to both capitalist stagnation and worker resistance. The Regulation School provides useful economic corollaries to the work of the Italian Marxists. Michel Aglietta describes the crisis of Fordism as the increased inability for the state to mediate the inequities between capital and labor. David Harvey, in his work on neoliberalism, points out that the recession of the 1970s changed the Federal Reserve’s understanding of interest rates: the Fed became indifferent to unemployment and focused instead on controlling inflation (Harvey 2005). The refusal of work and the appropriation of free time in the 1970s Italian *autonomia* movement advocated for worker mobility beyond the factory, but simultaneously led to the flexible and undermined position of labor in post-Fordist production. Paolo Virno notes in “Do You Remember Counterrevolution?” that although *autonomia* saw the refusal of work as a means of “social aggregation and a point of strength” (244) by extending class composition beyond factory labor, this revelation of physical labor’s antieconomic character in highly automatized production simultaneously opened the way for capital to recompose production in terms of a discontinuous labor process. It is the discontinuity of the labor process that marks contemporary capital as post-Fordist. Capital, in its ability to enfold non-work time and non-work spaces into production, not only manages to include new demands within production but to capture the increased value made possible by collective labor, including the collective production of knowledge and services necessary not simply to the creation of fixed capital but to the production of social relations as such.

Thus while the planner state provided the initial impetus for a theorization of collective production, it is the instrumentalization of the social in late capital that led the *autonomia* movement to focus on the valorization of “immaterial labor,” the production

of knowledge, language, or affect which classical political economy would have called unproductive labor (Virno and Hardt 1996; Hardt and Negri 2000, 2004; Negri 2008; Casarino and Negri 2008; Virno 2004; Virno 2008). The shift toward immaterial labor as the hegemonic form of production centers on Marx's notion of humanity become fixed capital through the instrumentalization of society's general intellect. Negri's work with Michael Hardt expands the concepts of the *autonomia* movement—most especially the real subsumption of society by capitalist production—to global capitalism, designating the post-imperial capitalist subject Empire and the autonomous collective subject of labor multitude. Unlike Adorno's rigid adherence to the distantiation of human productive capacity from the means of production, Negri's work ensures that the direct productivity of social relations in post-Fordism through the manipulation of language, signs, and affect are in and of themselves expressive of a productive desiring capacity beyond capital as well as a means of reproducing and increasing the increasingly social means of production.

Negri views the developments of postmodern capital as a movement from an expressive subject with its own firstness (i.e. a heterogenous series that operates as part of a unique synthesis), and what Deleuze and Guattari termed an "apparatus of capture" (i.e. a secondary or parasitic system [Deleuze and Guattari 1980, 441-442]). Under the regime of immaterial labor, capital is no longer productive but rather a parasitic apparatus of capture. One of the central problems with Negri's work, however, is that it maintains some aspects of capital's productivity alongside this radical autonomy of the multitude. Capital becomes a parasitic force from somewhere beyond, even while both he and Michael Hardt insist on "immanence." The utopic production of subjectivity a la Spinoza does not account for antagonisms within subjective production or the continued reproduction of capital. It is as though we are already Communists, but we have yet to recognize it! While Negri's work introduces the notion of the social individual and the power of collective production into critical discourse, this deduction of a wholly

autonomous multitude is problematic.³⁸ In his work with Hardt, this has led to an attempt to hybridize what they characterize as the poles of modernity (e.g. development) and antimodernity (e.g. popular/democratic struggle) into an “altermodernity” that combines the two (the term itself is derived from the French alter-globalization movement) (Hardt and Negri 2009). The difficulty with their approach is not the somewhat pedestrian alternative view so much as the contrast between their philosophical descriptions of a general ontological becoming of multitude and their descriptions of what appear to be *multitudes*. Their encounters with the patchwork horizontal networks of groups that band together to protect common production (groups that have been called “multitude”) reveal these networks to be local engagements and interventions that do not so much reveal the multitude engaged in Hardt and Negri’s global struggle for altermodernity as local interventions of multitudes against general tendencies operated by global capital. The overreach of this concept of multitude gestures toward a vast alter-class that is in fact highly variegated and has shown little if any evidence of class-consciousness.

From the Italian perspective, Virno’s work provides a useful contrast to Hardt and Negri as it highlights a central ambivalence to the construction of multitude. For Virno, multitude, as the emergent social subject of postmodernity, occupies “a risky state of loss of equilibrium and a favorable restraint” (Virno 2008, 64). While Virno discusses the mechanisms by which multitude innovates and creates itself, he does so by focusing on the phenomenological experience of the immaterial laborer without attempting to extrapolate ontological claims about the multitude. Sylvère Lotringer notes that Hardt and Negri create “a struggle looking for a class” while “for Virno it would be just the reverse: a class looking for a struggle” (16). Negri himself vindicates this view, stating in an interview that: “[Michael Hardt and I] quickly realized that the real challenge was not to unveil or reveal the multitude; the point, rather, was to do it, to make it, to produce it” (Casarino 105). By contrast, Virno is engaged in multitude’s unveiling, describing immaterial labor’s emotional tonalities (opportunism, cynicism, and fear) as well as its

use of virtuosic improvisations with the materials of social production (language, affects, and signs). This project helps to delimit the problems one confronts with the emergence of a new form of collective subjectivity and its potential rationalization. The individuation of the immaterial laborer in late capitalism at once reveals its ubiquity and its multiple articulations, both positive and negative.

While Hardt and Negri's work has re-energized post-Marxist work on collective agency, it is their insistence on a relation of immanence and antagonism between the multitude and empire—drawn from Deleuze and Guattari but different from it as noted—that has led to a recurrent criticism of their work: by assuming a primary resistance to the multitude, their work seems to lead inexorably toward the utopic assumption of a unitary revolutionary subject as the result of the multitude's evolution. Ernesto Laclau makes the strongest case against their approach in favor of a Gramscian notion of articulation:

For me, the emergence of unity of heterogeneity presupposes the establishment of equivalential logics and the production of empty signifiers. In *Empire*, it results from people's natural tendency to fight against oppression. It does not matter if one calls this tendency a gift from Heaven or a consequence of immanence. *Deus sive Natura*. What is important is that Hardt and Negri's approach to this question leads them to oversimplify the political process. (Laclau 2005, 241)

Any engagement with immaterial labor demands attention to the specificity of such labor and its effects while avoiding the pitfalls of a grand narrative of a unitary historical agent. By the same token, however, one must be aware of Laclau's own problematic take on Marx, one that rejects class conflict as an inherent component of capitalist production (as in: "antagonism is not inherent to the relations of production but it is established between the relations of production and an identity which is external to them" [Laclau 2005, 149]). On the one hand, Laclau's construction of identity resembles Hardt and Negri's multitude as a subject able to confront global capital on its own terms, if not as a direct effect of economic developments. On the other hand, Laclau's work comes close to dismissing one of Marx's central insights: changes in production allow new subjects (or

identities) to appear. E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working-Class* perhaps comes closest to offering a realistic historical view of the construction of a resistant social subject that is at once in relation to yet external and antagonistic to the relations of production.

What I find more troubling, though, is Laclau's claim that heterogeneity disrupts a situation's logic with an eruption of the political. This avoids any sense of the contradictions within capitalist production that lead to under-consumption, the global division of production, and the contradiction in capitalism's credit system between money and fictitious capital. It is difficult to dismiss these actually existing economic problems. Laclau is certainly right to be suspicious of an overvaluation of class-consciousness premised on any particular mode of capitalist production—he took this to task in great detail with Chantal Mouffe in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1986)—but Laclau's reduction of economic contradictions to political interventions overvalues capital's functionality. Laclau's description of how political demands are constituted are fascinating rhetorical models, which intersect in interesting ways with the work of Alain Badiou. However, Laclau's work uses language as a means of articulating demands rather than producing new forms of subjectivity, which keeps his approach in a realm where the inequities of exchange can be ameliorated but the problems of production remain.

Indeed, the link between immaterial labor and multitude is important precisely because it is what leads to the direct production of subjectivity. For Hardt and Negri, this link allows them to draw a relation between the poor and social production, since immaterial labor takes place outside the traditional labor process and allows the poor to enter into a post-modern proletarian-status: “since the poor participate in and help generate the linguistic community by which they are then excluded or subordinated, the poor are not only active and productive but also antagonistic and potentially rebellious” (Hardt and Negri 2004, 132). Nicholas Thoburn notes that immaterial labor becomes the means by which Hardt and Negri enfold into the proletariat the otherwise formless class

of the poor that Marxists would recognize as the lumpenproletariat. Their work effectively takes up Peter Stallybrass's description of the manner in which the lumpenproletariat acts as an avatar in Marxist theory for a pre-political class capable of political formation (Stallybrass). One should note, however, that the formlessness of the lumpenproletariat, its role as a kind of undifferentiated libidinous mass, is what Marx also discovers in the aristocracy of finance capitalism: "In the way it acquires wealth and enjoys it the financial aristocracy is nothing but the *lumpenproletariat reborn at the pinnacle of bourgeois society*" (Marx 1850, 39). Separated from production, parasitic and debauched, both classes defy notions of productivity, and operate as transitional shadows between Marx's privileged historical agents. Indeed, Hardt and Negri's effective extension of the class relation to agents outside the labor process as such reverses Empire's lack of an exterior into an immanent and extensive multitude. This is part of a laudable attempt to rediscover a notion of the common, social relations that can exist beyond capital. Negri argues that "poverty is naked power" (Casarino 91), and he has reiterated this position at length in *Commonwealth* with Hardt to emphasize the role of poverty, militancy, and love in the construction of the common. Their position is meant contrast with Giorgio Agamben's concept of naked life, which views the human condition as a poverty of abjection and understands life only in its relation to death. However, I would more readily accept that while the poor—and those otherwise outside the labor process—are implicated in post-Fordist production, their role in the construction of the common takes place in local forms that are only glancingly recognized as bearing some relation to a set of broader political demands. The question of how one may articulate a broad-based and effective political subjectivity for multitude remains an unresolved question for continuing inquiry.

For this project, the implication of the undifferentiated classes of the lumpenproletariat, finance capitalists, and unproductive laborers within production usefully speaks to the hegemonic function of gentlemanly capitalism in the nineteenth

century described by Cain and Hopkins. Such implications do not so much demand an examination of the ideological construction of the gentlemanly as it does the perforation of immaterial labor throughout the social, political, and economic spheres of Victorian England and its effects on the production of subjectivity. For example, problems of class imposture and shady finance bear on the construction of the social world and the characters of the Veneerings and the Lammles in Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend* (1864), Godfrey Cass in Collins' *The Moonstone* (1868), and Augustus Melmotte and the members of the Beargarden in Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* (1875). These problems not only lead to the intermingling of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, but such class distinctions bleed into the undifferentiated mass that Matthew Arnold termed the *Populace* in *Culture and Anarchy* (1868): "that vast portion, lastly, of the working class which, raw and half-developed, has long lain half-hidden amidst its poverty and squalor, and is now issuing from its hiding-place to assert an Englishman's heaven-born privilege of doing as he like" (107). It is no surprise that Walter Benjamin's attempt to understand the nineteenth century in *The Arcades Project* centered around the lumpenproletariat, with sections on prostitutes and gamblers, the unproductive world of fashion, and the flâneur, an undifferentiated class that seemed to extend across society, from the financier to the prostitute (Benjamin 1999). Benjamin's first draft of his essay on Baudelaire, drawn from these convolutes, turns the figure of the ragpicker into a cipher for immaterial labor's abasement: the picking over of refuse to create paper (Benjamin 2003, 8).³⁹

The study of the nineteenth century novel has long been fascinated with phenomena that an archaeology of immaterial labor can help refine. These not only include interest in finance and collective subjectivity, but more broadly the question of unproductive labor, which includes the manipulation of fictitious capital and the production of fiction, domestic service, affectual labor, and other forms of so-called women's work that make up so much of nineteenth century literature's engagement with

domesticity. I have limited the scope of this study to the examination of specific ideological impasses in novels of the 1860s that take on issues of unproductive labor, collective subjectivity, and finance. Such work invariably confronts service labor and the construction of gendered labor roles, a topic central to the interest of literary studies in the intersection of narrative and political economy, from Nancy Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, to Gallagher's *Nobody's Story*, and Michael McKeon's *The Secret History of Domesticity*. By emphasizing an emergent configuration of immaterial labor, I argue for an implicit connection not only between literary production and financialization but between what Raymond Williams once claimed was "the crucial distinguishing element in English life since the Industrial Revolution"—"alternative ideas of the nature of social relationship" (Williams 1958, 325). These conceptions of social relations extend from such processes and domestic economies to the larger question of the composition of collective subjects.

My approach historicizes the novels at hand while considering how the problems they present resonate with contemporary problems for Marxist thought and critical theory. Although nineteenth-century Britain tended to blur the distinctions of social and economic class, I focus on the means by which collective subjects are constituted across such demarcations. In this respect, critical theory's turn toward questions of subjectivation and the composition of collective subjectivity can offer useful counterpoints and corollaries to theories of immaterial labor by contributing another means for exploring the contours of experiences of post-industrial life. These theorists tend to fall into two camps, though they often respond to one another: on the one hand, a disparate group of Marxist philosophers like Alain Badiou, Slavoj Žižek, and Jacques Rancière focus on how events produce subjects—what we might call, taking the question of production into the realm of language, the function of language qua measure of value. On the other hand, post-Derridean philosophers like Giorgio Agamben and Jean-Luc Nancy (who both also bear a substantial debt to Georges Bataille), focus on the diffusion

of community into the non-place of language—what we might contrast with the productive use of language above as language qua mechanism of exchange.⁴⁰ Laclau and Mouffe fall somewhere between these camps with their post-class approach to Marx, which is premised on a deconstructive engagement with language that is nonetheless also interested in the composition of collective political demands.

It is language's ability to produce collective subjects that links the two camps. Alain Badiou is the preeminent figure in the subjectivation camp. Central to the rejection of Derridean deconstruction, Badiou subjects the poststructuralist ethical turn to scathing critique in his own *Ethics* (1998), where he called Derrida's reliance on the Levinasian altogether Other nothing more than "decomposed religion" (23). As already referenced, Badiou refers to deconstruction as sophistry, albeit with the caveat that sophistry is a necessary adversary to philosophy but one allergic to the category of truth. Indeed, unlike much contemporary philosophy, Badiou's work is foundational, and a kind of hybrid of Plato and Sartre. In *Being and Event* (1988), Badiou argues that mathematical set theory fulfills the function of modern ontology by approaching the realm of being as multiple. That is to say, "infinite alterity is quite simply *what there is*" (Badiou 1988, 25), not something transcendent beyond human experience like the altogether Other. Badiou's use of set theory has profound implications for his conception of collectivity, the role of the state, and the processes of subjectivation. Although accomplished via a series of expositions combining mathematics, philosophy, and set theory, Badiou's work represents a deep engagement with French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. Badiou's approach to the material constitution of reality as multiple allows him to maintain Lacan's sense of the real as a malleable yet material realm rather than a fixed exteriority while he simultaneously overturns Lacan's dictum against meta-language, which is what mathematical set theory becomes as a kind of ontology.

In terms of collectivity, Badiou's work in *Being and Event* hinges on a particular understanding of how sets are constituted and what their constitution means both for a set

and for the uncounted. Each set is infinite, there are infinite sets, and the uncounted parts within a set always exceed the elements that a set contains. Yet the realm of being—the infinite multiple—also maintains a foundational relationship between a situation of being and what Badiou calls “the void.” The void is not non-being but rather the inconsistency that subtends any set. In effect, the void sutures a set to the inconsistency of being that underlies it (Hallward 65). Leaving to one side the many differences between Badiou and Deleuze, the elements in a situation bear some similarity to what we saw in Deleuze and Peirce as firstness.⁴¹ For Badiou, this initial structuring of a set is its “presentation,” and it remains haunted by the void’s inconsistency, leading to a structuring of the structure, a literal re-presentation that forms the state of the situation, which Badiou rechristens “world” in *Logics of Worlds* (2009). The difference between the realm of presentation and representation leads Badiou to stake out four positions: *the void*, when an element is not presented or represented; *the normal*, presented by the set and represented by the state; *the excrescent*, represented by the state but not presented in the world; and *the singular*, presented in the world but not represented by the state. The latter two categories are central to Badiou’s description of truth and the processes of subjectivation. The singular is an unrepresented potential subject while the excrescent is a surplus of representation that can become an event. Such events take place at the edge of the void in a world, and operate a potential shift in a world’s suture to the void. Yet an event only exists insofar as it is an event *for* a subject. The paradigmatic example for Badiou is Saint Paul as a subject to the event of Christ’s resurrection. Paul’s commitment to the event of resurrection without reference to any set of Christ’s teachings or the influence of the Apostles illustrates a pure fidelity to an event (Badiou 1997). Although an event takes place within the state of a world, it is not, properly speaking, part of the realm of being, but rather a question of the representation of the state of the situation. An event determines the appearance of the state of the world only through the work of a subject to that event. Subjects discover in the language of the world that precedes an event a name

that can be reworked to imply the event, and nominate the event using the language of the situation. In turn, by maintaining fidelity to an event, subjects can engage in a process of *forcing* that makes the event's recomposition of the state verifiable—that is to say, it changes the status of the real. While this does not give language a place of primacy in Badiou, it does make language part of a continuous process of subjective fidelity to an event through the event's name. Such a move combats attempts to articulate being purely through language and linguistic construction, which Badiou argues at length in meditation 28 of *Being and Event*, “Constructivist Thought and the Knowledge of Being.” For Badiou—and, indeed, for Marxists like Negri—if the world were purely articulated through language, then being itself would be static, and the possibility of intervention and change would not exist.

For example, in contrast to Badiou's approach, one might consider the problem of focusing on linguistic articulation in Laclau's work. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985), written with Chantal Mouffe, argued that Gramsci's model of hegemony or passive revolution serves as a better model for the articulation of social subjects than a murky class-based conception of the proletariat and its relation to “productive labor.” In Laclau's *On Populist Reason* (2005), he further theorizes the constitution of political subjects through an essentially catachrestic process of hegemonic construction by articulating disparate demands under the identity of an empty signifier (72). Laclau's work on the articulation of hegemony through such empty signifiers bears some resemblance to Badiou's theory of the event and its subjects—and this is in part as much due to competing readings of Jacques Lacan—yet Laclau's work combines Lacan and Gramsci to examine the articulation of heterogeneity as a *signifying practice*. Where Badiou places the process of such rhetorical articulation at the heart of an event's reorganization of both the state and the world, for Laclau such rearticulation does not imply a change in the real, only an articulation of hegemony. Even so, it is useful to note that when Laclau also rejects the immanent antagonism of Hardt and Negri, his

description of the structuration of the social terrain through a process of “failed transcendence” as “the presence of absence (244), closely matches Badiou’s notion of the subtractive nature of the event and its relation to the void: “It is around a constitutive lack that the social is organized” (244). The approaches are quite similar, but the central question is whether one willingly embraces the the post-structuralist sense of the world as bodies and languages, or follows Badiou’s claim that there are bodies, languages, and truths that serve to reorganize them.

Jacques Rancière more explicitly takes up Badiou’s terms, but he sidesteps the question of subjective intervention for a more descriptive approach. Rancière applies Badiou’s description of representation to the political as an inclusive exclusion premised on linguistic commonality, which in effect makes all politics founded on a suppressed wrong (Ranciere 1999). Not only does this recall Lyotard’s work in *The Differend*, but one of the difficulties of Rancière’s approach is that, much like Lyotard, for all the discussion of the political, their theories of social composition never take any recourse to the question of the state. Thus although Rancière’s amalgamation of politics and linguistic production is suggestive for an examination of collective subjectivity and immaterial labor, one should note that Badiou rejects Rancière’s work as indifferent to both the role of the militant subject to an event and to the state in the construction of representation (Badiou 2005). Much as in Hardt and Negri, the threat of a blank unitary subject remains in the background of Rancière’s approach. By contrast, neo-Heideggerians like Jean-Luc Nancy and Giorgio Agamben take the implications of Heidegger’s late assertion that “Language speaks” to an extreme of exteriority, which displaces the possibility of the common into an experience of isolation and an exposure to death. This is largely an effect of their focus on the constitution of language in relation to the Heideggerian limit of death. It seems fair to argue that if these thinkers take language as the place of exchange rather than production, it is because the ultimate limit of death is, in Hegelian fashion, the internal negativity that drives linguistic production. Nancy’s

“literary communism” posits language not as a means of articulating collective subjects but of describing their limits, and he argues that literature “would designate that singular ontological quality that *gives* being *in* common” (64) but this being in common is none other than the experience of the limit itself. Nancy’s position not only resonates with Derrida’s *Politics of Friendship* but also with Agamben’s work on bare life, which carries a similar valence. Agamben traces language as a space of suspension, a community to come in its denuded linguistic form. For Agamben, bare life exemplifies the limits of the human, which leads him to examine figures like the Holocaust camp denizen known as the Musselman and hospitalized vegetative humanity in *Homo Sacer* (1995). Negri argues against Agamben’s notion of naked life: “to use nakedness to signify life means to homologize the nature of the subject and the Power that has made it naked, and to confuse in that nakedness any power of life” (Casarino et. al. 2009). Badiou ends *Logics of Worlds* with a similar call, which not only takes issue with Agamben but also with Negri’s excessive attachment to the biopolitical: “We will only be consigned to the form of the disenchanted animal for whom the commodity is the only reference-point if we consent to it” (514). Both writers, I would argue, are correct in their assessments.

Each of these thinkers is engaged with the profusion of means of communication as a socio-economic phenomenon that affects real changes in the structure of human existence. Yet as these accounts tend to focus on and extrapolate from contemporary experience, they occlude the forces that surrounded immaterial labor’s presence as an emergent mode of production. In a sense, the novels examined here via unproductive labor are also part of a prehistory of modernism insofar as, per Frederic Jameson, modernism autonomizes language (Jameson 2002, 149). For that reason, even as I engage in close readings to examine the composition and recomposition of collective subjects in texts, it is important not to raise language’s autonomization and its concomitant self-referentiality into a telos or valorized aesthetic mode but rather to understand it as a means of engaging with a particular historical change in social production that allows the

production of social relations to take on a particular form of appearance within literature. It would be a mistake to view modernist or postmodernist aesthetics as revelations of revolution rather than strategies merely open to utopic interpretations. By the same token, however, it is important to bear in mind that changes in the construction of representation, when representation has become central to a society's ability to reproduce itself, can and will affect the construction of social relations.

In reading the different emergent engagements with unproductive and immaterial labor in the mid-Victorian novels of Eliot, Dickens, Collins, and Trollope, the juxtaposition of different critical approaches to the aesthetic construction of collective subjectivity helps to illuminate the specificity of the models in the texts. Because such an approach is open to charges of anachronism and eclecticism, let me offer a brief defense. To the charge of eclecticism, I would reply that Marx's own approach to the possibility of immaterial labor is specific to the nineteenth century and formed part of a response to political economy's attempt to theorize the potential positive productivity of unproductive labor, either explicitly (as in Nassau Senior's work on unproductive labor discussed in chapter two) or implicitly (as in J.S. Mill's engagement with corporate bureaucracy discussed in chapter three). Moreover, as the era not only encompassed the expansion of the franchise, the increase in print media, the rise of global communication, but also the extension of the British service industry (cf. Cain and Hopkins), the refinement of corporate organization (cf. Alborn), and the development of white-collar crime (cf. Robb), it becomes increasingly difficult to overlook the growing importance of labor practices that would bear at least passing resemblance to post-Fordist immaterial labor. To the charge of eclecticism, I would reply that my approach is not a patchwork application of theorists or a series of staged encounters between theorists and texts. Rather, I have begun from a position common to Marxist criticism from the work of Pierre Macherey and Terry Eagleton: approaching each text as a question with premises already determined by its form, content, and historical circumstance (Macherey 1978;

Eagleton 1978). As Eagleton argues, a text, to the extent that it cannot answer its own problem, reveals an ideological impasse open to critique and recomposition (88).

However, since the passage from material to immaterial labor entails the direct economic yield of imaginative production, I have generally refrained from using the language of ideology critique, which implies a structural separability between idea and practice as well as the superstructural impasse of economic determination in the final instance.

Indeed, the concept of immaterial labor puts such determinism into question, and insists on a more supple elaboration of the interaction of material production and its social and ideological organization. Moreover, ideology also raises questions of class-consciousness and the construction of unitary historical subjects, i.e. the proletariat. For this reason, I have drawn from a particular subset of contemporary Marxist work to describe the specific contours of immaterial labor and class composition. As my positions are generally interventionist—e.g. operating from a sense of the productive interaction between subjects and the articulation of reality—they are also perhaps most easily accommodated by the emphasis on subjective constitution that links the work of Hardt and Negri, Deleuze and Guattari, and Badiou. However, the following work is neither a demonstration of nor an addendum to a specific theorist. It simply operates from a similar set of principles. This has led to encounters between critical theorists not as a means of guiding an interpretation but of providing contrasts to specific impasses in the novels at hand.

In the following chapters, I argue that fiction can offer a unique response to economic production when it confronts its own constitutive engagement with immaterial labor. Fiction's relation to immaterial labor reveals in each text a distinct attempt to differentiate a collective subjectivity in opposition to the financially based collective subject of economics, often through figures that wreak havoc on the social world through the creation of false signs and identities, from the forgeries of Godfrey Ablewhite in *The Moonstone* and Augustus Melmotte in *The Way We Live Now*, to the impostures of John

Harmon, Bradley Headstone, and Noddy Boffin in *Our Mutual Friend*, or the failure of Godfrey Cass to own his daughter the night of her mother's death in *Silas Marner*. Alongside the proliferation of working-class literature in the wake of the Stamp Act's repeal, in the 1860s the novel attempts to create a specifically literary multitude that was subsequently linked to the notion of limited liability and finance. Although such creations are undoubtedly reactionary—as I explore in the conclusion—they nonetheless also carry other potentialities. The adequation of the multitude and finance can be read as an endorsement of a high literary—or financial—value. Yet when these novels are read against the grain, they can also reveal a positive literary multitude that takes shape in the conjunction of negative figures for a collective laboring class not bound to material production and the rhetorical maneuvers within a text that proliferate social relations in a specifically linguistic register. This negative multitude—immersed in linguistic production and consumption—not only reveals anxieties of Victorian Britain's upper and middle classes, but also opens the possibilities of collective subjectivity in a manner that speaks both to the revolutionary currents of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as to the current post-Fordist mode of production.

My emphasis on the relation of collectivity to immaterial labor responds to a continued emphasis on private experiences of textuality in literary studies. Whether drafting discursive histories or detailing historical descriptions of institutions, critics tend to approach literature in light of an individualized experience of text. While Catherine Gallagher's discursive approach highlights the privileged experience of an academic reader in tracing the construction of a concept (e.g. value in *The Body Economic*), attempts to draft historically specific modes of reading turn away from this highly specialized reader in favor of an (idealized) average middle-class reader rhetorically constructed by the texts themselves. This approach is highlighted not only in Deirdre Shauna Lynch's examination of eighteenth century literature as a mechanism for educating individualized readers in market society (Lynch 1998), but also forms a

substrate in Mary Poovey's work on the economic press and its readers that her recourse to genre attempts to defuse. The primacy of the individual reader is equally central to Nancy Armstrong's *How Novels Think* (2008), where Armstrong also engages with the rise of individualism in the novel. Juxtaposing two generic currents in the novel to describe this development, Armstrong uses the tension between realist and Gothic fiction to describe the novel's engagement with collectivity. Yet even in her most convincing moments—like her reading of *Frankenstein*, which bears an uncanny resemblance to Hardt and Negri's reading of the novel (Hardt and Negri 2004, 10-12)—her emphasis falls on a shift that “enabled a British readership to understand itself as a stable aggregate of individuals across the globe” (53). That is to say, the construction of a collective readership is itself divided and able to comprehend itself only individually.

There are a number of difficulties with this individualized approach. First, the construction of a middle-class reader is predicated on a historical narrative in which the bourgeoisie act as nearly the sole economic and political class in nineteenth century Britain. Second, while an emphasis on a middle-class readership speaks to the impact—both in terms of a novel's content and its potential monetary recompense for its author—of large lending libraries in the initial production of a novel, it reduces such texts to the machinations of one interpretive community. I approach these novels as engaged in multiple processes of collective production, new linguistic assemblages capable of various forms of collective address, not only to the middle-class readership of lending libraries but potentially beyond, if not in immediate circulation then in later forms of publication and distribution made possible by the mass marketing of literature in the latter half of the century. The possibility of such reading exists precisely through counter-identifications, what we might call anti-interpellations, created by the text as it continues to exist beyond its historical moment and becomes available to other communities that accent the language differently and open the text's polyvocality to reveal a new grasp of its own historicity (cf. Volosniov). In this way, the aesthetic aspects of a text can become

the possibility of new historical understanding, or, as Terry Eagleton says, “that which speaks of its historical conditions by remaining silent” (177). Moreover, if one takes seriously the interventionist stance that subjects can not only reorganize the representation of the world but alter the world itself—as in the work of Badiou, or in a more apocalyptic tone, Benjamin—then one must consider the manner in which the texts of mid-Victorian finance have taken on new resonances in a globalized economy where the dominant post-industrial nations have become service economies.

I begin with Joseph Conrad’s ubiquitous finance novel *Nostramo* (1904) because it offers the most succinct example of the interaction of economic and literary production. While literary studies often use *Nostramo* to close the discussion of late-nineteenth century capitalism, I open with it to reorient the discussion and turn away from the achievement of monopoly capitalism and imperialist expansion toward the constructions of hegemony that make such a situation possible. For the novel’s title character, a thematic shift from cash to credit follows a change in his relation to language. Formerly a man whose only interest in silver was its ability to maintain his good name in society, with his theft of the silver and the arrival of credit, Nostromo puts his name into cheapened circulation to become little more than a miser intent on using his reputation to protect his stolen silver. Conrad explicitly traces in *Nostramo* the relationship between language and economics in the creation of the world market, and in the process exemplifies the interrelation of economics and linguistic production through its dual circulations of silver and the language of character, with the eventual subsumption of character’s representation by an economic form of representation, credit. While revolution and counter-revolution form the novel’s plot, *Nostramo* does not so much engage in an examination of class-warfare as consider the multiple subjective effects of a monetary crisis as the measure of reality finds itself debased by credit’s proliferation as a mechanism of exchange.

In the second chapter, I turn to the 1860s with George Eliot's *Silas Marner* (1861). The analysis of *Nostramo* prepares us to see the structural impasse that Eliot confronts when examining the construction of community through material and immaterial labor. In its naturalist emphases, *Silas Marner* tries to imagine the emergence of a new social subject as an organic process able to transcend the gap between social production (e.g. affective and linguistic production) and economic production by privileging a traditional notion of material production in Marner's linen weaving. So long as a society such as Raveloe needs Marner's economic production, a naturalized process of sympathy integrates this man who would otherwise be excluded from society. Yet in portraying this process, the novel's relation to itself as text heightens the dislocation it tries to resolve by positing two modes of language: on the one hand, a realm of simple language available to the pastoral folk of Eliot's work, and one which depends on materiality, inscription, and affect; on the other hand, a language for the wealthy and wise—both within the text and beyond, for its author and its readers—that circulates meaning beyond materiality. The contradictions between these two modes constitute the text's organic unity of social and economic production. While the miser showcases the contradictions of capitalist production by juxtaposing the accumulation of wealth with an existence in poverty, the contradiction becomes in the person of Silas Marner a productive exception, a generative negativity that nonetheless remains unavailable except at the level of narration. In his miserliness, Marner does not provide a figure for a new social subject. Rather, the possibility of collectivity appears in the narratable gap Marner occupies between social and economic production, the undetermined exterior of a materiality that motivates and suffuses the text yet remains irreducible to its own organicism.

While Dickens also engages with the miser in *Our Mutual Friend* (1864), the novel is uninterested in the miser's social reintegration and focused instead upon expelling him from society while releasing his hoard back into circulation. The story

follows the various machinations necessary to clean the taint of greed and garbage from a miser-dustman's legacy, to turn his money "bright again, after a long long rust in the dark" (Dickens 757). Yet society itself is tainted in this novel by the communism of capital as the joint stock company and its shares fall under Dickens's satirical lash and he mockingly pleads for Shares to "take rank among the powers of the earth, and fatten on us!" *Our Mutual Friend* is often thought of as a novel about economics, not simply for its thematic engagement with the miserly but for its close attention to waste and its reclamation by the social world. I argue that this attention in the novel displaces notions of unproductive labor into the realm of immaterial labor, especially with the novel's use of characters clustered around questions of literacy, not to mention the novel's interest in the commodification and reification of language itself. Immaterial labor appears tacit in Dickens's last completed novel, and the diegetic world here seems to operate at the very limits of material production. No longer intent on the plodding industrial production of *Hard Times* or the over-speculation of *Little Dorrit*, Dickens creates a world of scavengers, dustmen, and loan sharks who experience their existential limits only by their control of the written word. By contrast, the novel's women—Bella Wilfer and Mrs. Boffin—put language and affect to use to create a new collective subject within the reconstituted avuncular family in a reactionary form of collectivity that also marks Eliot's *Silas Marner*.

In chapter four, I examine how the construction of Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* (1868) confronts the question of narrative as labor with narrators that are servants or members of the working-class, and in many cases paid for the labor of writing. The novel's status as one of the first detective novels tends to overshadow the appearance of this nascent sense of immaterial labor and its multiplication of narratorial perspective as unproductive laborers are given a pivotal role in the construction of an entire social milieu. Approached as a detective novel, the plot's totalization of knowledge operates within a socio-economic organization that limits collectivity to groups willing to

help enforce the law. Approached in terms of immaterial labor, the novel offers a rhetorical organization premised on the multiplication of difference between and within characters with an incipient multitude that elicits thoughts for the novel's characters of the joint stock company and finance. Franklin Blake's different personalities serve as a kind of collectivity built into a single character, and with his unconscious theft of the gem this internal multiplication of character becomes a facet of the novel's plot to be excised by consciousness. The work of the text's immaterial laborers at once describes its economic subjection and its potential rejection of such status. The servant Rosanna Spearman's attempt to create an affect-based economy in place of the novel's economy of linguistic circulation—premiered on the idea of an avuncular family with Franklin that is unrealizable due to the constraints of class—fails, and leads to her suicide, as the grave becomes the only position she can find beyond exchange.

In chapter five, I argue that when Anthony Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* (1875) takes on the question of unproductive labor in finance and literature, it begins to excavate a kind of immaterial labor that is gendered, social, and directly productive. The novel's female characters engage in multiple forms of immaterial labor, from the affective and linguistic schemes that go into creating the novel's various marriage-plots to their more explicit literary endeavors. This feminine labor is subsequently co-opted by masculine figures of unproductive finance that itself begins to shade into a kind of immaterial labor with its creation of credit signs and various forgeries. Such labor is contrasted against an essentially gentlemanly notion of capital that posits the possibility of truthful and trustworthy economic endeavors as either grounded in agricultural production, as represented by the landed Roger Carbury and the well-intentioned but ill-spoken John Crumb, or in the honest communication of financiers like Mr. Breght, whose letters to the anti-Semitic Longestaffes reveal an honest man grounded in a concept of family. The immaterial labor of the novel's female characters is at once linguistic and affective, and draws social connections through language and marriage-

plots: from Lady Carbury as both a writer and romantic plotter, to Ruby Ruggles and Marie Melmotte as readers who create of their own romantic fantasies. Yet this feminine production finds itself stymied and appropriated by the novel's representations of gambling and finance, which is itself eventually ameliorated into the fabric of society even though its chief representative, the gutter-born Melmotte, is cast out. In this satirical novel, the fear of a multitude empowered by immaterial labor is warded off by appeals to an evanescent social chorus, an "everybody" that displaces and externalizes the novel's negative image of immaterial labor into the social and linguistic production, however fraudulent, of a truthful society.

Indeed, the productive nature of the false is a recurrent theme throughout the dissertation. From Nostromo's bartering of his name for gold and Marner's miserliness to Bradley Headstone's assumed identity in *Our Mutual Friend*, Rosanna Spearman's attempts to mislead the search for the Moonstone, and Melmotte's forgeries, the production of false signs creates new and sometimes frighteningly empowered subjects to be destroyed. Unredeemed, however, and examined in light of immaterial labor, it is through such figures that one can discover the potential forms of new collective subjects in the Victorian novel. Such collectivities take on two forms. One is the avuncular family, a reactionary formation that offers a recognizable collectivity that does not threaten the established social order but rather offers a separate space of safety. While Eliot's novel here provides the first of such examples, Dickens novels almost invariably end with such arrangements, whether it is the conjunction of the Boffins, John Harmon, and Bella Wilfer in *Our Mutual Friend*, or the extended community of bankrupts that join in the closing marriage ceremony of *Little Dorrit*, or even in *Great Expectations*, where Pip lives with Herbert and his bride in a kind of familial compromise that renders the novel's ambiguous ending with Estella irrelevant. The other form of collectivity is rhetorical as the narrative addresses its reader with varying degrees of inclusiveness. Such a maneuver should be apparent not only in the titles *The Way We Live Now* or *Our Mutual Friend*, but

in the pronomial play of Trollope's novel, the indeterminate rhetorical address of *Nostramo*, and the shifting narrative perspectives of *The Moonstone*. The dispersal of community into language is itself a reactionary formation, but one that continues to exercise dominance in the realm of critical theory as neo-Heideggerians like Agamben and Nancy amply demonstrate. It is nonetheless the ability to construct collective subjects across distances through language that becomes increasingly important for the late nineteenth century. This includes the construction of collective subjects open to exploitation by empire and global capital as the jingoism of the working-classes amply demonstrates. It also marks, however, the creation of subjects able to resist such exploitation, from the Communist and anarchist organizations that emerged in the latter half of the century to the emergence of New Liberalism and the eventual emergence of the welfare state. The study of the nineteenth century and its literature is in good part the study of the construction of collective social relations and their efficacy.

Notes

¹ David Harvey's discussion of Hilferding is useful in this respect, emphasizing Hilferding's inability to engage with the contradictions between credit and money within capitalism's system of developed finance: "Hilferding depicts finance capital as both hegemonic and controlling, whereas Marx portrays it as necessarily caught in its own web of internal contradictions" (Harvey 1982, 292). Harvey's approach is part of the regulation school of Marxist economics, which Michel Aglietta has usefully summarized as follows: "capitalism is a force for change which has no inherent regulatory principle; this principle is provided by a coherent set of mechanisms for social mediation that guide the accumulation of capital in the direction of social progress" (412). These mechanisms at once allow for the creation of organizations that are able to respond to internal variations in the accumulation of capital, and for the creation of relatively rigid protections for the interests of certain groups, most especially wage-earners, which eventually confront one another in contradictory ways.

² In *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*, Ricardo noted his earlier mistaken attitude toward the effects of machinery on the working classes in a section that would become of great use to Marx in his theorization of capital's ability to subsume and reorganize labor: "I am convinced that the substitution of machinery for human labor is often very injurious to the class of laborers. My mistake arose from the supposition that whenever the net income of a society increased, its gross income would also increase; I now, however, see reason to be satisfied that the one fund, from which landlords and capitalists derive their revenue, may increase, while the other, that upon which the laboring class mainly depend, may diminish, and therefore it follows, if I am right, that the same cause which may increase the net revenue of the country may at the same time render the population redundant, and deteriorate the condition of the laborer." (236)

³ Though such libraries had existed in London since the mid-eighteenth century, they dealt mostly in fiction, an effect of the exorbitant rate of 31s for the triple-decker novel that Mudie's Select Library, launched ten years later in 1842, would make an integral facet of their business model. See Griest 1970.

⁴ Simon Eliot enumerates four types of author/publisher arrangements: "on commission" (author paid publisher for production), "half profits" (author provides manuscript, publisher production, 50/50 split), "outright sale" (author sells manuscript to publisher for a lump sum), and "royalty" (percentage paid to author based on cover price). Royalty arrangements apparently originated in the U.S. context and migrated to British publishing after Babbage's day. See Eliot 55-56.

⁵ Both of the works cited contain new translations or amended versions of pamphlets published by Negri from the late 1960s through the 1970s. While *Books for Burning* contains the texts used by the Italian state when it tried Negri on various political charges, the most important essays on the state form appear as chapters two ("Keynes and the Capitalist Theory of the State") and three ("Labor in the Constitution") of *Labor of Dionysus*. In particular, Negri argues that with the appearance of Keynesian economics, capitalism recognizes the working class as a political economic problem using the name "effective demand." With the intervention of the state into questions of effective demand, Negri claims that "capital is now obliged to move to the *social* organization of that despotism, to diffuse the organization of exploitation throughout society, in the new form of a planning-based State that—in the particular way in which it articulates organization and repression throughout society—directly reproduces the figure of the factory" (45). As

the State increasingly binds the effectivity of capital to the rate of interest in an attempt to control unemployment, the whole edifice of capital becomes for Negri premised on labor. With his examination of the Italian constitution, Negri expands this notion of the planner state premised on labor to demonstrate that even as social democracy may contain the seeds of real communism, it is nonetheless an attempt to “envelop and directly control the working class at a social level, and thus reduce it to being only social labor” (62).

⁶ Babbage noted in the preface to the third edition (1833) that larger booksellers had inserted into his books a printed page “Reply to Mr. Babbage” (x), and he continued his defense of his critique (xii). The idea of an author’s union appeared throughout the nineteenth century, with the first Society of British Authors founded in 1843, which dissolved in acrimony shortly thereafter. Such unionization occurred during the proliferation of copyright legislation that extended from the late 1830s into the mid-1840s (the Dramatic Copyright Act of 1833, the International Copyright Act of 1838, the Copyright and Customs Acts of 1842, Literary Copyright Act of 1842), which, according to Victor Bonham-Carter, did little increase income for authors (75-76). A second attempt came in 1884 when Walter Besant founded a second Society of British Authors and began agitation for further copyright protection. See Bonham-Carter.

⁷ These mines were apparently “within the jurisdiction of the stannaries” according to the Act, and held a unique if anachronistic set of privileges as the coining centers of Cornwall.

⁸ In 1873, Walter Bagehot writes of the continuing Continental political turmoil as one of the chief reasons for London’s dominance as an international market. See Bagehot 56, 63, and 88-98.

⁹ As part of the Bank’s charter in 1697, Parliament restricted joint stock banking in England to the Bank of England. While other banks could issue notes, their limited size made this difficult and Bank of England notes came to dominate London as a means of payment for larger sums. Later restrictions on the minimum amount of bank notes were put in place to combat the excessive note issue of country banks (first to £1 in 1775, then £5 in 1777), which arose due to the Bank’s refusal to engage in branch banking. After the crisis of 1825, Parliament mandated the extension of branch banking by the Bank to discourage further localized note issue. See Quinn 156, 164.

¹⁰ Though the legal definition of a bill of exchange was not formalized until the Bills of Exchange Act of 1882, though as King notes, this definition was simply a codification of merchants’ customs. Prior to that “the bill was used for the acknowledgement of indebtedness between merchants, as a simply I.O.U., and even for making payments to third parties, long before its existence was recognized by the law, and long before there was any kind of discount market” (xvi). The discount market consists of bills sold for the bill’s amount less a particular quantity of interest known as a discount. Like interest, discount rates are calculated as a yearly percentage. See King xvii.

¹¹ Suspension of the Bank Act meant suspending the ratio of note issue in excess of 14 million pounds to gold, an action which typically had more effect on the perception of credit than the availability of notes themselves.

¹² This shift is largely responsible for the firm’s downfall, which I examine in chapter four (275-77).

¹³ That is not to say that fraud and busts were altogether a thing of the past, as the failures of the City of Glasgow Bank in 1878 and the Liberator in 1892 make clear.

¹⁴ Gallagher's earlier *Industrial Reformation of the English Novel* is also a useful touchstone, as she ends in the midst of the 1860s. Gallagher maps the fading of the industrial novel with a shift to a discourse on culture, and she uses Eliot's *Felix Holt, the Radical* (1865) as her fictional pivot and Matthew Arnold as its discursive counterpart, which are linked to the increased fragmentation of class position by the extension of the franchise. For Gallagher, Felix is a figure for pure culture, denuded of class, an example of Arnold's "class aliens" in *Culture and Anarchy*. Gallagher describes the fictional critiques of industrialism as moral critiques that ask what is the proper (Christian) response to industry. Gallagher formulates responses to this question in terms of free will or social determinism, which pits political economic understanding and a willingness to accept such economic laws as mandated by God à la Martineau against a Romantic paternalistic understanding of human plenitude as part of a continuous natural hierarchy that can be readily spotted in Coleridge, Carlyle, Ruskin, and Arnold.

¹⁵ Although Gagnier sidesteps Marx by lumping him into classical political economy, it is interesting to note that she has in essence explicated an aside by Raymond Williams: "What emerged in bourgeois economics as the 'consumer'—the abstract figure corresponding to the abstraction of (market and commodity) 'production'—emerged in cultural theory as 'aesthetics' and 'the aesthetic response.'" See Williams 150.

¹⁶ In this schematization, I have left to one side Norman Russell's *The Novelist and Mammon* (1986), one of the earliest turns toward the intersection of literature and finance. Russell provides a useful overview of nineteenth century financial terminology to provide historical explication of novels by Mrs. Gore (*The Banker's Wife*), Dickens (*Little Dorrit*), and Trollope (*The Way We Live Now*), as well as work by Charles Reade and Disraeli. Russell's work is not concerned with the articulation of finance in literature so much as explaining the historical incidents that surround these novels.

¹⁷ In either side of this small divide, however, are substantially linkages with feminist criticism. In comparing the construction of concepts, whether value in Gallagher, taste in Gagnier, or representation in Poovey, the canon of political economists (e.g. Adam Smith, T.R. Malthus, J.S. Mill, and W.S. Jevons) is contrasted with literary representations of gender roles, an effect not only of the content of nineteenth century literature but of a number of contemporary critical turns, combining new historicism, feminist critique, and postcolonial criticism to emphasize the structural occlusions and recompositions women confront in these texts. The feminization of poverty in the twentieth and twenty-first century adds particular weight to such a focus even as it struggles to delineate different cultural hegemonic structures in the disjunctive relations of political economy and literature. Yet as recent historical research by George Robb, Nancy Henry, and Timothy Alborn notes, the role of women in the world of Victorian finance was significant, given their preponderance in accounts held in savings banks and life insurance policies, as well as their ventures into joint stock shareholding, even as their legal ability to represent themselves in the marketplace remained questionable at best.¹⁷ While the critical focus on repressive constructions illuminates the many difficulties that women faced during the period, our evolving understanding indicates that such repressive strictures were part of a variegated set of economic roles that included a multitude of agential strategies. I would argue that just as critical theory has shifted from deconstruction's ethical focus on the occlusion of alterity toward the political focus on

the interrelation of events, subjects, and singularities, Victorian studies can benefit from added attention to the construction of collective subjects.

¹⁸ See for example Rose.

¹⁹ For example, behavioral economics—which throws into question the rationality of agents—nonetheless asserts that it is a corollary for, as Wilkinson describes it, “improving the explanatory power of economic theories by giving them a sounder psychological basis” (29). Akerlof and Shiller make similar claims. Recently, Paul Krugman noted that even “the New Keynesian models that have come to dominate teaching and research assume that people are perfectly rational and financial markets are perfectly efficient” (42)—a situation that is largely due to the hegemony of neoclassical mathematical models that demand equilibrium in order to function. On a more disturbing note, Ryan Grim has noted the importance of the Federal Reserve in funding the academic economists and their publications, which has led to a system in which the monetarist policies that catapulted the Fed to its status as global economic arbiter have become unquestionable within the academic economics community.

²⁰ Not only that, Marxists like Michel Aglietta, Antonio Negri, and Ernest Mandel saw Keynes as a response to capitalist crisis that bore a debt to Marx. For instance, Mandel lays out what seems to be the widely accepted Marxist view of Keynes: Keynes’s macroeconomics may be useful, but his attempts to save capitalism from crises not only lead to economic stagnation but his pump-priming techniques tended to toward investment in armaments that implicitly link the Welfare state with a military-industrial fascism (cf. Mandel 537-539; 719-720).

²¹ For example, Lyotard’s discussion of Marx in *The Differend* shifts almost immediately from quoting Marx’s “Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Law,” which precedes Marx’s discovery of surplus-value by about 12 years, to disputes between Lenin and Luxemburg as a kind of stand-in for concerns about the party and Stalinism (172-73).

²² For an account of Deleuze’s use of Peirce, see Colebrooke 60-63.

²³ This shift has two implicit aspects: the growth of working class consumption as an integral component of the capitalist economy—something most clearly worked out by the Regulation school—and the rise of an antagonistic relation to such instrumentalized consumption in the 1960s. This leads to an attempt to reclaim the consumption of use-values as an activity outside of capitalist exchange, a shift that led almost inexorably to the body as a counter-power to capital, and the construction of an antagonistic collective, productive, and lived time to the rationality of capitalist time. Negri points out in *The Constitution of Time* that “the whole of 1960s communist philosophy attempts to embody the realm of ends, to concretize the ideal of reason after the fall of the subject” (Negri 2003, 99). It did this by focusing on the body, a form of “collective corporeality as constitution of individuality” (ibid.).

²⁴ Derrida’s relationship with Marx is reminiscent of Lacan’s discussions of Marx in Seminar XVII. Lacan uses Hegel’s master/slave dialectic to describe a situation in which the production of surplus-value is inextricable from the production of subjectivity: the master exposes himself to death while expropriating the slave’s body, yet in the process the master gives up his *jouissance*, which the slave retains. The master, by giving an order, begins the production process by instantiating the realm of the signifier, which leads the slave to render to the master what Lacan calls the slave’s “surplus *jouissance*”

(107). This structural aspect resonates with Derrida's work (as does Lacan's work on *alethosphere*, the place where science's creations exist as "nothing more than the effect of a formalized truth" [161]). But Lacan points out the specifically historical nature of this relationship: because "nobody knows what to do with this surplus *jouissance*" (175) until "something changed in the master's discourse at a certain point in history" so "that on a certain day surplus *jouissance* became calculable, could be counted, totalized" (177). That is to say, there is a historical shift in the dominant form of discourse from the "master's discourse" to the "university discourse," which raises the calculable to an authoritative and unchecked position. This is why, for example, Lacan writes in a claim that augurs the notion of immaterial labor and its relation to the lumpenproletariat that "the student is not displaced in feeling a brother, as they say, not of the proletariat but of the lumpenproletariat" (190).

²⁵ Lyotard, for example, is clearly grappling with the increasingly importance of credit to global capital in *The Differend*, and his account, while following much of Marx's work in *Grundrisse*, is quite confused about the role of credit in capital, and its relation to money. At one point, he argues that "the time of the exchanges during which the money is thereby blocked in the form of credit is so much time lost in relation to effective exchanges (*hic et nunc*), just as when it is blocked during production" (176). Yet credit's role is precisely to smooth exchange and allow production to continue uninterrupted. Indeed, when Lyotard contrasts debts that "must be canceled and quickly" to narratives, which "must be recognized, honored, and deferred" (178), he misses entirely the intersection of narratives and debts that occurs in credit, which incurs debts that are precisely those that *must be recognized, honored, and deferred*. It is only when these debt-narratives are thrown into question, as in a crisis, that they interrupt production.

²⁶ It is useful to note that Derrida's engagement with Marx manages to engage with an important question, even if Derrida seems unable to formulate it properly. As Negri points out, Derrida comes close to the post-Marxian concept of value production beyond labor time with his insistent reading of "out of joint," yet remains "a prisoner of the ontology he critiques" (13) even as he falls back on the promise of the gift, here given in religious terminology, as a kind of messianism, a promise of a beyond that nonetheless remains out of reach (Negri 1999).

²⁷ Moreover, McCloskey's note on the limited ramifications of her critique in *Rhetoric* makes clear her commitment to the Chicago school. The subject of *Rhetoric* is a critique to help the science of economics evaluate itself: "It seems on the face of it a reasonable hypothesis that economists are like other people in being talkers who desire listeners when they go to the library or the computer center as much as when they go to the office or the polling booth. The purpose here is to see if this is true, and to see if it is useful: to study the rhetoric of economic science. The subject is science. It is not the economy, or the adequacy of economic theory as a description of the economy, or even mainly the economists role in the economy. The subject is the conversation economists have among themselves, for the purposes of persuading each other that the interest elasticity of demand for investment is zero or that the money supply is controlled by the Federal Reserve" (xx).

²⁸ For example, Lee Erickson's "classical free-market economic analysis of the early-nineteenth-century English literary market" (5) puts forward generally acceptable readings of the effects of the publishing industry on literary production, yet he insists upon couching it in language that is hilariously strident and patently offensive: "There are still some who refuse to read Adam Smith and believe in Marxist economics, in much the

same way, I think, as there are still those who refuse to read Darwin and believe in creationism” (17). Such a sentence is particularly hilarious considering the vulgar marginal utility theory Erickson uses throughout his work, one which insists upon the problematic terminology of *pleasure* and *desire*—a terminology that dates back to Jevons’ work in 1871, but that is absent in Menger’s work of the same year—to describe the marginal rate of utility rather than the now generally accepted locution “marginal rate of substitution.” This may seem a niggling point, but Erickson maps the marginal utility notion of pleasure or desire *directly* on to the pleasure readers take from a text, a move that “substitution” would prohibit while arguably strengthening his readings by allowing him to consider the behavior of consumers from a more nuanced position than a typical supply-side economics reading would allow.

²⁹ With the 2007 mortgage crisis and the 2008 credit crisis, however, it has become somewhat fashionable to dust off J.M. Keynes, albeit with a wink and a shrug. The New York Times provides a useful case study. Omitting the references made by economist Paul Krugman, which are too numerous to list, the *NYT* has run a number of feature pieces on Keynes recently. See Lohr, Mankiw 2008, Mankiw 2009, Skidelsky, Bernstein, and “Wild Animal Spirits.”

³⁰ As Boyd Hilton notes in his work on evangelical political economy, the evangelical arguments against Say’s law grew out of the intersection of sexual reproduction and economic reproduction: Chalmers argued that “just as overpopulation causes low wages and starvation, so a ‘supersaturation of capital’ lowers profits and leads to bankruptcies. In effect, what Chalmers was doing was to transform Malthus’s long-run stagnation thesis into an explanation of business cycles” (Hilton 119). Keynes’s work on Malthus not only appears in *Essays in Biography* as Hilton notes but also briefly in his *General Theory* (362-364).

³¹ The question of the relation between price, profit, interest, and value forms the heart of the “transformation problem,” i.e. the problem of transforming Marx’s “value” into market prices. Marx’s work on this issue in *Capital 3* has been the subject of critique since its publication in the late nineteenth century when Böhm-Bawerk claimed that Marx’s value bore no relation to profit. In 1904, Rudolf Hilferding addressed Böhm-Bawerk at length, arguing that his approach overlooked Marx’s engagement with social production and placed undue emphasis on labor as the source of value. By reading labor as subjective sacrifice—a view common to the marginal school and growing out of classical political economy—Böhm-Bawerk’s use of a personal estimation of value demands that all items be exchanged against a personal subjective sense of the amount of labor it would cost an individual to create such an item (entirely true, insofar as marginal utility theory is concerned). Hilferding points out that labor is intrinsic to a good, but that a good’s exchangeability is extrinsic and dependent upon social circumstance. Ernest Mandel mounts a similar argument in *Marxist Economic Theory*, which sees the transformation problem as a mere misunderstanding of Marx’s emphasis. The problem persists, though not in the form of the Böhm-Bawerk critique. Where Böhm-Bawerk claimed Marx’s claims were inconsistent between *Capital 1* and *Capital 3*, the contemporary contretemps focuses on the problem of an inconsistency internal to Marx’s work in *Capital 3*. Marxist economists split between three differing schools of thought, often shorthanded as the New Interpretation (NI), the simultaneous single system interpretation (SSSI), and the temporal single system interpretation (TSSI). The NI and SSSI both maintain simultaneous physicalist valuation of inputs and outputs, essentially attempting to extend and revise the work of earlier Marxist revisionary economists like Bortkiewicz and later Paul Sweezy. TSSI theorist Andrew Kliman has recently argued

that such approaches effectively undercut any understanding of Marx's theory by an assumption that makes the law of the tendential fall of the rate of profit nonsensical. Kliman's defense of Marx's work as a totality includes Marx's theory of the falling rate of profit not as the cataclysm Marx's readers often portray it (e.g. Ernest Mandel), but rather as a problem that leads to crises of overproduction and failures of effective demand. The audience for Kliman's work is less the Marxist intellectual than the garden variety economist since their inability to comprehend Marx's argument seems due to their attempts to formalize Marx's claims before understanding their logic. Marx's work is essentially an examination of a central disequilibrium in economic reality that economic thought misses—indeed, the only way to understand many of Marx's equations is to assume they are not reversible and hence *not equal*. Physicalist assumptions on the part of contemporary Marxist economists who refuse to engage with the law of the tendential fall of profit assume a spurious equality *in their construction of their equations*. Interestingly, the central problem that most economists use to argue against Marx—that value does not translate directly into profit—generally occurs alongside mention of the fact that this is *not* the case when the organic composition of capital is the same across industries or when there is only variable capital involved, precisely the two instances that provide the baseline for Marx's work on the equalization of the distribution of surplus-value via profit. Regulation school economists differ on their interpretation: Aglietta recasts the problem as a tendency toward uneven development between departments I and II (355-356), while Harvey sides with Sweezy yet underlines the central problem as one of over-accumulation, thus reinforcing Aglietta's stance that crises represent a contradiction between the falling rate of profit in production and lack of demand (195-6). See Hilferding; Kliman; Harvey 2006; Aglietta.

³² Interestingly, Jean François Lyotard takes note of this section in *Libidinal Economy*, but it reduces him to incoherence. Lyotard refuses to see a contradiction within a regime of production in which social knowledge is responsible for the majority of production but still paying its workers using a wage based on time worked. Instead, Lyotard claims such a situation only exists for Marx since it is only Marx who is concerned with production (148). This must come as happy news for wage earners in post-modernity. After sputtering for a paragraph, though, Lyotard returns to what he notes as “an inequality or a difference of potential somewhere in the system” (149)—a precursor to his notion of the differend—which is precisely what Marx describes in this contradiction: a difference between regimes of valuation that not only operates a wrong on the workers but a wrong that is increasingly obvious to all who enter into the phrasal network of capital.

³³ Adorno was likely unaware of Marx's work in the *Grundrisse* at the time of *Minimal Moralia* (1951), as the manuscripts were first made available to a wide audience in 1953. His stance in the later essay reiterates many of the points from *MM*, including his use of Schoepenhauer, and makes no mention of the passages from the *Grundrisse*. See Marx 1973, 7.

³⁴ A recent book on cinema by Jonathan Beller makes this especially clear. While Beller begins from the assumption that looking has become a primary form of social production, he nonetheless maintains that such looking is bound into an exploitive relationship with capital. The notion that the specular relationship must be productive *first* before capital can attempt to exploit it is nonexistent for Beller, a turn of events that is particularly strange considering that Gilles Deleuze's well known work on cinema—which he cites—is premised upon the primary productiveness of cinema as the construction of new modes of thought and sociality (Deleuze 1986). This is not to

undercut the extent to which cinema is implicated in capitalist processes of production, but to consider that reducing its production of social relations to a state of simple parasitism is reactionary at best.

³⁵ It is important to note that the first wave of *autonomia* and the later work of *operare* Marxists were focused on the problems of underdevelopment generated by Keynesian economic policies in Italy. Their engagement with free market policies came during the 1970s as Italy began to experiment with neo-classical models. See Negri's early essays on Keynes in Hardt and Negri 1997, as well as Virno et. al. in Virno and Hardt 1996.

³⁶ One should note that Negri first presented the contents of *Marx Beyond Marx* in Paris, in a series of seminars organized by Althusser. The failure of Althusser's notion of semi-autonomy is brought forward by Laclau and Mouffe in their argument that the deconstructive ramifications of Althusserian over-determination are expressly limited by his reliance on economic determinism in the final instance. See Laclau and Mouffe 98-99.

³⁷ Deleuze and Guattari put forward a similar argument in *A Thousand Plateaus*, labeling capital an "apparatus of capture" for its creation of relationships between potential agents of expression that could then be read as tertiary value signs. Michel Foucault's well-known theoretization of the primacy of resistance in *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1* is similarly derived from Deleuze, and it becomes Hardt and Negri's preferred exposition in *Empire, Multitude, and Commonwealth* (where Foucault's notion of the biopolitical event is central to the exposition of their argument). Negri's work also elicits another aspect of Deleuzian philosophy, that of the manner in which, as Deleuze describes in *Difference and Repetition*, "every phenomenon flashes in a signal-sign system" (222). Deleuze uses this system to describe how communication between heterogeneous series can create phenomenal effects via an "asymmetrical synthesis" (244). While this creation of signs between series expresses the movement from firstness to secondness in Deleuze, this approach resonates with the asymmetry between capital and labor in the production process given the exponential growth of fixed capital under a regime of relative surplus-value.

³⁸ Deleuze and Guattari do not work from a similar position of antagonism, but rather from the activation of different potentialities within desiring production. Capitalism is a particular expression of potentialities within desiring production that can be taken to a variety of different intensities, e.g. consumer capitalism, fascism, Communism, and even their axiomatic deduction of the primacy of resistance does not ensure that resistance tends toward collectivity. When Negri tries to take up similar questions in *Kairos, Alma Venus, Multitudio*, his answers are not nearly so supple or open to multiple subject positions. See Deleuze and Guattari 1972, and Negri 2003.

³⁹ In addition to his attempt to theorize the author's role in production in "The Author as Producer," Benjamin's work on the nineteenth century and Baudelaire is in essence a meditation on the subsumption of authorship by capitalist production. Adorno responded to Benjamin's early draft of the Baudelaire piece by arguing that Benjamin lacked any sense of mediation, in essence amalgamating capitalist production directly into authorial production. While there is certainly a grain of truth to Adorno's reading, it also highlights Adorno's refusal to recognize a potential production of knowledge that was not completely determined by capital. See Benjamin 2003a 768-782; Benjamin 2003b 99-115, 200-214, 313-355.

⁴⁰ Without a doubt, Michel Foucault looms in the background of all such work given his engagement with process of subjectivation and the emergence of biopolitics in *Discipline and Punish* as well as *History of Sexuality*, but I would argue that his overall methodology puts into practice the work of Gilles Deleuze. This is discernible from their early interplay, from Deleuze's use of Foucault's description of the classical world of representation from *The Order of Things* (Deleuze 1994, 262) to Foucault's description of a coming analysis that combines psychoanalysis and ethnology in the pivotal chapter on the human sciences in *The Order of Things* (379-380), which clearly evokes Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*, not to mention Deleuze's post-humous account of Foucault's philosophy in *Foucault*.

⁴¹ For a primer on the differences between Badiou and Deleuze, see Francious Wahl's 1992 preface to *Conditions*, which draws extensively on Deleuze's formalizations in *What is Philosophy?* and Badiou's *Being and Event*. After Deleuze's death, Badiou wrote his own elaboration on the topic in Badiou 2009.

CHAPTER 1: “THE SHAPE OF CREDIT”:
IMAGINATION, SPECULATION, AND LANGUAGE IN
NOSTROMO

Joseph Conrad’s *Nostramo* tends to elicit two kinds of responses from its critical readers: they either attempt to untangle its narrative or they privilege its rhetorical opacity. Such responses are in part an effect of the novel’s distended presentation of events. The novel is littered with characters and narrated through a series of temporal loops, and this makes its historical trajectory anything but transparent. Attempts to pin down the novel’s content straiten its narrative into historical timelines, map its actions across the imaginary topography of Costaguano, and turn its opacity into figures provided by the text’s source material or Conrad’s own political views.¹ By contrast, influential readers like Frederic Jameson, Eloise Knapp Hay, and Pamela Demory engage the novel’s proto-modernist opacity as its own figuration of history, from Hay’s reading of the novel as a fable of imperial politics, to Jameson’s as a reification of the romance narrative, or Demory’s as an allegory of the irreducible nature of the historical event. Critics, caught between these poles, often lose sight of the novel’s narrative dynamic. I would argue that this dynamic is constitutively tied to the novel’s fascination with the world market taking shape around it, most especially the subjective effects of credit’s signifying mechanisms brought by the market’s arrival. While the text’s narration displays the increasingly dense set of social relations made possible by global capital, its construction of character explores the isolating subjective effects that paradoxically accompany this newly integrated world as its titular character falls into opportunism to survive and is finally undone by the machinations that he undertakes first to protect and then to steal the mine’s silver.

The novel’s narrative traces the Gould silver mining concession’s defense of its “material interests” (Conrad 1904, 100)--a process that socially and politically

reorganizes Costaguano by embedding it in the world market--and its anachronic presentation figures Marx's claim that "the true nature of capital emerges only at the *end of the second cycle* [of production and circulation]" (Marx 1971, 514). In *Nostramo*, narrative economy and political economy form a unique dynamic of repetition as material interests subsume Sulaco's economy into the credit-based economy of the world market. This intersection of political and narrative economies inflects the novel's rhetorical texture and drives its plotting and characterization. Decoud's declaration that the mine's latest load of silver should be sent to the mine's American backers ahead of an invading rebel army exemplifies this narrative dynamic of subsumption: "Let it come down so that it may go north and return to us in the shape of credit" (Conrad 1904, 204). Although my methodology in this essay combines narrative theory's attention to the production of plot and character with Marxism's critique of political economy, this is not to homologize narrative theory and political economy into a single "literary" economy but rather to explore their intersections as encounters between mechanisms of social interaction and calibration that have become blurred and intertwined. By addressing the novel's rhetorical constructions of temporality alongside its thematic descriptions of characters who put their life-stories to economic ends, I will examine the novel's means of composing collective subjects within and through text. In this way, my argument combines insight into the novel's historicity and its rhetorical opacity in order to demonstrate the novel's engagement with economic crises and subjective tactics that are specific to the period of its writing and yet still relevant today. In particular, the novel's use of the imagination to create a kind of immaterial labor will demonstrate the relation of finance capital's subsumption of local economies and the creation of hegemonic identifications within the narrative.

In its account of the mine's increasing reliance on credit, *Nostramo's* narrative engages with global capital as a kind of collective subject. The novel's transnational perspective mirrors Conrad's own: a Polish expatriate in Britain, mining books about

South American economic development to construct a conflicted critique of imperial progress. Jocelyn Baines and Eloise Knapp Hay have documented Conrad's sources, from G.F. Masterman's *Seven Eventful Years in Paraguay* to Edward B. Eastwick's *Venezuela*, and Colombian statesman S. Perez Triana's *Down the Orinoco*. Triana provided the novel's idealism, Eastwick its conservative voice, and Masterman its setting and characterization (Hay 268-274). The novel's global perspective and thematics, however, coincide with the 1890 collapse of Argentina's economy. Under President Juárez Celman, the Argentine government financed infrastructure projects on the London bond market, which, in a classic intersection of imperial policy and finance, was hungry for foreign investment opportunities. Gold was reserved for export to service the government's international debts, and paper currency, ostensibly backed by gold, was issued for internal use. When a dropping balance of trade in 1889 threatened the government's ability to service its debt, Celman declared paper currency inconvertible and investors scrambled for gold as the currency deflated. Philip Ziegler notes that during the crisis, the gold premium leapt from "1180 to 165 in a single day" (242).² According to historian Colin MacLachlan, this situation continued through the 1890s with an eventual rise to "257 percent in 1894" (MacLachlan 38). In 1890, Celman blamed speculators for this development, closed the stock market, and paid "domestic holders of silver-backed peso debt with depreciated paper money" (ibid.). This move further angered the investing class, and subsequent economic unrest led to a coup in a series of resonant events for the plot of *Nostramo*: the Navy deposed Celman for his business friendly vice-president Carlos Pellegrini, who was then defeated in elections by an even more business friendly rival. The span of Argentina's currency troubles--from 1888 to 1890--also closely map the dates in Cedric Watts' scrupulous timeline of the novel's events, from Riberia's 1888 installation, to Montero's 1889 revolt, and the 1890 revolution (62).³

Moreover, Argentina's currency problems also threatened the global financial system. London's Barings Brothers Bank, deeply enmeshed in imperial finance, was a major Argentine investor. W.T.C. King argued that Barings's Argentine over-extension was part of a systemic culmination of "a five year wave of rising prices, of stock exchange and company speculation, and over-investment in illiquid and distant securities" (306). Such expansive attitudes toward distant securities had, for example, left Barings holding over ninety percent of the shares of the ill-fated Buenos Aires Water Supply and Drainage Company that it had offered for sale in 1888, which left the bank heavily reliant on the Argentine government's payment of dividends (Kynaston 426). Yet the collapse of Argentina's currency and government not only threatened Barings with bankruptcy, but also, due to the system-wide expansion of international exchange and speculation, threatened to set off a chain of bankruptcies via Barings that could culminate in a run on the Bank of England's gold reserves. The ensuing crisis firmly established centralized banking policy in Great Britain as the Bank of England used its position as Britain's lender of last resort to intercede directly on Barings's behalf. The Bank quelled the credit crisis by creating a guarantee fund of £17 million for Barings, in part through collections from the City's other leading banks.⁴ This crisis, the Panic of 1890, marked a moment in which British finance capitalists became aware of their shared interests as a class, what one might call the emergence of a form of class-consciousness in finance. King wrote of the Bank's ability to orchestrate such a coordinated response: "The banks had grasped the fundamental truth that the interests of one were the interests of all; that the failures of one would precipitate a crisis from which none could escape" (308). Anecdotally, this change in attitude is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that even the normally truculent Nathan Rothschild agreed to contribute (Kynaston 433). The effort, however, extended through the world of international finance with the Bank receiving funds from the Russians as well as the Bank of France (which was also via the Rothschilds) (MacLachlan 39). Furthermore, the Bank used its leading position to

negotiate Argentina's debt payments to Barings at terms that crippled the country for years (Cain and Hopkins 295).

Such historicizing does not so much explain the novel's events as set the scene for its creative engagement with the world market. While Luz Elena Ramirez examines the contours of South American history in *Nostramo* as an example of "Americanist literature" that "exposes and centralizes the frailties and contradictions of empire" (93), I would argue that the narrative's resonance with an international credit crisis raises the contradictions of empire to a level that exceeds the novel's historical moment.⁵ The novel's political economy extends beyond a vulgar thematics of class-consciousness to examine the potential composition of collective subjects through rhetorical means. That is to say, the novel reveals in its narration a constitutive bond between rhetoric and collective subjects through its engagement with the instrumentalization of language. Aaron Fogel touches on this intersection of the economic and rhetorical in his account of *Nostramo* with the paired figures of "silence" and "silver." Fogel notes that both serve as the weapons of a dependent people, silence as a passive component of social dialogue, and silver as the metal advocated in the late nineteenth-century for the democratization of circulation against gold's hegemony on the world market.⁶ In contrast to Fogel's deconstructive focus on alterity and exclusion, however, my approach is more attentive to the novel's construction of hegemony and its potential for modes of subjective recomposition.

On the one hand, *Nostramo*'s narrative turns its conjunction of economics and rhetoric in the dual circulations of silver and language into a means for exploring the relation between international finance and its credit-signifiers. On the other hand, this conjunction of the economic and rhetorical also leads to a confrontation with the Marxist concept of immaterial labor. This is not because the text is filled with laborers caught up in the production and manipulation of language, signs, and affects, although it has a few (for example, Decoud, who as a journalist produces propaganda for the mine, and

Monygham, who does not produce a commodity but rather provides a form of affect-based service labor in his role as the mine's physician). Rather, the text confronts the question of immaterial labor because the arrival of capital and the world market in Costaguano brings with it the entrepreneurial use of intellect and its imaginative faculties that marks the immaterial laborer. In describing the phenomenological contours and emotional tonalities of this labor, Paolo Virno dubs the improvisatory worker who manipulates language signs and affects "the opportunist":⁷

The opportunist confronts a flux of interchangeable possibilities, keeping open as many as possible, turning to the closest and swerving unpredictably from one to the other. [...] The possible, against which the opportunist is measured, is utterly disincarnate. Although the possible may take on this or that particular guise, it is essentially the pure *abstraction of opportunity*--not an opportunity for something, but rather opportunity without content, like the odds faced by a gambler. (Virno "Ambivalence," 16-17)

For Virno, this kind of work occurs in a world that is "colored by *fear* and secretes *cynicism*" (17): as the fear generated by economic insecurity becomes a motivating factor of production, the opportunist becomes cynical, manipulating rules and conventions to keep possibilities open while falling into a comforting and "unrestrained sentimentalism" (18). Driven by fear, the opportunist retreats into sentimentality to shield himself from the ramifications of his own cynical exploitation of the rules.

In his conjunction of opportunism, cynicism, and fear, Nostromo, the head of Sulaco's longshoremen, typifies the opportunist in his shifting strategies to secure the mine's silver. Nostromo tells Decoud that his "reputation [...] is bound up with the fate of this silver" (Conrad 1904, 261) as he pilots the lighter toward its rendezvous with a passing frigate and before refusing to abandon everything to the sea after Sotillo sideswipes them. However, when confronted by the possibility that the revolution may leave him destitute, Nostromo begins to see his improvisations to save the silver and his carefully constructed reputation as pointless. The indifference of Dr. Monygham and the Goulds to the silver's fate exacerbates this feeling, and Nostromo's fear of poverty leads

“the incorruptible Capataz de cargadores” (219) to the cynical determination to use his reputation to grow rich. In the novel’s third part, Nostromo instrumentalizes his identity, and he begins to use the name of Fidanza, as though mocking himself for using his reputed fidelity to steal. Nostromo’s love triangle with the “pliable, silent” Giselle and Linda, who is “all fire and words” (433), reveals his drive to keep open as many possibilities as he can, while his alienation of self into the materiality of silver means that when he is kept from speaking of the silver on his death bed, he dies “without a word or a moan” (462).

Opportunism also has formal ramifications in the text as Virno’s “*pure abstraction of opportunity*” becomes a literal structuring of possibility’s abstraction: it reframes the events in the gulf as an allegory of the movement from a local material economy embodied by silver to a global economy premised on credit, and this abstraction of opportunity is reiterated in Nostromo’s shift from the language of vanity to the economically-inflected language of the immaterial laborer. In this way, the novel effectively describes capital’s reorganization of society through crisis in subjective terms. Nostromo and Decoud, in their failure to either transport the silver to the frigate or lose it in the sea, confront themselves and the silver as a conjunction of signs and abject materiality, the one available to repudiation or use, the other to be eliminated. While credit stitches Sulaco into the fabric of the world market, the excrescent load of silver and the men who come into contact with it become spectral signs like the Azuera ghosts who haunt the silver, their existence emptied from the new credit-savvy world as they become names in a national history.

“Innumerable Josés, Manuels, Ignacios”: Capital, Class,
and Credit

Given the novel’s economic content, Marx’s work on the role of the production of precious metals in the world market is particularly useful. For Marx, precious metal

production's unique position in circulation is due to its ability to embody exploitation directly as *money*.⁸ Marx argued that capital's accumulation not only depended on production's extraction of surplus-labor but circulation's transformation of this congealed surplus into money. With relatively stable prices, the amount of money in circulation would need to increase in order to realize any newly produced surplus-value:

The surplus-value spent by the capitalists in money, as well as the variable and other productive capital which they advance in money, is in fact the product of the workers, in particular of those workers occupied in gold production. These produce afresh both the part of the gold product that is 'advanced' to them as wages, and the part of the gold product in which the surplus-value of the capitalist gold producers is directly represented. (Marx 1978, 412)

For Marx, only the surplus-labor of precious metal production can bypass circulation because such labor "directly" reproduces both the invested capital and the surplus-value produced in monetary form. This immediate monetary realization of surplus-value makes the exploitation of precious metal miners the basis for a total increase in the monetary supply necessary to expand labor's exploitation as a whole.

Marx's emphasis on the production of money's material substance, however, is part of an argumentative reduction that precedes his discussion of the historical interdependence of capitalist production and credit mechanisms.⁹ While the intensification and expansion of production is "dependent on the extent of the money capital which the individual capitalist has at his disposal," Marx explains, "this limit is overcome by the credit system and the forms of association related to it, e.g. joint stock companies" (433). Credit intensifies capital's circulation by virtualizing its transmission and expanding its supply while the joint stock company increases the total amount of capital available to enterprises by socializing ownership under private property. Although merchant banks like Barings dominated imperial finance until 1914, Britain's deregulation of the limited liability joint stock company with the Companies Act of 1862 set the stage for international finance, and such companies were central to the development of London's credit markets thereafter. By the late nineteenth century, the

London bill market, which had once served to redistribute capital from agricultural country banks to industry, had shifted its focus from the internal circulation of Britain's wealth to its foreign dissemination through international bills.¹⁰ While these bills provided international production and national infrastructure projects with credit, balances of trade were still paid in precious metal, as Argentina's situation illustrates. MacLachlan remarks that in the decade after the 1890 panic Argentina exported 160 million gold pesos to creditors, and service on the country's debt during the next decade required £4 million of gold annually (39). The imperialist era in large part depended upon this complex interrelation of material moneys and international credit between developed and developing markets--a tension between credit money as a mechanism of exchange subject to inflation and deflation, and material money as an international measure of value. In 1899, Rosa Luxemburg elaborated Marx's discussion of credit: she argued that while credit "renders capitalist forces extendable, relative, and sensitive to the highest degree," it also "facilitates and aggravates crises, which are nothing but the periodic collisions of the contradictory forces of the capitalist economy" (135). That is to say, credit's intensification of capitalist production reveals and exacerbates capital's internal contradictions. Rudolf Hilferding argued that this expansion of credit and speculative markets was merely a way for capital to ensure that fictitious capital, whether shares, bonds, or bills, were always able to convert into ready cash—in effect a particular specialization in the sphere of circulation. Yet in Hilferding's view, the centralization affected by large corporations made such markets of less importance as finance and industrial production became increasingly intertwined, except insofar as crises made convertibility—the problem speculative markets were meant to solve—more difficult.

In *Nostromo*, credit's arrival exemplifies such claims and brings Costaguano's political and economic contradictions to a head. The concessions demanded by credit lead to various reforms in Costaguano, first economically by legitimating and reforming the nation's labor practices to suit the mine's needs, then politically by restructuring the

government. Yet these reforms push the native population to revolt, and the mine's subsequent counter-revolution reorganizes Sulaco, the coastal city adjacent to the mine, as an independent nation to suit its economic demands. The preceding political turmoil forms a mass response to credit's arrival both in the novel's revolutionary coup and in the role the native miners' play in protecting Gould from it. Although the miners fight for Gould against Montero and Sotillo, their protection comes at a high price for Gould: class-consciousness. Prior to the revolution, the workers were unorganized. The mine had been "worked in the early days mostly by means of lashes on the backs of slaves, [and] its yield had been paid for in its own weight of human bones" (Conrad 1904, 75), and under Gould it continued to employ natives willing to work for low wages, "innumerable Josés, Manuels, Ignacios" whose dehumanized appearance in the aggregate, with "their flat, joyless faces, [...] to Mrs. Gould looked all alike" (112). The arrival of credit revolutionizes and reconstitutes an alliance between capital and the state by the combining the Goulds' interests with the new state of Sulaco, but credit also reconstitutes the Josés, Manuels, and Ignacios into a new class, and gives them a recognizable form for Mrs. Gould and the novel's other European characters: workers. Though their mass action defends the mine, the event is a perverse double of Montero's rebellion, an inversion of revolution that nonetheless marks their act as a kind of class composition. After the revolution, Gould confronts "labor troubles" (109), and the socialist agitation of "the hater of capitalists" (460), who tries to procure a legacy from the dying Nostromo. In its split between the political and economic, the miners' mass action recomposes the political struggle at the economic level.

Yet for all of the novel's political and economic thematics, the tension between exploitation and resistance enters the novel's construction less as a tension between classes than one between materialized money and immaterial sign. Note that the novel's shadowy communist figure is indifferent to this tension between money and credit signs, and openly declares his attachment to money and its signifying machinations: he argues

simply that “the rich must be fought with their own weapons” (462). *Nostromo*, however, refuses to be a meditation on class-warfare. Instead, the text considers the subjective effects that follow the subsumption of the local economy to the world market, from money’s conversion into credit to the appearance of immaterial labor, a trajectory mapped by the silver’s removal from Sulaco and Decoud’s death, to Nostromo’s opportunist turn and death. While credit’s virtualization of circulation obscures subject positions in production, its potentialization also opens autonomous spaces of subjective identification in language. New identities are not simply named by such language, but forged through it. This is the obverse of immaterial labor’s opportunism, which does not keep possibilities open for capitalist production but turns them instead toward collective use. These identifications may not lead directly to revolutionary change, but this is not due to a lack of potential but rather to a historical moment in which material production remains in force even as it begins to be surpassed. *Nostromo* describes an encounter with this knot of labor and signification: credit’s arrival does not so much eliminate material production as overcode it with another layer of signification.

“To Make You See”: The Rhetorical Construction of
Imagination and Speculation

Twenty years after the novel’s publication, Conrad referred to the silver as “the pivot of [the novel’s] moral and material events” (Conrad 1927, 296). In this description, the silver is not simply the novel’s center but the center of a movement that epitomizes the novel’s global perspective, its interest in credit, and its narrative strategies. As characters pivot around the silver, their perception of this motion articulates different idealizations of the novel’s economic world. While we will shortly see how the text’s subtle use of such perspectives constructs a kind of imaginative mode of immaterial labor, the economic basis of such perspectives could hardly be clearer. Though warned by his father to remain in Europe and forget the San Tomé mine, Gould becomes

obsessed by mines, and he begins to identify himself with the mining industry, as the extraction industry becomes something that could be--from his perspective--mine. Indeed, he studies mines "from a personal point of view, too, as one would study the varied characters of men" (Conrad 1904, 81). When Gould reopens the mine with the help of San Francisco financier Holroyd, Costaguano's political turmoil is his only obstacle to continued success. Gould's economic perspective dictates a change in political power with the installation of Ribiera, a Costaguanerian of Spanish descent (or Blanco), to ensure his interests as well as the new foreign interests of loan investment and railway construction. Such economic interference inflames class tensions and carries a racial tinge, which inspires the mestizo General Montero to rise against the Blancos with the support of the native population. Decoud, a Blanco journalist, urges Gould to send his silver north rather than bribe the approaching army with it as Doctor Monygham counsels. Decoud's subsequent despair and suicide when left alone on the Great Isabel with the silver reveals his own conflicted perspective, neither quite South American nor European. Indeed, the fact that European-educated Decoud, though an advocate for Sulaco's secession, is unable to withstand his own short isolation on the island further illustrates the nation's indebted position on the world market.

By contrast, the novel's Italians recall the class struggles of nineteenth-century Italy in their names and actions. Nostromo's friend and eventual near-sighted killer, the innkeeper Viola, bears the nickname Garibaldino, which at once recalls the name given to members of Garibaldi's socialist army and Garibaldi's compromise with the Piedmontese monarchy. The different meanings of Nostromo's name turn it into a portmanteau that traces his fall into opportunism. Ian Watt cataloged the name's potential derivations, from the Spanish *nostramo*, "our master," to the Italian *nuestramo*, "boatswain," and the neologism of *nostro uomo*, "our man" (6). I would argue that this internal multiplication of names marks Nostromo as the novel's avatar of a conflicted collective subjectivity, the representative of an indeterminate group that sees him as our

man, whether our master among the oligarchs or our man of the boatswains. In a novel where characters tend to “pivot” around the silver, Nostromo does not initially valorize silver in itself in the way Gould, Sotillo, or Pedro Montero do. Instead, he uses silver to valorize his character and to burnish his reputation, whether stripping the silver buttons from his jacket for his mistress or giving his last coin to an old woman. Where credit uses a sign to circulate a representation of silver, Nostromo uses silver to circulate his good name. When he confronts the possibility that his good character can be alienated from and betrayed by himself, Nostromo inverts this counter-circulation of language by turning his name to economic advantage, a change that marks a transformation in society itself after the miners’ successful assault on Montero and Sotillo and Sulaco’s secession. The triumph of the mine’s material interests makes Sulaco at once independent from Costaguano and dependent on the world market. Nostromo’s opportunist turn inverts his character, reducing him first to little more than a specter haunting the island of the Great Isabel and then to a name shouted by Linda Viola from the lighthouse, as the novel matches the appearance of credit and the world market with the debilitating effects of immaterial labor’s subsumption by capitalist production.

One form of immaterial labor in particular was undergoing its own rationalization concurrent with the novel’s events: economics. In *Principles of Economics* (1890), Alfred Marshall popularized the work of earlier marginal utility theorists William Stanley Jevons, Carl Menger, and Leon Walras. A life-long member of academia, Marshall was professor of political economy at Cambridge when *Principles* was published, and the work formed part of the discipline’s consolidation. Perhaps this is why Marshall undertakes in his early pages to describe the economist’s needed “intellectual faculties”:¹¹

The economist needs three great intellectual faculties, perception, imagination, and reason: and most of all he needs imagination, to put him on the track of those causes of visible events which are remote or lie below the surface, and of those effects of visible causes which are remote or lie below the surface. (Marshall 43)

At first glance, the narration of *Nostramo* seems a meditation on the economist's rationalized faculties: Conrad's attention to perceptual affect, his exploration of Costaguano's role in the world market, and his rationalization of character motivation fit such an interpretation. Yet where Marshall uses these economic faculties to search for rational and objective causality, Conrad uses the different subjective conceptions of the imagination held by the novel's characters to trace their irrational actions, and in the process subverts realist or objective perception in the text. In *Nostramo*, imagination is not a faculty that allows one to discover the world's hidden causes from on high but rather the chief faculty of an embedded immaterial labor that adapts the world to subjective use by creating abstract ideals.

Against the scientific imagination described by Marshall, Conrad's imagination has more in common with the productive imagination that Antonio Negri reads in Spinoza's *Ethics*: a faculty in which the confused representations of an individual's imagination commingle to produce new universal concepts that are, paradoxically, subjective.¹² In *Nostramo*, such imaginative labor forms a process of subjectivation for its characters, an intersection of ideological production and immaterial labor as imagination inflects each character's subjective interest with its own abstract ideal to create a new reality. The text makes the imagination the explicit mechanism of such work. For example, Decoud's suicidal nationalism results from his split between an "imaginative existence" as Doña Antonia's lover (Conrad 1904, 234) and Gould's derisive thought of him as an "imaginative materialist" (311)--that is to say, one who understands the country's material interests through a bemused European irony. For Mrs. Gould, the silver takes on its "justificative conception" through her "imaginative estimate of its power," which makes the silver "something far-reaching and impalpable, like the true expression of an emotion or the emergence of a principle" (117). Even under siege, Pedro Montero's *bovarysme*, that "long course of reading historical works, light and gossipy in tone, carried out in garrets of Parisian hotels, sprawling on an untidy bed, to

the neglect of his duties, menial or otherwise, had affected the manners of Pedro Montero” (341) to such an extent that in an interview with Gould, Pedro cannot help but “[speak] with closed teeth slightly through the nose, with what he imagined to be the manner of a *grand seigneur*” (342). Tortured by Guzman Bento, Dr. Monygham betrays himself due to “the fertility of his imagination when stimulated by a sort of pain which makes truth, honour, self-respect, and life itself matters of little moment” (318). By contrast, when captured by Sotillo, Captain Mitchell’s imbecilic fearlessness is the result of a “lack of a certain kind of imagination--the kind whose undue development caused intense suffering to Señor Hirsch” (291). Emilia’s attraction to Gould grows from her imaginative understanding of life itself as an entrepreneurial undertaking: “He had struck her imagination from the first by his unsentimentalism, by that very quietude of mind which she had erected in her thought for a sign of perfect competency in the business of living” (73). Even Gould’s *idée fixe* is the result of an “imagination [that] had been permanently affected by the one great fact of a silver mine” (95).

In *Nostromo*, the imagination produces abstract concepts that become both new subjective conceptions of the self and the basis for new social relations: on the one hand, Pedro’s genteel affectations and Monygham’s false confessions; on the other, Mrs. Gould’s practico-idealist hopes and Decoud’s love-struck nationalism. For Sotillo, imagination marks him with an affectual susceptibility: too late to capture the silver, he is tortured by the fact that “it was not thus he had imagined himself at this stage of the expedition. He had seen himself triumphant, unquestioned, appeased, the idol of the soldiers, weighing in secret complacency the agreeable alternatives of power and wealth open to his choices” (373). Sotillo’s experience illustrates imagination’s specular nature, which inflects each of its divergent uses throughout the text. The process of the imagination leads to an attempt at textual visualization. From “imagined” to “seen,” the text shifts registers from subjective idealization to visualized realization. Where Marshall’s imagination searched for visible objective causation, Conrad’s characters use

it to create such causes. Or as the railway engineer states in a different register: “Upon my word, doctor, things seem to be worth nothing by what they are in themselves. I begin to believe that the only solid thing about them is the spiritual value which everyone discovers in his own form of activity” (275).

Conrad detailed the specularity of this immaterial labor in his preface to *The Nigger of the ‘Narcissus’* as the work of the author, in which imagination begets a specular relation between author and reader: “by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel... before all, to make you *see*” (Conrad 1897, xl). Although initially an extension of Ford Madox Ford’s Impressionist agenda, in *Nostramo* Conrad’s rhetorical construction of sight no longer operates through the expansive descriptions of ‘Narcissis.’ yet nearly every aspect of the novel hinges on sight as the creative enfolding of social recognition, judgment, and construction.¹³ In this respect, Conrad’s imaginative construction of specular relations in this exceptionally economic text responds to the sentimental novel’s use of sympathy by deconstructing the imaginative specularity that formed the basis for its instructive scenes. Adam Smith outlined the relation of the imagination and specularity to sympathy in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759): spectators project themselves through the visual into situations and then imagine their reactions against similar situations in order to issue judgments on the correctness of an action based on their imaginative and visual comparisons.¹⁴ The specularity of Smith’s sympathy is economically inflected since Smith inferred that wealth’s ability to increase one’s opportunities to be observed led people to aspire to and sympathize with the ownership of wealth. By contrast, since poverty led individuals to avoid observation, the poor were not only less sympathetic but a spectator’s aversion to observing distress turned poverty itself into a literal obscurity. Conrad’s specularity responds to the use of Smith’s naturalization of the social order in the sentimental novel’s moral education by using specularity and the imagination to put the process by which the social order is naturalized into question.¹⁵

In their idealization of the silver, the Goulds' imaginative grafting of ideas to materiality binds economic and linguistic circulation. Decoud first identifies Charles Gould's practical idealization of the silver, asking his wife: "are you aware to what point he has idealized the existence, the worth, the meaning of the San Tomé mine?" (Conrad 1904, 199). Gould himself thinks that "he was too severely practical and too idealistic to look upon [irremediable folly's] terrible humours with amusement" (311). Conrad summarizes Gould's use of the silver's materiality to ground the moral idealism of his imperialist mining enterprise with equivalent phrases in the preface (32), and Gould expounds the point in terms that resemble those used by *The Times* in its coverage of Argentina's economic collapse: "What is wanted here is law, good faith, order, security. Any one can declaim about these things, but I pin my faith to material interests" (100).¹⁶ Mrs. Gould's handling of the mine's first silver ingot, however, perhaps best describes the specular nature of her imaginative idealization. The text describes Mrs. Gould handling the silver "still warm from the mould" with the "eagerness" of "her unmercenary hands" (117) in a struggle to convey *touching* without the greedy valence of *grasping*. If Mrs. Gould effaces the materiality of production and the exploitation of labor with her idealized handling, she redoubles the abstraction of commodity production by endowing "that lump of metal with a justificative conception," an ideal as "far-reaching and impalpable" (117) as the exchange-value that the silver embodies.

In contrast to this economic idealization, Conrad develops a form of sight beyond the specular relations between characters. This sight takes on two forms in the text, the first is a specular relation of characters to text, and the second an impressionistic textual vision reserved for the novel's readers.¹⁷ On the one hand, everyone in the novel reads and is read. On the other hand, the manifold circulation of reading and its textual representations becomes a meta-commentary on the text itself, returning our discussion to the intersection of language and economics in immaterial labor. Although silver remains the privileged material of economic circulation, a remarkable number of texts circulate

within the novel, sometimes explicit to everyone but the reader (Decoud's unseen writings in the Ribierist newspaper *Porvenir*), sometimes hidden from everyone but the reader (the secret letters in Bonifacio's saddlebags or the confidential notes that Holroyd writes in his own hand), and sometimes explicitly folded into the text (the letter Decoud writes to his sister or the scant excerpts from Don Jose's history of Costaguano, *Fifty Years of Misrule*). These multiple reading circuits not only disseminate the perception of events across a variety of perspectives but also renders their temporality problematic. For instance, President Ribiera's seeming multiple flights are in fact textual refractions of a single event.

As noted, critics have long approached *Nostramo* as a meditation on history. Eloise Knapp Hay described the novel as "a tightly organized political fable" (202) that traces the tensions within British imperialism between "the corruption of a system" and "the fall of a man" (201). Pamela H. Demory reads the novel as questioning how history is written, arguing "*Nostramo* lays bare the uncertainty, the relativity, and the constructedness of historical narrative" (318). Demory's approach grasps an important component of the novel's construction, but overemphasizes perspective's relativity. Specular relations in the text highlight the ideological aspect of historical perspective, which affects not only the narrative's construction but its content as well. Indeed, such is Frederic Jameson's argument in *The Political Unconscious*, where *Nostramo* returns Jameson's narrative theory to the historical and political. While Jameson's Greimasian squares typically use ideological pairings to demonstrate how characters are generated within a text, Jameson doubles and reverses the procedure with this novel, using the characters generated by an explicit rhetorical pairing within the text to trace an ideological field that subtends it. This folding over of his model is largely an effect of what Jameson rightly suggests is the novel's engagement with a kind of linguistic reification, and that he locates in the novel's generic form. I would argue, however, that the question of linguistic reification plays out at a deeper textual level than Jameson's

redoubled narrative model of the novel allows.¹⁸ The text's strange shape and qualities result from its engagement with the intersection of linguistic and economic production. From textual figurations of credit and immaterial labor to Nostromo's exploitative use of his character, the novel illustrates the problems and the promise of a historical turn toward an increasingly immaterial mode of production. On the one hand, the narrative structure demonstrates the increase in social relations that accompany the spread of credit and new modes of signification while diffusing these relations into mere contingency. On the other hand, the fictional agents caught up in this narrative proliferation of signs realize the constructed nature of their characters, a situation that leads to Decoud's despair and Nostromo's opportunist turn.

The switch point between questions of narrative structure and character construction in *Nostromo* is the novel's reflexive use of textual production. In its multiplication of perspectives on an event, the novel uses linguistic production as part of its thematics of historical repetition, and the reiteration of events constructs a unique readerly perspective embedded in the novel's anachronic narration.¹⁹ This is largely an effect of Conrad's stylistic knotting of passive voice, the past perfect tense, and grammatical constructions that Jeremy Hawthorne identifies in the novel as the "pseudo-iterative," a term taken from Gérard Genette. In Hawthorne's account, the pseudo-iterative does not simply "stress the typicality and representativeness of different actions," but "the fact that a habitual action can suddenly assume a new and revolutionary significance, whilst the new and revolutionary can become deadened by being incorporated into the realm of habit and custom" (131). The second chapter's account of the revolution typifies this stylistic constellation as past perfect and passive constructions project events back into time, while Mitchell's storytelling in the pseudo-iterative gives the tale a historic and repetitive sense:

The political atmosphere of the Republic was generally stormy in these days. The fugitive patriots of the defeated party had the knack of turning up again on the coast with half a steamer's load of

small arms and ammunition. Such resourcefulness Captain Mitchell considered as perfectly wonderful in view of their utter destitution at the time of flight. He had observed that “they never seemed to have enough change about them to pay for their passage ticket out of the country.” And he could speak with knowledge; for on a memorable occasion he had been called upon to save the life of a dictator, together with the lives of a few Sulaco officials--the political chief, the director of the customs, and the head of police--belonging to an overturned government. Poor Senor Ribiera (such was the dictator’s name) had come pelting eighty miles over mountain tracks after the lost battle of Socorro, in the hope of out-distancing the fatal news--which, of course, he could not manage to do on a lame mule. The animal, moreover, expired under him at the end of the Alameda, where the military band plays sometimes in the evenings between the revolutions. “Sir,” Captain Mitchell would pursue with portentous gravity, “the ill-timed end of that mule attracted attention to the unfortunate rider.” (Conrad 1904, 44-45)

The repetition of the pseudo-iterative will become in the novel’s third part as much a joke on Mitchell’s repetitive character as the history that he recounts, but here the pseudo-iterative inflects even the events that it does not narrate. In the description of the mule’s death, the pseudo-iterative “would play” is replaced by the muted indeterminate present of “plays” to create a knot of concrete death and habitual action that extends into the narrative present: “at the end of the Alameda, where the military band plays sometimes in the evenings between the revolutions.” Ribiera’s flight becomes a trope for Marx’s description of capitalist production’s atemporal nature. This single event seems to multiply, caught in an endless stylistic repetition. As political revolution enters this anachronic circuit, it ceases to be a radical overturning to become instead an absurd disparity between rhetorical planes, a slippage between the literal and figurative that reaches its apex with the juxtaposition of Senora Teresa gasping “their revolutions, their revolutions” while Nostromo uses a forefinger “to give a twist to his moustache” (224).

Conrad’s style diffuses the possibility of revolution in its anachronic temporality, but it also retrieves and quilts stories into the text to recreate rhetorically the atemporal sweep and global scale of developed capitalism. Opportunism appears at the level of the sentence as Conrad tries to open its grammatical structure to include as many possibilities as it can. While Ian Watt notes Conrad’s sentences are “predominantly simple, and where

they are not, the structure is usually a matter of relatively obvious compounding, often signaled by a semi-colon between the component main clauses” (29-30), this compounding, taken alongside Conrad’s stylistic linkage of the pseudo-iterative, the anachronic, and the repetitive, is often used to illustrate the arrival of the world market and credit-based capitalism in Sulaco. In the novel’s opening sentences, Conrad’s compounding converges with his stylistic strategies to display the impact of the world market on the novel, from its global scale to its atemporal burrowing of history between clauses:

In the time of Spanish rule, and for many years afterwards, the town of Sulaco--the luxuriant beauty of the orange gardens bears witness to its antiquity--had never been commercially anything more important than a coasting port with a fairly large local trade in ox-hides and indigo. The clumsy deep-sea galleons of the conquerors that, needing a brisk gale to move at all, would lie becalmed, where your modern ship built on clipper lines forges ahead by the mere flapping of her sails, had been barred out of Sulaco by the prevailing calms of its vast gulf. (Conrad 1904, 39)

The hypotactic clause “and for many years afterwards” extends Sulaco’s lack of commercial importance through an indeterminate past that must nonetheless be brought to an end before the paratactic present tense of the em-dash insertion. Sulaco’s history disarticulates the sentence, its multiple temporalities deforming the grammatical construction as narration sweeps through Sulaco, from the history embedded in its present features to the technological differences between old Spanish galleons and clipper ships. Conrad’s construction of a narratorial specularly creates an anachronic temporal thickness that dynamically opens individual sentences to the text’s different historical registers. The digressive compounding of clauses intensifies the story of Sulaco’s history using a temporal division within the sentence that reflects Conrad’s juxtapositional strategies in part one and is especially evident in the temporal shifts during the narration of the Goulds’ courtship. This creation of a rhetorically virtual temporality available to the reader testifies to the arrival of a new credit-based sign regime even as its anachronic

parsing of history obscures the possibility of historical change as nothing more than mere repetition.

“A Prey to Foreign Speculators”: The Text’s Open Secret
of Speculation

Nostramo is perhaps too easily read as an irreducible existential conflict between individuals and the society they inhabit, a novelization of Freud’s *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Eloise Knapp Hay mines this line of thought, drawing distinctions between some primordial vision of human interaction and a potential fallenness of modern society in Conrad. This reading receives a theoretical translation in Frederic Jameson’s analysis, where it operates under the guise of *ressentiment*.²⁰ The mine’s lost “Paradise of snakes” (116) may imply a vision of man in Conrad as primordially guilty and necessarily limited by an unavoidably violent nature, but *Nostramo* nonetheless also bears witness to a particular fall within a particular historical moment.²¹ Rather than read Conrad’s anachronistic narrative as an effect of some deep guilt in man’s primordial nature, I read it as an attempt to *produce a nature meant to be taken as primordial*. The novel leads toward ahistorical conclusions as an expression of an ahistorical tendency within capitalist production to imagine and idealize value while exorcising the materiality of production and the specificity of history from sight. Such a tendency not only appears in overly abstract discussions of the novel but in excessively concrete ones, from literal readings of history in the text without any sense of mediation to attempts to track the consistency of content—whether temporal, geographic, or topological—and even to expound on Conrad’s “real” view of the world.

Pamela Demory addresses the recurrent critical desire to discover the real at the heart of *Nostramo*’s narrative in her discussion of narrative point of view in the novel, but her deconstructive reading tends to make every perspective within the novel equally valid.²² Their impositions of value that a character’s perspective can bring should be

subject to critical evaluation. Without such evaluation, the values that the novel's characters threaten to supplant any critical perspective. Take for example Gould's defense of his imaginative imperialist speculation: "That's how your money-making is justified here in the face of lawlessness and disorder. It is justified because the security which it demands must be shared with an oppressed people. A better justice will come afterwards" (100). For Gould, the actions necessary to secure the interests of the mine coincide with a particular form of law and order that will necessarily "be shared with an oppressed people," which somehow will lead to an ethically justified justice ("a better justice") made possible by these changed conditions. Such ethics can all too easily be used to defend Charles and Emily Gould, often with special attention paid to Conrad's positive if pessimistic view of British progress as the truth of his imperial sympathies.

One might think any defense of the Goulds's political agenda difficult to make, given the explicitly anti-democratic nature of the Ribierist-Blanco government and of the British characters in general, but this rarely enters discussion.²³ Captain Mitchell's proto-fascist views, however, are unmistakable: "Authoritative by temperament and the long habit of command, Captain Mitchell was no democrat. He even went so far as to profess a contempt for parliamentarism itself" (279). Such an attitude is entirely fitting given that Sulaco's political organization is neatly summarized in Charles Gould's unofficial title of "El Rey de Sulaco" (202). It is all too easy to sidestep the central political fact of *Nostramo*: the arrival of modernity, the world market, and credit economies coincides with the failure of a democratic revolution. Even if one accepts the sordid picture that the novel conjures of the Montero brothers, Sotillo, and their soldiers as stupid, lazy, and corrupt, the claim of these men that Ribiera made Costaguano "a prey to foreign speculators" (147) is undoubtedly true. Nor should there be any doubt of the Monterists's political affiliation, its subsequent suppression, or the new Occidental state's absolute disinterest in the plight of Costaguano's populace at the novel's end. While postcolonial criticism has taken up the critical oversight of this aspect of the novel with varying

degrees of success, the problem itself highlights the impact of perspective on the dissemination of values and ideals both within the novel and in its criticism.²⁴ This is why attention to movement and figure are central to any critical project as they reveal the direction of perspective in a text while providing tools to place such perspectives into question.²⁵

Of course, one of the difficulties of interpreting perspective in *Nostromo* is that the adumbration of the specular and speculation is the text's open secret and central joke. On the one hand, the specular serves as an imaginative sight that attaches a subjective ideal to a material substance. On the other hand, speculation appears as a mercenary financial investment extracting objective material wealth from a land and a people. While the former is everywhere part of an accepted subjective practice, the latter is continually disavowed. Charles Gould denies to his wife his role as a financial speculator: "I would never have disposed of the Concession as a speculator disposes of a valuable right to a company—for cash and shares, to grow rich eventually if possible, but at any rate to put some money at once in his pocket" (91). The resonance of the phrase "to grow rich eventually if possible" with Nostromo's, "I must grow rich very slowly" (417) points to Nostromo's later speculative shift, which is prefaced by a similar shift when Gould realizes that he is indeed "an adventurer in Costaguano" (311). Yet it is Decoud who first ties the adventurer and the speculator in an imaginative knot with his description of Sulaco's history:

No, but just imagine our forefathers in morions and corselets drawn up outside this gate, and a band of adventurers just landed from their ships in the harbour there. Thieves, of course. Speculators, too. Their expeditions, each one, were the speculations of grave and reverend persons in England. That is history, as that absurd sailor Mitchell is always saying. (168)

Imagination launches the sight of a primordial war-like nature amid the country's exploitation while reaching forward to attach modern figures to these roles: Gould the adventurer, a speculator for the grave and reverend Holroyd of San Francisco.

Although Decoud is aware that this “history” is playing out in a new register, such history remains a series of circular repetitions for him:

Now the whole land is like a treasure-house, and all these people are breaking into it, whilst we are cutting each other's throats. The only thing that keeps them out is mutual jealousy. But they'll come to an agreement some day—and by the time we've settled our quarrels and become decent and honourable, there'll be nothing left for us. It has always been the same. (168)

For Decoud, the content of history has not changed, only the perspective of his experience. The city walls have dematerialized into national borders embattled by a jealousy of trade while the adventurers of old have become the nation's inhabitants, embroiled in civil war over the nation's material wealth. Lurking in the harbor and arranging affairs beyond the interests of nations, borders, or people, the new adventurers arrive in the transnational form that Lenin, following Hilferding, identified as integral to the constitution of imperialism, finance capital: “the transformation of numerous modest intermediaries into a handful of monopolists represents one of the fundamental processes in the transformation of capitalism into capitalist imperialism” (40).

The key social transformation for finance capital was the joint stock company. Deregulated in Great Britain in 1863, the joint stock company consolidates small capitals into a single massive capitalist organism. While the joint stock company played an important early role in the British empire (the most obvious institution being the East India Company, not to mention the ill-fated South Seas Company), the rise of joint stock banking in Britain was a necessary component for the imperial turn of British policy during the latter half of the nineteenth century. In their study of British imperialism, historians P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins argue that imperialism depended upon growth in the fields of finance, administration, insurance and transport as components of the British economy during this period. Indeed, while studies of imperial strategies often focus on means of direct administration, Cain and Hopkins emphasize the extent to which imperial decisions were dictated by the need to maintain centralized credit-worthy states, opening

markets to investment, a process that David Harvey would describe as capital's need to find new spatio-temporal fixes of capital, e.g. infrastructure spending. Such investment can open—or rather, reopen—Marx's primitive accumulation. Harvey has nuanced this concept as “accumulation by dispossession,” i.e. the direct seizure of assets, which can also provide new markets for speculative adventures.²⁶ The case of Argentina in the late nineteenth century was exemplary in this regard, and, from the *post-festum* perspective of developed imperialist finance and international capital already largely achieved by 1904, *Nostromo* thematizes these imperial strategies by using credit and social production while playing with the direction of speculation.²⁷

The slippage between the specular and speculation—from the visual attribution of imagination, to the idealization of materiality, and the gamesmanship of economic speculation—may tempt critics to amalgamate its uses. However, although the text's strange grammatical constructions and its anachronic temporality make such an amalgamation seductive, it is the very seductiveness of this confusion that forms the novel's most vital theme. The novel's title even provides us with its model: in itself, the multi-lingual portmanteau name of *Nostromo* describes the novel's folding of perspective in a fashion similar to the method by which the plot details the arrival of transnational capitalism. Personal linguistic vanity is displaced into the realm of material interest as a post-facto dematerialized perspective even as this experience of materiality's evanescence solidifies into signification. The translation of materiality's particularity into an idealized realm accompanies a negative rhetorical translation of the ideal into materiality. By internalizing an idealized signification, the materiality of lived existence confronts itself in the temporal horizon of death. The silver's “deadly disease” (232) leaches into the three men who follow its material line of flight, and its removal in anticipation of Sotillo removal disrupts and realigns the functions of language and economics with the credit system of transnational capital. By the novel's end, *Nostromo*'s good name will have become little more than a national usance drawn on the mine's

future prosperity, and Don Carlos will finally put an end to his wife's claim that "It is your character that is the inexhaustible treasure which may save us all yet; your character, Carlos, not your wealth" (309).

Money, Language, Credit

To address the amalgamation of language and economics within *Nostramo* demands an examination, albeit brief, of this widespread tendency to view the two as coeval. Marc Shell has extensively examined the influence of the economic on literature and philosophy in a Marxist-deconstructionist vein, but his work focuses not so much on economics as on money as the alienated mediator of exchange. In one particularly pointed conclusion, Shell writes, "Money talks in and through discourse in general. The monetary information of thought, unlike its content, cannot be eradicated from discourse without changing thought itself, within whose tropes and processes the language of wares is an ineradicable participant" (Shell 1982, 180-81). One confronts monetary alienation as an irreducible component of thought, a conclusion that is of a piece with 1970s and 1980s critiques of alienation from Debord and Baudrillard to the high obscurantism of Derrida. As an ineradicable participant of thought, economic exchange for Shell inheres as a trace in literary and philosophical discourse, a move that comes unfortunately close to rendering language into blank exchange-value. By treating linguistic exchange as part of an ever-present philosophical problem, every form of exchange becomes a metonymy for *monetary* exchange. Such an approach is indifferent to the antagonism between money as a measure of value (a.k.a. unit of account) and medium of exchange that Marx discusses in both the *Grundrisse* and *Capital 2*—a difference that I have taken in the context of *Nostramo* as the difference between money and credit, though the question of the growth of fictitious capital expands the world of credit to include the dissemination of fixed capital, national infrastructure, and land itself. If we remain in the world of money,

it will, as Marx notes, simply talk to itself, and this makes the possibility of resistance to alienation or expropriation a structural impossibility.²⁸

While one could begin with Plato's discussion of exchange in *The Republic* or Aristotle's differentiation of economics and chremastics, it seems more sensible to focus our attention on a more historically adjacent philosopher whose influence on Marx remains unmistakable. Hegel's work put forward a sense of society as an organic totality that operated by continual divisions and overcomings, an approach that highlighted the turmoil of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century period of intense capitalist expansion and political turmoil in France and England. In *The Philosophy of Right* (1821), he presents his resolution of the tension between individual free will and social determination building from concepts derived from British political economy.²⁹

Through the dependence and co-operation involved in labour, subjective self-seeking is converted into a contribution towards the satisfaction of the wants of all others. The universal so penetrates the particular by its dialectic movement, that the individual, while acquiring, producing, and enjoying for himself, at the same time produces and acquires for the enjoyment of others. (Hegel 1996, 198; §199)

Hegel's resolution of self-interested labor in production for the whole reiterates Adam Smith's "invisible hand"—by serving his own interest, each man also serves that of every other—as social sublation. Hegel also noted here that the inner contradiction of the civic community lead to an over-accumulation of wealth in one class alongside an explosion in poverty, and the transcendence of this contradiction is particular germane to *Nostramo*: the contradiction forces the community to extend beyond itself through colonization (233-235; §246-249).³⁰

Yet when Hegel traced a similar movement in subjective terms in his earlier text *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), he used political economy's market logic to arrive at similar conclusions by drawing a link between the circulation of wealth and the circulation of language. The connection of wealth and language is in part an effect of the mediating activity that Hegel locates in language: language alienates the self into an

external form to be “*heard or perceived*” (Hegel 1977, 309). For Hegel, such representational form depends on circulation:

That it is *perceived or heard* means that its *real existence dies away*; this its otherness has been taken back into itself; and its real existence is just this: that as a self-conscious Now, as a real existence, it is *not* a real existence, and through this vanishing it *is* a real existence. This vanishing is thus itself at once its abiding; it is its own knowing of itself, and its knowing itself as a self that has passed over into another self that has been perceived and is universal. (ibid.)

Hegel’s language is not inscribed but spoken, a pure vanishing mediator that externalizes a universal “I” as a particular spoken “I” in order to be perceived by another (if unvoiced) “I” in which the real existence of perception dies away. Premised on the closure of an interpersonal communicational act, Hegel’s model of language describes an exchange that negates particularity. Language is a vanishing.

In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel’s discussion of wealth appears immediately alongside this discussion of language. Wealth is also initially posited as a negative thing “to be sacrificed and surrendered” (312), but “the movement of its reflection consists in this, that wealth which is only for itself, develops an *intrinsic being of its own*, that, instead of being a cancelled essence, it develops an essential being” (313). For Hegel, the movement of wealth explicitly counterbalances the vanishing substance of language by instead creating “an essential being” out of circulation. Though wealth’s movement creates a kind of vanity, a self-centered “arrogance,” it also reveals wealth to be “the power over the self, the power that knows itself to be *independent and arbitrary*, and at the same time knows that what it dispenses is the self of another” (315). That is to say, wealth becomes the concrete manifestation of the social order, a continual mediation of the self through an “*independent and arbitrary*” power. Because the vanity of wealth and its ability to cohere subjects through circulation is contradictory, Hegel turns back to language to overcome the problem by deploying the “witty talk” of culture (321). This language of irony reveals the social contradictions engendered by wealth without

challenging their bases. The circulation of language thus does not simply mirror wealth's circulation, but is itself subsumed by wealth and then becomes that which subsumes wealth. The two become inextricable.

Contrast Hegel's imbrication of wealth and language with Roland Barthes's attempt to differentiate the two in *S/Z*. Drawing on Peirce's semiotics, Barthes writes that: "in the past... money 'revealed'; it was an index, it furnished a fact, a cause, it had a nature; today it 'represents' (everything): it is an equivalent, an exchange, a representation: a sign" (39). The importance of this move into "sign" (used by Barthes in lieu of Peirce's "symbol") is the abolition of "the last (or first) limit, the origin, the basis, the prop, to enter into the limitless process of equivalences, representations that nothing will ever stop, orient, fix, sanction" (40). The force of Barthes's appositional syntax conveys the power of this new unlimited sign, reflecting its freedom in Balzac's sexless or double-sexed castrato: signs without certainty or limit, money as sign, sign as abstraction, abstraction as money. As an increase in the velocity of syntax, the shift to money as credit-sign points toward the compacting of money and language as a historically located effect that has specific narrative ramifications for Barthes's work that the distinction between monetary indexicality and credit signs. The difference between money as an index—that is to say, as a material *measure* of value, which is the role that precious metals served in the context of global capital until the spontaneous delinkage of the dollar in 1971—and money as a sign—that is to say, as a medium of exchange, a credit sign, which the status of money in the contemporary context of twenty-first century capital. While the notion of money as credit (or as so many like to point out, as *fiduciary*, e.g. premised on trust) is widespread today as a "natural" state of affairs, it is important to recall that the historical existence of credit was largely opposed to the materiality of money. The credit crises of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries all point to this problem, and attempts to create a global system of exchange initially relied on money's materiality even as it substituted signs for local circulation.

Nostramo describes the violence of this transition as the measure of value is systematically undermined to maintain access to the global medium of exchange, a situation that cannot help but confront the Hegelian sublation of money and language. The indexicality of the mine's silver is abolished in order to return from the north as the (political) credit authorizing an intensification of local production while eliminating the necessity of diverting any of the material production of money to the local level. Sulaco's production is reserved for the transformation into monetary form of the world's surplus-value. Released from its limited role as the material production of a local channel of circulation, the labor of the mine's production becomes a stream of wealth lubricating the world market's machinations: Sulaco, the treasure house of the world. The novel's multiplication of wealth's forms makes explicit the difference between the kind of unitary model of monetary and linguistic circulation put forward by Hegel and the heteroglossia that inflects actual economic circulation.³¹ This is the difference between the multiple limited forms of local circulation and the kind of unitary monetary system that a global market relies upon to function, and that lead to the rise of credit economies. Able to take stock of the nineteenth century's colonial and imperial developments, Conrad surveys the differential relations of economics and language with a level of explicitness that, as we will see, authors like Eliot and Dickens can only approach indirectly.

Political economists detailed the initial stages of a change in monetary semiotics by stressing the importance of credit to the development of capitalist production. While histories of banking tend to begin with the fifteenth century emergence of Italian merchant banking, Adam Smith focused on the emergence of credit economies in the recently United Kingdom, particularly the differences between the Scottish and English banking systems. In England, the banking system was largely limited by Parliamentary regulations protecting the Bank of England due to its integrated governmental functions as Britain's chief lender and note-issuer.³² By contrast, Scotland's non-centralized banking system kept the potential means of payment dispersed. Scottish banking was not

only notable for its lack of central note-issue—shared by the United States for some time—but for the widespread use of the cash account credit system. Smith notes the effects of this system on Scottish banking:

The merchant in Edinburgh, on the other hand, keeps no money unemployed for answering such occasional demands. When they actually come upon him, he satisfies them from his cash account with the bank, and gradually replaces the sum borrowed with the money or paper which comes in from the occasional sales of his goods. With the same stock, therefore, he can, without imprudence, have at all times in his warehouse a larger quantity of goods than the London merchant; and can thereby both make a greater profit himself, and give constant employment to a greater number of industrious people who prepare those goods for the market. (Smith 1990, 397)

Credit accounts allowed merchants to cover “occasional demands” without maintaining a hoard of cash on hand. This expanded the power of merchant capital: merchants could at once keep commodities on hand for sale and maintain the liquidity necessary to produce or purchase as they saw fit. When a merchant made a sale, he threw cash back into circulation by depositing it with the bank held his cash account, which allowed the bank to extend credit to other merchants and producers.

For Smith, this extension of production and trade through credit followed principles that resembled the extension of cash circulation through the substitution of paper-money. Both credit and paper-money rely on convertibility for their value, thus on an agreed proportion of precious metal represented by such signifiers of value and factoring the velocity of monetary circulation into its total size: “Though he has generally in circulation, therefore, notes to the extent of a hundred thousand pounds, twenty thousand pounds in gold and silver may, frequently, be a sufficient provision for answering occasional demands” (389). Such circulation can potentially maximize the total distribution of capital through a dual substitution. On the one hand, merchant credit can substitute a hoard of commodities for one of cash and release cash for reinvestment in production. On the other hand, bank credit can substitute a hoard of notes for cash, and release material money (e.g. gold and silver) from limited local circulation for global

trade, which relies on intermittent material settlements rather than continual physical circulation of coin. Hegel's sublation of wealth mirrors the collapse of monetary indexicality that Smith traces in the emergence of developed capitalist production as material wealth transforms into its a unique language of value. The shift into credit economies creates a unitary set of value signifiers by consolidating the indexical material of global circulation, virtualizing the circulation of capital through immaterial means while simultaneously opening new material potentials for both exploitation and revolution.³³

Indeed, the quantitative flux of the ratio between signs of value and the materiality of precious metals leads to classical political economy's most explicit consideration of the world market. In Smith's discussion of the price of silver, he argues that "the price, therefore, of the coarse, and still more that of the precious metals, at the most fertile mines in the world, must necessarily more or less affect their price at every other in it" (273). That is to say, the price of silver at the most fertile mine in the world determines the price at every other mine as it changes the quantitative total of silver being exchanged, and can devalue currency by inflating the ratio of silver to total commodities in the market. For Smith, the inflation that followed the colonial discovery of silver in the Americas historically demonstrates this tendency. For Smith, the Gould Concession should set the price of silver and the value of all currency on the world market as it is the most fertile producer of silver.

By contrast, David Ricardo mounted an influential counter-argument to Smith that reversed Smith's position without substantially changing the classical monetarist position that the ratio of silver to total wealth yields the silver's value and its ability to represent value as currency. Ricardo shifted the argument's focus from the mine's productivity, i.e. the abundance of natural material, to the labor that such production demands: "[the value of metals depends] not on the rate of profits, nor on the rate of wages, nor on the rent paid for mines, but on the total quantity of labor necessary to

obtain the metal and bring it to market” (Ricardo 45). For Ricardo, the least productive silver—that is to say, the mine that is able to maintain production at a lowest rate of profit—would set the price of silver. This discussion mirrors the logic that drives Ricardo’s theory of rent, which would eventually—when transposed to consumption rather than production—serve as part of the logical basis of marginal utility theory. In short, prices are set at the margin of productivity: the least productive mine that is able to sustain production while maintaining a rate of profit equivalent to that of other capital investment under current technological circumstances determines a metal’s price. Ricardo’s focus on the cost of labor for the least productive mode of industry determines is central to his theory of rent: any land that produces more than the least productive land pays its surplus product in rent. The Gould mine should thus be paying a substantial amount of its surplus-profit—its profit over and above the average profit rate—as rent.

Marx expands and dismantles the differential logic of Ricardian rent in order to display how the logic behind rent not only leads to rent on all land, regardless of its level of production, but how its imposition becomes an obstacle to production itself when capitalism enters agricultural production. For Marx, rent generates an antagonism between landed property and capitalist production since the surplus that landed property appropriates as rent is also the surplus appropriated by the capitalist class in the average rate of profit.³⁴ Rent displays how a prior division of property becomes an obstacle to capitalist production:

Capital comes up against an alien power that it can overcome only partly or not at all, a power which restricts its investment in particular spheres of production, allowing this only under conditions that completely or partially exclude that general equalization of surplus-value to give the average profit, it is clear that in these spheres of production a surplus profit will arise, from the excess of commodity value above its price of production, this being transformed into rent and as such becoming autonomous vis-à-vis profit. And it is as an alien power and a barrier of this kind that landed property confronts capital as regards its investment on the land, or that the landowner confronts the capitalist. (Marx 1981, 896)

Though the contradiction between landed property and capitalist production is one between an emergent hegemonic form of social production and a prior form, it is not merely a limited clash of historical social organizations but an aspect of a larger contradiction in private property itself. Marx argues that: “All criticism of small-scale landownership is ultimately reducible to criticism of private property as a barrier and obstacle to agriculture. So too is all counter-criticism of large landed property” (Marx 1981, 949). The counter-revolution funded by Gould and masterminded by Decoud can in one sense be seen as an attempt to overcome the obstacle that landed property poses to capitalist production. Gould’s political machinations can be reframed as a response to the Costaguano government’s unpredictable demands for payment, a form of rent that Gould’s imagination yet again assigns to another material basis: “To be robbed under the forms of legality and business was intolerable to [Mr. Gould’s] imagination” (Conrad 1904, 78). Whether as bribery, the cost of installing the Ribiera government, or the final secession of Sulaco from Costaguano, each action Gould takes stems from his familial dislike of being “robbed under the forms of legality and business.” While his political intentions are a far cry from Marx’s, Gould operates under a similar logic by attempting to expropriate the land’s owners in order to achieve “the rational treatment, maintenance and improvement of the land itself” (Marx 1981, 949).

It is in this sense that the rationalist goals underlying Sulaco’s secession speaks to Lenin’s claim that, during the imperialist era, “for the first time the world is completely divided up, so that in the future *only* redivision is possible” (77). Yet the story of the Gould concession also speaks to the importance of external modes of production to capitalist accumulation. As an external market and point of production, Sulaco’s role as treasure house of the world also exemplifies Rosa Luxemburg’s under-consumptionist claim that “the external market is the non-capitalist social environment which absorbs the products of capitalism and supplies producer goods and labour power for capitalist production” (Luxemburg 2003, 347).³⁵ For Luxemburg, external modes of production

serve dual purposes: as sites able to absorb excess capitalist goods in order to realize surplus value, and as sources for labor and raw materials. Sulaco combines Lenin's notion of capitalist redivision with Luxemburg's notion of the role external markets play in accumulation. As a fable of transnational capital's arrival in Sulaco, the interweaving of capitalist signification and credit economies with external markets generates linguistic problems bound up with subjective production. On the one hand, the San Tomé mine dramatizes the postcolonial integration of a newly formed nation-state into the world market. On the other hand, the imaginative capacity of each character highlights the potential forms of resistance that undergirds this process. While those that fit the movement of integration are actualized, those that do not are insistently kept from realization or short-circuited into retrograde mass movements (like the miners' defense of Gould).

The resulting tension between Sulaco's integration into the global market and the creation of potentially resistant imaginative subjects in *Nostramo* dramatizes the imperial social reorganization that Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri describe in *Empire*. Hardt and Negri's work focuses on the development of a new form of global capital that lacks the exterior modes of production Luxemburg argued were able to absorb the contradictions of capitalist production. Such a form of global capital marks a specific historical moment that surpasses Luxemburg's analysis. Yet by making these claims, Hardt and Negri also revise the relation between formal and real subsumption developed by Marx (the shift from an incorporation of labor practices alien to capitalism within capitalist relations of production to the complete integration of labor into capitalist production). While Marx considers the movement from the formal to the real a necessary logical motion, Hardt and Negri emphasize that there is a *will* that underlies the transition:

In this sense, the processes of the formal subsumption anticipated and carried through to maturity the real subsumption, not because the latter was the product of the former (as Marx himself seemed to

believe), but because in the former were constructed conditions of liberation and struggle that only the latter could control. (Hardt and Negri 256)

The conditions of liberation eliminated by the real subsumption appear alongside the divisions enacted by primitive accumulation, and only to dissipate in labor's reorganization under the capital's command. Hardt and Negri's argument imbricates Lenin's redivision of capital and Luxemburg's non-capitalist modes of production: "Primitive accumulation is not a process that happens once and then is done with; rather, capitalist relations of production and social classes have to be reproduced continually" (258). Extending Marx's description of primitive accumulation as the violent accumulation of wealth, Hardt and Negri emphasize its role in the violent social division that generates classes.³⁶ This does not so much undercut Marx as shift the emphasis in Marxist work from the accumulation of capital to the expropriation of the people from the land and the violent memnotechnics of the law that ensure that the displaced understand their position within production (and David Harvey's work takes up a similar position).³⁷ Taken alongside primitive accumulation's continual division, transection, and segmentation, Hardt and Negri's focus on the processes of formal and real subsumption not only offers a view of capital's different historical processes for the reproduction of the conditions of production but also displays the growth of an autonomous proletariat. The San Tomé mine's role in the world market begins with a formal subsumption of the conditions of production that the enslavement of the local population displays as part of the extension of the working day, and brings with it a division of classes that segments the social world. The subjective experiences of this segmentation, however, offer different glimpses of potentially resistant modes before they are emptied into Sulaco's counter-revolution and the processes of real subsumption.

Indeed, primitive accumulation is the process that generates a landed class and creates the initial processes of rent. In contemporary theories of imperialism, the position of Second International Marxists on the bases of imperialism as the rapprochement

between industry and finance is superseded by an emphasis on the role of primitive accumulation as a means of dispossession. It should be clear, however, that this is not simply a contemporary problematic—although the contemporary situation has its own specificities, most especially the role of institutions such as the IMF and the WTO, the military ramifications of the US monetary policy since the US dollar acts as a global reserve currency, and what Michael Hardt has recently called a return to rent from profit through the use of international intellectual property laws³⁸—but one that demands a reconsideration of the role of finance not merely as a means of asserting industrial concerns *pace* Hilferding but as a means of primitive accumulation then available to capitalist uses. Marx’s emphasis on the hegemony of capitalist industrial production becomes for later theorists a means for asserting capitalist production as the engine of imperialism when it seems more proper to claim that industrial production acted in concert with the entrenched class interests of finance, which derived largely from the landed, rent-based upper-class of the United Kingdom while nonetheless serving as a structural determinant on the imperial situation itself.

The arrival of northern credit and the truth of the silver’s “deadly disease” mark the radical reorganization of society with Sulaco’s counterrevolution and secession. This real subsumption is marked by death as the dissolution of the resistant potential within these segmentations because such death is achieved through a forceful materialization that inverts the roles of language and materiality.³⁹ The potentialized realm of autonomous individuals becomes one of material death while the realm of materialized value blurs into a virtualized credit. To excavate the resistant potential of these segmentations and their accompanying imaginative spaces within *Nostramo*, it is imperative to keep our reading from falling into the Hegelian confusion of money and language. This means not only to critique both the political economic discourses that such confusion tends to naturalize and the effects of its naturalization, but to establish instead

the material differences that delimit particular forms of circulation in order to discover realms not controlled by capitalist production.

“Want of Faith in Himself and Others”: Death and the
Rhetoric of Subsumption

The deaths of Hirsch, Decoud, and Nostromo figure a movement from material to ideal in their ill-fated attempt to send the silver north so that it may return in the shape of credit, and each character undergoes a kind of rhetorical subsumption that allows him to be read and interpreted before dying. It is not simply that Sotillo’s misinterpretation of Hirsch’s mute gesticulations leads to Hirsch’s death, but that Hirsch’s death from such misinterpretation becomes both a collective rhetorical event that links him to Decoud and an asignifying emptying into text. Decoud’s death is an individualized misinterpretation as both his witnessing readerly audience and his rhetorical connection to Hirsch undercut the very isolation that drives him to suicide. By contrast, Nostromo’s change in character dissolves his portmanteau name into an array of identities and renders him unrecognizable, with the near-sighted Viola shooting him for somebody else.

Decoud’s suicide acts as an ironic metaphor, turning his opportunist plan for Sulaco’s separation into an uncontrollable fear of isolation: while his death is mistakenly attributed to his “striving for his idea” of an independent Sulaco, the text ironically notes that “the young apostle of Separation” had actually “died from solitude” (412). This death from solitude reiterates the deathly isolation that Decoud first experienced in the darkened gulf during the lighter’s brief voyage. In the darkness, Decoud had a “foretaste of eternal peace” when he lost sight of everything, including himself, an experience that the text intones “would have resembled death had it not been for the survival of his thoughts” (231). His subsequent suicidal confrontation with solitude dramatizes this survival of consciousness beyond specularly, and illustrates in the slippage between Separation and solitude the deadly effects of Decoud’s internalized European cynicism as

he engages in a struggle without witness that “only the simplest of us are fit to withstand” (412).

The specular, however, inheres in Decoud’s suicide through the agency of his imagination, and brings the problem of immaterial labor into the text’s rhetorical construction of history as a question of perspective. The full quote illustrates that although the event occurs beyond any subjective historical knowledge or memory, the narratorial voice can nonetheless claim to reveal its objective truth:

As might have been supposed, the end of Don Martin Decoud never became a subject of speculation for anyone except Nostromo. Had the truth of the facts been known, there would always have remained the question, Why? Whereas the version of his death at the sinking of the lighter had no uncertainty of motive. The young apostle of Separation had died striving for his idea by an ever-lamented accident. But the truth was that he died from solitude, the enemy known but to few on this earth, and whom only the simplest of us are fit to withstand. The brilliant Costaguanero of the boulevards had died from solitude and want of faith in himself and others. (412)

With its understated use of “us,” the narratorial voice constructs a rhetorical community as part of “the truth of the facts” that belies Decoud’s overwhelming encounter with “solitude.” While Decoud died for “want of faith in himself and others,” these “others” are rhetorically present as witnesses to his death. Such witnesses are part of the broader irony that joins the loss of specular relations to nationalist separation by extending the narrative’s judgment of Decoud beyond a personal want of faith in an individual agent of Smithian sympathy to a want of faith in a witnessing multitude.⁴⁰ Decoud’s suicide shows in part the banality of his lover’s nationalism through his inability to withstand solitude, but the “truth” of its telling is tied to the world market’s arrival in Sulaco: once one steps outside the nationalist perspective that keeps Decoud’s death from becoming “a subject of speculation,” there is no lack of witnesses.

Although Decoud’s subjective experience of solitude begins with silence, it quickly shifts to an internalization of specular relations as he imagines “a succession of

incomprehensible images” (414).⁴¹ Hovering between Decoud and a meta-narrative voice, the narrative’s focalization describes how

the solitude appeared like a great void, and the silence of the gulf like a tense, thin cord to which he hung suspended by both hands, without fear, without surprise, without any sort of emotion whatever. Only towards the evening, in the comparative relief of coolness, he began to wish that this cord would snap. He imagined it snapping with a report as of a pistol--a sharp, full crack. And that would be the end of him. He contemplated that eventuality with pleasure, because he dreaded the sleepless nights in which the silence, remaining unbroken in the shape of a cord to which he hung with both hands, vibrated with senseless phrases, always the same but utterly incomprehensible, about Nostromo, Antonia, Barrios, and proclamations mingled into an ironical and senseless buzzing. In the daytime he could look at the silence like a still cord stretched to breaking-point, with his life, his vain life, suspended to it like a weight. (412)

The imagination reappears as a productive mechanism with Decoud’s “imagined” cord, which snaps with a pistol’s report. While this imagined visualization creates new specular and aural experiences that forestall solitude’s effects, it also diffuses this communal construction by extending the plot’s anachronic structure through metaphor to the death of the lighter’s third passenger, the stowaway Señor Hirsch. Suspended by a rope that “vibrated leisurely,” Hirsch obtains relief only when he spits on Sotillo and “quick as thought [Sotillo] snatched up his revolver, and fired twice” (376). Yet even as these linked images merge the speed of thought with the rhetorical transmission of death, Hirsch himself becomes an opaque image of rigidified terror, unable to speak, and, once captured by Sotillo, unable to control his speech: “his Spanish, too, became so mixed up with German that the better half of his statements remained incomprehensible” (283). From “incomprehensible” statements to “incomprehensible images,” the rhetorical projection of Hirsch’s experience across characters gives the lie to Decoud’s solitude and separation by reaching beyond his solitary experience. The image of the cord not only links the imaginative interiors of Hirsch and Decoud as an analeptic explication of Hirsch’s final moments, but also opens them rhetorically to readers. Decoud’s imagined

specular relations extend beyond his solitude to a rhetorical community of witnesses, and intensifies his relation to others as an implied if unwitting witness to Hirsch's execution.

Yet this imagined opening of experience remains at most a rhetorical potential in the text. Decoud gives the silence material form so that he can "*look* at the silence like a still cord stretched to a breaking-point" (412; emphasis added), which turns the linguistic translation of communal experience into the basis of misperception. The involution of the specular and metaphoric reifies and literalizes the cord, emptying the potential of this linguistic relation into a death wish: "the cord of silence could never snap on the island. It must let him fall and sink into the sea, he thought. And sink!" (414). Decoud repeats Hirsch's fate as the imagined cord takes on specular existence and translates the rhetorical perception of Hirsch's death into a desire for death itself. While Sotillo and the rest of Sulaco imagine the lighter sunk, Decoud, with his wish to "fall and sink into the sea," ties Hirsch's fate and his own to the silver's speculative end. By loading himself with silver ingots as ballast so that he may "sink!", Decoud inverts his original plan to "let it come down so that it may go north and return to us in the shape of credit" (204). His suicidal plunge sends the silver to the depths of the Golfo precisely so that he may end the "proclamations mingled into an ironical and senseless buzzing," and stop the proliferation of signs and images.

The four ingots that Decoud takes from the hoard form the indexical ballast that unites metaphor, materiality, and language, and they figure in their loss the completion of capital's reorganization of Sulaco by credit. Decoud's fate--isolated, literalized, and drowned--is a trope for capital's subsumption of material production to credit. The loss that marks the hoard of silver as permanently incomplete also marks the achievement of Decoud's plan: "this stream of silver must be kept flowing north to return in the form of financial backing from the great house of Holroyd" (203). Hence Nostromo's deathbed exclamation: "How could I give back the treasure with four ingots missing? They would have said I had purloined them" (341). Nostromo's later theft does not so much turn the

silver into a hoard but rather demonstrates global capitalism's need to make such hoards untenable. After all, credit is a mechanism for eliminating the hoarding of capital. As Marx noted "With the development of the credit system, [...] this money no longer functions as a hoard but as capital, though not in the hands of its proprietor, but rather of other capitalists at whose disposal it is put" (Marx 1978, 261). When credit ceases to function, as in a crisis, hoards reappear because credit ceases to bear value and investors seek out money's certainty. Credit tries to ensure for capital a continuous state of production regardless of circulation time. Likewise, the silver's flow north maintains the mine's productive role in the world market for Gould and his investors regardless of its actual production. The chief difficulty confronting the mine's owners is that the silver retains its value as money in Costaguano regardless of the role that the mine's productive power plays on the world market. So long as the stream flows, the mine's access to credit disseminates economic power into a political and economic system of signification beyond any local power of command. Yet Gould's global credit aspirations cannot overcome the fact that hoards can and do reappear, and that, as money, silver maintains its antagonistic relation to labor as the direct embodiment of exploitation, alienation, and command. The best Gould can do is to obscure silver's economic status and its antagonism to labor offshore by maintaining the flow of silver north.

Indeed, Decoud's mystification of the tensions inscribed within the silver reveals in retrospect its potential to act as a kind of primitive accumulation. The load of silver figures the manner in which newly accumulated capital can instigate a new division of classes. Such a division appears during Decoud and Nostromo's struggle to save the swamped lighter: "There was no bond of conviction, of common idea; they were merely two adventurers pursuing each his own adventure, involved in the same imminence of deadly peril" (Conrad 1904, 257). The load of silver deprives the two men "of common idea," and confronts them only with the blank threat of death, a horizon that brings "their differences in aim, in view, in character, in position, into absolute prominence in the

private vision of each” (257). The silver, in its dividing properties, menaces Nostromo and Decoud, threatening the vanity of one and the political plan of the other. As Nostromo tells Decoud: “Your reputation is in your politics, and mine is bound up with the fate of this silver” (261). Nostromo’s reliance on the language of character makes the silver’s loss more honorable to him. He would have preferred to go “to the bottom with her” entirely “alone” (262). Decoud plays on this knot of vanity and language by inflating the value of Nostromo’s words, telling him: “Your wonderful reputation will make them attach great value to your words; therefore be careful what you say” (261). Nostromo, bought off by the increased value of his speech, leaves Decoud to plunder the silver in his isolated despair, and Decoud’s theft of the four ingots transforms the hoarded silver into capital by subjecting it to circulation beyond local control and dispossessing Nostromo, who is left under the silver’s spell in exchange for words. By ensuring that the silver appears incomplete, already in circulation, ghostly and subterranean, Decoud’s suicide manages to sink absence into the hoard of material money. This emptying of the hoard mystifies its local material function, and makes it impossible either to restore the silver or to grasp its social and economic significance except as capital. Nostromo’s opportunist shift, then, is forced upon him, an effect of the material subtraction that instates capital’s signifying regime and drives him to adopt it.

“A Revulsion of Subjectiveness”: Nostromo’s Loss of

Character

Critics tend to cast Nostromo’s change in the novel’s final part as deviating too much from the novel’s realism. What the plot outlines as Nostromo’s failure of character becomes in critical terms a failed character, and often the novel’s greatest failing overall. Even while defending the novel’s third part, Hay writes, “Nostromo is insufficiently compelling as a character to hold together the rich situations that follow coherently from the hiding of the treasure” (Hay 202). Jameson’s reading of this turn as a reification of

the romance narrative gives an advanced theoretical form to the view of the novel's close as a kind of fable or fairy tale. In order to explain the political failure of Nostromo's character, we are often thrown back on Conrad's tortured politics, a recourse that Daniel Schwarz questions in his reading, though perhaps with still too much of a sense that Conrad's politics determines our understanding.⁴² David Allen Ward is perhaps closer to the mark, and his Lacanian approach reads the novel's conclusion as a result of Nostromo's lost belief in public and private self, a conclusion that is "superficial simply because that is what its title character has become" (Ward 296). Almost everyone can agree that some kind of abstraction is at work in the novel's end, but its function--and its object--remains in question.

Nostromo's movement into abstraction, however, has been our topic all along. It is the culmination of the novel's intersection of economics and language. Nowhere is Nostromo's reification into name more explicit than in the novel's final paragraph when the reader overhears via Doctor Monygham Linda's cry of "Gian' Battista" while Nostromo's names multiply in a metonymic skid that binds his plurality to the sweep of the countryside:

It was another of Nostromo's triumphs, the greatest, the most enviable, the most sinister of all. In that true cry of undying passion that seemed to ring aloud from Punta Mala to Azuera and away to the bright line of the horizon, overhung by a big white cloud shining like a mass of solid silver, the genius of the magnificent Capataz de Cargadores dominated the dark gulf containing his conquests of treasure and love. (Conrad 1904, 465)

The inversion of language's immaterial circulation and economics's material circulation receives a final rhetorical flourish in this passage as the silver, its heft sunk in the ocean or buried in the sand, hangs spectral yet massive over the gulf in the form of a "big white cloud shining like a mass of solid silver" as the economic evanesces into a gaseous trope of its own lost solidity. Nostromo's change in the novel's third part grows from an imaginative cathexis of the buried silver that operates much like this play of the solid and spectral. After sinking the emptied lighter, Nostromo swims ashore, sleeping in an old

fort to escape detection by the rebels. Awakening fourteen hours later, he is hungry, poor, and isolated. The specular isolation that drove Decoud to suicide becomes for Nostromo another kind of death, one of character rather than person. While “the last act he had performed in Sulaco [giving an old woman his last piece of silver] was in complete harmony with his vanity, and as such perfectly genuine,” when Nostromo wakes “in solitude, except for the watchful vulture,” he finds that “his first confused feeling was exactly this--that it was not in keeping” with his reputation (348). Where Decoud’s isolation was caught up in the survival of his thoughts, Nostromo feels his isolation as “not in keeping” with himself. This loss of self recasts his actions, and the realization comes to him as a series of images that retroactively throw his vain reality into question: “The necessity of living concealed somehow, for God knows how long, which assailed on him on his return to consciousness, made everything that had gone before for years appear vain and foolish, like a flattering dream come suddenly to an end” (349). His recognition of his life as “a flattering dream” depends upon this “concealed” position. The last act of Nostromo’s prior life, although “performed in obscurity and without witnesses” (348), operated within Smithian sympathy: an imagined spectator could recognize the act’s meaning to be part of Nostromo’s vanity since it “had still the characteristics of splendour and publicity, and was in strict keeping with his reputation” (ibid.). By contrast, Nostromo’s solitude “has no such characteristics” by which a spectator may recognize his vain character. The awful “necessity of living concealed” is “the end of things” that reveals Nostromo’s personality as semblance and dream (349).

The interaction of Nostromo’s narcissism and the text’s use of specular relations is never clearer than in his apprehension “that it was no longer open to him to ride through the streets, recognized by everyone, great and little,” a loss that “made it appear to him as a town that had no existence” (349). Nostromo is bereft of any recognition except for the gaze of a vulture, a “patient watcher for the signs of death and corruption” (348), and his loss of identity turns this watcher into a personalized recognition of death

as the very limit of his existence, what the text calls “a fitting welcome for his betrayed individuality” (352). In this isolation, Nostromo “felt the pinch of poverty for the first time in his life” because being without money in Sulaco “had none of the humiliation of destitution” since “he remained rich in glory and reputation” (350). It is only “since it was no longer possible for him to parade the streets of the town, and be hailed with respect in the usual haunts of his leisure, [that] this sailor felt himself destitute indeed” (ibid.). Nostromo repeatedly feels his experience of poverty even as his isolation from specular relations dramatizes and inverts Smith’s claim that poverty is a kind of literal specular obscurity: “the poor man, on the contrary, is ashamed of his poverty. He feels that it either places him out of the sight of mankind, or, that if they take any notice of him, they have, however, scarce any fellow-feeling with the misery and distress which he suffers” (Smith 62). Smith’s explanation dovetails with Nostromo’s first exploration of the Great Isabel, undertaken on “a miserable Sunday” to escape the sight of others when he found himself broke (“I did not want to go amongst those beggarly people accustomed to my generosity” [Conrad 1904, 258]). In this later episode, however, it is reversed: Nostromo begins with specular isolation to reach a sense of poverty.

Nostromo’s loss of specular relations binds his character to material possessions. He derisively considers fleeing the country in poverty “with bare feet and head, with one check shirt and a pair of cotton *calzoneros* for all worldly possessions” (350). Moreover, his sudden awareness of his poverty leads him to believe that “he had been betrayed,” just as the name he will later assume, Fianza, echoes the belief he expresses here that “his fidelity had been taken advantage of” and “everybody had given up” (351). Realizing that “the hurried removal of the treasure out to sea meant nothing else than” this betrayal, the text proceeds to describe how: “The Capataz de Cargadores, on a revulsion of subjectiveness, exasperated almost to insanity, beheld his world without faith and courage” (351). Betrayal becomes Nostromo’s *idée fixe*, much as it will for Winnie Verloc three years later in *The Secret Agent*. The ambiguity of the sentence’s final clause

illuminates how Nostromo's very identity becomes a subject of revulsion as the clause "beheld his world without faith and courage" is at once attached to the sentence's object ("his world") and its subject ("The Capataz de Cargadores"). Nostromo may well see the world as empty of "faith and courage," but this phrase carries a rhetorical ambiguity as ironic as the notion that Decoud, "the apostle of Separation" (412), is unable to withstand personal isolation: In his "revulsion of subjectiveness," Nostromo himself is "without faith and courage" when he looks at the world, implicating himself in the "everybody" who "had given up." Nostromo is just as unable as Decoud to withstand isolation without betraying his character.

The phrase "revulsion of subjectiveness" carries an important resonance with the question of immaterial labor. Ten years later, in the 1914 preface to the American edition of *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus,'* Conrad applied the term "revulsion" to his own subjective transition from sailor to writer: "After writing the last words of that book, in the revulsion of feeling before the accomplished task, I understood that I had done with the sea, and that henceforth I had to be a writer" (xxxv). Conrad's choice of language converges with the language he used to describe Nostromo's opportunist shift as Conrad's decision to become an immaterial laborer is marked by a similar "revulsion of feeling." The word itself not only connotes a literal or figurative reversal often tied to economic circumstances, but also, as the OED notes, "a sudden violent change of feeling; a strong reaction in sentiment or taste."⁴³ The rhetorical linkage of Conrad's own immaterial labor and Nostromo's change reveals the manner in which Nostromo's self-betrayal functions through its own logic of linguistic alienation as he betrays his character into materiality. Nostromo reveals his "betrayed individuality" in his "revulsion of subjectiveness" and retreats from his character. Yet betrayal itself is subject to alienation as it comes to refer both to the violation of Nostromo's subjectivity and to his fear that the treasure itself should be "betrayed," leading betrayal to perforate Nostromo's character as both subjective violation and material disclosure. In the process, such

perforation generates another as the text dislocates the betrayal of Nostromo's character into the disclosure of a secret. At this moment, his imagination reappears as a subjectivizing mechanism attached to betrayal: "The word had fixed itself tenaciously to his intelligence. His imagination had seized upon the clear and simple notion of betrayal to account for the dazed feeling of enlightenment as being done for, of having inadvertently gone out of his existence on an issue in which his personality had not been taken into account" (Conrad 1904, 353). Nostromo takes imaginative grafting to its furthest extreme and turns it into a form of destruction by extending it beyond the construction of a new social relation into a new relation to the self. The imagination, in grafting betrayal to his intelligence, disarticulates Nostromo's very character. While Decoud had in the Golfo had "had the strangest sensation of his soul having just returned into his body from the circumambient darkness" (231), Nostromo's betrayed individuality reveals an experience that extends beyond his existence or personality, one that displays a conflict of personality and existence that is able to destroy the subject in its midst. Or as he describes it in free indirect discourse: "a man betrayed is a man destroyed" (353).

With this loss of specular existence, Nostromo's subjective dissolution leaves him unable to read his surroundings. His reaction to the shadow cast by Hirsch's dead body in the Customs House illustrates the gap between the vain Capataz and the opportunist Captain Fidanza as a kind of aphasia: Nostromo not only misreads signs, but projects his lost literacy onto them. Able to see only the "high-shouldered shadow of somebody standing still, with lowered head, out of his line of sight," Nostromo fills in his lost sight by imagining the activities of this shadow man who "was doing apparently nothing, and stirred not from the spot, as though he were meditating--or, perhaps, reading a paper" (356). The rhetorical and imagistic relations that link Decoud and Hirsch become blank signs to Nostromo since "the existence of the treasure [had] confused his thoughts with a peculiar sort of anxiety, as though his life had become bound up with it" (ibid.). This

binding of his betrayed individuality with the treasure leaves him with “an inexplicable repugnance to pronounce the name by which he was known” when he encounters Dr. Monygham, and he identifies himself only by occupation as “a *cargador*” (357). While Nostromo’s refusal of name becomes in the novel’s credit matrix a refusal to accept the credit that Sulaco’s denizens offer him, his inability to voice the silver’s fate is what allows him to exploit the potential illegibility of signs. Nostromo’s subsequent explosions--“The Capataz is undone, destroyed” (365), “I am nothing!” (380)--lead to his first truly opportunist act: when Monygham tells Nostromo he will send Sotillo to hunt for the silver on the Great Isabel, Nostromo exclaims, “What miserable invention!” (383) before offering his own, which depends upon signification’s opacity : “You want to tell him of a hiding-place big enough to take days in ransacking--a place where a treasure of silver ingots can be buried without leaving a sign on the surface. [...] Tell him it is sunk” (384). Nostromo displaces illegibility into the sea, the very place Conrad left behind in his own revulsion. He then seizes upon Monygham’s offer of “the best means of saving yourself [...] and of retrieving your great reputation” (387) and rides to Cayta to reclaim his betrayed individuality even while his invention protects the silver from Sotillo’s forces.

Nostromo’s opportunist turn reframes the world as constituted by unseen agents and signs. On his return via boat, when he spots the empty lighter floating “as if rowed by an invisible spectre,” it “exercised the fascination of some sign, some warning” (408). Nostromo combs the boat “for some scratch, for some mark, for some sign” in a desperate attempt to read only to discover on the boat’s floor a “brown stain” of blood (409) that reveals Decoud’s demise. Described as “a drowned corpse come up from the bottom to idle away the sunset hour in a small boat” (409), the Capataz drifts between the spectral and the abject illegibility of death, “as when the soul takes flight leaving the body inert upon an earth it knows no more,” only to return to consciousness “as if an outcast soul, a quiet, brooding soul, finding that untenanted body in its way, had come in

stealthily to take possession” (410). Nostromo’s experience of alienation from himself leaves his “untenanted body” subject to possession and rent while his desire “to clasp, embrace, absorb, subjugate in unquestioned possession this treasure, whose tyranny had weighed upon his mind, his actions, his very sleep” (436-37) leaves him not only possessed of the silver but by it as well.

“Masterful and Tender”: The Results of Language’s
Subsumption by Credit in the Novel’s Conclusion

In part three, the novel takes on its strongest aspects of a Hegelian subsumption of economics and language with Nostromo’s continued oscillation between the role of master and slave. Nostromo’s spiritual possession is consistently marked by an inversion of the previously “masterful” (221) attitude of the “camp-master” (68) into that of “the hopeless slave of the San Tomé silver” (440), a term otherwise consistently used to mark the natives forced to work the mine.⁴⁴ Nostromo’s affair with Giselle tries to use the treasure to upend this Hegelian problematic even as his desire for Giselle further knots possession into this tension between master and slave: “Masterful and tender, he was entering slowly upon the fulness of his possession” (443). A sexual pun on Nostromo’s “I must grow rich very slowly” (417), the phrase brings both mastery and possession to bear on Nostromo’s construction of himself. Indeed, Giselle offers Nostromo a brief glimpse of regained mastery. She not only calls him her “master” (444, 446) but Giselle also offers an opportunity for Nostromo’s vain generosity to reappear: by confessing the existence of the silver to Giselle, “the Capataz de Cargadores tasted the supreme intoxication of his generosity. He flung the mastered treasure superbly at her feet in the impenetrable darkness of the gulf” (446). Nostromo seems to choose Giselle over Linda for this reason of masculine mastery, demonstrating a crisis of identity precipitated by his inability to circulate words to with the same effect he once had. With Nostromo’s personal vanity displaced from linguistic circulation to material economics, it is no

surprise that he prefers the “pliable, silent” Giselle to Linda, who is “all fire and words” (433). Yet Giselle is unable to maintain specular recognition. Her very eyes refuse it, and when confronted by Linda, “the invincible candour of the gaze” of Giselle’s “beautiful eyes” become “empty, gazing blankly at [Linda]” (453). Giselle is the sign’s placeholder, Linda its expression. This emptiness keeps Nostromo from experiencing the intoxication of generously confessing to Giselle as anything more than a passing consolation. Rather than being mastered, the treasure takes on a more intense autonomous form because “he had not regained his freedom” and “the spectre of the unlawful treasure arose, standing by her side like a figure of silver, pitiless and secret, with a finger on its pale lips” (447). The spectral infection that the silver once represented, tainting the gringos of Azuera, Decoud, and Nostromo, becomes itself a specter that demands secrecy from Nostromo rather than a mere tenantry of his body. Slavery becomes a literal and external relation.

Secrecy and slavery become inextricable as a command given spectral form, and Nostromo is forced to perpetuate the broken specular relation that marked the silver’s initial concealment, a need “to do things by stealth [that] humiliated him” (432). His prior character becomes separable from his existence as his reality becomes little more than the hidden silver. This is Nostromo’s passage from the Capataz to the fraud and the miser:

A transgression, a crime, entering a man’s existence, eats it up like a malignant growth, consumes it like a fever. Nostromo had lost his peace; the genuineness of all his qualities was destroyed. He felt it himself, and often cursed the silver of San Tome. His courage, his magnificence, his leisure, his work, everything was as before, only everything was a sham. But the treasure was real. He clung to it with a more tenacious, mental grip. But he hated the feel of the ingots. Sometimes, after putting away a couple of them in his cabin—the fruit of a secret night expedition to the Great Isabel—he would look fixedly at his fingers, as if surprised they had left no stain on his skin. (432-33)

Nothing has changed yet everything has become its own simulacrum. The “crime” that enters and eats a man’s existence “like a malignant growth” is the imagination’s negative side, as it becomes a faculty that does not combine but rather divides the material and ideal. This negative imagination does not generate new social relations but rather empties

the material from the inside out to create sham ideals. Nostromo becomes an impersonation of himself since only “the treasure was real.” The silver replaces Nostromo’s vanity in his “tenacious mental grip” even as “he hated the feel of the ingots”— a seeming hatred of both the silver’s mental and physical feel, the bodily affect that first announced his specular isolation. Nostromo’s “revulsion of subjectiveness” has become a revulsion of the real, a fear that the real will leave its mark upon him as a recognizable stain. Nostromo is reduced to these stains even as they multiply the signs attached to him, and this surplus of signs both exacerbates the specular confusion that followed the dissolution of his identity and causes his death. The spectacled Viola, unable to recognize Nostromo in “the blackness of the shade” (455), mistakes him for another man and shoots him. “Like a thief he came and like a thief he fell,” Viola says in an echo of the Capataz’s confession to Giselle: “Like a thief!” (446). While Decoud’s suicide is an effect of his indifference to the rhetorically created collective subjects that describe the novel’s events, Nostromo’s death is rather an effect of such rhetorical constructs: Nostromo is killed by the multiplication of signs generated by his imaginative attachment to betrayal. While his final claim to Mrs. Gould—“The silver has killed me” (460)—retroactively reveals the silver as the unspoken agent in his incomplete confession, “I die betrayed—betrayed by—” (459), this betrayal is the imagination’s act of division as it extends beyond Nostromo’s personality to divide him into body and signs.

All that is left for Nostromo is the silver, but it no longer serves an indexical function. The negative dimension of the imagination here divides capital from silver once credit has overrun Sulaco, reorganizing society and its relation to silver to its own ends. This is the work of real subsumption, and it appears in the text as a change in silver’s rhetorical use as it moves from index, most obvious in the novel’s simple talk about the silver, to metaphor: the “silver bell” of Giselle’s voice (441), to the image of moonlight as “a colossal bar of silver” (454), and the already quoted “big white cloud shining like a mass of solid silver.” Until these closing pages, “silver” has been used to describe a

thing: Nostromo's sartorial embellishments, a variety of silver spectacles (a potential paronomastic play on the spectacle of the silver), or silver-colored items such as Nostromo's "silver-grey mare" (108), and silver hair belonging to Signora Teresa (57), the chairman of the railway (62), and Don Jose (144).

One exception in silver's rhetorical use precedes this late metaphorical turn. It appears in Pedro Montero's address to Sulaco on his arrival:

The crowd stared literally open-mouthed, lost in eager stillness, as though they had expected the great guerrillero, the famous Pedrito, to begin scattering at once some sort of visible largesse. What he began was a speech. He began it with the shouted word "Citizens!" which reached even those in the middle of the Plaza. Afterwards the greater part of the citizens remained fascinated by the orator's action alone, his tip-toeing, the arms flung above his head with the fists clenched, a hand laid flat upon the heart, *the silver gleam of rolling eyes*, the sweeping, pointing, embracing gestures, a hand laid familiarly on Gamacho's shoulder; a hand waved formally towards the little black-coated person of Senor Fuentes, advocate and politician and a true friend of the people. (330; emphasis added)

One could read this scene with Aaron Fogel as the crowd's reception of silence in the place of silver. I would argue, however, one can see that in the place of silver, speech, or silence the crowd receives a rhetorical spectacle that the text initially describes with disinterest but that builds in rhetorical force from the metaphor "the silver gleam of rolling eyes." After this point, the passage notes "a hand laid familiarly" and another "waved formally," ending with a move into free indirect with words that presumably belong to Pedro and describe the man next to him as an "advocate and politician and a true friend of the people." Silver's metaphoric deployment indicates a change in communicative form that links economics, language, and specular relations by sheer force of generalization and without regard for what the crowd receives. Although the crowd does not receive the "visible largesse" it desires or even the words of the speech, it discovers both in the deferred spectacle of the passage's rhetorical texture. Silver's turn from material to metaphor thus seems to operate as a negative version of the social rhetoric displayed in the audience constructed around Decoud's suicide. Rather than a

new witnessing multitude, the concrete multitude that bears witness to Pedro's speech is offered an empty social spectacle as silver's ability to endow a man with power remains a question of possession, isolation and division just as the specter of the silver isolates, humiliates, and swears Nostromo to secrecy.

Nostromo's death, taken alongside those of Decoud and Hirsch, brings the text's construction of the imagination to bear on the role of immaterial labor in a world reorganized by capital. The novel's use of credit imbricates linguistic production within economic production even as such labor exceeds its economic attachment. *Nostromo*, by tracing the imaginative uses of specular relations, turns the intersection of economic and linguistic production into a generative textual mechanism as language becomes a means of transmitting economic power. In tracing the differing circulations of economics and language, one begins to see the kinds of plots and subjects generated by their interaction not only at the level of individual characters but also at the level of rhetorical multitudes: spaces of potential recognition and communication open alongside the novel's ironic treatment of misers, frauds, and the existentially bankrupt. The text folds together disparate functions of economics, psychology, and history both inside and beyond its narrative maneuverings as issues of social and linguistic recognition. Indeed, readers of *Nostromo* enter the same circuit of nomination and valuation that beset the novel's characters as the interpretive work of reading becomes a form of immaterial labor in its own right. Where Frederic Jameson insisted that the impressionistic style of *Lord Jim* offered the last residue of sense not reified by capitalism, *Nostromo* more broadly addresses the subsumption of subjectivity itself to a process of economic signification so complex that the reader's discernment of this process is all that can begin to resist its naturalization of the value system on which it depends.

Notes

¹ See Watts, Berthoud, Ramirez, Jeffers, Miller, and Fleischman.

² The gold premium is “the spread between gold or gold-backed currencies and Argentine paper money” (MacLachlan 38).

³ The correspondent for *The Times* of London focused in his coverage of the political unrest in Argentina on the financially freighted term “confidence.” He declared at the height of the political and financial crisis on August 6, 1890 that “from the outset of this correspondence it has been shown that what was and is required here to help to turn the tide of difficulties brought about by reckless financing and speculation is the restoration of confidence and the maintenance of good faith.” *The Times* noted when reporting that Pellegrini had ousted Celman on August 8th that “the investing classes here will for some time be afraid to trust a country which, after all the talk about the era of revolutions being closed” has once more shown that in South America the ballot has not yet displaced the bullet as an agent for bringing about a change in Ministry” but also that the new President Pellegrini “has shown that he fully understands the importance of maintaining the national credit.” See also Ziegler 242.

⁴ That is to say, the Bank fully assumed its responsibilities as a central bank. In the 1870s, following Walter Bagehot’s advice, the Bank had begun to set its discount rates with the express intent of controlling market interest rates. The Bank’s actions in 1890 made the Bank’s role in controlling the market clear.

⁵ MacLachlan notes that Argentina’s history has lately become a potential model for a retrenched and failed twenty-first century United States (xiii).

⁶ See Fogel 94-145.

⁷ Immaterial labor recasts the political economic category unproductive labor, which Marx maintained as the purview of the parasitic class. Marx’s distinction was due in part to the fact that unproductive labor had not yet been fully reorganized by capitalist production and he examines this question in the excised chapter six of *Capital* 1 in terms of authorship. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri brought immaterial labor, i.e. intellectual or affective labor that produces an immaterial product, to its current critical prominence, but Paolo Virno’s work provides a useful contrast to the sometimes utopian overtones of *Empire* and *Multitude*. Sylvère Lotringer notes in his introduction to Virno’s *A Grammar of Multitude* that Hardt and Negri try to create “a struggle looking for a class” in *Empire*, where “for Virno it would be just the reverse: a class looking for a struggle” (16). See also Marx 1976, 1040-45; and Hardt and Negri, 109.

⁸ Antonio Negri argues in *Marx Beyond Marx* that money not only directly embodies exploitation but opens the risk that “*The symbol can become subject*, value can become command, over-determination can break the dialectic and be in force with power and command” (31).

⁹ Joan Robinson noted that Rosa Luxemburg’s attack on Marx in *The Accumulation of Capital* focuses on the first point while ignoring the second (309). Robinson’s account in her introduction to *Accumulation* is helpful: “Luxemburg garbles this argument considerably,” but largely because her concern is not with savings but rather “the inducement to invest” (xxix).

¹⁰ King notes this shift not only as part of an increase in international trade, but also as part of an increase in British branch banking, lessening the need for an internal bill market. See King 271-75.

¹¹ Mary Poovey offers an overview of Marshall's academic affiliations, noting the importance of academia to his work: "the success that Jevons and Marshall enjoyed--a success associated with their socially recognized *expertise*--was directly related to their affiliation with various universities" (277).

¹² Negri uses Spinoza's concept of the imagination as the basis for creating new concrete social subjects in both his work on Spinoza and his work on constituent power. A key passage occurs in Spinoza's *Ethics* in part II, proposition 40, where Spinoza argues that the finite human body can only form a limited number of distinct images. As the body exceeds this limit, the images become increasingly confused until "when the images in the body are utterly confused, the mind will also imagine all the bodies confusedly without any distinction, and will comprehend them, as it were, under one attribute, namely, that of entity, thing, etc." (50). Spinoza proceeds to note that "from similar causes have arisen those notions called 'universal,' such as 'man,' 'horse,' 'dog,' etc" (ibid.). Since universals arise by the confusion of images within a particular human body, "not all men form these notions [universals] in the same way; in the case of each person the notions vary according as that thing varies whereby the body has more frequently been affected, and which the mind more readily imagines or calls to mind" (51). Universals thus become abstract yet concrete subjective concepts, completely opposed to any sense of an objective universal concept. See Negri, *Savage*, 86-98; and Negri 1999, 120-21.

¹³ That is to say, I would argue that in *Nostromo* the impressionist rhetorical construction of sight is not a rhetorical compensation for capitalism's subtraction of objects as Jameson argued (Jameson 1981, 229-32).

¹⁴ James Chandler also makes a case for the importance of sentimentality in his article on *Lord Jim*.

¹⁵ Smith extrapolates from this individualized response the notion of an omniscient impersonal observer as the basis for individual conscience, and his idea bears a strong resemblance to the Lacanian ego-ideal. While an external spectator can potentially offer concrete praise or blame, an internal spectator judges the praise- or blame-worthiness of the individual. Smith notes this as the difference between "a desire of being approved of" and "a desire of being what ought to be approved of" (136)--that is to say, between having correctness and being correctness itself. Catherine Gallagher uses Smithian sympathy in her reading of Frances Burney to explicate *Cecilia* as a moral work. Gallagher argues that the narrative not only elicits identification between the reader and an impersonal spectatorial narrator but also couches such impersonal identification in terms of an obligation that shades into a rhetorically constructed debt. For Gallagher, such identification with Nobody is linked to the discursive construction of women authors in the eighteenth century. Gallagher's recent *The Body Economic* is more attuned to delimiting the sphere of political economy in its discursive shifts and its growing disciplinary attempts to quantify somatic responses to consumption than to its resonances with Smithian sympathy. I would argue that we can discover in Conrad a sympathetic matrix of narration and debt that has become part of the discursive configuration of global capital, one that turns the identification with nobody from a gendered construct into an insidious *mise-en-abyme* of signification that remains internal to both the text and

the credit economies of the world market. See Gallagher 1994, 203-56, esp. 235-38; and Gallagher 2006.

¹⁶ See note 3.

¹⁷ Such an account of specular relations and Smithian sympathy is in contrast to Aaron Fogel's account of "forced speech" in the novel, which he argues stands outside any dialogical relations of sympathy. While Fogel notes "chiming" sounds in Conrad as source as of textual and thematic play, his emphasis on "silence and silver" in *Nostramo* perhaps too readily homologizes the linguistic and material.

¹⁸ While this is certainly attuned to the text's political economic valences, Jameson's reading nonetheless reduces the novel to melodrama in a manner at odds with his methodology. If *Nostramo* is "a system analogous to that found operative in *Lord Jim*, but more complex" (275), it is only more complex in its secondary revision of his model than in its interpretation of the novel as a political system. While his reading of *Lord Jim* locates subterranean ideological values that generate the narrative's characters from the tension between these ideologies, in *Nostramo* characters are *directly* aligned with ideologies. This compacts the two into the position previously occupied by his ideological pairs. Although this move allows Jameson to draw unconscious political ideologies from the tension between characters, his analysis depends on a willingness to accept a one-dimensional schematization of the characters themselves as ideological representatives. Even if one accepts Jameson's claim that Conrad's form moves into the genre of the romance or melodrama based on the constitutive narrative split at the heart of *Lord Jim*, Jameson's analytic model for *Lord Jim* crosses this split to include both the pilgrims of the failed *Bildungsroman* and Gentleman Brown from the reified romance as opposing terms. In *Nostramo*, there is indeed an interrelation of form and content, but I would argue that it does not justify the flattening of character into ideological representative through the justification of generic flatness. For Jameson's comparable if not commensurate diagrams of these two Conrad texts, see Jameson 1981, 256 and 277.

¹⁹ Ian Watt and I.S. Talib both note the anachronic temporal construction of *Nostramo*. Terry Eagleton has recently pointed out the affinity between the novel's fragmentation of time and its relation to revolutionary potential. See Watt 35; Talib 16; Eagleton 52.

²⁰ Eloise Knapp Hay's argument is key here and remains a point of departure for most critics who attempt to account for Conrad's own politics, but certainly Jameson's use of *ressentiment* is also of importance.

²¹ In addition to Hays on this point, see Schwarz 133-156.

²² See Demory.

²³ In particular, consider this quote from Jeffers: "But within the larger circle of Costaguana, his profile has the lineaments I've endeavored to trace—that of a valorous captain of mining engineers, whose trust in those Emilia-decried "material interests" has helped save Sulaco from the Monterists, brought cable cars and telegraph lines to the country's infrastructure, consumer goods to its urban centers, secure employment to his miners and to those who supply them, and (given the increasingly potent rule of law in commercial affairs) the prospect, at least, of the "better justice" that no sensible person

living in actual Colombia or Panama in 1904-or now-would scoff at.” Moreover, this critic refuses to even entertain the question of who the “we” of our man may be.

²⁴ See Said; Parry.

²⁵ This approach draws heavily from Gilles Deleuze’s reading of Nietzsche, in part as a correction to current trends in critical theory that have placed too great an emphasis on genealogy without enough attention to critique. See Deleuze 1962, 73-110.

²⁶ Harvey’s notion of accumulation by dispossession includes one particular nuancing of primitive accumulation that I find troubling, accumulation by dispossession via devaluation, a notion that is historically located to such a degree that I find it difficult to accept wholeheartedly. Such devaluation strategies certainly exist, exemplified by interventions by the IMF and its subsequent austerity demands in so-called developing markets, from the mid 1990s through the present. As part of a specific political economy, Harvey’s discussion makes perfect sense. As a general mechanism within primitive accumulation, however, it does not, especially as the maneuver never seems engineered by anyone other than the IMF *after the occurrence of an economic crisis*. What Harvey accomplishes with this particular move is to reintroduce under another name a *tendency* within capitalist production toward the devaluation of assets, which are then subject to accumulation by the remaining larger capitals—that is to say, to reintroduce under another name the central problem of Marx’s thought, the law of the tendential falling rate of profit. On the one hand, Harvey’s move provides an important corollary to the manner in which crises are now controlled by the globally interconnected capitalism of Hardt and Negri’s Empire. On the other hand, Harvey’s move also displaces the descriptors of crises due to this tendency into the irrationality of primitive accumulation, e.g. as a mere assertion of force. Harvey engages with these questions at length in *The Limits to Capital*, where he argues that rent and land become in capitalist production merely another form of fictitious capital through the circulation of titles, an effect of the increased use of credit that makes land another form of interest-bearing capital when it is treated as a financial instrument. Harvey runs into difficulty, however, when he begins to equivocate relative surplus-value with excess profit. This confusion between relative surplus-value and what I believe Marx would have understood to be super-profit—a category maintained by regulation school economist Aglietta—leads Harvey to consider the extraction of rent as a means of appropriating excess surplus-value of one form or another through both structural considerations and brute force. In essence, when rent intersects with credit and fictitious capital, the process of appropriating surplus-value becomes part and parcel with state mechanisms that are eerily similar to primitive accumulation. Perhaps with the expansion of tendencies within capital toward a flat rate of profit, primitive accumulation returns in this fashion, but this a problem that merits more attention. This tendency marks the regulation school of Marxism, of which Harvey is a part, and is also represented by Michel Aglietta, who uses primitive accumulation to break Marxism out of its attachment to the notion of labour-power as a commodity, which he replaces instead with the wage-earning classes access to labor and mode of life as a power construct necessary for the reproduction of capital (31). See Harvey 2006; Harvey 2005; Aglietta 2000.

²⁷ This has also led to a sort of celebratory reading of transnational capitalism in *Nostramo*. Micklethwait and Woolridge’s history of the corporation includes this off-hand misreading of the novel: “Yet even when the foreigner’s sympathies lay with the country—think of Charles Gould in *Nostramo*—it has been easy for locals to assume otherwise” (161). Apparently, neither of them has ever finished reading the novel.

28 It is impossible to overstate the importance of maintaining this principle. Without a primary resistance, one falls back into Hegelian ontology. In his anti-Hegelian project, Gilles Deleuze outlined this most clearly in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, but the concept translates through his oeuvre as well as that of Michel Foucault. Indeed, Foucault's description of power in volume one of *History of Sexuality* seems deeply indebted to Deleuze's reading of Nietzsche. Judith Butler mines this notion in her *Psychic Life of Power*, while Antonio Negri draws on Foucault's work in *Insurgencies* as well as in his work with Michael Hardt.

29 While Hegel's use of political economy seems self-evident in the following passages, the note to §189 references Smith, Say, and Ricardo (Hegel 1821, 193). Moreover, Hegel's discussion of the civic community oscillates between the ancient world (specifically Greece and Rome) and Britain. This may help to explain the strange position of the civic community in Hegel's generally teleological history, which Hegel positions as the logical intermediary between the family and the state, but that he admits historically has appeared *after the construction of the state* (§182; Hegel 1821, 186).

30 David Harvey notes this section of Hegel as a potential influence on Marx's thoughts on colonization. See Harvey 2006, 413-414. While Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri usefully explicate the complicity of Hegelian sovereignty with Smith's theory of value, they do not touch on effects of this complicity in Hegel's linkage of money and language. See Hardt and Negri 2000, 83-87.

31 While I am extending Mikhail Bakhtin's term for the plurality that subtends any unitary language to the sphere of economics, Antonio Negri's arguments in *Marx Beyond Marx* for the role of small-scale circulation makes the point economically. Negri claims that "*Small-scale circulation seems to reject the functions of money, even though money can function within it in terms of simple commodity circulation. Within this small-scale circulation, the sequence M-C-M' does not hold: money exchanged between proletarians is us-value. Money is subordinated to self-valorization*" (138). Such does not, however, imply a simple reversal of power from capital to proletariat, but rather the "dissolution of all homogeneity," a "methodological 'plural'" that forms the multitudinous basis of working-class power.

32 See the second chapter in the second volume of *Wealth of Nations*, "Of Money Considered as a Particular Branch of the General Stock of the Society, or of the Expense of Maintaining the National Capital" (Smith 1990, 381-429). The Bank Charter Renewal Act of 1844 created a separate department for note-issue.

33 This question erupted many times during the early stages of transnational capitalism, both in terms of the intermittent national crises of cash circulation that led to the Bank of England's suspension of cash payments for notes from the end of the eighteenth century and through the Napoleonic wars, as well as in the eventual elimination of the dual metal standard in favor of silver, and in terms of international finance, led by changes in monetary transfers, most especially the length of time terms of usances were drawn on sight, then on telegram. See Poovey 2008. See also Marx 1978.

34 Marx calls the appearance of the average rate of profit "the form in which capital becomes conscious of itself as a *social power*, in which every capitalist participates in proportion to his share in the total social capital.... Capital withdraws from a sphere with a low rate of profit and wends its way to other that yield higher profit. This constant migration, the distribution of capital between the different spheres according to

where the profit rate is rising and where it is falling, is what produces a relationship between supply and demand such that the average profit is the same in the various different spheres, and values are therefore transformed into prices of production. Capital arrives at this equalization to a greater or lesser extent, according to how advanced capitalist development is in a given national society: i.e. the more the conditions in the country in question are adapted to the capitalist mode of production.” See Marx 1981, 297.

³⁵ While Luxemburg’s argument in *The Accumulation of Capital* positions itself as a response to Marx’s discussion of gold mining in the second volume of *Capital*, this is a misreading of Marx. As Joan Robinson points out in her introduction, Luxemburg mistakes a description of an increase of money in circulation with an increase of production for what Robinson describes using the Keynesian term “inducement to invest”—i.e. what drives a continued reinvestment of production when there seems to be no available consumers for the goods produced? (xxix). In *Marxist Economic Theory*, Ernest Mandel notes that Luxemburg never effectively accounts for the average rate of interest and its subsequent effects on the accumulation. I would agree with Mandel that when taken in conjunction with disproportionality, Luxemburg’s argument for the importance of external markets to capitalist production is an important contribution to Marxist thought.

³⁶ Deleuze and Guattari provide much of the heft for this argument, including the following quote: “For the fact remains that there is a primitive accumulation that, far from deriving from the agricultural mode of production, precedes it: as a general rule, there is primitive accumulation whenever an apparatus of capture is mounted, with that very particular kind of violence that creates or contributes to the creation of that which it is directed against and thus presupposes itself.” See Deleuze and Guattari 447.

³⁷ Marx describes both in part eight of *Capital* 1. See Marx 1990, 873-942.

³⁸ Michael Hardt, unpublished talk, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, 28 March 2009.

³⁹ Paul Virilio argues that confluence of liberation and death is an essential aspect of biopolitics. Once the minimal needs of life are administrated by law, a person is no longer a citizen or free: “Without culture, without society, and without memory, this figure has no historical precedent, and it is the unique precariousness of his situation in the heart of the system that binds him to this, since, for the man thus exposed, assistance has become survival, non-assistance a condemnation to death. *All liberation henceforth has for him invariably the appearance of death, of the end, of suicide or murder*” (32-33).

⁴⁰ I.S. Talib wrestles with the tension between memory’s role as one of the novel’s narrative techniques and the narrator’s indeterminate identity. Talib concludes that Conrad uses an indeterminate narrator to increase the reader’s sense of an immediate relation to the narrative itself.

⁴¹ Garrett Stewart has noted the physically scriptive component that links Decoud’s writing and death. The “scriptive pun” that Stewart finds in “Decoud’s natural enough desire to leave an ‘accurate impression’ of his last hours” as the intersection of “his own ‘breathing image’ [moving] toward closure as at one with pen’s mechanical ‘impress’” can be seen as a pre-emptive evacuation of the self into text that finds its

outcome in Decoud's suicide (161). I would argue that writing's material inscription as death is also an effect of language's involution in material circulation.

⁴² See Schwarz 133-134.

⁴³ In the OED, the non-medical entries for "revulsion" cite Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (2) and J.S. Mill's *Principles of Political Economy* (5).

⁴⁴ Either in reference to the history of native enslavement at the hands of the Spanish: "Mrs. Gould knew the history of the San Tome mine. Worked in the early days mostly by means of lashes on the backs of slaves, its yield had been paid for in its own weight of human bones. Whole tribes of Indians had perished in the exploitation; and then the mine was abandoned, since with this primitive method it had ceased to make a profitable return, no matter how many corpses were thrown into its maw." (75) And: "the trudging files of burdened Indians taking off their hats, would lift sad, mute eyes to the cavalcade raising the dust of the crumbling camino real made by the hands of their enslaved forefathers" (102). Or in reference to native enslavement by capital: "Even Senor Moraga in Sta. Marta had not been able to find one, and the matter was now becoming pressing; some organ was absolutely needed to counteract the effect of the lies disseminated by the Monterist press: the atrocious calumnies, the appeals to the people calling upon them to rise with their knives in their hands and put an end once for all to the Blancos, to these Gothic remnants, to these sinister mummies, these impotent paraliticos, who plotted with foreigners for the surrender of the lands and the slavery of the people" (157).

CHAPTER 2: “NO PHANTASM OF DELIGHT”:
DISRUPTIONS OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC
PRODUCTION GEORGE ELIOT’S *SILAS MARNER*

In *Nostromo*, immaterial labor appears in the synthesis of monetary and linguistic circulation, reflecting the integration of finance capital and social production during the imperialist era of the world market. In this chapter, I consider the beginning of the rise of financial institutions and literature’s response with George Eliot’s *Silas Marner* (1861). In this novel, Eliot turns her finely calibrated differentiations of Britain’s socio-economic milieus into the means for confronting the spatial and temporal inhibitions to the circulation of money and language. Contemporary with the extension of limited liability and the deregulation of joint stock companies through a series of Parliamentary acts that spanned 1855 to 1863, Eliot’s novel thematizes the creation of collective subjects through local material practices while translating authorial and readerly practices into an equivalent process. As Terry Eagleton has noted, Eliot’s work is bound to an organicism that tied to the “increasingly corporate character of Victorian capitalism and its political apparatus” (111). My argument begins from a point made by almost every critic of Eliot and that Eagleton puts in especially blunt terms: Eliot’s work is marked by an “ideological conflict between a rationalist critique of rural philistinism [...] and a deep-seated imperative to celebrate the value of such bigoted, inert traditionalism” (115). That is to say, Eliot’s work is torn between the enlightened critique of her narrative voice and the celebration of traditional social forms in her content.

In *Silas Marner*, Eliot’s social organicism and her narrative form come into an explicit conflict that opens on to the question of immaterial labor. The web, her famous trope of organicism, becomes in Marner’s linen weaving a part of economic production that holds a place in the community as a particular form of material labor bound to its mode of production. Eliot’s work aspires to this organic unity of social and economic

production, yet the distance between her narrative voice and the experience of her characters generates a disingenuous rhetorical nexus of social relations in Eliot's address to her readers and her representation of the rural population, one that Raymond Williams noted in her work overall as "inauthentic" (170). Eliot's attachment to an organic socio-economic continuum cannot overcome fiction's specifically immaterial qualities, and the novel's rhetorical texture exists in tension with the thematic nexus of community, material labor, and economic production. *Silas Marner* displays the emergence of a particular problematic—the need to imagine new forms of collective subjectivity in light of economic and social changes—in a specifically residual form, one that is almost by definition unable to translate the question of collectivity into the kinds of imaginative forms we will see as the expansion and reorganization of economic social subjects continues through the 1860s. As the question of collectivity is increasingly displaced into narrative voice, the construction of text and of collectivity begin to converge in a manner that presages the more expansive notion of immaterial labor in the twentieth century. This is especially the case in a textual engagement with what classical political economy understood to be unproductive labor, which spanned from service labor to professional occupations and finance. Given the social and economic changes of the 1860s—leading in large part to the corporative ideology that Eagleton locates in Eliot—unproductive labor becomes an important part of the production process in its ability to link the different aspects of social, in effect providing the switchpoints of social production. Finance centralized and disbursed capital through credit mechanisms, a shift that elicited in literature a contemplation of the manner in which service labor could be seen as socially productive in the domestic sphere. In *Silas Marner*, Eliot translates collectivity into a mechanism of internalized negation in Marner's suspensions of consciousness, his exile life in Raveloe, and his miserly attachments, redeploying the gap between social and economic production in multiple rhetorical forms as the text searches for a form of mediation able to fill the chasm. While his relation with Eppie illustrates the creation of a

new community, Eliot's use of organicism to describe the process undermines the novel's rhetorical attempts to engage with the creation of new relations using the discontinuous, inorganic, and expressly immaterial forms of linguistic production.

The tension lies in the antagonistic relation between the immanence of social and economic production posited in the unity of community and production in *Silas Marner*, and transcendental narratorial interpolations that disrupt this relation. Though such a rhetorical move tries to expand the realm of social relations, what Ernesto Laclau would call a relation of failed transcendence, the text encounters this strategy as an ideological barrier. On the one hand, narratorial interventions tend to operate from a transcendental, omniscient perspective, constituting a rupture in the novel's description of immanent social relations to exert moralistic judgment on the part of the narrator. On the other hand, such interventions generate an antagonism within the text as the narrator's voice becomes immanent to the text as one more position. This is not an intentional effort on Eliot's part so much as an effect of the textual work itself, which creates a contradiction between narrative and narration that finds thematic expression. The disruption of immanence and its subsequent real confrontation with the novel's other positions elicit in *Silas Marner* a ghostly or apparitional thematic as a consequence of the novel's organic matrix of social and economic production, limiting the conceptualization of a new social subject except through organic material production.

Eliot's *Brother Jacob* (1860) further illustrates how the link between an immanent materiality premised on the unity of production and community acts as a conceptual limit in Eliot's work. In this short tale of an untrustworthy pastry chef, Eliot inverts the moral lesson of *Silas Marner* by emphasizing the untrustworthy nature of what classical political economy would term unproductive labor, in the case of *Brother Jacob* a kind of unnecessary service labor that produces luxury goods that verge on the ephemeral. While *Silas Marner* overcomes the distance between Marner's material economic production and his estranged social relations by the interposition of a child, society expels the

impostor confectioner of *Brother Jacob*, whose labor represents untenable excess. In their economic engagement, these texts illustrate a reactionary response to the increasingly interconnected relation of economic and social production at the time of their composition, if not of their setting. Yet in her narratorial construction, Eliot tries to navigate a rhetorical solution to the extension of community beyond its traditional forms, effectively displaying the fear and promise that accompany the increasingly socialized economic production of the 1860s.

History, Economics, and Criticism

Silas Marner consists of two narrative threads. The first follows Marner's arrival at Raveloe after his expulsion from Lantern Yard, a religious community of weavers. Socially isolated, he finds his affections frustrated and unable to connect with other people, leading him to create fetishistic attachments to the objects he finds at hand, most especially his personified money. His miserliness is a displaced expression of social desire, an attachment to the community of "faces" on his coins (18), which the arrival of Eppie, the golden haired orphan, literalizes and inverts. The novel's second thread follows Godfrey Cass, son of Raveloe's local squire, Eppie's father, whose recent marriage to her drug-addict mother remains a secret to Godfrey's father. The marriage comes off in large part by the wiles of Dunstan, his prodigal younger brother, in the hopes of eventually superseding Godfrey's inheritance. In the meantime, Dunstan exploits his knowledge to blackmail from Godfrey the rents collected on their father's lands. When Godfrey is forced to make up these rents to his father without revealing his marriage, he allows Dunstan to sell his horse during a hunt near the town of Batherley. However, in his continuing heedless quest for pleasure, Dunstan takes one too many hedges, staking Godfrey's horse before the sale's completion. The two threads intersect when Dunstan, forced to walk home and contemplate a new cash source for the stolen rents, decides to extort a loan from Marner, the town's well-known miser. Not finding

him at home, Dunstan steals Marner's gold, only to stumble outside in the dark, drowning in the nearby Stone-pits where his body will lie undiscovered for the next sixteen years.

Marner quickly discovers the theft when he returns home to count his treasure. His attempt to summon the law at the local tavern brings him into the public eye, and the community's subsequent interest in the theft shifts the community's perception of him from a mysterious miser to a miserable afflicted man. Marner's social integration proper, however, does not begin until the golden head of Godfrey's abandoned child replaces his golden hoard. When her mother collapses in an opium-induced delirium outside, Eppie is attracted to the light of Marner's cottage while her mother freezes to death in the snow. Convinced the child has been sent in place of the gold for which he first mistook her, Marner insists on keeping her as Godfrey admits no knowledge of the child. With the intertwining of the novel's two narrative threads, the weaver becomes more and more integrated into society as part of an incorporative ideological construction of narrative: Marner ends his social isolation with Eppie, creating a kind of avuncular family to which the community opens, something the character of Dolly Winthrop highlights. By contrast, while Godfrey finds himself free to marry the socially respectable Nancy Lammeter, this advantage depends upon death, disappearance, and denial. The story's second half brings these secrets to light: Dunstan's body is found when Godfrey orders the Stone-pits drained, returning the hoard to Marner with due mortification as he realizes that other secrets will out, and admits to his childless wife that Eppie is in fact his child, the product of an illicit marriage. Yet when Godfrey tenders his apologies to Eppie, offering to take her up to the Red House, she refuses, and Marner speaks with indignation against Godfrey's neglect, leaving him to ponder the mistakes of his past. In similar fashion, when Marner uses his returned gold to visit Lantern Yard in search of the answers to his own blighted past, he also discovers the past altered beyond recognition. Both men must live in the present of their own devising, unmoored from the past. In place of Godfrey's

blighted hopes, the fruits of Marner's labor prove to be his expanded social relations, living out his days with Eppie and her new husband in Raveloe.

At first glance, the petty commodity production of *Silas Marner* seems far removed from the imperialist economics of *Nostramo*. Unable to escape capitalist production entirely, Eliot allows the linen-weaver Marner to retreat into the peasant hinterlands, where the feudal distribution of resources allows Squire Cass to fatten himself on war-inflated corn profits and the townsfolk avoid the intensification of industrial production, eliminating any questions of class-consciousness beyond an expansive humanism. Nor does Marner's hoard serve as a metonymy for capitalist accumulation. Though deposited in the Stone-pits with Dunstan's death, it does not return to Marner with interest, and does not imply a deposit in a historically specific local trustee savings bank or any other institution which could have served as a placeholder for Gladstone's Post Office Savings Bank, founded the year of the novel's publication, ostensibly to encourage working class saving but more or less as a means for Gladstone to challenge the Bank of England's grip on the Exchequer (Cain and Hopkins 145).

Credit is not at issue here either. There is little problem in the novel with money's reality or lack thereof. As Mary Poovey notes, the novel seems constructed to exclude economic problems, elevating instead an aesthetic solution to a moral problem with "gold" as a polyvalent signifier allowing Marner to discover value beyond the monetary in Eppie's golden locks (Poovey 383). Unlike the global expansion of credit economies that marked the use of language in *Nostramo*, money and signification in *Silas Marner* act as material objects with spatially delimited spheres of exchange that may appear to operate in a homologous manner but are not understood to be equivalent. As Philip Fisher notes: "legibility and community create one another" in the novel's economy (104), ensuring money is spent within the confines of the community, since "how could [burglars] have spent the money in their own village without betraying themselves?" (Eliot 1861, 19). Language is similarly territorialized, especially in the religious division

between Lantern Yard's Dissenters and Raveloe's Anglicans, ensuring that Marner does not understand Dolly Winthrop's use of "church," nor does she understand his use of "chapel" (81). Religion is bound to a specific social and geographical terrain, doubling the problem of linguistic translation with physical translation, not just of bodies but of buildings and earth. Even attempts to historicize the novel as a functional understanding of credit in terms of social trust like those put forward by Richard Mallen and Courtney Berger rely far more on a long extant notion of personalized merchant credit than any new subtleties of the credit system contingent on the creation of new social subjects through the joint stock company.¹

Whether social or economic, historical change is not at the center of *Silas Marner*, but rather inscribed at its margins. Like many men of their time, both Squire Cass and Mr. Lammeter are caught up in the economic machinations of the Corn Laws. The advantage Squire Cass gains in grain prices gives him no interest in peace with France: "Why, the country wouldn't have a leg to stand on. Prices 'ud run down like a jack, and I should never get my arrears, not if I sold all the fellows up" (67). Sixteen years later, the collapse of grain prices and increase in poor-rate taxation leads Mr. Lammeter to talk "with Godfrey about the increasing poor-rate and the ruinous times" (146). *Silas Marner* does not touch on the first round of voting reform, though when Eliot lifts and revises the novel's basic premises in *Felix Holt, the Radical* (1865), the franchise is central to Felix's address to the workingmen. His speech demands a change in the nature of the workingman before seeing any reason for the law to extend the franchise to them as a class: "The way to get rid of folly is to get rid of vain expectations, and of thoughts that don't agree with the nature of things" (Eliot 1865, 248). While in *The Industrial Reformation of the English Novel* Catherine Gallagher uses *Felix Holt* as the marker of a shift from the industrial novel to the cultured novel, I would argue that the movement into culture is a response to the confrontation with a gap between social and economic production that first appears in *Silas Marner*. Indeed, of the novel's passing historical

references, the most interesting is Godfrey Cass's comment to Marner that linen-weaving "was a good trade for you in this country" (161). Godfrey's use of the past tense only begins to imply the shift from hand- to power-loom weaving that occurred during the novel's sixteen-year span. Charles Babbage noted in 1832:

It appears that the number of hand-loom in use in England and in Scotland in 1830, was about 240,000; nearly the same number existed in the year 1820: whereas the number of power-loom which, in 1830, was 55,000, had, in 1820, been 14,000. When it is considered that each of these power-loom did as much work as three worked by hand, the increased producing power was equal to that of 123,000 handloom. During the whole of this period the wages of employment of hand-loom weavers have been very precarious. (340)

The accumulation of constant capital in linen-weaving changed the nature of such labor, a shift in part meant to eliminate skilled—and more expensive—labor: "a hand-weaver must possess bodily strength, which is not essential for a person attending a power-loom; consequently, women and young persons of both sexes, from fifteen to seventeen years of age, find employment in power-loom factories" (264). When unionization intervened to protect skilled labor, this merely ensured them a position in the changed mode of production, shifting skilled laborers into supervisory roles over small teams of women and children minding the power-loom (Daunton 75). In the midst of this gendered shift in economic and social production, Eliot places her miser-weaver turned surrogate father with but the slightest nod to the passing of his occupation into machinic supervision.

One must ask then how a novel that conjures the specter of industrial production becomes for recent critics emblematic of capitalist credit economies and the joint stock company. For both Courtney Berger and Richard Mallen, *Silas Marner* is an allegory of these economic relations not because of the novel's engagement with economic production but because of Eliot's overall engagement with social production. When social relations appear alongside economic relations, they quickly become, in Berger's words, "homologous," allowing "Eliot [to anchor] individual identity within a material but non-geographically specific structure" (322). By contrast, Richard Mallen's explicitly

economic reading posits all monetary relations as premised on trust, and his reading of money as analogous to a credit economy of signifiers allows him to argue that Eliot deploys a literature of irony to overcome real material problems. Both see Eliot's work as a supplemental form of social relation between author and reader that functions as a kind of compensatory structure for unresolved social tensions within the text. Such approaches tend to be informed by Susan Graver's reading of Eliot, which translates Eagleton's critique into a series of mediations between Tönnies's *Gemeinschaft* (agrarian community) and *Gesellschaft* (industrial society). In Graver's account, *Silas Marner* is a *Gemeinschaft* novel redeemed by the *Gesellschaft* position of its narration, able to describe the benefits and drawbacks of a traditional agrarian community in order to redeem it through the Enlightened values of the tale's narrator:

To find correctives to the narrowing effects of the fixed responses dictated by old-fashioned *Gemeinschaft*, one must look elsewhere, as George Eliot does by advocating 'the flexibility, the ready sympathy, or the tolerance which characterizes a truly philosophic culture' (*Essays*, p.29). In her novels, such virtues are often the signature of a narrator who persistently strives to encourage in the reader, by way of the culture of *Gesellschaft*, values essential to the creation of modern *Gemeinschaft*. (Graver 99-100).

From this perspective, even the combination of realist and folk tale aesthetics in *Silas Marner* can be cast as an expression of this tension: an older social tale given modern narration inscribes an organic social continuity. Such a position is only slightly modified in Mary Poovey's recent reading of the novel's use of free indirect discourse to double the narrative perspectives as an "emphasis on language's ability to transfigure and ennoble" (382) that lifts the tale beyond its historical inaccuracies.²

Yet even as critics trace this Enlightenment trajectory of social progress through Eliot's work and into the very relation of Eliot's texts and their readers, generating what Graver calls "community as communication" (23)—which in itself recalls the discussion of Adam Smith's visual sympathy from chapter one in terms of its mediation of market society across new social structures³—others are quick to note the problems that *Silas*

Marnet poses for any claim of a continuous organic inscription of the social. Susan Cohen argues that the novel incorporates gaps into its construction of continuity as its own deconstruction: “organic wholeness is the ideal toward which the novel, like the lives it depicts, aspires; but the narrator, unlike the characters, remains conscious that this ideal cannot be realized” (422). Both Sally Shuttleworth and Hao Li trace the problem of social inscription by deploying contemporary scientific and psychological discourses to describe the formal and thematic problems posed by narratorial attempts to create continuity, examining the discontinuities of Silas’s consciousness. Hao Li describes this as a problem of the relation between personal and communal memory claiming that while “Marnet fares best since the village does try to take him in,” he nonetheless offers “the strongest signal of skepticism, a note of caution that questions the apparent harmony of village support and yet confirms the possibility and validity of a personal perspective even when it is so burdened with the collective” (68). By contrast, Sally Shuttleworth poses the question in terms of two competing models of history: “order, continuity and control are set against chance, disruption and powerlessness: the fairy tale elements are balanced by the darker history of Molly or Dunsey, and the stress on moral responsibility is offset by the seemingly uncontrollable nature of Silas’s fits” (95).

As intricate and compelling as these lengthy readings are, Raymond Williams manages to encapsulate the novel’s difficulties in a few short pages without even mentioning it by name. In *The Country and the City*, Williams’ chapter on Eliot uses class to describe in Eliot’s work “an evident failure of continuity between the necessary language of the novelist and the recorded language of many of the characters” (169). Such discontinuity takes the form of a disjunction between the knowable community of common life and the known community that Eliot confronts in language, leading to an inability to “individuate working people” or “conceive whole actions which spring from the substance of these lives” (173). There are obvious similarities between Williams’ work and Eagleton’s—both emphasize a class conflict between the narrator and narrated

as the chief inflection of Eliot's work, with William's focusing upon the issue in terms of its construction and Eagleton in terms of its ideological underpinnings. Both rush headlong through Eliot's lengthy oeuvre for reasons that are altogether understandable but overhasty. While the clearest commentators on Eliot's use of language to address class disparities, both writers rely on material production to ground their critiques, and from such a position Eliot can only be seen as reactionary. When confronted by a strong imaginative engagement with history, however, one must take up Marx's challenge to learn from the reactionaries⁴—even when the reaction is an account of negativity. I would argue that while the novel reflects Eagleton's sense of a corporative ideology in Eliot's work as a whole, that such an ideological attempt to engage with unproductive labor becomes an early means of ingress for the problems of immaterial labor.

“A Mysterious Rigidity and Suspension of
Consciousness”: Marner's Being-in-Exile

As a moral tale, *Silas Marner* inscribes the union of economic and social production even as the text itself operates through an initial dislocation between the two. On the one hand, Marner's isolation from society forms the necessary precondition for his change. On the other hand, his shift into the miserly displays a nexus of interior and exterior force that undermines any schematic opposition between individual and society. Marner's transformation showcases exceptionality as a form of exile, a problem that traverses the text and links Marner to Godfrey Cass: Marner overcomes his exile from Lantern Yard by finding a new home with Eppie, while Cass's reactionary retreat from the threat of exile mars his familial hopes. Yet even as the novel mobilizes the threat of exile from the known social world as the basis of its exemplary tale, its opening description of Marner in exile throws the novel's organicism into crisis. The difficulty appears in the novel's schizophrenic movement between a kind of psychological realism that uses character focalization and free indirect discourse, and a folktale morality using

direct narratorial intervention. While the novel's folktale elements mark it as a kind of exemplary moral fable, they also allow Eliot to restore the people of rural England to the realist novel, although such a restoration is, as Williams notes, one not in the form of people but "*as a landscape*" (168). Indeed, Marner's status in the text compared to the detailed pages devoted to the landed Cass family is almost liminal, with the weaver less a character than a figure in the novel's *moral* landscape, an exemplar who serves as a contrast to the psychologically-nuanced yet utterly indecisive Godfrey.

Marner's appearance, however, operates a fundamental dislocation within the novel. The narrator consistently valorizes an enlightened organic continuum linking economic and social production. Such a unity, however, can only be detailed in the novel, as Dolly Winthrop tells Marner, by "them as was at the making on us, and knows better and has a better will" (Eliot 1861, 140). Yet in its attempts to traverse a variegated social terrain, the text not only delivers Cass and Marner to the same textual plane, but also subsequently renders the narratorial judgments that interweave the free indirect discourse of the characters' minds to the same plane as well. While these narratorial asides often seem to take a position similar to that taken by the Rainbow's landlord—"And so, I'm for holding with both sides; for, as I say, the truth lies between 'em" (52)—such an attempt to occupy a middle space of judgment opens a chasm within the text. On the one hand, Marner's cataleptic fits open a gap within the causality of the narrative and in his character development. On the other hand, Marner's status as a moral exemplar depends upon his exteriority to society.

Even reduced to landscape, Marner's representation as a moral example is separable from his existence, opening a space of critique as alien to the text as the linen-weaver is to Raveloe. By considering Marner as an example, the contradictory registers in Eliot's work are reframed, allowing us to explicate Marner's problematic state of suspension through textual transformations of self- and social representation.⁵ This is not to claim that Marner acts as a Derridean supplement, but rather as part of an aggregative

process that opens the text as a productive process rather than balancing it against a totalized whole. The tension between a realist psychological account of subject formation and a familiarization of alterity with distancing narrative devices, whether in terms of genre or narrative voice, dissolves. Instead, Marner's tale follows a trajectory of generative tensions between social and economic production as the narrative tries to create and name a unity of production beyond locality while simultaneously generating a space exterior and irreducible to the unity named. The rhetorical abstractions created to overcome the gap between social and economic production—most especially in terms of the text's use of "apparition" and "ghost"—generate an excess above the tension they were meant to overcome.

The productive aspect of Marner's exceptionality is at the heart of the novel's early scenes, where he exemplifies the condition of being in exile as negativity and obscurity even before his ignominious exit from Lantern Yard. An industrial community of religious Dissenters, Lantern Yard is a space where the immediate naive unity of material economic production and immaterial social production appear as an enclosed community, a totality made up of linen-weaving, spirituality, and an unquestioning reliance on providence that mirrors Godfrey Cass's reliance on chance. With the onset of his cataleptic fits, Marner becomes an empty space that disrupts this immediate unity. While the religious community wants to believe Marner's fits demonstrate a spiritual connection, he refuses to fill his suspended consciousness with "the subsequent creation of a vision in the form of a resurgent memory" (8). His fits are just blankness. When he falls into a trance at a senior deacon's deathbed, his friend William Dane uses this opportunity to eliminate Marner as a romantic rival by stealing the church money from the deacon's room, leaving Marner's penknife for evidence. Marner, unable to explain, finds himself subjected to the church elders reliance on the naive unity of tradition, drawing lots to determine Marner's guilt. Given the assumption of unity as immediate and total, nothing can fall to chance, and "*the lots declared that Silas Marner was guilty*"

(12). Marner can reenter the church “only on confession, as a sign of repentance” (ibid.)—by accepting society’s name of “thief” so that he can once more be part of the community. Indeed, the loss of money’s materiality and the production of language here point toward the kind of immaterial production that will mark Marner’s integration into Raveloe, itself an effect of his own experience of thievery, the money’s loss replaced by more explicit social relations. Yet Marner is not so much driven from Lantern Yard’s society as subtracted, first by his cataleptic fits, described by the narrator as “a mysterious rigidity and suspension of consciousness” (8), and again by the church’s free indirect declaration that “he was solemnly suspended from church-membership (12). In his refusal to accept the name of thief, Marner repeats his refusal to fill his fits with false religious visions, which becomes in its repetition an inability to repay the money he did not steal. Although the dissolution of this initial naïve organicism serves as the basis for the creation of a new one (with the unity of Raveloe’s production only slightly less immediate than that of Lantern Yard), the dissolution itself comes through a suspension of consciousness for change to take place, generating a subjective transformation that exposes the fissures marking both forms of production and their immediate relation to the community.

When Marner arrives in Raveloe, his suspended state describes the contours of an exile lived within the community while also serving as a figure for the dissolution of the immediate unity of material economic production and the immaterial production of social relations once provided by Lantern Yard. Earning a living with his handloom, Marner’s technological advantage separates him from Raveloe’s traditional agrarian economy and its social world. The “questionable sound” and “mysterious action” of Marner’s “treadmill attitude” at his machine stand in stark juxtaposition to the “natural cheerful trotting of the winnowing machine, or the simpler rhythm of the flail” (4), as well as to the church bells, which Dolly assumes Marner cannot hear—“when your loom makes a noise, you can’t hear the bells” (80)—but that are social signs that Marner simply fails to

comprehend. Yet Marner's being in exile is embedded materially in local economic production even while his exile keeps him suspended from society, a situation portrayed by the "half-fearful fascination for the Raveloe boys" who come to "peep in" at the spectacle of the exception in their midst, becoming in their spectatorship as a sign of organicism as the birds they have just left off disturbing (ibid.). The death of the local linen-weaver left a vacancy in the economy that the "richer housewives of the district, and even [...] the more provident cottagers" allow Marner to fill due to their "sense of his usefulness" (7). The material use-values that Marner produces for the rich and provident protects him "from the persecution that his singularities might have drawn upon him" as much as the "vague fear" that he engendered in Raveloe's youth (ibid.). Where his gaps in consciousness disrupted the immediate unity of production in Lantern Yard, his situation as a being in exile disrupts Raveloe's organic unity of production, opening a gap between its economic and social production.

In his suspension between the poles of material economic production and immaterial social production, Marner becomes endowed with a ghostly quality in the social world. Mr. Macey, Raveloe's parish clerk, provides the initial figure of this split in his attempt to explain Marner's fits as different from a stroke:

But there might be such a thing as a man's soul being loose from his body, and going out and in, like a bird out of its nest and back; and that was how folks got over-wise, for they went to school in this shell-less state to those who could teach them more than their neighbors could learn with their five senses and the parson. (6-7).

In its supposed ability to leave the body, Marner's soul takes on the bird's natural qualities just long enough to render his body an inert shell to be left behind. Shedding its natural figuration, the soul enters into an agreement with a spirit that is able to impart dangerous immaterial knowledge that appears in the sylleptic slippage binding the "five senses and the parson," represented in this instance by Marner's familial knowledge of herbal pharmacology. Moreover, the trope of leaving the body occurs during Marner's defense at Lantern Yard: "Or I must have had another visitation like that which you have

all seen me under, so that the thief must have come and gone while I was not in the body, but out of the body” (11). As we will see, the nexus of disembodiment, money, and knowledge provides a rhetorical thread that traverses the novel’s dual plots, illuminating the relation of economic and social production with the theft of Marner’s hoard and its relation to immaterial labor.

“A Passion For It”: The Miser, Capital, and Profit

This confluence of money, disembodiment, and ghostly knowledge demands some consideration of economics’ role in the text and its historical situation. Indeed, it is this historical situation that forms the basis of the exception that structures the text. As noted above, *Silas Marner* appeared in the midst of the legislative changes that deregulated the creation of new joint stock companies, a process that began in 1855 and ended with the 1862 Companies Act. Such a shift, however, does not directly impinge on Marner’s economic production as a petty commodity producer, weaving alone on his hand-loom. Joint stock company incorporation had little impact on industrial manufacturing until the end of the century, with the rise of large-scale manufacturing as part of what Ernest Mandel termed the “second industrial revolution,” premised not on coal but on petrol and steel (394). The shift was of more importance to the financial system, which grew substantially after the 1844 Bank Act and experienced a final explosion of growth in joint stock banks and bill brokers during the 1860s, until the 1866 crash of Overend, Gurney, and Company brought to this period of unchecked expansion to an end (cf. Robb 71). In their aggregation of individual deposits and broad use of a newfound large-scale financial power, Britain’s joint stock banks and bill brokers emerged from the 1860s as a new force in Britain’s financial system, leading to large banks controlling Britain’s internal circulation of capital while Britain’s developed credit markets became a central mechanism for global capitalism.⁶ By bringing together a large number of depositors as investors, these institutions created collective agents able to

finance enormous social infrastructure projects such as railways, bridges, and canals, while generating super-profits for their small number of investors. Karl Marx noted that:

The high profit [of joint stock banks] is explained here by the small proportion of the paid up capital in relation to deposits. For example, in the case of the London and Westminster Bank for 1863: paid up capital £1,000,000; deposits £14,540,275. In that of the Union Bank of London for 1863: paid up capital £600,000, deposits £12,384,173. (Marx 1981, 513)

Joint stock banks were organisms able to create highly socialized capital for exploitation by a small group, effectively operating as a precursor to the imperialism of the massive trusts of the late nineteenth century described by Marxists of the early twentieth century such as J.A. Hobson, Rudolf Hilferding, and V.I. Lenin.

More recently, historians P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins have argued that the latter half of the nineteenth century was not marked by a growth of industrial production in Britain's total GDP but by a fall in industrial production off-set by the rise in immaterial production, mostly in terms of what they would term financial instruments (i.e. purely financial services, not the intersection of financial services with industrial production conjured by Hilferding's term "finance capital"). They terms this the era of "gentlemanly capitalism," marked an intersection of the aristocracy and upper-middle class, fueled by public schools and geared toward the meritocracy of the British Foreign Service and the continually growing finance industry. In this, their account greatly resembles Hobson's claim that

In all the professions, military and civil, the army, diplomacy, the church, the bar, teaching and engineering, Greater Britain serves for an overflow, relieving the congestion of the home market and offering chances to more reckless or adventurous members, while it furnishes a convenient limbo for damaged characters and careers. The actual amount of profitable employment thus furnished by our recent acquisitions is inconsiderable, but it arouses that disproportionate interest which always attaches to the margin of employment. (56)

Cain and Hopkins note that these classes had little relation to the industrial bourgeoisie, but that their policies in part served the interests of industrial production, but generally

more insofar as they stabilized central governments to open fields for investment and guaranteed debt repayment, which simultaneously created new markets for British goods. To some degree, such an account contradicts the Marxist trajectory of historical development, but mostly insofar readers of Marx mistook his approach to the hegemony of the industrial form of production for a historical description of industrial concentration. David Harvey notes that the intersection of land ownership and banking is “historically prior to the industrial capital version” of finance capital (370), yet notes that while land ownership initially provides the money capital for banking, when land itself begins to be treated as a form of fictitious capital it falls under the hegemony of the capitalist mode of production. Landownership and gentlemanly capital fall under the hegemony of capitalist production. While gentlemanly capital devised a complex semi-autonomous financial system separate from industry, its role in the circulation of surplus-value continually grows as it searches for interest on its money capital. What changes in our understanding of Marx given the historical precondition of gentlemanly capitalism and its ideological emphasis on free market principles is the unmistakable necessity of collective agents able to circulate value in order to abet the accumulation of capital alongside the growing power of socialized labor. Indeed, the increased power of economic production depends upon an increased power of social production.⁷ While the intensification of social production in contemporary society now primarily occurs through electronic means, the growing power of finance capital in the mid-nineteenth represented a particularly important form of the sudden historical multiplication of social relations. Finance and its credit mechanisms brought together the intensification of virtual and actual social communication between 1860 and 1880—e.g telegraphy, the railway system, the postal service, shipping—to create a system in which fictitious capital not only allowed the rate of profit to increasingly equalized across sectors as Marx described, but became increasingly distributed according to the dictates of interest-bearing capital, leading to contradictions between the financial system and its monetary basis.⁸

In this way, finance impinges on *Silas Marner* without being either consubstantial or homologous with it. Rather, it delineates a form of subjectivity that remains alien to the text. Banking makes no appearance in the novel, and Marner's hoard would have been quite pedestrian given the text's early nineteenth century setting, when the majority of deposits in penny savings banks by the working-class were not made by male workers in professions such as weaving, but rather by female household servants (cf. Fishlow).⁹ *Silas Marner* is not a meditation on finance, banking or the working-class's ability to save, but rather on the problematic link between the production of social relations and the production of economic relations. That is to say, on how the reproduction of social groups interacts with economic production when the social group itself is disrupted, whether in the context of Lantern Yard or in Raveloe itself. As a point of entry for a historical critique, the concept of saving in *Silas Marner* transposes the collective aggregation of subjects into the figure of a single individual with limited means and a problematic relation to society. If joint stock banks offer one example of a collective subject attempting to overcome the gap between economic and social production, then *Silas Marner* is the individualized figure of the gap itself.

For Marner, saving is the asocial habit of a miser. His miserly greed, however, does not serve as a metonymy for capitalist production—a condition we will find later in Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*, where the miserly is raised to the level of a general social condition—but rather describes the miser as an abject corollary to capitalist production.

In *Capital 1*, Marx notes that

This boundless drive for enrichment, this passionate chase after value, is common to the capitalist and the miser; but while the miser is merely a capitalist gone mad, the capitalist is a rational miser. The ceaseless augmentation of value, which the miser seeks to attain by saving his money from circulation is achieved by the more acute capitalist by means of throwing his money again and again into circulation. (Marx 1990, 254-255)

Moreover, the miser expresses capitalism's basic drive for accumulation, limited and inverted through asocial tendencies: "As such [the capitalist] shares with the miser an

absolute drive towards self-enrichment. But what appears in the miser as the mania of an individual is in the capitalist the effect of a social mechanism in which he is merely a cog” (Marx 1990, 739). While the miserly can express a generalized drive toward accumulation, the miser’s asociality individuates accumulation from its communal role, rendering it impotent. By contrast, the capitalist’s accumulation is individually owned only insofar as it remains part of a transitive and social form of economic production. In the *Grundrisse*, Marx notes that the miser’s disruption of circulation is inimical to capital, and the impotence of his greed leads to “the dissolution of this individual within modern society [which] is in itself only the enrichment of the productive section of society” (Marx 1973, 223). In his attachment to the physical form of money, the miser describes the barrier of money’s materiality to circulation, which capitalist production tries to overcome through credit to renew itself more quickly. Yet as Slavoj Žižek notes, in moments of economic crisis, commodities lose their value and it is the miser and his hoard who benefits, revealing the “direct madness” of commodity fetishism (Žižek 2006, 59) as a kind of fundamental Freudian drive. This critically overlooked intersection of Marx’s miser and Eliot’s embeds the novel in the midst of the movement into the increasingly globalized sphere of British finance in the 1860s.

Although Marner cannot be mistaken for a capitalist, the motivation behind his miserly accumulation forms one of the recurring motifs of political economy and was at issue in the proto-marginalist economic work of Eliot’s day. In her work on Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda* (1871), Catherine Gallagher historicizes the confluence of contemporaneous physiology and marginal utility theory, bringing forward the influence of Alexander Bain on both Eliot and political economist and marginal utility innovator, William Stanley Jevons (Gallagher 2006, 118-155). By contrast, the plot and construction of *Silas Marner* brings forward an interconnection of physiology and economic theory in *political economy*. The approach of proto-marginalist, Richard Jennings, exemplifies this confluence. In 1855, Jennings offered one of the earliest versions of consumer-oriented

marginal utility theory, creating a subjective definition of value by biologizing the utilitarian pain/pleasure calculus, claiming that with equal incremental increase of a commodity, its pleasure for a consuming subject diminishes, while equally incremental increases of labor increase a worker's subjective perception of pain. When these physiological considerations are brought to the problem of accumulation, Jennings claims that this psychological mechanism displays miserliness, prodigality, and frugality to be "only the natural result of the laws which we have examined" (190). Furthermore:

a transference of affection from Sensations or Ideas to their *material causes* takes place, and in consequence of this transference a desire to attain the former ceases to be, and a desire to attain the latter becomes an efficient motive of conduct. It will occur to every one how often the veneration due to the Power has been forgotten in the veneration supposed to be due to the Idol, or, to advert to an example more conformable to our present subject, how in the case of the miser the objects which were originally valued, only because they afforded pleasure, have ultimately been valued for themselves, independently of, or in opposition to pleasure. From these instances of mental disease, it is pleasing to turn to the innumerable instances in which the same principle operates beneficially, producing that manly regard for pecuniary interest, which, whilst affording occupation and gratification to the individual, supplies Labour with Capital, and enriches successive generations with the accumulate products of bygone Industry. (191-192)

What is perhaps most surprising about critical economic readings of the novel that quickly veer into the realm of financial transformations of political economy is that they overlook the miser's centrality to political economy. Political economists had to confront and expel the miser from the proper workings of capital, from Jennings' "mental disease" to Marx's "mania of an individual." Indeed, the "transference of affection from Sensation or Ideas to the *material causes*" that Jennings describes as the perverted basis the miser's subjective motivation is not a new turn in economic theory but rather the culmination of an entire line of political economic thought regarding the miser. Rather looking forward to Jevons, Jennings's account of transference and the miser bears a considerable debt to David Hume's 1754 essay, "Of Interest." In this piece, Hume describes an individualized problem of affect placed in dialogue with social production:

Deprive a man of all business and serious occupation, he runs restless from one amusement to another; and the weight and oppression, which he feels from idleness, is so great, that he forgets the ruin which must follow him from his immoderate expences. Give him a more harmless way of employing his mind or body, he is satisfied, and feels no longer that insatiable thirst after pleasure. But if the employment you give him be lucrative, especially if the profit be attached to every particular exertion of industry, he has gain so often in his eye, that he acquires, by degrees, a passion for it, and knows no such pleasure as that of seeing the daily encrease of his fortune. And this is the reason why trade encreases frugality, and why, among merchants, there is the same overplus of misers above prodigals, as, among the possessors of land, there is the contrary. (Hume 1985, 300-301)

Hume's valorization of "occupation" cannot be immediately amalgamated into the positive representation of "employment" that traverses the nineteenth century. By positing a direct relation between activity and affect, Hume's analysis of occupation cannot be mistaken for Thomas Carlyle's transcendental exaltation of work in *Past and Present*, where Carlyle declares with typical fervor that "All work is sacred" (202). For Hume, there is little sacred in occupation, nor does its immanent relation to affect serve to create the kind of utilitarian calculus one might expect. Rather, Hume's account describes the ideational objectification of affect through an object's substitution for subjective pleasure. Hume's use of the term "passion" to describe the affect created by active repetition does not denote a controlling emotional state but rather what he terms in *A Treatise of Human Nature* a "reflective impression" (181). In contrast to original impressions, which are affects without ideational associations, this secondary form of impression is an affect associated with a particular ideational content, following a sequence of generation from body to mind: "The organs are so dispos'd as to produce the passion; and the passion, after its production, naturally produces a certain idea" (188). Original impressions constitute an organic disposition to the production of a secondary impression that reflects upon its creation, generating an associated ideational form. This movement between production and forms generates a creative psychology in which affect serves a central role.¹⁰ Yet the ideas produced by affect cannot be mistaken for epiphenomena, but rather serve as representations of affect *that are capable of*

circulation. Their translation from idea back into affect is part of a process that Hume terms “sympathy”: “In sympathy there is an evident conversion of an idea into an impression. This conversion arises from the relation of objects to ourself” (208). On the one hand, affect arises in a body to produce ideas; on the other hand, ideas through the body to create affect, a physical social bond created by the transmission of an idea.¹¹

In his description of the miser, the passion for gain follows Hume’s logic of sympathy: an affect, physical pleasure, is divorced from an idea, immoderate consumption, to become associated with another idea, the gain of objective wealth. This in turn bears a new affective association. From affect to idea and idea to affect, the creation of a passion for economy “is an infallible consequence of all industrious professions, to beget frugality, and make the love of gain prevail over the love of pleasure” (*Essays* 301). Lucrative activity reorients one secondary impression to another through the interposition of an idea, which occurs because “he has gain so often in his eye.” The visual representation of gain in turn generates a new affect, shifting from a kind of auto-erotic search for pleasure to a scotomized pleasure given objective form. Yet even as an attempt to sublimate an “immoderate” desire for personal pleasure into a form more suited for social use, Hume concedes that this maneuver can also fail, creating misers who refuse to scotomize their displaced affect and instead cohere the auto-eroticism of the affect by holding on to its objective displacement, a turn that Silas Marner exemplifies in his “habit of looking towards the money and grasping it with a sense of fulfilled effort [that] made a loam that was deep enough for the seeds of desire” (16). Much as in Marx, the miser that Hume describes appears as an unintended side effect of capitalist production rather than a metonymy for such.

By contrast, when Hume’s contemporary and friend, Adam Smith, comes to the question of accumulation in *The Wealth of Nations*, he puts the “miser” to one side, using the only slightly less freighted “parsimony” to describe accumulation’s mechanism. Instead, sympathy proves to be the point of convergence between the two Scottish

accounts of the miser. Discussed in chapter one as part of Conrad's parody of the sentimental novel, Smith's sympathy—discussed in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*—is differentiated avarice and ambition: “The objects of avarice and ambition differ only in their greatness. A miser is as furious about a halfpenny, as a man of ambition about the conquest of a kingdom” (Smith 2002, 202). Smith's quantitative approach to the miser's classification through a visual perception of size is part of his innately specular sympathy, which privileges its social aspect in terms of visual recognition and imaginative projection against Hume's primarily materialist affective mechanism. On the one hand, Smith's specular emphasis leads him to argue that poverty can be understood as a form of literal obscurity (62); on the other hand, Smith's emphasis on observation leads to him to theorize conscience as the projection of an idealized observer, a version of the Lacanian Other *avant la lettre*: “the all-seeing Judge of the world, whose eye can never be deceived, and whose judgments can never be perverted” (153).¹² Where Hume's sympathy translated the ideational into the affective, Smith's tends toward larger disembodied ideational constructs to explicate the construction of social bonds.

A tension between these two forms of sympathy informs the construction of *Silas Marner*. Gillian Beer has noted that this text “questions [...] the organicist emphasis on descent as a justifying and sufficient metaphor” (133). Such questioning, however, tends to displace the organic from the maternal body to the social body, reiterating the organic emphasis of the text by recurring to sensation and material connections between characters within the diegesis while the text's rhetorical description of social organization and narratorial judgment relies upon a visual construction of sympathy. For Raveloe's occupants, Marner's “prominent short-sighted brown eyes” are the most often noted of his “mysterious peculiarities” (Eliot 1861, 6), leading the narrator to mimic in free indirect the villager's suspicions: “For how was it possible to believe that those large brown protuberant eyes in Silas Marner's pale face really saw nothing very distinctly that

was not close to them, and not rather that their dreadful stare could dart cramp, or rickets, or a wry mouth at any boy who happened to be in the rear?" (4).

Marner's weak eyes serve as a metonymy for the general weakness of sympathy in *Silas Marner*. Where Smith's visual sympathy relied on the ability to recognize a situation and project oneself into its midst, the visual sympathy that informs *Silas Marner* describes rather a social world afflicted with a specific form of short-sightedness, a society of a weak sympathy where gaps and discontinuities in recognition make the visual relation as likely to lead to ignorance as enlightenment. In its excessiveness, Nancy Lammeter's insistence that she and her sister Priscilla "dress alike" betrays this very weakness of sympathy in its need for explicit signs of relation: "Would you have us go about looking as if we were no kin to one another—us that have got no mother and not another sister in the world?" (93). Nancy's question takes an ironic valence when Godfrey encounters his newly motherless daughter in Silas Marner's arms later that night since without the wrappings of familial relation Godfrey finds himself confronted and tempted by the possibilities inherent in a situation of weak sympathy:

The wide-open blue eyes looked up at Godfrey's without any uneasiness or sign of recognition: the child could make no visible audible claim on its father; and the father felt a strange mixture of feelings, a conflict of regret and joy, that the pulse of that little heart had no response for the half-jealous yearning in his own, when the blue eyes turned away from him slowly, and fixed themselves on the weaver's queer face, which was bent low down to look at them, while the small hand began to pull Marner's withered cheek with loving disfiguration. (116)

Visual recognition here fails to engender more than a "conflict of regret and joy" or "half-jealous yearning" that Godfrey experiences in his child's lack of recognition, a conflict of a piece with Godfrey's inaction and generally equivocal consciousness. While the text establishes Godfrey's familial role internally, this recognition by the narrator cannot overcome the child's lack of recognition, granting Godfrey a reprieve from his ill-conceived first marriage with the certainty that "the child could make no visible audible claim on its father." Sympathy is rather engendered through material contact, the child's

eye mirroring the movement of “the small hand” as it “began to pull Marner’s withered cheek with loving disfiguration.” The “loving disfiguration” of the material affective interaction between the child and Marner is the basis for Marner’s redemption, a material disfiguration that reiterates Eliot’s controlling organicism while opening Marner’s short-sighted eyes to society.

Analogously, the social world of Raveloe is afflicted with its own form of short-sightedness, most evident after the theft of Marner’s hoard. For example, Godfrey’s “imagination constantly created an *alibi* for Dunstan: he saw him continually in some congenial haunt, to which he had walked off on leaving Wildfire—saw him sponging on chance acquaintances” (73). Susan R. Cohen noted the importance of the disagreement between the Rainbow’s patrons as part of the novel’s attempt to navigate a *via media* of judgment, but she leaves the rhetorical texture of this judgment under-examined. In their consideration of the theft, the argument among Raveloe’s denizens is explicitly couched in terms of sight:

The advocates of the tinder-box-and-pedlar *view* considered the other side a muddle-headed and credulous set, who, because they themselves were *wall-eyed*, supposed everybody else to have the same *blank outlook*; and the adherents of the inexplicable more than hinted that their antagonists were animals inclined to crow before they had found any corn—mere skimming-dishes in point of depth—whose *clear-sightedness* consisted in supposing there was nothing behind a barn-door because they couldn’t *see* through it; so that, though their controversy did not serve to elicit the fact concerning the robbery, it elicited some true opinions of collateral importance. (73; emphases added)

As both sides vie for the proper perspective, the narrative caps this argument with an attempt to transcend sides, turning the disagreement into a commentary “of collateral importance” on the limited views of the participants. In showing up the disjunction of visual sympathy through its own true sight, however, the text verges on a perspectival *mise-en-abyme* that is only avoided by recourse to the reader’s complicity with the narrator’s view of truth.

From Accumulation to Administration: The Fantasy of
Capital's Creation and Immaterial Labor

The primacy of material relations reinforces the text's organic continuum of social and economic production even as it tries to expand immaterial social relations through a specular sympathy. The tension between these forms underlies much of the critical discussion surrounding the novel. Critics like Graver, Berger, and Mallen find in Eliot an attempt to imagine the transition from village life to market society that illustrates a logic deeply indebted to Smith's sympathy and its impacts on his presentation of production in *The Wealth of Nations* where the shift from affect to recognition calls forth the miser in implied form. While Smith's moral philosophy differentiated "the objects of avarice and ambition" by "their greatness," his political economy posits the capitalist as the Aristotelean golden mean between the prodigal and the miser, what Aristotle termed in the *Nicomachean Ethics* the virtue of "liberality" (*eleutheriotetos*) (4.1.1). Yet by withholding the miser from his schema, the miser and the capitalist are increasingly difficult to extricate, highlighted by Smith's contraposition of parsimony and prodigality without reference to a third term: "Capitals are increased by parsimony, and diminished by prodigality and misconduct" (Smith 1979, 473). While the prodigal and the miser form the Aristotle's extremes, Smith's dichotomy tries to exclude the miser only to dislocate the miserly into capitalist parsimony. In contrast to the prodigal's unproductive consumption and the miser's lack of consumption, the capitalist's accumulation by parsimony increases the objects size and raising it from the miser's small-scale to the kind of grandiose expenditure that Aristotle termed "magnificence." In Aristotle, this large-scale display of liberality reiterates the class bases of Smithian sympathy, discussed in chapter one, claiming that "a great achievement arouses the admiration of the spectator, and the quality of admiration belongs to magnificence" (4.2.10-12). In Smith's political economy, the capitalist walks the line between liberality and magnificence, offering a morality that has all the associated

benefits of accumulation for both the individual and society while sidestepping the associated Aristotelean excesses of vulgarity and paltriness.

Hence, while *Silas Marner* pits the prodigal against the miser, it is important to note that it redeems the miserly by elevating the miser's attachments in moderated form while punishing the prodigal. Rather than becoming a parsimonious capitalist, however, Marner leaves money behind completely, his changed attachment divesting itself entirely of its old grasping habits. When his hoard is returned, Marner's expanded sense of social attachments displaces money's role in his psyche:

“It takes no hold of me now,” he said, ponderingly—“the money doesn't. I wonder if it ever could again—I doubt it might, if I lost you, Eppie. I might come to think I was forsaken again, and lose the feeling that God was good to me.” (Eliot 1861, 160)

Marner's description of “the feeling that God was good to me” combines the affective with the all-watching spectator of Smith's conscience. Even in its deferral, Marner's relation to money remains a potential substitution of a material relation for lost social relations. By contrast, the capitalist's elevation of parsimony relies on the concept of accumulating profit, a translation of the miser's excessive saving into a frugality of production and consumption. For Smith, surplus production does not derive from surplus-labor but rather from the division of labor's ability to conserve labor through the capitalist's administration of raw material and labor. Though labor produces value, for Smith “land and capital stock are the two original sources of all revenue both private and public” (Smith 1999, 528). Profit appears as soon as land and capital stock comes into existence as external forms confronting the worker: “But this original state of things, in which the labourer enjoyed the whole produce of his own labour, could not last beyond the first introduction of the appropriation of land and the accumulation of stock” (Smith 1979, 168). The surplus-value available for capitalist accumulation is thus a product of appropriation or prior accumulation, leaving one either in a recursive loop of parsimony that only confronts its limit in violent appropriation.¹³

Smith's parsimony takes on new interest for *Silas Marner* with Nassau Senior's rechristening of the process as "abstinence." In his 1836 *An Outline of Political Economy*, Senior differentiated profit and abstinence as the capitalist's wages and his productive work, in effect extending the negative force of division that underlies Smith's conception of parsimony:

By the word Abstinence, we wish to express that agent, distinct from labour and the agency of nature, the concurrence of which is necessary to the existence of Capital, and which stands in the same relation to Profit as Labour does to Wages. We are aware that we employ the word Abstinence in a more extensive sense than is warranted by common usage. Attention is usually drawn to abstinence only when it is not united with labour. It is recognised instantly in the conduct of a man who allows a tree or a domestic animal to attain its full growth; but it is less obvious when he plants the sapling or sows the seed corn. The observer's attention is occupied by the labour, and he omits to consider the additional sacrifice made when labour is undergone for a distant object. This additional sacrifice we comprehend under the term Abstinence. (59)

On its face, this is little more than an ideological naturalization of profit as the just reward for abstaining from consumption, a concept that reiterates both the concept of savings and political economy's view that any form of labor—even managerial—should be understood as sacrifice.¹⁴ Yet where Smith situated capitalist parsimony on either end of production, Senior inserts abstinence into production's midst, labeling everything from technology to the division of labor as an effect of capitalist abstention.¹⁵ Such a maneuver makes the capitalist integral to material production even though he only produces restraint. For example, contrary to any historical form of production, Senior situates the capitalist as the wise abstinent figure in agricultural production necessary to mediate the relation of labor and land, not only claiming that the ability to wait for plants to bear fruit or oxen to mature is an act of abstinence only available to capitalists, but also that this ability to abstain in and of itself justifies the capitalist's appropriation of the final product.¹⁶ Indeed, Senior provides political economy's most explicit justification of commodity fetishism, arguing that with "a considerable division of labour, the product has no *one* natural owner," a difficulty only overcome "by distinguishing those who assist

in production by advancing capital from those who contribute only in labour” (79). In his abstinence, the capitalist’s negative activity is described by Senior as positively productive and effectively turns the abstinent capitalist into the “no *one*” of natural ownership.

In Senior’s attempt to endow the capitalist with an integral position in production, however, his imbrication of negativity into production creates unanticipated and unexplored results. By claiming profit as abstinence’s reward, Senior posits a gap between labor time and production time. This suspension allows abstinence to achieve “a distant object” without engaging in physical work by expanding potential production time beyond direct labor time in production. The negative activity of abstinence opens a realm of production beyond the natural world by breaking the immediate temporal continuum connecting nature and labor. Through the insertion of this gap, capitalist production inaugurates a second nature through a positive negativity that offers two results. On the one hand, Senior’s folding of non-labor-time into production time gives profit the ideological appearance of a natural process, as though the fermentation of raw materials generates the wine of capital. On the other hand, such an ideological move only masks the potential extension of production through the whole of lived time, displacing the production process into a general condition of lived temporality via a purely negative abstention that productively alienates the social body of labor from its production. In a sense, Senior’s work gestures toward the creation of surplus-value in a capitalist regime where immaterial labor is the hegemonic form of production. Such a position resembles Paolo Virno’s use of the *Grundrisse* to argue that in post-Fordist production value is no longer calculated by a disproportion between labor and surplus labor but rather in “the disproportion between production time (which includes non-labor, its own distinctive productivity) and labor time” (105).

Antonio Negri makes similar claims, both in *The Porcelain Workshop* (2008), and in his attempt to redeem Derrida’s *Specters of Marx* by using Derrida’s play on “time out

of joint” as a way of describing this disparity in regimes of value. The gap between labor time and production time is central to the development of social production, both as the potential to open free time for the development of individualities, as Marx argued in the *Grundrisse*, or as the space of capitalist exploitation that includes the miser. Or as Marx opined: “the miser certainly enjoys Senior’s *abstinence*” (Marx 1973, 612). This forward glance at social production can also be seen in Senior’s refusal to differentiate labor as productive or unproductive as Smith had done. Instead, Senior traces a continuum of production from “services” to “commodities” (51), what we would now refer to as the spectrum of immaterial and material labor. In Senior’s discussion of abstinence, an attempt to trace the interrelation of social and economic production beyond labor time is ideologically short-circuited.¹⁷

In John Stuart Mill’s *Principles of Political Economy* (1848), abstinence’s relation to temporality is at the center of his discussion. Mill again attempts a naturalization of profit, leading to the creation of an ahistorical causal loop as he argues that the abstinent “will look for some equivalence of this forbearance” from consumption through profit, though the very promise of profit “will generally have been a part of the inducement which made him accumulate a stock, by economizing in his own consumption” (60). Or rather, profit arises because the abstinent abstained due to the promise of a profit. However, when Mill addresses the actual function of abstinence, he sidesteps this difficulty. As the foundation of accumulation, Mill rephrases Senior’s theory of abstinence as “the sacrifice of a present for the sake of a future good” (179), i.e. a displacement of intentionality toward the future. While this attempt to look toward the future operates a similar disruption of natural production and immediate consumption, it also leads Mill to consider the future’s certainty as a function of property rights.

Thus while Senior’s description of abstinence opens a gap in the continuum of production, Mill’s consideration of the future relies on the political stability of private property, leading to problems of titles, bequests, and inheritances since the ability to

dispose of possessions lies at the heart of private property law.¹⁸ Yet in this context, Mill concedes that private property need not necessarily inhere at all times:

Few will maintain that there is any good reason why the accumulations of some childless miser should on his death (as every now and then happens) go to enrich a distant relative who never saw him, who perhaps never knew himself to be related to him until there was something to be gained by it, and who had no moral claim upon him of any kind, more than the most entire stranger. (229)

As Mill ends our detour through political economy, we should note that the miser remains an excrescence in capitalism, not as a failure of affective or visual sympathy, nor as an excess of abstinence, but as the potential exception to the rules of private property in terms that recall how Dunstan Cass rationalizes his theft of Marner's hoard. Imagining Marner "had slipped into the Stone-pit"—a fate Dunstan will shortly perform himself—Dunstan wonders in free indirect discourse, "If the weaver was dead, who had a right to his money? Who would know where his money was hidden? *Who would know that anybody had come to take it away?*" (Eliot 1861, 37). While the question of inheritance provides Dunstan's initial rationalization, it is undercut by the always lurking narratorial voice of judgment which answers the epistemological quandary: "He went no farther into the subtleties of evidence: the pressing question, 'Where is the money?' now took such entire possession of him as to make him quite forget that the weaver's death was not a certainty" (37). In his dispossession of Marner's hoard, Dunstan shows up the short-sightedness of prodigality and the consequent possession of greed.

At first, abstinence seems a promising matrix for *Silas Marner*. Susan Graver has noted George Eliot's familiarity with Mill's work on political economy, which she claims Eliot considered "to be authoritative reference texts" (6), although she does not approach the above economic texts. The novel's dual plot-lines would trace the confrontation of political and sexual economies between Marner and Cass, with Marner rewarded for his polyvalent, if occasionally misdirected, abstinence, while Cass stands reprimanded for his economic and sexual prodigality. Marner's adoption of Eppie would make his abstinence

a productive recuperation of Cass's prodigality, inverting Jeff Nunokawa's sense of Marner's perverse relation to his hoard as instead a proleptic passion for positive abstention, or giving the lie to Lee Edelman's reading of Marner's miserliness as queerness cured by the arrival of futurity in the shape of a child.¹⁹ By the same token, Godfrey Cass's inability to control his "low passion" (Eliot 1861, 29) for Molly serves as an embodied reflection of Dunstan's more literal economic prodigality. Even the temporal gaps that divide the narrative into two unequal parts could be repositioned in light of the supposed benefits of deterring a present for a future good.

To read *Silas Marner* as a fable of abstinence, however, would be to give its aesthetic closure a messianic tense because its ending disrupts this temporal deferral of the present to the future. In Marner's redemption and Eppie's choice, the future has come. Such is the implication of the completed garden wall in the novel's final pages, a combined effort of Marner, Eppie's new husband Aaron Winthrop, and, by monetary proxy, Godfrey. The wall serves as the explicit fulfillment of the novel's epigraph from Wordsworth, taking the place of Michael's unfinished sheepfold and the lost promise of the idyllic England represented by his cottage, the Evening Star. Closure achieved, Marner, Eppie, and Aaron "would rather stay at the Stone-Pits than go to any new home" (176). Moreover, the wall tropes the creation of proper perspective as the corrective to weak sympathy: "The garden was fenced with stones on two sides, but in front there was an open fence, through which the flowers shone with answering gladness, as the four united people came within sight of them" (176). This repaired fence displaces Marner's miserly life "which [had] fenced him in from the wide, cheerless unknown" until "the fence was broken down—the support was snatched away" (74). Once approached from the appropriate vantage, the new "open fence" allows for a visualization of Eliot's organicism, linking by "sight" the natural world of "the flowers" and the new social unit of Eppie, Aaron, Silas, and Dolly. In this closing example, the confluence between visual sympathy and organicism will brook no gap.

Indeed, even the threat of change that hangs at the margins of the novel becomes implicated in an organic expansion of change encompassing temporality itself. Silas makes this explicit when he tells Eppie “things *will* change, whether we like it or no; things won’t go on for a long while just as they are and no difference. I shall get older and helpless, and be a burden on you” (145). The inexorability of aging enfolded historical change in organic change, carried even into the idiomatic lessening of Marner’s “helpless,” as the threat of change creates a torsion of language. As the gap between social and economic production, the exceptionality of Marner’s position has been overcome by the text’s insistence on an organic growth of material affective bonds. The miser’s appearances in political economy offers the contours of a potential counter-articulation of social and economic production in Eliot that remains alien and irreducible to her explicit presentation.

“The Half-Crazy Oddities of a Miser”: Marner’s Miserly
Transformation and the Fetish

The ghostly freedom of Marner’s soul not only serves as a negative trope for his state of suspension but also confronts Marner as an alien force. By endowing the gap that Marner opens between social and economic production with the name of miser, the word takes on an autonomous existence from Marner himself. Indeed, the word only appears when Raveloe’s occupants serve as narrative focalizers, with Dunstan Cass being the first to introduce the term. For Dunstan, the term projects an inversion of his own prodigality, as he uses it to describe Marner while on his way to sell Godfrey’s horse, wondering “how was it that he, Dunstan Cass, who had often heard talk of Marner’s miserliness, had never thought of suggesting to Godfrey that he should frighten or persuade the old fellow into lending the money on the excellent security of the young Squire’s prospects?” (Eliot 1861, 32). Once Dunstan determines that Marner’s hoard will serve as a suitable replacement for the money lost by the horse’s death, the miserly moves from predicate to

noun as Dunstan calculates the best “operation on the miser’s mind” (36). Though convinced that “there must be a little frightening added to the cajolery” to loose Marner’s miser grip on his hoard (ibid.), it is Dunstan who is more strongly held in the grip of the term itself, even as he wonders why the miser had “left a light” in his cottage if he had gone out: “That was a strange forgetfulness in a miser” (ibid.). Once inside the cottage, Dunstan no longer needs to rationalize his greed by evoking the “miser,” referring to Marner instead as “the old staring simpleton” (37) and then simply as “the weaver” (ibid.). The word reappears in communal free indirect with the town’s rationalization of the theft (“anybody might know—and only look at him—that the weaver was a half-crazy miser” [61]), and when Marner’s neighbors tell him to sit up to hear the new year rung in for luck (“only a friendly Raveloe-way of jesting with the half-crazy oddities of a miser” [108]), and in direct discourse when Godfrey is puzzled by Marner’s determination to adopt Eppie: “that’s strange for a miser like him” (116). For both Raveloe’s inhabitants and critics of the novel, Marner’s miserliness is an effect of the shift between Dunstan’s focalization and the communal free indirect that folds readers into a position of narratorial judgment. The urge of critics like Nunokawa and Edelman to reclaim Marner’s miserliness as a productive perversion is a response to this social enfolding. I would argue that “the miser” labels the gap of Marner’s position, which its recurrent modifier of “strange” marks as the alien in both the community’s idea of the miser and in Marner himself.

In contrast to this rhetorical alienation, Marner’s internal transformation is curiously organic. Prior to the loss of his hoard, Marner confronts his exile as the material basis for his first subjective transformation. Even given his suspended consciousness during his cataleptic fits, the narrative describes Marner’s internal change as part of the material totality of affective production, something that grows within Marner in response to his environment and within the objects that surround him. Critics often note this model of internal change seems to be drawn from Augustus Comte’s model of development,

with which Eliot was familiar, and indeed, the first stage of Comte's theological model, fetishism, seems a model process for Eliot's attempt to unify social and economic production in an organic whole. As James McLaverty notes, Marner's fetishistic relation to material objects not only prefigures an enlightened social harmony to come but also opens the space for Marner's direct passage to this enlightened space since Comte's view of fetishism argued that by endowing all things with some degree of life, it was not only the first step toward the theological, scientific, and social harmony of positivism, but could be directly subsumed into positivism without passing through other stages. Yet between the life that Comtean fetishism inheres in all things and the novel's organicism, the fetish ameliorates Marner's state of exile without considering how his exile, suspended consciousness, or separation from Raveloe's society come to exist, only how they can be transcended.

In order to engage with Marner's subjectivation as part of the gap that he poses to the unity of social and economic production, Marx's notion of the commodity fetish serves as a counterpoint to the unifying trajectory of Comte's fetish, describing the dispersal and displacement of material social power into objects rather than its consolidation in a transcendental life. While Marner's fetishism tends to elicit brief critical comments on Marx's commodity fetish in Berger and Shuttleworth's work on the novel, I am less interested in Marx's oft-quoted figurative descriptions than in his underlying concept. To get caught up in the rhetorical animation of individual commodities is to fall prey to the fetish itself. After all, commodity fetishism is not the fetishization of individual commodities—or even of the commodity par excellence, money—but rather the social fetishization of the commodity form of value. Commodity fetishism describes a state of society ruled by what Louis Althusser stressed as the *real abstraction* of exchange value, i.e. not the abstract concept of exchange value but its material instantiation as money.²⁰

Indeed, compare Marx's earlier work on the commodity in the *Grundrisse*, where his approach is in marked contrast to that of *Capital*. Where *Capital* offers a static objective approach, the *Grundrisse* takes a subjective approach to describe the generation of the commodity as a concept—what readers of philosophy would understand as the difference in presentation between Hegel's early *Phenomenology of Spirit* and his later *Philosophy of Right*. The shift allows Marx to demonstrate the generation of new social relations within production and exchange through an antagonistic process of abstraction, division, and embodiment: the tension between a commodity's use-value and its exchange-value with another commodity leads to the use of a tertiary commodity, money, in order to mediate the exchange. When this tertiary commodity becomes the primary instrument of exchange (viz. money), it changes its modality, becoming a real abstraction that confronts other commodities as that which is within them (e.g. their idealized exchange-value) and that which exists alongside them (e.g. the real form as exchange-value, which exists as a commodity of its own) (Marx 1973, 144-145). Moreover, when money confronts exchange-value as a separate entity in its commodity form, the relation between any particular commodity's exchange value to its monetary realization becomes alien and separable to the commodity's exchange-value and to the monetary commodity itself, generating a new entity whose relation to both money and commodity seems wholly contingent, viz. price (Marx 1973, 187-190). Capitalism's proliferation of new social relations and real abstractions marks a change in the overall mode of production even as these real abstractions obscure production's social nature under the *commodity form of value*.

Given this understanding of the antagonistic proliferation of social relations through the multiplication of real abstractions, Marx's later passage on the commodity fetish takes on new meaning:

The mysterious character of the commodity-form consists therefore simply in the fact that the commodity reflects the social characteristic of men's own labour as objective characteristics of

the products of labour themselves, as the socio-natural properties of these things. Hence it also reflects the social relation of the producers to the sum total of labour as a social relation between objects, a relation which exists apart from and outside the producers. Through this substitution the products of labour become commodities, sensuous things which are at the same time suprasensible or social. In the same way, the impression made by a thing on the optic nerve is perceived not as a subjective excitation of that nerve but as the objective form of the thing outside the eye. (Marx 1990, 165)

With the hegemony of the commodity form of value, the products generated by labor's newly social and cooperative form do not appear to belong to the social body that creates them but rather appear as part of a world where both commodities and workers are individuated in natural and objective terms. The sensuous individuation of the production of socialized labor opens the space for their "suprasensible or social" aspect to become separable, not just as exchange-value but also in the real abstraction of money. On the one hand, the separability of social power allows for the exponential increase of individual needs. On the other hand, this separability allows it to confront the social body as alien and alienable. This is the central premise of market society, from the antagonistic forms of money, exchange-value, and price, given by the commodity form itself. In this confrontation, the newly social power of labor finds itself dispersed into an aggregate of individual labor commodities, a mere part of a world of isolated parts open to appropriation. The trope of the eye at first glance seems to distinguish appearance against reality. However, in light of the emphasis given the social body in the *Grundrisse*, the metaphor illustrates a change in the subjective metabolism of a social body and its response to objective rearrangements exterior to it, e.g. those made possible by the mediation of real abstractions.²¹ As the interrelation of social and economic production is rearranged, the commodity fetish illustrates the arrest of the potentially productive rearrangement of social and economic production in a purely individuated form open to appropriation.

As one can see, Marx's fetish is at issue in *Silas Marner*, but not in the manner critics have come to expect. On the one hand, the Comtean fetish that leads Marner to

endow his “most precious utensil” (Eliot 1861, 19)—a brown earthenware pot—with life serves as part of the text’s proof “that the sap of affection was not all gone” (19), which Marner’s attachment to his hoard only reiterates. On the other hand, with Marx’s analysis in mind, Marner’s relation to the pot stands in contrast to his relation to the hoard. Unlike the hoard, the pot is not a real abstraction, and does not embody an antagonistic relation of exchange value. All fetishes are not created equal. Marx’s analysis of greed in the *Grundrisse* says of miserliness “it must sacrifice all relationship to the objects of particular needs, must abstain, in order to satisfy the need of greed for money as such” (222-223). While Eliot’s use of Comtean fetishism implicitly links Marner’s affection for his pot with that for his gold, from Marx’s perspective, the difference between these objects casts light on Marner’s position within the gap between social and economic production because the pot labors with Marner. His relation to this “companion” (Eliot 1861, 19) with its expression of “willing helpfulness” (20) recognizes the pot’s use-value in his daily existence in a manner alien to labor’s objectification in money. The implicit difference between money and use-value finds its most explicit form in Godfrey’s realization that he cannot make up his years of indifference to Eppie by simply making her his heir: “there’s debts we can’t pay like money debts, by paying extra for the years that have slipped by” (169). By refusing Godfrey and redeeming Marner, Eppie expansion of relations in the sphere of use-value reinforces the novel’s organicism by operating exterior to the laws of exchange.

By contrast, the text’s description of Marner’s relation to his hoard prior to his redemption posits both an imagined material reproduction of the instrument of exchange as well as a form of personalized recognition between Marner and his hoard. This dual relation reiterates Marner’s position as a gap between forms of production while maintaining the real abstraction of money in a sphere separate from use-value. First, Marner’s love for his coins is not just a love for his particular coins but also a desire for more, as he thinks “fondly of the guineas that were only half-earned by the work in his

loom, as if they had been unborn children” (20). Marner’s miserly shift tries to bridge the separation between his productive labor and its abstraction using an abstract physical reproduction that only receives positive fruition in Eppie’s literalizing of the subjunctive phrase. The fetish’s shift from the register of the economic to the social thus operates through an organic process, an investment of the natural with futurity that capitalizes a naturalized set of social bonds. In essence, in the shift from his familiars to his golden haired girl, Marner exemplifies the logic of naturalized abstention that recalls Senior’s productive abstinence.

Second, with the dissolution of Lantern Yard’s naive unity of social and economic production, Marner tries to bridge the chasm that separates the two forms of production in his Raveloe life through a sympathetic process of “looking towards” and “grasping”:

He had seemed to love it little in the years when every penny had its purpose for him; for he loved the *purpose* then. But now, when all purpose was gone, that habit of looking towards the money and grasping it with a sense of fulfilled effort made a loam that was deep enough for the seeds of desire; and as Silas walked homeward across the fields in the twilight, he drew out the money and thought it was brighter in the gathering gloom. (16)

With the purposiveness of his economic production denuded of any role in social production, Marner gets into a habit of “looking” and “grasping” that is not so much an expression of an essential *habitus* as the inculcation of a new tendency that reshapes his desire, what we will later see as an expression of a particular tension in political economic sympathy. While Jeff Nunokawa has argued that Marner’s relation to his gold is masturbatory and homoerotic and thus able to create a compensatory secondary body outside of capitalist relations, it is important to note that auto-referential quality of Marner’s reflexive desire in his transformation is as much an internalization of exchange as a response against it. In this sense, Marner’s fetishism is as Freudian as it is Comtean in its mechanism, if not in its object. That is to say, Marner does not so much find in gold a substitute for the missing maternal phallus, but rather, in Freud’s sense of fetishism: “the perception [of a lack that] has persisted, and that a very energetic action has been

undertaken to maintain the disavowal” (154). The repetition of looking and grasping creates polyvalent effects. Confronted by the lack of external social relations, Marner’s internal affective production exerts itself to disavow the lack of social production, following a substitutive logic in which the economic role that Raveloe allows Marner to occupy takes on the material form of gold in the place of social relations.

Eliot approaches Marner’s relation to money as part of a continuing process of social production. His fetishization of the objectification of exchange-value effectively reproduces social production at the economic level though an energetic denial of lack, described at length by narratorial intervention:

Do we not wile away moments of inanity or fatigued waiting by repeating some trivial movement or sound, until the repetition has bred a want, which is incipient habit? That will help us to understand how the love of accumulating money grows an absorbing passion in men whose imaginations, even in the very beginning of their hoard, showed them no purpose beyond it. Marner wanted the heaps of ten to grow into a square, and then into a larger square; and every added guinea, while it was itself a satisfaction, bred a new desire. In this strange world, made a hopeless riddle to him, he might, if he had had a less intense nature, have sat weaving, weaving—looking towards the end of his pattern, or towards the end of his web, till he forgot the riddle, and everything else but his immediate sensations; but the money had come to mark off his weaving into periods, and the money not only grew, but it remained with him. He began to think it was conscious of him, as his loom was, and he would on no account have exchanged those coins, which had become his familiars, for other coins with unknown faces. He handled them, he counted them, till their form and colour were like the satisfaction of a thirst to him; but it was only in the night, when his work was done, that he drew them out to enjoy their companionship. (18)

The bodily reproduction of a want “bred” through a repetition depends on the limited scope of individual imagination. Marner’s stunted mind is thus responsible for his miserliness though not wholly reducible to it. Yet the miserly remains part of a creative expression of some intellectual capacity, for if Marner had had less depth to him, a “less intense nature,” he would have expended himself in the sensations that make up the surface of his loom rather than burying his money under the floorboards. In this metonymic motion between body, loom, and pattern, life itself could have played out to

“the end of his web.” Yet “money had come to mark off his weaving into periods,” not just offering a sign of his lived time, but confronting him as a material object that carries the lived time of material production in and alongside it. Money becomes not simply the real abstraction of exchange, but also for Marner the real abstraction of time.

In creating “familiar” from his coins, Marner leaps from Comte to Marx, from the register of individual material change to that of a social materialist history as his coins become conscious of his presence by remaining with him as markers of the past. Material presence becomes a history of consciousness, a memory that leads to understanding while absence becomes a ghostly lack of presence, a kind of forgetfulness that breeds misunderstanding. Eliot’s linkage of material production to social production is total yet wholly individual, relying on presence in direct tension with Marner’s status in exile. On the one hand, Marner builds an asocial community in his hoard, both in terms of the coins’ familiar faces as well as in their concrete externalization of a past that remains comprehensible compared to the lost and unexplainable past of Lantern Yard. On the other hand, the hoard’s materialization of social production and time confronts him in alien form. While Marner’s miserly turn displays an internal transformation of social production via the economic, the hoard remains an alien easily expropriable thing with no immediate relation to the production of life other than Marner’s economic production in weaving.

Brother Jacob: From Unproductive To Immaterial Labor

Eliot’s *Brother Jacob* (1860) is typically linked to *Silas Marner* because of the texts’ generic atypicality in her oeuvre and their similarly explicit use of gold hoards (cf. Dale). The texts are also marked by a similar temporal bifurcation, split into two parts separated by a number of years. Confectioner David Faux, expecting to find wealth in the new world through his personal abilities and racial hegemony, robs his mother for the price of a ticket to Jamaica, only narrowly escaping detection by his mentally

handicapped brother Jacob. A gap of six years separates the first two chapters, with Faux returning to Britain under the assumed name of Edward Freely. As Freely, Faux sets up a pastry shop in the small town of Grimworth, steadily appropriating the business of local grocers and the household work of the local middleclass housewives with his prepared specialty items. In another cue from Wordsworth, David's well-intentioned "idiot" brother, Jacob, represents a common humanity that David alternately manipulates or ignores. First, David cooks up for Jacob an alchemical story of gold's overnight transformation into sugar lozenges in order to conceal David's thieving intentions with the burial of their mother's money. As the dialectical inversion of David's relation to food as money, Jacob's view of money as food nearly spoils David's plans to escape to the new world as they both race to the buried hoard the next morning. David only shakes Jacob by plying him into insensibility with beer at a local tavern. In the tale's second half, Jacob realizes his deferred sugar-gorging when he discovers his brother at Freely's pastry shop, storming in to shouts of "b'other Zavy" (Eliot 1860, 76), and devouring everything in sight. Though David denies any knowledge of Jacob, claiming, "All men are our brothers, and idiots particular so" (80), the arrival of his brother Jonathan to collect Jacob establishes his real identity and history. The truth out, David's engagement to Grimworth's prominent Penny Palfrey is dissolved and his once profitable business shuttered. David finally slinks ignominiously from town, ending "the demoralisation of Grimworth women," and returning the town to a state of normalcy where "the secrets of the finer cookery were revived in the breasts of matronly housewives, and daughters were again anxious to be initiated in them" (83).

The political economic critique of *Brother Jacob* is twofold. On the one hand, David's denial of his idiot brother is a metonymy for his general indifference to social relations beyond the economic, given in the text alternately in utilitarian or economic terms. On the other hand, insofar as David's work enters the sphere of domestic or household production, he takes on a peculiarly unacceptable role in the division of labor.

As far as the first point is concerned, David's indifference to his brother is but part of David's excessively asocial Benthamite mind, enmeshed from the first in a utilitarian calculus of pleasure and pain that determines his decision to steal his mother's money: "he calculated whether an action would harm himself, or whether it would only harm other people" (54). Once David becomes the shop-keep Edward Freely, this calculus remains highly individualized but now subordinates his pleasure to economic rationalization in a monetary calculation of his utility compared to the pleasure of others:

But Mr. Edward Freely was a man whose impulses were kept in due subordination: he held that the desire for sweets and pastry must only be satisfied in a direct ratio with the power of paying for them. If the smallest child in Grimworth would go to him with a halfpenny in its tiny fist, he would, after ringing the halfpenny, deliver a just equivalent in "rock." He was not a man to cheat even the smallest child—he often said so, observing at the same time that he loved honesty, and also that he was very tender-hearted, though he didn't show his feelings as some people did. (59)

From the moral hypocrisy of a purely personalized calculation of pain and pleasure that authorizes the robbing of one's own mother to the subordination of impulses that keeps pleasure in ratio to economic command, Faux/Freely displays the allegorical form of his names through the falseness of his actions and the hypocrisy of free market opportunism and utilitarian ethics, which makes him "useful as an overseer of the poor, having a great firmness in enduring other people's pain" (64).

However, once the question of the division of labor arises in *Brother Jacob*, the problems that it poses have less to do with David Faux's personal falseness than an objective problem with the division of labor itself. The connection between *Brother Jacob* and *Silas Marner* lies in the two texts' interest in the disruption of social and economic production brought on by a shift in the mode of economic production:

I am not ignorant that this sort of thing is called the inevitable course of civilisation, division of labour, and so forth, and that the maids and matrons may be said to have had their hands set free from cookery to add to the wealth of society in some other way. Only it happened at Grimworth, which, to be sure, was a low place, that the maids and matrons could do nothing with their hands at all better than cooking; not even those who had always made heavy

cakes and leathery pastry. And so it came to pass, that the progress of civilisation at Grimworth was not otherwise apparent than in the impoverishment of men, the gossiping idleness of women, and the heightening prosperity of Mr. Edward Freely. (62)

While the novel tries to shift the problem of the division of labor into a comic register by lifting it from the melodramatic and often didactic situation of industrial production seen in Harriet Martineau or Elizabeth Gaskell to the more localized, small-scale question of household production as “the business of manufacturing the more fanciful viands” (62), the shift of the terrain of the critique creates ambivalent effects. Domestic production becomes not a question of a quantitative increase in material production but of the total use of the available labor-force, what Marx would call a privileging of absolute over relative surplus-value in domestic production. There is more than adequate production of pastry, it simply happens to be “heavy” and “leathery.” This is of course why Faux’s labor is classically unproductive: not only is it not engaged with the reproduction of capital, but in terms of the social division of labor it is also an active misapplication of labor time. For Eliot, Faux’s labor is an excess unwarranted by the existent domestic division of labor, even if his labor serves to free time for Grimworth’s women. After all, domestic production in *Brother Jacob* is a means to combat the problem of keeping “the maids and matrons [who] could do nothing with their hands at all better than cooking” busy with something other than “gossiping idleness.” Eliot’s decision to overlook any benefit in an increase of (unproductive) free time for individual social development displays in another register the controlling effect of her organicism.

Where Raveloe’s economy integrates Marnier’s material production even though his person remains socially excessive, Grimworth’s economy confronts Edward Freely’s production as economically excessive even though his person is readily integrated into society. The reversal of exceptionality is integral to Faux’s economic success and an indicator of its corruptive decadence. The text’s parroting of the rector’s wife’s—that she “found Mr. Freely a most civil, obliging young man, and intelligent to a surprising degree for a confectioner” (60)—provides the imprimatur of respectability that authorizes the

rest of Grimworth society to frequent his shop. While the material basis of Marner's work serves to open a space within society, the social basis of Faux's work proves materially excessive for Grimworth and worthy of expulsion. The difference can be traced to the very different conditions of their work: Marner's labor would be understood in classical political economy as productive, labor that creates a material product. By contrast, Faux's work stands on the threshold of unproductive labor for two reasons. First, he produces what are in essence luxury goods, which the entire canon of political economy—excluding Senior—deem unproductive. Second, where Marner is clearly a laborer, Faux's endeavors place him somewhere between the servant and the capitalist.

In their explicit valuations of the relations between different forms of social and economic production, *Brother Jacob* and *Silas Marner* are unique in Eliot's work. While the question of which roles are open to women in terms of social production prove central to Eliot's work—from Dinah Morris's work as a Methodist preacher in *Adam Bede*, Maggie Tulliver's travails in *The Mill on the Floss*, Dorothea's role as the new Saint Theresa in *Middlemarch*, and Gwendolyn's attempt to redefine her life after Grandcourt's death in *Daniel Deronda*—the discussion rarely strays into the realm of economic production. Even Gwendolyn's economically motivated sale of herself to Grandcourt is not so much a question of production as of exchange. At best, one can cite the valorization of the economies of Mrs. Poyser's dairy in *Adam Bede*, Priscilla Lammeter's similar economies in *Silas Marner*, and Felix Holt's idealistic, selfless, and decidedly conservative dedication to work. By contrast, *Brother Jacob* describes David Faux's occupation as a product of misplaced class-ambition, an expression of a prodigal desire for food that is itself a product of hunger and want:

How is the son of a British yeoman, who has been fed principally on salt pork and yeast dumplings, to know that there is satiety for the human stomach even in a paradise of glass jars full of sugared almonds and pink lozenges, and that the tedium of life can reach a pitch where plum-buns at discretion cease to offer the slightest excitement? Or how, at the tender age when a confectioner seems to him a very prince whom all the world must envy—who

breakfasts on macaroons, dines on meringues, sups on twelfth-cake, and fills up the intermediate hours with sugar-candy or peppermint—how is he to foresee the day of sad wisdom, when he will discern that the confectioner's calling is not socially influential, or favourable to a soaring ambition? (45)

In choosing his profession, Faux not only finds he is no “prince” among the pastries, but rather that the occupation itself is itself subject to class-limitations, “*not* the best preparation for the office of prime minister” (46). While the character of Faux chafes under such class constriction, the narratorial denigration of Faux's profession and work in the above quote adumbrates a desire to consume with a particular choice to produce, implying that Faux's greed grows from an experience of hunger that translates into a desire to consume his own production. Such implications make the derision of Faux's work and social ambition—“besides, in the present imperfectly organised state of society, there are social barriers”—surprisingly sharp. Susan de Sola Rodstein notes George Eliot's identification with her characters often takes the form of a kind of literal consumption in her essay on *Brother Jacob*, drawing various implied relations between David Faux's story and George Eliot's, in the process elaborating the uneasiness that such identification brings with it. Moreover, when Faux is confronted by the failure of his Jamaican ambitions, the text's only positive description of his work becomes part of a metaphoric reduction of the man to a piece of exchange-value: “And so he had to fall back on the genuine value there was in him—to be content to pass as a good halfpenny, or, to speak more accurately, as a good confectioner” (73). “Confectioner” finds its unvoiced double in David's implied work as a social “counterfeiter,” a conceit that spins the nearly immaterial forms of sugar-work into the realm of immaterial signification.

The counterfeit confectioner Faux offers the obverse of Silas Marner, elaborating the linkage between unproductive labor and narrative production in nineteenth century literature that forms the heart of this dissertation. Faux's problematic position between social and economic production makes clear that the conflict between Eliot's organicism and her narratorial intervention is an inability to credit immaterial labor as potentially

productive. Though Faux/Freely's product is hardly immaterial in and of itself—he makes commodity foodstuffs—the description of Faux as a character and an economic producer make clear the unique threat he poses to Grimworth's households. Not only does the value that Faux adds to the food he sells encroach on a particular realm of social production, undermining domestic economy in the process but the food itself becomes tainted by its association with the very notion of the confectioner, rendering it sugary and nutritionally insubstantial.

By framing Faux as a servant to the community at large who usurps the realm of domestic production while rendering it void of nutritive quality, Faux's role is removed from the material domestic economy and from the material agricultural economy of the period, rendering what may be tentatively understood as a kind of immaterial labor to the Grimworth's housewives in his performance of a variety of tasks premised on a wealth of knowledge. Faux's work usurps from the sphere of domestic economy a form of (gendered) social knowledge, putting it to real material use by generating new commodities from items his customers would otherwise purchase as groceries. In part, Eliot's defense of domestic economy serves as an attempt to protect "the secrets of finer cookery" and the initiation of Grimworth's daughters into these secrets as unique realm of social production that is not necessarily determined as economic subjection. The text's emphasis on the unity of social and economic production, however, leads to a grotesque emphasis on the productive use of domestic knowledge. While Marner enters Raveloe and immediately takes up a productive position within the economy, Faux displaces the town's grocers and housewives, offering an excessive service premised on a crime against and denial of the family, widely viewed as the building block of society. As "a sweet-tasted fetish" (52) for his brother Jacob, David may become for Jacob a strange object of Comtean worship, but in the social context of this short text he also offers in his very person Marx's fetish, embodying its excessive individualization while internalizing its contradictions.²² As a figure, David cannot be redeemed or explained, and the

contradictions that his immaterial production generate for a material organic continuum of social and economic production ensure that he is simply dismissed as a corrosive exception.

In the unredeemable David Faux, we might think we have found the villain that haunts *Silas Marner*: the gap within social and economic production occupied by a form of labor that undermines the organic. One might better recognize this inorganic production as the obverse of Eliot's narratorial conventions, not simply the extension of relation beyond the immediate and material that one discovers in language but its potential ghostly escape from narratorial control.

“The Light of His Faith”: Weak Sympathy and the Ghostly

Embodiment of Value

Nowhere is the impasse between economic and social production—and a potential exceptionality—more apparent than in the text's relation to language. Marner's relationship with the child Eppie follows a dual trajectory of organic growth that links social knowledge and economic materiality: “As the child's mind was growing into knowledge, his mind was growing into memory: as her life unfolded, his soul, long stupefied in a cold narrow prison, was unfolding too, and trembling gradually into full consciousness” (Eliot 1861, 124). The text's view of language carries similar material overtones: “We can send black puddings and pettitoes without giving them a flavor of our own egoism; but language is a stream that is almost sure to smack of mingled soil” (75). The positive obverse of David Faux's production, Raveloe's cookery offers an ego-less social solace that is not only beyond language, but beyond its very earth-bound nature. In *Silas Marner*, language confronts meaning as a transparency of edible sociability, one that largely depends on the digestibility of its social inscription. Dolly Winthrop marks her oatcakes with the letters “I.H.S.” though she cannot read, using a “stamp as has been in our house, Ben says, ever since he was a little un” (79), because she is certain that

“they’ve a good meaning, for they’re the same as is on the pulpit-cloth at church” (79).

Yet even with this materialization of linguistic exchange, communication itself depends more on the affect conveyed by tone than the words spoken or inscribed:

Silas was as unable to interpret the letters as Dolly, but there was no possibility of misunderstanding the desire to give comfort that made itself heard in her quiet tones. He said, with more feeling than before—‘Thank you—thank you kindly.’ But he laid down the cakes and seated himself absently—drearily unconscious of any distinct benefit towards which the cakes and letters or even Dolly’s kindness, could tend for him. (80)

While Marner remains “drearily unconscious of any distinct benefit” from the gift, the ability to recognize “the desire to give comfort that made itself heard in her quiet tones” is perhaps the clearest moment of communication between Marner and Dolly. While the disconnection of “church” and “chapel” in their vocabularies renders Dolly’s description of church meaningless to Marner, even Dolly is less interested in the meaning of the words than in their audible perception: “For I feel so set up and comfortable as niver was, when I’ve been and heard the prayers, and the singing to the praise and glory o’ God, as Mr. Macy gives out—and Mr. Crackenthorp saying good words, and more partic’lar on Sacramen’ Day” (81). As the inscribed transmission of meaning, language can be exchanged without comprehension, the tonality of “saying good words” offering meaning as an inflection of affect, a physical perception of sound that binds language to Eliot’s consuming organicism.

Yet in the novel’s final pages, the narrative strives to make room for its own form of unvoiced linguistic communication. When Dolly struggles to come to terms with the failure of providence during Silas’s trial at Lantern Yard, she turns her attachment to the affect of listening into a position subservient to those able to command language justly:

There’s wise folks, happen, as know how it all is; the parson knows, I’ll be bound; but it takes big words to tell them things, and such as poor folks can’t make much out on. I can never rightly know the meaning o’ what I hear at church, only a bit here and there, but I know it’s good words—I do. (139)

The inherent disconnect of *Silas Marner* is here transposed into the linguistic register: trust in the “wise folks” able to use “big words to tell them things” that “poor folks can’t make much out on.” Two forms of language describe the contradictions that constitute the text’s organicism: on the one hand, a realm of simple language that depends on materiality, inscription, and affect; on the other hand, a language for the wealthy and wise that circulates meaning beyond materiality. The antagonism of these forms is only overcome insofar as those “poor folks” continue to believe in the goodness of the words spoken above their heads.

In his exemplary status as the embodiment of the gap between economic and social production, Marner generates new tensions in Raveloe, leading not only to a material confrontation with the community and its exception, but also to one between the embodied gap and the gap itself through a series of rhetorical slippages between “soul,” “ghost,” and “apparition.” Mr. Macey initially posits that Marner’s fits display “such a thing as a man’s soul being loose from his body” (6), a notion of spiritual freedom that the narrator later uses as a trope when Dane and Marner naively discuss the assurance of salvation, describing how the weavers’ “unnurtured souls have been like young winged things, fluttering forsaken in the twilight” (9). The soul’s birdlike qualities endow it with a potentially antagonistic existence, a kind of unconscious that may harbor strange intentions, as when Dane asks Marner if in his sudden fits “he hid no accursed thing within his soul” (9), or that leaves his body open to demonic possession, as when Marner defends himself from the accusation of theft (11).

Yet the soul also describes a positive existence that confronts affect. After his expulsion from Lantern Yard, Marner’s soul is a “loving nature” disturbed by the exterior world: “poor Marner went out with that despair in his soul—that shaken trust in God and man, which is little short of madness to a loving nature” (12). Marner’s “shaken trust in God and man” serves as the basis for the text’s weak sympathy, here not as a visual relation but as the soul’s “despair.” The effects of exile on a subject’s “habitual views of

life” further outline the soul’s relation to affect as the creation and disruption of habits. On entering “a new land, where the beings around them know nothing of their history,” subjects discover that “human life has other forms than those on which their souls have been nourished” (13). The soul is embedded in its material historical situation, “nourished” by its particularity. In Marner’s case, however, the soul’s experience of affect and its material nourishment do not change its inner qualities, only its outward expression. The soul’s habits may change, but not the soul itself:

In his truthful simple soul, not even the growing greed and worship of gold could beget any vice directly injurious to others. The light of his faith quite put out, and his affections made desolate, he had clung with all the force of his nature to his work and his money; and like all objects to which a man devotes himself, they had fashioned him into correspondence with themselves. (40)

Marner’s “truthful simple soul” conveys a positive relation that confronts and responds to the world through affect, creating habits that correspond to the objects of his distressed affection. The theft of Marner’s gold robs him of his habit of counting, leaving “his soul like a forlorn traveler on an unknown desert” (42)—that is to say, bereft of correspondence, abandoned by its habitual object yet unchanged in essence. After its theft, the hoard’s supplemental relation to Marner’s soul becomes a ghostly figure: if after the theft, “the evening had no phantasm of delight to still the poor soul’s craving” (74), then such a phantasm is the missed joy of counting his gold. While Marner had once “thought [money] was brighter in [twilight’s] gathering gloom” (16), its affect is a trope of ghostly after-image, a mere “phantasm of delight” for his “poor soul” in contrast to “the light of his faith” which had been “quite put out.” The translation of these two visual motifs—the phantasm of gold’s gleam and the light of Marner’s faith—trace the tension between the rhetorical slippage of the spiritual and the ghostly as a question of *light*. From affect, we return to a problem of visual sympathy as the “light of his faith” is replaced by the gold’s “phantasm of *delight*.” Once bereft of both gold and faith, Marner

filled up the blank with grief. As he sat weaving, he every now and then moaned low, like one in pain: it was the sign that his thoughts

had come round again to the sudden chasm—to the empty evening time. And all the evening, as he sat in his loneliness by his dull fire, he leaned his elbows on his knees, and clasped his head with his hands, and moaned very low—not as one who seeks to be heard. (74)

The hoard's loss disturbs the economy of Marner's psyche, a wound that marks the empty space where the cathected hoard once resided. In "[filling] up the blank with grief," Marner remains unwilling, as Lacan would say, to accede to the signifier, offering instead an asignifying moan devoid of social meaning. Indeed, the appearance of this "sudden chasm" within Marner's thoughts only further dulls the scene's remaining light of its ability to generate sympathetic relations. The metaphor of the chasm not only expresses Marner's role as a gap in production, but by projecting the material excess of economic production that mediates social exchange as a phantasmal figure, the gap becomes linked to a third ghostly trope, "apparition."

Of course, the text's rhetoric tries to defer the phantasm into its organicism as an immaterial sympathetic link, a visual translation of sympathy. Like the Evening Star of the novel's epigram, the light emanating from Marner's cottage draws Eppie to him; the child's "eyes were caught by a bright glancing light on the white ground, and, with the ready transition of infancy, it was immediately absorbed in watching the bright living thing running towards it" (107). In the child's attempts to catch the "bright living thing," she subsequently translates the "phantasm of delight" of Marner's gold into "the cunning gleam" (107) that radiates from his cottage, and will return as a "passing gleam" (162) on Marner's face when Godfrey ineptly tries to adopt Eppie. The obverse of this "gleam," the "blank" or "chasm," is reiterated in the addiction of Godfrey's abandoned wife, Molly, "enslaved, body and soul" to "the demon Opium" (105). The phantasmal pleasure of gold in the "familiar" of Marner's hoard (18) become in Molly's opium her "one comforter—the familiar demon in her bosom" (106). Marner's birdlike soul is for Molly a material demon "in her bosom," "the black remnant" which ensures that "she felt nothing but a supreme immediate longing that curtailed off all futurity—the longing to

lie down and sleep” (106). While Marner’s familiars create a correspondence between him and the gold, the hoard ties this phantasm of delight to a material affectual process. In the substitution of a congealed monetized time for his lived past, Marner hoarded history while remaining open to the future only as the possibility of money to come. The hoard’s theft closes this perverse relation to futurity, allowing the openness of Marner’s miserliness to express a life-tendency that stands in stark contrast to Molly’s demon, whose comfort “curtained off all futurity,” an “oblivion” that overcomes even “the mother’s love [that] pleaded for painful consciousness” (106). Inverting Marner’s unwilling suspension of consciousness, Molly’s movement toward an immediate oblivion devoid of futurity is not merely prodigal but blind. “The black remnant” veils the cottage’s gleam from Molly’s sight, removing it from even meta-textual context: “she had wandered vaguely, unable to distinguish any objects, notwithstanding the wide whiteness around her, and the growing starlight” (106). The subjective leeching of light’s power in Marner’s dull fire becomes for Molly the demonic dissolution of sympathy in a world made visible yet cold.

Demonic possession is not Molly’s curse alone. Godfrey Cass’s desire to escape the ramifications of his “low passion” (29) for Molly leads him to be “visited by cruel wishes, that seemed to enter, depart, and enter again, like demons who had found in him a read-garnished home” (31). With Godfrey, the demonic obtains an obverse freedom of disembodied spiritual movement to Marner’s avian soul. When the possibility appears that Molly may indeed be dead in the snow, Godfrey’s “demons” become an “evil terror—an ugly inmate to have found a nesting-place in Godfrey’s kindly disposition” (112). His fear that her opiate-induced hypothermia may not have killed her—his new “ugly inmate”—urges him to trudge “unconscious” through the snow toward Marner’s cottage in order to determine his wife’s state and “unconscious of everything but trembling suspense about what was going on in the cottage” (112). The demonic drive to unconsciousness, however, is disrupted by a “conscience” that keeps Godfrey “not quite

unconscious of everything else,” a sense that “he ought to accept the consequences of his deeds, own the miserable wife, and fulfill the claims of the helpless child” (115). While opium overcame Molly’s conflict between oblivion and consciousness, Godfrey’s ugly inmate cannot render a decisive conclusion to his conflict (and the text’s as well) between conscience and unconsciousness.

Yet the homophonic compacting of conscience and consciousness does not translate into action. While Godfrey’s inaction tends to be couched as part of a conflict between chance and necessity, the equivocation between being-conscious and having-a-conscience displaces these terms into temporality: “there was one position worse than the present: it was the position he would be in when the ugly secret was disclosed; and the desire that continually triumphed over every other was that of warding off the evil day” (30-31). As Godfrey weighs his present against different contingent futures, he continually defers the moment of decision until he is confronted by the possibility of Molly’s death. Until this moment, Godfrey remains subject to the fear of exile that constitutes Silas Marner’s reality, attempting through his deferral of action to increase the temporal gap between present and future since “the longer the interval, the more chance there was of deliverance from some, at least, of the hateful consequences to which he had sold himself” (31). The resemblance between the uneasy ugly inmate of this gap and Senior’s capitalist, who profits from the insertion of a productive gap between labor time and production time reveals the temporal attachment Molly’s and Godfrey’s demons—both revel in the present against the fear of tomorrow.

Only the promise of a future with Nancy Lammeter grounds Godfrey’s conscience, keeping him from the demonic oblivion Molly finally embraces, even if it also ensures that “he had only conscience and heart enough to make him for ever uneasy under the weakness that forbade [her] renunciation” (115). The temporal direction of Godfrey’s attachment to Nancy inverts the demonic embrace of a future-less present to create instead a conflicting present-less urge toward the future:

For four years he had thought of Nancy Lammeter, and wooed her with tacit patient worship, as the woman who made him think of the future with joy: she would be his wife, and would make home lovely to him, as his father's home had never been; and it would be easy, when she was always near, to shake off those foolish habits that were no pleasures, but only a feverish way of annulling vacancy. (30)

Nancy does not simply endow the “future with joy,” but offers a presence that will allow Godfrey “to shake off those foolish habits that were no pleasures, but only a feverish way of annulling vacancy.” On the one hand, Godfrey’s “foolish habits” seem merely to showcase Godfrey’s prodigality in contradistinction to Marner’s miserliness. On the other hand, the very emptiness of the present to be filled with habit—the “vacancy” to be feverishly annulled—implies that Godfrey’s prodigality is as much an effect of exterior forces as Marner’s miserliness, an existence that consists not so much of foolish habits but of a vacant space variously tenanted, a chasm to be confronted with pain. Yet while Marner’s univocal consciousness depends on cataleptic fits to introduce unwilled changes by suspending his consciousness, Godfrey’s more textually developed consciousness, replete with psychological nuance not extended to Marner, relies upon this interval of inaction, torn between the demonic inmate of the present and his future-directed conscience only to fall back on “suspense and vacillation” (26), preferring in a proleptic etymological pun to “trust to casualties than to his own resolve” (27). Much as Dunstan’s death in the Stone-Pits (“a man falling into dark waters seeks a momentary footing even on sliding stones” [41]) appears only as a metaphoric description of Marner’s attempt to ward off despair, Godfrey’s trust in “casualties” impacts his reliance on chance, Molly’s chance accident, and her death itself in a single word that only reveals its secondary valence retroactively.²³

Moreover, Godfrey’s equivocal relation to temporality simultaneously displays the prodigal’s preference of the oblivious present while parodying the miser’s deferral of the present for future good and his relation to dead objectified labor: “If she is [dead], I may marry Nancy; and then I shall be a good fellow in future, and have no secrets, and

the child—shall be taken care of somehow.’ But across that vision came the other possibility—‘She may live, and then it’s all up with me’” (115). With Molly’s death, Godfrey not only has the opportunity to “be a good fellow in future,” but in the process takes up the miserliness that Marner gradually sheds through his adoption of Eppie, given temperate form in Nancy’s economic character. On the one hand, Nancy is scrupulous in her exertion of domestic economy, a woman who as “a daughter-in-law would be a saving to the old Squire, if she never brought a penny to her fortune” since she “never suffered a pinch of salt to be wasted, and yet everybody in their household had of the best, according to his place” (23). On the other hand, she expresses this economy directly in the business-like quality of her person, dressing so that “not a crease was where it had no business to be, not a bit of her linen professed whiteness without fulfilling its profession” (90). Yet the economy and order of the Red House has by novel’s end not served to increase either the Cass family or its coffers. With the sale of family lands, Godfrey is no longer even considered a squire, and his attempt to maintain the paternal line, even if only through his abandoned daughter, ends in failure.

The true test of paternity is rather fulfilled in the rhetorical linkage between Marner and Godfrey’s discarded daughter, Eppie, as “apparitions,” a word that occurs three times in the text during the novel’s two pivotal scenes. Marner embodies for Raveloe the problematic ghost that served as the topic of conversation for the Rainbow’s patrons, only shifting once into the immaterial “apparition”:

Yet the next moment there seemed to be some evidence that ghosts had a more condescending disposition than Mr. Macey attributed to them; for the pale thin figure of Silas Marner was suddenly seen standing in the warm light, uttering no word, but looking round at the company with his strange unearthly eyes. (52)

The text makes sure that “even the sceptical farrier, had an impression that he saw, not Silas Marner in the flesh, but an apparition” (ibid.). The “demonstration” of Mr. Macey’s claim that Marner’s “soul went loose from his body” appears in the strangely inverted form with “the pale thin figure of Silas Marner” which does not seem to reside “in the

flesh” but rather as “an apparition” (ibid.). Marner’s body takes on an exceptional status as neither flesh nor soul, staring at the men with “his strange unearthly eyes” as it remains unclear whether he confronts them as disembodied soul or disensouled body. This suspension of Marner’s status splits the ghost between sixteenth and seventeenth century usages of the word as a euphemism for the purely substantial corpse or “in allusion to the pale, shadowy and unsubstantial appearance attributed to ghosts.”²⁴ Between the theft of the hoard and Eppie’s arrival, Marner remains locked in this exceptional space. With the hoard’s ability to demarcate the past gone along with its monetary value, Marner is reduced to the abject status of wage-labor, working his day’s wages without thought of the future.

Eppie arrives in the space of this exceptionality. Standing in his open door, Marner looks out for his lost gold until “he was arrested, *as he had been already since his loss*, by the invisible wand of catalepsy and stood like a graven image, with wide but sightless eyes, holding open his door, powerless to resist either the good or evil that might enter there” (108; emphasis added). The strange locution “as he had been already since his loss” marks this arrest not as a punctual event, e.g. something that happened once, but a continuing state, while the literalization of “arrest” in Marner’s catalepsy reduces him to image and suspends his ability to see in order for the text to raise his experience to the level of the exemplary, an image for readers rather than Marner, who remains at the behest of chance to determine whether good or evil might enter. Yet within the text, the image does not serve as a corrective to mistaken ideas. When Marner’s “blurred vision” (108) mistakes Eppie’s golden hair for his returned gold (“the heap of gold seemed to glow and get larger beneath his agitated gaze” [109]), the correction comes through direct contact: “He leaned forward at last, and stretched forth his hand; but instead of the hard coin with the familiar resisting outline, his fingers encountered soft warm curls” (109). The supernatural “familiar” become a “familiar resisting outline,” a contrast of hardness with to the “soft warm curls” Marner’s hand discovers.

From this contact, Marner questions the child that he sees before him by wondering “*Was it a dream?*” as the “vision” conjures memories of his little sister (109):

But along with that question, and almost thrusting it away, there was a vision of the old home and the old streets leading to Lantern Yard—and within that vision another, of the thoughts which had been present with him in those far-off scenes. The thoughts were strange to him now, like old friendships impossible to revive; and yet he had a dreamy feeling that this child was somehow a message come to him from that far-off life: it stirred fibres that had never been moved in Raveloe—old quiverings of tenderness—old impressions of awe at the presentiment of some Power presiding over his life; for his imagination had not yet extricated itself from the sense of mystery in the child’s sudden presence, and had formed no conjectures of ordinary natural means by which the event could have been brought about. (109)

On the one hand, the chain of memories revived in this passage by Eppie’s arrival mark Marner’s awakening to his lived history as a set of internal ideational processes. On the other hand, the revival of such thoughts begins with the experience of softness and warmth, which is then attached to the image of the child. In its exemplary construction, the text creates these visions, offering itself as another “message come to him from that far-off life,” yet Marner’s ties to Eppie remain organic linkages of feeling.

In her very existence Eppie transposes the material exception that Marner occupies in Raveloe’s economy into an organic sexual economy. As the material remainder of mingled bodies, Eppie is the result of improper social relations and as such has no particular place within the social world, but rather confronts it as an excess of life that would have been sent to the workhouse to die if the asocial Marner had not kept her. Yet as an evocation of wealth beyond money, the text transposes Eppie from the realm of materiality and affect to that of vision. Thus the use of the word “apparition” to describe Eppie serves two distinct functions. On the one hand, as an apparition, Eppie translates the renewal of social relations into a visual register open to textual recuperation. On the other hand, Eppie’s apparitional status describes her place as the exception, the return of the illicit materiality of social production. The term itself moves through a metonymic association with Marner’s unannounced appearance in the midst of Raveloe society. The

ghostly point to be proved at the Squire's New Year's Eve party is rather the material inherence of memory as Godfrey finds himself face to face with the proof of his secret marriage:

But when Godfrey was lifting his eyes from one of those long glances, they encountered an object as startling to him at that moment as if it had been an apparition from the dead. It *was* an apparition from that hidden life which lies, like a dark by-street, behind the goodly ornamented facade that meets the sunlight and the gaze of respectable admirers. It was his own child, carried in Silas Marner's arms. (112)

Shifting from the register of simile to certainty, the apparition tropes the material reality of Eppie's existence, translating the problem into a realm of visual sympathy in its most explicit form as the appearance of "an apparition from that hidden life" revealed by sunlight to "the gaze of respectable admirers." The textual emphasis on the movement of Godfrey's eyes encapsulates the rhetorical strategy of dislocating the apparition from the realm of life and death to that of social visualization, bringing forward in unique fashion the attempt to integrate social and economic production through the weak sympathy of narration. Godfrey's failing is that while he "would never forsake it; he would do everything but own it" (117), a coinage the text emphatically returns to, continuing: "Perhaps it would be just as happy in life without being owned by its father, seeing that nobody could tell how things would turn out, and that—is there any other reason wanted?—well, then, that the father would be much happier without owning the child" (ibid.). The rhetorical play of Godfrey's unwillingness to own his own extends the economic notion of ownership into a social relation, subsuming the social into the economic. As a material exception, Eppie's apparitional status displays the manner in which the proliferation of antagonistic relations that traverse the text continues to explore the separation of social and economic production even while attempting to transcend and reintegrate the two modes of production. In their generative exceptionality, both Silas and Eppie display the proliferation of relations in excess of the text's conception of production, a proliferation that keeps the text from overcoming the gaps in social and

economic production that they represent even as their relation creates a new set of social bonds in excess of the organic ones linking Godfrey and Eppie.

In its organicism, *Silas Marner* tries to imagine the emergence of a new social subject as a material process able to transcend the gap between social and economic production by privileging a traditional notion of material production. So long as society is able to find space for one's material economic production, the organic process of sympathy will integrate the change. Such a conception of change forms the basis for David Faux's expulsion from Grimworth in *Brother Jacob* as Faux threatens the material production of Grimworth's domestic economy with his confectioner's shop, and even makes up the contours of Felix Holt's address to the workingmen in *Felix Holt, the Radical*. In *Silas Marner*, however, the mechanism the text deploys to overcome the gap only heightens the dislocation it tries to resolve. In this disjunction, the text offers an insight into the relation between narrative construction, unproductive labor, and properly immaterial labor that I will examine in the following chapters. While narrative intuits its ability to construct social relations, its multiplication in multistranded narratives uses repetition not only to highlight different tonalities of a particular thematic but to draw out conflicting registers within its representation of society. While Eliot's later work takes such multistranded devices to great heights, in *Silas Marner* it appears at a zero-point, a simple duality that reveals a conflict between the economic and the social. Eliot's organicism operates a limit on her ability to confront this conflict. While the miser showcases the contradictions of capitalist production by juxtaposing the accumulation of wealth with an existence in poverty, a life lived in exile from society while hoarding its signs of wealth, this contradiction becomes in *Silas Marner* a productive exception, a generative negativity that nonetheless remains, in Dolly's words, "dark to you and me" (173). In his miserliness, *Silas Marner* does not provide a figure for a new social subject. Rather, the possibility of such a collectivity appears in the gap that Marner occupies between social and economic production itself as the space of the exception, the

undetermined exterior of materiality that motivates and suffuses the text yet remains irreducible to its own organicism.

Notes

¹ Martin Daunton makes this quite clear in his description of Britain's manufacturing industry's general reluctance to take advantage of the ability to reorganize as a joint stock company after 1856, preferring to rely on a social capital that "depended on a reputation for trustworthiness and honest dealing" (74).

² Another example of Eliot criticism that explicates the use of metaphor alongside an amelioration of free market ideology is Courtemanche.

³ Deidre Lynch's work on Smith neatly encapsulates this point (Lynch 1998), but see also chapter one of the dissertation for a close reading of Smith's moral theory.

⁴ This is a favorite quote of Antonio Negri's, and seems to derive from Marx's 1842 article "Communism and the Augsburg *Allegemeine Zeitung*," which I quote and discuss in the dissertation's conclusion (433). Quoted in Negri, *Insurgencies* 238.

⁵ My attempt to map Marner's existence outside of such a dichotomy is not indicative of an exceptional status accorded to Marner, but an entirely different approach to the examination of social production that will inflect the reading of all characters. This builds on Giorgio Agamben's notion of exemplary being (or whatever being) in *The Coming Community*, which is itself an extension of Agamben's idea of "form-of-life," an approach to being that takes on beings in their desire (or intentionality) toward all of its predicates, a manner of approaching the absolute singularity of beings. See Agamben 1993 and Agamben 1996.

⁶ For more detail on this transition, see the dissertation introduction, 18-21.

⁷ Such a claim contrasts with Rudolf Hilferding's reading of the joint stock company and imperialism for two reasons. First, Hilferding's emphasis on a centralized command economy as the means of overcoming the anarchy of capitalist exchange leads him to make problematic assertions about the mediation of value that essentially posit communist economy as the direct distribution of use-value, sidestepping the problem of exchange-value's appearance entirely. Considering Marx's lengthy critique of Bastiat's "labor money" and Proudhonian mutualism in the *Grundrisse* and *The Poverty of Philosophy*, this seems highly problematic. Second, Hilferding's discussion of the joint stock company and the stock market focuses on industrial production (as one would expect of Second International theory), but such a focus overlooks the intersection of the stock market with state-funded debt by positing the two systems as interlocked for the purposes of economic production. Although the connection between industrial production and the stock market was important to the creation of the large-scale trusts of the late nineteenth century and beyond, it is an effect of the pre-existent structure of British finance. I would argue that Hilferding's description of the joint stock company is perhaps more exemplary in its ability to explain *how British finance entered the world of industrial production while abetting its own ends*, e.g. his engagement with promoter's profit and the two lines of capital development generated by the sale of joint stock company shares. See Hilferding 110-115.

⁸ See Harvey 292.

⁹ As a writer for *All the Year Round* noted in 1876, the Post Office Savings Bank was itself hardly conducive to savings for the lowest echelons of society, with a

minimum deposit of 1 shilling and a prohibitive number of forms requiring the ability of depositors to both read and write. See “Penny Banks.”

¹⁰ Gilles Deleuze explores the relation of nature (affect) and mind in Hume, illuminating the generative capacity of fictions. See Deleuze 44.

¹¹ This description is perhaps a little too glib in terms of its causality, which as one would expect in Hume remains more nuanced and problematic. The dual nature of causality between ideas and affects implies a relation of like to like, which brings with it associated dislikes, e.g. one idea translates into another, but both bear alongside them associated affects and vice versa. In this sense, Hume’s description of the movement between passion and sympathy bears a strong resemblance to the mechanism of Spinoza’s imagination. In Spinoza, the imagination not only translates bodily affect into a hazy idea with a variable relation to reality, but also bears the potential to alter the nature of reality itself through its modification of perception. Antonio Negri has in turn argued that this imaginative constitution can serve as a basis for Spinoza’s radical form of absolute democracy. By contrast, Hume is certainly less radical in his politics, though Daniel Gross usefully notes the dual nature of Hume’s politics as potentially recalling Marx’s work in the *Grundrisse*. See Spinoza; Negri 1996; Gross 124.

¹² See chapter one for a more detailed discussion of Smith’s notion of sympathy.

¹³ For Marx’s critique of Smith’s theory of surplus value, see Marx 1973, 330.

¹⁴ See Marx 1973, 612.

¹⁵ Senior claims that beginning with tools, technology is an effect of abstinence: “It will be observed, that we consider the use of all implements as implying an exercise of abstinence, using that word in our extended sense as comprehending all preference of remote to immediate results. [...] In an improved state of society, the commonest tool is the result of the labour of previous years, perhaps of previous centuries.” (68) The section of abstinence and division of labor is discussed above, framed by Senior’s claim that “the Division of Labour is mainly dependent on Abstinence, or, in other words, on the use of Capital” (78).

¹⁶ Lest one think I overstate the case, consider Senior’s description of the relationship between the proprietor of a natural agent (e.g. a landlord), a laborer, and a capitalist. One is left with the impression that feudal and peasant economies could never have existed, since the mediating function of the capitalist is nowhere to be seen: “In most cases a considerable interval elapses between the period at which the natural agent and the labourer are first employed, and the completion of the product. In this climate the harvest is seldom reaped until nearly a year after it has been sown; a still longer time is required for the maturity of oxen; and a longer still for that of a horse; and sixty or seventy years may pass between the commencement of a plantation, and the time at which the timber is saleable. It is obvious that neither the landlord nor the labourer, as such, can wait during all this interval for their remuneration. The doing so would, in fact, be an act of abstinence. It would be the employment of land and labour in order to obtain remote results. This sacrifice is made by the capitalist, and he is repaid for it by his appropriate remuneration, profit. He advances to the landlord and the labourer, and in most cases to some previous capitalist, the price of their respective assistance; or, in other words the hire of the land and capital belonging to one, and of the mental and bodily

powers of another, and becomes solely entitled to the whole of the product.” See Senior 93.

¹⁷ In the *Grundrisse*, Marx calls Senior’s attempt to amalgamate productive and unproductive labor “horse-piss,” then proceeds to note that: “It is therefore quite correct – but also characteristic – that for the consistent economists the workers in e.g. luxury shops are productive, although the characters who consume such objects are expressly castigated as unproductive wastrels” (273). Yet I would agree with Antonio Negri’s claim that Marx’s insistent use of the categories of productive and unproductive labor has a “*direct political function*” with “*ambiguous effects*” (64). That is to say, Marx’s insistence on this split expresses “the political irreducibility of the force of workers and of the proletarian revolution” (65). In the *Grundrisse*, workers produce and consume use-values while exchange-value operates as an autonomous, antagonistic force. Senior’s initial attempt to combine the material and immaterial labor thus appears to Marx in its context as an ideological amalgamation of the proletariat as a mere part of the continuum of capitalist production, not as an autonomous antagonistic subject able to confront capitalist production. See Negri, *Marx* 59-83. Elsewhere, Marx’s work on credit makes especially short work of Senior’s claims for abstinence: “What the speculating trader risks is social property, not his own. Equally absurd now is the saying that the origin of capital is saving, since what this speculator demands is precisely that *others* should save for him.” See Marx 1981, 570.

¹⁸ Undoubtedly, this issue occurs to Mill in the context of the various European conflicts that disrupted the value of currency, the stability of the local banks, and led to hoarding. In *Lombard Street: A Description of the Money Market*, Walter Bagehot makes these points in some detail in order to demonstrate the strain put on the Bank of England as the reserve bank not only for Britain, but to a great extent for Europe as a whole. While his immediate context is the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune for the suspension of payments in France, Bagehot also points to broader historical instability in Europe due to foreign invasion, which not only disrupted the local and national economy but could spontaneously devalue the currency as well. See Bagehot 63-5.

¹⁹ While intriguing as a rare application of Lacanian psychoanalysis to *Silas Marner*, Edelman’s use of the text is founded on a singular misreading of Marner’s temporal orientation, which then becomes a metonymy for sexual orientation. As my reading should illustrate, Marner miserliness does not display a focus on the past but rather an attempt to replace a lost history with a marker within the present as part of his exceptionality. See Edelman 53-66.

²⁰ Louis Althusser notes the importance of the real abstraction in Marx’s thought in *Reading Capital* and *For Marx*, yet Althusser’s readings do not address Marx’s work in the *Grundrisse*, where the activity of the real abstraction is given its most explicit formulation. Antonio Negri’s work on the *Grundrisse* notes the importance of the real abstraction as the basis of Marx’s subjective work, generating new subjects with antagonistic autonomous relations.

²¹ While the objective presentation of *Capital* takes on the metaphor of the eye in explicit terms, Marx derides it and the notion of visual sympathy in the fragment that opens notebook three of the *Grundrisse*. The missing final page of the second notebook makes this somewhat cryptic, but the remaining words illustrate a point important in my discussion of Hume and Smith: “... the process of the same subject; thus e.g. the substance of the eye, the capital of vision, etc. Such belletristic phrases, which relate

everything to everything else by means of some analogy, may even appear profound the first time they are expressed, all the more so if they identify the most disparate things. Repeated, however, and then repeated with outright complacency as statements of scientific value, they are purely and simply ridiculous.” (Marx 1973, 293)

²² In contrast to my focus on the fetish’s relation to the excess of individuation, Rodstein offers an account of the fetish’s relation to imperialism in her reading of the text. See Rodstein 304-306.

²³ In the O.E.D., the use of the word for “a state of subjection to chance” and in a military context as “used of the losses sustained by a body of men in the field or on service, by death, desertion, etc” are nearly contemporaneous (1503 and 1494 respectively), with the word passing into non-military usage to describe an individual killed or wounded in 1844. See OED s.v. “casualty”: 2b, 2c, and 3a.

²⁴ OED s.v. “ghost,” respectively 9 and 10a.

CHAPTER 3: "I CAN BE!": ECONOMIES OF
 CHARACTER AND IDENTITY IN *OUR MUTUAL
 FRIEND*

Our Mutual Friend is often thought of as a novel about economics, not simply for its thematic engagement with the miserly but also for its close attention to waste and its subsequent reclamation by the social world. I would posit that the novel's attention to economics and waste, however, is part of a response to the emergence of immaterial labor as a new mode of production in Victorian England, highlighted by the novel's turn of an already extant sense of commodification into an intensive experience of linguistic reification. The notion of immaterial production is immanent, if unvoiced, in Dickens's last completed novel, and its world seems to operate at the very limits of material production. In place of the plodding industrial labor of *Hard Times* or the over-speculation of *Little Dorrit*, Dickens creates a world of scavengers, dustmen, and loansharks limited only by their degree of control over the written word. As immaterial laborers, one can at last discover some commonality between the novel's various characters: Rogue Riderhood and Gaffer Hexam are no longer part of an unredeemable lumpenproletariat but rather occupants of the bottom-rung of the immaterial labor scale, opportunist service-laborers shading into criminality. As a teacher, Bradley Headstone stands one step above the birds of prey, but two below the lawyer pair of Eugene Wrayburn and Mortimer Lightwood, who also provide intellectual services that qualify as immaterial labor. So too do the socially speculative Lammles, the insurance-selling Podsnaps, and the economically speculative Veneerings. Loanshark Fascination Fledgeby collects bills paid to his social stand-in, the Jew Riah, a double production of financial and social credit. In his career of waste-removal, Golden Dustman Boffin's service did not so much produce a material surplus as subtract material excesses from the city. And in his secretarial turn as John Rokesmith, John Harmon spends his days manipulating

language and signs, whether for the benefit of Mr. Boffin or himself. Indeed, the novel's social critique hinges on a portrait of society in which wealth is not so much produced but reclaimed from the "dismal swamp" (208) of social opportunism—as the other facet of Harmon's character exemplifies with his role as the delayed inheritor of his father's filthy fortune—in leveling his critique, Dickens describes a world saturated with an immaterial labor that threatens to overwhelm the process of reclamation in a flood of unredeemable linguistic production.

Indeed, the few moments when material production rears its head in the novel provide its only brief gestures toward spirituality. Jenny Wren's description of a staircase full of angels appears as a heavenly reprieve from her waste product doll-making, just as Betty Higden's demand to be allowed to wander in search of work ends when Lizzie Hexam finds her expiring body on the roadside and "lifted her as high as Heaven" (506). At best, the world of material labor offers salvation by simile, a tropic Heaven. The novel's only appearance of a factory, the papermill where Lizzie Hexam flees to escape the attentions of Headstone and Wrayburn, is subject to an idyllic description all but neutralized by Headstone's violent attack there on Wrayburn, as though Dickens means to display the inherence of problems elicited by immaterial labor even when one tries to flee to the safety and certainty of factory-based material production.¹ Even the attempt to regress immaterial labor to one of its material components—e.g. the paper necessary to transmit writing—is unable to recover a utopic language prior to commodification, a situation that Mr. Boffin's problematic use of ink will display more clearly later.

The novel's engagement with immaterial labor is an effect of its attempt to engage with unproductive labor, e.g. labor that does not aid or increase the productive capacity of society. As a concept, unproductive labor differs from immaterial labor precisely in its emphasis on such labor's inability to aid the material increase of society's power of production.² J. S. Mill declared that while unproductive labor "may be as useful as productive labor," because it makes no material contribution to social

production, “society or mankind grow no richer by it, but poorer” (75). By contrast, immaterial labor describes the socially productive quality of labor that does not produce an alienable commodity, whether this is through the production of knowledge, the manipulation of language and signs, or the provision of a service. In its vision of a world where no one produces, the tale of “the son of a tremendous old rascal who made his money by Dust” (24) dislocates the problem of socially unproductive labor into the realm of socially constituted immaterial labor in this vision of unproductive labor creating a world for itself out of waste. In this liminal world of waste, the laborious revivification of excremental remainders in the work of dustmen like Old Man Harmon and the Boffins, river scavengers like Hexam and Riderhood, and taxidermists like Mr. Venus begins to coincide with the professional, clerical, and educational work of revivifying signs and language in text. The novel’s central conflict over Old Man Harmon’s ability to determine his inheritors from beyond the grave encapsulates the problematic relation of bodily remainder and sign as a question of language’s ability to operate in an economic context. Like Fledgeby’s use of Riah as a front for his bill-discounting, an uncertainty of identity in both name and character marks the novel’s population. From John Harmon to Noddy Boffin, from Bella Wilfer to Bradley Headstone and Rogue Riderhood, this indetermination of identity is the focus of immaterial labor, the difficult and potentially reversible determination of identity held between the revivification of remainders and the manipulation of language. Indeed, the material returns not as a marker of material production, but as a marker of the laborer’s class-status, a limit to the potentially threatening excesses of immaterial production in the lower classes thematized by the strangely embodied literacy of Wegg’s wooden leg.

At the moment that Karl Marx began to contemplate the concept of immaterial labor, *Our Mutual Friend* begins to consider the productive potential of language as an effect of the dissolution of a society premised in material production. Labor that is unproductive yet social cannot help but recall the novel’s very existence as a linguistic

form, and this holds unique implications for changes in the novel's narrative organization. Unlike Peter Brooks' *thanatos*-driven theory of narrative, this novel puts the idea of death as the condition of narratability into question by putting under negation the use of an individual lifeline to model a narrative totality. In large part, this is because the novel is not about an individual—indeed, the main character appears in its opening pages to be dead!—but about social organization. After all, Society is itself one of the novel's central characters, with chapters devoted to its capitalized instantiation interspersed through the novel as a “social chorus” (the title of book 3, chapter 17) in response to the story. Society tries to dictate with hypocritical propriety the correct acts of a gentleman, all the while concerned only with the appearance of things, from Mr. and Mrs. Veneering, the “bran-new people” (17) who are all surface, to its continual speculation in mere titles to profit in “O mighty Shares” (118), to the vulgar trappings of “Podsnappery” (131), the novel's term for the grotesque materialism of the upper-classes. Society represents materialism devoid of materiality, an excrescent representation that becomes a metonymy for the indeterminate space of a world of immaterial laborers. In its attempt to inhabit the space between life and death, the written and the spoken, the true and the false, Society is the experience of a communal relation that is inherently not a relation. In this respect, while the novel's conclusion follows the typical Dickensian retreat into the insular avuncular family, the structurally incoherent deaths of Headstone and Riderhood reveal the interrelation of death and narration as one founded not in the retrospective grasp of a subject, but rather in the revelation of community. Dickens presents a vision of what Jean-Luc Nancy terms “literary communism,” where death presents a community that is always already before the subject, or as Nancy writes: “what community reveals to me, in presenting to me my birth and my death, is my existence outside myself” (26). Nancy's sense of the term is not about the creation of a common space so much as the revelation of a common limit in death, a description that insists that even in presenting figures, literature operates by a kind of unworking, an incompleteness

that reveals “that singular beings are never founding, originary figures for one another, never places or powers of remainderless identification” (79). In this lengthy consideration of unproductive labor and false representation, Dickens constructs a vision of a community that finds itself through this communally denuded power of language, an experience of community most fully glimpsed in the violent and terrifying dissolution of relations between characters.

The novel is less interested in death as a means of closing the narrative than in its potential to open this indeterminate space of “literary communism.” No episode makes this clearer than Riderhood’s scene of near drowning. Dredged from the river and laid on the floor of the Six Jolly Fellowship-Porters, Riderhood’s brush with death in this scene reveals the intersection of community, indetermination, and language:

Doctor examines the dank carcase, and pronounces, not hopefully, that it is worth while trying to reanimate the same. All the best means are at once in action, and everybody present lends a hand, and a heart and soul. No one has the least regard for the man; with them all, he has been an object of avoidance, suspicion, and aversion; but the spark of life within him is curiously separable from himself now, and they have a deep interest in it, probably because it *is* life, and they are living and must die. (439)

Individuals become categorical (“doctor”) before dissolving into pronomial generality (“everybody”) with a singular “hand” and “heart and soul.” As Riderhood’s identity fades into an indeterminate life, the identities of the individuals populating the scene dissolve and commingle with reader and narrator as the narrator declares: “This flabby lump of mortality that *we* work so hard at with such patient perseverance, yields no sign of you” (ibid.; emphasis added). In “Immanence: A life,” Gilles Deleuze used this scene to illustrate his concept of immanence as *a life*, describing it as a moment where “*a life* is merely playing with death. The life of the individual has given way to an impersonal and yet singular life, which foregrounds a pure event that has been liberated from the accidents of internal and external life” (386).³ While Deleuze referenced this scene to illustrate singularity’s immanent relation to a field of difference, he worried that the

example reduced singularity to the liminal position in which an individual life confronts the blank negation of death, or in his words “in the simple moment when individual life confronts universal death” (ibid.). Deleuze’s interest in Riderhood’s confrontation with death focuses on a life’s liberation from its particularity to reveal the concept of singularity, a pre-individualized description of “a pure event.” In his attempt to think through literary communism, Nancy perhaps clarifies Deleuze’s anxiety here in his insistence that “there is no process of ‘singularization,’ and singularity is neither extracted, nor produced, nor derived” but rather that “the ground is itself, through itself, and as such, *already* the finitude of singularities” (27). This is precisely Deleuze’s point, but Deleuze’s focus on this liminal encounter with life is perhaps what keeps him from considering Riderhood’s near-drowning as the revelation of community through the scene’s rhetorical construction. Riderhood’s potential subtraction from the social field reveals the structure of a community fascinated with the thought of a “you” that they do not know. In the scene’s fluctuating narratorial address, communal space appears in the experience of textual indeterminacy as the text drifts into second person address, extending beyond the confines of the diegetic world to enfold the reader as well. Even as the threat of a blankly universal death remains in the gesture toward “this flabby lump of mortality,” the text itself can find in the dispersal of identity not the truer version of the individual, but a glimpse of community.

Such a fleeting glance at community holds out the possibility of redemption for Riderhood, but only in language. Once divested of Riderhood, this “spark of life” allows Riderhood’s daughter to believe “the old evil is drowned out of him, and that *if* he should happily come back to resume his occupation of the empty form that lies upon the bed, his spirit will be altered” (441; emphasis added). The “if” of this statement marks the potential alteration of Riderhood’s spirit as an indetermination of his identity opened by his near-death but operating in language. When the spark returns to his body, however, this indeterminate redemption is lost as the revelation of community fades against the

concrete determination of Riderhood's identity: "The short-lived delusion begins to fade. The low, bad, unimpressible face is coming up from the depths of the river, or what other depths, to the surface again. As he grows warm, the doctor and the four men cool. As his lineaments soften with life, their faces and their hearts harden to him" (ibid.). Riderhood's return to self ends this glimpse of community made possible by life's indeterminateness as the softening of the quickening individual and the hardening of community against itself. The men's "deep interest" in the spark of life disappears once Riderhood emerges from "the depths of the river, or what other depths, to the surface again." In its vocalic resonance with death, the depths of the river become the depths of life as the immaterial production of the novel itself yearns toward the revelation of a community irreducible to Society.

The Rotten Stain: Biopolitics's Excremental Remainder

While the novel's intertwined plots branch off from the problems of Society like so many repetitions of a problem within the social field, these are interwoven repetitions without an original. The usurious intrigue of Mr. and Mrs. Lammle with Fascination Fledgeby repeats the intrigue Mr. Lammle operated on Mrs. Lammle and vice versa. Fledgeby's front in Riah uses the stereotype of the Jew to cover his own greed, though there is no greed in Riah. Riah's friend, doll-clothing maker Jenny Wren, reproduces in miniature the mass produced fashion of the day. The Harmon plot is not so much the central or major plot, but rather simply the initial expression of the problems of Society. Indeed, it is introduced and contextualized in the novel's second chapter and first social chorus, "The Man from Somewhere," though the drowned corpse dragged from the river for the money in its pockets has already revealed in the first chapter the confluence of death, economic interest, and the potential indeterminate relationship of a man's body to his name. Mistakenly identified as the recent heir to a substantial fortune of dust, what is represented as John Harmon's drowned body is actually that of a sailor from Harmon's

voyage to London, George Radfoot. Harmon survived his plunge in the Thames only to surface with a new name, Rokesmith, and the determination to search out his assailant.

Over the course of the novel, Harmon identifies his antagonist in Riderhood, masquerades as secretary to his father's old servants and interim inheritors, the Boffins, before revealing to them his identity, and in a turn that exemplifies Tzvetan Todorov's narratological concept of "the-same-but-different" applied to the entirety of the novel's social world, marries the woman stipulated as his wife by his father's will, Bella Wilfer, only after Boffin's miserly imposture has revealed her interest in Harmon to be one based on love, not money. Boffin's hired reader, Silas Wegg, tries to blackmail the inheritance from Boffin and Harmon with a codicil to the old man's will discovered in the Mounds of trash surrounding Harmony Jail, and Boffin thwarts this plot with the help of the taxidermist Mr. Venus and another will hidden in a Dutch bottle by the old miser. The entirety of the fortune left to Boffin free and clear, Boffin can effectively erase the taint of the miser's money by giving it to Harmon and replace the legal-economic mode of exchange for one of the gift.

The novel's most prominent subplot is the love triangle of Eugene Wrayburn, law partner of the Boffins' solicitor Mortimer Lightwood, Gaffer Hexam's daughter Lizzie, and Lizzie's brother's schoolteacher, Bradley Headstone. This triangle works through different aspects of the issues contained in *Society*, from the changes of identity employed by both Harmon and Boffin, as in Headstone's guise as Riderhood during his attack on Wrayburn, to the redemption of the seemingly unredeemable, with Wrayburn's decision to marry Lizzie rather than toy with her. In this subplot, the novel's paired final drowning repeats key elements of the Harmon plot, compacting the differences in class and falsified identity into a death sentence. Enraged by Headstone's impersonation of him during Headstone's attack on Wrayburn, Riderhood and Headstone fight by the river until Headstone drags them both into the lock to drown. In this paired drowning, death becomes a gruesome embodied figure for a non-relational community even as it reduces

the two men to dead remainders long after they had ceased to be of any importance to the movement of the plot. Discovered “lying under the ooze and scum behind one of the rotting gates,” the two men are bound together in the ultimate non-relation of death, even as Riderhood remained “girdled still with Bradley’s iron ring, and the rivets of the iron ring held tight” (781).

Yet even as death reveals community in the novel, it simultaneously seems to function as a process that cleanses the world of problematic characters like Gaffer Hexam, Riderhood, and Headstone. Indeed, the inheritance plot itself is an attempt to cleanse Old Man Harmon’s money of its miserly taint. As Mrs. Boffin says, “as it his money had turned bright again, after a long long rust in the dark and was at last a beginning to sparkle in the sunlight” (757). This attempt to eliminate the taint of waste from the world via death recalls death’s constitutive role in constituting the limits of the subject in Lacanian psychoanalysis, an experience, in the words of Slavoj Žižek, of “being reduced to an excremental remainder” (Žižek 1999, 161). In *Our Mutual Friend*, the threat of such a reduction displaces the revelation of community into subjective constitution. While Riderhood’s later scene of near drowning described the revelation of community in the confluence of gazes on the spark of life rather than the flabby lump of mortality that was his body, the novel’s first chapter reveals the economic subtext of when such these gazes are diverted from the recognition of community toward the body. A series of gazes connect boatmen Riderhood, Hexam, and Lizzie as they drag an unidentified body from the river for profit, the corpse floating like so much excrement in the river, a remainder the text names only by implication. The unseen corpse anchors Gaffer’s “most intent and searching gaze” (Dickens 1865, 13), Lizzie’s “watching” (14), and Riderhood’s “squinting leer” as he “looked hard at [the boat’s] track” (15), their gazes culminating in the deferred description of the corpse from an imagined fourth vantage: “A neophyte might have fancied that the ripples passing over it were dreadfully like faint changes of expression on a sightless face; but Gaffer was no neophyte and had

no fancies” (17). Not only is he “no neophyte” but as a journeyman body-skimmer, Gaffer Hexam “had no fancies” that would allow him to focus on any aspect of these remains except their economic functionality. Discounted for its “fancies,” the neophyte’s gaze is displaced into the “faint changes of expression on a sightless face” that only merits representation through simile, a linguistic indetermination in the text of the corpse between man and object.

For the scavenger boatmen, the excremental remainder is the basis of their immaterial labor, the most human of human waste which they remove, sometimes after producing it. As the blind end of ocular relations, the sightless corpse absorbs the community of gazes in a linguistic potentialization even as the text mystifies Hexam’s immaterial labor by throwing into question the relation of body and language. The inability to name the corpse reinforces Hexam’s dispossession, the poverty of his rationalized occupational relation to death in dredging for bodies. Death becomes signification’s limit, the only thing capable of signifying even as it escapes signification. Hexam’s labor is not only without material product but absolutely barren, leading only to the unrecognized and unrecognized face of death as the basis of his economic existence. Indeed, when Lizzie focuses her attention not on the body, but rather on the “rotten stain” the color of “diluted blood” on “the bottom of the boat” “which bore some resemblance to the outline of a muffled human form” (14), death itself becomes not only the basis of the novel’s economics but its privileged content of signification as well.

In her aptly titled chapter “The Bioeconomics of *Our Mutual Friend*,” Catherine Gallagher examines the novel’s discursive complicity in the production and manipulation of what Gallagher terms “life.” Gallagher argues that the novel illustrates “a widespread insistence that economic value can be determined only in close relationship to vital power” and that “this operation often resulted in the reparation of value (equated with Life) from any of its particular instantiations (or bodies)” (87). Gallagher’s approach to this aporia uses political economy’s focus on bodily labor as the source of value against

the text's thematic and formal potentialization of value and energy, including an examination of readerly and textual construction in the essay's latter pages in terms of the text's demonstration of an ethics of reading for an individual bourgeois reader. While Frederic Jameson criticized Gallagher's essay for its indeterminate relation to the very economic questions that she raises (and Gallagher's work on political economy does seem to operate in a strangely apolitical space adjacent to economics and Marxism), Jameson's critique remains grounded in an approach to material production that is correct and yet beside the point.⁴ Gallagher's use of the concept of "life" is derived from T.R. Malthus' political economy and focuses on a sort of vitalist celebration of sex and food in the basic tenets of Malthus' work as the burgeoning power of human reproduction and growth.

Gallagher's positive use of "life," however, should be tempered by the fact that the vital excess of reproductive power in Malthus constitutes the very limit of social life. After all, Malthus's key contribution to political economy is the notion that population growth outstrips the growth of resources. Political economic life stands in relation to death as its limit. Indeed, this is why Giorgio Agamben's term "bare life" seems to describe more aptly the concept of life that Gallagher tries to locate in Malthus. Agamben argues that "not simply natural life, but life exposed to death (bare life or sacred life) is the originary political element" (88). In his attempt to describe how life constitutes its own limit, Malthus turns life's productivity into its most elementary exposure to death, revealing political economy's attempt to theorize the allocation and use of resources as a thought of bare life, life that is first and foremost exposed to death.⁵ Gallagher's approach to life's abeyance in the text overlooks the very biopolitical problem at issue, and offers a point of convergence between her approach to biopower and the text's Lacanian reduction of the subject to an excremental remainder: if the novel is read as an ideologically problematic separation of value qua Life and its instantiation qua body, the two terms converge on a life that is always bare, returning to the problem of subjective

reduction, whether as bare life or a piece of feces. Such approaches reinforce the confluence of a vital indetermination of life with an indetermination of representation, formalizing the metonymy of bare life and the rotten stain on the bottom of Hexam's boat without engaging their political and economic bases.

Gallagher is certainly not alone in her focus on the novel's use of vital indetermination. Indetermination has proven central to the novel's critical reception. J. Hillis Miller similarly noted years prior to Gallagher that "the characters in *Our Mutual Friend* only become mysterious for one another when they are dead or dying" (318). Miller's focus on the indeterminate status of life in the novel reveals its thematic multiplication of differences, showcased by its focalization through various marginal characters that open "only a finite number out of an infinite number of possibilities" (291). Pam Morris approaches the problem of indetermination in the novel as "an imaginative openness of possibility," noting that the "metaphorical descriptions of social conditions in London are closed off as fact by an unqualified use of the verb 'to be'" while "frequent 'as if' formulations connect things *as* they are to an imaginative openness of possibility," "[insinuating] into narrative discourse an ever-present possibility of imaginative opening out from the closure of actuality" (Morris 127). For Morris, indetermination becomes a rhetorical method of deflecting the problems of social conditions into a kind of messianic textual indetermination. She offers as an example Riah's response to Jenny Wren's request that he "change Is into Was and Was into Is, and keep them so" (Dickens 1865, 430): "Riah points out that this change would seal off the possibility of further change, perpetuate her present suffering, and deny the liberating power of 'If' with which they have been comforting themselves" (Morris 127).⁶ In contrast to Morris's examination of the rhetorical indetermination of class, Mary Poovey reads the novel as a series of anxieties about speculation and the female body. Poovey's engagement with gender in the novel depends upon its indetermination in Lizzie Hexam. Poovey argues that when a woman like Lizzie Hexam can fulfill both masculine and

feminine roles, virtue appears disaggregated from the female body, destabilizing constructions of masculinity in a series of identity crises for the novel's men. In their focus on the indeterminate potential that suffuses the novel, Gallagher, Miller, Morris, and Poovey offer a sense of the scope that indeterminacy has played in the novel's critical reception. The novel takes on the qualities of a dialectic, not in the Hegelian sense but in the sense of Walter Benjamin's arrested dialectic, the dialectic at a standstill.⁷ In its use of indeterminacy to represent a surplus of potentiality, the text allows critical problems from political economy to class antagonism, rhetorical construction to gender, to appear held in suspense, preserved and redeemed in this strangely liminal novel.

I would argue that a critique of the novel in terms of biopower could bring out the construction of this indeterminacy as a textual attempt to resist the reduction to bare life, in the process revealing the changed state of production that led to this indeterminacy of vitality and bare life. In this respect, Agamben's thought—and its critique—is useful. Building on the already referenced work of Jean-Luc Nancy, Agamben extends Nancy's historically nebulous construction of literary communism and inoperative communities to the emergence of immaterial labor as a mode of production in which the ontological presupposition of difference has become economically embedded.⁸ Agamben argues that with this emergence, there is a confluence in the construction of modern law and language, between a vital suspension that he terms the “sovereign exception,” and “bare life.” For sovereignty, this is the irrational state of exception that founds law in violence. For language, however, this suspension opens up a field in which language itself can become the subject of alienation. Once language is no longer the closed attribute of a single community but rather common to all, not only are the particularities of life suspended and rendered bare but language itself becomes a kind of utopic field of indeterminate equivalence. In its engagement with unproductive labor, literacy, and the organization of Society, the separation of “Life” and “bodies” in *Our Mutual Friend* can be read as part of the terrain of immaterial labor. The novel's use of

vitality in abeyance illustrates the suffusion and constitutive impasse of immaterial labor. Yet the indetermination of “life” within the novel reveals a community in excess of Society. Antonio Negri’s critique of bare life is particularly compelling in this respect, arguing that it is not an objective condition of life to be naked but rather that nakedness is an ideological imposition upon life, an attempt to denude life of its power by rendering it bare. Dickens’s work here is perhaps best understood as straddling the question of bare life, rejecting the ideological reduction of humanity to bare life while contemplating the alienation of its common linguistic production in the proliferation of waste.

Linguistic alienation had already occurred to Marx by 1864, as evidenced by the excised sixth chapter of *Capital*, “Results of the Immediate Process of Production” in which Marx discusses literary production as well as embodied forms of entertaining (e.g. acrobats, actors, etc.) as a form of production not yet fully subsumed by the capitalist mode of production.⁹ The problems of immaterial production were, of course never far from Dickens’ mind, from his grueling schedule of readings during this last period of his life to his rigorous schedule for a novel’s serial publication, which the trainwreck mentioned in the novel’s postscript threatened to disrupt. Moreover, as Stanley Friedman has demonstrated in his analysis of reading as a controlling thematic for the novel, reading and literacy are uniquely central to this novel. Perhaps Friedman’s most interesting point in his examination of this motif is that its very pervasiveness ensures that “in this novel, however, literacy is not a moral gauge” (54). The implication that Friedman does not draw from this aside is that once literacy has been denuded of any ethical function, it becomes part of the novel’s economically motivated world. The pervasive centrality of literacy operates a fundamental dislocation of the novel’s relation to labor, not because of an aporia in economic discourse that finds expression in the text as suspended vitality, but rather because in its engagement with reading and literacy, the novel displaces the problem of linguistic competence into the realm of the economic.

Linguistic production becomes labor, while waste becomes a figure for problems that the text can only engage in terms of linguistic production.

In his exculpatory speech on the propriety of robbing the dead, Gaffer Hexam's description of the body's liminal status between economic and spiritual worlds exemplifies the displacement of the economic confrontation with bare life into waste and linguistic indeterminacy:

Has a dead man any use for money? Is it possible for a dead man to have money? What world does a dead man belong to? 'Tother world. What world does money belong to? This world. How can money be a corpse's? Can a corpse own it, want it, spend it, claim it, miss it?' (Dickens 1865, 16)

In the drift between “dead man” and “corpse,” Hexam asks how a dead man can *have* something, either money or a world, while the question he poses of the corpse is “how can money be a corpse's?” For Hexam, “a dead man” is still a subject able to have, albeit in ‘tother world, while a corpse is an object in “this world” that cannot act but can—by implication—be acted upon. The corpse can be an object of labor. In their scavenging, Gaffer and Lizzie Hexam provide one form of such labor, the service of extracting bodies from the river as well as their surfeit of pocket change. This is unproductive labor—not only does the corpse have no use-value, but Gaffer and Lizzie do not produce it—a service that shades into immaterial labor through its linguistic rationalization. In a new economy of immaterial labor, the body acts as an excrescent mediator, returning to the status of waste after its pockets have been picked clean. Indeed, once ensconced in the morgue, the body doesn't signify, leading the police Inspector to exclaim: “Pity there was not a word of truth in that superstition about bodies bleeding when touched by the hand of the right person; you never got a sign out of bodies” (35). In this scene, where a disguised John Harmon views the corpse that will be mistakenly identified as him, such is precisely the point: bodies and signs do not coincide. Making his living by this non-coincidence, Gaffer Hexam grabs hold of the signs released in the liminal space between man and corpse, money. The body's life and identity gone, money becomes the uncanny

sign of congealed living labor denuded of identity, the sign drawn from the subject's excremental remainder. Money, death, and waste become signs of a fundamentally historical problem of mediation that binds language and economic production.

Our Mutual Shares: the Joint Stock Corporation and Social
Production

The convergence of representational problems in terms of both language and economics appears in *Our Mutual Friend* as a question of Shares—that is to say, as a question of stock holding and speculation. While Dickens' screed appears in the wake of the Consolidated Companies Act of 1862, the concept of the joint stock company was centuries old. Eighteenth century political economy saw the joint stock company as large unwieldy creations authorized by Parliamentary act that were of limited potential to capitalist production due to their attachment to the state. Smith described them as specialized collective undertakings for the public good, dependent on exclusive trading privileges and structurally ill-suited to the needs of self-interested capitalism. J.S. Mill only slightly modified and expanded this stance in 1848, after the 1845 Companies Clauses Consolidation Act inaugurated a boom in joint stock companies, culminating in the 1840s railway mania, though speculation resumed after the collapse of the ensuing collapse.¹⁰ The 1862 deregulation of joint stock company incorporation allowed the creation of such fictitious companies without Parliamentary intervention. By selling titles to profit, these large-scale social subjects created massive stockpiles of capital for economic action while nonetheless confronting their shareholders as separate—and, in the case of bankruptcy, antagonistic—subjects all their own. The Consolidated Companies Act of 1862 did not much influence manufacturing, but it revolutionized Britain's financial world, leading to the joint stock banks that came to dominate Britain's banking world by the century's end as well as the proliferation of bill-brokering firms, which were instrumental in the London credit market's international expansion.¹¹

For Karl Marx, the development of finance capital marked a new development in the capitalist mode of production, a step toward capital's subsumption of society through both the extension of capitalist production throughout society alongside a continuous scientific refinement and intensification of production. While Marx focused on labor's production of surplus-value in industrial capital in the first volume of *Capital*, he took on the problems of developed capitalist production and the implications of capital's reorganization of social production in the third volume, which although published in 1890, was written between 1863-1864. Alongside considerations of the joint stock company and credit markets, Marx also took on another category of interest to *Our Mutual Friend* in volume three with his description of waste's changed role in developed capitalist production as an indicator of extensive intensified production and as the production of new raw material:

It is the resulting massive scale of these waste products that makes them into new objects of trade and therefore new elements of production. It is only as the waste products of production in common, and hence of production on a large scale, that they acquire this importance for the production process and remain bearers of exchange-value. (Marx 1981, 173)

Economies of scale not only lead to quantitative increases in waste but to qualitative change in its function: the extension and intensification of social production can use waste for new productive purposes. It is no accident that Marx's example of "production in common"¹² is the common production of a social body: human excrement, which Marx claims could in quantity be used to increase agricultural yields. However, there is "colossal wastage in the capitalist economy in proportion to their actual use [of waste]. In London, for example, they can do nothing better with the excrement produced by 4 ½ million people than pollute the Thames with it, at monstrous expense" (Marx 1981, 195). Waste is multiply articulated, at once a new raw material for production and a pollutant. At the limit of capital's intensification, the productive power of large-scale social production ensures that even shit can signify so long as it is produced in large enough

quantities. At this stage of capitalist production, one can begin to conceive of immaterial production, when the signs of value have multiplied to such an extent that any and everything has become capable of signifying value.

Yet waste remained a limit concept in political economy, in large part due to its problematic relation to production, and the question of the potentially productive consumption of waste is part and parcel with the long-standing political economic argument about the nature of productive and unproductive labor. While I have elaborated this problem in terms of abstinence in chapter two, it is useful to note here the differentiation of productive and unproductive labor in terms of consumption. John Stuart Mill's definition of productive and unproductive consumption in *Principles of Political Economy*, the capstone of classical political economic thought, demands that only consumption that leads directly to material production is productive, claiming not only that "the only productive consumers are productive laborers" but also that "there is unproductive consumption by productive consumers" (77). Productive consumption by productive labor is thus the minimum consumption necessary for the production of life, a theory of the production of bare life. Mill's rigorous conception of productive consumption demands "that alone is productive consumption which goes to maintain and increase the productive powers of the community; either those residing in its soil, in its materials, in the number and efficiency of its instruments of production, or in its people" (ibid.). Mill reveals in this distinction political economy's obsession with bare life even as he decries the unproductive consumption of luxuries such as "gold lace, pineapples, or champaign [...] since these things give no assistance to production, nor any support to life or strength, but what would equally be given by things much less costly" (ibid.). Not only is the concept of productive consumption at heart the maintenance of life at its bare minimum, but its link to productive labor reveals the aporetic structure of immaterial labor in classical political economy.¹³ Productive labor is inherently material, yet in the increasing scope of material production, the production of and dissemination of

knowledge becomes increasingly necessary to expansion of production. The mental labor that provides the basis of such knowledge, however, remains under the heading of unproductive labor, labor that does not directly assist production.¹⁴

Mill's description of productive consumption illuminates the foundational assumptions of Marx's critique of political economy: if only consumption by productive laborers is truly productive, then why aren't laborers entitled to all—or at least the majority—of the fruits of production? Yet even as Marx's critique points out the illogical assumptions of political economy, it would be an oversimplification of Marx's position to claim that he merely reproduces an inversion of the labor theory of value. Labor as the source of value is a ruse, Marx argues, that obscures the basis of wealth in the social and cultural control of the conditions of production. For all of Marx's emphasis on labor, as he emphatically states in his *Critique of the Gotha Program* (1875):

Labor is *not the source* of all wealth. Nature is just as much the source of use-values (and surely these are what make up material wealth!) as labour.... There is every good reason for the bourgeoisie to ascribe *supernatural creative power* to labour, for when a man has no property other than his labour power it is precisely labour's dependence on nature that forces him, in all social and cultural conditions, to be the slave of other men who have taken the objective conditions of labour into their own possession. (Marx 1974, 341)

Labor is the description of a life stripped bare of its connection to the material world in its natural, social, and cultural conditions. If Marx retains the categories of productive and unproductive throughout his work, it is, as Antonio Negri states, because these categories have a “direct political function” with “ambiguous effects” (64). Marx's opposition of material and immaterial labor is premised upon “the political irreducibility of the force of workers and of the proletarian revolution” (65) against the unproductive forces of capital that control access to the knowledge that constitutes the basis of immaterial labor. While the subsumption of immaterial labor by capital for direct exploitation is already a possibility for Marx, as he notes in passing, he maintains these categories as descriptors of class antagonism. Yet as Marx pushes against the limits of

this tension, the problem of waste returns as a problem internal to capital: while capital's use of unproductive labor in knowledge production is an excrescence dependent upon living material labor, its integration into an increasingly scientific and knowledge based form of capitalist production leads it to the position of what Marx terms the social brain that controls the social body of labor.¹⁵ In 1864, while capitalist production had not completely subsumed intellectual production, its increasingly social form had led to the expansion of the joint stock company and a change in the command of production from the individual capitalist toward the newly autonomous form of finance capital. Taking itself as its own object, capital entered the financial markets with the deregulation of joint stock companies, using ready money to buy titles to payment in the stock market, credit system, and money markets, allowing finance capital not only to intercede in the sphere of production, but to also appear as its own autonomous sphere of value production. Finance capital's appearance of autonomous value production formed the basis of Marx's critique of interest-bearing capital, where "capital obtains its pure fetish form" since interest-bearing capital seems to have the ability to create surplus-value while maintaining its monetary form as "autonomous exchange-value" (Marx 1981, 517).

Our Mutual Friend takes to task this pure fetish of capital, explicitly deriding the concept of autonomous value creation of "O mighty Shares." Dickens put the ubiquitous mid-Victorian promise of riches in Shares and the effects of their failures to use throughout his work. From Ralph Nickleby's work floating bad joint stock companies like the "united Metropolitan Improved Hot Muffin and Crumpet Baking and Punctal Delivery Company" (Dickens 1838, 25), to Mr. Merdle's defrauding of investors in *Little Dorrit* and Betsy Trotwood's bad foreign investments (later revealed as instead part of Uriah Heep's embezzlement) in *David Copperfield*, bad investments recur throughout Dickens' oeuvre. In *Our Mutual Friend*, however, Dickens puts the concept of Shares through a process of direct narratorial examination:

As is well known to the wise in their generation, traffic in Shares is the one thing to have to do with in this world. Have no antecedents, no established character, no cultivation, no ideas, no manners; have Shares. Have Shares enough to be on Boards of Direction in capital letters, oscillate on mysterious business between London and Paris, and be great. Where does he come from? Shares. Where is he going to? Shares. What are his tastes? Shares. Has he any principles? Shares. What squeezes him into Parliament? Shares. Perhaps he never himself achieved success in anything, never originated anything, never produced anything? Sufficient answer to all; Shares. O mighty Shares! To set those blaring images so high, and to cause us smaller vermin, as under the influence of henbane or opium, to cry out, night and day, “Relieve us of our money, scatter it for us, buy us and sell us, ruin us, only we beseech ye take rank among the powers of the earth, and fatten on us”! (Dickens 1865, 118).

In this tirade, the narrator reveals the world of *Our Mutual Friend*—this world and not ‘tother—has been reduced to Shares, a linguistic replacement that operates by the negation of all communal linkages (“no antecedents, no established character...”). With the possibility of radical cooperation, sharing, and mutuality emptied from the world, everything is Shares and nothing shared. Shares become where one comes from and goes to, needing no “character” or “antecedents,” even if the question of character and antecedents form the novel’s plot. In lieu of “principles” or the ability to produce, Shares fulfill all social functions by emptying them of specificity, the blank signs of wealth that give one the right “to be on Boards of Direction in capital letters”—that is, to be little more than wealth’s sign. Shares disperse language in an indeterminate circulation, everywhere at once. In mistaking the unproductive for the productive, the narrator reveals the hegemony of “those blaring images,” the power of the excrescent, of signifiers in excess of their productive capacity—in short, of representation as waste.

Dickens’ diatribe reflects the sort of criticism that Marx leveled at the financial markets as illusory circulations of titles to profit, fictitious duplication of capital that have their own autonomy: “But as duplicates that can themselves be exchanged as commodities, and hence circulate as capital values, they are illusory, and their values can rise and fall quite independently of the movement in value of the actual capital to which they are titles” (Marx 1981, 608). Such independent movement means that the fictitious

titles to profit are able to confront constant and variable capital as an entirely autonomous field that nonetheless has real power in relation to other forms of capital—stock market crashes and the subsequent centralization of capital forming only the most obvious example. Yet as a model of social ownership, the joint stock company’s proliferation of titles to profit nonetheless displays a potential proliferation of signifiers as a method of socializing production by gathering capital from various individuals for a social undertaking, deterritorializing notions of private property by creating a cooperatively owned company within the boundaries of private property (Marx 1981, 571). Shares are part of a new mode of capitalist production and the marker of a potential shift from private property to social property (Marx 1981, 567).¹⁶ Marx identifies in Shares the dissemination of a generalized form of mutuality that the novel laments as lost in Dickens’ view of vampire Shares.

Indeed, by keeping the dual articulation of the joint stock company in mind, one can read in the textual construction of the novel an attempt to overcome the fictitious dominance of capital through the rhetorical structure of fiction: Shares produce “blaring images” to exert “influence” on “us,” while “we beseech” the strange immaterial Shares to “take rank among the powers of the earth, and fatten on us.” While Shares hover between material and immaterial, the rhetorical “us” evokes the novel’s indeterminate title and opening, “in these times of ours” (Dickens 1865, 13), situated in the midst of “the powers of the earth” even as “our” sense of time, place, and friendship is held in abeyance to create a social readerly body irreducible to the social use-values Dickens advocates in place of Shares. That is to say, not an earthly body, so much as an inclusive body constituted in language. Like the body in the Thames, torn between dead man and corpse, the readerly body of *Our Mutual Friend* is an exterior community that operates in the indeterminate space of linguistic alienation.

Yet this attempt to create a readerly community is turned on its head throughout the novel as it puts the indetermination of Shares to use indicting society. When the

Boffins try to find themselves an orphan through Mr. and Mrs. Milvey, the failure of the Milveys to procure an orphan is not from lack of supply, but rather their inability to recognize that the Society they exist within views itself as constituted by Shares:

it was impossible to complete the philanthropic transaction without buying the orphan. For, the instant it became known that anybody wanted the orphan, up started some affectionate relative of the orphan who put a price upon the orphan's head. The suddenness of an orphan's rise in the market was not paralleled by the maddest records of the Stock Exchange. He would be at five thousand per cent. discount out at nurse making a mud pie at nine in the morning and (being inquired for) would go up to five thousand per cent. premium before noon. The market was "rigged" in various artful ways. Counterfeit stock got into circulation. Parents boldly represented themselves as dead, and brought their orphans with them. Genuine orphan-stock was surreptitiously withdrawn from the market. It being announced, by emissaries posted for the purpose, that Mr. and Mrs. Milvey were coming down the court, orphan scrip would be instantly concealed, and production refused, save on condition usually stated by the brokers as a gallon of beer." Likewise, fluctuations of a wild and South-Sea nature were occasioned by orphan-holders keeping back, and then rushing into the market a down together. But, the uniform principle at the root of all these various operations was bargain and sale; and that principle could not be recognized by Mr. and Mrs. Milvey. (195)

Not only does the orphan become in this passage "orphan scrip" and "orphan stock," but with the appearance of a market for orphans comes a variety of attempts to rig the market, from stockpiling and dumping, to the production of counterfeit stock. The text does not simply decry the commodification of humanity, but the immediate turn toward false representation that accompanies this market, a falseness that the pastor, in another instance of the failure of spirituality in the novel, refuses to recognize.

Market society in the novel entails this false representation, which becomes another form of indetermination. The false surface of the Veneerings, the couple whose home provides the central setting for Society, is revealed in the novel's final chapter, but held in an indeterminate temporal state, as though the revelation of the gaming that marks the falseness of Society is always to come in *Our Mutual Friend*: "The Veneerings have been, as usual, indefatigably dealing dinner cards to Society, and whoever desires to take a hand had best be quick about it, for it is written in the Books of the Insolvent Fates that

Veneering shall make a resounding smash next week” (792). The winding sentence defers the Veneerings’ smash in the future perfect tense, a linguistic indetermination of not just of their economic folly, but also of the folly of Society’s game of cards. For their guest Lady Tippins, this linguistic indetermination carries false representation into the basis of her existence, as the commodification of humanity has not simply turned her into a Share, but in the process revealed her being as a counterfeit multiplication of her being:

Whereabout in the bonnet and drapery announced by her name, any fragment of the real woman may be concealed, is perhaps known to her maid; but you could easily buy all you see of her, in Bond Street; or you might scalp her, and peel her, and scrape her, and make two Lady Tippinses out of her, and yet not penetrate to the genuine article. (122)

In a reversal of Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus*, Lady Tippins’ clothing reveals the truth of her character. Yet even as the text’s violent emphasis on reaching the real woman concealed by her swaddling of Bond Street clothing reveals the novel’s deep antipathy toward the multiplication of representation achieved by commodification, the trope itself speaks to the possibility that something else has been created in this surfeit of representation. The indeterminate space of representation becomes a threatening surfeit. What remains unclear in this attempt to find the genuine article in Lady Tippins is whether such an article exists.

“Body Found”: Miserly Accumulation in Political

Economy

The plot of *Our Mutual Friend* turns the space of linguistic alienation into the subject of miserly accumulation, grounding the novel in a political economic fascination with the miser that Old Man Harmon’s fortune only begins to describe. Indeed, the central mechanism in the resolution of the Harmon inheritance and marriage plot is Mr. Boffin’s false transformation into a miser through reading, redeeming Bella from avarice by offering her a simulacrum of it. The centrality of the miser in the novel depends upon the miser’s hoarding, cathecting the objects that mediate exchange without pursuing

exchange itself. Where Eliot's miser, Silas Marner, experiences this problematic hoarding as an unrepresentable "chasm" in his consciousness,¹⁷ the misers of *Our Mutual Friend* extend their potentialization of exchange from societal isolation to the constitution of community itself as their physical hoards become part of linguistic blockages within the text. When bound to miserly hoarding, scavenging becomes a kind of literalized textual poaching, immaterial labor as the arrest of the signifier.¹⁸

Before discussing the text's interweaving of the miser and immaterial labor, however, it is important to take stock of the miser's role in classical political economy, most especially his relation to the accumulation of capital. While David Hume used the binary of "prodigal" and "miser" in his lauding of free trade (Hume 301), Adam Smith carefully described capitalism's model subject as "parsimonious" (Smith 1776, 437)—that is, according to the OED, one who makes "careful or sparing use of money or other material resources." A sixteenth century usage, however, immediately inverts the fifteenth century definition, deeming "parsimonious" as the "excessive unwillingness to part with money or other material resources; stinginess, niggardliness." The dual etymological valence haunts Smith's work. Not only does parsimony serve as the basis for accumulation, the miser himself is easily mistaken for a model capitalist. While Smith tried to differentiate the parsimonious from the miserly in *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, the discussion reflects Aristotle's claims in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that a "liberal man" knows the proper use of wealth while the "prodigal" and the "miser" do not (Aristotle 119b1-1123b1). Aristotle's question of the good, however, evaporates in the class-interest Smith uses to distill his argument: "The objects of avarice and ambition differ only in their greatness. A miser is as furious about a halfpenny, as a man of ambition about the conquest of a kingdom" (Smith 2002, 202). On the one hand, rendering the question of avarice into a problem of scale reduces the qualitative difference of wealth's uses to a subject's ability to approach quantitatively different objects. On the other hand, the qualitative difference between a kingdom and a halfpenny seems a function of social

dominance, the difference between a literal domination of people (“the conquest of a kingdom”) and the bare possession of an object (“a halfpenny”). Building from parsimony’s negative sense, David Ricardo later depersonalized the miser into a law of political economy in which the production of value operates through labor’s investment into land.¹⁹ Value derives not only from the investment of the laborer’s life into a productive field, but also from life’s limited time and land’s limited extent. Moreover, each increase in production simultaneously increases labor’s consumption, so that labor itself becomes the outer limit to accumulation and profit. While Marx contested Ricardo’s use of the limit to determine market price, Marx’s theory of the falling rate of profit extends Ricardo’s miser logic to its furthest (see Marx 1981, 317-338).²⁰

As a figure, however, Marx’s discussion of the miser precedes any discussion of labor or surplus-value. For Marx, the miser is a particular kind of neurotic subject generated by contradictions inherent in capitalist exchange, a subjective surface effect of capital’s deeper logical contradictions (Marx 1976, 227-232). If Smith made the miser a miniaturized, lower class version of the man of ambition, Marx makes him the abject inversion of a capitalist. The question of scale no longer refers to the size of the object desired but to the very logic of exchange as money’s qualitatively infinite capacity for exchange in general comes up against its quantitatively limited capacity for exchange in particular. If both the miser and the capitalist resolve this conflict by making exchange itself an object of desire, the capitalist desires the process of exchange while the miser desires its objectification. Indeed, the miser’s rapacity for money as objectified exchange is nearly autoerotic. In his quantitative accumulation of a physical substance only able to interact with itself, the miser trades his commodity for money but severs exchange in mid-transaction, valuing the real of its real abstraction over its abstraction in exchange. Although companies lay up hoards to replace constant capital worn out over time,²¹ hoards are contrary to the principles of capitalist production since they are unproductive, whether owned by a capitalist or a miser. Even if the miser’s money-hoard consists of

nothing but already appropriated labor, a hoard of congealed abstract labor is only productive insofar as it sets in motion living labor. As an inverted capitalist, Marx's miser is an abased subject, cathecting the objectification of exchange so completely as to fold his identify into his hoarded object.

In this respect, not only does Old Man Harmon fall under Marx's description of the miser, but so too does Gaffer Hexam, whose collection of police fliers headed "BODY FOUND" (31) offers an example of a miserly collection of language. In their attachment to the objects of exchange stripped of exchangeability, these miser fathers turn their unproductive labor into immaterial production by shifting their parsimonious withholding of exchange from the physical to the linguistic. Harmon and Hexam scavenge society's waste, accumulating material excesses that no longer signify and in the process endowing them with signification specific to their miserly recreations of society in miniature: the dust of the streets becomes the Mounds of Harmony Jail, the contents of the river the "meat and drink" of Hexam's hearth (Dickens 1865, 15). In Hexam's case, however, his parsimony results in poverty not prosperity, an accumulation of physical detritus instead of value's signifiers. The squalid walls of the dilapidated mill that he calls home decorated with a gallery of police fliers for the drowned, Hexam's parsimony tries to arrest the indetermination of language's communicative capacity to a simple denotation of death. While Hexam cannot read these fliers, he knows their contents by their physical location. He proudly tells Lightwood and Wrayburn: "I can't read, nor I don't want to it, for I know 'em by their places on the wall" (31). Hexam turns his collection of fliers into a material syntagm, the paradigmatic content of each derived by its location on the wall: "They pretty well papers the room, you see; but I know 'em all. I'm scholar enough!" (32). For Hexam, this spatialization of language turns the room itself into a paper to be read, and the horizontal flow of the Thames, which brings him the bodies to be turned into language, becomes the material syntagmatic arrangement of the fliers themselves.

The simulacrum of reading in Hexam's reduction of language to "places on the wall" reiterates Hexam's futile attempt to keep his children in their places by not allowing them to attend school. As the miserly attempt to arrest the indeterminacy of language in material form becomes an attempt to keep his children from any society beyond family, Hexam finds his children alienated from him as they search for another form of community. Hexam's attempt fails in rather spectacular fashion as his son Charley becomes perhaps the novel's most repugnant arbiter of social propriety, the confluence of lower class origins and moderate education creating a monstrously narcissistic opportunist. Charley initially tries to hide his learning from his father—when forced to write a note that "I made believe I wrote so badly as that it was odds if any one could read it" (36)—but leaves home at Lizzie's urging to escape their father's command against literacy and become a pupil-teacher under Headstone. Once free of Hexam's miser world, though, Charley's attempt to situate himself in Society as an educated man leaves him haunted by the fear that he might be "disgraced" should the world learn of his uneducated, scavenging sister (231). To this end, he aids Headstone's suit with his sister, telling Lizzie that, "As Mr. Headstone's wife you would be occupying a most respectable station, and you would be holding a far better place in society than you hold now" (394). While Louisa Gradgrind listens to her brother's entreaties and marries Bounderby in *Hard Times*, Lizzie refuses to marry Headstone simply to assuage her brother's class anxieties. In his own attempt to cleanse society, Charley exclaims, "I am determined that after I have climbed up out of the mire, you shall not pull me down. You can't disgrace me if I have nothing to do with you, and I will have nothing to do with you in the future" (396). Indeed, Charley's opportunism extends to his mentor. When he determines Headstone was likely responsible for the attack on Wrayburn, he breaks with Headstone, putting their relations in terms of character and credit:

if you were a good master, I was a good pupil. I have done you plenty of credit, and in improving my own reputation I have improved yours quite as much. Very well then. Starting on equal

terms, I want to put before you how you have shown your gratitude to me, for doing all I could to further your wishes with reference to my sister. You have compromised me by being seen about with me, endeavouring to counteract this Mr. Eugene Wrayburn. That's the first thing you have done. If my character, and now my dropping you, help me out of that, Mr. Headstone, the deliverance is to be attributed to me, and not to you. No thanks to you for it!
(693)

In his obsession with reputation, Charley turns Society itself into a system of “credit” predicated on a notion of character that refuses all grounding. Yet in his refusal to be pulled back to “the mire,” or own his master, Charley reiterates his father’s closed miserly society as a model for Society itself. Lizzie recognizes in her own illiteracy a form of class solidarity with her father, telling her bother that though she says that she “should be very glad to be able to read books,” she knows her lack of education “to be a tie between me and father” (ibid.). Nonetheless, Charley recognizes her fireside storytelling for the immaterial labor that it is: “You said you couldn’t read a book, Lizzie. Your library of books is the hollow down by the flare, I think” (39). While Charley’s literacy leaves him opportunistically bound to Society, Lizzie’s performative storytelling offers a mode of immaterial labor that reveals community even in abjection, not only when she tells her stories to Charley but even as she hears her father call while staring into the fire at the moment of his death.

Like Hexam, Old Man Harmon’s problematic relation to language bears upon his son’s entrance into a society marked by immaterial labor. Harmon does not try to arrest language’s indeterminacy in one particular form, but rather embodies such indetermination itself in the valuable accumulation of waste, opening a space of indeterminacy that his son occupies for much of the novel, Harmon’s identity held at bay as he plays the part of Rokesmith. Indeed, the novel turns the accumulation of waste into a trope for the accumulation of capital as the Mounds topologically traces the novel’s proliferation of meaning, a physical realization of language’s multiplication across the paradigmatic axis. If Hexam’s reduction of language to placeholders on a wall reiterates the syntagmatic axis, Old Man Harmon’s collection of dust in the Mounds provides a

trope for the vertical sweep of the paradigmatic. This paradigmatic excess not only marks the search for the final will but also the doubling of the place's name, both Harmony Jail and Boffin's Bower but also John Harmon's rechristening as John Rokesmith. The proliferation of substitutable meaning takes a different form when the newly rich Boffin hires Wegg to read to him at the Bower, unlocking the meaning in books by a variety of unlike substitutions, as Wegg rechristens Polybius "Polly Beeious" (66), Commodus "Commodious" (*ibid.*), and Belisaurus "Bully Sawyers" (187). When Wegg himself takes up residence in the Bower/Jail, his misreadings become part of the landscape of the Mounds, whether mangling Greek and Roman history, or misappropriating lyric poetry against its meaning. The two misers' accumulation of waste are metaphors of the axes of linguistic production in alienated material form, one reducing the movement of the syntagm to the spatialized arrangement of text while the other mounds excess meanings, a realm of substitution where the exchange of one word for another shades into economic exchange. In hoards of waste, the novel's miser fathers confront the indetermination of language as an objective reality.

Harmon and Hexam display in their material and linguistic accumulations the determinate link between the miser and unproductive labor as the miser's lack of a key feature to capitalism, sociality. Marx notes that although "[the capitalist] shares with the miser an absolute drive towards self-enrichment," the two are not equivalent because "what appears in the miser as the mania of an individual is in the capitalist the effect of a social mechanism in which he is merely a cog" (Marx 1976, 739). The capitalist's drive toward self-enrichment depends on the social circulation of wealth, which the miser refuses. Indeed, the two miser fathers displace the blocked circulation of wealth into a blocked circulation of signification, in essence an inability to engage with a socially productive form of unproductive labor, i.e. a rejection of immaterial labor perhaps best evidenced by Hexam's rejection of education. Yet in their externalization of this problematic indeterminacy, either as something to be arrested or lived within, the two

misers reveal the manner in which the world of *Our Mutual Friend* itself is a metaphor of linguistic indetermination. The materialized alienation of linguistic community in the novel not only creates a world saturated with waste, but a sense that community exists only in an alienated Society.

Indeed, the novel's engagement with misers does not so much exemplify Freud's definition of the individual anal character, the "*orderly, parsimonious and obstinate*" (Freud 294), but rather the applicability of anality to Society in general. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari noted the ubiquity of the anal character in capitalism: "the first organ to suffer privatization, removal from the social field, was the anus. It was the anus that offered itself as a model for privatization, at the same time as money came to express the flows' new state of abstraction" (Deleuze and Guattari 143). Miserliness is an effect of privatization, creating a society of anally invested asocial individuals. Although Eve Sedgwick's reading of "sphincter domination" (169) and anal rape takes the novel's anal character to its literal extreme, Sedgwick notes the central role of education as the class-inflected mediator linking Lizzie, Wrayburn, and Headstone: "The quarrel between the schoolmaster and Eugene is over who will teach her to read. But even within the masculine world of literacy, the gradations of class are unforgiving (166). Though Sedgwick's critique focuses on masculine attempts to exercise hegemony over cultural capital, her focus on the gendering of such hegemony overlooks the importance of the terrain in which it is exercised. As Hexam and Harmon's relation to language displays, the miser's attempt to control the new state of capital's abstract flows through anality becomes a figure for resistance to the increasingly abstract flows of language in an economy premised on immaterial labor even as it undermines their ability to participate in any other form of community.

As the novel's figure of internalized misreading, Silas Wegg exemplifies the indeterminate potential of immaterial labor's ability to disrupt Society. Wegg is the text's immaterial laborer *par excellence*, first in his selling of "halfpenny ballads" (52)—and,

recalling Eliot's David Fausse, Wegg also sells sweets and gingerbread—and again in his work as Boffin's hired reader. In the threat he poses to Boffin and Harmon, Wegg turns the immaterial laborer's proliferation of abstraction into a threat against the established social order with his search for an excess piece of signification to discredit Boffin and Harmon's claims to the old man's fortune. In addition to Wegg's scavenging for signs, Boffin's insistent focus on Wegg's supplemental feature as the key to his literacy links waste and the blank life of the text. Not only does he expound to Wegg, "A literary man—WITH a wooden leg—and all Print is open to him!", but Boffin subsequently jokes that it is his very lack of a wooden leg that keeps him illiterate: "Here I am, a man without a wooden leg, and yet all print is shut to me" (57). Wegg's wooden leg is a separable and self-aware prosthetic, aroused by the potentials unlocked by Wegg's reading of Boffin's near-pornographic tales of misers' fortunes: "here Mr. Wegg's wooden leg started forward under the table, and slowly elevated itself as he read on" (476). While the wooden leg tropes the indeterminate subject of immaterial labor, Wegg's figurative access to the world of Print is premised upon the loss of a limb that the taxidermist Mr. Venus has ostensibly put through an unsuccessful process of preservation and ersatz revivification. After being paid his price for the leg, Venus returns Wegg's appendage to him, disguising the excrescent limb in "a sort of brown paper truncheon" (295). While Wegg insists that "you can't buy human flesh and blood in this country sir; not alive you can't" (*ibid.*), his purchase of his own flesh and blood turns the body into a commodity, but only in the indeterminate space between life and death. After all, the leg is not quite alive, due to its separation from him, but perhaps not quite dead since Wegg himself continues to live. Between the preserved but useless leg and its wooden substitute, Wegg's leg opens Print as the indeterminate vital space that separates death from life, which Venus terms as he returns the leg, recalling Hexam's occupation in the river, "the source from when it – flowed" (*ibid.*).

But Wegg's access to Print does not keep him from constantly falling into the trap of misreading, whether it is his innocuous inability to explain the difference between the "Decline and fall off" of the "Rooshan" or "Roman" empire (65), his miscalculating inclusion of Venus in the scheme against Boffin, or his inability to spot Boffin's use of his miser-books to mislead him. Instead Wegg crows to himself over and again "He's grown too fond of money for that" (495), even as he watches as Boffin leaves with the Dutch bottle that will foil Wegg's scheme. As the scheme develops, Wegg's immaterial labor not only becomes increasingly separate from the words and events that he reads, but the power of reading begins to confront him as an autonomous force displaced into his prosthetic. Rather than enriching Wegg, his reading feeds his wooden leg so that after several hundred pages of misreading:

So gaunt and haggard had [Wegg] grown at last, that his wooden leg showed disproportionate, and presented a thriving appearance in contrast with the rest of his plagued body, which might almost have been termed chubby. (760)

Aroused and fed by language, Wegg's prosthetic tropes the novel's relation to immaterial labor as an excrescence endowed with life, much as the text itself is animated by the deferred gratification its readers expect of Wegg's comeuppance. The problem that confronts Wegg in his attempt to extort Harmon and Boffin with the codicil that leaves the estate to the Crown is not that Wegg has misread the text, but rather that the text itself is in excess, superceded by the will in the Dutch bottle, which leaves the estate free and clear to the Boffins. Sloppy's unceremonious dumping of Wegg in "a scavenger's cart" after this scene returns Wegg and the potential excesses of his labor to the dustbin, a process that the chapter's final sentence describes as "a somewhat difficult feat, achieved with great dexterity, and with a prodigious splash" (770). In its muted syllepsis, the sentence rhetorically binds the dexterity of the feat to its effects, dismissing the novel's internal figure of the reader with a flourish only available to its external reader.

“Mew Says The Cat”: Boffin’s Virtuoso Performance and
the Linguistic Display of Bare Life

Mr. Boffin’s “pious fraud” dislocates the problematic indeterminacy of linguistic production and the social reorganization of economic production into the realm of character.²² To provide Bella with a negative model of greed, Boffin performs a miserly charade meant to prove her true character and allow the creation of a new, small community, the familial unit plus the Boffins. Yet to create this fraud, Boffin shapes his character through stories read aloud to him by Harmon and Wegg from *The Lives and Anecdotes of Misers*. Boffin puts to use a societal role in a series of miserly improvisations that turn him into a specific kind of immaterial laborer that includes both the provision of services and linguistic creation. Drawing from Marx’s aforementioned “Results of the Immediate Process of Production,” Paolo Virno terms such improvisation the work of the virtuoso, a performative mode of immaterial labor that uses the social accumulation of language as the material for improvisation:

This virtuosity is nothing unusual, nor does it require some special talent. One need only think of the process whereby someone who speaks draws on the inexhaustible potential of language (the opposite of a defined “work”) to create an utterance that is entirely of the moment and unrepeatable. (195)

Boffin’s miserly performance is an example of such virtuosity, drawing on the miserly language of Society in an effort to create a community that will be irreducible to such Society. Boffin’s improvisations, however, lead to an eruption he is powerless to control or explain when he fires Rokesmith in front of Bella, ostensibly for scheming to romantically entangle Bella and take her fortune. Caught up in his own virtuosity, Boffin produces a profusion of language in excess of meaning: “Mew says the cat, Quack-quack says the duck, Bow-wow-wow says the dog!” (583). As Boffin’s work increasingly relies on virtuosity, his attempt to use language to create community instead reveals in its abandoned excess the socio-linguistic substrate upon which his labor depends.

The split of Boffin's performance yields a double vision that has led critics such as Jack Lindsay to complain that "the picture of the perversion through wealth has been too true, too effectively done. In point of fact, we feel two Boffins" (382). This second Boffin is not the Boffin committed to creating a new avuncular family with John and Bella but rather the excess of Boffin's embodied virtuoso performance of Society's miserly language, a miser Boffin that the text tries to eliminate even in its potential. Boffin's immaterial labor toys with the indetermination of language only to dismiss its negative potential. Indeed, after the revelation of his pious fraud, Bella does not simply affirm that Boffin is *not* a miser but she also rejects any idea that his performance could have been true in the first place: "Please I don't believe you are a hard-hearted miser at all, and please I don't believe you ever for one single minute were!" (Dickens 1865, 754). Boffin's performance is reduced to a false representation produced for moral ends.

Though not real, Boffin's change from a man guided "by a religious sense of duty and desire to do right" (105) to "a hard-hearted miser" (586) is nonetheless outlined as an explicitly social process. Perhaps this is why Dickens describes his descent as an overturning of Freud's anal-character *avant la lettre*. In place of infantile sexuality's unresolved cathexes, "orderly, parsimonious, and obstinate" social forces seem to mould Boffin's character. The social expectations predicated by his new wealth lead his wife to demand a change of house and manner, telling him, "We have come into a great fortune, and we must do what's right by our fortune; we must act up to it" (104). Thanks to Wegg, Boffin's growing collection of books about misers allows him to learn about all kinds of solitary misers, though neither he nor the misers themselves are ever alone. Even these books become objects for his avarice, though he has no use for them by himself. If Boffin's greedy illiterate collecting of books reiterates Gaffer Hexam's attempt to reduce text to materiality, it also institutes an abyssal relation of greed for representations with representations of greed as a trope for avarice's libidinal drive: "still Mr. Boffin, never wearied, remained as avaricious for misers as he had been at the first onset" (463). And in

his negotiation of Rokesmith's salary, Boffin turns to the idol of market-price as the self-regulating machine of labor's monetary value, telling Rokesmith that "a man of property, like me, is bound to consider the market-price" (457). The text's presentation of Boffin's metamorphosis makes it the result of exterior forces social forces, all too often modeled on a social representation presented by the harbingers of immaterial labor, whether from the printed text or the performed service.

The plot's attempt to dismiss Boffin's virtuosic turn as miser reveals the problem that linguistic indetermination poses for the text, as Boffin's performance tries to put the social-economic force of immaterial labor to productive use. Like Dickens's excoriation of Shares, Boffin's miser character is treated by the text as an excrescence, a representation in excess of body and identity that he tries to manipulate even as it confronts his real character with a problematic autonomy:

'When John said, if he had been so happy as to win your affections and possess your heart, it come into my head to turn round upon him with "Win her affections and possess her heart! Mew says the cat, Quack quack says the duck, and Bow-wow-wow says the dog." I couldn't tell you how it come into my head or where from, but it had so much the sound of a rasper that I own to you it astonished myself. I was awful nigh bursting out a laughing though, when it made John stare!' (756)

Boffin realizes to one side of his consciousness the miser immanent to Society in this explosion where language itself verges on waste as an excess of speech and meaning. Boffin does not describe his performative inspiration but rather his astonishment, first at the words, then at Harmon's "stare," initially described as an expression with "some faint idea that he had gone mad" (583). Though Harmon and Boffin are both in on the joke, neither knows how to interpret the speech. In its tone, Boffin will "own" that "it had so much the sound of a rasper" that the words sound right even if they do not sound like him. As the nonsensical representation of the language of animals, Boffin's speech tries to return the space of communication to that of pure animality. Boffin's nonsensical language in fact tries to reduce language itself to the space of bare life, animal noise that

represents only self-interest of life trying to sustain itself by consumption and possession, eating and copulating. Though no one in the novel ever makes sense of Boffin's outburst, the miser rasp comes from this reduction of love to bare life in barnyard noise, which Boffin's final repetition of "Mew, Quack quack, Bow-wow!" (759) recalls as he and Mrs. Boffin muse on the pretty and promising picture of Bella nursing her child.

This production of linguistic excess as a kind of bare life appeared earlier in the novel as a comedic precursor to Boffin's more troubling miser performance. In his only attempt to write, Boffin's finds his body to be the only canvas he can write upon:

He had been engaged in some attempts to make notes of these papers; but being troubled (as men of his stamp often are) with an exceedingly distrustful and corrective thumb, that busy member had so often interposed to smear his notes, that they were little more legible than the various impressions of itself, which blurred his nose and forehead. It is curious to consider, in such a case as Mr. Boffin's, what a cheap article ink is, and how far it may be made to go. As a grain musk will scent a drawer for many years, and still lose nothing appreciable of its original weight, so a halfpenny-worth of ink would blot Mr. Boffin to the roots of his hair and the calves of his legs, without inscribing a line on the paper before him, or appearing to diminish in the inkstand (179-180).

Like Wegg's excrescent leg, Boffin's thumb proves the excrescent mediator that opens him to language. Rather than proving the basis of misreading, however, Boffin's thumb becomes the basis of a miswriting. Language's indetermination marks Boffin in the place of the page with a miswriting that does not cost him even the minuscule halfpenny so dear to Smith's miser. Language's reproduction is troped as a physical molding, as the idiomatic "men of his stamp" leads to the description of the "various impressions" of Boffin's thumb. Boffin's writing is so "troubled" by his body, that it renders his body into a sign. When Boffin hires Rokesmith to write letters, keep accounts, and arrange his papers, there is no contract. Rather, Boffin "gave [Rokesmith] his hand in pledge of their new relations" (182). In his performances, Boffin brings out the problematic productivity of fictitious duplication in physical form, turning immaterial labor into an indetermination of character that is embodied without reliance on death. While Wegg's

prosthetic approached language as supplemental, Boffin's embodied immaterial labor overcodes his body in a smear of miswriting.

By contrast, Boffin's use of books in his pious fraud turns away from the animal reduction of language toward language's proliferation of meaning. It is not simply that his miser act is a kind of didactic exercise of self-reference, but that Boffin and Harmon's shared plot to mislead Bella and Wegg, Boffin authoritatively proclaims the examples of his literary misers to the man who devised the references: "Wasn't the experience of Dancer, and Elwes, and Hopkins, and Blewbury Jones, and ever so many more of 'em, similar to mine?" (578-79). The self-referential turn doubles the plot of the pious fraud, which Dickens liberally borrowed from Sheridan Knowles's play *The Hunchback*. Deferred by the novel's organization, these internal and external levels of reflexive reading form an interpretive knot, a space of plotted indeterminacy for a plot that cannot yet admit that everything has already happened. In its multiple reflexivity, reading becomes both the text's central figure for indeterminacy as well as its productive potential. Such reflexivity allows Rokesmith to defend himself against Boffin's performative accusations in this scene using a series of statements that are neither quite true nor quite false given the obscured reference:

'That I am incapable,' the Secretary went on, still without heeding him, 'of a mercenary project, or a mercenary thought, in connexion with Miss Wilfer, is nothing meritorious in me, because any prize that I could put before my fancy would sink into insignificance beside her.' (581)

Yet in this scene John Harmon is indeed part of a deceptive and "mercenary" project to which the virtuoso performances of Boffin and Harmon attest, as does Harmon's very existence as a secretary under the fictitious identity as Rokesmith. Moreover, this project not only depends upon linguistic production for its source material but for its redemption of both Old Man Harmon's fortune and Bella's character. Though Harmon no longer needs to marry Bella to inherit his father's wealth—it has become the outright property of the Boffins and they will gladly return it to him—his rhetorical amalgamation of Bella

with fortune (“any prize”) reiterates her role in the marriage plot laid out by his father’s will, where the possession of Bella was the very condition of possessing his father’s fortune. While Boffin mockingly compares Harmon’s attempt to “possess” Bella’s heart to this other form of possession, Bella has become irrelevant, both to his inheritance as John Harmon or his ability to marry her fortune as John Rokesmith. No longer equivalent to fortune, Bella has become its supplement, a figure potentially outside the realm of exchange yet attached to it by the very suspension that has made her supplemental. Bella’s supplementarity, however, exemplifies the problem of immaterial labor in the novel in a similar manner to Boffin’s virtuoso turn. Both are caught up in the abandon of language, turning it to use even in the face of its retreat. Boffin’s performance yields the results it intends to achieve while simultaneously generating an irreducible excess of language, offering a glimpse not only of community but the reiteration of social roles.

The Complete British Housewife: Bella’s Immaterial Labor

The revelation of Bella’s character reiterates the interaction of different forms of immaterial labor, from Boffin and Harmon’s virtuoso performances trying to elicit a display of selflessness to Bella’s use of books and newspapers to create her character as a wife. Yet for the majority of the text Bella presents herself as a spoiled, self-interested child. While she was made the condition of John’s inheritance after his father witnessed her throwing a temper tantrum as a four-year-old, Bella’s later turn tries to foreground this childish display as just that, even though her actions up until her confrontation with Boffin’s miser point in the other direction. When Lightwood first informs Bella of her coming good fortune, she turns out her presumed lover although she had yet to lay eyes on the husband who was the bearer of this good fortune. With the presumed death of her unseen means of class ascendancy, Bella finds herself returned to her middle-class home, and she stridently laments her poverty (even though the text has already demonstrated abject poverty to be something far worse than the state of the Wilfer household): “I hate

to be poor, and we are degradingly poor, offensively poor, miserably poor, beastly poor” (45). When the Boffins give up searching for an orphan and declare their interest in Bella, she accepts, though her mother declares the Boffins beneath them. When Rokesmith asks Bella if the book she is reading is “a love story,” she replies, “Oh dear no, or I shouldn’t be reading it. It’s more about money than anything else” (204). While the text tries to assure Harmon and the readers of Bella’s fidelity when she throws over the Boffins after their ill-treatment of Rokesmith, her subsequent shift into a doting housewife displaces her self-directed greed into her baby, so that she no longer wants anything for herself but “she would like to have for the inexhaustible baby such a nursery as never was seen” (737). With the revelation of his identity, the role of the Boffins in the plot, and their sudden fortune, not only is such a nursery provided for Bella but so too the wealth she claims to no longer desire. Yet when the novel displays Bella not to be a spoiled young woman obsessed with money, it treats her shift from spoilt girl to perfect wife not as an instance of development but as a revelation of her true character, the revelation of her character, to use Mr. Boffin’s words, as “the true golden gold at heart” (752). In turning toward money, Bella’s obsession becomes the truth of her character, but only as a trope. The excessive qualities of the metaphor delimit the potential polyvalence of “gold” not only by pointing toward Bella’s version of gold as “true” but also by revealing this truth as the quality of its being “golden gold.” The assurance of constancy displaces her economic interests into a linguistic indeterminacy that, much like Boffin’s miser explosions, is excessive and potentially autonomous.

In this respect, the trope of “the true golden gold” moves beyond political economy’s explanation, from Smith to Mill to Jevons, that gold was used as money because it was the most exchangeable commodity, toward Marx’s claim that the monetary commodity appears as form that stands in antagonistic opposition to the commodities that it is used to exchange.²³ Yet even though gold takes on this antagonistic form, it nonetheless retains its potential to return to commodity form as

easily as gold commodities retain the potential to become money.²⁴ In this trope, the metaphoric equivalent for Bella's constancy is indeterminate, commodity and money bound together in antagonism. In its very excessiveness, the phrase reveals the threat of falseness that haunts Bella's character. Mary Poovey has argued that the inversion of commodity and money in this trope is premised on the female body, revealing a destabilized relation of virtue and femininity in the equivocation that leads the novel's attempts to describe masculinity into various crises of identity (Poovey 1995, 166). Rather than begin with sex as the foundational presupposition, I would argue that the trope's equivocation reveals the constitutive role of indetermination in the novel as the convergence of economic and linguistic indetermination. When Mrs. Boffin relays her nightly conversation with Mr. Boffin during his miserly performances, her words link the trope to the laborious process of speaking:

But every night he says to me: 'Better and better, old lady. What did we say of her? She'll come through it, the true golden gold. This'll be the happiest piece of work we ever done.' (753)

These words evoke Mrs. Boffin's later description of Old Man Harmon's fortune redeemed from the miser's taint, "as if his money had turned bright again, after a long long rust in the dark, and was at last beginning to sparkle in the sunlight" (757), but it is Boffin's performance that removes the taint, which he terms "the happiest piece of work we ever done." I point to this phrase because in addition to being the object of Boffin's labor, Bella herself becomes a kind of immaterial laborer in the text precisely insofar as she comes through it the true golden gold, proving what "we say of her" by embodying the signified.

After eloping with Rokesmith, not only does Bella reverse her sense of class status without an increase of wealth, insisting to Rokesmith that "I am not poor" (664), but also goes about learning how to run a household "as if she were making the most business-like arrangements for going dramatically distracted" (666). Bella's lack of "business" skills, however, means that as she tries her hand at her own virtuoso

performance as housewife, she finds herself turning to a domestic handbook for the score to her improvisations:

For Mrs. J. R., who had never been wont to do too much at home as Miss B. W., was under the constant necessity of referring for advice and support to a sage volume entitled *The Complete British Family Housewife*, which she would sit consulting, with her elbows on the table and her temples on her hands, like some perplexed enchantress poring over the Black Art. This, principally because the *Complete British Housewife*, however sound a Briton at heart, was by no means an expert Briton at expressing herself with clearness in the British tongue, and sometimes might have issued her directions to equal purpose in the Kamskatchan language. In any crisis of this nature, Bella would suddenly exclaim aloud, ‘Oh you ridiculous old thing, what do you mean by that? You must have been drinking!’ And having made this marginal note, would try the *Housewife* again, with all her dimples screwed into an expression of profound research. (666)

Rather than uncover a language for her wifely improvisations in *The Complete British Housewife*, the text confronts Bella as another character who “was by no means an expert Briton at expressing herself with clearness in the British tongue.” The *Housewife* displays language’s potential autonomy to become a subject within the text whom Bella can accuse of drinking. Yet in this embodied autonomy of language, the *Housewife* limits the effects of Bella’s immaterial labor—her reading does not so much produce this subject as part of a social process of immaterial labor as engage with it. Indeed, Bella’s isolated subjective engagement with the *Housewife* inspires a direct yet faulty mimesis that reveals *The Complete British Family Housewife* to be an altogether less dangerous text than Boffin’s socially-read *The Lives and Anecdotes of Misers*. While Bella can only aspire to the status of a Complete British Family Housewife as an ideal, Boffin can imitate his multiple misers all too well. While Sedgwick, Gallagher, and Poovey locate a latent homosexuality and problematic homosociality in the novel, this seems an effect of a mimetic problem located in immaterial labor, as though the dangerous circulation of Boffin’s mimesis is an effect of the pluralization within and without the text, its written misers and social readers, not its gender. As a nationalist textbook for social and gender modeling, the *Housewife* displays language’s autonomy while limiting its potential

effects, displacing Bella's immaterial labor from a social endeavor to an isolated and troubled reading.

Bella's attempt to perform the role of housewife not only leads to an engagement with a text on housewifing, but also to the newspaper. Newspaper appears early in the text as another form of dust, "that mysterious paper currency which circulates in London when the wind blows" (147). Garrett Stewart notes that in this trope the newspaper personifies the "disintegration of words inscribed upon another kind of paper currency known as text" (224), reflecting the disarticulation of language alongside that of the newspaper as the shredded paper littering London's streets. Bella's newspaper reading, however, reveals a rearticulation of language by immaterial labor, as she uses her reading of the financial news to reinforce her role as a British housewife, returning the trope of "the true golden gold" to its economic valence:

Another branch of study claimed the attention of Mrs. John Rokesmith for a regular period every day. This was the mastering of the newspaper so that she might be close up with John on general topics when John came home. [...] Wonderful was the way in which she would store up City Intelligence, and beamingly shed it upon John in the course of the evening; incidentally mentioning the commodities that were looking up in the markets, and how much gold had been taken to the Bank, and trying to look wise and serious over it until she would laugh at herself most charmingly and would say, kissing him: 'It all comes of my love, John dear.'
(666)

The newspaper's fascination with "how much gold had been taken to the Bank" was a result of the 1844 Bank Charter Act, which ensured that all note issue above fourteen million pounds would be backed by an influx of bullion, which the bank had to purchase at £3 17s 9d. an ounce (and when asked to present gold for its notes, pay £3 17s 10 ½d. an ounce).²⁵ The path of gold in and out of the Bank indicated the direction of note issue as well as the direction of interest, often ensuring a spike in interest during credit crises in an attempt to lure money into banks, subsequently increasing the severity of the crisis.²⁶ To maintain her husband's rate of interest, Bella is in essence tracking the bank's—and to good effect. Even though "John certainly did appear to care as little as might be for the

looking up or looking down of things, as well as for the gold that got taken to the Bank,” he did care “beyond all expression, for his wife, as a most precious and sweet commodity that was always looking up, and that never was worth less than all the gold in the world” (667). As Rokesmith has yet to reveal his true identity or their fortune to Bella, her immaterial labor proves the value of Harmon’s investment of his own immaterial labor in her. More than “a most precious and sweet commodity,” Bella’s reading reveals her to be a commodity “that was always looking up” for Harmon, as the idiomatic rise on investment intersects with newlywed concupiscence. In the process, the City Intelligence “she would store up” becomes an expression of feeling for her husband: “It all comes of my love, John dear.” Bella’s love is an effect of her immaterial labor, her reading to discover an improvisatory linguistic score for her a performance of the Housewife as “the true golden gold.”

“What Other Depths”: Identity and The Limits of Death

While the use of immaterial labor in the Harmon inheritance plot turns the novel’s use of indetermination into a question of false representation rather than one of death, substituting a hero incognito for a drowned corpse in a continuously social and communal production and appropriation of language, the love triangle of Lizzie Hexam, Eugene Wrayburn, and Bradley Headstone knots the indetermination of false representation with death. In their competition over Lizzie’s education, not only do Wrayburn and Headstone struggle for control over the terrain of immaterial labor, but in the process engage in their own false representations. Headstone disguises himself as Riderhood in his fateful attack on Wrayburn, and Wrayburn himself delights in his directionless evening perambulations, always walking as though he is going somewhere, only to reveal he is going nowhere. When Wrayburn reveals this occupation to Lightwood, Lightwood not only declares Wrayburn to be “in your most reckless mood,” but that “even those who are utterly indifferent to everything else” should object to the

ludicrous situation of being followed by Headstone (532). Wrayburn's reply is particularly apt:

You charm me, Mortimer, with your reading of my weaknesses. (By-the-by, that very word, Reading, in its critical use, always charms me. An actress's Reading of a chambermaid, a dancer's Reading of a hornpipe, a singer's Reading of a song, a marine-painter's Reading of the sea, the kettle-drum's Reading of an instrumental passage, are phrases ever youthful and delightful.) I was mentioning your perception of my weaknesses. I own to the weakness of objecting to occupy a ludicrous position, and therefore I transfer the position to the scouts. (532)

Not only does Wrayburn's encomium to Reading ("in its critical use") provide a direct link between performance and textual engagement, but Lightwood's reading of Wrayburn's weaknesses reveals the interrelation of character and reading. Wrayburn's ironic comments display his reckless and indifferent character as a reading of the Society rake in the Lizzie plot. Indeed, until after he is attacked by Headstone, he seems to have no specific sense of his intentions regarding Lizzie, and declares to Lightwood, "I have no design whatever. I am incapable of designs. If I conceived a design, I should speedily abandon it, exhausted by the operation" (292). Although Wrayburn claims "But then I mean so much that I—that I don't mean" (281), his lack of meaning or design marks him as a figure for the exhaustion of an unproductive society. Indeed, the recurrent critical reading of Wrayburn and Lightwood as a homosexual couple in both Gallagher and Sedgwick attaches gender to the problematic slide of unproductive labor into immaterial labor, in the process returning the economic problem to a question of bare life, economics into bodily desire.

Much as Riderhood's near-death experience gathered men around him interested in "life," displacing the revelation of community beyond society into its rhetorical structure, when Headstone attacks Wrayburn, the ebbing of Wrayburn's life turns this rhetorical strategy toward the transcendent as Lizzie rows out to fetch Wrayburn's body from the river. The inverted repetition of the novel's opening—the dredging of a body from the river alive rather than dead, for love rather than money—dislocates the free

indirect of a community constituted by immaterial labor into prayers in Lizzie's consciousness. These prayers reconcile the class difficulties that mark Lizzie and Eugene's relationship by redeeming her unproductive labor as training for productive work. Lizzie initially prays "Now, merciful Heaven be thanked for that old time, and grant, O Blessed Lord, that through thy wonderful workings it may turn to good at last!" (683), and the narrator intones that "an untrained sight would never have seen by the moonlight what she saw at the length of a few strokes" (*ibid.*). Like the cleansing of Old Man Harmon's fortune, Lizzie redeems her unproductive work by retroactively making it a condition of saving Wrayburn:

Now, merciful Heaven be thanked for that old time, enabling me, without a wasted moment, to have got the boat afloat again, and to row back against the stream! And grant, O Blessed Lord God, that through poor me he may be raised from death, and preserved to some one else to whom he may be dear one day, though never dearer than to me! (684)

Lizzie's unproductive labor allows her to work efficiently, "without a wasted moment," and her reflexive manipulation of the boat brings Wrayburn back from the dead. Indeed, her free indirect address to Heaven seems to open the space for Wrayburn to undergo a redemptive revivification, actualizing the potential change Riderhood's daughter only glimpses during his ordeal. In the process of turning her unproductive labor productive, Lizzie turns her language away from community toward God, as though returning the power of immaterial labor to the transcendent and grappling instead only with the bare material life of a half-dead Wrayburn.

In contrast to Lizzie's redemption of immaterial labor, Bradley Headstone's impersonation of Rogue Riderhood provides a reading of the boatman—in Wrayburn's sense of the term—that refuses any redemption, turning the indetermination of immaterial labor into the murderous drive of false representation. Headstone's impersonation knots Lady Tippins' sartorial commodification with Bella's revelation of character through false representation, yielding a false representation that is truer than truth. When

Headstone reproduces Riderhood's dress, his production relies on his ability to read Riderhood's apparel, to commit the details to memory, and to reproduce them on command. Yet in this reproduction of Riderhood, Headstone discovers another aspect of himself:

Truly, Bradley Headstone had taken careful note of the honest man's dress in the course of that night-walk they had had together. He must have committed it to memory, and slowly got it by heart. It was exactly reproduced in the dress he now wore. And whereas, in his own schoolmaster clothes, he usually looked as if they were the clothes of some other man, he now looked, in the clothes of some other man or men, as if they were his own. (619)

Headstone seems to be masquerading outside his class in his schoolmaster clothes, described earlier as "recalling some mechanics in their holiday clothes" (218), while in Riderhood's clothes Headstone returns to his proper class. This use of immaterial labor to return to his lower class origins marks Headstone as the embodiment of class indeterminacy, a liminal figure whose education simultaneously includes and excludes him from the working class, isolated by his education from his class, yet marked by it in a way that keeps him from ascending beyond it.

Headstone's "careful note" of Riderhood's apparel relies on his lower-class education, an ability to commit facts to memory and reproduce them at command that suits the description of Headstone's mind as "mechanical":

He had acquired mechanically a great store of teacher's knowledge. He could do mental arithmetic mechanically, sing at sight mechanically, blow various wind instruments mechanically, even play the great church organ mechanically. From his early childhood up, his mind had been a place of mechanical stowage. The arrangement of his wholesale warehouse, so that it might be always ready to meet the demands of retail dealers—history here, geography there, astronomy to the right, political economy to the left—natural history, the physical sciences, figures, music, the lower mathematics, and what not, all in their several places—this care had imparted to his countenance a look of care; while the habit of questioning and being questioned had given him a suspicious manner, or a manner that would be better described as one of lying in wait. (218)

Headstone's knowledge is mechanical precisely because it has been instrumentalized. Knowledge is a commodity stored up in his "wholesale warehouse" of a mind, ordered for ease of use in his occupation, the immaterial labor of teaching. While this description of teaching recalls Gradgrind's pedagogy of rote repetition in *Hard Times*, Dickens used an inversion of this trope to describe the mind of Mr. Briggs in *Dombey and Son*, "whose learning, like ill-arranged luggage, was so tightly packed that he couldn't get at anything he wanted" (Dickens 1851, 847). Though Briggs' inability to keep up with Doctor Blimber's upper middle-class education in Latin is troped with a similarly spatialized memory, his "luggage," however ill arranged, is a world of leisure far removed from Headstone's "stowage." Headstone's mechanized mind tropes the world of immaterial labor as a place of commercial interests that have changed the very nature of his face, so that his labor has marked him with "a suspicious manner," the manner of an opportunist, "one of lying in wait." While the disfiguring work of commerce has been rerouted into metaphor in this passage, Headstone's use of his mechanical mind to reproduce the boatman's costume literalizes this lying in wait, turning his immaterial labor into the basis of his violence. Indeed, the traits that mark Headstone's mental development recall the working class egalitarian pedagogy of Joesph Jacotot, whose work focused on rote memorization, repetition, and conversation (Rancière 1991). Headstone's will similarly speaks to the nineteenth century French academic's argument that learning depended upon the will of the learner rather than the skill of the teacher. The horror of Headstone's mechanical mind only emphasizes the class hierarchies and inequalities that underlie such education, and its potentially monstrous productions.

Thus even as Headstone achieves his long-deferred desire to exact vengeance on Wrayburn in his indeterminate clothing, "the clothes of some other man or men," the indetermination of his class position and identity leaves his mechanical mind unable to subject the attack to the mental divisions that made it possible. The power of indeterminacy that Headstone realizes becomes a kind of torture as the mental capacity

that allowed him to plan the attack leads him into a torturous loop, replaying and replanning the attack in his mind:

He had no remorse; but the evil-doer who can hold that avenger at bay, cannot escape the slower torture of incessantly doing the evil deed again and doing it more efficiently. [...] The state of that wretch who continually finds the weak spots in his own crime, and strives to strengthen them when it is unchangeable, is a state that aggravates the offence by doing the deed a thousand times instead of once; but it is a state that tauntingly visits the offence upon a sullen unrepentant nature with its heaviest punishment every time. (690-691)

Headstone's impersonation releases a string of potentialities, a place where the act is committed a thousand times yet never complete. It is as though Headstone cannot bring himself to leave the space of indeterminacy that he occupied by impersonating Riderhood, so instead he returns the act to its own space of indeterminacy. The reality of the act taunts Headstone not because it elicits a repentance that marks his guilty nature—after all, “he had no remorse”—but rather because Headstone is only himself when he is not himself. His name encapsulates the problem: Headstone discovers himself only as the signifier of his death.

Indeed, although Wrayburn rigorously avoids recognizing Headstone, calling him only “Schoolmaster” (287) while twitting Headstone for his class origins, after the attack, Wrayburn identifies Headstone under negation, telling Lightwood: “Listen to what I say to you. It was not the schoolmaster, Bradley Headstone. Do you hear me? Twice; it was not the schoolmaster, Bradley Headstone. Do you hear me? Three times; it was not the schoolmaster, Bradley Headstone” (719). This identification by denial is not merely a sop to Wrayburn's class prejudices, but perhaps the only way for the novel to identify Bradley Headstone, a uniquely linguistic identification that relies on its immaterial alienation of existence itself: not Bradley Headstone. By contrast, Wrayburn's redemption limits his linguistic powers even as it displays another form of recognition: that of Lizzie as wife. Unable to use language to assert his class superiority, Wrayburn can only assent to Lightwood's use of Jenny Wren's suggestion: “Is the word we would

soon have come to—is it—Wife?” (722). In his assent, Wrayburn recognizes Lizzie with the propriety that his verbal sparring throughout the novel had tended to thwart, turning language from an indetermination of their relationship to a stark social determination. While immaterial labor proved crucial in the forging of the Harmon/Wilfer marriage plot, with the Hexam/Wrayburn marriage plot, immaterial and unproductive labor must be disavowed for them to enter into productive material relations. Yet in a world organized by the indetermination of immaterial labor, Wrayburn’s capitulation to the determined term ensures that even as the marriage plot between the two can be closed, the marriage itself is terminally crippled.

With the marriage plot accomplished, Headstone’s existence becomes as excessive as his indeterminate identity. While Wrayburn uses Headstone’s linguistic indetermination to identify him, Riderhood tries to force Headstone into a determined position when he demands Headstone to inscribe his own name. Angered by Headstone’s use of his identity, Riderhood appears at the schoolhouse to blackmail Headstone, but first intercedes in the lesson plan:

Would you be so kind as write your name upon [the blackboard], learned governor? [...] I’ve got it now!’ said Riderhood, after attentively listening, and internally repeating: ‘Bradley. I see. Chris’en name, Bradley sim’lar to Roger which is my own. Eh? Fam’ly name, Headstone, sim’lar to Riderhood which is my own. Eh?’” (772).

Writing describes the production of the “sim’lar.” The implied threat of Riderhood’s reading of Headstone’s name repetition of a reading of character, from a man to the letter. Headstone’s signature, committed before his class, is meant to seal his identity as not not-Headstone while punning on itself as death’s inscription: Bradley signs his Headstone.

As the final twist to Headstone’s use of immaterial labor, Riderhood tries to turn it to account, demanding payment for the use of his identity: “But when you copied my clothes, and when you copied my neckhankercher, and when you shook blood upon me after you had done the trick, *you did wot I’ll be paid for and paid heavy for*” (776;

emphasis added). Where Wrayburn revealed the role of linguistic indetermination in the recognition of identity, Riderhood returns to the intersection of such language with economics: “I don’t care a curse for the T’other governor, alive or dead, but I care a many curses for my own self. And as you laid plots again me and was a sly devil agin me, I’ll be paid for it—I’ll be paid for it—I’ll be paid for it –till I’ve drained you dry!” (777). Headstone’s unauthorized copying becomes its own stuttered repetition as Riderhood tries to drain dry the unproductive labor of Headstone’s false representation through cash. Once “drained” of his money, Headstone will be drained of the surfeit of representation, both in terms of money and identity, and returned to himself.

Unwilling to be drained like the river locks that Riderhood maintains as Deputy, Headstone tries to drag him into one instead. Believing his near-death experience has made him impervious to death by drowning, Riderhood exclaims that he “can’t be drowned,” to which Headstone retorts, “I can be!” (781). Headstone’s dialogue drives on elliptically without the antecedent past participle “drowned”: “I am resolved to be. I’ll hold you living and I’ll hold you dead. Come down!” (ibid.). While Headstone may be addressing Riderhood, his reflexive grammar means that he is turned not toward his doomed enemy but toward himself as the indeterminate figure of language held somewhere between life and death. More than just resolved to be, Headstone’s words separate his being from his will (a word almost elided by the two contractions of “I’ll”), so that at the moment before Headstone leaps to his death, his words and action ecstatically affirm life in its linguistic alienation by destroying it. Unable not to be Bradley Headstone, or pay Riderhood’s heavy price, Headstone affirms the indeterminacy of his identity by destroying his existence: “‘I can be!’ returned Bradley, in a desperate, clenched voice. ‘I am resolved to be. I’ll hold you living, and I’ll hold you dead. Come down!’” (781). Dead or alive, I *will* be Bradley Headstone *and* Rogue Riderhood.²⁷

There is no redemption from indeterminacy in the paired deaths of Headstone and Riderhood. Even Headstone's final exclamation of "Come down!" only reveals the hollow redemption of Jenny Wren's call to "Come up and be dead!" (280). Whether in Lizzie's prayers or Jenny Wren's utopic vision of heaven reenacted on Riah's roof, redemption is the indeterminate space of immaterial labor, the liminal space between life and death that retains the power of the word. That the villains Headstone and Riderhood "come down" to death displays the obverse side of this redemption, the reduction of the world itself to bare life, made all too clear in the final glimpse of their bodies discovered "lying under the ooze and scum behind one of the rotting gates" (781). In *Hard Times*, Stephen Blackpool took comfort in the fact that even though he had been mistakenly identified as a thief and forced to take a false name there was still some guarantee of his identity—given in a sign of the transcendent—a star above him that "ha' shined upon me" (264). Such guarantee is absent from *Our Mutual Friend*. Instead, a world of bare life and immaterial labor has made any certainty of identity all but impossible. While the text tries to create communities in contrast to a Society engaged in the production of false representation, these communities not only find themselves caught up in the indetermination and alienation of linguistic production but also in the subsequent reduction of life to a bare openness to death.

For *Our Mutual Friend*, Headstone's embrace of indetermination reveals the limitations of the novel's ability to grapple with the question of immaterial labor. Though the economic category appears in the text as an effect of its engagement with unproductive labor, waste, and the thematization of language within the novel itself, the novel's fascination with immaterial labor provides a useful insight into the critical construction of indetermination as a literary mode of community premised on linguistic capacity and bare life. In its critique of finance capital, Society, and Shares, the novel approaches the modern construction of a highly exchangeable, commodified language alongside bare life. In its construction of a cleansed world of avuncular families,

redeemed men, and expelled misers, however, the novel returns to the same mode of language for its productive force. Its methods and modes of subjective change are premised on the work of immaterial labor, which introduces excesses of indetermination the novel feels compelled to display and disavow. *Our Mutual Friend* grows out of changes in the understanding of social production in the 1860s, yet it is not reducible to such changes, whether in production, political economy, or Marxism. Instead, the novel offers an image of indetermination, in which linguistic production at once seems to be at the heart of the community and the basis of its dissolution.

NOTES

¹ The paper mill where Lizzie flees Wrayburn and Headstone offers a nostalgic counterpoint to Hexam's mill of blocked flows. Pam Morris notes of this scene that a "transformative impulse is most explicitly articulated" in the use of "as if" in the description of this setting: "the concluding images are of release and expansion, from the 'ripplicating circles' in the river to the 'ever-widening beauty of landscape... where the sky appeared to meet the earth, as if there were no immensity of space between mankind and Heaven' (689)" (128).

² J.S. Mill declares "all labor, according to our present definition, must be classed as unproductive, which terminates in a permanent benefit, however important, provided that an increase of material products forms no part of that benefit" (75).

³ While his discussion of *Our Mutual Friend* occurs at the end of his career, Deleuze elaborated this concept of singular life and the transcendental field much earlier, offering a similar, if less detailed account in *Difference and Repetition*. See Deleuze 1994, 246.

⁴ While both critics work in an economic vein, neither is willing to take up the issue of economic perspective. In *Postmodernism*, Frederic Jameson criticized Gallagher's work on *Our Mutual Friend* for similar reasons. By refusing to position itself, Gallagher's work on economics operates in an apolitical liminal space adjacent to economics and Marxism. To this extent, her claim that Lizzie's "horror is not that human flesh becomes money, but that money is just a metaphor for human flesh" (94) is particularly useful. Where a Marxist would argue that these relations are themselves irreducible and non-reversible, Gallagher is willing to place money in a position where it can seem to be productive, e.g. as a metaphor for human flesh. This is both too laden with economics and with a diluted liberal project that bears less resemblance to Marx (almost entirely neglected in Gallagher's recent work on nineteenth century economics) than to Malthus or Mill. See Gallagher 2006; Poovey 1995; and Jameson 1991, 190.

⁵ Malthus writes that "the increase of population is necessarily limited by the means of subsistence." See Malthus 61.

⁶ More recently, Pam Morris has argued that the novel tropes investment speculation as literal speculation in an attempt to engage with an increasingly visual culture. The return to Smithian sympathy via speculation, however, leaves one confronted by a society uncertain how to create interpersonal relationships that returns to the problematic of indetermination again. See Morris 2004, 197-221.

⁷ Benjamin most clearly detailed a materialist dialectics at a standstill in "On the Concept of History," especially theses 16 and 17: "Where thinking suddenly comes to a stop in a constellation saturated with tensions, it gives that constellation a shock, by which thinking is crystallized as a monad. [...] As a result of this method, the lifework is both preserved and sublated *in* the work, the era *in* the lifework, and the entire course of history *in* the era" (396). However, the concept runs through Benjamin's work. In *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Benjamin's prefatory attempt to distinguish the intellect's power to bring about "two things at a single stroke: the salvation of phenomena and the representation of ideas" (35), sets the stage for the allegorist's work in animating the ruin of the allegory with mourning. Indeed, his claim that "the characters of the

Trauerspiel die, because it is only thus, as corpses, that they can enter into the homeland of allegory” (217) helps reground Benjamin’s claim in “The Storyteller” that life only becomes transmissible at the moment of death. Narrative’s transmissibility is not simply premised on the death of the subject, but on the creation of an autonomous space of representation capable of reworking. Narrative itself appears in the delinkage of subjective life and representation, opening an indeterminate space of representation available for new use.

⁸ Agamben makes this point most explicitly in *The Coming Community*, which itself is a response to both Maurice Blanchot’s *The Unavowable Community* and Nancy’s *The Inoperative Community*, apparently taking his concept of a coming community from Nancy’s opening of the essay “Literary Communism” in the already referenced volume: “Community without community is *to come*, in the sense that it is always *coming*, endlessly, at the heart of every collectivity (because it never stops coming, it ceaselessly resists collectivity itself as much as it resists the individual)” (71). Agamben places his emphasis on a particular shift after the First World War that rendered apparent the constitutive link between law and bare life (38), but his description of the problematic as it obtains in language can be traced back to the nineteenth century through philology and anthropology (79). See Agamben 1991 and Agamben 1993.

⁹ This chapter has been published as an appendix to the first volume of *Capital*. I discuss Marx’s ideas in this chapter at length in the dissertation’s fourth chapter.

¹⁰ Contrary to the descriptions of classical political economy, the actual history of the joint stock company tends to describe massive imperial undertakings that did little good to the areas where they conducted their business, whether it was the South Seas or the East India Company. Mary Poovey lays out the history of joint stock deregulation in her introduction to *The Financial System in Nineteenth Century Britain*. Two writers for *The Economist* combine the history of the joint stock company with its classical theoretical basis to defend the modern corporation and global capital in Micklethwait and Woolridge. For Smith’s description, see Smith 1999, 320-348, esp. 330 and 346. Also, see Mill 148-170.

¹¹ See King 217-269.

¹² To this end, Hardt and Negri note the importance of “the common” in articulating new forms of social production in *Multitude*, arguing that the common allows the multitude to maintain its internal difference while acting “in common.” See Hardt and Negri 2004, 99-102.

¹³ Political economy’s popularizers tended to prefer a model in which immaterial labor could be considered productive, perhaps in part to avoid offending their audience. This includes J.R. McCulloch and Nassau Senior, who both popularized classical political economy while putting forward this key modification of its understanding of productive labor as a category. By contrast, J.S. Mill offers the orthodox position held by Ricardo and Smith.

¹⁴ Carl Menger addresses this problem by his creation of a hierarchy of goods in relation to production, part of the virtualization of relations that marks the emergence of economics as a discipline. See Menger 80-89.

¹⁵ Marx works through this idea in the *Grundrisse*, not only the concept of the social brain but the social body itself, which leads him to describe many of the social integration of production and consumption as metabolic processes. See Marx 1973.

¹⁶ This is a difficulty both within literary criticism and Marxist thought. Paolo Virno also uses this portion of *Capital* in order to discuss post-Fordist production as “the communism of capital” (Virno 2004, 110), noting that “the difficulty, with reference to post-Fordism as well as to the stock companies, lies in considering simultaneously the two contradictory points of view, that is to say, subsistence and ending, validity and surmountability” (102).

¹⁷ See chapter two of the dissertation 192-193.

¹⁸ In this sense, one might claim that the novel’s scavengers are textual poachers, but rather than turning a particular form of cultural production against itself as de Certeau describes, they resist the very basis of such production. See de Certeau 165-176.

¹⁹ “The reason then, why raw produce rises in comparative value is because more labor is employed in the production of the last portion obtained” (Ricardo 38).

²⁰ Marx’s theory of differential and absolute rent is also closely related to, if clearly differentiated from, Ricardo’s work on rent, and both depend on the action of the limit in one form or another. In this instance, as elsewhere, Marx refuses the question of most/least productive as a false choice, pointing out instead that the conditions under which the bulk of production occurs governs market price. See Marx 1981, 273-301, 751-907.

²¹ Marx uses railway cars as his example of constant capital steadily devalued while a replacement hoard is created in the wings. His discussion of hoard formation in volume two of *Capital* focuses on the hoard’s role in production while carefully delineating how neither a hoard nor money can act productively in and of themselves. See Marx 1978, 260-61, 423.

²² For a discussion of the literary tradition of the pious fraud, see Eigner.

²³ Marx uses this multiple articulation of money as the central example of antagonism in the *Grundrisse*, where money illustrates how “this contradiction between the commodity’s particular natural qualities and its general social qualities contains from the beginning the possibility that these two separated forms in which the commodity exists are not convertible into one another” (147). Moreover, the difference between money and commodity proliferates *within the monetary form itself*, as a new antagonism appears between “real money and accounting money” (190), generating the problems of market price’s separable existence not just from the commodity it prices but from the money that is used to pay the price itself. See Marx 1973, 145-203.

²⁴ Almost every major political economist notes gold’s relation to exchangeability in similar terms from Smith, to Ricardo, Mill, and Marx. Marx, however, notes in volume two of *Capital* that the unique quality of gold is not that it is the most exchangeable of commodities, but that as a commodity it does not have to undergo any formal transformation to be realized as money. As the direct embodiment of money, gold production realizes its surplus-value in money. This direct realization of surplus-value

helps to explain how capitalists can realize surplus-value in the circulation sphere without significant imbalances in monetary circulation. See Marx 1978, 409-412, 545-556.

²⁵ Mill offers the basic contours of the act in his *Principles*, 610, as does W.S. Jevons in *Money and the Mechanism of Exchange* (1875), 222.

²⁶ This is essentially the basis of J.S. Mill's argument in his discussion of the Act, though he focuses on note issue rather than commercial credit (615). Though Marx often mocked Mill, Marx's analysis of the Act echoes Mill's critique while bringing forward the Act's chilling effects on credit via the rate of interest. See Marx 1981, 561, and Mill 604-628.

²⁷ This is recurrent motif in Dickens of paired drowning or binding of doubled characters. In *Great Expectations*, when Magwitch captures Compeyson on the marshes, binding them together in an exclamation against his reduction to instrumentality: "Let *him* go free? Let *him* profit by the means as I found out? Let *him* make a tool of me afresh and again? Once more? No, no, no. If I had died at the bottom there;" and he made an emphatic swing at the ditch with his manacled hands; "I'd have held to him" (34). In *A Tale of Two Cities*, Miss Pross "seized [Madame Defarge] round the waist in both her arms, and held her tight. it was in vain for Madame Defarge to struggle and to strike; Miss Pross, with the vigorous tenacity of love, always so much stronger than hate, clasped her tight, and even lifted her from the floor in the struggle that they had." Miss Pross even declares to Madame Defarge, "I'll hold you till one or the other of us faints or dies!" (382), which immediately comes to pass when Madame Defarge's pistol goes off in their struggle, and kills the French woman.

CHAPTER 4: “ONE IN A THOUSAND”: THE
ECONOMICS OF MULTITUDE IN WILKIE COLLINS’S
THE MOONSTONE

Early in Wilkie Collins’s *The Moonstone* (1868), housemaid Rosanna Spearman describes to elderly house steward Gabriel Betteredge her fascination with the seaside quicksand that Yorkshire locals have dubbed the Shivering Sand. Betteredge, and later Franklin Blake, refer to the Sand in the language of a perplexingly convulsed female sexuality: “At the turn of the tide something goes on in the unknown deeps below, which sets the whole face of the quicksand shivering and trembling” (36). Franklin too cannot divest the sand of this “false brown face under a passing smile” (312). By contrast, Rosanna’s attraction to the Sand makes it a figure of asphyxiating *collectivity*:

“Do you know what it looks like to *me*?” says Rosanna, catching me by the shoulder again. “It looks as if it had hundreds of suffocating people under it—all struggling to get to the surface, and all sinking lower and lower in the dreadful deeps! Throw a stone in, Mr. Betteredge! Throw a stone in, and let’s see the sand suck it down!” (39)

In its tension with Franklin’s individual “false brown face,” Rosanna’s troping of the Sand as “hundreds of suffocating people under it” reveals the novel’s central tension as one between collective social production and its centralized expropriation.¹ Such a focus on collectivity will become much clearer in light of the novel’s permeation by metaphors and scenes linking banking and finance to the waged labor of a servant class recruited into narrative duties, an intersection that surfaces suffuses the narrative with its own fragmentary logic. For Rosanna, such awareness of collectivity grows from an anxiety about her own estranged social position. It is not simply that Rosanna’s past as a professional thief leaves her under suspicion of the novel’s central theft, but that she believes it has left an indelible mark of moral failure, manifested in part by her disfigured shoulder and the lexical drift between moral reformation and physical deformation.

Yet in Betteredge's description of Rosanna's history, her past as a thief becomes a means of introducing another figure of problematic collectivity:

The upshot of it was, that Rosanna Spearman had been a thief, and not being of the sort that get up Companies in the City, and rob from thousands, instead of only robbing from one, the law laid hold of her, and the prison and the reformatory followed the lead of the law. The matron's opinion of Rosanna was (in spite of what she had done) that the girl was one in a thousand, and that she only wanted a chance to prove herself worthy of any Christian woman's interest in her. (34)

From the hundreds of people suffocating to the thousands robbed, corporate fraud not only expands the scope of the novel's engagement with collectivity but also situates Rosanna as the obverse figure of a collective exploitation. While Betteredge's differentiation of crimes that affect "thousands" or "one" marks a kind of class-consciousness, the two terms collapse in his recounting that the matron of Rosanna's reformatory had declared "the girl was one in a thousand" (34). In her description of the Sand, Rosanna illustrates how characters struggle to the surface of this multi-perspectival narrative, struggling against an economic grounding of her narrative until—as in her final urging to "throw a stone in"—the Sand becomes a means of escape, localizing the collective in the deeps where they can rest together in doomed solidarity.

Such an argument contrasts with the dominant readings of the novel, whether under rubrics of epistemology, empire, or power/knowledge. For instance, Lewis Roberts reads the Shivering Sand as a figure for the enfolding of an indeterminate epistemology into realist narration. This position is shared by critics like R.P. Ladilaw, W. David Shaw, and Sue Lonoff, who focus on the novel as a question of how one can know, often taking up the novel's philosophical MacGuffin, Franklin's intermittent parsing of situations via the objective and subjective.² Imperialist critics focus on the novel's representation of India as a means of either critiquing or reinforcing the imperial project: e.g. John R. Reed takes the novel's sympathy for alienated characters like Rosanna as a critique of imperialism while Ashish Roy argues rather that the novel's semiotic strategies refine and

reinforce it. D.A. Miller exemplifies the Foucauldian turn in his reading of suspicion, turning the novel's multiplied construction into a social world disciplined by surveillance, arguing that Collins's use of multiple narrators effectively inscribes such agents within a power/knowledge relation no particular agent can localize. Miller's approach depends upon a reading of the book as essentially monologic, which Adele Wills argues against concisely by viewing its multiple narrators as a means of staging, rather than resolving, conflicts.

I argue that *The Moonstone* uniquely articulates a tension between two contrasting forms of collective agency: on the one hand, the collectivization of British finance, and on the other hand, the increased prominence of a socio-economic class premised upon unproductive labor. The novel's story and its plot implicate not only the British empire but the financial system upon which the imperial project depended and the British credit system provides a representation matrix that suffuses and unifies the novel's mystery plot. Indeed, Collins's novel, an early example of the detective novel, offers an opportunity to re-examine Todorov's narratological description of the whodunit as the apotheosis of the textual bifurcation of *fabula* and *sjuzhet*. The detective novel consists of two stories: the first, the story of the crime, is the text's narrative foundation, and it operates as a kind of *fabula* that the story of the investigation, in its role as *sjuzhet*, reveals. It is this second story, the account of the fabular crime, that Todorov notes "is excessive; it is a story which has no importance in itself, which serves only as a mediator between the reader and the story of the crime" (46). In *The Moonstone*, however, this second story is not only the product of unproductive labor—narration provided by servants, lawyers, rentiers, and policemen—but the account itself is inextricable from the story, the crime itself since unproductive labor structures both the occurrence of events and their representation. The maid Rosanna hides Franklin's nightgown, which obscures the nature of the gem's first theft and allows Godfrey to make off with the diamond, while unproductive laborers like the steward Betteredge, the rentier Miss Clack, and the

physician's assistant Ezra Jennings describe the events that surround the gem's theft and recovery. It is not so much that the account of the crime has "no importance in itself" as Todorov claims for the standard detective narrative, but rather that such excessiveness is impossible to extricate in this case from the fabular event. The suffusion of the novel's social world by so-called unproductive labor intersects with its use of finance to reveal a society in which the command of unproductive labor has become an integral component in the production of economic power itself.³ The emergence of a kind of immaterial labor in *The Moonstone* thus reveals the creation of narrative—in the excessiveness of the detective novel's second story—as a new and potentially autonomous realm of production controlled by minor characters and only subject to a secondary level of editorial control and revision in Franklin's editorial duties.

In its quasi-epistolary construction, the novel relies on servants to narrate the story of the Indian diamond's theft, yet its dispersed narration continually returns to banks and banking in its events. The novel tries to limit collective agents not just through such economic organizations but also by premising narration as remunerative work. These attempts to limit collectivity, however, contrast with the novel's multiplication of character and characterization. Collins described the novel as a study of character in the preface, an "attempt made [...] to trace the influence of character on circumstances" (3), but he does not offer lengthy psychological descriptions or detailed passages of interiority. Instead, characters are marked by multiple contradictory traits. Individual characters become figures for collectivity as amalgams of incongruent qualities: Franklin Blake's international education gives him conflicting personality traits described by Betteredge via nationality—a philosophical German, a witty Frenchman, a lazy Italian, and an empirical Englishman. Rachel Verinder is troped as "Rachel's best friend and Rachel's worst enemy are, one and the other—Rachel herself" (65), a doubling that increases in prominence after the Moonstone's theft. By keeping collectivity interior, though, the novel limits its effects, a solution that provides the answer to the novel's

mystery: Franklin's opium-induced unconscious theft of the diamond literalizes Betteredge's rhetorical multiplications while explaining Rachel's sudden changes in mood and affection. The novel is littered with other collective agents, from the domestic servants who run Lady Verinder's estate to the Indian "organization" (288) intent on returning the Moonstone to its Hindu shrine, from the widespread use of bank chequing accounts and bank vaults to the central role of banker's son, Godfrey Ablewhite, and his financial crimes. The relation between collective agents marks a tension in the novel between the narrative work of ostensible protagonist Franklin Blake, the servants he pays to narrate events he was not party to, and the intrusion of unpaid and potentially untrustworthy narrators in the text.

Lady Verinder's Chequing Account: Economic Circulation
and Representation

While the narrative frame's use of India elicits thoughts of the East India Company—extant during the novel's 1848 events, if not during its 1868 composition, ten years after the company's dissolution—Betteredge's reference to white-collar crime (those who "get up Companies in the City") conjures the May 1866 bankruptcy of bill-brokers Overend, Gurney and Company. Between 1825 and 1858, bill brokers such as Overends served a key liquidity function in the nineteenth century British banking system, mediating credit relations between regional banks and the Bank of England. During the 1825 crisis, regional banks turned to the Bank of England as a lender of last resort, but the Bank had refused to give them access to their credit facilities, viewing them as market competitors. While this initial encouraged regional banks to maintain greater reserves, when the Bank of England extended credit facilities to bill brokers instead of other banks, a kind of shadow banking system emerged that flourished between 1825 and 1858. Using their access to the Bank's lending window, bill brokers facilitated the majority of credit transactions while becoming bankers' banks, as regional banks

deposited their (increased) reserves with the brokers as “call loans.” Brokers paid interest on these deposits but this money remained available whenever a bank chose to “call for it” (King 48), paid for by the large number of readily sold and short term bills that brokers kept on hand. Brokers used to this influx of reserves to speculate in the credit markets, creating a system increasingly fueled by bank reserves. Panics in 1857 and 1858 revealed the dangers of this intertwining of banking reserves and credit markets, leading the Bank of England to withdraw brokers’ access to credit facilities in 1858 to limit speculation (King 201). The outcome was a dysfunctional relationship between the Bank and the bill market during the 1860s, a decade which saw Overends withdrawing £1.65 million in £1000 notes from the Bank in a single day in an attempt to drain the Bank’s reserves and threaten a run as a means of forcing the Bank to reopen discount facilities to the brokers (King 213). The ploy, however, failed, and Overends returned the money the next morning.

Such maneuvers marked a change in the attitude of the Quaker bill brokers, largely due to the shift in management from the first generation of owners to the second in the mid-1850s. After this change, Overends entered into a series of questionable investments that overextend the company’s capital, and led to underhanded transactions like dummy companies and near-fraudulent bills of exchange discounted with the firm’s approval.⁴ Trying to flush their debts and recapitalize, Overends incorporated in 1865, omitting any mention of the firm’s liabilities in the company prospectus, which was well received. The firm’s subsequent inability to meet its cash demands led to bankruptcy, a crash that caused another credit crisis and forced the Bank of England to suspend the Bank Act yet again. (It should be noted that between the delinkage of the Bank and the brokers and the specificity of the bankruptcy itself seems to have kept the 1866 crisis smaller than the more system-wide crises of the late 1850s or the global price depression beginning with the Panic of 1873.) The Overends’s crash also launched lawsuits against both the incorporated firm and its directors. Shareholders sued for relief, using the

omissions of the prospectus as the basis of a three-year battle beginning in August 1866. The board of directors was indicted for fraud in January 1869 and tried in December, the case dismissed as an act of negligence, not criminal, intent (King 253-256).⁵

The 1860s saw substantial changes in banking and credit, due in large part to the growth of joint stock banks and banking amalgamation after the extension of limited liability in 1858 and 1862 (Kynaston 167). These large financial entities introduced more branch banking, which sped the domestic distribution of capital without recourse to the bill market, and kept cash demands down through increased use of the bank cheque (Quinn 164). Indeed, chequing accounts became an integral part in Britain's internal circulation of capital, effectively surpassing the London credit markets which had previously served the purpose (Cain and Hopkins 172). From the 1860s on, the bill market, increasingly focused on international bills. Moreover, as George Robb notes, the financial crisis of 1866 was "a watershed in the English banking community" (71), marking both the end of the boom in bank incorporation and the emergence of a financial regime that was substantially more professionalized and diligent in limiting banking misconduct.

The Moonstone appeared during this reorganization of British finance and the fallout of the Overends's crash, which resonates in the novel's mention of corporate crime and its interests in finance and the socialization of production that finance represented. Unlike many mid-nineteenth century novels, though, the novel has not been subject to economic historicization. This is perhaps due to its mystery plot, which seems more interested in tracing value's movement than questioning it. Indeed, the novel seems to exemplify Mary Poovey claim that Victorian fiction's use of the economics of everyday life typically forecloses rather than opens economic considerations (Poovey 353-416), and the plot of *The Moonstone* relies on a passing acquaintance with—and acceptance of—standard economic activity. Yet such activity is linked to a centralizing figure for social production—the bank—and the story can be rendered broadly as

movements from one bank vault to another. The prologue's action takes place in the treasury of the Seringapatam palace where John Herncastle discovers the gem while looting. The Moonstone's first appearance occurs a space meant to centralize value and encase it with force. Herncastle's theft reveals the link of value and violence with the treasury itself, reiterated by its Muslim possessor's decision to set it in the pommel of a dagger and made explicit by his use of the steel-encased gem to murder its Hindu guards. The diamond's subsequent migration among British banks links India's imperial plundering to Britain's domestic economy, inhering the violence subtending the imperial project as a material trace even though the gem never dissolves into monetary representation. On returning to Britain, Herncastle is certain he is followed and sends the diamond to his brother-in-law, Franklin Blake's father, to be held at a bank of Blake's discretion, as well as "sealed instructions which had been deposited with the Diamond" (50) to direct its division and sale should Herncastle die by violence.

When Herncastle dies naturally, he wills the gem to his niece, Rachel Verinder, on her maturity. Franklin Blake is sent to deliver the diamond to Yorkshire, withdrawing it from the bank only to redeposit it when he believes he too is followed. After arriving in Yorkshire, Betteredge suggests that Franklin "shy the Diamond into the quicksand, and settle the question in that way" (52), before counseling him to deposit it at the local bank until Rachel's birthday a month later, effectively uniting the collectivity Rosanna imagines in the Sand with the centralization of collective economic activity in deposit banking. The diamond thus goes to the Frizinghall bank owned by Godfrey Ablewhite's father, and the novel's pivotal event hinges on Franklin's unconscious wish to return it to this particular vault. When he takes the diamond from Rachel's room the night of her birthday, the opium-addled Franklin hands it to Godfrey to return to the bank, raving: "Take it back, Godfrey, to your father's bank. It's safe there—it's not safe here. [...] I can't take it back to the bank" (456). Franklin's words abjure him of criminal intent while reiterating one of the novel's central economic assumptions—value should be kept at the

bank, not at home—a relation of value and domestic economy that will recur throughout the novel.

While the Moonstone resides in bank vaults, the plot traces its path via banker's receipts, an immaterial circulation of the jewel as the representation of debt, from Franklin's initial "receipt" of his deposit at Frizinghall (59), to Septimus Luker's "receipt of a valuable of great price" (209) which both the Indians and Mr. Bruff use to trace the diamond back to Godfrey. Yet the novel makes use of another financial instrument that operates in a contrary direction, the cheque. While the banker's receipt notes the receipt of a material deposit, the cheque notes the payment of a debt. Cheques are widely used in the novel: Lady Verinder pays Cuff with one (183), Miss Clack notes that her narrative is "compensated by a new laceration, in the shape of Mr. Blake's cheque." (202), Godfrey claims to have met Luker when he "happened to be cashing a cheque at a banking-house in Lombard Street" (204), and Luker pays Godfrey for the diamond with two cheques, one of which is post-dated (458). The novel's use of cheques reflects the financial system of the late 1860s more than the novel's 1848 setting, not only because of the extensive bank amalgamation of the period but because as the London Clearing-House did not admit London's joint stock banks until 1854, and only created in 1858 a system for clearing cheques from country banks.⁶ However, as economist William Stanley Jevons noted in 1875:

No one can enjoy [the cheque and clearing system's] advantages unless he keeps a banking account, and for this purpose he must be able to command a certain sum of money, and must have a sufficiently good position and credit to be entrusted by a banker with a cheque book. (290)⁷

Yet by 1868, cheque banks, which combined savings accounts with limited value cheques similar to money-orders, had begun to spread chequing beyond the moneyed class. Such cheques also became a means of disseminating economic tasks. As economist William Stanley Jevons noted, "a book of the Cheque Bank cheques can be safely trusted to almost any servant or agent who can write, and the cheque when presented forms a record

of the way in which he has applied the money” (293). Unlike cash, a cheque leaves a trail of signifiers in its wake. The novel uses cheques as the economic linkage between characters, transmitting money through a writing premised on debt.⁸

Godfrey’s crimes reveal the link between an economic centralization of wealth and its attempts to represent wealth by immaterial means, whether as receipt or cheque. It is not just that when a drugged Franklin gives Godfrey the Moonstone to return to the bank, Godfrey mimes embezzlement by pawning it with money-lender Septimus Luker (who proceeds to deposit it in yet another bank), but that Godfrey’s theft of the gem is the epiphenomena of another act of embezzlement. To support his secretly prodigal life, complete with mistress, suburban villa, and elaborate equipage, Godfrey has used his charitable front to bleed dry a trusteeship, forging the other trustee’s signature to sell the bonds held in trust. Godfrey’s fraud resembles the 1858 case of William Lemon Oliver, recounted by George Robb in *White-Collar Crime in Modern England*. Oliver was a London Stock Exchange broker who “forged share transfers for £5,000 of Canadian government bonds left in his safe-keeping” (Robb 92). Since he paid the owner her regular dividends, the fraud went undetected until she requested the return of her securities and he dawdled too long. Godfrey’s scheme not only uses government bonds, British Consols, but his hand is also forced by dividend payments. Godfrey’s scheme similarly uses government bonds, British Consols, and dividend payments force his hand, leading him to steal and pawn the Moonstone because he does not have the cash to cover the biannual £300 dividend payment. These crimes showcase the novel’s association of writing with debt: although the imputation of debt puts other characters under suspicion—Sergeant Cuff believes Rachel stole the diamond to pay debts, and Rachel believes Franklin stole it for the same reason—the apparently parsimonious Godfrey is debt-free. While his secret life reveals his hypocrisy, it is his lack of debt that reveals his crimes. Cuff does not so much find Godfrey’s private prodigality surprising as that it has been paid for in full: “The pictures, the statues, the flowers, the jewels, the carriages, and

the horses—inquiry proved, to my indescribable astonishment, that not a sixpence of debt was owing on any of them” (453). In a world of widespread debt, his lack of it is the marker of his criminality.

The novel’s narration links debt and writing as part of a generally unproblematic economic exchange since Gabriel Betteredge, Mathew Bruff, Miss Clack, and Sergeant Cuff narrate for pay. In the case of Betteredge and Bruff, long-term Verinder family servants, the payment is implied, while Miss Clack and Cuff narrate explicitly for cheques. Though Cuff’s narration appears long after he receives Lady Verinder’s cheque, it is the fruit of his promise to “bear in mind the amount in this cheque, Mr. Betteredge, when the occasion comes round for remembering it” (Collins 1868, 184). As the man responsible for collecting these narratives into a manuscript, Franklin uses his money to purchase narratives and to exercise control over them, adding footnotes to Miss Clack’s and critiquing Betteredge’s expository descriptions. By interdicting particular narrative interpolations from his servants while writing his story as an exercise in self-discovery, Franklin’s economic advantage acts as a structural determination that raises him to the level of protagonist. By contrast, the narrators who reveal the plot’s events do so while putting into question the imposition of this narrative economy: though the text’s most abject characters, Ezra Jennings, the social outcast who reveals Franklin’s sleepwalking theft, and Rosanna, the maid who hides Franklin’s nightgown to protect him from the police, do not narrate for economic benefit, but rather use death to prevent their narratives from entering economic exchange, bequeathing them to Franklin from the grave. The extent of the narrative’s economic implication reveals both the text’s ideological complicities and its potential counter articulations.

The novel’s tension between a regime of economic signification and a non-economic sign regime appears alongside the emerging schism of economic discourse in the 1860s. The above-quoted William Stanley Jevons emerged at the front of British economics with his mathematical approach to consumption. Jevons’s 1866 article, “A

Brief Account of a General Mathematical Theory of Political Economy,” first outlined his theory, which he elaborated in *The Theory of Political Economy* (1871). Although *Theory* appeared the same year as work by Leon Walras in France and Carl Menger in Austria—the triumvirate of marginal utility theory—Jevons’s approach is peculiarly British in its philosophical underpinnings. Jevons does not draw directly from Bentham but rather from Alexander Bain, whose work in biology translated Bentham into a natural philosophy framework, but Jevons’s concepts of “utility” and “disutility” mathematically formalize Bentham’s pain/pleasure calculus with a biological sheen. Even more telling, however, is how Jevons chose to foreground the concept of an isolated individual economic agent in his derivation of supply-demand curves. Jevons argued that although such an individual can never be understood by economic theory, its motivations could be determined retroactively via price aggregation. Contrast this approach to the work of Carl Menger, whose *Principles of Economics* is the only volume of early marginalist theory to avoid the mathematical formalization used by both Jevons and Walras. Although Menger deploys the expected Crusoe example to illustrate the relation of value to needs, use-value, and quantity (133-135), his work on exchange focuses on the necessity of the social relationship between economizing individuals and economic activity. This approach effectively puts to one side the notion of the isolated economic agent.⁹

In 1867, Karl Marx took this contrast to its furthest extreme in the first volume of *Capital*, mocking the Crusoe-based notion of an isolated economic producer in the well-known chapter on the commodity fetish. Where Jevons depends upon an isolated individual aggregated after the fact, Marx’s work begins from an assumption that the social totality produces the individual. Marx’s critique takes up labor’s perspective in the production process to describe the social constitution of value. While his theory revolves around capital’s valorization by surplus-labor, such a situation is only possible in a mode of production where social needs are disaggregated and satisfied by commodities—that is to say, in which more value is produced by the increased socialization of production but

in which the satisfaction of social needs only takes place through individual exchanges. As satisfaction of needs becomes increasingly a matter of exchange, prior accumulation comes to dictate positions in production, with the poor and unpropertied left only to exchange their labor power. Only when one can purchase labor power does it become possible to extract value in excess of payment, i.e. to extract surplus-value. Marx's social perspective and methodology allowed him to produce one of the first works of macro-economics in *Capital 2*, as well as to consider the interaction of technology, profit, and labor in the third.¹⁰ These presuppositions of economic theory—the isolated individual or the social construction of the individual—are central to the economic issues in *The Moonstone*: Marx's consideration of the social production of value when confronted by other kinds of labor will help to illuminate the immaterial labor performed by the novel's narrators, while the intensive subjective isolation necessary to Jevons's rationalization of economic exchange can serve as a means for considering the consolidation of the novel's plot.

All the same, *The Moonstone* does not so much provide an exegesis of these economic perspectives as of the problems of collectivity that a particular economic organization brings with it. The conjunction of these economic theories helps to bring to the fore the novel's permeation by multiplicity even as its plot trajectory seems to exclude it. The plot's attempts to totalize the narrative (and the subsequent exclusions created by such totalization) have been the focus of critics since the novel's publication, most especially the common contemporary critique of the sensation novel, its highly structured plot. From Anthony Trollope's claim, "I can never lose the taste of the construction [in Collins]" (Trollope 257) to Winifred Hughes claim that *The Moonstone* represents Collins's "triumph of form" (165), the totalization of form and plot remains the critical rubric for Collins. Such critical fascination with the totalizing effects of plot are no less present in D.A. Miller's reading of the novel through the hermeneutics of suspicion, which folds the novel's excluded details back into a monological story of

social surveillance that “promotes a single perception of power” (56) through the distribution of detection throughout the social milieu.¹¹ This is not to claim that the construction of power centers through impotence does not occur throughout the novel, but rather that one can trace alongside such constructions of power the primary lines of flight that subtend and subvert such centers.¹²

My approach to the novel emphasizes the positive multiplication of positions within the novel, which are only subject to the triumph of form secondarily as part of a double articulation of power, an approach that not only explicates the novel’s content and expression but also fits its historical situation. While postcolonial criticism has explicated the novel’s historical relation to events in India, such criticism focuses on the alignment of capitalist exploitation with the state, privileging nationalist and imperialist constructions while overlooking the specific mechanisms of social, financial, and industrial production that link the center and periphery. John R. Reed noted the confluence between the *Moonstone*’s inspiration and the setting of the novel with the second Anglo-Sikh war of 1848-1849, but it seems equally important to note that while the novel is set during the rule of one of Britain’s earliest joint stock companies, it is also written ten years after its 1858 dissolution.¹³ The tension between corporate and state structures is conveyed by the temporal differentiation of the novel’s historical setting and its time of composition, reflecting the turn toward what historians P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins have termed “gentlemanly capitalism,” the conjunction of imperialism, finance, and the meritocracy of British imperial bureaucracy. In my examination of collective agency’s resonances across the novel, the state and the joint stock company fold into one another, an effect of Britain’s own conflicted relation with India that makes their thematic distantiation in the 1860s problematic at best.

Plot’s Autonomization: Critical Precedents and Oversights

Work on *The Moonstone* tends to focus on three modes of critique: the

postcolonial critique, which reads the novel as premised upon the imperial domination of India, either as a critical response to the colonial project or as implicitly involved in such by dint of representational form; the psychoanalytic critique, which reads the diamond's theft as part of a symbolic sexual economy that typically places emphasis on the Oedipal issues of particular characters; and the aforementioned epistemological critique, which uses the novel either as an example of epistemology's radical indeterminateness or as an example for one particular epistemological form, e.g. realism, empiricism, or historical knowledge. Postcolonial criticism tends to focus on the interconnection of the novel's representation of individual characters with larger scale social concerns. John R. Reed argues that the novel's sympathy for estranged individuals is part of its critique of the imperialist project, including its linkage of corporate crime with the British expropriation of India's wealth. By contrast, Ashish Roy argues that the novel operates through a double articulation of usurped property/propriety that creates a British imperialist semiotic that, with only marginal failures, "circulates culturally intolerable ruptures only to rediscover them as the currency of tolerance" (673). My approach is not so much a counter to such postcolonial critiques, rather an addition: the effective reorganization of social production within the colonizing nation leads to an internal intensification of capitalist production, yielding specific changes in economic, political, and social organization, but also subsequently intensifies its relation to the exterior colonized world.

By contrast, the psychoanalytic criticism of the novel tends to avoid engaging with social and economic thematics, focusing instead on character motivation. This field is perhaps the least populated, perhaps because the extant critiques exhibit the best of doctrinaire Freudian or Lacanian reading. Unfortunately, that means that the insights of these readings tend to find themselves overshadowed by a hackneyed Oedipalization that undercuts the reading.¹⁴ Lewis A. Lawson's Lacanian reading tries to map the diamond to a sexualized sign economy attuned to the context of character motivation, leading to the insight of Rosanna's role as both a castrating figure in relation to Franklin and a kind

of underclass id. Rather than exploring the positive lines of flight in these figures, Lewis instead constructs an Oedipal drama, with Rachel as Franklin's Oedipal-fantasy mother and Godfrey as the father. Indeed, the emphasis psychoanalytic criticism places on Franklin as the ego-like figure for analysis tends to reify the plot-driven focus on Franklin as the novel's "hero" in a way that epistemological criticism will take to a different end.

Epistemological critiques of the novel are by far the most numerous, in part because critics tend to fall prey to the novel's philosophical MacGuffin—Franklin Blake's use of pseudo-Hegelian logic in his parsing of situations via objective and subjective perspectives.¹⁵ Collins's parody of German philosophy is itself an indicator of the degree to which the novel surpasses such binarisms—not one perspective *or* the other, but rather this perspective *and* that one *and* another. In R.P. Ladilaw's reading of the novel, it becomes an example of the eternal return of the same, operates through dialectic of character and circumstance that empties individuality into a general repetition of events. W. David Shaw's reading also takes the Hegelian baiting, presenting the novel as an attempt to overcome a crisis of representation between two competing historical perspectives, positivist and Hegelian. Winifred Hughes's reading of the novel—its "triumph of form"—depends upon a similar Hegelian technique of collapsing ontology and epistemology, making the novel's form into a series of knowing acts such that: "In *The Moonstone*, knowledge is a substitute for action" (165). Sue Lonoff displaces this method onto the reader's synthetic judgment, claiming that the novel's multiple narrators express a problem in epistemology that readers address in their uptake of text much as in Robert Browning's *The Ring and the Book*.

Perhaps the most well known of the novel's epistemological critiques, however, remains that of D.A. Miller. Miller's Foucauldian reading of the novel relies on the diffusion of power through the socius as a means of disavowing while reifying a culture of surveillance. Miller leaves the impetus behind such surveillance unthematized, subjecting the novel to a generalized reading of suspicion and surveillance that creates a

tautology in which social surveillance is practiced in order to maintain a society surveilled. The vicious circle is only averted when surveilled society places itself under negation—or as Miller puts it, “the novel must always ‘say’ power as though it were saying *something else*” (56). Such a problem plays out the difficulty that subtends most—if not all—the epistemological readings of the novel: a tendency to idealize epistemology rather than construct a genealogy. If Miller wishes to read the novel as monological, such a reading expresses an ideological notion of a single truth—as Sue Lonoff argued in this context—but such an ideological truth is an effect of social production, not of truth. One cannot use Foucault to describe the episteme of *The Moonstone* without noting the episteme’s relation to particular institutions and discourses as part of a historical mode of social production, most especially if one would like to co-opt terms from Mikhail Bakhtin, whose notion of novelistic heteroglossia depends upon the interaction of trading cultures for its very generation, something all too germane to the global scope of *The Moonstone*.¹⁶ Epistemological readings focus on the revelation of truth in the plot’s resolution, privileging the narrative’s need to generate closure in light of its excesses, which Miller describes as its “paradoxical economy” (33). Miller’s description seems fitting, but only because such an economy tries to inscribe its agents into its outcome. Indeed, my reading attempts to revivify this metaphor in the novel’s creation of narrative and its historical context in capitalist production. If one insists on reading in light of the exclusion, of the constitution of the mystery plot, this is the monological economy of a reader who falls prey to the drive to know, who, like the reader of the eighteenth century sentimental novel Ezra Jennings believes to be appropriate light reading for Franklin Blake (Collins 418), reads for the next solicitation of affect. Instead of the excessive pleasure of sympathy (though sometimes that as well), the reader is rewarded by the pleasure of knowing, an epistemophilia. Critics of the novel perhaps focus on its epistemological bent not so much for its usefulness in reading the novel as for its meta-critical reiteration of their own position: How do *we* know, and just who gets to know?

Epistemology is merely the expression of a social organization of power and its mechanisms. If we know that the social organization of power operates through surveillance, then one might reasonably ask, “Why?”

The answer is at once all too apparent and yet barely explored. In prior chapters, I have often turned to Adam Smith’s theory of sympathy, in part because sympathy is a remnant of the sentimental novel that both Conrad and Eliot reactualize in different fashions, but also because such sympathy remains in the nineteenth century imaginary as a mechanism of social cohesion. Indeed, Smith’s sympathy was an attempt to describe how a society not premised on traditional interactions or static communities could function. Smithian sympathy and surveillance are part of what one might call an early market society episteme, one dependent on transparency, rationality, and social recognition. If people misrepresent themselves, then fraud can run rampant. If one person cannot recognize the intentions and economic position of another, exchange cannot take place. If one does not recognize one’s own position within society, there is the potential for disruption and danger to others. These are the ideological codes of market society from Adam Smith forward.¹⁷ Of course, as Frederic Jameson has noted, the inability of specular transparency to account for the complex economic relations of the British empire led to modernist formal innovations in an attempt to represent what remains out of field (55). Where Jameson sees the work of Forster as a kind of cinematic harbinger in this respect, I would argue that *The Moonstone* takes up a different proto-cinematic conceit in its attempt to link and narrate across what Gilles Deleuze called in the cinematic context any point whatever, allowing the reader to traverse the narrative spaces of India, Yorkshire, and London through the construction of an almost impersonal assemblage.¹⁸

Such impersonality stands in opposition to Miller’s monology of power. While other critics have argued against Miller—for example, Adele Wills argues in favor of a criticism that views fiction as a means of staging rather than resolving conflicts (93), and

Ashish Roy demonstrates the expression of colonial power in a novel that Miller claims “never really perceives power as such at all” (56)—but the overriding tendency of such criticism is to displace epistemology into the realm of jurisprudence, to read the novels in terms of legality. Such legality of personhood is, however, and as Hegel noted in the early nineteenth century, already embedded in an economics of private property.¹⁹ Against such transpositions of epistemology into juridical categories, I would argue that the basis of the episteme in credit-based capitalist production appears clearly throughout *The Moonstone*, is thematized by the story, and forms the basis of both the plot’s closure and its resistance excesses. Winifred Hughes claims that “victory [in the novel] belongs to rationality, defeat to the failure of reason” so that the plot “becomes crucial for its own sake” through the recompense of knowledge over action (142). Are we not then confronted by more than a shift in generic form but a multiplication of the components that make up that form? In the sensation novel (and later the detective novel), plot becomes *autonomous*, a separate aspect of the construction that does not so much depend on the depth of characterization as the construction of a puzzle to which characters can later be attached. Once autonomized, plot confronts the other aspects of the novel as potentially antagonistic features more or less subsumed to its own functionality.

Why is the autonomization of plot an important development? On the one hand, it expresses the novel’s reduction to a more readily consumable commodified form. In her study of the sensation novel, Lyn Pykett notes the link between the commodification of the sensation novel as part of the 1860s spectacularization of culture (2), which itself seems a foreshadowing of Debordian spectacle and the birth of what will become the attention economy. On the other hand, plot’s increased autonomy generates an antagonism with accepted modes of novelistic characterization. These begin in turn to take on their own autonomy. Critics of the sensation novel have often noted the problematic nature of character development in the genre: Walter Kendrick remarks that the major sin of the sensation novel to Victorian critics was its focus on plot (21), and

Nicholas Rance describes the counter-intuitive nature of Collins's characterization for his contemporary readers. The sensation novel's privileging of plot over character seemed to them to undermine the notion of novelistic characters possessing, in Rance's word, "an unlimited free will" (26). Yet the controlling hand of the plot allowed Collins to challenge respectable characterization, not just in *The Moonstone* but in *No Name* (1864) and *Armadale* (1866), both of which featured women all too readily amalgamated into the category of fallen woman. In *No Name*, Magdalen's series of impersonations and frauds to recapture her lost paternal name and wealth escalate to such a point that her feverish end seems more likely to issue in death than in the sudden rescue at the hands of a ship's captain that Collins actually delivers. Lydia Gwilt in *Armadale* is not just a fallen woman but a forger and murderer, yet the novel's representation of her makes it all too difficult for readers to comfortably discern her moral degradation. This turn in characterization—the expansiveness afforded to the possibilities of impersonation in Collins's work in general—can appear in these novels precisely because of the new autonomy of plot, and out of this autonomy one can begin to trace the contours of a new form of representational resistance to plot in its twisted character creations, even if such appear inverted and poisoned.

"A Friendless and Lonely Life": Final Utility and the
Isolation of the Economic Agent

The autonomy of plot in *The Moonstone* functions through a particular narrative drive that largely depends upon the gradual unraveling of the diamond theft mystery, an effect derived in part from the novel's serial publication in *All the Year Round*. Collins' integration of the serial break with into the structure of the plot tends to rely on the evocation of a question left in suspense until the next number. After the Indian prologue, the first installment moves through Betteredge's dilations on life in a Yorkshire country house, the diamond seemingly forgotten until the final sentence, when after some joking

with Franklin Blake, the conversation takes a serious turn: “How seriously, you will understand, when I tell you that, in his opinion, ‘It’ meant the Moonstone” (33). While the serial breaks also serve as ironic punctuations to scenes—Betteredge wishing for his pipe and *Robinson Crusoe*, or Miss Clack officiously bequeathing a pious book to Rachel at the close of her narration—such breaks are less telling than the instances in which the break not only elicits a new question for the plot but also simultaneously counsels patience. When Sergeant Cuff claims toward the end of the installment published in No. 460 (15 February 1868) that “*Nobody has stolen the Diamond*” (115), he follows the statement with an urging for Betteredge to “Wait a little. [...] The pieces of the puzzle are not all put together yet” (AYR 223; 115). When Ezra Jennings tells Franklin, “I am firmly persuaded that I can prove you to have been unconscious of what you were about, when you entered the room and took the Diamond” (381-382), he then proceeds to dash off to an adjacent village to see a patient, claiming, “I am not willfully trying your patience—I should only be adding to your suspense, if I attempted to relieve it as things are now” (382). The subsequent installment (No. 481, 11 July 1868), begins by meditating on the effects of such deferral:

How the interval of suspense to which I was now condemned might have affect other men in my position, I cannot pretend to say. The influence of the two hours’ probation upon *my* temperament was simply this. I felt physically incapable of remaining still in any one place, and morally incapable of speaking to any one human being, until I had first heard all that Ezra Jennings had to say to me. (AYR 97; 382)

Suspense depends upon an experience of an interval between the arousal of curiosity and its momentary satiety. The novel’s gestures toward epistemology in part grow from the stuttered movement between arousal and satiation that operates across time, both within the text through narrative deferral and through the novel’s serialized publication. That is to say, the pleasure of expanding one’s knowledge of the mystery is measured over time against a quantum of knowledge itself subject to change. For example, the drive to know what Rosanna has hidden in the Shivering Sand is only satisfied by revealing another

question, how Franklin could have stolen the diamond without conscious knowledge of his own activity. Indeed, the novel's plot constitutes itself around revelations of knowledge that are always less one element, and the plot maintains itself against a missing element not merely withheld from view but constantly changing. The novel's trajectory does not tend so much toward a zero-point where everything has been revealed, but rather a deferral leading toward new revelations.

Such is apparent in the novel's concluding installment. The end of the domestic plot of *The Moonstone* is quite similar to that of *The Woman in White*, with the marriage plot capped by the birth of a child to inherit the estate and stabilize the shifting identities of the novel's central characters. Such could not be more explicit in *The Woman in White* when Marian playfully introduces the narrator to his own child: "Walter Hartright—the Heir of Limmeridge" (Collins 1860, 627). In *The Moonstone*, the scene becomes a final opportunity for Betteredge to use *Robinson Crusoe* for divination when Franklin arrives with news of Rachel's pregnancy. The mystical reference to text points to the insufficiency of the domestic cycle to close the plot. Franklin's announcement may be the recommencement of the biological cycle, but Betteredge's defense of *Crusoe* marks the textual skid that issues in the epilogue's tripartite narration. Hence even as Murthwaite's closing lines try to reinscribe the cyclic via an orientalizing notion of "cycles of time," the final two sentences do not so much note a return but rather the asymptotic line of flight from a zero-point of knowledge that has motivated the text all along: "What will be the next adventures of the Moonstone? Who can tell!" (Collins 1868, 472).

In its narrative drive, the limited satisfaction of the novel's plot provides a useful contrast to the tracing of consumer satisfaction in William Stanley Jevons's "final utility theory," rechristened "marginal utility theory" in 1890 by Alfred Marshall. Much as the plot of *The Moonstone* operates through the serial deferral of a final piece of the mystery, Jevons's theory operates by tracing the all-but-final portion of a commodity traded in exchange to determine changes in price or, in Jevons's words, the final degree of utility is

the “degree of utility of the last addition, or the next possible addition of a very small, or infinitely small, quantity to the existing stock” (Jevons 1871, 51). As an example, Jevons points to the movement of prices on the Consols market, pointing out that “the market price of the funds is affected from hour to hour not by the enormous amounts which *might* be bought or sold at extreme prices, but by the comparatively insignificant amounts which *are* being sold or bought at the existing prices” (Jevons 1871, 110). While the Utilitarian rationalism of Jevons’ work is of a piece with the majority of nineteenth century political economic thought, his use results in a different methodology from production-oriented political economists such as John Stuart Mill. Jevons turned political economy on its head, leaving its emphasis on labor and the production of value for a theory focused on a mechanics of consumption and exchange that functioned by tracing a commodity’s utility to a particular consumer. Such utility is not inherent to the commodity, but rather only appears under particular circumstances according to the needs of an individual. The utility of a commodity is its desirability for *this individual*, and varies according to the quantity of the commodity that *this individual* already possesses. Yet Jevons’s economics does not even try to estimate a commodity’s total utility to this individual—e.g. how much one might desire a thing as such—but only its *final degree of utility* to the consumer, or rather the last desirable portion for which a consumer would be willing to exchange something else in order to obtain the commodity in question. Consumers cannot thus be compared in terms of their subjective desires.

One need look no further in *The Moonstone* for evidence of this kind of thinking than in Ezra Jennings’ musings on the proper dose of laudanum to administer to Franklin Blake during their experiment. Jennings personal use provides a counterpoint to the amount of laudanum given to Franklin, demonstrating the irreducibility of individual consumption: from Jennings’ full dose of “five hundred drops” (410) to Franklin’s miniscule “forty minims” (413). Yet even Franklin’s small dose here is a marginal increase ordered by Jennings since

on this occasion, Mr. Blake knows beforehand that he is going to take the laudanum—which is equivalent, physiologically speaking, to his having (unconsciously to himself) a certain capacity in him to resist the effects. If my view is right, a larger quantity is therefore imperatively required, this time, to repeat the results which the smaller quantity produced, last year. (413).

The correct prediction of individual affect is central to the resolution of the mystery, and this prediction relies upon knowledge of the variation of individual susceptibility to a certain object and a subsequent correct calculation of the proper quantity to produce the necessary affect without rendering Franklin unconscious with an excessive dose. Beyond his individual physiological experience with the drug, even Franklin's knowledge of his prior experience changes the drug's effect on him. In the novel's description of laudanum's subjective intensity, one begins to glimpse the irreducible individuality and subsequent isolation of each subject.

Although Jevons's aggregation of supply and market price operates through social aggregation, he grounds his work on an individualized notion of consumption derived from Bentham and Bain. While he later focused attention on institutional innovations that allowed for the distribution of value in works such as *Money and the Mechanism of Exchange* and *The State and Labour*, his theory of economic exchange relies on the variations of bodily affect produced by changes in the quantity of an object able to produce such an affect. Marginal utility theory is grounded in the assumption that "every appetite or sense is more or less rapidly satiated. A certain quantity of an object received, a further quantity is indifferent to us, or may even excite disgust" (Jevons 1866, §8). Since Jevons's theory identifies as equivalents the biological satiety of an appetite and the conscious desire for an economic instrument such as Consols, exchange becomes an inherent component of the maintenance and reproduction of life even as the objects which maintain and reproduce life are held to be unique and incomparable: "This function of utility is peculiar to each kind of object, and more or less to each individual" (Jevons 1866, §9).²⁰

The individuation of utility on display in the 1866 essay, however, pales in comparison to the sweeping philosophical declaration that Jevons makes in *The Theory of Political Economy* on the possibility of comparing utility between individuals:

The reader will find, again, that there is never, in any single instance, an attempt made to compare the amount of feeling in one mind with that in another. [...] Every mind is thus inscrutable to every other mind, and no common denominator of feeling seems possible. But even if we could compare the feelings of different minds, we should not need to do so; for one mind only affects another indirectly. Every event in one mind is weighed only against other motives in the same mind, never against the motives in other minds. Each person is to other persons a portion of the outward world—the *non-ego* as the metaphysicians call it. Thus the motives in the mind of A may give rise to phenomena which may be represented by motives in the mind of B; but between A and B there is a gulf. Hence the weighing of motives must always be confined to the bosom of the individual. (Jevons 1871, 14)

On the one hand, the world of sensation that economics relies upon is one of absolute isolation. No transmission or commonality of feeling exists, only comparative representational structures isolated within individual minds. On the other hand, Jevons's presuppositions about the mind and the transmission of affect remain exterior to his actual realm of investigation. While Jevons claims that economic laws are equally in force whether "in the case of individuals and nations," he admits that "in reality, it is a law operating in the case of multitudes of individuals which gives rise to the aggregate represented in the transactions of a nation" (15). That is to say, while Jevons's work begins a process of tracing social interactions, his logical framework demands the creation of a trajectory that begins in simplicity and ends in complexity. As such, he posits agential isolation to describe the processes of marginal utility via biological affect—which recalls the isolation of Adam Smith's sympathetic spectator—although he must begin from an account of social behavior, an aggregation of social habits, which allows him to draw comparisons between the incomparable experiences of individuals. In *The Moonstone*, Betteredge's description of his role carrying out Jennings orders perhaps best encapsulates this contradiction between the individual solely motivated by

incomparable affect and the social measurements that determine his experience of affect even though he does not know it: “I’m a blind agent—that’s what I am” (Collins 1868, 403). Indeed, everyone in final utility theory is a “blind agent” since Jevons’s description of individual experience is entirely to one side of his method and does not appear to be in any way part of the motivation of an economic agent: “practically, however, it is quite impossible to detect the operation of general laws of this kind in the actions of one or a few individuals” (Jevons 15). That is to say, although final utility theory engages with the complexities of social aggregation, it is philosophically premised on an impossible foundation of individual desire and comparative representation as the presupposition of such aggregates.

Alongside the serial satisfactions of *The Moonstone*, the paradoxical constitution of Jevons’s theory helps to bring forward the problem of collectivity in the text. In much the same way that Jevons disavows the specificity of social aggregation in favor of an individual that can never be traced, *The Moonstone* disavows its relation with the social multitude that it conjures. On the one hand, the novel aggregates texts in its attempt to narrate an all but inexplicable event. On the other hand, each of the novel’s narrators is afflicted with an intense isolation that inhibits the creation of the text as well as the recognition of the novel’s multiple social organizations (of which more to come). While John R. Reed argued that social outsiders such as Franklin Blake receive a privileged position in the novel, the relation between the position of the outsider and the construction of the narrative has remained unexamined. I would argue that the aggregate structure of *The Moonstone* and its focus on excluded characters are an effect of the dispersal of linguistic (immaterial) production across class positions. That is to say, these two facets of the novel are an effect of the appearance of multitude in the form of immaterial producers. Such is especially apparent with Rosanna, who tells Betteredge early on, “It’s more lonely to me to be among the other servants, knowing I am not what they are, than it is to be here” (Collins 1868, 38). While loneliness is for Rosanna a

function of social isolation, for Betteredge and Franklin the word instead becomes a metonymy for the Yorkshire landscape where Rosanna prefers to wander (84, 130), especially the Shivering Sand, which Franklin calls “the lonely little bay” (312) as he waits for the tide to retrieve the missing lockbox. The externalization of loneliness as disfigurement afflicts Rosanna’s friend, Limping Lucy, although Betteredge prefers to term her manner “wretchedness” (191) rather than loneliness. The novel’s other major figure for loneliness is Ezra Jennings, who not only describes his scientific work on delirium as “the friend of many lonely hours” (374), but his very existence as a “friendless and lonely life” (430). Such loneliness seems to infect Dr. Candy at Jennings’s death, leaving the addled doctor feeling “very lonely” (461). Although Rachel Verinder never takes over the narration, her self-imposed isolation during its first half takes on a different form after her mother’s death, when lawyer Matthew Bruff refers to her in his narrative as “so young and so lonely” (279).

Indeed, loneliness is the basis for the irrational actions that keep the novel’s aggregation of narratives and its central figure of rationalization, Sergeant Cuff, from uncovering the mystery. Cuff’s rational explanations are only refuted by the irrational actions of agents motivated by loneliness: Rachel refuses to identify Franklin as the thief or speak to him (either event would subvert the plot completely); Rosanna hides Franklin’s paint-spotted nightgown to be able to prove her devotion to him at a later date when it would have been easier for her to dispose of it altogether, and her suicide is another irrational effect of her overwhelming loneliness. Ezra Jennings provides the positive aspect of such irrationality to the plot’s construction. His loneliness offers the solution to Franklin’s actions: his notes, which reconstruct Mr. Candy’s dosing of Franklin’s drink with laudanum and provide the basis for their reconstruction of the diamond’s theft, are part of his book on delirium, a project he maintains out of loneliness, certain it “will probably never be finished; and it will certainly never be published” (374). The isolation of characters provides motivation for the novel’s pivotal acts.

Counterpoised to the intractable contingency of individual action by lonely characters is the novel's collation of texts, which trace the movement of events along a single developmental trajectory. Although Franklin resolves at one point, "as a means of enriching the deficient resources of my own memory—to appeal to the memory of the rest of the [dinner] guests; to write down all that they could recollect of the social events of the birthday; and to test the result, thus obtained, by the light of what had happened afterwards, when the company had left the house" (362), the collation of texts in *The Moonstone* bear no resemblance to such a *Rashomon*-like construction. The novel instead follows a tight temporal trajectory entailed by the diamond's theft, only returning to the event itself as a subject of discussion embedded in the continuing passage of time. The plot's single-minded temporal trajectory, however, already appears to the text's narrators as part of Franklin Blake's editorial artifice. In closing the first section, Betteredge notes this while deploying an ironic juridical metaphor on the reader:

In answer to this, I can only state that I am acting under orders, and that those orders have been given to me (as I understand) in the interests of truth. I am forbidden to tell more in this narrative than I knew myself at the time. Or, to put it plainer, I am to keep strictly within the limits of my own experience, and am not to inform you of what other persons told me—for the very sufficient reason that you are to have the information from those other persons themselves, at first hand. In this matter of the Moonstone the plan is, not to present reports, but to produce witnesses. I picture to myself a member of the family reading these pages fifty years hence. Lord! what a compliment he will feel it, to be asked to take nothing on hear-say, and to be treated in all respects like a Judge on the bench. (Collins 1868, 197)

Collins deployed a similar explication to the novel's folio structure in *The Woman in White*, but the juridical acted as an explicit structural device in the novel's opening, preceding even the introduction of Walter Hartright with Collins intoning "as the Judge might once have heard it, so the Reader shall hear it now" (Collins 1860, 9). In *The Moonstone*, however, the conflation of judge and reader is not only withheld until the novel's mid-point, but operates less as a justification of the text's structure than a sarcastic comment on Franklin's flattering editorial treatment of his expected aristocratic

readers (“a member of the [Verrinder] family reading these pages fifty years hence”). Moreover, when Miss Clack notes Franklin’s strictures—“I am cruelly limited to my actual experience of persons and things” (260)—she directly contradicts Betteredge’s ironic elevation of the reader to judge with an excess of Christian forgiveness, exclaiming to her readers after Rachel makes an unflattering remark to her: “But, oh, don’t let us judge! My Christian friends, don’t let us judge!” (216).

The battle between editorial judgment and the novel’s narration takes another form as Franklin interrupts Clack with justificatory footnotes as well as their transcribed correspondence regarding the strictures placed on her narrative. The temporal trajectory of the plot or its choice of narrators does not so much create the formal plot trajectory by keeping certain perspectives and revelations from view but rather such limitations appear as an artifice within the text to the narrators themselves. The narration of *The Moonstone* locates a contradiction between the economic continuum of isolated individuals and aggregate exchanges. Such a disjunction between the lonely irrational character and the rationalized aggregate of texts expresses the potential for a newly empowered social organization undermined by presuppositions of a society constituted by isolated individuals.

Real Subsumption and Immaterial Labor

It is this disjunction between the individual and society—the presupposition of a movement from simplicity to complexity—that takes us to Marx. At first glance, Marx’s *Capital*, published a year prior to the novel, would seem to have little to say about the novel. Although many of the narrators are economically disadvantaged, none are industrial workers. The majority are unproductive laborers, part of what Marx termed the “parasitic class,” from household servants like Gabriel Betteredge and Rosanna Spearman to professionals like Matthew Bruff, Mr. Candy and Ezra Jennings, and state operatives like Sergeant Cuff. Insofar as they do not produce material goods, these

characters are not productive since they provide services. Though she barely retains her shabby genteel status after “events in the money-market (which diminished even my miserable little income)” (260), Miss Clack is also unproductive, a rentier. Nor Franklin is part of capitalist production, rather of a diminished aristocracy. Daniel Hack’s work on Collins’s *No Name* confronts unproductive labor, linking the fear that literature itself verges on such parasitic activity with Captain Wragge’s begging-letter writing, though without drawing on the political economic questions raised by this intersection. Because services are not embodied in an alienable commodity, Marx categorized this labor as an exchange of use-value rather than a value-creating activity.²¹ Yet in the preparatory notebooks that make up the *Grundrisse* and drafts of *Capital*, Marx considered the possibility that unproductive labor could become productive in the capitalist mode of production. The crux is a shift from production centered on labor to production centered on technology, what Marx called in “Results of the Immediate Process of Production” the shift from capital’s formal subsumption of production to the real subsumption.²² As capitalist production applies scientific processes to production, its ratio of fixed capital (machinery, technology, etc.) to human labor power tilts away from labor, and tends to accumulate fixed capital as an ever greater part of the production process, e.g. larger machines, fewer workers. This tendency, however, also leads “an ever increasing number of types of labor [to be] included in the immediate concept of *productive labor*” (1040).²³ This tendency enfolds a variety of classically unproductive labor:

In capitalist production, the tendency for all products to be commodities and all labor to be *wage-labor* becomes absolute. A whole mass of functions and activities which formerly had an aura of sanctity about them, which passed as ends in themselves, which were performed for nothing or where payment was made in roundabout ways (like all the professions, barristers, doctors, in England where the barrister and the physician neither could nor can sue for payment to this very day)—all these become directly converted into *wage laborers* however various their activities and *payment* may be. And, on the other hand, their valuation, the *price* of these different *activities* from the prostitute to the king—becomes subject to the laws that govern the price of wage-labor.” (Marx 1990, 1041-1042)

While all products tend to become commodities in this stage of production, the tendency of all labor to become wage labor affects the upper-echelons of the non-productive class, whether the professions such as barristers, and doctors or the aristocracy itself, and the lowest reaches of the lumpenproletariat, the prostitute.²⁴ The novel's character-narrators could thus exhibit at least one commonality across class positions as different forms of unproductive labor.

However, another formerly unproductive labor unites the novel's narrators: literary production. In these pages on real subsumption, Marx addresses the articulations of a writer's labor:

For instance, Milton, who wrote *Paradise Lost*, was an unproductive worker. On the other hand, a writer who turns out work for his publisher in a factory style is a productive worker. Milton produced *Paradise Lost* as a silkworm produces silk, as the activation of *his own* nature. He later sold his product for £5 and thus became a merchant. But the literary proletarian of Leipzig who produces books, such as compendia on political economy, at the behest of his publisher is pretty nearly a productive worker since his production is taken over by capital and only occurs in order to increase it. A singer who sings like a bird is an unproductive worker. If she sells her song for money, she is to that extent a wage-laborer or merchant. But if the same singer is engaged by an entrepreneur who makes her sing to make money then she becomes a productive worker, since she *produces* capital directly. A schoolmaster who instructs others is not a productive worker. But a schoolmaster who works for wages in an institution along with others, using his own labor to increase the money of the entrepreneur who owns the knowledge-mongering institution, is a productive worker. But for the most part, work of this sort has scarcely reached the stage of being subsumed even formally under capital, and belongs essentially to a transitional stage. (Marx 1990, 1044)

When a writer produces “as the activation of *his own* nature,” his work is unproductive, even though it may enter economic circulation later. When such labor is commissioned, it becomes wage labor, and if it supports a mediating agent, it becomes productive. In this same passage, Marx describes a singer who is unproductive when she “sings like a bird,” becomes a wage-laborer “if she sells her song for money,” and “*produces* capital directly” if hired by an entrepreneur who profits by her labor (*ibid.*). With labor's direct

production of capital, it should more properly be called immaterial labor as it produces an immaterial good for a capitalist enterprise.²⁵

In “Results,” Marx argued that such immaterial labor was still to come: “work of this sort has scarcely reached the stage of being subsumed even formally under capital, and belongs essentially to a transitional stage” (ibid.). In the earlier *Grundrisse* notebooks, however, the shift toward immaterial labor undermines the labor theory of value itself. With the concentration of productive power in technology, the basis of wealth shifts from labor to the development of knowledge, making “the *theft of alien labour time, on which the present wealth is based, appears a miserable foundation in the face of this new one, created by large-scale industry itself*” (Marx 1858, 705). Marx argued that capitalist production’s technologic dependence

indicates to what degree social knowledge has become a *direct force of production*, and to what degree, hence, the conditions of the process of social life itself have come under the control of the general intellect and been transformed in accordance with it (706).

As the singer employed by an entrepreneur illustrated, when the social knowledge produced by immaterial labor becomes the basis of production, what Marx calls here “the general intellect,” it is directly productive. While the production of fixed capital becomes an end in itself (710), the time it sets free—“disposable time” (708)—becomes the measure of value, not labor, as humanity itself becomes the ultimate form of fixed capital:

Free time—which is both idle time and time for higher activity—has naturally transformed its possessor into a different subject, and he then enters into the direct production process as this different subject. This process is then both discipline, as regards the human being in the process of becoming; and at the same time, practice, experimental science, materially creative and objectifying science, as regards the human being who has become, in whose head exists the accumulated knowledge of society. (712)

Marx posits the regime of free time as both the revolutionary aim of workers and the continuation of capitalist production into the instrumentalization of society’s free time.

As knowledge becomes an internal form of fixed capital, real subsumption marks labor’s

socialization through capital and its appearance as a force potentially autonomous from capital.²⁶

Immaterial labor has unique ramifications for credit and the financial system in Marxist thought. As David Harvey notes in *The Limits to Capital* (1982), credit—i.e. fictitious capital—overcomes the barrier that fixed capital can pose to accumulation by allowing capital to circulate separately from its concrete form in the production process. Yet even as credit overcomes the obstacle that fixed capital can pose to the processes of capital, it distorts the representation of value. This is the classic Marxist conflict between credit as a means of circulation and money as a measure of value. By contrast, Christian Marazzi has recently argued that such representational interactions have become productive in the contemporary mode of production, pointing to the intersection of knowledge production with the collective investment of workers' savings in financial markets as the basis for a system in which language and its conventions have become directly productive of value.²⁷ Appearing in the midst of Britain's creation of a developed international finance system, which included deposit banking across classes and an expanded interest in investment, *The Moonstone* takes up finance as a paradoxical contrast with its narrators, a centralizing figure to the decentralization of narrative form. Such a move effectively collapses credit and money into the representations of value against the narratorial proliferation of signs meant to smooth the circulation of value. Yet if one approaches the production of narrative as itself an activity able to produce capital directly—that is to say, as immaterial labor—the two begin to blur into a larger productive assemblage.

The Moonstone turns the thematic and structural aspects of Collins's early novels into questions of immaterial production. *The Woman in White* (1860), *No Name* (1864), and *Armadale* (1866) focused on identity's malleability, from Laura Fairlie's swapped identity with the dead Anne Catherick, to Magdalen's multiple impersonations to regain her patrimonial name and wealth, and the competing destinies of the two Allan

Armadales. In *The Moonstone*, the mystery plot subsumes questions of identity, creating a work permeated by the production of signs as servants and service workers find their unproductive service labor displaced into narration's immaterial labor. This subsumption of service work to immaterial production acts as a placeholder for an emergent mode of production, with the narrators who resist this attempt to make them produce capital directly with language trying to extend their narrative labor beyond capitalist rationality by turning death into absolute free time. These narrators, Rosanna and Ezra, extend from Collins's earlier sympathetic fallen women, which the generic conventions of the sensation novel's highly structured plot allowed, from Magdalen's unexpected rescue from fever by a passing ship's captain to Lydia Gwilt's partial redemption when she saves her husband from death before killing herself. Death becomes more than a limit for problematic characters in *The Moonstone*, but rather a disembodied speaking position, displayed by Rosanna and Ezra's unmarked graves, a refusal of location lest it economically inscribe their labor. Ezra's anonymous burial and Rosanna's disappearance in the Shivering Sand form a liminal space for their narratives to enter the world as the products of free time rather than labor time. Rosanna's description of the Sand as a struggling form of collectivity becomes a trope for the struggle of immaterial labor engaged in the production of social knowledge to escape the economics of labor.

While the novel's narration confronts immaterial labor, its use of banking mechanisms and its comparisons financial fraud elicit another aspect real subsumption. Immaterial labor's dissemination of fixed capital through the social world as common technical knowledge can be contrasted with the joint stock company's limitation of socialized ownership, what Marx calls in *Capital 3* "the abolition of capital as private property within the confines of the capitalist mode of production itself" (Marx 1894, 567). Following a line of Marxist thought that traces back to Rudolf Hilferding, Antonio Negri argues that finance and the joint stock company are not a transitional phase toward a new international, but rather the means by which "capitalist rationality is now trying to

reconstruct, through financial mechanisms, the capacity to measure its own development” (74). Yet the conjunction of finance and immaterial labor forms a dual movement: on the one hand, immaterial labor makes the means of production part of the common social world; on the other hand, the centralization of joint stock companies and financial organizations subordinates this making common, reinforcing a separation between worker and owner.

The Moonstone articulates a set of relations between the immaterial labor that narrates the diamond’s movements and the financial mechanisms that mark it. While the novel’s quasi-epistolary narration depicts a socialized and creative immaterial labor, its use of banking the novel thematizes collective social production as an effect of the social integration achieved by Britain’s financial network. In a scene toward the novel’s end, finance’s supplanting of collective agency informs Franklin and Bruff’s attempt to track the gem when Luker claims it from his bank. The crush of people in the lobby “waiting their turn to take money out, or to pay money in” (Collins 1868, 433) not only marks the bank as a central point in the novel’s socio-economic organization, but the obscured nature of social relations given the bank’s central role in credit’s circulation. Such confusion marks the social integration achieved by capital as system of unfathomable exchange that increasingly relies on specialized observers to explain its machinations to itself. In this case, though, it is not the professional economist who explains the hidden qualities of exchange but Bruff’s hired street urchin, Gooseberry, who correctly discerns Luker passing the gem to a tall bearded man. The mass of people around Luker as he “slowly made his way to the door—now in the thickest, now in the thinnest part of the crowd” (434), leads Franklin and Bruff to believe that Luker passes the gem to a man in a grey suit, and this displacement of attention demonstrates the expansive network of economic exchange of the novel’s social world. After watching as the man “paid in a cheque—received a receipt for it—and turned to go out” (434), they follow him to a chemist’s shop that Bruff recognizes with an exclamation as “My chemist!” (435). While

the diamond's theft from the Seringapatam's treasury inaugurates the shift of social, political, and economic power from a single center to an international economic network, Franklin and Bruff's tracking of the diamond displays British society's perforation by immaterial financial relations.

This reframes the Indian cabal surrounding the Moonstone as a kind of counter-power to the financial system, an inverted replication of the joint stock company. The Indian who inquires at Bruff's office receives Bruff's praise from their shared sense of value: "he did what none of my own countrymen had ever done, in all my experience of them—he respected my time" (284). The emphasis on the value of time—both personal and in relation to the loan made against the diamond—reiterates production's changed terrain, as does the corporate structure the Indians have created and maintained to return the Moonstone to its status as religious fetish, which allows them to command resources across time and space with a continuing change of personnel. The novel's India specialist, Mr. Murthwaite, describes it:

These present men of ours have succeeded to the men who were here before them. If they had only done that, the matter would not have been worth inquiring into. But they have done more. They have succeeded to the organization which their predecessors established in this country. Don't start! The organization is a very trumpery affair, according to our ideas, I have no doubt. I should reckon it up as including the command of money; the services, when needed, of that shady sort of Englishman, who lives in the byways of foreign life in London; and, lastly, the secret sympathy of such few men of their own country, and (formerly, at least) of their own religion, as happen to be employed in ministering to some of the multitudinous wants of this great city. Nothing very formidable, as you see! But worth notice at starting, because we may find occasion to refer to this modest little Indian organization as we go on. (Collins 1868, 288-289)

Not only does the Indian cabal depend on the "secret sympathy" of fellow countrymen, but these men are in Britain to serve "the multitudinous wants of this great city." This multiplication of wants brings with it a corporate multitude designed not simply to reclaim the Moonstone, but to reclaim it from a specific obstacle: the British financial system. A bank keeps the Indians in check when the gem is deposited by Franklin's

father for Herncastle, again when Franklin returns it to the bank upon first sensing that he is being watched, and again in Yorkshire. Moreover, the Indian organization only appears in the novel when they need to plot around the credit mechanisms that govern the jewel's redemption at the final London bank to hold the stone, and the organization ferrets out information about finance, while itself maintaining an organization to supply monetary means, employees, and organizational contact. Although Murthwaite dismisses the organization as "nothing very formidable, as you see!" (289), it is an attempt to confront the financial network of British society on its own terms. Its success, however, does not disrupt this network, but rather affirms it, reflecting in limited form the very system it resists.

"In Twenty Different Minds": The Many Sides of Franklin

Blake

Unlike the Indian organization, narrative immaterial labor does not mirror collective entities but rather offers a socialized productive force marked by a subsequent economic engagement or refusal. This is perhaps more recognizable as the conflict that Marxists like Harvey have noted between the world of credit as a means of circulation and money as a measure of value: while credit's expansion aids the accumulation of capital by speeding its movement, when taken to its furthest extreme the proliferation of credit threatens its ability to represent value in the same manner as money. Some narrators accept their subservient position to Franklin's editorial structure, albeit with varying degrees of Miss Clack's *ressentiment*, and others resist. Franklin acts as a hinge for the displacement of narrative immaterial labor into finance: while his unconscious theft of the diamond acts as a trope for the collective labor of knowledge production with his experience of the self-as-other, Franklin disavows his internal multiplicity. This is in part misdirection, but his disavowal also inscribes Franklin as a unified subject via personal credit. When Bruff claims that Franklin's pity for Rosanna "does you credit, my

dear sir—does you credit!” (339), Franklin takes the opportunity to explain the credit woes that have placed him under suspicion. Franklin took a loan from a Parisian restaurant owner, but, unable to pay when the loan came due, he “sent the man a bill” (340). However, as “my name was unfortunately too well known on such documents,” the restaurant owner “failed to negotiate it,” and this debt followed Franklin to Yorkshire where the restaurant owner’s brother attempts to collect it (*ibid.*). The episode makes Franklin less personally credible to Rachel and allows her to believe he stole the Moonstone to pay debts and “not for the mere pleasure of stealing it” (330), but it also reveals that Franklin’s name is not without credit, but only carries a limited supply. Franklin’s debts reiterate the generally untroubled relation of money and representation in the novel: his name is too well known to negotiate a bad bill and his body too readily identified to avoid collection. Although the stain on Franklin’s nightgown left during the diamond’s theft speaks to his unconscious internal multiplicity, his name’s limited credit displaces this internal division into the figure of the prodigal continental as a recognizable form of excess.

As a narrator, Franklin reiterates this dislocation by distancing himself from the novel’s earlier descriptions of his internal plurality. In Betteredge’s narrative, Franklin’s foreign education made him into a man of multiple personalities

he had come back with so many different sides to his character, all more or less jarring with each other, that he seemed to pass his life in a state of perpetual contradiction with himself. He could be a busy man, and a lazy man; cloudy in the head, and clear in the head; a model of determination, and a spectacle of helplessness, all together. He had his French side, and his German side, and his Italian side—the original English foundation showing through, every now and then, as much as to say, “Here I am, sorely transmogrified, as you see, but there’s something of me left at the bottom of him still.” (55-56)

Franklin’s plurality reflects multiple intellectual approaches: German philosophical expositions, French witty remarks, and Italian lazy indecision. Moreover, one can note here the extent to which the British nationality is marked by finance: Franklin’s “English

foundation” only appears when he follows Betteredge’s advice to deposit the Moonstone at the Frizinghall Bank. This leads Franklin to declare, “Betteredge, you are worth your weight in gold” (56).²⁸ During Rachel’s birthday dinner, Franklin’s personalities wreak havoc, offend Mr. Candy, and create the circumstances of the crime when Candy doses Franklin’s drink with laudanum in retribution. When the house discovers the diamond’s loss, Betteredge cannot tell “whether it was the French side or the English side, [but] the right side of Mr. Franklin seemed uppermost now” and “the only question was, How long would it last?” (92), only to see him “[give] way, in the interval since his departure, under the stress” (93). The events that follow Rosanna’s death “let out all the foreign sides of his character, one on top of another, like rats out of a bag” (179) and lead Franklin’s German side to conclude from Rachel’s actions that “Rachel, properly speaking, is *not* Rachel, but Somebody Else” (181). Multiplicity follows Franklin in Betteredge’s narrative. Indeed, before giving Rachel the diamond, Franklin’s indecision appears in non-nationalized form: “He was in twenty different minds about the Diamond in as many minutes” (71).

However, when Franklin begins his narration, he immediately asserts the uniformity of his character, and dismisses Betteredge’s descriptions:

The picture presented of me, by my old friend Betteredge, at the time of my departure from England, is (as I think) a little overdrawn. He has, in his own quaint way, interpreted seriously one of his young mistress’s many satirical references to my foreign education; and has persuaded himself that he actually saw those French, German, and Italian sides to my character, which my lively cousin only professed to discover in jest, and which never had any real existence, except in our good Betteredge’s own brain. (296-297)

By rebuffing Betteredge’s descriptions as too literal interpretations of Rachel’s “many satirical references to my foreign education,” Franklin implicitly links Betteredge’s faulty narration to the old man’s love for *Robinson Crusoe*. Betteredge uses *Crusoe* for “prophetic discovery” (409)—Franklin calls this “his favorite delusion” [409]—and replicates *Crusoe*’s use of the Bible with Defoe’s secular text. Indeed, Betteredge takes

taking Defoe's prefatory description of the novel literally: "*a religious Application of Events to the Uses to which wise Men always apply them (viz.) to the Instruction of others by this Example*" (Defoe 3).²⁹ Franklin turns Betteredge's confusion of the literal and figurative—a marker of his limited command of cultural capital—to explain away his description of Franklin's character.

From this point, the narrative relies on Franklin's more nuanced ability to discern the world and the differences between the figurative and the literal. Franklin not only supplants Betteredge's narration but the multiplicity Betteredge described to become the novel's protagonist and its most prominent narratorial voice. This dislocation of narratorial perspective is the crux of the mystery's structure and thematizes the story's use of subjective plurality as a means of creating plot. The revelation of Franklin's unconscious theft depends upon its focalization through his own incredulous consciousness. As he pulls the long-sought nightgown from the Shivering Sand, Franklin finds its laundry mark to "read—MY OWN NAME" (314). The following lines emphasize this strange confrontation with his name:

There were the familiar letters which told me that the nightgown was mine. I looked up from them. There was the sun; there were the glittering waters of the bay; there was old Betteredge, advancing nearer and nearer to me. I looked back again at the letters. My own name. Plainly confronting me—my own name.

"If time, pains, and money can do it, I will lay my hand on the thief who took the Moonstone."—I had left London, with those words on my lips. I had penetrated the secret which the quicksand had kept from every other living creature. And, on the unanswerable evidence of the paint-stain, I had discovered Myself as the Thief. (Collins 1868, 314)

Franklin's internal difference becomes one between what Jacques Lacan called the subject of the statement and the subject of the enunciation. In this respect, I concur with Lewis A. Lawson's psychoanalytic reading of Rosanna as the novel's castrating figure, while putting aside the Oedipal drama in which Lawson inscribes Franklin, Rachel, and Godfrey. Castration is, of course, central to the Lacanian symbolic and marks the

disavowal of the presubjective world of partial objects, but I would emphasize that this move is part of the text's disavowal of collectivity. When Franklin discovers the hidden gown, he confronts in his name his unconscious activity as an otherness of language, a problem of identification between his enunciation and his name, which leads to the stuttered repetition of "my own name" in his discovery of "Myself as the Thief." From the graphical emphasis of "Myself" and Thief" to full capitalization of "MY OWN NAME," the subject is lexically inscribed. While Franklin's narration creates a unitary narrating subject to dismiss Betteredge's descriptions, plurality remains in the linguistic excess of a name that knows more than he does. Franklin's scientific exoneration ameliorates such linguistic alterity by rendering his delirious ranting rational to reveal a stable identity that Franklin maintains even when unconscious. Thus even though the laudanum causes Franklin to "[fail] in coherence" (423), he can still verbalize his state of mind as he searches for the diamond to return to the bank (424). This is demanded by his role as protagonist—guaranteeing his narrations, his actions, and his love for Rachel—and it is his initial unification of character in his assumption of the position of chief narrator that makes it possible, a displacement of the lower-class collectivity of narration into a properly unified and class-based narrative.

In the novel's latter half, this also serves to assert the stability of another potentially divided identity: Rachel Verinder. Though described as an independent spirit unwilling to bend to the judgment of others, it is not simply Franklin who comes to the conclusion that Rachel is somehow divided or "not Rachel." In her description of Rachel's obstinacy, Lady Verinder's phrase also provides a figural split in Rachel's character. As Betteredge writes, "Over and over again, I have heard my lady say, 'Rachel's best friend and Rachel's worst enemy are, one and the other—Rachel herself'" (65). While Rachel's actions after the diamond's disappearance illustrate division rather than obstinacy—"In a rage, one moment; in tears, the next!" (98)—the revelation of Franklin's role in the gem's theft substantiates Rachel's obstinacy as her the root of her

identity. Not only does Franklin's unified (or castrated, in a Lacanian sense) identity rationalize Rachel's seemingly divided actions, but it also rationalizes Betteredge's explicitly irrational belief in Rachel's innocence:

It was downright frightful to hear [Cuff] piling up proof after proof against Miss Rachel, and to know, while one was longing to defend her, that there was no disputing the truth of what he said. I am (thank God!) constitutionally superior to reason. This enabled me to hold firm to my lady's view, which was my view also. This roused my spirit, and made me put a bold face on it before Sergeant Cuff. Profit, good friends, I beseech you, by my example. It will save you from many troubles of the vexing sort. Cultivate a superiority to reason, and see how you pare the claws of all the sensible people when they try to scratch you for your own good! (Collins 1868, 174).

For all of the novel's reliance on rationality to bring the plot to a close, Betteredge's exhortation to the reader to "profit" from his exemplary superiority to reason better describes the novel's rhetorical organization than the plot's mechanistic workings. When Franklin takes over Betteredge's position as the novel's chief narrator, his unification of his character against the multiplicity that came before makes him the novel's protagonist, creating an irrational readerly identification that the plot then labors to fulfill.

"Please to Excuse the Faults of This Composition": Labor-
Intensive Narration

Betteredge's narration emphasizes the laboriousness of plot's production while grounding narration in domestic economy. In his stuttered attempts to introduce the narrative, Betteredge's immaterial labor exemplifies the laboriousness of creative production as he apologizes for rhetorically "wandering off in search of Lord knows what, Lord knows where" (23), and offering "another false start, and more waste of good writing-paper" (26). This attention to the material cost of narration reveals an intersection between the economics of narration and the domestic economy that Betteredge oversees as Lady Verinder's steward. While this conjunction creates a certain sympathy between Betteredge and Lady Verinder, Betteredge's aristocratic sympathies take on an explicit

paternalism in his narration of the Yorkshire estate. Such paternalism is bound to a gendered exploitation of labor especially apparent in his decision to marry: “Selina, being my wife, couldn’t charge for her board and would have to give me her services for nothing” (24). Deeming his parsimonious approach to marriage “economy—with a dash of love” (24), this trope is the basis of Betteredge’s managerial approach, a combination of coercion and fatherly personal relations (due in part to his daughter’s job as Rachel’s maid). When Nancy the kitchenmaid tries to get around him to fetch Rosanna, he “took her by the ear” (33), tells her that he will fetch Rosanna instead, and sends Nancy inside to eat: “Nancy (who has a fine appetite) looked pleased. When she looks pleased, she looks nice. When she looks nice, I chuck her under the chin. It isn’t immorality—it’s only habit” (34). His aside tries not only to ward off potential criticism of immorality but also any criticism of the paternal familiarity that marks his management of the female servants.

Indeed, Betteredge’s management of the estate is predicated on knowing what happens, a drive that becomes “detective-fever” in his search for the Moonstone, his drive to know “what was to happen next” (131). As such, Betteredge’s narrative at once instrumentalizes his economic position while using it as a guarantee of his access to knowledge as his liminal class position allows him to describe the events of the Verinders and their guests as well as those of the household servants. Betteredge frames his discoveries with asides that illustrate his liminal position and indeterminate sense of audience, at times apologizing speaking in a manner inappropriate or disrespectful speech for the Verinder family, though at other times musing with familiarity on the experiences of the servant class. His apologetics split between these registers, sometimes noting them as obstacles for reader’s caught up by “what happens,” (e.g. his apology for describing a midday nap: “I am truly sorry to detain you over me in my beehive chair” [33]), or as part of the unseemly underside of a large estate’s domestic economy (e.g. Rosanna being smitten by Franklin, which makes him laugh: “I am sorry I drifted into writing about it”

[59]). Betteredge's stewardly attention to the reader's desire to know what happens next leads him into narratorial self-deprecation for his vagaries: "If you are as tired of reading this narrative as I am of writing it—Lord, how we shall enjoy ourselves on both sides a few pages further on!" (187). This readerly solicitude, however, also speeds the narration of events lest the reader share Betteredge's detective-fever in all its temporal discomfort. When Cuff refuses to tell Betteredge his means for discovering Rosanna's hiding place in the Shivering Sand, Betteredge inserts this parenthetical salve: "Not to irritate your curiosity, as he irritated mine, I may here inform you that he had come back from Frizinghall provided with a search-warrant" (157). At the end of his first period narration, Betteredge makes explicit the link between his attention to the reader's desires and his duties as steward:

Please to excuse the faults of this composition—my talking so much of myself, and being too familiar, I am afraid, with you. I mean no harm; and I drink most respectfully (having just done dinner) to your health and prosperity, in a tankard of her ladyship's ale. May you find in these leaves of my writing, what *Robinson Crusoe* found in his experience on the desert island—namely, "something to comfort yourselves from, and to set in the Description of Good and Evil, on the Credit Side of the Account."—Farewell. (197)³⁰

Given the upward class direction of his apologies for faulty composition and familiarity, it seems no accident that in his quote from *Crusoe*, a book used by economists since Smith,³¹ Betteredge inscribes his narration "on the Credit Side of the Account." While Betteredge is determined not to "profit" from the generosity of the upper class, he is no less intent on constructing a positive narrative of its hegemony.

Yet his narrative does occasionally fall on the debit side of the social ledger. In two striking sections, Betteredge's discussions of class differences confront labor and time in ways that echo Marx. His second person address of the gentry notes that their free time usually leads to "some nasty pursuit" (62) in natural history or art, largely because "you have got nothing to think of in your poor empty head, and nothing to do with your

poor idle hands” (63). While such free time is predicated on servant labor, Betteredge turns such labor into a respite from the freedom it creates:

It often falls heavy enough, no doubt, on people who are really obliged to get their living, to be forced to work for the clothes that cover them, the roof that shelters them, and the food that keeps them going. But compare the hardest day’s work you ever did with the idleness that splits flowers and pokes its way into spiders’ stomachs, and thank your stars that your head has got something it *must* think of, and your hands something that they *must* do. (63)

As work and idleness are extended to absurd extremes, the valorization of the imperative to act—“*must* think...*must* do”—becomes its own humorous if labor-intensive recompense against intellectual boredom. However, when Betteredge learns of Rosanna’s death, work becomes a limit to both intellectual and emotional experience. Free time gives “people in high life [...] the luxury of indulging their feelings” while “people in low life have no such privilege” (167). Servants, whose heads “*must* think of” something and whose hands “*must* do” something (63), confront a “necessity [... that] has no pity on us” as the imperative to suppress emotion, “to put our feelings back into ourselves, and to jog on with our duties as patiently as may be” (168). Here Betteredge does not apologize for his narratorial intervention: “I don’t complain of this—I only notice it” (168). The physicking of a dog is Betteredge’s only comparable example: “Excuse my mentioning this. It has slipped in somehow. Pass it over please. I am fast coming to the end of my offences against your cultivated modern taste. Besides, the dog was a good creature, and deserved a good physicking; he did indeed” (195). The narrated excess of domestic economy, the dog is a metonymy for the servants, characters who have “slipped in somehow” and may offend the reader’s “cultivated modern taste,” yet good creatures nonetheless, even if the conflation conjures Betteredge himself as Lady Verinder’s venerated lap-dog.

In his connection with the servants, Betteredge tends to slip into the plural, either the first person plural “we” and the vocative, or rhetorically, as in his uncertainty whether or not he “had been one too many at last for the celebrated Cuff” (124). His experience of

Rosanna's death sends him into a spiral of multiplying actions: "I did a dozen different needless things in and out of the house, not one of which I can now remember" (163), and "I had a hundred different questions to put to him; and not one of them would pass my lips" (163). This multiplicity is part of the novel's engagement with characterization, not as a realist depth but as a pluralization of character through the continual production of contradiction. This is present in Betteredge's concern for Rosanna as well as his contradictory attitudes toward Rachel and Cuff. Betteredge notes that Rachel is "self-willed...but the finest creature, nevertheless, that ever walked the ways of this lower world" (65), before addressing the reader:

Perhaps you see a certain contradiction here? In that case, a word in your ear. Study your wife closely, for the next four-and-twenty hours. If your good lady doesn't exhibit something in the shape of a contradiction in that time, Heaven help you!—you have married a monster. (65-66)

Much as Godfrey's lack of debt is a sign of criminality, for Betteredge, the lack of contradiction in a character is a sign of monstrosity. Although the aside is part of Betteredge's pervasive misogyny, contradiction is the only way the novel nuances character, and marks Betteredge's relation with Cuff: "I own I couldn't help liking the Sergeant—though I hated him all the time" (186). Indeed, he challenges the reader to "explain that state of mind, if you can" before he announces that "you will soon be rid, now, of me and my contradictions" (186). In his descriptions of other characters as well as in his own attitudes, Betteredge explicates character by multiplying contradiction.

With Miss Clack, Lady Verinder's spinster cousin, economic position and internal contradictions turn her narration into a work of comic *ressentiment*. The irony of Clack's character depends upon immaterial labor's economic status, hinging on the bad faith of her altruistic assertions and her furious work to procure a legacy with a deathbed conversion of Lady Verinder. Grudgingly narrating the first section of the second period, Clack details Lady Verinder's death and Rachel's brief engagement to Godfrey with asides on Christianity, her work with philanthropies like the Mothers'-Small-Clothes

Society, and her infatuation with Godfrey. She narration, however, takes place under altered circumstances: she accepts Franklin's cheque for her story after being forced into "foreign exile" (260) by speculative losses, lamenting that she is "condemned to narrate" (208) although she is "almost as poorly provided with words as money" (220). Yet even before these losses, Miss Clack uses poverty to justify her religious "right of spiritual property in [her] perishing aunt" (232), and her dissemination of religious pamphlets in Lady Verinder's house returns the printed word to instrumental ends. Even her protests that these pamphlets are a selfless distribution of language appear in economic rhetoric:

If my aunt, possessed of thousands, had remembered poor Me, to whom five pounds is an object—if my name had appeared in the Will, with a little comforting legacy attached to it—my enemies might have doubted the motive which had loaded me with the choicest treasures of my library, and had drawn upon my failing resources for the prodigal expenses of cab. Not the cruelest scoffer of them all could doubt now. Much better as it was! Oh, surely, surely, much better as it was! (224-225)

After comparing and quantifying of Lady Verinder's fortune and her own as "thousands" against "five," she decides to use of a cab to fetch "the choicest treasures of my library" for Lady Verinder at a "prodigal" expense (224). Clack's use of these "treasures" form an economically-phrased, religiously-oriented immaterial labor: she discovers a "career of usefulness" (223) in the endeavor, and attempts to "deposit a book" (233) in different rooms of the Verinder house, while seeding rooms with copied extracts of "all my precious passages" (236). From her narrative bargain with Franklin to her attempts to exchange religious pamphlets for a little legacy, Miss Clack is perhaps the narrator most aware of immaterial labor's economic status.

Exchange Beyond Exchange: Immaterial Labor and Surplus Affect

While Betteredge and Clack display a conflicted relation to the economics of narration, Rosanna Spearman and Ezra Jennings try to dislocate their narrative labor from their service labor in their relations to Franklin. Although both address Franklin with a

conflicted familiarity in contrast to Betteredge's disavowals, it is not just their subaltern positions that put the credibility of their narratives into question: Ezra is a disgraced man for unexplained reasons, and Rosanna's criminal past has already been described. Yet it is their liminal social status that becomes the basis for their an-economic narration. As Ezra's slandered name is a "question of character" (380), he tries to distance himself from being too familiar with Franklin, which becomes for Franklin a sign of "the unsought self-possession, which is a sure sign of good breeding, not in England only, but everywhere else in the civilized world" (370). When he explains his past, "his tone and manner [...] showed him to be especially, almost morbidly anxious not to set himself up as an object of interest to [Franklin]" (374). Ezra's attempts to address his problematic character become a kind of self-possession for Franklin, an impersonal familiarity. By contrast, Rosanna's cross-class love for Franklin keeps her from speaking to him for most of the novel except in misunderstood ellipses. Death allows Rosanna to embrace an otherwise unthinkable familiarity, using her suicide note to declare her love and acknowledge that "it would be very disgraceful to me to tell you this, if I was a living woman when you read it" (317). In the text, Ezra and Rosanna produce their narratives not for cash but rather, as Marx would say, as the activation of their own natures, bequeathing them as legacies to Franklin. Indeed, both express an attachment to Franklin, one that the novel leaves unexplained but that I would hazard is part of a sympathy with the subjective plurality that Franklin embodies and disavows. Franklin suggests for them a different life, lifting them from their melancholy existences to thoughts of the future, conjuring for Rosanna "the happy life I had never led" (318), and giving Ezra "a new interest in life" (398). Yet with their untrustworthy pasts, the lack of an economic relation to underlie their narrative labor as a kind of contractual obligation puts their narration into question. To provide a foundation, the novel deploys the very determinants that Franklin allows Ezra and Rosanna to supersede: their past.

Ezra's scientific observations endow his narration with certain epistemological authority, the rhetorical construction of his past assures his narration. By telling Franklin that he is "a man whose life is a wreck, and whose character is gone" (379), Ezra unwittingly reveals a similarity to Franklin in their blighted names, a metaphoric equivocation that helps to explain the similarity between Ezra and Franklin's relationship and that of the two Allan Armadales of *Armadales*. While Franklin's name binds him to a limited financial character, Ezra's brings with it a "vile slander" that makes his loss of character existential (ibid.). Ezra becomes something less than a man, able to assert his innocence only "on my oath, as a Christian" because "it is useless to appeal to my honour as a man" (ibid.). In his appeal to a commonality of religious creed over human existence, Ezra displays his loss of character as a lived poverty only overcome by a higher degree of signification, one that extends beyond the certainty of life. Such poverty marks Ezra with an existential debt rather than a financial one, a poverty of life given by the unnamed disease slowly killing him. As he wants "to provide for a person—very dear to me" (380), Ezra's life is doubly mortgaged:

I want to provide for a person—very dear to me—whom I shall never see again. My own little patrimony is hardly sufficient to make her independent of the world. The hope, if I could only live long enough, of increasing it to a certain sum, has impelled me to resist the disease by such palliative means as I could devise. The one effectual palliative in my case, is—opium. To that all-potent and all-merciful drug I am indebted for a respite of many years from my sentence of death. But even the virtues of opium have their limit. The progress of the disease has gradually forced me from the use of opium to the abuse of it. I am feeling the penalty at last. My nervous system is shattered; my nights are nights of horror. The end is not far off now. (380)

Though dying, he continues to work and save for this person by continually increasing his use of opium: "To that all-potent and all-merciful drug I am indebted for a respite of many years from my sentence of death" (ibid.). Indebted to an unnamed other and to the opium that keeps him alive, Ezra tropes an immaterial labor in which the laborer's services and the laborer himself evanesce in their performance, his time sold to work and

his body to opium. Much as his oath is couched in religion, his production extends beyond the material into a realm beyond. Jennings claims to Rachel that the world's rejection of him is "only the protest of the world [...] against anything that is new" (417), and he goes on to note the "wonderful sameness in the solid side of the English character" (ibid.), solidifying the homogeneity of Franklin's character while facilitating a comparison between the two men. His character gone and his debts at their limit, Ezra's narration is assured by his resemblance to Franklin, via debts that have forced him into a form of labor suspended between death and a life that is not life.

By contrast, Rosanna's narrative work lacks such guarantees. With a past neither as nebulous nor as misconstrued as Ezra's, Rosanna's character is not slandered but rather bears a "stain" that may be "taken off" while "the place shows" (37). Her narration is haunted not by a troubling plurality of character but by the fear that such plurality is what her character lacks, that her past as a thief will overwhelm her. Yet Rosanna's control of her immaterial labor allows her to resist being wholly reduced to thief, as it offers her a potential escape from life as a servant. She and Limping Lucy had planned to move to London where, as Lucy tells Betteredge, the two "might have got our living nicely" since both "wrote a good hand" (192). Such command inflects Rosanna's use of knowledge, as when she realizes that her possession of Franklin's nightgown provides her with something to which she could "see what use my love, or my revenge (I hardly know which) could turn it to in the future" (322). Unable to guarantee Rosanna's narration with debt, the novel embeds her letter in Franklin's narrative and disrupts it at times with an incredulous Franklin and Betteredge. Contrast this with Collins's unmediated use of Lydia Gwilt's diary in *Armadale*, where she presented her motives with clarity and sympathy yet was a character that Winifred Hughes notes was "universally denounced in the reviews" (158). Unlike Count Fosco's intervention in *The Woman in White*, Miss Gwilt's diaries and excerpts appear throughout *Armadale* as structurally equivalent pieces of narration to the novel's third-person narration. Franklin's

mediation of Rosanna's narrative keeps her at one remove from the reader, allowing him to break off in the midst to respond. Rosanna's letter threatens Franklin's view of himself, placing into question the authority he holds by social and economic fiat.

While the narrative structure tries to reinscribe Ezra and Rosanna's tales in exchange, the characters move inexorably toward a position outside economics: death. Franklin receives pages torn from Ezra's diary as a bequest, recounted by Mr. Candy: "Give those," he said, "to Mr. Franklin Blake. In years to come, he may feel an interest in looking back at what is written there" (460). Rosanna's letter closes with the hope of reconciling with Franklin, but she admits that it would not exist if such reconciliation were possible: "Oh! if we only end in understanding each other, how I shall enjoy tearing it up" (334). If the letter is read at all, it proves Rosanna's declaration that: "if you are as cruel as ever, and if I feel it again as I have felt it already—goodbye to the world which has grudged me the happiness it gives to others" (333). These narratives are not so much attempts at gift economies but rather to preclude reciprocity.³² Death becomes a guarantee against the possibility of economic relation, with their unmarked graves eliminating even the inscription of subjects of exchange. For Ezra, the anonymous grave serves as a means of erasing the slander attached to his name by expunging it altogether. He tells Mr. Candy: "Give me your word of honor that you will allow no monument of any sort—not even the commonest tombstone—to mark the place of my burial" (461). In erasing his name, however, Ezra generates more language—Candy's "word of honor"—while the unmarked grave does not eliminate his name only its attachment to a particular site. His slandered name remains in the bequeathed narrative. Ezra's labor exceeds his narrative, his name living on, *slandered*, in the text, his indebtedness a generalized condition of narration as his name is sacrificed to guarantee his narration.

Rosanna, however, uses death to instigate a productive dislocation of class identity to speak, her grave in the Sand ensuring both the dislocation and the truth of her words:

I shall be dead and gone, sir, when you find my letter. It is that which makes me bold. Not even my grave will be left to tell of me. I may own the truth—with the quicksand waiting to hide me when the words are written. (317)

Rosanna's immaterial labor becomes a truth she "may own" once nothing is left "to tell of" her, a written truth divorced from enunciative position. Both narratives arrive from such an unmarked position, but in contrast to Ezra's existential indebtedness, Rosanna discovers in her liminality a ghostly economy as her narrative becomes a kind of haunting, assuring Franklin that "I shall take care that you find out what I have done for you, when I am past telling you of it myself" (333). Yet although she is "past telling," Rosanna transposes herself into the reader's role as she imagines Franklin fulfilling her request to speak well of her to Rachel: "If you do that, and if there are such things as ghosts, I believe my ghost will hear it, and tremble with the pleasure of it" (334). This supplemental economy of language—the letter that informs and the kind words that forgive—is not monetary but affective: Rosanna does not exchange her words for money but for "pleasure."

Throughout the novel, Rosanna's actions try to displace her domestic service into an affect economy. Her attachment to Franklin leads her to a substitutive logic that turns her servant tasks into a form of immaterial labor, a secret *detournement* of the present by an unknown labor.³³ Rosanna's replacement of Rachel's roses with her own for Franklin's boutonniere is the novel's most overdetermined example: "Ah, Mr. Franklin, you wore *my* roses oftener than either you or she thought! The only comfort I had at that time, was putting my rose secretly in your glass of water, in place of hers—and then throwing her rose away" (318). Rosanna's rose substitution is not a zero-sum exchange. Rather, it engages in affective production by secretly altering Franklin's relation to the rose. Secrecy is crucial to this labor and unlocks the novel's use of the rose—from Rosanna's name to Cuff's floral obsession—as figures for the phrase "under the rose" (from the Latin *sub rosa*, secret or in strict confidence). The rose tropes the novel's economy of secretes, which Cuff figures in telling Betteredge that he "saw Rosanna

Spearman hiding in the shrubbery as we went by” (122).³⁴ Indeed, the Sergeant’s rose-obsession and his actions do not so much hinge on knowledge but on its secret dimensions, whether in his gardening debates over the proper method for budding roses, his whistling of “The Last Rose of Summer,” or his prior professional knowledge of Rosanna. Even his refusal in Lady Verinder’s garden to “take a rose” because “it goes to my heart to break them off the stem” (123) doubles as a reference to Rosanna and her crush on Franklin.

In psychoanalytic readings of the novel, the rose competes with the Moonstone as a symbol of the novel’s sexual economy. Where Albert Hutter reads the Moonstone as a symbol of Rachel’s stolen virginity, marking a general fear of sexual intercourse, Lewis A. Lawson argues for the rose as sexual symbol only invested when used “to describe the love relationship” (64). We have already seen how the Moonstone fits into a broader social economy. I would argue that these symbols represent the novel’s problematic relation with collectivity and immaterial labor. The rose links secrecy and sexuality—from Rosanna’s barely secret crush on Franklin and her imputation of a secret tryst between Franklin and Rachel the night of the theft, to Godfrey’s secret mistress in the London suburb with her “conservatory of the rarest flowers” (452)—but they are not reducible to one another. Rather, the two interact to create networks where signs and affects proliferate in actions that leave no physical trace other than Rosanna’s letter to Franklin. Rosanna’s secret desire provides the impetus to hide Franklin’s marked nightgown, and to take her secrets with her into the Shivering Sand—to put them under the Rosanna. As the figural knot of secret and sexuality, Rosanna’s rose-exchange reveals an immaterial labor in which zero-sum exchanges generate a surplus of affect for at least one of the agents involved.³⁵ Such short-circuiting of labor time to personal ends, similar to what Michel de Certeau called the tactic of *la perruque* (the wig), can be seen when Rosanna turns her housemaid work into a means of creating surplus-affect.³⁶

My work, sir, was to make your bed, and to put your room tidy. It was the happiest hour I had in the whole day. I used to kiss the pillow on which your head had rested all night. No matter who has done it since, you have never had your clothes folded as nicely as I folded them for you. Of all the little knick-knacks in your dressing-case, there wasn't one that had so much as a speck on it. You never noticed it, any more than you noticed me. I beg your pardon; I am forgetting myself. I will make haste, and go on again. (321)

Rosanna's work puts Franklin's possessions into an economy of affective production unbeknownst to him, providing her "happiest hour" as she expresses affection for him using the objects that surround him as proxies. Rosanna's work is not simply immaterial, but essentially an invisible aspect of the domestic economy that surrounds Franklin. Indeed, he remains unaware until the last that the missing nightgown is his, replaced by one that Rosanna "made, wrung out, dried, ironed, marked, and folded as the laundry women folded all the others, safe in your drawer" (325). Rosanna's strategy of affective substitution discovers the nightgown as a veritable treasure-trove, even if its exchange poses a problem. Unlike the indiscernible difference in roses, the nightgown is marked. While destroying the gown would protect Franklin, it must remain intact if she is to prove her good intentions: "Think of your cold behavior to me, sir, and you will hardly wonder at my unwillingness to destroy the only claim on your confidence and your gratitude which it was my fortune to possess" (332-333).

Although her actions threaten to fall back into the instrumentalized immaterial labor of Betteredge and Clack, even in abetting this potential economic turn, Rosanna finds another opportunity to produce affect when she hides the gown from Cuff by wearing it under her work-clothes: "You had worn it—and I had another little moment of pleasure in wearing it after you" (328). The mystery of *The Moonstone* is in large part the obverse of Rosanna's affective and immaterial production. While Franklin's narration focuses on his interior alterity, it is his inability to recognize Rosanna and the alterity of domestic labor that fuels the mystery as much as his laudanum-induced sleepwalking. Whether as immaterial labor or as the material production of an indiscernible substitute, Rosanna's affect economy creates the uncertainty surrounding the Moonstone's

disappearance. In her replacement of Franklin's nightgown, she expresses the novel's understanding of immaterial labor as something other than unproductive labor but rather labor that produces an indiscernible excess, in Rosanna's case, not just of rose, nightgown, or text, but of an emotion prohibited by her socio-economic position.

It is this excess that Rosanna tries to reveal in her letter, from the labor that organizes the social world of his existence to its narrative explanation. Rosanna provides the crucial link in the novel's narrative collectivity, the figure comes the closest to bringing the collective work of immaterial labor to the text's surface even as she sinks to the bottom of the Shivering Sand. Although the plot is marked by banking and credit mechanisms, its narration by servants able to write a good hand creates an impasse: the plot hurtles toward its revelation of an unconscious agent engaged in an economic transaction, yet Rosanna's letter elicits a linguistic hiatus in Franklin's narrative. Unlike the easily destroyed rose, her letter and the stained gown confront him as problems defying narration: "I leave the miserable story of Rosanna Spearman—to which, even at this distance of time, I cannot revert without a pang of distress—to suggest for itself all that is here purposely left unsaid" (335). Between the incremental tracing of aggregate desire of Jevons and Marx's description of immaterial labor's potential ability to become directly productive, *The Moonstone* describes the multitude's encounter with the positive production of immaterial labor as a surplus of affect that cannot be ameliorated to the language of plot. By bringing a nascent sense immaterial labor and its resonances to bear on *The Moonstone*, however, one discovers in what is purposefully left unsaid the voices that the plot cannot bear to admit.

Notes

¹ By contrast, Lewis Roberts's reading focuses on the Shivering Sand as a figure for the enfolding of an indeterminate epistemology into realist narration.

² R.P. Ladilaw turns this philosophical bent into an example of the eternal return of the same, following a dialectic of character and circumstance that empties individuality into a general repetition of events. W. David Shaw's reading also takes the Hegelian baiting, presenting the novel as an attempt to overcome a crisis of representation between two competing historical perspectives, positivist and Hegelian. By contrast, Sue Lonoff displaces this method onto the reader's synthetic judgment, claiming that the novel's multiple narrators expresses a problem in epistemology that readers address in their uptake of text, much as in Robert Browning's *The Ring and the Book*. Franklin often falls into this method of pondering issues, moving between subjective motivation and objective reality in a manner that does little to engage with German dialectics though it is attributed to his German education. For instance, when Franklin considers early on what to make of the Moonstone: "'The question has two sides,' he said. 'An Objective side, and a Subjective side. Which are we to take?'" (54). The split reappears when Franklin ponders Rachel's actions after the gem's theft (180-181), and again after his interview with Rachel makes it clear he must have stolen the diamond (360-361).

³ In this sense, the link between unproductive narrative labor and the production of the text resituates Peter Brooks's reading of Collins's *The Woman in White* as an image of the popular serial novel as a prelapsarian age of unlimited story telling and the unlimited consumption of story" (170). While Brooks acknowledges that such narrative production "was tied firmly to the new industrial means and modes of production and distribution" (ibid.), this comes as the closing argument to an argument that has only addressed Collins in a glancing fashion and without considering what the impact of such a mode of production might actually look like. See Brooks 143-170.

⁴ King terms these "lockups" and discusses at length the nature of these investments, including the use of the Greek and Oriental fleet to swap accommodation bills against bills of lading to float the company's debts. See King 251-255.

⁵ See King 253-256. King also provides Overends's 1865 prospectus as an appendix, see King 328-329.

⁶ On the changes in the clearing-house system during the 1850s, see Jevons 1875, 264-265. For an overview of the emergence of the cheque bank, see Jevons 1875, 290-298.

⁷ On the changes in the clearing-house system during the 1850s, see Jevons 1875, 264-265. For an overview of the emergence of the cheque bank, see Jevons 1875, 290-298. Babbage offers perhaps the best description of the internal processes of the clearing-house, though prior to the inclusion of the joint stock banks. See Babbage 126-127, ¶173.

⁸ Indeed, the novel's approach to character-based narration largely reiterates. Franklin Blake's unconscious theft may presage in structure the misdirection of the narrator in Agatha Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, but not the character's bad

faith: the omissions of Franklin's narrative are based on his own lack of knowledge, not, as in Christie, on a purposeful misdirection.

⁹ Although Menger's work was also published in 1871 it remained unavailable in English during the nineteenth century. See Menger 133-135, 175-190, esp. 180.

¹⁰ With the exception of sections in volume three written in the 1870s on the relationship between the rate of surplus-value and the rate of profit, as well as on the theory of ground-rent, the second and third volumes of *Capital* were written during the same period as the volume one—the early 1860s—and posthumously published by Engels. See Engels's prefaces to volumes two and three of *Capital*: Marx 1981, 83-102; and Marx 1981, 91-111.

¹¹ Walter Kendrick notes similar contemporary criticism of Collins's *The Woman in White* (1860), claiming, "at its best, the sensation novel aspired towards the condition of a crossword puzzle, a system of language which is governed only by its own design" (21). Nicholas Rance makes a similar point when he notes the contemporary critical excoriation of the sensation novel's privileging of plot over character as undermining the notion of novelistic characters possessing, in Rance's word, "an unlimited free will" (26). See Rance 19-36.

¹² In this sense, the difference between my position and that of Miller's is much the same as that between Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's notion of the diagram and that of Michel Foucault. In place of constituted power it is a question of positive desire while power remains a secondary construction (or stratification) of such desire, and "the diagram and abstract machine have lines of flight that are primary, which are not phenomena of resistance or counterattack in an assemblage, but cutting edges of creation and deterritorialization" (531). Such a position is also consistent with Antonio Negri's distinction of "constituent power" and "constituted power" in Spinoza and political theory. See Deleuze and Guattari 111-148, esp. 140-141; Negri, *Savage* 183-210; and Negri, *Insurgencies* 1-35.

¹³ See Matthew 142.

¹⁴ For example, Albert Hutter's claim that Franklin's unconscious theft of the diamond as the theft of Rachel Verinder's virginity is almost unassailable, while his subsequent reading of Miss Clack's eavesdropping on Godfrey and Rachel as a repetition of the primal scene seems tone deaf to the novel's thematics with its sudden attempt to transpose the otherwise peripheral Clack into a centrally Oedipalized subject.

¹⁵ Franklin often falls into this method of pondering issues, moving between subjective motivation and objective reality in a manner that does little to engage with German dialectics though it is attributed to his German education. For instance, when Franklin considers early on what to make of the Moonstone: "'The question has two sides,' he said. 'An Objective side, and a Subjective side. Which are we to take?'" (54). The split reappears when Franklin ponders Rachel's actions after the gem's theft (180-181), and again after his interview with Rachel makes it clear he must have stolen the diamond (360-361).

¹⁶ Bakhtin argues that only with the appearance of other languages does novelistic discourse appear, and his examples draw on either cultures intermingled via

trade or militaristic excursions (usually both). See Bakhtin's discussion of parodic language in Greek and Roman sources, Bahktin 41-83, esp. 60-61.

¹⁷ For commentary on Smith and this subject in the context of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, see Lynch.

¹⁸ Deleuze's discussion of this any point whatever (Fr. *point quelconque*) appears in *Cinema 1* in his description of Vertov's use of montage as a method for taking cinema "beyond perception" so "that it reaches to the *genetic element* of all possible perception, that is the point which changes, and which makes perception change, the differential of perception itself" (83). As Agamben will explore at length in *The Coming Community*, this "whatever" is a singularity—a point drawn from an existent plurality that can at best be an example but never an essence—which Deleuze here discovers in Vertov as an attempt to reach beyond the actual toward the virtual.

¹⁹ Hence in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel uses the Roman determination of "persons" as the basis for his dialectical transition from the ethical order of the Greek world into the world of culture (§477-483). Hegel lays out a similar argument in *The Philosophy of Right*, where the transition from the ethical order to the civic community depends upon the "concrete person" (185) since—as part of his appropriation of Adam Smith's invisible hand—"individuals in the civic community are private persons, who pursue their own interests" (190).

²⁰ Jevons continues with a list that bears a striking resemblance to Carl Menger's passage on the constitution of value. Jevons: "Thus, the appetite for dry bread is much more rapidly satisfied than that for wine, for clothes, for handsome furniture, for works of art, or, finally, for money. And every one has his own peculiar tastes in which he is nearly insatiable." Menger: "It is evident that satisfaction of his need for food, up to a certain degree of completeness, has a decidedly higher importance to this individual than satisfaction of his need for tobacco. But if his need for food is already satisfied up to a certain degree of completeness (if, for example, a further satisfaction of his need for food has only the importance to him that we designated numerically by the figure 6), consumption of tobacco begins to have the same importance to him as further satisfaction of his need for food. The individual will therefore endeavor, from this point on, to bring the satisfaction of his need for tobacco into equilibrium with satisfaction of his need for food." See Menger 127.

²¹ "Labor as mere performance of services for the satisfaction of immediate needs has nothing whatever to do with capital, since it is not capital's concern" (Marx 1973, 272).

²² Capital's formal subsumption of the production appropriates production without changes its processes, simply extracting absolute surplus-value by extending the working day. By contrast, real subsumption reorganizes the production process by using scientific and technical innovations to maximize labor power, with increased output creating relative surplus-value (Marx 1990, 1035).

²³ In his introduction to this section, Ernest Mandel argues that the chapter was likely intended as a transition between volume one and volume two, and that Marx's definitive statements on productive and unproductive labor occur in volume two. I would argue that Marx's discussion of productive and unproductive labor in relation to the sphere of circulation tends to obscure the continuing evolution of productive labor. In this

deleted chapter, however, Marx's analysis clarifies the objectivity of his statements in volume two as historically grounded, clearly arguing that the intensification of capitalist production has the ability to change formerly unproductive labor into productive labor. Indeed, Marx also makes this point in passing in volume two, noting the shift from unproductive to productive labor when such labor provides a surplus that increases the profits on material production. See Marx 1990, 944, and Marx 1884, 210.

²⁴ Marx makes a similar point in *The Communist Manifesto*, though without much explanation: "The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage labourers." See Marx, *Portable Marx*, 206.

²⁵ While Negri has put forward arguments on immaterial labor in a variety of forms (see note 18), his argument for the hegemony of immaterial labor in post-Fordist production in *Multitude* is perhaps the clearest exposition in his translated work on the topic. See Hardt and Negri 2004, 103-115, and 140-153.

²⁶ Work by neo-Marxists like Antonio Negri, Paolo Virno, and Michael Hardt have spent much time explicating Marx's work on immaterial labor in an attempt to confront the contemporary economic situation. In particular, Virno posits that the contemporary moment is marked by the disparity between the postmodern production of value, which operates under the regime of time via the general intellect and immaterial labor, and the continuation of wage-labor as the system of remuneration. See Negri 2008; Virno 2004, Virno 2008.

²⁷ I must note, however, that Marazzi's argument in *Capital and Language*, written in 2002 but published in translation in 2008, suffers from its historical position. Judging the economic developments of the 1990s through the end of 2001, Marazzi claims that "the New Economy cannot be reduced to a speculative bubble on the financial markets" (148). Although the subsequent crash of financial markets makes such a claim more difficult to swallow, Marazzi grounds his analysis in the simultaneous increase of labor productivity alongside a decrease in profits (*ibid.*). Such a situation is clearly problematic for capitalist production, especially since—according to *The Economist*—the increase in labor productivity in the U.S. for 2008 was a meager 1.9% and as of April 2009 appears to be stagnant for the year. While it would not be permissible to draw a causal correlation between a rise in productivity and a fall in profit to imply a potential resurgence of profit through this drop in labor productivity, the outcome of this state will be *very* interesting for Marxist political economy and claims of a transition toward a New Economy in which surplus value is premised according to the expropriation of the common. Will capital attempt a return to absolute surplus-value given falling labor costs, diminishing returns from fixed capital investment, and dysfunctional credit markets (which make fixed capital investment possible)? And if so, what will this mean for claims premised on the valorization of all lived time? I would hazard that *this crisis will serve as a means for reasserting the dominance of capitalist appropriation of surplus-value through work time while extending its control of social production through increased power over the common.*

²⁸ It is also interesting to note in this context Ezra Jennings's claim that "there is a wonderful sameness in the solid side of the English character—just as there is a wonderful sameness in the solid expression of the English face" (417). Franklin's

disavowal of plural identity coheres the sameness of the English character with British finance capital.

²⁹ On Crusoe's discovery of the Bible's prophetic capacities: "In the Interval of this Operation, I took up the Bible and began to read, but my Head was too much disturb'd with the Tobacco to bear reading, at least that Time; only having open'd the Book casually, the first Words that occur'd to me were these, *Call on me in the Day of Trouble, and I will deliver, and thou shalt glory me.* The Words were very apt to my Case, and made some Impression upon my Thoughts at the Time of reading them, tho' not so uch as they did afterwards" (80-81).

³⁰ The quote from *Robinson Crusoe* follows Crusoe's creation of an account book comparing the good and ill of being trapped on the island. Collins has inserted "yourselves" for the original text's "our selves" (58).

³¹ Political economy often turned to the individual or isolated producer as a kind of ur-text for economic production Marx uses Crusoe in *Capital 1*'s well-known section "The Fetishism of the Commodity and Its Secret" to display how production in Crusoe is premised on the division of labor even when there is only one laborer to be had (Marx 1990, 169-170). The further implication of Marx's use of Crusoe reveals that while the commodity obscures the social relations of production and exchange in an immediately present object, Crusoe is the political economic fantasy of an economic producer whose product naturally carries a kind of exchange value even though it exists outside any social relations.

³² For more on the gift economy and its use in 1970s French theory as a counterargument to capitalism, see the dissertation introduction (26-7).

³³ If such is apparent even in Rosanna's psychological motivation, from her description of her history as a causal history ending with "because the gentleman who was my father deserted her" (317), giving the gentleman Lothario the place of prime-mover in Rosanna's genesis as a thief, and Franklin Blake becomes a replacement for said gentleman, then this is only due to the inexorable substitution logic of Rosanna's other actions.

³⁴ OED, s.v. "rose" 7.a.

³⁵ From a Lacanian perspective, the conjunction of affect, signification, and death raises the question of *jouissance*. In Seminar VII, Lacan approaches a counter-economy in his discussion of ethics. Playing with the pluralization of the ethical good in French (*des biens*), Lacan displaces ethics into economics, contrasting Marx's use-value with what he terms "jouissance use," in which "the good is at the level where a subject may have it at his disposal" (229). Lacan's formulation redraws capital as the power of command as a force internal to subjectivation as a means of producing the symbolic order. My intention here, however, is not to create a specifically Lacanian reading of the text, but rather to put forward an account of Rosanna's psychic economy as part of the novel's broader engagement with an emergent sense of an economy of immaterial labor and proliferating credit signifiers. This is taken still further by Lacan in Seminar XVII, where surplus jouissance takes on the significance in Lacanian theory that Slavoj Zizek will come to emphasize. See Lacan 1992, 205-230, esp. 213, 228-230.

³⁶ de Certeau's *la perruque* is essentially a reclamation of work time for personal use by servants. In a contemporary context, one might compare it to an employee's extensive use of social networking sites like Facebook or Myspace during work time using office computers.

CHAPTER 5: “LET THEIR WORK BE TO THEM AS IS
HIS COMMON WORK TO THE COMMON
LABOURER”: IMMATERIAL PRODUCTION AND
FINANCE CAPITAL IN *THE WAY WE LIVE NOW*

No Victorian writer displayed such an intuitive understanding of the relation between economics and linguistic production as Anthony Trollope in his posthumous *Autobiography*. Indeed, while one would not wish to overstate the case, between Trollope’s career in literature and in the Post Office, Trollope made his living by the letter, whether by disseminating language by the novel or by post. Trollope’s autobiography almost immediately reduced his critical standing by puncturing the myth of creative genius. His description of his steady, workman-like application to the production of literature does not so much paint a picture of the writer as a cultured *littérateur* as of his reduction in Trollope’s experience to the status of laborer:

It will not, I am sure, be thought that, in making my boast as to the quantity, I have endeavoured to lay claim to any literary excellence. That, in the writing of books, quantity without quality is a vice and a misfortune, has been too manifestly settled to leave a doubt on such a matter. But I do lay claim to whatever merit should be accorded to me for persevering diligence in my profession. And I make the claim, not with a view to my own glory, but for the benefit of those who may read these pages, and when young may intend to follow the same career. *Nulla dies sine lineâ* [no day without a line]. Let that be their motto. And let their work be to them as is his common work to the common labourer. No gigantic efforts will then be necessary. He need tie no wet towels round his brow, nor sit for thirty hours at his desk without moving,—as men have sat, or said that they have sat. (Trollope 1883, 364-365; Latin translation added)

This passage follows Trollope’s well-known tabulation of the total earnings of his literary career, and it finishes his recasting of literature into a form of economic production. Trollope’s calculation of the time he spent diligently laboring of his texts and his subsequent remuneration for them attempts an accounting of his immaterial labor under the terms of material production. Even Trollope seems aware of the problems that he

confronts by attempting to value immaterial production in this way, and although he deems the final valuation of his forty-four novels a “result” that is “comfortable, but not splendid” (365), he seems nonetheless in earnest when he counsels young writers to “let their work be to them as is his common work to the common labourer.” Without a doubt, Trollope’s attempt to disown any attempt to have “endeavoured” for “literary excellence” is itself a subterranean lexical connection to such common “labour.”

Of course, Trollope was paid in a manner perhaps best described as petty commodity production rather than blank labor since he was paid for serial installments, volumes, and republications. Yet Trollope’s intermingling of different forms of work, such as his tendency to maximize his free time by writing in railway carriages when traveling for the Post Office, not only blurs the boundaries between work and self-development described by Marx, but also the social production of the Post Office and the social production of novel writing. It is interesting to note that while Trollope describes in no uncertain terms his animosity toward the increasingly bureaucratic nature of government work—he clearly believes that a certain class of gentleman is necessary to the role of government—in his artistic production, Trollope exemplifies immaterial labor’s emergence as a kind of common labor even as he clings to the last vestiges of class entitlement.¹

Perhaps the most suggestive text of Trollope’s texts to study the generalization of immaterial labor as an economic phenomenon is *The Way We Live Now* (1875). Mary Poovey has usefully outlined Trollope’s fascination with circulation in *The Last Chronicle of Barsetshire* (1866). In *Genres of the Credit Economy*, Poovey examines the visibility of representational problems in fiduciary and credit instruments during the eighteenth and nineteenth century in Britain, and argues that representational problems associated with credit instruments had largely faded from public consciousness by the mid-nineteenth century (254). She reads Trollope’s 1866 novel, which focuses on the

passage of a cheque, to argue that the narrative's "gestures" not only serve an "aesthetic function" but that

by establishing a relationship within the fiction among details that seem referential (but are not), Trollope simultaneously set up a self-referential system that is confined to the novel and used this system to comment obliquely on the financial system that actually existed in 1866 (399).

Trollope's self-contained system of representation is at once a kind of para-economic system and a critique of the system it resembles and supplements. Poovey notes the role that gender plays in grounding Trollope's construction of value in an enclosed aesthetic system by examining the novel's gendering of credit and gift economies. She argues that such gendering is an effect of Trollope's attempt to create a literature that is able to restore what he and other Victorian readers would recognize as the "natural hierarchy of gender" (416). This is certainly true in *The Way We Live Now*, but it does not explain the interaction of gender, finance, and unproductive labor in the novel, which marks a cultural shift toward a kind of immaterial labor. In this novel, Trollope's valuation of a gendered economic hierarchy is less concerned with the naturalization of gendered value signs than with discrediting the production of other kinds of signs, ones that are able to recompose the social sphere in ways contrary to the existing mode of production. Trollope's subsequent gendering of these sign producers is of interest not insofar as it refutes or points to a disparity in discursive construction or as a piece of historical description but rather as it constructs an account of immaterial labor in the negative.

At first glance, *The Way We Live Now* posits immaterial labor as the unproductive privilege of the parasitic classes, from the gambling IOUs passed by the shabbier of the Beargarden's shabby gentry such as Miles Grendall and Sir Felix Carbury, to the puffing of Lady Carbury's literary career and the empty speculations of Augustus Melmotte and Hamilton K. Fisker. Compare this construction with our two previous texts. In *Our Mutual Friend*, Dickens generalized unproductive labor across classes as the social mode of production even while the novel limited this foreshadowing of immaterial labor as the

potential for impersonation and falseness in the lower classes. In *The Moonstone*, Collins focused on the intersection of unproductive service labor and narrative labor to describe a world as equally suffused as that of Dickens by a nearly immaterial form of labor. By contrast, Trollope's 1875 novel approaches immaterial labor as part of a mixed mode of production: on the one hand, the text maintains an alliance between the feudal system and material agricultural production as the basis of ethical action, with parsimonious land owner Roger Carbury providing the novel's ethical direction, and the silent but well-intentioned grain merchant John Crumb acting as the embodiment of Britain's solid moral values; on the other hand, the text implies the possibility of a more honest form of immaterial production with the transparent dealings of the Jewish banker Mr. Bregbert against the seedy obscurities of Mr. Melmotte. Such an ethical form of finance capital offers a potential guarantee that the financial dissemination of capital may take place without criminality, even if such rarely occurs in the novel itself. The text's late attempts to secure Bregbert's honesty in the face of the Longestaffe family's anti-Semitism demonstrates an acute awareness of the need to establish an ethical position for an economics that is not grounded in the gentry, as the nearly historically outmoded position of Roger Carbury illustrates, or in labor, a category almost wholly absent from the text. The passing of the gentry as the ideological ground of the British state and the economy is not marked by a passage into industrial labor but rather a compromise with the capitalist mode of production that threatens to instrumentalize the totality of social relations. Hence Carbury's failed attempt to marry his cousin Henrietta leads him to renounce marriage not so much with a vow of celibacy as one of planned obsolescence: the narrator intones that "[Carbury] must learn to regard himself as an old man—as one who had let life pass by too far for the purposes of his own home, and who must therefore devote himself to make happy the homes of others" (Trollope 1875, 763). Although Carbury maintains much of the novel's ethical center, his inability to produce a letter or "story" that will gain him the hand of the woman that he desires reveals his

superannuated position in the text. Carbury will be unable to restore honor to the upper class simply by reverting to the certainties of the aristocracy and agrarian production against the myriad uncertainties of a capitalist production that draws even the unproductive classes into a potentially productive relationship to society. In terms of the novel's narrative structure, Carbury's romantic failure and economic passing mark the foreclosure of a once prominent marriage-plot. In terminology more familiar to Trollope criticism, the novel tries to determine how the merchant or financial classes can create social relations as trustworthy as a gentleman's word.

It is the question of the gentleman's word and its possible subversion that most clearly links Trollope's vision of society to Cain and Hopkins's "gentlemanly capitalism." The British economy and its empire increasingly relied in the second half of the nineteenth century upon a nexus of upper class interests and international financial development. This extended throughout an entire realm of invisible services, from merchant finance (which included banks like Barings Brothers), to shipping, insuring, and, in a point they share with J.A. Hobson, the human infrastructure of the imperial bureaucracy. The labor of the unproductive class, which was so problematic in both Dickens and Collins, has become in Trollope undeniably productive, even inherently open to debasement. In the Beargarden, this situation splits along class lines. Beyond the fact that the proliferation of IOUs resembles the stock exchange, the Beargarden's denizens know that these pieces of paper only barely represent actual money. Only Miles Grendall (the untitled) and Sir Felix (the shabby gentry) are gauche enough to believe in the monetary worth of these markers, and they go to great lengths to assemble them, with Miles cheating at cards to cut his debts, and Sir Felix disrupting the entire social milieu of gambling by pointing out Miles's subterfuge. By contrast, Dolly Longestaffe, heir to a title and an estate, has a different relation to these bills: he will pay them if he has to, but he sees no reason to throw over the game and its pleasures for some petty cheating. Although gambling in the Beargarden proves to be a kind of infection that taints the

entire club and leads to its dissolution in bankruptcy, such is clearly not the case in the novel at large nor in the historical situation it takes as its basis. In a sense, then, by turning toward questions not simply of the proper role of the gentleman but of the gentleman as a capitalist, Trollope confronts the transition from unproductive to immaterial labor—that is to say, toward a form of unproductive labor that is, due to its ability to increase the power of social production, able to produce surplus-value.

The novel examines this question of the trustworthiness that underlies a word—gentleman’s or otherwise—through the failed exchanges of speculative words. Indeed, this is what links *The Way We Live Now* to the topic of this dissertation as a whole: the problem of how a word can act as a trustworthy measure of value is precisely the problem of any credit crisis. While economists like to hammer on the *credo* of credit or the trust that underlies the fiduciary, I would argue that the question is not so much the belief that underlies the relationship between creditor and debtor, which is all too personal, but rather credit’s ability to represent value. I have made this point before, but it bears repeating: Credit, in all its myriad forms, extends the mechanism of exchange against the money’s role as a measure of value, which in the nineteenth century relied upon the materiality of gold. A surplus of credit instruments can debase credit’s ability to represent the monetary measure of value. In the context of a gold-standard currency, such a surfeit will not only drive money out of the marketplace, but when any of the mechanisms for maintaining credit liquidity fail—including an inability by banks or brokers to cover their debts with their credit—those holding credit instruments tend to rush toward gold-backed money. That is to say, credit crises freeze up the mechanism of exchange and lead capitalists to hoard money. Indeed, credit crises are largely problems of hoarding, which is why the figure of the miser so often appears alongside tropes of credit circulation. In this novel, Trollope describes a world where credit mechanisms increasingly serve to maintain social relations. Moreover, this society does not seem able to retreat into the figure of the miser and return to hoarding. Rather, the world of *The Way We Live Now* is

a kind of fantasy in which circulation has at last supplanted production, and signs have become inseparable from the social metabolism. In this world, the novel's characters are increasingly minor, not protagonists so much as lesser villains attached to recognizable and often creaky narratives that have been retooled by a change in the historical and economic moment.

The financial endeavors and eventual failure of financier Augustus Melmotte form the novel's ostensible content, but its plotting consists of the machinations of a trio of marriage scenarios concerning each of the members of the Carbury family. In the first, the dissipated Sir Felix tries to renew his fortunes through half-hearted lovemaking to the daughter of financier Augustus Melmotte. Even though Melmotte promises Sir Felix that he will disinherit his daughter should she elope, Marie entices him with promises of an inalienable fortune. In the second, Lady Carbury, Sir Felix's mother, encourages and defers the advances of Mr Broune, the editor of the influential newspaper *Morning Breakfast Table*, while she tries to forge a literary career via the London literary scene's nepotistic system of promises and favors. In the third, and by far most complicated, Henrietta, Sir Felix's sister who is often referred to as Hetta, becomes the object of competition between Roger Carbury, her landed cousin, and Paul Montague, Roger's former ward. Though Montague is Hetta's favorite, he is doubly compromised, first by his unwilling participation in one of Melmotte's stock-floating schemes, and again by his tenuous engagement to another woman, the ostensibly widowed Mrs. Winifred Hurtle. The complications of the novel's plot follow Melmotte's financial and political machinations while characters capitalize on their association with the corrupt financier until the revelation of Melmotte's robbery, forgery, and bankruptcy leaves everyone except the upright Roger somewhat compromised. In its drive to reveal the mendacity of Melmotte's schemes, the novel presses inexorably toward a demand that words act as signs of truth. Each of the marriage-plots closes with the discernment of true words over false. Sir Felix breaks his word to both Melmotte and Marie, first by attempting to elope

with Marie after signing a letter in front of Melmotte that renounces Felix's matrimonial intentions, and again by proving too dissolute to pull himself from the gaming table the night of the elopement as he misses the train that was to take him to his nuptials. With the collapse of her literary career, Lady Carbury finds the banality of her words subsumed by Mr. Broune's good name after she agrees to the match, and she discards her name and title to become Mrs. Broune. Meanwhile, Hetta, bewildered by the series of revelations that surround her engagement to Montague, seeks "a good word" (741) of Montague from the mouth of his discarded fiancé, Mrs. Hurtle. Satisfied by this, Hetta marries Montague and receives the financial benefits that would have come from marrying Roger Carbury, since Carbury insists that the new couple live with him at Carbury Hall and that he be allowed to bequeath his estate—and his name—to her child.

Roger L. Slakey first noted the linguistic tension that subtends *The Way We Live Now* in 1967. Slakey argued that the novel's crucial theme is "the question of what meaning a word should have" (248), and he reads the novel as a disjunction between "meaning and language" (249), taking up a metalinguistic approach that in poststructuralist terms differentiates the reality of the signified against the excess of signification. While this line of attack gives Slakey's reading more rhetorical heft than more recent critical readings, which tend to focus on the ethical dimension of character and narration in place of the intricacies of textual construction, such gains are offset by the indifference of Slakey's linguistic approach to the novel's economic content. For Slakey, fraudulent words simply have no relation to facts. His attention to the circulation of words within the novel overlooks the relation of a changed form of economic production and the creation of false signs, a relation that I will argue constitutes the matrix of an emerging form of immaterial labor and defines the novel's central tension. This tension is not between material and immaterial labor, which is perhaps best illustrated by the subplot competition between the silent grain merchant John Crumb, who as Mrs. Pipkin tells Ruby Ruggles, "means what he says" (Trollope 1875, 722), and

the always ready liar Sir Felix. Rather, the central tension is between the production of true and false signs, as in the competition between the forthright economic letters of Bregbert and the forged documents of Melmotte, or between the economically compromised but literate Mr. Booker and the economically successful but literarily banal Lady Carbury.

Amanda Anderson maps a similar conflict in her reading of the novel, but addresses it as a problem within circulation rather than a conflict between differing forms of immaterial production. Her reading may best be described as a New Liberal account of the novel, and argues that Bregbert's letters to Georgiana Longestaffe offer the potential of the "liberal and communicative principle of honesty" (525) in the novel by illustrating a form of transparent impersonal communication in a text that otherwise discounts the possibility of such communication. In an attempted rapprochement between the two strands of ethical and linguistic criticism in Trollope studies, Anderson posits the general structure of Trollope's ethical system as a conflict between the interactions of a character-based ethos and a potentially flawed social system of morality and ethical action. For Anderson, the disjunction of linguistic truthfulness and character-based honesty forms part of Trollope's interest in a "writing [that] transcends embedded ethos in a critical way" (529). By arguing that Bregbert's letters offer an impersonal form of communication that counter Trollope's typical schema, however, Anderson discounts the link between such a utopian form of transparent communication and the concept of market transparency. Indeed, the basic contours of this argument—that the social system of capital may have fundamental flaws, but the honesty of individuals can redress those wrongs—lead to the kinds of economic policy attempts of neo-Keynesian economists to limit fraudulent market activities by the imposition of rules to maintain market transparency.² This link is an ideological necessity for the existence of finance capital, and did not first appear in the aftermath of the 1929 market crash but was a widespread issue during the period of the novel's composition, the 1870s. The "liberal and

communicative principle of honesty” that Anderson locates as a uniquely positive moment in the text tends rather to encapsulate its most regressive endorsement of the market practices it is otherwise so intent to denounce. Indeed, while Anderson dismisses deconstructive or Foucauldian readings that declare that “dishonesty defines even the so-called respectable spheres of life, which all rely on ambitious self-interest and misrepresentation” (Anderson 525), the apoliticism of her reading ensures that she misses the principle contradiction that defines such dishonesty: the myth of market transparency.

One might note that such a sense of the necessity of market transparency was historically based. David Kynaston, in his history of the Victorian financial world, foregrounds the relation of Trollope’s novel to the proliferation of opaque or outright misleading information around the Stock Exchange in the 1870s. The situation led the House of Commons to establish a royal commission in 1876 to consider possible governmental oversight of the Stock Exchange, which was at this time still an informal private association. The commission revealed how jobbers and brokers practiced stock manipulation, both on the floor of the Exchange and by disseminating false price quotes to the financial papers. The drive to regulate the Exchange, however, foundered on the insularity of the institution, and did not lead to significant changes in its practices (Kynaston 280-281). Kynaston’s interest falls primarily on Melmotte’s resonance with the historical account and its leading figures—much like Norman Russell’s account of the novel in *The Novelists and Mammon*—and not on the intersection of such false immaterial production with the narrative and character development of Trollope’s novel.

J. Hillis Miller, in one of those unfairly maligned deconstructive readings, takes up the problem of linguistic production in Trollope as a tension between good coin and counterfeit. In *The Ethics of Reading*, Miller considers Trollope’s approach to his own artistic production in the *Autobiography* by highlighting a conflict between character-based honesty and systemic uncertainty as a tension between the desire “to affirm the values of [Victorian] society” and the perpetration of a kind of fraud on that society by

the creation of “imaginary selves... made out of nothing” (95). Unlike Anderson’s contrast, Miller links the tension between socially productive characters and the potential subversion of society by an excessive creativity to the economic concerns of Trollope’s text already mentioned above. In his reading of Trollope, Miller divides the two modes of socially embedded ethicality and creative fraud into real and counterfeit coin in a metaphor as theoretically suggestive as it is economically ungrounded. I would argue that the question of ethics recurs in Trollope criticism because of this multiple articulation that is described not only by Miller and Anderson, but also by Ruth apRoberts, who terms this tension Trollope’s “dual vision.” For apRoberts, this duality holds specifically narratological dimensions. Rather than being a question of the narrator’s truthfulness, Trollope’s dual vision appears for her as the sudden confluence of the narrator’s perspective with that of Trollope’s characters, an effect that depends upon the narrator’s insertion of an ironic distance to describe a character followed by the sudden disappearance of this distance when the narrator spontaneously concurs with a character’s assessment of the situation at hand. This duality acts as a kind of dialectic of social subversion (irony) and construction (agreement), which continually wavers in Trollope’s narration.

Like so much of Trollope’s work, *The Way We Live Now* has been treated in terms of ethics. In his study of Trollope, James Kinkaid deems Trollope “one of the most rigorous testers of accepted moral codes” (16) but also maintains that Trollope’s testing of moral codes does not constitute an attempt, contra ap Roberts, to create a system of relative morality or situation ethics. With this understanding of Trollope, Kinkaid concludes that in *The Way We Live Now* “there is no essential ‘acquaintance’” (168) between Melmotte and society: society is willing to use Melmotte to enrich itself but nonetheless maintains an essential indifference to him. For this reason, “Crumb’s world of nature is rough and therefore real; the world of language, in Alf, Melmotte, and Lady Carbury is now totally unreal. It is a radical distinction but not by any means a

pessimistic one” (ibid.). I will explore the distinctions drawn between society and Melmotte later in this chapter, but I would note here that when the world of language is rendered “totally unreal,” the possibility of constructing new social relations becomes nearly impossible. Contrast Kinkaid on this text with Regina Gagnier, who reads it in light of marginal utility theory and the implied ethics of this economic theory. For Gagnier, the unreality of language has become the basis of money in the text, so that while “Melmotte is fetishized as the inexorable law of the market” (72) for the bulk of the novel, he must be recast as a social alien (73) in order to keep the contagion of false signs from appearing as an immanent component of British market society. I would agree with Gagnier’s analysis insofar as it usefully describes what I would call the problematic imbrication of credit and money in the text, yet it does so without extricating the two or considering the potential productivity of such unreal language.

The difficulty of mounting an ethical critique of Trollope is largely an effect of the nebulous quality of the ethical itself. If one approaches the novel in terms of Aristotlean ethics, one could describe its characters in terms of profligacy (Sir Felix), vulgarity (Melmotte), and greatness of soul (Roger Carbury). If one takes the novel in terms of Kantian ethics, one could describe the inexorable power of the moral code against the particularity of the individual, which Roger’s personal struggle to conquer himself when Hetta chooses to marry Paul exemplifies. Or one could displace the novel into a general ethical problem of proper action, and return us to Roger Slakey’s initial critique: what is the proper circulation of one’s word or the propriety of maintaining one’s word? Indeed, when this problem is posed in the poorly defined realm of the ethical, it becomes a matter of personal honesty. This approach to the question grounds the exchange and circulation of words in the character of an individual, and places the honesty of the individual before the constitution of society. Such an approach only serves to sidestep the economic questions of linguistic production, which rely on the socialization of economic production. That is to say, by taking an ethical approach to the

text, the individual displaces the social and effectively becomes part of the Platonic concern that writing “always needs its parent to come to its help, being unable to defend or help itself” (*Phaedrus* 275.e). Trollope himself claimed the novel was inspired by “a certain class of dishonesty” that had become “so splendid that there seems to be reason for fearing that men and women will be taught to feel dishonesty, if it can become splendid, will cease to be abominable” (Trollope 1883, 354-355). Such an attempt to deflate a potentially destructive sympathy for the wealthy returns our discussion to Adam Smith’s sympathy via Smith’s claim from *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*:

This disposition to admire, and almost to worship, the rich and the powerful, and to despise, or, at least, to neglect persons of poor and mean condition, though necessary both to establish and to maintain the distinction of ranks and the order of society, is, at the same time, the great and most universal cause of the corruption of our moral sentiments. (72)

Just as Smith admits that “it is from our disposition to admire, and consequently to imitate, the rich and the great, that they are enabled to set, or to lead what is called the fashion” (75), Trollope too is well aware that his honest characters are underdeveloped and “the interest of the story lies among the wicked and foolish people” (Trollope 1883, 356).

Such interest in “the wicked and foolish people” could lead to yet another ethical critique in the form of Lacanian ethics. A Lacanian reading might see in the text a displacement of *jouissance* into the realm of signification: the novel’s wicked and foolish characters are not only so consumed by the pursuit of wealth that it could be considered a kind of psychic drive, but they are also utterly indifferent to love. Consider Sir Felix’s apathy toward Marie Melmotte: “He had no objection to tell her so [that he loved her], but without thinking much about it, felt it to be a bore” (Trollope 1875, 139). Or Lord Nidderdale’s response to Marie after she declares to him that she prefers Sir Felix to him: “It’s an awful bore” (275). Much as Paul, Hetta, and Roger seem to obsess about it, love is not the thing that drives *The Way We Live Now*. Wealth is the thing. The text’s

privileging of wealth over love leads it at times to read like a forerunner to Lacan's reading of Kant. In *The Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant argues that a man will refuse to sleep with a woman he desires if he knows he when he leaves her bedroom he will be taken immediately to the gallows. Lacan, of course, posits that there are psychic drives that will not be thwarted by such threats.³ It is precisely this kind of drive that Trollope seems to discover in Sir Felix describing how he "lacked sufficient imagination to realize future misery though the futurity to be considered was divided from the present but by a single month, a single week—but by a single night" (20). Sir Felix's inability to tear himself from the gaming table long enough to elope with Marie speaks to a drive that overbears all others.

Yet even a Lacanian reading would threaten to reduce the text to a quandary of existential ethics and overlook the manner in which the text confronts the blurring of unproductive labor into a more socially productive immaterial labor. I would argue that while Trollope framed the novel's ethical problem in terms of honesty, the text raises a different issue with far greater force. In both its formal and thematic construction, the novel is fascinated with the appearance of an unproductive labor that is social, linguistic, and gendered. It is with this nexus of attributes that the novel's female characters appear as an emergent form of immaterial labor that reaches beyond the novel's thematic weaving together of finance and literary production with the credit mechanisms of finance represented by Melmotte's forgeries and the Beargarden's IOUs. In this gendered form, the novel's engagement with immaterial labor begins to examine the tense relation between a society premised on certain established and material forms of wealth and production and an exploited form of immaterial labor whose livelihood depends upon establishing a place within this otherwise indifferent society. It is the tension between a masculine command of economic signifiers (often couched in the guise of the gentleman's word) and a feminine immaterial labor that constitutes the text's productive basis, and, indeed, even manages to reveal a certain primacy of feminine immaterial labor

against masculine finance: women produce words that drive the novel's plotting. Yet while the novel's female characters try to exercise power through the manipulation of signs to reorganize the novel's social world through marriage, such alliances nonetheless depend in the final instance on the economic standing of the men who manipulate economic signs to maintain their material social position.

Immaterial labor's interaction with, and eventual domination by, finance appears in its most immediate tropic form as the novel deploys a thematic matrix of "hot air" to describe the world of literature and finance. The text rhetorically adequates the literary world's "system of puffing" (Trollope 1875, 14) discussed by Lady Carbury with Melmotte's growth and popping of a social and financial bubble with his "floating of this railway company" (77). Both finance and literature become gusts of air ("puffing," "floating," bubbles, etc.). Melmotte's words create a trope of credit mechanisms as a kind of ethereality: "the nature of credit, how strong it is—as the air—to buoy you up; how slight it is—as a mere vapour—when roughly touched, can do an amount of mischief of which they themselves don't in the least understand the extent" (312). Although Melmotte's failure is framed as the result of a conflict between ambition and prudence, Herr Croll, his clerk, reiterates this airy notion. Croll describes the popping of Melmotte's over-inflated ego and schemes by proclaiming that Melmotte "vas blow'd up vid bigness," and he illustrates this idea with "an action as though he were a frog swelling himself to the dimensions of an ox" (747). Although the notion of Melmotte exploding from overindulgence is at once part of the novel's recurrent use of Melmotte's mouth as a locus of gluttony and avarice, Croll's simile privileges respiration over digestion, or perhaps even the ingestion of air itself. Credit mechanisms are clearly words for Trollope. Finance's domination of immaterial labor leads the narrator to intone midway through the novel that "as for many years past we have exchanged paper instead of actual money for our commodities, so now it seemed that under the new Melmotte regime, an exchange of words was to suffice" (346). It is this substitution, with all its varied ramifications for

gender, finance, and literature, that leads the novel away from a parasitism of finance and unproductive labor toward a sense of the productive role of social relations, which leads toward immaterial labor.

The Unanimity of “Everybody”: Gendered Spheres of
Unproductive Labor

In the novel’s initial lengthy portrait of Ruby Ruggles, the narrator describes the educational differences that separate men and women within an uncertain class—or rather, a class generalized out of her paternal name. Although the passage describes “the rural day labourer and his wife” as being part of “the Ruggles class” (143), it is difficult to classify Ruby’s grandfather, Daniel Ruggles, as part of the late nineteenth century agricultural proletariat, especially given the fact that he intends to settle a £500 dowry on Ruby and that he maintains a servant. Yeoman farmer, or perhaps petit bourgeoisie, would be a better descriptor. Nor does “rural day laborer” much apply to John Crumb, a meal and pollard dealer of some means, which is not only apparent in the text but also in light of grain merchants in other contemporary texts of the period, from the conceited Pumblechook in Dickens’s *Great Expectations* (1861) to the arrogant wealth of Michael Henchard in Hardy’s *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886). While Pumblechook and Henchard appear in narratives set prior to the repeal of the Corn Laws, John Crumb does not seem to have suffered appreciably from the subsequent fall in grain prices, as Ruggles, Mrs. Pipkin, and others use Crumb’s financial security to argue his suit to Ruby. As a small grain dealer in the 1870s, Crumb seems only to have lost his social prominence as the world of the grain dealer comes to intersect with that of the landed gentry and the business class. Yet as Cain and Hopkins note in their economic history of imperialism, the grain dealer’s position by 1875 had become increasingly precarious given the increase in grain imports from the U.S., Europe, and Asia after 1860, when the repeal of the Corn Laws and the increase in transport technology led to an influx of cheap

grain (110). Although British farm income continued to rise from 1870 to 1900, this growth meant little to Britain's grain production, but rather signaled "a shift in the locus of agricultural power from the wheat-growing south to the pastures of the north" (111). A Suffolk resident, Crumb's local prominence is largely an effect of the south's wheat production, and will be on the losing end of this agricultural shift.

Ruby Ruggles also hails from the upper-strata of the working class. Although the text keeps her class position nebulous, it posits that Ruby's education only occurred after she was "relieved from the pressure of want" (143). That is to say, her education was premised on a certain economic status removed from the pressing needs that would confront the day laborer first mentioned. This premising of Ruby's education on a certain freedom from want recalls political economist J.R. McCulloch's 1825 claim that, given such material improvement in living conditions, it would be necessary to inculcate the working classes with tastes for luxury items in order to maintain their industriousness by creating new material desires.⁴ Regina Gagnier has examined this need to create new desires by drawing connections between marginal utility and the aesthetic movements of the late nineteenth century as they turn toward *l'art pour l'art* (cf. Gagnier 50). McCulloch's argument is also a forerunner of what behavioral economists call the "ratchet effect." While consumer satisfaction generally remains constant, a shift in income creates a so-called "ratchet effect" in which the consumer's cultural and economic reference points are reset—ratcheted up or down—to reflect their changed income level, even though his/her level of satisfaction with his/her consumption overall remains unaltered (Wilkinson 60). This is the "satisfaction treadmill," in which consumers aspire to new income levels in the belief that it will increase their overall satisfaction with life only to return to their original level of satisfaction once the novelty of an increase in income wears off. Once "relieved from the pressures of want," people become—for political economy from the nineteenth century to the present—open to an

ever-expanding field of desires that may be consciously manipulated, as in McCulloch, or socially determined, as in behavioral economics.

With Ruby Ruggles, however, freedom from need does not lead directly to new consumer-based desires but also passes through what Marx would have recognized, at least in part, as the development of Ruby's free individuality through education:

But the Ruggles woman, —especially the Ruggles young woman, —is better educated, has higher aspirations and a brighter imagination, and is infinitely more cunning than the man. If she be good-looking and relieved from the pressure of want, her thoughts soar into a world which is as unknown to her as heaven is to us, and in regard to which her longings are apt to be infinitely stronger than are ours for heaven. Her education has been much better than that of the man. She can read, whereas he can only spell words from a book. She can write a letter after her fashion, whereas he can barely spell words out on a paper. Her tongue is more glib, and her intellect sharper. But her ignorance as to the reality of things is much more gross than his. By such contact as he has with men in markets, in the streets of the towns he frequents, and even in the fields, he learns something unconsciously of the relative condition of his countrymen,—and, as to that which he does not learn, his imagination is obtuse. But the woman builds castles in the air, and wonders, and longs. (143)

Ruby's developed intellect, imagination, and linguistic competence, precedes her other desires, and her indeterminate lower-class status seems part of the text's attempt to inhibit the reader, on whose intellect, imagination, and linguistic competence Trollope must rely, from identifying with Ruby. Indeed, the narrator deems no state of mind "more difficult" for "the ordinary well-instructed inhabitant of a city to realise than that of such a girl as Ruby Ruggles" (*ibid.*). Yet it is Ruby's linguistic competence that precedes and informs her new desires. The reader learns that Ruby's "castles in the air" are attributable to her naive *bovarysme*—of which the reader is of course completely innocent—first as she wonders why she should "marry that dustiest of all men, John Crumb, before she had seen something of the beauties of the things of which she had read in the books which came in her way?" (144), and again as she sits with Sir Felix and experiences "a realization of those delights of life of which she had read in the thrice-thumbed old novels which she had gotten from the little circulating library at Bungay" (145).

Women are relegated to a world of unproductive intellectual labor to fantasize different social relations while men are given the material economic reality, through their increased contact with the world via market, street, or field, of the spaces of exchange. This world of feminine unproductive labor is divorced from the realities of both production and exchange, and leads the narrator to claim that although “a mind more absolutely uninstructed than that of Ruby Ruggles as to the world beyond Suffolk and Norfolk it would be impossible to find,” Ruby’s education and intelligence created thoughts “as wide as they were vague, and as active as they were erroneous” (143). While Lady Carbury, Mrs. Hurtle, and Marie Melmotte will in turn illustrate the text’s gendering of an unproductive labor that may become indirectly productive and thus immaterial, no other passage in the novel sets the contrast between feminine and masculine unproductive labor in such stark terms. Ruby’s failing is not that she misunderstands her social position. After all, she knows the risk of becoming a fallen woman well enough to try to force Sir Felix to marry her. No, Ruby’s failing is that she *imagines* that the world could be otherwise than it is. Such imagination poses a threat to the social organization that spans from her landlord, Roger Carbury, through the whole of Suffolk and out to London. Ruby’s linguistic competence is a directly social skill by which she attempts to recompose a portion of the world to her own liking. This is not an attempt to reorganize society completely, but rather to create a supplemental world where her fiction-based fantasies can be realized.

Trollope’s dismissal of Ruby’s unproductive intellectual labor reinforces a realist project by deflating her dreams as the product of mass-market fiction. By contrast, Melmotte’s financial schemes undermine realism’s certainty with his production of questionable signs of value. These written value signs depend upon what Melmotte calls “unanimity.” When Paul Montague questions Melmotte about the sale of railway shares, Melmotte explains that in the basic nature of fiduciary instruments like credit, which rely on trust, “unanimity is the very soul of these things” (313). The kinds of easily produced

signs of value in which Melmotte traffics depend upon society's unanimous agreement that these signs represent value, and it is this social unanimity that is the subject of Trollope's critique. Hence the novel's ubiquitous general subject is the unanimous "everybody": Lady Carbury justifies her acquaintance with the Melmottes to Roger with the oft-repeated phrase, "Everybody visits them now" (61), to which Roger replies, "More shame for everybody" (*ibid.*). Indeed, Melmotte's insistence to Paul on "unanimity" simply puts the novel's constant battle for interpretive control of the exemplary "everybody" into more explicitly economic terms.

Yet "everybody" is not so much controlled by fiduciary considerations of trust as by questions of social propriety. In its first appearance in the text, "everybody" is subject to one interpretation of social propriety and then immediately put into question by the intrusion of another interpretation. At the first of the Melmottes' balls, Paul tells Hetta of her brother that:

"If Felix had 20,000 a year, everybody would think him the finest fellow in the world." In saying this, however, Mr. Paul Montague showed himself unfit to gauge the opinion of the world. Whether Sir Felix be rich or poor, the world, evil-hearted as it is, will never think him a fine fellow. (38)

The slippage between "everybody" in Montague's direct quotation and "the world" of the narrator's intervention constitutes the novel's most explicit equivocation of "everybody" with an entire social "world" that is capable of holding an opinion. Moreover, the narrator's insistence that "the world, evil-hearted as it is, will never think him a fine fellow" is not borne out until the novel's end, after some seven hundred pages of people taking Felix for a fine fellow. Only at this late stage does Dolly Longestaffe tell Lord Niddledale what he really thinks of Sir Felix in contrast to "everybody" else: "I'm good-natured to everybody that is good-natured to me—and to a great many people who ain't [...] But I do agree about Carbury. It's very hard to be good-natured to him" (734-735).

The narrator's proleptic rejection of Sir Felix by "the world" of everybody, while central to the novel's irony, is perhaps less an example of a stable ethical judgment than

of the novel's inter-relation of ethicality with the narrator's ability to assume the wisdom of hindsight. While this allows the narrator to look askance at the social world, it does little to change a social world in which, since "everybody wants money" (101), "everybody" will take advantage of Melmotte even though "everybody" also says "that Melmotte will be in quod before long" (466). The novel's conservative social ethics works on its role as a social signifier, narratorially demarcating the bounds of social propriety while allowing society itself to run unchecked. This is the tension that J. Hillis Miller explored in Trollope's autobiographical description of his work between its role as a "medium of social communication affirming and maintaining the values of that society" (Miller 87) and "the counterfeit production" (95) of characters, a process in which Trollope "has perpetrated a kind of fraud, that he has secretly undermined the values of his society" (96). I would argue that the use of the pronomial "everybody" in *The Way We Live Now* allows Trollope to explore the tension between his attempt to create a social ethics and to provide its parodic description. Such an exploration engages in a process of displacement and externalization in which the novel's unproductive labor—financial, linguistic, and affective—nonetheless becomes part of a continuous cycle of fraudulent social production that is subject to varying degrees of reclamation. While one can read the unfulfilled potential of such reclamation as part of a realist project—for example, in the novel's the refusal of a purely aesthetic closure, or in its inability to exorcise the threat of the counterfeit from the literary—it is through the pronomial "everybody" that one can detect the emergence of immaterial labor.

Both for his focus on the pronoun and his reactionary politics, Giorgio Agamben offers a useful theoretical counterpart Trollope's work in *The Way We Live Now*.⁵ In *Language and Death*, Agamben describes what he calls the ethical or "infantile dwelling" of man in language, a situation which implies a divorce of the impersonal pronoun from the living Voice and a subsequent turn toward an impersonal dwelling in the indeterminate commonality of the pronoun.⁶ For Agamben, the possibility of such

language is grounded in the historical appearance of an “age in which all human experience of language has been redirected to the final negative reality of a willing that means nothing” (92). Agamben reiterates this notion in *The Coming Community* with the concept of the “shekinah,” the final attribute of divinity in which “revealed and manifested (and hence common and shareable) being is separated from the thing revealed and stands between it and humans” (81-82). Against the Hegelian sense of language as a demarcation of negativity, death, and loss, language becomes a common non-essential being that is autonomous in its existence yet shared, what Agamben obliquely describes at the end of *Language and Death* as the reflexive turn of “social praxis itself, [and] human speech itself, which have become transparent to themselves” (107).

It is in his willingness to imagine the transparency of social praxis to itself that Agamben’s political project becomes both nebulous and useful to my reading of Trollope. Agamben’s approach to the ethical realm of language draws on and mystifies the Marxist concept of “general intellect,” which exercised great influence in Italian Marxist circles of the 1970s and 1980s. In the *Grundrisse*, Marx discussed the accumulation of scientific knowledge in society as one of the necessities of developed industrial capitalism. This takes the form of a social individual endowed with the general intellect of society that allows him or her to create and to operate the fixed capital that defines developed capitalist production. Contemporary Marxists like Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri see the general intellect as part of post-Fordist capitalism’s increased reliance on a completely integrated society of capitalist production, which includes the State as a primary organization for the accumulation of capital (cf. Hardt and Negri 1997). This situation thus makes the creation and maintenance of social relations a part of the production of capital, in addition to the creation of the intellectual property upon which machine production is based. The production of surplus-value thus extends far beyond the direct production of commodities, and this newly productive form of labor for capital, a form which is not premised on the materiality of production, is immaterial

labor. For Marxists, the general intellect has both a revolutionary potential and a stultifying reality in post-modernity. On the one hand, Antonio Negri deploys the concept to describe the post-revolutionary creation of a social and multilateral individual through an antagonism between the proletariat and the emerging immaterial mode of capitalist production (Negri 1991, 146). On the other hand, Paolo Virno uses general intellect to describe the importance of mere linguistic competence for contemporary capitalist production by emphasizing its presentation “as something *common* and conspicuous” (37) even while it becomes integral to capitalist production, as exemplified by its use in information and service industries.

Agamben’s work grows out of this ferment of Italian Marxist thought without necessarily bearing much resemblance to its interest in social productivity. In an early essay, “Form-of-Life,” Agamben tries to combine the descriptive and revolutionary/utopic aspects of the general intellect, and posits that “intellectuality and thought are not a form of life among others in which life and social production articulate themselves, but they are rather the unitary power that constitutes the multiple forms of life as form-of-life” (156).⁷ The denuded realm of language in post-Fordist production generates a world where linguistic competence can constitute a basic form of ethical interaction, and in its attachment to a particular form such language can maintain itself in singularity while remaining common without in any way resembling an essential being. Yet as Slavoj Žižek notes, the utopic overtones of Agamben’s relation to language are difficult to miss, especially Agamben’s description of children in limbo in *The Coming Community*, where the children remain unaware of their position and hence in a unique state of bliss (Žižek 2006, 265). Such a state adequately describes the problematic political status of Agamben’s work in language: while language in its impersonal form offers a means of self-articulation that can ensure the indissociability of life and its expressive instantiation, it can also describe a coming community that is highly depersonalized—indeed, naked or bare, as in Agamben’s well-known concept of bare life

from *Homo Sacer* (1998)—and almost wholly asocial, one that resembles nothing so much as a fantasy of global capital, a world of transparent sign-exchanges.⁸ It is this weak utopic outlook that informs Antonio Negri’s arguments with Agamben. In “The Political Monster,” Negri claims that Agamben mistakes capital’s ideological need to reduce humanity to nakedness for the nature of life itself. Indeed, Negri argues that rather than aspiring toward the depersonalized nonplace of language, instead “the ‘nonplace’ upon which the normal movements of the multitude have been taking shape so far, [have] now become *place*” (Negri 2008, 218)—that is to say, the general intellect of the multitude has become a monstrous body able to take part in a common struggle.

While I will return to the various polemics against Agamben, it is Agamben’s engagement with an experience of language denuded of any sense of dwelling—of an experience of the common production of language that cannot enter into the world—that haunts *The Way We Live Now*. It is the reactionary notion that immaterial labor and the general intellect can only construct a community premised upon death and wholly removed from the world. As Jean-Luc Nancy put it in *The Inoperable Community*—a book, which, along with Blanchot’s *The Unavowable Community*, demarcates the intellectual tradition that led to Agamben’s *The Coming Community*—“community is revealed in the death of others; hence it is always revealed to others” (15). *The Way We Live Now*, in its fascination with “everybody,” constructs a social subject that confronts the novel’s characters as both autonomous and foreclosed.⁹ “Everybody” acts as a figure embodying the Smithian idolatry of wealth and providing a social context that allows characters to fraternize with Melmotte even while they are certain he is a crook. After Roger upbraids Lady Carbury for appealing to everybody, Hetta too declares “Everybody goes there, Mr Carbury” (62), and Roger once again takes up the side against everybody: “Yes,—that is the excuse which everybody makes” (ibid.). Though the novel’s title uses the inclusive pronomial “we,” “everybody” is the novel’s preferred pronoun for society. This is likely for the same reason that the reader for the *Saturday Review* found fault with

the novel's title, which he noted as "the incivility of Mr. Trollope's title" (401). Whenever one speaks of "everybody," the speaker at once conjures the whole of society while simultaneously occupying a shadowy and liminal position in relation to this whole. Moreover, if "everybody" provides the example for society, then "everybody" may only hear what is socially proper. As Hetta tells Roger when he presses his suit, asking her if she loves another, "I am not to tell everybody all that happens" (65). In its autonomy, "everybody" at once threatens to subsume individual action to propriety even while individual subjects try to maintain their own autonomy by excluding "everybody" from their private spheres. "Everybody" represents the novel's attempt to articulate the common place of language's experience as both the seat of the individual and its nonplace.

Georgianna Longestaffe's search for a husband attests to the fluidity of "everybody." When Mr. Longestaffe determines the family cannot afford to stay in London through the season, he proposes to the unmarried and aging Georgiana that she may stay with the Melmottes, an idea that his wife, Lady Pomona, justifies with an expected, "Everybody goes to them" (169), to which Georgiana replies, "But everybody doesn't go and live with them" (*ibid.*). This conversation is reversed and repeated when her brother Dolly visits her later in London at the Melmottes' home, and Georgiana uses her mother's defense:

'Everybody comes here.'

'No;—everybody does not come and stay here as you are doing. Everybody doesn't make themselves a part of the family. I have heard of nobody doing it except you. I thought you used to think so much of yourself.'

'I think as much of myself as ever I did,' said Georgiana, hardly able to restrain her tears.

'I can tell you nobody else will think much of you if you remain here. I could hardly believe it when Nidderdale told me.'

'What did he say, Dolly?'

‘He didn’t say much to me, but I could see what he thought. And of course everybody thinks the same. How you can like the people yourself is what I can’t understand!’

‘I don’t like them,—I hate them.’

‘Then why do you come and live with them?’

‘Oh, Dolly, it is impossible to make you understand. A man is so different. You can go just where you please, and do what you like. And if you’re short of money, people will give you credit. And you can live by yourself and all that sort of thing. How should you like to be shut up down at Caversham all the season?’ (197-198)

Georgiana’s defense of her actions attempts to become part of “everybody,” even while precluding such an understanding. Dolly’s use of “everybody” not only highlights this duplicity but simultaneously illustrates the paradoxical social status that Melmotte enjoys: while in his mother’s words “everybody goes to them,” it is an entirely different matter if everybody comes to them. By crossing the boundaries of social proprieties, Georgiana becomes an exceptional “nobody” to her brother, who claims that she can only rely on another “nobody” to “think much” of her if she remains at the Melmottes.

Georgiana well understands Dolly’s arguments, and remains at the Melmottes only because of her gender, which, as she notes, makes it impossible for her to raise “credit.” With her mercenary engagement to Mr. Bregbert, Georgiana nearly erases her connection to “everybody” by becoming all but “nobody” to her family as they recoil in anti-Semitic horror at her attempt to exchange social position for the kind of monetary credit that Georgiana’s brother can procure by dint of his gender. Yet Georgiana too worries that “everybody would know the story of the Jew” (607), and similarly attaches “everybody” to the Longestaffe familial unit in her final letter to Bregbert when she writes: “it would be very disagreeable to quarrel with papa and mama and everybody” (608). When Georgiana finally elopes with an altogether acceptable if poor clergyman, Mr. Batherbolt, “everybody” is nowhere to be found. The pronoun is instead subsumed into the indeterminate narratorial voice: “When the fact was known it was almost felt, in the consternation of the moment, that the Whitstable marriage must be postponed. But

Sophia had a word to say to her mother on that head, and she said it. The marriage was not postponed” (730). Just as the family eventually accepts Mr. Batherbolt and buys him a small living, when Georgiana gives up her Semitic fling, she ceases to be confronted by an antagonistic “everybody” of anti-Semitic judgment.

“You Don’t Want to See the Thing Fall to Pieces”:

Unanimity, Credit and Melmotte

Melmotte’s demand for “unanimity” reveals the satirical creation of a single unanimous One that the novel’s double articulation of “everybody” displays on a rhetorical level. Melmotte bullies Montague that such unanimity should provide the basis of action, even if it is false: the railwayboard “should be unanimous. They should make themselves unanimous. God bless my soul! You don’t want to see the thing fall to pieces” (Trollope 1875, 311). Whether the situation is economic or amorous, this is the novel’s recurrent threat: the thing might “fall to pieces.” The phrase appears in both character dialogue and narratorial intervention. The narrator, considering the railway scheme, conveys how Montague worries that “the whole affair might tumble to pieces beneath his feet” (75), while Dolly Longestaffe resists selling Pickering place to Melmotte because, in his words, “I’ve a sort of feeling that I don’t like the family property going to pieces. A fellow oughtn’t to let his family property go to pieces” (219). The narrator describes how Lady Carbury’s novel is “pulled [...] to pieces with almost rabid malignity” (83) by the *Evening Pulpit*, and Lady Carbury herself tells Hetta, while trying to break her affection for Montague, “Your cousin says that all this Company in which he [Montague] is involved will go to pieces” (301). In a plotted repetition, Roger employs a similar phrase in the same chapter as he tries to persuade Montague to break his engagement to Mrs. Hurtle: “If I were you, nothing should induce me to marry her;—not though her claws were strong enough to tear me utterly in pieces” (304). The novel’s financial and marriage plots are rhetorically connected only through the fear that everything—or

everybody—might fall to “pieces.” Its opposite, unanimity, is both the satirized social subject of “everybody” and the social presupposition that the satire itself takes to pieces.

The recurrent threat of everything falling to pieces culminates in Marie Melmotte’s oft-repeated assertion: “If you chop me to pieces, I won’t do it” (226)—“it” being understood as marrying anyone but Sir Felix. As Marie’s affection for Felix increases, the text’s use of direct and free indirect discourse traces a shift in Marie’s disintegrative fantasy from “chop” (228; 313; 385) to “cut” (440; 442; 559; 590; 592; 657) that actualizes a uniquely feminine mode of immaterial labor in the text. That is to say, in the shifting usage from “chop” to “cut,” one can discover a purely linguistic production, one that is attached to a character’s consciousness and that becomes in turn productive within the context of the plot. As a refusal to become an object of exchange, Marie’s initial locution of “chop” forms a histrionic outburst of romantic idealism that simultaneously recalls and refuses an older usage of the verb: “to barter, give in exchange” (OED). Even if you chop me to pieces, Marie tells her father, I will not consent to be exchanged to Lord Nidderdale for the promise of a title and the expectation of legal protection that Melmotte assumes to be part and parcel of any nuptial alliance with the landed gentry. This romantic refusal of exchange, when she “offered to be beaten, and killed, and chopped to pieces on behalf of her lover” (228), nearly sways the otherwise immobile Felix, whose motives are no less mercenary than Melmotte’s or Nidderdale’s. Indeed, “chopped in pieces” is almost invariably attached to the possessive personal pronoun “her lover,” whether in direct quotation, as cited above, or as in the retrospective free indirect below, where the repetition of phrases indicates Marie’s overwrought romanticism as the ground for the text’s profusion of pronouns:

She had not only assured him of her undying affection in the presence of her father and mother, had not only offered to be chopped in pieces on his behalf, but had also written to him, telling how she had a large sum of her father’s money within her power, and how willing she was to make it her own, to throw over her father and other, and give herself and her fortune to her lover.
(313)

In her willingness to be “chopped in pieces,” Marie’s refusal of exchange becomes an emphatic embrace of pronominal self-ownership that authorizes her ability to “give herself and her fortune to her lover.” Against the notion of marriage as an exchange, Marie tries to approach marriage as a question of gifts—an approach she will repudiate in her marital negotiations with Fisker at the novel’s end. The final last appearance of “chop” marks the end of Marie’s attachment to Felix as her unquestioned lover. After attempting to elope with Felix on a New York bound ship, Marie is stopped by the police before she can leave her carriage, and she returns home with the belief that Felix was aboard the ship, rather than home in bed after a night at the Beargarden gambling away the £250 she’d given him for the trip:

She would have to encounter an enraged father; and when—when should she see her lover again? Poor, poor Felix! What would be his feelings when he should find himself on his way to New York without his love! But in one matter she made up her mind steadfastly. She would be true to him! They might chop her in pieces! Yes; —she had said it before, and she would say it again.
(385)

With the sympathetic exclamation for “her lover” of “poor, poor Felix,” Marie makes her final use of “chop.” Although she determines that “she had said it before, and she would say it again,” she never does. After learning of Felix’s abandonment, Marie’s humiliation generates a lexical pressure within the text that yields the shorter, sharper, and altogether more rhetorically fitting “cut.”

Whether Marie believes Felix cut her by his mistake or that she intends to cut him with this substitution, there is an unmistakable valence of social humiliation in the shift from “chop” to “cut.” One need only consider Georgiana Longestaffe’s correspondence with Lady Monogram, in which Georgiana complains that since she has come to London to stay with the Melmottes, her friend has avoided her: “Of course you have cut me. [...] I don't think an old friend like you, whom I have always liked more than anybody else, ought to cut me for it” (248). Lady Monogram replies: “I don't know what you mean by cutting. I never cut anybody” (ibid.). This denial is especially suitable given a close

reading of Trollope, with his notoriously fast style of composition and his refusals to revise, re-read, or edit. Granted, to place such emphasis on the shift from “chop” to “cut” may seem out of place in Trollope criticism, and likely he more than anyone would respond to such a reading as Lady Monogram responds to Georgiana: “I don’t know what you mean by cutting.” I would argue, however, that regardless of intent, the slippage should be linked to textual repetitions of “cut.” Early in the novel, Felix tell his mother in hyperbolic style that “If I were to marry [Marie], and if the money wasn’t there, it would be very like cutting my throat then, mother” (177). He reiterates the sentiment after his failed elopement: “If ever it could be well that a man should cut his own throat, surely the time had come for him now” (398). By this point in the text, more idiomatic uses of “cut” have appeared, including Georgiana’s social cut, Felix telling Marie that “Your father cut up very rough about money” (187), and Lady Carbury’s writing to Mr. Broune, “I have been so cut and scotched and lopped by the sufferings which I have endured that I am best alone” (276), a line that so catches Mr. Broune’s eye that he repeats it twice to himself (279). When Ruby pesters Felix about marriage, Felix threatens to “cut it” (331), a phrase that Lord Alfred also uses to his son when he finds Melmotte’s demands too much (343), and which then becomes, in Lord Nidderdale’s retelling of Alfred’s fantasied use of a “horsewhip” on Melmotte, a “cutting whip” (417). The building use of “cut” in the pages leading up to Marie’s disappointment offers a sense of the word’s overdetermination in Marie’s revised phrase as a knot of money, suffering, abandonment, and revenge.

Marie’s shift to “cut” appears in her first discussion with Lord Nidderdale after her failed elopement, when Felix’s status as “her lover” has fallen into question. The narrator intones a page prior, “She was quite ready to run away with a lover, if her lover loved her; but she would not fling herself at a man’s head” (439), and Marie’s words to Nidderdale reiterate the point: “Nobody in the world could break me off as long as I felt that he really loved me;—not if they were to cut me in pieces” (440). With the

introduction of “cut,” Marie displaces a conception of love as a gift to one of love as exchange, or at least exchangeable. She realizes once Nidderdale leaves that “if he had only made love at first as he had attempted to do it now, she thought that she would have submitted herself to be cut in pieces for him” (442). While in this example Marie is still willing to be “cut in pieces” for somebody, her determination quickly shifts from a resistance concerning love to one of economics. When Melmotte finds himself short of cash, he tries to access the money he has invested in Marie’s name—the same money that Marie had promised Felix if they eloped. Marie refuses to budge, angry over her father’s treatment of Felix and insistent that the money will eventually belong to her husband whomever that may be. In this disagreement, Melmotte “took her by both arms and shook her violently. But Marie was quite firm. He might cut her to pieces; but she would sign nothing” (559).

As Melmotte becomes more explosively violent, the text lifts Marie’s turn of phrase to the level of a trope in the culminating sequence of the novel’s piece-work. Melmotte, in his final attempt to wring a signature out of Marie, asserts his right to the money as his own property. When Marie rejects his assertion, the text describes Melmotte as having

that look which had probably first induced Marie to declare that she would endure to be ‘cut to pieces,’ rather than to yield in this or that direction. The lower jaw squared itself and the teeth became set, and the nostrils of his nose became extended,—and Marie began to prepare herself to be ‘cut to pieces.’ (590)

Each iteration of “cut to pieces” is given in quotation marks, even though the direct attribution of the phrase to Marie would only be in reference to her half-hearted remarks made to Lord Nidderdale after the aborted elopement. Moreover, Marie seems to feel her figurative statement coming closer and closer to violent actuality until Melmotte finally descends upon her:

‘Nec pueros coram populo Medea trucidet.’

‘Let not Medea with unnatural rage
Slaughter her mangled infants on the stage.’

Nor will I attempt to harrow my readers by a close description of the scene which followed. Poor Marie. That cutting her up into pieces was commenced after a most savage fashion. Marie crouching down hardly uttered a sound. But Madame Melmotte frightened beyond endurance screamed at the top of her voice,—‘Ah, Melmotte, tu la tueras!’ And then she tried to drag him from his prey. ‘Will you sign them now?’ said Melmotte, panting. (592)

The excess mediation of this moment, orchestrated to defuse the horror of the scene, turns Horace’s aesthetic prescription into a linguistic mediation that masks the scene’s violence with Latin, its subsequent translation, the intrusion of Trollope’s first person narrator, and even Madame Melmotte’s French exclamation of “you will kill her!” Yet at this moment the narrator absorbs Marie’s words into the narrative voice, and the trope is literalized “after a most savage fashion.” If the narrator’s sigh, “Poor Marie,” recalls Marie’s sigh of “poor, poor Felix” which accompanied her final “chop,” it is because at this moment that Marie’s romantic fantasy has become a violent and antagonistic reality. Marie’s fantasies of being chopped or cut into pieces, co-opted by Mr. Melmotte as a means of punishment and subjugation, recalls in violent form the trouble that Ruby Ruggles’ excessive linguistic competency can produce. Though Marie’s fantasies never reach the status of an immaterial labor able to cohere a collective subject, the internal processes of romantic fantasy nonetheless mark an emerging form of immaterial labor. The narrator later expands on the economic ramifications of this labor: Marie “had taught herself this business of falling in love as a lesson, rather than felt it. [...] she had learned from novels that it would be right that she should be in love, and she had chosen Sir Felix as her idol” (749). Mr. Melmotte displays in Marie’s final cutting that, largely due to her reading, Marie had gotten the business wrong. Finance demands the violent abjection of such feminine attempts at immaterial labor.

“Heroes to the Multitude”: The Exception or Exclusion of
Augustus Melmotte

At first glance, Augustus Melmotte is certainly not like “everybody.” Based on financier Albert Gottheimer, a.k.a. Albert Grant a.k.a. Baron Grant, Melmotte plays on Gottheimer’s notoriety as an especially unprincipled speculator in the 1870s (Kynaston 265). What makes Melmotte’s historical inspiration of special note for my project is the central role Gottheimer played in the bankruptcy of Overend, Gurney, and Co. Taking part in the discount house boom that marked the 1860s, Gottheimer entered the world of Lombard Street in 1859 when he launched the Mercantile Discount Company, Ltd., sending out a prospectus and issuing shares (King 223). From the first, Gottheimer’s use of the joint stock company proved central to his questionable business dealings. One of Overends aggrieved creditors, Stefanos Xenos, described Gottheimer’s shady maneuvers to sell his own stock as part of his discount business:

Mr. Albert Gottheimer, formerly a wine merchant trading under the firm of Coverdale and Gottheimer, was at that time studying closely the Limited System, through which the blind sister of the Fates afterwards made him a magnificent Grant. Mr. Gottheimer was willing to discount my promissory note of £3000 for one week for the premium of £100, provided I gave him as collateral security a bill of mortgage on one of my small steamers, which he pledged his word of honour not to register in the Custom-house until the promissory note came to maturity. He further kindly promised that, should it not be convenient to me to take up the *petit billet* at the expiration of the time, he would renew on the same terms, and continue to do so, provided I invested £1000 or £1200 in the shares of the Mercantile Discount Company, Limited, which he was paying, he said, 15 per cent per annum. [...] The future father of the Credit Foncier and Mobilier of England was too sharp for me. I took the shares to oblige him, and they soon burned my fingers.
(56)

Gottheimer maintained this shell-game of discounts, shares, and mortgages for one year before his dealings in bad paper forced the Mercantile Discount Co. into liquidation. Gottheimer, though, managed to depart via golden parachute by negotiating payment for the early termination of his contract (King 229).

Four years later, after taking the name of Albert Grant and becoming a Member of Parliament, Gottheimer floated a new joint stock company: the Credit Foncier and Mobilier of England (King 232). As the company's name indicates, Gottheimer positioned his business as part of the emerging world of international banking, putting to use the French model of joint stock banking that former Rothschild employees pioneered in 1852 (Cameron 8).¹⁰ In 1864, Gottheimer used the Credit Foncier and Mobilier of England, in conjunction with a long time associate, John Henry Barker (who ran his own discount business from Abchurch Lane, the site of Melmotte's offices) to float joint stock companies for Overend, Gurney & Co. so that Overends could use the assets held in their lockup business to generate new accommodation acceptance credits (King 250). That is to say, Gottheimer and Barker created new companies not so much to buy the property held by Overends, but to draw new bills against this property, which Overends discounted and sent back into the market (Xenos 69). While W.T.C. King argues that the action of the company was not "an open fraud on the public" (251) but rather an attempt to isolate and eliminate bad debt, Gottheimer's role in the affair can hardly be considered one of wide-eyed innocence, and led to his ouster from the Credit Foncier and Mobilier of England under the compulsion to pay the company an undisclosed sum in order to avoid legal proceedings (King 256).

As both David Kynaston and Norman Russell have demonstrated, the resemblance between Gottheimer and Melmotte is unmistakable. George Robb recounts that Gottheimer, as Baron Grant, was also instrumental in floating loans for Paraguay, including investment in the country's silver mines, marking a subterranean linkage between *The Way We Live Now* and Conrad's *Nostromo* (Robb 100). Indeed, I would note that there is an important connection between the machinations of finance capital and the excess of sign production that is at once unproductive and yet potentially the work of immaterial labor. Melmotte's commercial dealings revolve around a Gottheimer-like shell game: the floatation of the South Central Pacific and Mexican Railway. This

scheme depends on the sale of an indeterminate amount of unpaid stock at a premium. In theory, the difference between the premium and the cost of the share—for which, one should recall, Melmotte has never paid—would allow Melmotte to keep the premium and plow the initial cost of the share into the company, although it seems Melmotte was not consistent in this scheme. His other financial dealings constitute more clear-cut examples of criminal activity, including his forgery of Dolly Longestaffe's name.

What makes Melmotte so troubling to the social world of the novel is that Melmotte's questionable style of conducting commercial business becomes a method of transacting domestic business. Not only does Melmotte obtain the deed to Pickering when he loans Mr. Longestaffe money and postpones any payment for the estate by offering Longestaffe a position on the railway board—much as Gottheimer traded stocks and deeds with Xenos—but he also finalizes the deal by using credit. The narrator inveighs against importing such business practices into the domestic sphere. First the narrator notes Melmotte's ability to purchase the estate without ready money: "Were I to buy a little property, some humble cottage with a garden—or you, O reader, unless you be magnificent—the money to the last farthing would be wanted, or security for the money more than sufficient, before we should be able to enter in upon our new home" (268). Then the narrator takes account of the vaporous nature of Melmotte's credit: "But money was the very breath of Melmotte's nostrils, and therefore his breath was taken for money" (*ibid.*). The difference between transacting commercial and domestic business marks the novel's discussions of Pickering, especially after Melmotte mortgages the estate to raise more money for his investments while still not paying the Longestaffes. When Melmotte offers to pay for the estate with a pair of bills, the Longestaffe lawyer replies that this "sale of property is not a mercantile transaction" (576). After Melmotte's suicide, Breght similarly tells Mr. Longestaffe that while financiers "expect gains and of course look for occasional losses," in Mr. Longestaffe's case "when a gentleman in your position sells a property he expects to get the purchase price" (676). The novel

envisions a Britain wholly consumed by a credit-based economy, where commercial and domestic economies have become so intricately entwined that the entire structure of society is threatened. It is this combination of the commercial and domestic that constitutes the problem that Melmotte poses in the novel.

P.D. Edwards and John Sutherland have both considered the narrative effects of Trollope's decision to forego the novel's planned ending—a forgery trial for Melmotte—in favor of Melmotte's rather abrupt decision to commit suicide. This substitution is perhaps easier to understand in light of the legal aftermath of the Overends bankruptcy. While the failure of the company led to a widely reported trial of the board of directors, men either inept or at one remove from the most fraudulent decisions, the architects of the credit manipulations that led to the bankruptcy—Gottheimer and Barker—went unpunished. Indeed, although Gottheimer resigned from the *Credit Foncier and Mobilier* after paying his fines, the bank chose as his replacement his partner in crime, Barker (King 256). Gottheimer himself was back to floating new companies by the end of the 1860s, and had rose to new wealth by the early 1870s as Trollope composed the novel. By 1874, Gottheimer was caught up in the global depression that began with the collapse of the Austrian stock exchange in 1873, and his stock manipulation schemes were revealed in a shareholder lawsuit precipitated by the fall in share prices (Kynaston 266-67). Nonetheless Gottheimer's financial decline took an additional nine years to play out, and did not end with his bankruptcy, imprisonment, or death. Baron Grant simply retired on his savings (*ibid.*). If Trollope, writing in 1874, wanted to represent Melmotte's fate as in some degree reflective of contemporary events, a trial for fraud did not so much represent the tragic climax of a criminal career but at most a hiatus. There would be nothing punctual, from a narrative perspective, in such a trial. Sutherland simply notes that Trollope kept the option of a trial open until the last possible moment during the novel's composition without much weighing the effects of his final plotting decision (486). By contrast, P.D. Edwards's description of Melmotte's suicide reveals its

resonance with the implications of a trial without the lengthy exposition of a trial: at the moment of his failure, Melmotte becomes an ambivalent image of power, not so powerful in the eyes of the reader as he once was, yet not entirely bereft of his public image.

Trollope's decision to recast Melmotte's failure as suicide not only reflects the historical impasse of a fraud trail, but also highlights Melmotte's exceptional relation to the novel's impersonal social pronoun, "everybody." In his suicide, Melmotte underlines the exceptional status he has held throughout the novel, a man who hovers between the role of the exception that founds the rule of social propriety and the exception that marks social abjection. Melmotte's death does not reveal him as included within but rather as excluded from "everybody," and he is at once denuded of exceptionality's power while retaining its abjection. In this sense, James Kinkaid is right to say that Melmotte is not part of society. Rather, he is excluded from the people that make up British society, and becomes the text's embodiment of the excluded multitude that make up the unorganized obverse of a nation's citizenry. The contours of this Hobbesian concept are usefully described by Paolo Virno: the multitude "shuns political unity, resists authority, does not enter into lasting agreements, never attains the *status* of juridical person because it never transfers its own natural rights to the sovereign" (23). In his initial exceptionality, Melmotte arrogates the power of the sovereign to himself during his economic rise, which allows him not so much to commingle with society as rise above and manipulate it to his own desires. When his economic power slips away, however, Melmotte finds that his exceptionality has become not a source of power, but an abjection, as his low-born status returns him to the excluded position of the lumpenproletariat, the mob, and the multitude.

In its disavowal of Melmotte's financial power, the novel splits his tale between a kind of strained sympathy for Melmotte, and an excoriation of his person. Melmotte's Parliamentary election, situated as one of the first following the Second Reform Act of 1867, turns Melmotte's gambling habits from the realm of finance to that of politics. In

its description of his election, the text literalizes the electoral horserace: “three days since the odds had been considerably in Melmotte’s favour. [...] On the Monday Melmotte’s name had continued to go down in the betting from morning to evening” (480). Beyond the electoral gamble of extending the franchise, the proliferation of ballots themselves resonates with Melmotte’s proliferation of bad paper (e.g. credit instruments). Indeed, when rumors of forgery and financial misdealings begin to dog Melmotte’s campaign, the narrator describes the strange sympathy of the working classes *for* the financier:

It was supposed that the working-classes were in favour of Melmotte, partly from their love of a man who spends a great deal of money, partly from the belief that he was being ill-used,—partly, no doubt, from that occult sympathy which is felt for crime, when the crime committed is injurious to the upper classes. Masses of men will almost feel that a certain amount of injustice ought to be inflicted on their betters, so as to make things even, and will persuade themselves that a criminal should be declared to be innocent, because the crime committed has had a tendency to oppress the rich and pull down the mighty from their seats.
(Trollope 1875, 489)

The text is trying to draw a comparison between Melmotte’s mix of Conservatism and appeal to the working classes with Disraeli’s opportunist politics. The effect, however, does not so much highlight the differences between Conservative and Liberal positions—something that Trollope often uses to weight contrasting characters like Frank Greystock and Lord George in *The Eustace Diamonds* (1874). Rather, Melmotte’s appeal to the working-classes reveals a kind of Jacobin quality to Melmotte, but more as a psychological need to tear down class hierarchies than as a drive for equality. Much as Melmotte’s actions should be understood to be unproductive labor that is parasitic by nature, the novel takes up his criminality as resonant with the emergent political subjectivity of the working-classes. Although in the text’s description of the working-classes’ desire to exact retribution on “their betters,” there is no doubt where the sympathy of Trollope’s readers should lie, the idea of financial crime nonetheless offers the working classes a vicarious form of class warfare in which Melmotte becomes their avatar. A working class paper opines of Melmotte: “A Napoleon, though he may

exterminate tribes in carrying out his project, cannot be judged by the same law as a young lieutenant who may be punished for cruelty to a few negroes” (524). It should be no surprise that the name of the paper is *The Mob* (ibid.).

The same tenor of martial adoration appears in Mrs. Hurtle’s attempts to justify Melmotte’s dishonesty to Montague. She begins using similarly Napoleonic terms, “Such a man rises above honest [...] as a great general rises above humanity when he sacrifices an army to conquer a nation” (204), before she turns her speech into a disquisition on the will to power: “Here is a man who boldly says that he recognizes no such law; that wealth is power, and that power is good, and that the more a man has of wealth the greater and the stronger and the nobler he can be” (ibid.). Melmotte’s identification by both Mrs. Hurtle and *The Mob* as somehow uniquely exceptional is far more about class mobility than it is about the naked worship of power. The figure of Napoleon simply conflates the two. The issue is rather subjection and the fantasy of escape, a fantasy that Melmotte embodies for characters like Mrs. Hurtle, who is poor, without social standing, and altogether powerless except for her ability to elicit emotion from men and to generate socially-signifying signs. This is what Mrs. Hurtle illustrates when she tries to hold Montague to their engagement by telling him that “a woman’s weapon is her tongue” (362).

It is this affiliation of linguistic production to a lack of social standing or economic power that is demonstrated by the novel’s women, and which Melmotte appropriates in his financial dealings and forgeries. Feminine immaterial production offers the novel’s women a means of changing their social status, either by gaining them a husband (e.g. Ruby Ruggles, Marie Melmotte, and Mrs. Hurtle) or a career (Lady Carbury). By contrast, Melmotte’s use of false signs—as Roger Slakey first noted, Melmotte’s name is itself a play on the French *mal mot*, literally bad word—to climb the rungs of society subverts the social aspects of immaterial labor by falsification. The text reveals almost as an after-thought that these projections by the powerless are in fact

warranted: Melmotte was once one of them, and his falsehoods have allowed him to climb to the heights of society even though he was, as the text notes in free indirect, “brought into the world in a gutter, without father or mother, with no good thing ever done for him” (494). Melmotte, in his utter poverty, not only becomes part of the vast underclass of society but also takes on the role of the exception, one which can become an exemplar to the underclass itself. Melmotte is the figure for the eccentric and perverse singularity of multitude that infects Trollope’s sense of proper British society.

Melmotte turns back to the multitude for strength when his forgery of Dolly Longestaffe’s signature on the deed to Pickering threatens to expose his misdealings. Although he has lost the support of society, the Conservative establishment, and even his closest confidantes, Melmotte maintains the belief that if he were to be put on trial, he should prevail through “popular support”: “He had heard of trials in which the accused criminals had been heroes to the multitude while their cases were in progress, —who had been fêted from the beginning to the end though no one had doubted their guilt,—and who had come out unscathed at the last” (624). If the multitude supports falsehood as a means to resist society’s undue power, then the text’s earlier discussion of Melmotte can be read not so much as an indictment of falsehood as such but rather an examination of falsehood’s constitutive necessity for a man like Melmotte:

But never once, not for a moment, did it occur to him that he should repent of the fraud in which his whole life had been passed. No idea ever crossed his mind of what might have been the result had he lived the life of an honest man. Though he was inquiring into himself as closely as he could, he never even told himself that he had been dishonest. Fraud and dishonesty had been the very principle of his life, and had so become a part of his blood and bones that even in this extremity of his misery he made no question within himself as to his right judgment in regard to them. Not to cheat, not to be a scoundrel, not to live more luxuriously than others by cheating more brilliantly, was a condition of things to which his mind had never turned itself. In that respect he accused himself of no want of judgment. But why had he, so unrighteous himself, not made friends to himself of the Mammon of unrighteousness? Why had he not conciliated Lord Mayors? Why had he trod upon all the corns of all his neighbours? Why had he been insolent at the India Office? Why had he trusted any man as

he had trusted Cohenlupe? Why had he not stuck to Abchurch Lane instead of going into Parliament? Why had he called down unnecessary notice on his head by entertaining the Emperor of China? It was too late now, and he must bear it; but these were the things that had ruined him. (623)

The narratorial voice frames the issue as “the life of an honest man,” but for Melmotte this was never the issue. As part of the multitude born in the gutter, Melmotte never had the position of an honest man within society open to him. Melmotte’s attempt to raise himself to the status of the exception is premised upon this initial exclusion. Melmotte does not regret acting dishonestly, but rather not acting dishonestly *enough*. He does not regret his forgeries and frauds but rather that he did not insinuate himself enough into society, that he drew attention to himself as someone exceptional and in doing so allowed society to return him to the status of excluded. The dual focalization of the paragraph’s final clause displays that “dual vision” Ruth apRoberts located in Trollope’s texts: the narrator judges Melmotte’s dishonesty from a distance but then slides into free indirect as Melmotte lists his social missteps as the source of his downfall and then ends with a final clause that seems at once within Melmotte’s consciousness and ironically distant: “but these were the things that had ruined him.”

Melmotte’s double articulation has led to the wide disparity between critics in their examination of his character. Stephen Wall argues that the sympathetic development of Melmotte’s character undermines the logic of Trollope’s argument while Elizabeth R. Epperly, in contrast, not only claims that the narrator shows little sympathy for Melmotte, but that readers are not led to sympathize with him either. Melmotte becomes a problem of representation within the text. I would argue that while Giorgio Agamben’s work exemplifies the reactionary strain of thought of “everybody,” Alain Badiou’s work can help to elaborate Melmotte in a more productive and positive light. Melmotte seems torn between a pair of terms drawn from Alain Badiou’s *Being and Event*, the singular and the excrescent, and, indeed, by turning to Badiou, we can usefully reground many of the questions raised by my initial use of Agamben. In his work, Badiou uses four categories

to describe the relation of beings to a state via a dual system of presentation (the realm of being/bodies) and representation (the realm of appearance/language): the *normal* is presented and represented, the *singular* is presented but not represented, the *excrecent* is not presented but represented, and the Void takes the Greimasian fourth position of not presented and not represented (99). Badiou begins with the problems of set theory as a basis for ontology, with being as the presentation of difference and representation as a secondary presentation of such difference within a state. He quickly notes that “ontology cannot have its own *excrecences*—‘multiples’ that are represented *without ever having been presented as multiples*—because what ontology presents is presentation” (101). Badiou uses the excrecent to elaborate a Marxist critique of the State in the widely-cited meditation nine of *Being and Event*: the bourgeoisie are the normal term (presented and represented within the state), the proletariat are the singular (present within the state, but not politically represented), and the State is the excrecent excess of representation, which maintains a relationship between the normal and singular via their non-connection (109). The singular provides an initial figure for the event. This key concept in Badiou’s work operates in much the same fashion as the master signifier of a discourse or the foundation of a paradigm for a particular subject: an event is situated yet supplementary to any situation, connected to those who are its subjects through the void that this event opens in the prior situation (Badiou 2001, 68).¹¹ By contrast, the excrecent is at once the state itself as the organization of appearance without regard to being. For example, this is the role of the nation-state. Yet the excrecent can also be understood as the form of a kind of false event, a representational excess rather than a change that will bring together representation and presentation into a new normal. We will see later how the question of the excrecent and the singular—as part of the relation between the event and the void—becomes the crux of my narratological considerations in the dissertation’s conclusion.

For the purposes of this chapter it is important to note the striking contrast between Badiou’s notion of the event and its subjects and Agamben’s ethical demand to

dwell in the commonality of language: Badiou renders the common space of language excrescent except insofar as such an excrescence can act as the nomination of an event, which is subtracted from the world. Particular subjects maintain fidelity to this event as a form of truth. Compare this to Agamben's attempt to discover commonality through the reduction of humanity to linguistic competence. Such a maneuver sees humanity as a kind of excrescent commonality that does not produce subjects able to intervene in a situation. Rather, humanity becomes naked life, life only insofar as it is open to death. It is this focus on death as the Hegelian absolute master or the Heideggerian absolute horizon that blocks the production of new subjects as anything other than life open to death and renders the concept of community or collectivity impossible except insofar as subjects share in this experience or knowledge of death and the inability of subjects to communicate other than through the channels that death has carved into human experience. Indeed, Agamben's focus on death has led Antonio Negri to charge that his bleak sense of commonality is more reflective of the ideology necessary to globalization than of a process able to constitute subjects that extend beyond capital's limited ability to capture the new forms of value produced by an increasingly socialized mode of production (Negri 2008b).¹² The production of new subjects is not an area of particular concern for Agamben, though, and his thought focuses on such production as dependent upon life's openness to destruction. Agamben's concept of the sovereign exception describes subjective mechanisms as the dependency of power upon its ungrounded arrogation, upon the alienation of both naked life and the commonality of language (Agamben 1998). To transpose this into Badiou's terms, the production of power depends upon making the singular and the excrescent indiscernible. Where the excrescent in Badiou marks the problem of recognizing the singular event in a surfeit of representation, in Agamben the return to commonality falls back on the being of language as an indeterminate space of singularity and excrescence. This is why Agamben argued that Badiou misinterprets the relation of the event (which Agamben renders in *Homo Sacer* as

“the exception”) to the singular, claiming that the exception is in fact “what cannot be included in the whole of which it is a member and cannot be a member of the whole in which it is always already included” (Agamben 1998, 25). Rather, for Agamben the exception is the indeterminate space of language itself, its potentiality rather than its existence (ibid.). Agamben’s use of limbo thus serves to lift his linguistic concept of a life in death into the realm of a deconstructive utopic indeterminacy where the singular and the excrescent become indistinguishable in the concept of the event/exception.

Where Agamben’s pronominal limbo illuminated the suspended social critique of the novel’s use of “everybody,” Melmotte’s function in the novel is split between exceptionality and excrescence. On the one hand, Melmotte is a potential singularity that may be able to demarcate an event to particular subjects. On the other hand, Melmotte is an excrescence, a representational excess that the text and its narrator recognize as the mere masquerade of an event. The narrator, by trying to ameliorate Melmotte’s singularity, remains indifferent to what *The Mob* and Mrs. Hurtle see in Melmotte’s will to power as part of an event in which unproductive labor has become hegemonic. Instead the narrator views Melmotte’s singularity as excrescence, a proliferation of representation without substance. In order to limit Melmotte’s link to the event, the text traces his reduction to an excess of signification devoid of content. This begins with the social disaster of Melmotte’s dinner party for the emperor of China. First, the tickets to the dinner itself become part of Melmotte’s paper economy. They oscillate in value with the logic of the stock market, from the “high prices [that] were then being paid” when everybody wanted to attend to the “customary reaction” to overvaluation, a dip in value. With the rumor of Melmotte’s arrest for forgery, however, “eight or nine o’clock on the evening of the party the tickets were worth nothing” (465). Melmotte’s vaporous description of credit becomes with the dinner party a description of rumor—“it [rumor] had got into the air, and had floated round dining-rooms and over toilet tables” (ibid.)—and the immaterial and social process of valuation permeates everybody while

proliferating uncertainty. The ability of credit to measure value begins to depend upon what “everybody” else will do: no one wants to run toward the safety of material money unless certain that others will too. Lady Monogram sends Sir Damask ahead to scout the scene since all he knows is that: “everybody says that Melmotte will be in quod before long” (466). Yet people do not so much care whether Melmotte is a criminal but “whether others were going,” for “if a hundred or more out of the two hundred were to be absent how dreadful would be the position of those who were present” (450). The dinner party marks the first time that “everybody” parts ways with Melmotte, and this social divergence brings about the first collapse of one of Melmotte’s paper economies once “everybody” begins to question his ability to produce value out of thin air.

The centerpiece of Melmotte’s exclusion from “everybody,” however, marks another excess of signification, an excrescence that the text gives the status of a kind of evental master signifier through narratorial interposition: the silent figure of his Imperial Majesty, the emperor of China. While Melmotte angrily interrogates Lord Alfred about everybody missing from the dinner, the emperor sits ringed by the royal family in silence. In contrast to Melmotte’s noisy signifying excesses, silence here serves to denote a reality of power in both the Emperor and the royal family. On the one hand, the Emperor’s silence is predicated on his inability to communicate with those around him “as there was no one present who could even interpret Manchoo into English” (454), while on the other hand, the royal family “had not very much to say to each other” considering the circumstances (*ibid.*). The Emperor’s silence does not so much present an unrepresented singularity but rather turns him into an opaque figure that the narrator can use as a placeholder to project an ironic British consciousness:

that awful Emperor, solid, solemn, and silent, must, if the spirit of an Eastern Emperor be at all like that of a Western man, have had a weary time of it. He sat there for more than two hours, awful, solid, solemn, and silent, not eating very much,—for this was not his manner of eating; nor drinking very much,—for this was not his manner of drinking; but wondering, no doubt, within his own awful bosom, at the changes which were coming when an Emperor

of China was forced, by outward circumstances, to sit and hear this buzz of voices and this clatter of knives and forks. ‘And this,’ he must have said to himself, ‘is what they call royalty in the West!’ If a prince of our own was forced, for the good of the country, to go among some far-distant outlandish people, and there to be poked in the ribs, and slapped on the back all round, the change to him could hardly be so great. (454)

The narratorial cooptation of the silent Emperor satirizes the dinner from the perspective of an outsider, a partial embodiment of the narratorial voice within the text itself through the interposition of a conditional: “if the spirit of an Eastern Emperor be at all like that of a Western man.” This conditional *if*, however, elicits the text’s description of the dinner itself, split between the Emperor’s imagined responses and those of a western man.

Where Melmotte’s forgeries are revealed as false signs, with the Emperor the narrative substitutes the conditional for the actual to reveal the dinner’s emptiness. While the emperor’s opaque interiority gestures toward singularity with its lack of representation, the text deploys this opacity as an ironic indication of his weariness with the affair so that even as he receives visitors silently in the drawing room after dinner, the narrator can slyly exclaim of the text’s double vision, “How one would wish to see inside the mind of the emperor as it worked on that occasion!” (457). In this disjunction, the emperor exemplifies the text’s amalgamation of the singular and the excrescent as it attempts to normalize both. No longer simply a silent representation of power, the Emperor, his interiority grounded in the presentation of a normalized British identity, represents power as part of the normal (presented and represented) *mise-en-scene* of British imperial power at table.

By contrast, Melmotte only receives an extensive treatment of his interiority to display his emptiness. Even Melmotte’s dreams that his story would outlive him reveal his reliance on the ability of signification to represent something outside of or beyond reality, to be in excess of what is presented. He wonders whether “the grand dinner which he had given before he was put into prison would live in history” (477), and after his election thinks that “even though he should be condemned to penal servitude for life, he

would not all die” (626). Melmotte’s retreat to the solace of a place in history becomes part of a retrospective and a death-driven mode of narration that will be capped by his eventual suicide. Yet before the plot itself is certain that Melmotte will end his life, his dreams of history are contrasted by fantasies of an escape from inscription. After the dinner party and his dream of living on in history, Melmotte determines that since “there was no tangible sign that things were not to go on as they went before” (478), he must not cringe but rather act so that “when people talked of him they should say that he was at least a man” (ibid.). Melmotte is not simply expressing a fear of emasculation but of his potential loss of standing as a bourgeois individual. Melmotte’s manipulation of signs in his attempt to control what people say of him leads him away from the solace of history to imagine an existence beyond name. Walking home, Melmotte stares up at the stars, and reflects that

If he could be there, in one of those unknown distant worlds, with all his present intellect and none of his present burdens, he would, he thought, do better than he had done here on earth. If he could even now put himself down nameless, fameless, and without possessions in some distant corner of the world, he could, he thought, do better. But he was Augustus Melmotte, and he must bear his burdens, whatever they were, to the end. He could reach no place so distant but that he would be known and traced. (479-480)

Melmotte does not imagine the complete dissolution of self so much as the dissolution of his juridical person: his name, its associations, and the possessions that attach to it.

Melmotte’s imagined refusal of the name eliminates his connection to the event of unproductive labor, a disavowal of his Napoleonic status for people like Mrs. Hurtle or the readers of *The Mob*. Yet such a refusal can also be understood as Melmotte’s most realized embrace of his own quasi-evental status by realizing that he is a kind of unrepresented singularity: he imagines himself subtracted from the world. That is to say, by refusing his name, Melmotte not only imagines an escape from his troubles but an escape from his status as a social excrescence. Instead, he fantasizes a return to the unrepresented world of the gutter, *The Mob*, and the multitude.

Once elected to Parliament, however, Melmotte loses any hope of returning to the mob's anonymous singularity. As a Member of Parliament, Melmotte is counted as part of the political establishment. He has become part of the state with his political career, and embraced the realm of the excrescent as the representative of a society to which he does not belong, a non-representative member of the excluded mob and a representative of the normal citizenry from which he is excluded. From this position of representational excess, Melmotte's fantasy of an existence beyond name becomes its opposite: Parliament is a world where Melmotte lacks the power of his present intellect while he retains all his prior burdens, the space in which the abstract social pronoun of "everybody" becomes legally embodied. This is quite clear when Melmotte tries to enter a debate on exchange rates between England and France during his first appearance in Parliament. The narrator notes with an uncharacteristic emphasis Melmotte's knowledge of the topic: "About this Melmotte really did know something" (529). Yet Melmotte is cowed by the watchful gaze of the Parliamentary "everybody": "as soon as Melmotte was on his legs, and, looking round, found that everybody was silent with the intent of listening to him, a good deal of his courage oozed out of his fingers' ends" (530). He is then unable to formulate a sentence—"Melmotte had not dreamed of putting two words together" (531)—and the Speaker finally shames the financier for his scant knowledge of parliamentary procedure. Melmotte sees in this assertion of his status as the excrescent his imminent ruin, and tells his clerk, "It isn't what I've lost that will crush me, but what men *say* that I've lost" (621). Indeed, when the text describes Melmotte's ruin as an effect of "his own incapacity to bear his position" (623), the emphatic "his own" places the burden of his debts on the unbearable quality of his position as a subject: his name will be attributed losses discursively. It is in this particularity of signification that Melmotte finds himself to be no longer the exception to society's "everybody," but rather its exclusion. Cut off from the undifferentiated multitude by the burden of his name, Melmotte becomes wholly excrescent.

During his final scene in Parliament, Melmotte's experience of this reduction to representational excess begins with another silencing by the Parliamentary everybody and ends with his literal fall from grace as representation begins to trip upon itself and Melmote tumbles drunkenly over another MP. The text describes Melmotte's manufacturing of his own excrescent image as a form of "audacity," first in the free indirect of a general social observer ("they who watched him declared among themselves that he was happy in his own audacity" [640]), before the narrator offers his own invective against Melmotte's unrepentant behavior: "But even he, with all the world now gone from him, with nothing before him but the extremest misery which the indignation of offended laws could inflict, was able to spend the last moments of his freedom in making a reputation for audacity" [ibid.]. Melmotte's exceptionality is thus at last displaced into a mere sign of recklessness, a disdain not only for the law but for social proprieties as well, while retaining a sense of exceptionality in his "extremest misery." Melmotte's dream of living on in history becomes, much as it did for Nostromo in Conrad, a last minute attempt to create a "reputation for audacity." This effort is capped by Melmotte's insistence on addressing the House:

Melmotte standing erect, turning his head round from one side of the House to another, as though determined that all should see his audacity, propping himself with his knees against the seat before him, remained for half a minute perfectly silent. He was drunk,—but better able than most drunken men to steady himself, and showing in his face none of those outward signs of intoxication by which drunkenness is generally made apparent. But he had forgotten in his audacity that words are needed for the making of a speech, and now he had not a word at his command. He stumbled forward, recovered himself, then looked once more round the House with a glance of anger, and after that toppled headlong over the shoulders of Mr. Beauchamp Beauclerk, who was sitting in front of him. (641)

Melmotte, determined "that all should see his audacity," tries to own his excrescence, to put his ability to produce false signs to use for himself once more, but finds himself reduced to silence. His exceptionality is wholly bereft from any event capable of producing a new discourse: "he had forgotten in his audacity that words are needed for

the making of a speech, and now he had not a word at his command.” As though to emphasize his inability to control signs, the text notes that even though “his face [had] none of those outward signs of intoxication,” Melmotte follows his bout of aphasia with a loss of composure and standing that reveals his drunkenness beyond a doubt by falling over Mr. Beauclerk. Yet even though Melmotte finds himself more and more excluded by “everybody,” his suicide is a final attempt to maintain his own exceptional singularity: “he was able to deliver himself from the indignities and penalties to which the law might have subjected him by a dose of prussic acid” (642). In death, Melmotte manages to subtract himself from the realm of the law, to enter into the constitution of the event via silence. Melmotte’s suicide is the obverse of Decoud’s suicide in *Nostramo*: where Decoud imagined death to be a refuge from the proliferation of signs, Melmotte imagines death as the entrance into signs. Indeed, if both men become names with their own narratives attached, Melmotte’s death serves to assure that his link to the event of unproductive labor remains intact.

After his suicide, Melmotte and his crimes become little more than a name that society can exclude and forget while disavowing the event of unproductive labor’s turn. Instead of reflecting upon the discursive contamination of such labor, Melmotte’s crimes are reframed after his death not as crimes inherent to the changed nature of the economy and the workings of finance—in contradistinction to Baron Grant—but as crimes of sheer prodigality. This frame returns Melmotte and his failings to the grounds of Aristotlean ethics and tries to avoid admitting that society’s ethical framework has changed. Melmotte’s failure, according to Mr. Broune, was “brought about by his reckless personal expenditure,” an attempt to “conquer the world by it, and obtain universal credit” (647). Rather than address a real change in social production, the text shifts the problem into one of excess, making it a personal issue of Melmotte’s unrestrained behavior. Breght casts a similar the assertion, stating: “I can’t even yet understand how it was with him, or why he took upon himself to spend such an enormous deal of money here in London”

(676). Indeed, after his death, Melmotte's associates claim that if he had not "touched Pickering or entertained the emperor or stood for Westminster, he must, by the end of autumn, have been able to do any or all of those things" and he had only failed because he had "become hampered by the want of comparatively small sums of ready money" (663). This is of course the reality of any credit crisis: the proliferation of signs undercuts their value and leads to a demand for more certain recompense. Melmotte's failure is thus not a failure of credit but of an abuse of credit. A mere audacious prodigal, Melmotte is denied the status of singularity in *The Way We Live Now*. Instead, he becomes one of capitalism's excrescences, one of those inexplicable failures of purely personal excess that blot the history of capitalism's development, and nothing more.

"Besides, As I Put It, She Was Sure To Be Better Pleased":

Immaterial Labor and the Inexorable Shift of the Exception

In contrast to Melmotte's failed attempt to occupy the privileged space of the exception, Roger Carbury is undoubtedly the singular exception to the actions and attitudes of "everybody" in the novel even while providing the social field with a sense of the proper ethical direction. Hetta Carbury provides the most elaborate descriptions of Roger's infallibility in her discussion with Paul Montague, saying: "Roger is always right. [...] Whenever he thinks anything he says it—or, at least, he never says anything that he doesn't think. If he spent a thousand pounds, everybody would know that he'd got it to spend; but other people are not like that" (297). Hetta's remarks highlight the novel's two disparate forms of circulation and Roger's correct use of both: he speaks only what he thinks, and he spends only what he has. When Montague replies that Hetta must be referring to Melmotte, she strenuously disagrees with a phrase that crystallizes Roger's exceptional relation to "everybody": "I'm thinking of everybody, Mr. Montague—everybody except Roger" (297). This is not simply because Hetta believes that she is "not good enough for [Roger]" (301), but because Roger is certain that nobody is good enough

for him either—that is, except for Hetta. Indeed, although Hetta tells Montague that she knows Roger to be “as good as gold...and ever so much better than you [Montague] are,” she prefers Montague over the guarantees of such social bullion: “I suppose we ought to love the best people best, but I don’t” (506). Such is the difference between the world of Dickens’s *Our Mutual Friend* and Trollope’s *The Way We Live Now*: where John Harmon’s love for Bella Wilfer is guaranteed by the “true golden gold” of her character, Hetta—and, indeed, everyone else in this text—does not see these certainties as the key to happiness or the real functioning of society. For this, Hetta’s decision throws Roger into a subjective dilemma that only the exception to “everybody” could confront: if he is so right and good, then his choice of Hetta must be right and good... except that, given the circumstances, it isn’t.

While Trollope was dissatisfied with the sheer banality of the Montague/Carbury subplot, it nonetheless highlights a drift in the novel’s attempt to construct an ethical order around the logic of the exception. The exception, although still in force, is no longer productive but *sterile*. Where Melmotte’s exceptionality constituted a potential change of society (albeit with uncertain results), Roger’s exceptionality is purely reactive: change occurs in spite of the exception. When this impasse in the logic of the exception becomes a problem internal to Roger, it is only overcome by raising the exception to the level of an imperative, which effectively turns Montague’s claim that Roger “thinks of everybody near him” (298) into an ethical command for Roger to turn such thought against himself:

What right had he to think that he could judge of that better than the girl herself? And so, when many many miles had been walked, he succeeded in conquering his own heart—though in conquering it he had crushed it—and in bringing himself to the resolve that the energies of his life should be devoted to the task of making Mrs Paul Montague a happy woman. (763)

Roger’s exceptionality becomes externalized as its own singular ethical command, which dictates self-subjugation and displaces his embodiment of the exception into a

disembodied imperative that demands he take up the part of another, Hetta. Melmotte is reduced to an excrescence in order to evacuate his potential relation to this event of unproductive labor, and Roger only avoids such a fate by conquering and crushing his heart to become the exception that marks a surpassed event. The novel is certain that something has changed, but it refuses to admit what that means.

Immaterial labor and finance capital not only provide the premise of the novel's satire, but also pose the problem of a change in social production. Is it a real change in social production or mere deceit? While Melmotte's fraudulent finance capital is all but exorcised from the social fabric of the novel as a hated excrescence, Roger's alienation of his own exceptionality—that is to say, the displacement of his singularity into a dictate external to his own desires—mirrors the novel's inability to eliminate unproductive labor from society. It is this increasingly undeniable role of unproductive labor in social production that marks the emergence of immaterial labor as an event within the text. Indeed, immaterial labor remains embedded in the resolution of Hetta and Montague's marriage-plot through Mrs. Hurtle's use of language. Mrs. Hurtle not only uses the linguistic competence of her tongue as a "weapon" (362), but also, much like Lady Carbury, as a tool to provide for her own economic interests, most especially when she turns her hand to letterwriting. While Lady Carbury's textual production is routinely derided by the text—from the first noting that she was "in nothing more rapid than in the writing of letters" (7)—Mrs. Hurtle's labor is depicted as the steady work of a craftsman, an immaterial labor keenly aware of the work that her letters need to accomplish. Trying to hold Montague to his promise of marriage, Mrs. Hurtle fashions a letter after her first visit that "took her much time to write," but she erases the marks of her labor to ensure its emotional effect (she "copied it rapidly, with one or two premeditated erasures, so that it should look to have been done hurriedly" [211]). The text describes how the letter's content had "much art in it," and how Mrs. Hurtle has masked her anger to convey "a tone through it of natural feminine uncautious eagerness" (211). Mrs. Hurtle's awareness

of the linkage between femininity and immaterial labor keeps her work alive, in both its linguistic construction and subsequent inscription, to the notion that as a woman, her immaterial labor should never appear labored.

Mrs. Hurtle's relationship with Montague, whether to keep him or cut him loose, turns the trope of the deceitful or entrapping woman into one not merely premised upon immaterial labor, but that sees in such labor also the potential development of what Marx called in the *Grundrisse* "the free development of individualities" (706).¹³ When she realizes that their marriage would be ill-advised, Mrs. Hurtle turns her craftsman-like practice of revision into a subjective practice of repression, and composes a letter that absolves Montague of the engagement. She writes the letter, included in the text in its entirety, "with a conviction that she would not have the strength to send it" (368). Winifred considers posting her unsent letter after she receives another note from Montague that renews his call to dissolve the engagement, noting that it had a "feminine softness in it that gratified her" (391) and that "those words, fairly transcribed on a sheet of note paper would be the most generous and the fittest answer she could give" (391). Mrs. Hurtle can only contemplate turning the letter, with its proper tone of "feminine softness," to use after another mediating transcription, and even then "she could not even copy the words" (392). Though aware that in its form, this letter is a piece of immaterial production, Mrs. Hurtle is unable to use this repressed externalization as such, and instead writes two other letters, also contained in the text. The first threatens to horsewhip Montague for talk of monetary compensation, while the second states simply: "Yes. Come" (392). If Lady Carbury's scribbling mocks the kind of empty-headed feminine immaterial labor that George Eliot mocked as silly novels by lady novelists, then Winifred Hurtle's letters display an Eliot-level awareness of the power of well-crafted immaterial labor as well as its potential power for reshaping her own psyche.

Indeed, Mrs. Hurtle finds a way to turn all of her letters to use. When Montague appears in response to her terse third letter, she releases him from his promise by displaying her drafts and demystifying her extensive compositional labor:

I wrote three, and had to choose which I would send you. I fancy that yours to me was easier written than either one of mine. You had no doubts, you know. I had many doubts. I could not send them all by post, together. But you may see them all now. There is one. You may read that first. While I was writing it, I was determined that that should go. (394)

This scene, in which Mrs. Hurtle keeps her first generous letter to the last, transposes her compositional process into a performative mode of immaterial labor as she reveals her letters in reverse, from the two word response that brought Montague to her presence, to the angered threat of a horsewhipping, to the revelation of the feminine softness of her initial draft, which is given new power and meaning by this recontextualization. With her performance, Mrs. Hurtle chooses not to choose, and even defends the anger of her second letter against Montague's assertion that a woman should not horsewhip a gentleman: "Shall a woman be flayed alive because it is unfeminine in her to fight for her own skin?" (395). At once inverting the letter's threat and echoing Marie Melmotte's "cut to pieces," Mrs. Hurtle makes clear that a violent threat confronts feminine immaterial labor if it does not choose to efface its own artfulness. The vulnerability of the feminine skin that she tries to disavow becomes in the reversal of letters a vulnerability of textual surface when she produces her uncopied original for Montague to read. This textual manipulation of vulnerability allows Mrs. Hurtle to transpose the letter into the realm of immaterial labor: it becomes an instrument able to maintain a dominant position even while Montague receives his reprieve. The final act in a striptease of the compositional process, Mrs. Hurtle's drafts a form of falsified emotional nudity that allows her to tell Montague that "the charm of womanly weakness presented itself to my mind in a soft moment—and then I wrote this other letter. You may as well see them all" (395). Yet she distances herself from the letter's contents when he falls sobbing at her feet, telling him

flatly, “I have not sent it, you know” (395). In a final flourish, she takes the threatening second letter after dissolving the engagement “and tore it into scraps” (396). This gesture flays her own unfeminine expression by tearing it to pieces even while she returns the vulnerable uncopied text of the first, feminine, letter back to the obscurity of her pocketbook.

After this episode, Mrs. Hurtle’s manipulation of her own immaterial production puts her implicit understanding of the connection between immaterial labor and femininity to use in the realignment of social relationships. This includes her plan to bring together Ruby and John Crumb: she gets Ruby’s aunt to send Ruby out to service, while she writes Crumb “in her own name” (617) to come to London and collect his bride, certain Ruby will accept the grain merchant over her other options. Indeed, Mrs. Hurtle’s attempt to hold Montague to his promise of marriage was a similar plot, and equally attuned to the importance of a potential change in social position against a mere rise in economic standing. Yet it is in her meeting with Hetta Carbury that Mrs. Hurtle’s immaterial labor most fully expresses its ability to realign social relationships. Her willingness not only to lie but also to produce a narrative able to sway Hetta’s bruised ego turns her own unmoored sign production into the basis of bourgeois domesticity. Where Melmotte’s unproductive labor is dismissed as an excrescence and his crimes the mere excess of an otherwise honest world of finance, Mrs. Hurtle’s immaterial labor, with her reconciliation of Hetta and Paul, takes on the qualities of a socially productive labor that does not depend upon honesty. Once her labor ceases to be merely another instance of the feminine manipulation of social alliances, it takes on the qualities of an unrepresented singularity even as it also begins to resemble the insidious nature of finance capital.

Hetta, incensed by the disclosure of Montague’s prior relationship with Mrs. Hurtle, breaks off their engagement in the name of propriety. This is, of course, against the wishes of both parties, and Hetta and Montague each plead for Roger, the exception,

to intercede in the name of truth. Hetta tells Roger, “if you knew him to be good you would tell me—because you yourself are so good” (552), while Paul writes to Roger, “I am being destroyed by a false representation” (669). Although conflicted by the existence of such falsehoods, Roger resists and tells Hetta that “whatever be the story, Hetta, you shall not hear it from me” (552). When he is confronted by Montague’s letter, Roger falls back on the comfort that whatever representations the world may contain, at least he had “told no stories” (669). As the text’s exceptional position of truth, Roger encounters these demands to refute false representations and tell stories as little less than the threat of castration: if Roger demonstrates his exceptional position as the bearer of truth by telling Hetta what he knows, his speech will effectively resolve the conflict between lovers and end Roger’s own hopes of marrying Hetta. As such, when he finally accedes to the demands of truth and honor that he feels, the letter that Roger allows Montague to show to Hetta displaces the knowledge that Roger “had let his time for love-making go by” into an aggressive series of accusations that Montague had behaved “badly” to him, “cruelly to Mrs. Hurtle, and disrespectfully to my cousin,” while also tersely admitting that “Mrs. Hurtle’s presence in England has not been in accordance with your wishes” (670). Roger, although certain that he should confront and expel the excrescent, false representation, can only do so by making his own singular position untenable.

While Roger finds himself in an unsustainable position based on the demands of immaterial labor and his role as the social exception, it is Montague who finds himself the beneficiary of these sign manipulations. Between his business dealings with Melmotte and his engagement to Mrs. Hurtle, Montague profits handsomely from false signs even if he is also left with the unpleasant task of justifying conduct that he knows to be improper, first to Roger about Melmotte, and then to Hetta about Mrs. Hurtle. In the latter case, however, the problem Montague faces in justifying himself to the blank figure of purity that he sees as Hetta Carbury leads him to consider what kind of written or performed immaterial labor is best suited to the task:

But he hardly wishes to supply his beloved one with a written record of his folly. And then who does not know how much tenderness a man may show to his own faults by the tone of his voice, by half-spoken sentences, and by an admixture of words of love for the lady who has filled up the vacant space once occupied by the Mrs. Hurtle of his romance? But the written record must go through from beginning to end, self-accusing, thoroughly perspicuous, with no sweet, soft falsehoods hidden under the half-expressed truth. The soft falsehoods which would be sweet as the scent of violets in a personal interview, would stand in danger of being denounced as deceit added to deceit, if sent in a letter. (581)

In contrast to the letters of Mrs. Hurtle or Lady Carbury, Montague ponders creating a “written record,” which emphasizes its affidavit-like quality. Though determined to justify his actions, Montague is unable to manufacture false words for print. Instead, he determines that he had better rely on those “soft falsehoods, which would be sweet as the scent of violets in a personal interview.” Montague displaces into the realm of scent the vaporous nature of credit that Melmotte asserted earlier: “how strong it is—as the air—to buoy you up; how slight it is—as a mere vapour—when roughly touched” (312). Although Montague believes personal credit may be increased by the perfume of spoken “sweet, soft falsehoods,” in contrast to Melmotte and his forgeries, Montague maintains a certainty in the truthfulness of the written record. Hetta too is afflicted by a demand to adhere to the letter of the law even though it undermines her hopes. She is insistent that Montague should marry Mrs. Hurtle: “an engagement is an engagement” (583).

When Montague finally brings himself to compose a letter for Hetta, however, he does not produce the kind of written record that he feared but rather one that announces the potential failure of written records. He begins by announcing to Hetta, “I have never deceived you in anything, not by a word or for a moment” (648), but Montague does not expect his word to stand on its own—and to Hetta, it does not—so he turns to Mrs. Hurtle to support his claims by recommending that “if you want corroboration of my story go yourself to Mrs. Hurtle” (650). Where Roger’s exceptional position turned the demands of immaterial labor into a kind of castration, Paul’s relationship with Mrs. Hurtle renders his immaterial labor impotent. From the first, the literal hurdle that Mrs. Hurtle has

proven to Montague's marriage has given their relationship overtones of castration, and the text toys with this idea with during Montague's initial visit to her lodgings. The narrator describes the knowing look that the landlady, Mrs. Pipkin, endows on Montague, expostulating on the meaning of that look to the men who receive it:

If we have felt that something of ridicule was intended, because we have been regarded as cocks with their spurs cut away, then we also have a pride when we have declared to ourselves that upon the whole we have gained more than we have lost. But with Paul Montague at the present moment there was no satisfaction, no pride—only a feeling of danger which every hour became deeper, and stronger, with less chance of escape. (214)

The narrator's barely veiled castration metaphor pronominally extends the experience of a physical loss become immaterial gain to a plurality of masculine readers even as Montague finds himself condemned by the landlady's look to an inclusive exclusion. To remain true to his word, Montague is included in the cutting but excluded from the gain. Between his status in this trope and his equivocal relation to "everybody," Montague highlights the impossible relation of the excrescent and the singular in Agamben's critique of Badiou. Agamben argues that the sovereign exception of language tries to make sense and denotation coincide in a politics of the sovereign exception. Such an endeavor is in contrast to the project of deconstruction, which tries to confront the disparities between sense and denotation to reveal language as a field of indetermination between the two, the place of the inclusive exclusion, or rather, the space between the singular and the excrescent. In his interpellation, Montague finds himself castrated without the benefit of gaining access to a new subject position. Trapped between the singularity of a love for Hetta that he cannot declare, and an excrescent relationship with Mrs. Hurtle that only signifies for others, Montague experiences the indeterminate space of language as a hell of indecision. My use of Agamben to analyze the novel reflects the text's conflation of these two positions more than any particular privilege of Agamben's philosophy. Agamben provides a model for the novel's impasses, where Badiou—whose sense of militant subjectivity is close to Negri's, but differentiated by an assertion of the

importance of immortal truths in addition to the world of biopolitics—is better positioned to offer a sense of the novel’s counter potentials.¹⁴

Locked in a battle of truths in the indeterminate space of language that Roger’s exceptionality is unable to ground or resolve, Hetta and Montague are reconciled by Mrs. Hurtle’s performative immaterial labor. The event, as she later tells Montague, is not simply that “one does not scruple a lie for a friend, you know!” but also that:

I could not make her understand during one short and rather agonizing interview how you had allowed yourself to be talked out of your love for me by English propriety even before you had seen her beautiful eyes. There was no reason why I should tell her all my disgrace—anxious as I was to be of service. Besides, as I put it, she was sure to be better pleased. (742)

Ever the wordsmith, Mrs. Hurtle does not try to convey the totality of the situation to Hetta, but rather a carefully constructed narrative meant to please. Hetta’s willingness to believe Mrs. Hurtle’s story recalls Ruby Ruggles’ readerly solicitude against the face of reality, a tendency in Hetta that even her mother denounces as “the unrealistic, romantic view of life which pervaded all Hetta’s thoughts” (696). Hetta’s romantic view of life, like Ruby’s and Marie’s, becomes a figure for a positive feminine immaterial production that is undercut by a naivety that keeps them from realizing the stories they are so pleased to hear are constructed only for the purpose of creating such pleasure. Only after Ruby and Marie discover the fraud that Sir Felix perpetrated on their naivety do both enter into more worldly alliances negotiated in light of their economic standing, Ruby with Crumb, and Marie with the slick talking Fisker. By contrast, Hetta remains in the naivety of fiction.

The eventual quality of Mrs. Hurtle’s immaterial production is her ability to keep Hetta immersed in this unrealistic, romantic view of life by appealing to the very sense of truth and justice that forced Hetta to renounce Montague. Mrs. Hurtle begins with a declaration of the appropriateness of Hetta’s actions that directly aligns herself with Hetta and social propriety: “I think that he has been unjust to me, and that therefore your

injustice to him is no more than his due” (698). Only then does she declare that Montague “had been talked out of his love by my enemies and his own friends long before he had ever seen you” (698). Pitched between registers of propriety and romance, the effect of Mrs. Hurtle’s tale of a woman scorned is a pleasant counterfeit of the far more complicated relationship that Hetta is quite happy to receive. Indeed, while Montague provides a figure for the machinations of justification of misconduct knowingly undertaken by “everybody” after the fact, in her self-justification Hetta reveals the internal processes by which “everybody” unwittingly aids and abets such conduct as it occurs:

She had told herself that her visit was to be made in order that she might be justified in her condemnation of her lover. She had believed that it was her intention to arm herself with proof that she had done right in rejecting him. Now she was told that however false her lover might have been to this other woman he had been absolutely true to her. The woman had not spoken kindly of Paul,—had seemed to intend to speak of him with the utmost severity; but she had so spoken as to acquit him of all sin against Hetta. What was it to Hetta that her lover had been false to this American stranger? It did not seem to her to be at all necessary that she should be angry with her lover on that head. Mrs. Hurtle had told her that she herself must decide whether she would take upon herself to avenge her rival’s wrongs. In saying that, Mrs. Hurtle had taught her to feel that there were no other wrongs which she need avenge. It was all done now. If she could only thank the woman for the pleasantness of her demeanour, and then go, she could, when alone, make up her mind as to what she would do next. She had not yet told herself she would submit herself again to Paul Montague. She had only told herself that, within her own breast, she was bound to forgive him. (698-699)

In her halting forgiveness, Hetta embodies the *rentier* class by taking the profits from her investment with utter indifference to the fraud perpetrated upon a stranger. Much as “everybody” received Melmotte and invested with him although certain his wealth came from criminal activities, Hetta becomes in this instance the social entity willing not only to profit from fraud but to embrace it as such so long as it injures somebody else. Hetta’s complicity, however, is the fruit of Mrs. Hurtle’s immaterial labor, her narrative reframing of the situation so that in refusing Montague, Hetta will “avenge her rival’s

wrongs” and not her own. The phrase’s implication is immediately apparent in Hetta’s free indirect discourse as Montague’s conduct towards her is absolved as truthful, however problematic it may have been to another. Moreover, by convincing herself of this absolution, Hetta reveals her awareness of Mrs. Hurtle’s labor in crafting this phrase for her: “In saying that, Mrs. Hurtle had taught her to feel there were no other wrongs which she need avenge.” Beyond the written word, Mrs. Hurtle’s immaterial labor, her lie for a friend, teaches Hetta through implication how to feel about the situation even as “the pleasantness of her demeanour” demonstrates Mrs. Hurtle’s skill not just in crafting but in delivering the kind of “soft falsehoods” that Montague used to such little effect.

For all of Hetta’s romanticized purity—her “virgin heart” which was “pure and white as snow on which no foot has trodden” (700)—she represents the conflicted interior of the true beneficiaries of the financial and immaterial production that *The Way We Live Now* tries to indict. While Montague walks away from his business with Melmotte with some profit and his investment intact, Hetta embraces the romantic fraud perpetrated by Montague on Mrs. Hurtle and the lies that, as the greatest refinement of her immaterial labor, Mrs. Hurtle crafts to make Montague’s actions defensible. That Roger Carbury all but settles his estate on Montague and Hetta’s children formalizes in less mercenary terms Melmotte’s scheme to marry Marie to Lord Nidderdale, only now the alliance between the world of finance and Britain’s gentry has been purged of the threat of the multitude. In this respect, Mrs. Hurtle’s immaterial labor not only functions as the basis of bourgeois domesticity and the social world where “everybody” resides, but also reveals the role of an underclass of such laborers in constituting the world of social interaction. Like Melmotte’s manipulation of signs, Mrs. Hurtle’s immaterial production in the end benefits *everybody* except herself. In its display of this social exploitation of immaterial labor, as well as the figurations of finance capital that ape and subsume it, *The Way We Live Now* reveals a historic moment in which linguistic production begins to recognize its role as common labor.

It is in this sense that Badiou's work on the event is perhaps most important. This is not because Badiou embraces the notion of immaterial labor as a subversive social movement—he does not—but because the ability to recognize and name an event depends as much upon the subjects as upon the event itself. Thus an event, even one as central to social and economic production as the revaluation of labor, may not be recognized as such at the moment by the people at hand. Trollope's essentially reactionary stance valorizes a romanticized marriage-plot and the landed gentry as the bases of social production, yet his satirical examination of a society of unproductive labor recognizes in backhanded fashion a change in society's composition, even if only to mock it. George Gissing will take such insights to their logical extreme in *New Grub Street* (1891) and *The Odd Women* (1893) as immaterial labor becomes increasingly exploited and socially corrosive, but in *The Way We Live Now*, Trollope has already outlined the contours of this shift.

Notes

¹ While one could draw this tension in Trollope as a differentiation between the literary community's attempt to construct literary value in the nineteenth century and its fear of a multitude of working-class readers with uncertain taste as described by Mary Poovey (Poovey 2008, 305-318), I would argue that the conjunction of economic description and "common labor" displaces class anxiety to describe the potential productivity of a larger literate class.

² See Paul Krugman, Akerlof and Shiller, etc.

³ I have in mind the Lacan of the 1950s, represented by Seminar VII and the essay "Kant with Sade" in *Ecrits*, although Lacan revisits this issue in the 1970s in Seminar XX with more emphasis on feminine sexuality. See Lacan 1992, 108-109, 189, and Lacan 2006, 645-668.

⁴ In his *Principles of Political Economy*, J.R. McCulloch writes: "The mere necessities of life may be obtained with comparatively little labour; and those savage and uncivilized hordes, who have no desire to possess its comforts, are proverbially and notoriously indolent and dissipated. To make men industrious—to make them shake off that lethargy which is natural to them, they must be inspired with a taste for the luxuries and enjoyments of civilized life" (208-209). See McCulloch 204-219.

⁵ In his early work *Language and Death*, Agamben examines the role of the pronoun as the point of intersection between linguistics and metaphysics. As a linguistic shifter, the pronoun's dual function as symbol and index leads to the introduction of the concept of the utterance, not merely as an indication of some particular person's voice, but as a more general indication "*that language takes place*" (25). The pronoun thus introduces the possibility of an impersonal Voice to ground language's ability to take place. When linked to the Voice, the pronoun, as a nonplace for the taking place of language, becomes for Agamben tied to the negative space of death via metaphysics: in Hegel, the problem of deixis (the use of *this* and *that*) leads to a notion of language that guards the unspeakable by speaking in a language of negativity, while in Heidegger, "*Da, the place of language is thus a nonplace*" (57), leads to an experience of language as a place where "all the shifters disappear" (58). The structural similarity that Agamben discovers in the Voice and death creates a metaphysical assurance that the entrance into language is coeval with a consent to death.⁵ Yet Agamben is far from endorsing this equivocation, and claims that his position begins from "the definitive cancellation of the Voice" (104): "Only if the human voice is not simply death, but has never existed, only if language no longer refers to any Voice (and, thus, not even to a *gramma*, that is, to a removed voice), is it possible for man to experience a language that is not marked by negativity and death" (95).

⁶ Similar ideas appear in the work of Gilles Deleuze. On the one hand, in his description of the event and its relation to language in *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze writes "the voice, though, presents the dimensions of an organizing language without yet being able to grasp the organizing principle according to which the voice itself would be a language" (194). It is, however, precisely this autonomous prevocal system that precedes language that Agamben resists seeing as anything more than animality. Similarly, Deleuze examines the structure of language, but against Agamben's emphasis on the pronoun, Deleuze focuses on the indeterminate article. For example, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari emphasize the molecular child or becoming-child is " 'a'

molecular child is produced... ‘a’ child coexists with us, in a zone of proximity or a block of becoming” (294).

⁷ The phrase “form-of-life” resembles a phrase used by Trotsky in his account of the cultural sublimation of competition in a revolutionary state: “All forms of life, such as the cultivation of land, the planning of human habitations, the building of theaters, the methods of socially educating children, the solution of scientific problems, the creation of new styles, will vitally engross all and everybody. [...] All will be equally interested in the success of the whole. The struggle will have a purely ideological character” (189).

⁸ While Agamben turns to Negri in *Homo Sacer* to discuss the difference between constituted and constituting (or constituent) power (Agamben 1998, 43-44), his engagement with the notion of global capital grows out of a post-Heideggerian response to developments in post-Marxist thought, in part the deconstructive stance of Jacques Derrida, but perhaps more explicitly the more political deconstructive work of Jean-Luc Nancy, e.g. Nancy’s *The Inoperable Community*. The problem seems to be the position of language as a premising structure that threatens to become an absolute, leaving one adrift in an indeterminate space of language that seems to demand a decisionist response to any notion of the event. In *The Coming Community*, for instance, Agamben engages with Debord’s *Society of the Spectacle* to argue “the spectacle is language, the very communicativity or linguistic being of humans. This means that a fuller Marxian analysis should deal with the fact that capitalism [...] was directed not only toward the expropriation of productive activity, but also and principally toward the alienation of language itself” (80). Whether this is the discovery of a meta-language or an attempt to think the total alienation of Being in the lost commonality of language, Agamben discovers the positive potential for a changed experience of language as “for the first time it is possible for humans to experience their own linguistic being” (83). What is this space of absolute alienation of common language if not a utopic inversion of the global capital? Agamben is certainly aware of the risks of this common alienation, if not of the capitalist implications then in its implications in terms of so-called “human rights,” making the refugee the best example of modern subjectivity—inside a state, yet stateless.

⁹ One might usefully contrast “everybody” with Catherine Gallagher’s description of “nobody” in the work of women writers through the early nineteenth century, or even Dickens’s use of “nobody” as a nominalization of self-negation with Arthur Clennam in *Little Dorrit*. In place of a rhetorically filled absence or an indicator the self placed under negation, Trollope’s “everybody” describes a positive social field lacking stability or localization.

¹⁰ *Crédit foncier* (Fr. land) banks took on mortgage banking while *Crédit Mobilier* (Fr. movable goods, though also securities [*valeurs mobilières*]) banks were typically launched to finance large scale public works, most especially railways.

¹¹ Badiou struggled with the relation of the event to its name, a problem of nomination that could lead to a kind of double event between the event itself and its subsequent name. In *Ethics*, he notes the problem as well as his attempt to redress it in part in his definition of the event in this later work. In *Logics of Worlds*, his approach is more clearly linked to Lacan: the event is a subtraction from the world, a nonsensical point that can generate its nomination out of pre-existent discourse while creating a new truth. See Badiou, *Being and Event*, meditations 8, 9, 18, 20, and 34; *Logics of Worlds*, trans. Alberto Toscano (London: Continuum, 2009).

¹² Badiou launches an elaborate critique of what he terms “constructivist thought” in meditation 28 of *Being and Event*, arguing against deconstructive approaches to language as a space of indeterminacy. See Badiou 286-294.

¹³ Contrasted with Lizzie Eustace in Trollope’s *The Eustace Diamonds* (1873), Mrs. Hurtle’s immaterial production is all the more striking. Lizzie’s romanticism—e.g. her frequent references to a Byronic “corsair”—and her paltry attempts at manipulation are generally transparent to all around her. Perhaps the closest comparison to Mrs. Hurtle may be Lydia Gwilt in Wilkie Collins’s *Armadale*, who combines a deceitful persona with an immense quantity of letters and diaries—though, it should be noted, these are used by the narrative to convey her interiority more than an extensive manipulative practice.

¹⁴ Negri’s work as a whole is about the constitution of subjects adequate to their historical moment, most especially the primary and resistant subjects who create the world—what he calls “constituent power”—which Marx would recognize as the proletariat, but that Negri prefers to call the multitude. (It is for this reason that he has been accused of putting a potential subject in front of the real struggles, or rather of theorizing before the constitution of the multitude rather than engaging with its contemporary reality in full.) Negri himself points to this emphasis on subjectivity in his work as a contrast to Deleuze, Derrida, Nancy, Blanchot, and Agamben, stating: “In none of them subjectivity—and especially—militant subjectivity—is central. This is the case even for Nancy, who is the most *gauchiste* among them” (87). Michael Hardt has also expressed a certain affinity with Badiou’s work for what seem to be similar reasons. By contrast, Alain Badiou takes Negri to task in the opening pages of *Logics of Worlds* for Negri’s readiness to reduce the world to a question of the arrangement of bodies and language without considering the necessity of the constitution of subjective truths (2-3). Negri’s project is not indifferent to the question of subjective truths, but he tends to displace it into subjective antagonism instead of Badiou’s truth-procedures. Badiou’s position actually allows us to recognize the emergence of immaterial labor as an event, but one that does not necessarily entail the creation of what Badiou would call “faithful subjects.” Negri’s position instead implies a telos to the construction of immaterial labor that belies his otherwise strident anti-Hegelianism. This also draws on an unpublished talk by Michael Hardt at the University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 27 April 2009.

CONCLUSION: TOWARD A NARRATIVE DIAGRAM

In many respects we are closer today to the questions of the nineteenth century than to the revolutionary history of the twentieth. A wide variety of nineteenth century phenomena are reappearing: vast zones of poverty, widening inequalities, politics dissolved into the ‘service of wealth’, the nihilism of large sections of the young, the servility of much of the intelligentsia; the cramped, besieged experimentalism of a few groups seeking ways to express the communist hypothesis . . . Which is no doubt why, as in the nineteenth century, it is not the victory of the hypothesis which is at stake today, but the conditions of its existence. This is our task, during the reactionary interlude that now prevails: through the combination of thought processes—always global, or universal, in character—and political experience, always local or singular, yet transmissible, to renew the existence of the communist hypothesis, in our consciousness and on the ground. (41-42)

—Alain Badiou, “The Communist Hypothesis”

I began this project with *Nostramo* to illustrate the growing dominance of economic production imbricated with language before turning to the early 1860s where this intertwined production begins to emerge. While I termed both the early and late phases of this situation part of the emergence of a productive immaterial labor, such a claim demands an important caveat. The Italian theory of immaterial labor appeared as part of the analysis of the State form during the early stages of neoliberalism, and immaterial labor is bound up with a form of globalization in which capitalist production can no longer displace its contradictions into non-capitalist spheres. In *Empire* (2000), Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri premise capital’s loss of external modes of production as the basis for the generalization of capitalist production beyond the boundaries of Keynesian and planner state policies (also known as embedded liberalism), which had effectively dictated the distribution of productive forces through government investment and a monetary policy geared toward limiting unemployment. The crisis of the welfare state and the resultant birth of neoliberalism effectively lead to the construction of a stateless capitalist class (*Empire*) against an increasingly stateless civil society

(multitude). The role of the state in neoliberalism, however, remains at issue. David Harvey notes the importance of central banks in reshaping neoliberal monetary policy—a situation that began with Paul Volcker in 1979, who focused on inflation with utter indifference to unemployment or the claims of labor—and state and state-affiliated banks like the IMF and World Bank emerged as the dominant mechanism for dictating capital's international distribution as the power of command (Harvey 2006b). Indeed, Harvey's work in *The Limits of Capital* demonstrates that the preeminent mode of Empire's governance is the ability to inflate or deflate currencies on an international scale (Harvey 2006a). Marx could scarcely imagine such a situation, even given the Bank of England's intermittent suspensions of the 1844 Bank Act or its long suspension of specie payment during the Napoleonic wars, and Marx's work on the state's relation to capital, credit, and interest is often obscured by his focus on the realm of production. Too often, the state remains simply a cover for the interests of capital rather than an agent in the construction of domination.

The theory of the state, however, is central to questions of immaterial labor, social production, and the power of social command. This is certainly clear in Hardt and Negri's work—and dates back to Negri's early work on Hegel and civil society—but it is also present in Alain Badiou's work on the event, Giorgio Agamben's arguments about naked life and the sovereign exception, and the work of Regulation school economists on the construction of the neoliberal era. The question of the state's relation to labor—most importantly, its ability to serve as a mediating switch point between capital and labor—is central to the most important political and economic questions of our day: how a state asserts its sovereignty and who it recognizes as citizens; how are antagonisms within a society created or defused via state mechanisms; and, most importantly, what is the relation between the constituting power of the people and their mode of collective action, if not the state? If, as Badiou asserts in the epigraph, we are closer to the questions of the nineteenth century today, this is not because we are on the other side of the state's ability

to mediate the antagonism between labor and capital but because the question of how one must address these antagonisms is now inescapable, even if the notions of equality and social justice that form the basis for such mediations have been coopted by capital or dismissed outright.¹

Thus what may seem like one of the chief difficulties in asserting a form of immaterial labor in the nineteenth century—that the British state had only begun to operate as a force able to mediate capitalist production rather than simply naturalize it by force of law—is largely what makes the era so ripe with resonance. Moreover, the question of state intervention did mark the era of laissez-faire capital in Britain and dates back to capital's development in the eighteenth century. Indeed, as John Brewer has argued, the centralization of British finance during the eighteenth century was instrumental in the creation of British military dominance, and the intrication of the Bank of England, the Sinking Fund, the National Debt, and the British military. During the nineteenth century, the knot of military and financial interests began to enter the sphere of civil society as financial markets increasingly served national and international commercial interests. At the same time, the reorganization of the British state began to bring excluded groups into the purview of political representation, and saw what can only be called modest state intervention in commercial and industrial practices with the Factory Acts, from the 1833 limiting of child labor to the 1847 Ten Hours bill, marking the emergence of the state's intervention in production. By the 1870s, even William Stanley Jevons had to concede that “restrictions on industry are not good nor bad *per se*, but according as they are imposed wisely and with good intentions, or foolishly, and with sinister intentions” (Jevons 1968, 170).² The theoretical armature of the Welfare State was certainly not put in place during the mid-century, but this was where it began to evolve—at least as far as bourgeois political economy was concerned: J.S. Mill's *Principles of Political Economy* (1848) advocated for the amelioration of production's inequities through various forms of redistribution, including a minimum wage and

education for the poor (348-369). By the 1890s, such positions had become part of British new liberalism. J.A. Hobson—whose *Imperialism* (1902) provided Lenin with the groundwork for his *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capital* (1916)—took up the underconsumptionist arguments which working-class economic theorists had advocated since the 1820s:³ by redressing inequities in pay, one could expand consumption in the home market, improve the quality of life for working men and women, and mitigate social unrest. Agitation for the vote, which spanned the entirety of the nineteenth century, marked a demand by the laboring classes for representation within the state—that is to say, for the state to mediate the relation between labor and capital via the political. These demands were not met until 1918 when all property qualifications were removed for men, and women were forced to wait an additional ten years for their voting rights. During this period, central banking policy in Britain evolved from the hands-off monetarist practices that generated the Bank Act of 1844 to the interventionist models of centralized bank practice. The Bank already understood these interventionist policies in the 1860s when it began to adjust its policy for setting discount rates, even if the Bank only made such practices explicit in 1890 when it intervened to save Barings Brothers (cf. King). Britain's international financial dominance—largely an effect of the stability of both its political system and its gold-backed currency (Kynaston 331)—served as an international mediating point between labor, capital, and the landed classes that led Britain to defend its financial interests with increasing military force over the latter half of the nineteenth century in Egypt, Africa, and India. What I have called harbingers of immaterial labor are made possible both by the power of British money to ground the expansion of fictitious capital that Britain's free market and imperial policies depended upon and by the state's growing engagement with labor—e.g. the limitation of absolute surplus-value production by introducing limits on the length of the working day, child labor, and health and safety standards (Best 117-20). That is to say, these harbingers of immaterial labor are part of a weak mediation between a diffusive form of finance and an exploited laboring class, both

in Britain and abroad. While the British state had not yet become the dominant force controlling the social division of production (e.g. the British welfare state), it was during the nineteenth century that people began to argue that it could.

This story—the story of the capital’s imbrication with the state—was not the story that I set out to tell for reasons attached to my historical moment. In 2006, the most pressing question did not seem to be capital’s relation to the state but rather the expansion of global capital toward a post nation-state form of sovereignty—that is to say, to be not a problem of the local shoring up of effective demand but the decentralization of capital. The story that seemed ready to be told—perhaps because so many were already telling it in various ways—was that of capital’s attempt to surpass the state-form. One can clearly recognize this story in the expansive capitalism of mid-Victorian Britain, and the manner in which it speaks to the present. Yet the period examined here is framed by two massive financial crises. The first, felt through 1857 and 1858, roiled Britain’s financial system and led to the heated expansion of the credit markets during the 1860s. The second, a global depression that Britain’s international monetary dominance at once sheltered it from the worst while inaugurating the era of socialist agitation, began in 1873 with the crash of the Austrian stock exchange and lingered into the 1890s. My initial focus fell on the peaks between those events but it was perhaps rather to the troughs that I should have looked. The mid-nineteenth century is often seen as a time of unparalleled economic stability in comparison to the turmoil of the 1830s and 1840s, but it was the collapse of 1857 that led Marx to begin writing the *Grundrisse* with the expectation that capitalism was not long for this world. Yet the period is not marked by the kinds of working class resistance that marked the Chartist era, and the working classes were mostly tacit until the start of agitation around the second reform act.⁴ Instead, the period is one in which financial expansion and speculation were rife and the problems of inequality were largely seen by the privileged to be diminishing—this is the apex of Asa Briggs’s *Age of Improvement*. This all sounds quite familiar. For us, it is perhaps time to leave behind the

critique of capital's fevered extra-state expansion for the increasingly intricate questions of the relations between labor, global capital, and a state-form that, in the United States at least, barely seems up to the task of saving capital from itself again. Such a situation has led not only to a confrontation between neoclassical monetarists and New Keynesians, but also between the competing models of irrationality within economics, from the "animal spirits" of Keynes's *General Theory* (161) to the multiple-selves of behavioral economics and the addiction models of cognitive science and behavioral evolution.

Yet it is important to remember in the contemporary rush toward some inchoate compromise between neoliberal and Keynesian economics that even economic models that claim to map and aggregate irrationality focus on such ideas in the form of individual responses. If one asks "Why Marx?", one should consider the experiments of behavioral economists, which use environments and limited tasks as the basis for comparing behaviors (cf. Wilkinson): such experiments lack a sense of what Marx called the social metabolism, the totality at work in a system of production, distribution, and consumption. Marx's process does not rely upon the Aristotelian assumption that a whole is always reducible to its parts but rather on the sense—traceable to Hegel—that the whole can be greater than its parts. The notion of a social organism in Marx, however, is part of his ongoing argument with Hegel. As Antonio Negri has noted, this argument at times seems to be an attempt to extricate Spinoza's productive sense of the universal substance from Hegel's introduction of negativity (Antonio Negri 1991). For instance, Marx cites Spinoza in the "Introduction" reproduced in the *Grundrisse*:

Production as directly identical with consumption, and consumption as directly coincident with production, is termed by them *productive consumption*. This identity of production and consumption amounts to Spinoza's thesis: *determinatio est negatio*.

But this definition of productive consumption is advanced only for the purpose of separating consumption as identical with production from consumption proper which is conceived rather as the destructive antithesis to production. (90)

Marx glosses over the perhaps all too obvious point: the political economic differentiation of consumption divides and diminishes productive power. In this instance, one can already see that the differentiation of consumption assumes that labor's consumption in excess of its bare reproduction is antagonistic to the mode of production. This claim also resonates with Hegel's nascent underconsumptionist critique in *The Philosophy of Right*, which also posited an increasing antagonism between the wealthy and the poor (233-235). The late nineteenth century new liberal critiques of political economy took up similar largely underconsumptionist positions, due in part to T.H. Green's diffusion of the Hegelian view of society as an organic totality (Cain 20).

Of course, contemporary economists can parody Marxist claims as little more than calls for complexity over simplicity or for the institution of impossible models in the place of their workable equilibrium-based one. When one considers how well macroeconomic models have performed in times of crisis, I may be excused for not taking such criticism to heart. Economics is perhaps least destructive when practiced as a retrospective science mapping social movements of wealth and the effects of such movements, and not as a means for predicting the short term movements of the stock market. Justin Fox, in *The Myth of the Rational Market* (2009), recounts the deep link between stock market speculation and the overvaluation of mathematical and rational models within academic economics and its embrace of the efficient market hypothesis. New Keynesian economist Paul Krugman has also called for a retreat from grand economic models for more complex accounts of social production, and there is much debate about the state of macroeconomics, including a general questioning of the movement in economics to combine microeconomics (e.g. work on price and rational agents) with macroeconomics.⁵ Unfortunately, macroeconomic analyses premised on simplistic notions of individual rational action and efficient markets continue to dominate national policy and discussions as though economics is an objective science with proven predictive abilities. One must reiterate time and again that it clearly is not. Moreover,

decisions regarding the division of a society's wealth should not be made by the powerful few but by society as a whole for reasons dictated by social justice and equality. In many respects, this is something—shockingly—that Mao declared “confidence in the masses” and which Alain Badiou recently reiterated: “political decision is not fettered by the economy. It must, as a subjective and future-oriented principle, subordinate to itself the laws of the present” (2009, 23). By contrast, economic analysis too often posits impersonal rational economic agents that must be mollified by ritualized observations of certain so-called natural laws regardless of the social impact of such mollification (or the long-standing historical manipulation of markets).⁶ The end result merely continues a system of property designed and maintained to protect the prosperity of the few at the expense of the many. The resultant oppression is not as surprising as the fact that it is made possible by a discipline that is not merely tainted by an ideologically suspect history but that also has such a remarkably poor record of predicative success.

But, one might object, Marxism privileges a particular position of critique! The idea that new Keynesian or behavioral economics offer impartial views is, however, quite difficult to take. Although behavioral economics arose to redress the blindspots of neoclassical economics (cf. Fox; Wilkinson 2008; Akerlof & Shiller 2009), consider the perspective that behavioral economists bring to their examination of irrationality. George Akerlof and Robert Shiller, while both trenchant commentators on the failings of efficient markets, remain as shockingly blind to the question of class perspective as William Stanley Jevons in 1871: everyone in market society acts like a capitalist, even though she may hold no capital other than her labor. Workers resist nominal wage cuts because of the so-called *money illusion*. After all, they must be misguided to resist a cut in their wages since a drop in the consumer price index indubitably means an overall increase in *real* money wages! Yet if one considers the thirty-year stagnation of wages in the United States, it is perhaps not so strange that workers resist cuts in their nominal wages as much as cuts in their real wages.⁷ Such indifference to the interaction of the historical situation

with economic questions continues to mark and disfigure economic thought. Consider the simultaneous fall in the rate of savings and rise in the use of credit cards that they note (116-130). Akerloff and Shiller suppose that this situation demonstrates the shortsightedness of most workers rather than a response to income stagnation: workers simply cannot live within their means. Yet is it so strange to see a rise in the use of personal credit as finance finds it profitable to return to the realm of usury when workers confront stagnating wages and a rising cost of living? This is why the Marxist David Harvey noted the intersection of falling wages with rising credit usage in the U.S. (Harvey 2006b) where economists otherwise see worker profligacy. Indeed, when one takes the worker's perspective into account alongside historical developments, it is quite clear that the continuous rise of inflation during the neoliberal era not only served to devalue savings but also included the widespread shifting of worker savings by government and business into corporate investment strategies as a means to offset inflation-based losses and to further diminish wages. Needless to say, workers at General Motors are happy that defined contribution plans supplanted their defined benefits plans. How else could they have hoped to become major stakeholders in a bankrupt corporation, their retirement funds siphoned off by mismanagement and malfeasance? Worker savings, whether from nations like China (Akerlof and Shiller 125-128) or from western nations in the form of pension plans (Aglietta 420-21; Marazzi 2008), are now massive sources of investment capital. CALPERS, the pension fund of the state of California, is effectively the world's largest hedge fund, and suffered nearly \$100 billion in losses for 2008 (Garrahan). State pension funds helped fuel the world economy while their executives engaged in a variety of illegal practices still under criminal investigation.⁸ One of the lessons of the neoliberal era is that workers should not expect to gain an economic advantage through monetary policy, whether it comes by price deflation, which leads to increased unemployment, or by monetary inflation, which eliminates savings. If one saves a small income, inflation or fraud destroys it, and if one does not save but

instead use credit to stave off the pitfalls of inflation, deflation can make debt insurmountable. Akerlof and Shiller wonderfully point out that William Jennings Bryant's 1896 presidential campaign promise to inflate the dollar in order to bring down farm debt would have come at the cost of the creditor! Yes, these are truly the problems of irrationality that economists must confront with most urgency: Who will protect the poor capitalist from losing a percentage of his profit to the greedy workers when deflation brings down the price of goods? And who will protect the poor underserved creditor from the threat of inflation? This is the view of mainstream macroeconomics, which addresses irrationality by taking up the perspective of the class that owns the majority of property in society and tells the working classes that they must be protected from the heinous faults of their own money illusion, *the illusion that monetary policy could redistribute wealth in any direction other than to the top.*

My position is largely that of the Regulation school of Marxist economics, which insists that even while capitalism can act as a powerful force for change, it lacks any internal regulatory principles (cf. Aglietta 412). There is no equilibrium or market rationality, only a set of social mechanisms that serve to mediate the antagonisms within the system of production and are put in place and maintained by people in accordance with certain class perspectives that are themselves malleable. On the one hand, the accumulation of capital via market processes does not aim at equilibrium but rather the creation of new value. On the other hand, the antagonisms generated by these accumulations lead to ruptures in the system that are then subject to various regulatory principles exterior to economic production. The entire process is irrational as such. In Marx, these external forces appear in the processes of primitive accumulation that precede capitalism. It has become increasingly clear, however, that these "primitive" processes are necessary to capitalism's regulation as a system, even if they are not specifically economic in nature. That is to say, capitalism not only depends on the internal processes of production and circulation, but on various modes of regulation that

proceed by violence and force as well as by legal means of disaccumulation like monetary policy and laws governing intellectual property rights. It is impossible to examine such mechanisms without taking into account their class perspective, perhaps most especially the creation of class relations via the wage and how capital includes or excludes the different forms and modes of social production under the wage relation. How one enters into such situations and identifies—and is identified—is an inescapable aspect of Marxist analysis.

One might see, then, in my reading of the nineteenth-century novel more than an attempt to discover a rhetorical collective. Literary production, in confronting the question of collectivity, also tries to think through the irrationality of social and economic relations in a generically specific manner that can at times verge on a utopian social vision. I would argue that the novel's engagement with the irrationality of the social is related to what Mary Poovey calls "literary value" in her reading of literature's attempt to differentiate itself from political economy (Poovey 2008). Poovey demonstrates that literature tries to draw its own institutional boundaries leads it to construct a specifically literary sense of value that stands in tension with the values of political economy. Yet if literary value focuses on the social world, it does so by bringing out the irrational linkages that hold society together as links that are distinct from the world of rationalized relations imagined by political economy. The novels throughout this dissertation illustrate this point: Eppie chooses to stay with Silas and forego the wealth and ease promised to her by her estranged father. Bella Wilfer maintains her relationship with her unpleasant and opportunistic mother although it costs her time and money, and the Boffins give their inheritance to John Harmon because they believe it to be the ethically correct action, not because the law binds them to do so (and even if it undercuts their own economic interests). Rosanna compromises her position in Lady Verinder's household by stealing Franklin's nightgown to protect Franklin from himself. Lady Carbury continues to pay

for her son's keep in Germany, even though Felix Carbury is a profligate cad who steals from her. Roger Carbury gives his estate to Hetta and Paul Montague after Paul thwarts Roger's hope of marrying Hetta. Thematically, these novels go to great pains to demonstrate that social motives outweigh economic ones.

The interrelation of literary constructions of the social world with questions of the social world's irrationality leads to some reflections on my approach to the novel as a form and the ramifications of my approach to Marxist narrative theory. For each novel, I examined plot construction—which typically hinged on economic questions—by using the recurrence of particular rhetorical constructions within the text to draw inferences regarding the relation of its ideological positions to its thematic content. At the same time, I considered how characters developed both as part of what we might call a text's ideological totality—which is heavily reliant on the plot's formal closure—and as part of a potentially reactionary space that resists this totality. While my approach is heavily indebted to Frederic Jameson's work in *The Political Unconscious* (1981), my method implies an openness between character and narrative that allows for resistant formations. This places me at odds with Jameson's tendency to totalize narratives when he uses ideological pairings to generate the characters within a text, a method that depends upon textual closure not simply in terms of the plot's resolution but in terms of the novel itself as a closed aesthetic totality.⁹ With this methodology, Jameson offers a more fine-grained narratology of Terry Eagleton's broader Marxist claim about literature in *Criticism and Ideology* (1978): "every text is the answer to its own question, proposing to itself only such problems as it can resolve, or leave unresolved without radically interrogating the terms of its problematic" (87-88). In essence, Eagleton applies Marx's famous claim about history from the Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* to the realm of literature and ideology: "Mankind thus inevitably sets itself only such tasks as it is able to solve, since closer examination will always show that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution are already present

or at least in the course of formation” (426). This conflation of the historical and the ideological yields an intersection of Marxism with formalism, and to a degree, structuralism: texts only pose questions they can answer, or they construct aporias around ideological impasses.

It is precisely this conflation of history and ideology that poses such a problem for Marxist analyses of narrative. For history to occur, the ideological foreclosures that operate in texts have to be secondary to the potential solutions available to humanity in its historical moment. Thus one might consider the ramifications of Jameson’s totalization, which grows from a sense of the importance of the social totality in Marx (and totalization for Lukacs) but that becomes problematic when it enters literature. By and large, Jameson’s method focuses on the manner in which texts force the emergence of an answer to the questions that it may pose via the conjunction of plot and character.¹⁰ Such forcing reveals the manner in which a text’s construction generates a political unconscious, a matrix of what is politically possible and impossible (281-299). For Jameson, the solicitation of a resistant space within a text is part of its utopian urge, which these novels, by dint of their relation to the realist project of the nineteenth century novel, are destined to fail. Narrative theory’s focus on the impasses, failures, and collapses in a narrative’s internal logic thus serves to delineate the crucial impasses in ideology, and leads—as Jameson’s title makes clear—to resonances with psychoanalysis. The ideological deadlocks in a text come to reside somewhere between the analysand’s legible symptom and the impenetrable point in the dream that Freud called “the navel, as it were, by which it is connected to the unknown” (n.4, 88). The reconstruction of a narrative world’s rhetorical bases thus becomes a snapshot of a social or political unconscious, which takes us still further into psychoanalytic territory. As Jacques Lacan insisted—in a formula that he made quite clear is not reversible—“language is the condition of the unconscious” (41).

All of this seems so true that it has come to merit its own claim to academic hegemony, and my project, as part of an attempt to demonstrate my position within this received discourse, may not seem all that different at first. The minor departures are not, however, merely academic in nature but point to a divergence in my position from the accepted state of critical analysis as the terrain of biopolitics, or what Badiou has more recently called “democratic materialism” (Badiou 2009)—that is to say, a naturalized belief that there are only bodies and languages. Against democratic materialism, Badiou has offered what he calls the “materialist dialectic,” which adds to the existence of bodies and language the supplement of truths. Truths, which subtract from worlds, are the foundation of the appearance of objects and the procedures of subjects. This has an important ramification for my use of Hardt and Negri’s work since they position immaterial labor as directly biopolitical production.¹¹ While bodies and languages certainly exist—and they are without a doubt increasingly organized by capitalist regimes focused on the control of immaterial labor—what Badiou’s notion of local truths illuminates is something at once strikingly obvious and yet often obscured in the necessary novelistic details of my presentation: although unproductive labor in the nineteenth century increasingly took on many of the important social functions that eventually mark immaterial labor, people of the time did not necessarily recognize a politically significant event in this shift of labor’s composition. The emergence of immaterial labor and biopolitical production does not necessarily entail the realization of a political truth. The proletarianization of seemingly unproductive forms of labor was not necessarily understood as a means of recognizing a political demand for equality, since that would have necessitated an identification between professional work and manual labor that the hierarchy of British society could not accept. Trollope fell in public esteem after the posthumous publication of his memoir revealed his literary work as undertaken with a clear understanding of literary production as labor. The emergence of immaterial labor often serves as a mechanism for group identifications with loose conceptions of

equality and ethical imperatives, something that is especially evident in these novels as a drive toward the sphere of middle-class female domesticity.

More specifically, though, what do these Victorian plots of finance, unproductive labor, and literary production have to do with Marxist narrative theory? These stories, written at the highpoint of the Victorian novel, display an operative tension between narrative's centralization, e.g. in the kinds of overarching thematics that mark Dickens's late work, and narrative's dispersal through a variety of minor characters. In a sense, these novels reveal that Peter Brooks's description of the nineteenth century novel as a kind of "self-contained motor" (41) is less a description of mechanization than of the function of collectivity. I would argue that this not only coheres narrative in a centralized motor force but also reveals a shift in social constitution from the panoptic society's dichotomy of individual/mass toward what Deleuze described as "the society of control" composed of "dividuals," the singular that is one of many, and "banks," non-totalizable aggregates. This approach intersects with Badiou's rejection of a Hegelian Absolute for a series of wholes, truths, and worlds that are local and non-totalizable as a universal form (Badiou 2009, 140-144). It is this sense of what can be called a kind of local totality that differentiates my approach from that of Jameson and Eagleton. If ideology is at play in these texts—and it is—it is an ideology that does not precede or impregnate these texts, but rather one that they are more or less complicit in constructing. This is not to say that one suddenly confronts a world of multiple, disparate, and equivocal ideologies but rather that the hegemony of a particular ideological formation only occurs via this local whole. Between Deleuze's description of a changed, non-totalized world—albeit one which still carries a variety of holisitic assumptions—and Badiou's localization of conflicts and totalities, the two philosophers both nuance descriptions of the human and inhuman that changes in the mode of social production make possible. Such changes challenge one of narrative theory's general truisms: characters are at once embedded within a narrative and productive of it. Jameson's major contribution to narrative theory is to display how even

the most peripheral of characters within a text are part of the text's ideological function. Brooks's attempt to premise narrative on the motor force of desire—which is to say on a pre-castrated notion of desire, the libidinal force of desire that defines Freud's primary processes and fascinates Jean-Francois Lyotard¹²—nonetheless displaces narrative's metonymic *eros* into the narrative closure of *thanatos*, what Brooks terms “the right death” (103). Brooks's move takes up the logic of Lacanian retroversion and its castrating implications: the ending of a text overdetermines its beginning and renders legible its repetitions of desire by cutting off its excesses.¹³

These novels display the increasingly decentralized structure of narrative fiction at the mid-point of the nineteenth century, one that is populated with characters that are often not drawn from society's more respectable reaches. For example, sensation novels, a genre specific to the 1860s, offer rigid narrative arcs and conventional moralisms that allow them to characterize murderers, con men, and fallen women. One can read the narrative of the novels of this period as ideologically and aesthetically totalized forms—as, indeed, I have throughout this dissertation. Yet at the same time, such totalities represent an ideological drive to marginalize a social component that cannot be fully incorporated into the text. We discover here a problem that is at once a historically specific—the increased subsumption of society to capitalist processes in place of traditional social formations—and that illuminates a problem in narrative theory with the construction of texts as Wholes. As a formal question of terminology, novels are perhaps better described as diagrams than wholes.¹⁴ Such diagrams are local unities of segments that nonetheless can also extend beyond this unity in order to connect with other segmentations in a larger discursive rhizome, similar to what Friedrich Kittler termed “discourse networks.” Characters are segments within a diagram, and these character segments are sutured to narrative segments. This process—the suture of narrative and character segments—is one of the means by which history enters into the construction of a text, as segments intersect with others to construct lines of flight in a kind of network of

Bahktinian polyvocality.¹⁵ The diagram is itself a revision of Bahktin’s chronotope, “the organizing centers for the fundamental narrative events of the novel” (250)—that is to say, a rhetorical organization to convey an event (but not the event itself, which is what the text tries to communicate). The chronotope, as “the ground essential for the showing forth, the representability of events” (250), is the operative logic that underlies the construction of a fictional world. Thus textual diagrams connect not only to their contemporaneous contexts in unforeseen ways, but also to the contexts of their readers at later dates. History’s entrance at the point of suture—which is also the point at which the void enters into Badiou’s construction of ontological suture in *Being and Event*¹⁶—is double. This double suture allows a novel like Trollope’s *The Way We Live Now* to comment on financial corruption of the 1870s and to top Newsweek’s 2009 list of must-read summer books (27 June 2009) after the sentencing of Dickensian-named fraudulent financier Bernie Madoff to 150 years in prison. For this particular project, these novels tend to elicit broad narrative reflections because they reflect and refract one historical moment in which financial networks became legible, centralized, and international into another.

This textual approach does not, however, reduce the situation to a pluralism of language (or discourse) and a set of bodies. It also depends upon the nature of the subjects engaged with the text, a situation that Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) illustrates rather well. The text’s description of the Wretch’s self-education and construction of fellow feeling draws a connection between the Creature and the self-educated working-class that agitated for political freedom during the 1810s (cf. Thompson), with the multitude of body parts that make up Frankenstein’s creation. As Franco Moretti notes (85-90), this metaphor of the disfigured social body is at once functional and monstrous, a figure whose frustrated attempts to gain sympathetic recognition turn violent, and whose demands for recompense for his suffering make the even his promise of emigration not safety enough for the threatened class. This view of

the creature, largely that of Victor's narration, is the view of a reactionary subject who understands that an event has reshaped the social world—the emergence of the working-class through the scientific rationalization of production that the creature's creation solicits—but wishes to avoid the responsibility of its consequences. This reactionary narration diffuses the event using a proliferation of frame narratives, translations, and recusals that obscure the possibility of a different reading that can account for the Wretch's position as a character with whom one can identify rather than revile. A reader can, however, take a position faithful to the demands of equality. If it is easier to teach certain forms of perverse identification in the twenty-first century U.S. classroom, this seems largely an effect of the subjective changes that accompany American expectations of equality as well as the highly socialized mode of production in late capitalism.¹⁷ Such a position displaces the formation of the subject from the textual register of Althusser—where the subject is a kind of language-effect—to a relation between subjects and truth-events, which has consequences for linguistic legibility but is not determined by it.¹⁸ A diagram of discourse within a text makes a world visible and reveals a logic to this visibility, but it is the relation of the diagram to these events and local truths that allows it to continue to function.

This is not to say that something has been left out of the representation. Rather, what is represented is at once legible and opaque, and the interrelation of legibility and opacity shifts with a text's relation to local truths. This is what makes the universal castration function of narrative theory so problematic. Consider Roland Barthes's paradigmatic account in *S/Z* (1970), where Barthes describes the symbolic field as “occupied by a single object from which it derives its unity [...] This object is the human body” (214-215). Barthes's critique perhaps draws the clearest link between theory's attempt to totalize narrative in the symbolic (for Barthes, a text is always a re-reading) and democratic materialism's reduction of the world to bodies and language. Narrative empties bodies into signs, which, so long as the signs remain subject to a continuous play

of metonymic linkage becomes its own oddly utopic disturbance of society that is rhetorical, sexual, and legal, “a generalized collapse of economies” (215). One might recognize here in Barthes the stirrings of Agamben’s *The Coming Community* (1993), where the potentiality of language has become a utopic form of limbo, an aspiration to the state of the dead infant whose soul knows neither the promise of heaven nor the threat of hell, only the indetermination of purgatory. The closure of the text operates a retroversion through its plot that overdetermines its meaning. Closure, in effect, enchains what came before. How could any character, or for that matter any event, escape the implication of meaning that such an operation entails? Moreover, since Barthes claims that bourgeois ideology naturalizes the codes that inhabit a text, one cannot critique these codes. Rather, one can ironize the codes by pluralizing the text and pushing it toward the writerly—which is Barthes’s project in *S/Z*—or one leave the field of the text behind entirely by giving free reign to an uncoded interplay of bodies in the utopian mode of post May ‘68 France. Barthes closes his critique by arguing that the classic readerly text expresses a “pensiveness,” which implies it has more to say than it actually does, as a manner of projecting fullness in the place of absence, a way of evoking history as a ruse in order to naturalize the very unnatural processes of narrative construction. I would argue that the pensive is rather the illegible openness of the textual diagram, the dense skein that allows a text to open on the historical moment of its composition and its readerly uptake.¹⁹

However, Barthes’s reduction of narrative to a reactionary process of enclosure and limitation may be more representative of his political stridency than of his narrative analysis. A counter-reading of Barthes’s discussion of the name can offer a subterranean account of lines of flight—what Deleuze and Guattari describe as the lines that mark the exteriority and change of multiplicities (1980, 9-10)—within a text. These tendencies toward escape and deterritorialization also conversely reveal the consistency of collective

subjects and the role of a signifier in enchaining an event locally. This appears first with the castrating role of the Proper Name in the constitution of character:

What gives the illusion that the sum is supplemented by a precious remainder (something like *individuality*, in that, qualitative and ineffable, it may escape the vulgar bookkeeping of compositional characters) is the Proper Name, the difference completed by what is *proper* to it. The proper name enables the person to exist outside the semes, whose sum nonetheless constitutes it entirely. As soon as a Name exists (even a pronoun) to flow toward and fasten onto, the semes become predicates, inductors of truth, and the Name becomes a subject: we can say that what is proper to narrative is not action but the character as a Proper Name: the semic raw material (corresponding to a certain moment of our history of the narrative) *completes* what is proper to being, *fills* the name with adjectives. (191)

For Barthes, the proper name—and character itself—is a ruse made possible by the intersection of figures, semes, and cultural codes, which fill the empty name with being. Yet atemporal and reversible codes are not the name’s only possible attributes. Barthes also describes the sequentiality of “a series of actions” as “the unfolding of a name” (82), so that “to read [...] is to fold the text according to one name and then to unfold it along the new folds of this name” (83). The rhetorical intersection of an impersonal name as the unfolding of an action and the enfolding of the proper name (as the overcoding of character attributes) creates a textual network in which actions and character are co-implicated. The names themselves become nodal points that demarcate the replacement of excesses—not merely semic, referential, and symbolic but also proairetic and hermeneutic—by certain signifiers within the context of a signifying chain. One can see that Barthes’s construction of a name able to eviscerate semic excess also simultaneously opens new lines of flight within a text via the conjunctions of names that he describes as the “folding” of the text.²⁰ In *Nostromo*, Conrad uses this intersection of name and act as the basis of Nostromo’s character change, what the novel terms his “revulsion of subjectiveness.” The historical nature of this shift in the novel reveals that the realist novel’s historical character, which appears along one of these textual folds, is not an attempt to represent history, but rather, as Barthes notes, an attempt to give history a

“minor importance” in the diegesis, and “this *minor* is the measure of authenticity” (101). History is thus not simply a text’s pensive gesture, but one of narrative’s minor facets, an evocation of a real beyond the text that the readerly obscures by the fact that it has been solicited by the text’s events.

Yet it is not simply that narrative forecloses the historical—and by extension, the social and the economic—but rather that narrative, in a turn that recalls one of Agamben’s more useful contributions to theory, maintains itself in a suspended relation to its milieu, not as an exclusion that is included in the whole but unrepresented, but rather as a narrative’s abandonment by history.²¹ This situation precipitates the polarities of literary scholarship: on the one hand the illusion of the existence of what we might call a bare narrative, e.g. formalism, structuralism, and narratology (perhaps most especially in its cognitive forms); and on the other hand, the sovereign world of history in which narrative is but one small piece, e.g. new historicism, discourse analysis, cultural studies. History, as the minor of the narrative, invades literary scholarship either as the pensive minor evocation of a milieu subservient to its textual construction, or as the text’s dominant tonality. Hence the inescapable imperative, familiar to all: *historicize!*

Such claims about history are *de rigueur*. What matters to my project is not so much an attempt to make the text a bare reflection of some teleological history but rather to excavate the Barthesian descriptor of history itself as minor.²² History not only appears as the political unconscious of a text—e.g. the ideological representation of a dominant history—but also manifests itself as a form of what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari termed “minority.” Their notion of the minor is perhaps most widely known through *Kafka: Towards A Minor Literature* (1975), an examination of Kafka’s texts as deterritorializations of the dominant social, cultural, and linguistic diagrams via textual production. Their formulation of minority in *A Thousand Plateaus*, however, details minority as a “becoming of everybody” against the “Nobody” of the majority (105). This differentiation provides an important distinction between my project and that of critics

like Catherine Gallagher, Deirdre Lynch, and Mary Poovey, in which fiction provides readers with a model for the triumphant capitalist subject. Indeed, it is little surprise that Gallagher's book about the rise of the novel and the construction this subject is entitled *Nobody's Story*. By contrast, my focus on collectivity takes up the question of how novels attempt to constitute capitalist subjects as a project that invariably brings with it counter forms of collective subjectivity with specific local qualities. It might also be useful to see my approach in contrast with Lauren Berlant's recent work on sentimentality and intimate publics. Berlant argues that collectivity in mass society is organized by a sense of an available common emotional world that can offer relief from the antagonisms that mark the political world. Thus, for Berlant, sentimental interventions in fiction operate using identificatory figures—female Nobodys—who create emotional recognitions of everyday injustices, which in turn solicit collective fantasies of unconstrained agency that are able to assert proper affective justice on the world. In terms of narrative and textual work, Berlant explores sentimentality's efficacy in generating and *diffusing* notions of collectivity. I explore the underside of this process—what Lacan or Badiou might recognize as *l'enverse*—the other side of sentimentality. For example, Berlant's approach might take better account of the character of Lucie Manette in Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* as the representative of a pained figure who nonetheless tries to affirm the possibility of a better life beyond the struggles and inadequacies of the fragmented political world. My approach has less to say about Lucie, but far more to say about Sydney Carton, the Defarges, and Jerry Cruncher, figures who form and deform the space of social, economic, and political production from which Lucie Manette, Charles Darnay, and the rest, retreat.

Moreover, my focus on minor characters intersects with Deleuze and Guattari's conception of minority and with the kinds of theoretical work that I have used thus far to describe narrative construction. In particular, Deleuze and Guattari's use of set theory to describe minority creates some important links with Badiou:

What distinguishes [the major and the minor] is that in the case of a majority the relation internal to the number constitutes a set that may be finite or infinite, but is always denumerable, whereas the minority is defined as a nondenumerable set, however many elements it may have. What characterizes the nondenumerable is neither the set nor its elements; rather, it is the *connection*, the “and” produced between elements, between sets, and which belongs to neither, which eludes them and constitutes a line of flight. (470)

For Deleuze and Guattari, minority is the exterior of the set, the void that, following set theory, opens within any countable set. It thus inheres within majority as a power of deterritorialization and acts as the anarchic deformation of a dominant power without necessarily striving toward any political end. By redefining the multitude as a nondenumerable “everybody,” Deleuze and Guattari reveal an anarchic tendency within a certain strand of continental theory that also took up Italian Marxism and the work of Mao to reveal the nondenumerable, the multitude, the Void, and the minority as not simply linked to history, but, as Mao used to say, history’s motive force.²³

Deleuze and Guattari’s minority—at once a figure for everybody and what escapes any set—resonates with Badiou’s work in set theory. Badiou’s Mao-influenced work, however, takes a more sharply political turn in its conception of the unrepresented and its relation to the nondenumerable than sense of an inescapable state and anarchic multitude, which suffuses Deleuze and Guattari. One can see in Badiou’s turn from an early focus on subjectivity in *Theory of the Subject* (1982) to ontology in *Being and Event* (1987) as a shift from an attempt to theorize the revolutionary masses to a consideration of the construction of the revolutionary body itself through the relation of the event and “the Void,” the in-consistency of being that Badiou uses as a kind of metonymy for the multitude. For Badiou, an event creates a new truth for subjects by revealing the void—the inconsistency of being—that underlies a world. This in turn creates a new world with new subjects. In *Conditions* (1992), Badiou describes the event as the “original disappearance” (132), a subtractive mechanism comparable to Freud’s primal scene. Freud described the primal scene in the Wolf Man case study as a

necessarily operative scene in the retroactive psychic construction of sexual understanding, whether witnessed or invented in the child's mind, and as a moment of pure undecidability (e.g. the enigma of what the parents are actually doing). For Badiou, an event similarly generates a truth that "retroactively [validates] the fact that at the point of this undecidable there was the disappearance [...] not only of the undecidable, but of the very question of the undecidable" (ibid.). The event is thus not *within* a world but is rather a world's supplement, an enigma and revelation of the world's inconsistency and undecidability that disappears from a world even as it renders this world legible to its subjects.²⁴ The event as an upsurge of being's inconsistency—its revelation of the void—carries a clear revolutionary valence given the void's metonymic link to the multitude, and, as I detailed in chapter five, the link between the event and the emergence of the previously unrepresented within a world via political struggle. There is a link here in both Badiou and Deleuze and Guattari between the void and minority as the inchoate field of deterritorialization. What makes Badiou's contribution so useful is that his imbrication of the void with the event constructs multiple subjects in response to an event as faithful, reactive, obscure, or resurrectionary. Events generate subjects specifically because they open a world to being's inconsistency. In a manner of speaking, the density of a textual diagram and its ability to open onto historical experience that I describe in novels is part of an attempt not merely to describe discursive networks—where nothing every really changes, and discourse simply drifts along—but to uncover the evental sites within texts that mark changes outside the space of discourse and bare life.

I also raise the question of what constitutes an event because the interrelation of the event and the subjects it retroactively generates can return us to the connection of narrative and character. In *The Poetics of Prose*, Tzvetan Todorov delineated narrative's basic structure as a tendency to delineate a world, a stability, or an equilibrium that is disrupted and then reinstated (111). I would argue that this basic sense of narrative describes a world disrupted by an event in Badiou's sense of the word, which reveals

some form of inconsistency within the situation that the narrative eventually resolves by creating a new world while also changing the composition of its characters. This is not so much the establishment of an equilibrium—of which we should always be suspicious—but of a new dominant relation, a new formal hegemony, a new set of subjects.

Narrative, as the organization of a state and its realm of appearance, operates a fundamental effect on the presentation of what Alex Woloch terms a novel's character-system. The most important contribution to narrative theory's engagement with the incipient force of history as minority may then be Woloch's concept of the minor character. Woloch's theory of the minor character operates under a similar intuition of segmentality within a diagram, which he delineates by using two new narratological categories: character-space and character-system. The former is defined as "that particular and charged encounter between an individual human personality and a determined space and position within the narrative as a whole," while the latter is "the arrangement of multiple and differentiated character-spaces [...] into a unified narrative structure" (14). This has implications for character's relation to plot, since the unified narrative structure's limited attention ensures that "the space of a particular character emerges only vis-à-vis the other characters who crowd him out or potentially revolve around him" (18). Thus Woloch argues "the realist novel is structurally destabilized not by too many details or colors or corners, but by *too many people*" (19). The minor character is such an excess, always revealed and occluded in relation to the novel's character-system, what we might see in a Deleuzian sense as the dominant or major of the realist novel to the minor character's minority since the central character effectively dominates narrative's construction as a denumerable set. By contrast, the minor character is torn between two polarities: that of the worker, who acts as a functional component of the narrative and allows Woloch to deem the minor character "the proletariat of the novel" (27); or that of the eccentric, who disrupts the plot. Yet Woloch notes that because minor characters maintain an asymmetrical relation to a novel's dominant character-

system, even a work like *The Pickwick Papers*, which “revolves around the charged interactions *between* the protagonist and this world of minorness” ensures that minor characters can “never *succeed* in destroying the asymmetric structure that condemns them to minorness” (143). Although Woloch’s work extends across the history of narrative fiction, he makes one claim that has particularly important ramifications for my work here. Woloch notes while describing the democratizing drive of the nineteenth century and its attempt to engage with history that “the development of impersonal narrative and the asymmetric character-field in early-nineteenth-century fiction allows the novel to establish a particular relationship to the transhistorical category of the literary protagonist” (320).

It is largely this democratization of narrative form that is at issue in the novels examined in the dissertation. These works represent the apex of the minor character in the mid-Victorian novel as the result of the collective nature of social production as well as increasingly political demands for representation. It is no mistake that these novels arrive in the wake of working-class consciousness. Even with Chartism’s failure, voting rights and social policies remained important points of agitation, as did questions of government intervention in industry. Collectivities are not, however, by necessity engaged in the political, and the narratives of these novels are far from reflecting a political working-class consciousness. What they do reflect is the changed state of a society that has become interconnected and collective in ways previously unimaginable, and that this situation was not only impossible to avoid but increasingly accepted. As new senses of collective relations emerged, different modes and mechanisms of class solidarity replaced the Romantic era’s turmoil of social reorganization with more recognizable modes of collectivity that bore various relations to the state. Minorness is a modality for the construction of collectivity that may be economic, political, or merely social.

These financial novels, with their minor characters and minor history, constitute a form of what Mikhail Bahktin called a “minor chronotope” (252)—a chronotope within another dominant chronotope—and this subsidiary representational form of space and time allows for a sense of social interconnection to appear in narrative as an impersonal vision of society. Bahktin even makes a similar point in his reading of Balzac, and his interpretation provides a contrast to Barthes’s pensive Balzacian text. For Bahktin, the interconnection of the political, social, financial, and literary in Balzac’s novels is part of an examination of “the supreme power of life’s new king—money” (247). It is by intermingling “historical and socio-public events together with the personal and even deeply private side of life” that Balzac creates a text in which “the epoch becomes not only graphically visible [space], but narratively visible [time]” (ibid.). This minor chronotope—which coheres the minor character with the historical movement toward collectivity within other dominant narrative forms like the marriage plot, the sensation novel, or the fairy tale of the miser—links Barthes’s overdetermined narratological network of plot and character, Bahktin’s rhetorical pluralization of the text, Deleuze and Guattari’s minor literature, and Woloch’s minor characters. Between the totalization of narrative and its polyvocalic resonances, these texts construct questions about the collectivity of social production made possible by their material historical conditions. The answers given to these questions at once reflect reactionary ideological positions but also elicit different drives toward collectivity in the rhetorical composition of the questions themselves. The reactionary forms of these responses at once recognize and dismiss the possibility of the event of changed social production.

It is important to bear in mind that my use of “event” differs substantially from the narrative theory conception of the event popularized by Seymour Chatman, et. al, and it has important ramifications for the role of the reactionary within narrative construction. The tendency in narrative theory, as H. Porter Abbot illustrated in an unpublished talk on the limits of narratability, is to break down occurrences within a narrative world into a

series of events, each of which is then potentially decomposable into more events.²⁵ This seems to miss the point—or rather, to mistake the “what happens” of a plot, its story or fabula—for the event that premises a narrative. An event suffuses and inflects a diagram made up of segments that constitutes what it is take takes place. We might think of this as pitting what happens in a narrative against why the narrative takes place at all: not what makes up the unit of narratability that accounts for how a man sits in a chair, but why a narrative includes a segment of a man sitting in a chair at all. Such events may not be immediately apparent based on the actions within a text.

This is perhaps nowhere clearer than in the novel’s turn toward psychological realism, where character, in its appearance and occlusion, seems to leave no space for the unrepresented except as a quandary within seemingly normal and fully presented characters. Character studies thus raise questions about the status of seemingly normal subjects within a world and the possibility that an event that may change this world while simultaneously dismissing the appearance of characters who are part of the masses or the void, leaving a situation of suffocating character interiority. For example, Henry James’s *The Golden Bowl* (1904) is essentially the tale of disrupted equilibrium via a happy, if unnatural, father-daughter pair that their two marriages try to normalize. These marriages constitute an event, not just as a merger of European aristocracy and social adventuring with new money but as the coopting of these forces as the social and affectual support of the new American capitalism that Adam and Maggie Verver represent. The new spouses re-establish the Ververs’ unnatural domestic equilibrium and then begin an affair of their own, which at once undermines the Ververs’ control of the world while reiterating it on another level: the spouses satisfy one another’s needs as another means of maintaining the Ververs’ domestic idylls. If the affair’s revelation breaks this world—as well as the titular golden bowl—it is due more to the Ververs’ assertion of ownership than emotional need. The circular conversations between father and daughter reveal that their relationship verges on the revelation of two forms of singularity: on the one hand, the

socially inconvenient fact of their spouses' infidelity, and on the other hand, the socially unspeakable possibility of incest. By the novel's end, the humiliated spouses, the Prince and Charlotte, whose affair itself takes on a kind of singularity in its textual unrepresentability, are reduced to little more than ciphers of the socially proper.

But given the novel's event, an intersection of affectual labor and capital, where is the appearance of the void, the density of the diagram that opens it onto something else? It is not that it has disappeared—indeed, the event itself testifies to a certain historical juncture—but its clearest appearance has been displaced into the minor character. In the kind of intensely psychological narrative represented by *The Golden Bowl*, the trials of the normal character occlude the minor character, which increasingly becomes a problematic singularity and an abject laborer in the service of the plot and the construction of other character's interiorities. The void of the masses thus appears via the plot's central intercession of the Jewish shopkeeper. The shopkeeper is almost entirely proletarianized in the plot's service: he must try to sell the bowl to Amerigo and Charlotte, then to Maggie some years later; he must also be fluent in Italian to understand the Prince's conversation with Charlotte, and be struck by it enough to remember the conversation years later; and he must feel guilty enough about the price that he charges Maggie to write her a note and try to return her money. But it is his Jewishness that serves as a metonymy for what the Prince, in his anti-Semitism, takes as the shopkeeper's minor and dismissable singularity: no one need be concerned by that "horrid little beast" (460). Indeed, in the novel's only turn toward a kind of interiority for the shopkeeper, when he discovers that Maggie knows the Prince and Charlotte, the text describes in free indirect how "he had flushed up quite red with his recognition, with all his responsibility—had declared that the connexion must have had, mysteriously, something to do with the impulse he had obeyed" (481). At this moment, it is as though the shopkeeper suddenly recognizes his own instrumentalization by a plot that is not his own,

and which conjures him to speak, for, as Maggie puts it, “he remembered everything and told me everything” (461).

The minor character reveals the event that structures the novel. I would hazard that in the novel, the suturing of character and plot is the point that allows minorness to enter a textual diagram as the void of history. Moreover, such a historical suture opens a text to the excesses of both character and historical discourse. In *The Golden Bowl*, the Prince’s anti-Semitism conjures the threat of usury that haunts the intersection of capital, finance, affect, and the aristocracy even as the Jewish shopkeeper proves the disastrous piece that locks these pieces together. In the novels examined here, the Jew often serves as a contrasting and abject figure to developed finance and the inchoate status of the immaterial laborer, from Fledgeby’s use of the Jew Riah as a front to Mr. Breghtert’s attempt to model a positive and if explicitly Jewish finance against the implicit and potentially contaminating Jewish finance of Melmotte, to Sotillo’s torturing of the Jewish Señor Hirsch for the location of the silver. The Jew figures the inconsistency of the history and body of finance, the fear of usury and exploitation that finance remains unable to dismiss or incorporate. One might say that the intersection of character and plot not only generates a text’s character-system but it opens the system at the point of the suture to its formal and historical inconsistencies, which the minor character most explicitly marks. The suture does not so much establish equilibrium as it indicates a character’s major or minor relation to the diagram via the character’s importance to the text’s plot or to some exterior history.

In this respect, Badiou’s description of subjective processes in *Logics of Worlds* (2006) helps bring out the event’s relation to the diagrammatic construction of narrative and character precisely because these processes reveal the subject’s interrelation with the disruption of a world and its subsequent creation. This is not because fiction or linguistic representations are themselves governed by the kind of logic that Badiou traces as the linkage between the mathematical world of ontology and the logical realm of appearance,

but rather because of an important oversight in Badiou's connection of ontology and appearance. This is what Peter Hallward noted as the missing realm of "ordinary ontic reality" (118) in *Logics*. Badiou moves instead between being, which is the realm of pure multiplicity, and the realm of appearance, which is marked by a process of subtraction that resembles the notion of the event, as in Badiou's claim that in order for a world to remain ratiou, "the multiple must not be conveyed in full by its appearance" (Badiou 2009, 322). In effect, the subtractive qualities that mark both the event and the realm of appearance coheres worlds around a local subtraction from a multiple. On the one hand, this occurs in appearance with objects. On the other hand, this occurs with events around subjects, who are constituted as active social bodies engaged in struggles with their world (453).²⁶ Although *Logics* may not answer the phenomenological questions that Badiou intends, his description of multiple local worlds composed of collective subjects engaged in struggles premised upon events not only has political but narrative efficacy.²⁷

Indeed, what Badiou has given us in his philosophy of multitude is an excellent descriptor of the relation between a world and an aesthetic text, one that operates without reducing a world—or a history or a people—to merely one more adjacent textual or linguistic construction. Such texts express a world as it confronts an event, and this event may or may not change the world's appearance for the subjects involved. What is most suited in Badiou's approach to narrative theory is his mapping of the construction of a world's equilibrium, disruption, and resolution as subjective processes linked to events and open to being's inconsistency.²⁸ These subjective processes help to illuminate both the relation of characters within a text to the event that organizes it, and the relation of narrators to these events. If Badiou's theory of the event is indeed retrospective—as Hardt and Negri object—it is more susceptible to historical linkages than their Foucauldian micropolitics, which pushes the event into a future that is yet to come (Hardt and Negri 2009). Thus while Hardt and Negri continually confront the obstacle of a subject they continue to await, Badiou allows us to describe subjects who operate within

a world. There are four subjective processes for Badiou. The subject who reflects the event most fully is the faithful subject, and Badiou's earliest and clearest example is St. Paul (Badiou 1997), who he describes as a subject that maintains fidelity to the event of Christ's resurrection rather than his teachings. In *Logics of Worlds*, Badiou expands his work on subjective processes with mathemes that evoke his clear influence by Lacan and describe subject processes as a relation between an event, the production of a new temporal present, and the construction of a subjective body. The faithful subject process provides the basic form of this matheme: it produces a new divided body that at once maintains itself in relation to the event while its divided body opens on to the void as a source of future strength or weakness (Badiou 2009, 52).²⁹ The reactionary subject bears an important similarity to the faithful subject in that it does not negate the event but rather resists it to create a weak present, which bears a trace of the event without affirming it in the manner of the faithful subject. The matheme of the reactive subject places the entire matheme of the faithful subject under a bar to indicate that the faithful subject acts as "the unconscious of the reactive subject" (56). By contrast, the obscure subject completely rejects both the event and the division of the subject and invokes instead a full and pure transcendent body like God, nation, or race. The final subject process, the subject of the resurrection, "reactivates a subject in another logic of its appearing-in-truth," and "presupposes a new world, which generates the context for a new event, a new trace, a new body" (65).

When Badiou applies his philosophy to literature, he most often turns to poetry, and his examinations of Mallarmé, Valéry, and Rimbaud use poetry's expressive qualities to highlight the ruptures and subtractions of events and what are generally faithful subjects.³⁰ When one applies Badiou's work to novels, however, these subjective processes and their relation to the event allow us to recast narrative theory's central problem: closure. Closure reveals a narrative's response to an event, one that can affirm, quarantine, deny, or resurrect the event. If narratives tend toward constructions that

contain or displace the contradictions that events raise within a world, it is useful to reframe these narratives as reactionary precisely because the narrative construction cannot efface its confrontation with an event. While Badiou's expressive relation between being and appearance may have its philosophical shortcomings, it is quite sensible when it comes to analyzing narrative form: conflict appears around an event, which changes a world and yields different subjective forms. An event produces a world, a narrative, and a set of relations between characters that determine dominance and minority. In novels, this tends toward reactionary conclusions as realism keeps the tension between the production of a diegetic world and the historical world on which it is premised in check. Marx himself noted the reactionary's conflicted relation to change in his 1842 article "Communism and the Augsburg *Allgemeine Zeitung*." Even as reactionaries attempt to limit the revolutionary possibilities that events can open, they nonetheless recognize these potentials:

Who speaks of handicraft corporations? The reactionaries. the artisan class is to form a state within a state. [...]

Who polemicizes about parceling out the land? The reactionaries. A recently published feudalistic writing (Kosegarten on land parceling) went so far as to call private property a privilege. This is Fourier's principle. Once there is agreement on principles, may not there then be disagreement over consequences and implications?

Because the reactionary recognizes the event without affirming it, as Marx notes, there can nonetheless be "agreement on principles" between the faithful subject and the reactionary. While Marx's words recall Elizabeth Barrett Browning's British domestication of Fourierist principles in the closing evocation of an utopian new Jerusalem of *Aurora Leigh* (1851), the generally reactionary narrative construction of Victorian novels are not, however, premised upon analyses of economic principles but rather on the representation of social and economic composition, and this returns us to the question of minority since narrative production in the multi-plot novel of the mid-nineteenth century increasingly turns on the minor character and the minorness of history.

The exemplar author of this minor conjunction is the nineteenth century's exemplar author, Charles Dickens. His rise with the sensational popularity of *The Pickwick Papers* (1837) not only marks a structural proliferation of character over plot but an economic proliferation of literature as a mass cultural form. Yet Dickens's use of the minor character does not presuppose a political project or an embrace of collective social production, something that Dickens's two explicitly historical novels make quite clear. When Dickens examines the Gordon Riots of 1780 in *Barnaby Rudge* (1841), it is to excoriate the destructive and protean force of the multitude, even though such a force begins to inflect the form of the novel itself. Its diffusive narrative trajectory buries the upper-class marriage plot between Edward Chester and Emma Haredale in the personal and political intrigues of the patriarchs, and nearly supplants them in narrative interest with the lower-class repetition of the marriage plot between Dolly Varden and Joe Willet. The tension between marriage-plots demonstrates the novel's near total overrun by minor characters, from the Willets and the Vardens to the mob and its leaders, Hugh, Simon Tappertit, and Ned Dennis. The scenes of mob violence render the mob a mass of impersonal—at times nearly inorganic—action, as in descriptions of the storming of Newgate prison and the resulting fire. The novel's namesake, an idiot boy whose closest friend is a mimicking crow, does not so much direct the plot's action as provide it with a figure able to witness it, even if Barnaby does disappear for nearly a third of the text. Indeed, although a reader's expected sympathy for Barnaby draws on Wordsworthian conventions, the novel's troubled narrative structure renders Barnaby's function in the narrative something akin to the child protagonists of Italian neorealism, a culture's scarred and vacant witness to history.

The failure of *Barnaby Rudge* to map expected plot conventions seems to have led Dickens's return to the historical novel and mob violence in *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) away from the expansiveness of the earlier novel and instead toward a taut domestic tale framed by dense and impersonal scenes of the mob. Yet what acts as the

local narrative switchpoint in the diegesis of *Tale*? A bank, specifically Tellson's Bank, which is the employer of Jarvis Lorry and Jerry Cruncher, and is both the means of retrieving Doctor Manette from Paris and of sending Charles Darnay back to France at the Revolution's height. Moreover, Tellson's provides the novel's earliest representation of the irrational connection of law and death so that "Tellson's, in its day, like greater places of business, its contemporaries, had taken so many lives, that, if the heads laid low before it had ranged on Temple Bar instead of being privately disposed of, they would probably have excluded what little light the ground floor had, in a rather significant manner" (56-57). Here the mob is already dead, brought together by the bank even while the mob's members maintain a diffusive individuation, their heads "privately disposed of." Britain's social stability becomes seems to pass through this diffused corporative arrangement, with the criminal mob become so minor that they do not block out the sun but are rather blocked out entirely by the novel's passage to another field, one in which the dead multitude is recalled to life by the mob of the Terror.

The generally reactionary position of Victorian novels to the rise of social production tends to displace this event into a weak present of moderate social reforms. When these fail, as in the French Revolution, the central event for nineteenth-century Britain's political consciousness, Dickens makes such failure part of an embedded and historically specific aspect of a particularly venal French culture rather than of the mode of production. Thus Charles Darnay's disastrous wish to "free [his estate] slowly [...] so that the miserable people who cannot leave it and who have been long wrung to the last point of endurance, may, in another generation, suffer less" (130) fails because of the history of class injustice in France, which Britain's more supple regimes of accommodation and reform—from the mid-Victorian political perspective—could thwart, even if the actual repression of British Jacobins was certainly far from subtle (cf. Thompson). Jerry Cruncher repents his poverty-necessitated bodystealing because it has nothing to do with science or politics—it is an act of sheer opportunism. In contrast,

Madame Defarge remains faithful to the Terror because of its specifically political and inhuman demands of truth.

Of even more consequence to my work is the fact that the character that provides the plot's closure, Sydney Carton, is not merely an unproductive laborer, as Mr. Stryver's jackal of the law, but an immaterial one: Stryver's professional success depends upon Carton's poorly recompensed work. Combined with his role as Charles Darnay's double and his own role as alcoholic dissolute, Carton acts as a trope for the indetermination of the various classes of unproductive labor—the aristocratic, the professional, and the lumpenproletariat—and his ultimate sacrifice reveals him to be both the vanishing mediator between the aristocracy and the middle class, and the subsequent basis for the redeemed (mid-Victorian) family. The closing evocation of a redeemed Carton—in the form of Darnay's son given Sydney's name as a respected man of the law—at once asserts the historical intersection of the aristocracy and professionalism while pointing toward the increasingly instrumentalized intellectual labor of the mid-nineteenth century. In *A Tale of Two Cities*, Carton's redemptive and religiously symbolized act is the vanishing of the immaterial laborer as the mediator of social production. At its furthest extremes, Victorian fiction can shade into the register of the obscure subject by raising the specter of a full and pure body that cannot be realized in this world, as Dickens does in *Tale*. *Our Mutual Friend* also verges on such a turn with its blunted evocations of transcendent reprieve in Jenny Wren's staircases of angels and Betty Higden's rhetorical ascent to heaven even if Dickens the social reformer cannot bring himself to embrace the meaning of this turn. Badiou's description of the reactive subject as the repression of the faithful subject reveals in these reactionary texts a means of discovering counter subjective forms buried within texts, however perverse their actual presentation may be. Thus Bradley Headstone and his double life cease to be the evil obverse of John Harmon. His doubled identity becomes instead the terror of the empowered knowledge worker in command of his own subjective multiplicity. Headstone's monstrousness as the faithful

subject of a changed social production recalls Antonio Negri's recent claim that the appearance of the subject of multitude is the creation of a monstrous body (Negri 2008), and the villains of the novels examined here tend to reinforce the monstrous potential of seeming evil as something other than villainy.

These novels are not only engaged with an emergent immaterial social production but also represent a particularly important chronotope of minoriness that appears by dint of the resonances between social, historical, and economic events. The density of events and representational modes opens these texts as diagrams to the contemporary world and their textual polyglossia allows the deformations of unproductive labor to reveal through a variety of semic connections a notion of collective productivity not premised upon a labor of hardship. This is the central impasse of George Eliot's *Silas Marner*, which depends upon the immaterial social linkages of textual production even though Silas can never engage with such links. Although Silas is the novel's titular character, he occupies a peripheral character-space in the novel's character-system, which focuses on the interiority of Godfrey Cass. The novel is doubly compromised: not only is its focus reactionary and generally premised on Cass's privileged interiority, but what the narrative takes as its suppressed faithful subject, Silas, is little more than an idealization of the material laborer that bears little if any relation to its historical moment. Rather, the rise of unproductive narrative labor—which suffuses the text as the problem of narration and social production—is the faithful subject that the text struggles to repress, one that appears in the novel as fragmented narrative segments that gesture toward textual production even while its diagram occludes the appearance of this problem as anything other than a moral dilemma.

In chapter three, *Our Mutual Friend* binds unproductive labor to the novel's plotted repetitions and doublings, from Rogue Riderhood's impersonation of Bradley Headstone, John Harmon's self-duplication as John Rokesmith, and Noddy Boffin's miserly turn, to the kinds of explicit character doubles that structure the novel's plot: the

two boatmen, Gaffer Hexam and Riderhood; the two marriage plots, Bella and Lizzie; Lizzie's two lovers, Headstone and Eugene Wrayburn; the two attempts to disinherit, first by the murderous Riderhood then by Silas Wegg; the doubled lawyers, Eugene and Mortimer; the doubled figures of Society, the Veneerings and the gold-digging Lammles; and even the doubled figures of usury, the Jew Riah and Fascination Fledgeby. Unproductive labor's proliferation via character duplication and plotted repetition not only diffuses the narrative center throughout the novelistic world but saturates the world with unproductive labor. This means that Dickens's reactionary plots at once elevate his protagonists while burying his villains even while they displace his protagonists from their formal narrative dominance. In this way, Bradley Headstone becomes a portrait of the unproductive laborer's self-realization, and his duplicating of identity allows him to declare his own existence in an affirmation that is both terrifying and strangely affecting. The minor character becomes the bearer of an unproductive and potentially immaterial labor that Dickens tries to attenuate in this glancing recognition. If the novel reasserts the family hearth as the last refuge of British state, this is not an assertion that undercuts the admission of a changed state. *Our Mutual Friend* is premised upon the event of a changed social production even if it is unable to come to grips with its ramifications.

Hence the minor character's centrality to narrative production provides the focal point for my reading of *The Moonstone* in chapter four. Collins's novel, an early example of the detective novel, offers an opportunity to re-examine Todorov's narratological description of the whodunit as the apotheosis of the textual bifurcation of *fabula* and *sjuzhet* since the detective novel consists of two stories, with the first, the story of the crime, the text's narrative foundation, that operates as a kind of *fabula*, which the story of the investigation reveals as a kind of *sjuzhet*. It is this second story, the account of the fabular crime, that Todorov notes "is excessive; it is a story which has no importance in itself, which serves only as a mediator between the reader and the story of the crime" (46). In *The Moonstone*, this second story is not only the product of unproductive labor—

narration provided by servants, lawyers, rentiers, and policemen—but the account is itself inextricable from the story’s resolution: unproductive labor structures both the representation and occurrence of the story. Rosanna, the maid, hides Franklin’s nightgown, which obscures the nature of the gem’s first theft and allows Godfrey to make off with the diamond, while unproductive laborers like the steward Betteredge, the rentier Miss Clack, and the physician’s assistant Ezra Jennings describe the events surrounding the gem’s theft and recovery. It is not so much that the account of the crime has “no importance in itself” as Todorov claims, but rather that such excessiveness is impossible to extricate from the event itself. The suffusion of the novel’s social world by so-called unproductive labor intersects with its use of finance to reveal a society in which the command of unproductive labor has become an integral component of economic power that has explicitly imperial characteristics, as the Indian gem makes clear. The emergence of a kind of immaterial labor in *The Moonstone* thus reveals the creation of narrative—in the excessiveness of the detective novel’s second story—as a new and potentially autonomous realm of production controlled by the minor character.

In Trollope’s *The Way We Live Now*, the narrative’s irony—part of Trollope’s narratorial double vision—reveals its reactionary frame in its engagement with the rise of social production and its diffusion in language and finance. This is in part an effect of Trollope’s own engagement with his literary production as a form of what he termed “common labor” and of the prevalence of financial misconduct in the stock exchange of the 1870s, as well as of the narrative’s suffusion by minor characters. The novel’s generally thin central characters, Hetta Carbury, Paul Montague, and Roger Carbury, reveal the extent to which the minor character has come to exert thematic hegemony in these texts of finance, unproductive labor, and social production in general. Augustus Melmotte is perhaps one of the greatest minor characters in Victorian fiction precisely because he comes so close to becoming the novel’s protagonist, and the narrative’s relation to Melmotte’s interiority is itself far more troubled than, for example, the relation

of the narratorial voice to Mr. Merdle in Dickens's *Little Dorrit* (1857), the character to whom Melmotte is most often compared. Moreover, by considering the segmentation of narrative in *The Way We Live Now*, one can see the manner in which the minor character becomes central to a narrative without becoming major: Melmotte's segments are thematic yet episodic, thick segments in the network of the text that nonetheless are not central to its diagrammatic construction. The skeletal love-triangle between Hetta, Paul, and Roger serves that purpose, even if it often drops out of view while Melmotte nearly creates his own diagram within the novel's world, one in which wealth proliferates and attaches to the representation of the formless mob. The novel's central narrative—Hetta and Paul's marriage, and their inheritance from Roger—reinforces the British state by highlighting the intersection of new money and shabby gentility via imperial investments like the novel's fraudulent South Central Pacific and Mexican Railway, which are held by their owners at arm's length.

It is this attempt to create a differential internal diagram—a deterritorialization of the text that opens it to a new or counter operation—that marks Conrad's *Nostromo* with a series of subjective attempts at rhetorical collectivity that credit's assertion blocks as the unitary language of global capital. Nostromo is only the novel's protagonist insofar as his dual articulation as a representative of the exploited and an agent for the exploiters brings out the conflict between diagrammatic forms. His turn toward immaterial labor is an effect of his attempt to bridge the gap between the two and make use of his reputation by turning his personal credit to monetary value in his theft of the silver. Moreover, the novel maps a literal change in state, a revolution and secession as Sulaco becomes a separate and powerful force in the world market. It is not simply that Nostromo confronts global capital but rather that he confronts the local realization of global capital's tendencies in the Gould Concession. In this confrontation, Nostromo's excessively individualized response, ironized by the rhetorical multitudes that Conrad constructs throughout the narrative, takes up perhaps the most essential questions concerning

immaterial labor: the certainty that the state is changing, that you are implicated in this change, and that you are nonetheless isolated in this field of multiplying difference. What was in these nineteenth century novels an attempted indifference to social movements and collectivity has become the pressing concern of postmodernity. What does it mean to construct a collectivity in a situation of global capital where the wage relation and monetary exchange have become both the central means of sociality and yet insufficient to the task of mediating sociality itself? How can one construct a life in opposition to global capital's insistence that we are nothing more than naked life embedded in the endless proliferation of bodies and language?

The answer has much to do with the recognition of an event: the constitution of a population in which sociality and the wage relation have generated forms of social production in excess of the wage relation that reveal demands for equality and social justice. In the realm of art, one might understand this as art's ability to produce a world not simply within itself but as a new world of production. If the arrival of twelve-tone music constitutes a musical event for Badiou (2009, 79-89), one might consider how the publication of works as far afield as *Lyrical Ballads*, *Waverly*, *The Pickwick Papers*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *In Memoriam*, *The Origin of Species*, or *Jude the Obscure* are events with particular ramifications for the production of literature and its readers. Moreover, in terms of the narrative theory I have put forward here, the shifting legibility of a text's diagram allows a text to continue to open to its readers across time by a continual reanimation of history via a lived present that is its own expression of fidelity to a contemporary event. My interest in immaterial labor is not simply a historical concern with unproductive labor but the resurrection of the event of social production in the nineteenth century by a contemporary present where a highly developed form of social production takes immaterial labor as its baseline and excoriates the poor and exploited as the unproductive members of society. The change in the mode of production today allows us to resurrect within these texts an event in the nineteenth century that was part of an

emergent historical force with the generalization of the wage relation across manual and intellectual labor. Such recognition outlines the consequences of this event for the present, consequences that must be confronted on their own terms yet remain attached to the very real question of how society produces, recognizes, and organizes itself.

Notes

¹ The epigraph is a truncation of Badiou's *The Meaning of Sarkozy* (2007) published in *New Left Review*. The passage appears in the Verso translation on 116-117.

² Jevons was also enmeshed in questions of governmental control of industries communication and transport systems. As one might expect, Jevons opposed nationalization of systems that would be used by the majority of the country when prices were lowered—e.g. the telegraph and railroads—but advocated for the creation of a universal parcel post for the easy transportation of goods. See Jevons 1965, 277-306, 324-383.

³ E.P. Thompson discusses Owenite and early working-class underconsumptionist theorists in *The Making of the English Working Class* (779-806). Also, Thompson notes that “by the early years of the 19th century it is possible to say that collectivist values are dominant in many industrial communities [...] Collectivist values are consciously held and are propagated in political theory, trade union ceremonial, moral rhetoric. It is indeed, this collective self-consciousness, with its corresponding theory, institutions, discipline, and community values which distinguishes the 19th-century *working class* from the 18th-century *mob*” (424).

⁴ Eric Hobsbawm notes the role of respectability in obscuring the difference between the personal and the collective during this period of European history. Hence this period at once sees the emergence of the British aristocracy of labour, an organized trade union movement, and the International without trending toward the revolutionary fervor of 1848. See Hobsbawm 224-26.

⁵ See “Modern,” “Other,” “Efficiency,” Krugman, “How,” and Lucas.

⁶ I discuss some of the mechanisms used by traders and jobbers in the nineteenth century to manipulate the market in chapter five (345). Goldman Sachs has recently come under media scrutiny for potential stock market manipulation via high-frequency trading (HFT). These high volume trades are conducted by computer programs—hence known as program trades (PT)—that could follow stock buying orders in advance of their appearance on the market, which allegedly allowed Goldman to frontrun the market. See Duhigg.

⁷ The stagnation of income in the U.S. is a widely noted trend. *The Economist*, in a report on the gap between rich and poor in the U.S. using data from the U.S. Census bureau, noted in 2007 that “at no point over that 29-year period [1972-2007] did median incomes pass the \$46,000 mark” (“A Special Report”). In 2009, Emmanuel Saez released a report that showed a historic record in the levels of income inequality in the U.S. (Krugman 2009). Aglietta noted the importance of consumer credit to the creation of consumption norms as an integral component of the Fordist economy (231-32).

⁸ Pension funds in California, New York, and New Mexico are under investigation for what New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo has described to *The New York Times* as “a conspiracy involving politicians, professional investors and consultants to defraud public pension funds in New York and other states by paying millions of dollars in kickbacks in exchange for access to the funds.” See Hakim.

⁹ Jameson offers an interesting defense of both the terms “totality” (from Lukacs) and “totalization” (from Sartre) in his foreword to a reissue of Sartre’s *Critique of Dialectical Reason*: Lukacs’s notion of the totality depends upon the perspective of class position, and Sartre’s notion of “totalization” is meant to exclude the notion that a “group in fusion” is an ontological form (Jameson 2009, 229-30).

¹⁰ Terry Eagleton has argued that Jameson’s emphasis on form at once acts as “a kind of psychical defence against the ethical” as well as allowing Jameson to dodge the “momentous questions” of content in light of a leftist politics. See Eagleton 2009.

¹¹ On a separate note, Badiou’s work resonates with an older Sartrean form of Marxism that Jameson would certainly recognize, one in which decision and the constitution of groups plays an important role, and that the hegemony of a poststructuralist lack of truth has often obscured. The question is how one can maintain a totality without totalizing, or how a Sartrean “group in fusion” comes into being, or one becomes a subject to one of Badiou’s events. The answer has much to do with extricating the general or abstract tendencies of capitalism with their local instantiation, which precedes the general notion of capitalism.

¹² Lyotard makes a third in the triumvirate of French philosophers—the other two being Deleuze and Badiou—who challenged Hegelian representation and totalization, albeit in quite different ways, as Badiou notes in *Being and Event* (483).

¹³ Moreover, it’s rather difficult not to read Brooks’s description of “the danger of reaching the end too quickly, of achieving the im-proper death” (104) as anything more than a displacement of narrative closure into a masculine fear of premature ejaculation.

¹⁴ Deleuze popularized this term in *Foucault* as “a map, a cartography that is coextensive with the whole social field” and “is defined by its informal functions and matter and in terms of form makes no distinction between content and expression, a discursive formation and a non-discursive formation” (34). The diagram that Deleuze describes in *Foucault* avoids global structures or economic determinism as such for local and unstable molecular arrangements of power, discourse, and bodies that are in a kind of perpetual disequilibrium. Hardt and Negri subsequently took “diagram” from Deleuze, and used the term in *Empire* while discussing Foucault’s carceral logic (329-330).

¹⁵ Bahktin makes an appearance in Hardt and Negri 2004 where they take up Bahktin’s concept of polyvocality as a means of describing the multitude as a form of political organization: “In political organization as in narration, there is a constant dialogue among diverse, singular subjects, a polyphonic composition of them, and a general enrichment of each through this common constitution. The multitude in movement is a kind of narration that produces new subjectivities and new languages” (211).

¹⁶ Badiou’s notion of “subtractive ontology” grows out of his Sartrean past as a connection between what Sartre would have seen as the fullness of being (the In-Itself) and the emptiness of consciousness (the For-Itself). The connection between being and its presentation—which seems to imply a Sartrean pure consciousness prior to the Ego—is achieved by what Peter Hallward describes as “the unrepresentable link that connects, or ‘sutures,’ any situation to its pure being” (65).

¹⁷ For example, the figure of the vampire has changed significantly. Where Franco Moretti sees the late nineteenth-century vampire of *Dracula* as a figure for capital, the vampire in popular culture has now become a figure for an alternate or resistant form of sociality. As Hardt and Negri note, the contemporary fascination with vampires uses the vampire's monstrosity not only to help "others to recognize that we are all monsters—high school outcasts, sexual deviants, freaks, survivors of pathological families, and so forth" but "more important, the monsters begin to form new, alternative networks of affection and social organization" (Hardt and Negri 2004, 193).

¹⁸ This is position derived from Badiou's use of Russell's paradox, which he explains "means that *it is not true that to a well-defined concept there necessarily corresponds the set of the objects which fall under this concept*. This acts as a (real) obstacle to sovereignty of language: to a well-defined predicate, which consists within language, there may only correspond a real inconsistency (a deficit of multiple being)" (153). From this paradox, Badiou claims that the ontological world of multiple-being cannot "follow from language" (154), which in turn demonstrates the inexistence of the Whole. One might also note that Lyotard's work in *The Differend* also hinges on a reading of Russell's paradox.

¹⁹ I note here Giorgio Agamben's *The Open* (2002) only to demarcate that I am not taking up his argument that postmodernity's biopolitical production has led to an indetermination of the animal and the human, which Agamben describes chiasmically as "the total humanization of the animal coincides with the total animalization of man" (77). Agamben makes this argument by tracing the competing notions of "the open" at play in Heidegger, the open as the unconcealedness of being for humanity, and Rilke, the open as the where of the animal world (59-70). I would agree with Alain Badiou's counter-argument that such a reduction is ideological and not ontological as Agamben would have one believe (Badiou 2009, 514).

²⁰ Jean-François Lyotard takes this problem of the name as part of his discussion of phrase universes in *The Differend*, where he notes: "The referent of a proper name (the object of history) is designated by a name which is a quasi-deictic and not a deictic. The name localizes the object within nominative networks without having to situate it in relation either to an *I* or to any deictic" (50). Indeed, Lyotard's work on the phrase resonates with Badiou's understanding of the event's relation to a world and a subject, as such phrases are impersonal (71) and are the means of directly presenting a world. This returns us to Barthes, since Lyotard defines "world" as "a network of proper names" (79).

²¹ Agamben uses abandonment to describe what he calls "the original political relation" in which "the state of exception [acts] as zone of indistinction between outside and inside, exclusion and inclusion" (181). Lauren Berlant takes up Agamben's work on the ban (as the sovereign exception) to argue along with Agamben that the use of politically dense images to shape collective identities creates figures utopic yet apolitical figures for an unreachable future. Yet Berlant makes explicit what Agamben only hints at in the closing pages of *Homo Sacer*, where he gestures toward the need for "a form of life that is wholly exhausted in bare life" (188). By contrast, Berlant closes her discussion by gesturing toward the political and sexual contradictions that "cannot be dissolved, only sublimated, and barely that, within the liberal regime of law's promise to relieve subjects from their bodies and locate freedom in their feelings" (167). That is to say, the law is the lure, while sexual, political, and bodily freedom are the apex of the political, the form of life that is literally exhausted in bare life. It is, of course, against such claims that Alain Badiou mounts his critique.

²² This is not to discount the importance of history, but to note aesthetic production's agonized relation with history. Nowhere has this been clearer than in the hilarious argument between various pundits and film critics over whether the Batman of Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight* (2008) is really Dick Cheney? For examples, see Klavan, Ackerman, and Smith. There are certainly more.

²³ Such claims perhaps reflect the influence of Maoism on the development of continental theory and European Marxism. This is certainly the case with Alain Badiou, whose links to Maoism are clear, but also reflects the influence of Maoist arguments on the Italian *operai* and *autonomia* movements, which is the more direct influence on Deleuze and Guattari, as well as Hardt and Negri.

²⁴ "Worlds" is Badiou's preferred terminology in *Logics of Worlds* for what he called "situations" in *Being and Event*. In fine, the event does not exist within a situation, but it does have a site, which Badiou terms "evental site" or "a multiple such that none of its elements are presented in the situation" and that is "*on the edge of the void*" (Badiou 1987, 175).

²⁵ H. Porter Abbott, unpublished talk given in Garrett Stewart's "Story in Theory: From Taxonomy to Narratology—And Beyond" seminar at the University of Iowa, 21 July 2009.

²⁶ Badiou explains this in a particularly lucid overview of his project late in *Logics*: "We are always in a world (there is a transcendental); in this world objects appear, which are atomically structured; between these objects there exist relations (or not). An object can 'become' a site. Of course, as such it vanishes without delay, but the amplitude of its consequences characterizes it as an event. And it is on condition that an event has taken place, as we shall show, that a [subjective] body is constituted." Badiou 2009, 453.

²⁷ This is not to say that Badiou's work does not pose a problem to Marxist thought. In *Logics*, Badiou's professed Platonism ensures that an object's appearance in a world is an expression of its being, and not relations between objects. This poses an obvious problem for questions of the role of antagonism in class composition and the role of the class struggle in general. Rather, the link between being and appearance as an affirmation of being implies that the success of any class movement will come with the highest affirmation of the revolutionary class as a class itself. Such a position leads to questions about the contemporary constitution of the multitude, a position that does not seem to hold much interest for Badiou but that his statements lead us toward, if only because it implies a necessary autonomy of the class in struggle and its eventual emergence triumphant.

²⁸ Hardt and Negri argue that Badiou's notion of the event looks backward to the past rather than forward (the direction they claim that Foucault's implicit notion of the event faces). This reinforces a prevailing sense that Hardt and Negri are describing a process in search of a subject rather than the movements of a subject engaged in a process. While their approach usefully describes the continuing evolution of an amorphous international struggle with capital, it does not offer much room for intervention or the construction of collective action. See Hardt and Negri 2009.

²⁹ Badiou's subject formulas use the following symbols: ϵ is the trace of the event, C is a body issued from the event, and π is the present that is the event's set of

consequences. These subject-mathemes do not represent the subject in one of its terms, but are rather attempts to describe subject procedures as such.

The faithful subject:

$$\frac{\varepsilon}{\varnothing} \Rightarrow \pi$$

The reactive subject:

$$\frac{\neg \varepsilon}{\left(\frac{\varepsilon}{\varnothing} \Rightarrow \pi \right)} \Rightarrow \pi$$

The obscure subject:

$$\frac{C \Rightarrow (\neg \varepsilon \Rightarrow \neg \varnothing)}{\pi}$$

³⁰ On Mallarmé, see Badiou 1987, 191-198, and Badiou 1992, 4967; on Rimbaud, see Badiou 1992, 68-90; on Valéry, see Badiou 2009, 455-475.

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