Forms of Empire:

Law, Violence, and the Poetics of Victorian Power

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of English in the Graduate School of Duke University

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ABSTRACT

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Victorian England was the first empire in history to imagine itself as liberal, believing that its own power could bring law to the darkest and most unruly corners of the world. But despite covering nearly the entire period known as the Pax Britannica, Victoria’s long reign did not include a single year without war.

The conceptual knots presented by England’s global power forced some of the century’s most canonical authors to confront, and attempt to solve, contradictions fundamental to their self-consciously liberal society. Because law was understood by many Victorian theorists as the opposite of violence, it was when metropolitan thinkers came up against the fringes of civilization’s ordering power, in the empire, that the violence underwriting peace become most uncomfortably plain. “Out there,” said jurist James Fitzjames Stephen, “you see real government.” But if what Stephen called the liberal state’s quiet but crushing force emerged most explicitly at the peripheries of law’s reach, literary forms composed at the center of the imperial network—London—reveal the problem of liberal violence as absence, as silence: as a problem. These problems became dilemmas of narrative and poetic form that I argue are legible across linked areas of Victorian literary production: from the realist masterpiece (*The Mill on the Floss*) and the philosophical treatise (*A System of Logic*) to works of political historicism (*On Liberty*), sensation fiction (*Armadale*), and apparently apolitical poetry about flowers (*Poems and Ballads*). *Forms of Empire* looks to show how the Victorian state’s interrelated forms—literary and political, conceptual and historical—expose the violence liberal theory could not see.
*Forms of Empire* builds on and seeks to advance work on the pairing of “liberalism and empire” in the broad area of cultural studies. To do so it works dialectically, placing Victorian liberalism’s vision of perpetual peace in the context of the empire’s endless war and tracking loose networks of London-based thinkers as they confronted the problem of how violence relates to law. This process exposes live debates, both explicit and implicit, about just what force secured Victorian England’s so-called Age of Equipoise. What emerges is a particularly literary analysis of how linked coteries of Victorian writers, through the height and decline of a great world power, attempted to make sense of the uneasy links they saw (and did not see) between liberalism and empire, the forms of law and the disorder of violence —the vexed connection, that is, between peace and war.

The project’s focus on literary structure and political theory is also historical, tracing Victorian global rule from its phase of hegemonic globalization at mid-century (the so-called Age of Equipoise) into its more openly war-torn, post-1870 decline, a structure that corresponds to the project’s two halves. While reframing existing periodizations of empire in Victorian Studies, this genealogical procedure also particularizes what is often studied as a homogenous “imperial discourse.” *Forms of Empire* is necessarily interdisciplinary, since it charts the conceptual cross-pollination among semi-autonomous fields of Victorian knowledge: political theory, anthropology, economics, philosophy, and literature, among others. But it is also focused on method, showing that theoretical debates among Victorians themselves —about the dilemmas of their hegemony— can illuminate controversies about liberalism, violence, and method in a newer moment of empire, ours.
For Anne, everything.
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“Inborn, inbred, engendered in the corrupted humours of the vicious body itself”: Introduction

The antagonisms of reality return as immanent problems of form.

—Theodor Adorno, Aesthetic Theory (1970)

“Look!”
“See!”
“[H]e is not there.”

—Charles Dickens, Bleak House (1853)

In the capital city of history’s first fully global empire, at the mid-point of a novel that uses fog as a metaphor for modern law, a man explodes in a spray of liquid and fat. Krook’s shocking combustion sits at the structural center of Charles Dickens’s long indictment of the Victorian legal system, concluding the tenth installment of Bleak House’s (1853) twenty-part run. Central to the novel’s design, this eruption of violence has also proven crucial to readings looking to evaluate the artistic and political significance of the era’s defining treatment of law.

One set of readers has continued posing the questions first raised in G.H. Lewes’s open letter to Dickens in the Leader: is this grisly end appropriate to the mode of realism? Can such an unlikely outburst be considered “probable”? Lewes judged no. It was as if, he said, a “lamppost had been converted, by a flash of lightening, into an elm tree” (qtd Haight “Dickens” 52). Dickens retained the terms of the critique —realism, probability— but responded yes, citing as sources scientific treatises he hadn’t fully read.¹ Sparking ongoing

¹ The controversy over spontaneous combustion, in this novel about the proliferation of paper, has generated an impressive profusion of text. While the novel was still in serial, Lewes claimed that Dickens was propagating a scientific error; Dickens
debate about the protocols of literary realism, Krook’s combustion scene has also helped shape methodological developments in Victorian Studies since the 1980s. D.A. Miller’s powerful Foucauldian treatment in *The Novel and the Police* (1988) reads Krook’s death as indicative of the novel’s reflexive effort to imagine, and thus institute, a total system of discipline. For Miller, the novel’s reformist thesis is that like Krook, a backward Chancery system will eventually explode, making way for a more efficient, and thus more powerful, institutional form. Responding to the tendency of such readings to instrumentalize literature into ideology or “discourse,” James Buzard’s post- or anti-Foucauldian reading (2005) shows how ingeniously Dickens imagined and critiqued closed systems of cultural belonging. Here Krook is the negative image of the national wandering the novel itself cultivates in readers, a threat to culture that is killed off to make room for Esther’s more capacious point of view. These diametrically opposed accounts share a sense of the scene’s importance to constituting a closed (and implicitly national) field of analysis —for Miller “discourse,” for Buzard “culture.” Neither asks why an unthinkable eruption of violence would be necessary to establish that order.

But if one notable thing about this scene is that it plants an inexplicable explosion at the heart of modern law, then another, even more striking thing about this, the most discussed scene of violence in Victorian literature, is that it is not a scene at all. Krook’s death happens off the page. As Mr. Weevle and Mr. Guppy call on the rag-and-bottle man retorted by painstakingly explaining that he’d read plenty of sources, and went on to name six. For the initial discussion of this well-known debate, see Haight, “Dickens and Lewes on Spontaneous Combustion” and Peter Denman, “Krook’s Death and Dickens’s Authorities.”

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1 See *Disorienting Fiction: The Autoethnographic Work of Nineteenth-Century British Novels*, 118, 131.
for a clandestine appointment over a matter of paperwork, they find that the body they seek
to interview is gone. Weevle is first on the scene, but returns having witnessed only the
signs of the body’s violent end, its traces: “the burning smell is there – and the soot is there,
and the oil is there – and he is not there!” (551). The two men investigate this unsettling
absence, repeatedly enjoining each other to visualize what has happened: “Look!” “See!”
(552)

But what they see is only another set of what the novel elsewhere calls “signs and
tokens”: “a dark greasy coating on the walls and ceiling,” a cat “snarling at the something on
the ground,” “a smouldering suffocating vapour.” Rather than explosion, silence; rather
than combustion, the smoky afterimage of its damage. “They advance slowly,” Dickens
writes, drawing out the moment, “looking at all these things” (552). The narrative shift in
the next sentence positions us with these two gentlemen, as we all gaze not at a thing but at
the residue of absent trauma:

Here is a small burnt patch of flooring; here is the tinder from a little bundle of
burnt paper, but not so light as usual, seeming to be steeped in something; and here
is – is it the cinder of a small charred and broken log of wood sprinkled with white
ashes, or is it coal? O Horror, he IS here! and this from which we run away, striking
out the light and overturning one another into the street, is all that represents him.
(552)

As the jumble of signs accumulate, the moment of recognition is delayed — “here,” “here,”
“here”— then takes shape, at last, in a burst: O Horror. But it is not here, and even in this
moment of discovery, there is only one more sign.

In original illustration by Hablot Browne (“Phiz”), the two men and cat stare into a
vacant space where the event has been, while steam and smell curl around them, leaving a
dark hole at the center of the picture. Only a rag-doll ghost, hanging from the rafters, looks
away from this non-scene, gazing instead at the men themselves and completing the picture’s counterclockwise motion, which leads our eye from the men, to the hole, to the doll, and back finally to the men, as they read the tokens of a death they can’t quite make out:

![Image of the scene from Bleak House](image.jpg)

**Figure 1: The traces of violence. Bleak House, 552-3**

We don’t see it either. *Bleak House* is careful to paint Krook as the structural counterpart to the Lord Chancellor of the Court: in the picture as in the book, the violent end of the
Chancery system is exposed in an event that happens elsewhere, out of view. Krook’s dead body is present only in its “representation” as mist, a smeared trace of human injury that works as a grim mirror image, the novel suggests, to the fog that itself stands in for the suffocating law Dickens associates with the modern state. Dickens puts an unseen eruption at the heart of England’s legal order, an outbreak of baffling violence that distorts the forms of his otherwise well-ordered plot, and that remains inexplicable as violence in the critical paradigms now current in Victorian studies. But Dickens also insists that this detonation has emerged from within the order it disrupts; it is internal to the very system it explodes — “inborn, inbred,” Dickens writes, “engendered in the corrupted humours of the vicious body itself” (553). It is the invisible violence at the heart of modern law.

***

*Forms of Empire* attempts to tell the story of the eruption Dickens’s staring men can’t see. I begin with this canonical moment of violence’s non-narration, in other words, because it can stand as an allegorical point of entry for the constellation of interrelated arguments that follow. On a methodological level, those arguments will look to develop a vocabulary for theorizing how such emblems—particular instances that evoke a general claim—might operate in the first place. Here I will say that Krook’s unseen death, emerging from within the “corrupted body” of the legal order’s own logic, invisible to the men who look for it, can stand as a fit trope for the largest claim this dissertation will advance. It is that violence was constitutive of and fundamental to a Victorian empire that used the category of law to understand its modernity, and that used this label, the modern, to
establish a project of world rule that spanned two thirds of a century and included at least 228 separate conflicts.

For the Dickens of Bleak House, modern law was a fog that needed to be lifted, further modernized; its unending bureaucratic delays and inhuman proceduralism called out for reform. Yet over the course of the century those fogs did clear, improving into the increasingly efficient forms of the Victorian state. Forms of governance became more democratic; mechanisms of administration became more transparent; and bureaucratic institutions streamlined their ability to manage more and more members of the population that itself emerged as the object of political guardianship. All of this meant that the Victorian state increasingly operated, at home, according to what Max Weber calls “rule by virtue of ‘legality,’” a system in which government maintained its legitimacy “by virtue of belief in the validity of legal statute and the appropriate juridical ‘competence’ founded on rationally devised rules” (“Vocation” 312). The period’s most powerful visions of human progress toward the rule of law were articulated by theorists like John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer, and Henry Maine, who understood time to unfold in an upward, orderly plot that would culminate in a future in which violence might be eradicated forever.

As “status” was succeeded by “contract” (in Maine’s terms), and as a historical phase characterized by vertical relations between ruler and ruled was understood to give way to the horizontal relationship among equals characterizing the modern state’s reciprocal sovereignty, law and commerce would replace despotism and war. As Mill wrote in the 1863 Subjection of Women (drafted in the 1850s), “[w]e now live—that is to say, one or two of the most advanced nations of the world now live—in a state in which the law of the strongest seems to be entirely abandoned as the regulating principle of the world’s affairs”
Mill’s use of “seems,” and his hiccupping false start, beginning with “we” but reforming this to mean “advanced nations,” reveal the space in which *Forms of Empire* dwells. For in addition to being a modern state increasingly operating on the principles of juridical equality, free commerce, and rational procedure, Victorian England also the first empire in history to imagine itself as liberal, believing that its own power could bring order to the darkest and most unruly corners of the world. This is a commonplace.

What is less well known, and what has yet to be fully accounted for in Victorianist criticism, is that despite covering nearly the entire period known as the *Pax Britannica*, Victoria’s long reign did not include a single year without war. Large and small, waged on land and sea, pitched against civilized enemies or non-state actors, these wars formed the white noise to the Victorian modernity Mill and Spencer theorized. Taken together, they constituted the smoky absence that contorted the very forms in which liberal thinkers’ own stories could be expressed, even if they did not know it. In much of the recent work on liberal theory and empire I build on and seek to advance in the pages that follow, modern criticism understands the domination effected under the banner of liberalism as either a paradox, or as a hypocritical failure to live up to “a more tolerant and pluralist universalism” the theory itself had promised (Pitts 21). In this way violence is figured as the exceptional antithesis to the worldwide order a liberal Enlightenment, following in the wake of Immanuel Kant’s “Perpetual Peace” (1795), is understood to have pledged. Whether it cites Jurgen Habermas’s work or not, modernity in these accounts is an unfinished project.  

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3 Kant, “Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch,” in *Political Writings*. I reference Habermas, whose work has informed much recent work in Victorian Studies in ways I glance at below. What is important for my points here is that Habermas’s ideal of a universal world order governed by reason is always held at bay, waiting in the offing: further improvements are necessary to close the gap in which atavistic violence (the Bosnian Wars, Iraq) take place. The percolation of this
of Empire reframes these debates by invoking the century’s ongoing but unseen imperial violence, taking as its point of departure not the empire’s problematic narratives of civilization or exceptionable ideologies of race, but the longue durée of globalized Victorian warfare—the unspeakable violence of the nineteenth century modern.

Though I make reference to several of these particular conflicts in the chapters that follow, training specific attention on the Jamaica Rebellion of 1865 and on the “small wars” in southern Africa in the 1880s, this study does not offer an account of each of them, nor does it attempt to rehearse, in any empirical way, the trends and subcategories of imperial warfare during the period, though it draws on sources that do. Instead, Forms of Empire understands the ongoing, asymmetrical conflict at the outskirts of Victorian civilization as the bass-note, or condition of possibility for a story that is conceptual and literary. The conceptual aspect of this narrative focuses on metropolitan theory and literature’s engagements with, and productive avoidances of, the problem of violence as it relates to world hegemony. As historians have shown, the Victorian world system was a network crisscrossed by shipping routes, trade lanes, and communications cables so extensive that some commentators have referred it as a period of Victorian globalization. But like the ones that succeeded it, this phase of globalization was characterized, too, by the sinews of another apparatus, a military one, as British warships policed the seas, far-flung armies waged

nondialectical narrative into the common sense of much criticism on the topics can be read as a sign of the success of Victorian liberalism’s effort to establish its terms as true, a process I look to historicize in chapters one and two.

small wars, and English governors administered law to an increasing population of non-white subjects.

For the political theorists, scientists, and literary authors treated in the readings that follow, visions of peaceful interconnection and uplift juxtaposed uneasily, even impossibly, with the material fact of a war that knew no horizon. The dissertation’s main formal gesture, of heading each of its two halves with lists of “Queen Victoria’s Little Wars,” is intended to enact this dialectic between apparently exclusive facts — on the one hand, the metropolitan theory and literature I discuss at length, and on the other, the peripheral wars happening almost every single day during the period in which these documents were composed. I do not discuss these lists, but leave them, silent, as one half of what Fredric Jameson calls a “historical trope” (*Marxism and Form* 189): they are this project’s way of putting one narrative, an imperial one, in contact with another, domestic one, and allowing those worlds to oscillate dialectically, working as both the figure and the ground, “context” and “subject,” of the readings I pursue. This oscillation itself produces the effect that stands as one of *Forms of Empire’s* most basic assumptions, which is that these two apparently paradoxical worlds — liberalism and empire, modernity and violence — are in fact one and the same. In staging this dialectical relationship, the project attempts to take measure of the uncanny coexistence of violence and law, their interinvolvement as part of a single system. It looks to read the Victorian vision of perpetual peace in light of the empire’s endless war.

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5 For Jameson the formulation of historical tropes is a dialectic strategy that looks to hold two apparently antithetical “worlds” in the same frame of analysis: by “setting into contact with each other … two incommensurable realities” (*Marxism and Form* 189), such tropes disclose the involvement of those separate levels in a single narrative, “history.” I follow Jameson’s insistence on the “untranscendable horizon” of this history (*Political Unconscious* 102), but do not view this narrative’s content as Marxist in the sense that it adheres to the stages of civilizational advance that are themselves a product of nineteenth century liberal theory (and its dialectical inversion, in Marx). My sense of history as the “Passion of the world,” as Walter Benjamin called it in his *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (166), is fleshed out in more detail in the chapters that follow.
Dickens used legal improvement as the master trope for his reformist vision, and like Bleak House, the chapters that follow use the image of the law as a way to evaluate Victorian understandings of their own modernity. Mill and Maine helped established the Victorian assumption that the world’s bildungsroman would end in a stage governed by both a freely-operating world capitalism and by the rule of law they understood as its prerequisite. Hierarchy would be replaced by equality, blood ties would be replaced by sovereign subjects, and oaths would be replaced by contracts between economically equivalent parties. Because this theory imagined modern law as the antithesis of violence, it was often when metropolitan thought touched up conceptually against the fringes of civilization’s ordering power, in the empire, that the violence underwriting peace became most uncomfortably plain. “Out there,” said jurist James Fitzjames Stephen, “you see real government” (qtd. White 11). The dissertation’s second half describes Victorian engagements with conflicts beyond the reach of English law, suggesting how London-based writers like Algernon Charles Swinburne, H. Rider Haggard, and Robert Louis Stevenson imagined this “real government” to operate. But if what Stephen called the liberal state’s quiet but crushing force emerged most explicitly at the peripheries of law’s reach, the literary forms I treat in the dissertation’s first half, composed at center of the imperial network — London — reveal the problem of liberal violence as absence, as silence: as a problem. These problems became dilemmas of narrative and poetic form that I argue are legible across multiple areas of Victorian literary production.

What emerges is a set of connected close readings, unfolding chronologically and across genres: together, they follow linked coteries of Victorian writers, through the height and decline of a great world power, as they used the resources of imaginative writing to
grapple with the uneasy connections they saw (and did not see) between liberalism and empire, the forms of law and the disorder of violence—the vexed relation, that is, between peace and war. This study is necessarily interdisciplinary, since it charts the conceptual cross-pollination among semi-autonomous fields of Victorian knowledge: political theory, anthropology, economics, philosophy, and literature, among others. But *Forms of Empire* is also focused on method, showing that the complex debates among Victorians themselves—about the dilemmas of their hegemony—can provide resources for engaging with liberalism and violence in a newer moment of empire, ours.

In his 1994 *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said suggested that the empire’s presence was felt most acutely in British metropolitan literature as silence. Yet in studies of Victorian literature and empire, Said’s legacy has been marked most of all by an effort to find traces of empire in the content of nineteenth century texts, focusing attention on explicit references to imperial locations, on characters who return from the colonies, or on the traces of empire visible in offhand or marginal references to the imperial itineraries of what Elaine Freedgood calls “Victorian things.” In this way the absence Said referenced has been turned into presence. Still other treatments follow one half of Said’s title—“culture”—to understand the empire as a machine for transmitting national identity and sustaining it. These accounts read the empire’s networks of trade and violence as a mechanism for producing categories of affective belonging, following Benedict Anderson’s influential example (1983) to see how

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6 In the context of his foundational reading of slavery’s traces in *Mansfield Park*, for instance, Said calls for a global criticism whose incredible ambition the following pages can only hope to approach. Said asks us “to take seriously our intellectual and interpretive vocation to make connections, to deal with as much of the evidence as possible, fully and actually, to read what is there and not there, above all, to see complementarity and interdependence instead of isolated, venerated, or formalized experience that excludes and forbids the hybridizing intrusions of human history” (*Culture and Imperialism* 96).

7 See the readings collected in Elaine Freedgood, *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel*. 

11
imagined communities are created across imperial networks of cultural exchange.\textsuperscript{8} Though I draw on and hope to extend these engagements with Victorian empire in the broad arena of cultural studies, this dissertation’s focus on form and violence, rather than on content and culture, proposes a reframing of analysis that would see Victorian empire not as an affectivity-producing process of acculturation, but as a war-making project aimed at sustaining material hegemony on the world stage. This war-making project used legal distinctions to decide who was to be protected, and who killed, by the globe’s sovereign power. By focusing on legal belonging and violence, rather than on identity and culture, \textit{Forms of Empire} is able to reflect, as well, on how Victorian authors recode the antagonisms of their moment into complex theoretical configurations —works of literature— that themselves disclose, in broken and poetic ways, the constitutive exclusions of an empire that imagined its categories as universal.

Historians of Victorian politics have long understood how the innovations of nineteenth century liberalism produced the conceptual categories and state institutions that persist into the present day. The justice of this claim can be measured, perhaps, in the upswing in recent work on Victorian liberalism in literary studies, work that has followed Amanda Anderson’s field-defining \textit{Powers of Distance} (2001) to reevaluate —and revalue— the ideals of disinterested rationality at a moment, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, when the legacy of institutionalized liberalism seemed again to offer the possibilities of a political order that might live up to the weighty charge of the Enlightenment. Focused on this state in its domestic operation, this work has done much to diagnose the possibilities and challenges the

\textsuperscript{8} See, canonically, Benedict Anderson, \textit{Imagined Communities}. The most accomplished recent examples of this trend in cultural criticism include John Plotz, \textit{Portable Property: Victorian Culture on the Move} and Buzard, \textit{Disorienting Fiction}.
liberal legacy poses for us now.\textsuperscript{9} What remains invisible in these accounts is the massive material and conceptual complication of the empire, which sustained Victorian modernity with networks of trade and violence unequaled until the later moment of empire that furnished the context for those new readings themselves.\textsuperscript{10}

Since my project attempts to transform and historicize aspects of the critical debates that have enabled it, its intervention is staged in multiple discussions, both internal to Victorian Studies and beyond it. Contributions in the field of imperial history have focused on the rhetorical pairing of “liberalism and empire” over a longer period, doing so in ways that both exploit and look to explain the apparent tension between those nouns. Influential work by Uday Singh Mehta, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Jennifer Pitts, and Sankhar Muthu, among others, has evaluated the vast exclusions accomplished under the banner of England’s claim to universalism. From a postcolonial perspective, Mehta and Chakrabarty have trained attention on who was left out of liberalism’s unilinear vision of progressive history and its civilizing cultural mission, posing the incisive question of who was left, in Chakrabarty’s cutting phrase, in the “waiting room of history.” Pitts and others have responded with efforts to rehabilitate, in qualified ways, the legacy of liberal thought reaching back to the Enlightenment. Muthu’s \textit{Enlightenment Against Empire} shows how key figures of that period...

\textsuperscript{9} In addition to Anderson’s works see especially Lauren Goodlad, \textit{Victorian Literature and the Victorian State: Character and Governance in a Modern Society} and David Wayne Thomas, \textit{Cultivating Victorians: Liberal Culture and the Aesthetic}.

\textsuperscript{10} The “post-Foucauldian” turn in Victorian Studies dates precisely to the ratcheting up of American militarism in the new millennium, and can be seen of one symptom of this world-historical configuration. Appearing in 2005, at the height of the Iraq War, Anderson’s methodological statement in \textit{The Way We Argue Now} took as its object of critique “feminism, new historicism, queer theory, [and] postcolonialism,” in order (as its promotional copy says) to “promot[e] a revitalized culture of argument through a richer understanding of the ways critical reason is practiced at the individual, collective, and institutional levels.” \url{http://press.princeton.edu/titles/8065.html}, accessed 4/17/2009. My intention is not to make the biographical claim (which would be false) that the author was involved in a conscious effort to promote the empire most able to benefit from institutionalized rationality; it is that the neo-Victorian effort to recover the categories of modernity and reason itself emerged as a sign, on the level of theory, of new dispensations of power and violence after the Cold War.
provided terms for opposing imperialism, while Pitts’ analysis, focused on British and French sources, argues that an original eighteenth century liberalism, committed to human equality and a “nuanced and pluralist theories of progress,” was perverted, as she writes, “by an imperial liberalism that by the 1830s provided some of the most insistent and well-developed arguments in favor of the conquest of non-European peoples and territories” (2). Though diverging in their conclusions and emphases, these accounts share a focus on the cultural narratives of liberal imperialism, a sense that the damage of empire was accomplished by stadial accounts of civilization that problematically eclipsed differing claims to modernity and cultural value. This emphasis on cultural stages means that a respect for difference emerges as the antidote to empire, an assumption that allows Pitts and Muthu to reoutfit the categories of liberal thought in order to provide an ethically-minded defense of what Pitts calls “the fundamental reasonableness of all societies” (5) that produced, in Adam Smith’s case, “resources for cross-cultural respect that nineteenth-century theorists of progress would fail to maintain” (7).

Mehta and Chakrabarty’s accounts may attend more carefully to the ways in which the very categories of reason, modernity, and culture themselves worked to maintain the hegemony of the power able to lay claim to those terms. Still, their accounts join with Pitts and Muthu in focusing on culture as the battleground on which such skirmishes have been and should now be fought. To be sure, certain elements of nineteenth century liberal thought on empire worked hard to imagine the imperial project in stadial cultural terms,

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11 Like Pitts’s, Muthu’s account positions a respect for cultural difference as the antithesis of empire: “the Enlightenment’ as a whole has been characterized as a project that ultimately attempted to efface or marginalize difference, a characterization that has hidden from view the anti-imperialist strand of Enlightenment-era political thought” (6).
articulating a cultural narrative of *bildung* in which savagery would be replaced by barbarism, and barbarism would eventually give way to a civilization understood to coincide with England itself. In critiques of this narrative, the focus falls most often on what alternative modernities were eclipsed by England’s upwardly-tending story of civilization. But accounts that understand the term “imperialism” to refer to the metaphorical or epistemic violence of cultural exclusion, or those, like Pitts’ and Muthu’s, that understand violence as characteristic of a backward or archaic period, unwittingly replicate the translating efforts of (certain) nineteenth century thinkers themselves, as they attempted, with the varying degrees of success I describe below, to use cultural theory to transform the military and economic project of world rule into a matter of civilizational stages.

*Forms of Empire* builds on these and related discussions of the Enlightenment’s legacy in the Victorian years, but uses a focus on violence and sovereignty to reframe the culturalist methods shaping much work in that field. In this, the dissertation draws on and adds to new debates in postcolonial studies and political theory, debates that have taken shape in an effort to explain other moments. 12 Though its primary resources are the theoretical and literary productions of Victorians themselves, *Forms of Empire* also draws language for its analysis of Victorian power from thinkers — Hannah Arendt, Walter Benjamin, Carl Schmitt, and Giorgio Agamben— whose own conceptual apparatuses were shaped by their experiences with different but not unrelated dispensations of state power. Arendt, Benjamin, Schmitt, and Agamben all variously grapple with the disturbingly modern form of

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12 Most salient of these moments is the contemporary one, when global violence has persisted even beyond the “end of history” announced with undue optimism by Francis Fukuyama in 1989. The book version appeared in 1992; both were explicit responses to the fall of the Berlin Wall. See Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992). For a sustained methodological consideration of the future of postcolonial critique, see the essays collected in Loomba et al., *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*. 

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human destruction emerging out of the collapse of Germany’s Weimar Republic and perfected under the Nazi state. Devised in the long shadow of the most profound inversion of modernity’s promise in history, all of these theoretical narratives attend to the modern state’s constitutive exclusions, the necessary outliers to liberal universalism’s progressive vision of peace.

So while it engages throughout these pages with what is called theory, the dissertation also looks to read backwards on this work, historicizing interventions by Agamben, Schmitt, Arendt, Jacques Derrida and others in order to see them, like the literary works I discuss, as both strategic and symptomatic responses to particular conjunctures. The mutual illumination that arises from this effort to allow “theory” to work like literature, and Victorian literature to work as “theory,” is evident when, for example, I show in chapter four how Robert Louis Stevenson’s quasi-metaphysical allegory *Jekyll and Hyde* (1883), is formally echoed in Agamben’s efforts, in *Homo Sacer* (1993) and *State of Exception* (2005), to narrate the emergence of an “atavistic” violence during a different, but related imperial downturn. This echo itself becomes evidence of both texts’ efforts to respond to the dynamics of their respective phases of globalized imperialism. In this way the Victorian engagements with violence and law treated below emerge as an apparatus for coming to terms with a phase of world power particular to the British nineteenth-century. But they also help establish a conceptual language for historicizing imperial configurations in our own moment. In attending to this double-directional historicism, I look to perform a shuttling
between object and subject, theory and literature, that might allow one moment’s forms to reflect on the other’s, even as it insists on the specificity of the Victorian case.\textsuperscript{13}

The theoretical vocabulary I draw on here has enabled a focus on political and legal belonging as a fundamental category of politics, and on power or sovereignty (not discourse or culture) as the governing forces in imperial relations. Aamir Mufti has recently drawn on Karl Marx’s “On the Jewish Question” —and on another work conditioned by the Nazi case, Adorno and Max Horkheimer’s \textit{Dialectic of Enlightenment} (1944, 1947)— to show how the conceptual and legal dynamic of exclusion was crucial to the unfolding of imperialist power in its global sphere of operation. Emphasizing the importance of categories of political membership in the prosecution of empire, Mufti’s account uses the nineteenth century controversy over “the Jewish Question” to show how the universal rationalization process characteristic of modern secularism —what Adorno and Horkheimer call Enlightenment’s rule of equivalence— both demands and produces the exclusions it is invoked to efface. I follow Mufti in the attempt to show, dialectically, how Victorian universalism produced the internal and external exclusions it proposed to eradicate. On this reading, the fact that the Victorian state expanded its franchise even as it extended networks of extraction across the globe reads less as a paradox, and more as two sides of the same process, a particular case I treat in my second chapter. But \textit{Forms of Empire} also looks to show how the British state used legal categories, and the monopoly on legitimate violence

\textsuperscript{13} In this way I look to perform, wherever I can, the fourfold operation Jameson has described as dialectical criticism. In \textit{Marxism and Form} (1971) and in the even more complex \textit{The Political Unconscious} (1984), Jameson calls for a methodology that would historicize at least four things at once. Attending to the original writer’s historical situation and to the history of that author’s genre(s), dialectical historicism is also responsible to historicize the critic’s historical situation while also attending, to the critical genres available to structure that “modern” criticism in the first place. If I have not lived up everywhere to this redoubtable injunction, I have at least tried to set into motion the rudiments of such an oscillation between critical frames and critical object, figure and ground, as I attempt to do justice to Jameson’s widely-quoted injunction to “always historicize” (\textit{Political Unconscious} 9). See \textit{Marxism and Form}, 306-416, “Towards a Dialectical Criticism.”
that authorized them, to decide who should live and who should die in the context of its flourishing, and then fading, worldwide hegemony.\textsuperscript{14} Victorian England’s so-called Age of Equipoise saw the most aggressive expansion of military capability in the world’s history.

Perhaps surprisingly, the project’s stark approach to the political imperatives of empire informs the specifically literary approach in the readings that follow. A central methodological tenet of \textit{Forms of Empire} is that the conceptual knots presented by England’s global power forced some of the century’s most canonical authors to confront—and use formal resources to attempt to solve—contradictions fundamental to their self-consciously liberal society. As I show, the key terms and contradictory logics of liberal theory would structure imaginative texts ranging from George Eliot’s historical novels (chapter one) to Mill’s \textit{System of Logic} and Wilkie Collins’ sensation novels about slavery and names (chapter two); from Swinburne’s scandalous poetry about flowers (chapter three) to the naïve adventure tales, apparently entirely unburdened of theoretical vocabularies, written by romancers like Haggard and Stevenson (chapter four).

All of these works, and the others I read closely in what follows, responded to the political common sense of their age both directly and indirectly, strategically and symptomatically, by creating other, more imaginative works of political theory, even as they attend variously to the vast damages global rule produces. Some of the works I read bury modernization’s traumas in the narrative time of the past (Eliot), while others endlessly mourn the injuries of empire, retaining a melancholic fidelity to the lost (Collins, Swinburne).

\textsuperscript{14} Max Weber’s influential definition of the state as that political body with a monopoly on legitimate violence is found in “Politics as Vocation,” in \textit{Political Writings}. I discuss Weber’s definition in the context of Mill’s political theory in chapter three, below.
All of them recode the categories of liberal thought into intricate, multivalent productions, works of striking figural complexity in which otherwise unspeakable tensions provide opportunities for formal innovation and also (sometimes in the same work) give rise to productive representational failures. I do not assume in advance the function of a category called “the literary”: as I suggest in the margins of each the dissertation’s four chapters, this category was itself being consolidated in its modern form during the period under consideration. Instead I insist on the ability of different works to operate differently, and at different historical conjunctures: they work sometimes critically and sometimes “ideologically,” sometimes causally and sometimes symptomatically, and most often agonistically within their own logical armature, creating theoretical torsions that themselves emerge as complications of form.

As I explain in my second and third chapters, these works also provide terms for the dissertation to theorize its own structure, as it looks to devise a method of presentation adequate to its argument, one that like Collins’s self-reflexive novel about slavery’s unending damage, Armadale, might remain “haunted by names.” Victorian literature also provides language for the project to articulate its own stance toward the damages it charts, as it positions itself melancholically above the graves of empire.¹⁵ In these ways, the reading practice I propose, and look to model in what follows, attempts to do justice to Theodor Adorno’s sense, written about his reading of Kant, that “the most eloquent parts of the work

¹⁵ The Freud essay referenced here is “Mourning and Melancholia” (written 1915, pub 1917), anthologized in truncated form in Gay, ed. The Freud Reader. In an influential distinction, Freud describes how mourning is a process of transference or redirection of libidinal energies from the lost object to a new one. In successful mourning, as Maria Torok glosses it, “The libido invested in the [lost] object will be recovered eventually and the ego, in accordance with Freud’s description, will become available once more in order to fix itself on other objects that might be necessary for its libidinal economy” (116). Thinkers from Walter Benjamin to Jacques Derrida have helped reframe Freud’s distinction to describe an ethical stance toward loss as the “unsuccessful” version of this economic process of exchange: an endless, nonexchangeable obligation to what is gone.
are the wounds which the conflict in theory leaves behind” (qtd. Buck-Morss 80). *Forms of Empire* is an attempt to attend to those wounds.

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The argument that unfolds below is historical and political, then, but also fundamentally literary. Each of the dissertation’s four chapters looks to pursue these linked projects simultaneously. Its story unfolds chronologically, but tracks the changing dynamics of law and violence across genres. The dissertation begins with Victorian thinkers’ attempts to theorize the origins of the British legal order they understood as modern. The question of how something called the “rule of law” came into being was a conceptual problem for mid-Victorian legal historicism: as I show in my opening chapter, it emerged as a problem in moments like the poetic apocalypse that closes George Eliot’s countryside modernization novel, *The Mill on the Floss* (1859-60). Synthesizing mid-century stories about the origins of law in political theory, anthropology, and geology, this chapter shows that key political thinkers of the period understood that old, violent ways would develop gradually into a new era of peace and legal equality: early geology called this gradual model of time “uniformitarianism.” In the context of political narratives by Henry Maine (1861) and John Stuart Mill (1859), the often-discussed, legendarily enigmatic flood scene that closes *The Mill* can be seen to depict a version of the violent instant when modern law emerged: the kind of foundational rupture in time that geology called a “catastrophe.” In this opening argument, I set the terms that will structure the rest of the dissertation: law, violence, and form. I further suggest that that liberal theory’s belief that a peaceful modernity would arrive slowly
and without violence did not acknowledge the fundamental, original disruption that must bring this law into being. Eliot’s novel uses what has long been seen as its “startling” and “violent” final event — its catastrophe — to solve poetically this fundamental problem in the temporal logic of Victorian theory. In doing so, it gives fractured voice to the Victorian legal order’s foundational violence, the pre-legal or anomic force (a-nomic: non-legal) that would emerge, elsewhere, as the very violence invoked to maintain peace itself.

The forms of modern law are the topic of my second chapter, which explains how concepts of human interchangeability emerging in debates on the 1867 Reform Act structured linked genres of mid-century writing. Here I show how Mill’s massive *System of Logic* (1834-1873) performs the theoretical work that enabled the nation’s particular human beings to be converted into the countable legal subjects required of the modern state — the equivalent or typical members of what Mill called the state’s “aggregate.” By accounting for the emergence of the law’s exchangeable subjects, the chapter is able to triangulate the logic of abstraction in multiple novels from the decade of mass democracy, about the urban lost. These elaborate plots of recovery — *Our Mutual Friend* (1865) *No Name* (1863), *The Woman in White* (1860), among others — describe in content, and model in form, the state’s new inductive attempts to register or uplift particular named subjects into the law’s protection. In this species of biopolitical peace, abstract subjects are counted by the law, while those remaining uncounted (vagrants, watermen, inhabitants of the colonies) are beyond the pale, or lost. They are the absent or uncounted bodies that Radical MP John Bright called modern democracy’s structurally necessary “residuum.” If the state’s effort was to abstract some particulars and cast off others, Collins, “haunted by names” (as Armadale’s heroine-villainess says), refuses to abandon any of them, offering up a hedged dedication to
particularity in the face of the liberal empire’s expanding protocols of exchange. In this
Collins’s novel provides methodological terms that allow the dissertation to begin theorizing
its own mode of presentation. If Mill’s analytic method moved particularities upward into
higher-order categories through the operation of “types,” my analytic strategy of
constellation arranges its particulars into analytic groupings (what Mill called sets or
categories). But by following a counterinductive, allegorical strategy I develop in dialogue
with Walter Benjamin, I look to devise and practice a method that might hold “successful”
abstraction at bay, by embracing the fundamental disjunction—and figurative leap—hidden
at the core of this crucial analytic mechanism, one that was meant to revolutionize Victorian
method and continues to structure our own.

The project’s second half begins at the same moment Mill and Collins diagnosed, the
mid-1860s. But it shifts outside of the world of law’s peaceful operation to describe what
violence awaits what Bright called modernity’s human residuum, training attention on a
moment of historical and theoretical crisis in the liberal empire: the Parliamentary debates
over the colonial state of emergency in 1865 Jamaica, when the empire killed 439 black
peasants under a regime of martial law. Published the very month news of this imperial
violence hit liberal London, the sixty-plus Poems and Ballads in A.C. Swinburne’s perverse and
excessively violent collection of that name cite the Marquis de Sade and romanticize a force
that could supersede all law—“a superflux of pain.” As debates about martial law’s
“sanguinary license” raged, Swinburne’s poetic celebration of another kind of license
scandalized liberal thinkers who believed that a pluralist, protecting law was, as political
theorist Walter Bagehot said, “the ripest fruit of our civilization.” Closely analyzing
overlapping literary and political controversies in the late summer of 1866, I show that
Swinburne’s paradoxical art — “lawless” in content, but orderly in form — identifies a contradiction that the repeated acquittal of Governor Eyre in the Jamaica case likewise exposed: both show how an extralegal excess (a temporary dictatorship, a superflux of pain) could secretly animate the very law it seemed to abrogate. Yet far from celebrating this violence, and far from sealing it, like Eliot’s retrospective novels, into the narrative time of the past, Swinburne’s melancholic poetry suggests a way of maintaining a fidelity to past trauma. (“The world shall end when I forget,” says one of Swinburne’s speakers.)

Swinburne’s melancholic dedication to past pain and lost objects helps this dissertation extend its earlier reflections on method, as it follows Swinburne in the attempt to dwell on the scene of invisible violence, reinvoking it in an effort to make its continually elusive presence felt. This chapter forms a hinge in the dissertation’s chronological story, marking what the project understands as a shift from a supposedly peaceful phase of Victorian globalization into a more openly violent geopolitical decline, what Erich Hobsbawm calls England’s post 1870s “Age of Empire.”

It always had been an age of empire. But my final chapter attempts to take account of the changes in England’s world power and the innovations this change sponsored at the level of form. Published in the wake of Lord Gordon’s epic failure in the Sudan, and the same year the Berlin Conference confirmed a newly multilateral imperial world system, H. Rider Haggard’s hyperbolically violent King Solomon’s Mines justifies its plot of regime change by depicting an African regime as the very image of anti-English despotism. In dialogue with what Victorian international legal theory called “the standard of civilization,” by which sovereign status depended on adherence to a European vision of the rule of law, Haggard’s text follows this legal theory to theorize a “just” and therefore structurally unlimited warfare
in defense of universal human values, a contradiction informing the tonal oscillations of Haggard’s own prose. The man responsible for shaping Haggard’s notorious style, Andrew Lang, drew on his scholarship on Homer to conceptualize the romance as a throwback mode that could compete with the new realism exemplified by Henry James and then being theorized, by William Dean Howells, as the aesthetic form proper to a new, newly American brand of world citizenship. Haggard’s cartoonish but formally sophisticated novel uses the pseudo-epic, melodramatic conventions developed by Lang to try to shore up, at a late date, a British claim to universalism that was already giving way to an American one. I close by showing how the most generically complicated work produced by the Lang coterie, Stevenson’s The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886), strategically rewrites debates about realism and romance to reflect on the violence that emerges in conditions of imperial transition. Stevenson’s quasi-metaphysical system itself reemerges in the allegory of law and violence in a fading world order unfolded in Agamben’s widely discussed Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life (1993, trans. 1998).

Throughout the pages that follow, I move between what we have come to know as “high” and “low” forms of literary production, and between literature and theory, from the realist novel to sensation fiction, from lyric poetry and philosophical treatises to the mass-market romance. In all of this, Forms of Empire attempts to maintain a focus on the human damage accumulated during the Pax Britannica, suggesting not just that its own act of writing might somehow testify to the persistence of this injury into the present, but also that this testimonial work has already been accomplished, in slanted ways, by Victorian literature and theory itself.
Part I: Equipoise
Table 1: Queen Victoria’s Little Wars, 1837-1864. (Farwell, 364-368)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1837</td>
<td>Insurrection in Canara, India</td>
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<td>1837-38</td>
<td>Mackenzie's rebellion in Ontario</td>
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<td>Second Goomsore campaign</td>
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<td>1839</td>
<td>Operations in the Persian Gulf</td>
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<td>Kurmoool Campaign</td>
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<td>Capture of Aden</td>
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<td>Jodhpur campaign</td>
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<td>1839-42</td>
<td>First Afghan War</td>
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<td>Opium War</td>
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<td>1840</td>
<td>Expedition into Kohistan</td>
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<td>Marri uprising in Sind</td>
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<td>Operations on the coast of Syria</td>
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<td>1841</td>
<td>Expedition into Zurmatt</td>
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<td>Expedition against dacoits in Shahjhanpore district</td>
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<td>1841-42</td>
<td>Expedition against Walleng hill tribes on the Arracan frontier</td>
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<td>1842</td>
<td>Expedition against Shinwaris</td>
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<td>Pirara expedition</td>
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<td>Insurrection in Shorapore district, India</td>
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<td>Industrial disturbances at Leeds</td>
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<td>Military occupation of Natal</td>
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<td>1842-43</td>
<td>Operations in the Saugor and Nerbudda territories</td>
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<td>1843</td>
<td>Rebecca riots in Wales</td>
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<td>Sind campaign</td>
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<td>Gwalior campaign</td>
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<td>Pirates of Borneo chastised</td>
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<td>Disturbance in Malabar, India</td>
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<td>1843-48</td>
<td>First Maori War</td>
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<td>1844</td>
<td>Mutiny of two native regiments on Sind frontier</td>
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<td>1844-45</td>
<td>Campaign in southern Mahbratta country</td>
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<td>Campaign against hill tribes on northern frontier of Sind</td>
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<td>1845</td>
<td>Expedition against Boers</td>
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<td>1845-46</td>
<td>First Sikh War</td>
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<td>Kaffir War (War of the Ax)</td>
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<td>1848-49</td>
<td>Second Sikh War</td>
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<td>1850-53</td>
<td>Kaffir War</td>
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<td>1851-52</td>
<td>Two expeditions against Mohmands</td>
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<td>1852</td>
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<td>1854</td>
<td>Expedition against Shiranis</td>
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<td>Expedition against Bori clan of Jowaki Afridis</td>
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<td>Expedition against Mohmands</td>
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<td>Battle of Muddy Flat</td>
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<td>Rebellion of Burmese in Bassein district</td>
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<td>Operations against Rohillas, India</td>
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<td>Relief of Christenborg on Gold Coast</td>
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<td>Riots of Chinese in Singapore</td>
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<td>Eureka Stockade incident, Australia</td>
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<td>Operations against rebels in Toniman Rajah's country, India</td>
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<td>1854-55</td>
<td>Malageah expeditions</td>
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<td>Crimean War</td>
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<td>1855</td>
<td>Expedition against Aka Khel Afridis</td>
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<td>Expedition against Miranzai</td>
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<td>Expedition against Rubia Khel Orakzais</td>
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<td>Insurrection of Bedeers of Deodroog</td>
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<td>Storming of Sabbajee</td>
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<td>1855-56</td>
<td>Insurrection of the Sonthals suppressed</td>
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<td>1856</td>
<td>Expedition against Turis</td>
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<td>Fights with hill Kareems in Burma</td>
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<td>1856-57</td>
<td>Persian War</td>
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<td>1856-60</td>
<td>Arrow War in China</td>
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<td>1857</td>
<td>Operations on Canton River</td>
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<td>Operations against Shans and Kareens of the Younzareen district, Martaban Province</td>
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<td>Expedition against Beydur Beluchis</td>
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Chapter One. “It is coming, Maggie”: Time and Violence in the Age of Equipoise

1.1 The Plateau of Law

The backward-looking, cataclysmic plot of George Eliot’s second full-length novel, *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), does many things, all of them well. It describes Maggie and Tom Tulliver struggling toward adulthood in a kind of doubled *bildung*; it shows a charming but outdated village called St. Ogg’s, and nestles it at the confluence of two grandly symbolic rivers; it relates a sequence of historical modernization and family dramas that take place in a golden past, “many years ago” (5); and it features, less charmingly, a shocking flood whose victims, killed by wooden shards and a vortex of water, end up in graves arranged for view. “It is the epic of the human soul,” wrote the *Spectator*, “traced through childhood, development, and temptation” — the reviewer might also have said catastrophe (Carroll, ed. 112). This chapter is about time, violence, and law, and looks to show how Eliot’s description of the twilight of country life in *The Mill on the Floss* reconfigures a political narrative common to the late 1850s and early 1860s: this story is about the advent of a political order understood in temporal terms, and narrates the emergence of a regime understood to be governed by “law” — a regime, that is, in which formally equal subjects

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1 For the first and most widely discussed argument of the novel as a double *bildungsroman*, see Buckley, *Season of Youth*. For advances on this productive, but ultimately masculinist thesis see the sophisticated feminist analyses by Susan Fraiman and Jed Esty. Esty’s argument reads *The Mill’s* narrative structure as a political story in ways I have drawn on but depart from here.

2 “The Mill” of the book’s title is actually on the Ripple, not the Floss, as Eliot complained to her publisher, who came up with the title. See Haight’s *Life of George Eliot*, 319 for a description of this episode.
interact rationally in a theater of exchange apparently evacuated of force. In this shared vision of political modernity’s dawn, named “liberty” by John Stuart Mill and “contract” by Henry Sumner Maine, and figured by Eliot’s novel as “the present,” coercion by violence is understood to have been superseded, in the world’s most advanced or “adult” nations, by discussion, reason, and the operations of equal justice. “We learn to restrain ourselves as we get older,” Eliot’s narrator says. “We no longer approximate in our behaviour to the mere impulsiveness of lower animals, but conduct ourselves in every respect like members of a highly civilised society” (33). The light irony here does not obscure the force of these categories: in this shared story, “old” custom is said to have already turned, by a long process of historical necessity or the short shock of revolutionary event, into a “new” peace, one that is “ours.”

It is well known that the Victorian age generated a profusion of developmental narratives, but the years directly surrounding 1860 proved especially productive. Interventions in natural history, biology, political theory, and comparative legal history, among other areas of knowledge, all testified to the fact that to many theorists of the period, the “now” of the late 1850s represented the very crest of time’s upward, ordained motion. A stable domestic state and an unquestioned global hegemony, in other words, meant that

3 Like J.S. Mill’s *On Liberty*, which I read alongside Henry Maine’s *Ancient Law* (1861), Darwin’s *Origin of the Species* was published in 1859. But as J.W. Burrow has emphasized, “evolutionary thinking” was widespread in the years surrounding 1860; in reference to Maine’s legal historicism, Burrow argues for the “impossibility of interpreting every piece of evolutionary thinking in the years following 1859 into an effect of the influence of Darwin” (153). In the genre of history, Henry Thomas Buckle’s encyclopedic but unfinished *History of Civilization in England* (1857-61) argued in part that history’s inevitable progress consists of the replacement of the rule of physical laws with mental ones, force being superseded by cognition. I am implicitly arguing that despite their generic differences or the validity of their various scientific contents, all of these stories are political narratives with similar “formal” content. Rather than emphasizing biographical details such as the fact that Eliot invested all the profits from the 1859 *Adam Bede* in Indian railways (as Nancy Henry does, in her helpful *George Eliot and the British Empire*), I am attempting to show how political and, I later argue, imperial violence exists among what we might call the formal substrata of her fiction.
England seemed to stand in a unique relationship to “modernity” – that is, as its very instantiation. Mill’s On Liberty (1859) and Maine’s Ancient Law (1861, begun late 1850s) make this political narrative explicit. Both Maine and Mill’s stories, like Eliot’s, chart the emergence of a “modern” political rationality out of the dark past of a previous age, a narrative in which peace and law supersede force and coercion. These are parables of the English liberal state’s emergence, allegories of the process by which “old” custom transforms into “modern” contract, and into the peace with which this stage is held to be coextensive. In a critique of what he calls “the trope of modernity” (Singular 40), Fredric Jameson has suggested that this latter term signifies an unspoken conflation of political parliamentarism, philosophical individualism, and capitalist rationality. Certainly all of these registers find expression in the rational gesellschaft represented by Lawyer Wakem, The Mill on the Floss’s property-buying villain and privatizer of water rights. As the novel’s very embodiment of modern times, Wakem’s name comes some way in suggesting his function: even as it calls us to memorialize, in a “wake,” the order he has helped displace, the lawyer’s name signals his primary role, which is to “awaken” the primitive St. Ogg’s into the modern rule of “law.”

It also well known that later historians’ accounts have reproduced the optimistic self-assessment of the English nineteenth century’s middle years, isolating its center decades as a free-standing, synchronic moment, an “Age of Equipoise” characterized by the linked achievements of law, peace, and free trade. In the 1964 book that coined this vivid phrase, W.L. Burn dates the mid-century’s happy balance as extending from 1852 to 1867 (15). Asa Briggs (1955), describing what he calls “high Victorian England” (People 1), offers the Great Exhibition (1851) and the Second Reform Bill (1867) as its bookends. Briggs tells us that
during the extending present of this period, a total equilibrium meant that violent events and radical disturbances were a thing of the past—if also, for the historian with the benefit of hindsight, the future. With law as its rule and domestic tranquility as its achievement, the mid-century, Briggs writes, was unpunctuated by interruptions of any kind:

The picturesque battles of the nineteenth century fall on either side of the period. On the one side, there are the sharp conflicts of the 1840’s, when contemporaries talked openly of class war and imminent revolution, and, on the other, there are the bitter struggles of the [1870s and] 1880’s, when Irish nationalism molded English history and Victorian radicalism overlapped with twentieth century socialism. The middle years of the century form a great plateau bounded on each side by deep ravines and dangerous precipices. (1)

It may surprise us to see the period that included the Crimean War, the Indian Mutiny, and the Morant Bay Rebellion invoked as the very picture of calm, but Briggs’ concern here is domestic, and his investments are in equipoise. Describing homeland upheaval in language that links military violence (“sharp conflicts”) with geological hazard (“dangerous precipices”), the historian replicates the conceptual arsenal of the Victorians he is talking about, giving voice, in the process, to his own age’s preference for defused conflict and steady terrain. The very accuracy of its recapitulation sheds light on the object itself.  

Investigating the connection between mid-Victorian “equipoise” and the Anglo-American Cold War project’s self-diagnosis as an “empire of liberty” is beyond the scope of this chapter. Yet as historian James Vernon has recently argued, in the interwar and Cold War periods, a specific ideological investment — that of asserting the value of “freedom” against “totalitarianism” — authorized historians to replicate the admiring assessments of British flexibility offered by Victorians themselves, when resistance to “despotism” animated an increasing number of foreign interventions, including the Crimean war. Vernon writes that positive assessment of Victorian equipoise was at its most influential in the decades following the Second World War, when modernization theory became enchanted by what it saw as the Victorian achievement: the peaceful transition to an industrialized market economy, the formation of a democratic civil society, and the largely voluntary origins of the welfare state – all achievements predicated on a new ethics of individualism. (273)

Sir Llewellyn Woodward’s influential The Age of Reform: 1815-1870 (1938, rev. 1962), is a symptomatic example of such work; it cites an 1871 Census publication’s citing of Milton, in order to draw parallels between the Victorian age of liberty and the interwar situation. Woodward’s enemy in 1962 the same enemy, we learn, that was fought down by the progress of the Victorian age; this enemy is “a return to the past,” a “backward, feudal, land-owning, and military caste which never understood the ‘living logic’ of industrialism and refused to accept the adjustments of traditional values required of it” (630). For a central instance of the Victorian tendency to admire their own political order, see the Bagehot, The English Constitution (1867), which I treat briefly in chapter 3, below.
But Briggs also favors a geological metaphor to describe the period’s calm, and the “social balance” it represents (1). Here, the “great plateau” of peace is coextensive, Briggs writes two pages later, with the British rule of law, which is itself another name for what he calls the “movement of unremitting adaptation and reform carried out without violence” during the period (3). This characterization of British law as the very antithesis of violence has a long pedigree, beginning at least with Victorian jurists and political theorists themselves. In re-outfitting it, Briggs’ account of “Victorian People” does not mention Maggie Tulliver or the violent flood event that kills her, a natural disaster so earth-shaking that it might have been ripped from tales of rocks and hazards like Charles Lyell’s Principles of Geology (1830, rev. 1852, 1860). If, as I will suggest, The Mill on the Floss anticipates the tendency of its neo-Victorian interpreters to think of political “modernity” in the mixed registers of time and geology, it also shares with those accounts an understanding that these processes, understood as “history,” culminate in its own moment, a peaceful, achieved present—in the stable plateau of the now, one where floods and other violent interruptions belong to another, previous temporal-political order. The topic of this chapter is not Cold-War liberalism or post-1990 neo-liberalism, but if mid-twentieth century assessments of the mid-Victorian age, along with more recent ones, have rearticulated the period’s image of its own present as the very apogee of the modern, these analyses have also suggested that

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5 Amanda Anderson has recently called for a reintroduction of the term “modernity” to the evaluation of Victorian political practices, a move that self-consciously returns to the temporal-political schemas invented by the Victorians themselves, with modifications from Jurgen Habermas and John Rawls. See Anderson, “Victorian Studies and the Two Modernities” and other works. As I attempt to suggest in the next chapter, Anderson’s project shares with the Victorian ideologies of modernity it recapitulates a tendency to ignore the material political and economic practices that are the co-travelers with the idealist “distance” it endorses (as her work terms this positively-charged indifference). This discourse of “expanding” rationality and communication thus tends to overwrite the structural inequalities of an idealistically “internationalist” order that is factually imperial. (Anderson’s “two modernities” are “aesthetic” and “political”; her intervention does not discuss Jameson’s “singular” one, capitalism, and thus leaves undiscussed this or any other systemic—and thus “invisible”—
turning to the Victorian source of those stories can shed light not only on the ideological conjuncture of the 1850s, but on its legacy in our contemporary period and on the critical models attempting to explain it.

Like “politics,” of course, the grand movements of history have long been understood to sit among George Eliot’s signal themes – they are the dual obsessions, we might say, of both her writing and of writing about her. But by historicizing Eliot’s second novel more tightly in the context of other historical-political narratives from the “plateau” of the late 1850s and early 60s, I look to unpack how Eliot’s most charismatic local novel registers, and attempts to solve, a contradiction in the liberal historicism specific to a particular moment in the *longue durée* of British hegemony: the peaceful equipoise underwritten by England’s unquestioned imperial power and domestic “peace” at mid-century. Both Maine and Mill’s stories emphasize, on the one hand, the radical disjunction between stages (“status” transforms to “contract”), but on the other hand couch this in terms of law’s emergence after an extended past of gradual development. In this, both inequality that might attenuate free political representation.) Ranciere and Badiou each differently emphasize this structural aspect of “invisibility” in a philosophical register, discussing subjects and political groups who evade the count of existing orders of representation; Wendy Brown reads the relationship between idealism and materialism in this context sociologically; and Nancy Fraser offers a concrete solution to unequal representation at the level of world institutions. I treat these linked issues in chapter two, on metropolitan realism’s “lost people,” below.

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5 Hewing closely to Eliot’s own pronouncements, full monographs treat the topics of, for example, *Memory and History in George Eliot* (Li) and *George Eliot and Victorian Historiography* (McCaw). Evaluations by Anderson, Irene Tucker, Kathy Psomiades, and others have underscored that history, for Eliot, was a political matter. Yet recent political analyses of Eliot’s work have typically focused on her self-described “world-historical” text, *Daniel Deronda* (1876), a novel whose status with respect to world history can be viewed with the caveat that it is the only of Eliot’s novels to take place in the present. 6 “*Longue durée*” is Fernand Braudel’s term, but here I draw on Giovanni Arrighi’s *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and the Origins of Our Times*, where the term is used to describe cycles of global hegemonic power. In relationship to a more fully-fleshed out history by Cain and Hopkins, of the “gentlemanly capitalism” working as the historical agency of British empire, I discuss Arrighi’s suggestive but debatable analysis in my introduction. The reason “peace” is in quotation marks is explained in greater detail in chapter 3, on Swinburne and Morant Bay. There I draw on James Fitzjames Stephen’s Hobbesian objections to John Stuart Mill to show that Stephen anticipates Michel Foucault’s more recent analysis of the liberal state’s “peace” as a type of “silent war.” See Stephen, *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity* (1873), and Foucault, *Society Must be Defended*!
narratives exhibit a reluctance to theorize the sources of lawful stability, their origin in a violent founding event — a reluctance Eliot’s story of flood and sacrifice does not share. Elaborating on its contemporary fables of law’s emergence, in other words, *The Mill* catalogues the violence that can be said to underwrite “equipoise,” acknowledging, in this way, the raw, extra-legal force that subtends the transition into an order characterized by law and that remains, in potential form, after that law’s successful founding.

I will be arguing, in other words, that Eliot’s novel tackles what Giorgio Agamben has called “the problem of law in its originary structure” (167). But I will also suggest that *The Mill on the Floss* contains the founding event it depicts, literally burying it in the graves of Maggie and Tom Tulliver that form the novel’s closing image and the bookend of its retrospective structure. After sketching at some length the context for Eliot’s 1860 intervention, the sections that follow argue that Eliot’s novel does three things. First, it engages with the contradiction whereby the achieved present of English lawfulness (whether called “liberty” or “contract”) can be viewed, equally, as history’s natural progression and as the result of a radical jump between stages. As I argue in the first sections of this chapter, this contradiction, which might be seen as the tension between *durée* and event, “uniformitarianism” and “catastrophism” (as geological discourse had it), sat at the center of works in both geological theory and political historicism from the century’s middle years. Second, Eliot’s novel solves the tension it raises between *durée* and event by presenting, in the midst of a gradualist, organic historical model, a “moment” of encoded revolutionary violence (the flood). On the levels of both content and form, this event effects a radical rupture in what we might call the novel’s organic order: it kills Maggie and Tom in a single, unrepresented instant of violence, and it arrives on a formal level, as a *deus ex machina,* to
reorder the narrative’s existing codes of expectation. I will suggest, then, that in both content and form, Eliot’s novel theorizes, with Walter Benjamin and other twentieth century theorists of violence and legality, law’s dependence on a constituting political event — on a violent, revolutionary rupture of the kind Hannah Arendt calls “a ‘natural’ force whose source and origin lay outside the political realm” (On Revolution 181). Third, The Mill on the Floss’s retrospective structure can be said to accomplish formally what is also (on the level of plot) the literal encryption of the current sovereign order’s violent origin: it buries the dead bodies of Tom and Maggie in graves that “we” have been positioned to view. A framed novel set in a long-dead past, Eliot’s text offers its “‘natural’ force” — its massive, unexpected flood — as an instant of divine violence whose lethal effects, by the novel’s end, have been safely interred in the narrative time of the past. Thus written into “memory,” the founding event forms the basis from which Eliot’s novel can understand our new order of law to extend.

Tracing The Mill’s complex temporal-political configuration, and charting its significance to its moment, in and around what we might call the high-water mark of the Victorian liberal empire, allows us to reconfigure our views of Eliot’s historicism and that of her age. It also opens up a connection later chapters of this dissertation will examine in depth: the link, forged in middle years of the British nineteenth century, between a metropolitan “rule of law” and the violence that, as that law’s unspoken authorizing force,

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8 Benedict Anderson’s Imagined Communities also situates the grave as the privileged figure of political time. For Anderson, the Unknown Soldier is the figure who, {now dead} represents the sacrifice that must be encoded into the time of the “past” for a nation to acknowledge its status as a legitimate power in the present. Anderson’s work begins: “No more arresting emblems of the modern culture of nationalism exist than cenotaphs and tombs of Unknown Soldiers. The public ceremonial reverence accorded these monuments precisely because they are empty or no one knows who lies inside them, has no true precedents in earlier times. […] Yet void as these tombs are of identifiable mortal remains or immortal souls, they are nonetheless saturated with ghostly national imaginings” (Anderson 9). The ghostliness of these national imaginings, or rather, the way in which ghosts of founding violence are put to rest, is a point I return to in my final section, below.
remained in potential form to reemerge elsewhere: on, for example, the imperial “banks of the Zambezi” (245) that Eliot’s own novel specifies as the horizon of the peaceful, modern consciousness whose awakening it depicts.

1.2 “Familiar with forgotten years”

Imperialism will emerge as an explicit theme in the chapters following this one, but it is national time, not imperial war, that sits as the central topic of Eliot’s 1860 story of law’s rise: temporality is its most recurrent and un-missable theme. Appearing in editorial asides throughout its pages, The Mill on the Floss’s explicit descriptions of temporal process have inspired a long tradition of criticism to view the novel in terms of something called “history.” In a chapter called “George Eliot’s Apocalypse of History,” Christina Crosby surveys what she accurately calls the “voluminous criticism” attempting to parse Eliot’s stance on the matter of time, then summarizes Eliot’s “conviction that the individual must submit to the great impersonal forces of history which work on and through one” (12). Echoing the Hegelian overtones of this insight in a reading of The Mill on the Floss, Jonathan Arac has underscored Eliot’s interest in history’s “impersonal forces” even more specifically. Of St. Ogg’s and its peasant inhabitants, Arac writes that “[c]ontinuous development from ‘traceable origins’ marks this world” (676). He then explains how the novel links the various figural “levels” or strata of its world into a single historical motion, a forward flow well symbolized, as readers will recall, by the sweeping currents of the river Floss itself. By Eliot’s historical logic, Arac notes, land, people, and politics are tied into a single course of
history — a unified, nearly geological process of sedimentation in which time accumulates, and the present takes its place literally on top of what preceded it.

The novel’s diegetic action is described not in the language of revolution and event — of history understood as eruptions or sudden overturnings — but in terms of the slow unfolding that characterizes Eliot’s theory of social change. Aligning with this decelerated temporality, the country village of St. Ogg’s has “developed,” Eliot’s narrator tells us, in “a long growth” that is not unlike the growth of a plant (254). Giving voice to the social historicism Eliot would later buttress with readings of, and romantic walks with Herbert Spencer, the Mill’s narrator describes the country village as a kind of historical shrub, which is itself a metaphor for the sedimented years and the residue of them, legible as the “traces” marking this geographical “spot.” The narrator reports:

It is one of those old, old towns which impress one as a continuation and outgrowth of nature, as much as the nests of the bower-birds or the winding galleries of the white ants: a town which carries traces of its long growth and history like a millennial tree, and has sprung up and developed in the same spot between the river and the low hill from the time when Roman legions turned their backs on it from the camp on the hill-side, and the long-haired sea-kings came up the river and looked with fierce, eager eyes at the fatness of the land. It is a town ‘familiar with forgotten years.’ (106)

In this often-cited passage Eliot’s narrator quotes the Wanderer from the first book of Wordsworth’s Excursion to emphasize the accumulated sense of history in St. Ogg’s, its paradoxical ability to remain “familiar” with what it has “forgotten.”9 Here, we are told, on this “spot,” time stacks on top of itself: history accumulates, and each epoch of time leaves

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9 I borrow the phrase “sense of history” from Alan Liu’s study of Wordsworth, and return to Liu’s suggestive generic analysis of Wordworth’s (anti-) historicism below. It is perhaps worth noting here that Walter Benjamin’s historicism is a less romantic version of the stacking Eliot describes here; for Benjamin, time stacks too, but what stacks is the very wreckage of the historical process, its accumulated damage. See Benjamin, “Theses,” and Baucom, Specters of the Atlantic.
behind a “trace” that is the mark of its former presence. The physical town, the very ground it occupies, registers this extending durée, even if its living inhabitants do not.

Here, any dramatic event that might seem to have introduced disjunction is folded into the long, slow sedimentation of millennial time. As my own metaphors of stratification and accumulation have already suggested, this is the realm of geological history, of the long ages and layered time described in Charles Lyell’s Principles of Geology (1830, revised 1852, 1860), the work that influentially helped extend the horizon of early Victorian thinking about temporality. Though James Secord has recently argued for expanding our awareness of Victorian geology to avoid viewing Principles as an isolated, revolutionary text – as an event in its own right— it was undoubtedly most influential intervention for Victorian lay readers, in this way fulfilling one recent definition of the event as something that “forces” those in its wake “to take sides, for or against” (qtd Hallward 113). It certainly set the terms for a subfield with which Eliot was familiar at least from her earliest researches on her second novel, on “inundation” in the British Library. Lyell’s treatise influentially argued for a long view of an extended history, one in which apparent ruptures of historical change are contained within the grand, equalizing extension of geological continuity, epochs of gradual, “uniform” change. Secord’s emphasis is on the “minor” geologists arguing in Lyell’s

10 Eliot’s research program for The Mill on the Floss has been well documented. For an overview, see the entry on the novel in Rignall, ed. Eliot’s notes, including her observations on floods and geological events, are collected in A Writer’s Notebook. In her 1851 essay, “The Progress of the Intellect,” Eliot shows her sympathy with Lyell’s long view, invoking what she called “the great inductions of geology” as support for her sense of history’s “undeviating law.” This was the law, Eliot writes, of “that invariability of sequence which is acknowledged to be the basis of physical science, but which is still perversely ignored in our social organization, our ethics, and our religion” (Essays 31). Eliot’s editor gives a note directing us to Lyell, and to his argument in Principles, “which set up the principle of uniformity in natural processes against the conception of catastrophic changes” (Essays 31n).
shadow, but as other historians of geology have shown, once the long historicity of the earth had been posited, scientists responding to Lyell argued about whether geological change happened in long epochs or brief, violent events. In this debate about geological causation, “catastrophists” held that periodic, violent events punctuated long eras of calm, forming hinges between discrete epochs, while the “uniformitarian” position (Lyell’s) put its lot with long, slow growth. For Lyell, in other words, the momentary interruptions of historical change certainly had effects (volcanoes, earthquakes, and what he calls “aqueous causes” — floods — are his signal examples), but these forces were best interpreted as mere blips, tiny exceptions legible as nuances in the rocky texts of England’s long past. (As Secord explains, “reading” was the favored metaphor for describing geological analysis, while the transcription of sedimented geological layers into pictures was called “stratigraphy” [25].)

The accumulated strata in Eliot’s St. Ogg’s — its legible layers of long, slow growth— certainly appear to place it under the auspices of uniformitarianism and the layered time this theory imagined. As Eliot’s narrator explains in the Wordsworthian passage cited above, even the apparent ruptures of imperial incursion (waged by “Roman legions” and “long haired sea kings”) have become part of the town’s process of temporal accretion. Here, traces of what might be seen as events have been flattened into history, stripped of

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11 Secord’s *Controversy in Victorian Geology* critiques what he identifies as the prevailing view of geology as “an essentially historical enterprise concerned with process and time” (317); instead he emphasizes the institutional settings and local struggles of individual geologists. Secord’s valuable analysis casts itself as a refutation of geology as “high level theory” (318), but in this may underplay how developmental stories in “science” worked to allegorize other social processes, like politics. I am arguing that these treatises worked as one level of cultural production (with prose fiction and political theory) on which the state of the modern State was being theorized.

12 As Michael Tomko has pointed out, Lyell was “the leading proponent and popularizer of geological uniformitarianism — the controversial theory that the earth has existed for immeasurable ages and that change is only enacted by constant forces over long periods of time” (115).
their event-ness and written into the ground itself. At this early point in *The Mill on the Floss*, in other words, the novel’s emphasis is on process and slow time, and Eliot’s metaphors are even more natural than rocks. “[L]ike a millennial tree,” Eliot’s narrator explains, St. Ogg’s has experienced its development as an organic, inexorable accumulation, as the adding of rings to its social trunk. The town and its inhabitants are literally a part of its physical location, a “continuation” and “outgrowth” of the earth itself – what Eliot’s narrator calls “this spot.”

It will have become clear by now that Lyell’s theory, and Eliot’s articulation of a version of it, offers a model of historical inscription deeply useful to political theories reliant upon “the land” as the privileged vessel of national stability. Arac’s analysis of *The Mill’s* historicism does not mention Edmund Burke, nor Burke’s notion that English political institutions gain their stability from their ties to the ground of a national-historical tradition, their roots in earth. He does, however, refer to the novel’s interest in oaks and land, and cites “the British Constitution” as one of the outcomes of Eliot’s geological tale of process and unhurried forward motion (676). Figures of land and rock do organize the descriptions of what we might call St. Ogg’s spots of time. Yet as the metaphorical substitution of “millennial tree” for “rock” might suggest, *The Mill* also uses organic, even biological metaphors to imagine this historical “growth.” Drawing on geology, the novel’s descriptions of St. Ogg’s long growth also place us, and its characters, in the province of Eliot’s particular theory of political organicism.

Eliot’s 1856 program essay, “The Natural History of German Life” expounds upon the ideas of W. H. von Riehl to argue that the contemporary moment is what she calls “incarnate history,” the living accrual of the past realized in the present (Essays 289). In this
often-discussed essay as in *The Mill on the Floss*, Eliot argues for a long view of England’s political development: providing childish subjects with the voting power of rational man too early, she explains, is to play dangerously with time. In this essay as in other of her political texts, such as the 1868 “Address to Working Men, by Felix Holt,” Eliot’s purpose is to argue against any too-hasty, revolutionary change: the short, sharp shocks of popular uprising, she argues, represent disturbing modifications to the state’s social body — a body understood, in Eliot’s persistently organic metaphors, as a living organism. What is needed before political change can be introduced safely, then, is time. As Eliot writes: “As a necessary preliminary to a purely rational society, you must obtain purely rational men, free from the sweet and bitter prejudices of hereditary affection and antipathy” (*Essays* 287, italics added). Here Eliot invokes the “prejudice” and “hereditary affection” of pre-modernity’s inhabitants, then pits these against the rationality available to the modern subjects comprising Eliot’s imagined audience.

Rather than judging the positive or negative aspects of this political prescription, I want to note its temporal structure: this is a theory of time with two categories, old and new (“heredity” versus “rationality”), but the stress, here as in St. Ogg’s, is on gradual process, on the continuous growth of the social plant. The “Natural History” essay goes on:

> What has grown up historically can only die out historically, by the gradual operation of necessary laws. The external conditions which society has inherited from the past are but the manifestation of inherited internal conditions in the human beings who compose it; the internal conditions and the external are related to each other as the organism and its medium, and development can take place only by the gradual consentaneous development of both. (*Essays* 287)

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13 “What I am striving to keep in our minds,” Felix tells the “Working Men” in Eliot’s 1868 essay, “is the care, the precaution, with which we should go about making things better, so that the public order may not be destroyed, so that no fatal shock may be given to this society of ours, this living body in which our lives are bound up” (422).
With its play between individual and environment, this, like Spencer’s, is a complex sociology, as Amanda Anderson and Irene Tucker have recently appreciated. Highlighting the value of equilibrium, slow motion, and something called “consentient” development, it is also the “central expression,” as Eliot’s editor writes, of her “conservatism” (Pinney, ed. 267).\(^\text{14}\) A turn to the OED informs us that “consentient” means “unanimous, consensual.” But “consentient development,” as the phrase is deployed here, describes the concord between “organism” and “medium,” not between the ruled subjects and the state that rules them. Eliot’s cagy rhetorical move thus invokes the very keyword of liberal contract theory at mid-century (“consent”) to argue against its too-wide dispersal. Here as elsewhere in Eliot’s social theory, the slow, “consentient” growth of organism and individual, seen in the longue durée of geological time, would engender liberal developments in the long run. Even this apparent “conservatism,” that is, understands that an unhurried, long growth will eventually culminate in equality, commercial modernization, and even suffrage for the someday-to-be liberated peasantry. At the moment, however, these specimens live in what Dipesh Chakrabarty has referred to as the time of liberalism’s “not yet.”\(^\text{15}\)

\(^{14}\) Certainly the essay has proven central to recent political readings of Eliot’s novels. Anderson’s *Powers of Distance* begins with an extended, largely sympathetic reading of “Natural History,” and Tucker’s *A Probable State* likewise spends multiple pages teasing out the complexities of the essay’s theory of collectivity. Yet both of these exemplary studies of Eliot’s relationship to liberalism use the essay as an opening to extended readings of not *Adam Bede* or *The Mill on the Floss* but *Daniel Deronda* (1876), and in this may forgo a chance to review the fiction contemporaneous to the essay itself. My emphasis, in describing what is at stake in the move from 1851 to 1876, would be on exactly the relationship to “equipoise” I am trying to unpack here. As I discuss in chapter 4, below, by 1876, British global hegemony was changing form, and “militarism” could be seen to have “returned” as an explicit imperial policy. (It always had been a policy.) See, for example, Cain and Hopkins’s *British Imperialism 1688–2000*, whose important (though contested) revisionist intervention I discuss in my introduction.

\(^{15}\) Provincializing *Europe*, 9. In Chakrabarty and Uday Singh Mehta’s critiques, Mill’s notorious comments on colonial barbarians being “not yet” ready for civilization form the opening salvo, the overture for a discussion of liberalism (as historicism) and the imperial logic of this stadial time. Chakrabarty’s critique is especially nuanced, and has structured my remarks in the dissertation’s afterword. Here I am attempting to reframe discussions of liberalism and empire toward an understanding of the role violence plays in the very peace that liberalism’s progressive time is understood to guarantee. Arguing for this, I offer a different reading of Mill’s infamous understanding of childish nations below.
My concern is not to critique Eliot for subscribing to this widespread notion of uneven developmental time, a model that in any case had structured the liberal political tradition at least since Kant’s “What is Enlightenment?” (1784), and likely before. It is rather to suggest that Eliot’s historicism evinces what seems to be a contradiction: here we have both a theory of two-stage difference (between peasant blindness and “our” insight), and also the long, Lyellian process of geological accumulation, the growth of a Burkean “millennial tree” that will engender insight in the peasantry in due time. However this may be, what is clear is that while *The Mill on the Floss* may be interested in documenting the “changing circumstances” of country life (Rignall, ed. 264), the landscape of the novel seems, at first glance, untouched by any historical motion at all. Blind to the ghosts in their midst, the residents of St. Ogg’s believe that “events” as such have been banished from their world. The seemingly inert peasant world of St. Ogg’s “goes from generation to generation,” we are told, apparently without change:

The mind of St. Ogg’s did not look extensively before or after. It inherited a long past without thinking of it, and had no eyes for the spirits that walked the streets. Since the centuries when St. Ogg with his boat and the Virgin mother at the prow had been seen on the wide water, so many memories had been left behind, and had gradually vanished like the receding hill-tops! And the present time was like the level plain where men lose their belief in volcanoes and earthquakes, thinking tomorrow will be as yesterday, and the giant forces that used to shake the earth are for ever laid to sleep. (109)

By describing the “memories” that have been “left behind” here, Eliot refigures the complex Wordworthian formulation of the “millennial tree” passage to explain that past events have

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16 In Kant’s early intervention into modernization theory, he notes that enlightenment is an unfinished project: “If it is now asked whether we at present live in an enlightened age, the answer is: No, but we live in an age of enlightenment” (58). Kant also prefigures Eliot’s own theory of putting mental liberation before the political kind: “A revolution may well put an end to autocratic despotism and to rapacious or power-seeking oppression, but it will never produce a true reform in the ways of thinking” (55).
been both forgotten and deposited here in residual form. By the same logic that their town can be said to be “familiar with forgotten years,” the current residents of St. Ogg’s are described as unaware of the tradition written into their surroundings, their “inheritance.” Here, as in Asa Briggs’s twentieth century account, geological events emerge as the preferred figure for describing historical-political change (“[T]he giant forces that used to shake the earth” have been “for ever laid to sleep”). Yet the passage also underscores that the residents of St. Ogg’s have been lulled into what we might call a naive uniformitarianism: they are locked into geological time without the ability to read for the memories inscribed in their spot.

“It’s just as if it were yesterday, now,” Mr. Tulliver exclaims later (246), underlining what he believes is the serially recurring present of his rural environment, its perpetual now. Tom and his sister also think they live in an arrested development: as children they had, the narrator says, “no thought that life would ever change much for them; […] and it would always be like the holidays” (35). With its provincial characters believing that they wander the level plain of a continuous present, *The Mill* in this very specific sense appears to live up to its reputation as Eliot’s signal intervention into pastoral.17 As with the shepherds and nymphs of that mode, “anxiety about the future had never entered Tom’s mind” (175). But this is his own oversight.

The world’s apparently literal uniformity may be symbolized by the grinding revolutions of the mill itself, with its “unresting wheel” (4) that turns and turns without ever moving. But in Eliot’s complex symbolic economy, the very emblem of an apparently static,

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17 On *The Mill* as Eliot’s signal pastoral novel, see the *Cambridge Companion*. On the characteristics of pastoral, see Alpers, *What is Pastoral?* and Alan Liu, whose intervention on Wordsworth I discuss below.
eternal return, the “unresting wheel,” is driven by the novel’s central figure for progressive motion, the river. (This historical body of water will also, of course, be the source of the novel’s most shocking geological event, in the novel’s closing pages.) For while Tom and Maggie may believe that they live in a state of eternal holiday, the narrator emphasizes, abruptly, that they’re wrong. “Life did change for Tom and Maggie” (35), we are told, and if St. Ogg’s other residents believe that the “giant forces that used to shake the earth forever” have been deactivated now, the flood of the novel’s final book will most dramatically prove them wrong. Catastrophic events do happen in St. Ogg’s, and reordering, geological ruptures – “aqueous causes,” as Lyell named them– do take place. If these fold, in the long run, into the accumulating strata of an extending time, for the participants like Tom and Maggie the results are lethal. They will be dramatically sacrificed to the very violent, interruptive force that their fellow villagers believe have been forever deactivated. The “rupture with what exists” that this event effects (Badiou Metapolitics 24) means that in Eliot’s novel it is the figure of force itself, delivered in its most apparently natural form, that arrives to inaugurate the new world of consent.

1.3 Status, Contract / Then, Now

Revolutionary events are not part of the lexicon of liberal theory in the mid-nineteenth century, though this theory shares with Eliot’s text nearly all of its fundamental categories. If the amalgamated logics of geology, biology, and slow time provide the watchwords of Eliot’s social theory and the controlling metaphors of her description of the
archaic St. Ogg’s, so too is “consent” an operative term, and it is this last that would prove
the marker of modernity, in Eliot’s world as in those of the theorists contemporaneous with
her.\footnote{On consent as the marker of modernity in the 1870s, via Daniel Deronda, see Psomiades, Primitive Marriage. For an extended history of this notion, reaching to Hobbes and Locke, see Victoria Kahn, Wayward Contracts.}

In the same year Eliot was drafting her story of the unhurried geological growth
whereby “prejudice” turns into “rationality,” John Stuart Mill famously wrote of “the
despotism of custom” as “the standing hindrance to human advancement, being in
unceasing antagonism to that disposition to aim at something better than customary, which
is called […] the spirit of liberty, or that of progress or improvement” (On Liberty 70). As
Chakrabarty and Uday Singh Mehta have differently argued, Mill’s historicism posits a
“now” of rational civilization against a “not yet” of what his essays (following the
nomenclature of other political discourse of the period) consistently name “despotism.”\footnote{On the “despotism”/ “constitutionalism” distinction as a mobilizing force in the Crimean war, see Anderson, A Liberal State at War. For full accounts of Mill’s imperial historicism, see Chakrabarty, Provincializing Europe and Mehta, Liberalism and Empire. These accounts valuably demonstrate what Johannes Fabian has called the “denial of coevalness” at the heart of Victorian (and earlier) historicisms. It is perhaps useful to note here that Eliot’s “Natural History” essay, discussed above, contains both a theory of realist fiction and a program of ethical sympathy toward the countryside’s “pre-modern” inhabitants. In this it can be said to outline a political aesthetics that follows closely what Fabian has described as an “allochronic” model: the essay’s anthropological or “natural historical” observations about country folk in the essay locate, as Fabian writes, “the referent(s) of anthropology in a Time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse” (31). Operating within this paradigm, Eliot elaborates an analysis of the local “prejudices” and “hereditary” associations of the untimely peasant, maintaining that peasant life is a relic of a pre-modern age: these natural men inhabit an epoch, doomed but charming, that we must seek to understand, even as we recognize that its inhabitants are “not yet” ready for the innovations of, for example, representative democracy. A critique of Eliot’s politics along these lines is certainly possible, but my emphasis is instead on the implications of such historical discourses for Victorian understandings of how “peace” worked. I show, in subsequent chapters, how the foundational violence of this peace, the “barbarism” still latent in “civilization” itself (to redeploy this discourse’s own terms), is always present \textit{in potentia}, but is concretized in the colonial context as well as in the imperial zones within the metropole (slums, shantytowns, “lost places”) that I describe in my second chapter.}

For Mill, the rule of force and coercion typified an older, archaic way (“custom”), while
rationality, free contract, and a consent-based sovereignty—“liberty”—constitute its
successor.
As its contemporary critics like James Fitzjames Stephen recognized, Mill’s later work, in *The Subjection of Women*, can be read as an extended working out of the historical model raised in *On Liberty*. In this later essay, Mill expounded on the 1859 book’s two-stage formulation, comparing the outdated rule of custom, “a social relation grounded on force,” with a new law of exchangeability (“institutions grounded on equal justice” [*Subjection* 124-5]). Mill explains:

> We now live – that is to say, one or two of the most advanced nations of the world now live – in a state in which the law of the strongest seems to be entirely abandoned as the regulating principle of the world’s affairs: nobody professes it, and, as regards most of the relations between human beings, nobody is permitted to practice it. (124)

Already alluded to in this dissertation’s introduction, Mill’s hesitating distinction between inferior nations and “us” introduces an even more telling temporal ambiguity. Citing the apparent extinction of “the law of the strongest” even within advanced nations, Mill argues here that the old way of force is not dead yet. Mill’s polemic gains its force, that is, by suggesting that the inequality characteristic of the old way, “institutions which place right on the side of might” (124), has already been superseded by history, but that it also, paradoxically, still survives. It is a holdover from an earlier stage that, while doomed in any case, must also be extinguished actively. In this foundational document of liberal feminism, a conflation of historical optimism (force *will* give way to contract), triumphalism (force *has* given way to contract), and activism (it *should* give way) betrays a confusion of historical models. The strategy of this polemic, then, is to criticize the state of English “modernity” by valorizing its already-achieved accomplishment, showing how “archaic” forms persist in
these high days of liberty. To this end, Mill’s language studiously blurs the distinction between temporal stages and political forms, the stage and the state. We live in “a state,” he says, where liberty mostly rules. But the term “state” is ambiguous, referring as it does both to a social stage and a material political organization: our “state,” in Mill’s careful uncertainty, is both our status with respect to the scale of civilization, and England in 1868.

Replicated in the 1868 *Subjection* essay, the effort of Mill’s 1859 *On Liberty* to usher in “something better than customary” by explaining that it has already been achieved stands among the most enduring Victorian efforts to explain how a rule of law characterized by individual exchangeability has superseded an older order characterized by force. Eliot was familiar with Mill’s work – the elder theorist served as the editor of the *Westminster Review* just before Eliot — but the theory of law’s emergence closest to Eliot’s own imagination may have originated with another influential theorist of custom and contract, Henry Sumner Maine. Written while Eliot was composing the *Mill*, Maine’s contribution to Victorian legal theory in *Ancient Law* (1861), like *On Liberty*, narrativizes the movement into the Victorian modern as a transition from force to law, from compulsion to voluntarism, but Maine’s version tells this as a family story, one where the force relations of kinship give way to the putatively free contract of modern marriage relations. *Ancient Law* describes the movement into the “now” as the switch from the rule of force characterized by the *patria potestas* — the rule of the father and of violence itself — to the law of individual choice, where individuals...
contract with mates in an open market of freely actualized agents. In Maine’s two-stage
figuration of progress, the development that can in one context seem like continuous
development — gradually “progressive,” as Maine calls it (23) — is also a radical switch, a
leap from the old to the new: from the world of local ties, kinship relationships, and harvest
temporalities to the world of formal equality and homogenous, empty time — a modernity
through which individuals, not groups, move as agents. Maine names this the “movement
from Status to Contract” (Ancient Law 165).

As Kathy Psomiades has shown, Maine’s narrative is complex, and shows an
impressive reflexivity about the status of historical narratives as narratives, as well as about
the viability of the anthropological data generally used as evidence for claims of how ancient
societies worked. What is important here, in an analysis of The Mill on the Floss’ own
modernization story, is another point Psomiades emphasizes, which is how Ancient Law’s
historical narrative uses the key opposition of individual versus group to describe a system in
which “status” signals a communal or tribal condition based on kinship and unequal
relations among subjects. “Contract,” on the other hand, stands as shorthand for the liberal
society in which what was once a collective social body has been, as it were, disaggregated.
“[S]ociety in primitive times,” Maine summarizes:

was not what it is assumed to be at present, a collection of individuals. In fact, and in
view of the men who composed it, it was an aggregation of families. The contrast may
be most forcibly expressed by saying that the unit of an ancient society was the
Family, of a modern society the Individual. (121, italics original)

Pitting collective family groups against deracinated and, by assumption, male free agents,
Maine’s terms are importantly gendered, as Psomiades has shown with reference to Daniel

22 See the forthcoming Primitive Marriage: Victorian Anthropology and the Novel.
Deronda. Unconsciously highlighting the gender logic underwriting this story of the new citizen’s emergence, economist K.B. Smellie summarized Maine’s theory in the early 20th century by noting that Maine “accepted the Ricardian economic man as the goal of progress.” He continued: “It is the Ricardian economic man who is freed from the patria potestas, and who enters on a boundless economic and moral progress as status gives place to contract” (qtd. Burrow 156). Smellie alertly underscores the economic aspects of a “contract” stage inhabited by men. Maine’s own emphasis is even more comprehensive: for Maine, the various registers of this advance toward manhood include individualized marriage relations and economic free agency, as well as the modern state that is understood to authorize these forms. All these social “levels” – economic and political, base and superstructure— are folded into the controlling figure of “contract,” arrayed under the heading of law itself.

Maine and Eliot are interested in describing a similar kind of family drama. As readers will remember, The Mill on the Floss locates kinship ties as among the central indicators of St. Ogg’s lagging status with respect to modernity. As if fulfilling Maine’s temporal-political distinction exactly, Tom and the other pre-contractual characters in St. Ogg’s find themselves strangely tied up with blood, a fact the novel emphasizes by repeating the key words of Maine’s opposition. “There were some Dodsons less like the family than others,” the narrator notes with amusement,

that was admitted; but in so far as they were ‘kin,’ they were of necessity better than those who were ‘no kin.’ And it is remarkable that while no individual Dodson was satisfied with any other individual Dodson, each was satisfied, not only with him or her self, but with the Dodsons collectively. (38, emphasis added)

Eliot’s text perfectly repeats the terms of Maine’s two-stage historical narrative. The “clannishness” of the Dodson and Tulliver families, of course, has long been part of the
novel’s charm, but it also marks a political distinction between the country’s charming inhabitants and “us.” Eliot composed a sheaf of notes and commentary on *Ancient Law,* and she approvingly emphasized Maine’s central distinction in her abstract of the treatise, voicing her agreement with his stark differentiation between old collectivity and new individualism. In a state of status, Eliot noted, paraphrasing Maine, “kinship [is] conceived as the sole ground of community in political functions.” She continued, in her own language: “A man was not regarded as *himself*—as an individual; his individuality was swallowed up in the group to which he belonged” ([*Middlemarch Notebooks*](http://example.com) 204-205, italics original). Eliot’s italicization of “himself,” emphasizing “a man’s” lost individuality, along with her choice of the word “swallow,” suggests that her editorial slant leans toward the modern.  

In keeping with its author’s researches, *The Mill on the Floss* emphasizes the temporal distance between then and now at the levels of both social structure and word choice (“individual,” “collectively”). In this way, it follows Maine in locating time as an issue of individuality, or what we might call self-actualization—the making actual of a free self. Besides poking gentle fun at the outdated kin relationships of the Dodsons and Tullivers (the novel makes humorous asides at the shared traits among these kinship groups), Eliot’s novel also looks to demonstrate Maggie’s struggle to individualize herself in distinction her

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23 For these notes, see *George Eliot’s Middlemarch Notebooks,* 202-207. For Eliot’s list of “Books for Historical Studies,” see *George Eliot: A Writer’s Notebook,* 1854-1879, 57.

24 Spencer’s social gradualism would likewise describe the action of historical motion as resulting in individualization. The father of laissez-faire individualism defined history as the organic movement toward disaggregation. As H.S. Jones writes, “Spencer’s organicism was *structural*: the sign of the organic character was not its possession of a collective ‘brain,’ but the fact that the evolution of society followed what he called ‘the law of organic progress,’ namely ‘the transformation of the homogenous into the heterogenous’” (79). For Spencer’s fully elaborated thesis, published the year before Mill put out *On Liberty,* see “Progress, its Law and Cause.” In *Essays: Scientific, Political and Speculative* (1858).
clan associations.25 (Her ride to the gypsies, her penchant for excessive reading, and her affair with Stephen Guest, among other “rebellious” episodes, are all conventionally cited as moments of her “breaking free” from family strictures.) It is perhaps not coincidental that Samuel Smiles’ *Self Help* appeared in the year Eliot was drafting her *Mill*, the very moment that another Mill wrote, in *On Liberty*, that “[o]ver himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign” (6). As Mill’s recourse to the idiom of sovereignty suggests, Maggie’s tale, seen alongside contemporary stories from the late ‘50s and early ‘60s, is not just a narrative of the modern subject’s emergence, as Nancy Armstrong has argued. It is also, more, the story of the birth of the liberal state itself, the entire political regime understood to coincide with this new contractual individualism. Status turns into contract.

Maggie’s new individualism is not the only register in which *The Mill on the Floss* charts a version of the two-stage stories with which it is in dialogue. St. Ogg’s place further downstream in what the narrator calls the “onward tendency of human things” (255) may be most evident in its not-yet-liberated characters, those specimens of peasant life who perfectly mimic Mill’s “barbarians” or the German farmers of Eliot’s “Natural History” essay in their imperviousness to reason, the rule of exchange, and the modern political order. (“The idea of constitutional government,” Eliot quoted von Riel as saying, “lies quite beyond the range of the German peasant’s conceptions” [*Essays* 285]). Described in the chapter of *The Mill on

25 Gillian Beer’s reading neatly recodes Maggie’s struggle in just the terms I have been tracing, and can be read as evidence of how persuasive Eliot’s figuration of Maggie as a nascent *citoyen* can be (she emerges as intelligent, mobile, sympathetic, and, awkwardly, male). For Beer, one of Maggie’s outbursts represents the struggle for “the free life,” one “not different from those of men.” This is the life of the modern citizen, I am suggesting, the life of liberal contract. Beer writes: “It is this expression of female desire, the desire for knowledge, for sexual love, for free life, which is the unmitting narrative urgency of *The Mill on the Floss*, a desire for new forms of life unrealizable in terms of the old order and the fixed stereotypes by which [Maggie] is surrounded. The desires (for knowledge, sexual love, freedom) are not different from those of men; the difference is in the breaking of the taboo on them, the claiming of them as female desires” (Beer *George Eliot* 98). It is this distinction between “new forms of life” and “the old order” of “fixed stereotypes,” consistent across liberal historical models, that I am looking to more tightly historicize.
that also discusses St. Ogg’s collectively, Mr. and Mrs. Glegg exemplify the distance between now and then: these characters provide the very type of “old” provincialism in their ties to the land, to kin, and to custom. Belonging “to a generation with whom spelling was a matter of private judgment” (119), both Glegs inhabit an era in which rationalization and bureaucratic standardization have yet to take hold. “It was a time,” Eliot’s narrator tells us, “when ignorance was much more comfortable than at present” (109).

Like the unstandardized Glegs, Tom is figured as part of the natural world, rather than someone who reflects upon it, pre-modernity being figured here as both a lack of imagination and an incurable localism. “An excellent bovine lad” (164), Tom is unreachable by education: his tutors try in vain to educate him in the codes of bourgeois Englishness, and in the regime of contract that is held to define it (he is studying, unsuccessfully, to become a businessman). They find themselves unable to instruct him out of his love for animals, guns, and armies – all coded, in Eliot’s optimistic historicism, as “old.” (She shared Herbert Spencer’s belief that violence is fundamentally irrational and “archaic,” a point that will return later.26) “Latin grammars” and “a new standard of English pronunciation” (124) hold no interest for Tom, and his mind, like his peers in the village, works locally, not globally. “I’m attached to the place,” he says of Dorlcote Mill (375), and despite these deep ties to his spot, “Tom’s imagination” was “not … rapid and capacious enough” to grasp its nuances (93). Not yet having achieved rational reflection on, or what Amanda Anderson has recently extolled as “modern detachment” from the spot of his upbringing (Powers 10), Tom, like the

26 In The Mill on the Floss, Eliot argues that a jingoistic pedagogy at home as the rationale for warfare abroad. As Tom fantasizes about fighting abroad, the narrator wryly notes: “It is doubtful whether our soldiers would be maintained if there were not pacific people at home who like to fancy themselves soldiers. War, like other dramatic spectacles, might possibly cease for want of a ‘public’” (163).
St. Ogg’s to which he is attached, remains locked in what the novel, its contemporaneous political stories, and several of Eliot’s modern readers all understand to be a “pre-modern” rootedness. Tom is a thing literally rooted in the ground: “He was one of those lads,” we are told, “that grow everywhere in England” (27).

But if Tom is the bovine extension of nature, mindlessly focused on his place and on the kinship allegiances native to it (he signs a blood oath to his father on the family Bible, solidifying an anachronistic, trans-generational vendetta), Maggie, of course, is Tom’s developmental counterpoint — the character who is able, somehow, to grow past this historical stage of heredity to comment on it critically. As I have suggested, for Armstrong, Maggie is instrumental in providing a mediating force in the novel; her presence “automatically redefines all other subjects — or what we might consider the collective subject of the novel” (94). Certainly Maggie acts as the novel’s super-empowered individual. Dark haired, individualized, and broad minded, she has enough perspective to scold Tom for the fact that he “ha[s] not a mind large enough” to be rational (326): in contrast to her colleagues among the pastures, Maggie’s consciousness is in the process of learning how to engage in the broad-minded, wide-ranging liberal imagining that Bruce Robbins in 1999 called “feeling global.” Indeed, even in her own slack, repeatedly emphasized passivity in the boat with

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27 On the function of ‘not yet’ in the imperial discourse of liberalism, see Mehta and Chakrabarty, and the dissertation’s afterword, on Lewis Henry Morgan. I invoke the “modern” advisedly here, since this is the keyword Anderson argues for, in her important but, I suggest, suspect effort to rehabilitate the very cosmopolitan remove The Mill on the Floss is concerned to naturalize. My object here would be to overlay the apparent equipoise of the 1850s and early 60s with that of the post-historical 1990s, in order to note how Anderson’s own 2001 political-temporal narrative (knowingly?) recapitulates the terms and stakes of Eliot’s own.

28 In his book of that title, Robbins argues that the goal of an ethical cosmopolitanism “would be both to defend the social welfare state and, as much as possible, to extend it outward — for example, toward residents who are noncitizens” (36). Robbins’ project is complex and well-intentioned, but my emphasis in the following chapters will be on the imperial functionality of this “extending outwards,” and on how the mid-Victorian British state and the corporate entities operating within it were asymmetrically empowered by this network of interconnected forces. For a flavor of this critique in a newer
Stephen Guest (she was not “conscious of having said or done anything decisive” [440])

Maggie achieves something like an expansion of her imagination.\(^2\)

The wide-ranging idealism the novel valorizes as modern comes, too, with a geographical corollary, with physical travel acting as the material instantiation of idealist broadness, a move that understands an easy shift between the registers of ethics into politics and replicates the internationalism of Eliot’s “advanced liberal” cohorts at the *Westminster Review*. In accord with this move from narrow- to broad-mindedness, from selfishness to sympathetic cosmopolitanism, the first book we hear of Maggie reading is not about pastry-making or vegetable cultivation (the preoccupations of the other female Tullivers) but about European travel. She recommends a work she calls *Pug’s Tour of Europe* (25) to a simple character named Luke as a remedy for his too-tightly focused mind, one similar in its geographical limitations to her brother’s. (“Why, you’re like my brother Tom, Luke” [25].)

As she reaches out to help this limited soul, Maggie’s injunction conjures the cross-border logic of exchange, understood as “sympathy,” that will emerge as one of the novel’s signal contents for the term modernity. Maggie tells Luke that this book about crisscrossing Europe

\[^2\] Maggie is overcome not by Stephen’s attractions, but by her own tendency to connect with others: “This yielding to the idea of Stephen’s suffering was more fatal than the other yielding, because it was less distinguishable from that sense of others’ claims which was the moral basis of her resistance” (440). As I suggest below, Maggie’s very susceptibility to others, her excessive sympathy, is a marker of her fatal modernity. Eliot would explore a sympathy that was literally fatal in *The Lifted Veil* (1859), written at the same time she was working on *The Mill on the Floss*, “when my head was too stupid for more important work” (GEL III, 60 n1).
‘would tell you all about the different sorts of people in the world, and if you didn’t understand the reading, the pictures would help you – There are the Dutchmen, very fat, and smoking, you know – and one sitting on a barrel.’

‘Nay, Miss, I’n no opinion o’ Dutchmen, There ben’t much good I’ knowin’ about them.’

‘But they are our fellow-creatures, Luke – we ought to know about our fellow-creatures.’ (25)

The next chapter will emphasize the importance of how this central lesson of liberal rationality — of cultivating a reflective, broad-minded cosmopolitanism — is cast in the language of expansion. What is clear here is that Maggie represents the novel’s most “modern” individual identity. Her complex, peaceful sensibility, a “keen vibrating consciousness poised above pleasure or pain” (415), reveals her to have arrived at a sympathetic state of reflection that marks her nearly complete transition from the peasant’s naïve childhood into the sentimental adulthood of modern man. Hyperbolically reflective, able to connect with other consciousnesses across time and place, Maggie bears the seeds or traces of a future world of liberal exchange already within her soon-to-be past moment of “hereditary custom.” A modern citizen caught in a previous historical era, trying to break

30 A full reading of the book Maggie recommends to Tom is beyond the scope of this argument, but a view of it as a story about internationalism and empire would yield significant results. The book is called *Pug’s tour through Europe, or, The travell’d monkey: containing his wonderful adventures in the principal capitals of the greatest empires, kingdoms, and states* (1825). It is a poem about a monkey on a Grand Tour, and is framed for children, but works on an adult level too, as a pedagogy of local turning global, and coming back again. It begins with “A COUNTRY Pug” coming “to London, / A raw young bumpkin ‘Squire’; it then goes on to describe Pug’s journey through the centers of European capital accumulation, Paris, Madrid, Rome, Florence, Venice, and also “Greece, that cradle of the arts.” But a war breaks out there, and he moves to Turkey, Germany, Russia, and Norway, finally ending up with the Dutchmen Maggie mentions to Luke. It ends with these Dutch men, all represented as financiers, sitting on barrels (as Maggie notes), and with Pug extolling the virtues of staying home: “Sick of their habits, smoked to death / Pug took his passage home; / And, landing, cried ‘Whilst I have breath, / “From England I’ll ne’er roam.” ‘ (35). There is much to observe here, but one might begin with the poem’s fascination with the Dutch, connecting this to the story of successive world imperialisms told by Giovanni Arrighi. In *The Long Twentieth Century*, Arrighi identifies “three hegemonies of historical capitalism” in which imperial territorial acquisition was driven by what he calls “cycles of capital accumulation” (8): Italian, Dutch, and British. An American cycle has followed these. Seen through this lens, the story of Pug going abroad and returning reads an imperial parable about England’s burden of as the new world power; it describes the local turning global, and coming back again, though Maggie invokes it for the opposite purpose — to convince Luke to replicate the movements of British capital by interfacing with “other people” abroad. Her repackaging of an anti-cosmopolitan allegory (stay home, don’t go abroad!) into a story about cross-cultural exchange is no doubt significant here.
out, she is what Hegel termed a world historical individual. For Hegel, the world historical individual is ahead of his time, asynchronous with his now. “He is,” Hegel writes, “the hidden Spirit knocking at the door of the present, still subterranean, still without a contemporary existence and wishing to break out, for whom the contemporary world is but a husk containing a different kernel from the old” (qtd Lukacs 39-40).

Anachronistically peaceful, acting in accord with sympathy and not force, Maggie’s function as the novel’s world historical individual is perhaps most evident when she quells violence — force being the central synecdochal feature of the state of status or custom. With restraint coded as adult (and thus modern, a trait of “ours”) and the violence of “impulse” associated with a childlike status, the episode in which Mr. Tulliver thrashes his significantly named rival, Lawyer Wakem, further clarifies that while the rule of this father may have structured the world of the past, it is peaceful reserve that characterizes its historical successor. Maggie’s role is not only to represent a nascent version of this regime of exchange already alive in the past, but to assist in its ascendance. Here is the episode:

The sight of the long hated predominant man down and in his power, threw [Mr. Tulliver] into a frenzy of triumphant vengeance, which seemed to give him preternatural agility and strength. He rushed on Wakem […] and flogged him fiercely across the back with his riding-whip. Wakem shouted for help, but no help came, until a woman’s scream was heard, and the cry of “Father, father!” Suddenly, Wakem felt, something had arrested Mr. Tulliver’s arm; for the flogging ceased, and the grasp of his own arm was relaxed.

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31 The quotation is from Lukacs, The Historical Novel, offered in reference to the modernizing characters of Walter Scott — the writer, with Wordsworth, whose historical experiments Eliot most attempted to replicate in her early novels. Adam Bede (1859), Eliot’s first full novel written just before The Mill, takes place in 1799, and thus could be subtitled, like Waverly, “Tis Sixty Years Since.”

32 In the Second Treatise, Locke had said pre-political formations were defined by war, or what he called “Force without Right” (281, italics original). Picking up this trope, Mill infamously described the way in which force without right, although primitive, was nevertheless appropriate for dealing with primitive peoples: “Despotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians, provided the end be their improvement, and the means justified by actually effecting that end. Liberty, as a principle, has no application to any state of things anterior to the time when mankind have become capable of being improved by free and equal discussion” (On Liberty 13-14).
“Get away with you – go!” said Tulliver, angrily. But it was not to Wakem that he spoke. Slowly the lawyer rose, and as he turned his head, saw that Tulliver’s arms were being held by a girl. (334)

With the local man cast as vengeful animal, the passage shows that while an unthinking struggle for male “predominance” may define Tulliver’s clannish world (“Father, Father!”), his epoch is on the wane. What this episode depicts, then, may be a part of what Armstrong describes as The Mill’s role in the formation of the modern subject, where Maggie distills and preserves the “good” and “bad” desires from the men she meets until she’s no longer needed and can be killed off (97). But it also, and more fundamentally, comes some way in explaining Maggie’s role in what is ultimately a political story about the rise of the Victorian liberal state. Extending Daniel Hack’s recent description of the temporal distancing accomplished in the Victorian revenge plot (Hack “Revenge” 279-281), where revenge is a part of the past and forgiveness characterizes the present, we can appreciate the political stakes of Maggie’s out of time-ness: the civilization to her father’s savagery, in this episode the modern girl has subdued her atavistic “Father,” leaving “the lawyer” to escape unhurt.

Like other, more recent interventions into modernization theory, then, Eliot’s own political tale has added specific content to the otherwise formal distinction between then and now. “To the mind of the peasant,” Eliot theorized in the “Natural History” essay, “law presents itself as the ‘custom of the country’” (Essays 279) — that is, as no law at all. With Maggie’s help, history has been ushered to the brink of a modernity that has as its substance

33 The novel has already defined “predominance” as shorthand for the animality of custom: “There are certain animals to which tenacity of position is a law of life […]: and there are certain human beings to whom predominance is a law of life” (183). Mr. Tulliver, the passage suggests, is one of these animalistic beings.
rational reflection, sympathetic exchange, and the parliamentary lawfulness that is its political vehicle. What I have attempted to overlay onto the familiar fact of Maggie’s out-of-timeliness, then, is her role as the mediator of the novel’s antagonistic political temporalities, the function her character plays in negotiating between what Matthew Arnold might have called (in a twist on his 1855 phrase) two ages, one doomed to die, the other almost ready to be born.34

I have dwelled on several familiar passages from Eliot’s second novel at some length, then, because they can stand in for this text’s effort to chart a temporal-political narrative we can parse by adding to the terms already familiar in the voluminous criticism on Eliot’s historicism. For all its emphasis on continuity, on the organic connection of one epoch with the last, it is also clear that St. Ogg’s development is a process of two-step modernization toward a moment Eliot herself, like the theorists she both adapted and anticipated, understood to result in the arrival of liberal contract and the state authorizing that contract, one in which autonomous, freely acting agents are able to discuss, not brawl, and contract, not enslave – a world in which these agents rationally reflect on their surroundings rather than exist as a part of them. It is symptomatic of this point that Nancy Graver’s canonical reading, in George Eliot and Community, follows not Maine or Mill but the late nineteenth century sociologist Ferdinand Tonnies to chart Eliot’s double-time as a move between *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*, “community” and “society.”35 Graver’s analysis transcodes Eliot’s terms into those of a late-century German theorist, but part of her point in applying Tonnies

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34 From “Stanzas from the Grand Chartreuse” (1855, reprinted 1867).
35 As Graver explains, for Tonnies community is the name for the largely “rural” or pre-capitalist way of relating, what he calls “the lasting and genuine form of living together” (Tonnies 35). Tonnies argues that society, on the other hand, is a “mechanical structure” of relations, one coextensive with what he calls “public” life (33). *Gemeinschaft* is old,” the early sociologist summarizes, “*Gesellschaft* is new” (34).
to Eliot’s fiction is not “to maintain that [Eliot] was a systematic social theorist” like Tonnies, “but rather to suggest that she grappled with the problem of social renewal in different yet analogous ways” (8). Graver steps aside of anachronism in this way, but following her lead we might point to a long list of other, similar two-step codes, a list that might include Max Weber’s, in Protestantism and the Spirit of Capitalism (1904), or Friedrich Nietzsche’s, in Genealogy of Morals (1887) which described the birth of the modern, “emancipated” individual — “calculable, regular, necessary” (58) — as one “with the actual right to make promises” (59). My point is that while Maine’s story of status turning into contract may be a better candidate for intertextuality than Tonnies, Weber, or Nietzsche — Eliot made extensive notes on Ancient Law in the ‘60s, and her notebooks for The Mill on the Floss also include references to his work — I do not insist on any causal or empirical link between the two, but instead that these theorists, Eliot and Maine (and Mill), responded to the political challenges of the so-called Age of Equipoise with what we might call a deep metaphorical structure, one in which the passage from an ancient rule of force into a modern liberal law is figured as both a historical process of unfolding and as a radical rupture between stages.  

In his seminal Evolution and Society (1967), W.L. Burrow reviews the nineteenth century’s most significant theories of development, and in doing so offhandedly describes what he represents as a minor confusion in both Maine and Mill’s political stories, a confusion that identifies the paradox of historical representation I am attempting to unpack

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36 I thank Sarah Lincoln for the Nietzsche reference, and for her many other incisive comments on this chapter.

37 Victoria Kahn’s study of Hobbes cites Maine’s 1861 text as the beginning of the modern contract theory tradition, running, for her, into the Cold War and beyond.
here. Burrow cites Mill’s often quoted lines from *On Liberty* about the suitability of “despotic means” in dealing with barbaric, pre-rational societies (see note 33, above). His emphasis is not on the racism of this notorious formulation, but on the inconsistency of its thinking about time. This is Burrow, comparing Mill’s theory with Maine’s:

The conclusion of Mill’s argument does not matter – it is the distinction on which it is based that is relevant here. Mill recognizes, as the evolutionists did, that ‘barbarians’ are improvable, though he doubts their capacity for spontaneous improvement save in exceptional circumstances […]. He appreciates, of course, that civilized peoples have a barbarous past […] – the presupposition of all Maine’s writings. [Mill] even seems to imply a ‘natural’ course of growth […]. But the whole force of his argument rests on a rigid distinction between ‘barbarism’ and civilization.

It is precisely this distinction, quite as much as the evolutionary element which is also apparent, that underlies much of Maine’s social thought. When he wants to emphasize the fact of continuity, the similarity between ‘barbaric’ institutions and those of the European past or even present, Maine speaks in an evolutionary, ‘gradualist’ manner. But almost equally often he speaks in terms of a straight dichotomy – status and contract, progressive and non-progressive, barbarous and civilized. (158-9)

What Burrow notices here is that the temporal confusion between gradual time and radical rupture (the geological difference between “uniformitarianism” and “catastrophism”) is written into the very heart of both of these theories: Mill’s 1859 narrative of custom giving way to liberty and Maine’s 1861 story of status turning into contract lack the theoretical tools to understand *when*, precisely, and *how* this change occurs.

Whether cast in the idiom of Tonnies, Maine, Mill, or Eliot herself, this narrative is marked by a central confusion, I am suggesting, namely the inability to pinpoint the *event* of rupture or switch, the *moment* of the rule of law’s emergence. It is a difficulty not local to Victorians. Frederic Jameson has provided criticism with its most sophisticated tools for understanding the issue of historical periodization as a fundamentally narrative problem. In *A Singular Modernity* (2002), Jameson both comments on and rewrites the very storylines we
have been tracing, emphasizing capitalism’s directing power but sounding the political notes emphasized by Maine, Mill, and, I am arguing, Eliot. The moment of the modern, Jameson writes, is nothing less than

*the moment* of the overcoming of feudalism by capitalism, and of the aristocratic social order of castes and blood by the new bourgeois order which at least promised social and juridical equality and political democracy. (39, italics added)

Elsewhere in this same work Jameson insists that every narrative of modernity participates in what he calls “a dialectic of the break and the period” (23), an irresolvable tension between continuity and dramatic “moments” of change. All narratives of modernity participate in this dialectic, but the moment I have quoted stands, Jameson writes, as the “real historical event and trauma” any subsequent narrative of modernity must recode (39). Jameson’s work offers the most powerful terms we have for understanding, first, how a basic economic level of analysis relates to the “superstructural” features of political organization, and second, how the narrative problem of transition attends the effort to describe relationships between what are represented as distinct historical periods.

Here, however, the moment that stands as this text’s moment of the “real” – as the political unconscious that all other narratives must rework— itself shuttles between a description of political change (that of “social castes and blood” turning into “political democracy”) and changes in modes of production (feudalism changes into capitalism), a figural interpenetration of levels that Eliot’s historicism also accomplishes. It may be significant, in this context, that it is not simply restraint, rationality, and “public spirit” (109) that characterize the “modern” of *The Mill on the Floss*, but business. The efficient capitalist Mr. Deane “had been advancing in the world as rapidly as Mr. Tulliver had been going down in it” (191). And with his own plans to privatize irrigation procedures in the face of
Tulliver’s sense that “water was water” (148), Lawyer Wakem functions as one mechanism, with Maggie, by which the dreamlike era of custom is awakened into the rule of this Lawyer’s law, and into the rule of privatization and business exchange with which it is held to be coextensive.

The point, however, is not simply that Eliot, too, figured the advent of modernity in terms that are political as much as they are economic. Certainly the arrival capitalism stands for Jameson (though not for Eliot) as the condition of possibility for what he calls “the modernity effect” (41), the very narrative category in which a switch from old to new can be articulated. But the point is temporal, and narrative: though he will later specify that one characteristic of “modernity” itself is “its irrepressible search for the break, for the ‘first time,’ for the beginning” (145) (“[T]here can be no question of deciding on any ‘true’ beginning of modernity as such” [145]), Jameson’s story in A Singular Modernity has already resorted to such a figure. This point brings with it several corollaries. One is the realization, by now familiar, that Marxist historicisms are committed to recapitulate the figures and narrative structures of their dialectical opposites, those of liberalism. (On the one hand Jameson is arguing that “modernity” has no content, yet on the other he is offering “the rise of capitalism” as its content.) Another is that while capitalism is here, as elsewhere in Jameson’s work, understood as the ur-narrative of modernization, its untranscendable under-story (Political Unconscious 11), Jameson also sketches what seems to be a necessary relationship between this ur-narrative and a “superstructural” one, namely politics. We learn here that a specific political order, one coextensive with “juridical equality and political
democracy” or law itself, arrives alongside capitalism, its necessary counterpart. Since I am not drawing on Jameson’s 2002 story as the true story, incisive and self-reflexive though his critique is, but rather as one that shares tropes and certain conceptual difficulties with the stories I am discussing here, I will emphasize a third corollary. It is that this Marxian narrative (A Singular Modernity) reproduces the temporal ambiguity that sits, unacknowledged, at the heart of liberal stories from the mid-nineteenth century, including Eliot’s — a central ambiguity about whether this “change” arrives via durée or event, whether its narrative mode is (we might say) uniformitarian or catastrophist. With the book’s project arguing against the very possibility of positing an identifiable moment of the modern, Jameson’s description of the “real historical event and trauma” of modernity (the real to the other narratives’ recordings of it) is, like those other accounts, structurally unable to decide whether “modernity” arrives gradually, after a long process (a la Braudel), or whether, instead, it comes in an instant of radical change, in “the moment of the overcoming of feudalism by capitalism.”

When was this moment? In Jameson’s as in Mill’s and Maine’s stories, what is inaugurated in this narrative instant, this structurally necessary but unrepresentable switchpoint, is the modern rule of citizen-subjects, capitalism, and of procedural law itself.

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38 In the chapter of Capital Volume 1 (1867) on “The Process of Exchange,” Marx specifies the relationship between levels by describing the relation of consenting parties in the system of commodity exchange: “This juridical relation, whose form is the contract, whether as part of a developed legal system or not, is a relation between two wills which mirrors the economic relation. The content of this juridical relation (or relation of two wills) is itself determined by the economic relation” (178, emphasis added). I discuss this passage in detail in the next chapter; here I am suggesting that for Eliot, Maine, and Mill, the relationship among modernization’s legal, social, and economic registers is figural, and not theoretical: at different moments one level might be understood as the figure for another, and vice versa: thus political liberty can work as a trope for capitalist progress, but capitalist progress can also function as a figure for indicating a movement towards liberty.

39 It must immediately be repeated that Jameson may be the critic most concerned with the narrative nuances of historical time currently writing. A Singular Modernity is a polemical book, and so does not flesh out Jameson’s fully-realized understanding of the narrative problem of figuring “transitions” between stages. With force and detail, that issue is treated, along lines very similar to those I trace here, in The Political Unconscious, 96-97.
But this product of a radical switch, this “moment of overcoming,” is also, of course, the result of gradual change and an apparently inevitable historical accumulation. (Jameson cites Arno Mayer’s *Persistence of the Old Regime* to describe the “incomplete modernization” even within an apparently modern Europe [141].) For Maine, at least, the “moment” of history’s emergence into the epoch of legal forms was nothing less than revolutionary. Describing what happens when one social organizing principle (the blood ties of status) gives way to another (the geographical connections of contract), Maine, here emphasizing the break, not continuity, between his stages, says this:

Nor is there any of those subversions of feeling, which we term emphatically revolutions, so startling and so complete as the change which is accomplished when some other principle – such as that, for instance, of local contiguity – establishes itself for the first time as the basis of common political action. (124, emphasis added)

Maine’s rhetoric connects Jameson’s “moment” of change with the language of revolution, sharpening the catastrophist thesis that the transition from one to the other is felt as an overhaul, a systemic disruption and indeed re-ordering of political form: a “first time.” We have seen that Maine’s theory is not consistent in this emphasis on the break, but in his language above, the shocking transition into the now is offered in terms apparently borrowed from Edmund Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (it is a “subversion of feeling,” Maine says, “which we term emphatically” a “revolution”). Eliot, too, will theorize this “moment” of law’s arrival as something that “establishes itself for the first time” (as Maine phrased this foundational event) in a structurally necessary, though unrepresentable instant of violent overturning. In *The Mill on the Floss*, the switchpoint from

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40 Burke may be the most well-known advocate of *duree over event*: for him, a revolution was “an irregular, convulsive movement,” one that would shock the order of any appropriately historical society. “The course of succession is the healthy habit of the British constitution” (*Reflections on the Revolution in France*, 22).
then to now – that “true’ beginning of modernity as such” that Jameson announces as an unrepresentable, mythic legend — comes in the form of the flood, a dreamlike subversion of feeling that has been called the novel’s “Deus ex Machina of sudden death” (qtd Rubin 18).

1.4 Mythic Violence / The Flood-Event: “What were those masses?”

When Eliot was told, after The Mill on the Floss’s publication, of charges by Edward Bulwer-Lytton that novel had been ruined by its “too hasty” ending, Eliot attested that she had composed the finale in a kind of surge of energy. The novel’s last eleven pages, she said, “were written in a furor” (GEL III 278). Though she had planned it since her first research on the novel, the dramatic episode Eliot produced in those eleven pages replicated that fury. Critics have long been disturbed by Victorian literature’s most well known earth-shaking event, with a long tradition of feminist critique identifying the novel’s unexpected violence alongside the novels of Thomas Hardy as an instance of anti-feminist female sacrifice. Other readers, of a less political orientation, have likewise debated the flood’s propriety since the first reviews appeared, calling attention to the final event as an example of Eliot’s artistic failure, a breakdown in the laws of realist narration. The grandest deus ex machina in Victorian literature, the final overflow of the Ripple and the Floss forms a kind of surprise ending, arriving, these readers have thought, out of nowhere—a transcendent, melodramatic event
arriving as if from on high. It is a random occurrence from the genre of romance infiltrating this high realist novel.

The final flood so jarred Henry James, for example, that in an often quoted review this other member of the Great Tradition described Eliot’s scandalous conclusion in terms normally reserved for political upheaval. For James, the flood represented an entirely unpredictable rupture in a plot that should have been governed by existing laws of continuity and expectation, of “order.” The novel’s final event felt imposed from the outside, James judged; it effected a suspension of the normal and orderly procedures of realist narration, introducing a melodramatic rupture in the novel’s laws of form. Here is James:

The chief defect – indeed, the only serious one—in *The Mill on the Floss* is its conclusion. Such a conclusion is in itself assuredly not illegitimate, and there is nothing in the fact of the flood, to my knowledge, essentially unnatural: what I object to is its relation to the preceding part of the story. The story is told as if it were destined to have, if not a strictly happy termination, at least one within ordinary probabilities. As it stands, the *denouement* shocks the reader most painfully. Nothing has prepared him for it; the story does not move towards it; it casts no shadow before it […]. But one thing is certain: a *denouement* by which Maggie should have called Stephen back would have been extremely interesting, and would have had farmore in its favor than can be put to confusion by a mere exclamation of horror. (32-33).

A tear in the novel’s narrative fabric elicits from James the codewords that, for a conservative tradition extending from Burke, have provided the lexicon for denouncing revolutionary violence. Meaningless, brutal, “improbable,” the flood is for James a violent disturbance of the existing system, one that “shocks the reader most painfully.” It can elicit no rational response, he tells us, nothing at all beyond “confusion,” and “a mere exclamation

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41 Already in 1956 Larry Rubin could refer with some exhaustion to the “critical controversy long standing” regarding the novel’s conclusion (18). Rubin notes that E.A. Baker “sees the flood as a ‘melodramatic contrivance’” (qtd 18), then lists a series of other scandalized responses to the ending that Henry James’s canonical reading, and F.R. Leavis’s updating of it, had trained New Critics to defame.
of horror.” If James’s confrontation with inexplicable violence recalls Mr. Weevle and Mr. Guppy’s discovery of Krook’s spontaneous demise, from the introduction (“O Horror!”), his own confusion of aesthetic and political registers in describing this interruptive event also opens a window onto The Mill on the Floss’s political-aesthetic priorities. I would like to use James’ famous language here, that is, not to weigh in on what is or isn’t the proper aesthetic response to Eliot’s unmanaged ending, nor indeed to determine whether or not the ending is unmanaged in the first place.

Rather I read James’ shock, his experience of what Maine called a “startling” and “complete” “subversion of feeling,” as an indicator that the flood represents what seems to be a rupture in the novel’s already-existing symbolic order (its “laws”). We can press on the recurring language of abruptness, violence, and shock here, in other words, to suggest that the question, for James, is an encrypted political-aesthetic one: the question is whether the flood is justified by history (by the “preceding part of the story”); whether this shocking reordering is “essentially unnatural;” whether it is, or as he seems to suspect, is “not illegitimate.” What James’ reading offers, in other words, is an evaluation, at once aesthetic and political, of what we might call a revolution in the novel’s form. This “improbable,” “horrific” event seems, in other words, to represent at the level of novelistic structure what Badiou would term a “properly political” event, one that effects, in an instant, an overturning of an existing order of things and that refigures the very horizons of “probability” themselves, or what James referred to as the novel’s “destiny.” (For Badiou a properly political event is not debate within a given system of possibility but a renovation, at the level of structure, of the existing order of expectation. As Badiou writes, “the essence of
politics is not the plurality of opinions. It is the prescription of a possibility in rupture with what exists” [Metapolitics 24]).

If the novel’s final, world-shaking inundation asks to be read as an encrypted revolutionary event, as I will suggest it does, it is true that the novel has trained us for this reading by using political language to offer the historical story of Maggie’s development as itself a series of revolts — tiny shocks that show this child as a participant in what we might call play-acting insurrection. When the impulsive Maggie cuts her own hair, this is narrated as an uprising, an act of revolt that both thrills and frightens the onlooking Tom (57). The “delicious grinding snip” of the shears cuts away Maggie’s long hair and leaves her momentarily free, her hair “cropped in a jagged uneven manner, but with a sense of clearness and freedom, as if she had emerged from a wood into the open plain” (57). She is liberated, if only momentarily. This little rebellion is followed by others. Later, when Maggie explodes to Mrs. Tulliver and the aunts, the behavior is judged an “aberration” (200): “there was something portentous in this mad outbreak; she did not see how life could go on after it” (200). Effected though it may be with an odd passivity, Maggie’s affair with Stephen Guest is the most damning example of what her father, in reference to her persistent insubordination, has earlier called “this revolutionary aspect of things” (95). Prefiguring Gwendolyn’s famous non-murder of Grandcourt in Daniel Deronda’s boat scene, Maggie’s love-boat cruise with Stephen is a non-act with revolutionary results: after it, she thinks, “a new era had begun for her” (317). The point, however, is not just to trace the novel’s recurrent use of the language of revolution to describe these little offenses against the conventions of status, nor just to note that they occur against the mill-like monotony of the novel’s apparently placid or “uniformitarian,” but (we soon see) interruptible environment.
The point, instead, is that these brief, aberrant acts prepare us for something more—an “event” in the philosophical sense—that will expand the novel’s theme of interruption to its shocking, “dream-like” conclusion (487).

It comes. As the waters rise around her and the flood begins to be recognizable for what it is, Maggie commandeers a boat and, floating, finds her eye drawn to the threats encroaching around her. “What were those masses?” (489), she wonders. Her remark conjures an image of the crowd as it registers shock at the size, the darkness, and the fear instilled by the destroyed machinery coming at her in rafts. “In dreadful clearness,” we read, “floated onwards the hurrying, threatening masses” (491). Seeing these masses for the first time, “Maggie’s heart began to beat in an agony of dread” (489): as she and Tom cling to their own boat, their “anticipated clash” with this flotsam is avoided once, but the forms bear down on them, and they are overturned, finally, by these pieces of “wooden machinery,” these floating shards of mechanization (491). What kills them, as Eliot’s language carefully specifies, is a combination of broken wood and the refigured violence of popular revolt, one rendered in terms recalling not just farm implements in the water but Chartists at the barricades. Here is their death:

Huge fragments, clinging together in a fatal fellowship, made one wide mass across the stream.

“It is coming, Maggie!” Tom said, in a deep hoarse voice, losing the oars, and clasping her.

The next instant the boat was no longer seen upon the water—and the huge mass was hurrying on in hideous triumph. (491)

It is instructive to compare this version of Maggie and Tom’s sacrificial death with the scenes of floating refuse Eliot documented in her notebooks. There, she copied: “Many thousands of deals & baulks of large timber, with household furniture, horses, cows, staiths,
came floating down & almost covered the river for some hours” (Writer’s Notebook 36). The organic floating refuse of the actual indundation Eliot researched has been politicized by metaphor, in its novelistic version, into “huge fragments” “in a fatal fellowship.” In the novel’s fatal scene, a dark crowd of machinery, a “huge mass,” performs the “hideous” violence that kills the indecisive Maggie and her doomed, archaic Tom.

The word “mass” is repeated four times in less than a page here, but if criticism has differed on how to read this event, I am emphasizing that whether it is understood as a psychologized weather event, an incestuous apocalypse, or (as I read it here) a transcoded popular uprising, it is like Maggie’s haircut: a fleeting moment of shocking, irrevocable violence. I introduced the passage by writing “here is there death,” but I now want to note that the “death” itself is not presented as such: the instant of violence is in fact skipped over in the temporal complexities of the “moment” Eliot’s text stages here. Tom warns that “It is coming, Maggie!,” but there is no referent for the “it” of his exclamation. “It” can be read as the flood, or their death, or the “mass” itself, but Eliot’s prose allows for all of these readings: indeed the “it” may refer most of all to the violence of the event itself. After pages of past-tense narration, the ambiguous referent of Tom’s utterance arrives, conspicuously, in an extending present-tense (“It is coming”), a present participle followed by a series of other verbs, nearly gerunds, that likewise call attention to the lengthening function of the participle’s incomplete action (“losing,” “clasping”): they grammatically prolong the instant of the event. Time slows here, a moment extends, and a paragraph break vaults us from these static verbs past the event itself, skipping “it.” “The next instant,” the narrator tells us, all is over. The past tense returns: The boat was no longer seen upon the water, and the huge mass was hurrying on in hideous triumph.
What I want to underscore in this amazingly rendered scene, in other words, is not just the recurrent and apparently purposeful language of crowds, masses, and revolutionary violence, but also the temporal complexity of the “moment” in which this profusion of double signifiers appears. *Time* is what is at issue here, and what the staging of the death event underscores is that the “instant” of violence itself – the death— eludes representation: it is not, cannot be shown. Skipped over in a paragraph break, Eliot’s non-narration of the “hideous mass’s” triumphant violence conforms in this way to what Badiou, with other philosophers of the event, has recently understood as the peculiar temporality of the revolutionary “moment.” According to Badiou (and to Eliot’s narration here), the event of overturning itself – what in the scene’s language would be called the “instant” that came before “the next” one— is like a point in geometric mathematics: it cannot be presented. A hinge between before and after, it is itself nothing, an atemporal zero-point outside of the order of calendric or “ordinary” time. “Even though it can always be *localized* within presentation,” Badiou specifies, “it is not, as such, presented, nor is it presentable. It is – not being – *supernumerary*” (*Being and Event* 178).42

By calling it “supernumerary,” Badiou means to indicate that the event is not already-existing within the “count” of the existing situation; the event is not itself among the elements of the situation that gives rise to it. The full quotation runs this way: “The event is not actually internal to the analytic of the multiple. Even though it can always be *localized* within presentation, it is not, as such, presented, nor is it presentable. It is – not being – *supernumerary*” (*Being and Event* 178). For a full and particular discussion of the event as a revolutionary “moment” outside time, see Johnston, “Confronting the New Sophists” and, in more depth, Hallward 107-151. For a slightly different account of the political event, see Ranciere and Badiou disagree about the conditions of possibility of this event; on the disagreement, see Badiou, *Metapolitics* 114-123. F.R. Leavis’s comments about the “value” of the flood likewise underscore its “unrepresentable,” unexchangeable or what Arendt will call its “undatable” nature. In *The Great Tradition*, Leavis writes: “The flooded river has no symbolic or metaphorical value. It is only the dreamed-of perfect incident that gives us the opportunity for the dreamed-of heroic act” (*Great Tradition* 45-46). In noting that the event is “without value,” Leavis argues not just that the flood is aesthetically improper, but hints I will say at something more telling, which is that this event is beyond the purview of the exchange operation representational language (i.e. of metaphor) demands. In a metaphor or a “symbol” (as Leavis called these tropes), one terms stands for the other; it is, as Paul de Man points out in a reading of Locke, a circular or what he calls “figural” circuit of representation (“Epistemology of Metaphor 38). Yet in Leavis’s terms the flood does not *stand for* anything, it is pure presence, only itself. For Leavis, that is, the event is absolutely singular: a self-grounding element
My interest is not in parsing the nuances of event theory, nor in arguing for the prefiguration of French philosophy in Victorian fiction. Rather I want to suggest that these theories of revolutionary rupture and Eliot’s climactic death scene share a common understanding of the temporal complexities attending the transition between one order and the next, a theoretical treatment not present in the narratives from Maine or Mill I have already discussed. Among these complexities is that the “event” of a new order’s founding, the creative destruction that gives rise to a new regime of “law,” evades both temporal “counting” (in Badiou’s language) and representation itself. It happens without registering as part of experience, or as Maggie realizes just before she is sucked into the water: “It was the transition of death, without its agony” (487). In language more easily grasped than Badiou’s but less poetic than Eliot’s, Hannah Arendt has underscored what the final scene of The Mill on the Floss dramatizes, namely the idea that any revolutionary transition between one periodizing order and another — such as that which inaugurates “contract” out of “status” — is a no-point, an unrepresentable instant outside of time. The switchpoint exists, that is, in what Arendt calls the “hiatus between the end of the old order and the beginning of the new” (206).

In a chapter of On Revolution (1963) discussing the problem of law’s foundations, Arendt writes that the moment of revolutionary violence cannot be dated using the protocols of ordinal or properly calendric time. Like Tom’s unattributable “it,” the moment of change is outside of historical temporality. “The revolution,” Arendt writes, speaking without an equivalent. (On the singular event, see for example the famous formulation in Derrida, “Signature Event Context.”)
here of the American one, “was precisely the legendary hiatus between end and beginning, between a no-longer and a not-yet” (206, emphasis added). She goes on:

Moreover, this hiatus obviously creeps into all time speculations which deviate from the currently accepted notion of time as a continuous flow; […] If one dated the revolution, it was as though one had done the impossible, namely, one had dated the hiatus in terms of chronology, that is, of historical time. (206-7)

Referring to a “legendary” moment of founding precisely parallel to Eliot’s famously mythic or “dreamlike” closure, Arendt is arguing that revolutions are undatable, and that to put them into an idiom of “currently accepted” notions of time (the orderly succession of year, date, and hour) is to do “the impossible.” 43 Revolutions exceed this orderliness. As James complained of the flood-event, such overturnings veer wildly from the existing order of expectation. Arendt’s terminology for describing these moments of transition recapitulates Eliot’s own with nearly perfect accuracy. Arendt refers to the order of time scandalized by these events as “time as a continuous flow,” recalling Eliot’s own heaving, flowing river Floss – the river of history, that emblem for what Eliot’s narrator called “the onward tendency of human things.”

In what has been repeatedly called the “most Wordsworthian” of Eliot’s novels (e.g., Knoepflmacher 175), the flood, I am suggesting, works as the unpresentable switchpoint between now and then, a version of what Alan Liu, in reference to Wordsworth’s own strategy of lyric containment, calls the “denied mimesis of Revolutionary combat” (374). The combat is “denied,” for Liu’s Wordsworth, because Liu’s account is interested in locating the counterrevolutionary ideology that would contain such violence in Wordsworth

43 It may be worth noting here that Arendt’s 1963 project is aimed at valorizing what she represents as the exceptional stability of the neo-classical revolution in America (in distinction from the violent French one), and in this may speak to the same Cold War priorities that animated Asa Briggs.
himself. (Wordsworth *should have* depicted the revolutionary history Liu calls “tragedy,” but instead retreats to the reactionary, ahistorical mode of lyric.) Certainly Eliot shares that poet’s deep suspicion of revolutionary change, and at least one recent critic has grouped Wordsworth, Eliot, and James into a group of writers engaged in what she calls “the crisis of action in nineteenth century British literature.” But while Liu is interested in critiquing what he figures to be Wordsworth’s personal fear of revolution, I would inflect my point differently. Eliot’s novel has *staged* the foundational event (or constituting violence) that is the structural requirement of any movement from one “stage” to another — here, from the old rule of “status” structuring St. Ogg’s to the new world of exchange typified by sentimentalism, business rationality, and law itself. That this moment of temporal transition is skipped over in Eliot’s beautifully written death scene — that it is represented as unrepresentable — precisely serves to confirm the scene’s status as the not-present switchpoint between the novel’s contending temporalities, the violent, uncountable zero-point of its new temporal-political order.

The flood’s lethal violence can thus be seen as a revolutionary event, in the sense that it effects a formal rupture in the novel’s structure, operating as a founding “moment”

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44 Writing in an 1848 letter, Eliot noted that in England

*a revolutionary movement would be simply destructive – not constructive. [...] [T]here is nothing in our constitution to obstruct the slow progress of political reform. This is all we are fit for at present. The social reform which may prepare us for great changes is more and more the object of effort both in Parliament and out of it. But we English are slow crawlers.* (GEL, I, 254)

“Our constitution,” Eliot writes, using the organic political theorist’s double-word, would not stand the shock of a “destructive” event. Eliot may here allude, glancingly, at what Lyell’s geological treatise referred to as the dual functions of “aqueous causes,” their “destroying” and “renovating” power to both destroy old formations by sheer force and, by sedimentary deposits, build new ones.

45 See Stephanie Markovits, *The Crisis of Action in Nineteenth Century British Literature*. Though it draws heavily on Arendt, Markovits’s treatment is conspicuous unconcerned with the political valences of the fear of action she argues is common to these members of the Great Tradition. I return to Markovits’s treatment of James in chapter four, below.

46 As Hallward quotes Badiou, “The event reveals ‘the inadmissible empty point in which nothing is presented’, and this is why every event indicates, in principle, a pure beginning, the inaugural or uncountable zero of a new time (a new calendar, a new order of history)” (Hallward 114-115).
encoded within its story of gradual modernization. The critical dispute attempting to answer the question of where this event comes from, how it comes about, itself confirms this analysis. James’ review indicated his preference for a conclusion that might fall “within ordinary probabilities.” (“Nothing has prepared [the reader] for it,” James complains. “[I]t casts no shadow before it.”) In terms taken from the aesthetic codes of realism he himself helped naturalize as appropriately literary, James asks for a conclusion that would be predictable, probable, that would accord with what is “destined” to happen – he asks, that is, for a conclusion that in Arendt’s terms might be calendric or datable, “ordinary.” (In Lewes’s terms from the introduction, it should be “scientific” or “probable.”) In another reading of the novel, Jerome Buckley concurs with James’ evaluation of the flood as an event that is transcendent with respect to the novel’s figural system, something coming from outside its established order of predictability. “The flood is a physical force outside the psychological framework of the action,” Buckley writes. “It has no real relation to Maggie’s dilemma; it encroaches upon her melodramatically, an agent from without” (Buckley 114). “An agent from without,” the flood, for Buckley as for James, is an element proper to the codes of romance, not realism, an event that comes from somewhere beyond the novel’s own order to shock its organic system. On this reading, it is a violent presence that is transcendent with respect to the novel’s order of representation.47

47 Writing of politics and revolution, Jean-Luc Nancy anticipates Badiou to write that “The surprise — the event — does not belong to the order of representation” (173). As my description of the warring readings of the flood will now attempt to suggest, Nancy thus offers a reading of the event as “transcendental” in a way that conforms with James or Buckley’s reading of the flood as “outside” the novel’s existing system. Readings of the conclusion as “immanent” to the novel’s order of representation, such as the ones that I discuss below, would conform to Badiou’s notion of the event, in the sense that they describe the flood as something that was prepared for by the novel, but in ways that are only legible retrospectively, after the event has arrived.
But other critics, granting the surprising or even shocking nature of the ending, have countered by noting that Eliot had the flood in mind all along; it was “the part of the story that George Eliot planned first” (Haight, qtd Eliot, *Writer’s Notebook*, 168n). There are hints of the flood, these critics say, planted throughout *The Mill on the Floss*’s many, many pages, and in light of these it is impossible to call the flood’s arrival unexpected. “James was clearly wrong in one respect,” one critic notes, “since the ending is prepared for in a formal sense by various allusions and foreshadowings” (Rignall, ed. 266). If, in following this line, readers reinstate the codes of realism James helped institutionalize by adopting a defensive tone in protecting Eliot’s novel from charges of artistic failure, they also raise what I will say is a more important point of controversy, one about the status of the final flood with respect to the novel’s representational system, or what Badiou would call its “situation.” For the critics emphasizing foreshadowing, the flood is immanent to the novel’s order; it develops, if not predictably, then at least believably from the elements already present within the novel’s representational world, its “whole finely meshed system of prefiguration” (Rubin 21). What these critics emphasize, then, is that what Larry Rubin calls “the final event” of the novel (21) has a kind of retrospective necessity: unpredictable though it may be, the shock has nevertheless been prepared for with numerous allusions to flooding, raining, catastrophe, and even drowning.⁴⁸ “What one finds here,” Rubin writes, “is a remarkable accumulation of suggestion, both direct and oblique – an accumulation so forceful in its impact that the drowning of Maggie seems to the reader to become only a matter of time” (21). In

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⁴⁸ A final image, in which Maggie begs Lucy to forgive Stephen, “points with the impersonal assurance of a road sign to the actual drowning scene” (Rubin 21). This is the image: “These words were wrung forth from Maggie’s deepest soul, with an effort like the convulsed clutch of a drowning man” (qtd Rubin 21).
defending the organic wholeness of Eliot’s novelistic world, Rubin references the very “accumulation” and “time” Eliot’s novel is obsessed with to argue that the event of the flood is immanent to the novel’s system. Its arrival is, as Rubin says, “a matter of time.”

Although cast as a defense of Eliot’s organic form – its successful adherence to realist codes—this reading also argues for the flood to be read as a revolutionary event, if in different terms. As I have already briefly noted, for Badiou the event is “supernumerary,” evading the count of what “already” exists: it is a new emergence, a not-present arrival that is unaccounted for within the existing order (or “set”), but that can nevertheless be shown, retrospectively, to have been present as possibility in the elements of what Badiou calls the situation.49 Another way of phrasing this is that events can only be seen to have been possible retrospectively: they can’t be viewed as possible until after they have occurred, at which point they seem to have been inevitable. (The signal temporality of the revolutionary event, Badiou specifies, is the future anterior, the “will have been.” It will have been necessary.) What I am driving at here, in this theoretical detour, is that a reading of the flood that would underscore the fact that it has been “prepared for” (that is, a reading contradicting James and Buckley’s sense of it as transcendent deus ex machina, something arriving “melodramatically, an agent from without”) – such a reading of the flood’s immanence to its “situation” confirms the flood as the equivalent, at the level of narrative

49 The evental site is Badiou’s name for a set or order in which the elements that make up that set are not yet legible, in the sense that they are not yet specifically identifiable, but are known to exist. It is at this “site” where the momentary (or literally atemporal) actualization of these heretofore unspecifiable potential elements takes place — this is the event. The elements actualized in the “instant” of the event were present, Badiou argues, in the situation before the occurrence of the event that made them visible, but they could not have been known to be so until afterwards: they were immanent to the situation, but unable to be seen as such before the event’s occurrence. For Badiou, events have to be immanent, i.e. they can’t come from outside ‘the situation.’ As Hallward notes, a foreign invasion, being an incursion from without, cannot properly be termed an event (Hallward 116). We may remember in this context that the “Long Haired Sea Kings” and “Roman Legions” of St. Ogg’s were folded into the long history of the village, while the flood, being immanently “possible” in the situation, is, like any popular uprising, there, in potential form, waiting to surge.
form, to the political event in Badiou’s sense: it can be seen as “inevitable” (it has been seen as inevitable, by Rubin, Haight, and other critics), but it can only be seen as such after it has happened. Its constituent elements are present in the form of “foreshadowings” or “hints,” but there is no possible way to predict what, exactly, will come of these elements, how they will coalesce, until the flood itself has already occurred. “It is a matter of time,” Rubin says.

Even if it is understood as immanent to Eliot’s organic fictional world, then, Eliot’s carefully rendered flood scene offers itself in both content and form as the moment between its two temporalities, the sublime zero-point at which “law” is understood to have been founded. Though the readings of Rubin and Haight emphasize the event’s immanence to the novel’s system, James’ and Buckley’s reading of the flood as “an agent from without” is worth dwelling on, since their sense of this “Deus ex Machina of sudden death” (qtd Rubin 18) confirms St. Ogg’s mythic, dreamlike violence as revolutionary in yet another register. As my epigraph indicates, the OED gives the definition of “Deus ex machina” as “A power, event, person, or thing that comes in the nick of time to solve a difficulty; providential interposition, esp. in a novel or play.” Calling it “a power” and “a providential interposition,” the OED’s definition underscores what the Latin term itself advertises, which is that this often maligned fictional and dramatic device operates theologically as a transcendent ordering power. A standard feature of literary romance, the deus ex machina represents an unexpected arrival of a godlike, refiguring gewalt (“power,” “violence”): it is understood to redraw the horizons of possibility within a fictional work’s existing regime of

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50 I do not have the space here to parse the implications of the flood’s status as a sublime event. (Though I thank Sarah Lincoln for this suggestion.) Such a detour would no doubt lead through Kant and Burke, and begin by noting the connections in both of those theorists’s formulations between the language of sublime natural violence and that of political revolution.
representation. (What was once considered impossible — such as a genie’s descent or a long-lost cousin’s plot-solving arrival — is now, after it has happened, proven to have been possible.) Divine and unexpected — “It casts no shadow before it,” as James noted of the flood — the arrival of a *dens ex machina* changes the rules of what is considered possible. It sets new laws.

In his 1921 “Critique of Violence” (*Zur Kritik der Gewalt*), Benjamin draws on his ongoing correspondence with Carl Schmitt to meditate on the sources of “law” or political order in what he calls “mythic violence.” (*Gewalt*, as Derrida notes in his reading of Benjamin’s text, means violence but also means power, in the sense of founding or “constituting” political power.) Benjamin’s essay distinguishes between three kinds of violence, which he calls law preserving violence (or “police violence”), law making violence (“mythic violence”), and that violence which abolishes all law, which Benjamin names “divine violence.” For Benjamin, any sequence of worldly legality begins with a founding, violent event (an instant of mythic violence); this establishes a new order, one that is preserved by police, or law-preserving violence, which for Benjamin is merely the refiguration of the founding violence into potential form (the power of the foundational event can always exert itself in any moment of “peace,” but does not do so at all moments).

Any order that is founded, as all orders are, on foundational, constituting violence is subject

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51 “Lawmaking is power making.” Benjamin writes, “and, to that extent, [it is] an immediate manifestation of violence. [P]ower [i.e. *gewalt*, or violence] [is] the principle of all mythical lawmaking” (295).  
52 In this sense it establishes a new *nomos* or set of governing rules upon which law can be founded. Agamben cites Schmitt’s well-known definition of the sovereign as “he who decides the state of exception,” then points out the paradoxical status of this lawmaking power: “The paradox implicit in this definition (which we may refer to as the paradox of sovereignty) consists in the fact that the sovereign, having the legitimate power to suspend the law, finds himself at the same time outside and inside the juridical order. Schmitt’s specification that the sovereign is ‘at the same time outside and inside the juridical order’ is not insignificant: the sovereign *legally* places himself outside the law. This means that the paradox can also be formulated this way: ‘the law is outside itself,’ or: ‘I, the sovereign, who am outside the law, declare that there is nothing outside the law’” (Messiah and the Sovereign, 161).
to interruption by another, subsequent event of mythic founding in a future time, an interruption that would establish a new order in opposition to the old (the general strike is Benjamin’s example). (Divine violence, which I do not treat here, is problematically the messianic end-time of this cyclical process of revolution, duration, and counterrevolution.\textsuperscript{53}) For Benjamin, then, all law (even that understood as “peace”) is “intimately bound up” with violence (295). What is of interest, for this reading of the moment of mythical violence (not represented in Eliot’s text), is Benjamin’s understanding that an unexpected, fundamental, extralegal force is the only way a new order of law can be established.

For Benjamin, mythical, founding violence is to politics what the \textit{deus ex machina} is to fiction or drama. “Mythical violence in its archetypal form,” he writes, “is a mere manifestation of the gods” (294). It is an unexpected, insurgent violence that comes, as if from “without” or “on high,” to destroy an older sovereign order and establish a new one. The very paradigm of revolutionary violence and a name for the constitutive feature of literary romance, it is a momentary, interruptive rupture. As a long series of readers have noted, the version of the \textit{deus ex machina} ending in \textit{The Mill of the Floss}’s concluding pages is violent, lethal: it kills the book’s two main characters in a vortex of water and wood in an ending that has long been read as “sacrificial.” What I have been arguing with reference to Mill and Maine (and to Maggie’s own invocations of “consent”) is that the violent event that acts as “an agent from without” founds a new order of law, the “modernity” of the novel’s temporal-political configuration. An abrupt, unexpected violence (“what were those

\textsuperscript{53} In “Force of Law,” Jacques Derrida offers a trenchant critique of the troubling possibilities of this last category, possibilities he argues were realized in the holocaust. There Derrida casts a doubtful eye on what Benjamin figures as the liberating possibilities of “divine violence” – violence without bloodshed or total violence. What is important for my discussion here is that Derrida leaves largely intact the other two categories, of law-making violence and law-preserving violence.
masses?”) forms the switchpoint between two epochs, a switchpoint that is itself both unreservedly violent and unrepresentable in temporal terms, making it a problem for a realist narration founded on protocols of expectation and “destiny” (as James termed this convention). Maggie’s thoughts as the flood swells capture precisely this complicated interchange between political and aesthetic registers. Of the situation that coalesces into the flood event that kills her, she notes: “The whole thing had been so rapid – so dream-like—that the threads of ordinary association were broken” (487).

As Benjamin suggests, and as Eliot in her essays attests, in this revolutionary instant of lawmaking (or what Maggie called “the transition of death, without its agony”), the moment when the foundational force of pure violence is visited upon its victims cannot itself ever be “justified,” since it belongs to no previous order of law, no “thread of ordinary association.” What is at issue here is precisely what counts as “ordinary,” or “lawful,” and by what power it has been made to appear so. The moment of founding is properly self-justifying, or, in grammatical terms, as Derrida notes in his reading of Benjamin, performative. As Benjamin and Derrida both point out, this performative violence, this

84 Revolutionary violence’s unjustifiable character was well theorized by Eliot herself. In an 1856 essay she wrote that “A revolutionary must not only dare to be right, he must also dare to be wrong – to shake faith, to wound friendship […]” (Essays 265). But if this sounds like a defense of founding, “unjustified” violence (the Pascalian wager of Badiou or Zizek’s revolutionary militant), it isn’t. The essay is on Antigone, and was written just before Eliot began work on The Mill on the Floss. This play about the warring claims of state and family stirs Eliot to observe that “Perhaps the best moral we can draw is that to which the Chorus points – that our protest for the right should be seasoned with moderation and reverence, and that the lofty words – (great words, “megaloi logoi”)— are not becoming to mortals” (265). Aimed at discouraging revolutions from erupting, the formulation nevertheless supports the point that lawmaking or founding violence, for Eliot, cannot come from humans and so must be expressed as “divine,” “natural,” or in Benjamin’s terms “mythic” – in “great words” arriving, that is, like a flood.

85 Here as elsewhere, Derrida’s reading of Benjamin is illuminating, not least for the accuracy with which it reproduces the language I have been tracing in Eliot’s ending and her readers’ impressions of it. Derrida summarizes: [Law’s] very moment of founding or institution (which in any case is never a moment inscribed in the homogeneous tissue of history, since it is ripped apart with one decision), the operation that amounts to a founding, inaugurating, justifying law (droit), making law, would consist of a coup de force, a performative and therefore interpretative violence that in itself is neither just nor unjust and that no justice and no previous law with its founding anterior moment could guarantee or contradict or invalidate. (13-14)
violent *gewalt* that brings nothing but its own power into being— that has only itself as its foundation—is one that, in Benjamin’s words, “demands sacrifice” (297): law’s foundation requires a martyr on which the performative, divine violence that would ground a new order can exert itself. It should be made clear at this point that if Benjamin’s correspondent Carl Schmitt could be more comfortable with this thesis than we are, Benjamin’s aim is to *critique* the paradoxical violence at the heart of peaceful law: to catalogue it, learn its codes— not endorse it. Long notorious for its anti-feminist sacrifice of Maggie, Eliot’s novel instructs us to read its historical transition in just these disturbing Benjaminian terms. As Eliot’s narrator informs us, sacrifice is the explicit price of every epochal shift: “suffering,” we are told, “whether of martyr or victim […] belongs to every historical advance of mankind” (255).

Demanding sacrifice, arriving without announcement, and only able to be “justified” by the *later* legitimacy of the order it founds (the new lawfulness *will have been* justified, provided the new order of law proves durable), the foundations of *The Mill on the Floss’s* new order of law are at once supremely violent and mythical, belonging to an order ungoverned by regimes of predictability or “justification” in their previously existing narrative or political senses.

The scene that immediately precedes the flood— the scene that foments this revolutionary instant— is Maggie’s transgressive boat-trip with Stephen. Like the episode with her father and Lawyer Wakem I discussed above, Maggie’s cruise with Stephen forces to a literal physical confrontation the conflict between the novel’s “old” and “new”

What Derrida allows us to see is not only the language of fictional probability latent in this discourse (law’s moment is “ripped” from the “tissue of history”), but also the more fundamental issue of how in Benjamin’s theoretical world as in Eliot’s fictional one, the emergence of any order of “peace” is closely related to, indeed coextensive with violence: the emergence is itself violence.
temporalities, a confrontation that cannot be “solved,” the novel indicates, without the providential intervention I have just described. The episode that we might say precipitates its novel’s mystical, concluding water event — its aqueous cause—, finds Stephen attempting an endless sequence of rhetorical gestures to persuade Maggie to legally marry him. They have already spent the night in the boat together: while nothing untoward has happened (that we know of) the eyes of the community will see them as united. Maggie, Stephen is arguing, should bring “fact” into step with “law.” Finally he hits a nerve:

“Dearest,” he said, in his deepest, tenderest tone, leaning towards her and putting his arm around her, “you are mine now — the world believes it— duty must spring up out of that now: in a few hours you will be legally mine, and those who had claims on us will submit — they will see that there was a force which declared against their claims.” (450-1)

Force and submission are the argument’s critical terms. Physically laying claim to his charge with “his arm around her,” Stephen voices his appeals in terms Maine and Mill have already provided; he uses the archaic language of primitive sovereign violence, of the political coercion native to the epoch of patria potestas. In the face of Stephen’s insistent effort to urge her to elope, Maggie recurs feebly to the language of contract, of consent, and of the liberal “now” in which such concepts have validity. She responds to the arm around her and the force it represents by saying she does not “consent,” but there is no power behind her claims:

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56 Here I am heavily indebted to Kathy Psomiades’ reading of an eerily similar scene in Daniel Deronda, in which Grandcourt is the atavistic, lizardlike aggressor (representative of an older sovereign power), and Gwendolyn finds herself unable to “decide” on an outcome, though she (like Maggie) specifies her inability to “consent.” This scene also takes place on a boat, the emblem, apparently, for the undecided zone between custom and law in Eliot’s political imagination. For Psomiades’ reading, see the forthcoming Primitive Marriage. I see my argument as supplementing hers, to say that Eliot saw the moment of this transition from force to consent to be in or around 1860. Though he is a “guest,” Stephen’s force is not out of place in St. Ogg’s temporality; by 1875, Grandcourt’s sovereign force would seem doubly anachronistic.)
“Oh, I can’t do it,” she said, in a voice almost of agony – “Stephen, don’t ask me, don’t urge me.” […] “Dear, dear Stephen, let me go! —don’t drag me into deeper remorse. My whole soul has never consented – it does not consent now.” (451)

The difference between “ask” and “urge” that Maggie’s hesitation specifies here articulates the antagonism between political temporalities that is now reaching its crisis. (To “ask” is to make a request without coercion, one that is a matter of free choice or consent; to “urge” is to resort to force. Though the semantic distance between the terms is small, politically they are an epoch apart.) The problem is that though her “whole soul” has not been won over, her body has already consented, floated out onto the river in the water-borne, tidal ride that will prove her undoing. This, I am suggesting, is the crisis point in the novel’s conflict of registers, where the old language of force and of possession has come into irresolvable conflict with the new language of consent and of contract, of equal relations among contracting agents (marriage as contract, not coercion). But this emergent language of contract and consent does not yet have “the force of law” to back it up, and Maggie cannot inaugurate the new order herself. After her feeble rejection of Stephen’s advance, Maggie notes that she “was not conscious of a decision as she turned away from that gloomy averted face, and walked out of the room: it was like an automatic action that fulfils a forgotten intention” (451-2). Maggie cannot decide. Hastened here to its unsolvable crisis point, the transition between old and new will require a “moment” to finally decide it, a foundational force from which a new regime can extend.  

57 After Maggie attests to her inability to consent, Stephen “let go her arm” (451), giving up the control that history itself has rendered obsolete. She has evaded him, but Maggie is not strong enough to “decide” to reject him. Fulfilling a forgotten intention, we might note, is not unlike being familiar with forgotten years: Maggie has performed an act but without the full force of consciousness or sovereign will. If “decision” operates, as Carl Schmitt has suggested, as the structuring condition of all political order, then Maggie’s inability to “decide” here suggests that a new regime of law has yet to take hold. On the ability to decide as the necessary precondition of politics, see Schmitt, Political Theology.
The flood follows. I have already emphasized the violent aspects of the event that arrives to perform this founding action, and the status as Maggie as a “sacrifice” to this violence has been well documented at least since Gillian Beer’s pioneering feminist analysis of the novel. The Mill’s mythic event, whether arriving from within the situation or, as divine violence, from “without” it, serves to found the new order of law that Eliot’s text, like others in and around the moment of 1860, associates with the modern. In its 1860 review of Eliot’s first novels, the Westminster Review invoked all of the registers in which Eliot’s own text was operating to condemn the violent arrival that kills The Mill’s asynchronous, world-historical protagonist. Time, geology, and the narrative of an earlier world giving way to a new one organize its comments. “[T]he denouement is altogether melodramatic,” the reviewer judged, and went on in the terms I have used as an epigraph:

indeed, there is a tendency to and taste for startling events in George Eliot, which seems to crop out of the rich culture of her mind, like the primitive rocks of an earlier world. The flood in the mill, and the rescue of Hetty in Adam Bede, are instances of what we mean; they are vestiges of a Titanic time, before the reign of peaceful gods commenced. (Critical Heritage 143)

By charting the violent process by which “startling events” trade the old, violent gods of status for the “peaceful gods” of liberalism, Eliot’s novel proposes that a radical break, a sacrificial, divine “moment” of mythic violence must subtend any new rule of law. If in this insight Eliot prefigures the insights of recent theory on law and violence, she follows her contemporaries like Maine and Mill in viewing the new order thus founded as one of lawful equipoise – as an epoch characterized by what Maggie called “consent.” But in distinction from narratives from Maine, Mill, and even Asa Briggs, The Mill on the Floss documents the “intimate” relationship between this new law and the violence that works as its authorizing force. My argument has called for an appreciation of Eliot’s insight into the violence nestled
at the foundations of modern liberal peace. But in closing this chapter’s discussion of the liberal order’s violent birth, I want to suggest how the mythical moment her novel attempts to represent, the one that kills Maggie and Tom in a vortex of wood and machinery, is itself placed in the novelistic time of “the past”—turned, by the novel’s retrospective frame, into a dead epoch that we “take up into ourselves,” in Friedrich Schiller’s terms, as part of a process of cognitive exchange that valorizes our status as residents of the very order of sentimental peace this violent rupture has founded.

1.5 “The Beauties of the Spectator”

As I turn, to close this chapter, toward a consideration of the framing strategy by which the novel positions its readers to regard, and to reflect sentimentally upon the events and dead subjects its action depicts, it is useful to recall the novel’s own long-acknowledged status as a picture of the past, as an enclosed image of what has already left us. The metaphor of framing has proved useful for describing the novel’s effect. The Mill’s narrator refers to “the beauty of the early pictures of mill life” (141), and this photographic, still-life effect was also evident to the book’s earliest readers. For the unimpressed critic in The Dublin Review, the novel was merely “a series of photographic studies” (Carroll, ed. 148), while the same reader who complained of the primitive rocks jutting through Eliot’s imagination, in the Westminster, found something to appreciate in The Mill’s pictorial quality, in the “numerous” “pictures” of the past the novel mounts for its readers. “You can hardly stop before a single frame,” it noted, “without finding food for the day’s thought” (Carroll,
ed 141). “Why is it so delightful,” Blackwood’s wondered, elaborating this response to the Mill’s photographic effect, “to read what we have known and felt so well already?” (Carroll, ed 13) Taking seriously this temporal-aesthetic effect — one by which the novel can seem to present us, as if for the first time, with the naivete and violence we have already moved past— begins to move us toward a political reading of the novel’s retrospective form. A “dream,” a “hallucination,” and a “picture” — as it has been variously called— The Mill on the Floss is also a backward-looking frame narrative, one that, after depicting the revolutionary foundation of law in a time “many years ago” (5), contains this deadly story of law’s origins and presents it as a framed or sealed image of “nature.” In doing so, Eliot’s novel presents a sentimental image of a simple past and the lethal event that kills it off: readers view the “trace[s]” or “marks” of an age of custom, as Eliot’s narrator calls them in the book’s final chapter, the aftereffects or textual remainders of a naive world that, in the Schillerian terms I want to develop now, we no longer are but seek, a “lost” pastoral or pre-lapsarian state we do not inhabit but regard from a position of reflective modernity.

There is a frame, after all, around these photographic traces of country life. If Eliot’s modernization tragedy in The Mill on the Floss is properly the story — the diegetic space of the novel that moves us, violently, from then to now — the first chapter, “Outside Dorlcote Mill,” is literally that: the outside, or extradiegetic casing of the story. Within this frame, 

58 Roland Barthes has suggested that the photographic form bears a unique relationship to temporality: it is the very proof of “the absence of the object” (Camera Lucida 115); yet the photograph serves too as a testimony, attesting to “the fact that this object has indeed existed and that it has been there where I see it” (115). “The Photograph,” he continues, “then becomes a bizarre medium, a new form of hallucination: false on the level of perception, true on the level of time: a temporal hallucination, so to speak, a modest, shared hallucination (on the one hand ‘it is not there;’ on the other ‘but it has indeed been’): a mad image, chafed by reality” (115).

59 As Schiller writes, great artists “will either be nature or seek the lost nature” (196): he means that they will “be” it if they are archaic, and seek it if they are modern.
Maggie is the narrative’s modern consciousness reflecting on her more “natural” peers, but the novel’s form ensures that readers, too, are in position to scale what the narrator calls “the steep highway of tolerance” (274), ascending toward something like the reflective, peaceful rationality the novel has already coded as modern. (“[T]he responsibility of tolerance lies with those who have the wider vision,” Eliot’s narrator instructs [471].) In the novel’s opening pages, our narrator sits in a chair but dreams he is standing on a bridge. Thus doubly distanced from past events, he finds himself awash a reverie of nostalgia and memory, giving what seems like physical expression to his stance as sentimental spectator:

Ah, my arms are really benumbed. I have been pressing my elbows on the arms of my chair, and dreaming that I was standing on the bridge in front of Dorlcote Mill, as it looked one February afternoon many years ago. Before I dozed off, I was going to tell you what Mr. And Mrs. Tulliver were talking about, as they sat by the fire in the left-hand parlor on that very afternoon I have been dreaming of. (5)

After these words the novel begins. *The Mill on the Floss* thus opens with the desensitized, indeed dozing body of the spectator-narrator, actually in an armchair but dreaming he is viewing from a bridge. (It ends, as we will see, as another spectator, the reader, gazes at a tombstone.) Separated two times from the direct objects of the past, the acting subject of these sentences is also linked to them by the sinews of an operation he here calls “dreaming” but elsewhere refers to as “memory.” With “us” identified with this doubly-distanced onlooker, the novel’s well-known framing structure acts as the formal machinery by which this story about historical violence both contains that trauma and formally reflects upon it, encrypting it into a synchronic, lyric moment that we regard: it is a grave, a “picture.” In the

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60 In the opening sequence the narrator is awash in memory: “I remember those large dipping willows,” the narrator says, “I remember the stone bridge” (4). Repetition simultaneously distinguishes past and present and folds them together: “Now they are on the bridge,” the narrator says, muddling tenses (it is “then,” not “now” that “they are on the bridge”); “Now I can turn my eyes towards the mill again” (4). The repetition and temporal doubling here invokes the categories of trauma theory, though at this stage of the dissertation I lack the reading to pursue this consideration.
process the novel celebrates the doubled or “sentimental” character of those superempowered subjects who, like “us” and the narrator, are able to perform this reflection.

In writings with which Eliot was deeply familiar in her early career,61 “our divine Schiller,” as Eliot called the German poet and theorist (GEL 8, 13), framed a distinction between “naïve” and “sentimental” modes whose terms, like Maine’s and Mill’s, are legible throughout The Mill on the Floss’s depiction of its pre-modern peasants. Schiller’s neo-Kantian philosophical aesthetics, which Eliot studied “intensively” during the 1840s and 50s (Guth 25), prefigured the mid-century liberal story of custom transforming into law, but did so in terms of literary form and cognitive process, or of what we might call moral aesthetics. Like the two-step codes of Maine and Mill, Schiller’s 1801 “On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry,” explains that existence can be divided into two temporalities, ancient and modern, but adds that these temporalities are coextensive with two distinct aesthetic dispositions, or “men” — one unreflective and single-minded (that is, “old”) and the other reflective and rational (“new”). For Schiller as for the early Eliot, naïve or pre-modern people are like other features of nature, existing as parts of their organic world, necessary to it and determined by its law, even though, like Tom or Mr. Glegg, they may be unaware of that law’s character. The rational or reflective modern subject, by contrast, is one who has

61 Eliot read Schiller early and often, mentioning him in the second paragraph of “The Future of German Philosophy,” written just before she began work on The Mill on the Floss. Eliot’s favorite German author in her first years reading the language, she referred to the poet and philosopher as “our divine Schiller” (GEL 8, 13) and suggested that she wished she herself had written his works (qtd. Rignall, ed. 356). In matters concerning George Eliot’s reading one can be sure his homework has already been done for him. As if on cue, Deborah Guth’s study, George Eliot and Schiller, attests to the novelist’s deep familiarity with Schiller’s work, noting “how intensively Eliot read his work during these years [1840-1855]” (25). A list of the actual works of Schiller Eliot read, with dates and editions, is also provided. Because Guth’s study is empirical and not conceptual, it does not deal in depth with the scheme of “On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry.”
achieved “distance” from his surroundings and is able to use his powers of rationality to reflect critically upon them.

What Schiller calls the “unity” of the peasant consciousness — his direct, unmediated participation in his world – is thus set against the self-division of the modern man. “We are free and what they are is necessary” (181), Schiller writes. This distinction between mental dispositions is reflected, too, in the art native to each temporality, where naïve art is a direct expression of a unified state, while sentimental art reflects upon — regards from a distance— that (now lost) prelapsarian state. “[I]n the experience of sentimental poetry,” Schiller clarifies, “the mind is in motion, it is tense, it pulsates between conflicting feelings, while in the case of naïve poetry it is calm, relaxed, one with itself, and perfectly satisfied” (233). Understanding cognitive modernity as a nearly physiological state of agitation – “tense,” “pulsat[ing]” — and setting it against the “calm” ignorance of the satisfied peasant, Schiller’s distinction recalls our narrator’s work, throughout The Mill, to establish a distinction between Maggie’s “keen, vibrating consciousness” and Tom’s narrow love of family, or the blithe but rooted foolishness of the Dodson ladies. Operating in a doubled mode far removed from the pleasant but naïve unity of the peasant world, Eliot’s sentimental art, like Schiller’s, looks to show how the privileged and evolved modern subject uses his “expansive” capacity of intellec­tion — Anderson’s “powers of distance” — to reflect sympathetically upon the simple objects of nature around him.

62The pre-modern childhood Eliot’s novel ascribes to its inhabitants is typified by the experience of total unity of body and world. “There is no sense of ease,” Eliot’s narrator exclaims, “like the ease we felt in those scenes where we were born, where objects became dear to us before we had known the labour of choice, and where the outer world seemed only an extension of our own personality: we accepted and loved it as we accepted and loved our own sense of existence and our own limbs” (141).
Among Schiller's signal innovations – and the one I will say links his own narrative with Eliot's here— is to ascribe to this regarded, immature past not the negative valence we might expect but a positive one. “We laugh at him, but by the same token we still cannot help admiring him” (187), Schiller writes of the naïve man. He continues, in language that sheds light on The Mill on the Floss's dual narrative structure and the priorities it identifies. Schiller writes:

[I]f you can take consolation in the loss of natural happiness, then let its completeness serve as a model for your heart. If you step out of your artificial circle toward the completeness of nature, then it stands before you in its magnificent stillness, in its naïve beauty, in its childlike innocence and simplicity. Dwell at that moment on this image, cultivate this feeling […].

But this cultivation, importantly, has its limit:

Do not let it occur to you any longer to want to change places with nature. Instead take nature up into yourself and strive to wed its unlimited advantages to your own endless prerogatives, and from the marriage of both strive to give birth to something divine. Let nature surround you like a lovely idyll, in which again and again you find the way back to yourself from the aberrations of art and gather the courage and new confidence about the course of life, so that the flame of the ideal, so easily extinguished in life’s storms, is rekindled in your heart. (139, italics original)

The modern hero has dialectically “lapsed” into a state of heroic reflection. In describing the complex operation whereby a modern, expansively minded subject regards the natural objects of the past, Schiller’s text describes a version of cosmopolitan rationalism precisely analogous to what Eliot’s text understands to be “our” modern condition.

For Eliot, the metaphors for describing this emancipated mental state are of travel. The Mill on the Floss’ narrator tells us that citizen-subjects like the reader have uprooted themselves. They no longer find their imaginations restricted to “home scene[s],” but instead roam abroad, alighting mentally upon “grove[s] of tropic palms,” and the “strange ferns or splendid broad-petalled blossoms” of foreign zones (36). Far from accidental, The
Mill’s references to these leafy locales perform an important function in the novel’s
differential historical logic: no longer simply a matter of time-coded politics (custom vs. law),
nor just of ethical aesthetics (naïve vs. sentimental), the difference between now and then
here takes its final turn, emerging as the demarcation between hedgerow and tropics,
between rooted nationalism and a cosmopolitan modernity. In Eliot’s model, that is, what
we might call the chronotope of civic tolerance emerges as a space that is “modern,” and a
space that is all over the world – but specifically, in Eliot’s recurrent example, in the palm-
covered expanses of the tropical periphery. “Our instructed vagrancy,” the narrator says
later,

which has hardly time to linger by the hedgerows, but runs away early to the tropics,
and is at home with palms and banyans – which is nourished on books of travel, and
stretches the theatre of its imagination to the Zambesi – can hardly get a dim notion
of what an old-fashioned man like Tulliver felt for this spot, where all his memories
centred, and where life seemed like a familiar smooth-handled tool that the fingers
clutch with loving ease. (245)

If the tone of this well-known passage appears to criticize our wide-ranging peregrinations,
the “stretched” “theatre of its imagination” it describes is also the precise form of cognition
the novel has aimed us toward, the form of sentimental lawfulness Maggie’s own sacrifice
has inaugurated, and in which “we” have been positioned as viewers. Feeling “at home”
not in any domestic scene but in the jungles along the imperial river only just recently
explored and documented by David Livingstone (in 1858), the Mill’s language testifies to the
material logics of this cognitive cosmopolitanism, turning us, in this way, toward this
dissertation’s third and fourth chapters, and their concerns with what we might call the
export of law’s violence to the colonial peripheries, those very leafy locales Eliot imagines
here as the very emblem of “elsewhere.”
But as Schiller and Eliot equally indicate, if we remain stuck at home while in the midst of performing the expansion of mind Bruce Robbins calls “feeling global,” we should not despair. We may be disheartened, Schiller tells us, by our awareness that the centered satisfaction of the simple life is gone. We may indeed feel the need to celebrate, even to lionize those who remain in that state of nature. But as Schiller has already instructed us, we should not look to “change places” with the objects we regard. Instead, the sentimental modern is enjoined to “take nature up into yourself,” to “strive to wed its unlimited advantages to your own endless prerogatives” (139). Aimed at “us,” the paradoxical injunction is to renounce our expansive powers, but by renouncing intensify them. Schiller’s moral and aesthetic theory of flaming, ideal reflection – the sentimental self-division that is also a self-aggrandizement — prefigures Eliot’s novelistic structure, which has posited a historical “them” in relationship to a modern “us.” Noting the power by which this sentimentality allows us to confirm our own “unlimited advantages” puts us in a position, I think, to begin answering Blackwood’s question about why, in The Mill on the Floss, it was so “delightful” “to read what we have known and felt so well already” (qtd Carroll 13).

Anatomizing precisely the “delight” of The Mill and the Floss’s temporal effect, Schiller writes that on staring at nature or its inhabitants, “there emerges a unique phenomenon of a feeling,” one “in which cheerful patronizing, respect, and melancholy flow together” (183). At once an affirmation of superiority, an appreciation of past virtue, and a sadness in losing it, the feeling produced by Eliot’s sentimental pictures is not precisely nostalgic, because it does not enjoin us to return to the lost age it depicts.63 Rather, as Schiller and Eliot’s text

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63 On nostalgia in Victorian literature, see Nicholas Dames’s acute series of readings in Amnesiac Selves.
equally suggest, the lesson is to “take up nature into” ourselves, to “wed” the naïvete we view with our own “endless” mental “prerogatives.” Schiller notes that as a result of the sentimental man’s complex cognitive operation, what he feels when he regards the lost or even doomed past is not precisely delight, but something richer and stranger — the appreciation of his own “endless” ability to inhabit the position of the naïvete he has surpassed. In this “delight” or “patronizing respect” (183), we sympathetically re-experience the fate of lost objects, apparently celebrating them through a sentimental, self-dividing cognitive operation that serves, even more, to celebrate our own capacity to perform this appreciation. In the 1851 “Progress of the Intellect,” Eliot weighs in using these terms exactly. Her syntax is complicated, her temporal logic more so. “It may be doubted,” she writes,

whether a mind which has no susceptibility to the pleasure of changing its point of view, of mastering a remote form of thought, of perceiving identity in nature under variety of manifestation — a perception which resembles an expansion of one’s own being, a pre-existence of the past — can possess the flexibility, the ready sympathy, or the tolerance, which characterizes a truly philosophic culture. (Essays 29, emphasis added)

With “sympathy,” “flexibility,” and “tolerance” standing in for our “truly philosophic” or modern culture — Mill’s “liberty,” Maine’s “contract” — the sympathetic operation Eliot parses here, like Schiller’s, calls for what Eliot terms “an expansion of one’s own being, a pre-existence of the past.” The call, that is, is to descend into the pre-modern world of naiveté to re-experience it again, as if for the first time. The most salient effect issuing from this expansive operation is, as Eliot specifies, “pleasure.”

The Mill’s narrator, too, finds a pleasant effect attending her observation of the past’s simple objects of the past — a “romance,” as she calls it, that “thrills me with a sense of poetry” (253). In the final chapter we will see how the romance emerges as the generic logic
appropriate to narrating the archaic, unified mode of being Schiller associates with naivete and Lukacs calls epic. Now we can see that the thrill the narrator registers here and elsewhere in The Mill on the Floss shares with Schiller’s account and with Eliot’s essays the self-satisfying aim of what we could call an aesthetics of temporal sentimentalism: we derive pleasure, even power from the renunciation of singular “identity” associated with connecting to these lost children. The paradoxically self-affirming power of this variety of self-denial exerts its appeal for Maggie, too. When she receives her collection of books, each one full of moral instruction and chastening power, this catechism awakens her into reflective adulthood, where she discovers the second-order pleasure of pleasure’s denial.

“[R]enunciation,” the narrator reports, “seemed to her the entrance into that satisfaction which she had so long been craving in vain” (271). 64

I am suggesting that the novel’s form, its retrospective, framed structure, confirms that the powers and pleasures of observation Maggie enjoys mirror our own, as we, like Blackwoods’, register “delight” and “patronizing respect” at the peasant specimens Eliot’s novel arranges for our view. But The Mill on the Floss also ritually kills at least two of these specimens, and as I have argued in reference to the flood-event, it is not simply the idyllic or blithely pre-modern past that we are positioned to regard (“surround yourself with nature like an idyll,” Schiller enjoined [139]). The mythic sacrifice of the novel’s violent conclusion is likewise made spectacular. Beginning with a narrator in an armchair dreaming of a time “one February afternoon many years ago” (5), the novel does not end with its cataclysmic,

64 Adorno’s ironic comment in The Dialectic of Enlightenment captures the force of Maggie’s experiments in self-denial: “The history of civilization is the history of the introversion of sacrifice – in other words, the history of renunciation. All who renounce give away more of their life than is given back to them, more than the life they preserve” (Dialectic 43).
geological rupture — its “deus ex machina of sudden death.” It ends, instead, by laying out for view a monument to those it has killed. Maggie and Tom lie buried together near their father, their shared grave forming the novel’s final image. These are the book’s last words:

Near that brick grave there was a tomb erected, very soon after the flood, for two bodies that were found in close embrace; and it was visited at different moments by two men who both felt that their keenest joy and keenest sorrow were for ever buried there.

[...] The tomb bore the names of Tom and Maggie Tulliver, and below the names it was written —

‘In their death they were not divided.’ (492)

We end by gazing on an epitaph. To be sure, The Mill on the Floss’s famous graveyard ending is not alone among Eliot’s tomb-obsessed texts: Middlemarch (1874-5) ends with the “unvisited tombs” of the historical dead; two of the three Scenes of Clerical Life (1857) conclude with grave scenes; and the first piece of fiction Eliot ever wrote, an awkward short story called “Poetry and Prose, from the Notebook of an Eccentric,” begins with these words: “A week ago, I stood sole mourner at the grave of my friend Macarthy” (Essays 14). Like all of these, The Mill on the Floss’s graveside ending positions “us” as spectators of a grave, as we sentimentally regard the written traces of a historical past that has been laid to rest. Why is it so delightful? Twice removed from the flood and its trauma, self-divided and sentimental, the modern spectator is asked in this final scene to incorporate the violence of the novel’s final, radically violent event, literally taking it up into ourselves (in Schiller’s terms) as the novel seals its own traumatic rupture into the narrative time of “the past.”65

65 The operation I am describing here is, of course, akin to the psychological function of mourning. On the difference between the closure associated with this mode and the open-ended pain of melancholy, see, canonically, Caruth.
Placing its viewers in the position of this sympathetic viewer, Eliot’s novel thus asks us to perform the act of mourning for a dead past well-dramatized in the Walter Scott novels she so admired during her early career. We are asked to sympathize with this dead past, to sentimentally re-experience it. Closely related to the sentimentalism outlined by Schiller, sympathy has since its foundational expression in Adam Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) functioned as a discourse of pleasure-bestowing exchange. In *Scenes of Sympathy*, Audrey Jaffe underscores the importance of sympathy discourse to the mid-Victorian liberal imagination, arguing for the instrumental function sympathetic spectatorship played in naturalizing a commodity culture transformed people into subjects and objects consolidated for exchange. Ian Baucom has recently inflected this story to suggest that the sympathetic operation of “feeling another’s pain” does more than individuate and depoliticize. Baucom suggests that Smithian sympathy is itself an operation of exchange, one in which the empowered, liberal-minded observer of a suffering other gains a kind of second-order pleasure not unrelated to the gratification of renunciation Maggie diagnosed above. On this reading, the sympathetic operation allows me to trade away what might have been my

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66 Lewes gave Eliot a full set of *Waverly* novels as a New Year’s present as she was beginning work on *The Mill on the Floss*. He inscribed the gift this way: “To Marian Evans Lewes, The best of Novelists, and Wives, These works of her longest-venerated and best-loved Romancist [sic] are given by her grateful Husband 1 January 1860” (qtd Haight 319).

67 The novel has already coded sympathy as one idiom of its “modernity.” Offered as the very evidence of her precocious temporality, Maggie’s sympathetic mind confirms her participation in the novel’s “new” regime of exchange. Maggie’s episode with Stephen and her love of injured animals demonstrate this, but it is the disabled Philip Wakem who is the novel’s most visibly injured object of Maggie’s hyperbolic compassion. This “poor crooked creatur” (172) is deformed and visibly wounded; he is an unattractive, unappealing mate in the conventional terms in which attraction is rendered — but Maggie, overcome with a wash of sympathetic feelings for this injured body, nevertheless nearly elopes with him. It is made clear throughout the novel that Maggie’s attraction to Philip is founded on the pleasant, sympathetic feelings his suffering engenders in her, an arrangement Philip himself is happy to facilitate. “I like you to look at me,” he says to Maggie (172), setting up nearly perfectly what Audrey Jaffe has identified as the scopic logic of sympathetic viewing. Jaffe reads Smith to demonstrate that sympathy discourse in Victorian fiction works to individualize groups and to ethicize politics: the operation of sympathy, she argues, disaggregates classes, individualizing both its subjects and objects and thus rendering non-political the very iniquities for which it is proposed as a solution (8, 15). Wendy Brown’s *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in an Age of Empire* takes a similar line, arguing that tolerance discourse “substitutes emotional and personal vocabularies for political ones in formulating solutions to political problems” (16).
interested viewing of another’s suffering (my openly self-interested stance), in order to earn the higher, less obvious, and apparently disinterested satisfaction that comes from having engaged in that selfless imaginative act in the first place. By this logic, the empowered observer gains the affective feeling of having “disinterestedly” sympathized with the injured or—in Smith’s own recurrent examples—with the impoverished objects of his feeling gaze. As Smith writes in the opening pages of his moral treatise, upon viewing the pain of a suffering man, the sympathetic observer “derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it” (Theory 9). The exchange confers on him “nothing… except”: it seems to yield him nothing, but “pleasure” is the commodity that is traded for pain. Another of the books Maggie reads as part of her morally expanding catechism is called The Beauties of the Spectator: in the context of the aesthetic “satisfaction” attending her modern self-denial, it seems that the title’s genitive can be taken both ways. The spectator both sympathizes with the plight of naïve men, but also solidifies her own, more sophisticated beauty by doing so.68

If Smith’s theory focuses on what we might call instants of sympathy — on the uneven exchange between individuals in the context of a synchronic moment — Eliot’s model is lengthened. For it is the very “tragic” story of the novel itself, its violent founding event, the deaths of its naïve characters – it is all of this, the very story of “The Mill on the Floss,” and the transitional event between custom and law it depicts, that the novel’s frame positions us to regard. Framed in the Westminster and Dublin Reviews’ “photographs,” this story of law’s violent emergence is what Eliot’s narrator asks that we sentimentally connect to, “taking it up into ourselves” in an operation that itself confirms our own status as

68 The book Maggie reads is a compilation of essays from Addison and Steele: The Beauties of the Spectator; or The most elegant, agreeable and instructive pieces selected out that renowned work. (London and Paris, 1804).
modern subjects able to perform that work. Using precisely the cosmopolitan detachment extolled in recent Victorianist criticism, we disinterestedly view the historical suffering it shows us, in the process validating our own status as the historical beneficiaries of that suffering.

In the novel’s closing pages, we are left with only traces of the damage this suffering has left behind, a historical trauma’s ghostly afterimage. The flood event and its death have been turned into a text of history, the narrator tells us, a registration of past violence not dissimilar from the “stratigraphic” marks dotting the spot at St. Ogg’s.

“Nature repairs her ravages,” Eliot’s narrator tells us, in the line directly following Maggie and Tom’s death (491). The narrator continues: “The desolation wrought by that flood had left little visible trace on the face of the earth, five years after. [...] The hills underneath [its] green vesture bear the marks of the past rending” (491). After the flood, beyond the event, we are left with is “marks,” “trace[s].” Barely visible, these graphic remainders of founding trauma, “the desolation wrought by that flood,” mark a past presence (“it happened here”) even as they confirm its current absence (“it is gone”). But Eliot’s novel of catastrophe – of literal, geological “catastrophe”— ends with a different kind of writing, a quotation: “In their death

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69 In *Principles of Geology*, Lyell refers to the marks of past violent events as “records to after ages,” marks etched into the very earth itself. This legible record of catastrophic causes is, Lyell writes, “a symbolical language, in which the earth’s autobiography is written” (v).

70 In an influential essay, Derrida writes that the trace is that which reaches forward from the past, the unassimilable remainder of a past (singular) event of inscription. The event in the past is “absolutely singular,” in Derrida’s terms, like the moment of the act of signing or the instant of circumcision (both, for Derrida, examples of the absolutely singular ‘event’ whose traces are ‘written’). The mark thus testifies to the absence of this event even as it calls us to militate for its recovery: “This trace,” Derrida writes, “relates no less to what is called the future than to what is called the past, and it constitutes what is called the present by this very relation to what it is not, to what it absolutely is not; that is, not even to a past or future considered as a modified present” (“Difference” 13). The singularity of the inscription event is discussed further in “Signature Event Context,” where Derrida shows that the condition of writing is that it is always “severed” from this singularity: “The structural possibility of being severed from its referent or signified [...] seems to me to make of every mark, even oral, a grapheme in general, that is, as we have seen, the nonpresent remaining of a differential mark cut off from its alleged ‘production’ or origin” (318). The “origin,” here, is the flood; the “differential mark” is the “trace” in the ground.
they were not divided.” Quoted, cited, and reproduced for us from a carving in stone: the now-famous words, already made available as a portable maxim, provide the closure of the novel and the bookend of its mourning frame; these words bury the human trauma the novel has visited on its own pre-modern, pre-legal characters. In quotation marks, in italics, these marks of past violence testify to the novel’s effort to bury the time of its violence in “the past.” The event and its damage has literally become part of the ground, encrypted into what Eliot’s narrator earlier called “this spot.”

I have argued that the form of The Mill on the Floss stages, inters, and then regards from a modern vantage what is at once a gradual historical accumulation and a two-stage model of modernization, one punctured by the founding violence of a mythical event, the arrival of “law.” If Eliot’s most Wordsworthian novel provides the backstory for mid-century’s England’s “equipoise” of law and peace, it has also described the inhabitant of this modern area as one whose mind skirts the Zambezi in sympathetic, wide-angle flights of imagination. By placing liberal equipoise in its properly “international”—that is, imperial—context, The Mill on the Floss has already indicated the eventual turns of this dissertation’s argument, which will move in its second half toward a discussion of where, and how, and under what imperial conditions the sublimated force of liberal “peace” rearticulated itself as open war. But before relocating to the civilized world’s outskirts, I first stop in the metropolitan core of Victorian modernity itself, London. There we see how Victorian theory and fiction began to conceptualize its modern law as a network of peaceful human interchangeability, a grid of exchange that might eventually know no horizon. Coordinating this idealist vision of law’s abstracting power with sensational novels about lost people from
the mid-century, the next chapter sets the terms for this project’s effort to recode, in a different valence, what Humphry House’s 1941 survey named “The Dickens World.”
Chapter Two. “The names haunt me”: Reform Fiction and the Logic of Exchange

Everybody to count for one, nobody to count for more than one.

Democracy is trying to affirm its own essence; to live, to enjoy, to possess the world, as aristocracy has tried, and successfully tried, before it.
—Matthew Arnold, “Democracy” (1861)

2.1 At the Central Office

The officials of the 1841 census who were responsible for taking account of every individual human being in England and Wales were called “Enumerators.” This suggestive title was actually a misnomer, though, for these locally-supervised employees were not themselves charged with the task of converting people into numbers. Rather, enumerators were to search into the darkest corners of the nation’s territory, collecting proper names and verifying the individuating marks—dates of birth, occupations, family relationships—of the particular people they found there.¹ This first step of the census procedure was not without its difficulties, as a contemporary cartoon by Dickens’ illustrator George Cruikshank demonstrates.

¹ As a Census Bureau historical document attests: “Although a census had been taken every 10 years since 1801, this [1841 Census] was to be on a grander scale than any of the previous ones. For the first time, every individual was to be not merely counted, but named, on one of the schedules which were distributed to every household.” (“The Registrars General,” 1).
Figure 2: George Cruikshank, Census Cartoon (1841)
In Cruikshank’s satirical drawing, one household’s teeming surplus of particular people threatens to overrun the frame. Proper names proliferate, and the profusion of particularities overwhelms both the man of the house and the census Enumerator there to record his burgeoning family. It would not be until the next step of processing, however, after the Enumerator had turned in his list to a central office, that the surplus of names Cruikshank satirizes would be converted into data.

Alex Woloch has recently argued that “[t]he distinction between counting and naming occurs precisely at the fault line where an individual ceases to command attention as a qualitatively distinct being and begins to be viewed as a quantitative unit, absorbed into a larger number [...]” (5, emphasis original). Woloch’s observation comes in a close reading of the catalog of ships episode in the Iliad, the opening gambit to his study of the politics of character-writing in the nineteenth century. For Woloch, the development of modern literary “characters” – and specifically the “deep” characters of Forsterian fame— mirrors broader developments in industrial capitalism and what he sees as the linked phenomenon of “increasing political equality” (31). Echoing recent treatments of the historical relationship between finance and fiction by Mary Poovey and Deidre Shaun Lynch, Woloch’s emphasis is on the way literary figuration participated in the tension between individuality and abstraction, between what is “qualitatively” singular and what is “quantitatively” equivalent, or general.2 For Lynch, the literary character as it was developed and perfected during the

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2 For Woloch, the realist novel was a mechanism that produced an allegorical reproduction of social relations, a reproduction by which “minor characters,” as Woloch writes, “are the proletariat of the novel” (27, italics original). Drawing less strict homologies between the fictional and economic spheres than Woloch does, Poovey and Lynch have recently called attention to how literary texts are able to manage the tension between abstraction and exchange that characterize a developing industrial economy. For her part, Lynch connects specific innovations in “literariness” during the eighteenth century to concurrent developments in finance, “thinking about character in connection with commerce” (15). “Literary
eighteenth century “is located – optimally – at the interface of what is particular and what is general” (46). For Poovey, texts anointed as “literary” in the New Critical tradition that includes Eliot and James as its chief exemplars are represented as being able to perform the quasi-mystical, “aesthetic” work of connecting particularities to the general categories in what W.K. Wimsatt called a “concrete universal” (Poovey Fact 327). Using Eliot as her example, Catherine Gallagher has shown that the problem of particularity is “coiled at the heart of the novel genre” (George Eliot 61); but it was twisted, too, at the foundations of the democratic sovereignty being debated and consolidated during the Victorian mid-century, when any particular voter began to be understood as potentially equivalent, in philosophical and political terms, to the next one. Given the apparent importance of literary art to this political problem of negotiating between general and particular, it is perhaps significant that the architect of England’s first nationalized census, and the country’s first Registrar General, was a former novelist.

In a letter, the silver-fork-novelist-turned-administrator Thomas Henry Lister explained how the particular names collected in scenes like the one depicted by Dickens’ illustrator were to be turned into the regular units of the state’s count. The author of such entertainments as Granby (1826), Herbert Lacy (1828), and Arlington (1832) directed that the locally-gathered census cards called “household schedules,” bearing names and professions, represent themselves as being able to “uniquely solve the problem of induction” (327). All of these critics are in their different ways attempting to chart how literary form becomes implicated as a mediator between the contradictions between particularity and generality that are, as Marx’s 1867 Capital itself theorized, the structuring antinomies of a developing capitalist economy. But by the Victorian period, economy had become political economy, and my suggestion will be that the logics of abstraction necessary to counting and numbering were the political problems of suffrage, “representation,” in the years leading up to the second Reform Bill.
would be sent to a central clearing house. There, in a Westminster office, state employees would turn the nearly endless jumble of particular names they received (Cruikshank’s “lists”) into what Lister called “Abstracts.” “I will here mention,” wrote the Registrar General:

that I would have no Abstracts made but at the Central Office. The duties of the Local Authorities should be confined to the preparation and transmission of correct records of simple facts. The abstraction, condensation, classification and arrangement of those facts should be done upon one uniform system, and upon the responsibility of one person or Board. (June 27, 1840, qtd. in Glass, 115-116.)

Transforming a vast, uncollected jumble of individual names (“simple facts”) into a functional databank of counted citizens, each one numerically equivalent to the next, the 1841 Census of England and Wales functioned, in this way, as the first centralized, state-run project of human abstraction in British history.³

John Stuart Mill was not an employee of the Registrar’s Office, but while Lister was fine-tuning the state’s first fully centralized census, the logician, literary theorist, and (after 1865) liberal MP for Westminster was busy creating the Victorian period’s most widely-read treatise on the method by which “simple facts” could be transformed into the higher-order abstractions he called knowledge. *A System of Logic Ratiocinative and Inductive; Being a Connected View of the Principles of Evidence and the Methods of Scientific Investigation* sets out to offer nothing short of a complete theory of the human mind’s ability to turn observed particulars (“facts”) into general principles. It details, in other words, how the processes of what Lister called

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³ See Nissel 1-3 and Glass. 1841 was the first national census, in the sense that information was not (as before) collected and held locally and then sent, in digested or “abstracted” form, to the central office, but was instead collected as part of a centralized effort at the outset (Nissell 57). The Population Act in 1840 had stipulated the need for a full accounting of the national body, and appointed a Registrar to bear responsibility for the counting of people in England and Wales. There had been earlier censuses— all contested and vigorously debated by various quarters— in 1801, 1811, 1821, 1831. See Charlotte Sussman. After 1841, more sophisticated centralized censuses would continue throughout the century. The 1853 count was well-timed to coincide with another display of imperial administration, the Great Exhibition, while by 1861, the census included a theoretical section on the health of nations, adopted from Adam Smith, and was supported by tables bearing information on “the area and population of the British Empire compiled from the census returns of British colonies and possessions” (Nissell 65; cf. Sussman).
“abstraction, condensation, classification, and arrangement” ought most rationally to transpire. Containing work Mill had begun in the 1830s, published in 1843, and revised throughout the 50s and 60s (appearing in a final edition in 1873), the book literally spans the Victorian period. It was a compulsory text at Oxford until the end of the nineteenth century, while at Cambridge Mill’s work was read widely both by those students who were made to study it and by those who were not (Snyder 100). Providing an empiricist method for multiple generations of Victorian thinkers, Mill’s Logic staked out philosophical territory that even its critics (like the late Victorian liberal Hegelian, T.H. Green) were forced to traverse in their efforts to move beyond it.

But if Mill’s Logic can be said to have worked as the methodological unconscious of the mid-Victorian age, this was only the fulfillment of the author’s hope. Mill’s own retrospective description would highlight what he viewed as the political significance of this apparently apolitical work. Mill’s hope was to use seamless argumentation and a quietly figurative prose to scrap with philosophy on its own grounds, moving the locus of philosophical inquiry from the purveyors of old and problematically foreign doctrines and

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4 The book went through eight editions during Mill’s lifetime, “including an inexpensive edition for working-class readers” (Snyder 100). Mill made some 5,000 emendations to the text over the course of its publication history (Whitaker 1035). For an account of these, see CW VII, p xliv-cvii.

5 Mill’s Logic continues to animate debates in the philosophy of proper names and logical method, and is still “the standard view of induction” in philosophy primers today (Snyder 100). Mill’s work on the metaphysics of the proper name continues to animate debate in the discipline of analytical philosophy. See Saul Kripke’s Naming and Necessity, which engages directly with Mill in an effort to further Mill’s thesis, and also John Searle’s anti-Millite rejoinder to Kripke, Intentionality (1983). For an introduction to these debates – and Mill’s role in them – see “Reference,” in The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. I return to Mill’s theory of the name briefly below.

6 Though he recollected later his surprise at the popularity of the volume, Mill conceded his desire that his work on logic would form the bedrock for nothing short of a liberal revolution. According to the Autobiography, by the time of his work on the Logic Mill believed that the time had come for a ‘hand to hand fight’ between the philosophies of experience and intuition” (CW 1.270). Leslie Stephen would later explain that “Mill wished to provide a logical armoury for all assailants of established dogmatism” (Stephen 76); more recent commentators have found cause for celebrating the fact that Mill’s theory “liberates ordinary people to explore the truth and falsity of ideas and, as such, to participate in society and politics and develop themselves as progressive beings” (Rosen 121).
into the hands of reasonable individuals. Though “the German, \textit{or à priori} view of human knowledge, and of the knowing faculties” once predominated, Mill believed the times were changing: “the System of Logic,” he recalled, “supplies what was much wanted, a text-book of the opposite doctrine” (CW I, Ch 7 para 395). Mill’s method thus looked to provide theoretical foundations for the improvements he would later call for in the political sphere: by demolishing what Mill called “deep seated prejudices” and “the great intellectual support of false doctrines and bad institutions,” his \textit{Logic} would replace an old regime of philosophical autocracy with a newer, more liberal way of thinking, one appropriate to “these times” (CW I, Ch. 7, paragraph 395). This was a thinking centered, as Mill would explain, on the rational individual’s ability to use the logical processes culminating in induction.

According to Leslie Stephen, Mill’s work became a “sacred book for students who claimed to be genuine liberals” (Stephen 75-76). To be sure, its story of an old tyranny turning into a newer, more logical individualism has its echoes in the explicitly political interventions we have encountered in chapter one, \textit{On Liberty} (1859) and \textit{The Subjection of Women} (1868, drafted in the 1850s), both of which theorized that the inevitable march of human knowledge would move human society out of dogma and into reason, out of force and into a modern epoch understood to coincide with the category of law. Part of this chapter’s work will be to show that Mill’s work on logical reason bears an important but under-recognized relationship to his political writing from these mid-century years. But if this seems obvious from Mill’s own commentary, I will look to shift away from Mill’s own dichotomy between the philosophy of tyranny and that of liberty, the distinction between an old prejudice and a newer rationality that persists in recent Victorianist projects that replicate
the terms of their objects of study. I want to suggest instead that by understanding the meticulously outlined but ultimately mystical – that is, “aesthetic” — processes by which Mill’s self-consciously modern vision of rationality operated – how it produced “abstractions” out of singular phenomena — we can, first, trace the political import of this method, and second, give theoretical specificity to Arnold’s observation that, in the 1860s, “the essence of democracy” was seeking to possess the world.

By linking the state’s mid-century efforts to count and number its citizens with reforms of the franchise finally passed in 1867, this chapter builds on the origin story already supplied by The Mill on the Floss. Reading Mill’s System of Logic as an essay on what we might call liberal method, it describes the method (or “theory”) by which the Victorian era’s most influential liberal thinker understood “abstractions” to be produced from “particularities”; this establishes, on the microcosmic level of reason, the process by which countable subjects (citizens) could be produced for a state increasingly organized along a political-economic logic of ‘equality’ or general human equivalence. Mill’s theory of naming and abstraction can in turn help historicize a central trope of mid-century fiction, the lost person. As readers

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7 See Amanda Anderson, Powers of Distance, where Mill earns compliments for “privilege[ing] the capacity to achieve distance from one’s own perspective and interests, conceiving the movement toward truth as result of a continuously enacted impartiality on the part of the individual” (Powers of Distance 17). Anderson’s account of Mill’s ennobling treatment of rationality (and his positively-charged indifference) does not mention the historical dimension of his claims, their structural reliance on a younger, more savage “other” societies who have not yet awakened to “modern” enlightenment. This detail has however received attention in other quarters. See Mehta, Liberalism and Empire, and Chakrabarty, Provincializing Europe. Lauren Goodlad’s Victorian Literature and the Victorian State attends to Mill’s interventions in a historicist mode.

8 Mill’s own essays on reform help periodize the window of time I am concerned with here. His “Thoughts on Parliamentary Reform” appeared in February 1859, followed directly by “Recent Writers on Reform” (April 1859), which is an appraisal of what Mill calls “the present Reform movement” (CW 19.343). Considerations on Representative Government was first published in 1861, but was reprinted again that year and then, in the 3rd edition, in 1865. (See headnote, 19.372). The Reform Bill itself, of course, passed in 1867. Mill’s essay called “Centralisation” appeared in April 1862.

9 Recent work by Lauren Goodlad, Amanda Anderson, David Wayne Thomas, and Elaine Hadley, among others, has sought to reconfigure our assessments of Victorian liberalism’s ongoing legacy, even though the work those critics have sometimes sought to “move beyond” could already be said to be grappling in still-important philosophical and theoretical ways with the vexed inheritance of the British Empire’s liberal project. (See especially Gallagher, Armstrong, Poovey.)
of Dickens and Collins will recall, the plots of *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), *The Woman in White* (1860), *No Name* (1863), and *Our Mutual Friend* (1865), among other works from this decade, all hinge centrally on misplaced bodies that are ultimately reclaimed by “life” (in *A Tale of Two Cities*) or “law” (in *The Woman in White*).

These lost characters are made to resurface as characters in a fashion most vividly dramatized, perhaps, in the way John Rokesmith (“maker of mist”) reemerges as John Harmon(y) to reclaim his legal standing in *Our Mutual Friend*’s (1865) money economy, concluding the novel’s sequence of redemption. And though she begins by being pulled down into the realm of the lost, *The Woman in White*’s Laura Fairlie too finds herself uplifted, finally, onto “the list of the living” (413). These reform-era novels in other words end up recounting the particularities they have absented, bringing their lost people back into the biopolitical category of “life” — “within the pale of the civil law of Europe,” as *No Name* has it (139). *Armadale* (1866) goes further. Coordinating the logical problem of human exchange with the violence this novel associates with both slavery and the modern exchange then understood as liberty, Collins’ 1866 novel about slave money, names, and violence allows this chapter to conclude by turning to the questions organizing the dissertation’s second half. In the midst of a world system whose networks of abstraction spanned the globe, what particular bodies found themselves outside Victorian liberalism’s inductive logic, un-abstracted into any category of political membership? Who was not available to be “processed” in the leap that inaugurated specific, singular “facts” into what Mill called “laws”? Who didn’t count, and why?
2.2 The Victorian Rule of Equations / Mill’s Logic

To register how Reform fiction uses the stock sensation theme of the lost person to allegorize the uplifting or life-giving operations of metropolitan law, we need to understand how Victorian liberal theory understood that operation to work. In the Logic Mill created a methodological program for the age: his text would become the Victorian period’s most influential treatise on the procedure by which named particularities could be transformed into equivalent members of the higher-order categories he called abstractions. Mill conceptualized his logical work in political terms, and as I’ve suggested, the story the Logic tells of an old, pre-rational tyranny turning into a newer, more individualistic empiricism explicitly anticipates the narratives of On Liberty and The Subjection of Women. Both of those more directly political works trace a two-stage model of progressive history, theorizing that the human progress would pull society out of dogma and into reason, out of force and into a rule of law associated with equality and characterized by contract. In reference to the Logic, Mill refers to this historical transformation as one by which an old “philosophy of intuition” (based on prejudice) turns into a newer, more empirical “philosophy of experience” (CW 1.270). In multiple idioms, then, Mill’s work from this period expresses a political-theoretical historicism that pits an ancient philosophy of tyranny against a modern philosophy of freedom, a shorthand that persists in recent Victorianist projects on liberalism.

10 Leslie Stephen would explain that “Mill wished to provide a logical armoury for all assailants of established dogmatism” (76); more recent commentators have found cause for celebrating the fact that Mill’s theory “liberates ordinary people to explore the truth and falsity of ideas and, as such, to participate in society and politics and develop themselves as progressive beings” (Rosen 121).
in these years. But rather than restaging Victorian celebrations of their own modernity (no single year of Victoria’s reign was without imperial war), I want to focus on the logical steps that enabled Victorian theory to understand how the modern state’s constituent subjects emerged. Mill tackles this problem most directly in the idiom of logic: his theory of induction attempts to solve the problem of how abstract or theoretically interchangeable units, each one equivalent to the next, can be created out of a mass of singularities denoted by proper names. By understanding the mechanisms of Mill’s politically-inflected version of rationality, I’ll suggest, we can better understand the political stakes of Doctor Downward’s understated admission, in Armadale, that he has “known very serious inconveniences to arise sometimes from mistakes about names” (341).

Mill’s project finds him engaging a set of problems in diverse proto-disciplinary languages, which means that his concepts move between idioms and gain inflection in that translation. In this sense we might notice how A System of Logic’s story of something young and impulsive turning into something older and more serious informs the self-fashioning tale in Mill’s own Autobiography (1873). The Logic’s philosophical focus on aggregated masses of particulars likewise echoes the equally weighty Principles of Political Economy (1848), which was being drafted alongside the Logic’s early editions. But the Logic’s theories of abstraction and aggregation also find Mill working out the fundamental assumptions of the more directly political works, including Utilitarianism (1861) and Considerations on Representative Government (1863) in addition to Liberty, and Subjection: this is the assumption of a modern state made up

11 In Anderson’s Powers of Distance, for example, Mill stands (with Eliot) as exemplary of the book’s polemic on reason; he is praised for his ability to “privilege the capacity to achieve distance from one’s own perspective and interests, conceiving the movement toward truth as result of a continuously enacted impartiality on the part of the individual” (17).
of regular, measurable units—countable citizens governed by law, participating in contracts, and entitled to an equal share, as Mill styles it, in a social system understood as an “aggregate.” In Considerations, Mill insists that the best modern government “is that in which the sovereignty, or supreme controlling power in the last resort, is vested in the entire aggregate of the community” (CW XIX, 403). Mill’s most extended treatment of the philosophy of aggregation, Utilitarianism, closes with a quotation from Bentham’s “Essay on Representation”: “Everybody to count for one, nobody for more than one” (81). In the modern state, each personal unit is understood to be typical, in the sense that it is equivalent to other examples of itself, self-contained but counted within the larger calculus of costs and benefits that defines Mill’s utilitarian democratic program.12

The word “aggregate” reappears in Mill’s writing with regularity: as a numbered whole or a counted mass, an aggregate is a total entity theoretically reducible to equal, interchangeable parts.13 Stephen has suggested that Mill’s choice of this term signals Mill’s assumption of a typical or universal subject of law, a bearer of rights and participant, equal to all others, in the state’s horizontally-arranged sovereignty. He critiques Mill for assuming “that man, like molecule, represents a constant unit” (Stephen 283). Massed together, these are the regular elements that, in aggregate, can be said to act as both the subjects and objects

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12 In this way I am reading Mill as part of the casuistical tradition John Forrester has outlined in his ongoing work on the case form, proposing that the question of particularity and aggregation contained in the case is also a problem of democratic reform. Forrester hints at such a reading when he explains how the case form captures the paradox by which “the rise of statistical thinking put in question the notion of the individual, through the very process of refining what it might mean to have knowledge of a number of individuals” (3). A special issue of Critical Inquiry on the case form, 33.4 (2007), elaborates the broader stakes for this line of discussion, which I follow through the book-length investigations by Chander and Baucom.

13 In an 1862 usage, the OED gives us “aggregate,” in legal terminology, as something “Composed of many individual bodies united into one association”; a second definition, with usages from 1824, 1859, and 1876, simultaneously biologizes and politicizes this definition. An aggregate, here, is a thing “[c]onstituted by the collection of many particles or units into one body, mass, or amount; collected, collective, whole, total.” As Michel Foucault writes, using his own terminology for the flexible governmental power he associates with the mid-nineteenth century, “Utilitarian philosophy was the theoretical instrument that underpinned the government of populations” (Security, Territory, Population 74).
of the modern liberal sovereignty Mill imagines. All of Mill’s explicitly political works, therefore, assume a structural distance between named particulars and the abstract or exchangeable units that are individuated but no longer singular. As Thomas Carlyle recognized from the opposite side, in the critiques of Reform I read in more detail below, on the front end of this conversion process are incommensurable singularities, while on the back end are examples of the “type” citizen, the proper subjects of a count, or aggregate. In dialogue with these other Reform-era accounts, Collins also emphasizes this difference in the first pages of Armadale, which are conspicuously set in the year of the first Reform Bill (“the opening of the season of eighteen hundred and thirty-two” [9]). In the novel’s introductory scene, Collins portrays a crowd, then draws a distinction between “the three notable personages of Wildbad” and, “[b]eyond this select circle,” “the townspeople in general” (9). The “distance” broached by Reform, as Collins and Mill equally understand, is between (singular) “notable personages” and, “beyond them,” the abstract or interchangeable examples of a type that constitute a citizenry: members of the set, “townspeople.” How is this distance to be broached? Mill sought to address this question not in his multiple political writings on representation and equality but in his Logic, answering it with his description of the inductive method.

Induction is the centerpiece of Mill’s analytic theory, “the main question of the science of logic—the question which includes all others” (CW VII 283). Mill explains that inferences created in the process of inductive reasoning are more than closed logical circuits

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14 In a brief discussion of the Logic, Forrester claims that “[f]or Mill... reasoning is always from particulars to particulars” (6). But his focus is solely on Mill’s treatment of syllogisms. While Mill did argue against the a priori existence of classes (of “natural kinds”) as Forrester suggests, the Logic explains at length how scientific classes or “generalizations,” however provisional, could and should be determined: this is by induction, a mode of reasoning Mill describes as central to his method, but which Forrester does not discuss in his (albeit short) treatment.
(like syllogisms are), and more than matters of definition (like names are): they are the extrapolation from what has been observed into a new order of claim. An induction occurs at the moment, that is, when the human mind transfers between levels, creating new knowledge by moving from particular observed cases upwards, as Mill consistently figures it, to general (or “abstract”) principles. This moment of ascent or uplift thus works as the link connecting low and high, covering the distance between empirically observed facts, or items of particular data, and new abstractions:

Induction, then, is that operation of the mind, by which we infer from what we know to be true in a particular case or cases, will be true in all cases which resemble the former in certain assignable respects. In other words, Induction is the process by which we conclude that what is true of certain individuals of a class is true of the whole class, or that what is true at certain times will be true in similar circumstances at all times. (CW VII, 289).

Mill defines the machinery of induction as a “process” or an “operation of the mind” where an “inference” is made, a mental operation that is able, somehow, to leap between the level of particular observed cases to the level of larger principles. In keeping with his empiricist priorities, Mill is careful to note that these codes are subject to revision on the discovery of new evidence in the future: thus a miracle, for instance, would revise existing natural laws in exactly the way a deus ex machina rewrites a fictional system’s codes of expectation. (In this sense his theory recapitulates the dilemmas of The Mill on the Floss’s flood scene discussed above.) But once they are properly abstracted, what were at one point named singularities can be said to be members of a set, and are subject to the rules of belonging to that set, which Mill calls the “laws” which “govern” them (CW XXI, 236; cf. CW VII, 316).

Properly executed inductive linkages are the crucial features of Mill’s politically-inflected rational system, but its mechanism of abstraction is most clearly visible when Mill
describes classification. As Mill explains, classification requires an initial operation of reason, a first-order step that works to contain a given set of similar particularities under the label of a set, or class. Classes, he specifies, are the “general conceptions” that are “obtained (in metaphysical phrase) by abstraction from individual things” (CW VIII 650, emphasis original). Mill’s description of the process by which we arrive at these higher-order categories calls forth his most detailed account of how abstraction works. It is thus worth quoting at some length:

We know that two things are as much as the mind can easily attend to at a time, and we therefore fix upon one of the objects, either at hazard or because it offers in a peculiarly striking manner some important character, and, taking this as our standard, compare it with one object after another. If we find a second object which presents a remarkable agreement with the first, inducing us to class them together, the question instantly arises, in what particular circumstances do they agree? and to take notice of these circumstances is already a first stage of abstraction, giving rise to a general conception. Having advanced thus far, when we now take in hand a third object we naturally ask ourselves the question, not merely whether this third object agrees with the first, but whether it agrees with it in the same circumstances in which the second did? in other words, whether it agrees with the general conception which has been obtained by abstraction from the first and second? Thus we see the tendency of general conceptions, as soon as formed, to substitute themselves as types, for whatever individual objects previously answered that purpose in our comparisons. (CW VIII 654, emphasis added)

Beginning with an individuating “character” Mill shows how we move from that particularity outward, upward, aggregating other examples “in our hand[s]” and then producing, out of those diverse but now-similar phenomena, a “general conception,” one that is “obtained by abstraction” from the first material objects. In this foundational moment of Mill’s liberal method, abstraction is born as the type.

As Mill explains, the type is an immaterial proxy, different from but linked to the “first” and “second” particularities from which it is abstracted. It is a heuristic or properly immaterial figure, standing in for a potentially endless set of particular items (the other
examples or cases of that type), allowing those particulars to be seen, now, as iterable members of a similar class, exchangeable with one another within the overarching sameness of a newly created category. (Every particular bird is an example of the type, “bird,” just as every particular human—in one of Mill’s favorite examples—is an example of the type, “man.”) As the mediating figure or linking abstraction that can serve to contain two (or many more) distinct items, the type is the immaterial “substitute” that puts what were once qualitatively distinct particularities into a relationship of exchange, arranging them into groupings within which each example is equivalent to the next.

By providing the mechanism by which qualitatively distinct or singular objects can be compared, collated, and aggregated with others of its class, Mill’s type performs the function of what Karl Marx theorized as exchange value—a parallel that testifies to the wide circulation of this logical problem during the Reform era. In the early chapters of Capital that were drafted contemporaneously with the Logic in the 1840s and 50s (in the British Library) and published in the year of the Second Reform Bill (1867), Marx offers a well-known analysis of the hidden work performed by the commodity, describing the “mystery” of exchange in ways that directly restate Mill’s description of the inductive process (Capital 139). For Marx, the particularities at the beginning of the inductive process are “qualitatively different” or non-equivalent particular goods, such as linen and shirts. But by a process of conversion called exchange, these two once-dissimilar particularities are first typologized into

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15 Marx was explicitly in dialogue with Mill’s work, citing him by name in several derisive instances in Capital. My point is more broad: that this logical problem underwrote a political shift, and informed multiple idioms, during the Reform years. Without reference to Marx, Mary Poovey has argued that “[t]he modern system of abstraction […] was produced in relation to a complex set of problems, which were simultaneously economic, political, and administrative” (31). For Poovey, the production of abstract space and the “modern form of abstraction” it represents (25) is linked to “modern industrial capitalism” (25), a connection I am pursuing here by linking Marx and Mill.
commodities (objects with exchange value), and then finally equated. Where Mill spoke of two separate “objects” “in hand,” Marx writes of corn and iron:

Let us now take two commodities, for example corn and iron. Whatever their exchange relation may be, it can always be represented by an equation in which a given quantity of corn is equated to some quantity of iron, for instance 1 quarter of corn = x cwt of iron. What does this equation signify? It signifies that a common element of identical magnitude exists in two different things, in 1 quarter of corn and similarly in x cwt of iron. Both are therefore equal to a third thing, which is itself neither the one or the other. Each of them, so far as it is exchange-value, must therefore be reducible to this third thing. (Capital 127)

As in Mill’s account, what Marx details here is that when a comparison is forced between two disparate objects under a regime of equivalence, a “third thing” is produced that functions as a *medium* of achieving equivalence between the first two: this “third thing, which is itself neither the one or the other” is the means of achieving equivalency between them, the substitute. It is the properly abstract “object” that provides the connective tissue linking the first two qualitatively distinct objects.

What Mill calls “the type” is in other words what Marx would theorize as money —it is that “third thing” that allows qualitatively distinct, particular objects to be put into a numerically-represented relationship of equivalence. Like Mill’s “type,” money, writes Marx, “crystallizes out of the process of exchange” (Capital 181). The contours of Marx’s political-economic critique of exchange are well known, but for Marx as for several of his later interpreters (notably Theodor Adorno), the historical development of exchange also exacts a profoundly acute metaphysical cost. On the level of logical process, the mode of abstraction that Mill documents in the *Logic*, and that Marx critiques in *Capital*, creates equations out of difference: it subordinates particularity, subsuming alterity under the category of abstraction. In the extreme form Mill advanced in the *Logic*, it ensures, on a theoretical level, that all the
qualitatively different objects or subjects in the world (as Mill called those items denoted by names) are potentially exchangeable with one another—that they can be made *not different*.\textsuperscript{16}

In a book-length reading of Adorno, Fredric Jameson calls attention to “the existential or even metaphysical dimension” of exchange, paraphrasing Adorno to describe “the effects [...] of *equivalence* as a new form imposed on reality and of *abstraction* in the broadest epistemological sense as a historically emergent form of organizing the world” (Jameson 148, italics original). As Jameson shows, for Adorno, the emergent form of organizing the world called equivalence “excises the incommensurable” (qtd. Jameson 149): monetary logic transforms difference into sameness, flattening qualitative distinctions in order to produce repeatable, *exchangeable* units—equal parts that work, like money or citizens, as the chits of a political-economic system now operating according to a metaphysics of counting.\textsuperscript{17} It is in this sense, I want to suggest, that we can newly understand what has been described as Mill’s “deep commitment to equality” (Collini 138).

What I am also suggesting is that Mill’s inductive method attempts to outline, on the level of logical process, the theoretical and institutional mechanism by which, in the political sphere, the liberal state’s abstract citizens—formally equal and implicitly male, all cases of the same type—were understood to be produced out of a sea of properly named singularities. After the introduction of money, Marx writes, in an often-cited formulation, “Men are henceforth related to each other in their social process of production in a purely

\textsuperscript{16} As Mill explains, “If [...] we knew what all names signify, we should know everything which, in the existing state of human knowledge, is capable either of being made a subject of affirmation or denial, or of being itself affirmed or denied of a subject” (CW VII, 46). The quietly radical position here is that all observable or conceivably observable phenomena in the world—objects, concepts, clusters of either—are potentially nameable as “facts”; they are theoretically able to be marked as particular “subjects” available for (later) mental processing.

\textsuperscript{17} Though her timeline differs from the tighter history I am attempting to trace here, Poovey’s *History Modern Fact* discusses of induction’s place in modern orders of rationality. For discussions of the “type” and the “typical” and their relationship to historicism, see Baucom, especially 35-79, and Chandler, *England in 1819* and “On the Face of the Case.”
atomistic way‖ (Capital 187). Describing this atomic relation, Marx clarifies his terms by echoing Mill and other mid-Victorian legal theorists, calling it the “juridical relation, whose form is the contract” (Marx 178n). This is the legal relation proper to the new regime of money, a “juridical relation” that, Marx writes, “correspond[s] to the production of commodities” (Capital 178-9n). Here, in this juridical, monetary modernity — Mill’s stage of “liberty” — exchangeable subjects of the law are the individualities or members of an aggregate that, like commodities, have been moved one level upward, into that higher-order position in which they stand in as examples of a type Mill called citizen. They are equal units, governed by “law” and available, in aggregate, to be managed under the processes of statistical analysis and optimization – counting — that Michel Foucault associates with biopolitical security.18

2.3 “Count of Heads”

By focusing on Mill’s effort to construct a viable theory of the way singular phenomena can be successfully abstracted into exchangeable concepts, “examples” of a “type,” we have arrived at a reading of the political stakes of Mill’s inductive theory. While running for Parliament in 1865, Mill told audiences that “no man who was competent to

18 For a full-length treatment of the “deep interconnection between the legal form and the commodity form,” see Pashukanis (63). Baucom’s chapter “Subject $”; or, the Type of the Modern” (35-79) discusses monetary subjectivity in relationship to slavery in the 18th century. On the mechanics of counting as they relate to biopolitics, see Foucault, Security Territory Population, esp. 20: “the problem of security,” says Foucault, is “at bottom… the problem of the series. […] I think the management of these series that, because they are open series and can only be controlled by an estimate of probabilities, is pretty much the essential characteristic of the mechanism of security” (Security 20). Foucault is interested in separating the issue of legal subjectification from the biological shaping of populations he says is proper to security; my interest is in showing how the utilitarian concept of aggregates fulfilled both functions, producing individual sovereign-subjects at the same time that it created a numerically-understood body politic that could be shaped and managed according to biopolitical means.
manage his own affairs ought to be without a vote” (CW XVIII, 30). A newspaper quoted him on the stump that same year by reporting that “He could not conceive that a country was what it ought to be without an extension of a share of political right to all. (Cheers.) Those left without it seemed a sort of pariahs” (CW XVIII, 39). Mill here explains that “political right” names status as a counted citizen, while those without this are marked with the status, or rather non-status, of “pariahs.” This is a difference, we can now see, between outlying singularities, un-abstracted or un-inducted, and those particulars that have been already uplifted into the category of “law”: citizens. This chapter will conclude by asking what violence awaits the bodies of those pariahs who have been excluded from the state’s mechanism of abstraction, whose detachment from political belonging has left them without what Hannah Arendt calls “the right to have rights.”

Here, however, we can see that Mill’s effort in these explicitly political pronouncements mirrors the Logic’s project of creating what he understood, in the philosophical and legal spheres, to be a potentially universal field of counted subjects: each particular person within the state’s borders is theoretically available to be abstracted into an example of the type “citizen,” the bearer of abstract right. Mill’s exceptions, not mentioned in his speech, included the mentally ill and those unable to demonstrate a minimal competency in reading and arithmetic. Two years after his election to Parliament on a platform of universal suffrage, Mill would critique the Reform bill for not yet living up

19 “Abstract right” is Hegel’s term, but Zizek provides language for understanding is relevance here. Zizek is discussing money’s co-development with the Kantian subject: “What is at stake here is not simply that this ‘bearer’ designates a neutral universal function which can be filled in by any individual; if we are to attain self-consciousness, the empty universality of the ‘bearer’ has to assume actual existence, it has to be posited as such, i.e. the subject has to relate to itself, conceive of itself, as (to) an empty ‘bearer,’ and to perceive his empirical features which constitute the positive content of his particular ‘person’ as a contingent variable. (Zizek Tarrying 29, emphasis original).
to these advanced goals, claiming that the measure that resulted, with a 10 pound property
requirement and still-vast exclusions in the countryside, was not, as he said, a properly
“democratic measure.” The Act that passed, Mill suggested, “neither deserves that praise
nor, if honourable members will have it so, that reproach. It is not a corollary from what
may be called the numerical theory of representation” (CW XVIII 61). Looking to institute
such a numerical theory, Mill advocated a system of representation in which not localities
but individual subjects would be represented in Parliament. This individualizing democratic
position sought to actualize the principle he’d already outlined in Utilitarianism, where “each
counts for one, no one counts for more than one.”

This aggregating logic directly contravened the position articulated by Thomas
Carlyle on the same subject. That Mill and Carlyle would disagree on this or anything else is
hardly surprising, but Carlyle’s discussion of the Reform Bill gives important emphasis to the
points I have been raising about Mill’s effort to theorize an abstract citizen, the “typical” unit
of a democracy now numerically understood.20 Overheated and violent, Carlyle’s “Shooting
Niagara, and After?” (1867), puts emphasis where Mill occludes it, underlining what Carlyle
sees as the negative consequences of the conversion process by which singular individuals
are transformed into iterable or exchangeable subjects, examples of a type. His invective
against the Reform Bill and all it stood for compared the new democratic reforms to the
operations of a Census, going on to explain that its vision of a universal interchangeability

20 As Leslie Stephen writes, in reference to Mill: “The tendency of the Utilitarian was to regard society as a number of
independent beings, simply bound together by the legal or quasi-legal sanctions” (Stephen 305). The 1832 Reform Act had
already performed this work to a significant degree, altering the British electoral system “from a historical to a rational
basis” (Pulzer 32). By rational the critic means individual: before 1832 representation was communal, corporative; the
community was what was represented. After 1832 it was based on the “first principle” of utilitarian logic, the individual
(Pulzer 32).
among subjects augured an era in which each “head” “counts” as much as the next one. The Reform Act would mean

Complete ‘liberty’ to all persons; Count of Heads to be the Divine Court of Appeal on every question and interest of mankind; Count of Heads to choose a Parliament according to its own heart at last, and sit with Penny Newspapers zealously watching the same. (Carlyle, Shooting Niagara 589)

Carlyle vastly misjudged the sweep of the 1867 Reforms, of course, which left a majority of urban males disenfranchised, the provinces largely unchanged, and —despite Mill’s late proposal— kept women out too (Evans 441). Exaggerated though it may be, Carlyle’s high-octane critique gives voice to the fact that the conversion of individuals into the abstract subjects of a count registered as a newly acute political problem in the 1860s. It details, as well, how a regime of exchange or abstraction proper to the political-economic logic of the Census now seemed to be taking explicitly political shape. Carlyle’s outrage gathers into a blast of staccato racism and a citation of history’s great men. Reform, he believed, would mean

Divine commandment to vote (‘Manhood Suffrage,’ – Horsehood, Doghood ditto not yet treated of); universal ‘glorious liberty’ (to Sons of the Devil in overwhelming majority, as would appear); count of Heads the God-appointed way in this Universe, all other ways Devil-appointed; in one brief word, which includes whatever of palpable incredibility and delirious absurdity, universally believed, can be uttered or imagined on these points, ‘the equality of men,’ any man equal to any other; Quashee Nigger to Socrates or Shakespeare; Judas Iscariot to Jesus Christ; — and Bedlam and Gehenna equal to the New Jerusalem, shall we say? (Carlyle, Shooting Niagara 592)

Carlyle’s invective assumes that race and intelligence are the only particularities obscured by this abstracting process. In this way he gives a barely readable conservative gloss on the movement into mass-democratic representation that the equally conservative Lord Derby called the “leap in the dark” of the Second Reform Bill (qtd Evans 441).
But we can use Carlyle’s conservative read on this question – his romantic, racist nationalism— to show how other, more ethically defensible political and ethical projects might gain purchase by critiquing a world in which all human relationships – indeed all the world’s objects—have been made subject to a utilitarian rule of equations. With attention to the developing dispensation of justice that emerges in tandem with the financial logics of general human equivalence, Ian Baucom refers to this as “justice as exchange”: a justice in which a substitute can always be found for an injury, when insurance money (in Baucom’s example) can be understood to remedy any human loss, no matter how grievous (“Specters” [article] 62-3). If a critique of what Baucom calls “the fungibility of all things” seems to lead inevitably to romantic invective like Carlyle’s, Baucom’s treatment adduces a countervailing position that would refuse both of these supposed alternatives. His account looks to elude the dichotomy between an older traditionalism and a new exchange, adducing a Benjaminian argument to call for a fidelity to past damage that is also an ethical commitment to the singularities that would be effaced in the move to exchange.

Marx himself cautioned against the temptation to return to some imaginary, prior purity: what he calls a “lost wholeness” (Grundrisse 162). Unlike Carlyle, whose nostalgic fantasies refused equivalence but saw the only alternative in the past, Marx, confronted with the spectacular dehumanization accomplished under the banner of equality, warned in 1844 that “it is as ridiculous to yearn for a return to [an] original fullness as it is to believe that with this complete emptiness, history has come to a standstill” (Grundrisse 162). In the passage from “Democracy” I cited as an epigraph, Matthew Arnold wrote that “the essence of democracy” was looking to “possess the world.” If “the essence of democracy” can be taken, now, to refer to the regime of equivalence in which nameable particulars are, by a
process of abstraction, stripped of that particularity and put into a transactional relationship called “equality,” then Arnold’s phrase confirms more recent work on Victorian worldwide finance, reading as a warning that fiduciary logic was already, in 1861, striving to achieve its own essence by spanning the world in networks of objects and subjects available for exchange.

Operating at the level of individual citizens, the integrative, uplifting operation of liberal parliamentarism also worked at a structural level. Despite differing political investments, historians Margot Finn and Jonathan Parry have both shown that during this period the liberal state sought to cancel outlying political threats by containing them, consolidating potentially subversive, uncounted collective movements into the processes of procedural democracy and recoding them under the sign of reform. Parry describes how Parliament’s “integrating function” in the Reform era sought to “succeed in reconciling tensions and subordinating sectional pressures” (8). In this sense, the Victorian liberal state operated hegemonically, ceding certain principles, liberties, and even representational status to formally “external” groups. This in turn allowed the state in its existing form – imperial parliamentary democracy – to retain the underlying, constitutive power that, in Nancy Fraser’s words, “furnishes the stage on which struggles over distribution and recognition are played out” (Justice 75).  

Liberalism itself, and the parliamentary democracy that emerged as its appropriate political form, became the organizing principle under which differing voices were managed.

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21 For an extended discussion of the distinction between constituted (secondary) power and constitutive (lawgiving) power, see Schmitt, *Norms of the Earth*. Fraser’s “Reframing Justice in a Globalizing World” offers a current articulation of what is at stake in attending to such a distinction.
In the 1850’s, Finn writes, “[s]hared beliefs in the legitimacy of parliamentary structures informed working-, middle-, and upper-class culture alike, containing labor’s political vision securely within the compass of the nation-state” (6). “Containing” is a key concept here, for again it is by this process that the steadily increasing constitutive power of the British liberal state controlled what might have been its political threats. The state opted to strategically subsume, indeed to “parapolitically” manage opposition rather than to fight out what Jacques Ranciere would call a properly political struggle, one by which the excluded part might of society (here, the working class) might lay claim to status as the whole.22 “If nineteenth century Liberalism meant anything,” Parry summarizes, “it meant a political system in which a large number of potentially incompatible interests —whether nationalities, classes, or sects— were mature enough to accept an over-arching code of law which guaranteed each a wide variety of liberties” (Parry 3). In liberalism’s effort to transform meta- or “properly political” struggle (as Ranciere calls this structural contestation) into parapolitical disagreement, class war became parliamentary debate: the integrative or uplifting process of liberal reform in the 1850s aimed at creating, in the words of critic Chris R. Vanden Bossche, “an English nation that was not divided by class but was unified as a single people” (9).

22 On the difference between “politics” and “parapolitics,” see Ranciere, *Dis-Agreement*; for a related analysis (though with important differences from Ranciere’s project), see Badiou, *Metapolitics*, esp. 1-24. Both thinkers understand the word “political” to mean the process by which constitutive forms of political organization are contested at a structural level. So a dispute between socialism and capitalism, say, or monarchism and parliamentarism, would be “properly political.” The contention is that liberal democracy is organized around a principle that would look to occlude and contain just this sort of “metapolitical” or “properly political” struggle; under the conditions of a flexible liberal parliamentarism, differences of this type are contained within a structure of political organization that is itself the proper object of contestation. As Badiou writes: “The essence of politics is not the plurality of opinions. It is the prescription of a possibility in rupture with what exists” (*Metapolitics* 24).
Interventions by Mary Poovey and others have sharpened and radicalized a similar observation about the inclusive nature of mid-Victorian liberalism. These analyses provide tools for understanding the links between a parliamentary logic of reform and the procedures of domestic population management, equally inclusive, that unfolded in tandem with it. Parry’s own historical study charts the already global ambitions of liberalism’s inclusive logic: “The Liberal ideal was to bring as many people as possible under the rule of [its] principles” (Parry 3). But it is Walter Bagehot’s definition of liberalism that perhaps most aptly captures this integrative aim. In a review of Mill’s Principles of Political Economy (1848), Bagehot defined liberalism as “the faith in the possibility, nay the duty, of constant political expansion—of drawing a larger and larger portion of the population into the circle of political duties which connect them with the government, give them a control over it, and interest them in what it does” (emphasis added, “Review of JS Mill’s Principles of Political Economy, 1848).

As texts on the urban slums like Mayhew’s London Labour and the London Poor and Friedrich Engels’ Condition of the Working Class in England suggest, the fronts of the liberal state’s missionary project were those zones in which outlying subjects were to be counted and uplifted – recovered, inducted, and brought into what Foucault has described as the biopolitical project of producing a populace.23 I will approach the colonial implications for this simultaneously uplifting and abstracting strategy – and for determining who was and was

23 Even citing William Booth’s late century text, In Darkest England, and the Way Out (1890) may come some way in sketching this ideological territory, whereby subjects—urban poor or savage populations—were to be “rescued” and made present to the “light” of the state’s managerial apparatus. In this vein we might also point to Our Mutual Friend (1865), a novel precisely concerned with the processes by which drowned men and other items “lost” to the liberal state are, and must be, recovered. Bleak House’s fog—a metaphor for Chancery, itself a metaphor for liberal governance—is telling in this respect as well, for this quintessential Victorian obscurity must be cleared, or reformed, just as Tom-All-Alone’s must be brought within visibility of liberal state’s civilizing mission.
not available to benefit from it—in subsequent chapters. What I stress here, however, is the
direct relationship between Parliamentary liberalism’s mid-century strategy of political
management and its domestic project of population administration. Both of these flexible,
inclusive efforts sought to bring what was outside to the inside, and then looked to cultivate
positively these once-external entities as a part of a now-growing, internal populace — what
Poovey echoes Foucault to call a “social body.”

In this broadest sense, Arnold’s warning about the essence of democracy looking to
possess the world can be understood to mean that already in that early year of debate on
Reform in which his essay was published (1861), democracy’s methodological “essence” was
looking to the transmute particular differences it encountered into a broad-based likeness
(abstraction), doing so across what Mill viewed as a potentially horizonless field of exchange.
If we can see now that the achievement of a total field of typical, countable subjects
represents the essence of democratic reform, man confronting man as an atom on a
horizontal field of sovereign-subjects, then it represents, too, the essence of what Marx in
1844 theorized as the world market, in which all human relationships are calculable on a
spreadsheet of costs or benefits, and in which a given state’s monstrous chaos of particular
human beings is available to be abstracted into a series of citizens who count. Rather than
reading Marx as “theory” and Mill and Carlyle as “content,” however, I have attempted to
suggest that Marx’s critique of political economy and Mill’s massive Logic can be read as
tactical theoretical engagements meant to engage the newly current problem of widening
democracy. Carlyle’s is explicitly such.

But if these texts grapple with the problem of interchangeability as it related to a
transforming dispensation of government in the moment of Reform, so too can that genre
of fiction specific to the 1860s—the sensation novel—be seen as engaging with the
philosophical problem of exchangeability that attended a (slowly) widening franchise and a
more quickly widening network of global commerce centered in London. Pursuing a related
point, Jonathan Loesberg has argued that sensation novels “are manifestations of the same
ideological responses that formed the structure of Victorian discussions of parliamentary
reform in the late 1850s and 1860s” (116). For Loesberg, novels of the 1860s by Collins,
Mrs. Henry Wood, and Elizabeth Braddon all worked as reflexive ideological productions
that looked to solve, unconsciously, contradictions emerging from a new fear of what he
calls “a loss of class identity” (117). Loesberg’s important account helps shape the readings
that follow. But his argument also abstracts separate cultural productions into members of a
higher-order set (a Foucauldian discourse or Jamesonian genre), and argues that they belong
to that set without remainder or misfit, a process that mirrors the departicularizing logic I am
following here. Armadale will provide tools for troubling this methodological procedure.
But before describing how that 1866 novel about slave money and contracts attempts to
defend particularity against the violence it associates with both slavery and the
interchangeability characteristic of liberty, I will follow Loesberg’s set-making gesture to
show how multiple instances of Reform-era fiction conceptualize the art and politics of
abstraction.

2.4 “Torn from the list of the living”
To put emphasis on the legal forms of the commodity culture—how “laws,” as Mill said in the *Logic*, are made “to govern multitudes of facts”—is to make a claim about Marx’s work in relation to liberal-democratic reform in the mid-Victorian years. So far I have charted in some detail the apparently separate histories of formal logic and state administration in order to trace the categories of particularity and abstraction in the decades culminating in the Second Reform Bill, using what I’ll suggest is the properly poetic category of the “type” to do so. Now I want to turn more fully to the literary realm, showing how this rather abstruse set of inquiries can help historicize a central trope of mid-century three-decker fiction, the lost person. In an 1862 review essay entitled “Centralisation,” Mill summarized the common sense of his age—and the motion of his own *Logic*—by noting that the process of modernization led to the expansion of the state’s ability to recognize and then to protect those under its auspices. In previous epochs, Mill writes,

> Law and government recognized, as legally existing, only the few in authority: the slave-masters, the heads of families, the patriarchal chiefs of tribes or clans. Improving civilization changes this state of things—relieves man from the power of man, and brings him under that of law. (“Centralisation,” [1862] CW 17.589)

Anticipating Max Weber’s distinction between “traditional rule” and “rule by bureaucracy” in *Politics as Vocation* (1919), the story Mill tells here is familiar from the discussion of liberal historicism in chapter one: authority gives way to law, force gives way to consent, and “law” emerges. But here Mill sketches the developments of civilization as an extension of the category of those counted within “the law’s” reach, an increase in the number of those it recognizes as available to this law’s protective custody: “civilization” is characterized by an increase in the number of those who are “recognized” as “legally existing.” (“All this is admitted,” Mill says, “and forms no part of the debatable ground” [CW 17.589]).
Civilization in other words is the name for the expansion of law’s ability to count, a furtherance of what I have described as the state’s ability to abstract an ever-widening set of particular facts (human beings) into citizens. Finding more and more individual people, abstracting more and more particularities, the law extended its protective custody in the 1860s more than any other decade. By 1870, one commentator notes, the state “had assumed almost modern shape” (Evans 358).24

It is therefore entirely appropriate that at this moment perhaps more than any other during the nineteenth century, literary authors found themselves preoccupied with the figure of the lost person – with those human particularities who have somehow evaded or been excluded from the political induction by which named facts are transmuted into abstract subjects of law. Lovers of large Victorian novels will remember that in the decade of Reform, literary characters were finding themselves written into vast dramas of lost and found. John Harmon was recovered from the swirling Thames in 1865, the same year that Lewis Carroll’s Alice disappeared down a hole only to resurface again as a more polite bourgeois young lady. In 1859, Charles Darnay was “recalled to life” from the abyss of France in A Tale of Two Cities; Magdalen Vane, no longer with “No Name,” was brought back in Wilkie Collins’s No Name “within the pale” of “the Civil Law of Europe” in 1861, just three years after the female characters of The Woman in White were restored to “the list of the living.” The plot device of a dead character who resurrects herself into a new identity would also provide the frisson of Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s Lady Audley’s Secret, of 1862, which, like Our Mutual Friend (1865) hinged centrally on a drowned person returning to life.

Concerned with personal identity, double identities, faked identities, dead people resurrected, abandoned individuals who get reclaimed, and, most of all, with the way in which these “sensational” plotlines could register as legal problems, all of these stories, I want to suggest, represent allegories by which Victorian novelists transcoded the theoretical problem of mid-century liberalism’s inductive logic into narrative form. To be sure, reform would emerge in fiction as explicit content in, for example, Anthony Trollope’s political novels of that period such as Phineas Redux (1873), which retrospectively dramatizes the debates of the second Reform Bill in a thinly veiled allegory of actual events. The advanced liberal character Monk explains that “Equality is an ugly word and shouldn’t be used. It misleads, and frightens, and is a bugbear. […] But the wish of every honest man should be to assist in lifting up those below him, till they be something nearer his own level than he finds them” (Trollope Phineas 128). Rather than trace such political content, I want to focus on how novels of absence and recovery from this period address the question of the law’s expanding reach as a matter of form. In these novels, the process by which particularities are abstracted into law provides the structure of plots in which named characters are lost and then recovered into “life” or “law.” In the biopolitical moment under consideration here, these were figures for the same thing. Thus a masterful chapter of Our Mutual Friend finds Rokesmith narrating his own reemergence as Harmon, and specifies that before this recovery, his character hovered in the grey zone between legal abandonment and legal identity, a “living-dead man” (367).

I’ve named a series of the most widely-read novels of the 1860s, and cannot hope to offer full readings of each of these texts here. But Wilkie Collins’ work from this period displays, with particular vividness, the literary obsessions that I am arguing emerged in
tandem with the political logics of what I am calling inductive liberalism. Conscious of the methodological contradiction this involves, I will use them as examples to stand for a larger set, returning at the close of this chapter to reflect on this very process. But at this point, tracing Collins’ special preoccupation with legal identity and the reach of law can shed light not just on the predilections of one author who was throughout his life, as his biographer Catherine Peters writes, “intrigued by questions of identity, substitution, and doubling” (Peters 202). It also begins to connect these questions with the material facts of the changing dispensation of state sovereignty I have identified as biopolitical induction. Organizing the plots of all three of Collins’ long domestic sensation novels of the Reform Bill decade – No Name, The Woman in White, and Armadale—problems of “identity, substitution, and doubling,” as Peters called them, are filtered through the device of the proper name to dramatize the processes by which a particular fact or body can sink below the state’s ability to abstract it.

The problem of legal abandonment drives the plot of all Wilkie Collins’ 1860s fiction. Centering on figures who hover at the borderline of legal existence, imagining the fates of characters who are unnamed, uncounted, Collins’ texts during this period use plot and narrative form to dramatize what happens when a given particularity (a named fact) shuttles back and forth over the line separating what is within the state’s abstracting reach—the law—from what lies beyond it. “[L]egally speaking,” Collins writes in a line that names his own 1863 novel, Magdalen Vane “and her sister had No Name” (181). The Vane sisters, Collins explains, are “outcasts of the whole social community”; they have been cast “out of the pale of the Civil Law of Europe” (139). Written out of her father’s will, submerged below the horizon of state’s and even Europe’s visibility, Magdalen suffers what Collins calls
“practical abandonment” (219), though she will later emerge to reclaim her status as a counted citizen present to the law.

_The Woman in White_ (1859-60) is perhaps the decade’s most faithful dramatization of how liberalism’s inductive logic could be turned into a problem of novelistic plot. The novel is obsessed with rule: formally replicating the procedures of a criminal trial, _The Woman in White_ itself acts as “a supplement to the law” (Dolin 1). Even before readers have learned what particular sovereign state’s order of rule will be supplemented in these three decks of page-turning incident, the figure of law arrives to announce itself as the novel’s organizing concern. We are introduced to the law in its universal, capitalized form:

> If the machinery of the Law could be depended upon to fathom every case of suspicion, and to conduct every process of inquiry, [...], the events which fill these pages might have claimed their share of public attention in a Court of Justice. (9)

Conspicuously framed in the conditional mood, this early sentence — the novel’s second — points us toward the interstitial in which the rest of the novel will dwell. This grand, conditional “if” marks the distance between the state and its outside, between the machinery of an abstract Law and the stories and subjects (particularities) that “might have” been, but aren’t yet, “fathomed” by it. This structure has led Ann Cvetkovich to call attention to the novel’s interest in “promot[ing] an extension of the operation of law” (25).

“Loss” is the codeword for the novel’s most important turns of plot. Laura Fairlie is the victim of the book’s primary case of ontological misplacement, and she frames the problem for us, referring multiple times to her fear of becoming a “lost woman.” But Laura’s double Anne Catherick, dead and buried under a gravestone with another woman’s name on it, has been most definitively absented as well. When Marian Halcombe engages a housekeeper, for example, in a conversation about Laura’s double Anne, Marian asks the
servant whether Anne’s mother had recently seen this “lost daughter” (209). The housekeeper reports: “‘I give her up,’ were the last words she said that I can remember; ‘I give her up, m’am, for lost’” (209). The burden of the novel will be to find these lost women, to recover their identities (if not their lives), and thus to pull them back from the abyss of their givenness, and re-place them, named and known, into the field of the counting apparatus this novel calls law.

As *The Woman in White* is at pains to teach us, being lost is to exist in a kind of middle ontological state, uncounted by law but physically existing: only life. Alive and breathing but unrecognized by the protocols of the state’s inductive functions, such characters are particulars but not citizens — in the terms made popular by Giorgio Agamben, they are *zoe*, not *bios*. Excluded from political belonging, if a body is lost, it *might* be found, and it *might*, as happens to Laura, have itself restored to the category of belonging through the ministrations of a zealous investigator like Hartright. To be lost is therefore to sit in the middle position exactly marked in the conditional “if” of the novel’s second sentence — the “if” that marks the political distance between the state and its outside, between the “machinery of the Law” and what can’t yet be “fathomed” by it (9). *The Woman in White* is focused on such limit-cases of governmental abstraction, dwelling in the distance between unprotected particularity and the exchangeability proper to aggregation, when named individuals have been made into the subjects and objects of an increasingly popular sovereignty.

In the novel’s most extended dramatization of this tension between the inside and the outside of the state’s abstracting forms, the text calls attention to exactly this frontier separating the lost particle and the found one. I quote at some length the often-cited
passage that frames the novel’s central dramatic and, I am arguing, political problem.

Hartright muses:

In the eye of reason and of law, in the estimation of relatives and friends, according to every received formality of civilized society, ‘Laura, Lady Glyde,’ lay buried with her mother in Limmeridge churchyard. Torn in her own lifetime from the list of the living, the daughter of Philip Fairlie and wife of Percival Glyde might still exist for her sister, might still exist for me, but to all the world besides she was dead. Dead to her uncle who had renounced her; dead to the persons in authority who had transmitted her fortune to her husband and her aunt; dead to my mother and my sister, who believed me to be the dupe of an adventuress and the victim of a fraud; socially, morally, legally, — dead.

And yet alive! Alive in poverty and in hiding. Alive, with the poor drawing master to fight her battle, and to win the way back for her to her place in the world of living beings.

The amazing cadence of Laura’s “loss” emphasizes three times the finality of her supposed abandonment: “socially, morally, legally, — dead.” Invisible to “persons in authority,” ripped from “the list of the living,” Laura is uncounted by a state outfitted precisely to count everyone. But this is a recovery narrative, too, and the abrupt conjunction that begins the new paragraph marks the dramatic turn from zoe to bios, the radical recovery of given life into political belonging, Collins’ novel wants to trace. “The first part of the story,” Collins said in a newspaper interview, “will deal with the destruction of the victim’s identity. The second with its recovery” (qtd. Neilson 3). “And yet alive!”: this is the turn that closes the gap between being abandoned by the law and being inducted into its managing administration, or what Mill in the “Centralisation” essay called its “protection.” Collins’ ingenious paragraph break marks a turn, in other words, from the political outside (“torn from the list of the living”) to the visible, breathing world of the biopolitical state, the “world of living beings” that is coextensive, here, with “the eye of reason and law.” “Questions of identity,” a lawyer
advises Hartright, “are, in themselves, the hardest of all questions to settle” (443). But settled they are.

Collins’ passage can stand as a microcosm of the plot more broadly, emphasizing just the dichotomy I have been suggesting sits at the heart of liberal politics at mid-century: this is the antinomy between the living state, full of recognized, typologized subjects, and its dead or abandoned outside – still alive, still particular, a “fact” or “subject” that has been “torn from the list of the living.” Seeing a lost person under this sovereign order, as Marian does with Laura a few pages after this passage, is, we learn, to “recognize the dead-alive” (421). Perched on the very razor’s edge between life and death, subjects who are “lost” are the ghosts of a counting apparatus predicated on visibility, and thus present themselves as the paradigmatic problem of an inclusive liberal sovereignty aimed (but not yet succeeding) at “possess[ing] the world.”

Mill told his political supporters that those who were marked as subjects by the law were “citizens,” while those outside its abstracting functions were “pariahs.” If The Woman in White is so obsessed with finding its lost ladies, so consistently interested in bringing its subjects and characters back into their legal identities, and thus back within the law’s reach, what are we to make of those particularities who are so forcefully, even violently cast out of it? What of the pariahs? In a well-known speech of 1867, John Bright, the most advanced of advanced liberals, explained that the dignified status of citizen could not ever be fully extended. Contrary to Mill’s theory of universal induction, which stipulated that all particularities were conceivably available to be abstracted –everything that can be named can be counted— Bright explained that some particulars were of necessity left out. This
structurally excluded body was what Bright called the “residuum”: a set of bodies (not subjects), who were permanently excluded from the state’s count. The radical MP explained:

At this moment, in all, or nearly all boroughs, as many of us know sometimes to our sorrow, there is a small class which it would be much better for themselves if they were not enfranchised, because they have no independence whatsoever, and it would be much better for the constituency also that they should be excluded, and there is no class so much interested in having that small class excluded as the intelligent and honest working men. I call this class the residuum, which there is in almost every constituency, of almost helpless poverty and dependence. (qtd Hall et al 98, Hansard 3rd series, vol 186, cols 624-42, 26 March 1867)

Helplessly dependent, locked into an abyss of poverty, permanently unable to be uplifted into abstraction as citizens, this residuum constituted, for Bright, the necessary remainder of a system formulated by other thinkers according to the vision of a universal suffrage. Bright here describes the poor, the unspeakably inhuman, those with “no independence whatever”: these are the particularities structurally excluded from abstraction within the state’s borders.

If the conversion from named particularity to exchangeable subject effaces difference, injuring the singularity of the objects it ennobles, Bright’s commentary allows us to see another form of injury, one that forms the precise reverse of this: the injury of abandonment. As historian Jennifer Pitts has shown, “the process of democratization in western Europe generated exclusions not only internal to those societies but also globally, and […] the liberal thinkers of this period were deeply implicated in these exclusions” (254). Pitts’ analysis proceeds as an implicit effort to extend the abstracting logic of the thinkers it analyzes, asking us to un-exclude those excluded people, to count them and to mark them, finally, as part of the body of law. By contrast I have attempted to suggest that such a process of abstraction presents its own dangers. It subjects all particulars to the inductive process of a state in which a political economic logic of “justice as exchange” predominates.
Still, to be excluded from law, to be uncounted by its abstracting mechanism: this would be to make one’s body available to a different kind of damage. The next chapter of this dissertation uses the martial law declared after the 1865 Jamaica Rebellion to ask what spectacular state violence could be visited, legally, on the human bodies who found themselves cast, as Collins had it, “out the pale of the Civil Law of Europe.” Such bodies find themselves, as Arendt has written of stateless bodies in the twentieth century, “forced to live outside the common world [...] thrown back, in the midst of civilization, on their mere givenness” (302). Excluded from political life, cast out of law — merely facts — “their plight,” she continues, “is not that they are not equal before the law, but that no law exists for them; not that they are oppressed, but that nobody wants even to oppress them” (296). It is these particular bodies, this unprocessed residuum, these facts uninducted into law, who are, as Arendt writes, “perfectly superfluous” (296). Written seven years after The Woman in White, Collins’s most extensive reflection on the political status of named particular would dwell on precisely this problem. A closing reading of Armadale (1866) allows this dissertation to shift toward its consideration of the superfluous bodies created in what Amir Mufti refers to as Europe’s “constitutive failure” to live up to its imagined universality (4).

2.5 Armadale and the Particular

In a throwaway moment from the middle pages of Collins’ long, Reform-era book about slave money and identity, Armadale, the unsavory son of a man named Bashwood
obsures his own character by inhabiting another one. Describing this man in disguise, the narrator tells us that

[No ordinary observation, applying the ordinary rules of analysis, would have detected the character of Bashwood the younger in his face. [...] No eye for reading character, but such an eye as belongs to one person, perhaps, in ten thousand, could have penetrated the smoothly-deceptive surface of this man, and have seen him for what he really was.... (516)]

Repeating the term “character” twice in this short paragraph —along with “ordinary”— the passage draws attention to how a single thing (“one person”) can be differentiated from a massive collection of items like it (“ten thousand”). Its emphasis falls, that is, on what makes individuals individual, and on how, through a quasi-scientific process of “analysis,” one can or can’t tell. Not even an exceptionally astute observer, Collins writes, can “penetrate” the “surface” to see the real Bashwood in his radical singularity. A good reader might be able to discern the features that particularize the person marked by the name of “Bashwood the younger” from the one he’s impersonating (the “character” legible “in his face”). But here the process of reading fails, and in Collins’s knowingly staged scene, Bashwood’s ability to exchange his singularity with someone else’s allows for a jibe at a liberal political order —and a literary community— obsessively fixed (as Collins puts it here) on “reading character.”

Taking unconscious cues, perhaps, from scenes like this one, reviews of *Armadale* fixated on precisely this concept —character— judging, for instance, that “Character alone should be the central object of interest for a novelist. And Mr. Wilkie Collins cannot draw character” (Page, ed. 159). The *Westminster* reader goes on to associate novels of character with the morally instructive realism of its former editor, George Eliot; in this he speaks for a long line of critics who have praised that author’s free indirect discourse and penetrating
style—alternately inward and capacious—for their ability to expose the depth of individual minds in a way that seems to distinguish the Victorian novel from its forbears. Critics who have used these terms to focus on *Armadale’s* apparent preference for plot over character, though, fail to notice that its plot is *about* character—how it can be falsified, how names do or don’t match it, how one individual (in disguise) might inhabit several of them in sequence.

Recent work by Amanda Anderson, Lauren Goodlad, and David Wayne Thomas, among others, has underscored the importance of character to liberal political systems, expanding on Victorian self-assessments to highlight the ethical self-fashioning denoted by this term. But in the decade of the Second Reform Bill, “character” also crystallized precisely the conceptual dilemma this chapter has been tracing, one that is raised in Bashwood’s disguise sequence and treated at length in *Armadale’s* spectacularly complicated plot: the tension between interchangeability and singularity. Citing mid-19th century usages, the *OED* informs us that in fact the term “character” crystallized precisely this the tension we’ve seen operating in the Census and in the logic of Reform: it denotes both a general, or

25 The *North British Review* judged similarly of Collins that “to this author plot and incident are all in all, character is nothing” (Page, ed. 141). The *Westminster* complained that “whilst Miss Braddon’s and Mr. Wilkie Collins’ productions sell by thousands of copies, *Romola* with difficulty reaches a second edition” (Page, ed. 160). The figure of depth in discussions of character is well-worn, but Deidre Lynch has linked its nineteenth century consolidation with changes in economic practice, offering a historical account of the emergence of concepts like character and person as they relate to literary and financial practice. The relationship between character and commerce Lynch charts suggests the one I describe below, between financial exchange and the monetary logic of democracy. On the importance of free indirect to what we could call the nineteenth century century “rise of depth,” see McKeon 485-491, and the investigation of James and Lang in the final chapter, below.

26 See Anderson, *Powers of Distance*; Goodlad, *Victorian Literature and the Victorian State*; and Thomas, *Cultivating Victorians*. Citing works of the Reform era like Alexander Bain’s *The Study of Character* (1861) and Samuel Smiles’ 1859 *Self-Help* (Chapter 13: “Character: The True Gentleman”), Collini observes that the Victorian discourse of character was aimed at blunting the harsher effects of the liberal state’s expanding franchise in the decade of the second Reform Bill. More recently, Anderson has modified a Victorian notion of character (as “ethos”), with additions from Habermas, to argue for the implicitly liberal assumptions of all debate (*The Way We Argue Now*). I am indebted to these accounts, but am attempting to emphasize (as Collins does) the vast exclusions produced by the supposedly universalizable category of liberal character, calling attention to those uncounted, unnamed, un-“cultivated” bodies structurally excluded from the universality imagined by Mill (and Habermas): those who live “beyond the pale of the Civil Law of Europe,” as Collins writes in *No Name* (139).
commonly-held morality, and also what would seem like its opposite: particularity itself.

Character, we learn, meant both “[a] person regarded in the abstract” and “[t]he aggregate of the distinctive features of any thing; essential peculiarity” (OED). Marking both singularity and an abstract exchangeability, “character” in other words names the very tension between those poles. As Deidre Lynch has observed of literary characters, “[t]he character is located—optimally—at the interface of what is particular and what is general” (46). Or as Matthew Arnold might have put it, character was what kept you from destroying Hyde Park, but your character was also what distinguished you from everyone else in the mob.

_Armadale_ exploits the theoretical tension inherent in the term character to respond to what we might call the logic of democratic Reform, a strategy allows this particular sensation novel to be classified, provisionally, not just with other sensation novels but with other, more obviously philosophical texts of the period—including Mill’s and Marx’s. The novel will also provide resources for questioning this very gesture of classification. In _Armadale_’s preface, Collins addresses his novel to two sets of readers, “Readers in general” and “Readers in particular” (6), a gesture that announces what will become a central theoretical drama of this novel. While it inherits Mill’s assumption of a modern historical stage of equal relations among subjects, Collins’s novel ironizes liberal society’s tendency to create the economically equivalent, typical units that would participate in those relationships. It thus offers a principled, if self-contradictory critique of mid-century liberalism’s domestic project of abstraction. But this globe-skirting novel also expands liberal theory’s domestic focus, pointing toward the second half of this dissertation by acknowledging that the Victorian state’s mechanisms of equivalence operated abroad as well, in that ever-widening system of _actual_ exchange known as the British Empire. By tracing connections between an older
circumatlantic slavery and a newer, equally violent cosmopolitanism (personified in Lydia Gwilt), Armadale bears witness to this other system of abstraction too, pursuing the British Empire’s global money economy through time, from its historical origins in slave-based accumulation into the more contemporary, free market in labor that ushers in guilt (or Gwilt) itself.

Collins’s 1866 novel thus performs its own kind of critical link-making, charting theoretical connections among abstraction, exchange, and violence in ways that comment on a moment, the 1860s, when “the free market had become the hallmark of modernity” (Howe 29). In doing so it provides criticism with new ways of thinking about Reform and empire together. Read in the terms provided by Mill’s Logic, the particular case of Armadale can open up general methodological opportunities, avenues of analysis that reach beyond the imperial or liberal cultures that have been the focus of work in those areas since the 1980s.27 Disclosing a relationship between the protocols of domestic Reform and imperial globalization — parsing their shared logic — Armadale helps us appreciate that in the 1860s, it was not just unsavory opinions on race, nor only problematic ideologies of development, but a modern and free financial system that both furthered British hegemony and masked its expansion under the sign of peace.

2.6 “The civilized universe knows it already”

27 Lauren Berlant has argued that “to ask the question of what makes something a case, and not a merely gestural instance, illustration, or example, is to query the adequacy of an object to bear the weight of an explanation worthy of attending to and taking a lesson from” (666). The remaining sections of this article make the case for Armadale’s ability to stand as a case in these terms.
Paradoxically, attending to the singularity of Collins’ text has already required a series of provisional inductions, tactical abstractions by which I’ve cited “examples” and “representative passages,” and placed this novel under the newly formed class or genre we might call “Reform era works of logic.” Before I address this question of method—and suggest how Armadale exceeds its own category—let me continue establishing links. Like Mill’s System of Logic, Armadale is a wide-ranging document with multiple subplots. And like Mill’s treatise on abstraction, Collins’s sensation novel begins with a preamble on the philosophical function of names. In the first pages of his own long work, Mill explains that the business of logic is to analyze propositions. Because every proposition comprises at least two named subjects put into a relationship with one another, “the signification of names, and the relationship generally between names and the things signified by them, must occupy the preliminary stage of the inquiry we are engaged in” (CW VII 22). Armadale introduces us to this question before we even open the book. To whom or what does the title Armadale refer? Following the pattern of mid-Victorian triple-deckers like Pendennis (1848-50), David Copperfield (1850), or Phineas Finn (1867), we might assume that this novel’s title refers to its most conventional hero, the “light” Allan Armadale. “Thoroughly English” (55), this particular Armadale is represented as typical in a self-conscious sense: he loves sailing, hates thinking, and sports a lovely complexion and a cheery disposition. But his opposite number is an Allan Armadale too, though this one bears the blood of former slaves and introduces himself by the “extraordinary” and “strangely uncouth name” of Ozias Midwinter (62, 60). One dark, one light, one introverted, one plucky, these second-generation Allan Armadales do not yet exhaust the roll call of potential referents for this novel’s name, for they are the
progeny of two other Allan Armadales, the novel’s first pair of doubled potential protagonists.

In total there are five men who lay claim to the proper name of Allan Armadale. The novel’s original Allan Armadale is the England-based owner of an eighteenth century slave plantation, in Barbados. This man is “godfather by proxy” to one Allan Wrentmore (28), whose first name is Allan in honor of Allan Armadale, but who later inherits his proxy godfather’s sugar fortune – and with it, the wealthy slaveowner’s last name. Because the original Armadale’s actual son, also named Allan Armadale, was disowned, Allan Wrentmore/Armadale becomes “the richest man in Barbados,” someone who passed his youth “in idleness and self-indulgence, among people —slaves and half-castes, mostly— to whom my will was law” (28, 27-28). Alluding to slavery and sexual excess, this violent backstory reaches its climax in a lethal conflict between Allan Wrentmore/Armadale and the disowned son of the original Allan Armadale, a dispute centering on sexual jealousy and the fate (and fortune) of a rich English woman suggestively named Blanchard. Armadale the son impersonates Wrentmore, stealing his intended bride and the English fortune associated with her. But Wrentmore catches up with him at sea, locking his enemy into the hold of a sinking timber ship called, spectacularly, \textit{La Grace de Dieu}. Before he drowned, however, this roguish Armadale had impregnated his “blanching” bride, producing a son in the form of the light Allan Armadale of the novel’s main, second-generation action. Wrentmore, now a murderer, goes on to marry a woman of “mixed blood” and “African eyes” (24) in Trinidad, later fathering a mixed-race son by her. This is the other Allan Armadale, also known as Ozias Midwinter —the one who, as the novel unfolds, is able to overcome his own dark inheritance, ultimately befriending the son of the man his father murdered.
Sensational as it may be, Armadale’s double-generational plot recapitulates the more serious temporal-political schemes set out by Collins’s advanced liberal contemporaries. Mill’s work describes a progressive historical sequence that moves from an era of force — characterized by slavery — into an epoch of modern peace based on contract. For the Logic, this was the transition by which the philosophy of “intuition” developed into that of “experience.” In On Liberty, Mill refers to it as the distinction between “custom” and “liberty,” while legal historian and political theorist Henry Maine, in Ancient Law (1861), figured it as the transition between the stages “status” and “contract.” However it is characterized, in this newer, more individualistic era, agreements are understood to be based not on coercion or kinship relations but on contracts negotiated freely between autonomous or abstract subjects. Set in the West Indies in the years between 1832 (the year of the first Reform Bill) and 1837 (just after slavery was abolished in the British Empire), Armadale’s backstory occurs at the late cusp of what liberal theory understood to be a pre-modern, pre-individual political temporality. Characterized by slavery, patrilineal inheritance, and conflicts over women and the fortunes traveling with them, this political temporality is, in the terms laid out by Maine and Mill and ratified by Collins’s narration, “pre-contractual.”28

Armadale’s elaborately scandalous backstory establishes the novel’s central theme of impersonation, or human interchangeability. But bracketed in the past, in a series of expository letter-writing and dictation scenes, this backstory also provides a temporal-political counterpoint for the novel’s main action, which centers on the two modern Allan

Armadales who are the heirs to these rivals. Starting, as the novel specifies, in 1851—the year of the Great Exhibition—Armadale’s diegetic events trace a self-consciously modern plot. But here Collins strays from his fellow theorists of modernity. For where Mill believed that the historical stage of liberty would put an end to bloodshed, for Collins the end of slavery only marks his violent plot’s beginning. Armadale’s second generation action revolves around a bewitching series of what Lyn Pyckett has called, in reference to Collins’s novels, “crimes of advanced capitalism”: “crimes which arise from the traffic in paper currency, from the manipulation of documents in a bureaucratic culture, and the control, misrepresentation, or misuse of information” (149). A writer, a forger, and an expert inhabitant of multiple identities, the female free-agent Lydia Gwilt is perhaps the most sharply-drawn symptom of this monetary modernity. Where the docile Blanchard was passed back and forth between men like an inert object, Gwilt is an autonomous subject, able to alter her own character at will. Bootstrapping herself into any role she imagines, Lydia resembles the Mill of the Autobiography far more than any customary tribesman: Collins exploits this apparent paradox to show that his villain is both a criminal and a perfectly rendered subject of law, what Neil Larsen calls a “monetary subject,” whether she has money or is after it (56-7).

After this professional self-fashioner is defeated in her aggressive effort to defraud the light Armadale of his fortune (and murder him), what emerges in this historical novel is a more conventionally happy ending, one that follows Mill in viewing the emergence of free, or abstract subjects as an appropriately uplifting denouement. As the novel’s narration repeatedly reminds us, Armadale teaches the (liberal) lesson that the sins of the fathers are not visited upon the sons: it shows, that is, that every subject has the power to abstract
himself from his family history by the magic agency of virtuous behavior. “The promise of the Future,” we are told, “shin[es] over the ashes of the Past!” (108). While the Armadales pères found themselves bound up by the obligations of status —locked in a pre-modern blood-feud— their sons are able to overcome what seems like fate (recall the ship’s name, Le Grace De Dieu) to ratify a peaceful, horizontal relationship between equals. The novel culminates as Ozias and Allan establish a contractual brotherhood: an agreement, sealed by handshake, between the sons of sworn family enemies. This connection finalizes what Elaine Hadley refers to as the Reform era’s “shift from an old … vertical system of status relations to a new … horizontal system in which transactions were commercial, private, and contractual” (46). Their new union is in other words based not on kinship bonds of blood but on voluntary consent: it is a transactional relationship sealed by handshake, a merger.

“[W]hile we live, brother, your love and mine will never be divided again,’ [Ozias said]. They shook hands in silence” (677). Here contract defeats status, and liberty, equality, and a powerfully figurative fraternity (it is not based on blood) close the book on Collins’s historical plot.

The novel’s juxtaposition of an outdated slavery and a modern union between economically equivalent subjects places its analysis in the territory of Mill and Maine. Following Mill, the novel acknowledges that modern marriage is a contract too, a fact Collins plays for laughs as Allan and Neelie Milroy read naively through Blackstone’s Commentaries:

“Is there nothing about Love?’ asked Neelie. ‘Look a little lower down.’ ‘Not a word,’ [Allan said]. ‘He sticks to his confounded ‘Contract,’ all the way through’” (456). But while the action of Armadale’s historical plot naturalizes the abstract subjects of such contracts as modern, concluding its historical sequence with a handshake ratifying the equivalence
between qualitatively *different* Allan Armadales, Collins’s tacit approval of this modern stage is couched within a surprisingly far-reaching critique.

In fact, as multiple readers have observed, Collins was fascinated with defending difference, valorizing the idiosyncratic or marginal over the “typical” in ways that self-consciously reverse what Alex Woloch has identified as the modern novel’s “distribution of attention” away from minor characters (12-42). The formal conceit of *Armadale*’s main action highlights this very antagonism between major and minor, figure and ground, as two heroes, one dark and one light, share the same name and compete, in structural terms, for status as the referent for the novel’s title. But Collins’s apparent interest in investing his marginal figures is clear in *Armadale*’s treatment of these two potential heroes. The light-haired Allan and the fetching Neelie act their proper parts as hero and heroine of a typical English novel. They exchange banal lovers’ talk (though about what their names would be if they were different people [246-7]), and coo with one another in saccharine tones (albeit as they wade through “the bottomless abyss of English law” [456]).

In contrast to these second-hand souls, Ozias is what Mill’s *Logic* would call an unabstracted particular—a qualitatively *different* thing—and it is to Allan’s apparent credit that he notices this:

Allan had seen in him—what he didn’t see in people in general. He wasn’t like the other fellows in the neighbourhood. All the other fellows were cut out on the same pattern. Every man of them was equally healthy, muscular, loud, hard-headed, clean-skinned, and rough; every man of them drank the same draughts of beer, smoked the same short pipes all day long, rode the best horse, shot over the best dog, and put the best bottle of wine in England on his table at night; every man of

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29 As Pykett summarizes, “[h]is fascination with social outsiders is matched by a well-developed interest in crime and criminality” (138). For a sense of how this fascination with the marginal reverses trends in a broader novelistic tradition, see Woloch “Characterization and Distribution” in *The One vs. The Many*, 12-42.
them sponged himself every morning in the same sort of tub of cold water, and bragged about it in frosty weather in the same sort of way; every man of them thought getting into debt a capital joke, and betting on horse-races one of the most meritorious actions that a human being can perform. They were no doubt excellent fellows in their way; but the worst of them was, they were all exactly alike. It was a perfect godsend to meet with a man like Midwinter – a man who was not cut out on the regular local pattern, and whose way in the world had the one great merit (in those parts) of being a way of his own. (67)

The markers that identify these “equally” banal clubmen are social and economic indicators of the English leisure set. But they are also class markers in another way, for they signal the interchangeability of these subjects within an overarching logical category, their “general[ity].” This is classification in the most double-coded sense: going through the motions of inherited activities (“smok[ing] the same short pipes”), these interchangeable Englishmen, all “cut on the same pattern” and “exactly alike,” are represented as the very opposite of this text’s dark-skinned descendent of a slave. At this point the novel’s polemic seems clear, and two orders of characterization, one problematically abstract and one particular, seem in place. Yet even this apparently fully-voiced valorization of difference is put into the mouth of the typical hero Collins satirizes —Allan— and we notice, on closer inspection, that this blond man’s paean to the powers of individuality refers not to Ozias Midwinter but to “a man like” him. Even here, in the novel’s most fully-voiced “celebration of diversity,” the singular is folded back into the type.

Internally contradictory as it may be, the novel’s interest in valorizing the marginal gives a geopolitical edge to the fact that its most sympathetic character, the one who comes closest to exhibiting absolute singularity, is not English. Dark with the “creole blood” imparted to him in Trinidad (397), Ozias is represented as the more fascinating of the two modern Allan Armadales, just as the bewitchingly international Gwilt emerges as more
colorful than the classically English Blanchard. Collins’s sympathy for characters who are literally peripheral reflects an investment in difference that extends to his treatment of setting. Flitting between the West Indies and Thorpe-Ambrose, the Canary Islands and Italy, the novel’s dense network of action links multiple points in a mid-Victorian world Erich Hobsbawm described as “an increasingly dense web of economic transactions” (62) reaching across the globe. *Armadale* repeatedly emphasizes the fringes of this economic network as the location of a positively-charged particularity, while its scenes depicting classical tableaux of English domestic novels—the countryside, the family estate—are represented as typical in a decidedly negative sense. The novel’s famous shipwreck scene occurs on a rocky, gothic crag in the waters off the coast of the Isle of Man. In weird moonlight and with a surplus of particularizing details (including the proper names of specific rocks, “Spanish Head” and “Calf” [120]), Collins individuates this location, identifying it as distinct from every other place in the world. The town on the Isle of Man is equally particularized. Castletown, writes Collins, is like literally no other location on earth:

> It is doubtful if there is a place on the habitable globe which, regarded as a sight-seeing investment offering itself to the spare attention of strangers, yields so small a per-centage of interest in return, as Castletown. (114)

A pun on “interest” allows this sentence to satirize the assumptions of transactional logic (“investment,” “yields,” “per-centage”) in order to declare, ironically, that this spot won’t repay attention from economically-minded travelers.

But Collins himself “invest[s]” no fewer than three full pages describing the features of this transactionally unrewarding town, spinning artful sentences that describe its architecture, its geographical setting, its inhabitants, its “prevalent colour” (“faint grey” [114]), even detailing “various interesting discoveries in connection with the laws and
constitution” made by Ozias and Allan (115). When the novels’ action shifts to what is described as the “singular place” (255) in the northern moors called “The Broads,” we are told that “the shore in these wild regions was not like the shore elsewhere” (255). Similarly individualizing descriptions accompany accounts of other non-English locales, including Germany, Italy, and even the derelict, lawless suburbs of the metropolis itself, site of Doctor Downward’s gothically-rendered mental institution. (No diegetic action takes place on Barbados or Trinidad.) What these scenes show is that Armadale endows the peripheries of England’s global network of exchange, not its core, with a positively-charged particularity, while the stock scenes of domestic fiction are represented as just that: stock scenes.

The chapter describing the Isle of Man is entitled “Day and Night,” a phrase that aptly describes the difference between Collins’s vivid, particularizing description of that “happy little island [that] rejoiced in laws of its own” (115), and his account of the classically English locale of Thorpe-Ambrose. Not only does Collins neglect to describe this clichéd countryside manor, but he makes a joke of not doing so. Miss Milroy says something, and

Before Allan could reply, they turned the corner of the plantation, and came in sight of the cottage. Description of it is needless; the civilized universe knows it already. It is the typical cottage of the drawing-master’s early lessons in neat shading and the broad pencil touch – with the trim thatch, the luxuriant creepers, the modest lattice-windows, the rustic porch, and the wicker birdcage, all complete.

“Isn’t it lovely?” said Miss Milroy. “Do come in!” (179)

Thus the English, the domestic, the moneyed—all of this is characterized by both visual cliché and the adjective “typical.” (Miss Milroy, vapid to the end, can do nothing but call it “lovely.”) In fact Collins describes not the cottage itself but an aesthetic rendering of it, in a drawing-master’s practice sketches: doubly mediated, abstracted twice into images based on other images, to “civilized” eyes, the scene is typical, not itself.

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Just as in the depiction of English clubmen who can be exchanged with one another endlessly, this scene finds Collins satirizing the fiduciary logic of abstraction on another level. Conspicuously *not* particularized, the cottage is located at the very epicenter of England’s “civilized universe”; it thus falls under the abstracting power of metropolitan typicality, where one cottage can be exchanged with another member of its own category (“English Cottage”) with apparently no loss of descriptive effect. It is rather to the underdeveloped fringes of this clichéd realm that Collins directs his descriptive energies, endowing those areas with a vividly-imagined singularity. We see, for example, that at the “outskirts of the little town of Thorpe-Ambrose,”

> Nature was uninviting; man was poor; and social progress, as exhibited under the form of building, halted miserably. [...] All the wastepaper of the town seemed to float congenially to this neglected spot; and all the fretful children came and cried here, in charge of all the slatternly nurses who disgraced the place. [...] No growth flourished in these desert regions, but the arid growth of rubbish; and no human creatures rejoiced but the creatures of the night—the vermin here and there in the beds, and the cats everywhere on the tiles. (376)

The picture is far more than a drawing master’s sketch, something different from “lovely.”

In a particularizing mode, *Armadale’s* narration traces a relationship between the clichéd realm of “social progress”—“the little town of Thorpe-Ambrose”—and the “neglected” regions at its margins, registering the economic distance between the two, and their connectedness as part of a single system, at the level of aesthetic practice.

Collins’s novel repeatedly draws analogies between the financial logic of exchange associated with “types” and what it styles as this abstraction’s cognate forms, social convention and aesthetic cliché. The multiple levels of *Armadale’s* critique become clear in the scenes satirizing Major Milroy’s clock, that ill-conceived creative effort in which the “perfect discipline” of the machine’s literally wooden characters comically breaks down.
(224). (The scene finds Collins self-reflexively commenting on what reviewers never failed to call the “machinery” of his own novels [224, 225]). But Armadale extends its critique of mechanical aesthetics even further than this, proceeding to associate modern or “civilized” creative practices like Milroy’s with actual violence. Lydia Gwilt’s hackneyed lie to Midwinter sets the plot on course toward its final scene—poison gas, an attempted murder, a suicide. The creative villain has made up a story about her past life in order to convince Midwinter she’s someone else. But it is a bad story:

“There was nothing new in what I told him; it was the commonplace rubbish of the circulating libraries. A dead father; a lost fortune; vagabond brothers, whom I dread ever seeing again; a bedridden mother dependent on my exertions —No! I can’t write it down!” (491)

Gwilt’s admission of her guilt frames this novel’s distinction between interchangeable literary clichés and vividly particular fiction. Via this oddly sympathetic anti-hero, Collins’s autoreferential gesture suggests that unlike Milroy’s clockwork plot or Gwilt’s twice-told tale, a specific narrative will have an identity—distinguishing marks that make it singular—while the “commonplace” or commodified fiction “of the circulating libraries” can be reduced, as it is here, to a list of stock plot devices. That Collins’s own novel earned him an unprecedented sum, appeared serially in the respectable Cornhill, and circulated in those same libraries are among this passage’s distinct ironies. Armadale’s self-contradictory critique posits a particularizing literary practice as the realm of the non-exchangeable or incommensurable, an aesthetic ideology whose ironies are further complicated by its treatment of its anti-hero, Gwilt. On the one hand, Gwilt (like Ozias) is a sympathetic defeater of cliches; on the other hand, she is a murderess. And although Gwilt finally dies, this poetic justice was of a feeble
sort, according to contemporary reviewers, who complained that this sensation novel’s unexampled villain had not been punished enough.

The novel’s ambivalence toward its intermittently appealing writer-villain — she is in this sense very much like *The Woman in White*’s Fosco — can be taken as evidence of its self-contradictory stance toward the modernity this post-1851 plot documents. Even as *Armadale* naturalizes the freely acting, monetary subject of the contract form as “modern” (as we saw in the happy ending of Ozias’s handshake), it also attacks the literally deadening effects of that very abstraction. As the representative of an epoch of free-agents, Gwilt literalizes what Adorno calls abstraction’s “rage” to subsume the world (*Dialectic* 23), or what Matthew Arnold referred to, in 1861, as democracy’s effort “to affirm its own essence, to live, to enjoy, to possess the world” (5, italics original). And when Gwilt wonders “Why am I not always […] like a wicked character in a novel? Why? Why? Why?” (559), *Armadale*’s self-reflexive (and self-contradictory) critique of exchange logic turns full-circle, forging a connection between the lethal violence of its plot and the flattening force of aesthetic abstraction. Self-contradictory as it may be, this critique of typological procedure registers as a specifically political one in a moment, 1866, when the universal equivalence imagined in Mill’s *Logic* was being put into (limited) institutional form by the Second Reform Bill and being enacted, materially, as the British financial empire was busy extending its networks of exchange across the globe.

Those networks are where *Armadale* takes place. Ranging in time across the entire “Age of Reform,” from the 1830s to the 1860s, *Armadale* superimposes over this timeline a spatial organization that spans the globe. Its setting is therefore the imperial network itself, that “increasingly dense web of economic transactions” based in England but reaching
across the world. At a moment when the expansion of international capital markets meant that England acted “as banker, moneylender, insurer, shipper, and wholesaler to the world at large” (Cain and Hopkins 163), this plot shuttles over trade and communication lanes connecting London to Barbados to Italy and to the not-incidentally chosen “Isle of Man,” among many other locations.

Tracing the movement of money, people, and communications throughout the world of Victorian universalism, Armadale’s double-generational plot also links the epochs it appears to separate. Like its slave-based backstory, the novel’s modern plot can be said to take place through Liverpool, that legendary entrepôt of the eighteenth and nineteenth century slave trade and hub, in the 1860s, of a newly global commerce. “I spare you,” Ozias writes to Mr. Brock, as the plot begins in earnest, “the account of our stormy voyage, of our detention at Liverpool, and of the trains we missed on our journey across the country” (156). What it means, in a novel explicitly about slavery, for Allan and Ozias to be “detained” in Liverpool is left for the reader to imagine. What is clear is how this plot traces the history of its global setting from its origins to its denouement, from the eighteenth century traffic in slaves to its current or “modern” phase. Attending to the dark history of the global modernity it documents, Armadale reaches as far back as the era of British accumulation in the West Indies; it moves as far forward as the moment when the money issuing from those sugar plantations has been properly forgotten, laundered, “Blanched” —arriving through Liverpool but transformed into cleaner, more respectable English money in the countryside manor of (for instance) Thorpe-Ambrose.

It is true that Armadale is partially concerned to expunge the dark past it outlines, sealing it in the past in order to welcome in a more modern (contractual) present. “[O]ut of
Evil may come Good,” exclaims Midwinter in the novel’s final scene, just before his handshake (677). The grammatical uncertainty implied by “may” is important, though, for in the novel’s ambivalent historicism, good might come out of evil, but a series of past crimes, committed under an earlier regime of slavery, reappear as a troubling and unexpungeable specter in the present—the ghost of past damage that will not go away. More lethal than Lydia Gwilt’s free agency, more scandalous than Miss Oldershaw’s ability to reinvent herself in multiple roles, the primal violence of slavery has power to efface the characters of those who profit from it.

Midwinter’s father, raised among the “half-castes” to whom he dictated law, is literally destroyed by his association with this economic system, having sustained a “paralytic affection” in the West Indies (sic 15), a disease that reduces him from a particular person to a blank slate. His eyes roll in his head, and

[t]he rest of his face [was] as void of all expression of the character within him, and the thought within him, as if he had been dead. There was no looking at him now, and guessing what he might once have been. The leaden blank of his face met every question as to his age, his rank, his temper, and his looks which that face might once have answered, in impenetrable silence. Nothing spoke for him now but the shock that had struck him with the death-in-life of Paralysis. The doctor’s eye questioned his lower limbs, and Death-in-Life answered, I am here. (13, italics original)

The disease is syphilis, but, unnamed, it is also the crippling, singularity-effacing effect of the most literal form of human exchange. In Armadale’s telling, the institution of capital accumulation by human bondage has the power to convert the singularity of its practitioners into zoe or bare life—“I am here.” The “social death” Orlando Patterson associates with chattel slavery is thus cunningly turned around, and here it is not the slave, but the master who has “bec[o]me a social nonperson” (Patterson 5). Inheritor of a slave fortune, despot in a colonial zone, Allan Wrentmore/Armadale is “Death-in-Life,” departicularized—the most
haunting kind of Victorian thing. What were once his individuating marks (age, rank, temper, looks) cannot speak for this slaver now.

Like Mill, who as part of a polemic on the American Civil War argued for the corrosive power of slavery on the civilized societies who practice it, Collins appears here to indulge in the suggestion that the main evil of this social form was its power to degrade its beneficiaries. Mill’s review of J.E. Cairnes’ *The Slave Power* (1862), like his other temporally-inflected political writings, argued with a strange assurance that this most basic kind of human exploitation was a thing of the past, an archaic or doomed form that had stubbornly stretched into the current epoch. Mill’s historicism posited that an era of modern liberty would eventually close the door on this violence; he argued, furthermore and in a slightly different context, that “the great extent and rapid increase of international trade” would prove “the principal guarantee of the peace of the world” and “the great permanent security for the uninterrupted progress of the ideas, institutions, and character of the human race” (qtd Howe 27, emphasis added). Armadale redirects Mill’s optimistic interest in character, tracing an uncanny linkage between past and present forms of human commodification. The very design of this double-generational plot insists not just on the separation between past and present but on their continuity, on the intimate relationship one bears to the other.

One way Armadale traces the links between old and new forms of human exchange is by figuratively connecting slavery and the modern market in labor, that supposedly ennobling institution that is the point of entry, via a newspaper ad, for the novel’s murderous governess. When Mrs. Milroy argues for the advertisement that will ultimately secure Gwilt’s services, she reasons that “[m]y niece’s governess was originally obtained by an advertisement, and you may imagine her value to us when I tell you that she lived in our
family for more than ten years” (178). In doing so, this respectable woman unwittingly tells us that even in the modern market, a person has “value” and can be “obtained” — though this servitude is bought on a free market and not a Barbados auction block. Before he becomes Allan’s right-hand man, Ozias too has suffered the pains of a free market system, having learned about the civilized world from the bottom up: “It has been my good fortune to see something of Society,” he says. “I have helped to fill its stomach and black its boots” (93). Scenes like this find Collins bearing witness to the fact that the triangular trade in slavery that made the nearly-dead Armadale “the richest man in Barbados” had, by the moment of the Great Exhibition (when Armadale’s action is set) and by the year of Reform (in which it was published), improved into a global system of exchange characterized by the metaphorical violence of abstraction as well as its more literal forms, allegorized here in sequences of attempted murder, poison gas, and forced detention in Dr. Downward’s psychological ward.

In contrast to Mill’s paean to the powers of trade, then, Collins’s novel charts the persistence of violence from an apparently outdated era of slave accumulation into a newer one, in its novelistic present; in doing so it attends to the historical development of a “contractual” modernity in which violence changes forms but does not go away. Internally contradictory as it may be, Armadale’s engagement with liberal theory shows it to be in dialogue with its contemporaries even as it attends to the ghosts that theory believed would soon be past, a double relation that is finalized in the novel’s bravura final sentences. As Midwinter approaches a window, he sees that “the darkness had passed. The first light of the new day met him as he looked out, and rested tenderly on his face” (677). In this stunning conclusion, Armadale tells us with apparent confidence that an overpowering
metaphorical darkness has “passed,” that it is gone. But it also tells us that the “light” arriving to replace that darkness falls directly “on his face”: on the very face that, flush with Trinidadian blood, registers the persistence of a dark history into the present, and the future.

Attention to the melancholic interventions of Collins’s novel can open new questions not just about the aesthetic or political predilections of one author who was throughout his life, as Peters writes, “intrigued by questions of identity, substitution, and doubling” (202). It also begins to connect these biographical matters with the theoretical and material complications of liberal imperialism in the Reform era, when a newly centralizing, increasingly democratic British state, operating under the auspices of peace and trade, addressed its power of abstraction to a progressively expanding field of particular bodies within its boundaries. Claiming the power to manage the lives of those citizens who fell within its official count, this state also reserved the power to exert its force on the bodies beyond its edges — in those underdeveloped zones, internal and external, where, as Collins wrote, “social progress” was “halted miserably.” In his notes on the money form that would become *Capital*, Marx describes how “the developed system of exchange” erases distinctions, creating abstract “individuals [who] seem independent […] but they appear thus only for someone who abstracts from the *conditions, the conditions of existence* within which these individuals enter into contact” (*Grundrisse* 163-4, emphasis original). *Armadale* looks to reverse the abstracting process Marx and Mill very differently charted, drawing attention to the global conditions of possibility, the ground, that allowed Victorian theory to conceptualize the figure of its modernity.
2.7 Allegory / Archive / Method

In a chapter that has touched on method, I conclude with a section that theorizes my own. Mill, Marx, and Collins all responded to the theoretical novelty of the decade of Reform by attempting to describe what Marx called the “mystical” logical process fundamental to liberal democratic sovereignty. Noting this allows us to more tightly historicize existing accounts of the conversion process Adorno and Jameson— with Collins— critique, linking it to the widening franchise and concomitant expansion, at mid-century, of both biopolitical state institutions (“The Central Office”) and capitalist production in its manufacturing and financial dispensations. But Marx’s account of the mystery of exchange also allows us to circle back to literature and to method, to note the properly poetic core of Mill’s inductive program. In the Logic’s many separate efforts to define induction, “that operation of the mind” is described as an operation or a procedure or a process that moves from particular to general. “In other words,” Mill writes in one of these efforts at definition, it is “the process by which we conclude that what is true of certain individuals of a class is true of the whole class” (CW VII, 289). Though he tries twice just here (“In other words”), Mill has not defined induction but explained its result, restating his original terms for mediation (“operation,” “process”). The very unrepresentability of this process has led one commentator to observe that “Inductive Reasoning, which has long been the Glory of science,” has not “ceased to be the scandal of Philosophy” (qtd. Randall 60.)

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30 See The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume 1, 140-142, and more expansively, The Birth of Biopolitics.
Mill’s multiple efforts to characterize this “scandal of Philosophy,” his efforts to name the “cognitive process” that would link the level of “facts” to that of “knowledge,” dissolve again and again into a repetition of key terms framed in what we have to recognize as an artful vagueness — a “mystery.” The central “problem” in the Logic, as one commentator puts it, is “how [to] get from facts to science, ‘by experience.’” This is the problem of scientific method, of ‘generalizing,’ as Mill assumes, from particulars” (Randall 66, emphasis added). In a foundational reading of inductive logic reaching back to the eighteenth century, Mary Poovey has likewise described “the problem of induction” as “the methodological problem of moving [...] to general principles” (313-4).³¹ In his own efforts to theorize this multiply problematic operation, Mill circles repeatedly around the crucial step or “operation” of mediation, which he has earlier described, tellingly, as “the main question of the science of logic – the question which includes all others” (CW VII 283, emphasis added). What emerges is that the multiple efforts to answer this question, to name induction, lead not to the description of its content but to the restatement of it as a question: whatever it is that “justifies” the “drawing [of] an inference” concerning a given case or set of cases remains untheorized, perhaps untheorizable (CW VII 283). The decisive process of induction emerges, in other words, as an unrepresentable or properly unnameable cognitive event separating named particularity and “real knowledge.”

³¹ Poovey's focus is on the way “numbers continued to accumulate cultural value” during the 1830s (313), but she also alludes to how “numerical information (eventually) became the British government’s preferred mode of knowledge” (5). Her History of the Modern Fact traces what might be called the longue durée of thinking about facts, linking “the problem of induction” to the developing logics of what might be called another “problematic” formation, “modernity.” James Chandler’s discussion of Romantic casuistry in England in 1819 focuses on the consequence of this problem to the procedures of historicist criticism. I am indebted to both accounts, but am attempting to draw focus here on what we might call a more particular frame of time, the 1860s, linking Mill’s work on abstraction to the abstraction necessary to a liberal state transitioning into a form of liberal democracy we recognize as contemporary.
The point is not to critique Mill for a somehow faulty theory of induction, but to
draw attention to this logical theory’s structuring blindspot, the poetic “leap” placed at the
heart of a program dictating that all objects or processes are potentially available for
abstraction. Mill refers us to the dangers of making false inductions, to the logical perils that
follow from using past observations to make bad predictions of future outcomes. Given the
provisional nature of all inductions, he asks, how can we be sure that any given induction is
valid, that any process of generalization is, as he wrote, “justifiable”? Mill explains that the
guarantee for determining good inductions rests not on the profusion of sensory input, nor
on any external, measurable, or “markable” function, but on the skill and subtly (or “art”)
of the reasoner himself — on what we might call his genius:

Why is a single instance, in some cases, sufficient for a complete induction, while in
others, myriads of concurring instances, without a single exception known or
presumed, go such a very little way towards establishing an universal proposition?
Whoever can answer this question knows more of the philosophy of logic than the
wisest of the ancients, and has solved the problem of induction. (CW VII, 314)

This is how Mill ends his chapter on induction. In this way he leaves a central, irreducible
mystery at the heart of what is still, even after these many pages, “the problem of induction.”
We can go further to suggest, as several of Mill’s commentators have, that the creation of
valid inductions is a properly creative process, a poetic operation of the mind whereby
qualitatively different things (particularities) are turned, troped, abstracted one level upward
into something “higher,” purer — no longer particular. Writes one of Mill’s interpreters:

“Induction is really an ‘art’” (Kubitz 183-4).

As the analyses by Woloch, Lynch, and Poovey I quoted at the outset of the chapter
all indirectly predicted, the category of “art” will prove crucial to Mill’s attempt to name the
operation by which particularities can be converted to abstractions. Indeed it is art or “the
aesthetic” itself that will emerge as the central category in Mill’s most direct attempts to explain how hidden agreements might be contained and represented in that non-existent, properly abstract subject he calls the type. For Marx, money is the magic force that can put qualitatively distinct facts (linen, shirts, corn, iron) into relationships of equivalence; for Mill, the magic that provides that unnameable linkage is called “genius.” It is this last mysterious faculty that provides, for Mill, the connective tissue that can mediate between case and law, particularity and general abstraction.

In the 1832 essay “On Genius,” written during the early draft stages of the *Logic*, Mill uses that label as the category that stands in for the successful linking of these separate levels. As in an 1867 address at Edinburgh, in which Mill describes Newton as history’s most successful practitioner of induction, “On Genius” invokes that scientist as the very emblem of the human mind’s successful movement between observation and knowledge. In this account, the example stands in for the process:

Now, the capacity of extracting the knowledge of general truth from our own consciousness, whether it be by simple *observation*, by that kind of self-observation which is called *imagination*, or by a more complicated process of analysis and *induction*, is *originality*; and where truth is the result, whoever says Originality says Genius. […] Whoever knows anything of his own knowledge, not immediately obvious to the senses, manifests more or less of the same faculty which made a Newton or a Locke. Whosoever does this same thing systematically—whosoever, to the extent of his opportunity, gets at his convictions by his own faculties […]—that man, in proportion as his conclusions have truth in them, is an *original thinker*, and is, as much as anybody ever was, a *man of genius* […] (CW I, 332, emphasis original)

Mill explains that “genius” is what provides the connective tissue able to successfully create original but valid equations between qualitatively distinct observed phenomena. Circuitously, then, Mill argues that whoever is able to proceed by proper induction is a genius, and that geniuses are those men able to perform proper induction successfully. The
circularity of Mill’s reasoning is symptomatic of the mysteries attending the “problem” of defining this “operation of the mind” in purely logical terms.

The chapter in the *Autobiography* that describes Mill’s “discovery” of the philosophically scandalous or properly artful leap called induction is called “A Crisis in my Mental Life.” In this account of his celebrated mental breakdown, he outlines once more the difficulties attending induction, recalling that “[a]t the point which I have now reached [in my work on the *Logic*] I made a halt, which lasted five years. I had come to the end of my tether; I could make nothing satisfactory of Induction, at this time” (CW I, 191). The chapter on Mill’s crisis of mind has become famous for other reasons: it details how Mill came to see his own legendary educational training as overly rational, too dry and tending towards a diminution of feeling. Mill came to see, as he reports, that the “analytic habits” able to determine what he calls “permanent sequences in nature; the real connexions between Things […]; [and] natural laws” (CW I, 142, 141) – these lead to the weakening or atrophying of “the passions and the virtues” (CW I, 143). If the work of ascertaining “laws” and “connexions” by abstract reasoning – the work of inductive logic – seems to have led Mill into this crisis, his chapter also details how he got out, describing the system of therapy he devised for himself as a cure.

This, he says, hinged centrally on the restorative powers of literary art — specifically Wordsworth’s *Excursion* (CW I, 149-151). The Wordsworth poem that for George Eliot provided a model for the way aesthetics could layer antagonistic historical moments (see chapter one, above) for Mill formed “a medicine for my state of mind” as he grappled with the complexities of induction. Finding himself “at the end of [his] tether,” Mill’s important chapter on mental breakdown calls induction one of the *Logic’s* “really hard knots” (CW 1
Autobiography Early Draft paragraph 239). Untying this mysterious knot, naming induction’s unthinkable moment of conversion, spurred from this famed writer of nonfigural prose some of the most mystical writing he ever produced, and also his most extended claim for the power of literature. In the Logic Mill sought to obscure the function of “poetry” in induction, papering over the extent to which the category of art had already emerged to name what was an otherwise untheorizable leap.

As I attempt to name this dissertation’s own relationship to the abstracting methodology it has traced, I want to insist on the poetic function Mill attempted to avoid. To this point I have argued for the specificity of Armadale’s efforts in diagnosing the dilemmas of exchange, emphasizing its singular ability to critique abstraction. But it will not have escaped the reader’s attention that throughout this chapter my own account has performed a series of abstracting moves. I’ve read Mill’s diverse works as a class; claimed examples to stand for larger categories; elaborated a functional homology between Mill and Marx; and arrayed a particular series of 1860s novels (but not all of them) under the heading of a set of texts we could call “Reform-era logics of exchange,” then argued how one of them, Armadale, exceeds its own category. If my own analytic gestures have taken the shape of a performative contradiction, as they perform the relationship-making work of exchange while focusing critically on precisely that procedure, I want to conclude with a suggestion of why and how.32 To do so I’ll invoke another critic of modernity’s abstracting power, Walter Benjamin, who along with Adorno may be the most searching diagnostician of how modern

32 With a meta-critical insight that bears on my procedure here, Lauren Berlant has noted that scholarship interested in what she calls “the singularity concept” often contradicts its own assertions in practice, mobilizing “a whole variety of descriptive and interpretive processes of determining likeness, generality, or patterning” in service of an argument against exactly those methods (663n).
conditions of exchange impinge upon method. In an effort to attend to the singularity the objects under his review, Benjamin sought to formulate and practice a criticism that would honor their integrity as qualitatively particular fragments while also insisting on their ability to allegorically represent larger historical claims. He also insisted on this practice as an art.

Arranging jumbled singularities into provisional constellations, Benjamin’s method sought to invest those objects with the power to bear witness to historical damage far beyond their own ability to signify. Properly constellated, singular objects might poetically express or otherwise evoke “abstract” historical narratives – and true ones— without becoming subsumed under any category they might be called upon to represent. In the “Epistemo-Critical Prologue” to his doctoral dissertation, translated as The Origin of German Tragic Drama (1924-25), Benjamin unfolds a quasi-mystical methodological program emphasizing that the singular instance or item of historical information – the fragment, the letter, the episode— can stand as an emblem, or allegorical representation of a larger whole, without becoming the “example” of its “type.” The goal of an allegorical historicism, Benjamin writes in the Arcades Project, is “to discover in the analysis of the small individual moment the crystal of the total event” (Arcades 461).

Refusing any Millite claim to seamless induction, reveling in the disjunctions or misfit between the singular instance and the category it is invoked to represent, Benjamin’s method insists on impossibility of “successfully” performing the move from particular to general. Here the particular is understood always to exceed any category it is made to stand within. It

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33 For Benjamin, “Dialectical mediation … too quickly forced a unity where none in fact existed. Classical German Idealism with its emphasis on the subjective synthesis of reality was less effective than its Platonic predecessor in grasping the objective dimension of truth. Such truth appeared, Benjamin claimed, in what he called ‘ideas.’ Rather than subsuming particular examples under a general rubric, ideas preserved the integrity of concrete objects, which they organized into patterned configurations [called ‘constellations’]” (Jay Marxism and Totality 248).
is absolutely singular. Benjamin’s opposition to what he styled as the positivist logic of inductive claims-making led him to reconsider the outdated literary mode of allegory. For Benjamin, allegory was a discourse of representation in which two levels exist simultaneously, without achieving “synthesis” in a way that was required, but I suggested only mysteriously achieved, in a formal logic like Mill’s.  

34 Allegory, by contrast, was for Benjamin a system of signs or equivalences in which the very artificiality of its representational apparatus (X = Y) revealed the disjunction on which its own process of representation relied. In allegory the equivalence between one level and another (singular to general, example to claim) is fractured, broken, irremediably not-one. Cast into the idiom of historical criticism, allegories thus take the form of splintered, bi-level analyses — dialectical presentations that oscillate between small and large, particular and general, insisting on the finally unbreachable distance between them. Such arguments take the form, therefore, not of seamless logical equations but of miscellanies of objects arrayed together in constellations. These constellations gesture with open artificiality toward larger claims, but finally fail to produce the mediating linkages Benjamin associated with the logic of exchange. But this is a productive failure, since these constellations gather the broken images that themselves testify to the endless damage, the “Passion of the world,” this poetic criticism understands to coincide with the category of “history” (Tragic Drama 166). “ Allegories,” as Benjamin

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34 For Benjamin, “Dialectical mediation … too quickly forced a unity where none in fact existed. […] Rather than subsuming particular examples under a general rubric, ideas preserved the integrity of concrete objects, which they organized into patterned configurations [or ‘constellations’]” (Jay, Marxism and Totality 248).
writes, “are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things” (Tragic Drama 178).35

The stunning miscellany of charged fragments assembled in the work he called The Arcades Project (1927-1940) testifies to the shape and scope of Benjamin’s allegorical historicism, showcasing as well its mourning dedication to the lost objects it constellates. That massive compendium arranges into figurative groupings a wide catalog of fragmentary bits of evidence or “facts” – quotations, comments, truncated essays that do not resolve into a thesis but break off, disjunctively, before a jump-cut. This metonymic procedure refuses the consolation of synthesis or logical conclusion (metaphor), instead reveling in the arcana of dead things. It is haunted by the names of singularities that a logic of exchange would look to efface, to synthesize, or move one level higher. (These are for Benjamin names for

35 In this way Benjamin’s historical method conforms to the metonymic logic of the allegory instead of the metaphoric logic of the symbol, a pairing that also structures Paul de Man’s understanding of allegory (in “The Rhetoric of Temporality”). Where the symbol attempts to make seamless wholes (tropologically speaking, metaphors), allegory insists on the distance between one of its terms and the other, and does not work to bridge this gap but rather radicalizes it, displays it. In this sense it is metonymic. As Jim Hansen writes in a comparison of de Man and Benjamin’s understandings of allegory: “[f]or Benjamin, the critical emphasis on symbolism […] erases the distinction between the transcendental and the material, appearance and essence, subject and object. In rather undialectical ways, symbols actively conceal sociological, contextual, or referential conflict by constructing universal imperatives and continuums. In Benjamin’s thought, and here he is followed closely by de Man, the romantic conception of the symbol posits the beautiful as the true and, likewise, as the truly moral” (Hansen 670). Benjamin would instead seek to sharpen the disjunction between “the transcendental and the material,” immanence and transcendence – to stretch it. I am arguing that this rather abstruse tropological argument has stakes for discussions of method in Victorian Studies. In these terms a “New Historicist” method would represent its figurative procedure as an apt representation for a real historical process, in this sense denying the figurative leap that critics like Fredric Jameson (in Postmodernism) and Alan Liu (in Local Transcendence) have shown is central to this procedure. It engages in metonymy, but passes this metonymy off as metaphor or symbol: a unified logical apparatus. It works immanently but assumes that this immanence can unproblematically “represent” a transcendental claim – to stand as an example of its case. By contrast a cultural studies approach would deny the transcendental historical claim altogether, arguing that its arranged readings and items of evidences, gathered from the mass of Victorian print culture (say), are one narrative, with others that describe a totality that is left implicit because it is the tacit assumption of the method. The name of this assumption is “culture”: it is the grounding “transcendence” that forms not the object, but the condition of possibility for the method itself, which unfolds in the area of the immanent. This process in other words insists on the immanence (detail) without making a claim for the transcendent (historical reality), since this transcendent is left implicit in the approach, as “Victorian culture.” My approach, instead, is to posit a transcendent level (the eternal warfare of the nineteenth century) and run an immanent set of readings (my arguments). I then insist on the disjunction between this dialectic’s two conflicting but relating levels – the immanent (detail) and the transcendent (historical claim). I insist on both; hold fast to the truth content of the latter; and offer the broken space between, unmediated, as a way of emphasizing the poetic or figurative aspect of this dissertation’s particular constellation of details.
the same procedure.) In this Benjamin’s method links to Collins’s effort, in *Armadale*, to defend the particular against the creeping mechanisms – logical as well as material— proper to the idiom of financial abstraction.

In the *Logic*, Mill attempted to produce a rational mechanism for producing analytic links on this model of exchange, but resorted, perhaps unwittingly, to the realms of poetry and genius as the only spheres in which such link making could be explained. By contrast, Benjamin emphasizes the function the poet-allegorist plays in the creation of historical tropes. It is this poet figure who, like Mill’s Wordsworth, is able to arrange constellations of unabstracted materials. It is only by virtue of the lyric power of those constellations –i.e. by virtue of their success as *figures*— that the particular items arrayed for view can link up in even a broken way to the larger historical claims Benjamin calls “truth.” The historian, as a poet, is central to this process:

If the object becomes allegorical under the gaze of melancholy, if melancholy causes life to flow out of it and it remains behind dead, but eternally secure, then it is exposed to the allegorist, it is unconditionally in his power. That is to say it is now quite incapable of emanating any meaning or significance on its own; such significance it has, it acquires from the allegorist. He places it within it, and stands behind it; not in a psychological sense but in an ontological sense (*Tragic Drama* 184).

Insisting on the importance of remaining faithful to singular things Benjamin’s discussion reveals not just how closely this method is related to melancholy, to our endless obligation to minister to dead objects. It also suggests the role that art itself must play in the proceedings.

To be haunted by names, to be obsessed with the lost or marginal singularities denoted by them: this is impossible challenge Benjamin’s method proposes and that *Armadale* invites us to consider. “Let me think,” Lydia Gwilt confides to her diary. “What *haunts* me, to begin with? The Names haunt me!” (424, emphasis original). She is talking
about the profusion of Allan Armadales, but her comment has methodological resonance here. Without any claim to Benjamin’s success or scope, my own account has taken its cues from Collins’ rigorously strange novel and Benjamin’s investment in the damage of modern exchange, reconstituting its own particulars in order to tell a story about how logical procedure and political practice informed one another in a moment of democratic Reform that was also a moment when vast injury was paradoxically produced by the innovations most characteristic of liberty. My suggestion has been that Armadale coordinates the logical dilemmas of modern reform with those of financial exchange, shuttling its action across oceangoing networks first carved by transactions in human bodies and linking, in the 1860s, the empire’s increasingly democratic core and its underdeveloped “outskirts.” Armadale thus addresses itself to a moment when the first liberal empire in history saw its capital and violence transact themselves, under the sign of “law,” across a vast global network, one unrivaled until the even more fully-realized moment of empire that is ours.

To be haunted by names, to be overcome with particulars. As this dissertation shifts to a consideration of what happens outside law’s boundaries, to consider the fates of those particular bodies who remained unabstracked into Victorian England’s law, it also seeks to retain an emphasis on literature, or on what Mill and Benjamin equally understand as poetry. In this spirit I conclude with a relic from the archive of Collins’ friend and collaborator, Charles Dickens. In The Life of Dickens (1872-4), the novelist’s friend John Forster included a transcription of diary pages Dickens wrote and abandoned, and which were discovered only after his death. It is a fragment. In the final two entries Dickens made in this fragmentary diary, a heading was marked with the capitalized title, “AVAILABLE NAMES” (757). Forster reports that this “wonderful list” includes names arrayed into classes and
categories, some of which were eventually included in the author’s famous novels. But there
is also another category, Forster says, a category of those names that had fallen out of any
category at all. “The rest,” he writes, “not lifted into that higher notice by such favour of
their creator, must remain like any other undistinguished crowd.” I will let this crowd of
unabstracted particulars end this chapter on induction and reform. Forster lists several
classes of names, categories and types. “And then,” he says, describing the page, “come the
mass of his ‘available names,’ which stand thus, without other introduction or comment”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOWNDLING</th>
<th>WODDER</th>
<th>FLEDSON</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HOOD</td>
<td>WHELPFORD</td>
<td>HIRLl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUFF</td>
<td>FENNERCK</td>
<td>BRAYLE</td>
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<tr>
<td>TREBLE</td>
<td>GANNERSON</td>
<td>MULLENDER</td>
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<tr>
<td>CHILBY</td>
<td>CHINKERBLE</td>
<td>TRESLINGHAM</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPESSIFER</td>
<td>BINTREY</td>
<td>BRANEKLE</td>
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<tr>
<td>SITTERN</td>
<td>WOZENHAM</td>
<td>MAG</td>
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<tr>
<td>DOSTONE</td>
<td>STILTWALK</td>
<td>CHELLYSON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAY-LON.</td>
<td>STILTINGSTALK</td>
<td>BLENHAM — CL</td>
</tr>
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<td>SNOWELL</td>
<td>STILTSTALKING</td>
<td>BARDOCK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOTTRUM</td>
<td>RAVENDER</td>
<td>SNIGSWORTH</td>
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<tr>
<td>LAMMLE</td>
<td>HOLBLACK</td>
<td>SWENTON</td>
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<tr>
<td>FROSER</td>
<td>MULLEY</td>
<td>CASBY — BEACH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLYANT</td>
<td>REDWORTH</td>
<td>LOWLEIGH — LOWELY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Queedy. Redfoot. Pigrin.
Besselthur. Tarbox (B). Yerbury.
Inge. Tuzzen. Stiltington.
Jump. Twemlow. Podsnap.
GANNAWAY.      LIGHTWORD.      GLIBBERY.
MRS. FLINKS.    TITBULL.       MULVEY.
PEDSEY.        BANGHAM.       HORLICK.
DUNCALF.       KYLE — NYLE.   DOOLGE.
TRICKLEBANK.   PEMBLE.        GANNERY.
SAPSEA.        MAXEY.         GARGERY.
READYHUFF.     ROKESMITH.     WILLSHARD.
DUFTY.         CHIVERY.       RIDERHOOD.
FOGGY.         FLINKS.        PRATTERSTONE.
TWINN.         JEE.           CHINKIBLE.
BROWNSWORD.    HARDEN.        WOPSELL.
PEARTREE.      MERDLE.        WOPSLE.
SUDDS.         MURDEN.        WHHELPINGTON.
SILVERMAN.     TOPWASH.       GAYVERY.
KIMBER.        PORDAGE.       WEGG.
LAUGHLEY.      DORRET — DORRIT. HUBBLE.
LESSOCK.       CARTON.        URRY.
TIPPINS.       MINIFIE.       KIBBLE.
MINNITT.       SLINGO.        SKIFFINS.
RADLOWE.       JOAD.          ETSER.
PRATCHETT.     KINCH.         AKERSHEM.
MAWDETT.
Part II: ...And After
Table 2: Queen Victoria’s Little Wars, 1865-1901 (Farwell 168-71)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1865</td>
<td>Insurrection of freed slaves in Jamaica</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bombardment of Cape Haitian in Haiti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1865-66</td>
<td>Expedition into interior of Arabia from Aden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1866</td>
<td>Fenian raids from United States into Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867</td>
<td>Fenian troubles in Ireland</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Expedition to Honduras</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expedition to Little Andaman Island</td>
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<td>1868</td>
<td>Expedition against the Bizoti Orakzais</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hazara expedition against Black Mountain tribes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Basuto War</td>
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<tr>
<td>1868-70</td>
<td>Maori War in New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1869</td>
<td>Expedition against Bizoti Orakzais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1869-70</td>
<td>Red River expedition in Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>Fenian raid from United States into Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>1871-2</td>
<td>Lushai campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>Expedition against the Dawaris</td>
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<tr>
<td>1873</td>
<td>Town of Omoa in Spanish Honduras bombarded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1873-74</td>
<td>Second Ashanti War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1874-75</td>
<td>Daffla expedition on North-West Frontier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>Naga Hills expedition</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Bombardment of villages on Congo river</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rebellion in Griqualand</td>
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<tr>
<td>1875-76</td>
<td>Rebellion of slavers against British-inspired slavery laws in Mombasa and Kilwa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Operations in Malay Peninsula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877-78</td>
<td>Kaffir War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expedition against Jawaki Afridis</td>
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<tr>
<td>1878</td>
<td>Pirate strongholds in Borneo bombarded</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Gaika War in South Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expedition against Zakha Khel Afridis</td>
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<tr>
<td>1878-80</td>
<td>Second Afghan War</td>
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<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>Expedition against Zakha Khel Afridis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>1869</td>
<td>Expedition against Suliman Khel Pawindahs and others</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Punitive exhibition against Zaumukts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Expedition against Zaumukts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Expedition against Mohmands</td>
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<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>Zulu War</td>
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<td>Expedition against Sekakuni</td>
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<td>1880</td>
<td>Expedition against Batanis</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Expedition against Marris</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Expedition against Mohmands</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Expedition against Malikshahi Waziris</td>
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<tr>
<td>1880-81</td>
<td>The Gun War or Fifth Basuto War</td>
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<tr>
<td>1880-81</td>
<td>First Anglo-Boer War</td>
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<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>Expedition against Mahsud Waziris</td>
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<td>1882</td>
<td>Arabi rebellion</td>
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<td>1883</td>
<td>Bikaneer expedition, India</td>
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<td>1883-84</td>
<td>Akha expedition, India</td>
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<td>1884</td>
<td>Rebellion of Metis in Western Canada</td>
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<td>Zhob Valley expedition</td>
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<td>1884-85</td>
<td>Expedition to Bechuanaland</td>
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<td>1884-85</td>
<td>Gordon Relief expedition</td>
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<td>1885</td>
<td>Bhutan expedition</td>
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<tr>
<td>1885-87</td>
<td>Third Burma War</td>
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<td>1885-98</td>
<td>Wars with Arab slave traders in Nyasa</td>
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<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>Black Mountain or Hazara expedition</td>
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<td>1888-89</td>
<td>Sikhim expedition</td>
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<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>Tonhon expedition</td>
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<tr>
<td>1889-90</td>
<td>Expedition to Sierra Leone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>Chin Lushai campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>Malakand campaign</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mashonaland expedition</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vitu expedition</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Punitive expedition in Somaliland</td>
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Table 2, continued

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>Manipur expedition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hunza and Nagar campaign</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Samana or second Miranzai expedition</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hazara expedition</td>
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<tr>
<td>1891-92</td>
<td>Operations in Uganda</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Campaign in Gambia</td>
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<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>Isazai expedition</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tambi expedition</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chin Hills expedition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>British and French shoot at each other by mistake in Sierra Leone</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First Matabele War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expedition to Nyasaland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893-94</td>
<td>Third Ashanti War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arbor Hills expedition</td>
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<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>Gambia expedition</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disturbances in Nicaragua</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>British expedition to Sierra Leone</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expedition against Kabarega, King of Unyoro, in Uganda</td>
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<tr>
<td>1894-95</td>
<td>Punitive expedition to Waziristan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Nikki expedition</td>
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<td>1895</td>
<td>Chitral campaign</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Brass River expedition</td>
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<tr>
<td>1895-96</td>
<td>Second Matabele War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jameson Raid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fourth Ashanti War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>Bombardment of Zanzibar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rebellion in Rhodesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matabele uprising</td>
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<tr>
<td>1896-98</td>
<td>Reconquest of Sudan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>Operations in Bechuanaland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Operation in Bara Valley, India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897-98</td>
<td>Punitive expedition into Tochi Valley</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tirah campaign</td>
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<td>Year(s)</td>
<td>Event</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897-1903</td>
<td>Conquest of Northern Nigeria (capture of Benin City in 1897)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>Riots in Crete, bombardment of Candia</td>
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<tr>
<td>1898-1902</td>
<td>Suppression of the Mad Mullah in Somaliland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>Campaign in Sierra Leone</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bebejiya expedition, North-East Frontier</td>
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<tr>
<td>1899-1902</td>
<td>Anglo-Boer War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>Boxer Rebellion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aden field force supported Haushabit tribe fight off Human tribe from Yemen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rebellion in Borneo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900-01</td>
<td>Ashanti War</td>
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</tbody>
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Chapter Three. “The hell-like saturnalia of martial law”: Form and Excess, Morant Bay and Swinburne

This stinging and biting, all these ‘little lascivious regrets,’ all this talk of snakes and fire, of blood and wine and brine, of perfumes and poisons and ashes, grows sickly and oppressive on the senses. Every picture is hot and garish with this excess of flaming violent colour.

—John Morley, “Mr. Swinburne’s New Poems” (Saturday Review, 4 August, 1866)

I am almost ashamed to speak of such acts with the calmness and in the moderate language which the circumstances require.

—John Stuart Mill, “The Disturbances in Jamaica” (Parliamentary Speech, 31 July, 1866)

3.1 Ballads of Life and Death

In the late summer of 1866, the Victorian press found itself consumed by reports of transgressions so outrageous, so excessively violent, that they “rocked the English-speaking world” (Hyder Career 39), quickly coming to represent the precise inversion of the ordered balance English political system stood for. I refer to Swinburne: the fifty one Poems and Ballads in Algernon Charles Swinburne’s collection of that name (1866) “shook an entire generation” (LaFourcade 417), 1 stirring reviewers to denounce “these unspeakable foulnesses” (Hyder, ed. 24) and their “hundred lurid horrors” (Hyder, ed. 26). At the same moment other commentators, similarly concerned with social balance, found themselves scandalized by the “savage barbarities” (qtd. Bleby 11) attending another, I will say parallel series of outrages. These were the lurid horrors surrounding the suppression of colonial

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1 LaFourcade’s La Jeunesse de Swinburne (1928) was the first and remains among the most authoritative biographies of the poet. For LaFourcade, Poems and Ballads “est demeurera le livre qui bouleversa toute une génération” (417).
rebellion in Jamaica, in which 439 Jamaican peasants and one dissident politician were killed under a regime of martial law.

“The year 1866,” one historian writes, “may be taken as a datum line from which to measure developments in the law of martial rule” (Fairman 242-243). Reading that observation metonymically, alongside the generation-shaking effect of Swinburne’s collection, this chapter looks to unpack what it claims is the shared logic of these two incidents. To do so, it locates the apparent perversity of both events at a specific moment in the waning years of the era of mid-Victorian global rule, the period the first half of this dissertation has examined in detail. This is the period of domestic calm and ordered peace W.L. Burn understands as the “Age of Equipoise” extending from 1852 to 1867 (15), and that coincides with what Cain and Hopkins, with Arrighi, understand as England’s status as claimant to the mantle of world leadership. Dated at the end of this epoch, particularized within its general category, both Morant Bay and Poems and Ballads expose the violence that purchased the social balance Burn mythologizes, making newly explicit the relationship that had always existed between Victorian imperial law and the force sustaining it. Put differently, this chapter’s contention is that by theorizing an intimate relationship between violence and order, form and excess, Swinburne’s poetic experiments reveal a faultline in a liberal theory that was also exposed, materially, by the British government’s “excessive” and “extralegal” response to rebellion in Jamaica.

I want to do something very different from excuse those violences and something more than read their relationship as a chance to mount an artful juxtaposition of apparently
unrelated historical events. Rather, this chapter will suggest that the hyperbolically violent suppression of the Morant Bay Rebellion and the exactly contemporaneous publication of Swinburne’s hyperbolically violent were felt as analogous affronts to a Victorian liberal theory that understood that its orderliness could operate as the very cancellation of excess. Like the Governor Eyre controversy, which conjured outrage but ended with Eyre’s acquittal and the payment of his court costs by the British state, Swinburne’s jangling, happily sickened verse exposed the lie of the assumption that law and peace were interchangeable terms. Both events exposed, instead, the way the forms of law are, as Walter Benjamin writes, “necessarily and intimately bound” to violence (“Critique” 295). Swinburne’s Poems and Ballads and the experiments in colonial force delivery in eastern Jamaica in this way reveal a crucial contradiction in Victorian political theory in the waning years of what mid-twentieth century readers, with the Victorians themselves, understood as Victorian England’s age of equipoise, as geopolitical changes meant that peripheral events put increased pressure on metropolitan thinkers to theorize the role force played in an empire of peace. Both events thus mark a hinge in a the cycle of British hegemony, which as Giovanni Arrighi has argued shifted from its “high” phase to its initial decline in the years directly following Morant Bay.

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2 On the paratactic strategies of new historicist work, see, for example Frederic Jameson, Postmodernism; or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism: “Elegance here [in the New Historicism] consists in constructing bridge passages between the various concrete analyses, transitions or modulations inventive enough to preclude the posing of theoretical or interpretive questions” (188 et passim). As I suggested in a note to chapter two, my account differs from this method in the sense that I am looking to forgo the “bridge passages” that would “successfully” complete the circuit of methodological induction. Instead I am attempting to radicalize the disjunction between them and by doing so insist on their operation as figures allegorizing a larger historical claim.
The opening salvo of the mid-Victorian era’s most disturbing literary event is a meditation on violence and art called “A Ballad of Life.” Complemented by the collection’s second poem, “A Ballad of Death,” this first effort announces its political stakes by articulating the key terms of the changing dispensation of nineteenth century sovereignty I discussed in chapter two. At the same time, it sets the terms for what have come to be alternately denounced and romanticized as the tortured inversions of Swinburne’s perverse art — an aesthetic in which love and pain (like “life” and “death”) intertwine, and both are subordinated to the bare force Swinburne names “desire.” The poem centers on a beautiful, lute playing woman, “fervent as a fiery moon” (4): this is Swinburne’s figure for the spark of poetic inspiration. The poem’s speaker gazes at this beautiful woman, is transfixed by her, and then hears the song she plays, notes that shatter its listeners with “extreme sad delight” (6). Like the rest of the collection, this opening poem’s thematic emphasis is on “extreme”: not a pillar of virtue or an embodiment of moderating calmness, Swinburne’s figure for art is a despotic power, a kinetic force demanding violent allegiance: “blood burn[s] and swoon[s] / Like a flame rained upon” (6-7) in her presence. This is an all-powerful, indelicate muse, one who exacts worship from “maidens” and earns it from the poet himself:

My soul said in me; This is marvelous,  
Seeing the air’s face is not so delicate  
Nor the sun’s grace so great,  
If sin and she [i.e., poetry] be kin or amorous.

1 In the Bonchurch edition and several other modern reprints, the first of the Poems and Ballads is Swinburne’s “Dedication” to Edward Burne-Jones, but both 1866 editions begin with “A Ballad of Life”: the legitimate Moxon edition puts the dedication at the end, and the “pornographic” Hotten edition dispenses with the dedication altogether.

4 As Foucault explains in the 1976 lectures later titled Society Must be Defended: “And I think that one of the greatest transformations political right underwent in the nineteenth century was precisely that, I wouldn’t say exactly that sovereignty’s old right – to take life or let live – was replaced, but it came to be complemented by a new right which does not erase this old right but which does penetrate it, permeate it. This is the right, or rather precisely the opposite right. It is the power to ‘make’ live and ‘let’ die. The right of sovereignty was the right to take life or let live. And then this new right is established: the right to make live and to let die” (241).
And seeing where maidens served her on their knees,
I bade one crave of these
To know the cause thereof.

(41-47)

“This is marvelous”: in the epiphanic moment that opens *Poems and Ballads*, Swinburne’s speaker awakens to the possibility of an aesthetics born of “sin” rather than “grace,” “great[ness],” or “delica[cy].” Retooling the juxtapositions announced in the Baudelaire volume he had praised in an 1862 essay, Swinburne uses a tight matrix of internal rhyme and networked alliteration, along with a formal scheme borrowed from Dante, to fashion “A Ballad of Life” as an essay in poetic order. But lodged within this exhibit in the laws of form is a precise negation of then-ascendant Victorian associations of formal beauty with goodness and truth. Swinburne’s speaker finds art in crime and the forces that engender it rather than in the softening calmness that leads to right reason.

Associations between beauty and moderation (or what “A Ballad of Life” calls “grace” and “goodness”) had been drawn as much by Kant as by Keats, and structured the political assumptions of liberal England as much as they structured its aesthetic ones. In his theoretical essays of 1867, for example, Matthew Arnold would see the finest of literary arts as the epitome of “sweetness and light,” the elevating machinery in a program of liberal-

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5 On the form of “A Ballad of Life” and “A Ballad of Death,” see Lafourcade 441-2, where the biographer cites WM. Rossetti’s early reading to offer a genealogy of Swinburne’s influences (here, Italian). For a recent overview of Baudelaire along lines I outline here for Swinburne, see Debarati Sanyal, *The Violence of Modernity: Baudelaire, Irony, and the Politics of Form*.  
6 As David Wayne Thomas’s *Cultivating Victorians* symptomatically suggests, Kantian aesthetics can be seen as the artistic counterpart to the idealist logic of Victorian liberal theory, where, as Amanda Anderson has recently demonstrated, “disinterest” was a prerequisite for right action. Anderson’s *The Powers of Distance* both argues for and is symptomatic of the central role “disinterest” played in these liberal and neoliberal ideologies, a centrality that concept also enjoys in Kantian aesthetics. As the editors of Kant’s third critique put it: “in a judgement of taste […] pleasure is produced, in an attitude of disinterested contemplation, not by a practical concern for utility or advantage in possession of an object, but by the free and harmonious play of the cognitive faculties of imagination and understanding that the beautiful object induces” (xvii). I return to Kant’s political aesthetics – via Matthew Arnold— below.
aesthetic uplift. Composed in the aftermath of the Hyde Park riots—another disturbance in the late summer of 1866—Arnold’s treatise saw art as what would cultivate the rational moderation necessary to a liberal state, a mechanism for instructing unruly masses in the virtues of calm. Culture was the best vehicle, Arnold thought, for hastening “the growth and predominance of our humanity proper, as distinguished from our animality” (Culture 61–2). For Swinburne, by contrast, the vital force of physical transgression (the “animality” of “sin”) trumps the abstractions of both sweetness and light, and indeed of “humanity” itself. The allegorical figure for beauty—the woman Swinburne calls “kin or amorous” with “sin”—is attended by three allegorical male figures. In the stanza’s closing lines, a series of colons function as semantic equal signs, resolving three successive abstractions into the physical energies that are their motor:

Then Fear said: I am Pity that was dead.
And Shame said: I am Sorrow comforted.
And Lust said: I am Love.

(47–50)

In Swinburne’s telling, the abstract virtues of Arnold’s “humanity” are revealed to be matters of bodily reaction. “Fear” is the true name of “Pity,” “Shame” is the identity of “Sorrow,” and the most cherished of Dickensian emotions, “love,” is exposed as nothing more exalted than its physical instantiation, “Lust.” Adam Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) had long before argued that “Fear,” “Pity,” and “Lust” are all primal, pre-cognitive physical

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7 Arnold articulates a view of culture “in which all the love of our neighbor, the impulses toward action, help, and beneficence, the desire for removing human error, clearing up human confusion, and diminishing human misery, the noble aspiration to leave the world better and happier than we found it—motives eminently such as are called social, come in as part of the grounds of culture, and the main and pre-eminent part” (Culture and Anarchy 59). J. Hillis Miller frames the distinction between Arnold and Swinburne in terms that have connections to those I draw out here: “Arnold always keeps himself erect and aloof [...]” but for Swinburne, “the more powerful the sensation, the better” (The Disappearance of God 244–5, qtd. McGann 34).
reactions — “passions,” as Smith terms them, what Kant names “affect” or functions of what Arnold calls “animality.” Swinburne’s exercise in poetic form thus rewrites the abstract idealism of Victorian sentimentalism (“sweetness,” “light,” “love”) into vectors of physical matter and equally material physiological response.

Like the rest of Poems and Ballads, “A Ballad of Life” was recalled by its publisher for fear of legal action after chastening reviews attended its initial July 1866 publication. The collection was later republished by a printer of pornographic material, John Camden Hotten. The priority of “passion’s” bare force over idealist visions of law had already emerged in a more directly political context a year earlier, in November of 1865. That month a packet ship arrived from Kingston, bringing bundled newspapers and dispatches that contained near-pornographic news describing the material force required to put down rebellion among black peasants in Jamaica. In The Black Atlantic (1993), Paul Gilroy points to the importance of the Eyre controversy to imperial England in the Victorian years, but leaves this violence out:

In the work of reinterpretation and reconstruction, reinscription and relocation required to transform England and Englishness, discussion of the cleavage in the Victorian intelligentsia around the response to Governor Eyre’s handling of the Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica in 1865 is likely to be prominent. Like the English responses to the 1857 uprising in India […], it may well turn out to be a much more formative moment than has so far been appreciated. Morant Bay is doubly significant because it represents an instance of metropolitan, internal conflict that emanates directly from an external colonial experience. (Gilroy 11)

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8 See The Theory of Moral Sentiments, esp. 1-66. In the Third Critique Kant argues for the danger these unregulated emotions posed to the law of reason, distinguishing between “passions” and “affect.” The theorist of disinterest and law explains his preference for the first: “affects” are, for Kant, unruly, extralegal feelings —“tumultuous and unpmeditated”— while “passions” are “sustained and considered” (154), and are thus importantly related to the “regulative functions” of law. I return to Kant’s sense of sublime law below.
Gilroy’s alliterative call for reinterpretation and relocation correctly opens up the definition of “Victorian” to a wider southern Atlantic context. His sense of how an “internal conflict” “emanates” from someplace “external” uses a metaphor of vapor circulation that underscores, too, the procedures of his culturalist method, one where texts circulate and ideas flow; in doing so his account reinscribes this imperial legal crisis as a matter of phenomenology, alluding to its roots in “experience.”

Taking Gilroy’s transatlanticizing gesture as a starting point, my effort in this chapter is to place the Jamaica episode within a larger and more concrete narrative of Victorian biopolitical violence. As I argued in chapter two, inversions of life and death are the province of nineteenth century sovereignty, part of the story whereby the modern liberal state reframed its comportment toward the lives of subjects within its laws and the deaths of those outside them. The accusations of inhuman cruelty that attended the 1866 receptions of both Swinburne’s poems and what became known as the “Jamaica Atrocities” thus mark a moment in the history of the modern state when, as we saw with reference to Collins and Mill, the crucial terms of sovereign power — “life” and “death” — named the changing stance taken by the modern state toward the maintenance of its counted citizens. In this period, as Foucault writes, “the old power of death that symbolized sovereign power was now carefully supplanted by the administration of bodies and the calculated management of life” (History of Sexuality 139-40). Foucault’s object of analysis is a closed and thus tacitly

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9 Gilroy’s comments may inform Ian Baucom’s important reading of the event, which has persuasively shown how the Morant Bay controversy stirred both sides of the debate to a reconsideration of what it meant to be English. For Baucom, as for Catherine Hall and (perhaps less rigorously) for Gilroy, the Governor Eyre affair was “less an inquiry into the legality of one man’s actions than … an examination of the imperial deformations of English identity” (Baucom 49). My investigation draws heavily on this work but looks to relocate the problem as a contradiction in the way liberal theories of “law” imagined violence.
national field of power. But what the Jamaica episode more than any event in the Victorian period exposed was the limit or boundary line or threshold separating the field governed by “the calculated management of life” and those spaces in which “the old power of death” still held perfect sway.

By viewing the Jamaica crisis in legal terms and by unpacking the ideology of atrocity, this chapter looks to reframe the discussion of Morant Bay from a crisis in identity or affective belonging to one focused on political membership and the dispensations of violence that membership prohibited or enabled. Exposing the limits of the biopolitical recovery project of mid-Victorian liberalism, the cases of “Morant Bay and Swinburne” also expose the excess lodged within the law, shedding light, uneasily, on the perverse core of peace itself – a relationship Swinburne’s verse stages as the involvement of sublime force within “beautiful” form. This chapter’s final point will be that the endless war on the colonial fringes – its constant exception— worked as the supplemental other to the rule of metropolitan peace I discussed in relation to Dickens’ and Collins’ lost person plots in chapter two. An analysis of the massive show of imperial force in Jamaica is thus central to this dissertation’s investigation of British lawful “equipoise” since, as one historian of martial law writes, “in the exercise of violence over life and death more than in any other legal act, law reaffirms itself” (Rossiter 286).

But after describing two “parallel” dramas of law and violence, with Swinburne’s excessive, but metrically fastidious poetic project on the one hand, and, on the other, the legal debates over imperial martial law in Jamaica, the final pages of this chapter use the very strategy of juxtaposition I risk here, of setting a poetic event against a political one, as an occasion to reflect on what Mary Poovey, discussing the governing protocols of
contemporary Victorian Studies, has called the “chronically undertheorized area” of mediation (249). This is the methodological question, central to any political cultural criticism, of how one thing (say, a legal controversy about martial law) can be said to sit in relation to another thing (one poet’s stunning first book of poems). Morant Bay and Swinburne: to highlight this academic “and,” to radicalize and to foreground the problem of mediation, of “parallelism,” this chapter follows a counterinductive method I revisit in closing, risking obscurity by breaking up its argument into sections — discrete or synchronic scenes with jump-cuts rather than connections in between. I begin with what one 1866 pamphlet called “the hell-like saturnalia of martial law.”

3.2 “Licking at the police”

Early October, 1865. In a whitewashed courthouse at the far end of England’s largest West Indian colony, a young boy was being tried for simple assault, a minor incident whose fallout would spark what has been called “the most protracted and significant public discussion of the idea of the rule of law during the Victorian era” (Kostal 16). Petty crime was not an uncommon thing in this poverty-wracked strip of territory in the Caribbean Sea. After the final emancipation of slaves in 1838 and the deep decline in sugar production that followed it, fortunes had plummeted for Jamaica’s whites and blacks alike. Incomes were falling, and the wholesome industry that liberal-minded abolitionists believed would spring
up among the black population after emancipation had yet to materialize. Impoverished and only getting more so, by mid-century Jamaica had degenerated into what seemed a shabby anomie — “a place of disappointment and decay, its black population lazy, its planter class decadent and archaic,” as metropolitan observers thought (Hall 24). In the courtroom at Morant Bay, a black man named James Geoghegan shouted some words of protest about the arrested boy’s sentence, saying that the boy shouldn’t be made to pay a four shilling fine; Geoghegan was himself taken into custody. But a crowd of black residents had gathered outside the courthouse, some “40 or 50 people with sticks, licking at the police,” as the parish clerk reported (sic, qtd. Heuman 4). The crowd freed the arrested man. It was an act of rebellion, as officials immediately surmised — a revolt. One early report called this “the first resistance to lawful authority” (qtd Semmel 46) in the spree of violence and counter-violence that would come to be known as the “Jamaica uprising.”

The resistance to lawful authority became real when a group of several hundred armed residents overpowered the police detachment that had been sent to re-arrest the freed prisoner; the ramshackle army released these captured police, but then marched into town bearing guns, sharpened implements, and a red flag. One observer remembered hearing a rebel promise that “we will kill every white and Mulatto man in the Bay, and when we finish, we will go to the estates” (qtd Heuman 4). The island’s 13,000 whites had reason for concern, considering that Jamaica’s population of 350,000 blacks then outnumbered them at

Douglas Hall’s *Free Jamaica, 1838-1865: An Economic History* provides an analysis of the island’s material conditions after emancipation: “In order to understand the tragedy of 1865 it is first necessary to realize that in the period of five years after 1860 a rapid succession of economic and political catastrophes, each of which by itself would have raised serious problems, had hit the island. Behind these, moreover, and enhanced by them, was a gradual worsening of relations between employers and labourers, and also between the people as a whole and the Island Legislature and governor” (237). As Catherine Hall points out, Anthony Trollope’s *The West Indies and the Spanish Main* (1859) did much to solidify this impression.
a rate of more than twenty five to one (Hall 23). To the ruling class, the threat was of a fully-fledged imperial revolution, one that, if not stamped out judiciously, could soon rival either the still-infamous 1857 rebellion in India or, worse, the 1791 overthrow of French control in Haiti, where white Frenchmen had been killed, scandalously, by black republicans. What was at stake, then, was not only the shape of English national identity, but also the very security of British imperial sovereignty, the conceptual and legal foundations of the colonial government’s control over its holdings, and over the lives and deaths of the people inhabiting them. What was at stake, in other words, was the status of metropolitan rule of law in the context of colonial rebellion – that is, in a state of war.

The reports that reached Governor Edward Eyre described a shocking anarchy, the very abrogation of equipoise: murdered officials, disemboweled civilians, and a rampage against private property. Eyre later summarized what he’d been told about the threat to his colony’s due processes, providing a report to Lieutenant Cardwell, the overseer of the Colonies in London, that related what were represented as inhuman acts of lawlessness, the “frightful atrocities” (Jamaica Papers 1, 86) that, for Eyre, justified the sternest possible reprisals. As Eyre wrote to his superior:

The Island curate […] is said to have had his tongue cut out whilst still alive, and an attempt is said to have been made to skin him. One person […] was ripped open,  

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12 I should note here that my account of the Morant Bay events is indebted to several more comprehensive versions, including Bernard Semmel’s *The Governor Eyre Controversy*, Catherine Hall’s *Civilling Subjects*, as well as those contained in contemporary reports by the Jamaica Committee. Ian Baucom also provides a sharp narrative of the revolt in his *Out of Place*. The crucial text on the Haitian rebellion is C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins*.

13 As I discuss below, Victorian legal thought was unanimous in understanding the status of rebellion as equivalent to that of open war. James Fitzjames Stephen, whose political thought I treat below, repeated in his influential *A History of Criminal Law* (1883) the definition he had developed as lead counsel for the Jamaica Committee (1866): the term “martial law” named “the common law right of the Crown and its representatives to repel force by force in the case of invasion or insurrection, and to act against rebels as it might against invaders” (qtd Fairman 30). War, of course, was a problem of sovereignty: as one 1854 treatise on *The Laws of War* puts it: “The right of making War […] solely belongs to the Sovran power. Subjects cannot, therefore, of themselves, take any step in the affair; nor are they allowed to commit any act of hostility without orders from their Sovran” (Thompson 35).
and his entrails taken out. One gentleman [...] is said to have been pushed into an outbuilding, which was then set on fire, and kept there until he was literally roasted alive. Many are said to have had their eyes scooped out; heads were cleft open and brains taken out. The Baron’s fingers were cut off and carried away as trophies by the murderers. Some bodies were half-burnt, others horribly battered. Indeed the whole outrage can only be paralleled by the atrocities of the Indian mutiny. (Jamaica Papers 1, 86)

What I want to draw attention to in Eyre’s account is not how crassly it serves his own interests in defending, after the fact, his decision to invoke martial law. In fact, as the Jamaica Committee would later point out, the tone of Eyre’s letter is boastful rather than defensive. Instead I want to underscore how Eyre’s account of these inhuman acts calls on a very specific, fantastically excessive brand of violence to accomplish that work. The hyperbolic torments chronicled in Eyre’s letter to his boss—all ripping, roasting, scooping, and cleaving—read like the outsized battles of adventure romance I discuss in the following chapter: they are a negative image of modern law, a conjured vision of what total anarchy might look like. Eyre’s chaotic vision takes shape in a cloud of hearsay ("it is said"), and if that vision is marshaled here to justify extraordinary government measures, it is true, too, that a parallel fantasy of law’s absence would provide the rhetorical key for liberal critics of Eyre, as they charted the excesses that would come to seem equally fantastic as “the Jamaica Atrocities” became the nation’s leading news item. No evidence was ever found to support

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14 In his dispatch, Eyre takes total responsibility while thanking his subordinates for the “utmost promptitude and efficiency” with which they “carried out” “all my wishes” (Jamaica Papers 1, 92). He asks his superior to recognize his subordinates for their small part in his great act. The dispatch’s proper genre, then, may be that of the award acceptance speech.

15 Citing with odd relish soldiers’ accounts of their rampages, one pamphlet condemning the “atrocities,” called The Reign of Terror, approvingly quotes a Rev. Henry Clarke, island curate in the parish of Westmoreland: “every honest Englishman [should] blush with shame for the savage barbarities his countrymen are capable of when left to the exercise of their natural propensities, unrestrained by any fear of public opinion or of the law” (Bleby 11). This tone is characteristic of the responses to graphic reports written by soldiers, endlessly reprinted in the press, that told of, for example, the whipping of pregnant women, the shootings of unarmed, already dead bodies, and, as one soldier notoriously wrote, “hanging like fun by court martial” (qtd Semmel 51). I discuss Bleby’s pamphlet briefly below.
Eyre’s hair-raising allegations— in total, twenty whites were discovered to have been killed, and subsequent investigations found no organized revolt to speak of. But this did not prevent the specter of “outrages” against law from supplying justification for a massive show of force on the part of the government. “It is very probable,” an official reported in a letter to Eyre in Kingston, “that without some military aid, the force at the disposal of the authorities will, in the event of the people carrying out their threats, be insufficient to uphold the law, and, in that case, the worst consequences must be anticipated” (qtd Semmel 47).

His comment established the stakes for what would become the most controversial marshaling of law-preserving imperial force in the nineteenth century.

The contours of that show of force have been well documented and extensively condemned, both in reports by the liberal Jamaica Committee and by later accounts that have shared its core analytic categories. In her important account of the Jamaica case, Catherine Hall explains that her own personal involvement with the case sprang from “what might be characterized as a humanist universalism, an assumption that all human beings are equal, [which] was integral to the shared vocabulary of the Left […] but the unspoken racial hierarchy which was the underlying assumption of that humanist universalism had not been confronted in my psyche […]” (5). In this way, Hall’s account understands the affair as an instance of failed liberal universalism—what we might call Victorian liberalism’s unfinished project, its inability, in this instance, to live up to its power to abstract the world into its own

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16 See *Jamaica Papers* VI, 9. The Jamaica Committee’s document presents a quantitative table which juxtaposes the numbers of those “Killed and wounded by negroes on the 11th Oct, 1865, at Morant Bay,” with a numerical representation of those “Killed and wounded by authorities in resisting rioters on the 11th of October” and “Punishments by authorities afterwards.” The effect, then, is of utilitarian comparison, meant to quantify the asymmetry of the “authorities’” response to the violence of the rioters. Its operative assumption is that black bodies “count” as much as white ones, an assumption that proved highly optimistic. See page 15, below.
categories. If the logic here would understand the remedy for this failure to come from a more perfect version of equal law – one without “unspoken racial hierarchies” — I am trying to understand, instead, how a specific order of exclusion is inscribed into that very universalism from the outset: how the violence that appears “exceptional” to an idealist universalism in fact exists, dialectically, as part of its foundational logic.

For his part, Governor Eyre declared martial law in the Eastern portions of the island, suspending the normal processes of the courts and instituting a regime of temporary dictatorship that Eyre later said, in a letter to Thomas Carlyle, was “in itself right, necessary, just, and merciful under the circumstances” (Workman 96). He sent troops by land and sea to Morant Bay with orders to kill, and charged police and mercenary bands of Maroons with the same task. He arrested a known dissident, a man named George William Gordon, and transported him from an area where civil law remained in place to Morant Bay, where it had been suspended, and then executed him.17 He oversaw a spree of violence in which the British command killed 439 black residents by ropes, guns, blades, or whips; flogged some 600 men and women (some of whom, it was later reported, were pregnant); and burned one thousand homes to the ground (Hall 23). The government suffered no casualties. “This is the picture of martial law;” wrote a Captain Ford in his dispatch, “The soldiers enjoy it — the inhabitants have to dread it. If they run on their approach they are shot for running away” (Jamaica Papers I, 21). The names of the victims do not survive.

17 The hanging of Gordon was a particularly vivid flashpoint in the Jamaica debates. It was viewed as a political murder, an exact transgression of a system understood to operate by discussion and procedure, not force. As Walter Bagehot wrote: “In causing Mr. Gordon to be hanged, Eyre’s greatest offence is that he put an affront on the majesty of law, and, for a time, cancelled the ripest fruits of our civilization” (Collected Works 41, qtd. Kostal 468).
I will return to the topic of enjoyment Captain Ford raises here, the note of what Swinburne will allow us to see is the “sadism” animating Ford’s description of anarchic law-enforcement – a description that would itself be a key exhibit in the campaign to prosecute Eyre for murder. Here I want to suggest that while the Jamaica rebellion raised questions of national affective belonging and racial inequity, it also posed potentially earth-shaking conceptual problems for a legal order founded on principles of procedural justice and the equal administration of civic rights – that is, on “law.”¹⁸ Under what circumstances could this law be suspended in order to preserve it? Who could and couldn’t be put to death by the British state’s temporary imperial dictatorship, and who decided this? Only eight years after the Indian Mutiny the mandate seemed clear that when the rule of colonial law was under threat, when rebellion was afoot, extraordinary measures could, and should, be taken. (The leader of the campaign to put down the Indian Rebellion, Lord Canning, had earned the name “Clemency Canning” because of his reticence to do just that.) As we will see, even John Stuart Mill, the leader of the campaign to prosecute Eyre for the civil murder of Gordon, had acknowledged the right of the state to suspend law at certain “necessary” times: with this granted by all parties, the legal question developed into a dispute about whether this necessity existed, and how far Eyre had gone in excess of that mandate. Still, as

¹⁸ I explore in more detail the complexities of this conception (“law”) in my introduction, above. In his *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel explores the basis of political law (glossed by Kojève as “Droit”) by unpacking the distinction between “equality” and “equivalence,” showing that their fundamental difference is their relationship to a primal, ordering distinction of power – that of the master and the slave. (“Equality” is the name of subjects’ relationship before power relations are established, while “equivalence” is their relationship after their primary sorting into rulers and ruled — that is, for Hegel, into those who own property and those who are property. The hybrid state of “equity” is what results in the modern state, according to Hegel, when each subject is both master and slave.) My contention in chapter two is that Hegel’s theoretical intervention provides tools for understanding how Millite liberalism of the Victorian period confused the registers of what Hegel calls the “abstract man” (the universal subject) and his “concrete” counterpart (the particular one). My reading of this crucial text is now only preliminary, but will no doubt require a tracing of Hegel’s reception through the Victorian period, an itinerary that culminates in T.H. Green’s self-described “liberalizing” reading of Hegel’s theory of right in *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation* (1879-80).
Mill wrote in July 1866, on behalf of the Jamaica Committee, the most haunting vision the episode raised was of the possibility of tyranny on British-controlled soil:

> Our lives and liberties have not been, nor can they be safely allowed to be, under the guardianship of the Executive Government alone; they have been, and it is essential that they should remain, under the guardianship of the law. 
> (“Statement” 423-4)

Mill’s argument for the Committee operates under the assumption that executive power and the law are opposing terms, with the former being synonymous with tyranny and the latter being coterminous with the British Parliamentary system itself. “Our lives,” the Committee explains, are and should be under the power of “the law,” not subject to the whims of a despotic, or ontologically singular political authority. By invoking once again the structuring dichotomy of liberal theory traced in previous chapters, where an old and singular force opposes a new and plural peace, Mill’s formula turns away from the question of how “law” might itself rest on the potentially oppressive, singular power he imagines as lodged in “the Executive Government alone.” (In this he contravenes Max Weber’s definition of the state as the entity with a monopoly on legitimate violence.) But another crucial distinction skipped over in the Committee’s account is the content of the pronoun “our.”

Invoking the terms Benedict Anderson uses to denote national structures of belonging, Hall has argued that “Mill’s imagined community was one of potential equality” while “Carlyle’s imagined community [in arguments against the Jamaica Committee] was a hierarchically ordered one in which ‘we’ must always master ‘them’” (Hall 25). Hall’s analysis may follow the tendency of Victorian liberal theory in appreciating something called “equality” over another, opposed thing called “hierarchy,” in this way replicating a
longstanding nineteenth century dichotomy between “freedom” and “despotism.” It may be worth recalling, in this context, that the Jamaica Committee’s legal strategy did not fully pursue Mill’s (or Hall’s) vision of total lawfulness: the group lodged its persistent legal complaint not against the killing of 479 black peasants but for the murder of Gordon, a single political figure. (The distinction between “killing” and “murder” identifies the problem at issue, where “murder” names an illegal killing under law and killing is not a legal category, referring to the taking of life outside of law — under, for example, conditions of war.)

More importantly, what the Morant Bay affair more than any other episode in mid-Victorian politics thus exposed was how the logic of “equality” did not get rid of the problem of state violence, or what Hall calls “hierarchy”: the Jamaica affair would show, rather, the ways in which hierarchy or power — or better, the bare force relations those two terms are used to describe — works within the operations of “equality” itself. In chapter two I argued that in a metropolitan context the watchword for mid-Victorian equality was recovery: the injunction, for metropolitan novels by Dickens and Collins, was to find the state’s lost subjects, “recalling them to life,” as Dickens has it A Tale of Two Cities, and to place them, named and known, onto the field of the state’s visibility, or what Collins in The Woman in White (1859) calls “the list of the living.” But even as Mill was envisioning an endless horizon of equality’s reach, the outcome of the legal debates about the “atrocities” committed under Eyre would suggest that while a law of life may have been the rule in the

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19 On the discourse of “despotism” in mid-century English political rhetoric, see Anderson, A Liberal State at War, and pages 20-22 in chapter one, above.
20 Gordon was a “coloured” landowner, which in the racial typology of post-emancipation Jamaica meant he was not white but not black either.
metropole, its status in the colonies was less clear. Outside the bounds of legal belonging, the native Jamaicans deemed to have participated in insurrection found themselves without civil legal protection at all, a fact that marked their bodies for death in ways that the outcome of the Jamaica case would show were entirely acceptable — that is, “legal” — in conditions of imperial rebellion.21

What became known as the Governor Eyre controversy made this central contradiction in liberal theory uncomfortably explicit. Under conditions of duress, the governor of Jamaica had suspended the ordinary procedures of the courts in order to put down what he and his advisors viewed as a grave threat to the stability of the island’s proper government. No one argued that martial law was inapplicable in colonial contexts. Rather, as the opposed camps resolved themselves into an antagonism that corresponded roughly to the distinction between liberal internationalists and Tory nationalists, Mill’s Jamaica Committee, which included Herbert Spencer, Charles Darwin, Charles Lyell, Thomas Huxley, John Bright, John Morley, and Frederick Harrison, argued that martial law had been misused. As Mill’s 1866 speeches to Parliament eloquently explained, Eyre had been right to respond vigorously, but martial law had been inappropriately extended — the floggings and 21

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21 Or perceived imperial rebellion. One issue the Committee disputed was that no genuine insurgency existed. But it transpired that the belief that such a revolt might be afoot was enough to establish the juridical (or a juridical) situation of “rebellion.” Insurgents against lawful authority forfeited their rights of citizenship, and for Hannah Arendt, to be without legal status is to have taken the first step toward being eliminated. Her analysis of human rights and statelessness shows that to be stripped of political or “civil” status — as in a state of rebellion — should return a human being to the shared state of “humanity” that putatively stands as the baseline guaranteeing rights to life and status. Paradoxically, however, [actually the opposite is the case. It seems that a man who is nothing but a man has lost the very qualities which make it possible for other people to treat him as a fellow-man. (Arendt 300)

Transformed in this fashion into what Giorgio Agamben calls bare life, the man in a state of insurrection is a man only, and finds himself without any of the guarantees membership in a national community confers. For Agamben such remainders become objectified from the “men” they once were into the stateless aftereffects of the legal order. They are thus made available to the state’s full power at any “exceptional” time the state should deem such power necessary. Slavery and its legacies complicate this picture, since slaves never had “legal personality” to begin with; freed slaves were in a similarly anomalous position. On the literary nuances of “legal personality” (as it relates to literary “character”), see chapter two, above.
tortures, the Committee thought, had been excessive, even “barbarous” (qtd Hall 24).

Furthermore, the Committee asserted, in killing Gordon, a political opponent of Eyre’s and someone not directly involved in the “rebellion,” Eyre had committed murder. Carlyle’s Governor Eyre Defense Committee, which counted among its supporters Charles Dickens, John Ruskin, Charles Kingsley, and Alfred Lord Tennyson, believed that colonial order must be upheld in any case, and that to assume that something so abstract as law applied equally in Jamaica as in Manchester or London was a kind of scandalous joke — a blinkered version of the telescopic philanthropy Dickens had already satirized in Bleak House (1853).²² (Though many of Dickens’ later commentators have lamented this lapse from the reformist sentimentalism of his earlier period.)

As Hall has shown, the Eyre affair in this way presented itself as a racial problem, one that tested the limits of a supposed imperial universalism: did blacks have the same rights as whites, were both groups “English”? Following Foucault’s 1976 lectures on race and the state, later published as Society Must be Defended!, Ann Laura Stoler has recently provided tools for rereading the well documented racism of the Victorian period through the lens of state power. For Stoler (as for Foucault), racism operated as one mechanism, with

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²² As Dickens wrote in an 1865 letter:
The Jamaica insurrection is another hopeful piece of business. That platform-sympathy with the black – or the native, or the devil—afar off, and that platform indifference to our own countrymen at enormous odds in the midst of bloodshed and savagery, makes me stark wild. Only the other day, here was a meeting of jawbones of asses at Manchester, to censure the Jamaica Governor for his manner of putting down the insurrection! So we are badgered about New Zealanders and Hottentots, as if they were identical with men in clean shirts at Camberwell, and were to be bound by pen and ink accordingly. (Letters v. 11, 114-115)

Dickens’ thoughts on colonial insurrection were composed just after the serialization of Our Mutual Friend, his longest and most involved dramatization of the state’s project of recovering its lost metropolitan subjects. I argued in chapter two that Dickens’ lost person plot, like Collins’ in The Woman in White, looked to inscribe its characters onto a field of biopolitical state law — the world of what Dickens here calls “pen and ink,” in Bleak House tropes as the paper-filled archives of Chancery, and in Our Mutual Friend figures as “the world of the living.” This letter on the Jamaica rebellion touches the limits of that inclusive project. Sketching a geographical and racial boundary to the law’s salvage project, Dickens here contrasts “New Zealanders and Hottentots” with “men in clean shirts at Camberwell,” and argues that the rules of procedural law —of “pen and ink”—have no place in dealings with these abandoned imperial subjects.
others, by which the emergent liberal state articulated its ability to make war. As Giorgio Agamben glosses Foucault’s point, “racism is precisely what allows biopower to mark caesuras in the biological continuum of the species, thus reintroducing a principle of war into the system of ‘making live’” (Remnants 84). By this reading, race emerges not as the site of domination (racism as violence) but as one tactic in the arsenal available to a biopolitical state as it determines whom to protect, and whom to kill, in what Foucault describes as nineteenth century liberalism’s “coded war” (Society 52). 

Mill himself declared that racial or more vaguely philanthropic considerations were secondary to the questions the Jamaica case raised about the status of British law. Writing to David Urquhart in 1866, Mill said: “you see that I am not on this occasion standing up for the negroes, or for liberty, deeply as both are interested in the subject – but for the first necessity of human society, law” (Letters 1205). Of course, in his central programmatic statements On Liberty (1859) and Considerations on Representative Government (1862), Mill had already theorized that not all areas were temporally ready for law, this “first necessity of human society”: the theorist notoriously argued in those works that certain swaths of the globe were “not yet” prepared, developmentally, to participate in the legal forms of equality and participation. 

Eyre’s three successive acquittals for his actions under the martial law he declared would soon vindicate this assessment.

23 Although, as Stoler notes, Foucault himself does not square up to the question of empire. See Stoler, Race and the Education of Desire, 55-94. “In the lectures, state racism is not an effect but a tactic in the internal fission of society into binary oppositions, a means of creating ‘biologized’ internal enemies, against whom society must defend itself” (59).
24 Adapting Foucault, Achille Mbembe has also influentially understood imperialism’s racism as a subordinate discourse, or epiphenomenon of state violence, a focus I share in this chapter’s analysis of Morant Bay. As Mbembe explains, “in the economy of biopower, the function of racism is to regulate the distribution of death and to make possible the murderous functions of the state. It is, [as Foucault] says, ‘the condition for the acceptability of putting to death’” (17).
25 As Mill writes in Considerations on Representative Government (1862): “A people of savages should be taught obedience, but not in such a manner as to convert them into a people of slaves. And (to give the observation a higher generality) the form of
Those legal decisions confirmed—albeit reluctantly, and with considerable contestation—that in imperial locations, politics were in a permanent state of war, one where the bare right of executive power could show itself at any “extreme” moment, breaking through law with force. As one historian of emergency law confirms, “In the nineteenth century martial law as a legal concept or practice can hardly be said to have existed in England itself. It is true, however, that it was still an actuality and something of a burning issue for the colonies and Ireland, and in this way martial law was kept alive as a product and a part, although an extraordinary part, of English law” (Rossiter 141-2). This extraordinary part of British law, this “burning issue”—the question of when, and under what circumstances, the force of the empire’s law could make itself explicit—came to define the legal dilemmas of the Jamaica controversy. By attending to this we can refine criticism that has tended to inscribe this problem of political belonging into the idiom of universal ethics, and which in this way continues the Millite project of rewriting the unsettling relationship between law and force into the language of atrocity, or outrages against humanity itself.

3.3 “Superflux of pain”

government which is most effectual for carrying a people through the next stage of progress, will still be very improper for them if it does this in such a manner as to obstruct, or positively unfit for them, the step next beyond. Such cases are frequent, and are among the most melancholy facts of history” (43). I discuss Mill’s similar comments from On Liberty about the justifiable use of “despotic means” when dealing with native populations in chapter one, above. Dipesh Chakrabarty refers to the incomplete modernization of the colonial subject as living in the time of liberalism’s “not yet.”
Swinburne’s *Poems and Ballads* appeared in July, 1866, the same month Mill appeared before Parliament as the new leader of the Jamaica Committee to announce his intention to prosecute Eyre for murder, or what Mill called “blood unlawfully shed” (July 9 1866; Speeches 91). Published just as the Jamaica Committee raised the stakes in its campaign, and just before the jurist James Fitzjames Stephen resigned as the Committee’s lead counsel in a spectacular break with Mill over the role of force in law, Swinburne’s violent poems were perhaps poorly timed to elicit popular approval, and they did not elicit it. It has been customary for critics to associate this poor reception—“an attack seldom, if ever, equaled in for its fierceness in the annals of English literary history,” as one early documenter called it (Hyder *Career* 37)—to the bourgeois naïveté of a Victorian audience. Readings conventionally slot *Poems and Ballads* into a narrative which figures Swinburne as a transgressive hero facing down naïve moralists and “middle-class pressmen” (Pease 65). Yet the most articulate critic of Swinburne’s collection was no naïf but rather one of the most respected political thinkers of the era, Mill’s protégé, member of the Jamaica Committee, and future liberal MP John Morley.

If one tradition of criticism has looked to praise Swinburne’s ability to scandalize Victorian sentimental ideology, another strain has connected Swinburne’s virtues with the republicanism expressed in his later and overtly political *Songs Before Sunrise* (1871). Rather

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26 Discussions of Swinburne’s “politics” are generally cast in the idiom of dominance and resistance familiar to readers in the field of cultural studies; here Swinburne “threatens to disrupt” the operations of middle-brow “ideology” (Pease 66, cf. Dellamora). These arguments typically call on the press reports as evidence of a unified “restrictive culture.” I acknowledge a debt to these readings—many are incisive—but my suggestion instead is that, at least in Morley’s case, there is specific political content to these denunciations, one that exposes a particular understanding of the relationship between law and violence.

27 Isobel Armstrong’s comprehensive *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics, and Politics* reads Swinburne as an “agonistic republican,” and remains among the most suggestive analyses of Swinburne’s “politics.” Armstrong’s account also raises, but does not fully analyze, the connection between Swinburne and Morant Bay: my hope is to deepen and further historicize her initial
than valorize Swinburne for his ability to outrage the middlebrow, and rather than nod to the progressivism expressed in his openly republican poems—such as, for example, his “Ode to Mazzini”—I aim to understand the political dynamics of Swinburne’s “apolitical” verse by putting it in dialogue with the liberal theory that it contravened. What I want to focus on, then, is how Swinburne’s work in *Poems and Ballads* privileges happy violence in a kind of “sadism,” romanticizing a lawless excess at a moment in the history of the liberal empire, late 1866, when events in Morant Bay demanded that liberal England square up as it had never done before to law’s relationship with force.

Most of Swinburne’s *Poems and Ballads* were composed in the seven years between 1858, when Swinburne was at Balliol College, and the date of its publication (Rooksby 132), a timeline that places them squarely within the window W.L. Burn has named the Age of Equipoise, the same period Walter Bagehot called England’s great “Age of Discussion.”

Yet Swinburne’s collection is a prolonged meditation not on rational exchange but on torment and violence: a manifesto of excess, it is all pain and sweetness, bitter froth and crushed flowers. Its constituent elements are borrowed from the classical sources whose meters the poems imitate, as well as from Baudelaire, the poet of beautiful evil Swinburne insights. Stephanie Kuduk Weiner’s *Republican Politics and English Poetry, 1789-1874* is the most recent and thorough of these studies. It usefully outlines how republican discourse animated the efforts of poets from the French Revolution onward. If this account assumes the radicalism of this republican discourse, what my account adds to Weiner’s valuable historical work is a conceptual analysis of how Swinburne’s early poetry dramatizes the dynamics between force and law in the mid-Victorian imperial moment: that is, I see the “politics” not in the explicit references to matters of state but in the assumption that poetic practice is conceptually engaged with political practice—a fact to which Morley’s review of *Poems and Ballads* well testifies, as I discuss below.

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28 In *Physics and Politics* (1872), according to Bagehot, “[t]he greatest living contrast is between the old Eastern and customary civilisations and the new Western and changeable civilizations. […] Historical inquiries show that the feeling of the Hindoos is the old feeling, and that the feeling of the Englishman is a modern feeling. […] [T]he change from the age of status to the age of choice was first made in states where the government was to a great and a growing extent a government by discussion, and where the subjects of that discussion were in some degree abstract, or, as we should say, matters of principle” (88-89).
had praised in an 1862 essay, the first on the poet ever published in England. In Baudelaire, Swinburne saw a poet who had found the limit point where “good” pleasure (Arnold’s “sweetness and light”) coincided with the violence and death that would seem to be its opposite. “Not the luxuries of pleasure in their simple first form, but the sharp and cruel enjoyments of pain, the acrid relish of suffering felt or inflicted, the sides on which nature looks unnatural, go to make up the stuff and substance of this poetry,” wrote Swinburne of Les Fleurs du Mal (Hyder, ed. 30).

Swinburne critiques the “simple first form” of pleasure, that first-order enjoyment derived directly from objects that satisfy the Kantian or Arnoldian requirements — disinterested, calming— of “the beautiful.” In doing so he announces his dialectical sensibility, his acute sense, as one of Swinburne’s editors writes, of “the tension of delicately poised opposites: shadows thinned by light, lights broken by shade, sunset passing into moonrise, sea merging with sky. He is obsessed by the moment when one thing shades off into its opposite, or when contraries fuse” (Rosenberg xxxi). A dialectical mind but also a theorist of the excessive, Swinburne was also influenced by the Marquis de Sade, although Swinburne’s connection to the notorious orgiast goes deeper than the later writer’s often cited, but rarely analyzed, “sado-masochism.”

29 Swinburne read Sade as early as 1862, later attesting to his belief that Sade “saw to the bottom of gods and men” (Letters I, 121). At

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20 Lafourcade writes: “Mais le sadisme de Swinburne depasse de beaucoup une simple theorie de l'amour; de purement instinctif et sensual, il devient bientot raisonnable et intellectuel. Eclairé par les doctrines du Marquis de Sade, et jusqu'a un certain point poussé par une conviction personnelle, Swinburne découvre dans la nature cette meme loi de souffrance universelle et de morte qui lui etait apparue dans le mecanisme des passions. La ruine et la destruction sont les grandes principes qui regissent le monde. La nature ne peut creer sans tuer, ne peut faire vivre sans faire souffrir.” (431).

[“But Swinburne's sadism goes far beyond a simple theory of love; from (being) purely instinctive and sensual, he quickly becomes well-reasoned and intellectual. Enlightened by the Marquis de Sade's doctrines and pushed, up to a certain point, by personal conviction, Swinburne discovers in nature this same law of universal suffering and of death which had appeared to him in the mechanism of passions. Ruin and destruction are the major rules that govern the world. Nature cannot create without killing, cannot cause life without causing suffering.”]
least since the 1947 publication of Pierre Klossowski’s *Sade My Neighbor*, philosophical and political critics on the left have found room for analysis in the hyperbolic violence of novels like *Justine* and *Philosophy in the Bedroom*. Another, related tradition has linked the “atrocity” of Sadean lawlessness with the calm reserve of Kantian disinterest, finding a necessary and mutually defining relationship—a dialectic—between Kant’s stern privileging of law and Sade’s manifest interest in abrogating it. My suggestion will be that the intense, absolute violence in Swinburne’s Sadean poetry likewise opens itself up to a dialectical political analysis, articulating a singular force that represents the apparently total abrogation of law—though this is an excess that, as I show in this chapter’s final section, is also perversely “bound up” with the very formalism it seems to contravene.

“Anactoria” may be Swinburne’s boldest thematization in poetic form of the violence that Victorian legal theorist James Fitzjames Stephen suggested sits underneath the surface of the calm legal forms Mill and his Committee understood as modern. In this monological poem the speaker is Sappho and the object is one of Sappho’s lovers: it is thus a love poem, but a love poem of a very particular type. To Swinburne’s speaker, the pain of love cannot be purged or completed; it is structurally unfinishable, unappeasable. It will not be pacified:

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30 A short list of thinkers who have squared up to Sade would include Simone de Beauvoir, Gilles Deleuze, and Maurice Blanchot. Blanchot links Sade’s antinomianism to issues that animate this dissertation’s first chapter, seeing that Sade “was drawn to [revolution] only to the extent that it constituted for a short time the possibility of a regime without law, since it represented a transition period from one set of laws to the other” (45).

31 Lacan’s “Kant Avec Sade” makes the point that Sade’s profound outrages are the secret truth of Kant’s tyrannical morality, while the chapter in Adorno and Horkheimer’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment* called “Juliette; or Enlightenment and Morality” speaks of the two as a dialectical pair (Adorno wrote the chapter). On the slight but philosophically significant differences between these two approaches, see Rebecca Comay, “Adorno Avec Sade...” Zizek has also approached this question in *For They Know Not What They Do* and elsewhere. For the purposes of my argument here it is enough to suggest that this tradition sees the unbridled excess of Sadean “atrocity”—its apparent antinomianism—as linked fundamentally to the stern rationality of Kantian “law”: they are two sides of the same coin, or (for Lacan) the same side, split: in either case, law and its excess (or superflux) are, as Benjamin wrote, “intimately bound.”
My life is bitter with thy love; thine eyes
Blind me, thy tresses burn me, thy sharp sighs
Divide my flesh and spirit with soft sound,
And my blood strengthens, and my veins abound. (1-4)

Flowing from stasis, a stunning dynamism: the first verb in this miraculous opening is “is,” but what follows are words of motion and force — violent verbs borrowed, it seems, from Governor Eyre’s account, written to his superior, reporting cleaving, scooping, and roasting. Swinburne’s terms are “blind,” “burn,” “divide,” “strengthen,” and “abound.” The telos of this sequence moves out of torment and into power, and the violence is what produces that power. (“Blind,” “burn,” and “divide” become “strengthen” and “abound,” a transition signaled with the conjunction “And” in the fourth line, which suggests that the last two terms are a result of the first three.) “Anactoria’s” upsurging verse, all iambs and anapests, underscores the bare energy that is the apparently unregulated motor of this poem.

Verbs drive and push while Swinburne’s poem theorizes a connection between the “delicately poised opposites” of violence and love. For Swinburne here, both are forces, kinetic energies beyond or outside the purview of anything approaching restraint. Not even death offers a threshold or limit case to the unappeasable force Swinburne names “desire”:

Let life burn down, and dream it is not death.
I would the sea had hidden us, the fire
(Wilt thou fear that, and not my desire?)
Severed the bones that bleach, the flesh that cleaves,
And let our sifted ashes drop like leaves. (6-10)

Not quite beautiful, “Sappho is identified here,” as Yopie Prins writes, “only as the effect of a self-displacing, self-disrupting sublime violence” (Prins 133). In a reading of this poem in her book Victorian Sappho, Prins has catalogued Swinburne’s devices, using a sharp formalist eye and an ear for classical influences to see Swinburne as an aestheticist of the first order.
For Prins, the drama of Anactoria is that its “verbal violence,” “turns pain into poetry” (126). “I read Anactoria,” she explains, “as an allegory of sublime rhythm: in this dramatic monologue, Sapphic eros is allegorized as a rhythmic effect that recollects the scattered body of Anactoria into Sapphic song and scatters the body of Sappho into the world” (120). Prins’ concerns are thus themselves aestheticist, in the non-pejorative sense that they are local to poetry itself.

But we can build on Prins’ correct identification of the sublime here. In his *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790, 1793), Kant had called the beautiful that which the mind views in an attitude of “calm contemplation” (141, emphasis original). A peaceful, contemplating disinterest, one unmarred by what Kant calls “affect,” is in this way the condition of possibility for the appreciation of beauty. On viewing sublime sights, by contrast, Kant specifies that the mind is displaced, animated, affected: it experiences a “powerful outpouring” of “vital powers.” “[T]he mind,” Kant says, “feels itself moved” (129, 141). To appreciate beauty, Kant further explains, the spectator must be still, void of any engagements, even as beauty itself works to reinforce that disinterested stance, one where the dangerous “movement” of physiological response — “vital force” — is defused enough that sweetness and light might pour in. We have seen a similar formulation in Eliot’s description of Maggie’s preternaturally modern intellect, “poised above pleasure or pain.” Prefiguring Eliot’s depiction of Maggie’s mature mental processes, Kant explains that the cognitive remove necessary to appreciate beauty cannot be inflected with any more physical

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32 In a move with implications that will be fully sketched out in my final section, Kant also describes the importance of “form” to the beautiful object— with “form” understood as a limit and and telos, or “end”—, a limitation that is in the sublime object entirely absent: “The beautiful in nature concerns the form of the object, which consists in limitation; the sublime, by contrast, is to be found in a formless object, insofar as limitlessness is represented in it […]” (128, emphasis original).
interests. “Emotion,” he writes, “a sensation in which agreeableness is produced only by means of a momentary inhibition followed by a stronger outpouring of the vital force, does not belong to beauty at all” (111, emphasis original). Motion and stasis, interest and disinterest, passion and reserve. The pairings multiply, and as it makes a distinction between calmness and excitement, culture and anarchy—all of it always folding back towards reason—Kant’s distinction between beautiful and sublime responds to a long history of thinking on the topics, a history that itself confirms that these conceptual categories developed as a political configuration as much as an aesthetic one. Matthew Arnold, who had read Kant as early as 1845 (Allott 254-66), did not share the German philosopher’s rigor but would translate Kant’s idealist philosophy into a more engaged social criticism, calling for an art that would likewise work to defuse momentary outpourings of vital force (“anarchy”), using a subtler machinery, culture, “to draw ever nearer to a sense of what is indeed beautiful, graceful, and becoming” (Culture 64).

In Kant’s political-aesthetic terms as in Arnold’s, where a “beautiful” or calming reason works toward the preservation of order, and the peace of “disinterest” is the definition of political modernity, “Anactoria” reads as a mesmerizing counternarrative. A

33 The literature on this topic is vast. Frances Ferguson offers a polemical but I think useful description in Solitude and the Sublime: Romanticism and the Aesthetics of Individuation: see especially chapter three, “Burke to Kant: A Judgment Outside Comparison,” 55-96.

34 I want to be clear that I am not offering a full engagement with Kant’s political-aesthetic system, one which, in any case, had not yet to be fully understood in Victorian England by Arnold’s day, though Arnold was important in spreading his thought (Muirhead 434). J.H. Muirhead charts the reception of German Idealism in the Victorian age, tracing the history of Kant’s translation in England, beginning with lectures on the philosopher in the 1790s and continuing to the first translations of Kant’s work, in 1819. “By the thirties,” Muirhead writes, “through the influence of Coleridge, De Quincey and Carlyle, Kant’s name had become familiar in circles far beyond ‘the learned.’ Henceforth it occupies a conspicuous place in the histories of philosophy” (432). For a useful overview of the complex relationship between Kant and political liberalism, see Kantrin Flikschuh, Kant and Political Philosophy. From within the idiom of political theory, Flikschuh describes how Kantian slogans—rarely fully-considered reckonings with the philosopher’s system—inform neoliberal theories from Rawls to Habermas. (Mill’s “classical liberalism,” different from these but related to them, is also briefly discussed.). See the chapter called “Kantian Metaphysics in Contemporary Liberalism,” 12-49. I am also indebted to Bill Knight for help in talking through Kant’s idea of the sublime.

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celebration of naked violence, the poem is supercharged with the vital energy Kant calls the “dynamical sublime,” the forces of nature that “make our capacity to resist into an insignificant trifle in comparison with their power” (Kant 144):

I would my love could kill thee; I am satiated
With seeing thee live, and fain would have thee dead.
I would earth had thy body as fruit to eat,
And no mouth but some serpent’s found thee sweet. (23-26)

In this love poem, the violence goes further:

I would find grievous ways to have thee slain,
Intense device, and superflux of pain;
Vex thee with amorous agonies, and shake
Life at thy lips, and leave it there to ache;
Strain out thy soul with pangs too soft to kill,
Intolerable interludes, and infinite ill;
Relapse and reluctance of the breath,
Dumb tunes and shuddering semitones of death. (27-34)

Alliteration and assonance knit these crimes together, linking opposites (“amorous agonies”) and intensifying already vivid nouns (“shuddering semitones”); internal slant rhymes (“strain” and “pangs”) further unify these diverse liberties.

Pain and love and the excess of unchecked violence – all of these are present here and linked into a coherent drive, the urge toward total oblivion evident in this passage’s movement from a series of pulsing verbs (“find,” “vex,” “shake,” “strain”) to a strange stasis. The sentence culminates in a clause that is not a clause at all but signals a hovering exhaustion, where a noun phrase sits in place of a verbal one: “Relapse and reluctance of the breath / Dumb tunes and shuddering semitones of death.” We note, too, that the sense of “would” switches in the third item on this list of transgressions, from “wish” (“I would my love could kill thee”) to the conditional (“I would find grievous ways to have thee slain”), underscoring the combination of activity and stasis, calmness and motion, already evident in
the poem’s first lines (“My life is bitter with thy love”). This is, Jerome McGann writes, “poetry which fascinates and absorbs, but which in the end goes nowhere” (41).

How to theorize a poetry that is excessive but immobile? The fascination of these dramatic lines is linked to the fact that Swinburne’s world is one charged with the dynamism of unchecked physicality, of desire and lust seemingly unregulated by any calmer reserve. Figural patterns multiply while speakers unfurl idioms in which metaphors mix and stack, creating a riot of signification, a frenzy of cross-cutting reference. In Poems and Ballads we confront a world

Where air might wash and long leaves cover me,
Where tides of grass break into foam of flowers,
Or where the wind’s feet shine along the sea. (53-56)

Excessive in their very metaphoric surplus, these love poems concern themselves with a world structured by killing, breaking, and cleaving, all of it filtered through a figural arsenal whose terms are taken entirely from the natural world: air turns into water, which transforms into leaves and flowers and grass before turning once again into what it was before – wind, troped as the “feet” of poetic meter itself, flitting along the surface of the ocean.

Excessive, yes, but immobile too: theorizing “natural” drives and surplus force, “Anactoria” is also about consumption, about one body (of the lover) appropriating another body (of the loved). Swinburne is staging a drama of aggregation, of totalization.

“Anactoria” tells a story of a drive toward ontological totality whereby one thing (Sappho) consumes and is consumed by every other thing in her field. Jerome McGann again cites Swinburne’s propensity “toward forms which do not so much move forward as they spin off from a center, accumulating all the while what can be a bewildering variety of figures and images which are constantly interacting with one another” (41). These poems operate
according to a logic of accumulation, adjectivalism, with modifiers added to static nouns that in the end “shade into their opposites” anyway, creating a larger and more powerful whole. Here love is absolutism, and as such its logic can only be of accretion: it can be modified, intensified, but since it is singular it cannot be made truly dynamic. “Anactoria’s” grand monism explains its profusion of modifiers, the ceaseless rain of intensifiers and the accumulative logic of Swinburne’s notorious adjectivalism: “Ah sweet, and sweet again, and seven times sweet” (117).

The accretion of violence and sweetness in Poems and Ballads – its incessant, additive force— builds intensity while it moves toward the total sameness of metaphor. (McGann compares Swinburne’s poetry to coral, accreting layers, building in mass, making more of itself.) Another of “Anactoria’s” sentences begins by suggesting a metonymic connection between these two lovers – a link of proximity, one that would ensure individuation of the compared objects— but then shows that this speaker’s vision is more total than that. As in the logic of metaphor, one term is consumed by the other, appropriated by it to create a new whole. Blood begins by being “against” blood, but pain soon folds all these terms into a single sensing body:

I feel thy blood against my blood: my pain
Pains thee, and lips bruise lips, and vein stings vein.
Let fruit be crushed on fruit, let flower on flower,
Breast kindle breast, and either burn one hour. (11-14)

In this play of sameness and difference, difference folds into identity in a semantic and conceptual struggle that results in ontological totality (“flower on flower”). The poem tells us that if a more conventional, moderate, or properly “sympathetic” love poetry might police the distance between separate terms (in this way operating according to the logic of
metonymy\textsuperscript{35}), this disinterested, individuating emotion is not in the vocabulary of Swinburne’s speaker here. In “Anactoria’s” metaphoric logic, a thing is repeated, redoubled: it is made into itself, a self-aggrandizing totality. “I Sappho shall be one with all these things” (276).\textsuperscript{36}

Driving toward its grand monism, the poem imagines a model that is the precise reversal of what Mill understood in his political theory as modern. “Anactoria’s” energy aims toward unity, toward singularity, toward what, in terms of political power, Mill’s \textit{Considerations on Representative Government} (1862) refers to as a problematic \textit{ontological} singularity. The burden of Mill’s treatise is to de-ontologize sovereign power, to sever it from belief: he explains that the most peaceful or modern sovereignty is one that is plural, diffused among the people: “the ideally best form of government,” Mill writes, “is that in which the sovereignty, or supreme controlling power in the last resort, is vested in the entire aggregate of the community” (57). A “supreme controlling power” is, “in the last resort,” “vested” in an “aggregate”: for Mill sovereign power has no proper location, and should not have it: power’s crystallization into singular form is a thing most seriously to be avoided. (“Our lives and liberties have not been,” as he said in reference to Jamaica, “nor can they be safely allowed to be, under the guardianship of the Executive Government alone….”) In

\textsuperscript{35} On the logic of metonymy versus that of metaphor, see Paul de Man, “The Rhetoric of Temporality,” in \textit{Blindness and Insight}. De Man’s concern is to valorize metonymy over the totalizing Romantic technique of metaphor; my suggestion is that Swinburne’s metaphoric procedure provides a counternarrative to comfortable assumption that totalization is “bad.” For Swinburne the issue is descriptive, not prescriptive: in \textit{Poems and Ballads}, totalization and violence is all there is, and to pretend otherwise is to lapse into sentimentalism. If there is a politics to these techniques, then, it would appear that metaphor is “anti-liberal,” being the chosen figure of, for example, Marxist theories of totality. De Man’s metonymic sensibility would thus be considered “pluralist” in its opposition to this unification, as Jameson’s critique of American deconstruction in \textit{Postmodernism} comes some way in suggesting.

\textsuperscript{36} Kathy Psomiades provides further terms for understanding this singularity, explaining that from Sappho’s perspective “[t]he world is ‘like me’ not because of a visual similitude but because its various objects provide analogues for Sappho’s sensations […]. The natural objects Sappho names are ‘like me’ because sensations like hers can be attributed to them” (78).
Considerations, the theorist explains how in the system of representation he outlines, England’s three governmental branches share authority equally, each having the power of “thwarting and obstructing the others” in order to prevent the government’s “powers from being exerted aggressively” (93). In framing a popular sovereignty made moderate by checks and balances, Mill uses a vocabulary already familiar from chapter two to describe the English rule of law as operating according to the principles of representation, rational discussion, power-sharing – principles which, as Mill explains, combine to subvert the “aggressive” use of power.

In “Anactoria” the speaker is sovereign and her power is aggression personified. Sappho describes a fevered lust for another body that builds and builds, gaining power only to fold back into her own physical nausea:

Yea, all sweet words of thine and all thy ways,
And all the fruit of nights and flower of days,
And stinging lips wherein hot sweet brine
That Love was born of burns and foams like wine,
And eyes insatiable of amorous hours,
Fervent as fire and delicate as flowers,
Coloured like night at heart, but cloven through
Like night with flame, dyed round like night with blue,
Clothed with deep eyelids under and above –
Yea, all thy beauty sickens me with love[.]
(47-56)

Like the rest of this poem, Sappho’s lacerated trance is here cast in the “stopped form” of heroic couplets (Saintsbury 341), a form that might work, in Mill’s language, to “thwart” and “obstruct.” Yet Sappho’s stopped-form aria, bookended by a word for political assent that is also an archaic invocation (“Yea”), blows through its end stops, enjambing crucial phrases to signal an unstoppable forward energy (49-50, 53-54). Three successive “all’s” combine with three “and’s” to further advertise the superflux breaking through the “thwarting and
obstructing” accomplished by the poem’s end-stopped form. The verb is deferred through this litany of vexations, taking us through the compound subjects of “fruit,” “lips,” and “eyes” – all draped in elaborate qualifiers, four lines in the case of “eyes” — until we reach, finally, the climax of this coital scene, which is not a climax at all but offers an inversion where the release should be: a dash, a line break, and then we come to rest, exhausted, with the physical response of this dramatic monologue’s speaker. (“Yea, all thy beauty sickens me with love.”)

Staging restraint, Swinburne answers with excess. Another of the monologues in Poems and Ballads, “Laus Veneris,” repeats this dialectical formula in more telling terms. This poem finds the speaker (now male) complaining that other, more moderate lovers “pluck sweet fruit of life and eat” (98). The line suggests that these fine lovers comport themselves toward their loved objects in a normal — that is, calm or balanced — metonymic relationship, one that retains distance between lover and loved and is made moderate, here, by the soothing internal rhyme of “sweet” and “eat.” For these lovers, Swinburne tells us, the plucking and tasting of a loved object might seem to be an act of “sweet[ness],” of light, an act (we can now say) that operates according to the calming logic of neo-Kantian or Arnoldian beauty. But for Swinburne’s more interested speakers, pleasure derives not from the renunciation and denial that provided a “higher” pleasure to Maggie Tulliver. It comes rather from the experience of love as a totalizing, all-devouring process. Some may regard their object from a polite distance, says Swinburne’s obsessive knight Tannhauser,

But me the hot and hungry days devour,
And in my mouth no fruit of theirs is sweet.

No fruit of theirs, but fruit of my desire,
For her love’s sake whose lips through mine respire;
Her eyelids on her eyes like flower on flower,
Mine eyelids on mine eyes like fire on fire. (99-104)

If there is light to go with this sweetness it comes from “fire.” Like Sappho, Tannhauser here *folds together* with his object of lust, cancelling distance and becoming one with her. As Swinburne’s verse specifies, they share the same lungs. The knight’s obsessive consumption of and consumption by his love’s object, his oneness with what he desires, “does not,” as Kathy Psomiades writes, “allow for the distant dispassionate musing that usually characterizes beauty’s onlookers” (Beauty 82). Following Psomiades we can note the closeness here, the repetition of key terms combined with a repetition that is also a simile: “her eyelids on her eyes like flower on flower.” Is this sameness, or difference, or, rather, a totalization that obliterates that distinction? As Psomiades writes of another section in “Laus Veneris”: “Too close to be distanced and described […] or contemplated in its loveliness, Venus’s face is part of Tannhauser’s flesh” (Beauty 89, emphasis added).

“I, Sappho, shall be one with all these things”: Prins cites this line of “Anactoria” but explains that Sappho is paradoxically not driving towards a stable or completed self: her violence may never be completed. Prins may overstate the self-displacement of Sappho’s intense drive toward aggrandizement, but her terms allow for an analysis of how pleasure is figured in this and other of the Sadistic experiments in *Poems and Ballads*. Writing of Baudelaire, Leo Bersani describes the libidinal pleasure associated with this type of antinomian tendency toward the sublime. Unmoved by the pleasures of beautiful contemplation —those Psomiades linked, above, with “dispassion” and “beauty”— Sappho, in “Anactoria,” wants to “blind,” “burn,” and “divide” to the point that she becomes a single entity with her “lover,” whom she in fact wants to kill. Bersani is discussing how
Baudelaire prefigures Freud’s understanding of sadism (in Freud’s “Instincts and Their Vicissitudes” [1915]) to describe how “agonies” could produce a “second-order” pleasure whose proper libidinal result derived from the fact that it exceeds all boundaries of experience — a “superflux of pain.” Bersani writes:

The usual notion of pleasure and pain would therefore have to be revised and subordinated to a more inclusive view of sexual pleasure as a component of all sensations which go beyond a certain threshold of intensity. […] Pleasure and pain continue to be different sensations, but, to a certain extent, they are both experienced as sexual pleasure when they are strong enough to shatter a certain stability or equilibrium of the self. […] The crucial point to hold onto is the association of sexuality with the organism’s experience of something excessive. […] The pleasurable excitement of sexuality occurs when the body’s normal range of sensation is exceeded and when the organization of the self is momentarily disturbed (deranged) by sensations somehow ‘beyond’ those compatible with psychic organization. Sexuality would be that which is intolerable to the structured self.

(Bersani 76-77)

Describing one of Swinburne’s most important influences – Baudelaire— Bersani inadvertently assesses the structure of excess in Poems and Ballads, one where outpourings of what Arnold called “animality” repeatedly, even flagrantly “go beyond,” in Bersani’s words, “a certain threshold of intensity.” 37 I have offered a short, programmatic reading of “Anactoria” and nodded to “Laus Veneris” to make a claim about the place violence and

37 Swinburne’s “poetics of excess place[s] value on the wasteful, exorbitant expenditure of energy in violation and transgression. To break through ethical, psychological, and sexual categories in desire and lust, madness, violence, incest, is to assert a plentitude which recognizes no limit and begins to assuage that furious dependence on the literal by which the poet is bound” (I. Armstrong 407). Armstrong may lean too heavily on Bataille here, but she is right to suggest that Swinburne is theorizing what excess looks like. What, he seems always to be asking, is a “superflux”? My purpose in this chapter would be to inflect Armstrong’s observation towards the political question of violence and law, noting, for example, Bataille’s interest in the revolutionary “instant” outside of law. As Bataille writes in reference to Sade:

Without a profound complicity with natural forces such as violent death, gushing blood, sudden catastrophes and the horrible cries of pain that accompany them, terrifying ruptures of what had seemed to be immutable, the fall into stinking filth of what had been elevated — without a sadistic understanding of an incontestably thundering and torrential nature, there could be no revolutionaries, there could only be a revolting utopian sentimentality.

(Visions of Excess 101)
excess occupy in this collection. But a more sustained engagement (with readings of, for example, “Faustine,” “The Leper,” and “Dolores” especially) would further show that with local modifications and with certain ironic complexities, Swinburne’s first major collection undertakes a program of exploring what Bersani calls, again in reference to Baudelaire, “a dizzying transgression of limits which has no other end but its own explosive and fatal force” (Bersani 89).

The program of sublime, fatal force articulated in Poems and Ballads – its vision of power as at once excessive and singular— did not help its author’s position with Victorian critics. In one of the most often cited of all Victorian literary reviews, James Buchanan would later (in 1871) denounce Swinburne alongside D.G. Rossetti for what he saw as their perverse voluptuousness, in article he called “The Fleshly School of Poetry.” But the conservative critic also wrote a review of Poems and Ballads in the summer of 1866, one of three hostile notices of the work to appear on August 4th. In his review, Buchanan noted that where Shelley and Keats showed the virtue of “passionate sweetness” and Wordsworth modeled “cold severity,” Swinburne, by contrast, “stain[s] the current of our literature with impure thought” (Hyder, ed. 30). Insincere even in his perversity, Swinburne is, Buchanan concludes, an unworthy successor to the “transcendent purity” of England’s poetic tradition (Hyder, ed. 30). Recurring to a standard lexicon of conservative denunciation, though one that is also, in its degraded way, neo-Kantian — “insincerity,” “purity” — this review did not disturb Swinburne. Its terms, as Swinburne recognized, recycled reactionary tropes in

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38 For Kant, “sensations [... ] justifiably count as beautiful only insofar as [they] are pure, which is a determination that already concerns form” (109, emphasis original). Though if Buchanan is invoking neo-Kantian categories he certainly has no idea he’s doing so.
ways that the poet’s friends, who had predicted the shock his volume would produce, had already warned him about.

But another notice, by John Morley, was not so easily written off. Morley avoided reference to Swinburne’s blasphemy and paganism in order to take issue with the poet’s program in more piercing terms – terms that, as his biographers note, affected Swinburne more than any other of Poems and Ballads’ many negative reviews. In his article on August 4, 1866, just five days after Mill appeared before Parliament to denounce “the Disturbances in Jamaica,” Morley identified another set of disturbances for readers of The Saturday Review:

[Swinburne] is so firmly and avowedly fixed in an attitude of revolt against the current notions of decency and dignity and social duty that to beg of him to become a little more decent, to fly a little less persistently and gleefully to the animal side of human nature, is simply to beg him to be something different from Mr. Swinburne. (Hyder, ed. 22-23).

The vocabulary of rational restraint – checks, balances—structures Morley’s commentary, where “decency,” “dignity,” and “social duty” oppose (as for Arnold) “the animal side of human nature.” For Morley, Swinburne is not simply a rebel in moral terms, but one whose program of open violence puts him in opposition to the political spirit of the age, a spirit that, for Morley, is one of orderly progress out of “animal” force and into a more humane peace.39 (As one account of Morley’s political career attests: “Progress, ordered movement, inevitable improvement – these are the themes in which Morley wanted to believe” [Hamer 19].) In his literary review, Morley recognizes in Swinburne the antithesis of this orderly

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39 Morley’s conviction that the peace of “humanity” would triumph over what he styles as its opposite is perhaps most clearly evident in his (very critical) lectures on Machiavelli, published 1897. There Morley paraphrased Machiavelli’s materialist vision of power, only to labor towards a charitable dismissal of those disturbing thoughts. For Morley, it is unfortunately true that Machiavelli “represents certain living forces in our actual world,” but this is because energy, force, will, violence, still keep alive in the world their resistance to the control of justice and conscience, humanity and right. In so far as he represents one side in that eternal struggle, and suggests one set of considerations about it, he retains a place in the literature of modern political systems and of European morals. (Morley Machiavelli 49-50).
motion, citing “the nameless shameless abominations which inspire him with such frenzied delight” (23).

But the critic’s own poetic zeal in this assessment (as he rhymes “nameless” and “shameless”) gains focus as the essay goes on. Morley continues by identifying in Swinburne “a mind all aflame with the feverish carnality of a schoolboy” (23), one obsessed with crime, vexation, stinging, biting – and “much else that is nameless and abominable” (24). “Mr Swinburne,” Morley writes, “riots in the profusion of colour of the most garish and heated kind” (26). (He again, in the passage I cite as an epigraph, calls attention to “the excess of flaming violent colour” and the “biting and burning” (25) throughout these pages.) Too vivid by half, the sensual supercharging evident in Swinburne’s verse threatens the equilibrium that a cooler rationality would secure: it is a catalog of crimes, a meditation on the dizzy possibilities of what can happen when reserve is abandoned: “There are not twenty stanzas in the whole book which have the faintest tincture of soberness. We are in the midst of fire and serpents, wine and ashes, blood and foam, and a hundred lurid horrors” (26).

Denouncing these outrages against modern reason, the protégé of Mill and future MP here casts his objection to Swinburne’s poetics in explicitly political terms. In doing so he puts his finger on what I am suggesting is a crucial part of the political vision Poems and Ballads articulates. During the summer of 1866 Morley also reviewed George Eliot’s Felix Holt (in the Saturday Review of June 16th). In that anti-political novel, the follower of Mill found much to appreciate. The story that featured its title character defusing riots through the sheer persuasive power of speech stirred from Morley the highest compliments: Eliot, Morley thought, “looks out upon the world with the most entire enjoyment of all the good
that there is in it to enjoy, and with an enlarged compassion for all the ill that there is in it to pity” (“Felix Holt” 723). Citing Eliot’s expansive, idealist broadness of mind —her “enlarged compassion”— Morley well identifies the idealist or cosmopolitan wandering I described as Eliot’s content for the term “modernity.” In doing so the critic makes plain his own political-aesthetic leanings, singling out for praise “the benign, elevated, and calm spirit which breathes through the authoress’s style” (“Felix Holt” 723). Rather than read these as conventional phrases of bourgeois praise, I want to argue that they also coded political messages, where calmness, elevatedness — what Amanda Anderson calls “the powers of distance”—have themselves been elevated into what I am suggesting is the political-aesthetic of mid century liberalism.

Morley sums up his August 1866 denunciation of Poems and Ballads with praise, but soon unfurls the now explicitly politicized terms of his objections. “Not all the fervour of his imagination,” Morley writes, not

the beauty of his melody, the splendour of his many phrases and pictures can blind us to the absence of judgment and reason, the reckless contempt for anything like a balance […]. The lurid clouds of lust or of fiery despair and defiance never lift to let us see the pure and peaceful and bounteous kindly aspects of the great landscape of human life. (29)

Swinburne’s poems articulate an alternative vision that Morley deals with seriously, and in starkly political terms: devoid of “judgment and reason,” evincing “reckless contempt for anything like a balance,” Swinburne’s Poems and Ballads were the very image of what the liberal imagination wanted to believe the English rule of law was not.40 It is customary for

40 As Merle Bevington describes in his institutional history of the Saturday Review, the attack on Swinburne’s collection issued from a unified sense that the poet, whom the Review had earlier encouraged, had now gone too far. “For some time Swinburne’s open avowal, in conversation, of his admiration for the Marquis de Sade had been a cause for concern, even among his friends [some of whom were on staff at the magazine]. […] Many respectable people, including the owners of
criticism to invoke Swinburne’s reviews as evidence of a hopelessly backward bourgeoisie, the “middle-class pressmen” Allison Pease dismisses in her reading of Swinburne in *Modernism, Mass Culture, and the Aesthetics of Obscenity*. But I have quoted Morley’s review at some length because I take his considerations seriously. As I have attempted to show, this key denunciation of Swinburne’s poems operates as a veritable handbook of terminology from liberal theory of the period, where naked force opposed balance and restraint — “excess,” that is, opposed “law.” Identifying the structures of excess Swinburne took pains to encode in his verse, Morley’s reading thus represents an articulation, in an aesthetic idiom, of the very antagonisms that would become evident in more properly political terms as a more widely touted crisis took shape over what role excessive violence might play in the benign and elevated mission of the British Empire.

### 3.4 Force, Peace, The Pygmy’s Right Hand

Fevered inspiration, lurid force, and a resulting delight: the terms picked out for aesthetic critique by Morley, a man “close to Mill in both doctrine and temperament” (Collini, unpaginated), shuttle us toward the contests over law and violence that animated liberal political discourse in the summer of 1866. These contests shed further light on the links between Swinburne’s decidedly unbeautiful violence and what Ian Baucom has called...
“the sublime terror of Morant Bay” (50). In an 1868 letter Mill described this terror, noting with due horror what he calls the “wanton torture & death of many hundred men & women” (p 1410) during Eyre’s temporary dictatorship in Jamaica. But Mill moves on from this to explain that it is not these horrors that motivate his interest in the situation. The Jamaican crimes were no doubt terrible, Mill writes:

Yet if all human sympathies could be cast aside together, the importance of instituting a judicial enquiry into the proceedings in Jamaica would still be paramount in the eyes of all thinking persons who look upon law & order as the foundation of order & civilization. (Letters 1411)

Before breaking with it in June of 1866, James Fitzjames Stephen served as the lead counsel for the Jamaica Committee, producing in that spring an opinion that supported the Committee’s charge that in killing Gordon, Eyre had gone in excess of his duties as governor. (After Eyre’s first acquittal and when the Committee, now under Mill’s direction, decided to pursue Eyre for civil murder, Stephen withdrew from the Committee, arguing over what Stephen saw as Mill’s excessively sentimental connection to the case [Leslie Stephen Life 230]). Before this split Stephen had argued that martial law existed within the common law, as a lawful part of that order’s self-defensive architecture.41 Martial law, Stephen wrote in his 1866 opinion, was nothing more than “the common law right of the Crown and its representatives to repel force by force in the case of invasion or insurrection, and to act against rebels as it might against invaders” (Jamaica Papers 1, 70, italics original). I have already quoted Stephen’s definition to show that the status of insurgents was equivalent to

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41 As Stephen’s biographer writes: “The law, as understood by Fitzjames, comes, I think, substantially to this. The so-called ‘martial law’ is simply an application of the power given by the common law to put down an actual insurrection by force. The officers who employ force are responsible for any excessive cruelty, and are not justified in using it after resistance is suppressed, or the ordinary courts reopened. The so-called courts-martial are not properly courts at all, but simply committees for carrying out measures adopted on responsibility of the officials; as the proclamation is merely a public notice that such measures will be employed” (Stephen, Life 229)
that of invading national armies, though without national status. Here what is of note is that for Stephen, the apparent excesses of martial law were a part of the common law, one mechanism, with others, by which the state could lawfully defend itself against threats to its stability. This would seem to align Stephen with the Millite dream of a horizonless rule of law, the perpetual peace of legality that the author of *On Liberty*, like George Eliot and Morley, had theorized as the outcome of history’s natural ascent. But if Fitzjames Stephen’s early opinion for the Jamaica Committee would seem to uphold this conclusion, later in his career the jurist would not count himself among Mill’s “thinking persons” who see “law & order” as one with “order & civilization.” After his noisy break from Mill during the height of the Jamaica prosecution, and after a two year stint as a magistrate in India, Stephen’s views on the relationship of violence to law had drastically altered. This iconoclastic thinker, the man who, “of all the Victorian critics of democracy [was] at once the most radical and the least encumbered with substitute religion” (White, 17), would theorize how it is force itself that subtends “order & civilization,” outlining in his major theoretical work the way in which “wanton torture” and “death” were built into the very apparatus of order Mill and his Committee were interested in defending. Force, for Stephen, was the very name of peace.

After his time as the Jamaica Committee counsel, Stephen served as a member of the Legislative Counsel at Calcutta for two years. On the journey home from that tenure the jurist produced what may be the Victorian period’s most trenchant critique of the principles of Millite liberalism, *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity* (1873). “He always said,” Stephen’s editor

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42 Leslie Stephen’s biography of his brother describes the effect of his tenure in India on his legal beliefs in a chapter of his *Life of James Fitzjames Stephen* called “Indian Impressions” (292-300).
writes, “that his experience in India was a second university education, and that *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity* was ‘little more than the turning of an Indian lantern on European problems’” (White 1). In India Stephen developed an abiding respect for what he, like the liberal theorists he would come to oppose, called “the rule of law.” But while Mill (like Morley) in repeated arguments signaled that this term signified for him the culmination of a process of historical motion into a stage understood to operate, horizontally, according to a logic of contract, for Stephen the rule of law was simply another term for authority.

Though composed in the 1870s, Stephen’s argument in this work reflects on Mill’s positions in *On Liberty* and other political work from the age of equipoise.43 Stephen’s critique would hold Mill to account for his historical optimism; for his empty use of abstract terms like “liberty”; and most importantly for this chapter’s argument, for what Stephen considered Mill’s naïve believe that violence could somehow be eradicated from politics. Conjured in an imperial location, imagined in the periphery and marshaled to understand the workings of law in the metropole, Stephen’s theory sheds light on the debates surrounding the Morant Bay affair, an Indian “lantern” that would reveal the force that subtends law and works through its apparently peaceful operations. “Disguise it how you will,” Stephen judged, “it is force in one shape or another which determines the relations between human beings” (Liberty 209).

In a trenchant critique of *Subjection of Women* and the historical argument it rests upon, Stephen picked apart the claim that the prevailing trend of history was toward a

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43Stephen explains in the first pages that he has chosen Mill’s work to critique because it represents the common-sense of the age: “No better statement of the popular view – I might, perhaps, say of the religious doctrine of liberty—is to be found than that which is contained in Mr Mill’s essay on the subject” (Liberty 54).
peaceful equality, and that (in the context of *Subjection*) inequality among the sexes “stands out as an isolated fact in modern social institutions,” “in radical opposition,” as Mill had written, to “the progressive movement, which is the boast of the modern world” (Subjection 137). Stephen critiques this formula of Mill’s, but also invokes Sir Henry Maine to refute the argument both theorists had lodged about historical progress I discussed in chapter one, namely that through the course of history, “force” gives way inevitably to a peace based on contract. “I say,” Stephen writes,

that all that is proved by the fact that status, to use Sir H. Maine’s expression, tends to be replaced by contract, is that force changes its form. Society rests ultimately upon force in these days, just as much as it did in the wildest and most stormy periods of history. (226)

To further explain this refutation of what he styles as Mill and Maine’s optimistic historicism, Stephen goes further to grant that the appearance of peacefulness may certainly have developed since those “wildest and most stormy periods of history,” but that what has happened is not an eradication of force but its metamorphosis into a subtler form.

To make this argument Stephen has recourse to the historical novels of Walter Scott. He refers readers to Scott’s *The Fair Maid of Perth*, and grants that on first appearance, it would appear that the “spirited picture” of the wars and tribal infighting of fourteenth century Scotland meant that at that time, the world had been ruled by force. Stephen grants, too, that it would also appear, by contrast, that the “quiet industry, farming, commerce, and amusement” of present day Scotland (Liberty 228) might look quite different. It might appear, indeed, as though force had been replaced by peace. “Look a little deeper,” however, and we see that

[t]he force which goes to govern Scotland of these days is to the force employed for the same purpose in the fourteenth century what the force of a line-of-battle ship is
to the force of an individual prize fighter. The reason why it works so quietly is that no one doubts either its existence, or its direction, or its crushing superiority to any individual resistance which could be afforded to it. [...] It can be defied only on the smallest possible scale, and by taking it at a disadvantage. A criminal may overpower an isolated policeman just as a pygmy might with his right hand hold down the last joint of the little finger of a giant’s left hand, if the hand were in a suitable position; but deliberate individual resistance to the law of the land for mere private advantage is in these days an impossibility which no one ever thinks of attempting. Force not only reigns, but in most matters it reigns without dispute, but it does not follow that it has ceased to exist. (Stephen Liberty 203)

Stephen invokes two colonial contexts to make his point: governing the Scottish highlands today requires massive, crushing force, just as the rebellion of an African Pygmy, like that of a common criminal in London, might temporarily seem (but only seem) to resist the sovereign power underwriting law.

What has happened under the auspices of this wide-ranging, modern imperial law (its “peace”) is not that force has gone away, but that it has become more subtle: it has been shifted from the order of the actual – the unmitigated force of what Foucault called “the older power of death” — into the register of the potential and all-pervasive. 44 Prefiguring the arguments Max Weber would make in his influential analyses of state power in Politics as Vocation (1919), in which he defined the modern state as “a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory” (unpaginated), 45 Stephen’s argument provides the exact counterpoint to the historical story George Eliot devised from her own reading of Walter Scott. Eliot saw Scott’s historical novels about pacification as evidence that the archaic rule of status would

44 Stephen further explains: “To say that the law of force is abandoned because force is regular, unopposed, and beneficially exercised, is to say that day and night are such well-established institutions that the sun and moon are mere superfluities” (Stephen 206).
give way inevitably to a wide-ranging, sympathetic imagination, the “peace” of contract that was awakened, in *The Mill on the Floss*, by that perfectly-named businessman, Lawyer Wakem. (Morley’s reading of *Felix Holt* celebrates exactly this forward-driving historical tendency.)

For Stephen, on the other hand, what has happened in the state of Maine’s contract, or what Hall called Mill’s “imagined community of potential equality” is that force has transformed into a silent, humming machine; bare force is available to descend at any necessary moment in a show of “crushing superiority.” Stephen’s critique in other words articulates the position that British liberal society, in the height of its modernity—a temporal metaphor Stephen also critiques—has yet to improve, as Mill’s insistent language had it, beyond the use of force. Indeed there is no hope of ever improving beyond force, since it is force itself that defines human society. “Force is an absolutely essential element of all law whatever,” Stephen writes later in the book. “Indeed law is nothing but regulated force subjected to particular conditions and directed towards particular objects. The abolition of the law of force cannot therefore mean the withdrawal of the element of force from law, for that would be the destruction of law altogether” (223). That the articulation of this basic tenet of sovereignty theory could be offered as a polemic intervention is a measure, perhaps, of how completely the question of violence had been sidestepped by mainstream Victorian theory.

Stephen would go further to associate the ineradicable presence of force relations within “law” with war itself. As his above metaphor of a “line-of-battle ship” suggests, war is the proper figure for modern power relations, the condition of possibility for everyday existence. What we call war, Stephen theorized, is merely the force relations of everyday life rendered explicit. “It seems,” Stephen writes,
that compulsion in its most formidable shape and on the most extensive scale—the compulsion of war—is one of the principles which lie at the root of national existence. It determines whether nations are to be and what they are to be. It decides what men shall believe, how they shall live, in what mould their religion, law, morals, and the whole tone of their lives shall be cast. It is the ratio ultima not only of kings, but of human society in all its shapes. […]

From this great truth flow many consequences, some of which I have already referred to. They may all be summed up in this one, that power precedes liberty—that liberty, from the very nature of things, is dependent upon power; and that it is only under the protection of a powerful, well-organized, and intelligent government that any liberty can exist at all. (Stephen 166)⁴⁶

For the Stephen of Liberty, Fraternity, Equality, then, the excesses of tyranny—what Mill described in his speeches as the “sanguinary licenses” of “temporary dictatorship”—were not the absence of the rule of law but their very truth made explicit.

Stephen thought of himself as a Hobbesian. In a series of essays for the Saturday Review that appeared while the Jamaica controversy was taking shape in the summer of 1866 (and within weeks of John Morley’s August 4th review of Poems and Ballads, in the same magazine), he began to work through the realist political philosophy that would animate Liberty, Equality, Fraternity. In those essays, Stephen called on Hobbes as the prototype for his own, soon-to-be-elaborated ideas that power, far from being an archaicism or “survival” from a previous age, indeed furnished the possibility of human civilization in the first place, modern or otherwise. “[T]o imagine a society in which there is no sovereign,” Stephen wrote in one of these essays, “is to imagine a society that is not a society, but an anarchy” (“Sovereignty” 58).⁴⁷ All of Stephen’s essays on Hobbes appeared just before or during the

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⁴⁶ In this way Stephen could be said to anticipate Foucault’s critique in Society Must Be Defended that “war” is the name for society’s normal “force relations laid bare” (48). “Politics, in other words, sanctions and reproduces the disequilibrium of forces manifested in war” (16). Stephen would similarly argue for the indistinction between persuasion and violence, arguing that the former is merely a “softer” iteration of the latter.

⁴⁷ Of his schooling at Eton, Stephen later said that “The process taught me for life, the lesson that to be weak is wretched, that the state of nature is a state of war, and Vae Victis [woe to the conquered] the great law of nature” (qtd. White 4).
Jamaica case, with his earliest essay on Hobbes, “Hobbes on Government” appearing August 26, 1865, three months before the first news of insurrection reached London.

He returned to Hobbes as the controversy heated up: “Hobbes’ Leviathan” appeared September 29th, while “Sovereignty” – reprinted later as “Hobbes’ Minor Works” — hit the pages of the Saturday Review on November 10, 1866, just after Stephen resigned from the Jamaica Committee. “[Hobbes] saw clearly,” Stephen wrote in the first of these essays, “what very few people see even now, that liberty is a negative idea, and that what is usually claimed under that name is not liberty, but dominion. That part of our life as to which the law issues no commands is the province of liberty. The possession of control over others is not liberty at all, but power” (“Hobbes on Government” 12). But it is in the November 10th essay entitled “Sovereignty” that Stephen expresses his sympathy with Hobbes’ sense that order flows not from any historical process banishing violence, but from an ontologically singular, power-wielding force:

[I]n every true society there must be one supreme governor, whether in the shape of a man, or of an assembly of men. The commands of this sovereign may be equitable or inequitable – that is, they may, or may not, tend to promote the welfare of the governed; but they cannot be unlawful, for they are themselves the laws, and the only law, of the subject society.

If the sovereign is forcibly and successfully resisted, he ceases to be sovereign, and anarchy ensues, for the essence of sovereignty is supreme force. (“Sovereignty” 55)

This idea may seem scandalous to contemporary tastes, Stephen admits, but he insists that Hobbes’ doctrine “is intimately connected with many of the most practical controversies of the day” (“Sovereignty 54).

While Stephen does not cite Jamaica in this short piece, his conception sheds light on the crisis of legality by which black Jamaicans found themselves cast out of juridical order,
and by which the governor who “deemed” those subjects be executed could be acquitted in three successive trials. Stephen has an acute sense of how, as he puts it in *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*, “many dissimilar things” “run into each other” (43), evincing a Swinburnian sensitivity to the dialectic and showing, here, how “absolutism” and “democracy,” like “despotism” and “liberty,” shade into one another in ways that will no doubt cause unease to what he styles as Victorian England’s political common sense. In reference to what he called “the Disturbances in Jamaica,” Mill had told the Parliament, defiantly, that “We stand here to assert the authority and majesty of law” (31 July 1866; Speeches 113n). Stephen’s theory puts hard questions to that flourish. With attention to the problems imperial rule raised for metropolitan law – shining an “Indian lantern” on the problematic status of law’s “majesty” — Stephen exposed crucial conceptual ambiguities where Mill imagined an answer to be. In this way Stephen’s theory challenges Mill’s idealism: we might use speeches to “assert” the authority of law as much as we like, but what power guarantees “the majesty of law,” by what material mechanisms is it in fact “asserted,” and where, most crucially, does that sovereign power draw its limits? What is the boundary to law?

48In the article Stephen uses the empire to mock England’s diffusion of power. “The sovereign of India,” he writes, “for the time being is the sovereign of England; and who is sovereign of England, in the metaphysical sense, it is impossible to say” (“Sovereignty” 63). With Weimar Germany as his example, Carl Schmitt echoed the dispute between Mill and Stephen about the ontological status of sovereign power. Schmitt explains, like Stephen here, that liberal parliamentarism “understands dictatorship not just as an antithesis of democracy but also essentially as the suspension of the division of powers, that is, as a suspension of the constitution, a suspension of the distinction between legislative and executive” (Crisis 41). For Schmitt as for Jean Bodin, only an indivisible, singular power can hold absolute power in a given state, and while this power may take different forms at different times – it may, indeed, not reveal itself as power at every moment — this structuring, lawgiving presence hums in the background or exists quietly until such time as it is called into presence. The single test of sovereign authority, Schmitt says, is the ability to suspend the rule of law in exceptional circumstances. “Sovereign is he who decides the state of exception” (5), he pronounces, and then clarifies: He decides whether there is an extreme emergency as well as what must be done to eliminate it. […] All tendencies of modern constitutional development point toward eliminating the sovereign in this sense. (7) The point Schmitt raises is that sovereignty in a liberal democracy, as in a dictatorship proper, is ontologically singular — even when it takes on the appearance of being “shared.” Schmitt used scare quotes to mock, as Stephen does here, “the ‘neutral’” power of nineteenth century British Parliamentarism, “‘which reigned but did not rule’” (1).
Responses to Stephen’s *Saturday Review* essays on Hobbes do not survive, but the jurist was fiercely attacked for his views in *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity* by his former associates on the Jamaica Committee, Frederic Harrison and (again) John Morley. Harrison adopted positivist objections to Stephen’s polemics, but Morley, now writing for the *Fortnightly Review* (in August of 1873), attacked the Hobbesian critic from what Stephen’s biographer in reference to this episode calls “Mill’s point of view” (L. Stephen Life 339). Stephen had shown the empire’s peace to be a permanent state of war, one where force relations resolve into equilibrium and are normally unnoticed but can emerge at any exceptional, “crushing” moment. “The Pygmy’s right hand,” as he’d said, posed no threat to its power. It is little surprise, perhaps, that this theory was devised in a colony and exported back to the seat of modern restraint in London. During Stephen’s sojourn to post-1857 India he realized, as he recalled, that seeing law work in the empire was “the best corrective in existence to the fundamental fallacies of liberalism. Out there, you see real government” (qtd White 11). By turning the lantern of India toward domestic politics, Stephen argued again and again his fundamental point that what seemed to be the exception to liberal rule – the descent of violence, or force itself – in fact defined that rule. For Morley as for Harrison, Stephen’s analysis of the “silent war” of domestic liberal state – and its explicit war, during martial law — was unwelcome news.

Colonial records vindicate Stephen. The explicit realization of the state’s crushing peace had been long established as a tool for administering law in colonial zones by the time Morley voiced his strident objections to Stephen’s theory. “In the colonies during the nineteenth century,” we learn,
‘martial law’ was invoked on a number of occasions when the white man’s burden became unwieldy. The list includes servile revolts in Barbados (1816), Demerara (1823), and Jamaica (1831). To this may be added the native revolts against taxation in Ceylon (1848) and the uprisings of Negro labourers in St. Vincent (1862) and Jamaica (1865). The attacks of border tribes called forth proclamations of ‘martial law’ in the Cape of Good Hope in 1835, 1846, and during the period 1850-53. An attempt to collect a poll tax from the Zulus of Natal in 1906 led to a race war which in turn called forth a prolonged period of martial rule over the natives. Martial law was twice proclaimed in Lower Canada during the “Patriote” Rebellion of 1837-38. Still other cases might be mentioned. (Fairman 53)

It is in this context, perhaps, that we can best appreciate the historical fact that not a single year in Queen Victoria’s long reign was without imperial warfare. This was a reality that from Stephen’s perspective made perfect sense, while for Mill’s theory – or Morley’s derivation of it— it could only be explained by recourse to the categories of time and development, atrocity and humanity. Theorizing an endless and exceptionless world of law, romanticizing this vision, Mill had imagined modernity as a chronotope of civic rationality whose spatial and temporal limits knew no boundary: force relations would die out, inevitably giving way to a law of humanity. Stephen thought that “in political and moral matters,” John Stuart Mill “represented the tendency to be content with the abstractions of the unpractical man” (Leslie Stephen Life 231). Casting his lot with abstractions, turning a blind eye to the power that guaranteed law, Mill, for Stephen, “seemed […] to dwell in a region where the great passions and forces which really stir mankind are neglected or treated as mere accidental disturbances of the right theory” (Leslie Stephen Life 231).}

49 A fact reported proudly by Byron Farwell, in Queen Victoria’s Little Wars (1); I cite Farwell’s tables in the headings to this dissertation’s two halves.

50 Responding to another historical crisis in liberal democracy, that of the Weimar Republic, Carl Schmitt argued in 1922 that “[t]he central concepts of modern state theory are all secularized theological concepts” (Political Theology 36). For Schmitt this meant that “the liberal constitutional state […] attempts to repress the question of sovereignty by a division and mutual control of competences” (11). In his own effort to demystify liberalism’s effort to transcend violence (gewalt), Schmitt singles out the Millite and the neo-Kantian traditions as linked efforts to imagine a world in which exceptions would never arise, and where violence might someday be made to go away. Of Mill, Schmitt writes that “[i]n the interest of
3.5 “Indifference was impossible to him”

Swinburne too would argue, with a self-conscious sense of scandal equal to Stephen’s, for the determining power of “great passions and forces.” In essays on Byron (1866) and Blake (published 1868, drafted 1866), the poet of excess framed his own distinction between the material drives “which really stir mankind” and “right theory,” articulating, like Stephen, his sense that it was the former that determined relationships among men. Swinburne’s introduction to Byron is concerned to justify a reconsideration of the romantic poet’s artistic virtues. While readers of the contemporary period, Swinburne writes, “have become used to better verse and carefuller workmen” (vi), Byron’s “excellence of sincerity and strength” recommends him to readers today: his verse is the source of an “imperishable excellence” (vi). These rather conventional words of praise take a more telling swerve later in the essay, when Swinburne offers a description of Byron’s procedure that sheds light on his own poetic procedure, further opening up, in the process, the links this chapter has been developing between the poet’s antinomian sensibility and the material problems of law and violence exposed in Jamaica.

objectivity and because of his fear of arbitrariness, he too emphasized the validity without exception of every kind of law” (Political Theology 41). As Stephen has already shown us with reference to Hobbes, a sovereign power always exists; it is inevitable, Schmitt writes here, echoing Stephen, that a situation will arise in which an exception to these rules must be decided, and it is in such exceptional moments that the sovereign power, whatever that power might be, is revealed. “Not every extraordinary measure,” Schmitt specifies, “is necessarily an exception. What characterizes an exception is principally unlimited authority, which means the suspension of the entire existing order” (Political Theology 12).
It is here that Swinburne develops his own political theology, his sense of the political effectivity of a singular drive based, he explains, on a nonnegotiable demand whose source is in a commitment whose only metaphors can be taken from the natural world.

“Turn now to Byron or to Shelley,” Swinburne writes:

Their passion is perfect, a fierce and blind desire which exalts and impels their verse into the high places of emotion and expression. They feed upon nature with a holy hunger, follow her with a divine lust as of gods chasing the daughters of men. Wind and fire, the cadences of thunder and the clamours of the sea, gave to them no less of sensual pleasure than of spiritual sustenance. (xii)

The role of “fierce and blind desire” in Swinburne’s own poetics has already been explained, and the other key terms Swinburne uses to praise these poets—“wind and fire,” “the clamours of the sea”—are recognizable as the key images structuring Poems and Ballads. For Shelley as for Byron, as Swinburne writes here, “divine lust” and “holy hunger” are the driving forces animating a poetics based on belief, an archaic spirit proper to the era of gods that is “sensual” but also “spiritual.” Swinburne goes on to explain that while Shelley’s work may please us, it is Byron who most courageously revels in the force relations proper to a world charged with the blind commitments of desire. To Byron, says Swinburne,

Tempest and rebellion and the magnificence of anguish were as the natural food and fire to kindle and sustain his indomitable and sleepless spirit. The godless martyrdom of rebels; the passion that cannot redeem; the Thebaid whose first hermit was Cain, the Calvary whose first martyr was Satan, these, time after time, allured and inspired him. Here for once this inner and fiery passion of thought found outer clothing and expression in the ruin of a world. (xiii-xiv)

Swinburne reads Byron as a poet of the excessive, of the unappeasable forces of passion, rebellion, Satanism. All are for Swinburne positive terms: while the surface world may be

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51 For Georges Bataille as for Swinburne and (and Swinburne’s Byron), catastrophe “is that by which a nocturnal horizon is set ablaze, that for which lacerated existence goes into a trance – it is the Revolution – it is time released from all bonds; it is
frozen over in a veneer of tranquil equanimity, Swinburne’s claim is that the forces underneath that placid top seethe and groan, and the poets who acknowledge this see, like the Marquis de Sade, to the “passions” (Kant’s “affects”) that sit at “the bottom of gods and men.” Swinburne’s neo-romantic allegiances find him praising these outdated (because open) antagonisms, these archaic commitments of “rebels,” “martyrs,” “rebellion.” All of these stances find proper expression, Swinburne says, not in triumphalism but by attending to the vast historical damage visible everywhere — finding “outer clothing,” he says, in “the ruin of a world.”

Byron’s attractively outdated interest in the abrogation of law impressed Swinburne more than Shelley’s, whose signature political tract was called “A Philosophical View of Reform” – not revolution. But even more than Byron, the poet who exemplified for Swinburne the dialectical possibilities of unblunted belief was William Blake. “[M]ade up of mist and fire” (“Blake” 358), the Romantic mystic was for Swinburne the very paradigm of a positively-charged frenzy. Here again, Swinburne names this privileged vision “belief.” In the essay on Blake that has long been seen as the key articulation of his own aesthetic program, Swinburne explains his appreciation for the way in which this bizarre, inspired

pure change; it is a skeleton that emerges from its cadaver as from a cocoon and that sadistically lives the unreal existence of death” (Bataille 134). Bataille is describing lawless revolutionary violence, but could be describing martial law. In either case he no doubt describes Swinburne’s lawless verse.

52 Shelley’s political position is an extremely complex topic, but my preliminary suggestion would be that we might come some way in understanding Swinburne’s hesitation about the “ineffectual angel” by noting that Shelley titled one of his central political tracts “A Philosophical View of Reform” – not Revolution. I thank Rob Mitchell for reminding me of this.

53 Entire passages of Swinburne’s reading of Blake could be transposed without edit into a discussion of Swinburne: “The sound of many verses of Blake’s cleaves to the sense long after conscious thought of the meaning has passed from one: a sound like the running of water or ringing of bells in a long lull of the wind” (“Blake” 362). Or again: “[T]he fiery and lyrical tone of mind and speech, the passionate singleness of aim, the heat and flame of faith in himself, the violence of mere words, the lust of paradox, the loud and angry habits of expression which abound in his critical or didactic work, are not here absent” (“Blake” 363).
romantic created his own “good,” transforming a world into his own image in a lifelong mission not unlike a religious crusade. In a time of rational calculation, and in a world governed by the immanent workings of de-ontologized sovereignty, Swinburne finds in Blake an inspired counterpoint. “[T]he main part of him was, and is yet, simply inexplicable,” Swinburne writes:

In a time of critical reason and definite division, he was possessed by a fervour and fury of belief; among sane men who had disproved most things and proved the rest, here was an evident madman who believed a thing, one may say, only insomuch as it was incapable of proof. He lived and worked out of all rule, and yet by law. (“William Blake” 359)

Creating his own law, toiling in pursuit of an absolute of his own devising, Blake’s “faith was absolute and hard, like a pure fanatic’s; there was no speculation in him” (359). Swinburne goes on in his hyperbolic praise, invoking each of key terms of Victorian liberalism I have been discussing so far — Bagehot’s “Age of Discussion,” Kantian disinterest, and the procedural law of Mill’s de-ontological liberalism— only to refuse them each in turn:

His outcries on various matters of art or morals were in effect the mere expression, not of reasonable dissent, but of violent belief. [...] Indifference was impossible to him. Thus every shred of his work has some life, or some blood, infused or woven into it. In such a vast tumbling chaos of relics as he left behind to get in time disentangled and cast into shape, there are naturally inequalities enough; rough sides and loose sides, weak points and helpless knots, before which all mere human patience or comprehension recoils and reels back. But in all, at all times, there is the one invaluable quality of actual life. (“William Blake” 360).

Invoking “actual life” and “violent belief” as the positive antithesis to reasonable dissent, Swinburne voices a preference for belief’s “invaluable quality” — a quality that supersedes all value. To this he opposes the conceptual logic of exchange, the “mere human patience” that

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54 Hyder suggests that “With this book [William Blake, written 1863-66]… modern appreciation of Blake began” (Life and Career 133).
might recoil, Swinburne suggests, in the face of the “inequalities” of Blake’s mystical and quasi-Benjaminian collection of sharp fragments, that “vast tumbling chaos of relics,” full of “weak” and “helpless” jagged edges. Stemming from belief, Blake’s vision takes form as the ruin of the world.

Swinburne’s own melancholic investments, his insistence on the unexpungable damage of history, its persistence into the present moment, led him to praise those same qualities of Blake, and perhaps to find them there. In poems about injury in *Poems and Ballads* like “Dolores” and “Itylus,” Swinburne maintains what he represents as the fundamentalist conviction that past violence cannot and will not go away. His rewriting of the Procne myth in “Itylus,” for example, reworks the traditional theme, common to Keats, Matthew Arnold, and T.S. Eliot, by which the story of Philomela’s rape and subsequent transformation into a nightingale becomes an allegory of pain turning into poetry, a transformation of trauma into beauty that mirrors the procedure of cognitive exchange psychoanalysis understands as mourning. Swinburne’s retelling refuses this closure, insisting instead on the melancholic persistence of this damage, its inability to be purged from the historical record. Instead of being a poem about the triumph of poetry over pain – that is, about the exchange of injury into something else—Swinburne’s version of the Procne myth is about memory: it enjoins its speaker and readers to witness a violence that cannot be exchanged or otherwise erased. This is the poem’s final stanza:

O sister, sister, thy first-begotten!
   The hands that cling and the feet that follow,
   The voice of the child's blood crying yet
Who hath remembered me? who hath forgotten?
   Thou hast forgotten, O summer swallow,
   But the world shall end when I forget.       (55-60).
The stanza’s final line forms what would seem to be the closure of its C-C rhyme, as “forget” concludes the rhyme initiated by the “child’s blood cries yet.” But what works poetically as closure is thematically positioned as its precise opposite, open-endedness: no forgetting happens here, no closure is achieved. The speaker realizes the strangeness of this commitment to remembering, marking it as the opposite to the stance taken by “thou.” If Swinburne finds in Blake some image of this quasi-Benjaminian dedication to the past – where the past is understood not as a sequence of progressive stages but as a fragmentary jumble of damage, what Benjamin called “history as the Passion of the world” (Tragic Drama 166)—then he also recognizes in Blake the focused, extra-rational allegiances that make such a commitment possible.

Like Stephen’s essays on Hobbes, Swinburne’s heroic depiction of Blake’s “perpetual freshness and fulness of belief” (“Blake” 364) was finalized during the height of the Jamaica crisis, a crisis which, as we have seen, centered most of all on how sovereign violence related to the law that would advertise its ability to make that force unnecessary. In their different ways, Swinburne and Stephen both responded to this historical conjuncture by proposing a re-ontologization of power, a return to belief. Both men cast light on the sovereign violence that sits at the heart of any order that imagines itself to have left that violence behind. Stephen did so by using a realist political vocabulary to celebrate the necessity of force in all political relations, while for Swinburne the violence that subtends order is the cause of pain whose human cost cannot be erased.

Morley recognized that the singularity of Swinburne’s poetic vision represented the very abrogation of ordered rationality that liberal theory of the period understood as the content for the term “law.” In “Laus Veneris,” Swinburne’s knight Tannhauser says that his
love is an absolute obsession. The poem underlines the theological content of this position by specifying that Tannhauser is not just any warrior but a Christian one – a religious warrior just back from an actual crusade. Speaking of God, the Christian knight admits to his fanaticism:

Though [God] search my veins all through, searching them
He shall find nothing whole therein but love.
(383-384)

Given over entirely to a belief understood as “love,” Tannhauser is consumed by a drive that is coterminous with total violence, one encoded as part of his very physical makeup, in “my veins all through.” This physical desire harries the knight, he says, sticking to him and scorching him: he is unable to shake it. It is “clinging as a fire that clings / To the body and to the raiment, burning them; / As after death I know that such-like flame / Shall cleave to me for ever” (404-407). In this heretical reversal of Christian eternity, “Laus Veneris” rewrites the endlessness of the afterlife as the unceasing pain of an obsessive lust. In doing so this religious knight tells us that the proper figure for belief is war. Tannhauser imagines himself in the crusades, describing his killing of enemies in terms that echo his own cleaving passion for his loved Venus. In a flashback he confronts “some certain of my foe’s men,” then tells us:

The first red-bearded, with square cheeks – alack,
I made my knave’s blood turn his beard to black;
The slaying of him was a joy to see. (243, 245-247).

Compared to the metaphoric violence of love, this actual violence (a killing, a cleaving) is rendered with strange indirectness, a reticence that paradoxically serves to highlight the event. But Swinburne’s point is not lost: with the fanaticism of love equated with the “just war” of a political and religious crusade, Swinburne’s poem puts on display the bare violence
of imperial war, and Morley’s liberal aesthetic objections to Swinburne begin to take a more obviously political shape.

By offering a reading of Swinburne’s materialist political theology, this chapter has provided terms for suggesting Swinburne’s ideological complicity with Tannhauser: it has left room for assuming, in other words, that Swinburne figures this crusading knight — slaughterer of infidels, prey to a consuming passion — as a “good” figure. In allowing for this I have emphasized the way in which Swinburne would seem to make his fanatical knight, like Sappho, a somehow sympathetic character, the “hero of the story.” But in moving toward the close of this chapter I want to recall Swinburne’s work, in “Itylus,” to bear witness to rather than celebrate historical violence, going further to note that the form of Swinburne’s dramatic monologues in Poems and Ballads allows for a precisely ironic reading of their hyperbolically violent main characters, their Sapphos and Tannhausers. Jerome McGann, for example, has made the case that Tannhauser is being ironized. Consumed by a singular lust, “Tannhauser is not really a tragic figure in ‘Laus Veneris,’ however, but a pathetic one. Swinburne uses him as the moral example of an attitude which ruins the possibility of a fully human life” (256). I want to close this section on Swinburne’s political theology by taking this doubleness seriously, using the ambiguity of Tannhauser’s position to suggest that rather than endorse this crusading violence, Swinburne stages it for our view. Uncontent with abstractions, seeing to the bottom of gods and men, Swinburne sees, and shows us, the forces that seeth and groan under the calm surface of what Mill, Morley, and more contemporary theorists have valorized as “modern” detachment. His efforts in that regard allow this argument to swerve back to the political world, to take measure of the fanaticism at the core of the very rule of law that believed it might cancel fanaticism forever.
In his July 1866 speeches for Jamaica Committee, Mill framed the debate over Eyre's
guilt as a contest between restraint and excess, a peaceful law versus the unchecked executive
power Mill understood as law's negation. Which side was England on? Referring to martial
law as “arbitrary power – the rule of force, subject to no legal limits” (#), Mill explained that
to invoke such a force as this is not (as it might first appear) to step aside from responsibility
by claiming that the force is lawless. Far from absolving its invoker of responsibility, martial
law’s “arbitrary power” in fact increased that figure’s responsibility, his culpability under law.
In front of a full session of Parliament, Mill elaborated, using an uncharacteristic rhetorical
energy and a formulation whose terms justify extended quotation:

[I]f men are let loose from all law, from all precedents, from all forms —are left to
try people for their lives in any way they please, take evidence as they please, refuse
evidence as they please, give facilities to the defence or withhold those facilities as
they think fit, and after that pass any sentences they please, and irrevocably execute
those sentences, with no bounds to their discretion but their own judgment of what
is necessary for the suppression of a rebellion […]; when there is absolutely no
guarantee against any extremity of tyrannical violence, but the responsibility which
can be afterwards exacted from the tyrant—then, sir, it is indeed indispensable that
he who takes the lives of others under this discretion should know that he risks his
own. (“Disturbances in Jamaica 2” #.)

Mill's account unwittingly draws on a vocabulary borrowed from neo-Kantian aesthetics,
referring to the “forms” of “law” and “extremit[ies]” of “violence” in order to cast the
problem of Eyre’s lawless despotism as the very picture of unregulated motion, outpourings
of vital force. If colonial governors can do “as they please,” Mill says, the law and its regulative functions have been abrogated entirely.

This speech to Parliament predates Matthew Arnold’s well known chapter on “Doing as One Likes” in *Culture and Anarchy* by three years, but Mill’s story replicates Arnold’s terms with an accuracy that sheds light on the analytic resources of liberal theory in the period. In his chapter, Arnold outlines the threat mass democracy posed to the harmony of the state, arguing that the times were tending towards individual whim. Freedom, Arnold surmised in the context of the 1866 riots in Hyde Park, had leaned too far. “More and more,” he writes, “this and that man, and this and that body of men, all over the country, are beginning to assert and put in practice an Englishman’s right to do what he likes; his right to march where he likes, meet where he likes, enter where he likes, hoot as he likes, threaten as he likes, smash as he likes. All this, I say, tends to anarchy” (84-85). Psomiades has recently called attention to the role Arnold’s fears played in contests over who might count or not count in nationalized liberal universalism imagined in the lead-up to the 1867 Reform Bill.

The problem became even more pronounced when its horizons were expanded geographically, beyond England’s internal “residuum” to its external one. What I have been underscoring is the degree to which invocations of “anarchy” could structure the liberal political imagination in this most turbulent period of Britain’s global rule. In this shared imaginary, “lawlessness” and “liberty” (like “anarchy” and “culture,” or Morley’s “horrors”

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55 What is interesting is that a central tension in Kant’s *Third Critique* is how the dynamical sublime – that which overcomes us with its excessive force, as opposed to the numerical sublime, which blows us away with numbers—ends up getting brought back within the realm of reason and beauty. Kant’s system recovers reason’s supremacy, even in the face of this radical disturbance. In a way, then, Kant’s sublime stages the same problem martial law stages with respect to law: is it outside, or inside? Kant brings it inside, but exposes a faultline in his argument in doing so.

and “balance”) were understood as opposing terms. In Arnold’s domestic context as in Mill’s imperial one, what remains inexplicable to this conceptual opposition is how “anarchy” itself—the violence that knows no law, that is prior to and beyond the law that it is invoked to enforce—had long been established as a tool for securing liberty and culture in the first place.

The mechanism I refer to, martial law, had enjoyed a long and controversial history in England before Morant Bay: its roots lay in the Riot Act and Acts of War, and the term originally referred to the military law that would apply to the invading armies or other nationally-defined enemies of the state. Known in the French tradition as the state of siege, “martial law” in England thus named the rules of war governing troops in the field: it was administered by the military, to the military. In English Common Law, insurgents rising against the state’s lawful power also arrayed themselves in a state of war. Like invaders under an enemy flag but without the benefit of national status, those participating in insurrection entered a state of enmity with respect to the government: they were unprotected by civil law, and instead fell under the jurisdiction of the laws of war—that is, of martial law.57 Henry VII and Henry VIII, among other monarchs, had invoked this function to put down rebels from within England’s own population, and by the nineteenth century the term began to take on new meaning, now also referring to temporary executive power in a state of emergency. In his 1930 survey of martial law’s long history, Charles Fairman lists at least five competing definitions of the term operative by the time of his writing. By October of

57 As Rossiter writes: “In the event of a rebellion its initiation amounts to a governmental declaration of war on those citizens in insurrection against the state. [...] It has a variety of forms and pseudonyms, the most important of which are martial law, as it is known in the common law countries of the British Empire and the United States, and the state of siege, as it is known in the civil law countries of continental Europe and Latin America” (Rossiter 9).
1865, as W.R. Kostal writes, “the law of martial law was dauntingly complex, perhaps utterly incoherent” (10). Still, out of the chaos of martial law theory at least two traditions began to be consolidated around the time of the Jamaica Rebellion – martial law as military law and martial law as a temporary executive dictatorship. Both were qualitatively separate from the “normal” operations of Constitutional procedure. “Thus we see,” one legal historian writes, “that the English legal/constitutional system […] is aware of two regimes: the standard one and martial law. The second triggered by ‘necessity’ is nothing but a temporary suspension of ordinary rights” (Ferejohn 239).

Since the insurrection at Morant Bay was “triggered by ‘necessity’” but did not involve foreign military agents, it fell, most heavily, under the auspices of a temporary dictatorship. As we will see, even Mill’s Considerations on Representative Government acknowledged that in an emergency situation, the state preserved the right, whatever that right may be called, to secure itself by any means necessary – since “necessity,” as Oliver Cromwell had long before theorized, “hath no law.” The legal instrument by which that right could take shape might be debated, but the right was not in question. “It is a matter of common knowledge,” Fairman explains,

that governors […] of British colonies and dominions do in various emergencies issue what purport to be proclamations of martial law. These usher in an extraordinary regime wherein the military authority issues regulations for the conduct of the civil population; individuals deemed troublesome will be seized and held without judicial process, and in some instances may be tried and sentenced to death by a military tribunal. Soldiers may be ordered to take life to prevent the commission of a felony, or to punish, or perhaps to produce a moral effect. (Fairman 23)

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58 In histories of martial law, Cromwell’s quote is typically invoked alongside Cicero’s dictum that “when arms speak, the laws fall silent.” It is a perhaps neat historical coincidence that Cromwell led the original expedition to steal Jamaica from the Spaniards, perhaps invoking his own maxim in 1670, as part of the project of acquisition he and his New Model Army called “The Western Design” (Dunn 152).
What Fairman outlines here is not just the process by which “an extraordinary regime” could take power over a colonial population, or how that regime could come to occupy the position of supreme sovereign, “deem[ing]” certain sections of the population to be threats in an act that itself asserts the temporary regime’s power of decision – that is, its sovereignty. By invoking “common knowledge” he also begins to unveil one of the central aporias at the heart of emergency law, which is the way in which this “law” coincides uneasily with the “fact” of its own execution. As the confused legal record indicates, “martial law” is lawful less because it is legal than because it happens, because of “necessity”: as Fitzjames Stephen’s August 1866 argument in the context of Hobbes suggested, the state’s right to invoke this suspension is based on its self-preserving power, its sovereignty; it thus precedes the prescriptions of legal forms. (“The commands of [the] sovereign may be equitable or inequitable,” Stephen wrote, “but they cannot be unlawful, for they are themselves the laws […]”)

But Mill did not see the issue this way, and from the liberal perspective the question resolved into an apparently simple one: was martial law “inside” or “outside” of law? In the moment that Mill, in Considerations, had called “the last resort,” where did sovereignty reside? The Jamaica Committee’s statement of July 27, 1866 outlined its intention to argue that though martial law had been executed as if it were outside of the law, it should be brought back within the law’s reach. Mill writes:

[T]he Committee desire to challenge in a Court of Justice the jurisdiction of courts of martial law, which, as the late events show, may be made engines of indiscriminate

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59 On the power to “deem” as the marker of the decision that marks sovereignty, see Ian Baucom, On Inimical Life, forthcoming [?].
butchery and torture; [...] and to have it determined by authority whether the law which these courts [of martial law] assume to administer is really law at all, or sanguinary license which the law will repress and punish. ("Statement of the Jamaica Committee." 27 July 1866, 424)

Mill chooses the figure of "sanguinary license" to oppose "the law," a dualism that once more recapitulates the language surrounding Swinburne’s sanguinary poetics of excess, condemned by Morley just five days after this speech. Later in the Committee’s statement, Mill describes Disraeli’s conservative position, writing that Disraeli “admits that the proclamation of martial law is the suspension of all law, and exposes the lives of British subjects to irresponsible butchery” (424). Mill’s Committee in other words argues that Disraeli’s position acknowledges without apology the fact of martial law’s externality from law; the Committee, on the other hand, is interested in bringing that mechanism back within the reach of what they call the “authority” of the rule of law, making martial law something “which the law will repress and punish.”

By referring to the “authority” that will “determine” whether martial law is or isn’t law, Mill and his colleagues may beg the question the case is most concerned with solving, since precisely what is at stake is who has the authority to determine what constitutes this state of exception, what justifies it, and what measures may be undertaken under its auspices.60 (Here Mill is assuming that it is the English state, based in London, that bears

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60 In his survey of laws of siege (the name, in the French context, for martial law), Frerejohn explains that criticism of martial law resolves into a question of who, or what body, retains the power to judge whether "exceptional circumstances" exist:

Some [thinkers] (let’s call them ‘realists’) claim that this ontological difference [between normal and exceptional circumstances] is objective and evident, that everybody can recognize its existence or supervenience; as a result, a neutral, involuntary mechanism can be established in order to detect its appearing or disappearing as a state of the world. [...] Some other thinkers (let’s call them ‘skeptics,’ or we may call them Schmittians) claim that there is no absolute evidence of the existence of the exceptional situation, that people will inevitably disagree about its existence, and thus we need to attribute to some agency (organ or institution) the epistemic authority to declare the exception. (Ferejohn 226).
this sovereign authority, while the Governor Eyre Defense Committee held that it was the governor who held it. In either case, the spatial metaphors of insides and outsides – metaphors that frame the question as one of whether this martial law “is really law at all,” or instead something outside of it – suggest a fundamental confusion about the mechanisms by which a state can preserve its own power.

In staging the debate about law and sovereignty in spatial terms, Mill anticipates the moves of more recent thinkers who, spurred by newer crises, have looked to analyze the relationship of law and violence in the contemporary era. In his 2005 book on the law of exception, Giorgio Agamben cites two historians to frame the problem martial law proposes in spatial terms: “the state of exception constitutes ‘a point of imbalance between public law and political fact’ that is situated – like civil war, insurrection, and resistance – in an ‘ambiguous, uncertain, borderline fringe, at the intersection of the legal and the political’” (State 1). As the historian Charles Fairman concludes in his own analysis (1930), “‘Martial law,’” “runs close to politics” (foreword, unpagedinated). Concerned with boundaries, edges, and “internal” moments of reversal, Fairman and Agamben both employ spatial metaphors to describe the “position” martial law occupies with respect to the constitutional or normal legal regime: for Fairman it is “close” to politics, and for the historians Agamben cites, it is “a point… between” that “is situated” “at the intersection” of political necessity (fact) and legal form (law). Both critics thus raise another central aporia of what in reference to

For the opinion on this matter that is now canonical in certain strands of critical theory, see Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Essays on the Concept of Sovereignty.*

61 As Mill said to Parliament: “We want to know […] who are to be our masters: her Majesty’s judges and a jury of our countrymen, administering the laws of England, or three naval and military officers, two of them boys, administering, as the Chancellor of the Exchequer tells us, no law at all.” (The Disturbances in Jamaica [2] , 31 JULY, 1866.)
Jamaica R.W. Kostal calls “the law of martial law,” namely its ambiguous location with respect to the state’s normal proceedings.

Mill’s *Considerations on Representative Government* took pains to illustrate the virtues of a political system moderated by checks and balances, where the sovereignty resides in “the aggregate of the people” “in the last resort.” But earlier in that discussion Mill makes a striking admission of the position excess occupies in the context of this moderating law. It is an important one. “I am far from condemning,” writes the author of *On Liberty*,

in cases of extreme exigency, the assumption of absolute power in the form of a temporary dictatorship. Free nations have, in times of old, conferred such power by their own choice, as a necessary medicine for diseases of the body politic which could not be got rid of by less violent means. (Considerations 56)

Mill moves on from this biopolitical metaphor to explain that a temporary dictatorship is only justified if this abrogation of liberty is itself aimed at expanding liberty. Suspending the law, Mill writes, “even for a time strictly limited, can only be excused, if, like Solon or Pittacus, the dictator employs the whole power he assumes in removing the obstacles which debar the nation from the enjoyment of freedom” (56). How this will be guaranteed is not mentioned. Apparently resting on discussion, communicative rationality, and the dynamically pacifying influence of parliamentary procedure (“law”), this moment in Mill’s theory shows his model of government opening itself up to the exception, to the assertion of a more naked sovereign power in “cases of extreme exigency.” In doing so it alludes, momentarily, to the supervening, “deciding,” sovereign power that exists behind the operations of the system outlined in the rest of the treatise’s many pages. Who decides when a case is of “extreme exigency”? 

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These comments predate Mill’s parliamentary speeches on “Disturbances in Jamaica” by four years. But those events would push hard on this crucial internal tension in Mill’s 1862 text. Despite the efforts on both sides of the Eyre affair to determine whether martial law was either internal to law or was something external to it, what emerged, after three straight acquittals, was that martial law “occupied” both “positions.” Stephen’s essays on sovereign power have prepared us to see this point that martial law existed as an exception that served to confirm the rule; it defined the set of “law” without itself belonging to that set.62 The unchecked violence of “martial law” occupied an anomalous, doubled “space,” a zone of indistinction whose very exceptional status was precisely what allowed it to confirm and preserve the rule. The threat of this descent was the very guarantee of imperial peace. As Agamben writes, “[i]n truth, the state of exception is neither external nor internal to the juridical order, and the problem of defining it concerns precisely a threshold, or a zone of indifference, where inside and outside do not exclude each other but rather blur with each other” (“State of Exception” 23). In my final chapter I will return to these insistent spatial metaphors, turning a historicizing eye on the figural apparatus Agamben’s account shares with other narratives of violence in imperial decline. Here I will note that the doubled relationship Agamben describes in the context of the American situation in 2005 allows us to understand a point that the outcome of the Jamaica case likewise underscored. Here, in a most material sense, it is the exception that defines the rule. That which was “external” to law (martial law) could nonetheless exist “within” it, and this “threshold”

62 In an extraordinarily complex presentation, Alain Badiou mobilizes the distinction between “belonging” and “inclusion” to theorize the conditions by which one thing can be “included” in a set without “belonging” to it. See Being and Event, 81-84. What I am interested in here is not multiples and emergences but how martial law can be a “part of” law without “belonging” to that law — “a part, though an extraordinary part,” as one historian calls it. See also Hallward, 82-93.
concept is what (in its very exceptional status) defined the very order it appears most violently to abrogate.

The paradoxes of this apparently deconstructive reversal or dialectic have already come to life in more concrete terms, where in Liberty, Equality, Fraternity Stephen showed that the term “liberty” referred most of all to its opposite — force. Here I want to dwell in brief theoretical terms on the apparently paradoxical situation by which martial law, or what Mill called “the rule of force, subject to no legal limits,” could occupy with respect to British law proper. The complex, self-contradictory operations by which a mechanism can “belong without belonging” to a set that it defines is the topic for a 1980 essay for an issue of Critical Inquiry on narrative by Jacques Derrida. There Derrida discussed the rules by which one thing (say, a particular novel) can be said to exist within a set of other examples of its own type (novels as a genre). In doing so the critic meditates on law and belonging, the logic by which any singular entity can be said to belong to a larger collective or group, what Mill in the Logic called a “set.” What Derrida sees is that any trait that announces membership in a set is not itself a member of that set: the trait that says “I am a novel” is not itself a novel. Since Derrida’s stakes in the essay he called “The Law of Genre” are larger than literary, we can follow his reading of this apparent contradiction (and the outcome of the Jamaica Case) to see that this insight holds true of the relationship between martial law and law proper. Martial law is the actualization of the very “lawless” violence that forms the unspoken foundation that state power or “law” rests upon: it is an announcement of the bare, unregulated and unregulatable force that Benjamin called, in an essay I discussed above, “lawmaking violence.” (“Law preserving violence,” as Benjamin argued, is the name for police violence, or violence that is properly within the law’s regular operations.) Martial law
is in other words the “extralegal” announcement of law’s foundational force. This naked force is not itself part of the set it defines and upholds (“law”): it is the law’s very abrogation, its excess, but at the same time it is precisely this excess that expresses the identity of its set, upholding and defining the category it seems to transgress. Derrida makes his point this way:

This supplementary and distinctive trait, a mark of belonging or inclusion, does not properly pertain to any genre or class. The re-mark of belonging [i.e. the declaration that ‘I am a novel,’ as in martial law’s declaration that ‘I am the law’] does not belong. It belongs without belonging, and the ‘without’ (or the suffix ‘-less’ [as in, “lawless”]) which relates belonging to non-belonging appears only in the timeless time of the blink of an eye. The eyelid closes, but barely, an instant among instants, and what it closes is verily the eye, the view, the light of day. But without such respite, nothing would come to light. (“The Law of Genre” 65)

What Derrida is enigmatically outlining is how the very event that defines a rule or a law—the “respite” of “a blink of an eye” that is an interruption of the normal order— is precisely that which exceeds the rule but, by exceeding it, defines it.

These terms provide a language for understanding how the unrepresented apocalypse that in The Mill on the Floss stood in for the foundational violence of the liberal state’s legal order might return in order to uphold that law. In the more material context of Jamaica in 1865, Derrida’s insight can be understood to provide a theoretical vocabulary for the way in which, in the Jamaica case, a “lawless” violence that exceeded “law” could be held simultaneously to be both “inside” and “outside” the legal order Mill and his colleagues termed the rule of law. “I am the law,” is what martial law announces, but that

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63 As Slavoj Zizek writes, describing the refusal of Kant’s political theory to understand the violence by which law comes into emergence: “Every reign of law has its hidden roots in … an absolute – self referential, self-negating— crime by means of which crime assumes the form of law, and if law is to reign in its ‘normal’ form, this reverse must be unconditionally repressed” (208). Martial law is the return of this repressed, the expression of law’s “criminal” or proper alegal foundations during a moment when that law’s “‘normal’ form” has been temporarily suspended.
announcement—the reign of martial law—is not itself legal. Akin to the revolutionary or “lawmaking” violence that precedes and founds a legal order (the terror of a revolutionary flood, say), martial law is precisely the “lawless” force that “law” rests upon, a making explicit of the state’s constituting force. “Disguise it how you will,” Stephen wrote, “it is force in one shape or another that determines relations among men.” This naked or properly unregulatable force, in the form of martial law, was, in Mill’s own words, “a necessary medicine for diseases of the body politic which could not be got rid of by less violent means.”

It is significant, in this context, that in his Parliamentary speeches, Mill compared Governor Eyre to Robespierre. It is further significant that at least one pamphlet detailing the violence under martial law in Jamaica, by Henry Bleby, anticipated that revolutionary trope, describing the excessive violence on the island in terms borrowed from counter-revolutionary politics of the kind I earlier traced in in the language of Edmund Burke. Bleby’s pamphlet on what he repeatedly names the Jamaica atrocities is called *The Reign of Terror: A Narrative of Facts Concerning Ex-Governor Eyre, George William Gordon, and The Jamaica Atrocities*. The title advertises the book’s equation of the unregulated violence of the rebellion’s suppression with the founding, or pre-legal violence of revolutionary terror. Speaking of Eyre, Bleby reworks the terms we have already seen from the governor’s own report, to the Colonial Office, that described the “ripping,” “roasting,” and “cleaving” of the rebels’ (supposed) revolutionary assault. Breathlessly, Bleby describes how “the savage hordes which [Eyre] let loose upon the people without any check to their ferocity, and with no instructions but to ravage and destroy, gorged themselves with blood” (Bleby 50). The hyperbolic denunciation of these Swinburnian crimes—this “hell-like saturnalia of martial
law,” as the book’s epigraph has it— take shape, then, as a discussion of martial law’s absolute, irredeemable lawlessness, its anomie. Bleby’s pamphlet and Mill’s rhetorical connection between French revolutionaries and colonial governors attest to their shared sense that the unregulated violence they associate with martial law precedes law, defines it.

We can read these rhetorical associations between revolution and martial law as evidence that the absolute destructive potential of state violence, or martial law, is what asserts that the law exists — it is precisely the force that means that the law exists— but this declaration is itself precisely not “part” of law: “it belongs without belonging.” “Martial law,” R.W. Kostal writes in his comprehensive legal history of the Jamaica case, raised fundamental questions about British politics and jurisprudence. Martial law was proclaimed only when the very existence of the state was in doubt, only when the civilian legal system was under siege. Inevitably, then, martial law was about taking extreme and extra-legal measures in order to rescue the basis of all law, the state. Could these measures be subject to law? Was ‘martial law’ law, or was martial law a state of non-law, a state of official and pragmatic lawlessness? (Kostal 16)

Eyre’s successive acquittals, I am suggesting, would respond to this question with an answer of “both.” In 1866 and after, political and legal debates surrounding the outpouring of vital forces at Morant Bay grasped with uneven success for a vocabulary that might explain the force that defines the peace, searching for a figural language that might describe what Benjamin called the “intimate” involvement of lawless violence in the law it defines.

3.7 Excess and Formalism / 420 Ways to Have Thee Slain

If martial law couched itself as the unacknowledged core of British parliamentary law – the violent, extralegal heart of what John Stuart Mill called the “forms” of juridical
protection—so too did Swinburne’s *Poems and Ballads* lodge their own excess within an overarching formalism, one that several critics of British poetry have seen as the very image of artistic order. Returning to literature, I want to suggest here that Swinburne’s 1866 collection stages the self-contradictory dynamics of law and “atrocit[y]”—the involvement of law and excess—as a drama of content and form.\(^{64}\) Reading “Anactoria” and “Laus Veneris,” we have seen how fully Swinburne’s *Poems and Ballads* announce the singular violence of their excess. In linguistic terms, Isobel Armstrong writes,

Swinburne’s poetry effectively … creat[es] a language which may be determined but which is nevertheless out of control in the sense that it is *outside the law*, or outside humanly made laws. (Armstrong 406, emphasis added).

So much we have seen. And yet all studies of Swinburne that consider his “rebellion”—or rather, as I phrase it here, his interest in the excess of law—are forced to confront the fact that Swinburne’s odes to life, death, fanaticism, and damage in *Poems and Ballads* are precisely “lawful” in their forms: these are some of the most accomplished exercises in poetic formalism of the Victorian age.

One 1908 article entitled “The Metrical Forms Used by Certain Victorian Poets,” “furnishes some statistics,” a later author writes, “estimating that Swinburne used 420 metrical and stanzaic forms, almost twice as many as Tennyson (240) and Browning (200)” (Faverty 244). Swinburne’s work represents a surplus of ordered forms. But rather than seeing Swinburne’s numerically impressive formal variety as another way of demonstrating

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\(^{64}\) By arguing that Swinburne’s poem lodges excess at the very heart of its formalism, my reading could be said to explore what Fredric Jameson calls the “inadequation” of content to form. Where Swinburne’s poetic content is concerned with lawless excess of a loosely Sadean type, I am interested in how Swinburne’s formal purity—as it has been named by generations of critics—represents the exact negation of this program. Jameson outlines a criticism in which “formal realizations, as well as formal defects, are taken as the signs of some deeper corresponding social and historical configuration which it is the task of criticism to explore” (Marxism and Form 331). Swinburne’s poetry, I am arguing here, describes a dialectic of form and content, lawlessness and law, which I am suggesting sheds light on the “social and historical configuration” of liberal imperialism in the 1860s.
his excess, I want to take seriously, as Jerome McGann does, the fact that this formalism works as one half of Swinburne’s dialectic strategy: the frisson of a poem like “Anactoria,” for example, one that dramatizes Sadism but does so in heroic couplets, comes precisely from the drama it stages between the excess of its content and the restraint of its meter, between driving violence and “stopped-form.” The questions this dialectic poses are those we have already seen in reference to martial law: is the violence of Swinburne’s excess “inside” or “outside” the forms in which it is couched? Is the violence “contained” by those forms, or rather, as I want to suggest here, do the poems stage that very tension as their central drama?

McGann cites Swinburne’s love of static, eternal, lawful forms, a tendency toward formal order which for McGann is most evident in Swinburne’s use of the roundel, that repetitive, eleven-line form in which the opening of the first line is repeated as a refrain in the fourth and eleventh lines. (Swinburne adapted his own exceptionally difficult roundel form from the French rondeau, fourteen line poems with only two rhymes, where the first and second, seventh and eighth, and thirteenth and fourteenth lines repeat.) “If you don’t have to depend on your own improvisations for the fundamental sound structure,” McGann writes of Swinburne’s roundel, “but can look to a form which possesses an anterior and objective existence, all the practical music of the verse will take its character from the given, ‘unsought’ rhyming pattern” (44-5, emphasis added). In a later poem simply called “Roundel,” Swinburne gives poetic language to McGann’s point here, emphasizing the ringlike coherence of this strict form:

A roundel is wrought as a ring or a starbright sphere,  
With craft of delight and with cunning of sound unsought,  
That the heart of the hearer may smile if to pleasure his ear
A roundel is wrought. (1-4)

Tightly meshed, circular in its internal self-reference, giving the pleasure of unity like any other example of Kantian beauty, the poem formally performs what it describes. “Given,” “unsought,” “anterior,” and “objective,” as McGann says, the laws of form – here, the roundel—work for Swinburne as the orderly template within which the “sadistic” or lawless programs of poems like “Anactoria” can unfold.65

The best of Swinburne’s recent critics have done much to sharpen our appreciation of Swinburne’s formal sophistication and his complex engagements with his historical moment. Yet they leave open the question of the relationship between the poet’s formalism and the apparent political import of his poetry. Terms to answer such a question are provided by earlier critics, whose interest in form allow this chapter’s argument about violence and imperial law to fold into a discussion of poetics proper. In his 1857 “Essay on English Metrical Law,” Coventry Patmore influentially described successful poetry as a management of tension: the best poetry, he wrote at the height of the Age of Equipoise, achieved “the coordination of life and law” (7). For Patmore “life” is the name for vital substance of poetry, its content, while “law” derives from the poetry’s meter. Meter is thus for Patmore a regulating force, or what, in reference to Swinburne, Prins calls a “disciplinary measure” (Prins Sappho 122): it is what tempers and restrains the spirit of poetry’s content. Calming the spirit, meter thus operates according to what we can say is the regulative Kantian

65 For McGann, “Swinburne’s flagellant verse, precisely because it is so schematic, clarifies an aesthetic attitude specifically allied to the masochistically inclined personality. The art of Sacher-Masoch, Swinburne, and Genet exhibits similar formal properties” (281).
logic of the beautiful. Citing Patmore as her key example, Prins, in an important essay on
“Victorian Meters,” goes further to explain how meter worked to rationalize unruly energy:

The Victorians increasingly conceptualized meter as a formal grid or pattern of spacing, created by the alternation of quantifiable units. Their interest in quantification has the effect of detaching poetic voice from spoken utterance, and marks – literally, in the making of metrical marks—a graphic distinction between meter and rhythm. (“Meters” 90).

Describing the formal grids and quantifiable units of meter, Prins outlines a political economy of form, one where the units of meter – what Swinburne called his poems’ “shining feet”—are regularized, made the same. The rough edges of “spoken utterance” and its “rhythm[s]” are smoothed out, equalized under law.

These general comments on Victorian meter take a more specific turn in George Saintsbury’s *A History of English Prosody* (1910). As Prins describes in her essay on Victorian meters, Saintsbury’s massive, three volume project looks to chart what it styles as the historical progression of English meter, a history that follows Mill’s earlier historicism to describe a trajectory that runs out of chaos and into law, progressing upwardly from the stormy twelfth century (before the “regimenting” accomplished by Chaucer[170]) to the regularized, rationalized forms of the present day. For Saintsbury’s Whig history of poetic development, modernity arrives in the guise of a new formalism that the critic calls, in important language, “the practical abolition of the strict syllabic theory, and the admission of Substitution and Equivalence” (171). With a long history of older, more “tyrannical” forms superseded – that is Saintsbury’s language (170)—a new, modern order of “Substitution and
Equivalence” has emerged.\textsuperscript{66} “Now,” Saintsbury says, “things are different” (170).

Saintsbury’s historical account of poetic development thus sketches in aesthetic terms the Millite story of status turning into contract, a story whereby a new regime of equivalence emerges from the stormy periods of unregulated force. We finally arrive, Saintsbury says, at “the exercise, deliberate and unrestrained, of the franchise of English prosody” (296, qtd Prins 93). As Prins notes in her overview of this rather stunning political-aesthetic performance, Saintsbury tells a story by which “English prosody becomes a national heritage, with a political as well as a poetical purpose in resisting ‘tyranny’ and establishing a ‘new ordered liberty’ for the English nation. It has its own law and order […]” (“Meter” 93).

This story of archaic violence turning into the substitution and equivalence of modern meter has its own interest, of course, in relationship to the arguments about liberal historicism developed in this and earlier chapters. But what is of special note in the current context is that the poet Saintsbury calls upon to represent the apogee of history’s motion towards lawful order is not Matthew Arnold, whose “Dover Beach,” for example, reads as a sober manifesto of how a calming aesthetics might finally triumph over anarchy (“The sea is calm to-night,” it begins). Instead the poet invoked to stand for formal modernity is Algernon Charles Swinburne. Representing (with Tennyson) “this new ordered liberty” (Saintsbury 296), Swinburne is modern poetry’s latest exponent, Saintsbury says, one whose “unsurpassed versatility and virtuosity” in formal metrics is the fruit of “the growth and development of seven centuries of English language and English literature” (Saintsbury 351, 66)

\textsuperscript{66} As my introduction makes clear with a reading of Hegel, and as my first chapter shows with Eliot, Mill, and Henry Maine, the categories of “substitution” and “equivalence” are the key terms of the contractual notion of modernity all of those authors share. What I am suggesting here is that Saintsbury’s theory of poetic modernity recapitulates these other modernization tales by calling the “now” the moment when subjects have been successfully rationalized, made interchangeable under “substitution” and “equivalence.”
qtd. Prins “Meter” 93). Morley’s unbalanced, atavistic follower of Sade is also the very image of lawful modernity.

Both readings are correct. Aside from superficial compliments to Swinburne’s poetic talents, Morley’s reading did not address poetic form, concentrating on the excessive content of *Poems and Ballads* to structure his politicized objections. What Saintsbury’s account allows us to see is the way in which Swinburne’s excessive and lawless poetics (but also, and simultaneously, a lawful and orderly one) stages the problem of “lawlessness” as a dialectic of form and content. In the political-aesthetic terms this chapter has been tracing through Arnold (via Kant) and through Mill (via Morley) and, now, into Swinburne, the dialectic I am attempting to unpack in *Poems and Ballads* could be represented this way:

| Arnold’s code | + | - |
| Mill’s code: | + | - |
| Law | Violence |
| Restraint | Excess |
| Balance | Disorder |
| “Humanity” | “Animality” |
| Ideal | Material |
| Beautiful | Sublime |

Swinburne’s code:

(Content) - +

(Form) + -

Swinburne explains this complex situation in clearer terms in his essay on Blake. As we’ve seen, for Swinburne Blake was an inspired mystic, a man who made his own laws. “He wanted supremacy of freedom and intensity of faith,” Swinburne says. “Hence he was properly neither Christian nor infidel: he was emphatically a heretic.” (“Blake” 373).
But Swinburne explains, as well, that the apparently untamable force of Blake’s theological commitment to his absolute is actually bound by limits. Blake seems to destroy all order, “[o]nly there are laws, strange as it must sound, by which the work is done and against which it never sins” (“Blake” 372). Swinburne goes on to explain the process, in Blake’s poems, by which those laws emerge out of what seems like chaos. The “savage abstractions” of Blake’s titanic imagination speak with “vast lax lips,” Swinburne says, making a jumbled, disordered sound, a riot of utterance or what seems like “a dialect barren of all but noise, loud and loose as the wind.” However,

Slowly they grow into something of shape, assume some foggy feature and indefinite colour: word by word the fluctuating noise condenses into music, the floating music divides into audible notes and scales. The sound which at first was the mere collision of cloud with cloud is now the recognisable voice of god or daemon. Chaos is cloven into separate elements [...]. Upon each of these the prophet, as it were, lays hand, compelling the thing into shape and speech, constraining the abstract to do service as a man might. (“Blake” 374)

Swinburne is describing a process by which law emerges out of chaos, order out of the pure force of belief: “the mere collision of cloud with cloud” is transformed by the poet’s dialectical imagination “into shape and speech,” the tonal, lawful form of musical scales, or better, the marks and divisions of poetry itself, those shifting and patting feet with which Swinburne populates his own self-reflexive poetry. Describing the relationship of law and belief in Blake’s poetry, Swinburne sheds light on his own complex aesthetic program. If our temptation is to read this process, as Prins does, as a process of simple aestheticization, “the turning of pain into poetry,” my suggestion is that we can do something more than that by emphasizing the way in which Swinburne’s poetry – as he sees it reflected in Blake and as it reads on the pages of Poems and Ballads— exposes the dialectic of law and violence also
raised in Morant Bay, encoding this as a tension between the peace of form and the disorder of content, a tension that further exposes the intimate relationship one bears to the other.

Writing of Euripides’ dramas, whose verse forms Swinburne imitated in *Poems and Ballads* (Saintsbury), Theodor Adorno shows how a beautiful law can be contaminated with, coterminous with, “intimately bound” to the terror and violence that would seem to be its opposite. Adorno says of Euripedes:

The law of the formalization of beauty was a moment of balance that was progressively destroyed by its relation to its contrary, which the identity of the beautiful hopelessly tries to hold at bay. Terror itself peers out of the eyes of beauty as the coercion that emanates from form; the concept of the blinding glare of beauty articulates this experience. (*Aesthetic Theory* 52)

More than any other theory of art, Adorno’s aesthetic theory is, like Swinburne’s, “obsessed by the moment when one thing shades off into its opposite, or when contraries fuse” (Rosenberg xxxi). Here Adorno uses a political opposition (between “law” and “terror”) to describe how works in the tradition of the Kantian (or Arnoldian) beautiful look to “hold at bay” their relation to beauty’s contrary, a “blinding glare” of pure coercion. Connecting this comment on Euripedean verse forms with Adorno’s very similar essay connecting Kant with Sade, in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, we can see that he here describes the terror of law itself, the absolute, sublime violence that secretly animates the calmer forms of disinterested beauty—“the coercion that emanates from form.” Put more plainly, Adorno sketches what I am claiming is the dialectical relationship between law and violence Swinburne’s poetry exposes as the disjunction of form and content: this is the intimate involvement of beautiful and the

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67 As late as 1888, Walt Whitman wrote of Swinburne that “[h]e is always the extremist—always all pro or all con: always hates altogether or loves altogether: as the boys say, he goes the whole hog or nothing: he knows no medium line” (qtd in Hyder Life and Career 220). I am attempting to show how Swinburne’s poetry allows for the unification of these extremes without flattening either term into a “medium line”: two mutually exclusive positions can be held entirely, put into an active juxtaposition that highlights both their relation and their absolute distinction as “extremes.”
sublime, form and its excess, or as I have argued in a more concrete context, the intimate relationship between the hell-like saturnalia of Jamaica’s temporary dictatorship and what Mill called “the majesty of law.”

Swinburne’s Poems and Ballads have long been seen as a key monument in the aestheticist tradition, an exhibit in the movement towards the aesthetic ideology of modernism and an example of an “art pour l’art” return to form. In this chapter I have tried to suggest that Swinburne’s formalism is one that acknowledges, even flaunts its own impurity, its own involvement with “excessive” violence even as it retains a melancholic attachment to the damage it understands as resulting from this force. By reading Swinburne in an Atlantic context, by placing these biting, burning poems in the circuit of global violence centered in London and dispensing its force all over the world, I have tried to show how these apparently aestheticist exercises in form address the critical legal issues that animated the colonial project of nineteenth century Britain as its so-called age of equipoise pivoted toward the open militarism of the empire’s post-1870 downward phase. On one level, Swinburne can be seen to elevate to the level of poetic program what Fitzjames Stephen described in the realm of politics. On another level, as Swinburne’s own obsession with the laws of form suggests, the poet meditates on the very role that this excessive violence might play in a relationship to the lawful peace that would regulate it. Grappling in poetic terms with the key political problem punctuating the mid-Victorian imperial era, Swinburne can be said not to have solved that problem of law and violence, not to have offered its solution, but to have staged it and by staging revealed its operations to our view.

The juxtaposition I have risked here, alternating between sections devoted to Morant Bay and to Swinburne, to politics and to poetry, has been an attempt to invoke a relationship
between a book of poems on the one hand and an outbreak of imperial violence on the other. This kind of linkage between culture and materialism, as Raymond Williams might have put it, has placed two separate things next to one another, in this way operating by a poetic logic of metonymy – one thing and another— where both objects are arrayed on separate planes with proximity, rather than conceptual identity, to suggest their connection.

What is this academic “and”? In *Culture and Imperialism* (1994), Edward Said explains his method by calling attention to the metonymic relationship between its subject areas. “I have deliberately abstained,” Said writes,

> from advancing a completely worked out theory of the connection between literature and culture on the one hand, and imperialism on the other. Instead, I hope the connections will emerge from their explicit places in the various texts, with the enveloping setting – empire— there to make connections with, to develop, elaborate, expand, or criticize. (Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 14)

Said’s grammatically complicated method places his two fields in proximal links, where “connections,” he hopes, “will emerge” with a “setting” “there to make connections with.”

In this foundational, metonymically titled work at the origin of postcolonial criticism – Culture and Imperialism— the two levels of Said’s title can only be proximally linked together, set into contact. If this procedure circumvents the standards of validity proper to inductive logic, it also takes pains to delay the question of imperialism’s relationship to actual violence, focusing its analysis on the figurative violence of representation rather than on the dynamics of warmaking and acquisition that structured British rule in the nineteenth century.

Swinburne proposes a different method. Minutely attuned to violence and damage, the accretion in *Poems and Ballads* – its incessant, additive force— builds intensity while it moves towards the overarching oneness of metaphor. Rather than proposing a metonymic relation between its two lovers, that is, one that would police the distinction between
compared objects – one thing and another— a poem like “Anactoria”’s play of sameness and difference finds difference folding into identity, as the speaker becomes one with her other in a semantic and conceptual struggle that results in ontological singularity, a union: metaphor.68 If, in logical terms, this acquisitive metaphoric procedure represents the triumph of a specific type of inductive method — the violent subsumption of the multiple under the category of the one— then it may be that Swinburne’s poetics can frame questions about this chapter’s own method, as it has looked to connect the disparate or unconnected fields of culture and imperialism.69 By contrast to the metonymic procedure of Saidian cultural studies, where connections wait to emerge, Swinburne’s speaker reaches for totalizing singularity: “I Sappho,” the speaker says, “shall be one with all these things” (276). Capturing particularities and transforming them in her own image, subsuming them under her category, Swinburne’s speaker performs the inductive work that would convert single instances into examples of a type. But this is Sappho, not Swinburne, and in this grand drama of metaphoric logic, couched within quieting forms, the poem itself puts on display both the promises of such a totalizing method and its dangers, its inherent violence. In contrast to both Said’s refusal to provide synthesis and to Sappho’s overmastering insistence on it, I have looked to allow my chapter’s two instances – “Morant Bay” and “Swinburne”

68 On the logic of metonymy versus that of metaphor, see Paul de Man, “The Rhetoric of Temporality,” in Blindness and Insight. De Man’s concern is to valorize metonymy over the totalizing Romantic technique of metaphor; my suggestion is that Swinburne’s metaphoric procedure may trouble the comfortable assumption that totalization is “bad.” For Swinburne the issue is descriptive, not prescriptive: in Poems and Ballads, totalization and violence is all there is, and to pretend otherwise is to lapse into sentimentalism. If there is a politics to these techniques, then, it would appear that metaphor is “anti-liberal,” being the chosen figure of, for example, Marxist theories of totality. De Man’s metonymic sensibility would thus be considered “pluralist” in its opposition to this unification, as Fredric Jameson’s critique of American deconstruction in Postmodernism comes some way in suggesting.

69 In his chapter on metaphor in his Philosophy of Rhetoric (1936), I.A. Richards quotes Aristotle, who in describing the power to create metaphor sounds precisely like John Stuart Mill writing of the genius required to formulate successful inductions: In the Poetics Aristotle writes that “the greatest thing by far is to have command of metaphor”; “it is the mark of genius, for to make good metaphors implies an eye for resemblances” (qtd. Richards Philosophy of Rhetoric 89).
and the archival evidence arrayed under those headings—to remain separate, proximate, broken into numbered sections. But I also want to insist that this two-level story is a way of narrating a real configuration of law and violence at a specific moment in the British empire’s history. This chapter’s presentation has been a constellation, then, a broken allegory or a fractured synthesis. Its arrangement of particulars has attempted to defend the separation of its objects even as it insists on their ability, in a way that both evokes synthesis and refuses it, to allegorize a larger and very real historical story.

As this dissertation shifts from the legal crisis that closed the book on England’s mid-century hegemony and into what Erich Hobsbawm calls “the Age of Empire” – it had always been an age of empire—it moves forward in time, following the decline of British world hegemony and explaining how this downturn produced increasingly open violence beyond the thresholds of the empire’s counting and uplifting procedures. In the next chapter we relocate from the contested edges of metropolitan law to a space beyond those boundaries, the unruled periphery of H. Rider Haggard’s Africa. A consideration of how that zone of anomie is represented (a-nomon: no law), at a period of increasingly open militarism in the 1870s and 1880s, helps this dissertation explain what happens to imperial form when the globe’s sovereign power, in the face of new challenges, could only with great strain continue to imagine itself as an empire of peace.
Chapter Four. “Coming home from the end of the world”: Action, Epic, and the Late-Century Romance of Regime Change

“More claymores, less psychology.”

—Andrew Lang

4.1 “When you are face to face with it”

A particular, taken from an archive and made to stand as an emblem: in the late spring of 1881, a letter arrived in London, scrawled in black fountain pen, posted from the imperial frontier, bearing a son’s update to his mother. It unfolds in a style that eludes introspection. It brings news from Natal, in Southern Africa, bearing witness to wars waged beyond the boundaries of a world system now shuffling toward downturn:

Hilldrop,
Newcastle,
NATAL

My dearest Mother,

I have to thank you for your long letter written from London at the time of the bad weather. At any rate with all our troubles we are spared frost and east winds. Long before this gets to you you will have heard of our third disaster and of the death of poor Sir George. We heard the guns going the day before yesterday and then came the news that 500 men had been annihilated [sic] on the top of the square mountain we see from our verandah. Thank God it is not quite so bad as that, but still it is a crushing defeat and so far as we can judge a most unnecessary one. […] It is very sickening to be continually talking to men one day and the next to hear that they are dead, yet that is what happens to us every day now. We do not know what the next move is to be any more than the troops themselves, in fact everything seems to be in more or less of a mess. […] [T]he slaughter amongst the officers is tremendous. War is a fearful thing when you are face to face with it. We had a nice little alarm here the other night. Louie had just gone to bed and I was sitting in the drawing room when I heard a mysterious noise and saw a cocked revolver coming
round the corner of the door of the verandah which was open. I looked out and perceived an officer of the mounted police followed by a line of armed troopers advancing with the greatest caution along the verandah. It appeared that they believed the place to be in the possession of the Boers and had come to see the truth of it. They stated that there was a patrol of them 500 strong on the farm so we did not have a very comfortable night, however nothing happened to us. Altogether these are not very comfortable times but Louie shows wonderful pluck about it, the fact is one gets used to anything.

H. Rider Haggard

That the writer of such action-packed romances as *King Solomon’s Mines* (1885) and *She* (1887) should take time to describe “anihilation” [sic] and “slaughter” should not surprise us. Yet the twenty-five year old Haggard, still four years away from becoming one of the best-selling authors in English history, ends his unpublished letter not with a pitched battle but with a non-event. The “nice little alarm” he describes in his colonial encampment results only in more waiting, as a pressing danger dissolves into temporary relief. “Nothing,” Haggard concludes, “happened to us.”

As a study in the metaphysics of waiting, or as an analysis of the temporality of colonial war, in which silence-shattering events alternate with the empty time of expectation, this text is not distinguished by its incisiveness. That is the point I want to make about it. Haggard’s admittance of relief is not at all “deep,” his description not “psychological.” The author ends his update by feinting toward a disclosure of some kind of cognitive process, describing a not “very comfortable night” and paralleling this with the “not very comfortable times.” But this doubled negation of “comfortable” describes a physical state, not a mental

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1 Unpublished manuscript letter with typescript copy, Duke University Special Collections.
2 In a spirit very different from Haggard’s Paul K. St. Amour has referred to air-war temporality as “the routinization of emergency”; a very similar experience of time no doubt structured the imperial frontier, where as I suggested in chapter three, emergency was the rule (see St. Amour, “Air War Prophecy and Interwar Modernism” 130).
one, and we see that even in this romancer’s most uncharacteristically reflective moments (“War is a fearful thing…”), his narration exposes only surfaces.

Like his novels, Haggard’s dispatch from the frontier of the British system translates cognition into action, emphasizing not ethos but praxis: its focus, that is, falls on externality and physical movements rather than “character.” In bringing us “face to face with it,” Haggard’s prose gives voice to what in chapter one George Eliot theorized as the naïve style, and what Georg Lukács calls the “absolute immanence of life” proper to the epic mode (Theory 35). Here interior states are accessible only by way of their physical expressions, and an emotion like fear is uncomfortable, Haggard says, “sickening.” As in the stilted, melodramatic pages of King Solomon’s Mines discussed below, all emotion in this colonial dispatch is “scrupulously externalized,” as Erich Auerbach writes of the Homeric style: “Clearly outlined, brightly and uniformly illuminated, men and things stand out in a realm where everything is visible” (3). The temptation may be to follow the aesthetic priorities naturalized by a tradition extending from Eliot and James to see this focus on action instead of depth as a matter of Haggard’s personal simplemindedness, his lack of “penetration.” (D.H. Lawrence claimed that “it was [George Eliot] who started putting all the action inside” (qtd. Markovits 89). Or we may be inclined to replicate the modernizing schemes I traced in chapter one to see Haggard’s style as the kind of impulsive writing criticism continues to

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3 Much criticism has rehearsed the themes of Haggard’s own biography to suggest that the man was not a “deep thinker.” (Haggard proudly admitted as much.) Haggard’s “dumbness” is a theme of criticism on the author reaching back to Brantlinger’s foundational discussion in Rude of Darkness. The claim itself is not without historical grounding – see the introduction to the Penguin edition of King Solomon’s Mines, where we learn that Haggard was the only one of his siblings not intelligent enough to warrant an education at public school. In a similar spirit Lang would explain to Stevenson in a letter that Haggard “has lived apart from books” his whole life (qtd. Demoor “Andrew Lang” 314) – a fact adduced to explain Haggard’s jerky, untutored prose style. My emphasis forgoes these biographical points of interest to focus on the significance of Haggard’s project, as it was shaped by Lang, in the historical context of the 1880s.
compare unfavorably to the more “adult” techniques of psychological realism. Instead this chapter will look to focus on one moment in the history of “depth’s” emergence, offering an explanation of why, by the 1880s, the pairing of “realism and romance” emerged to help establish “character” as a virtue in realist fiction and a prerequisite for a newly American brand of world citizenship—one half of an inter-imperial contest over literary style. In defense of this claim about geopolitics and literary form, the following sections make three interrelated arguments.

First I focus on the content of what has long been taken as the exemplary imperial romance, Haggard’s *King Solomon’s Mines* (1885), showing how this tale of peripheral resource extraction engages, at the level of plot, with British policy at the far end of the globalized (British) equipoise charted in the dissertation’s first half. The content of Haggard’s most successful novel gives voice to the violence that attended the Empire’s material downturn, describing compromised colonial sovereignty and “just war” at the edges of a fading but increasingly acquisitive —and increasingly wartorn—British world order. The chapter’s second section turns to form, placing these small wars in the context of debates that pitted an introspective realism against a self-consciously superficial romance as those arguments were waged transatlantically between British and American literary men, including Haggard’s mentor Andrew Lang. This inter-imperial rivalry over the proper depth of literary writing emerges as a symptom of a larger geopolitical shift, or *translatio imperii*, by which a new bourgeois empire, an American one, began to assert its claim to *ethos*, and with it, its place as

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4 For examples of this tendency see Amanda Anderson and Stephanie Markivits; nearly all single-author studies of Henry James typically follow this tack, but see Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, for the argument that James’s battles with “action” did not find him rejecting it but transforming it into “melodramas of consciousness.”
the globe’s future hegemonic power. In the face of calls by the Atlantic editor William Dean Howells for a character-driven American literature that was “so largely of the future as well as the present” (“Mr. Henry James” 28), the “Homeric combats” of the British literary romance (as Lang called them) represent a reinvocation of an outdated, epic mode in an era of imperial rivalry. The belated return of the epic sponsored by Lang — himself a decorated scholar of Homeric poetry— in this way indexes the fading totality of a British world system, even as it self-consciously romanticizes that very system as a secure and ideologically impermeable reality.  

But in addition to this well-documented double function – romance as a dying empire’s wish-fulfillment— these late-imperial mock-epics also provide insight into how, at the end of a global cycle, the violence that had always authorized what Foucault called the liberal state’s “silent war” becomes newly explicit beyond the edges of its power. In texts like King Solomon’s Mines no less than in Lang’s 1882 prose translation of the Iliad, the violence of peace is rendered visible, even hyperbolically so. “War is a fearful thing,” as Haggard told his mother, “when you are face to face with it.”

The chapter concludes by showing how an 1886 novel by another writer Lang championed, Robert Louis Stevenson, strategically recodes the aesthetic dynamic of the late Victorian downturn – action versus ethos— into the idiom of psychological fiction itself,

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5 I adapt the concept of Translatio imperii, or “movement of power,” from medieval historian Jacques LeGoff. In Medieval Civilization 400-1500, LeGoff explains that for medieval thinkers “every age had one heart” (171), and that “the succession of empires … was the guiding thread of the medieval philosophy of history” (171). The transfer of power or shift from one empire to another brought about a concomitant shift in “knowledge and culture, a translatio studii” (171). Below and in the introduction, I show how Giovanni Arrighi’s analysis helps us map a similar transfer of power between the British and the American world systems in the years following 1870.

6 My timeline here parts with that of Jed Esty, who argues in A Shrinking Island and his newer work on the colonial bildungsroman that the 1880s represent the climax of British imperialism, not the moment of its impending demise. Esty’s account draws heavily on Arendt’s timeline of empire, in The Origins of Totalitarianism, which focuses on Cecil Rhodes as the exemplar of British Imperialism. Rhodes and his desire to “annex the stars if [he] could” were exceptional, however; my focus on economic indicators provided by Arrighi and Cain and Hopkins reframes the timeline Arendt provides in ways I explore below.
revealing how extralegal violence appropriate to the colonies returns to structure life in the heart of law itself — London. *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) comments on the relationship between a metropolitan realism and a rehabilitative romance epic in both its generic and political idioms, staging the tension between the empire’s civilizing ambitions and its newly explicit blunt force as an internal conflict of genres. While Haggard’s genre exercise, written in imitation of *Treasure Island* (1884), revels in the timeless mode Lang was branding as romance, Stevenson’s self consciously singular novel (“The Strange Case”) stages this genre’s conditions of emergence, dramatizing how an “epic” mode of rejuvenating action and violence – personified in Hyde— arises under the specific historical condition of imperial decline. He is the parasitical symptom of a materially exhausted hegemony, one evoked in the figure of Doctor Jekyll, that dapper but belated doctor whose life’s work has been dedicated, Stevenson specifies, to “do[ing] what they call good” (7) .

Staging an internal relationship between realism and romance as Lang, Howells, and James framed those terms, Stevenson’s 1886 “psychological” novel comments critically on the end of a world-historical cycle of accumulation, showing how the “epic” violence proper to the unregulated periphery returns to haunt, indeed to terrorize, the now-outdated “privatizing and internalizing tendencies” of British realism itself (McKeon 435).

4.2 “Kill! Kill! Kill!” / *King Solomon’s Mines*

*King Solomon’s Mines* (1885) has been described as the first instance (Brantlinger), the most offensive specimen (Chrisman), and a “nearly pure example” (Patteson 113) of a genre
we might have done better without. Shepherded into publication by Andrew Lang and then puffed by him in the Saturday Review (he compared it to Walter Scott and Homer, and said he “would give many novels, say eight hundred …for such a book as King Solomon’s Mines” [qtd Elwin 241]), the novel recounts outsized adventures in a child’s idiom. It was written on a dare to imitate Stevenson’s Treasure Island, and is dedicated, it says, “to all the big and little boys who read it.” Standing in for a set of eight hundred other books, Haggard’s exemplary imperial romance was published at the height of the mid-1880’s “New Imperialism,” the year the Berlin Conference carved up Africa for European use and in the wake of Britain’s greatest late-century imperial embarrassment, the abortive 1885 campaign to rescue Lord Gordon at Khartoum. 7

The novel addresses this context by reworking it into bright colors, sketching England’s colonial frontier as a zone not of ongoing asymmetrical conflict but as a proto-Freudian fantasia, where heroic men penetrate an almost comically feminized Africa to perform great deeds and then laugh about them. 8 At this level, Haggard’s text fits neatly with what a long tradition of accounts in cultural studies have made of it: it stands as confirmation of Northrop Frye’s diagnosis of romance as the genre of “wish fulfillment” (186), the site (as Nancy Armstrong has argued) where the pensee sauvage of cultural mythmaking runs at fullest throttle, exhibiting “culture’s” seamless ability to provide

7 The timing of England’s incursion into African affairs corresponds exactly with the timeline of the longue durée of British power I have been arguing for throughout this dissertation, and which I explore in more detail below. “In the 1850s, the British appeared to withdraw from direct political control over the South African interior. But from the 1870s they adopted an aggressive thrust into the whole sub-continent.” (Worden 21).
8 For postcolonial readings of Haggard using a cultural studies method as I delineate it below, see, for example, McClintock, Chrisman, Coundouriotis, and Low.
imaginary solutions to real problems. But if Haggard’s novel transforms the real violence of a dying empire’s wars into the stuff of a boy’s tale, it also does both more and less than this. This section focuses on the misfit or productive disjunction between the mythmaking apparatus of Haggard’s romance and the real political processes that are visible through it. By attending to the remainders of *King Solomon’s Mines*, that is, on the traces that escape its mythmaking power, we can newly appreciate a plot detail that goes unaccounted for in readings focused on this novel’s outsized cultural politics: the restoration drama in Kakuanaland.

The effort to read *King Solomon’s Mines* as a dreamlike and productively self-contradictory work of political theory will be helped by recalling that the war chronicled in Haggard’s breakthrough novel is a fight for law itself. The plot’s main episode documents how British military expertise helps reinstate a rational, just ruler, “a magnificent looking man” (40) as the sovereign of a formerly despotic African state. After this operation, the representative British characters depart, leaving Kakuanaland safe in the hands of a new, more enlightened regime, one that promises to replace the random executions of the former state with the equivalence and peace of modern law. “[B]loodshed shall cease in the land,” promises the reinstated prince, Ignosi. “No longer shall ye cry for justice to find slaughter[,] … No man shall die save he who offendeth against the laws” (142). Narrated in the pseudo-archaic style shaped by Lang’s pioneering translations of Homer, this story of international intervention in defense of universal norms – call it “nation-building” or “modernization” — coexists with another tale, more amenable no doubt to Haggard’s own

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9 See, for example, Armstrong’s brief treatment of *King Solomon’s Mines* in *Fiction in the Age of Photography*, 235-243.
Tory imperialism,\textsuperscript{10} in which resource extraction and the expansion of British territorial sovereignty emerge as the ultimate effects of the intervention staged by Quatermain and his band. It is not the presence of one or the other of these imperial strategies – emancipatory or jingoistic, “informal” or “formal”—but rather their uneasy overlap that marks this romance as an exhibit of the late empire’s political strategies. I want to be clear that in this analysis of what I am calling “imperialism” I concede Gallagher and Robinson’s caveat that “[t]he imperial historian… is very much at the mercy of his own particular concept of empire.” (Robinson and Gallagher “Free Trade” 1). The concept of empire I use here includes those forms of overseas influence-expansion not necessarily termed “imperialism” in the sense in which that term was used in the 1880s.\textsuperscript{11}

Swerving between denunciations of violence in an ethical vocabulary and gleeful recountings of it in a hyperbolic mode, what Haggard’s romance makes visible is how a formal strategy of annexation worked hand in glove with the kind of softer influence, still imperial, that was advocated by mid- and late-Victorian opponents of “imperialism.” Merged in Haggard’s imbalanced prose, these two apparently conflicting political positions map roughly onto the paired strategies available to British power in the late century, when the “soft” or humanitarian motivations generally adduced by Gladstonian liberalism traded blows with the more muscular approach favored by Tory lawmakers in the run-up to the

\textsuperscript{10} “Imperialism,” Haggard said while introducing his friend Rudyard Kipling to a club of writers, is “in the divine right of a great civilising people – that is, in their divine mission” (qtd. Etherington 93).

\textsuperscript{11} I build on Cain and Hopkins’ definition of imperialism in The British Empire 1688-2000: “The distinguishing feature of imperialism is not that it takes a specific economic, cultural or political form, but that it involves an incursion, or an attempted incursion, into the sovereignty of another state. […] What matters … is that one power has the will, and if it is to succeed, the capacity to shape the affairs of another by imposing on it. The relations established by imperialism are therefore based on inequality and not upon mutual compromises of the kind which characterize states of interdependence” (54).
1886 elections. Corresponding broadly to the distinction between formal and “informal” or “indirect” imperialisms, this broadly-sketched distinction itself maps onto what David Harvey has called the “contradictory fusion” of late modern imperialism’s twin strategies, “territorial” or state-expanding, and “molecular” or trade-expanding, where the first formally incorporates resources and territory, and the second works to bring areas that are outside the fold of the modern international order (and its circuits of commerce) within that fold. It is King Solomon’s Mines’ distinction to dramatize both strategies simultaneously: “formal” and “informal” imperial strategies overlap and inform one another in Haggard’s plot, with the first, influence-expanding narrative being apparently disavowed even as the civilizing or modernizing story unfolds in plain view. But in its inability to perform fully its fantasizing operation, Haggard’s hyperbolic romance reveals connections between these two plots, the “good” and the “bad,” the humanitarian and the imperialistic, showing how the unbracketed conflict of a “just” war unfolds alongside a reluctant intervention on behalf of humanity itself. In narrating the process of one regime change, King Solomon’s Mines also sheds light

12 It is true that imperial strategy was one of the central issues at stake in this election, but I am less interested in the micropolitical details of this mid-1880s debate and more interested in the broader strategic tendencies of this declining state. This is not a defense of the infamous concept of the “imperial mind” put forward by Robinson and Gallagher; for a suppler description of historical agency (via the concept of “Gentlemanly Capitalism”) during the period, see Cain and Hopkins, The British Empire, and the arguments following in its wake. For the micropolitics of the moment, see the final chapter of Parry’s very thorough The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Britain, “Traditional Liberalism Under Attack: 1874-86” (274-303). On the relationship between these micro- or parapolitical details and “the political” as a broader category of structural contestation – a conflict over the rules under which debate might proceed— see Fraser, “Reframing Justice in a Globalizing World” and Jacques Ranciere, Disagreement.

13 According to Harvey, one of imperial power’s tactics is to establish political control in accord with “a territorial logic of power” (qtd Arrighi Adam Smith 211), one in which physical space is annexed in formal arrangements that look to aggrandize or expand the imperial state’s formal holdings. (Thus India and Canada, for example, were territorial expansions of the state, part of “Greater Britain.”) This type of aggrandizement could be expensive and – to a nation disinclined to protracted warfare— inconvenient. Harvey’s second strategy complements this aggrandizing logic, forgoing formal expansion in order to better take advantage of what Harvey calls “the molecular processes of capital accumulation in space and time” (Arrighi Smith 211). Here the effort was to ensure the flow of economic power “across and through continuous space” (qtd. Arrighi Smith 211-212), pulling far-flung regions into a world economic order managed, in this British century, by banking houses located in the City of London. See Arrighi, Adam Smith in Beijing, “The Territorial Logic of Historical Capitalism,” 211-249. On the implication of British banking houses in this worldwide network of accumulation, see Cain and Hopkins and Kennedy.
onto another, a geopolitical one: it offers insight into the political project of a global power in its late or declining phase, when a broad downturn coincided with what Hannah Arendt has called the “Climax of Imperialism” in the 1880s and England looked to secure material resources against its newly encroaching rivals on the world stage.14

The plot of Haggard’s dream-sequence unfolds in the episodic fashion, beginning as Allan Quatermain is approached in Durban, South Africa, by Sir Henry Curtis and the unambiguously named Captain Good, a naval officer. The details of their quest are familiar to millions of readers: the team of characters representing the three estates of a certain image of Britishness — an aristocrat, a former sailor, and a freelancing adventurer — join with their native guide Umbopa to follow a vividly drawn map into the heart of Africa. They cross a desert, climb a mountain (“Sheba’s left breast”), enter a cave, find a dead explorer, then pass into the lush valley of Kakuanaland, a lost civilization distantly related, we are told, to the Zulus. In Kakuanaland the white men prove their superiority by predicting an eclipse. The novel’s main episode transpires as the trio helps organize a rebellion against a murderous king, Twala. Having used their newly proven supernatural powers (and their ability to organize a coup), the heroes restore their former porter to his rightful place as king, then enter the mines of the book’s title, where they are locked into the treasure chamber by a shriveled witch-goddess, Gagool. They escape, and on the return journey through the desert they find Sir Henry’s brother seemingly at random. After returning to Durban, all

14 England’s most direct rival in Africa was Germany, whose presence is effectively erased in Haggard’s novel but creeps into the margins of Olive Schreiner’s contemporaneous The Story of An African Farm (1883), when the suggestively-named tyrant, Bonaparte Belkins, crafts an alliance with a Kaffir and a Boer character in order to have Otto Farber, referred to as “the German,” kicked off the kraal (90). On the 1880s as the “climax of imperialism” see Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism, esp. 185-221.
adventurers re-enter civilization, now more or less rich thanks to the few diamonds they were able to fit in their pockets.

This quick sketch of a plot that was itself quickly sketched – Haggard boasted that he composed the novel in a six week burst, never having thought about the structure deeply (Cohen 85)— will have already suggested why the text has been seen since the 1990s as a tool of subconscious late-imperial myth-making. Rather than rehearse such a reading, I want to focus on the political logic visible in the novel’s main episode, the sovereignty drama that is “solved” by the intervention of Quatermain and his squad. Haggard’s Kakuanan characters set the stage for British intervention by recounting their nation’s convoluted political history in a tale that forms the third back-story contained inside the novel’s major quest narrative. The details of the sovereignty crisis are these: long ago the civilization’s king, Kafa, fathered twin sons, Imotu, the first born, and Twala, the present king (101-102). Because the custom in Kakuanaland is to kill the weaker twin, the mother hid Twala away, with Gagool providing protection to the child for several years. Meanwhile Imotu became king, eventually bearing a son, Ignosi. When Ignosi was three years old, a famine swept the land. Gagool blamed Imotu, and when the witch doctress unveiled Twala, who had secretly been kept alive, he and was greeted as king by a starving populace. Imotu’s wife, now widowed, fled the country to the south, raising the former king’s son (Ignosi) under the

15 Here British pluck, honor, and technological superiority reluctantly intervene into African affairs, following what we are told is a domestic mission into the Dark Continent: the recovery of Sir Henry’s lost brother sits, accidentally, alongside the quest for capital acquisition suggested by the book’s title, with a by-the-bye racism and an outsized misogyny, visible in the novel’s famous woman-map and in the shriveled person of Gagool, thrown in to spice matters up. For an analysis of Haggard’s body-map, see, canonically, Anne McClintock’s Imperial Leather, but also Stiebel 82. For feminist readings of Haggard’s romances see Armstrong, Gilbert and Gubar, Chrisman, Bunn, and Murphy.
16 The other two are Sir Henry’s story about his lost brother, at the outset of the novel, and Allan’s narrative about the history of the mines, a story which itself contains Jose Silvestre’s translated first-person account of the diamond mines. This nested structure – picaresques bracketed within one another—recalls Lang’s description of the Odyssey’s form.
name Umbopa. “Then if this child Ignosi had lived,” Quatermain helpfully inquires, “he would be the true king of the Kakuana people?” (103) The answer is yes, and the rather baroque scenario may be clarified by a family tree, which I adapt from Richard Patteson’s structural analysis of the novel:

Figure 3: Sovereignty crisis in Kakuanaland. Adapted from Patteson 118.

The revelation that the servant Umbopa is really Ignosi the king forms the anagnorisis, or moment of recognition, that commentators from Frye to Bakhtin have identified with the romance mode. Reorganizing Haggard’s own experiences as a colonial secretary under Theophilus Shepstone in Natal, the war to reinstate Umbopa/Ignosi amounts to a drama of regime change on the margins of the British system: the valences of this drama’s successful resolution will require acrobatic balancing from Haggard’s text, for it must partially disavow ulterior motives on the part of the British liberators, even as it acknowledges the benefits
that accrue to them because of their intervention. If they get diamonds from and power over the regime they set up, these advantages accrue only by accident: the real motivation was a humanitarian one.

With odd good cheer, the adventurers consent to assist in the new civil war, with Sir Henry and Captain Good agreeing to help for different but equally “humorous” reasons – Henry because “I have always liked Umbopa,” Good because “a row is surely good, and warms the cockles of the heart” (116 p). Amusing as they may be, these two rationales also read as cartoon versions of actual strategies available to British imperial administrators at this late-century moment: intervention can be justified either via an atavistic lust for brute force (“a row…warms the cockles of the heart”), or because of the more modern obligations of loyalty that friendship incurs upon a stronger power (“I have always liked Umbopa”). Quatermain’s response is more telling, since it combines these alternatives, capturing the peculiar combination of reluctance and action – a kind of accidental warmaking – this text is at pains to ascribe to its laconic hero. Umbopa has offered to pay the British men as mercenaries. With a smirk, Quatermain reveals that what motivates him is not quite friendship:

‘Umbopa, or Ignosi,’ I said. ‘I don’t like revolutions. I am a man of peace, and a bit of a coward’ – here Umbopa smiled – ‘but, on the other hand, I stick to my friends, Ignosi. You have stuck to us and played the part of a man, and I will stick to you. But mind you, I am a trader, and have to make my living; so I accept your offer about those diamonds, in case we should ever be in a position to avail yourself of it. (116)

Umbopa’s well-timed smile allows us to see that Quatermain is in fact no coward at all: he is marked as a warrior in search of mineral wealth even as he mouths the language of nonviolence. Cast in terms of political theory, the tension Haggard’s text dramatizes here is
that between Quatermain’s feigned liberal idealism (‘I am a man of peace’) and his actual diamond-grabbing realism, a tension that rewrites the antagonisms of Britain’s presence on the African frontier into a grinning contradiction the book stages but does not resolve.17

Just as earlier we have learned that ‘for a timid man, I have been mixed up in a deal of slaughter’ (7), Quatermain’s speech about being a man of peace could speak for Britain’s national position in this, its late imperial phase: it gives a glance at the virtues of peaceful free trade appropriate to a civilizing or incorporating imperial mission, one aimed at bringing in or uplifting those outside its auspices, only to underscore the resource extraction and extension of British influence that (as we’ll see) are the results of the campaign waged with this uplift in mind. In this Haggard’s text uses Quatermain to articulate actual and contradictory political logics operating on the African frontier, as pressures on England’s world position drove it to consolidate territories that provided tactical position (bases, naval stations) and also resources: by 1873, 1.6 million pounds’ worth of diamonds were streaming out of the Kimberly Mine each year (Meredith 37), destined to prop up a metropolitan economy whose domestic production had fallen into a deep decline. For King Solomon’s Mines and other of his African tales Haggard drew on his own experience as attaché to Theophilius Shepstone, special commissioner for the Transvaal. As part of what he called the ‘Cape to Cairo policy,’ the British colonial secretary Lord Carnarvon – Shepstone’s boss— had as early as

17 During Haggard’s tenure in Africa the blunt work of expansion was frequently leavened with the language of justice and friendship. Like the earlier annexation of Natalia (1843) the acquisition of the Transvaal was explained as a humanitarian endeavor: Shepstone framed it as a gesture of protection, arguing that under Boer rule the territory was subject to Zulu invasion; it was also, he said, bankrupt, factionalized, commercially unviable. ‘[T]he ravaging of an adjoining friendly State by warlike savage tribes,’ he said, ‘cannot for a moment be contemplated by Her Majesty’s Government without the most earnest and painful solicitude’ (qtd Meredith 72). Shepstone acquired the land by proclamation, but the flag was not raised until material force in the form of British troops had arrived from Natal. A Boer Burgher explained to the gathered crowd why he was submitting to annexation: ‘We bow only to the superior power. We submit because we cannot successfully draw the sword against this superior power, because by doing so we could only plunge the country into deeper miseries and disasters’ (qtd Meredith 73).
1876 determined to extend British control over large swaths of African territory in order to position England against potential European competitors now rising on the world stage.

“We cannot,” Carnarvon wrote, “admit rivals in the East or even the central parts of Africa” (qtd. Meredith 69).

One historian explains how Carnarvon’s realpolitik effort to shore up England’s position in the world worked in concert with an ideal of disinterested protection aimed at threatening regimes:

Wars entered upon to overthrow a menacing military power … often terminate in annexation. The Zulu war [begun in 1877] was a campaign of this nature—the disciplined armies of [the Zulu prince] Ketchwayo [Cetywayo] were a standing danger to Natal, and the crushing of the Zulu power was indispensable for the peace of South Africa; the war, however, ended in the incorporation of the kingdom into the British Empire. (Callwell 28)

Shepstone was this policy’s agent on the ground. Haggard’s first book was about these Zulu wars: the self-published Cetywayo and His White Neighbors (1882) drew on his experience under Shepstone, arguing for England’s annexation of Cetywayo’s territory, and for the installation of the new king appointed by the colonial governor, on the basis of the former dictator’s “standing danger” not just to British interests but to values understood in universal human terms. In Cetywayo, Haggard used his first-hand knowledge of what he styles as Cetywayo’s fantastic cruelty to blast English philanthropists and “lady advocates” (13) – those who turn a blind eye, he says, to crimes against humanity happening outside the pale of English law, and thus ignore the responsibilities of the stronger power to defend victimized territories by bringing them under its sovereign protection. The situation in Natal was complex, and the material advantages of bringing these territories under the British flag continues to be debated. What I want to emphasize is how the universalist ethical vocabulary Haggard uses
in Cetewayo — and pursues in King Solomon’s Mines — enabled political distinctions to be drawn that had large consequences for determining what human bodies were and were not subject to the protections of international law, separating those inside its threshold from those outside it.

In keeping with Quatermain’s official position on nonviolence, the novel frames the British effort to depose Twala as a reluctant interventionism, a fight to unseat an unjust regime and impose on it a law that would accord with universal norms. In a chapter whose title, “The Witch Hunt,” advertises a ceremony that is the very paradigm of arbitrary state violence, the Twala regime is revealed to be a kind of proto-Hitlerian death-cult, a bloodthirsty and random tyranny that is the precise negation of British legal rationality. The “glorious show” of Haggard’s hunt-scene (133), in which random citizens are selected to be murdered, finds Twala’s autocratic rule represented as an enemy of humanity itself. As the despot’s armies assemble for a rally of ceremonial murder, the grisly but disconcertingly hilarious scene recodes Victorian field accounts of warlike Zulu tribes (and Haggard’s own experiences with them) into an African Triumph of the Will:

The king lifted his spear, and suddenly twenty thousand feet were raised, as though they belonged to one man, and brought down with a stamp on the earth. This was repeated three times, causing the solid ground to shake and tremble. Then from a far point of the circle a solitary voice began wailing a song, of which the refrain ran something as follows:

“What is the lot of man born of woman?”

Back came the answer rolling out from every throat in the vast company:

“Death!”

Chapter two showed how the modern or fully-realized British legal order operated in an “uplifting” biopolitical mode, working to produce life and to care for it: within the bounds of the modern state, Foucault explains, “the old power of death that symbolized sovereign
power was now carefully supplanted by the administration of bodies and the calculated management of life” (*History of Sexuality* 139-40). In bold strokes, Haggard’s scene paints the Twala government as “old” in precisely this sense: its thanophilic operations sit in systematic opposition to the life-giving or abstracting biopolitics of the British state and its law.\(^{18}\)

When the first random warrior is summarily executed with spear and club, the three heads of state blurt out their nation’s anti-ethic: “‘Kill!’ said the king. ‘Kill!’ squeaked Gagool. ‘Kill!’ re-echoed Scragga, with a hollow chuckle” (122). The ceremony’s “exhaust[ing]” work of death is continued with vivid energy until “some hundreds of bodies were stretched out in rows behind us” (123).

Excessive as these scenes may be, they perform a real function within the novel’s differential political scheme, one imported directly from the systems of historical-political coding I have discussed to this point. Haggard’s narration of Twala’s African death cult describes the enemy regime as subscribing to “the old power of death” in ways that mark it as the negative image of the modern liberal state’s life-protecting functions, a parody Millite justice. The inversion accomplished in the native government’s anti-ethic (Kill! Kill! Kill!) comes full circle when Twala calls the extravagant process of random execution he sponsors by exactly the name it is not: “‘Let law take its course, white men [Twala says]. These dogs are magicians and evildoers; it is well that they should die.’” (137, emphasis added).

Focused on law and its inversion, Haggard’s text locates a figurative *beyond* to the modern

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\(^{18}\) I am less interested in the “correspondence” between Haggard’s fictional version and real events than I am in how both resort to the categories of political theory the dissertation has traced to this point. The novel’s depiction is drawn from Haggard’s experience with Shepstone in Natal, but gains an even more specific political inflection in Haggard’s outsized fictionalization. “As regards the question of Cetywayo’s bloodthirstiness, which is so strenuously denied by his apologists,” Haggard explains in *Cetywayo*, “[t]here is not… any doubt that Cetywayo was in the habit of killing large numbers of people” (16). This killing has been turned into a political program and cast in the terms of life and death I have been tracing since chapter two.
legal order, figuring a hyperbolic state of nature as lying outside the “thresholds or frontiers” (Derrida Hospitality 47, 49) separating the inside of modern legality (and sovereignty itself) from its anomic other (a-nomos: “no law”).

Haggard was a middling barrister before launching his career as a romancer under Lang’s direction, and his first novel’s obsession with legal language may stem from that interest in law, one that has never been explored in Haggard criticism and that can only be glanced at here. In any case it is clear that the novel uses a legal vocabulary to recode the imagined Twala regime into a negative image of England, a quasi state of nature that functions as the constitutive “lack” Achille Mbembe and others have described as the structuring metaphor in western depictions of Africa reaching to the present day.19

Quatermain is the positive figure who exposes this lack, having already explained that he at least adheres to the principle of restraint that governs rational nations the world over: “I have slain many men in my time, but I have never slain wantonly or stained my hand in innocent blood, only in self-defense” (7). Offered in a clunky but legalistic prose, Quatermain’s lesson about the morality of colonial violence – don’t be wanton, don’t kill innocents— repeats English common sense and a bowdlerized Christian ethic. It also invokes legal terms (“innocent,” “self-defense”) that establish his slaying of “many men” as just, in this way reframing theories of just war that reach from the work of sixteenth century

19 In On the Postcolony, Achille Mbembe points out how “Africa … constitutes one of the metaphors through which the West represents the origin of its own norms, develops a self-image, and integrates this image into the set of signifiers asserting what it supposes to be its identity” (Postcolony 2). In similar terms, Franz Fanon referred to how colonial discourse figures “the native” as the exact reversal of human values, in ways that link up to Haggard’s description of the Twala regime. “The native is declared insensible to ethics,” Fanon writes. “[H]e represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values. He is, let us dare to admit, the enemy of values, and in this sense he is the absolute evil. He is the corrosive element, destroying all that comes near him; he is the deforming element, disfiguring all that has to do with beauty or morality; he is the depository of maleficent powers, the unconscious and irretrievable instrument of blind forces” (Fanon 41). On the persistence of this figuration into current discourse on globalization, see James Ferguson, Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal Order.
Spanish jurist Francisco de Vitoria to principles of international law current in Haggard’s late nineteenth century moment, when “the law of nations,” as one historian writes, “was now becoming ‘universal’” (Nussbaum 191).

4.3 Just War at the Edge of the Earth

None of Haggard’s slanders on native regimes is surprising given his reputation as the ultimate mythmaker of empire. But the distinction between civilized and savage cultural stages commonly noted in Haggard criticism (and other work in the field of what Said influentially called “culture and imperialism”) enabled and sustained distinctions that reach beyond the field of cultural representation, informing international law in ways that give shape to the political reading of King Solomon’s Mines I want to pursue here. Neil Lazarus has critiqued post-Saidian cultural criticism for its assumption that imperialism’s cultural politics – say, the problematic and racist representational distinction between “the West” and its others—comprise the sole content of imperialism’s damage. “Eurocentrism,” he says, “has typically been viewed not as an ideology or mode of representation but as itself the very

20 By suggesting that “only… self-defense” is a valid rationale for violence, Quatermain repeats Vitoria’s influential maxim about nations, from On the Laws of War, that “the sole and only just cause for waging war is when harm has been inflicted” (303, italics original). Vitoria’s text assessed the legal precedents for annexing the New World. His careful analysis repudiated many existing justifications for making war on the Indians, but ultimately provided another rationale by adducing the right of traders and merchants to free passage in any location, no matter who rules it. In England this became a benchmark justification; as Lord Palmerston said as early as 1841, “It is the business of government to open and to secure the roads for the merchant” (Palmerston to Auckland 22 January 1841). Just off the docks in Durban, Quatermain finds his own negotiation of just war and commodity-extraction perched at a similar threshold between civilization and its outside. But when this adventurer invokes “self defense,” he reveals the strain that attends his effort to rewrite the “slaughter” of “many men” as justice.

21 In positing a distinction between cultural and legal/political levels, I follow Antony Anghie, who has unfolded “an exploration of both the relationship between ideas of culture and sovereignty, and the ways in which sovereignty became identified with a specific set of cultural practices to the exclusion of others” (5).
basis of domination in the colonial and modern imperial contexts” (Fetish 43). For the Marxist Lazarus, cultural politics are epiphenomenal to the actual techniques of domination and extraction comprising imperialism: any critique focused solely on representations-as-violence “serves to dematerialize what it tacitly references” (Fetish 54). If Lazarus’s concern is to focus on tangible processes of domination instead of cultural ones, Haggard’s text suggests how cultural distinctions helped established the legal categories that in turn had material consequences for those human bodies that were politically subject to British power but not represented by it.

According to what is still called “the standard of civilization in international law” (cf. Schwartzberger 212-234), status as a civilized state, and the recognition by international law that comes with it, presupposes a state’s internal capacity to regulate itself and operate according to the institutionalized codes of reason understood as the rule of law. In the system of international law reaching from Kant to John Rawls (and codified during the nineteenth century), the requirements for recognition as “civilized” include features that will be recognizable as the elements of modern citizenship discussed in previous chapters: civilized statehood requires working institutions of public bureaucracy, a regular army, “a published legal code and adherence to the rule of law,” the willingness to follow international laws of war, and the capacity to honor contracts (Bowden 6). For a state to be recognized as a sovereign actor by international law it must follow these universal (European) norms, norms that mirror on a national level the self-regulating behavior that

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22 Bowden’s account is a summary of accounts by Georg Schwarzenberger and Gerrit W. Gong. See Gon, The Standard of Civilization in International Society (1984) and Schwarzenberger, “The Standard of Civilization in International Law” (1955). Both accounts trace this concept from the “European colonial period” (Bowden 6) to the post WW-II or American period.
both Kant and John Rawls—and, from chapter one, George Eliot—identify as necessary for properly modern individual human beings operating at the level of ethics.23

Describing the Victorian roots of this fundamental distinction in international sovereignty theory, one historian explains how the standard of civilization worked to demarcate the edges of political belonging, separating the modern world’s inside from its outside:

Victorian international law divided the world according to its standard of civilization. Inside Europe—and in other areas of the world colonized by Europeans—there was the sphere of civilized life: this meant [...] the protection of property; the rule of law on the basis [...] of codes or constitutions; effective administration of its territory by a state; warfare conducted by a regular army; and freedom of conscience. The fundamental task of international law in this zone was to resolve conflicts between sovereign states in the absence of an overarching sovereign. Outside this sphere, the task was to define terms upon which sovereignty—full or partial—might be bestowed. It was thus in the non-European world that the enormity of the task required in acquiring sovereignty could best be grasped. There, too, the potential costs—in terms of legalized violence—of failing to attain the standard of civilization were most evident. (Mazower 557)

The structuring distinction in Victorian international law thus relied on the cultural dichotomy Haggard’s novel is at pains to rework: a civilized “inside,” which Haggard’s text leaves implicit (it is “our” common sense), sits in an unspoken opposition with an uncivilized “outside,” depicted in Twala’s death cult, and a world is divided in legal terms between those who would act within the bounds of universally-valid law and those who are either unrecognized by, or enemies to that law — “outside” its “sphere.”24

Further pursuing this topographical distinction between insides and outsides as it operated in the nineteenth century, Antony Anghie has recently shown how the assumptions

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23 See Kant, “Perpetual Peace,” and “Metaphysics of Morals”; and Rawls, Political Liberalism.
24 On the persistence of this distinction see Bowden, “Civilization and Savagery in the Crucible of War.”
of positivist legal theory ascendant in the 1880s relied upon metaphorical and geographical lines between (European) law and its outside other. He traces the constitutive exclusions by which “sovereignty became the exclusive preserve of Europe” (7) while non-sovereign or peripheral zones were held to be populated by human bodies that, under international law, were available for European states to act upon in one of three ways: by working either to civilize by uplifting into law; to ignore; or to eliminate by war.  

Anghie’s historical account of the physical limits or thresholds to the modern international order is supported by sources already familiar in Haggard’s moment. “It is scarcely necessary to point out,” writes Victorian legal theorist E.W. Hall in his influential Treatise on International Law, published five years before King Solomon’s Mines,

> that as international law is a product of the special civilization of modern Europe, and forms a highly artificial system of which the principles cannot be supposed to be understood or recognized by countries differently civilized, such states only can be presumed to be subject to it as are inheritors of that civilization. They have lived, and are living, under law, and a positive act of withdrawal would be required to free them from its restraints. But states outside European civilization must formally enter into the circle of law-governed countries. They must do something with the acquiescence of the latter … which amounts to an acceptance of the law in its entirety beyond all possibility of misconstruction. (42-43)\

Hall’s 1880 account gives voice to the positivist legal consensus that within the boundaries of “the special civilization of modern Europe,” law holds sway, while “outside European civilization” exist states which cannot be properly considered sovereign states at all, and are thus not entitled to the legal protections membership in the international community confers.

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26 In his United Nations-era A Concise History of the Law of Nations (1947), Arthur Nussbaum cites Hall’s treatise as an authority and explains that Victorians liked it too: “In England its reception was so favorable that four posthumous editions, the last one in 1924, increasing the total to eight” (236).
It is an important feature of this theory that “European” is not a precisely geographical term, but one that allows geography and cultural standing to commingle in ways familiar from the civilizational discourse of law charted in earlier chapters. “European” states, Hall explains, need not be located in Europe but usually are. (The white colonies comprising “Greater Britain” would be examples of exceptions to this tendency.) Still, to “enter into the circle of law-governed countries,” he argues, a non-European nation must accept “the law” by submitting itself to “the acquiescence” of nations already within that circle. Published at the outset of the decade of romance, Hall’s effort to sketch the edges of “the sphere of law” (43) gives legal specificity to King Solomon’s Mines’ efforts to juxtapose life and death, peace and violence, justice and its opposite. The binaries staged by Haggard’s text invoke the cultural difference between civilization and barbarism, but do so in ways that identify Twala’s regime in legal terms as “outside” or beyond the community of nations operating by law and thus subject to it in its international dispensation. Bloodthirsty, cruel, and arbitrary – ruling with force, not justice, taking life rather than protecting it— Twala and hisautocratic advisory board are the foes of reason, we are made to understand, the very image of what civilized modernity is not. They are unjust enemies.

Anghie’s concern is not simply to denigrate European theory for its exclusions, nor to defame, once again, the cynical or hypocritical use of “civilization” as a pretext for the enormous political barbarisms committed during the long history of European imperialism (though he acknowledges both these points). Rather his effort is to show how the process of defining the legal content of European modernity required a distinctive other, or an image of its barbaric outside. The categories and limits of modern law only became legible against the figure they were understood to negate. Anghie suggests in turn that this constitutive
outside or structuring exclusion can be said to have produced the very categories of European international law in the first place. My concluding sections, on *Jekyll and Hyde*, will return to the process by which this constitutive “outside” returns to structure the legal order’s “inside” under conditions of decline — how modernity’s other comes back to haunt it. Here I want to focus on what military innovations were enabled by the legal dichotomy Haggard’s baroque romance and post-Kantian Victorian theory share, when theories of universal rights meant that the only way a human body or group of them could be discounted from legal belonging was to exclude them from the category of the human itself.

In his section on Right in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant describes the unjust enemy as “someone whose publicly expressed will, whether expressed in word or in deed, displays a maxim that would make peace among nations impossible and would lead to a perpetual state of nature if made into a general rule” (“Metaphysics 170”).

Kant’s “someone” is ambiguous, referring at once to both individual actors and rogue collectivities. But as his theory specifies, such outliers to the human community threaten the very structure of civilization itself. In *Cetywayo*, Haggard suggested that the Zulu prince represented just such a figure, expressing a maxim of despotic tyranny antithetical to the healthy existence of a world organized, now, according to the principles of exchange and order comprised under the heading “law.”

From the perspective of international legal theory, because enemies like Cetywayo existed not only outside the international community governed by law, but also as

27 On Kant and the unjust enemy as the “other” of humanity, see Carl Schmitt, *Nomens of the Earth* 168-171; but see also Ian Baucom, *On Inimical Life*, forthcoming.

28 Haggard quotes a Mr. Osborne, who wrote to the Secretary of Native Affairs describing how “[h]e [Cetywayo] is putting people to death in a shameful manner, especially girls. The dead bodies are placed by his order in the principal paths, especially where the paths intersect each other… It is really terrible that such horrible savagery should take place on our own borders” (qtd Haggard 17).
antagonists to that community, these figures could become the objects of wars potentially unlimited in scope. In his long treatise on international law, *Nomos of the Earth* (pub. 1950), Carl Schmitt cites this passage in Kant to describe how in the period after the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), war among civilized (European) states was “bracketed” or limited by the recognition of both parties’ status as sovereign international actors. Relations arrayed under this heading were horizontal or what Schmitt calls properly political — confrontations between equals in which each party was a *justus hostis*, or just enemy.

As the Westphalian peace dictated and as later practice ratified, outside this zone of bracketed conflict was asymmetrical, or vertical. Because such wars were undertaken between one sovereign state inside the legal order (and thus able to lay claim to justice) and an irregular enemy outside its pale, the scale and prosecution of such conflicts were ungoverned by the rules of war; the bodies subject to such war, being uncounted by any sovereign or rights-guaranteeing body, found themselves excluded from what Hannah Arendt calls “the right to have rights,” and thus available to be dealt with in whatever way the greater power deemed fit. Schmitt argues that Kant’s theory of the unjust enemy gives rise to a species of warfare that has links to medieval just war, an unbracketed conflict that like those crusades was theoretically unlimited in its prosecution – “total.”

It is according to this logic of unregulated, justified violence against “superfluous” or uncounted bodies that, in Swinburne’s “Laus Veneris,” we saw how the Christian knight Tannhauser pursues a “goodly fight” against the “blinkard [sic] heathens stumbling for scant light” (212, 210)

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29 “On one side,” Schmitt writes, Kant “has the *justus hostis*, and on the other, the unjust enemy — a concept whose discriminatory power to divide goes even deeper than does that of just war and *justa causa*” (Schmitt Nomos 171)

For another articulation of this thesis in terms of nineteenth century colonialism, see Mark Mazower, “An International Civilization? Empire, Internationalism and the Crisis of the Mid-Twentieth Century.”
while he remains confident that “Though [God] search all my veins through, searching them
/ He shall find nothing whole therein but love” (383-4). Swinburne took the unlimited wars
of the Christian crusades as an occasion for theorizing how an excessive, vertical violence
could emerge out of a system predicated on justice.

But as Anghie’s work suggests, it is in the colonial context that this diagnosis
registers its full force, for it was outside the boundaries of modernity, beyond the lines of its
law, that the most irredeemable enemies existed. As Schmitt glosses the passage on the
unjust enemy in Kant, “[a] preventative war against such an enemy would be considered
even more than a just war. It would be a crusade, because we would be dealing not simply
with a criminal, but with an unjust enemy, with the perpetrator of the state of nature”
(Nomos 169). War against such an enemy brought about the apparently paradoxical situation
by which unlimited or “inhuman” violence could be pursued for the protection of human
values. With Kant, nineteenth century sovereignty theory from Austin forward understood
that because those who perpetuate the state of nature stand as enemies to modernity,
disregarding its universally valid maxims, they are unfit to receive the protections that
modern law might offer and are thus available to be either forcibly brought within its sphere,
uplifted into law, or eliminated. The former course of action might sometimes be prudent,
but at other moments elimination made tactical sense.

In his 1899 field manual, Small Wars: Their Principle and Their Practice, British colonel
C.E. Callwell explained that the techniques available to the civilized nation in combating
unjust or irregular enemies knew no boundaries. Though it was advisable to follow the laws
of war wherever doing so was practical, conflict could also include such irregular measures as
“the destruction of villages,” “raids on livestock,” and “the destruction of the crops and stores of grain” (40, 41). Callwell goes on:

The most satisfactory way of bringing such foes to reason is by the rifle and sword, for they understand this mode of warfare and respect it. Sometimes, however, the circumstances do not admit of it, and then their villages must be demolished and their crops and granaries destroyed; still it is unfortunate when this is the case. (41)

Concerned, like Hall or Kant, with “bringing… foes to reason,” the passage follows the tenets of international law to specify that the European rules of war recently codified in Geneva (in 1864) do not apply in cases when the enemy is unrecognized by – because it does not itself recognize—European norms of war. Unlimited by law, ungoverned in scope, just wars against non-civilized enemies are restricted only by the rule of necessity: whatever the civilized army needs to do to ensure victory is what it is allowed to do. Warfare waged against uncivilized enemies was thus extralegal in the precise sense that it was outside of law. It was an unregulated, unregulatable violence (proper to what political theory understood as the state of nature) that served, like the martial law declared in Jamaica, to police the integrity of civilization against threats posed by peoples living in just that a-nomic state—that is, in the “state of nature.”

Haggard’s text rewrites the apparent paradoxes of imperial just war into a tale that concerns not regular armies but representative adventurers. When Haggard’s three-man band helps organize the coup against Twala, the British characters act as military advisors for

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30 “[I]n small wars against uncivilized nations,” specifies a British general in 1923, reflecting on the Victorian period, “the form of warfare to be adopted must tone [sic] with the shade of culture existing in the land, by which I mean that, against people possessing a low civilization, war must be more brutal in type” (qtd Mazower 557). From J.F.C. Fuller, in The Reformation of War (1923). Mazower points out that “[t]he 1914 British Manual of Military Law, too, emphasized that ‘rules of International Law apply only to warfare between civilized nations… They do not apply in wars with uncivilized states and tribes’” (qtd 557).
native soldiers, but the operation proceeds in the organized fashion appropriate to modern or civilized combat. Sir Henry Good commands a regiment called “The Greys,” while Quatermain and Ignosi command “the second attacking regiment” (158), “The Buffaloes.” Despite this apparent orderliness, and in keeping with Callwell’s prescription for conflict on the colonial fringes, the war for Kukuanaland’s liberation reads as a baroque extravaganza of slaughter – thousands are killed, blood is everywhere. But Haggard takes pains to show us that in contrast to their enemy, Ignosi and his armies follow the laws of civilized combat, even if they are not bound to; Ignosi orders his troops not to kill Twala’s wounded, “and so far as [Quatermain] could see this order was scrupulously carried out” (163). What we are presented with in this “mythic potpourri” of fact and fancy (Monsman 289) is a war whose grisly means are apparently justified by their ends.

But the question of justification remains central, and is legible in the internal tensions of the novel’s prose as it narrates this doubly just war that on the one hand looks to reinstate a rightful king, and on the other works to establish a universally-valid law in a locale where the “old right of death” holds sway. Haggard’s account of the coup against Twala veers in tone between a moral discourse borrowed from civilized ethics and a more visceral idiom appropriate to the anything-goes approach in zones of conflict beyond the edges of European law. As the war proceeds, the killing is called “awful,” but then described as “music[al],” a confusion of negative and positive registers Haggard’s prose briskly papers over:

The slaughter was something awful, hundreds falling every minute; and from among the shouts of the warriors and the groans of the dying, set to the clashing music of meeting spears, came a continuous hissing undertone of ‘S’gee, s’gee,’ the note of triumph of each victor as he passed his spear through and through the body of his fallen foe. (163)
The words “shocking” and “awful” recur multiple times throughout the fourteen page battle scene. But is this language condemning “the slaughter” or reveling in it?

The answer is both, and as it narrates the just war that unseats Twala, the tone of Haggard’s prose looks to reconcile but instead reveals the paradoxical valences of just war doctrine itself, where the codes of civilized ethics (those that would produce the judgment of the violence’s “awful[ness]”) are the very reason why this violence is undertaken in the first place.31 The contradictory levels of Haggard’s narration in other words reveal a tension between, on the one hand, the ethicopolitical language that according to international law is proper to the civilized core and, on the other, the unbracketed pseudo-Homeric total war appropriate to this romantic African periphery. “It was a mighty struggle,” Quatermain says of the battle, “and an awful thing to see” (173). Here as above, a register in which struggles can be called “mighty” competes with a civilized ethical idiom (“awful”), doing so in a way that can only be fused in Haggard’s surreal, self-contradictory prose, which looks to imagine simultaneously these two competing codes for understanding violence: in Haggard’s sentence, an “and” sits where a “but” should be.

4.4 “Almost unbounded rights of sovereignty”

. The slaughter finally ends; Ignosi is restored; law is established. The sequence would seem to conclude a war in service of civilization, since the reinstated monarch wastes

31 “[T]he effort to establish order is perhaps the sine qua non of imperialist romance – whether or not that effort succeeds” (Patteson 118).
little time in renouncing — or being forced to renounce— the arbitrary and violent ways of the previous administration. Quatermain has already instructed the future king by emphasizing the importance of human values in their guise as legal proceduralism, telling Ignosi that “We [English] shed no blood of man except in just punishment” (120). Even before the military coup is waged, the representatively English party has stressed that the installation of modern legal justice (not diamonds, not influence) is the singular aim of its intervention, exacting a promise that Ignosi’s reign will unfold in accord with the principles of modern legality. Haggard represents this as a promise between friends:

‘Ignosi,’ said Sir Henry, ‘promise me one thing.’
‘I will promise, Incubu, my friend, even before I hear it. […] What is it?’
‘This: that if you ever become king of this people, you will do away with the smelling out of witches such as we have seen last night and that the killing of men without trial shall not take place in the land.’” (146)

The British request is for a liberalization of justice administration, for the establishment of an order that would make Ignosi’s new state accord with the maxims of universal civilization (Hall’s “Europe”) and thus complete its cycle of uplift into the folds of modernity.

In Cetywayo Haggard recounts an 1873 episode in Natal that followed precisely this structure, doing so in terms that reveal the source for Sir Henry’s demand. There Haggard explains that when Shepstone declared Cetywayo king, the British sovereign specified that the new regime would operate according to principles he dictated in four simple points. Haggard writes that Shepstone,

standing in the place of Cetywayo’s father, and so representing the [Zulu] nation, enunciated the four following articles, with a view to putting an end to the continual slaughter that darkens the history of Zululand:
1. That the indiscriminate shedding of blood shall cease in the land.
2. That no Zulu shall be condemned without open trial, and the public examination of witnesses for and against, and that he shall have a right to appeal to the king.
3. That no Zulu's life shall be taken without the previous knowledge and consent of the
king, after such trial has taken place, and the right of appeal has been allowed to be
exercised.
4. That for minor crimes the loss of property, all or a portion, shall be substituted for
the punishment of death. \((Cetywayo\ 11-12)\)

The four-step prescription repeats the minimal requirements of sovereign states in Victorian
international law; its specific language emerges in Haggard’s novelistic account nearly
unchanged. (Shepstone, like Sir Henry, demands a halt to “the indiscriminate shedding of
blood in this land.”) In *King Solomon’s Mines*, Ignosi cannot accede to such demands entirely,
explaining that “[t]he ways of black people are not the ways of white men… nor do we hold
life so high as ye” (130). Still he avers at least to enforce a certain local version of the rule of
law. “I will promise it,” Ignosi says. “If it be in my power to hold them back, the witch
finders shall hunt no more, nor shall any man die the death without judgment” (130). Sir
Henry takes Ignosi’s promise as the necessary condition of their help in the fight. “That’s
the bargain, then,” he says (130).

For Kant, the victor in a war against an unjust enemy is empowered, and obligated,
to impose on the defeated people “a new constitution that by its nature will be unfavorable
to the inclination of war” (Kant Para 58, qtd. Schmitt *Nomos* 170). In keeping with this
nation-building injunction, the war in Kakuanaland, fought with a British advisory team and
enacted on battlefields full of capital in its purest form, leads to “a new constitution” that is
amenable to the universal principles to which Quatermain has already given voice. Ignosi
provides a helpful summary of what has transpired, describing how “the white lords from
the stars, looking down on the land, had perceived its trouble, and determined, at great
personal inconvenience, to alleviate its lot; […]” and how these celestial lords would “stand
by them [i.e. the Kakuanans], and assist them to overthrow Twala, and set up the rightful
king, Ignosi, in his place” (141). The establishment of this rightful king and a new constitution forges what we are led to understand is an indirect link—of friendship and mutual honor, not dominance and submission—between the liberators and a newly installed government, now fit to join the international comity of nations. The Englishmen will “stand by” them.\textsuperscript{32}

In this way the structure of Haggard’s Kakuanan plot concludes the Kantian sequence of war against an unjust enemy, in which, as Kant theorized and Hall’s 1880 treatise upheld, a formerly extralegal body is ultimately brought into the fold of the comity of nations, made to “accept the law in its entirety” (as Hall wrote), or “brought to reason” (as Callwell’s military manual put it) in a process that ends with recognition as a sovereign state. From this angle the plot to replace Twala with Ignosi reads as an effort to carve a civil society from a lawless state of nature, an uplifting mission meant, in legal terms, to bring the Kakuanan state \textit{within} the threshold of international law: at the end of this sequence a formerly excluded zone is \textit{included} in ways that mirror on an international level the individuating and abstracting power of the state’s biopolitical uplift I charted in chapter two.

Such a story would presume the sovereignty or achieved individuality of the resulting nation-state, its ability, as Kant says and Victorian international law confirmed, to enter international civil society as an actor endowed with the self-regulating power he and the later positivist tradition equally require of sovereign national subjects. (It must be able, for

\textsuperscript{32} In this as in so many details, Haggard’s text directly recodes the situation on the ground in late imperial Africa, where “\textit{[i]imperial officials had attempted to impose liberal, Christian standards upon the Boer colonists in their relations with the coloured and Bantu population. The slaves were freed. Masters were restrained. Servants were given liberty of contract and equality in courts, the tribes protected in possession of their lands, and the principle of political equality was laid down. It was not a purely humanitarian policy, for the Colonial Office was convinced that without justice there could be no peace on colonial frontiers, no security within them, no economy in defense or growth of trade}” (Robinson and Gallagher, Africa and the Victorians 53).
example, to conclude contracts, or what Ignosi calls “promise[s].”) In keeping with this requirement, the liberal narration of the Quatermain cadre’s intervention appears to be capped when Haggard’s British trio makes overtures at granting full sovereignty to the regime its own intervention has restored. Though Quatermain is set up as the new king’s trusted advisor, we are told that Ignosi “could exercise almost unbounded rights of sovereignty” (175). The “almost” will become important, but here it appears that when the adventurers depart Kakuanaland with the full state honor of a tickertape parade, the neo-Kantian or liberal narrative of nation-building is fully in place – the British have waged a just war; they have set up institutions of justice; they have maintained no military or administrative presence in the liberated zone. And if they have taken diamonds they’ve done so reluctantly, leaving the majority of the wealth where they found it.

But again our attention is drawn directly to the question of who’s in charge, as the narration elliptically reveals Kakuanaland’s compromised autonomy in the aftermath of its externally-engineered military coup “to overthrow this tyrant and murderer” (115). Certainly the signs of the restored ruler’s “almost unbounded rights of sovereignty” are apparent. The departure of the white benefactors stirs from Ignosi a speech full of nationalist vigor, the sure sign of the full autonomy necessary for sovereign recognition in the international sphere:

“Listen, and let all the white men know my words. No other white man shall cross the mountain […]. If a white man comes to my gates I will send him back; if a hundred come, I will push them back; if an army comes, I will make war on them with all my strength, and they shall not prevail against me.” (223)

It is a noble sentiment, but just after Ignosi’s inaugural speech as the sovereign of his now-independent state, readers learn that there is an exception: the three white men can return
whenever they please. And Haggard’s text suggests that when they do, they will continue to exert influence over the native people as they did before they left. What is that influence? Fifty pages before Ignosi’s declaration of total sovereignty, we have learned that the three white men have retained a certain indirect power there, one that extends indefinitely into the future. Ignosi gives an order to the effect that

we three were to be greeted with the royal salute, to be treated with the same ceremony and respect that was by custom accorded to the king, and the power of life and death was publicly conferred upon us. (183)

The “power of life and death” is the exact power of sovereignty as such. Conferring such power on Quatermain’s band, the novel in this way reveals that the new autonomy of Ignosi’s state is in fact a kind of shadow sovereignty, a native front for British power in its wider sphere of influence. In Cetywayo, Haggard gives further support to this reading, recounting the real-life sovereignty drama King Solomon’s Mines reorganizes into fictional form. He details how Shepstone supposedly ceded but in fact retained sovereignty over the Zulus in 1876. Before Cetywayo emerged as a tyrant in his own right in the 1880s, Shepstone was to nominate him as king in another, earlier effort to establish a friendly regime. But Zulu law had no mechanism for understanding how someone who was not a Zulu king could grant sovereignty to a king. The solution, Haggard says, was to “investe[] Mr. Shepstone with all the attributes of a Zulu king, such as the power to make laws, order

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33 For analyses of the many techniques the British used after 1870 to secure “prominence” in Africa, see Meredith, Robinson and Gallagher, and (Germany and England in Africa). That sovereignty is coextensive with what Quatermain calls “the power of life and death” is a commonplace in the theory of sovereignty from Bodin to Hobbes to Schmitt. Foucault summarizes this history neatly in a lecture: “You know that in the classical theory of sovereignty, the right of life and death was one of sovereignty’s basic attributes” (Society Must Be Defended 240). Or as Mbembe writes in his elaboration of Foucault: “the ultimate expression of sovereignty resides, to a large degree, in the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die. Hence, to kill or allow to live constitute the limits of sovereignty, its fundamental attributes. To exercise sovereignty is to exercise control over mortality and to define life as the deployment and manifestation of power” (Necropolitics 11-12).
executions, &c., and those attributes in the eyes of Zulus he still retains” (Cetywayo 10). Then he could nominate the new king. The result is one that Haggard finds amusing: Shepstone to this day holds sovereignty over the Zulu nation to which he ceded independence.

If King Solomon’s Mines describes a similar story of indirect rule, by which the “power over life and death” remains in British hands and full sovereignty has been nominally but not substantively transferred to the new native regime (now a “state” in the terms of international sovereignty theory), this point is underscored elsewhere in the novel. In fact the same page that tells us that Ignosi “could exercise almost unbounded rights of sovereignty” also contains another, more telling exchange, in which Quatermain makes a show of deferring to the native king even as the explorer himself ultimately decides on a matter of wartime strategy. What plays out is a power drama writ small, in which an apparently sovereign state defers decision to its British benefactors — its “father.” Again it is precisely to the question of who’s in charge that the text calls our attention. As an important question of strategy is debated, the answer seems to be Quatermain:

“The last word is in Ignosi, the king, for it is a king’s right to speak of war; but let us hear thy voice, O Macumazahn [Quatermain],” [said Infadoos].
“What sayest thou, Ignosi?” [Quatermain said.]
‘Nay, my father,’ answered our quondam servant, who now, clad as he was in the full panoply of savage war, looked every inch a warrior king, ‘do thou speak, and let me, who am but a child in wisdom beside thee, hearken to thy words.’ (174-5)

Here Infadoos and Quatermain make overtures toward Ignosi’s status as sovereign, his “king’s right” to offer “the last word,” and Ignosi himself appears in his most powerful guise, “looking every inch a …king.” Yet this petty sovereign is a “quondam servant” (quondam: former), a dependent and “friend” who may look like a sovereign but isn’t one: the passage uses language from descriptions by John Stuart Mill and Kant of international
relations with pre-modern subject races—Mill called it “nonage”—to explain that for this child, the power of decision rests with the father. Whether it is based on consent or coercion, whether the new state is a sovereign nation or an indirectly ruled puppet regime, this proxy war at the empire’s edge has yielded a legal order remade in England’s image, one ready, at last, to be brought under the auspices of civilization and a rule of law now internationally understood.

In unfolding a simultaneous narrative of informal liberal nation building (in keeping with Kant and Hall) and the indirect annexation of territory under British sovereignty (in keeping with a more “forward” or explicit imperial policy favored by Haggard and his superiors in Natal), King Solomon’s Mines dramatizes imperial procedures more complicated than previous commentators have seen. In addition to being the racist fantasy of civilization cultural studies have long critiqued, the text uses its cultural distinctions to engage with the political and legal theory of its moment, putting the double-logic of late-century British imperial intervention on display and bringing into focus the structurally unlimited warfare waging at the edges of what was, by 1885, a British world system newly under threat of competition.

Legal and political, then, but generic too. For George Eliot writing in the period of high British hegemony, in 1860, the cosmopolitan modern mind could be understood to

34 The British empire was famously catholic in its approach to its linkages with territories in its system, and used “formal” and “indirect” means at various times for various effects: fully a third of India was “governed” by “autonomous” Indian princes who were assigned British agents—these were “sovereigns” whose real independence was carefully monitored and controlled by imperial authorities. I thank Michael Moses for his help in clarifying these details. Quatermain sums up the encounter by recounting the political process that has just transpired. “Behold, Ignosi, with us thou wast a servant, and now we leave thee a mighty king” (222). The final phrase is importantly ambiguous, since “we leave thee” can refer to the British team’s departure—they are leaving him as king—or to the fact that they allow him to be king, give him leave. In any case the next line clarifies what the terms of this transmutation have been. “If thou art grateful to us,” continues Quatermain, “remember to do even as thou didst promise: to rule justly, to respect the law, and to put none to death without cause” (222).
travel to “the the banks of the Zambezi” in wide-angled flights of imagination, as the
physical geography of the empire became a cognitive space available to the enlightened
citizens of the metropolitan center. For Haggard in the 1880s, the banks of the Zambezi can
be narrated only as a zone of adventure and bloodshed, a space not of deep capaciousness or
cognitive expansion but of a hyperbolic, even cartoonish variety of physical conflict
appropriate to romance.

4.5 “As good as Homer!”

“Does not Mr. Rider Haggard make even his African carnage pleasant?” (qtd. Edel
178). The question is Henry James’s, and it is meant ironically. James’s oddly-timed aside
on Haggard comes as he is using Maupassant to theorize his own sense of how an artist-
author should negotiate between the twin poles of inwardness and action, “character” and
“plot.” In a letter to Stevenson James continued this line of thought, finding in the “beastly
bloodiness” of Haggard’s novels (qtd. Edel 178) the negative image of his own more delicate
practice:

Such perpetual killing and such perpetual ugliness! It is worth while to write a tale of
fantastic adventure, with a funny man, etc. and pitched all in the slangiest key, to kill
20,000 men, as in Solomon, in order to help your heroes on! In She the Narrator
shoots through the back (I think) his faithful servant Mohammed, to prevent his
being boiled alive, and describes how he leaped into the air “like a buck” on
receiving the shot. They seem to me works in which our race and our age make a
very vile figure – and they have unexpectedly depressed me. (qtd. Edel 178).

James had read all of King Solomon’s Mines and half of She (1887), and despite his ongoing
correspondence with Stevenson was by this point a full-fledged participant in the debates
over realism and romance animating the literary world throughout the 1880s and 90s – weighing in, as his champion William Dean Howells ensured, on the side of realism. James’s viscerally negative response to Haggard’s visceral novels is not surprising given James’s status today as the most reflective of modern novelists, literary history’s chief defender, with Eliot, of fiction’s effort to plumb the depths of spatially-imagined human psyches in order to expand and cultivate the sympathetic capacities of readers.\(^{35}\) (Fiction should elevate the sympathetic faculties, as James suggested of Haggard, not “depress” them.) But the terms of his dismissal also shed light on a moment when this realism war had yet to be won, and form an entry point to an analysis of the barely-remembered literary debate that itself can be said to give form to the discussions of imperial violence I have pursued to this point. The eminently civilized James focuses on Haggard’s excess and his violence: there is too much action here, James says, a surplus of shocking event. His reaction concurs with the profound introversions of James’s own writing, what one critic summarizes as the realist’s “nervousness about overt action” in his own fiction (Markovits 145).

But it was precisely because of the facility with which he produced the kind of prose vexing James here that Haggard had already been selected by the folklorist and literary impresario Andrew Lang as the standard-bearer of what Lang would style a new movement in British fiction. Under Lang’s direction, the campaign against an upstart American realism by the advocates of romance during the mid-1880s was “one of the most important literary debates in Britain during the late 19\(^{\text{th}}\) century” (Michalski 13), though it is chiefly

\(^{35}\) On the persistence of models of “depth” in critical discourse, see Eve Kosovsky Sedgwick “The Character in the Veil: Imagery of the Surface in the Gothic Novel,” who shows how criticism repeats “a particular psychological model of the self, one with an inside and an outside and with certain material (‘the irrational’) on the inside that could or should pass outside” (255).
remembered not as a debate but with isolated references to its most widely anthologized interventions – James’ “The Art of Fiction” and Lang’s “Realism and Romance.” For the editorial figures most involved, Lang and Howells, the realism wars were a consuming rivalry that took shape along transatlantic circuits of publication – with Howells working from his position as editor at the Atlantic Monthly (until 1886) and at Harper’s (after that time), and Lang firing back from his talky, digressive column “At the Sign of the Ship” for Longman’s, which began in 1885 and ran into the twentieth century. (Lang also edited a book series for the publisher, which included many of Haggard’s works.) As Howells later reflected, “[f]rom the first it was a polemic, a battle” that pitted a new realism against what the American styled as the backward-looking forms of romance (qtd. Demoor “Andrew Lang” 417). For Lang, James, Haggard, and Stevenson, then, this generic dispute provided the terms by which the development of their separate aesthetic programs could be conceived.

I’ve suggested how King Solomon’s Mines’ plot documents the sovereignty battles at the edge of a British system in decline. But I’ve also touched on its style, which stood as the prime example of the savage form Lang set against the civilized mode he styled as overly polite and far too metropolitan: realism. Lang was Haggard’s early champion, who read King Solomon’s Mines in manuscript and helped arrange for its publication, going on to collaborate with Haggard throughout the waning years of the nineteenth century and later authoring a badly-reviewed novel with him, published by Longmans — The World’s Desire of 1890. “[P]erhaps the most influential critic of the last two decades of the nineteenth century”

*36 Jameson’s Political Unconscious takes this moment as the subject of its final chapters on the consolidation of “literature” in the face of mass culture at the end of the century; but Jameson does not open up the international implications of the debates, focusing instead on the class logic of the British context (Gissing, Conrad).
Lang carved out multiple avenues for reaching the public he loved to amuse—magazine columns, folklore criticism, Homer scholarship, and literary criticism, among many areas of production. During his lifetime Lang authored several hundred books (!), and throughout the 1880s used articles and correspondence to establish “a dominant influence beyond any individual critic before or since” (Elwin 183). He cultivated a small coterie of adventure writers, advocating for a rejuvenating, nostalgic romance mode centered on event and explicit action—on plot, as he tirelessly insisted, not character.

Lang theorized this event-oriented approach as was a way of reanimating a tradition reaching back, he thought, not only to Walter Scott, a fellow Scotsman Lang had always admired, but also to the premodern forms Lang associated with “savage” folklore and Homeric epic. To the critics who demanded from their fiction probability of events, domestic settings, and deep psychology, Lang responded by making connections between Haggard, Homer, and the marvels of supernatural myth:

The “Odyssey” is the typical example of a romance as probable as “The Arabian Nights,” yet unblemished in the conduct of the plot, and peopled by men and women of flesh and blood. Are we to be told that we love the “Odyssey” because the barbaric element has not died out of our blood, and because we have a childish love of marvels, miracles, man-eating giants, women who never die, “murders grim and great,” and Homer’s other materials? Very well. “Public opinion,” in Boston, may condemn us, but we will get all the fun we can out of the ancestral barbarism of our natures. I only wish we had more of it. The Coming Man may [well] be bald, toothless, highly “cultured,” and addicted to tales of introspective analysis. (Lang Realism and Romance 689)

37 Accounts of Lang marvel at his ability to write at any time no matter the circumstances. One story describes Lang scribbling out a magazine article while animatedly chatting during a train ride, never losing concentration on either “conversation.”
What Lang offers in this talky defense of the modern romance is the claim that its archaic stories stir a “barbaric element” that has not yet died in us, even at this late phase of civilization. Lang’s citation of a bald and toothless coming man jibes at the scientific theories of Herbert Spencer to mock — but not refute — the idea that the process of modernization will inevitably dim what Lang calls “the ancestral barbarism of our natures.”

But the jibe that follows, about public opinion in Boston, is aimed directly at Howells, with whom Lang was by this time (1887) fully engaged in a battle that pitted the coming man of American realism against the atavistic throwbacks of English romance. The childlike instinct in “[m]odern English criticism,” Howells later wrote, indicting Lang directly, “likes to be melted, and horrified, and blood-curdled, and goose-fleshed,” while an appropriately modern, adult, and American criticism, Howells maintained, prefers the more refined and sympathy-extending pleasures of psychological fiction [qtd Demoor, “Andrew Lang” 417]).

The debate pitted an outdated or atavistic English practice (figured throughout these debates as childish, an accusation Haggard and Lang were happy to embrace) against the more modern or adult techniques of Americans like James. For Howells the character-centered techniques of James represented the form in which a new American modernity might articulate itself. As he wrote in the one of the first interventions into the realism wars, “Henry James, Jr.” (1882), the dispute was nothing other than a tension between an English past and an American future:

38 Howells maintained that “Only character and characterization really count in fiction, all else is subordinate” (qtd Cady Light 15); this demand for character was tied to a program of “esthetics” and “social ethics” that, as Howells said, was “democratic” because it necessarily “must focus on individual and common character.” In this dichotomy realism was “humane” and “democratic” — anything else was a politically problematic romanticism (qtd Cady Light 15).
To spin a yarn for the yarn’s sake, that is an ideal worthy of a nineteenth century Englishman, doting in forgetfulness of the English masters and groveling in ignorance of the Continental masters; but wholly impossible to an American of Mr. Henry James’s modernity. [...] To such a mind as his the story could never have value except as a means; it could not exist for him as an end; it could be used only illustratively; it could be the frame, not possibly the picture. (Howells qtd. Benardete, ed. 99)

With the past obsession with “story” set against an interest in deep characters more appropriate to the future, Howells polemecizes in favor of a modernity characterized by “artistic impartiality” (“Mr. Henry James” 318) and painstaking “analysis of motive” (320). As Howells wrote: “realism seeks now, to widen the bounds of sympathy, to level every barrier against aesthetic freedom, to escape from the paralysis of tradition. [Romance] exhausted itself in this impulse, and it remained for realism to assert that fidelity to experience and probability of motive are essential conditions for great imaginative literature” (Howells Selected Criticism Volume 2, 21). In this international rewriting of the status to contract story, an “exhausted” British romance is held to represent “tradition” while a new American realism, waiting in history’s wings, readies itself for an ascent to new heights of “aesthetic freedom.” Against the old romance, writes Amy Kaplan, American realism “emerges in literary history in bellicose terms – as a war, a struggle, a campaign—and William Dean Howells appears as the leader of this charge” (15).

Lang for his part conceded the dichotomy Howells frames here between surface and depth, character and incident, but maintained that the retrograde pleasures of story had the power to revitalize men who had progressed to far into a bloodless state of civility.

Discussing the character-driven novels of the kind Howells puffed, Lang opposes modern interest in emotions with something more elemental:
They all talk about their emotions for ever, and the pleasure which this affords to the Man of the Future in each of us is almost too poignant. […] But the natural man within me, the survival of some blue-painted Briton or of some gipsy, was equally pleased with a true Zulu love story. (“Realism and Romance” 689)

In the folklorist’s dichotomy, an archaic, event-oriented mode is asynchronous with its moment, but has the power to rekindle the older, more physical way of living modern (British) men have forgotten. If one surprise of this theory is that Haggard’s clunky novels are placed on the level of myth, another is that both of these primitive forms have the power to stir within modern man an older way of living that is no longer ours, a Zulu or “gipsy” mode of life Lang inflects with a positive not negative valence. Lang’s program in this way almost perfectly reverses the dichotomy Matthew Arnold made, in Culture and Anarchy (1867), between our “best” and “worst” selves, arguing not for the calm moderation of modern disinterest, but for the passionate physicality of the animal man. As Lang says of reading Homer: “our own sense of vitality is … in a measure increased, and, as it were, there is a kind of transfusion into our veins of the heroic blood, of the vigour in the limbs of the sons of Gods” (Homer and the Epic 11).

At Oxford Lang had begun his career as a decorated scholar of Homeric poetry, but was also influenced there by E.B. Tylor and other participants in the new anthropological science then reshaping ethnographic and ethnological method.39 The key aspect of Tylor’s theory for Lang was the doctrine of survivals, or holdovers from previous cultural stages. What Lang took from this innovation was two key points. The first was the idea that myths

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39 Lang met Tylor at Balliol, where Lang read for classics but was exposed to the “epoch-making” work of John McClennan, Primitive Marriage (1865) (qtd Dorson 207). Lang and Tylor differed about the coincidences of oral and material culture across race and distance. “Lang favoured coincident and multiple invention, while Tylor leaned more to the borrowing of myths […] between peoples. They differed too on spiritualism, Tylor dismissing it as a ‘monstrous farrago,’ while Lang thought the element of animism – though not of automatism—to be a survival” (Dorson 208).
were the crystallization of a kind of deep structure, a common language or *pensée sauvage* shared by all human cultures at a given stage of development, no matter the historical or geographical location of the myth’s creation and transmission. Myth was “a shared idiom of savage thought, magical thinking” (Dorson 209): thus Welsh folk tales, Icelandic sagas, African myth, and Homer could equally be adduced in Lang’s (many) published collections of folk stories as representing a primitive prehistory that was our common heritage. The second was that “older” forms could reach *beyond* their proper time and place, contaminating or haunting the present moment with dead forms: magical thinking could reemerge in epochs that had themselves become disenchanted. (Both positions would later be fleshed out in a more theoretical language by Levi-Strauss; they would emerge from that source to structure the fundamental assumptions of Jameson’s own method for reading “sedimented” generic signals, and pass from Jameson to inform Nancy Armstrong’s recent diagnosis of the novel as a given culture’s primitive subconscious.  

Lang’s quasi-Lukacian nostalgia for the world’s outdated forms, his embracing of “the natural man within me, the survival of some blue-painted Briton or of some gipsy” put him in direct conflict with his academic colleagues more in step with modernity, including Max Muller. A longtime fixture at Oxford and its first-ever Professor of Comparative Theology, Muller elaborated from that institutional position a racialized system of myth that contrasted directly with Lang’s, arguing that primitive forms like the Indian Vedas (Muller’s

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40 In this way Lang’s own folkloric research, following Tylor’s and radicalizing it, can be seen as a kind of ironic source code for Jameson’s own profoundly generative hermeneutic method — ironic because Lang’s position as a founder of romance makes him a symptom or object of study rather than source of “theory” within Jameson’s own account. (Jameson does not cite Lang, locating his own sources in the French structuralism that would adapt Lang’s work.) Jameson’s methodology in *The Political Unconscious* can be described as a theory of survivals at the level of genre, a haunting or sedimentation, as he calls it, of older forms within newer ones by which “the ideology of the form itself, thus sedimented, persists into the later, more complex structure as a generic message which coexists — either as a contradiction or, on the other hand, as a mediatory or harmonizing mechanism—with elements from later stages” (141).
prime example) were “diseases of language,” corrupted or mistaken versions of an original, correct “Aryan” story. Lang’s countervailing theory held that these stories represented a shared savage past that was (for him) lamentably all but expunged in the modern age, even though its broken traces persisted, unevenly, into the present moment as survivals. For Muller the study of archaic forms revealed our salutary progress into more regulated and rational time, while for Lang to engage with these asynchronic fragments was to reanimate a premodern age he preferred to the civilized forms and inward dilation indulged in by the Coming Man.

Lang’s dictum “More claymores, less psychology” captures this preference for outdated action. But a sketch he sent to Stevenson in a letter, depicting an episode of *Kidnapped*, expresses even more vividly the cartoonish quality of the “heroic” violence Lang sought to recapture:
Despite the loving attention paid here to coat buttons and shoe buckles, Lang’s loose, scribbly lines provide an almost perfect visual rendering of the reputation he’d cultivated for unpretentious accomplishment, “an easy grace of style” (Elwin 183) that is most visible, perhaps, in the “m”-shaped suggestions of birds and their jokey label, “Eagles.”

41 “[H]e possessed an easy grace of style which won the envy of highbrows, and charmed the masses by its unpretentiousness, its familiarity, its lack of conscious superiority and condescension” (Elwin 183).
conscious formal design – even if, on second glance, we note the sense of compositional balance evident in, say, the shaping form of the sail, swooping over Breck’s head; the crosshatch that rhymes deck and mountain; or the vertical axis of the mast, structurally dividing friend and foe.

But at the core of all of this characteristically easy virtuosity—what Henry James called Lang’s “beautiful thin felicity” (qtd Melwin 191) – matters of life and death intercede, and brutally: a sword tip emerges through the back of its victim, as Mr. Shaun’s flailing body is literally lifted off its feet by the force of the blow.42 Set against this hyperbolic violence, Lang’s wobbly, humorous approach registers his nostalgia for the lost age of action and romance he depicts, his sense that a more lively time of heroism and force has unfortunately been superseded. In a more theoretical register too, Lang framed his investments in the unmediated life of prior ages and the magical thinking proper to it. While Muller was articulating his theory that non-European systems of thought were diseases of language, one of Lang’s many articles in Longman’s lamented “The Decay of the British Ghost” in the modern age: the “sad truth,” Lang wrote, is that “one by one they are fading away” (“Decay 251”).

Lang’s scholarship on Homer developed in tandem with his work on folklore, which itself unfolded in connection to his ongoing polemics on literary romance. All of these lines of work were predicated on the presupposition that savage myths were the aesthetic record of primal cognitive experiences now expunged, but that romance might somehow rekindle.

42 Lang’s caption to Stevenson further emphasizes the violence contrasting the cartoonishness here, shifting to French to capture the strange pleasures produced by this archaic bloodiness. His postscript to Stevenson reads: “Alan Breck donne un bon coup d’epee a M. Shaun, trois pouces de fer travers dans le ventre” (“Alan Breck gives a good strike of the sword to M. Shaun, three inches of iron passes through his stomach” (Democrit Deor Stevenson 102, my translation).
Lang’s appreciation for Homer came from his understanding of it not as high art but savage myth, a “conscious art,” as he called it, that served as the literary afterimage of a society operating according to social rules and mental structures we no longer share (Homer and the Epic 7). “The epics are not only poetry,” he wrote in Homer and the Epic, “but history, history not of real events, indeed, but of real manners, of a real world, to us otherwise unknown” (7). In this Lang anticipates later critics of Homer like Erich Auerbach and Georg Lukacs, for whom the Greek epics record the “absolute immanence of life” of a premodern moment (Lukacs Theory 35), a pre-bourgeois mode of being in which “flatness” of character reflected a unified way of living subsequently split into the divided selves characteristic of the (realist) novel form. As Lukacs writes in language Lang will ratify shortly, in the epic world

[t]here is not yet any interiority, for there is not yet any exterior, any ‘otherness’ for the soul. The soul goes out to seek adventure; it lives through adventures, but it does not know the real torment of seeking and the real danger of finding; such a soul never stakes itself; it does not yet know that it can lose itself, it never thinks of having to look for itself. Such an age is the age of the epic. (Lukacs Theory 30)

It was precisely this “age of the epic” that Lang sought to recapture in the clunky mock-Homeric romances he defended from his post at Longman’s.

Homer was crucial to this work. Lang’s numerous interventions in the contested field of Homeric criticism (he argued that one person wrote all the poems), included Homer and the Epic (1893) and The World of Homer (1910), both of which collected work Lang had done during the 1880s and 90s. While Muller was finalizing his groundbreaking English translation of Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason (1881), a text Muller thought represented “the perfect manhood of the Aryan mind” in its self-reflexive, “non-dogmatical” modern form (lxi)—what Howell’s called James’s expansive “artistic impartiality”—Lang was translating Homer, “puzzl[ing] over the brutal and irrational features of Greek myths” (Dorson 206).
This obsession with myth extended directly into Lang’s literary work as editor, critic, and translator. In the period just before and during the realism wars, Lang produced two of the Victorian period’s most popular translations of Homer, collaborating with S.H. Butcher on a prose version of *The Odyssey* (1879) and with Walter Leaf and Ernest Myers on an iconic prose treatment of the *Iliad* (1883), possibly the most widely read translation of any kind in the Victorian period. \(^{43}\)

These vastly influential works have yet to be analyzed or even mentioned in Victorianist criticism on the romance. Still, what George Steiner in his book on Homeric translation calls the “contentious” program on which Lang’s version is based (Steiner 372) has stakes for the stylistic development of the late-Victorian imperial novel. As we’ve seen, Lang held that Homer’s epics were not an eternal standard of art or culture, nor even the mixture of “energy” and “pure lines” Matthew Arnold had evoked in his influential 1861 lectures “On Translating Homer.” For Lang the epics were examples of an irredeemably savage art that disclosed a heroic way of life now all but extinct. Any faithful translation should thus convey the strangeness and immediacy of a world in which, as Auerbach observes, all thought is “scrupulously externalized” (3) into scenes of physical action and quoted speech. In *The World of Homer*, Lang concurs with Auerbach’s assessment, praising Homer’s mastery by (repetitively) describing the unchanging nature of his characters’ essences: “[s]o consistent, so delicate, so strong a delineation of character… every person is drawn with equal firmness, delicacy, and consistency” (*The World of Homer* 250). Lang’s

\(^{43}\) According to Hugh Kenner, in preparing *Ulysses* James Joyce used Samuel Butler’s 1897 translation of the *Odyssey*, not the more vulgar and fantastic Lang and Leaf I discuss below. For Kenner the Butler is preferable to the Lang because its Homer is “an observer and an ingenious transposer or actualities” rather than a teller of romantic tales — they say “fair court” where Butler says “tower” in the first book, a substitution Kenner says affected Joyce’s use of the tower at the opening of *Ulysses*’ first episode. See *The Pound Era*, 46-49.
emphasis on the “consistency” of Homeric characters echoes Auerbach’s sense that the
injunction of epic style is
to represent phenomena in a fully externalized form, visible and palpable in all their
parts, and completely fixed in their spatial and temporal relations. Nor do
psychological processes receive any other treatment: here too nothing must remain
hidden and unexpressed. (Mimesis 6)

With Auerbach, Lang understood that savage or “epic” thought was pre-rational in any
modern (Kantian) sense. The mental undergirding of epic life predated rationality
understood in the post-Kantian or bourgeois terms of internal self-division, self-reflection,
or “the powers of distance.” Auerbach would echo Lang’s sense that style proceeds from
this elemental fact: because its categories were primarily physical, the epic’s mode of
narration must convey this fundamental – and historically explainable— absence of
“thought.”

Lang’s scholarship had convinced him of the cognitive difference between the epic
or “savage” age and “ours”; it had also proven to him that Homer’s poems were written in
an already-archaic dialect of Greek — that the language was old-fashioned even to Homer’s
original audiences. In keeping with this theory Lang cast his epics into prose — the better to
convey immediacy—and reasoned further that his prose translation should recreate the
original’s archaicizing effect, using an “old and plain” style Lang linked in his preface to the
*Odyssey* to the Biblical idiom (ix). The result was the same quasi-King Jamesian prose line,
full of thees and thous, that would later be transposed almost without alteration into the
pages of Haggard’s pseudo-Homeric combats.44 In Book XI of Lang’s 1883 *Iliad*, a spree of

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44 In a letter to Stevenson, Lang recommends that Stevenson read Haggard’s first novel, *The Witch’s Head* (1884), directing
him more specifically to a chapter Haggard had titled “A Homeric Combat” (INSERT REF; Demoor, Dear Stevenson?)
premodern violence becomes an action scene from the world of romance, old and plain and unremittingly brutal:

[Agamemnon] spake and dashed Peisandros from his chariot to the earth, smiting him with the spear upon the breast, and he lay supine on the ground. But Hippolochos rushed away, and him too he smote to earth, and cut off his arms and his neck with the sword, then tossed him like a ball of stone to roll through the throng. (185)

In Lang’s treatment, immediacy of detail combines with an archaicizing linguistic affectation (smite, smote) to create an action scene fully reminiscent of the all-out battle scenes in King Solomon’s Mines. When Lang tells us that Agamemnon “cut off his arms and his neck with the sword,” his simple declarative statement conveys action in its purest form. In Robert Fagles’ 1990 treatment of this passage, by contrast, the content is just as violent (it’s in the original). But in this post-Cold War translation, Lang’s directness has been smoothed into present participles, words that lengthen what Lang cut short: “Hippolochus leapt away, but him he killed on the ground, / slashing off his arms with a sword, lopping off his head[.]”45

Lang’s sharp hard verbs have been evened out, and the shock of decapitation (Lang used “cut”) has been softened into the figurative “lopping.”46

45 As Fagles’ account runs on its

And he pitched Pisander off the chariot onto earth
And plunged a spear into his chest – the man crashed on his back
As Hippolochus leapt away, but him he killed on the ground,
slashing off his arms with a sword, lopping off his head
and he sent him rolling through the carnage like a log.
He left them there for dead and just at the point
Where most battalions scattered Agamemnon charged,
The rest of his troops in armor quick behind him now,
Infantry killing infantry fleeing headlong, hard-pressed … (VI, 167-175)

46 Lang’s translations respond implicitly to Arnold’s influential 1861 lectures “On Translating Homer,” but where Arnold emphasized how Homer’s primitive “grandeur” and “energy” combined with “the pure lines” and “liquid clearness” (Arnold “Translating,” unpagedinated). Lang’s translation dispenses with the sweetness and light of the latter pairing, and goes straight for the gut.
What Lang’s Homeric translations convey, in other words, is a world of physical action and superficial characterization, one whose mode informs the stylistic idiosyncrasies of *King Solomon’s Mines* and the other romances Lang helped usher into print. As Lang wrote in *Homer and the Epic*, “The epic, in the *Odyssey*, becomes a romance, the best of all romances” (7). Like Lang’s Homer, Haggard’s own prose performs shifts between scenes incredible violence (what James called *King Solomon’s Mines* “bloodiness!”) and a stagy archaicizing idiom, a tonal oscillation that is further radicalized by the novel’s infamous “humor.” (I will withhold examples.) Lang said of Homer’s world that its savage physicality meant that great deeds, feasts, and pitiful violence — “humour too” — sat next to one another without transition, since all of these facets of existence functioned as elements of a unified society in which softer distinctions would have been unnecessary and indeed unthinkable (*Homer and the Epic* 6). “[W]ith his clear vision of the end of all living, he combines the gladdest enjoyment of life,” Lang writes (*Homer and the Epic* 5). Or as Haggard put it, the savage chronotope of the African countryside has no place for the transitional buffering appropriate to civilization:

> There was no breathing space between the day and night, no soft transformation scene, for in these latitudes twilight does not exist. The change from day to night is as quick and as absolute as the change from life to death. (102)

Haggard’s sentences well describe his own style, which, proper to this African zone, lacks the “soft transformation scene[s]” proper to domestic fiction and instead veers with apparent wildness between humor and death: the world of romance, Lang and Haggard equally suggest, is one in which orderly changeovers and rational transitions do not occur. In a judgment that will now sound not at all surprising, Lang proclaimed that Haggard’s uneven, violent pages were “as good as Homer” ("Norwich Castle Catalogue" 5). Equally

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unsurprisingly, Haggard called this one of “the greatest compliments that had ever been paid to him about his literary work” (“Norwich Castle Catalogue” 5).

If the adventure romance emerged, at a period of England’s global decline, as a belated effort to reinvoke an outdated epic life, then its counterpart across the Atlantic celebrated the arrival of a new bourgeois man. While Lang managed Haggard and corresponded with Stevenson, Howells was cultivating his relationship to James and working to institutionalize the fictional forms with which that name has become synonymous. With James as his example, Howells had begun the realism wars by declaring that “The art of fiction… has become a finer art in our day than it was with Dickens and Thackeray …. These great men are of the past; […] the new school… which is so largely of the future as well as the present, finds its chief exemplar in Mr. Henry James” (“Mr. Henry James 28). As the dialectical counterpart to melodrama, the free indirect discourse James helped institutionalize can be understood as the formal enactment of the “modern” or realistic cognition Howells saw on the ascent. It is the formal mode proper to the philosophic differentiation between inside and outside that Lukacs has in mind when he explains that “happy ages have no philosophy” (Theory 29).

In the type of Jamesian free-indirect discourse celebrated by Howells and implicitly critiqued by Lang, the narrative voice dips first into one perspective, then into another, and ascends, finally, to cast ironic judgment on all of them in a process that expands webs of intersubjective sympathy while it “deepens” the capacity of individuals to experience separate “levels” of their own experiences. The “concretization, at the micro-level of style and the sentence, of that (variously figured) condition of detachment or distance” for which James has long earned renown (Mc Keon 485) and that Amanda Anderson has associated
with modernity itself, free indirect discourse is the mechanism by which rationality in its post-Kantian guise finds its proper literary expression. It both models and cultivates character: “ethos.” James himself links his novelistic procedure to a probing mental expansion he understands in Kantian terms, writing that process of creating true art (not romance, not melodrama) induces “an immense increase—a kind of revelation—of freedom” (Art of Fiction 515). This new claim to freedom represents a claim for a specifically American version of it, an effort to relocate the place of “depth” from an older side of the Atlantic to the side now able to lay claim to its name (in the Atlantic Monthly, based in Boston). It may be true, as D.H. Lawrence said, that of all the novelists “it was [George Eliot] who started putting all the action inside” (qtd. Markovits 89). But after 1880 figure of modern detachment was an American.

Once we appreciate the importance of free indirect discourse and its concomitant figure of “depth” to the self-consciously modern fiction coming from Boston and New York (where Harper’s was based) in the 1880s, we are in a better position to historicize the notorious deficiencies of the romance style. If free indirect discourse captures the subtle, probing machinery of James’s realistic procedure, then Allan Quatermain’s rebuttal stands as fit description of its romantic opposite: “Elephant hunters are a rough set of men,” Quatermain says, “and don’t trouble themselves with much beyond the facts of life and the ways of Kafirs” (19). In keeping with this dictum, Haggard’s narrative structures are first-person and extremely limited: his novels unfold as found texts mediated by editors, disclosing nested sets of adventures, one inside of another, that are narrated always from a single simple man’s point of view. (In Homer and the Epic, Lang had described a similar digressive, nested structure in the Odyssey.) In Haggard’s accounts, all is surface and
everything, as Howells judged of Haggard, was “a great, whirling splendor of peril and achievement, a wild scene of heroic adventure, and of emotional ground and lofty tumbling” (Howells Criticism & Fiction XVIII, 237). This superficial or “heroic” aspect of Haggard’s Lang-sponsored prose becomes evident as a stylistic strategy, rather than a simple defect, when we see how relentlessly this program is pursued in the texts. When Quatermain is asked whether he will join the adventurers, we are presented with what is announced as a moment of “inward” mental deliberation – he is supposed to be thinking. But Haggard recasts this cognitive moment into an entirely physical episode:

I rose and knocked out my pipe before I answered. I had not made up my mind, and wanted the additional moment to complete it. Before the burning tobacco had fallen into the sea it was completed; just that little extra second did the trick. It is often the way when you have been bothering a long time over a thing.

‘Yes, gentlemen,’ I said, sitting down again, ‘I will go[.]’ (32)

In this remarkable non-narration of mental process, all internal dilation has been recoded into physical event, and what Michael McKeon has called “the process of internalization broadly characteristic of the nineteenth century novel” (485) is dramatically rewritten into a play of surfaces: “I rose and knocked out my pipe.”

Debates about epic and folklore allow us to see Haggard’s melodramatic style as the products of a specific historical conjuncture, and not just as “bad” in a way that would

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47 Lang in *The World’s Desire* made the mistake of telling the story in the third person; this mode is out of keeping with the logic of these neo-Homeric tales.

48 In the terms Peter Brooks uses, melodrama almost perfectly captures the sense of superficiality and providence Lang associated with magical thinking and Homer. Writes Brooks: “There is no ‘psychology’ in melodrama in this sense; the characters have no interior depth, there is no psychological conflict. It is delusive to seek an interior conflict, the ‘psychology of melodrama,’ because melodrama exteriorizes conflict and psychic structure, producing instead what we might call the ‘melodrama of psychology.’ What we have is a drama of pure psychic signs — called Father, Daughter, Protector, Persecutor, Judge, Duty, Obedience, Justice — that interest us through their clash, by the dramatic space created through their interplay, providing the means for their resolution. This space can resemble teh structure of mind, nearly in a Freudian sense, or a medium comparable to the dream text, but only because it works through the play of pure, exteriorized signs” (*Melodramatic Imagination* 1995, 35-36)
reproduce the judgment of the “Realism Wars” winning side. This historicizing process also works in reverse, allowing us to reframe our understanding James’s late style to see it less as the culmination of modernity and more as the product of a moment in which the content of the term “modernity” was being contested at the level of literary form as much as of politics itself. For in the high Jamesian style Howells associated with the future, “[w]e are as far as we could possibly be from the clarity of Homeric epic action” (Markovits 148).

In The Political Unconscious Jameson uses Conrad’s Lord Jim (1901) as a test case for illustrating how, in the late nineteenth century, a maturing commodity capitalism meant that a “vulgar” or mass-cultural romance mode existed in tension with a “high” or anticommercial aesthetic, one whose stylistic emphasis on subtle inwardness and psychology was a “will to style” that looked to transcend the marketplace (and the world) by retreating into an aestheticism of gesture.49 Indexing formal modes to phases of capitalist production, Jameson describes a newly “literary” reaction against an expanding commodity culture, one that his narrative understands to be operating evenly in a broadly Euro-American context. Thus French authors (Flaubert, Balzac), Polish expatriates (Conrad), and émigré Americans (Henry James) are representatives of a reaction to capitalism in its most general or worldwide operations (at least in the first world). Deidre Lynch has charted the rise of “deep” fictional character in the late eighteenth century, indexing the aesthetic innovations of modern character to changes in the culture and practice of finance at that pivotal moment, as England’s mercantile empire transformed itself into a credit economy. As economic historians like Arrighi have shown, a similar transition in the history of global capital cycles –

and the imperial systems they underwrote—was occurring in the 1880s, as a contracting British hegemony was being replaced, slowly, by the American empire that would by the turn of the century lay claim to status as the world’s new content for the term modernity. If the financial shifts characterizing the 1780s and 90s marked a shift in the fortunes of a British world system from its early phase to a later one, the post 1870s phase of financialization Arrighi and others have noted began moving the global balance of power across the Atlantic. What was at stake was which bourgeois empire, the old one or the new one, would lay claim to the mantle of global modernity. Particularizing Jameson’s vision of capitalism’s phases, Arrighi’s accounts for the transition by which a British world system gave way, beginning in the 1870s and 1880s, to a nascent American phase of accumulation. In this it can be said to segment and nationalize Jameson’s story about the rise of capitalism tout court. Following this motion allows my account to discern uneven developments in the rise-of-capitalism-story that provides the “untranscendable horizon” to Jameson’s powerful reading. Arrighi’s long-durational story in other words exposes uneven developments within Euro-American modernity, not just between it and its underdeveloped outside.

Accounts of the rise of the romance in Victorian studies such as those by Stephen Arata, Nicholas Daly, and Patrick Brantlinger treat this topic within the context of a locally British imperial decline, or at least, for these cultural accounts, in the context of the anxiety of such a decline. Symmetrically, accounts of the rise of “realism” in the United States during

\[\text{Arata forgoes any discussion of mediation by sidestepping the question of whether his cultural narrative has any particular relationship to what was happening in the world: “Finally,” he writes, “I should stress that this book does not attempt to determine whether British society was declining ‘in fact’ during this period…” (6). It seems difficult to know what it would mean for a “society” to decline, but Arrighi’s analysis of waves of accumulation allow us to see that in the 70s and 80s the British imperial cycle was factually in a phase of contraction, despite the only apparently paradoxical (but perfectly rational) expansionist policies this decline spurred.}\]
the same period tend to focus on the rise of a newly confident American bourgeois system, an “aesthetic of the common” (in Howells’s phrase) that attempted to lay claim, as Amy Kaplan writes of Howells, “to a shared human identity – ‘our common humanity’” (qtd Kaplan 21).  

(Jameson’s account could be said to transcend this distinction, treating American, British, and other authors as participants in the same historical contest over high and low.)  But by putting these two generic and political stories – one of decline, the other of rise— into the same global frame of analysis, my argument is that the disputes about literary depth between British and American literary men indexed rivalries between imperial orders with competing claims to the status of the modern, as England’s empire faced the possibility that a new power might now lay claim to “ethos.” These wars emerged as part of a sea-change in what we might call the location of imperial power on a global scale, as a nascent American phase of capital accumulation began to displace its British forbear at the advent of what one historian calls the newly “bipolar world” after 1885.

Framing the British emphasis on the literal as a return to an outdated, already-dead epic mode against the “adventure[s] of interiority” composed by the new American realists (Lukacs Theory 89) under Howells’ auspices, Lang and company imagined the romance as a mass cultural form that might reanimate a moment of unified totality emblematized by Homeric epic as much as by Anglo-Saxon myth. It was a way to revive a lapsed civilization. Noting this allows us to reconsider in broadly geopolitical terms the reticence to narrate

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51 See for example Amy Kaplan, The Social Construction of American Realism and Daniel Borus, Writing Realism: Howells, James, Norris in the Mass Market; whose third chapter cites the location of American publishing to suggest the new global center: it’s called “Fifth Avenue Takes Command.”

52 On the transfer of power during this period, see Arrighi, but also Paul Kennedy, The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000, especially 194-274. See also Steven Lobell, The Challenge of Hegemony: Grand Strategy, Trade, and Domestic Politics, chapter 3.
“events” in realist literature produced during the height of an imperial cycle. From this angle, Eliot’s characterological realism – on which James’ modeled his own— can be seen as the formal expression of a consolidating British hegemony as much as James can be seen to augur a new American cycle. Centering its discussion on Wordsworth, George Eliot, and James, once recent account has referred to the reticence about explicit action these authors share as “the crisis of action in nineteenth century English literature.” But James was an American, or was branded as such by Howells, and in the transitional moment of the 1880s, as the British world system to which George Eliot’s fiction gave voice was giving way to a newer one, what emerged were fierce debates about the proper location of “character.” It fell to Howells and James to lay claim to a new characterological ethos whose mental flights could span the globe but whose institutional headquarters followed Howells’ career from its place in Boston (until 1884) to New York. For their part, Lang and Haggard participated fully in the effort to recharge the vitality of a doomed empire: to shore up a fading power, they looked to romanticize “blue-painted Britons”; valorize their “Zulu” brethren at the other end of the world; and indulge in flights into atavism and violence rendered in prose that borrowed from a certain vision of Homer as much as from melodrama itself. This story adds important specificity to Jameson’s diagnosis of “the remarkable transformation of Henry James from a minor nineteenth century man of letters into the greatest American novelist of the 1950s” (Political 222). But as these debates unfolded, another, more reluctant party to these debates over action used “the realism wars” as an occasion for a more critical project. Stevenson’s effort was to reflect on how an archaic, long-dead violence – the open

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wars of peripheral romance—might, during a period of imperial decline, return from the ends of the earth to terrorize civilization itself.

4.6 “Coming home from … the end of the world”: Jekyll and Hyde

_The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde_ (1886) has been described as a crude morality play and a sophisticated psychological drama—at once a shilling shocker, an early detective novel, and a member (with _King Solomon’s Mines_) of the category Brantlinger calls the “imperial gothic.” It “is not,” observed the flummoxed _Academy_ in January 1886, an orthodox three-volume novel; it is not even a one-volume novel of ordinary type; it is simply a paper-covered story, belonging, so far as external appearance goes, to a class of literature familiarity with which has bred in the minds of most readers a certain measure of contempt. [But] [a]ppearances… are deceitful; and in this case they are very deceitful indeed… (Maixner, ed. 203).

Powerless to discern the true self hidden beneath _Jekyll and Hyde_’s “external appearance,” the reviewer recapitulates the main dynamic of the plot he analyzes, and its class language: in the final accounting, is this a respectable novel or a “contemptible” one, more like Jekyll or more like Hyde? The reader’s confusion can be read as a sign of the sophistication with which Stevenson’s novel anticipates and comments on the generic categories of its moment.

Written to satisfy a publisher’s demand for a shilling tale, and miming the conventions of that cheap and action-oriented form, _Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde_ is a high-octane story about “the perennial war” in one man’s mind (79) that is also a meditation on the literary forms in which its own story of urban violence is constrained to unfold. Criticism has long

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84 For a catalog of these approaches see the introduction and essays in William Veeder and Gordon Hirsch, eds. _Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde After One Hundred Years._
appreciated Stevenson’s ambivalent relationship to the changing conditions of readership that structured his late imperial moment, seeing this text as “an unconscious ‘allegory’ about the commercialization of literature” in the 1880s (Brantlinger and Boyle 266). Via Jameson I have already suggested how changing market conditions inflected the dispute between a “high” realism and a “low” romance, as that debate unfolded transatlantically between Lang and James’s early champion, Howells. Playing both sides of these debates at once, Stevenson cultivated close friendships with both Lang and James, though he rarely mentioned one in his correspondence with the other.55

In keeping with this double investment, Stevenson’s supposedly “unconscious” morality play negotiates its moment strategically, manipulating the generic antagonism between realism and romance to dramatize the place of political violence in a moment of transition between one bourgeois hegemony and another. On the one hand Jekyll and Hyde self-reflexively addresses itself to the genre dispute structuring its literary occasion, showing how the peripheral, action-oriented form of romance infects the metropolitan forms of an “interior” or psychological literary realism. On the other it charts the imperial implications of that dispute, dramatizing how a “peripheral” political form – the blunt force ruling at the empire’s edge— returns to structure urban life at the center of a dying global system. In

55 See the oddly parallel works, Henry James and Robert Louis Stevenson: A Record of Friendship, and “Dear Stevenson: Letters from Andrew Lang to Robert Louis Stevenson…,” both of which make a case for the shaping power of Lang’s friendship for their subject’s life and work. Referring to the “dichotomies in Stevenson’s life and work” (268), Brantlinger and Boyle observe that Stevenson’s work is structured by the precise sorts of dichotomies allegorized in Jekyll and Hyde; these are “the conflicts between bourgeois respectability and bohemianism, engineering and art, and Calvinism and free thought… As for his art, his letters and essays reveal his vacillations between ‘realism’ and ‘romance.’ In each case, Stevenson affirms the creative energy or vitality of what he simultaneously regards as the less serious or less moral half of the antithesis” (Brantlinger and Boyle 268). The comment psychologizes Stevenson’s work at the level of the author, but we can turn this observation around to see how it identifies the machinery of Jekyll and Hyde itself, as this novel about violence and order “internalizes” the dispute between genres at the level of its main character’s psychology.
works like *Treasure Island* (1883) and *Kidnapped* (1886), Stevenson had already perfected the mode Lang was theorizing as romance; those adventure tales privileged action over introspection, setting their stories of piracy and event in a milieu that self-consciously borrowed from the work of Stevenson and Lang’s fellow Scotsman, Sir Walter Scott. (Stevenson refused a request by Lang to collaborate on a novel with Haggard, citing Haggard’s sloppy prose style.) But Stevenson’s third novel is not about tropical resource acquisition (*Treasure Island*) or an escape from slavery that takes place beyond the reach of English power (*Kidnapped*). Nor is it, like Stevenson’s later South Seas tales such as *The Beach at Falesa* or “The Ebb-Tide,” a meditation on the status of law at the edges of an imperial network, at a moment (as in *Falesa*) when a colonial official named Wiltshire arrives to replace one named Vigours.

Nearly alone in Stevenson’s early oeuvre, *Jekyll and Hyde* returns from these romantic outskirts to frame its own description of a fading imperial vigor in what would seem a zone of “realism”—the metropolitan center. Stevenson’s urban work represents more than a simple change in scenery, though, a shift in focus from the country to the city or from the periphery to the core. Rather than policing the distinction between these zones, opposing a civilized realism to a peripheral romance as that distinction was propagated by Lang and Howells, *Jekyll and Hyde* reflects on their mutual imbrications, their presence within a single system: it shows how, in generic and political terms, far-flung dramas of war and action replay themselves in the center of civilization itself.

If Stevenson’s novel works as a symbolic code for showing how “exteriority – the law of nature and the principle of the preservation of one’s own life – is truly the innermost center of the political system” (Agamben *Homo Sacer* 36), then it is important that his novel
diagnoses this condition as a symptom of imperial decline. *Jekyll and Hyde*’s setting is a global capital gone to seed. The center of light and culture in which the novel takes shape is now marked by want and crime and the blight that attends material impoverishment. It’s characterized, we are told, by “a prolonged and sordid negligence” (3), where tramps, children, and knife-wielding schoolboys hide in doorways “and for close on a generation, no one had appeared to drive away these random visitors or repair their ravages” (3). This downward spiral may be most visible in the architecture of Jekyll’s home, a once-fine pile that is linked to Hyde’s even unseemlier house in both physical and allegorical terms: the residences of these dialectically linked men have separate entrances, but are “internally” connected.

Hyde’s “blistered and distained” door (3) is located on a street that has fallen from any original glory into a state of coy, feminized commodification — the sure sign, this misogynist text suggests, of something good turned bad. “[T]he inhabitants were all doing well, it seemed, and all emulously hoping to do better still, and laying out the surplus of their grains in coquetry; so that the shopfronts stood along that thoroughfare like rows of smiling saleswomen” (2-3). Gendered nearly to the point of self-parody, Hyde’s tawdry hideout is around the corner from Jekyll’s place, which sits in a square of ancient, handsome houses, now for the most part decayed from their high estate and let in flats and chambers to all sorts and conditions of men; map-engravers, architects, shady lawyers and the agents of obscure enterprises. (18)

To be sure, the list of men adduced above testifies to the imperial center’s new and shabby cosmopolitanism; it conjures a roll-call of the rising professions, a development Stephen
Arata called a preoccupation of Stevenson’s in these years and Nicholas Daly has linked to the romance as such.⁵⁶

But it does so by invoking a very specific set of arriviste professionals: map-makers, builders, law professionals, and capitalists. The sequence is significant, since it recapitulates in a quick gesture the stadial accounts of political modernization first theorized by Stevenson’s Scottish Enlightenment countrymen and romanticized “close on a generation ago” by Mill and Eliot. In those upward-tending narratives, the exploration of temporally prior locations would lead to settlement, which would lead to the establishment of legal order, which would in turn encourage a modern and modernizing trade: map makers become architects, who become lawyers who finally become “the agents of obscure enterprises.” Stevenson’s canny satire lists these imperial men in the order their services might be used by just such a civilizing operation. But by the late phase documented here, the empire’s civilizing political narrative has become perverted, turned upside down:

huddling in “flats and chambers,” these masculine cogs of modernization testify, now, to a moment in which liberal political theory’s status-to-contract storyline has failed. The men of Jekyll’s boulevard in other words complement the smiling saleswomen of Hyde’s alley, and in Stevenson’s doubled framework of metropolitan decay, a new downturn is visible in both its (formerly aristocratic) masculine and (formerly domestic) feminine guises.⁵⁷

Scenes like this have led critics to focus on the role of degeneration in Jekyll and Hyde, and on the part racial science played in cultural narratives of imperialism during the broadly

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⁵⁶ See Arata’s chapter in Fictions of Loss: “‘The sedulous ape’: Atavism, Professionalism, and Stevenson’s Jekyll and Hyde,” 33-53, and Nicholas Daly, Modernism, Romance, and the Fin de Siecle, especially 30-52.

⁵⁷ Nancy Armstrong has argued for the late-century romance as an adventure in the recovery of masculinity. See Fiction in the Age of Photography, 201-243.
Victorian period. (Brantlinger reads Stevenson’s work alongside novels from the 1860s.)

But even in more focused historical accounts, an emphasis on degeneration picks one of Stevenson’s metaphorical languages – a scientific one—and offers it as an explanatory key, domesticating this elaborately figurative text for comparison with other polemics of the fin de siècle like Max Nordau’s often-cited Degeneration (1892).58 Other readings focus on the class valences of Stevenson’s account, its apparent critique of how high forms have degenerated into low ones. An analysis centered on gender might similarly show how the book depicts an older, stronger masculinity that has become problematically feminized. But focusing on one of Stevenson’s discourses ignores the stacking of registers in Jekyll and Hyde, its tendency to add these and other quasi-allegorical levels on top of one another and encourage the figural interpenetration among them. All point toward decline. In one passage of simple description, for example, the novel uses metaphors of disease and drowning to suggest, finally, how the transfer of empires becomes a matter of meteorology:

The fog still slept on the wing above the drowned city, where the lamps glimmered like carbuncles; and through the muffle and smother of these fallen clouds, the procession of the town’s life was still rolling in through the great arteries with a sound as of a mighty wind. But the room was gay with firelight. In the bottle the acids were long ago resolved; the imperial dye was softened with time, as the colour grows richer in stained windows; and the glow of hot autumn afternoons on hillside vineyards, was ready to be set free and to disperse the fogs of London. (37)

London’s fog transforms multiple idioms into an interconnected web of tropes, an overlapping collection of possible metaphorical keys. Though the city is “still” pulsing with

58 Brantlinger argues that Jekyll’s chemicals release “the apelike barbarian – the savage or natural man—who lives beneath the civilized skin” (233); in this way his account reads the tale as a going native story; Hyde also, for Brantlinger, “fits the stereotype of the Irish hooligan” (233) at the time of the Fenian riots in the 1880s. So the idea is that this is about “otherness,” a racist fantasy about the empire. For Arata the situation is more complicated, but only slightly see Jekyll and Hyde “turns class discourses of atavism and criminality back on the bourgeoisie itself” (Arata 36). The point is that Stevenson’s novel invokes these different registers —race and class, respectively—but uses them as metaphors for telling a larger story about the decline of a long-term imperial project that was arguably ushered in with the romances of Stevenson’s literary hero, Walter Scott.
“arteries” and “life,” Stevenson’s first, biopolitical metaphor suggests that London’s once-healthy body has become scarred with “carbuncles.” But we have already switched registers more than once, moving from fog to sleep to calling the city “drowned” and “muffled”; inside the room other figures proliferate, as a bottle of wine allows a single object to be “resolved” like “acid,” “stained” like windows, and then “softened with time” like an “imperial dye” – or dying, we are glancingly made to suspect, like the empire itself, ready to be blown clean by a new breeze from abroad.\(^5^9\)

A change, in any case, impends: the metropolitan fog that for the Dickens of *Bleak House* (1853) could represent the triumph of an all-encompassing bureaucratic machine — the “smother[ing]” cloud of the mid-Victorian state — provides the occasion for a figural profusion all of whose separate metaphors underscore how English daily life is in a process of transformation. One trope contains a subset of others (some scientific) to allegorize a shift that is at bottom geopolitical: having already invoked an “imperial dye,” the passage’s final emphasis falls deliberately on the name of the capital city scalded by the “hot glow” coming in from abroad: it is *London’s* fog that waits to be “disperse[d].”

If Stevenson’s gift for pathetic fallacy enables him to rewrite the transfer of empires as a change in climate, his stylistic tendency to stack figures also allows him to show how the “resolv[ing]” “acid” of political decline etches into metropolitan life at a very specific moment. The book locates the moment of this decay precisely, dating its there-goes-the-neighborhood story from the mid-century, “close on a generation” ago. Law, liberty, and the promise of economic improvement have now revealed a grimy underside, and the stage

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\(^{59}\) The new air that will blow away this doomed fog comes from a place with “hillside vineyards”: this may not indicate California, which Stevenson visited in 1879, but it’s certainly not England.
of prosperity and supposedly peaceful interconnection I charted in chapter one has now lapsed into a shopworn degradation. If Stevenson’s novel positions Hyde as the parasitical symptom of this material geopolitical decline, and if we assume the novel’s present to be 1886, the year of its composition and publication, then when Dr. Lanyon says that “it is more than ten years since Henry Jekyll became too fanciful for me. He began to go wrong, wrong in mind…” (12), the physician dates Jekyll’s deterioration – and Hyde’s emergence—to 1876. Lanyon’s description of Jekyll’s flight into “fanc[y]” follows Arrighi and other historians in fixing the downward turn in England’s global fortunes in the mid-1870s.\(^6\)

Following work by earlier world systems historians, Arrighi argues that for England, “the late nineteenth century financial expansion” he dates to the mid-1870s marks “the closing phase of the third (British) systemic cycle of accumulation” (163). For Arrighi the industrial slump of that decade – and the speculative boom that rose in its place—signaled the beginning of the end for British global hegemony. This paradoxical marriage of geopolitical decline and speculative boom Arrighi documents becomes the stuff of dark satire in novels of the mid-1870s like Anthony Trollope’s *The Way We Live Now* (1875) and *The Prime Minister* (1876). George Eliot inflects the same symbolic content more positively, using a new (Jewish) internationalism and the decline of older wealth formations to tell a happier “cosmopolitan” story in *Daniel Deronda*, of 1876. As the moment of financial contraction these novels variously document extended into the 1880s, what emerged in its place was not just a new postnational culture, as *Daniel Deronda* and several of its recent

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\(^6\) Historian Paul Kennedy emphasizes a similar timeline to Arrighi’s, noting that “[a]fter 1870… the shifting balance of world forces was eroding British supremacy” (Kennedy 226).
interpreters would suggest, but war at the imperial peripheries. Decline meant violence, and the “climax of empire” many critics (following Hannah Arendt) have dated from the late century actually coincided with the period of British hegemony’s contraction, as geopolitical downturn brought with it an increasingly open, “muscular” attempts to maintain England’s position in the world. At least 35 separate military campaigns unfolded between 1875 and 1885, all at the edges of an embattled British world system; these included the Zulu wars, the first Boer War, and the Third Burma war, but also expeditions in India, Afghanistan, and the Sudan, among many other locations. (For a full list of these wars after 1865 see Table 2)

The earliest “signs of autumn” for England’s global hegemony (Arrighi 8) thus coincided with the period of the empire’s most explicitly militaristic moves, as open force became more and more necessary to manage England’s position within a world system now not simply unipolar.

Daly has focused on a similar timeline, drawing on pioneering critics in cultural studies like Stuart Hall to identify a “cultural shift” from 1880 onwards, a shift “in which the lineaments of a particularly modern culture come more sharply into focus” (11). But material data gathered by world systems historians helps explain why such a shift might take place, and enables theoretical conclusions about the dynamics of violence and power in the Victorian period that remain hidden in accounts that focus on a plaguedly vague “imperial culture” and equally unspecific modernity. As Arrighi and other historians have shown, the material hegemony of a high imperial state leads to something like globalization,

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62 Jed Esty’s recent work on the colonial bildungsroman follows Arendt’s chronology exactly, and is….
in which the violence maintaining peace is hidden, held in potentia, as a world power expands its networks of trade and informal influence without significant rival. A declining power, on the other hand, moves into a mode of “dominance,” using its still-active warmaking power in increasingly explicit bids to reassert its priority at the edges of a now-threatened system. What Rudyard Kipling called “the savage wars of peace” emerge, in other words, when the peace guaranteed by one hegemonic power is newly under threat. I adduce these material narratives of imperial downturn to begin making a claim about how astutely Stevenson grasped, and recoded, the curiously inverse political dynamic between violence and geopolitical power, whereby the fading of imperial power produces an apparently paradoxical increase in open violence. Stevenson’s supposedly timeless degeneration story is keyed to this specific moment in the itinerary of England’s power: in the very years Jekyll loses his grip on his spasmodic double, British material hegemony was slipping into dominance, and the violence that had always structured Victorian peace was becoming newly visible – emerging, like a dark double or an atavistic return, into the light of a formerly civilized life. Late in this late-Victorian novel, Dr. Lanyon particularizes the timing of the plot’s violent eruptions even more precisely, noting that the spasms Jekyll’s careful dosages once controlled began to spin out of control “nearly a year ago” (71). In 1885: the year of the events in King Solomon’s Mines I traced above; the year the Berlin Conference made

63 Arrighi borrows the terms “hegemony” and “dominance” from Antonio Gramsci to explain how an increasing reliance on war and blunt annexation (dominance) displaces the hegemony that comes from unquestioned, or “unipolar” power. Here his example is the United States, which shifted from hegemony at the moment of socialism’s fall (1990) to the dominance that he argues characterizes the moment of 2005 (see Hegemony Unravelling, parts 1 and 2, New Left Review 32-33 [2005]). “In all likelihood,” he writes, “the neo-conservative bid for global supremacy [as manifested in Iraq] will go down in history as one of the several ‘bubbles’ that punctuated the terminal crisis of US hegemony.” (Hegemony 2, unpagedinated).
explicit the imperial rivalries of a newly multilateral world system; and the very moment another of Stevenson’s narratives, *The Dynamiter* (1886), unfolds an urban adventure whose own colonial investments shed light on the global import of *Jekyll and Hyde*.

Written immediately before *Jekyll and Hyde*, *The Dynamiter* is also a London story, an interlocking narrative in which episodes of colonial romance, told by women, are contained within a larger, realistic framework in which three aristocratic men encounter a Fenian plot to blow up the capital. (Their target is a statue of Shakespeare.) This form allows Stevenson’s text to show how war in Ireland returns to threaten the cultural superstructure of the metropole, but its significance extends beyond the local topic of Fenianism to register an analysis of British imperialism *tout court*: “horrible was the society with which we warred,” says one Irish revolutionist, “but our own means were not less horrible” (412). Subtitled “The New Arabian Nights,” this novel’s two set pieces, told in flashbacks, announce their shift into a romance with section breaks, shifting to female speakers who tell “exotic” stories (“Arabian Nights”) that take place beyond what the novel suggests is the pale of civilized modernity — in a Mormon seraglio, in Utah, and in a Cuban Hoodoo camp. Bifurcated into exotic tales on the one hand, and realistic metropolitan scenes on the other, the book’s form seems to follow Lang and Howells in enforcing a generic distinction that is also, for Stevenson here, a geographical and political one: realism and romance, here and there, civilization and barbarism are differentiated in both modal and in geographical terms.

But in contrast to his fellow combatants in the “Realism Wars,” Stevenson establishes this interlocked set of structural binaries only in order to collapse it. As *The Dynamiter’s* metropolitan men compare notes at the end of the novel, the novel slyly shows
how the comfortable milieu of its tweedy mock-heroes (aristocrats all) buts up against the starker context of the empire’s endless wars:

Upon a table was a large-scale map of Egypt and the Soudan, and another of Tonkin, on which, by the aid of coloured pins, the progress of the different wars was being followed day by day. A light, refreshing odor of the most delicate tobacco hung upon the air; and a fire, not of foul coal, but of clear-flaming resinous billets, chattered upon silver dogs. (527)

While tobacco-puffing characters might abstract the empire’s wars into the movements of pins, Stevenson’s delicate satire reveals links between supposedly romantic “action” and the real violence it masks. The “progress” here is of “wars.” With grim irony, that is, Stevenson registers the connection between imperial war and what one of the novel’s aristocrats calls “the strategic centre of the universe … in the midst of the chief mass of people, and within earshot of the most continuous chink of money on the surface of the globe” (Dynamiter 325). Moments like this find Stevenson coordinating the “adventures” or small wars at the edges of the world with the imperial center that profits from them, doing so in ways that go further to inflect this critique through the lens of genre.

Here romance is something other than wish fulfillment: it is the mode proper to war and accumulation, not “a kind of sugar candy sham epic,” as Stevenson wrote in a letter, but a literary form that helps expose “the smell and look” and “human grin” of material fact (Letters IV, 100-101). In the prototypical romance Treasure Island, too, Jim Hawkins shows the material glint piercing romance conventions when he wonders, about the treasure, “[h]ow many [lives] it had cost in the amassing, what blood and sorrow, what good ships

65 The reference is to Frye’s famous definition of romance, in Anatomy of Criticism. In a similar vein Stevenson’s South Seas romances were understood to demolish from the inside the conventions of romance-making. The first sentence of “The Elbh Tide” reads this way: “Throughout the island world of the Pacific, scattered men of many European races and from almost every grade of society carry activity and disseminate disease” (123). Replied one contemporary reviewer: “This is not the Stevenson we love” (qtd introduction xxix).
scuttled on the deep, what brave men walking the plank blindfold, what shot of cannon, what shame and lies and cruelty[?]” (196, chapter 33). Absent in Haggard’s rewriting, such gestures reveal Stevenson’s awareness of what we might call the political logic of romance, where far-flung zones of accumulation read as the other to metropolitan prosperity and law, the violent underside to political theory’s vision of civilization. For Stevenson, the fanciful zone of romance is less a space of Haggard-esque fantasy and more like what Achille Mbembe has called, adapting Carl Schmitt and Agamben, the “terror formation” of the colony (24), that zone beyond the reach of metropolitan law where, as Schmitt writes, “anything could happen as long as it was held to be de facto necessary according to circumstances” (Nomos of the Earth, qtd Agamben Sacer 37) If Schmitt’s political diagnosis sounds like an overview of the romance form (a form in which “anything could happen”), for Mbembe, the colony is a spatially realized state of nature, a zone of naked power beyond the scope of the social contract. From the perspective of liberal political theory, Mbembe says, colonies are similar to the frontiers. They are inhabited by ‘savages.’ The colonies are not organized in a state form and have not created a human world. […] As such, the colonies are the location par excellence where the controls and guarantees of the judicial order can be suspended – the zone where the violence of the state of exception is deemed to operate in service of ‘civilization.’ (Necropolitics 24) We have already seen this juxtaposition of a metropolitan law and a colonial exception at work materially in the context of Mill’s Jamaica and Haggard’s Africa. What I want to emphasize about Mbembe’s account here, in the context of Stephenson’s literary rewriting of it, is how the so-called romantic zones outside of modern law are temporally coded but spatially-realized. They are physically demarcated states of exception where “modern” law holds no sway, and where the rule of pure decision works as a governing logic, even, as we
saw in the grim irony of *King Solomon’s Mines*, when the colonial state’s extralegal war is waged in service of something called “law.” What I want to suggest, in other words, is that Stevenson’s work from the mid 1880s, like M bare’s account from the age of Bush, labors to show what we could call the underside of romance, connecting the far-flung “adventures” with the real violence animating them, and linking this, in turn, with the modern urban centers positioned to receive the newly-necessary “treasure” this violence produces.

As in *Treasure Island*, where life on the island contrasts with the lawful space of the tavern, *The Dynamiter* disaggregates its generic imperial functions into separate geographical locations, with Cuba and Utah as the zones of (female) romance, and the London map room that of (male) realism. The urban, psychological framework of *Jekyll and Hyde* demands that the spatial relationship between realism and romance charted in these earlier works is transformed into another kind of metaphorical link. In a famous passage, Utterson speculates that Hyde is a kind of retributive return, an echo of past trauma — “the ghost of some old sin, the cancer of some concealed disgrace: punishment coming, *pede clando*, years after memory has forgotten and self-love condoned the fault” (20). Hyde’s otherness from Jekyll – and his connection to him—is figured in terms that are not geographical but temporal, a manipulation of time and space that puts him in dialogue with the chronotopic logic of Victorian liberal theory. As Dipesh Chakrabarty and others have argued, the developmental schemes of theorists like Mill and Maine strategically transformed peripheral space into prior time: thus Mill’s India, like the African zones explored by Haggard’s adventurers, were understood to be not just geographically distant but temporally prior.66

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66 See Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, and Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*. 342
According to this ideology of modernity, zones that are denied coevalness are relegated to the cultural stage of barbarism and (more important for my points here) understood to be governed by allegedly archaic, pre-contractual political forms Henry Maine called status.

We can go further to extend my points about romance from above to note that such locations are characterized, in generic terms, by what Bakhtin calls the adventure chronotope: as Haggard’s and Stevenson’s texts equally suggest, the space-time of the imperial periphery is populated by “flat” characters, colorful incident, and the providential plotting of melodramatic romance. It is a place where, as Schmitt said, “anything [can] happen as long as it [is] held to be de facto necessary according to circumstances.” In keeping with this temporal-political primitivism, Lang theorized that “modern romances of adventure” were “savage survivals” on the level of literature, relics of now-outdated political structures (qtd Daly 18). But where Haggard followed Lang to replicate this chronotopic political logic, figuring Twala’s African state as the very image of an archaic, anti-English despotism, Stevenson’s account manipulates these terms to show the uncanny feedback loop of liberal theory’s temporal-political coding, the way the supposedly premodern comes back to haunt, indeed to terrorize and to secretly animate, modern civilization itself. With a sharp critical eye, that is, Jekyll and Hyde documents how a supposedly barbaric rule of force

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67 Bakhtin’s adventure chronotope maps with telling precision onto the terms I have developed to this point, romance and melodrama. For Bakhtin the adventure chronotope is marked by flat characters; the development that comes from “roundness” is foreign to it: “This is the most abstract of all chronotopes and the most static. In such a chronotope the world and the individual are finished items, absolutely immobile. In it there is not potential for evolution, for growth, for change. As a result of the action described in the novel, nothing in its world is destroyed, remade, changed, or created anew. What we get is a mere affirmation of the identity between what had been at the beginning and what is at the end. Adventure time leaves no trace.” (110).
“com[es] home,” as Mr. Enfield says of his own late-night travels through London, “from some place at the end of the world” (4).

4.7 “I was radically both”: Violence / Law / History

_Jekyll and Hyde’s_ politically inflected return, its dark and traumatic double, arrives, of course, in the person of Edward Hyde. With “a savage laugh” and “extraordinary quickness” (17) this “hardly human” and “troglodytic” man (18) is all physicality, nothing but action; he is the submerged but now visible force that represents the darker half of the Doctor’s well-meaning philanthropy, the underside of his efforts, throughout his career, at “doing what they call good” (7). In contrast to this liberal sensibility, Hyde’s blunt decisiveness is represented as a function of atavism and savagery, a detail that has shaped racializing cultural readings of this novel since the 1980s. But as Jekyll later specifies, this savage man is also a young man, a vibrant man – not a racialized savage but a kind of asynchronic hero, a Homeric man of action caught out of time. “In my second character,” Jekyll says, “my faculties seemed sharpened to a point and my spirits more tensely elastic” (96). The comment aptly rephrases Lukacs’ theory of the epic sensibility and Lang’s invocation of revitalizing Homeric poetry. I will return to the rejuvenating power of this romance mode, its ability to “sharpen” and “tense” slack “spirits.” Here I want to suggest

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88 Bakhtin’s well-known definition of the chronotope runs as follows: “In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope” (84). Stevenson found himself drawn to the possibilities such interleaving of registers produced, writing of the Pacific, for example, that it “is a strange place; the nineteenth century only exists there in spots; all round, it is a no man’s land of the ages, a stir-about of epochs and races, barbarisms and civilizations, virtues and crimes” (Letters III, 261).
how the pre-modern Hyde refigures the temporal-political oppositions of Victorian theory. In Hyde’s first appearance, he surprises his witnesses (and readers) with quick, unthinking force. When Hyde murders Carew, the “singular ferocity” of the crime (27) is rendered in terms of non-cognitive, reflexive or properly animalistic decision:

[All of a sudden he broke out in a great flame of anger, stamping with his foot, brandishing the cane, and carrying on (as the maid described) like a madman. The old gentleman took a step back, with the air of one very surprised and a trifle hurt; and at that Mr. Hyde broke out of all bounds and clubbed him to the earth. And next moment, with ape-like fury, he was trampling his victim under foot and hailing down a storm of blows, under which the bones were audibly shattered and the body jumped upon the roadway. At the horror of these sights and sounds, the maid fainted. (27)

The transition between sentences accomplished with Stevenson’s “And next moment” signals the lack of pause, the absence of cognition, that characterizes this animalistic “fury.” Compared to a flame, an ape, a madman, and a storm, Hyde is represented as a natural man “out of all bounds,” in sharp distinction from the fainting maids and surprised gentlemen who are native, apparently, to the civilized capital he rampages. “It wasn’t a man,” says Enfield, “it was like some damned Juggernaut” (4). Enfield uses a word popularized by British accounts of Indian myth to frame Hyde’s blind violence as a kind of peripheral return, a perfect inversion of civility that registers with special irony when Enfield, unable to shake his high bourgeois form, calls this murderous animal by the title “Mr.” But if Hyde is abominable to the civilized residents of this city, a foreign presence come back home (“I had taken a loathing to my gentleman at first sight,” Enfield reports [5]), he is also a man

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69 The OED shows “juggernaut” as derived from Hindu myth. “A title of Kisha, the eighth avatar of Vishu; spec., the uncouth idol of this deity at Pr in Orissa, annually dragged in procession on an enormous car, under the wheels of which many devotees are said to have formerly thrown themselves to be crushed.” I thank Philip Steer for pointing this and other points out to me as I prepared this chapter.
whose capacity for quick, decisive action confers a kind of stirring energy – even, as Jekyll later specifies, “profit” (86).

Whether it comes from the past or from the periphery, from a remote space or a far-off time, Hyde’s dramatic but profitable violence is figured in terms appropriate to the romance mode – action, singularity of purpose, “savagery.” In the 1880s these traits were associated with a single generic mode, since “[r]omance,” as Daly writes, ventriloquizing Lang, “is the raw meat that appeals to the wild man within. [Romance was] variously described by Lang as […] ‘the savage within us,’ [and] ‘the old barbarian [concealed] under our clothes’” (Daly 18). In Stevenson’s text Hyde is romance mode in physical form, an apelike but rejuvenating figure antithetical to modern life. On murdering the aristocratic Carew, that metaphoric stand-in for civilization itself, Hyde explains that his “brutish, physical” spree is triggered by “the civilities of my unhappy victim” (92). By indulging in this dip into the chronotope of adventure, Jekyll also removes himself from the “bounds” of modern civil life: “I had voluntarily stripped myself,” he reports, “of all those balancing instincts” that govern every member of polite society (92, 93). Given human form in Hyde, this peripheral and savage mode arrives pede clando, on limping foot, triggered by some sin or disgrace—some inhumanity—committed elsewhere. While Hyde is associated with this barbaric or prior outside, his scientific host works as a kind of metonym for modern ethical realism itself, blessed with “every mark of capacity and kindness” before his degenerative condition sets in (22). (“Jekyll was now my city of refuge,” Hyde says when explaining his wish to get back to civilized persona [92]). In this way Jekyll and Hyde, like Stevenson’s other texts of the 1880s, works to coordinate the outside of civilization’s “bounds” with their center, meditating on the blowback effect of excesses committed in distant places or times.
To this point I’ve looked to describe this novel’s effort to separate, and then to connect, two distinct chronotopic zones or modes, one peripheral (romance) and one metropolitan (realism). Charting this double-movement will allow us to inflect in generic terms what one critic has called “the densely political discourse with which Jekyll describes the self” (Thomas 243). Earlier I called Hyde the “perfect inversion” of metropolitan civility, but this “abnormal and misbegotten” (73) man’s relationship to the bounds of legal modernity is more complex than simple negation. In his lectures to students at Cornell and Wellesley in the 1950s, Vladimir Nabokov used diagrams to illustrate the dialectical interinvolvement of “dark” and “light” in this text, resorting to a visual model to frame the “phenomenon” of Stevenson’s achievement (180) in ways that further the political reading I want to follow here. Composed and revised between 1941 and 1958, Nabokov’s lecture employs a moral vocabulary to show how Stevenson dramatizes evil’s emergence out of good, how “Hyde is mingled with him, within him” (182), or how, in the terms I want to develop in closing, violence emerges through law in conditions of imperial decline. “The situation,” Nabokov says, “can be represented visually” (183):

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70 Sick with his dark symptoms, Jekyll demands Lanyon’s help via letter: “I want you to postpone all other engagements for to-night,” he writes, “ay, even if you were summoned to the bedside of an emperor” (68). The comment sets up an implicit equation between Jekyll and “an emperor”; it also foregrounds the quasi-allegorical mode in which Stevenson engages here, as he raises multiple “meanings” for his story only to leave them unresolved.
indicate the larger amount of good that Jekyll possesses.

3. There are really three personalities—Jekyll, Hyde, and a third, the
Jekyll residue when Hyde takes over.

The situation may be represented visually.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Henry Jekyll (large)</th>
<th>Edward Hyde (small)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

But if you look closely you see that within this big, luminous, pleasantly
tweedy Jekyll there are scattered rudiments of evil.

When the magic drug starts to work, a dark concentration of this evil
begins forming

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Nabokov explains that although the two men take shape as separate “personalities,” the tinges of “evil” that already exist in Jekyll—the “ghosts” of his “dark sins”—mean that the emergence of Hyde is not separate at all, but rather the crystallization or radicalization of an already existing tendency toward violence (Nabokov’s second sketch). After gathering strength during the process of drug-taking, this crystallized essence of a preexisting crime (what Nabokov calls “a dark concentration of evil”) is spatially abjected, cast off into the separate physical zone of Hyde’s body (sketches three and four). But as Nabokov points out in his final representation, Jekyll’s imperfect transformation means that in the final phase, as at the beginning, the apparently total “evil” of Hyde remains mixed with or haunted by what Nabokov calls a “residue” of the “good” Jekyll: what the novel finally shows, and what Nabokov’s own sketches allow us to see, is the increasingly “parasitical” relationship.
(Nabokov 182) between a violent, apelike, decisive, “really damnable man” (7) and “one of your fellows who do what they call good” (7): the philanthropist and the murderer, the trouner of children and defender of the values of modern civilization are one man. “[T]his, too,” says Jekyll, “was myself” (83).

Nabokov’s 1950s account follows cues laid by Stevenson to be read his novel as a timeless allegory, or what Nabokov calls “a fable” (180), a parable about the eternal dynamics between dark and light, good and evil. This “eternalizing” reading neatly translates the Victorian moral assumptions Stevenson critiques into the idiom of the early Cold War ones Nabokov upholds. A similarly metaphysical analysis of this book about chemicals and handwriting might describe Hyde in terms of Derrida’s pharmakon, that poison-cure that comes from Plato’s Phaedrus but designates the deconstructive capacity of language that is understood to transcend temporal or political context.71 I want to return to Jekyll and Hyde’s susceptibility to metaphysical readings, how it tempts readers into ahistorical analyses even as it insists on the historicity of its own events (as we saw with its obsession with dating). Here we can see how Nabokov’s visual translation helps illuminate the way in which Stevenson’s late imperial intervention narrates several moments or phases in a complex relationship between Jekyll and his parasitical host or alter ego. Though the bare violence Hyde embodies initially seems distinct from its nonviolent, polite host, as the story progresses it is revealed, first, to be one with him; finally, as Nabokov’s second sketch explains, the dark natural man emerges as the secret truth of Jekyll, the doctor’s own implicit evil radicalized and made explicit — “projected or ejected,” Nabokov says, into a new, spatially realized

71 See Derrida’s account in “Plato’s Pharmacy,” in Dissemination, 67-186.
region—what we could call a “zone of anomic” (Agamben State 23). “[T]hough [I was] so profound a double-dealer,” Jekyll says, “I was in no sense a hypocrite; both sides of me were in dead earnest; I was no more myself when I laid aside restraint and plunged in shame, than when I labored, in the eye of day, at the furtherance of knowledge or the relief of sorrow or suffering” (79).

Psychoanalytic readings utterly antithetical to Nabokov have followed the categories he invokes here, coding Hyde as the irrepressible id, the dark return of an even darker desire. Jerrold E. Hogle, for example, uses the theories of Julia Kristeva to read the novel as an allegory of abjection. Anachronistic though they may be, psychoanalytic accounts like Hogle’s have the benefit of diagnosing the mechanical nature of the dynamic of violence and restraint Stevenson narrates here, his efforts to encode this process as a structural one.

Nabokov’s diagrams derive from the system of representing set relationships invented by eighteenth century mathematician Leonhard Euler, but recall the famous pictures in other structuralist accounts of the Cold War, like Levi Strauss’s Tristes Tropiques of 1955. Taking on board Nabokov’s spatial rendering of the Jekyll and Hyde dynamic, we can do even better justice to Stevenson’s historical sensibility, and to his larger project of documenting a fading empire, by emphasizing this relationship’s properly political character. Referring to

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72 Stevenson’s presentation in other words shows how the bare violence Hyde represents “is neither external nor internal to” its law abiding host, “and the problem of defining it concerns precisely a threshold, or a zone of indifference, where inside and outside do not exclude each other but rather blur with each other.” The quotation is Agamben’s description of what he calls the state of exception (State 23), or the bare force that secretly animates any regime of law and becomes visible in the moment when law is suspended. I return to the oddly precise parallels between these two late imperial allegories below.

73 On Euler diagrams and their relationship to set theory see the article “Diagrams” in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/diagrams/, accessed 3/21/2009. Venn diagrams, devised in the 1880s by British logician John Venn, differ from Euler circles in that the earlier kind only use round forms, “simple closed curves,” while Venn diagrams can employ any variety of interlocking forms. Venn later explained that his work in logic had been inspired by reading John Stuart Mill’s System of Logic.
“the densely political discourse with which Jekyll describes the self,” Ronald Thomas has called attention to the recurrent political terminology — empire, polity, usurpation, deposition, and power— that structures Jekyll’s self-reporting in his final deposition (243). Quickly decisive, an enemy of deliberation, Hyde is figured as the premodern political force animating Jekyll’s “pleasantly tweedy” (as Nabokov says, 183) or properly civilized modernity. As a figure of a decision-based political power, guided by what Hobbes calls the “Passions” and “Desires” proper to a state of nature (Leviathan 187), Hyde acts with decisive force shocking to those who witness it.

We have seen in earlier chapters how Victorian liberal theory understood modern sovereignty to be disaggregated and plural: thus Walter Bagehot called the mid-Victorian period a great “Age of Discussion” and John Stuart Mill asserted that the best, most modern form of rule was one based on deliberation and consent, where “the sovereignty, or supreme controlling power in the last resort, is vested in the entire aggregate of the community” (CW XIX, 403). In a trenchant critique of liberalism’s celebration of pluralistic restraint, Schmitt has argued that this ideology of discussion attempts to paper over or repress sovereignty’s power of “decision,” ignoring the role of action in political life. (Schmitt cites Mill to mock “the ‘neutral’ power of the nineteenth century, ‘which reigned but did not rule’” (Political Theology 1). Invoking a dichotomy that will seem familiar to readers of Jekyll and Hyde, Schmitt writes that “[t]he essence of liberalism is negotiation, a cautious half-measure, in the hope that the definitive dispute, the decisive bloody battle, can be transformed into a parliamentary debate and permit the decision to be suspended in an everlasting discussion” (63). Schmitt’s analysis highlights the political coding of Stevenson’s novel. If caution and a consensus-based rationalism animate the more civilized characters in Stevenson’s London
(they are doctors, lawyers, scientists), Hyde emerges as what Schmitt would call a figure of decision, “more express and single,” as Jekyll says, “than the imperfect and divided countenance I had been hitherto accustomed to call mine” (83-4). Express and single, this atavistic man is a political throwback, welcoming rather than avoiding “the definitive dispute, the decisive bloody battle”; Hyde’s quick action and lack of deliberation – along with his violence—mark him in political terms as the secret essence of a fading Victorian imperial liberalism, emerging uncontrollably into the light of day. Stripped of “balancing instincts” (93), he is a sovereign figure, fearing only death (101), demanding allegiance and repaying disagreement with pure violence. “We have all orders to obey him,” says Poole, the servant (20).

As a sovereign figure who is also coded as the personification of the state of nature, “out of all bounds,” Hyde exemplifies Hobbes’ observation that “the state of nature survives in the person of the sovereign, who is the only one to preserve its natural [injunction] of *ius contra omnes,*” the law of all against all (Agamben *Sacer* 35). This theoretical substructure shows how Stevenson’s urban novel tells not just the story of how one generic mode inhabits another –how romance infects and animates the urban forms of realism. It also explains how this generic language work as one figural code, with others, for articulating the way in which a *political* logic proper to the imperial periphery returns to animate the zone of metropolitan law. As Mbembe argued with reference to the work of Schmitt and Arendt, the colony is a spatially realized state of nature, a zone of pure force outside of, or prior to, the “modern” social contract — a place where, as Jekyll punningly indicates, “the bonds of obligation” find their “solution.” Hyde in other words crystallizes both the structuring chonotopic logic of romance – where, as we saw with reference to Haggard, action and
violence unfold in crazy, neon-tinted bursts—and the political logic of the empire’s state of nature, returned pede clando from the ends of the earth or the dark past of barbarism. Later, when Jekyll explains that he “was slowly losing hold of my original and better self, and becoming slowly incorporated with my second and worse” (90), the doctor repeats another structuring dichotomy of Victorian liberal theory, Matthew Arnold’s distinction between best and worst selves, to show how an apish, anarchic, despotic barbarism has come from elsewhere to usurp the modern liberal man. In the 1867 Culture and Anarchy, Arnold invokes Hobbes to provide a proleptic plot summary of Stevenson’s political morality tale. As our worst selves, he writes, “we are separate, personal, at war; we are only safe from one another’s tyranny when no one has any power; and this safety, in its turn, cannot save us from anarchy” (Arnold 99). When Jekyll rewrites his doubled psychological state in Arnold’s terms, he positions his internal drama in the long history of liberal theory, and his descent into the animalistic decisionism of Hyde becomes legible as a lapse into the state of nature itself.

The novel is careful to stress both the horror and the appeal of this outdated mode of being, that unnameable “something seizing, surprising, and revolting” about it (73). “[W]here Jekyll perhaps might have succumbed,” the doctor says, “Hyde rose to the importance of the moment” (96). Singular rather than divided, at one with itself rather than transcendentally homeless, Hyde’s capacity for action is what marks him as temporally prior

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74 In the guise of our best selves, Arnold wrote in 1867 we are fit members of a modern state, “unite, impersonal, at harmony. We are in no peril from giving authority to this, because it is the truest friend we all of us can have” (99). But when we lapse into the thrall of our darker, worse selves, we spin outside of law, Arnold says, outside of political modernity, and into a zone of what Jekyll likens to the absolute indulgence of self, “his every act and thought centered on self; drinking pleasure with bestial avidity from any degree of torture to another; relentless like a man of stone” (87). In Leviathan Hobbes calls this state of total self-indulgence living in a state of nature, while in Culture and Anarchy Arnold calls it “doing as one likes.”
to the deliberative doctor, and also more attractive. As Lang suggested of the romance mode, this unchecked violence is literally rejuvenating:

There was something indescribably strange in my sensations, something indescribably new and, from its very novelty, incredibly sweet. I felt younger, lighter, happier in body; within I was conscious of a heady recklessness, a current of disordered sensual images running like a millrace in my fancy, a solution of the bonds of obligation, an unknown but not an innocent freedom of the soul. I knew myself, at the first breath of this new life, to be more wicked, sold a slave to my original evil; and the thought, in that moment, braced and delighted me like wine. I stretched out my hands, exulting in the freshness of these sensations; and in the act, I was suddenly aware that I had lost in stature. (82)

Recounting how his “solution from the bonds of obligation,” returned him to an “original evil,” in this often-cited passage Jekyll uses the language of political theories of civil society to describe his newfound freedom, a fact that further underscores the political nature of the tale of violent emergence Stevenson frames here. Turned into the animalistic Hyde, Jekyll is removed from civil society itself, transformed into a resident of political theory’s most violent, pre-legal state where, as Hobbes writes, “man is a wolf to other man”: he is transformed into man in the state of nature. Simultaneously liberated and degraded, freed and enslaved to an “original evil,” Hyde’s decisionist violence is two things at once: it is pure, “therapeutic,” but also corrosive, atavistic, antithetical to the modern rule of law. It performs all the darkly rejuvenating functions Lang ascribed to the epic romance.

Responding to the configurations of law and violence at the end of another imperial cycle, the *longue durée* of world power that succeeded Britain’s and that Arrighi calls the American cycle of global leadership, Giorgio Agamben has attempted to explain how the imperatives of state violence developed in the periphery return to structure the political forms of the metropolitan center. In *Homo Sacer* (1995, trans. 1998), Agamben adapts theoretical frameworks from Schmitt, Foucault, and Arendt, using the figure of the twentieth
century concentration camp as a figure to show how the “exceptional” or baldly violent procedures of appropriate to the colonial periphery sit at the heart of the metropolitan legal order, as a form of rule “linked to a colonial war is extended to an entire civil population” (Agamben Sacer 166). For Agamben the camp is the embodiment of this mechanism, since it represents a spatially articulated state of nature, an extrajuridical location within the heart of a society supposedly ruled by law: the state of exception literalized in the camp is, in the words of one reader, “the constitutive outside held inside, an inclusive exclusion” (Chare 44). Like Stevenson’s account, Homo Sacer can be read as an effort to transform historical dynamics into metaphysical ones, as it recodes specific processes and contexts (such as the emergence of the Nazi regime from Weimar) as a matter of ontological mechanics, a rewriting that is most apparent, perhaps, in the easy interchange his work effects between sources in Greek and Roman law and those seeking to explain later historical-political conjunctures (Weimar, Guantanamo Bay). Thus Solon, Aristotle, and Pindar sit alongside Benjamin, Schmitt, and Strauss, and all can be adduced as explicators of a single juridico-metaphysical problem reaching from the ancient world to the present day.

But even as it looks to transcend context, Agamben’s metaphysical allegory is grounded in a specific historical conjuncture, a tension that may be crystallized most vividly in 2005’s explicitly topical State of Exception, which cites “the USA Patriot Act issued by the U.S. Senate on October 26, 2001” (3) but calls the state of exception “a Paradigm of Government.” With this tension between metaphysics and history in mind, we can return to my point about Nabokov’s moral vocabulary, which as I pointed out is borrowed from one figurative level in Stevenson’s novel. On the one hand, Jekyll and Hyde is a morality play for undergraduates, a text about a dark person and a light person that tells a story that is
about the “primitive duality of man” (79); on the other hand, this metaphysical drama takes place in a specifically-dated late imperial metropolis, a London wrenched by the empire’s post-1876 imperial contraction. Agamben’s quasi-metaphysical allegory of 1995 wavers on a similar threshold, and through the timeless language of metaphysics we are asked to read an account that takes as its topic the complicated interinvolvement of force and law in a late phase of America’s global empire. If this is the case then Agamben’s notoriously “poetic” presentation style becomes legible as a strategy as much as a symptom, since like Stevenson’s diffusely figurative text, Agamben’s story mixes and stacks metaphors in an effort to capture the complex relationship it describes between force and law:

What happened and is still happening before our eyes is that the ‘juridically empty’ space of the state of exception … has transgressed its spatiotemporal boundaries and now, overflowing outside them, is starting to coincide with the normal order… (State of Exception 38)

The temporal logic of the passage – “what happened and is still happening” — reveals the tense shuttling between history and metaphysics, while the spatial figures proliferating here give us a picture of containers and flow, as the liquid energy of force “overflow[s]” its boundaries. If this account reminds us of the emergence of Hyde from “within” his civilized host, his emergence as a parasite or dark double or secret truth that ultimately exceeds its lawful “container,” then this only confirms the point about the figuration of late imperial violence I want to make here in closing. In chapter one, I showed how John Stuart Mill exploited the ambiguity of the term “state” when he wrote of the modern “state of liberty,” using that term to strategically obscure whether the political conjuncture he

75 Or again, in another series of figures for spatial coincidence: “The state of nature and the state of exception are nothing but two sides of a single topological process in which what was presupposed as external (the state of nature) now reappears, as in a Mobius strip or a Leyden jar, in the inside (as state of exception), and the sovereign power is the very impossibility of distinguishing between outside and inside, nature and exception, physis and nomos” (State of Exception 37).
described, “liberty,” was a condition of being, a state, or was instead a physically realized place, England in 1859. Agamben’s account of the “state of exception” exploits a similar ambiguity, finally working to blur the question of whether this state is a place or a stage, a historically datable reality or a metaphysical concept transcending time and place.

My interest is not in parsing the nuances of this by-now well-known narrative of how the exception becomes the rule; instead I want to call attention to the figural language it uses to explain this relation. Like Nabokov explaining Stevenson to his Cornell undergraduates, Agamben finds that the best language for explaining his argument’s structure is not language at all:
Nabokov used crosshatched circles in his own Euler diagram to demonstrate the separate moments of Jekyll and Hyde’s interpenetration, as Jekyll’s civilized tweediness first became infected, then “cast off” its parasitical “evil.” In a similar way, what Agamben attempts to show here is how, in what he calls a state of exception, the state of nature begins as “distinct” from the law, then moves “inside” the law, and then, finally, becomes one with it, crosshatching itself within it in a state of “absolute indistinction.” With Yugoslavia as his example, Agamben explains below his diagram that the state of exception is “coming to
light” (like Hyde or “bloody masses”) to reclaim its status as the rule, as “the permanent
structure of juridico-political de-localization and dis-location.” As outsiders become insides
and insides become outsiders, what emerges is that the dynamic Agamben diagrams here, by
which a lawless state of nature contaminates, secretly structures and finally takes over the forms of
civilization itself, nearly perfectly replicates the elaborately figurative mechanisms we have
traced in *Jekyll and Hyde*.

But rather than seeing Agamben’s 1998 story as a way of decoding Stevenson’s 1886
plot – adducing it as the “theory” to illuminate Stevenson’s “literature”— I want to stress
how both tales work as theory, and both work as literature. Both narratives, that is, emerge
at specific historical instances, in specific moments of global imperial cycles, and work as
attempts to create a figural language adequate to explaining the interrelationship of violence
and law at times when one world system’s global power is slipping from hegemony into
dominance. We can develop this observation even further, to suggest that the dramatic
popularity of Stevenson’s *fin de siècle* bestseller might help us appreciate why Agamben’s
critical model has emerged, at the *fin* of the American *siècle*, as the preferred critical idiom for
narrating what Arrighi understands as the final phase of U.S. hegemony, its trendiest
theoretical emplotment. Just as Stevenson’s dialectical story provides a particularly vivid way
of narrating what was in 1886 a very current crisis, so too does *Homo Sacer* look to provide a
figurative system that might grapple critically with the dynamics of an imperial system
shuffling toward downturn. Both stories perform complex recoding operations that tell us
something about the resurgence of violence that attends geopolitical decline. But they also
tell us about the codes or generic languages available to create such stories. By insisting on
the double function of Stevenson and Agamben’s late imperial allegories, on their ability to
function both as critical projects (“theory”) and as figural historical documents (“literature”), we can in closing this dissertation adduce another, methodological reading of Jekyll’s famous admission of his double-identity, of his ability to operate in two registers at once: “of the two that contended in the field of my consciousness, even if I could rightly be said to be either, it was only because I was radically both” (79-80).
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Biography

Nathan K Hensley was born in 1976 in Fresno, California, to Jeff Hensley and Paula Solomon. He graduated from San Joaquin Memorial High School in Fresno (1995), then earned a B.A. in English from Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York (1999). He received an M.A. in English from the University of Notre Dame (2004), and completed his doctorate in English at Duke University in 2009, with the support, in his final year, of a Mellon/ACLS Dissertation Completion Fellowship. His areas of specialization are Victorian literature, empire, and critical theory; his work has or will appear in *Victorian Studies*, *the minnesota review*, and *The Politics of Gender in Anthony Trollope’s Novels* (Ashgate, 2009).