FINANCIAL TIMES: FINANCE CAPITALISM, LONDON AND THE BRITISH MODERNIST NOVEL, 1870-1940

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“Financial Times: Finance Capitalism, London, and the Modernist Novel, 1880-1940,” reconsiders the British modernist novel with respect to the phase of finance capitalism that Giovanni Arrighi argues characterized the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Britain. During this period, the British economy became increasingly reliant on financial modes of accumulation—what Paul Krugman, in a recent op-ed describing the financialization of the U.S. economy, calls “the business of moving money around, of slicing, dicing and repackaging financial claims”—and an increased flow of liquid resources were channeled into and through the London-anchored international banking networks. London was, in one scholar’s words, “the prop for the British economy as a whole.” Thus, I argue that London became central to British national identity in a way it had not been before, and a novelistic tradition that had grown up under the hegemony of the feudal estate—the social structure upon which the manufacturing economy of the nineteenth century had been based—found itself having to adapt to the uniquely and complexly heterogeneous social and geographic spaces of London.
Before turning to the modernist novel’s new-found interest in London, Chapter 1 lays the foundation for that investigation by tracing the history of “character” in the British novel. If, as many critics argue, the eighteenth-century British novel taught us how to read and attach value to character, I look at how the eighteenth-century novel renders character legible through a complex of domestic reading conventions that construct the *place* we call home. Then, via a reading of Wilkie Collins’s *The Moonstone* (1868), I argue that the idea of home begins to unravel. In an effort to shore up the epistemology of character, Collins’s novel intensifies the logic of home; but in so doing destabilizes it and renders it incapable of serving as a source of certainty. To conclude Chapter 1 I turn to Arthur Conan Doyle’s first Sherlock Holmes novel, *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), and argue that Holmes represents a re-emergence of the figure of the quixote, who was so important to the burgeoning hegemony of domestic discourse in the eighteenth-century. But unlike his predecessors, Holme’s quixotism wields narrative authority and instead of discrediting a prior mode of literary representation begins to imagine a new one, a new mode of literary representation that disassociates questions of character from personhood and like later modernist novels conceives of character as a problem of textuality that is no longer referential.

Tracing the history of character in fiction is important to understanding how and why modernist novels became so interested in the city during the financial phase of Britain’s global hegemony. Chapter 3 examines how London causes problem for the epistemology of character in Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*. As an ostensibly provincial novelTess of the D’Urbervilles is an important test case for my claim that the financialization of the British economy was accompanied by a cultural turn
toward London. I argue that Tess is in fact a London novel, as it depicts a provincial Wessex infused with the logic of London. Indeed, the novel’s central conflict, Angel’s reaction to Tess’s confession, arises from the misapplication of pastoral hermeneutics to a world, the novel suggests, is best made sense of through an urban poetics. In subsequent chapters I look at how London provides a model for novelists trying to rethink character as a textuality that encodes and decodes the manufacturing of value under finance capitalism. With its reading of H. G. Wells’s Tono-Bungay (1909), Chapter 4 anchors my dissertation because Wells’s novel offers the most explicit and thorough articulation of the phenomena I observe piecemeal in the other novels. It registers a full-blown awareness of the challenges the shift to financial modes of accumulation and the consequent turn toward London pose for the novel and the model of subjectivity it posits. As I demonstrate, through the novel’s financial mogul, Teddy Ponderevo, Tono-Bungay locates epistemological isomorphisms between finance capitalism, urban space, an emergent form of subjectivity, and a new novelistic poetics.

If Wells’s novel finds congruence between subjectivity, finance capital, and London’s complex spatial regime, that congruence does not inform the novel’s structure as it does in the final two novels I examine. In Chapter 4, I argue that the formal innovations of Virginia Woolf’s The Waves ground a new mode of subjectivity resembling what I call the speculating subject. Reading Woolf’s novel alongside the economic theory of her fellow Bloomsberry John Maynard Keynes reveals parallels between Keynes’s theory of financial speculation and The Waves’s vision of collective subjectivity. “Financial Times” concludes with a reading of Jean Rhys’s Voyage in the Dark that locates a sparseness at the heart of fiancé capitalism, which is mirrored in
Rhys’s heroine, Anna Morgan. If Teddy Ponderevo’s behavior and speech patterns are repeated in *Tono-Bungay’s* representation of London and his financial empire, and if Woolf’s formal experimentation imagines a speculating subject whose value emerges as a process of textuality rather than character, Anna Morgan is the opposite side of the same coin. She similarly encodes a world saturated by the logic of London and finance capitalism.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION: FINANCE CAPITALISM, LONDON, AND THE BRITISH MODERNIST NOVEL

To speak against London is no longer fashionable. The Earth as an artistic cult has had its day, and the literature of the near future will probably ignore the country and seek inspiration from the town. Of Pan and the elemental forces, the public has heard a little too much—they seem Victorian, while London is Georgian—and those who care for the earth with sincerity may wait long ere the pendulum swings back to her again. –E. M. Forster, *Howards End* (76).

In *The Country and City*, Raymond Williams notes the peculiar slowness with which British literature came to appreciate the urban: “even after society was predominantly urban its literature, for a generation, was still predominantly rural” (2).

The generation for whom British literature, and the novel in particular, came to embrace London is that of E. M. Forster’s—and this dissertation seeks to understand why. This is not to say that there were not novels about London or set in London prior to Forster’s generation; rather, this dissertation claims, as in my epigraph, that at this time the novel found itself obliged to “seek inspiration” from London. In his study, *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800-1900*, Franco Moretti lays the groundwork for understanding how space might shape literary production and vice versa. Space, he contends, influences every aspect of novelistic production—genre, form, style, plot, and so on—and in turn literature produces space. If the British novel grew up within the hegemony of a provincial England whose dominant spatial form was the feudal estate, then for novelists of Forster’s generation, London became a problem. They were faced with the task of adapting a mode of representation informed by the spatial configuration of the feudal estate to the very different spatial regime of London.

The links between the “origins” of the English novel, the “rise” of capitalist modes of accumulation, and the increasing influence of the bourgeoisie have been well
established, and my claim that the novel developed within a hegemony of feudal social
relations does not conflict with that consensus. After all, those social relations were the
conditions within which British capitalism developed. As Perry Anderson explains, the
early English bourgeoisie are unique in European capitalist history for having come out
of the ranks of the landed aristocracy. While the outcome of the English Civil War was
“a typically bourgeois rationalization of state and economy, and its major direct
beneficiary was a true bourgeoisie” the war was not between a rising bourgeoisie and a
struggling aristocracy as was the French Revolution. Instead, it pitted against each
other the interests of two factions of the land-owning classes, investment-oriented
landowners and rentier landowners. While the war did shatter “the juridical and
constitutional obstacles to rationalized capitalist development,” it nevertheless left
“almost the entire social structure intact” (28-9). The narrator of H. G. Wells’s Tono-
Bungay (1909) sums up the legacy of this process: “all that is modern and different has
come in as a thing intruded or as a gloss upon this predominant formula” of the feudal
estate (14). Despite its narrator’s observation, however, in Wells’s novel, the influence
of the estate system over social relations is in its final throes as the novel seeks to
imagine the “new order” that replaces it (9). One of the central claims of this dissertation
is that the novel’s new interest in London in the period between 1870 and 1940 signaled
a final renunciation of the foundational claims the feudal estate had long made upon the
English social structure. And far from contradicting those arguments that link the origins
of the English novel to the rise of capitalism and the bourgeoisie, this dissertation
follows in their footsteps and looks to changes in the dominant mode of accumulation to
understand the novel’s turn to London, a turn which brought about a revolution in
representation equivalent to that witnessed by the eighteenth century with the birth of the English novel.

If Forster’s *Howards End* (1910) is sensitive to the fashionable turn toward London, it also registers these economic and social changes. Forster is reluctantly fascinated by the city as he concedes to the dictates of fashion and in *Howards End* calls upon London to do essential work as a figuration of the continual “flux” that characterizes modern life in the novel: “the city herself, emblematic of [the Schlegels’] lives, rose and fell in a continual flux, while her shallows washed more widely against the hills of Surry and over the fields of Hertfordshire. This famous building had arisen, that was doomed. Today Whitehall had been transformed: it would be the turn of Regent Street tomorrow” (76). While the novel makes note of many of the other things we tend to associate with the excesses of the modern city—traffic, crowds, noise, pollution, and so on— it is the rapid rise and fall of urban architecture to which the novel most interestingly attributes modern “flux.” The Schlegels, the narrator tells us, were able to swim “gracefully” on “the grey tides” of London’s flux because of their fortunate place in the city: their home, an “older house,” was shielded from the “beating” waves of the city by “a lofty promontory” of newly built, luxury flats, so that their house seemed to reside in a kind of “estuary, whose waters flowed in from the invisible sea, and ebbed into a profound silence” (4). But the Schlegels are scheduled to lose their “backwater” in the city when their lease expires, something that occurs midway through the novel. Their lease will not be renewed because “values have risen too enormously,” creating incentive for the landlord to demolish the house and build luxury flats like those across the street (58). Had Forster focused his novel’s disapprobation of the city on the more
clichéd images of urban hustle and bustle alluded to above, the London of *Howards End* would not have been distinguishable from a London of any other time period, or indeed from any other city. The novel would have read as a facile denigration of urban space in general. But the novel’s attribution of urban, and by extension modern, flux to the rising value of urban real estate places the London of *Howards End* squarely in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. For this London is at the center of what Giovanni Arrighi, in his history of global capitalism, *The Long Twentieth Century*, identifies as the “autumn” phase of Britain’s hegemony.

The history of capitalism has often been understood as a linear one, which progresses through a number of different stages, beginning with primitive accumulation and culminating in the late twentieth and early twenty-first-century form of capitalism variously referred to as “global,” “finance,” “monopoly,” or “late” capitalism. By contrast, the compelling history of capitalism detailed by Giovanni Arrighi in *The Long Twentieth Century* is not one of steady growth and expansion. Rather, it is made up of four distinct historical cycles of capitalist accumulation, each overseen by a different hegemonic block: the Genoese cycle of the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries, the Dutch cycle of the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, the British cycle of the eighteenth through nineteenth centuries, and the U.S. cycle of the twentieth century. Although each cycle is dominated by a different hegemonic block and effects an overall expansion of global capital, each cycle is structurally consistent with its predecessor, passing through two phases that correspond to Marx’s classic formula of capital accumulation, $MCM^\prime$. Each cycle alternates between an MC phase of material expansion in which capital accumulates primarily (though not exclusively) from the production of commodities and
the CM’ (or perhaps more accurately MM’) phase of financial expansion in which the dominant mode of capital accumulation within the governing block takes place through financial deals, such as “borrowing, lending, and speculating” (Arrighi, “Financial Expansions” 154).

*Howards End* bears witness to this second, financial phase of the British hegemony in its censure of the “nomadic civilization” (186) created by real estate speculation, one of many means of financial accumulation that tend to drive the economy of the ruling governmental block during phases of financial accumulation.¹ Others include insurance, credit, investments in stocks and bonds, speculation in futures markets, as well as a whole host of nebulous transactions, such as derivative trading, hedging, and the bundling of loans, that have been invented in the most recent, U.S.-centered phase of financial accumulation (which Arrighi argues began around 1970) and await definition and refinement as government officials, academics, and pundits try to sift through the economic turmoil of the first decade of the twenty-first century. In this regard, the timing of this dissertation is auspicious to say the least. I write this introduction as world governmental and financial leaders maneuver to forestall a devastating economic collapse caused in large part by questionable financial transactions that grew out of real estate speculation. In the past several months, billions of dollars in capital have simply disappeared from the global economy as financial institution after financial institution has had to write off bad debt or close up shop altogether. But what Arrighi’s history of capitalism shows us is that while the scale of this financial crisis may be unique to the twenty-first century, this type of crisis is not.
In his essay “Culture and Finance Capital,” Fredric Jameson praises Arrighi’s history of capitalism for enabling us to come to grips with the mysterious functioning of the U.S. economy since 1970. Jameson poses the problem in this way:

after the disappearance (or brutal downsizing) of heavy industry, the only thing that seemed to keep [the late 20th-century American economy] going (besides the two prodigious American industries of food and entertainment) was the stock market. How was this possible, and where did the money keep coming from? (138)

According to Arrighi’s model, capitalism’s defining feature is not a particular mode of production but a mode of accumulation characterized by a flexibility that allows capital to move quickly from unprofitable to profitable investments. It is during phases of financial expansion that capital is at its most flexible because it is no longer tied down in the fixed capital, raw materials, and labor that make up commodity production. Thus, returning to Howards End for a moment, insofar as the rampant real estate speculation unmoors the Schlegels and sets them adrift in the sea of London, creating what the novel deplores as a “civilization of luggage” (107), the novel allegorically registers the unmooring of global capital that characterizes every CM’ phase of accumulation, and in Arrighi’s view, makes capitalism what it is, capable of exponential expansion on a global scale.

Going against the grain of popular understanding, Arrighi draws a distinction between capitalism and the market (which can function perfectly fine without capitalism), and he limits purely capitalist practices to what he calls “the ‘non-specialized’ top layer in the hierarchy of the world of trade” (8). Following Fernand Braudel, Arrighi divides the economy into three tiers: the lowest consists of “material life;” the middle tier houses the “market economy” where “supply, demand, and prices”
are linked; and the top tier is the “anti-market,” better known as capitalism itself (10).

Thus, Arrighi argues,

the really important [historical] transition that needs to be elucidated is not that from feudalism to capitalism but from scattered to concentrated capitalist power. And the most important aspect of this much neglected transition is the unique fusion of state and capital, which was realized nowhere more favorably for capitalism than in Europe. (11)

Although aspects of capitalist practices were widespread prior to the fourteenth century, when the first cycle of accumulation began, Arrighi does not credit those practices as being truly capitalist. Rather, the history of capitalism began when those localized mini-capitalist practices came to be coordinated into a large-scale, globally hegemonic system by joining forces with the institution of the nation-state.

Arrighi shows how precisely capitalism and the nation-state are mutually implicated in each other’s existence. Nation-states compete for control over mobile global capital in order to fund warfare and other power-seeking endeavors. This allows capital to dictate the terms according to which it will help a nation-state acquire power, so the state that provides the most favorable conditions for capital attracts the most mobile capital (12-13). Once a nation-state acquires a large quantity of capital within its jurisdiction, the concentration of power within that nation-state enables it to control and regulate inter-state competition. Contrary to popular outcries against the contaminating effects of state regulation of trade, Arrighi, following Adam Smith, contends that “large-scale profits can be maintained for any length of time only through restrictive practices buttressed by state power, which constrain and disrupt the ‘natural’ operation of the market economy” (20). In other words, state regulation, not the free market, allows capital to accumulate on a grand scale: in a truly free market, competition would consume capital’s profits, and it is only with the kind of market protection a powerful
nation-state provides that capital can afford to make the huge and therefore risky investments in the built environment (factories, distribution circuits, retail outlets, etc.) required by phases of material expansion. For this reason Arrighi deems the capitalist layer of his tripartite schema the “anti-market”: capitalism’s relationship to the nation-state protects it from the hazards of the market.

It is during phases of financial accumulation, when large amounts of capital circulate outside of production, that competition for interstate capital intensifies. Since a “capitalist agency, by definition, is primarily if not exclusively concerned with the endless expansion of its stock of money,” it necessarily seeks the most profitable investment for its capital; when the rate of return on investments in material production falls below the rate of return on financial investments, capital will be invested in the latter (Arrighi 229). And significantly, the most profitable investments may not fall within the jurisdiction of the hegemonic block, so during phases of financial accumulation, the hegemonic block witnesses an exodus of capital from its direct governmental jurisdiction. Arrighi locates the beginning of the CM’ phase of the British hegemony around the global depression of 1873-1896, an economic crisis that he attributes to a dramatic increase in competition that drove down profits (163-4). Thus, “the second half of the nineteenth century was characterized . . . by great waves of capital exports out of Britain” as the increased competition caused by material expansion led the British capitalist class to look elsewhere for financial gain (165). After 1900, “more than half of all British savings were invested abroad” (Hobsbawm, The Age of Empire 75). Certainly the Schlegels of Forster’s novel participate in this trend. Their aunt repeatedly chides them for investing in “Foreign Things” rather than domestic ones. Of course, the Schlegels’ foreign
investments end up doing “ Admirably,” while their domestic investments “ declined with . . . steady dignity” (8).

Importantly for my argument, the vast majority of these overseas transactions went through London (Delany 289). While manufacturing has always been a part of the London economy, London has never been a manufacturing center, and the industrial revolution of the nineteenth-century phase of material expansion built up several centers of capital accumulation throughout Great Britain: “By 1800, mining and textile factories were creating independent growth-centers in the Midlands and the North, in South Wales and Scotland” (Porter 136). It would be going too far to claim, as some have done, that London was reduced to a marginal role in this manufacturing economy, but these independent economic centers did weaken its economic hegemony by attracting capital and labor that may have otherwise gone into the city. 2 As historians of London have noted, the provincial manufacturing centers did not even rely on money from London, as their profits were great enough to finance their own expansions (Sheppard 233, Porter 202). But as manufacturing began to falter in the 1870s, and what had always been a trade deficit became even larger, London’s role as the capital of global finance became increasingly important as a facilitator of international investments:

the City of London was, more than ever, the switchboard for the world’s international business transactions, so that its commercial and financial services alone earned almost enough to make up for the large deficit in its balance of commodity trade . . . [And] the enormous weight of Britain’s foreign investments and her merchant shipping further reinforced the centrality of the country in a world economy which turned on London and was based on the power sterling. (Hobsbawm 51).

In Geoffrey Ingham’s words, “The City’s commercial capitalism gradually became a prop for the economy as a whole” (97).
In the late nineteenth century, London “became financier to the world” as foreign
governments, including France, Russia, Prussia, Greece, and a number of South
American republics, as well as international joint-stock companies, turned to London for
loans. In addition, more than forty British banks built branches overseas so that many
overseas transactions that had no other link to the British economy were negotiated by
those banks (Porter 203). If Britain had lost its dominance as a manufacturing power, it
nevertheless maintained its capitalist hegemony by serving as an entrepôt for
international money. However, in greasing the wheels of global finance, Britain was
greasing the wheels of its own demise as the dominant global capitalist power.
Increasingly, nation-states tried to attract all of this free-floating, investment seeking
capital to their respective borders, with Germany and the United States taking the lead
as attractive destinations for global capital. As one contemporary observer noted,

The old world-empire of Free Trade had long since tottered to its fall. American Trusts and German Kartellen, controlling their own home
markets, were dumping their products in non-protected countries; and
though the influence of this was hardly yet felt in England, the very
existence of such tactics bred a secret terror. Wherever the English
industrialist looked, he could not escape the presence of America and
Germany. (Dangerfield 212)

Because phases of financial accumulation are marked by an exodus of capital
from the hegemonic block’s jurisdiction, Arrighi describes this phase as the “autumn” of
the hegemonic block’s power. It oversees a transition of power to a new hegemonic
block. During the fifty or so years leading up to World War I, the United States was the
largest beneficiary of British overseas investments, so Britain had a substantial claim on
U. S. foreign debt. However, World War I upended this claim, and Britain found itself
selling off its U. S. assets at bargain prices and then eventually borrowing from the U. S.
to pay for war. But World War I did not mark what Arrighi calls the “terminal crisis” of
British hegemony; instead, it ushered in a period of joint rule (a characteristic, Arrighi argues, that is part of every phase of financial accumulation) in which both countries’ currencies functioned as reserve currencies and therefore wielded vast influence over world markets. This joint rule lasted until the allies’ victory in World War II, which effected a full transition to U. S. hegemony (Arrighi 270-2). So while Germany posed some threat to British hegemony, it was the specter of the United States that truly haunted the British during this period. Indeed, in a compelling essay arguing that the late twentieth-century blockbuster film Notting Hill is still trying to diffuse concerns about Britain’s “reduced status” in its relations with the U.S., Phillip E. Wegner observes in British literature a long twentieth century of anxiety about U.S. dominance (310). At the turn of the century Joseph Conrad’s Nostromo anticipates the day when the U.S. will be “giving the word for everything” (qtd. in Wegner 315), and after World War II Britain is “reduced to a dominion of the United States” in George Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four (316).

The competition between Germany and the United States casts its shadow on Howards End in the primary opposition that drives the novel’s narrative. The Schlegel siblings are born of a German father, while Henry Wilcox is, at one point, compared to the American president Teddy Roosevelt. Interestingly, the Germany that spawns the Schlegels is not the aggressively expansionist, economic power house of Kaiser Wilhelm II: The Schlegels were not ‘Germans of the dreadful sort.’ Their father had belonged to a type that was more prominent in Germany fifty years ago than now. He was not the aggressive German, so dear to the English journalist, nor the domestic German, so dear to the English wit. If one classed him at all, it would be as the countryman of Hegel and Kant, as the idealist, inclined to be dreamy, whose Imperialism was the Imperialism of the air . . . Germany a commercial
By associating the Schegels’ with the tradition of German idealism rather than with the expansionist nation-state—the image of Germany the passage suggests is more fashionable—Forster neutralizes the political and economic threat that Germany poses to Britain’s global hegemony and actually succeeds in reconciling the Schlegels’s German ancestry with core British values. The Schlegels’ German idealism translates in the novel as English liberalism. In this way, the novel recasts the opposition between the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes as one between English liberalism and American-style capitalism.

While the “backbone” of nineteenth-century British industrial capitalism was the family firm, a business model that combined the roles of ownership and management (Arrighi 242), American corporations divided these tasks, creating a system of capitalism based on what Thorstein Veblen terms “absentee ownership.” In Hobsbawm’s words, “Juridical persons (i.e. large business organizations or corporations), owned by shareholders employing hired managers and executives, began to replace real persons and their families owning and managing their own enterprises” (Hobsbawm 10). Such a business model provides limited liability to its owners and internalizes “activities and transactions previously carried out by separate business units” (Arrighi 239). Where the British hegemony was built on “a world-wide network of small- and medium-sized firms,” the American system “brought the variegated groups of firms under the control of a small group of monopolistic corporations” (Pollin 113). The great innovation of the American corporation was to
internalize transaction costs, which provided a more efficient process for accumulating capital through material production. The internalization of transaction costs is one way in which capitalism, to invoke Marx’s famous phrase, seeks to “annihilate space by time” (Grundrisse 538-9) and create, in Arrighi’s jargon, “economies of speed” (239). Such a business model allowed American companies to go international much more easily, so that “By 1902 Europeans were already speaking of an ‘American invasion’” (241). While the proliferation of U. S.-owned corporations would certainly have been one manifestation of the specter of the U.S. in Britain, Howards End registers a different concern: the infiltration of the American model of business into British capitalism.

If the family firm had been the backbone of the nineteenth-century British economy, liberalism had been the backbone of nineteenth-century British politics. Since the first Reform Bill of 1832, British liberalism, with its fusion of economic and constitutional liberalism (free trade combined with civil liberties and social reform), had been the reigning political ideology, and the Liberal Party had dominated in the House of Commons. Just prior to the writing of Howards End, in 1905 the Liberal Party was swept into power, after a brief period of Conservative rule, by a landslide majority. But ironically, as George Dangerfield writes, it was precisely this landslide that “doomed” the Liberal Party and began the process that Dangerfield describes in his book, The Strange Death of Liberal England: “But the Liberal Party which came back to Westminster with an overwhelming majority was already doomed. It was like an army protected at all points except for one vital position on its flank. With the election of fifty-three Labour representatives, the death of Liberalism was pronounced; it was no longer the Left” (10).
The election of Labour was initially a boon to the Liberals, who, with its help, had enough support to repeal the House of Lords’ veto power, an act that terminated the virtually unchecked political power of the landed feudal interests and contributed to the final renunciation of the aristocracy’s cultural and political (if not economic) hegemony that I will argue modernist London novels register. The Parliament Act of 1911 empowered the much more democratic House of Commons: but in so doing, it also empowered the Labour Party. So after World War I, when suffrage was extended to all males over 21 (and some women over 30), the Labour Party was the natural fit for the newly enfranchised working-class voters. In the Victorian era, the political dynamics of the House of Commons revolved around the conflicting interests of rentier landowners who favored tariffs on agricultural imports and a bourgeois capitalist class (albeit frequently landed as well) who favored free markets that would keep down the cost of consumer goods and, by extension, the cost of labor. With the enfranchisement of the working class, the Liberal Party became the party of the middle class. While the Liberal party maintained its influence during the inter-war period by forming coalitions with either the Conservatives or Labour—for example, a Liberal/Labour alliance in 1923 gave Labour its first government—Liberals never again controlled the government (John Davis 141-165).

In 1946, Forster categorized himself as belonging to “the fag end of Victorian liberalism” (“The Challenge” 322), and critics agree that the Schlegels, members of the rentier middle class who take pride in their reformist principles and attentiveness to the conditions of the lower classes, also fit under this label—indeed, as Daniel Born explains, “Through Margaret and Helen, Forster succeeded in delineating the most
comprehensive picture of liberal guilt in this century” (141). But where Henry Wilcox fits within the liberal/conservative paradigm of late-Victorian England is less clear. Alistair M. Duckworth suggests that Henry, because of his ownership role in the West African Rubber Company, would have sympathized with the Imperialist faction of the Liberal party, headed up by Joseph Chamberlain, who called for the institution of tariffs on imports produced outside of the Empire (15). This may be true, but the aspect of Henry’s character that the novel places the most emphasis on is his inability to “connect” per the epigraphic imperative, “Only connect . . .”; and the ability to connect, the novel suggests, is an essential characteristic of Victorian liberalism.

Critical discussions of the epigraph abound, with some scholars identifying the novel’s ostensibly “harmonious” final scene as the realization of the epigraph’s imperative. Others are quick to remind readers that the final scene’s harmony relies on the violently discordant death of Leonard Bast; in these readings the novel fails to meet its own ideal. If the novel finds it difficult to offer a positive image of what it means by connection (a failure captured by the ellipses of the epigraph?), it does offer up a negative one. Henry Wilcox epitomizes disconnection: he fails to connect to place as he moves from house to house; he embraces the motorcar which disconnects people from each other and their immediate environment; he is unable to recognize his role in Leonard Bast’s downfall; and he is unable to see the similarities between his own infidelity and Helen’s affair. But most importantly with respect to my argument, Henry’s position as an “absentee owner” by its very nature, conflicts with the novel’s ethic of connection. Midway through the novel, Margaret visits Henry’s office:

She was glad to go there, for Henry had implied his business rather than described it, and the formlessness and vagueness that one associates with
Africa had hitherto brooded over the main sources of his wealth. Not that a visit to the office cleared things up. There was just the ordinary surface scum of ledgers and polished counters and brass bars that began and stopped for no possible reason, of electric-light globes glowing in triplets, of little rabbit-hutches faced with glass or wire, of little rabbits. And even when she penetrated to the inner depths, she found only the ordinary table and Turkey carpet, and though the map over the fireplace did depict a helping of West Africa, it was a very ordinary map. . . . She might have been at the Porphyrian, or Dempster’s Bank, or her own wine-merchant’s. Everything seems alike in these days. (140)

Veblin characterizes the limited liability company in this way: “The corporation (or ‘company,’ in English usage) is a business concern, not an industrial unit . . . Hence it is necessarily impersonal in all its contact and dealings” (82). Margaret is disappointed by her trip to the office because the office does not reflect (or connect to) what Henry does or the source of his wealth (of course the novel remains conveniently unconcerned about the source of the Schlegel’s wealth). Put another way, his office is “impersonal.” He could administer any kind of business from its interior. If Henry’s deceased first wife, Ruth Wilcox, demonstrates connection to place—she “seemed to belong . . . to the house [Howards End], and to the tree that overshadowed it” (14)—Henry’s office is just another example of his failure in this regard.

Henry Wilcox’s American-style capitalism puts him at odds with one of the core ethics of liberalism as it is presented in the novel through Margaret’s character, and it is this aspect of Victorian liberalism that is lost with the recalibration of political parties after the first world war. Economic liberalism found a home in the realigned Conservative Party, and by the last quarter of the century came to be known as Thatcherism. However, social liberalism, the great mediator of liberal guilt, had no place in a political environment in which the lower classes were enfranchised. If Henry represents the specter of American-style capitalism invading England and threatening
the values that underwrite England’s dominant political institution, the ending of the novel effectively quarantines that threat. Devastated by his son’s incarceration for manslaughter, Henry is reduced to an invalid in the final pages of the novel, dependent on the care of Margaret and no longer offended by the presence of Helen and her illegitimate son, the son of Leonard Bast, to whom Henry leaves Howards End. If the authors of the ominously titled *The American Invaders* (1902) and *Made in Germany* (1897) chastise the British public for ignoring the challenges to its global economic dominance—in the words of the first, “We slept while our rivals went ahead. We have been too content to rest satisfied with the great accomplishments of past generations” (x); and in the words of the second, “The industrial glory of England is departing, and England does not know it” (1)—Forster’s novel would certainly elicit their scorn for translating the economic and political threat that Germany and the U.S. represented into a domestic drama that turns to nostalgia for resolution.

Critics have long recognized the nostalgic impulses of Forster’s novels and of *Howards End* in particular, and they have typically characterized this nostalgia as a “desire to preserve a space apart from the encroaching modernity of London, a space where time might unfold differently, away from the commercial” (Outka 331, my italics). As an expression of longing for the past, nostalgia appears at first glance to be a category of time: but having the emphasis on space in this characterization of Forster’s nostalgia is for good reason. Stephen Bernstein notes that the etymological origin for the word nostalgia is “the sickness for home,” an origin which calls attention to “spatial dislocation rather than temporal.” The past that is recalled by nostalgia, then, “is not just a time, but a place, to be recovered” and Forster’s novel looks to Howards End as the
place in which the lost, authentic England can be rediscovered (40-1). If Henry’s American-style capitalism enforces disconnection by speeding up the annihilation of space by time, Forster seeks to reverse that paradigm and looks toward space, or rather place, to annihilate time. Spatial theorists tend to characterize the distinction between place and space as the difference between being and becoming. Where space is said to be produced through social struggle, place is characterized by an intrinsic conservatism and nostalgia. For example, David Harvey speaks of place or being as a “spatialization of time” and of space or becoming as an “annihilation of space by time” (Condition of Postmodernity 273). Forster’s novel sets up a dichotomy in which London expresses space and Howards End expresses place, and there is no doubt that the novel prefers the latter and associates it, rather than London, with “authentic” England.

Drawing on his observations about time and space, Harvey reads cultural modernism as a reaction to what he calls “time-space compression”—a fundamental characteristic of capitalism in which “spatial barriers” are overcome and the “pace of life” increases to such a degree “that the world sometimes seems to collapse inward upon us” (240). As examples, Harvey points to changes in perceptions of time and space arising from the rapid technological developments that Stephen Kern identifies in The Culture of Time and Space: 1880–1918: wireless communication and the proliferation of automobiles, changes in social organization such as the institution of universal standard time, and theoretical innovations like Einstein’s theory of relativity. But to Kern’s technologically deterministic social analysis, Harvey adds the observation that by the late nineteenth century, Europe—and to a large degree the world—had become so
economically interdependent that local identity was undercut by dependence on the economic welfare of distant parts of the globe. Harvey concludes that modernism both “celebrat[ed] universality and the collapse of spatial barriers” while “it also explored new meanings for space and place in ways that tacitly reinforced local identity” (273). In his essay “Imperialism and Modernism,” Jameson draws a similar connection between modernism and the diffused space of imperialism: the spatial regime of empire manifests as a “meaning-loss” in modernist literature. In Howards End, Jameson contends, the place-holder for this meaning-loss is the figure of London, a figure that undermines the “ethos of place”— “the twin paths of intimate human relations and of an immediate landscape” —by obliterating landscape (The Modernist Papers 161).

While Howards End acknowledges the novelistic turn toward London and bears witness to the political, social, and economic conditions that are part of the same historical process, it nevertheless refuses the city. At the beginning of this introduction, I suggested that the novel had grown up within the hegemony of provincial England, and this dissertation looks at how writers adapt the modernist novel to an age in which the dominance of finance capitalism has made London the unchallenged economic and cultural center of the England. Thus, this dissertation contributes to the ongoing discussion about the crisis of representation that conventionally serves as a defining feature of modernism, and Harvey’s attribution of the crisis to “time-space compression” provides a useful touchstone for my discussion. It is precisely this time-space compression that Forster refuses to confront when he turns away from London, where, his novel suggests, place is denied and space is produced and reproduced via rampant real estate speculation.
Poststructuralist theorists of urbanization would tend to agree with David Harvey when he says in *The Urbanization of Capital*, “The study of urbanization is not the study of a legal, political entity or of a physical artifact” (xvi). For these theorists, the city is not a thing that exists to be observed, studied, and represented, but a process whose articulations are negotiated along the fault lines of social, political, cultural, and economic antagonisms. If all space is a perpetual becoming, urban space stands out in spatial theory as a peculiar space that draws attention to or sets into relief its “becomingness.” For example, Michel de Certeau’s city emerges out of the street-level navigations of ordinary people and may best be described as “A migrational, or metaphorical, city,” not “the clear text of the planned and readable city” (93). For de Certeau, the city is not an object of representation—indeed, he chafes at the use of the phrase “the city,” comparing it to a proper name that creates a representational unity; rather, urban space consists of an interminable and ever-shifting confluence of practices that “enunciate.” In other words, the city articulates. It announces itself as representation, but a form of representation that defies appropriation by art forms, like the novel, whose meaning relies on the construction of borders and the invocation of conventions.

Julian Wolfreys, on the other hand, attempts to locate a mode of representation that can account for the urban space of London. For Wolfreys, London’s singularity emerges out of the countless practices and “affects” that, like de Certeau’s paths, can never be molded into a consistent and familiar pattern. The city can only be written as a multiplicity of “fleeting marks” that will never “amount to a whole picture.” To put it differently, any representation of the city is always only “a performative mark, a
momentary gathering point, and a nexus of mnemonic and spectral effects” (8). Hence, in Wolfeys’s view, only modernist and postmodernist texts that gesture back toward their own textuality, materiality, and historicity are adequate to the task of representing London. He condemns texts that attempt to approach the city with a mimetic mode of representation. He takes aim in particular at turn-of-the-century English novels that reduce London to an object of representation by relying “on already familiar metaphors and the coercively rationalizing force of mimesis” (11). Wolfeys utterly rejects these representations of London as ideologically motivated “misreading[s] and misperception[s]” (11). He claims that at the turn of the century, London, which was characterized almost exclusively via “such overworked tropes as fog, disease, and the labyrinth” (11), bore the brunt of increasing anxiety over the “breakdown in mimetic or directly representational modes of discourse” (55). Wolfeys stridently maintains that a mimetic mode of representation—a mode of representation that claims to transpose material reality, in toto, into language—is wholly inadequate to the task of writing London, and he reads the turn-of-the-century appeal to overwrought tropes as a reactionary registering of the challenges London posed to this type of representation:

Only arriving as the spatial and temporal articulation of that which announces its inaccessibility to mimesis, direct vision, and representation as such, London admits to the unveiling of the complex historicity and materiality of the textual network. In effecting this revelation, the poetics and technicity of the city intervenes in, thereby drawing attention to, the limits and crises of mimetically and ontologically grounded models of historicism that seek to muster, in Benjamin’s words, a “mass of data to fill the homogeneous, empty time. (10)

The effect of writing the city, then, is not to lay bare the complex contours of and render knowable a teeming landscape, but to lay bare the excesses of representation—that is, the tendency for representation, whether simplistically mimetic or not, to generate a
positivism and plenitude that veil the interests, power structures, and systems of domination and exploitation that underwrite experience.

Although Wolfreys offers up modernist and postmodernist performative representations as alternatives to what he insists are the simplistically mimetic orthodoxies of the fin-de-siècle, it would be disingenuous to suggest that such representation eschews mimetic qualities altogether. Indeed, it could be argued that it is just another form of mimesis, one that replaces visual topography and imagistic content with affect and form. In *Writing London*, Wolfreys effectively lays out a heuristic for identifying what he believes to be a “more accurate” aesthetic practice for representing the city, and in doing so he effectively attributes the city with the ontology that he originally denies. To say that the fin-de-siècle representations do not adequately convey the true character of London is to assume that London has a “true” character. Instead of evaluating various representations of London written during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, I will instead be asking why such representations appear to capture the “true” character of London for their authors and for their respective historical audiences.

The historical and cultural moment with which this dissertation concerns itself consists of those years that loosely correspond to the phase of financial accumulation that Giovanni Arrighi argues characterized the “autumn” of Britain’s hegemony over global capital. To date, most investigations of social and cultural productions in terms of capitalism have tended to take for granted a form of commodity capitalism, with processes or mechanisms of finance serving a secondary or supplementary role. Arrighi’s revised history asks that we reconsider social and cultural production during
certain historical moments through the lens of finance capitalism writ large. In
Jameson’s words, “any comprehensive new theory of finance capitalism will need to
reach out into the expanded realm of cultural production to map its effects” (143).

Ian Baucom is one of the first scholars to answer Jameson’s call for a re-
examination of cultural production during phases of financial accumulation. In Specters
of the Atlantic, Baucom reconsiders late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century
epistemology, a subcategory of which is novelistic production, in the context of the
phase of finance capitalism that Arrighi argues set the stage for global capital’s
transition from Dutch to British hegemony. In this sense, Baucom’s project serves as a
useful model and sounding board for my own. However, Baucom offers a curious
reading of Arrighi’s historical cycles. Arrighi uses the phrase of his title “the long
twentieth century” to refer to the U.S.-centered cycle of accumulation that began in the
late nineteenth century and continues to the present day. Baucom, on the other hand,
identifies the late eighteenth century as the beginning point of his “long twentieth
century,” effectively collapsing the British and American cycles into one. He thereby
skips over any consideration of the early twentieth-century phase of financial
accumulation with which I am concerned. His reason for collapsing Arrighi’s British and
American cycles into one “long durée” derives from the Benjaminian philosophy of
history that grounds his project in which there is “no such thing as a fully discrete or
isolated ‘present’ or ‘past” but “only a nonsynchronous contemporaneity in which an
older deep-structural form inscribes, reasserts, and finds itself realized” (30). In
Baucom’s reading then, the current phase of financial expansion “accumulates, repeats,
intensifies, and reasserts the late eighteenth” (30).
However, by combining the two cycles into one, Baucom elides an important element of Arrighi’s argument: the role that governmental blocs play in his history of capitalism. Arrighi divides the British and American hegemonies into two cycles, not only because both hegemonies oversee full MCM’ cycles, but because the competition between nation-states for control over global capital is essential for capital’s continued expansion. Arrighi’s historical analysis shows that global capital divests itself from processes of production when increased investment in production has saturated the market and created so much competition that surplus capital cannot be profitably reinvested. The surplus capital is therefore diverted from production and turned over to banks who redirect the capital to more profitable areas of production: and, frequently, the capital is redirected outside of the ruling governmental bloc’s immediate jurisdiction. When profits from this process of redirection exceed profits from production, global capital enters a phase of finance capitalism, and it is this highly flexible form of capital, mediated by international banking networks that are nevertheless anchored in the ruling governmental bloc, for which nation-states compete. In seeking profitable investments, capital not only seeks cheaper raw materials and labor but also social and governmental structures that are conducive to capital accumulation and allow for new modes of production and investment. For this reason, there are substantial differences between the British and American hegemonies, differences crucial for understanding capitalism’s historical expansion that may be overlooked if the two are viewed as a continuum. As I have discussed above, the limited-liability corporation pioneered in the United States revolutionized capital accumulation. While the British did legalize such business models in the mid-nineteenth century, the “backbone” of the British system
remained the family-based firm, which provided the social conditions upon which the new models had to be built. Thus, where Baucom summons a “hauntological” notion of history, we must also attend to an Oedipal one in which the heir to global capital’s hegemony kills off at least some of the tired old structures that its predecessor was unable to transcend due to the intrinsic conservatism of culture and institutions.

Baucom’s argument fails to draw distinctions between the phase of finance capital that inaugurates the British hegemony and the one that ushers in the empire’s “autumn.” During the eighteenth-century phase, capital was flowing into Great Britain, while in the latter phase it was flowing out. Moreover, capital was not necessarily flowing into or even through London as it was channeled primarily through Amsterdam and sought profitable investment wherever it could be had. England’s industry was dispersed throughout the country in several industrial centers, many of which benefited from the influx of capital. Certainly Baucom’s focus on the Atlantic slave trade, based out of Liverpool and made possible by insurance and other mechanisms of finance capitalism, seems to support such a conclusion. By contrast, the twentieth-century phase of finance capital witnessed a tremendous exodus of capital from England that was primarily mediated by the then dominant London-based banking networks (Arrighi 164-8). And this economic turn toward London, I argue, helps to explain the cultural turn to London among writers of novels.

If Baucom’s project leaves ample room for my own, it also suggests a compelling starting point for drawing connections between finance capitalism and the novel. Baucom begins with the assumption that phases of finance capital “would coincide with or be accompanied and enabled by a series of epistemological transformations and the
emergence—or reemergence—of a set of cultural forms which dialectically encode and make possible those reorientations of capital” (26). One of these cultural forms is the novel. To translate Baucom’s argument into Jameson’s peculiar terminology, he identifies “mediations” between “structurally distinct objects or sectors of being” (Political Unconscious 225). Baucom’s argument about the relationship between novelistic production and finance capitalism is not a causal one that relies on the classically one-dimensional base/superstructure model. Rather, like Jameson’s “mediations,” as with my own argument, it seeks to “demonstrate that widely distant elements of the social totality are ultimately part of the same global historical process” (225-6). Baucom describes phases of finance capital as “moments in which capital seems to turn its back entirely on the thingly world, sets itself free from the material constraints of production and distribution, and revels in its pure capacity to breed money from money—as if by a sublime trick of the imagination” (27). Thus, Baucom contends, the central epistemological categories underwriting finance capitalism are imagination, faith, and trust. The value that accumulates via processes of finance capital is an imaginary one and exists only in the form of an agreement between at least two individuals. For example, Baucom argues the distance that the slave trade traversed required a system of credit to reduce the time between initial expenditures and realized profits. Such a system requires that value not follow but precede commodity exchange: “Such value exists not because a purchase has been made and goods exchanged but because two or more parties have agreed to believe in it. Exchange, here, does not create value, it retrospectively confirms it, offers belated evidence to what already exists” (17).
This system of credit, Baucom continues, is fundamentally novelistic, so much so that finance capitalism and the novel “serve as one another’s mutual, dialectical, conditions of possibility” (41). Both trade in speculative discourse and types—credit relies on identifying “typical” values and wagers that all specific situations will resemble the typical, while the novel’s realism, its believability, depends on the “typicality” of its characters. Where credit “invented a ‘new image of social personality,’” a new social person no longer ‘anchored in the land’ but attached instead to a series of negotiable promises, calculations, and speculations; a person no longer readable through reference to a table of inherited status but only as legible as the entire complex system itself,” the novel teaches us how to read this new form of subjectivity in which personal value is no longer measured by external markers of class status but by one’s “character” (66).

If the new “social person” is “no longer anchored in the land,” it is still, in the eighteenth-century novel at least, very much embodied and anchored in its material environment. Indeed, as I will argue, the eighteenth-century novel creates the thingliness of character. It is not until the early twentieth-century that the novelistic personality, like finance capitalism, “turns its back on the thingly world” and becomes, I will argue, a disembodied series of negotiations and impressions—a consciousness perhaps best characterized as existing, like value under finance capital, in a state of radical, consecutive relativities—a perpetually reconfigured consciousness momentarily constellated as it encounters and reencounters its material and social world. If the eighteenth-century novel, as Baucom argues, “encodes and makes possible” the fictional truths of finance capital, and if it helps to inaugurate a new form of
intersubjective relations that serve as a foundation for the “trust” required by a credit
based economy, the modernist novel “encodes and makes possible” the radically
relative truths of this later manifestation of finance capital in which value is maintained
through a series of momentary constellations, and the accumulation of value depends
on that process of perpetual reconfiguration. The wealth and health of the subject,
paradoxically then, arises from a sustained uncertainty, instability, and unknowability,
which, I will argue, is encoded in the modernist novel’s interest in the urban space of
London.

As the “autumn” of England’s hegemony over global capital came to be signaled
by increasing financial accumulation and the increased flow of liquid resources into and
through the London-anchored international banking networks, London became the
center of the British empire as well as the center of British novelistic production, not
necessarily in the sense that increasing numbers of novels came to be set in London,
but in the more radical sense that London became itself a poetics, a kind of “cognitive
mapping,” grounding a new legibility: the legibility of constellated value. Anthony Vidler
has pointed out that the perceived disorder of the city has been one of modernity’s most
persistent bogeymen: “How does one make sense of a city that offers no visual or
conceptual unity, that seems to offend all the laws of aesthetics and reason, but that
nevertheless demands reform?” (236). Howards End’s response to this problem is to
reject the becomingness of the city in favor of the stability and certainty of place. The
subsequent novels that I look at in this dissertation turn that question on its head, and
ask instead, “How can the city teach us to read for something other than conceptual
unity—that is, for something other than certainty, stability, and knowability?”
Before turning to the modernist novel’s new-found interest in London, Chapter 2 lays the foundation for that investigation by tracing the history of “character” in the British novel. If, as Baucom argues, the eighteenth-century British novel taught us how to read and attach value to character, I look at how the eighteenth-century novel renders character legible through a complex of domestic reading conventions that construct the place we call home—the “space apart” that Howards End represents. Then via a reading of Wilkie Collins’s *The Moonstone* (1868), I argue that the complex of reading conventions that had made home a place begins to unravel and in an effort to shore up the epistemology of character Collins’s novel intensifies the logic of home but in doing so destabilizes it and renders it incapable of serving as a source of certainty. To conclude the chapter, I turn to Arthur Conan Doyle’s first Sherlock Holmes novel, *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), and argue that Holmes represents a re-emergence of the figure of quixote, who was so important to the burgeoning hegemony of domestic discourse in the eighteenth-century. But unlike his predecessors, Holme’s quixotism wields narrative authority in his novel, and instead of discrediting a prior mode of literary representation, begins to imagine a new one that disassociates questions of character from personhood and like later modernist novels conceives of character as a problem of textuality that is no longer referential.

Tracing the history of character in fiction is important to understanding how and why modernist novels became so interested in the city during the autumnal phase of Britain’s global hegemony. Chapter 3 examines how London causes problem for the epistemology of character in Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*. As an ostensibly provincial novel *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* is an important test case for my
claim that the financialization of the British economy was accompanied by a cultural turn toward London. I argue that Tess is in fact a London novel, as it depicts a provincial Wessex infused with the logic of London. Indeed, the novel’s central conflict, Angel’s reaction to Tess’s confession, arises from the misapplication of pastoral hermeneutics to a world, the novel suggests, is best made sense of through an urban poetics. In subsequent chapters, I begin to explore what an urban poetics might look like. With its reading of H. G. Wells’s Tono-Bungay (1909), Chapter 4 anchors my dissertation because Wells’s novel offers the most explicit and thorough articulation of the phenomena I observe piecemeal in the other novels. It registers a full-blown awareness of the challenges the shift to financial modes of accumulation and the consequent turn toward London pose for the novel and the model of subjectivity it posits. As I demonstrate, through the novel’s financial mogul, Teddy Ponderevo, Tono-Bungay locates epistemological isomorphisms between finance capitalism, urban space, an emergent form of subjectivity, and a new novelistic poetics.

If Wells’s novel finds congruence between subjectivity, finance capital, and London’s complex spatial regime, that congruence does not inform the novel’s structure as it does in the final two novels I examine. In Chapter 5 I argue that the formal innovations of Virginia Woolf’s The Waves ground a new mode of subjectivity resembling what I call the speculating subject. Reading Woolf’s novel alongside the economic theory of her fellow Bloomsberry John Maynard Keynes reveals parallels between Keynes’s theorization of financial speculation and The Waves’s vision of collective subjectivity. “Financial Times” concludes with a reading of Jean Rhys’s Voyage in the Dark that locates a sparseness at the heart of fiancé capitalism that is
mirrored in Rhys’s heroine, Anna Morgan. If Teddy Ponderevo’s behavior and speech patterns are repeated in *Tono-Bungay*’s representation of London and his financial empire, and if Woolf’s formal experimentation imagines a speculating subject whose value emerges as a process of textuality rather than character, Anna Morgan is the opposite side of the same coin. She similarly encodes a world “melted down” (to use Forster’s phrase) by the logic of London and finance capitalism.

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1 At first glance, real-estate speculation does not appear to be a mechanism of financial accumulation since it does seem to trade in a commodity. However, unlike commodities whose value depreciates with consumption, the value of real estate tends to appreciate. This is especially true during times of inflation, which also serves as a mode of financial accumulation. In *The Great Wave*, Fischer identifies several periods in European history since the twelfth century that were characterized by sustained inflation. Though Fischer does not make the connection, these periods roughly correspond to Arrighi’s phases of financial accumulation.

2 Responding to a historian who claims the industrial revolution was “a storm that passed over London and broke elsewhere,” Roy Porter points out that “London’s manufacturing output was still unrivalled in Britain . . . And the nation’s industrial economy was profoundly dependent upon the capital’s imports, transport and communications, wholesale and retail networks, finance skills and its service sector more generally” (187).

3 In *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money*, Keynes considers how the separation of ownership and management influences investment decisions. As I will discuss in further detail in Chapter 4, he is particularly interested in how investment decisions come to be based less on knowledge of a firm’s value than on “mass psychology” (152-4).

4 For discussions of Forster’s liberalism see Trilling, Duckworth, Crews, Levenson, Weissman, and Widdowson.

5 For discussions of the epigraph and the theme of “connection” in *Howards End* see Born, Delaney, Stone, White, and Outka.

6 See Thacker and Wegner for useful overviews of twentieth-century spatial theory.

7 As Peppis notes, *Howards End* participates in a broader trend in Forster’s fiction which tends to “locate the essence of England in the rural south” (48)

8 I take the phrase constellated value from Schleifer’s *Modernism and Time*, which argues that the decentered and non-linear figure of the constellation is the dominant representational and logical regime of modernism.
CHAPTER 2
SERGENT CUFF, SHERLOCK HOLMES, AND THE NOVEL OF CHARACTER

Ian Baucom argues that the eighteen-century novel taught readers how to understand a new mode of subjectivity that was no longer “anchored in the land” but valued instead for its “character” (66). Baucom’s claim that the eighteenth-century novel helped to inaugurate a new mode of subjectivity is not original to him; nor is Baucom the first to link this novelistic individual to changing modes of production and wealth creation. Indeed, Baucom’s observations about the relationship between finance capitalism and the novel in the eighteenth century are fairly brief and rely mostly on a synthesis of previous work by other critics, much of which has specifically addressed the rise of credit, long recognized by scholars as being of central concern to the rise of the British novel.1 Baucom, then, does not need to deal at length with novelistic production, and for him the novel is only one example of several “epistemological transformations” and emerging “cultural forms” that accompanied and made possible the phase of finance capitalism that ushered in the British hegemony. The British modernist novel, on the other hand, has not been read in conjunction with the increasing influence of financial modes of accumulation in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Such an investigation can help to explain why the British modernist novel, much like the eighteenth-century novel, represents a revolutionary moment in the history of literary form.

What critics have come to call the “crisis in representation” that spurred the experiments in form associated with modernism has largely been understood in the context of advances in science and technology, a growing mass culture, changing social relations, British imperialism, and so on. But Arrighi’s history, which indicates that British
capitalism fundamentally changed during the modernist period, provides us with the opportunity to explore how the poetic revolution that we call modernism responds to and enables these structural changes in the British economy. In this chapter, I look at two Victorian novels—Wilkie Collins’s *The Moonstone* (1868) and Conan Doyle’s *A Study in Scarlet* (1887)—that were written well before the time period generally identified as modernist. By comparing these novels to two eighteenth-century novels—Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela* (1740) and Charlotte Lennox’s *The Female Quixote* (1752)—I seek to show that these Victorian novels register an emerging instability in the representational form of the novel parallel to that brought about and recorded by eighteenth-century novels; and importantly, this representational instability concerns the central problem to which the eighteenth-century novel attended, the problem of imagining character.

Given the opportunity that Arrighi’s cyclical model provides modernist scholars to discover a new way of understanding the old problem of modernist experimentation, it is unfortunate for Baucom’s study that he absorbs the modernist period into one “long durée” in which the point of comparison to the founding of the British hegemony in the eighteenth century is the decline of the American hegemony in the early twenty-first century. I touch on this problem in the introduction, but because I intend to compare the two British moments in this chapter, it is important to explore this issue in more detail. As I mention in my introduction, Baucom’s model fails to distinguish between the phase of finance capitalism that ushered in the British hegemony and that which led to its decline. I suggest that the earlier phase was characterized by an influx of capital into the country while the latter witnessed an exodus of capital from its juridical borders.
Continuing with that observation, it is similarly true that during the earlier phase Great Britain was not the financial center of the world: Amsterdam was. Although Amsterdam was losing its control over global trade, which had been the foundation of its hegemony, the Amsterdam Bourse “remained the central regulatory mechanism through which idle capital was rerouted towards new trade ventures, some of which were directly controlled by the inner circle of the Dutch capitalist class but most of which could be safely and profitably left in the hands of lesser Dutch and foreign (primarily English) enterprises” (Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century* 140).

The Dutch hegemony was built on surplus capital from Baltic trade; but in the eighteenth century, Baltic trade could no longer withstand the reinvestment of the surplus capital it produced. In other words, much like British manufacturing in the late nineteenth century, Baltic trade of the Dutch hegemony could no longer profitably expand. Because profits from Baltic trade began to decline, the Dutch withdrew from trade and focused on high finance (142). English enterprises were the primary beneficiary of this shift. Although the bulk of wealth being generated in the global economy may have been through financial modes of accumulation, this was not the case in Great Britain where wealth was being generated by the increased production made possible by the influx of capital from Amsterdam. Hobsbawm notes that in 1750 England was still a “nation of shopkeepers” and wealth was generated through trade rather than manufacturing or industry (*Industry and Empire* 12). It was the influx of investment-seeking capital from Amsterdam that funded the construction of the infrastructure needed to develop the manufacturing economy that would become the foundation of the British hegemony. In the eighteenth century, British manufacturing
was rural and decentralized, so “the typical worker [was] some kind of village artisan or smallholder in his cottage” (15). The wealth from Amsterdam helped to fund the growth of factory production for which Britain would become famous, and this system played into the hands of the aristocratic landowners who owned much of the property upon which British industry was built. This is one of the many circumstances that help to explain why the British bourgeoisie, as Perry Anderson argues, was essentially an aristocratic bourgeoisie. If, according to Arrighi, investment-seeking global capital concentrates within the national borders that provide the most favorable conditions for its accumulation, the economic interests of what Anderson call the “investment-oriented” land owners combined with their political power (consolidated by the English Civil War), were those favorable conditions. Trade was the province of the cities; but the political power, Hobsbawm writes, rested in the hands of the landed nobility who directed resources toward manufacturing (Industry and Empire 165).

According to Arrighi’s model, each new hegemony ushers in a new structure of capital accumulation, and the British hegemony was the first to internalize production costs. During the two previous cycles, production had occurred outside the direct control of the hegemonic state, so those hegemonies were maintained by controlling global trade rather than manufacturing goods (Arrighi 177). While trade had been the primary mode of accumulation in England at the beginning of the eighteenth-century phase of financial accumulation, as Arrighi explains, Dutch banks shifted resources away from trade and directed it toward manufacturing (165). Thus, Baucom’s focus on slave trade as the exemplary feature of the eighteenth-century financial expansion misrepresents the situation. Baucom focuses on slave trade because it relied on and encouraged the
expansion of the insurance industry, an important industry for phases of financial accumulation. But in assisting the slave trade, the insurance industry, like the banks, effectively transferred resources to the development of British manufacturing. During what Hobsbawm calls the “First Industrial Revolution of 1750-1840,” the slave trade provided a cheap means of producing cotton in the southern United States, which became one of the chief suppliers of cotton for British textile industries (Industry and Empire 41-2).

Baucom describes phases of finance capitalism as “moments in which capital seems to turn its back entirely on the thingly world, sets itself free from the material constraints of production and distribution, and revels in its pure capacity to breed money from money—as if by a sublime trick of the imagination” (27). But from Britain’s perspective, finance capital did not so much turn its back on the “thingly” world as help to build the “thingly” world of nineteenth-century British industrialism. Baucom locates a parallel between finance capitalism’s rejection of the thingly world and the eighteenth-century novel’s investment in a character “no longer anchored in the land”—land of course being the quintessence of thingliness. Instead, the novel valued more abstract, less thingly character traits such as virtue and sympathy. But what the eighteenth-century novel in fact does is establish the “thingliness” of character—it posits the idea that “character” is intrinsic to personhood and demonstrable in the material world. Such is the premise of Samuel Richardson’s Pamela (1740) whose title character exposes her virtue, found to be worthy of Mr. B.’s hand in marriage, through a series of letters. Nancy Armstrong writes,

Pamela’s letters reveal her genuine displeasure with Mr. B.’s sexual advances, her determination to resist him so long as he tries to turn her into
a kept woman, and thus her possession of a sensibility befitting a lady. It is literacy alone that transforms her from an object he can forcibly possess into a self-possessed subject who can consent to his offer of marriage. Embodying the core fantasy of the early novel—that writing makes the individual—Pamela writes herself into existence as the wife of a wealthy landowner. Looking back from Pamela at Crusoe and Moll, we can see that their extraordinary adventures could have done little to make them exemplary had they not possessed the means of authoring their respective stories. . . . Each could inscribe him or herself in writing as an object, or body, separate and apart from the subject that inhabited that body, and put that body through a series of moves to enhance its social value. (How Novels Think 5-6)

The thingliness of character is literalized in epistolary novels like Pamela, Robinson Crusoe, Moll Flanders, and others, in which the self becomes embodied in the thingliness of a text.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word “character” first appeared in the thirteenth century when it meant simply “a distinctive mark impressed, engraved, or otherwise formed; a brand, stamp” (“character,” def. 1a). Although the original meaning of the word had no relationship to personhood, we can see a direct relationship to the idea of human character. After all, our character is said to be our distinctive mark; it is what sets each of us apart from all other individuals. But it is not until the seventeenth century that character comes to be used in this way (“character,” def. 11). Importantly the idea of character as a defining feature of personhood emerges simultaneously with two other usages: “character” as in “the style of writing peculiar to any individual” (“character,” def. 4c), and “character” as in literary character (“character,” def. 17a). This triad of usages are mutually imbricated in the eighteenth-century novel’s invention of character. Pamela’s writing is a sign of her unique and virtuous personhood while she, as a literary character, teaches us how to read persons as characters. It is also no coincidence that we see the co-emergence of these usages about the same time that
Britain begins to build the foundation upon which its hegemony would eventually be built.

Arrighi explains that the development of the British hegemony began well before the financial phase of the eighteenth century. Queen Elizabeth is a critical figure for the expansion of capitalist modes of accumulation in Britain. It was during her reign that state-supported piracy acquired the great store of wealth that would fund the first industrial revolution; it was during her reign that the East India Company and the Royal Exchange were founded; and it was during her reign that the monarch began to negotiate with British capitalists to fund nation-building projects because Henry VIII had plunged England into debt with a series of failed conquests. This last instance is of the utmost importance for the history that Arrighi describes. Arrighi argues that capitalism did not consolidate into a globally hegemonic system until smaller-scale capitalist enterprises joined forces with the nation state. This happened in Britain under Elizabeth’s reign; and as capitalism grew to hegemonic status in Britain, it was necessarily accompanied by cultural artifacts that encode and decode its way of organizing the world. The advent of character as a distinctive mark and quality of personhood was one of the cultural artifacts that was created by and helped to create the conditions of existence for wide-spread capitalist accumulation in Britain.

However, if this usage of character first appeared in the 17th century, it wasn't until the eighteenth century that the novel helped to popularize it, and what had previously been traces of an emerging idea became a full-blown discourse. Importantly, the novelistic character that taught the eighteenth-century reader how to read persons also taught readers to think of themselves as citizens. If capitalism had to join forces with the
nation-state to achieve hegemonic status in Britain, so too did the novelistic character. For Baucom, the “central epistemological drama of the long eighteenth century” was one in which “mobile property displaced ‘real’ property, and the imaginary value of stocks, bonds, bills-of-exchange, and insured property of all kinds increasingly trumped the ‘real’ value of land, bullion, and other tangibles;” therefore, “the concepts of what was knowable, credible, valuable and real were themselves transformed” (16). Scholars have long recognized that the nation-state has an important role to play in this epistemological drama because it is the nation-state that ultimately guarantees the “imaginary value” of the most basic form of “mobile property”: money. As Patrick Brantlinger explains, money is always an expression of debt, and that debt is guaranteed by the nation-state (Fictions of State 35). This observation points to one of the supreme ironies of the “imagined political community” (to use Benedict Anderson’s phrase) that we call the nation state (6): the nation-state itself is an expression of debt. All modern nation-states are “penniless,” and their national currencies and financial institutions “are forms of debt misrecognized . . . as wealth” (Brantlinger 3). To summarize in Brantlinger’s words, “[n]ation-states are invented through a process of fetishistic misrecognition whereby debt, absence, and powerlessness are transubstantiated . . . into wealth, a plenitude of laws and institutions, and power” (20). The novel is one of the many cultural forms that help transform the “absence” of the nation-state into a “thing.”

Scholars who write about the novel and the nation-state—for example, Brantlinger, Benedict Anderson, Armstrong, and Moretti—tend to agree that the novel has a unique ability to incorporate disparate geographic locations into an imagined community of
individuals who do not know each other but can nevertheless, in Armstrong’s words, “understand [themselves] as a stable aggregate” linked by a shared “set of obligations and constraints” (How Novels Think 53-4). The novel, then, not only taught readers to value character, but to value characters who participate as members of this aggregate, characters for whom the nation-state serves as a touchstone for their everyday decision-making processes. Take, for example, Austen’s Northanger Abbey, in which Catherine Moreland is disabused of her quixotic tendencies when she is reminded of her position as a British citizen. Interpreting her experiences in the Tilney’s home through the conventions of the gothic romances that she had come to adore, Catherine comes to believe General Tilney must be holding his supposedly deceased wife captive in the abbey. When Henry Tilney discovers her folly, he admonishes her,

  Remember that we are English, that we are Christians . . . Does our education prepare us for such atrocities? Do our laws connive at them? Could they be perpetuated without being known, in a country like this, where social and literary intercourse is on such footing; where every man is surrounded by a neighborhood of voluntary spies, and where roads and newspapers lay every thing open? (186)

If the nation-state guarantees the imaginary value of mobile property, this passage suggests that it also guarantees character. Catherine can trust that General Tilney could not have succeeded in secreting his wife away even if he had wanted to because the disciplinary apparatus of the nation-state would not allow him to get away with it. This passage demonstrates beautifully how the absence of the nation-state is transformed into material plenitude, into schools, roads, neighborhoods, newspapers, and spies. I have suggested that the early British novel, far from turning its back on the thingly world, helped transform character into a thing; but we can now also see how that process required the novel to also imagine the thingliness of the nation-state.
That Baucom does not attend to this aspect of the novel raises again the problem of Baucom’s peculiar appropriation of Arrighi’s model. Baucom’s study is so enamored of the cyclical nature of Arrighi’s model that it does not do justice to its careful and nuanced historicism which locates each phase of each cycle within the very specific social and political circumstances of its place and time. Baucom’s tendency to dwell in what Marx warns are “rational abstractions” is especially apparent in his hauntological model of history, in which there is “no such thing as a fully discrete or isolated ‘present’ or ‘past’ but only a nonsynchronous contemporaneity in which an older deep-structural form inscribes, reasserts, and finds itself realized” (30).² As an example, Baucom summarizes Benjamin’s famous argument in which he identifies allegory as the dominant epistemological strategy in both the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries (18). Baucom goes on to argue that Arrighi’s cyclical model of capitalist history explains why allegory would appear in both centuries: they corresponded to phases of material production, and the commodity is the paradigmatic allegory because its meaning derives from “an invisible realm of values.” As Baucom explains, in allegory “things . . . signify not themselves but some superordiante ‘value’” (18). If allegory is the dominant epistemological mode of material expansion, then there must be, Baucom reasons, a dominant mode for financial expansions, and he proposes historicism. But this speaks to the limited scope of Baucom’s study, which focuses exclusively on the semiotics of some abstract form of finance capitalism.

However, according to Arrighi’s history, financial phases of accumulation are accompanied by intense social and political transformations. They are moments when vast amounts of wealth are moving out of the hegemonic bloc and into other
jurisdictions, so interstate competition for global capital intensifies and various political jurisdictions, including the governing bloc, begin to position themselves differently within the networks of global capital. My study differs from Baucom’s in that it attends to the ways that the modernist moment of financial accumulation returns to cultural forms of the earlier one but in so doing creates them anew for its specific historical configuration. My intention in this chapter is to look at how the British novel bears witness to both periods of financial accumulation as moments of transition through the figure of the quixote—a figure that was central to the development of the British novel and that re-appears in a surprising way in the late nineteenth century in the character of Sherlock Holmes.

In his analysis of eighteenth-century novelistic character, Baucom observes a contradictory process at work. Although “the linked concepts of credit and credibility testify to the financialization of character,” character is simultaneously “definancialized as the credit individuals earn no longer finds itself indexed to the ‘real’ or abstract property they possess” but to their “investment in the language of humanity” and sympathy (200). In other words, character is financialized in the novel insofar as character becomes the measure of an individual’s exchangeable value; but a character acquires that value through its investment in a discourse of sympathy, which is antithetical to the logic of exchange. Baucom traces the origins of sympathy as a source of value to the romance genre of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. What I will explore in the next few pages is how that contradiction comes to be reconciled in the eighteenth-century British novel.
In her influential history of the British novel, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, Nancy Armstrong provocatively declares that “the modern individual was first and foremost a female” because she ostensibly existed beyond the reaches of commerce and politics and could therefore serve as a clandestine site of the class struggle imagined by the domestic novel (66). As depicted by Armstrong, the novel mediates (in the Jamesonian sense) between the supposedly apolitical, non-commercial domestic sphere, where social relations are said to be direct and unalienated—that is, where love and sympathy rather than economic self-interest and the logic of exchange governs relationships—and the commercial sphere. Although Baucom draws an opposition between the financialized character of credit and the definancialized character of sympathy, it strikes me that the central epistemological forms of finance capitalism as Baucom identifies them—imagination, faith, and trust—are profoundly domestic insofar as they are ostensibly unalienated ways of ordering relationships. Thus, the space of home as imagined by the domestic novel is an important category of experience for our understanding of the eighteenth-century phase of financial accumulation. We have already begun to investigate how the idea of home becomes problematic during the second financial expansion of Britain’s hegemony. Recall that in *Howards End* the idealized country house represents a “space apart” from the encroaching commercialism of London, where home becomes an object of exchange through real estate speculation. Howards End, on the other hand, represents a place of intrinsic as opposed to relational values, and importantly it is able to do so because of the women—first Ruth and then Margaret—who attach sentimental rather than commercial value to it. If Henry Wilcox, the legal heir, had persisted in his claim, the property would have
been just that, a property, not a home. *Howards End* demonstrates that home is the quintessential *place* in the British novelistic imagination. But this epistemology of home originated with the figure of the quixote, who was so important to the origins of the British novel.\(^3\)

The notion of home that was popularized by novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries played a crucial role in resolving a problem with using character as a source of value for personhood. If character is to be an index of value, it must be legible, but how does character come to be legible? As I discuss above, *Pamela* and similar novels attempt to solve this problem by using an epistolary form, in which writing serves as a transparent and authentic transcription of how the “external pleadings of the senses” are converted into “the internal testimony of conscience,” to use Baucom’s words (198). But as demonstrated by the notorious Pamela/anti-Pamela debate, not every eighteenth-century reader was convinced by Pamela’s transcription. Instead of reading Pamela’s letters as authentic representations of her character, anti-Pamelists charged Pamela with masquerading as a virtuous subject in an effort to entrap Mr. B. Christine Roulston understands the Pamela/anti-Pamela debate as growing out of the problem intrinsic to Pamela’s first person narrative. If the first-person narrative was crucial for the exposure of character, it also created problems for its author. To be truly virtuous Pamela must appear to be unaware of the desirability of her virtue; but Pamela’s first-person narrative, by its very nature, draws attention to her virtuous body as a sensual object. Expanding on this observation, Roulston compellingly argues that the conflicts between the demands of a first-person narrative and feminine modesty may explain why Richardson depicts Pamela as so prone to faint at the most opportune
moments (5-18). As supposedly unconscious, spontaneous responses to Mr. B.’s sexual advances, Pamela’s fits and fainted do not rely on the hermeneutical frame of her first-person narrative to signify her modesty. However, as Roulston also points out, eighteenth-century discourse on feminine conduct suggests an alternative interpretation of Pamela’s fainting fits. Conduct books, while claiming that supposedly impromptu physical reactions like blushing and fainting are authentic signs of modesty, imply that women should practice these reactions (5-18). Pamela’s fainting fits could have been interpreted as practiced and, therefore, contrived to increase her desirability. That said, *Pamela* is clearly meant to be read as a sincere account of Pamela’s character, and while the careful reader might express some skepticism, the novel does not ask us to do so. The novel casts Pamela’s account as unequivocally authentic. Ultimately *Pamela* effaces the problem that it introduces, the problem of intention. The anti-Pamelists cannot trust Pamela’s character until they are sure that her intentions are likewise virtuous. But how can Pamela reassure her audience that her intentions are sincere?

Although *Pamela* never troubles itself with this question, a later novel does. The opening pages of Charlotte Lennox’s *The Female Quixote* (1752) offer a clever rewriting of *Pamela*. *Pamela* is made up of two sections: the pre-marital story in which Pamela demonstrates her virtuous character through what critics have argued is essentially a romance plot (an issue I will return to below) and a section that describes her post-marital life. It is at this second section that the opening pages of Lennox’s novel takes aim. Whereas Pamela’s voice dominates the first half of her novel, Mr. B’s voice consumes the over three-hundred-page domestic narrative that follows. Immediately after their marriage, Mr. B. begins to articulate what will eventually become a copious
set of rules governing his household. And Pamela’s journal, once a defiant record of her thoughts and experiences, becomes little more than a transcription of these rules. The first set of rules, or “obliging injunctions,” as Pamela calls them, concerns such issues as Pamela’s dress, her daily schedule, how she should treat unexpected guests, and how she should react to accidents when entertaining (368-372). In other words, all of Mr. B.’s rules place restrictions on Pamela’s body and behavior that will reflect well on his character. Whereas the restrictions that she placed on her behavior during her romantic narrative signified her value as a virtuous subject, the restrictions imposed by Mr. B. reorient her virtuous character so that it enhances his value. In the first part of the novel, Mr. B. played the part of the libertine villain who imprisoned Pamela in his house, fondled her, and even attempted to rape her. But whereas Pamela’s character was tested again and again throughout the first half of the novel, Mr. B’s character is redeemed with the mere recognition of her virtue, and it is enshrined within a domestic space where Pamela’s every gesture reflects his good character.

The rewriting of the post-marital narrative in *The Female Quixote* exposes this dynamic. *The Female Quixote* describes the follies of its protagonist, Arabella, who, like Don Quixote, has read so many romance novels that she interprets her experiences through those conventions. The novel ends with her reformation and subsequent marriage to her cousin Glanville. But the novel actually describes two marriages, the first being her father’s marriage to a strikingly Pamela-eseque wife. The novel’s opening passages show her father, the Marquis, moving into the country and taking with him a bride, “inferior to himself in Quality,” but with “Beauty and good Sense” enough to make “him an agreeable Companion” (6). Not only does the marriage between the Marquis
and his wife reproduce Mr. B’s and Pamela’s in terms of social class—an aristocratic gentleman takes a middle-class woman as his wife because her good character proves her worthy of the rise in social status—but other aspects of the opening passages of *The Female Quixote* recall *Pamela* as well. The Marquis’s marriage may very well have begun with an abduction. The Marquis “carried” his wife into the country to a “very remote” location “several Miles distant from any town” and constructed a wooded border, which was made to appear as “wild, uncultivated Nature” (6). Although the narrator explains that the Marquis retreats to the country to escape immanent disgrace at court, the imagery and language in this passage certainly evoke the gothic-like conventions of an abduction plot. Moreover, the novel hints at some not-so-virtuous aspects of the Marquis’s character prior to his marriage. The narrator explains that he was able to conceal the pain of his “Disgrace” at court by “the natural Haughtiness of his Temper,” and that he behaved “rather like a Man who had resigned, than been dismissed from his Posts” (5). Given this description, the Marquis begins, somewhat, to take on the appearance of a libertine Mr. B or even a “ravisher” from one of his daughter’s romances. Just as Pamela’s first-person narrative provokes the anti-Pamela readings, *The Female Quixote* gestures toward what one might call an “anti-Marquis” reading in which the Marquis’s “Disgrace” may not be so “undeserved” as the narrator claims. One way of reading the Marquis’s retreat into the country and domesticity is the conventional one: after suffering humiliation in the brutally competitive political sphere, the Marquis naturally longs for the unconditional embrace of the protective domestic sphere. But another reading—an anti-Marquis reading—suggests that the Marquis turns to marriage and domesticity to restore his character. In other words, like his daughter,
the Marquis has learned from fiction: he has learned from Mr. B that the virtue of his own character is not determined by his actions or even intentions but by the mere recognition of his wife’s good character. Thus, Lennox’s novel, in its parody of romance satirizes *Pamela*, positioning the masculine figure as the naïve reader of *Pamela’s* domestic representational regime who has been duped by an anti-Pamela. However, the fact that he has been duped is irrelevant. His character receives the benefit of reform regardless of his wife’s actual character. Thus, the novel seems to say, the Pamelists and anti-Pamelists are wasting their time. Pamela’s “true” intentions are irrelevant as long as the appearance of her good character effects Mr. B’s reform.

Lennox’s novel draws attention to how claims to truth operate on the level of appearances that assume the proportions of reality as they become codified through conventions of reading. A superficial reading of *The Female Quixote* might lead one to believe that the novel establishes a clear distinction between reading and reality as the novel seems to suggest that there are conventions of reading (Arabella’s romantic foible) and then there is reality, which remains inaccessible to Arabella’s perception. But the novel undermines such a facile interpretation by suggesting that the Marquis’s character, which at first glance seems fairly straightforward, also depends on conventions of reading. When the Marquis was accused of wrong-doing at court, the narrator explains that he maintained his innocence until “he fell at last a Sacrifice to the Plots [his enemies] were continually forming against him” (5, my emphasis). “Plots,” or literary conventions, torment the Marquis long before his daughter ever picks up a romance novel. At court, the Marquis succumbs not to truth per se, the opening passages suggest, but to the machinations of a fiction that ultimately yields the power
of truth. Add to this fiction the anti-Marquis reading, and the reader becomes equally incapable of determining the source of veracity. In the absence of an identifiable reality, the Marquis is shown retreating to the domestic sphere, and the novel proceeds to write his character as the ideal domestic husband. He takes comfort in “Solitude and Privacy,” dutifully “divide[ing] his Time between the Company of his Lady, his Library,…and his gardens” (5-7) and taking Arabella “from under the Direction of the Nurses and Women appointed to attend her,” and caring for her himself (6).

Although the Marquis, following in the tradition of Mr. B, married the Marchioness in spite of her inferior social position and because of her good character, the little that the narrator reveals about the Marchioness—that she “had purchased [Romance novels] to soften a Solitude which she found very disagreeable” (7)—does not demonstrate her good character as promised—that is, if Pamela is taken as the model of good character. Unlike Pamela, the Marchioness did not take pleasure in her domestic role or in the company of her husband; instead, she turned to romance novels to take refuge from the oppressive loneliness brought about by her enclosure within domestic space. The novel, then, suggests a reading in which the Marchioness may have artfully affected her good character prior to marriage in order to attract and secure the Marquis’s attentions. But regardless of her post-marital character, her marriage to the Marquis, like Pamela’s marriage to Mr. B, functions to put to rest the competing fictions that placed the Marquis’s character in doubt. It is only after the Marquis secures the hand of a woman who appears to possess a good character and shows himself to be a good husband and devoted father that it becomes impossible to believe he could have been guilty of the crimes for which he was accused. And the brevity of the
Marchioness's embodied presence in the novel—not insignificantly, the Marchioness dies upon the birth of her daughter, as if to suggest that one of her primary domestic responsibilities kills her—satirically sets into relief the origins of certainty in *Pamela*: the figurative enclosure of Pamela, and by extension the eighteenth-century literary woman, within domestic space renders the potential duplicity of Pamela’s first-person narrative—the source of uncertainty for the Pamelists and anti-Pamelists—benign because her ‘true’ intentions no longer matter. *The Female Quixote* thereby exposes how the paradox that emerges between what Baucom calls the “financialized” and “definancialized” character is reconciled in the domestic novel. Whether Pamela’s modesty was unwittingly desirable or not, now ensconced within domestic space, it reflects on and buttresses masculine authority, not her own. So Mr. B.’s “financialized character”—that is, his exchangeable credibility—is underwritten by sympathy because he has learned to recognize the value of Pamela’s virtue, which is fixed by her enclosure in his home. Certainty of character, which according to Baucom is so important to the burgeoning capitalist hegemony in Britain in the eighteenth century, is codified then in the emerging hegemony of domestic fiction that transforms home into the place where social struggle or competing claims to truth and value are put to rest.

Whereas *Pamela* takes for granted the idea that Pamela possesses a character that is stable, unique, and there to be represented fully and transparently in her writing, *The Female Quixote* casts doubt on this logic, and it does so through the figure of the quixote, a figure that shows up repeatedly in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century novels: Henry Fielding’s Joseph Andrews, Sir Walter Scott’s Waverly, Mary Shelley’s Victor Frankenstein, and Jane Austen’s Catherine Moreland and Marianne Dashwood,
just to name a few. If as Armstrong contends, “What we now call ‘the novel’ won its title in a field of argumentation as it figured out how to adjust to, incorporate, and abject competing ways of thinking about the individual” (10), the quixote was an important figure in this struggle because its very existence discredited a particular mode of representation during a historical moment when, as Michael McKeon has so persuasively argued, the concept of truthfulness came to be more closely associated with the notion of verisimilitude than with historical accuracy. The eighteenth-century quixote’s problem is that he or she applies the logic of verisimilitude to a literary world that does not operate according to such logic, so the quixote discredits that literary world by exposing the failure of its verisimilitude.

In Arabella’s case that literary world is the one imagined by romance fiction. But Lennox’s novel offers a striking twist on the quixotic paradigm. Instead of discrediting romance fiction, Arabella’s quixotism exposes the gender politics at play in the eighteenth-century censure of romance, which characterized it as a danger to feminine sensibility and a threat to social stability. Richardson’s novel certainly participates in this condemnation of romance by insisting that it “borrows none of its Excellencies from the romantic Flights of unnatural Fancy, it being founded in Truth and Nature” (5-6). And in the novel, Pamela is accused by Mr. B. of being a quixotic reader of romance. In a letter to Pamela’s father explaining why Pamela has not returned home as she had promised, Mr. B. tells Pamela’s parents, “I never knew so much romantick Invention as she is Mistress of. In short, the Girl’s Head’s turn’d by Romances, and such idle Stuff, which she has given herself up to, ever since her kind Lady’s Death” (93). Although Mr. B. is lying, he is clearly tapping into a common way of talking about romance at the time. In
the words of the doctor in *The Female Quixote*, “[Romance novels] are senseless Fictions; which at once vitiate the Mind, and pervert the Understanding” (374). A superficial reading of *The Female Quixote* suggests that it too reproduces this logic; but recent critics agree that romantic conventions and values come to serve as the basis for moral authority in the novel. More importantly, however, those conventions and values ultimately come to serve as the foundation for the domestic narrative that replaces Arabella’s romantic one. Throughout Lennox’s novel, the world of romance is a world governed by women and their interests. It encourages female friendship and the formation of communities of women. Whereas Arabella’s vapid, anti-romantic foil, Miss Glanville, expresses jealousy over other women and avoids their companionship, Arabella seeks out relationships with women: she befriends and defends Miss Groves, a “loose” woman who is in the country to conceal the birth of her second illegitimate child; she cherishes her brief friendship with the countess; she comes to the defense of a naval officer’s mistress at Vauxhall; and she instantly renounces her betrothed, Glanville, when she believes him to be the unfaithful lover of a woman who poses as a romance heroine. Indeed, the romantic world imagined in Lennox’s novel represents, in the words of Deborah Ross, “a sort of feminist revision of history in which women are behind every great event—not only as love objects, but as leaders of armies” (104).

Of course by the end of the novel Arabella has been made to realize her folly and reject her romantic world view. But in depicting Arabella’s reform, the novel does not so much renounce her romantic world view as expose how that world view comes to serve the interests of the androcentric domestic narrative that *Pamela* represents. Early in the novel Arabella describes the proper way for a romantic hero to go about courting a
heroine: a romantic hero must demonstrate years of unrequited devotion until he can finally declare his passion with “awful Tremblings, and submissive Prostrations” (32).

But the novel does not depict Glanville declaring his passion in such a fashion. Instead, a reformed Arabella plays the part of the trembling and prostrate romantic hero:

[...]Turning to Mr. Glanville, whom she beheld with a Look of mingled Tenderness and Modesty, To give you myself, said she with all my remaining Imperfections, is making you but a poor Present in return for the Obligations your generous Affection has laid me under to you; yet since I am so happy as to be desired for a Partner for Life by a Man of your Sense and Honour, I will endeavour to make myself as worthy as I am able of such a favourable Distinction. (383)

This is precisely the type of speech Arabella would have expected of Glanville. Arabella humbles herself, emphasizing Glanville’s noble qualities and drawing attention to her “Imperfections.” And to conclude the declaration, she, as she would have expected of her romantic supplicant, promises to “endeavour to make [her]self worthy.” Thus, Arabella’s reform is less about relinquishing her romantic notions—love, honor, duty, loyalty, devotion, and so on—than about re-inscribing them so that they serve the interests of proper gender relations in which, like Pamela, her good actions and virtuous character buttress her husband’s authority and not her own. The only thing Arabella relinquishes in reforming is power, and the novel punctuates this point with its notoriously abrupt ending in which Glanville stakes his claim to his new found power by kissing Arabella’s hand. An action that Arabella had previously considered an egregious affront to her honor and had strictly prohibited—an action whose prohibition was the source of her power over Glanville—is now met with her “emphatic Silence,” and two short paragraphs later, the novel ends with an equally emphatic silence as it offers only the slightest hint of Arabella’s post-marital life—that she was “united” with Glanville “in every Virtue and laudable Affection of the Mind” (383). Arabella’s emphatic silence also
suggests that the struggle between competing fictions has been put to rest, and the
domestic novel can now claim victory along with the transparency of character that it
presupposes.

If character was to replace family history and property as the primary means of
attaching value to persons—at least in the novelistic imagination if not in reality—then
ascertaining character became a problem, and \textit{The Female Quixote} documents how
this problem was resolved through a reconfiguration of reading conventions. By the time
Queen Victoria assumed the British throne, even her authority was attached, at least in
part, to her exemplary character, which again is affirmed by the domestic narrative: “By
mid-century Victoria had erased the image of profligacy and aristocratic decay that had
been associated with royalty because of her predecessors’ notorious behaviors:
throughout her reign, she projected herself and her family as approachably domestic,
wholesome, and even bourgeois” (Weltman 106). But in 1868, just as the tide was
beginning to turn against Britain’s manufacturing hegemony, the specter of character
reappears in Wilkie Collins’s \textit{The Moonstone}, and ascertaining character again
becomes a problem for the British novel. Indeed, Collins explicitly addresses this issue
in his preface to \textit{The Moonstone}: “In some of my former novels, the object proposed
has been to trace the influence of circumstances upon character. In the present story I
have reversed that process. The attempt made, here, is to trace the influence of
character on circumstances” (3). By the time Collins is writing, the conflation of literary
character with character as the defining qualities of personhood is so thorough that
Collins speaks of his literary characters using the non-count noun “character” usually
reserved for actually existing persons as if the character of his characters precedes their
literariness, just as character presumably precedes circumstances in persons. Whereas Pamela’s character comes under scrutiny precisely because of its literariness, a century later Collins can assume the transparency of the literary. And in a delightful flourish of circular logic, Collins drives home his novel’s claim to representational authenticity: “I have declined to avail myself of the novelist’s privilege of supposing something which might have happened, and have so shaped the story as to make it grow out of what actually would have happened—which, I beg to inform my readers, is also what actually does happen in these pages” (3). We can trust that his novel records “what actually would have happened” because that is what “actually does happen in these pages” (3). But in spite of Collins’s confidence in his novelistic agenda of representational transparency, *The Moonstone* casts doubt on the preface’s fundamental assumption about the non-literariness of character. Indeed, the mystery the novel sets out to solve is not so much the question of who took the moonstone from Rachel Verinder’s boudoir as of how to shore up the non-literariness of character. In other words, the novel investigates how character can be made knowable without having to rely, as *Pamela* does, on a complex of reading conventions. It is not insignificant, then, that Collins’s novel returns to the epistolary form.

Ascertaining character appears as a problem in *The Moonstone* in the novel’s opening pages, which consist of a manuscript that describes how the moonstone came into the possession of the Herncastle/Verinder family. The manuscript was written by a cousin of John Herncastle, the man who first acquired the moonstone in India and later bequeathed it to his niece Rachel Verinder. Herncastle’s cousin writes the document in an effort to restore his own good character, which has been maligned by his relatives for
“refus[ing] the right hand of friendship to [his] cousin, John Herncastle” (11).

Herncastle’s cousin goes on to describe the circumstances that led him to distance himself from Herncastle. He and Herncastle took part in the taking of a palace in India. After a fairly swift and surprisingly bloodless process, the author of the document, while in the palace, hears a cry and runs into a room where he finds John Herncastle wielding a bloody dagger over the body of a “mortally wounded” Indian (14). The hilt of the dagger contains the moonstone, which Herncastle presumably pockets. The author believes Herncastle to have murdered the Indian and two of his mates, but he does not make a public accusation of murder or looting against Herncastle because he “cannot say that [his] own eyes saw the deed committed” (15-6). When he confronts Herncastle about it, Herncastle refuses to acknowledge or deny his guilt. Like Pamela, the author of this document turns to first-person writing as evidence of his unimpeachable character. But the first-person document does not resolve the problem of the author’s or Herncastle’s characters. Herncastle could be innocent of the murders, which would actually render his exile from the author’s familial circle a mark against the author’s character.

The remainder of the novel is devoted to clearing the name of another maligned character, Franklin Blake, who we eventually learn unintentionally took the diamond from Rachel’s room. Because the first-person narrative of the manuscript only served to complicate the problem of character, the rest of the novel tries a different tactic. Although the rest of the novel consists of first-person narratives, only one of them is written by the person attempting to restore his character. Problems begin for Franklin Blake and the Verinder family when John Herncastle bequeaths the moonstone to his
neice and Blake dutifully delivers it to the family estate, which leads Gabriel Betteredge, the author of the first narrative, to complain that a “quiet English house was suddenly invaded by a devilish Indian Diamond” (46). As I will discuss in more detail in my final chapter, colonial and postcolonial scholars have argued that the epistemological category of home establishes boundaries between the imperial metropole and the “contact zones” of empire, and thereby helps to establish and protect the imagined community of nation (Johnson 15). *The Female Quixote* explains how the construction of home in domestic fiction shores up the contours of character by putting to rest the competing narratives of social struggles that make up the public sphere, so it makes sense that the problem of character would re-emerge as a problem of empire in *The Moonstone*, which explores this “interpenetration of the realms of empire and domesticity” (Heller 144). In Collins’s novel, the English home cannot as comfortably masquerade as place because it becomes the site of the geo-political social struggle of empire.

One of my claims in this dissertation is that with the decline of Great Britain’s global hegemony, the British had to rethink national identity within a recalibrating network of global capital. By embedding its character drama in the imperial drama, *The Moonstone* draws attention to how assumptions about character depend on a discourse of nationalism. As I explain above, just as the nation-state guarantees the value of mobile property, the nation-state guarantees character; and, as the logic of *The Moonstone* suggests, when the contours of the nation-state and national identity are placed in doubt, so too are the contours of character. This logic is made an object of comedy in Betteredge’s repeated concerns about Franklin Blake’s cosmopolitanism:
At the age when we are all of us most apt to take our colouring, in the form of a reflection from the colouring of other people, [Blake] had been sent abroad, and had been passed on from one nation to another, before there was time for any one colouring more than another to settle itself on him firmly. As a consequence of this, he had come back with so many different sides to his character, all more or less jarring with each other, that he seemed to pass his life in a state of perpetual contradiction with himself. He could be a busy man, and a lazy man; cloudy in the head, and clear in the head; a model of determination, and a spectacle of helplessness, all together. He had his French side, and his German side, and his Italian side—the original English foundation showing through, every now and then (56).

If value is to be attached to persons based on character, then character must be coherent and consistent. However, in Betteredge’s view, Blake cannot possess a consistent character because of his multi-national experiences. Blake’s lack of a single national identity means that, for Betteredge, the nation-state cannot serve as guarantor of his character. Betteredge’s logic is admittedly mocked by Blake later in the novel, but the novel nevertheless reproduces the logic in another character of ambiguous origins: Ezra Jennings.

Although Ezra Jennings is one of the heroes of the novel insofar as it is he who pieces together the puzzle and solves the mystery, his character dies at the end shrouded in mystery. Jennings was raised in one of the colonies, and he says of his parents, “My father was an Englishman; but my mother—” (371). Jennings never finishes this sentence, suggesting that all we need know is that his mother was not English, and that he thus cannot claim an English national identity. Moreover, Jennings’s hybrid appearance is so extraordinary to Blake that Blake cannot read his character: “His gypsy complexion had altered to a livid grayish paleness; his eyes had suddenly become wild and glittering . . . The latent resources in the man, for good or for evil—it was hard, at that moment, to say which—leapt up in him and showed
themselves to me, with the suddenness of a flash of light” (378). Jennings’s odd appearance is even more pronounced at this moment because he has been driven to excitement by the prospect of sharing a morbid secret with Blake. Before moving into the Verinder’s community, Jennings had been accused of some sort of malfeasance, and as a result he has been chased from place to place by “the cloud of a horrible accusation” so that his “character is gone” (379). Jennings continues, “There are circumstances in connection with [the event] that tell against me. I cannot bring myself to acknowledge what the accusation is. And I am incapable, perfectly incapable, of proving my innocence. I can only assert my innocence. I assert it, sir, on my oath, as a Christian. It is useless to appeal to my honour” (379). Jennings’s dilemma recalls the manuscript that began the novel. As with the author of the manuscript and John Herncastle, circumstances tell against him, and all he has is his first-person narrative to suggest otherwise. Notably, he never tells his story and even insists that his diary be buried with him in an unmarked grave. The Moonstone, then, attempts to imagine the non-literariness of character by discrediting the first-person narrative with which the idea of character came to life in the eighteenth century. Without an authoritative first-person narrative, and without an unambiguous national identity, the value of Jennings’s character remains unresolved in the novel. His death, combined with his desire to “be forgotten,” re-enacts the death of the Marchioness in The Female Quixote, and it imparts a spectral residue that draw attention to the competing narratives that had to be disavowed to guarantee character.

If the entrance of the non-English into the domestic sphere casts doubt on character in The Moonstone, the novel must seek another means of restoring the
promise of character’s legibility. Immediately after the moonstone disappears, it is
Rachel’s character that initially bears the brunt of accusations. Sergeant Cuff, a
renowned London detective, is brought in to investigate the disappearance, and all of
the evidence he uncovers points to Rachel Verinder’s guilt. When sharing the evidence
with Lady Verinder, who refuses to believe that Rachel could have secreted away her
own diamond, Cuff insists that such a crime would fit a pattern with which he is familiar:

My own experience explains Miss Verninder’s otherwise incomprehensible
conduct. It associates her with those other young ladies that I know of. It
tells me she has debts she daren’t acknowledge, that must be paid. And it
sets me asking myself, whether the loss of the Diamond may or may not
mean—that the Diamond must be secretly pledged to pay them. This is the
conclusion which my experience draws from plain facts. (173)

Baucom locates an identity between the semiotics of finance capitalism and the novel
when he says that both trade in speculative discourse and types—credit relies on
identifying “typical” values and wagers that all specific situations will resemble the
typical, while the novel’s believability depends on the “typicality” of its characters.
Sergeant Cuff, then, is Baucom’s ideal reader of “financialized character.” He has
learned to read for types, and in his experience, Rachel fits the type of the young,
aristocratic woman who has over-extended herself financially. But despite the
overwhelming evidence against Rachel, her family and friends refuse to believe she
could have taken the diamond because they “know” her (172). Betteredge says: “It was
downright frightful to hear [Cuff] piling up proof after proof against Miss Rachel, and to
know, while one was longing to defend her, that there was no disputing the truth of what
he said. I am (thank God!) constitutionally superior to reason” (174). And Mr. Bruff, the
family’s lawyer says,

I judge the Sergeant to have been utterly wrong; and I offer the opinion that
if he had known Rachel’s character as I know it, he would have suspected
everybody in the house but her. . . . If the plainest evidence in the world pointed one way, and if nothing but Rachel's word of honour pointed the other, I would take her word before the evidence, lawyer as I am. (226)

It turns out that Bruff is right to lend Rachel's character so much authority. She did not take the diamond, and, even more importantly, her odd behavior and refusal to speak about what she knows (evidence that Cuff and her detractors use to point to her guilt) ends up adding value to her character. Looking closely at how evidence that at first glance appears to speak against Rachel's credibility ultimately adds to its value will help us understand how Collins's novel affirms the authenticity of character as a viable epistemology by patching together the paradox between the financialization and definancialization of character that it fears is unraveling.

Rachel's refusal to exonerate herself by revealing what she knows about the diamond's disappearance recalls John Herncastle's refusal to exonerate himself when his cousin accuses him of murdering the Indians. The novel never clears up Herncastle's involvement in the murders, and it even adds to the mystery of his character when, in bequeathing the diamond to Rachel, it is impossible to determine whether he did so as a gesture of forgiveness for the family's mistreatment of him, as he claims in his will—"I give the Diamond to [Lady Verinder's] daughter Rachel, in token of my free forgiveness of the injury which her conduct towards me has been the means of inflicting on my reputation in my lifetime"—or whether he did so as an act of revenge, knowing that the curse of the diamond would afflict the Verinder household (55). The novel only offers Herncastle's first-person statement, a discredited source of veracity, as evidence of the former; but to believe the latter, one would have to accept the reality of the supernatural curse. Neither are tenable positions within the logic of the novel, but we do know that whether Herncastle bequeathed the diamond as an act of forgiveness
or as an act of revenge, he did so in response to the indictment against his character inflicted by Lady Verinder’s behavior toward him. So like Ezra Jennings, Herncastle’s character dies shrouded in mystery even though he spends his entire life responding to what he thinks are misperceptions of it.

The novel does, by contrast, eventually explain Rachel’s odd behavior. Rachel initially refused to share what she knew about the disappearance of the diamond because she had fallen in love with Franklin Blake, who she had seen sneak into her boudoir and take the diamond. Rachel reasons that to reveal Blake’s dishonor would be to impugn her own character because she has failed to properly read his and because she continues to love him even though doing so “horrifies” her and makes her “wretched” (242). But ironically it is because she refuses to make public her knowledge of Blake’s guilt that her character actually does come under suspicion. Moreover, Rachel had not yet made public her love for Blake, so she is the only person who could render an indictment against her character for loving him. Rachel’s logic is disconcertingly paradoxical, but it nevertheless appears again in the novel when Rachel breaks her engagement with Godfrey Ablewhite. Traumatized by Blake’s apparent disloyalty, Rachel reluctantly agrees to marry Ablewhite; but she discovers through Bruff that Ablewhite has been inspecting her mother’s will, an act that indicates he is marrying her “for his own selfish and mercenary ends” (277). She determines to break off the engagement, and Bruff advises her to present her evidence against Ablewhite. However, she refuses because doing so would be to admit that she had disgraced herself in agreeing to marry such a deceitful person: “I have believed in that man. I have promised to marry that man. How can I tell him he is mean, how can I tell him he has
deceived me, how can I disgrace him in the eyes of the world after that? I have
degraded myself by ever thinking of him as my husband” (280). By refusing to explain
her reasons for breaking off the engagement, she again “expos[es] herself to the most
odious misconstruction of her motives” and Bruff admonishes her, “You can’t brave
public opinion . . . at the command of private feeling” (280-1). Rachel, however, insists,
“I can . . . I have done it already” (281). Here again, the contours of character assume a
stable shape only in the domain of the private, but the private is no longer defined as
the domestic space of the home. What guarantees Rachel’s character, according to her
own logic, is paradoxically not the shape that it assumes in public but in the private
knowledge that she possesses and her intimate acquaintances possess about her
actions.

This presents us with a conundrum. If we are to attach value to character,
character must be legible. *The Female Quixote* exposes how the eighteenth-century
novel—which, from this point on, I will call the novel of character to include its
nineteenth-century descendents like *The Moonstone*—rendered character legible
through a codification of domestic reading conventions in which the removal of the
female figure from the arena of social struggle and competing narratives guarantees her
character and by extension her husband’s.10 More than a century later, *The Moonstone*
reintroduces anxiety about the legibility of character that had consumed critics of
Richardson’s novel, and it resolves that anxiety in a similar fashion—but with an
important improvement. Collins’s novel paradoxically renders character, which by
necessity must be public, a function of an intensified version of the domestic sphere.
Psychological interiority replaces the home, which has become contaminated by its complicity in empire, as the place apart from the social struggles that make space.

Whereas *The Moonstone* is still able to re-reconcile the paradox about which it becomes so anxious through an intensification of the private sphere that had settled the problem of competing narratives in the eighteenth century, Arthur Conan Doyle’s first Sherlock Holmes novel, *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), is not able to do so. The contradictory process of financialization and definancialization of character that the novel of character had so precariously reconciled through its figuration of domesticity unravels in *A Study in Scarlet*. *The Moonstone* is symptomatic of Baucom’s hauntological model of history insofar as the problem that the novel of character set out to solve resurfaces, and *The Moonstone* re-solves the problem through an intensification of the method used by *Pamela*. However, as I mention in the introduction, as a compliment to Baucom’s hauntological model we must also summon an Oedipal one in which the older structural forms are replaced by new emergent ones. It is my contention that *A Study in Scarlet* is an example of the latter because in it the older structural form of domesticity does not serve to resolve the tension between a character that must be credible in the commercial realm of exchange and a character whose credibility is underwritten by the unalienated qualities of love and sympathy. Both Doyle’s novel and *The Moonstone*—significantly two of the novels credited with consolidating the conventions that would become standard in later detective novels—bear witness to the re-surfacing of this paradox as a problem during Britain’s autumnal phase of financial expansion. However, unlike *The Moonstone*, Doyle’s novel calls for a new way of addressing the crisis, and it does by re-invoking the figure of the quixote,
who by definition signals a gap between a mode of representation and the world it purports to depict.

Fans of Sherlock Holmes may chafe at the idea of associating Holmes with the tradition of the quixote who is conventionally an object of mockery. But Holmes is an unconventional quixote because, unlike his predecessors, he is the source of authority in his novels. Despite that difference, Doyle’s first novel goes to great lengths to associate him with the tradition of quixotism. Quixotes of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries tend to fall victim to their folly because they have suffered an unregulated education. For example, Lennox’s heroine is “permitted” the use of her father’s library but is not provided any guidance, so she gravitates toward her deceased mother’s “great Store of Romances” (7). Austen’s Catherine Moreland was “left to shift” for herself because her mother was too busy with so many children to guide her education (17). So “from fifteen to seventeen she was in training for a heroine; she read all such works as heroines must read to supply their memories with those quotations which are so serviceable and so soothing in the vicissitudes of their eventful lives” (17). Walter Scott’s Waverly was “permitted, in a great measure, to learn as he pleased, what he pleased, and when he pleased” (45), and this lack of structure “was attended with evil consequences” as Waverly was allowed to develop the romantic world view that would prevent him from discerning the characters of the Scottsmen who lured him into their cause (47). A century later, Watson similarly tells us of Sherlock Holmes’s education: “His studies are very desultory and eccentric, but he has amassed a lot of out-of-the-way knowledge which would astonish his professors” (9). But whereas early quixotes read romance novels, Sherlock Holmes is a quixotic reader of sensation
literature. Early in the novel, in an effort to understand why Holmes studies what he does, Watson makes a list of Holmes’s accumulated knowledge. The list reveals that while Holmes has no knowledge of literature, philosophy, and astronomy, and very little knowledge of politics and spotty knowledge of botany, geology, anatomy, he has “immense” knowledge of “Sensational Literature” (18). “He appears to know every detail of every horror perpetrated in the century” (18). Watson’s choice of the label “sensational literature” to describe Holmes’s preferred reading materials is a curious one. Since the 1860s “Sensation” had come to be a code word for a whole slew of discredited cultural artifacts: sensation novels (like *The Moonstone*), sensation dramas, and sensational news. The kinds of reading materials Watson’s far reaching label might include is unclear, but Holmes is probably reading a whole host of quasi-non-fictional accounts of crimes from which the sensation novel would later derive. Regardless of what Watson means to include under that label, the label itself further connects Holmes to the tradition of quixotism by associating his excessive reading habits with an unwarranted discourse that, like romance in the eighteenth century, blurred the lines between fiction and non-fiction.11

To understand how and why Sherlock Holmes’s quixotism can serve as the source of narrative authority in the late nineteenth century when such a proposition would have been unimaginable in the eighteenth, and to understand why the unwarranted discourse of sensation literature can become a source of moral authority, we must turn to an influential history of knowledge production. In *A History of the Modern Fact*, Mary Poovey provides a compelling analysis of how information comes to acquire the credentials of truth. Whereas ancient facts derived their authority from “metaphysical
essences,” modern facts, Poovey argues, “are assumed to reflect things that actually exist, and they are recorded in a language that seems transparent” (29). Poovey locates a nascent form of the modern fact in double-entry bookkeeping, which originated in fifteenth-century Italy but was not widespread in Britain until the sixteenth-century, during the all-important reign of Elizabeth I that I discuss above. The first manual of double-entry bookkeeping was published in 1494 by an Italian mathematician during what Arrighi identifies as the first financial phase of accumulation centered in the Genoese city-state. Importantly double-entry bookkeeping was wielded as a means of lending credibility to modes of financial accumulation, which had been condemned by the Catholic church as “usury” because they appeared to beget money from nothing. “The ‘case’ the double-entry ledger was designed to make . . . was that the business, the facts of which the ledger recorded, was honest and that its profits did no more than offset the risk its owners incurred” (Poovey 38). Double-entry bookkeeping did this by aligning itself with the authorized discourse of classical rhetoric, which was the domain of the non-commercial, aristocratic classes. The important point here is that double-entry bookkeeping lent credibility to financial transactions not because it documented the “reality” of those transactions, but because it aligned itself with a warranted discourse, much like the novel of character embedded the logic of character in the warranted discourse of domesticity. Importantly, double-entry bookkeeping functioned very much like home in this regard. As Poovey observes, “Because the double-entry system assigned a proper place to every entry, it saturated place with meaning” (35). Like home, double-entry bookkeeping arrests meaning by embedding each individual factoid within a seemingly immutable system of unalienated relations.
That each entry in the double-entry system acquires its meaning from the rhetorical system in which it is embedded exemplifies the paradox that for Poovey is the defining feature of the modern fact. Modern facts “simultaneously describe discrete particulars,” which are a source of reliable information because they exist outside of time, place, and ideology, “and contribute to systematic knowledge” (xii). Indeed, as double-entry bookkeeping demonstrates, discrete particulars only acquire meaning when they contribute to the systemic knowledge they are supposed to precede. In the early double-entry system, the ultimate sign of a firm’s credibility was the final entry in the ledger, which was entered to balance out the two sides of the record. But Poovey notes that this final entry did not reflect a transaction that had actually occurred—it was simply written in. “Because double-entry bookkeeping’s sign of virtue—the balance—depended on a sum that had no referent—the number added simply to produce the balance—the rectitude of the system as a whole was a matter of formal precision, not referential accuracy” (56). My reading of Pamela and The Female Quixote illustrates how the production of character participates in a similar logic. The domestic narrative that consumes the second half of Richardson’s novel puts to rest the competing fictions that undermine Pamela’s credibility. Thus, double-entry bookkeeping is fundamentally novelistic insofar as it purports to transcribe discrete events, while the “accuracy” of those events can only be realized as an “effect” of its formal conventions. And conversely the novel comes into being in Britain as a kind of accounting that lends credibility to character through a fictitious balancing act that emerges as an “effect” of a particular nexus of reading conventions.
In her history, Poovey goes on to describe how this paradoxical nature of the modern fact became a problem in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Intellectuals repeatedly argued that the system within which the discrete particular is said to precede but must be embedded necessarily undermines the credibility of the fact. Sargeant Cuff encounters this problem in *The Moonstone* when his calculation of the evidence he has discovered in the Verinder household leads him to proclaim Rachel’s guilt. The problem with Cuff’s calculation arises because the evidence alone is not enough to determine her guilt. Instead, he must embed that evidence within a larger system of knowledge, his experience as a professional detective. As I’ve already explained, Rachel’s mother, Betteredge, and Mr. Bruff come to Rachel’s immediate defense and insist that her character, which they “know” without doubt, is evidence enough of her innocence. Her character can function thus precisely because she offers no evidence, no discrete particulars, that speak to its virtue. Recall that she refuses to offer evidence of her innocence with respect to *both* her alleged involvement in the diamond’s disappearance and the breaking of her engagement with Ablewhite.

However, in *A Study in Scarlet*, Sherlock Holmes does not fall victim to the pitfalls of the modern fact. Instead, Doyle’s novel begins to imagine what Poovey calls the “postmodern fact.” If the modern fact exists as the tension between the idea that the fact’s credibility extends from its contextual deracination at the same time that it only acquires meaning within a system of knowledge, then the postmodern fact resolves this tension by inserting the fact into a self-contained system of knowledge that does not purport to provide a transparent representation of reality. Poovey first sees evidence of the postmodern fact when John Stuart Mill responds to critics who condemn political
economy for its deployment of induction—the movement from discrete particulars to systems of knowledge. Those critics express concern about induction’s reliance on assumptions that cannot be true in every circumstance. The most familiar example of this problem is political economy’s assumption that human beings are “motivated exclusively by the desire for wealth” (323). Recognizing that humans are not always motivated by such a desire, Mill argues that political economy can avoid such criticism if it acknowledges its limitations and presents itself as a model for generating hypotheses rather than as a system of representation. As Poovey explains, Mill addressed “the problem of induction by subordinating distracting particulars to the ‘tendencies’ and abstractions that hypothesis could uniquely illuminate” (324). In Mill’s defense of political economy, Poovey sees an emergent form of the postmodern fact that privileges the system of knowledge production rather than the deracinated particular: “the postmodern conviction that the systems of knowledge humans create constitute the only source of meaning is gradually displacing both the problem of induction and all the variants of the modern fact” (328). However, by privileging the system of knowledge production, the postmodern fact by extension derives its credibility from the people and institutions that possess the now rarified knowledge. Whereas the credibility of the modern fact depended on its accessibility to any observer, the credibility of the postmodern fact depends on its inaccessibility. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, there were only four legally recognized professions: the clergy, the military, medicine, and law. But by mid-century there was growing demand for scientific professionals, and as James A. Secord explains, for the ‘new generation of careerists” science was “the province of a paid elite independent of the mass audience” and they represented “a new kind of
intellectual aristocracy” based on “expertise” instead of “social connections” or adherence to “codes of moral propriety” (478). In other words, the careerists’ authority derives not from external markers of class status nor from character, but from a new source of value, a monopoly on certain kinds of knowledge. By extension, the postmodern fact articulates a truth because it is the province of a coterie of individuals who have earned the right through acquiring institutionally supported credentials to deem a fact a fact. And as Martin Kayman points out, Sherlock Holmes exemplifies the new “careerist” that Secord describes: Holmes’s authority derives from “specialized training” and “accumulated knowledge” to which his peers and his readers do not have access (220).\textsuperscript{12} It is important to emphasize here that his authority does not derive from the accuracy of his model, which critical readers of Holmes’s logic have pointed out is deeply flawed.\textsuperscript{13}

The logic that informs the credibility of the expert also informs the structure of A Study in Scarlet, which consists of two parts that are strikingly at odds with one another. Indeed, they read as if they belong to two different novels. But it is the contrast between the first and second parts that indicates Doyle’s novel is not anxiety ridden about the problem of induction that plagued Sargeant Cuff in The Moonstone. The first part of the novel resembles the Holmesian narrative with which most readers today are familiar. Holmes uses his extraordinary skills of observation, induction, and deduction to solve crimes that baffle the ordinary detectives.\textsuperscript{14} And like Cuff, he turns to his experience and “immense” knowledge of sensation literature to draw conclusions from the evidence he sees. For example, when he sees blood at the crime scene that cannot possibly belong to the murdered man, he recalls a previous crime, “the death of Van Jansen, in Utrecht,
in the year ‘34” to develop a hypothesis about the origin of the blood and admonishes his companions who are not familiar with that case, “Read it up—you really should. There is nothing new under the sun” (30). The remainder of the first part proceeds to astonish Watson and the reader with the alacrity and infallibility with which Holmes solves the crime.

The second part of the novel, on the other hand, describes the back story to the crime, and it assumes an entirely different aspect. As Michael Atkinson puts it, “Turning the page from part 1 to part 2, we encounter a different textual personality. At this point, both consistent narration and analytic reasoning from effect to cause collapse, the genre of story changes, the ethical standings of characters are reversed, and the style of presentation alters dramatically” (68). The second part tells the story of Jefferson Hope who devoted his life, sacrificing life and limb, to seek revenge against two Mormon men who had kidnapped Hope’s betrothed and forced her into polygamous marriage. The first part concludes with Sherlock Holmes occupying the position of novelistic hero. After investigating the murders and hunting down the murderer, Holmes cleverly lures him to his apartment and with a flourish claps the handcuffs around his wrists, and declares, “with flashing eyes, ‘let me introduce you to Mr. Jefferson Hope, the murderer of Enoch Drebber and of Joseph Strangerson” (66). There is no doubt in this scene that Hope is guilty of two grisly murders that strike horror into the hearts of everyone involved. Upon seeing the body of Drebber, Watson remarks, “I have seen death in many forms, but never has it appeared to me in a more fearsome aspect than in that dark, grimy apartment” (30). Upon seeing the second body, Watson remarks, “There was something so methodical and so incomprehensible about the deeds of this
unknown assassin, that it imparted a fresh ghastliness to his crimes” (61). And throughout the first part, Watson and the detectives fear that the yet undiscovered murderer will commit further “atrocities” (65). This is the image of Jefferson Hope with which the first part of the novel concludes as Holmes and company lead him off to jail. Holmes says in the final passage, “And now, gentlemen . . . we have reached the end of our little mystery. You are very welcome to put any questions that you like to me now, and there is no danger that I will refuse to answer them” (67). The reader might expect at this point to continue on through a narration of how Holmes came to discover the murder, but the reader does not get that story. Instead, when the reader turns the page, he or she encounters a story to which Holmes could not possibly have been privy. Nor is it a story Holmes would have wanted to tell because it is full of elaborate descriptive detail and tales of love. In short, as “the emotional foundation of the novel” it is the story of everything the Holmsian detective narrative cannot take account (Atkinson 68).

In the second part of the novel, Jefferson Hope is the hero and the murders he commits are explained as acts of justice. The murders that were unambiguously “ghastly” in the first part of the novel, viewed through the romantic lens of the second half, assume an entirely different appearance. Yet the novel never demonstrates a need to reconcile this contradiction. At the end of the second section, Jefferson Hope dies, thereby foreclosing the need to engage in any debate about whether or not his arrest and approaching execution are just. Doyle’s novel, thus, sets side by side two discrete systems of knowledge—two different disciplines, if you will—and offers two different models for the same discrete particular, the “fact” of murder. And neither system of knowledge need claim to have implications for the reality they are supposed to explain
because Jefferson Hope conveniently dies, so the two parts can remain merely disciplinary models. Moreover, the reality they never have to account for is the “character” of Jefferson Hope. He is both villain and hero, and remains that way at the end.

Through this analysis Doyle’s novel begins to take on a faint tint of modernism. The notion that the Holmes series is motivated by a perceived disorder and obsessively seeks to restore order through detection is so commonplace that it may be hard to appreciate the formal oddity of this first Sherlock Holmes novel. But it is this aspect of A Study in Scarlet (though not necessarily subsequent Holmes novels and stories) that looks forward to the crisis in representation that we call modernism. It was, after all, the problem of representing the both/and of character that Virginia Woolf began to theorize in her famous essay “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown”: “The impression [Mrs. Brown] made was overwhelming. It came pouring out like a draught, like a smell of burning. What was it composed of—that overwhelming and peculiar impression? Myriads of irrelevant and incongruous ideas crowd in to one’s head on such occasions; one sees the person, one sees Mrs. Brown, in the center of all sorts of different scenes” (748). As I have begun to demonstrate, character re-emerges as a problem for the British modernist novel, and as I will continue to argue, the modernist novel resolves the problem of character by detaching it from personhood. When Woolf speaks of character in her essay, she is using it in an very different way than the novel of character and its fin-de-siècle descendents with which Woolf takes issue. Her character can only ever be a series of sometimes contradictory impressions, so the only source of value that character represents in her essay is literary value. The reason for this will become apparent in
chapter 5, which navigates an encounter between the economic theory of John
Maynard Keynes and Woolf’s novel *The Waves*. But to briefly forecast that argument
here, character need not serve as a source of value—that is, it need not be financialized
nor definancialized—during the modernist phase of financial accumulation because
wealth production in Britain during this later phase relies on a new form of value based
in the uncertain and incongruous realm of public opinion instead of the certainties
promised by an authentic, consistent, and legible character.

To conclude this chapter, I want briefly to address another aspect of the autumnal
phase of financial accumulation that I am concerned with in this dissertation. In my
introduction, I promised to investigate how the United States haunts the British
modernist novel as it tries to rethink British national identity within shifting networks of
global capital that will, after World War II, overwhelmingly favor the United States. Since
half of *A Study in Scarlet* is set in the American west, I would be remiss not to connect
the novel to this issue. One might be inclined to claim that Doyle’s novel literalizes the
haunting schema because the murders that infest the British homeland originate in the
United States. But during his lifetime, Doyle repeatedly expressed an affinity for the
United States. In an 1894 interview, Doyle was quoted as saying, "there is no subject on
which I take so keen an interest" as "warmer friendship between the two great nations
of the English-speaking race. . . . Neither nation recognizes as it ought the kinship of the
other" (qtd. in Thomas, par. 10). Like many of his contemporaries, Doyle viewed the
United States as an extension of the British Empire because he saw the United States
as an ally that can contribute to the British imperial project. Kipling’s infamous poem
“The White Man’s Burden” was written on the occasion of the U.S.’s colonial occupation.
of the Philippines, and as Paul Kramer and John Plots so eloquently put it, the poem reads like an “imperial recruitment drive” for Americans (par. 2). Kramer and Plotz explain that before the turn of the century the relationship between Britain and the United States appeared to many Brits to be not so much an “interimperial” one as an “intraimperial one” (par. 8). And this apparent “intraimperial” alliance between Britain and the U.S. was understood to be based on a perceived racial alliance. Doyle repeatedly advocated on behalf of such an understanding:

> the only natural and permanent alliance upon earth is that between these two countries, having a common language, common blood, common moral and religious ideas, and up to the last century a common history. ...I believe the English-speaking races must either coalesce, in which case the future of the world is theirs, or else they will eternally neutralize each other and be overshadowed by some more compact people, as the Russians or the Chinese. They should pool their fleets and their interests. ... It would be the first great step towards the abolition of war and the federation of mankind. (qtd in Thomas, par. 10)

Katie-Louise Thomas concludes from these observations that in *A Study in Scarlet,* “Doyle turned to the crown jewel of Britain's First Empire, America, to reclaim a white confederacy and restabilize their imperial position” during a period of intense anxiety about “the degenerating effects of the Second [non-white] Empire” (par. 9). But such an argument effaces the “degenerating effects” that Doyle’s first novel locates in the American west through the novel’s exoticization of Mormonism. As Lydia Alix Fillingham writes, “Mormonism is crucial to *A Study in Scarlet* both for its utter foreignness and for its familiarity to the English. Polygamy represented the furthest reaches of taboo exoticism, but many of those polygamous wives and husbands had emigrated from England” (674). In Fillingham’s reading, *A Study in Scarlet* tunes into contemporary anxiety about alleged kidnappings of young British women perpetrated by Mormons to fill the ranks of polygamy. If Doyle supported an imperial alliance between
Britain and the United states in his non-fictional writings, his novel articulates a much more ambivalent attitude in which the U.S. also harbors the racialized contagions threatened by the non-white territories of Britain’s nineteenth-century empire.

Not only are the murdered men coded as non-Anglo-European through anti-Semitic tropes—their names, Enoch Drebber and Joseph Strangerson, as well as their “simious and ape-like” appearance (30)—Doyle repeatedly refers to the Mormons’ polygamous family structure as a “harem,” which associates Mormonism with the undifferentiated eastern other (105). In The Colonial Harem, Malek Alloula writes about the west’s fascination with the figure of the harem during this time period and argues that its appeal for the western gaze derived from its perceived impenetrability. As a space ostensibly prohibited to the western gaze, the harem symbolized the unknowability of the other and posed a challenge to Western ownership that had to be overcome. Penetration of the harem by the Western gaze, then, represented total conquest of the colonized other. Throughout the second part of A Study in Scarlet the narrator emphasizes the secrecy and exclusivity of the Mormon community: “None knew who belonged to this ruthless society. The names of the participators in the deeds of blood and violence done under the name of religion were kept profoundly secrete” (89). The impenetrability of the Mormon leadership is reinforced by the novel’s fascination with the impenetrability of its polygamous culture. Thus, the narrative itself as well as the murders of the two Mormon patriarchs—which effectively enforce British sexual mores in the colonial periphery—enacts a form of conquest—in the name of protecting the female body from a debased sexuality—typically reserved for the Eastern other in British novels of this period. In A Study in Scarlet, Doyle expresses an unease
with the imperial alliance he and many of his contemporaries hoped for, but he quarantines that unease through a classical colonial narrative of penetration and conquest that figuratively restores the racial integrity of the United States by ridding it of its contaminating effects.

1 See Pocock, Brantlinger, *Fictions of State*; and Nicholson.

2 In *The Grundrisse*, Marx lays the groundwork for Jameson’s famous counsel to “always historicize” (*Political Unconscious* 9) when he argues that the basic conceptual categories of classical economics (production, distribution, etc.) cannot be theorized outside of their historical context: “Whenever we speak of production, then, what is meant is always production at a definite stage of social development” so that “Production in general” is only a “rational abstraction” which is spoken of for mere reasons of expediency (85).

3 Paulson identifies Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* as “one of two books that profoundly shaped English writing of the eighteenth-century” (x). His book provides a detailed account of how the figure of the Quixote introduced an “aesthetics of laughter” into the British literary tradition.

4 For further discussion of how Pamela’s first person narrative undermines her narrative authority and encourages an anti-Pamela reading see Kinkead-Weeks and Townsend.

5 Doody briefly outlines the contours of the Marquis’s seemingly libertine behavior, but she does not discuss the implications of her reading.

6 See Gordon, Martin, Palo, and Spacks.

7 Spencer and Motooka also offer thorough discussions of gynocentrism in the romance genre. Both critics approach the issue by arguing that it is precisely gynocentrism that makes the genre seem so “unrealistic,” in Spencer’s term, and “mad” in Motooka’s.

8 Heller reads *The Moonstone* as a tepid critique of Britain’s imperial project. She argues that the novel exposes “the interpenetration of the realms of empire and domesticity by showing how the hierarchies of gender and class that undergird British culture replicate the politics of colonialism” (144). But critics remain divided on the novel’s attitude toward British colonialism. See Roy and Duncan.

9 Gruner argues that Rachel’s refusal to speak conceals another crime, the crime of her own passion, which as a Victorian woman, Rachel would be obliged to keep secret. But as I will show below, keeping Blake’s crime a secret actually forces her to reveal her feelings for him (albeit cryptically) to Ablewhite. If she had simply revealed what she knew, her passion would have remained a secret. GoGwilt’s reading of Rachel’s silence as an example of “hystericized subjectivity” aligns more with my understanding because there is indeed something hysterical about the idea that virtue can only be guaranteed by an act that suggests its opposite.

10 I choose the phrase novel of character over other potential labels like domestic novel or novel of manners because those labels would, for some readers, exclude novels like *Robinson Crusoe, Waverly, or Frankenstein* that are very much invested in the project of creating character.

11 For additional details about the history of sensation literature and how it came to be discredited in the latter decades of the nineteenth century see Brantlinger, “What is ‘Sensational’ about the ‘Sensation Novel’?,” Pykett, and Adams.
In a similar vein, observing that Holmes is often the mirror image of the villains he chases down, Reiter argues it is his professionalism that distinguishes him from them.

See Kestner and Jann.

Holmes describes his method as “deduction” but critics agree that he uses both induction and deduction. See Rzepka, 16-7.

Jann and Huh also read Doyle as exhibiting some modernist tendencies. Jann argues that Doyle registers the social upheaval that many critics associate with modernism by turning to detection to counteract a “period overshadowed by fears of cultural decadence and increasing fragmentation” (6). But Jann’s argument relies on the assumption that Holmes’s strategies of detection restore some sort of order. I am arguing, by contrast, that this first story begins to imagine a different kind of order that anticipates modernist representational strategies. Huh’s argument locates Doyle’s modernism in a personal experience he had aboard a ship in which his fundamental assumptions about race were shaken by a freed American slave who, from Doyle’s racist perspective, demonstrated a surprising degree of intellectualism. But this “modernist moment” that is the origin of Huh’s study does not really translate into a textual modernism in the Sherlock Holmes series.

For discussions of how the Holmes novels seek to rescue order from disorder through detection see, Greenslade, Kelly, and Miller.
CHAPTER 3
PASTROAL LONDON: READING LONDON IN TESS OF THE D’URBERVILLES

Much has been made of Watson’s description of London in the opening pages of A Study in Scarlet. Having been injured in Afghanistan and later “struck down by enteric fever” while convalescing in India, Watson returns to England with his “health irretrievably ruined” (8) He explains how he came to settle in London: “I had neither kith nor kin in England, and was therefore as free as air—or as free as an income of eleven shillings and sixpence a day will permit a man to be. Under such circumstances I naturally gravitated to London, that great cesspool into which all the loungers and idlers of the Empire are irresistibly drained” (8). That Watson drifts to London because he has “neither kith nor kin in England” establishes London as a space governed by anonymity, as a space where people go when they have no other place to go. Lacking a home, Watson “stayed for some time at a private hotel in the Strand, leading a comfortless, meaningless existence” (8).

As Howards End does, A Study in Scarlet casts London as antithetical to the work performed by the category of home, the place that guarantees comfort and meaningfulness. Moreover, Doyle’s novel sets up this opposition on the two mutually implicated planes of the personal and the national: London is also antithetical to constructions of home because it warehouses all of the “loungers and idlers of the Empire” (8). London is a space where the boundaries between metropole and empire, symbolized by the figure of the home, collapse. Consequently, critics tend to read Watson’s “cesspool” image as metaphor for the contaminating effects of empire. According to such readings, the London of the Sherlock Holmes series is “under siege” from the imperial periphery and marks a generalized fear that contact with empire will
“release the savage within” (Thomas par. 8).\textsuperscript{1} Watson, with his “irretrievable health” and “meaningless” existence, both products of his time spent in the imperial periphery, embodies a realization of this fear.

Although London is cast as home’s antithesis, the logic of home is nevertheless still operative in the novel through the character of Holmes, whose name shares a distinct homonymic similarity to the word home. Other critics have noted this as well. Joseph McLaughlin argues that the similarity is meant to designate Holmes as the “protector of the ‘home’-land” (30), while Tanya Agothocleous, argues that the name marks Holmes as “the consummate cosmopolitan, imaginatively at home anywhere in the world” (132). In the previous chapter, I explore how the British novel of character establishes home as the place where competing narratives are put to rest and the contours of character emerge clearly defined. Insofar as Holmes has come down to us through the entire series of novels and short stories as an “infallible” reader who imposes “a magical exercise of control over an increasingly unknowable city and world” (Agothocleous 135), and insofar as Holmes’s infallible reading abilities extend to the reading of character—he claims that “by a momentary expression, a twitch of a muscle or a glance of an eye, to fathom a man’s innermost thought” (20)—Holmes seems to replace the figure of home as the source of absolute certainty. However as I argue in the previous chapter, Holmes does not actually promise this kind of guarantee in his first novel. As a quixote, he only knows how to read one kind of way, and his way of reading cannot account for what the novel upholds as the irresolvable contradiction that is Jefferson Hope’s character. At novel’s end Hope is a paradox, both “grisly” murderer and exonerated hero. Unlike later Sherlock Holmes stories, 	extit{A Study in Scarlet} does not
subject London to the disciplining place of home through Holmes’s mystifying detective skills. Instead, at novel’s end, London remains a contact zone where differences collide, paradoxes remain unresolved, and uncertainty reigns.

I begin this chapter by returning to Sherlock Holmes because *A Study in Scarlet* provides a useful first example of how London became the imaginary space of choice for British novels as they dramatize the problems of the second British phase of financial expansion. The rest of this dissertation will explore how the modernist novel’s interest in London is intertwined with the problem of character and the corresponding erosion of the category of home. As an ostensibly provincial novel—one of what many have labeled the “regional novel”2—*Tess of the D’Urbervilles* is an important test case for my claim that the financialization of the British economy was accompanied by a cultural turn toward London. Indeed, the very idea of a “regional novel” is predicated on an assumption that London articulates the “non-regional,” universal Britishness. Accordingly, the “regional novel” represents some variation on normative national identity even if that variation lays claim to authenticity through the nostalgic impulses of novels like *Howards End* and, somewhat more complicatedly, *Tess*. As I will demonstrate in this chapter *Tess* is in fact a London novel. At the end of *Howards End*, the “red rust” of London can be seen on the horizon working its way toward the idealized landscape of the country house. But the “red rust” of London has already arrived in Hardy’s Wessex where, unlike Hetty Sorrel of George Eliot’s *Adam Bede*, *Tess* is not a victim of feudal exploitation but of urban blight. That *Tess*’s problems originate with the incursion of the city into the geographically isolated home of the Durbeyfields is no revelation to Hardy critics for whom such an observation is
commonplace. But what I am interested in is how the novel laments the incursion of London into the provinces not just because, as many critics argue, London is as an expression of the “ache of modernism” that infuses Hardy’s entire oeuvre, but because imagining a Wessex “melted down” (to use Forster’s words) by the spatial regime of London creates problems for reading and for novelistic poetics.³

In its opening pages, Tess introduces the reader to a community in limbo. As Michael A. Zeitler observes, “The world of Tess is a world largely cut off from its past” (102). The “forests have departed” and the May day dance is the sole surviving ritual of its feudal history (Hardy, Tess 13). Yet the geographically isolated Vale of Blackmoor also seems to have been passed over by modernity—the economics, technologies, and, most importantly for my argument, the systems of representation of modern bourgeois capitalism: the novel of character. Tess’s father, John Durbeyfield, while walking home from work, learns from the local pastor, who has been researching ancient families in the area, that he is the descendent of a once landed family, the D’Urbervilles. Upon hearing the news, Durbeyfield, a knock-about who likes his drink, immediately concludes that his personhood has increased in value because of the family connection. He sits down on the side of the road and orders a passing boy to call for a carriage to transport his now esteemed personage home. The boy, of course, refuses to follow the orders until he is persuaded by an offer of payment, and Durbeyfield proceeds to squander his family’s meager resources believing that this newly discovered connection will bring him wealth. He even squanders the value of his daughter’s beauty and virtue when he sends her to the D’Urberville house to “claim kin,” which results in her rape and pregnancy. Durbeyfield has evidently not been interpolated into the bourgeois
hegemony through the novel: he is operating according to an old system of value having not learned to attach value to character. Importantly, neither has his daughter, who fails to interpret correctly the libertine behavior of her seducer, Alec D’Urberville, because, as she complains to her mother, “Ladies know what to guard against, because they read novels that tell them of these tricks; but I never had the chance of discovering in that way, and you did not help me!” (82).

In the previous chapter, I argue that *The Female Quixote’s* rewriting of *Pamela* exposes how Richardson’s novel shores up questions about Pamela’s character by enclosing her within the home where her actions reflect the value of her husband’s character rather than her own. The novel thereby removes the problem of intentionality that had so raised the ire of the anti-Pamelists who claimed that Pamela’s virtue was staged in order to reap the reward of marriage. *Pamela* is a useful touchstone for *Tess* for obvious reasons. Like Pamela, Tess is a lower-class woman who is abducted and seduced by a wealthy gentleman. Tess, however, is unable to resist. She is initially raped by Alec, but she then continues a sexual relationship with him until she becomes pregnant and leaves. Despite this difference, Hardy’s novel shares another similarity with *Pamela*: it was ambivalently received by its contemporary readers. According to Margaret Higonnet, it was “scandalous” to some while it generated “impassioned popularity” among others (xix). Notably, *Tess*’s critics were troubled in ways very similar to *Pamela’s*. They were upset by what they claimed to be an immodest portrayal of sexuality and as a result they doubted Tess’s virtue that the novel insists on to the very end (Geoffrey Harvey 36). Like Richardson, Hardy was deeply distressed by this criticism and went to great lengths to defend his heroine’s reputation. In the first full
edition of *Tess* he added the subtitle “A Pure Woman, Faithfully Presented” to counter accusations against her character. In the preface to that edition, Hardy insists “that the story is sent out in all sincerity of purpose, as representing on the whole a true sequence of things” (3). In later editions, his rhetoric becomes more adamant. He claims the novel is “an impression, not an argument,” and it is expressing an “inner Necessity and Truth” (Hardy, “Preface” 463). Those who read it other than the way it was intended to be understood, he says, are “willfully” misinterpreting it and “pervert[ing] plain meanings” (463-4).

In Hardy’s defense of his novel we can again witness the conflation of the three usages of character that I identify in the previous chapter. As a distinctive act of writing, Hardy’s literary character is an expression of his own, so attacks leveled against Tess are likewise attacks against him. Moreover, he uses the same strategies to defend himself as he uses to defend Tess. Hardy’s argument that Tess remains a pure woman despite her “fall” rests on the idea that she did not want to have sex with Alec. She was raped and then she was entrapped in his house where she was powerless to resist. In other words, Hardy re-introduces the problem of intentionality that *Pamela*, with an impressive performance of literary gymnastics, had put to rest a century and a half before. What *The Female Quixote* teaches us about *Pamela* is that Pamela’s intentions no longer matter after her marriage because her good character reflects on and buttresses her husband’s. But Hardy is never able to put to rest competing claims about Tess’s intentions, just as he is unable to put to rest competing readings of his novel. To defend his own character against the accusations of his critics, he similarly appeals to the logic of intention. Hardy disparages readers for failing to read the novel as he
intended it to be read: they are “willfully” misreading it. Just as Richardson did before him, Hardy makes truth claims about his novel based on an assumed transparency of representation; but unlike Richardson, Hardy’s truth claims are not based on an assumption of verisimilitude. In his non-fictional works, Hardy distances himself from “mimetic art” condemning such practice as a “student’s style” (Life and Work 192). Instead, Hardy describes his representational mode as a “disproportioning . . . of realities, to show more clearly the features that matter in those realities” (239). So although, as Susan David Bernstein notes, “the prefaces wobble around the notion of a purity of meaning, the metaphysics of a virgin text whose fundamental sense precedes its material and interpretive violations” (160), that purity of meaning resides in Hardy’s intentions rather than the text’s resemblance to some perceived reality. Like Pamela’s letters, Hardy’s novel is “Faithfully Presented” with “sincerity of purpose” and expresses “an inner Necessity and Truth.”

As in Pamela, writing is a means of externalizing a pre-existing character; but in this case, it is the author’s character. To understand this according to the logic of the modern fact that Poovey describes, writing is a transcription, like double-entry bookkeeping, of a set of discrete particulars whose authority derives from their thorough extraction from context and from their universal accessibility. However, what Richardson and Hardy discover is that those discrete particulars only derive meaning from a system of interpretation that they cannot control. Hardy learned the hard way how a transcription of discrete particulars can take on a life of its own, and the discovery was so devastating that he gave up writing novels altogether after Jude the Obscure was received in a similar way. He wrote in his journal, “How strange that one may write a
book without knowing what one puts into it—or rather, the reader reads into it. Well, if
this sort of thing continues no more novel-writing for me. A man must be a fool to
deliberately stand up and be shot at” (qtd. in Bernstein 164). However, this lesson need
not have been so difficult for Hardy to learn. Instead of learning it from his readers, he
could have learned it from his own heroine.

We discover early in the novel that despite her modern schooling Tess does not
have access to the technologies of literacy; so unlike Pamela, her intentions cannot be
rendered transparent through her writing. Instead, Tess relies on the practice of
confession to externalize Tess’s “inner truth.” Originating with the Catholic church in
what Michel Foucault would call in Discipline and Punish the age of the spectacle, the
confession has, during the modern era, lost its association with the sacred, and, though
still bound up with ritual, it has become an integral part of everyday secular life. As
such, Foucault argues in A History of Sexuality, it is central to the production of
character and by extension the modern individual. Confession is the means by which an
individual is said to expose its “true” and “unique” self. At first glance, then, the
confession appears to be a liberatory act: “[I]t seems to us that truth, lodged in our most
secret nature, ‘demands’ only to surface; that if it fails to do so, this is because a
constraint holds it in place, the violence of a power weighs it down” (60). Hardy clearly
subscribes to such an understanding of confession when he describes his novel as “an
inner Necessity and Truth” that will out. But he quickly learns the disciplining effects of
confession. As Foucault explains, confession is one of the many apparatuses of the
modern disciplinary regime. Confession is, like the school, the health care system, and
even the family, a seemingly benign institution that works on behalf of a dispersed and
invisible network of power to constitute and reconstitute the subject as a docile body—a body that willingly submits to and works to further the interests of hegemonic social power.

Foucault further identifies the confessional with the origins of modern sexuality. It was in the confession, and only in the confession, that an individual discussed its sexuality. Thus, sexuality came to be understood as “[a] thing that is hidden” only to be legitimately revealed in a carefully regulated ritual overseen by an authority (61). The relegation of sex to the regulated regime of the confession makes possible the differentiation and categorization of multiple sexualities that are a defining feature of the modern individual. The iteration of confession in multiple contexts, including religious, medical, familial, and even literary, provides the means for defining and enforcing normative and deviant sexualities. Confession provides the material for a complex discourse of sexuality, a discourse that defines sexuality not simply as a physical act but as a complex array of emotions that surround the experience: “It is no longer a question simply of saying what was done—the sexual act—and how it was done; but of reconstructing, in and around the act, the thoughts that recapitulated it, the obsessions that accompanied it, the images, desires, modulations, and quality of the pleasure that animated it” (63). In Hardy’s mind, as expressed in his defensive posturing, it is the complex array of emotions that surround Tess’s sexual improprieties—she did not want to engage in them and she regrets them—that enable her to maintain her virtue. And it is the complex array of emotions that went into the writing of Tess that guarantee its purity of meaning as well.
Because confession, like writing, purports to bring a submerged reality to light, Foucault reasons that the modern individual is characterized by an urgent need to confess, and at one point in The History he declaims with his trademark cynicism, “Western man has become a confessing animal” (59). This statement takes on a tragic literality with respect to Tess: she is repeatedly associated with the animal kingdom, and she exhibits a self-destructive compulsion to confess.6 When she and her husband Angel Clare are alone for the first time after their wedding, before they go upstairs to consummate the marriage, Tess describes her desire to confess: “It was wicked of her to take all without paying. She would pay to the utmost farthing; she would tell, there and then” (223). It is difficult to miss the rhetoric of accounting here. Tess worries that she has misrepresented her credibility, so she feels obligated to right the balance by confessing. Her sexual experience is figured in this passage as the quintessential discrete particular, a number whose significance precedes the system that accounts for it. But before Tess gets a chance to balance her books, Angel interrupts her with his own taking of account. He reveals to Tess a discrete particular of his own: he too “fell” (224).

As a proper confession should, Angel’s dwells less on the details of the event than on the emotions surrounding it. He explains that he has always been “a stickler for good morals” and that he “loved spotlessness, and hated impurity” so that after the event he felt “terrible remorse” and “[h]appily awoke almost immediately to a sense of [his] folly” (224-5). He goes on to say that he is sharing this information because he fears he could not “treat [Tess] with perfect frankness and honour” without doing so (225). Angel’s feelings surrounding the experience are expressed in his first-person voice. However,
interestingly, when the time comes in the confession to actually say what he did, the
narrator takes over: “He then told her of that time of his life to which allusion has been
made when, tossed about by doubts and difficulties like a cork on the waves, he went to
London and plunged into eight-and-forty hours’ dissipation with a stranger” (224-5). That
Angel’s folly took place in London clearly has implications for my argument, but before I
turn to those, it is important to understand how Angel responds to Tess’s parallel
confession and why he does so.

Tess is predictably elated when she learns that Angel’s infraction is a mirror image
of her own, and she concludes that because her crime “cannot be more serious,” Angel
must forgive her as she just forgave him (225). If Tess’s rhetoric sets the reader up to
interpret this scene as an act of accounting, the double confession evokes the image of
the double-entry record. Indeed, before Angel launches into his story, the narrator
describes him as Tess’s “double” (224). According to this logic, Tess’s confession
should balance him out. One act of forgiveness begets another and the account is
restored to its proper balance. But the discrete particulars of Angel’s and Tess’s
respective experiences do not balance out because, as Angel laments, “Forgiveness
does not apply to the case. You were one person; now you are another. How can
forgiveness meet such a grotesque prestidigitation as that” (228). On the one hand,
Angel is simply reproducing the double standard that governed gender relations at the
time and against which Hardy is polemicizing. Indeed, as Penny Boumelha argues, it
was the polemical nature of the novel that upset readers who should have been quite
accustomed to the sexual nature of fallen woman plots by the time Tess arrives.
However, the novel does not use the double confession just to expose the double
standard. It also uses it to expose the reasons why the double standard is so ingrained—female virtue is not so much about virginity as it is about shoring up the credibility of masculine character.

The novel suggests the imbalance that occurs as a result of Tess’s confession is the result of Angel's having, like a quixote, read Tess’s character through the singular lens of the pastoral, which idealizes nature and effaces the embodied labor that goes into its construction. As Raymond Williams argues, the pastoral gives credit to a “natural bounty” for the productions of agricultural labor: “The actual men and women who rear the animals and drive them to the house and kill them and prepare them for meat; who trap the pheasants and partridges and catch the fish; who plant and manure and prune and harvest the fruit trees: these are not present; their work is all done for them by a natural order” (32). Like his quixotic ancestors, Angel Clare's education was informal. He was the only one of his brothers who did not take a University degree, and as a result he becomes “a desultory tentative student of something and everything” (16). His time at Talbothay's dairy, where he meets Tess, is just one in a chain of various life plans he has taken up since coming of age. Tess first catches Angel’s attention when he overhears her at the breakfast table defending a most unexpected statement. When asked whether or not she believes in ghosts, Tess responds inscrutably: “our souls can be made to go outside our bodies when we are alive.” When pressed for an explanation, she continues, “A very easy way to feel ‘em go . . . is to lie on the grass at night and look straight up at some big bright star; and, by fixing your mind upon it, you will soon find that you are hundreds and hundreds o’miles away from your body, which you don’t seem to want at all” (120). The novel’s dramatic irony tells us that Tess longs to escape
her body because it bears the mark of her seduction, but it does not occur to Angel to wonder why someone like Tess, whose body is so young, and healthy, and enviably pretty, would want to escape it. For Tess, her body is an enduring sign of the rape perpetrated against her and of her unsuitability for Angel; but Tess’s extraordinary statement only induces Angel to marvel, “What a genuine daughter of Nature that milkmaid is!” (120). Angel attributes Tess’s musings to the “natural bounty” of the pastoral. According to Angel’s reading, she is the “peasant poet” whose lack of education confirms the authenticity of the pastoral ideal. When describing Tess to his parents, Angel proudly says, “She’s brim full of poetry—actualized poetry, if I may use the expression. She lives what paper-poets only write about” (164). Later, when he again finds himself stupefied by Tess’s musings, he repeats the sentiment: “And as he looked at the unpractised mouth and lips, he thought that such a daughter of the soil could only have caught up the sentiment by rote” (126). According to pastoral logic, nature is an ahistorical category, unchanged and unmarked by the social struggles that make up history. Similarly for Angel, Tess’s body must be unchanged and unmarked by history; to his mind she does not have a history. Her body is “unpractised” and her sentiments are the result of a natural bounty not of experience.

Angel’s nature is not a landscape of objects and bodies interacting and working; it is an ideal of purity whose authenticity derives from its lack of history. Angel naively conflates Tess with the pastoral landscape and reasons that Tess too must lack a history. Such reasoning allows her to stand in for Angel as idealized femininity. As critics have noted, Tess represents to Angel the “monolithic essence of female purity” (Shires 151). In Angel’s eyes, Tess is no mere “milkmaid, but a visionary essence of
woman—a whole sex condensed into one typical form” (Hardy, *Tess* 130). Later, when Tess begins to allude to her history, Angel silences her by insisting, “My Tess has, no doubt, almost as many experiences as that wild cowlululus out there on the garden hedge, that opened itself this morning for the first time” (177). The pastoral conflation of Tess with nature guarantees her good character because it effaces the problem of intentionality much like the novel of character does by embedding the feminine figure within a synchronic complex of reading conventions that effectively remove her from the epistemological category of diachronic history and enclose her within a spatial regime in which her interests are not her own. The novel of character resolves the problem of intentionality by creating a disinterested femininity, epitomized by Rachel Verinder, who refused to worry about the public credibility of her character. Angel’s reading of Tess through the pastoral does the same thing. But when Tess confesses that she does in fact have a history, the problem of intentionality resurfaces, and Angel’s immediate response is to accuse Tess of “prestigitation.” Angel cannot forgive Tess because she has not merely “fallen” as he did; to his mind, she has perpetrated a sleight of hand. She is no longer Tess; she has become the anti-Tess, who has entrapped him into marriage by masking her “true” character: “He looked upon her as a species of impostor; a guilty woman in the guise of an innocent one” (229).

Hardy juxtaposes two discrete particulars that, according to the double-entry logic within which he embeds the confession—and he presumably does so to lend his social critique the rhetorical credibility of accounting—should balance each other out. To understand why they do not, we must return to the structure of the confession. As Foucault states, one only confesses in the presence of an authority—that is, in the
presence of someone who has the authority to absolve guilt. As the essence of female purity, Tess is supposed to serve as this authority who can absolve Angel of his guilt. Angel, then, is following in the footsteps of Mr. B, whose character was exonerated and restored to credibility with the mere recognition of Pamela’s virtue. Richardson’s novel punctuates this point by staging a confession very much like Angel’s. Mr. B confesses to Pamela that he had had an affair and a child with a woman who tried to entrap him into marriage. At the end of his confession, Mr. B expresses regret over his “past liberties” and “pity” for “poor Sally Godfrey;” but most importantly, he says that he came to this place of regret “from the same Motives that I admire my Pamela’s Virtues; and resolve, by the Grace of God, to make myself as worthy of them as possible” (487). Critics have paid close attention to how Mr. B’s class status is important to legitimizing Pamela’s character. Although Pamela is famous for imagining a new mode of subjectivity that is valued for its character instead of its social status, the logic of Pamela requires that the social status of Mr. B serve as the authority that can legitimize this new source of value. But after recognizing the value of Pamela’s character, Mr. B begins to abide by the same logic of character and sets out to reform his, so in the second half of the novel, it is Pamela who retains the authority to lend credibility to his character by absolving him of the guilt of the affair. Mr. B concludes his confession by expressing the “hope” that Pamela’s “Prayers for my Pardon and my Perseverance, will be of no small Efficacy on this Occasion” (487). When Angel offers his confession, he does so similarly with the “hope” that Tess’s forgiveness will restore him to the person he believed himself to be, “a stickler for morals.” But because Tess is not the ideal of femininity
Angel imagined her to be, she cannot serve as the authority—the source of absolution—for Angel. This is why Tess’s revelation is so devastating for Angel.

Angel mistakenly assumes that Tess could not have a history because he reads her through a pastoral narrative, which, by definition, denies historicity and by extension interestedness. When he discovers that Tess does in fact have a history, his immediate response is to accuse her of duplicity, of intentionally misleading him to further her own interests. The novel suggests that Angel’s misapplication of the pastoral in his reading of Tess is the product of a false opposition he constructs between the country and the city in which London is where history happens and where interestedness drives relationships. Hence, in his imagination, London is where the certainties of character erode. It is in London, of course, where Angel loses his “character” by violating his values: “he was carried off his head” and almost “entrapped by a woman much older than himself” (116). In London, femininity is interested and experienced. That Angel subscribes to such logic is confirmed in a conversation he has with Tess about their possible marriage. When Angel renews his proposal and Tess again tries to dissuade him from the idea, he complains, “I cannot think why you are so tantalizing. Why do you disappoint me so? You seem almost like a coquette upon my life you do—a coquette of the first urban water” (177). Coquettes, women who manipulate men to further their own interests, are only, it seems, to be found in the “urban waters” of London. In London, then, character is thrown into doubt because it is a space where the problem of intentionality cannot be resolved due to an abiding interestedness. We have seen how Angel constructs the pastoral as a place of disinterestedness where a “natural bounty” rather than experience accounts for all meaning. London, by contrast, is the space of
knowledge and experience that Angel believes Tess does not possess. Indeed, it is precisely her lack of knowledge of London that reinforces his belief in her natural and necessary purity. When they drive together to meet the train to London that delivers the milk from the dairy, Tess describes Londoners as “Strange people that we have never seen” (187). It is after Tess makes this and other similar comments evidencing her ignorance of London that Angel renews his proposal and Tess finally concedes.

Tess’s proclaimed ignorance of London reassures Angel of his pastoral reading of her, but this is another example of dramatic irony. Although Tess claims not to know London, the novel is very interested in how Tess’s surroundings are infused with the influence of London. From the very beginning, when we learn that the Vale of Blackmoor, though secluded, is “within a four hours’ journey” of London, the novel stresses the proximity of the Vale to London rather than its distance (12). As Raymond Williams has so enduringly observed, the novel is much more interested in how the “regional” is coming to be defined by London than in how the provincial remains distinct from London (209). In Howards End Forster worries about what a world “melted down” by the logic of London might look like, but he preserves a space apart. Hardy does not. The Wessex of Tess is a world increasingly governed by the spatial regimes of London. Not only did Tess’s schooling “under a London-trained mistress” mostly cure her of her provincial dialect (21), and not only is the economy of Wessex driven by the consumer demands of those “strange” Londoners, but the land of Wessex is becoming subject to the relative values of real estate rather than the intrinsic values of home. Whereas in Howards End the country house represents the last remaining place of intrinsic values, in Tess the country house is merely real estate. For example, the D’Urberville house
“was not a manorial home in the ordinary sense, with fields, and pastures, and a grumbling farmer, out of which a living had to be dragged by the owner and his family by hook or by crook. It was more, far more; a country house, built for enjoyment pure and simple, with not an acre of troublesome land” (38). The wealth that built and maintains the D'Urberville house is not produced by the natural bounty of the pastoral. Instead, “Everything looked like money—like the last coin issued from the Mint” (38). In contrast to the intrinsic value that the country house represents in Howards End, the D'Urberville house—appropriately constructed to be the residence of a “money-lender” (39)—is money itself, the quintessential symbol of exchangeable and relative value. At the end of the novel, when Tess and Angel are running from the law, they hide out in what had been a conventional manor house but is now a country get-away for some potential urban buyers. The house is fronted by a sign advertising it for rent: “This desireable Mansion to be Let Furnished” with further instructions “to apply to some London agents” (387). And finally, Tess's family is set adrift, very much like Margaret and Helen Schlegel, when they are evicted from their home upon the death of Tess's father, who “was the last of the three lives for whose duration the house and premises were held under a lease” (351). Tess originally embarks on a peripatetic life in order to escape the social derision that follows her pregnancy. But by novel’s end everyone in Wessex, including Angel and Alec, are on the move. They have all joined the great “migration” that the novel laments has become the norm in regions like Wessex. If A Study in Scarlet and Howards End cast London as the antithesis of home because it is a space governed by the anonymity of a constantly moving heterogeneous population, by the
end of Tess, Wessex looks a lot more like London than the rural sanctuary for an injured character that Angel longs for it to be.

In 1912, Hardy described his novels as “Novels of Character and Environment” (Whitehead 204). Critics have argued that such a label appropriately captures Hardy’s tendency to conflate character with environment. Elaine Scarry observes that throughout his oeuvre Hardy exhibits an enduring interest in how the body is marked by its interactions with the world (50). Roberto M. Dainotto locates an “allegorical contiguity between the human and the geographic. In this relation between land and life, Hardy’s characters become the expression of a topography laid out in the map” (43). And Ralph Pite observes that in Hardy’s novels character and environment “appear equivalent to one another” (1). It seems, then, that Tess critiques one double standard only to replace it with another. The novel draws our attention, through dramatic irony, to how Angel misreads Tess as the essence of female purity by conflating her with her environment, which he idealizes by applying a pastoral narrative. But as Boumelha points out, the narrator also conflates Tess with an idealized nature, governed not by intention or interestedness but by instinct. Like the animals she is frequently associated with, she is driven by “instinct” and “appetite” rather than “art” (122-3). Thus, the novel reproduces the logic that it condemns Angel for using. If it was the artlessness of the natural world that attracts Angel to Tess, it is also the artlessness of the natural world that, according to the novel’s polemic, allows Tess to retain her virtue.

As we have seen in previous novels, in an effort to resolve the problem of intention and put competing fictions about her character to rest, the novel embeds Tess in an environment, like the home, that is detached from the interested world of commerce.
But the novel does this at the same time that it suggests such a place does not exist. *Tess*, then, is riddled with contradictions. And these contradictions remain irresolvable in *Tess* because Hardy is still working within the paradigm of the novel of character. His defense of Tess suggests that character is still, in his mind, an aspect of personhood and the source of an individual’s value; his readers’ condemnations of Tess similarly indicate that character has consequences beyond the literary. Yet Hardy’s novel is an interesting study for this dissertation because the contradictions that plague the novel demonstrate the degree to which the epistemology of character is bound up with a particular configuration of femininity and of space. To imagine a different configuration of either one, as Hardy’s novel attempts to do, casts doubt on an epistemology that attaches value to a presumably legible character. Without a disinterested, domestic femininity to serve as a reference point stabilizing all character, character cannot serve as a source of value because its representation becomes a site of struggle between competing interests, much like the characters of the Marquis in *The Female Quixote* and John Herncastle and his cousin in *The Moonstone*.

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1 See also McLaughlin, Otis, and Siddiqi.
2 See Williams (248).
3 For studies of how the “ache of modernism” infuses Hardy’s work see Meadowsong, Kettle, and Howe.
4 Bernstein similarly observes that the rhetoric of *Tess*’s prefaces “fashions [Hardy] as writer into a figure resembling his heroine” (159).
5 For additional accounts of Hardy’s rejection of mimetic practice see Higonnet, Shires, Meadowsong, and Riquelme.
6 See Rooney for a thorough catalogue of moments in which Hardy’s novel allies Tess with the animal kingdom (475).
7 See Roulston.
Published only one year before *Howards End*, H. G. Wells’s *Tono-bungay* could be the sibling foil to Forster’s novel. The narratives of both novels pivot upon a perceived opposition between provincial England and the city of London, an opposition that gains currency, both novels suggest, within the economic and social conditions of what Arrighi identifies as the “autumn” phase of Britain’s hegemony. But where Forster’s novel refuses the city and expresses nostalgia for the reassurances of place promised by provincial England (even if those reassurances threaten to be short lived as the creeping “red rust” of London appears over the horizon at *Howards End* [243]), *Tono-bungay* epitomizes the contemporary turn toward London that I seek to locate and explicate in this dissertation. In a manner of speaking, then, *Tono-Bungay* anchors this dissertation. It offers the most explicit and most thorough articulation of the phenomena I observe piecemeal in the other novels. It registers a full-blown awareness of the challenges the turn toward London poses for the novelistic form and the model of subjectivity upon which it relies. That said, *Tono-Bungay* can only articulate the problems it encounters and cannot yet anticipate how those problems will be resolved by the formal experimentation of the later novels I will discuss, *The Waves* and *Voyage in the Dark*.

The opening pages of Wells’s novel announce that it will be a novel about novel writing as the narrator, George Ponderevo, declares,

I’ve got, I suppose, to a time of life when things begin to take on shapes that have an air of reality, and become no longer material for dreaming, but interesting in themselves. I’ve reached the criticizing, novel-writing age, and here I am writing mine (6)
Although *Tono-Bungay* tells the gripping story of the rise and fall of the Tono-bungay empire, the source of narrative crisis comes not so much from the spurious dealings of George’s uncle as from George’s inability to mold into a novel those “things” that have seemingly acquired “an air of reality.” Indeed, as Jeffrey Sommers has observed, George’s novel writing assumes the quality of a theatrical performance as he repeatedly poses himself “carefully situated at his desk” and uses stage directions to describe the process (73). But the drama of the performance does not hinge on his success or failure; there are no criteria for making such a determination in George’s world. George acknowledges at the outset that he is not writing a novel per se, but rather “something in the nature of a novel” (3) that might more precisely be described as “an agglomeration” of “notes and inconsecutive observations” (5). As critics have rightly pointed out, in having George describe his novel as an “agglomeration,” Wells seeks to distance his own artistic practice from the polemics of his friend and foe Henry James, whose aesthetic sensibilities were notoriously, albeit with superb genteel decorum, offended by Wells’s diffuse style.¹

But George’s decision to write a novel that is “comprehensive rather than austere” is not motivated simply by Wells’s antagonism to James’s pedantry (6). Instead, in his critical and non-fictional writings Wells insists that the Jamesian novel no longer makes sense in a post-Victorian world:

> Throughout the broad smooth flow of nineteenth century life in Great Britain, the art of fiction floated on this same assumption of social fixity. The Novel in English was produced in an atmosphere of security for the entertainment of secure people who liked to feel established and safe for good. Its standards were established within that apparently permanent frame and the criticism of it began to be irritated and perplexed when, through a new instability, the splintering frame began to get into the picture. I suppose for a time I was the outstanding instance among writers of fiction
Some defenders of Wells’s legacy have attributed the underappreciation of his novels in academic circles to, among other things, the dominance of Jamesian aesthetics within the institution in the middle of the last century. But following the poststructural triumph of the last thirty years, and especially after the transformative impact on the practice of literary and cultural criticism of Fredric Jameson’s *The Political Unconscious*, which proposes that “all literature, no matter how weakly, must be informed by what we have called a political unconscious, that all literature must be read as a symbolic meditation on the destiny of community” (70), Wells’s oeuvre seems more amenable to current strains of literary criticism. Indeed, as expressed in the passage cited above, according to Wells, Jamesian aesthetics were appealing not because they claimed to strike a universal chord, but because they were the socially symbolic expression—or, as he put it in “The Contemporary Novel,” the “social mediator” (154)—of Victorian security and relative social fixity. So one of Wells’s many concerns in *Tono-Bungay* is to conceive of a novelistic form appropriate to a time of “new instability,” an instability that *Tono-Bungay* attributes to the increasing influence of modes of accumulation—the intangible modes of new forms of capital production and financial accumulation—that break with the logic of the estate system and transfer economic, political and cultural power to London.

Early in the novel George meditates on what he believes characterizes a conventional novel and on how his novel deviates from that tradition:

Most people in this world seem to live ‘in character’; they have a beginning, a middle and an end, and the three are congruous one with another and true to the rules of their type. You can speak of them as being of this sort of people or that. They are, as theatrical people say, no more (and no less)
than ‘character actors.’ They have a class, they have a place, they know what is becoming in them and what is due to them, and their proper size of tombstone tells at last how properly they have played the part. But there is also another kind of life that is not so much living as a miscellaneous tasting of life. One gets hit by some unusual transverse force, one is jerked out of one’s stratum and lives crosswise for the rest of the time, and, as it were, in a succession of samples. That has been my lot, and that is what has set me at last writing something in the nature of a novel. I have got an unusual series of impressions that I want very urgently to tell. I have seen life at very different levels, and at all these levels I have seen it with a sort of intimacy and in good faith. (3)

A few pages later, George locates the origins of the “character actors”—those who, unlike George, “have a class” and “a place”—in the social system of provincial England:

In that English countryside of my boyhood every human being had a “place.” It belonged to you from your birth like the colour of your eyes, it was inextricably your destiny. Above you were your betters, below you were your inferiors . . . On the lowest fringe of these real Olympians hung the vicarage people, and next to them came those ambiguous beings who are neither quality nor subjects . . . The doctor in Bladesover ranked below the vicar but above the “vet,” artists and summer visitors squeezed in above or below this point according to their appearance and expenditure, and then in a carefully arranged scale came the head keeper, the cook, the publican, the second keeper, the blacksmith . . . the village shopkeeper’s eldest son, the first footman, younger sons of the village shopkeeper, his first assistant, and so forth. (10-2)

In the Bladesover system (as the feudal estate system is referred to in the novel), each individual is unambiguously interpolated into its proper place in the system with respect to other individuals. Each individual is provided with clear and unmistakable reference points with which to construct a stable identity that is consistent from birth to death. And it is this type of experience, George argues, that resembles characters in a novel. The lives of Bladesover residents have a “beginning, a middle and an end,” which are all “congruous with one another” as their “proper size of tombstone” will reflect. The end of their lives will merely be an extension and confirmation of their beginnings, just as the end of a conventional novel follows directly out of its beginning. That George casts
himself as the star of his own play about novel writing might mislead one into concluding, as Sommers does, that George is one of these “character actors” who “is patently the very same George in the novel’s opening and closing chapters” (72). True, George is very much the same from beginning to end, but the dynamic character that Sommers looks for and misses in George relies on the very novelistic conventions that cannot account for George. George, in other words, changes the terms of the argument and asks not what makes a good or interesting character but what constitutes character in a novel that can account for him, if indeed we can even speak of character at all.  

_Tono-Bungay_ concurs, then, with _Howards End_’s association of place with provincial England. But whereas _Tono-Bungay_ seeks to represent a mode of subjectivity that lacks place, _Howards End_ reproduces the “character actors” of George’s Bladesover system. While Forster’s novel briefly imagines the possibility of crossing class boundaries, none of the characters are hit by a “transverse force” that radically reconfigures their relationships to each other and themselves. The novel ultimately confirms the place of its characters. The triumph of the Schlegel sisters, the representatives of middle-class Victorianism, is unmistakable at the end of the novel as the sisters find themselves safely ensconced in a traditional English country house surrounded by the ruins of the overly ambitious Wilcoxes whose plunder now serves the end of their class stability. Even the potentially disruptive birth of Helen’s mixed-class son is mitigated by the death of the child’s lower-middle-class father as well as the novel’s concluding affirmation of the romantic pastoral. The final scene has Helen walking into Howards End carrying her son and holding the hand of Tom, the son of the neighboring farmer. The novel concludes with Helen’s exclamation: “The field’s cut! . . .
the big meadow! We’ve seen to the very end, and it’ll be such a crop of hay as never!” (246). On the one hand, the image of this final scene is one of class heterogeneity in which the leisure class, the middle-class, urban lower-middle class, and agricultural laboring class occupy the same space, but Helen’s final exclamation aligns the scene with the pastoral tradition, a tradition well known for its erasure of class conflict in its romanticization of agricultural labor.⁴ The conclusion of the novel must, then, call our attention to the true reason for the novel’s desire for the reassurances of place: the reification of space into place reaffirms feudal class structures by absorbing and ameliorating class tensions. In the face of “new instability”—an instability registered in the novel’s anxieties about urban real estate speculation—Howards End turns to what Tono-Bungay depicts as a very old source of social security.

While in Howards End class conflict disappears under a gauze of nostalgia for place, George’s repeated invocation of the word “place” is meant to ambiguously evoke the mutually supporting categories of social class and the stasis of space that Forster’s novel hints at but ultimately effaces. Tono-Bungay meticulously describes how the strict regulation of space within the Bladesover system serves to reify its class structures:

The house was built in the eighteenth century, it is of pale red brick in the style of a French chateau, and save for one pass among the crests which opens to blue distances, to minute, remote, oast-set farmhouses and copses and wheat fields and the occasional gleam of water, its hundred and seventeen windows look on nothing but its own wide and handsome territories. A semi-circular screen of great beeches masks the church and village, which cluster picturesquely about the high road along the skirts of the great park. Northward, at the remotest corner of the enclosure, is a second dependent village, Ropedean . . . Now the unavoidable suggestion of that wide park and that fair large house, dominating church, village and the countryside, was that they represented the thing that mattered supremely in the world, and that all other things had significance only in relation to them. They represent the Gentry, the Quality, by and through and for whom the rest of the world, the farming folk and the labouring folk,
the trades-people of Ashborough, and the upper servants and the lower servants and the servants of the estate, breathed and lived and were permitted. And the Quality did it so quietly and thoroughly, the great house mingled so solidly and effectually with earth and sky, the contrast of its spacious hall and saloon and galleries, its airy housekeeper’s room and warren of offices with the meager dignities of the vicar, and the pinched and stuffy rooms of even the post-office people and the grocer, so enforced these suggestions . . . (7-8)

The landscape surrounding Bladesover house creates the illusion that Bladesover is all that exists in the world. Anybody standing within its grounds cannot see beyond its territory because hills and trees, except for one narrow opening, block the view to the surrounding communities and farms. In addition, the house appears to be in perfect harmony with its environment, “mingl[ing] so solidly and effectually with earth and sky” that the house itself seems to be part of nature. And finally, the architecture of the house’s interior space reinforces the hierarchy that obtains in its territories. Even Bladesover’s servants occupy rooms that are spacious and “airy” compared to the “meager dignities” and “pinched and stuffy rooms” of those who live outside of the house. The spatial structure of Bladesover naturalizes, universalizes, and de-historicizes the social relations that ground the estate system—that is, it forecloses the possibility of imagining some other form of existence by limiting the occupants’ line of vision, aesthetically linking the house to the category of the natural, and imagistically reproducing the markers of class status in the private spaces of its residents. George sums up the ideological work the spatial architecture of Bladesover performs: “when I was a little boy I took the place with the entirest faith as a complete authentic microcosm. I believed that the Bladesover system was a little working-model—and not so very little either—of the whole world” (7).
There did come “a time when [George] realised that Bladesover House was not all it seemed” (7). George attributes his ability to recognize as mystifying the work performed by the Bladesover grounds and architecture to his lack of place in the system. While George’s mother is the housekeeper at Bladesover and “knew with inflexible decision her place” (13), George’s father is conspicuously absent, perhaps, the novel hints, residing somewhere in the colonies: “The word colonies always upset [my mother]. She was afraid, I think, that if she turned her mind in that direction my errant father might suddenly and shockingly be discovered, no doubt conspicuously bigamic and altogether offensive and revolutionary” (18). If Bladesover legitimizes its authority by creating the impression of spatial enclosure, the specter of George’s father gestures toward the space of the other that Bladesover attempts to close off. In so doing it calls attention to the existence of those “unstable questionable few,” who have no “place” within the Bladesover system (10). The novel suggests, then, that George inherits his lack of place from his errant father, and like his father, George’s lack of place is figured by his transgression of spatial boundaries. He regularly goes into “the park or shrubbery (where [he] was a trespasser)” (11), and when he develops a taste for reading, he “surreptitiously . . . raid[s] the bookcases in the big saloon” (20). Indeed, his incursions into the library are described in intricate detail:

The book-borrowing raid was one of extraordinary dash and danger. One came down the main service stairs—that was legal, and illegality began in a little landing when, very cautiously, one went through a red baize door. A little passage led to the hall, and here one reconnoitered for Ann, the old head-housemaid . . . Ann located, came a dash across the open space at the foot of that great staircase that has never been properly descended since powder went out of fashion, and so to the saloon door . . . (21)
As this passage suggests, the “illegality” of George’s book-borrowing raids does not occur in the borrowing of books, but in his mere presence in the spaces that he must illegally enter in order to get to the books.

George, then, is not one of the “character actors” that, along with the Bladesover system, are the foundation for the conventional novel. Unlike his mother whose interaction with individuals from different social classes was very limited and meticulously regulated, George has been accepted into the company of people from a broad range of social strata: “I have eaten illegal snacks—the unjustifiable gifts of footmen—in pantries, and been despised for my want of style (and subsequently married and divorced) by the daughter of a gasworks clerk, and—to go to my other extreme—I was once . . . an item in the house party of a countess” (3-4). If the Bladesover system functioned for his mother as a source of stable identity formation, it does not do so for George, and throughout the novel he longs for something to ground his sense of self—he longs for “something to hold on to” (189). But George’s crisis of subjectivity does not arise simply from his lack of place in the Bladesover system; it is exacerbated by the seeming immateriality of the world—his uncle’s world of capital accumulation, a combination of finance capitalism and American style capitalism that would come to define twentieth-century capitalism—in which George finds himself after he is banished from Bladesover.

Following the unforgivable transgression of kissing a young relative of the Bladesover “Olympians,” George eventually finds himself living with his father’s brother, Edward (Teddy) Ponderevo. Like George and his father, Teddy has no place in the Bladesover system; indeed, George later says of his uncle, “My uncle was the first real
breach I found in the great front of Bladesovery" (60). Even though George is able to recognize and foreground the mystifying work of the Bladesover system, it nevertheless was “one of those dominant explanatory impressions that make the framework of [his] mind” (57). Teddy, on the other hand, “had no respect for Bladesover and Eastry—none whatever. He did not believe in them. He was blind even to what they were” (60). As the owner of a chemist’s shop in a small village in the jurisdiction of another estate, Teddy complained about the intrinsic conservativism of a system that allowed no room for new ideas for financial growth:

But there’s no Development—no Growth! They just come along here and buy pills when they want ‘em—and a horseball or such. They’ve got to be ill before there’s a prescription. That sort they are. You can’t get ‘em to launch out, you can’t get ‘em to take up anything new. For instance, I’ve been trying lately—induce them to buy their medicines in advance, and in larger quantities. But they won’t look at it! Then I tried to float a little notion of mine, sort of an insurance scheme for colds; you pay so much a week, and when you’ve got a cold you get a bottle of Cough Linctus so long as you can produce a substantial sniff. See? But Lord! They’ve no capacity for ideas, they don’t catch on; no Jump about he place, no Life! Live!—they trickle, and what one has to do here is to trickle too—Zzzz. (52)

In short, Wimblehurst residents frustrate Teddy because they continue to consume according to a logic of need rather than of abundance.

In *Modernism and Time*, Ronald Schleifer links the early twentieth-century crisis of representation to what he calls a “crisis of abundance”—when “the enormous multiplication of commodities available for consumption in a world seemingly filled with abundances of things” demanded a revised intellectual and representational accounting of reality (4). Schleifer’s interest in the “crisis of abundance” is primarily a Benjaminian one in its fascination with the intersections between commodity culture and intellectual and aesthetic production. But there is another way to think of this “crisis of abundance,” and that is as a function of overproduction. The commodity market of the late nineteenth
and twentieth centuries was glutted with product. Indeed, the “great depression” of the
1870s, which lasted well into the 1890s and was the longest recorded economic
recession up to that point, was in large part the result of an over-production of
commodities. Economists have been quick to point out that in the midst of this great
depression, global production actually expanded. In addition to technological advances
which increased output, other countries, especially Germany and the U.S., were quickly
industrializing and flooding the global market with cheaper goods. The increased
competition that accompanied the increased production drove down prices so that
between 1873 and 1896 prices in Britain fell 40% (Hobsbawm 36-7). While the dramatic
drop in prices decreased the cost of living for the lower classes and thereby increased
their standard of living, the falling rate of profit encouraged the capitalist classes to seek
other modes of capital accumulation and thereby spurred a transfer of British capital into
mechanisms of financial accumulation (Arrighi 171). Teddy’s insurance scheme
described above is an example of how producers and retailers might have sought to
expand profits in the face of a saturated market and decreasing prices. In looking to
earn his fortune, Teddy recognizes that simply producing a necessary commodity will
not lead to the wealth that he craves. The only fortune to be made in “wheat or steel” is
in “Corners!”—that is, by monopolizing the market and manufacturing an artificial
scarcity: “The whole trend of modern money-making is to foresee something that will
presently be needed and put it out of reach, and then haggle yourself wealthy” (61-2).
But until Teddy is able to discover that elusive commodity or make it big on “stog-
igschange,” he seeks to speculate on a smaller scale in Wimblehurst with his insurance
scheme (60). He is betting against his customers that they will pay more in insurance than the cold remedy will cost him once they need it.

In his discussion of the eighteenth-century phase of financial accumulation, Baucom notes that the system of credit that enabled the Atlantic slave trade required “both a theory of knowledge and a form of value which would secure the credibility of the system itself;” and “central to that theory was a mutual and system-wide determination to credit the existence of imaginary values” (17). In this system of imaginary values, value does not follow but precedes commodity exchange: “Such value exists not because a purchase has been made and goods exchanged but because two or more parties have agreed to believe in it” (17). Mechanisms of finance capital, then, rely on a logic of imaginary values, values that exist in the present only in terms of agreements between potential producers and consumers and which can only be realized at some future date. It is the logic of imaginary value that Teddy tries to instill in his patrons and that they, much to his frustration, refuse to acknowledge. But in Teddy’s imagination there is a place, or rather space, whose inhabitants do recognize the virtues of imaginary values. While the people of Wimblehurst are “all shook down into their places” and “fast asleep, doing their business out of habit—in a sort of dream”(63), in London, people “Rush about . . . Do things!”—that is, they come up with new ways to make money (61).

If the spatial regime of provincial estates like Bladesover and Eastry is shown to enforce myth of place—Teddy regrets “plant[ing]” himself in Wimblehurst and feels “buried in it up to the arm pits” (60)—London, by contrast, is where space happens. George describes his initial arrival in London by train:
I marked beyond Chiselhurst the growing multitude of villas, and so came stage by stage through multiplying houses and diminishing interspaces of market garden and dingy grass to regions of interlacing railway lines, big factories, gasometers and wide reeking swamps of dingy little homes, more of them and more and more. The number of these and their dinginess and poverty increased, and here rose a great public house and here a Board School and here a gaunt factory; and away to the east there loomed for a time a queer, incongruous forest of masts and spars. The congestion of houses intensified and piled up presently into tenements; I marveled more and more at this boundless world of dingy people; whiffs of industrial smell, of leather, of brewing, drifted into his carriage; the sky darkened, I rumbled thunderously over bridges, van-crowded streets, peered down on and crossed the Thames with an abrupt éclat of sound. I got an effect of tall warehouses, of grey water, barge crowded, of broad banks of indescribable mud, and then I was in Cannon Street Station—a monstrous dirty cavern with trains packed across its vast floor and more porters standing along the platform than I had ever seen in my life before. (77)

Whereas the spatial regime of Bladesover separates classes by allocating distinct spaces for various functions, rigorously separating work, education, leisure, etc., in London these spaces butt up against each other. George is surprised to find that a "public house" is next to a "Board School," which is next to a factory, which is next to a residential area. As a result, the sounds and smells of production are ubiquitous in London, entering the private spaces of the working and leisure classes alike. This is a situation that would never be tolerated at Bladesover, where the kitchen is safely ensconced in the basement such that not even the smells of cooking are allowed to offend the polite nostrils of the Olympians upstairs.

Because Bladesover is an enclosed system with distinct and identifiable boundaries and a clear center (Bladesover House) and periphery (the oast-set farms), it lends itself to a panoramic representation. As a result, George has no trouble conveying Bladesover in its entirety to the reader, or at least leaving the reader with the impression that he has conveyed Bladesover in its entirety. But the spatial regime—if one can even call it a regime—of London defies Bladesover logic, and thus gives George trouble
when he tries to offer the reader a comprehensive description. To provide the reader with an impression of London comparable to that of Bladesover would be an endless, tedious endeavor, so George shifts from attempting to describe London, per se, to explaining how he came to “apprehend” London:

I could fill a book, I think, with a more or less imaginary account of how I came to apprehend London, how first in one aspect and then in another it grew in my mind. Each day my accumulating impressions were added to and qualified and brought into relationship with new ones; they fused inseparably with others that were purely personal and accidental. I find myself with a certain comprehensive perception of London, complex indeed, incurably indistinct in places and yet in some way a whole that began with my first visit and is still being mellowed and enriched.

London! (89)

Although George claims that he has obtained a “comprehensive perception of London,” his perception fluxuates as it is “mellowed and enriched” by new experiences and observations, so that in the end, he can only offer up the exclamation of “London!” to convey the “whole.” Moreover, his process of “apprehending London” leads him to conclude that London can only be made sense of as a diseased growth on the Bladesover system: “All these aspects have suggested to my mind at times, do suggest to this day, the unorganised, abundant substance of some tumorous growth-process, a process which indeed bursts all the outlines of the affected carcass” (92).

As I explain in my introduction, Julian Wolfreys condemns turn-of-the-century novelistic representations of London such as that found in *Tono-Bungay* for explaining away the heterogeneous complexity of London by appealing to a few “overworked tropes” like “disease.” Wolfreys argues that the novelists’ use of these tropes manifests their fear of being “placed under the threat of erasure by the plenitude and velocity of the city’s heterogeneous traces” (48). Their use of tropes also registers contemporary
anxiety over the “breakdown in mimetic or directly representational modes of discourse” in the face of such excess as London exhibits (55). On the one hand, George’s narrative of how he came to apprehend London corroborates Wolfreys’s claim. Indeed, George’s first description of London from inside the train repeats a common motif identified by Wolfreys: “The registration of the city’s phantasmagoria through the movement of the cab-screen [or in this case, train-screen] attests to an increasingly common mode of attention in the second half of the nineteenth century, one in which perception is fundamentally characterized by experiences of fragmentation, shock, and dispersal” (48). And upon arriving in London, George does express a fear of “erasure”: “But I did not realise all this when I came to London, did not perceive how the change of atmosphere began at once to warp and distribute my energies. In the first place I became invisible” (95). What begins for George as the proverbial shock of anonymity in the teeming city later becomes a full-blown crisis in subjectivity, a crisis not of being seen but of seeing himself. Indeed, this crisis is why he set out to write the novel in the first place—“I want to tell—myself” (6).

However, Wolfreys assumes that these fin-de-siècle writers are responding merely to an intrinsic fear of the city’s heterogeneity. The “disease” metaphor in Tono-Bungay is certainly an expression of this fear and an expression of George’s inability to satisfactorily submit the city to the conventions of novelistic representation. More importantly, however, it captures the city’s relationship to the fading hegemony of the Bladesover system. George appeals to the disease trope because he sees the city not just as a teeming and threatening chaotic mass of heterogeneity and otherness, but because it looks to him like a diseased version of Bladesover. As indicated earlier,
although George did not have a place in the Bladesover system, his perceptive apparatus developed within that system, and he acknowledges that he has trouble thinking outside of its terms. So when he arrives in London, the Bladesover system provides the default interpretive matrix through which he might understand the city. The disease trope, then, is not merely a reaction formation as Wolfrey’s would have it. Nor is it simply a naïve replacement for the nascent crisis in representation that literary and cultural critics have long associated with this period. When George abandons his attempt to offer a visually descriptive impression of London akin to that which accounts for Bladesover, he aligns his narrative approach more with the modernist and postmodernist writers that Wolfreys celebrates. George shifts from a mimetic register—“the naïve naming of the outside world” (Jameson 212)—to an impressionistic one, which “discards even the operative fiction of some interest in the constituted objects of the natural world, and offers the exercise of perception and the perceptual recombination of sense data as an end in itself” (230). Not only does he describe his apprehension of London as an ongoing process—so that London appears at any given time as merely a “gathering point” of “accumulating impressions” registered in the exclamation “London!,” an appellation referring to an idea that is perpetually being “mellowed and enriched”—but he transforms London from a thing that exists in space to a thing that reveals itself and continually reproduces itself in and as text. London perpetually becomes in George’s imagination, and thus, by extension, in his novel. Where Wolfrey’s locates a naïve adherence to mimetic modes of representation, Tono-Bungay identifies a shift in the historical conditions of possibility for representation. For George, the mimetic register is inextricably linked to the economic and cultural
hegemony of the estate system, a system that maintained its power through the
nineteenth-century phase of material expansion but is now becoming an innocuous
museum piece:

The great houses stand in the parks still, the cottages cluster respectfully
on their borders, touching their eaves with their creepers, the English
countryside . . . persists obstinately in looking what it was. It is like an early
day in a fine October. The hand of change rests on it all, unfelt, unseen;
resting for awhile, as it were half reluctantly, before it grips and ends the
thing for ever. One frost and the whole face of things will be bare, links
snap, patience end, our fine foliage of pretences lie glowing in the mire. (9)

However, “the new order” that is replacing the dissolving lines of the estate system
are yet “enigmatical” to George: “the new England of our children’s children is still a
riddle” (9). George’s problem with locating or identifying the contours of the new order is
that he is looking for a new order—that is to say, he is looking for something that is
ordered like Bladesover. What he fails to see, but what his novel nevertheless registers,
is that his uncle and London, in their apparent disorder and formlessness, broadcast
“the new England,” an England that can no longer rely on the tangible—or “substantial”
to invoke the novel’s own nomenclature—world of commodity production for its
continued position as the global capitalist power. Therefore, it must rely instead on new
schemes of capital accumulation, some of which are purely financial, but others of
which, as I will show, forecast an important characteristic of the next, American-
centered phase of material expansion.

Some readers might object to my reading of Tono-Bungay as a novel first and
foremost about fin-de-siècle finance capitalism because at the heart of the novel, indeed
in the very title of the novel, and at the source of Teddy’s financial empire lies a
commodity—the sham cure-all Tono-Bungay. However, Tono-Bungay is not a
commodity like other commodities: it is not like a pair of shoes, which has an intrinsic
use value; it is not even a commodity like the fifth pair of shoes, whose value is no longer attached to need but to desire—for, in the end, even the fifth pair of shoes has a use-value. Rather, the value that obtains to Tono-Bungay exists purely as a function of Teddy’s marketing schemes, or what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have termed in their provocative work on late-twentieth century and twenty-first-century capitalism, “affective,” “communicative” production. Although the reader is given a tour of the Tono-bungay factory, and although we are told that George made improvements in the efficiency of its production, thereby lowering the costs of its production and theoretically increasing the amount of surplus value represented by each bottle, the value of Tono-Bungay does not derive from its production per se: “It was my uncle’s genius that did it . . . He wrote every advertisement; some of them even he sketched . . . That alluring, button-holing, let-me-just-tell-you-quite-soberly-something-you-ought-to-know style of newspaper advertisement, with every now and then a convulsive jump of some attractive phrase into capitals . . .” (136).5

In *Empire*, Hardt and Negri take issue with Arrighi’s cyclical model of capitalism; they argue that such a model disregards human agency and forecloses the possibility of “a paradigm shift” (237-9). But the two projects need not be at cross purposes: where Arrighi’s project traces the history of capitalist *accumulation*, Hardt and Negri’s traces the history of capitalist *production*—*production* being a subset of capital accumulation. Understood in this way, the two projects complement each other and reading them together produces a much richer outline of capitalist history than either provides by itself. As I explained in the introduction, according to Arrighi’s history, each new hegemony inaugurates a qualitatively and structurally different form of capitalism,
bringing new institutional structures and productive mechanisms to bear on capital accumulation. In identifying the primary innovation of the American hegemony, Arrighi focuses on the vertically integrated corporation that replaced the family-based firm. But where Arrighi focuses on an institutional change that made production more efficient, Hardt and Negri’s work details a new source of production and therefore a new source of value: namely, immaterial production, one component of which is the affective-communicative production of marketing.

Hardt and Negri identify three economic paradigms that have dominated production since the Middle Ages: the first was “agriculture and the extraction of raw materials”; the second was industrialization and the manufacture of commodities; and the third and “current paradigm” is “informatization” (which they equate with “postmodernization”), “in which providing services and manipulating information are at the heart of economic production” (280). This is not to claim, of course, that the manufacture of commodities has ceased; rather, it is to assert that the primary productive capacity—that is, the primary source of value—of manufacturing lies in its informatization: “Just as through the process of modernization all production tended to become industrialized, so too through the process of postmodernization all production tends toward the production of services” (286). To put it another way, just as agriculture was industrialized, today, factories have been informatized (287). If Hardt and Negri identify informatization as the dominant mode of production in Empire, they find its corresponding world order in what they call “imperial sovereignty,” which, they argue, has its foundation in the American Constitution. With the phrase “imperial sovereignty” Hardt and Negri want to distinguish the world order of Empire from the classical
Western system of nation-states, or “modern sovereignty.” Whereas the authority of modern sovereignty resides in a centralized, transcendent location or body and depends on a dialectic of self and other established and maintained via colonial regimes (so the standard bearer or hegemon modern sovereignty would be the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century British empire), imperial sovereignty relies on diffuse networks of power relations: “the new U.S. concept of sovereignty opens with extraordinary force toward the outside” and “when it expands, this new sovereignty does not annex or destroy the other powers it faces but on the contrary opens itself to them, including them in the network” (166). The originality of the U.S. Constitution, they argue, is to relocate power within society. Modern sovereignty, by contrast, “estranged and alienated the source of power from society” (164). But to maintain order within this diffuse network of power, imperial sovereignty leverages what Hardt and Negri call “biopower,” “a form of power that regulates social life from its interior” and derives from “an intensification and generalization of the normalizing apparatuses of [Foucauldian] disciplinarity” (23). Empire arises from the dialectical tension between empowering the “multitude” and insuring its docility via an expanded and even more comprehensive disciplinary apparatus that makes use of immaterial labor. The dialectical tension of Empire, then, provides the conditions of possibility for the productive capacity of immaterial labor—the creation and maintenance of informational networks, the performance of symbolic analysis and, the source of Tono-Bungay’s value, “the production and manipulation of affects” (30).

When I argue that Tono-Bungay bears witness to the “autumn” phase of the British cycle of accumulation, I am claiming that the novel registers two interrelated
characteristics of that phase: the increasing dominance of finance in the British economy and the transfer to U.S. hegemony. The former I will return to in a moment, but as I have already suggested, we see the “yet enigmatical” traces of the latter in Tono-bungay itself. The source of Tono-Bungay’s value derives not from its production but from its marketing, a mode of production, which, in Hardt and Negri’s words, “has perhaps the clearest relation to postmodernist theories” (151). Indeed, they acknowledge that “capitalist marketing strategies have long been postmodernist” (151).

A great deal of ink has been spilled on debating the parameters of postmodernism and modernism as well as on the relationship of Tono-Bungay to those categories.6 I am not claiming that Tono-Bungay should be recategorized as a postmodern novel, but rather that it begins to identify the contours, in emergent form, of the logical, representational, and ethical structures that find equivalencies in late twentieth-century theories of postmodernism as well as the power networks and modes of production of Empire that characterize the American hegemony. Tono-Bungay can be anything its makers want it to be, and indeed, over the course of its career, Tono-Bungay takes on many shapes. At first it promises to increase virility and its label boasts “a strong man all set about with lightning flashes” (119). But a later ad suggests that it improves mood, simply saying, “HILARITY—TONO-BUNGAY. Like Mountain Air in the Veins” (137). Tono-bungay is thus the ideal commodity for postmodern niche marketing. It can be redefined and reconstituted with ease: “we rolled over the Cheviots with a special adaptation containing eleven per cent. of absolute alcohol; ‘Tono-Bungay: Thistle Brand.’ We also had the Fog poster adapted to a kilted Briton in a misty Highland scene” (141). Later manifestations of Tono-Bungay include “Tono-Bungay Hair
Stimulant” and “Concentrated Tono-Bungay,” which was marketed for the eyes, “Tono-Bungay Lozenges,” and “Tono-Bungay Chocolate” (142).

Before auspiciously settling on *Tono-Bungay* as the title for his novel, Wells considered calling it drably “The End of an Age” (Hammond 93). The proposed title would have focused the novel on the “Dissolving Views” of the passing age; but the accepted title draws our attention to the dawning era. If Bladesover represents for George the organizing principle of the previous age, Tono-Bungay epitomizes the structural regime of the future one. Capitalism, by definition, requires a perpetual revolution or “becomingness” for the constitution of value, and *Tono-Bungay* forecasts an intensification of this process. It is the chameleon-like ability of Tono-Bungay that George finds so disturbing about the world into which he has been thrown after being banished from Bladesover. George longs to “do some good in the world—something—something effectual” (100-1), but it is unclear in this world what constitutes good. At first George is sure that Tono-Bungay is a “damned swindle!” (125) and that his uncle should strive to “supply a sound article that is really needed” rather than “shout advertisements” (126). But as Teddy reminds him, the production of “sound articles” is “behind the times. The last of that sort was sold up ‘bout five years ago” (126). What drives the accumulation of value now, Teddy insists, is not need, but trade: “I grant you Tono-Bungay may be—not quite so good a find for the world as Peruvian bark, but the point is, George—it makes trade! And the world lives on trade” (125). Teddy goes on to point out that it is those who create trade—what Paul Krugman in a recent discussion of the financialization of the American economy, calls “the business of moving money around, of slicing, dicing and repackaging financial claims”—rather than those who
create products or knowledge who are most highly valued (126). Where George wants
to remain loyal to “a neglected, wasted past of use and honour” that was the foundation
for the novel of character (128), Teddy “shift[s] the venue from the region of honour to
the region of courage” (122). Whereas under the Bladesover system and in the novel of
character, personal value was linked to intentions and character shored up through the
codification of competing narratives, under the new system, as Teddy sees it, value
creation requires competing narratives. For example, Teddy originally raised funds for
the production of Tono-Bungay by playing investors off of each other. He told each
investor that the others had already invested. Teddy dismisses George’s ethical doubts
about his methods by pointing to the trade his lie had created. George’s indictment of
Teddy is based on the assumption that value and character are inextricably related and
necessarily precede the literary, but Teddy demonstrates that the literary—his fictional
complex of lies—can create value.

If, as Baucom has argued, the novel developed to address the problem of
attaching value to character of character, a century and a half later Teddy Ponderevo
jettisons the problem of character altogether and shifts the plane of struggle over value
to a struggle over competing fictions: hence his often quoted mantra, “We mint Faith”
(209). Teddy uses the wealth generated by the marketing of Tono-Bungay to build a
vast financial empire so that by novel’s end the bulk of his wealth accumulation, like the
British economy at large, comes from financial deals, “which being translated, meant for
him to buy respectable businesses confidently and courageously at the vendor’s
estimate, add thirty or forty thousand to the price and sell them again” (205). Later, at
the empire’s apex, it consisted of three companies, each of which remained solvent “by
selling great holdings of shares to one or other of its sisters, and paying a dividend out of the proceeds" (209). George laments that Teddy's empire was just a “courageous fiction,” but he also reluctantly acknowledges that Teddy has it right. The financialized world he lives in is built on the faith generated by those fictions:

Banks couldn’t for a moment ‘make good’ if the quarter of what they guarantee was demanded of them. The whole of this modern mercantile investing civilization is indeed such stuff as dreams are made of. A mass of people swelters and toils, great railway systems grow, cities arise to the skies and spread wide and far, mines are opened, factories hum, foundries roar, ships plough the seas, countries are settled; about this busy striving world the rich owners go, controlling all, enjoying all, confident and creating the confidence that draws us all together into a reluctant, nearly unconscious brotherhood . . . and beneath it all, you know, there was nothing but fictitious values as evanescent as rainbow gold. (209)

If Bladesover marked the center of power of the previous age, financial networks make up the matrix of power in the new one. Just as Bladesover had its mode of representation (the novel), model of subjectivity (the character actor), and spatial regime (the estate), the financialized world has its corresponding epistemological forms. And although George professes ignorance of what those new forms might look like, his novel does not.

To maintain confidence in his empire Teddy must perpetually rewrite the fiction of his finances by constantly buying and selling and moving around money. Similarly, if the authority of the Bladesover system derives from place or the arresting of time in space, the authority of Teddy’s empire relies on the continual production of space in time. His empire is locked into a perpetual state of becoming. It makes sense, then, that Teddy looks to London as the “somewhere” where finance capital happens. It is, after all, where space happens in the novel. Just as Teddy must continually rewrite the fiction of his empire, George must continually rewrite the fiction of London to accommodate
each new encounter he has with the city. But London is the not only spatial mediation of finance capitalism. The ruins of Crest Hill are as well. As Teddy accumulates capital, he buys houses that serve as material signs of his wealth. He eventually buys Lady Grove, an old estate much like Bladesover. As it had been for Teddy's bourgeois forbearers, who used their vast wealth to buy up titles, estates, and other accoutrements of aristocratic bearing, the purchase of Lady Grove should have marked the climax of Teddy's ambitions. But Teddy is not at all content with Lady Grove: "It's all dark and old and dried up and full of old-fashioned things—musty old ideas—fitter for a silver-fish than a modern man..." (255). He wants, instead, "a twentieth-century house!" (256). So he begins building Crest Hill, a sprawling, chaotic affront to the orderly English country house. The building of Crest Hill threatens to go on indefinitely as it proceeds according to Teddy's capricious whims. Crest Hill perpetually “grew and changed”; it had a “billiard-room roofed with plate glass beneath the waters of [an] ornamental lake. [Teddy] furnished one wing while its roof still awaited completion. He had a swimming bath thirty feet square next to his bedroom upstairs” (258).

Crest Hill is another example of how Teddy represents a “breach” with the Bladesover system. The residents of Lady Grove and its surrounding communities complain that the new house shifts the “centre of gravity” (259). Crest Hill transplants the heterogeneity and excess that *Tono-Bungay* attributes to London into the provinces. The building of Crest Hill requires hundreds of workers—stone masons, sanitary engineers, painters, sculptors, scribes, metal workers, wood carvers, furniture designers, ceramic specialists, and landscape gardeners—so that Lady Grove and its surrounding communities are overrun by people who, like George, do not have a place
in the Bladesover system. In the words of the local vicar, “We find—the great number of strangers introduced into the villages about here by these operations, working-men chiefly, a little embarrassing—. It put us out. They bring a new spirit into the place; betting—ideas—all sorts of queer notions” (259). Lady Grove, the vicar suggests, is falling victim to urban blight. And in George’s view, just as London looks like a cancerous tumor infecting the estate system, Crest Hill “bubbled like a salted snail, and burgeoned and bulged and evermore grew”—at least until it fell into ruins immediately upon the collapse of the Tono-Bungay empire (256).

While London and Crest Hill spatially evoke the logic of finance capital, George’s novel serves as its representational mediation. As with London and Crest Hill, George describes his novel as a record of the “fermenting mass of things learnt and emotions experienced and theories formed” (6). Several times, George expresses frustration with his inability to shape his “fermenting mass” of “impressions” into a novel. Notably, when he gets to the part of his uncle’s story that describes the peak of the Tono-Bungay empire—when it is at it most financialized, intangible, and significantly, at its most fictional—George complains that more so than before “Impressions crowd upon one another and overlap one another” as he tries to transcribe them on the page (219). And like London and Crest Hill, the novel is “comprehensive rather than austere” (5).

In her excellent postcolonial reading of Tono-Bungay’s imperialist critique—a critique that arises not from an antipathy to “empire’s depredations” but from anxiety about the deforming effects of imperialism on metropolitan England—Benita Parry asserts that while Tono-Bungay registers the “social and psychic turbulence” that concern its more properly modernist descendents, that “turbulence is described rather
than syntactically transcribed”: “the annals of flux and unpredictability are moderated by
the assured delivery of a narrator whose normative idiom tames the vortex which is
[Wells’s] subject” (150). To be sure, George’s crisis in subjectivity and his frustrations
with the inadequacies of novelistic discourse are largely narrated rather than formally
accounted for. However, I would argue that the vortex of uncle Teddy does offer an
example, however limited, of how Tono-Bungay attempts to transcribe the “new
instability” that Wells senses and describes in his critical writings.

The first time George sees his uncle, he finds his behavior so remarkable and so
impossible to describe that he assigns it its own name: “Teddiness.” Teddiness “is
nimbleness without grace, and alertness without intelligence . . . [His uncle] jerked out of
the shop, came to a stand on the pavement outside, regarded something in the window
with infinite appreciation, stroked his chin, and, as abruptly, shot sideways into the door
again . . .” (47). Unlike tea-parties at Bladesover, “where the etiquette was very strict”
and the participants imitate their superiors by performing the same behaviors and
reenacting the same conversations every time they gather around the tea table (13),
Teddy’s behavior is rapid, jerky, unpredictable, impulsive, and contradictory. Even
Teddy describes himself as the “cascading sort” (51), a likewise apt descriptors for his
speech that just keeps coming and coming and threatens to consume the book:

Movin’ everywhere . . . I expect you’re right . . . It’s a big time we’re in,
George. It’s a big Progressive On-coming Imperial Time. This Palestine
business—the daring of it . . . It’s—it’s a Process, George. And we got our
hands on it. Here we sit—with our hands on it, George. Entrusted . . .
There they are, million, George. Jes’ think of what they’ve been up to to-
day—those ten million—each one doing his own particular job. You can’t
grasp it. It’s like old Whitman says—what is it he says? Well, anyway it’s
like old Whitman. Fine chap, Whitman! Fine old chap! Queer, you can’t
quote him! . . . And these millions aren’t anything. There’s the millions over
seas, hundreds of millions, Chinese, M’rocco, Africa generally, ‘Merica . . .
Well, here we are, with power, with leisure, picked out—because we’ve been energetic, because we’ve seized opportunities, because we’ve made things hum when other people have waited for them to hum. See? Here we are—with our hands on it. Big people. Big growing people. In a sort of way, - - Forces . . . That’s it, George—energy. It’s put things in our grip—threads, wires, stretching out and out, George, from that little office of ours, out to West Africa West Africa, out to Egypt, out to Inja, out east, west, north and south. Running the world practically. Running it faster and faster. Creative. There’s that Palestine canal affair. Marvellous idée! Suppose we take that up, suppose we let ourselves in for it, us and the others, and run that water sluice from the Mediterranean into the Dead Sea Valley—think of the difference it will make! All the desert blooming like a rose, Jericho lost for ever, all the Holy Places under water . . . Very likely destroy Christianity . . . “Making tunnels . . . New countries . . . New centers . . . Zzzz . . . Finance . . . . Not only Palestine. (247-8)

Like the Tono-Bungay empire whose value relies on a constant accumulation of new assets as well as a constant reconfiguration of its old assets; like London that takes on a new identity with every turn of a corner; like Crest Hill whose center of gravity shifts with each new addition; and like George’s fermenting mass of a novel, Teddy’s speech bubbles forth without center, without focus, and seemingly without intention. If the Tono-Bungay empire exists as a perpetually reconfigured, constellated value and London can only be apprehended and reapprehended as momentary gathering points of impressions, Teddy’s character suggests that subjectivity likewise takes the form of a radical relativity in which the self manifests as a momentary convergence of fictions.

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1 Wells famously referred to *Tono-Bungay* as his most “deliberate attempt upon The Novel” (“The Contemporary Novel” in Edel and Ray 232). Some critics have taken this to mean that of all Wells’s novels *Tono-Bungay* most closely conforms to the Jamesian novel. However, Kupinse rightly points out that “attempt” can mean either to “endeavor” or to “assault” (69). That Wells invoked the “proper” name of “The Novel” suggests he intended *Tono-Bungay* to be an assault, since he notoriously bristled at the notion that there is somehow only one kind of novel. For a comprehensive account of, including original documents for, the James/Wells debate see Edel and Ray. For further discussion of the debate see Hammond and Linda R. Anderson.

2 See Hammond, Linda R. Anderson, and Lodge

3 Woolf famously categorizes Wells along with Bennett and Galsworthy as Edwardians who do not know how to write character. However, Caserio argues that Wells’s notion of character aligns more with Woolf’s than she gives him credit for.
See Williams, who points out that the romantic pastoral gives credit to a “natural bounty” for the productions of agricultural labor: “The actual men and women who rear the animals and drive them to the house and kill them and prepare them for meat; who trap the pheasants and partridges and catch the fish; who plant and manure and prune and harvest the fruit trees: these are not present; their work is all done for them by a natural order” (32).

Kupinse similarly observes that the value of Tono-bungay does not derive from the surplus labor that goes into its production. He argues that the novel locates value, instead, in waste and satirically translates Marx’s MCM’ formula into MWM’. However, his argument does not account for the novel’s pointed interest in the labor that does actually induce people to buy Tono-bungay and thereby give it value.

For discussion of *Tono-Bungay* as a modernist novel see Lodge, Sommers, Kupinse, Herbert, and Parry.
CHAPTER 5
THE MIDDLE CLASS MAKES WAVES: KEYNES, WOOLF, AND THE DECLINE OF THE BOURGEOIS SUBJECT

For all of his desire to “do some good in the world” and distance himself from what he describes as his uncle’s base endeavors to accumulate for accumulation’s sake, George Ponderevo nevertheless comes off as a less than sympathetic character, capitulating to and willingly profiting from the logic of wealth production that he despises (100). One of his final acts of the novel, which he dismisses as “irrelevant,” has him slaying an innocent man in a desperate attempt to save his uncle’s crumbling empire (210). In spite of his high-flown rhetoric about “use and honour” (128), he is unable to live according to the moral framework that he repeatedly insists governs his sense of self. The base requirements of everyday life dictate George’s actions despite his repeated claims to a moral high ground, claims that continue right up until the end as he cruises up the Thames on his destroyer. And while George, as author of his novel, depicts his uncle as absurdly grotesque, with his Zzzz-ing and rambling monologues, his Napoleonic narcissism and insatiable appetites, it is George who comes off as ridiculous, casting about, right up until the end of the novel, longing for a world of order and certainty that he acknowledges does not exist.

Readers may chafe, then, at my drawing a comparison between George Ponderevo and the highly regarded John Maynard Keynes, an intellectual who held the ear of international leaders and laid the foundations for Roosevelt’s New Deal and post World War II economic policy. But a passage from his memoirs exhibits a strikingly Ponderevian quality:

I still suffer incurably from attributing an unreal rationality to other people’s feeling and behaviour (and doubtless to my own, too). There is one small but extraordinarily silly manifestation of this absurd idea of what is ‘normal’
namely the impulse to protest—to write a letter to The Times, call a meeting in the Guildhall, subscribe to some fund when my presuppositions as to what is ‘normal’ are not fulfilled. I behave as if there really existed some authority or standard to which I can successfully appeal if I shout loud enough—perhaps it is some hereditary vestige of a belief in the efficacy of prayer. (Two Memoirs, 100)

Like George, who looked for a “quality of intention” in London’s disorder (85) and wants to believe that there exists “a headmaster” who checks “mischievous and foolish enterprises of every sort” (62), Keynes “still” wants to believe in a rational world with a principled authority to which he can appeal. This passage comes from “My Early Beliefs,” an essay he submitted to the Bloomsbury memoir club and in which he looks back on his “youthful religion”—his devotion to the philosophy of G.E. Moore—with tolerant amusement (81). But he does not simply attribute his early, now untenable, beliefs to youthful naiveté. They made sense to his generation who “never lost a certain resilience which the younger generation seem never to have had” (82). The younger generation, Keynes writes, “have enjoyed, at most, only a pale reflection of something, not altogether superseded, but faded and without illusions” (82). Like the world governed by Bladesover, the world of Keynes’s youth remains only as a “pale reflection,” still, in George’s words, “traceable and evident” (9). But it is fading so quickly that Keynes has to go to great lengths in his memoir to explain to his younger audience the basic tenets of a philosophical system that had just twenty years before drawn the attention and admiration of an entire generation of intellectuals.

Keynes devoted more than fifteen years of his life—from 1902 when he “went up to Cambridge” to 1921 when he published A Treatise on Probability, his monographic response to Moore—to thinking about Moore’s work. The Treatise takes Moore’s Platonic concept of Good as its starting point and attempts to construct an objective
means of evaluating actions according to a system of probability. This early work is decidedly positivist, trading in universalisms and assuming the intrinsic rationality of individuals. It confidently distinguishes between “knowledge” and “argument”, and, perhaps most striking given Keynes’s ties to Bloomsbury, it takes for granted the transparency of language, the direct correspondence between signifier and referent.¹ In “My Early Beliefs” Keynes describes the Cambridge method of argumentation under Moore’s influence: “It was a method of discovery by the instrument of impeccable grammar and an unambiguous dictionary. ‘What exactly do you mean?’ was the phrase most frequently on our lips. It if appeared under cross-examination that you did not mean exactly anything, you lay under a strong suspicion of meaning nothing whatever” (88). Representation remains an unproblematized category in Keynes’s Treatise. How then, did Keynes, by the end of his century, come to be known as, in Jennifer Wicke’s words, “The supreme modernist economist” (116)?

In Keynes’s Uncertain Revolution, Bradley W. Bateman expresses “wonder” at how the person who wrote A Treatise on Probability can also be the author of The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money, a book “in which irrational people who base their decisions on social conventions” rather than objective probabilities, are responsible for the economic woes of the Great Depression (7). By the time Keynes wrote The General Theory he had begun to question his positivist assumptions about rationality, knowledge, and language. Indeed, the later work responds to and critiques the positivism of classical economics. Keynes is motivated to write The General Theory by the apparent gap between the rationality of the classical theory of unemployment and its applicability in the real world: “Our criticism of the accepted classical theory of
economics has consisted not so much in finding logical flaws in its analysis as in pointing out that its tacit assumptions are seldom or never satisfied, with the result that it cannot solve the economic problems of the actual world" (378). Cordoned off and insulated as a symbolic system, classical economics makes sense; but if applied “to the facts of experience,” Keynes condemns it as “misleading” and “disastrous” (3). Several decades prior, John Stuart Mill answered similar criticisms levied against political economy by proposing precisely what Keynes identifies as the source of the problem; and, according to Mary Poovey, in so doing Mill imagined a nascent form of the postmodern fact. But if political economy and other disciplines can only be used as models, Keynes is interested in how we use those models to make decisions in a world that cannot be accounted for by any one model. The problem Keynes articulates regarding the insulated nature of the postmodern fact is forecast in the Sherlock Holmes novel I discuss in the second chapter. If Jefferson Hope had not serendipitously died, the legal system would have had to decide whether or not to prosecute him for the murders. However, each half of the novel provides an opposing and equally compelling answer to this problem. As a novelist, Doyle had the luxury of avoiding the problem, but as an economist trying to figure out how to resolve the Great Depression, Keynes did not.

By the time he wrote The General Theory, economics had become a problem for Keynes in a similar way that London had become a problem for novelists. He had to adapt a mode of representation that had been codified and conventionalized around a specific set of assumptions to account for a reality that defied those assumptions. Keynes, then, shared common ground with his fellow Bloomsberry Virginia Woolf. In this
chapter, I will explore this common ground between Keynes and Woolf. Specifically, I will look at their shared interest in the tension between two ostensibly opposed modes of subjectivity. Critics have long concluded that the structural experimentation of many of Woolf’s novels, but most especially *The Waves*, formally encodes the tension between subjective individuation (the model of subjectivity underwriting the novel of character) and collective interdependence.² My reading of Keynes’s and Woolf’s interest in subjectivity, however, will show that *The Waves* does not simply encode that tension; it also historicizes that tension within the British novelistic tradition. In other words, *The Waves* provides a history of the British novel that identifies its origins in the now defunct English estate system and wonders what the novel looks like when it must account for an urban hegemony. If the reader was turned off by my comparison between George Ponderevo and John Maynard Keynes, the reader most certainly will cry foul (Woolf definitely would have) at my next claim: *The Waves* can, in this sense, be read as continuing the project that *Tono-Bungay* began but left unfinished in its nihilistic conclusion. Like *Tono-Bungay*, *The Waves* locates the origins of character in the complex nexus of the novel, the estate system, and the nation-state. In Woolf’s novel (and to a lesser extent in Keynesian theory), each of those things is irrevocably bound to the others, so a change in any one of them necessarily but unpredictably changes the others. As I will show, both Keynes and Woolf, writing prior to World War II but at a time when the devastating potential of war stands apparent on the horizon, are deeply concerned with this process as they bear witness to the transition from British to American hegemony.
In “Coterie Consumption: Bloomsbury, Keynes, and Modernism as Marketing,” Jennifer Wicke also explores common ground between Keynes and Woolf. In Wicke’s reading, both Keynes and Woolf are interested in reconceiving the market as a problem of aesthetics. For both “the imperative is to represent what is acknowledged beforehand to be resistant to representation, at least by traditional (realist, rationalist) means” (117). To read Wicke’s essay is to get the impression that reading Keynes is very much like reading Woolf: both worlds, in her depiction, are made up of a “blooming, buzzing confusion” (117). One cannot argue with such a depiction of Woolf’s novels, especially since the novel under consideration in the essay is Mrs. Dalloway. But to describe the Keynesian world as a “blooming, buzzing confusion” is generous indeed. To be sure, one of Keynes’s most important legacies is his insistence that uncertainty play a central role in economic thought, and in that sense, the Keynesian market is “chaotic” as Wicke suggests. The problem with Wicke’s analysis arises from her focus on consumption in Keynesian theory. Keynes’s theory of employment did shift the focus from the production side of the equation to put more emphasis on the role of consumption, but consumption is only one part of Keynes’s formula. Where classical economists assume the “volume of employment” is determined by “the marginal disutility of labour” (the point at which it is against a worker’s best interests to work for a certain wage), Keynes argues that the level of employment is determined instead by “the propensity to consume and the rate of new investment” within a community (The General Theory 30, my emphasis). Investment makes up the second part of the equation, and it is in the area of investment, not consumption, that Keynes brings to bear the issue of uncertainty.
Wicke is right to point out that practices of consumption are much harder to submit to the rationalizing principles of economics than those of production, but Keynes does not trouble himself much about that.\(^3\) In *The General Theory*, whether or not he is right to do so, Keynes confidently lays out the principles governing the consumption habits of communities and individuals. What matters to Keynes is not what people consume but rather how much people consume (given Wicke’s interest in Bloomsbury as a “coterie of consumption,” a group that through its own consumptive tastes helps shape those of the larger market, she seems to be concerned with the former), and he lays out both the objective and subjective factors that determine levels of consumptions. Objective factors include things like amount of income, changes in income due to changes in fiscal policy, inflation/deflation, and expectations about future income. Subjective factors include things like personal desires to save for a rainy day to provide for retirement, accumulate wealth through interest, and leave a legacy. Those things combine with personal desires to spend for enjoyment, generosity, ostentation, and so forth. But overall, Keynes maintains that the most profound changes in levels of consumption can be accounted for by changes in income, the more objective category, rather than changes in personal attitudes and desires (He reasons that those factors take a long time to change so their effects are less dramatic). He even goes on to identify some trends on which economists can depend: an increase in income will lead to an increase in the volume of consumption but will lead to a decrease in the rate of consumption (in other words, people will spend a lower percentage of their higher income); alternatively, a decrease in income will cause consumption to surpass income because people will make use of savings to maintain their standard of living (89-112). If we are looking for
an alternative to the rational model of the classical economists in Keynes's work, the issue of consumption is not the place to start. Keynes’s consumer is very much a rational consumer.

When Keynes speaks of uncertainty, it is important to understand that, as John B. Davis points out, Keynes means something very specific. Keynesian uncertainty is not some “metaphysical absolute” about “the unknowability of the future.” Rather, Keynesian uncertainty is “almost a social relation,” a “particular kind of structure of interdependent belief expectations” (108). Keynes develops this notion of uncertainty in his discussion of investment, the other factor that determines levels of employment. Keynes is specifically interested in how investment practices change as a result of the increased dependence on mechanisms of finance capital in the economy as a whole, along with the increasing influence of what I have been calling American-style capitalism. He expresses concern that the shift from the family-owned firm to the American vertically-integrated corporation will increase instability in the market. He writes, “In former times, when enterprises were mainly owned by those who undertook them or by their friends and associates, investment depended on a sufficient supply of individuals of sanguine temperament and constructive impulses who embarked on business as a way of life, not really relying on a precise calculation of prospective profit” (150); but “[w]ith the separation between ownership and management which prevails to-day and with the development of organized investment markets, a new factor of great importance has entered in” (151). This “new factor of great importance” is mass psychology. The growth of investment markets combined with absentee ownership of corporations has allowed owners of capital to invest and divest in a business venture much more easily.
Moreover, Keynes reasons that because these investors are not involved in the day-to-day management of the company—indeed, a small-scale, short-term investor may not be involved at all in the company’s activities—they do not have intimate knowledge of the company’s actual value and potential. Investors under these circumstances do not base their investment decisions on how efficiently or effectively a company might produce a commodity or service. In other words, they do not base their decision on the character of the company; instead, they base their decisions on what other investors think about the company. Investment, then, becomes an exercise in trying to beat the curve of popular opinion rather than an exercise in the analysis of value and character. Investors, Keynes writes,

are, in fact, largely concerned, not with making superior long-term forecasts of the probable yield of an investment over its whole life, but with foreseeing changes in the conventional basis of valuation a short time ahead of the general public. They are concerned, not with what an investment is really worth to a man who buys it ‘for keeps’, but with what the market will value it at, under the influence of mass psychology, three months or a year hence. (155)

Under these circumstances, Keynes continues, investment,

may be likened to those newspaper competitions in which the competitors have to pick out the six prettiest faces from a hundred photographs, the prize being awarded to the competitor whose choice most nearly corresponds to the average preferences of the competitors as a whole; so that each competitor has to pick, not those faces which he himself finds prettiest, but those which he thinks likeliest to catch the fancy of the other competitors, all of whom are looking at the problem from the same point of view. (156)

This observation about the structural role of mass psychology in investment decisions leads Keynes to draw an important distinction between “enterprise” and “speculation”: enterprise is “the activity of forecasting the prospective yield of assets over their whole life” while speculation is “the activity of forecasting the psychology of
the market” (158). This distinction, I think, helps to resolve a problem with Arrighi’s historical model of capitalism. *The Long Twentieth Century* has been criticized for failing to specify exactly what kinds of transactions constitute financial deals. Robert Pollin, for example, wonders if transferring investments from less profitable to more profitable “areas of material production” classifies as a financial deal since ultimately the investment aids in the production of a commodity (116). Arrighi responds by claiming that this type of investment becomes important at the end of a financial expansion when material production is again becoming profitable (“Financial Expansions” 157). But I am not satisfied by that answer because such investment surely takes place throughout the entire financial expansion. Keynes’s distinction between enterprise and speculation does however allow us to conceive of the difference between investment in production during phases of material expansion and investment in production during phases of financial expansion. What differentiates enterprise from speculation is not the object of investment—they are investments in the same thing—but the source of capital accumulation. During phases of material expansion, the increased value of an investment in production comes directly from the production of commodities and the profits that are realized through exchange. Such an investment corresponds to Keynes’s notion of enterprise. But over the course of a material expansion, competition increases and profits decrease so the rate of increase in the value of that investment slows. At this point investors begin to turn to speculation in which capital accumulation comes not from the profits realized from production but from beating the investment curve. In other words, investors try to anticipate popular opinion as they buy low and sell high. The increased value in an investment comes from the value that the “mass
psychology” attributes to it, and that value may or may not reflect the productive capacity of the firm. The system of absentee ownership certainly increases the ease with which speculation occurs; so if Arrighi credits the vertically integrated American corporation with creating a more efficient mode of production, it also created a more efficient mode of financial accumulation.

Keynes goes on in his discussion of enterprise and speculation to argue that an economy built upon speculation generates incredible volatility: “the mass psychology of a large number of ignorant individuals is liable to change violently as the result of a sudden fluctuation of opinion due to factors which do not really make much difference to the prospective yield” (154). And it is to the volatility of such a system, most thoroughly realized in the U.S, that Keynes gives credit for the contemporary economic woes:

In one of the greatest investment markets in the world, namely, New York, the influence of speculation . . . is enormous. Even outside the field of finance, Americans are apt to be unduly interested in discovering what average opinion believes average opinion to be; and this national weakness finds its nemesis in the stock market. It is rare, one is told, for an American to invest, as many Englishmen still do, ‘for income’; and he will not readily purchase an investment except in the hope of capital appreciation. This is only another way of saying that, when he purchases an investment, the American is attaching his hopes, not so much to its prospective yield, as to a favourable change in the conventional basis of valuation, i.e. that he is, in the above sense, a speculator. Speculators may do no harm as bubbles on a steady stream of enterprise. But the position is serious when enterprise becomes the bubble on a whirlpool of speculation. When the capital development of a country becomes a by-product of the activities of a casino, the job is likely to be ill-done. (159)

Arrighi identifies the Great Depression along with World War II as the terminal crises that effected a final transition from British to American hegemony. But Keynes foresaw the transition to an American hegemony way back in 1919 when he wrote his first widely read, if not efficacious, economic work, The Economic Consequences of Peace.

Keynes’s criticism of the war reparations imposed on Germany was largely motivated by
his desire to build up Germany as an ally against the growing power and economic leverage of the United States (Skidelsky xxvi). Two and a half decades later, as the Allies are about to face the consequences for failing to heed Keynes’s warnings, the ire with which Keynes describes what appears to him to be a grotesque and childishly irresponsible American approach to economics suggests that he senses the tide has already turned. If Keynes is right and the U.S. can be blamed for the global economic situation, then the U.S. has already realized its hegemony. Great Britain clearly no longer possesses its economic leverage if its more staid approach (that Keynes perhaps mistakenly credits it with) cannot forestall economic disaster.

If as John B. Davis points out Keynes means something much more specific when he speaks of uncertainty than a general unknowability about the future, then Keynes also sees uncertainty figuring significantly into the economic equation only under specific circumstances, those circumstances in which speculation becomes the driving force of the economy as it had during his lifetime. There are essentially two modes of subjectivity working side-by-side in *The General Theory*: the subject as character whose value is legible and the speculating subject for whom value is a function of popular opinion, a momentary consolidation of competing narratives. In *Modernism and Mass Politics*, Michael Tratner documents the early twentieth century blossoming of interest in “the crowd” and mass behavior. Although Tratner does not mention Keynes in his catalogue of contemporary theorists, like many of those theorists who saw revolutionary as well as devastating potential in mass behavior, Keynes expresses ambivalence about the speculating subject. It would be misleading to characterize the opposition between the enterprising and speculating subject along the axis of rational and irrational
because they are both operating according to rationalizing principles of different sorts. We might also be inclined, given Keynes’s irritated rhetoric, to characterize the speculating subject as a monstrous mutation; but this too would be unfair. Keynes is forced to admit that speculating behavior actually facilitates investment. He flirts with the idea of requiring investments be permanent, “indissoluble, like marriage,” but he quickly recognizes that such a move would discourage investment because people would not be able to take their money out at signs of trouble (160). Here again, the Ponderevian longing for a headmaster surfaces only to be stifled by a reluctant recognition of the structural productivity of uncertainty upon which his world depends.

Perhaps a more appropriate taxonomy for differentiating between the two modes of subjectivity operating in Keynes’s General Theory might be one that is familiar to readers of The Waves, a novel that is structured around the tension between the subject that, like novelistic characters, is self-defined by a recognition of its individual interests and desires and the subject that is determined by and through its immersion in and relation to the social. However, whereas in Keynes these two modes of subjectivity run along-side each other, never really crossing paths, The Waves is Woolf’s most deliberate attempt at formally encoding the dialectical tension between the two.

In recent years, critics have tended to celebrate the challenge to the one-dimensional, self-determined notion of subjectivity posed by Woolf’s formal experimentation, seeing in her method an alternative to the sense of self that underwrites patriarchal and colonial enterprises. But Woolf is notoriously difficult to pin down. Her writing defies the thetic orientation of the scholarship whose task it is to account for it. To make a claim at one turn of Woolf’s oeuvre is to find that claim
contradicted at the next. As with George’s London, obtaining a “comprehensive impression” of Woolf’s work, of even just one of her works, is an endeavor with a perpetually deferred end. Reading Woolf’s novels is very much like walking in de Certeau’s city—just as it is difficult when walking down a city street to imagine what lies beyond the immediate surroundings or to draw connections with more distant parts of the city, it is difficult to synthesize the various localities that make up the heterogeneous geography that is “Woolf!”

Woolf loved the urban landscape of London. She resented her frequent, forced habitations in the suburb of Richmond for taking her away from the beloved space that infused virtually all of her work, whether as content or poetics. Even a novel like *To the Lighthouse*, which is set well outside of London, is what I would call a London novel. It is after all, about the death of a country house—a kind of anti-*Howards End* if you will—that takes London, like its predecessor *Mrs. Dalloway*, as the inspiration for its formal expression. Readers might wonder why *Mrs. Dalloway*, demonstrably the quintessential London novel of Woolf’s oeuvre, is not the focus of this chapter. Certainly, *Mrs. Dalloway* possesses many of the ingredients I am looking for in this dissertation: *Mrs. Dalloway* places London at the center of national consciousness, taking what had long served as defining features of Englishness—domesticity and its angel in the house—and infusing them with the heterogeneous, metropolitan streets of London. But *Mrs. Dalloway* is a novel of and about its moment, the post World War I national and economic euphoria that Keynes senses and warns against in his polemic against requiring German reparations: “In England the outward aspect of life does not yet teach us to feel or realize in the least that an age is over. We are busy picking up the threads
of our life where we dropped them, with this difference only, that many of us seem a
good deal richer than we were before” (4). Clarissa Dalloway is likewise “picking up the
threads of her life.” Woolf writes in *Mrs. Dalloway*,

> The War was over, except for some one like Mrs. Foxcroft at the Embassy
last night eating her heart out because that nice boy was killed and now the
old Manor House must go to a cousin; or Lady Bexborough who opened a
bazaar, they said, with the telegram in her hand, John, her favourite, killed;
but it was over; thank Heaven—over. It was June. The King and Queen
were at the Palace. And everywhere, though it was still so early, there was
a beating, a stirring of galloping ponies, tapping of cricket bats . . . (5).

In Clarissa’s imagination the War is over, and she articulates a sense of spring-time
renewal, a return to the way things were. Of course, there are those for whom the war
continues to resonate: for example, the mothers of war casualties, and of course
Septimus Smith, who has been irrevocably and devastatingly transformed by his
experiences in the War. But for Clarrissa such remnants of the War are
compartmentalized as personal problems; they are no longer the problems of a nation,
and they become problems for Clarissa only insofar as anyone’s problem can become a
problem for someone else in the city—temporarily and anonymously. If *Mrs. Dalloway*
turns to the landscape of the city to imagine a kind of collective consciousness, the
novel also expresses some skepticism at the liberatory potential of such a model of
subjectivity. When Septimus is forced into Clarissa’s consciousness at her party, he is
little more than any other object in the urban landscape—an object of curiosity and
momentary aesthetic contemplation and subject to the disinterested gaze of Clarissa’s
flanerie.

If the London of *Mrs. Dalloway* is post-World War I London, that of *The Waves* is
pre-World War II and Depression era London. Several critics have pointed out that *The
Waves* reads like an elegy, perhaps an irreverent elegy, but nonetheless an elegy for
Percival and for the British Empire that he represents. Since this dissertation takes as its object the autumn phase of the British hegemony over global capital, *The Waves*, with its temporal progression from sunrise to sunset, spring to autumn, birth to death makes for a much richer choice than what might seem like the more obvious one of *Mrs. Dalloway*. But, there are other characteristics of *The Waves* that make it an optimal candidate for this study. It follows a trajectory similar to that of *Tono-Bungay*, beginning in the shadow of a large estate and moving to London as the six characters grow into adulthood. And as I will discuss in the conclusion to this chapter, the novel shares Keynes’s ambivalence about mass psychology. While *The Waves* does not take a direct interest in the shift in modes of accumulation as *Howards End* and *Tono-Bungay* so conveniently do, the declining influence of the estate system and the rise in nationalism that Woolf’s novel does record are part of that same historical process.

At the beginning of *The Waves*, the six children are in residence at a primary school next to the estate of Elvedon. Surprisingly, Elvedon has not elicited much interest from critics, but, as Julia Briggs points out, “in a novel that seldom identifies local habitations” the very specificity of the name should pique a reader’s curiosity (245). Early in the novel, after Susan is devastated by the kiss she witnesses between Jinny and Louis, Bernard, in an attempt to distract Susan from her disappointment, suggests they “explore” Elvedon (16). They proceed to invade the perimeters of the estate, pretending to be “discoverers of an unknown land” (17). The children marvel at the lush, virgin landscape: “The ferns smell very strong, and there are red funguses growing beneath them. Now we wake the sleeping daws who have never seen a human form; now we tread on rotten oak apples, red with age and slippery” (17). They observe
the natives: “The lady sits between the two long windows, writing. The gardeners sweep the lawn with giant brooms” (17). And they eventually have to flea the “hostile country”: “Run! The gardener with the black beard has seen us! We shall be shot! We shall be shot like jays and pinned to the wall!” (17). As Joseph Allen Boone points out, whereas an earlier draft of The Waves had presented the adventure to Elvedon as an actually occurring event, the published version ambiguously suggests that the exploration could simply be Bernard’s first attempt at a story (630). Both possibilities are intriguing and, as always with Woolf, assuming both to be true will reward us with a richer understanding of Elvedon’s presence in the novel, whether as place or as object of literary imagination.

The name of the estate, “Elvedon,” is richly textured, potentially leading the critic down any number of interpretive paths. It simultaneously alludes to the biblical Eden and pagan fantasies of an elven paradise. Jane Garrity argues that it also summons Avalon the mythical Celtic island associated with the Arthurian legends—not at all a surprising association given the inspiration for Percival’s name (286). But I am most interested in Elvedon as an actually existing place, Elveden Hall and Estate located in Suffolk. In 1905, Woolf (then Virginia Stephen) spent a month near the border of Suffolk with Vanessa and Thoby shortly before leaving on the trip to Greece where her brother would contract the tuberculosis that would eventually take his life. It is unclear whether Woolf visited Elvedon during her stay.¹⁰ She likely only saw the “signposts at the crossroads with one arm pointing ‘To Elvedon,’” that spark Bernard’s imagination. Perhaps Elveden imprinted itself on her imagination, much like Percival does on the six characters or the lighthouse on James Ramsey, as an absent presence with a twofold function: it is both a screen onto which a subject projects its fantasies and a mirror that
reflects back to the subject its own desires. Naturally my suggestion that Elveden played such a role in Woolf’s life is a playful one, meant only to draw attention, as I think Woolf’s novel does, to the constitutive role of the country estate as the source of authentic Englishness in the British imaginary long after it had lost its economic hegemony. But by choosing an estate that she and Bernard perhaps never saw as the novel’s representative estate, Woolf also draws attention to how, in order to serve as the foundation for the British imaginary, the estate had to be emptied of its real history and politics.

Elveden has a peculiar history for an “English” estate. In 1849 it was given by the British government as compensation to the Maharajah Duleep Singh, the ruler of Punjab who had been ousted by British colonial expansion. The Maharajah lived there until 1886, and in 1894 the estate was sold to the Irish family of Guinness brewing fame. Garrity points out that the East to West movement of the sun tracked by the italicized interludes evokes the notion of reverse colonization, suggesting that England, not the exotic and distant East, is the site and object of colonization (286). If for George in Tono-Bungay “Bladesover illuminates England” (57) and is still “the clue to almost all that is distinctively British” (14), for Woolf, writing twenty years later, the English estate no longer carries such cultural capital. The spatio-political institution of the country estate, long the cornerstone of English identity, long the arbiter of taste in the British imaginary, is in Woolf’s novel inhabited by the colonized other. In The Waves the country estate does not gesture, as it does for George, toward an insular national identity of Englishness upon which the British Empire was built and legitimated. Instead, Woolf’s very particular choice of estates suggests that the country estate is, like

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London, a cosmopolitan space. If in *Tono-Bungay* Teddy’s Crest Hill, which, as I argued in the previous chapter, likewise brought cosmopolitan London into the countryside, shifting the center of gravity from the estate to London, in Woolf’s novel, the country estate is not even recognizable as having once been the center of gravity. The characters of *The Waves* never reverence Elvedon as George, however resentfully, does Bladesover.

Like George’s Bladesover, Elvedon is surrounded by “a ringed wood with a wall” that is designed to mark its territories off as an illegal space for the average folk (17). When George trespasses in the illegal spaces of Bladesover during his book borrowing raids, he is very conscious of having trespassed, but Bernard and Susan offer Elvedon no such respect. The spatial regime of Bladesover functions to reify space into place and thereby affirm feudal class structures. Bernard and Susan’s adventure unmoors Elvedon’s claims to place and rearticulate it as space, which, like the metropolitan space of London, is subject to negotiation along the fault lines of social, political, cultural, and economic antagonisms. In their adventure, Elvedon is the blank canvass of the exotic, the dark unknown that drives the narrative of the classic British adventure story. Contradicting critics who have located an unequivocal condemnation of British imperialism in *The Waves*, Garrity, in her study of femininity, nationalism, and female modernist writers of the inter-war period argues that Woolf exhibits a “bifurcated response” to the imperial project. She is “both repulsed by the jingoism of empire and seduced by the irreducible centrality of the narrative of conquest” (3). She “ridicules” novels that glorify the British empire, but, Garrity contends, she simultaneously reproduces and takes advantage of culturally pervasive and therefore salient “imperial
tropes” as she tries to imagine a national space for women (3). For example, Woolf famously described femininity as a “dark continent” and expressed pleasure at the fact that it was finally “beginning to be explored in fiction” (qtd in Garrity 15). A similar bifurcation is apparent in the Elvedon adventure episode. As with Woolf’s imperial metaphor for femininity, Bernard uses the narrative of conquest to open up Elvedon and the English country estate to struggle, rendering it a space whose meaning and systems of power are contested. But Woolf also “ridicules” Bernard’s use of that narrative by turning him into a producer of the imperial fiction she abhorred.

Bernard aspires to be a writer of stories, but in the final section of the novel he must admit his failure. He fails as a writer, the novel suggests, because his conception of writing is naively romantic. The third episode opens with Bernard fantasizing about his facility as a writer:

as I come into my room, and turn on the light, and see the sheet of paper, the table, my gown lying negligently over the back of the chair, I feel that I am that dashing yet reflective man, that bold and deleterious figure, who lightly throwing off his cloak, seize his pen and at once flings off the following letter to the girl with whom he is passionately in love. (78)

He continues the fantasy of the “dashing yet reflective man” and imagines that the final product of this moment of spontaneous brilliance is a “sketch which, [the girl] must think, was written without a pause, without an erasure. . . . But also I must give her the impression that though he—for this is not myself—is writing in such an off-hand, such a slap-dash way, there is some subtle suggestion of intimacy and respect” (78). However, the letter “falls flat” and Bernard gives up for the evening, promising to “write the letter tomorrow directly after breakfast” (79). While his creator knows that writing is the product of long and devoted labor, Bernard imagines that writing is the result of spontaneous, frenzied, and passionate inspiration. Bernard is enamored, not of writing
per se, but of writing as spectacle. He is enamored of the writing persona, the writer
celebrity. Even though he is unable to complete a simple love-letter that he has “begun
ever so many times,” he imagines that he will become so well known that people will be
familiar with his biography, a biography describing “the logical sobriety of a man” (76). It
is only natural that in the midst of this frenzied fantasy of himself as celebrity writer that
he turns to Byron for inspiration. Throughout the novel, Bernard’s literary ambitions are
the object of affectionate mockery both from his author and from his friends who are
annoyed by Bernard’s persistent but inevitably incomplete efforts at storytelling. For
example, Neville, the successful poet, ignores Bernard as he “burble[s] on, telling us
stories” (37) and dreads the “appalling moment” when “Bernard’s power fails him . . .
and he sags and twiddles a bit of string” (39). Some critics have celebrated Bernard’s
failure as a writer as a failure of patriarchal language and narrative, but Bernard is not
the only one of Woolf’s characters to simultaneously carry forth her most earnest
challenges to the status quo and serve as object of her unforgiving satire. 14

If the Elvedon episode is in fact just the first of Bernard’s stories, the colonial tale
is, then, an apt beginning to a writing career that is itself a fantasy. And just as the
colonial tale authorizes the imperial project, Bernard’s writerly fantasy shores up his
hetero-normative masculine identity by positioning him as the object of feminine desire.
In his fantasy, the letter’s female recipient is moved not by the contents of the letter—his
expressions of love and desire for her—but by the image of him as a Byronic hero that
the carelessly written, slap-dash of a letter must provoke in her imagination. Bernard’s
masculine fantasy finds a parallel in Mrs. Dalloway when Peter Walsh, while killing time
in the streets of London, follows a “young woman” and constructs an elaborate fantasy
about a romantic encounter with her. Although the “young woman” is completely unaware of Peter’s existence, his thoughts are entirely consumed by her, and he even imagines that she “singled him out, as if the random uproar of the traffic had whispered through hollowed hands his name, not Peter, but his private name which he called himself in his own thoughts. ‘You,’ she said, only ‘you,’” (53, my emphasis). Like the exotic landscape of colonial tales, the anonymous female body serves in Peter’s fantasy as a blank canvas onto which Peter projects his own desires and thereby reaffirms his sense of self, his masculine identity.

Without dismissing the generosity with which Bernard tells the story to rescue Susan from her despair, we must also recognize that by so doing Bernard positions himself as the chivalrous romantic hero. Although the most obvious source for Bernard’s story is the colonial narrative of exploration (arguably a descendent of the heroic romance), his story also references the romance genre. As Garrity notes, the interwar period witnessed a revival of interest in all things medieval, especially in the Arthurian legends, which supposedly narrate mythical origins of the English nation (272). As I’ve already mentioned, Garrity proposes that the name Elvedon aurally evokes the Arthurian island of Avalon, and she is not alone in observing Percival’s association with the legendary search for the Holy Grail. *The Waves* is replete with allusions to contemporary popular interest in medievalism, and Bernard’s story, which positions him as chivalric hero, is another example. But naturally this medievalism becomes the object of irony in *The Waves*. The chivalric characters are, after all, not so much heroes as quixotes. The novel casts Percival as a true believer in the imperial project and he is held up by his friends as the imperial hero, the archetype of English masculinity. But
Percival dies a rather unheroic death, tossed from his flee-bitten horse, not in the glories of battle, but during a race among friends. Garrity notes the apparent incongruity between the “magnificence” of Percival in his friends’ eyes and his apparent “mediocrity” (Garrity 273). Thus, Percival is not the only quixotic figure. His friends are as well. They see giants where there are in fact windmills. Although Bernard and Susan are clearly pretending in the Elvedon scene, this quixotic structure is nevertheless reproduced in Bernard’s story when he casts the gardeners as natives defending their territory. In medieval times, these gardeners would have presumably posed a threat to interlopers like Bernard and Susan. The gardeners would have in fact been armed personal charged with guarding the feudal estate from attack. But the armed guards are no longer necessary by the time Bernard tells his story. The feudal estate no longer faces the threat of attack. There is no longer anything worth attacking. Elvedon is now a child’s playground, a space so open to interpretation that the child’s imagination can do with it what it will.

But the gardeners are not the only inhabitants at Elvedon. There has been much debate among critics about the significance of the “lady writing.” She is mentioned in almost every subsequent memory of Elvedon that occurs in *The Waves*. Pursuing her Kristevan reading of Elvedon as “vestigial memory” for Bernard, Garrity concludes that the “triangulation of Percival, Bernard, and Elvedon is a reconfiguration of the nation by putting into language that which Western culture has silenced and repressed: the abjected maternal body” (288). But the maternal body represented by the lady at Elvedon is, as Garrity points out, a maternal body of a privileged class, so that in *The Waves* the “elaboration of female authorship is conceivable only as a space of high
culture” (288). But if the lady writing serves as a vestigial memory for Bernard, it also serves as a vestigial memory for the British novel. As some feminist theorists of the origins of the English novel have pointed out, and as I discuss in Chapter 2, the novel of character’s claims to authority rely on the contradictory gesture of abjecting and appropriating femininity. Popular eighteenth-century rhetoric surrounding romance novels characterizes them as a danger to feminine sensibility and a threat to social stability. But of course, Nancy Armstrong famously and enduringly argues that the novel appropriated the depoliticized, feminine figure of the domestic sphere in order to render benign the novel’s investment in class politics. Struggle over the definition of femininity was at the heart of the origins of the English novel, and its incorporation as a genre relied heavily on its claims to a virtuous femininity that it had constructed.

Woolf began to conceive of The Waves as she was working on A Room of One’s Own where she so spectacularly tackles the necessarily vexed topic “women and fiction.” What does the phrase mean?, she asks: It could mean “women and what they are like; or it might mean women and the fiction that they write; or it might mean women and the fiction that is written about them; or it might mean that somehow all three are inextricably mixed together . . . .” (1). But the possibility that Woolf leaves out of this list is the one with which her polemic is arguably most concerned: the phrase could mean women are fiction, or more precisely, they are the stuff of which fiction is made. This is the point of Woolf’s story about her effort to discover the “essential oil of truth” about women at the British Museum (29). Her trip to the British Museum teaches her that “wise men never think the same thing about women” (31). Indeed, she learns that what “wise men” say about women says more about the “wise men” than women. It is while
drawing the sketch of Professor von X that “the submerged truth . . . comes to the top” (33). Professor von X writes about the “mental, moral and physical inferiority of women,” Woolf’s sketch tells her, because he is angry: “The professors—I lumped them together thus—were angry” (34-5). But in fact, she is the one who is angry at Professor von X: “My heart had leapt. My cheeks had burnt. I had flushed with anger” (34). In this anecdote, Woolf demonstrates the relationship between women and fiction by turning the process by which women become the stuff of fiction back on “professors.” Her drawing turns Professor von X into a reflection of her anger, just as the female recipient of Bernard’s letter and the young woman that Peter follows reflect Bernard’s and Peter’s desires when the two men imagine the women to be expressing their own. Throughout her oeuvre Woolf draws attention to how the female body has functioned historically as an empty signifier—woman is the “dark continent” that makes fiction, and by extension the novel, possible. The “lady writing” at Elvedon similarly summons the historical relationship between women and fiction. Indeed, the “lady writing” most certainly recalls Samuel Richardson’s Pamela, the woman who, held hostage on a country estate, wrote the modern, bourgeois individual into existence.

In How Novels Think, Armstrong argues that “What we now call ‘the novel’ won its title in a field of argumentation as it figured out how to adjust to, incorporate, and abject competing ways of thinking about the individual” (10). In other words, what we now call the novel is defined by the mode of subjectivity that it articulates, namely the individual defined not by its social rank but by its character, a character rendered transparent through expressive writing. As the example of Pamela demonstrates, writing was the means by which the modern subject came into existence, and for this reason the
modern individual comes out of the ranks of the bourgeois literate class. For Pamela, Armstrong writes, it “is literacy alone that transforms her from an object [Mr. B] can forcibly possess into a self-possessed subject who can consent to his offer of marriage. Embodying the core fantasy of the early novel—that writing makes the individual—Pamela writes herself into existence as the wife of a wealthy landowner” (5-6). When George Ponderevo sits down one hundred and fifty years later to write a different kind of self, he is still motivated by this “core” novelistic fantasy. But his novel, despite his best efforts, necessarily turns into a story about the failure of that fantasy. Unlike Pamela’s letters, his novel cannot bring coherence to his self, so George appeals instead to the spectacle of himself writing, apparently suggesting that because he writes (not because of what he writes) he exists. By the time Bernard, a couple of decades later, aspires to be a writer, he no longer believes in the fantasy of Pamela. For Bernard, writing is only spectacle. Bernard’s writerly fantasy combined with his repeated references to the “lady writing” draws attention to the fetishistic function writing has performed in the history of the novel. Writing, Woolf’s novel suggests, is the compensatory supplement that brings ostensible coherence to the bourgeois subject. But the recognition of writing as fetish signals its failure to function efficaciously as such, and as writing loses its constitutive potential so too does the bourgeois subject lose its authority.

The bourgeois subject is a product of its historical moment, the transition from feudalism to capitalism. The bourgeois subject challenged the authority of the feudal ruling class by appealing to a value system that, in Armstrong’s words, “sets itself up in opposition to the shallow devotion to objects and concern for surfaces that it invariably attributes, however indirectly, to an earlier and less deserving ruling class” (28). The
bourgeois subject, then, depended on the bogeyman of the aristocracy to sustain its claim to moral authority. If I am correct in arguing that the autumn phase of the British hegemony witnessed a final renunciation of even the cultural capital wielded by feudal ruling class, then it stands to reason that the bourgeois subject likewise lost its *raison d'être*. Certainly, the “death of liberal England” that I outline in the introduction must likewise signal the death of the bourgeois subject. The Liberal Party that had stood in opposition to the Conservative Party of feudal interests was the political embodiment of bourgeois morality, and when its overwhelming political success forced the House of Lords to give up its virtually unchecked veto power, it too lost its political relevance. The bourgeois subject could no longer base its claims to moral authority on its opposition to the less deserving feudal class. This dynamic between the bourgeois subject and the feudal class had long served as the smoke screen for capitalism’s excesses and exploitation. With the loss of the feudal bogeyman, the bourgeois subject became its likely replacement. If the novel “won its title in a field of argumentation” about the contours of the modern individual, the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century British novel has again opened up that field of debate. Continuing the project begun by Doyle in *A Study in Scarlet*, *The Waves* propels the professional middle-class subject to the vanguard of this struggle.

Because over the course of the novel Bernard’s monologues become longer than those of the other characters, a trend that culminates in the final episode when his voice seemingly consumes those of his five friends, critics often look to Bernard as the central figure, even the authoritative voice in the novel. However, I want to propose that it is not Bernard but Louis who is the hero—or perhaps anti-hero—of *The Waves*. Although in
the final episode Bernard channels aspects of all five characters, it is Louis’s voice that dominates, especially in the final few pages. Louis began life as the son of a wealthy Australian banker and hence enjoyed many of the privileges of the bourgeoisie in his youth; but with his father’s bankruptcy Louis descends into the ranks of the lower middle class and must work as a clerk to earn his living. The similarities between Louis and other lower middle class characters created by Woolf and her contemporaries are unmistakable. Take, for example, Leonard Bast and J. Alfred Prufrock. All three inhabit unquestionably dingy (decidedly not bourgeois) environments. While Louis looks out his window to a view of “chimney-pots; cats scraping their mangy sides upon blistered chimney-stacks; broken windows; and the hoarse clangour of bells from the steeple of some brick chapel” (220), Leonard Bast lives “not upstairs, but down, [in] what is known to house agents as a semi-basement, and to other men as a cellar” (33), and Prufrock haunts streets lined with “one-night cheap hotels/ And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells” (lines 6-7). All three also look to the classics as a shibboleth into a higher social status. Louis tries to keep up with Bernard and Neville, who he resents with “hatred and bitterness” for their leisurely entitlements (96), by reading a book “propped against the bottle of Worcester sauce” while he eats lunch (94); Bast “felt that he was being done good to” by Ruskin’s florid descriptions of Venice (35); and Prufrock resents being disregarded by women “Talking of Michelangelo” (14). But Louis differs from Bast and Prufrock in an important way.

As Ronald Schleifer observes in “‘The Young Man Carbuncular’: 1910, the Lower Middle Class, and the Shape of Modernism,” the lower middle class was ushered into existence by the demands of an economy based on “the semiotics of finance” (5). The
working-class schools created by The Forster Act of 1870 educated “a literate class of workers” who became the paper pushers for a system of capital accumulation based not on the production and exchange of commodities but on the nominal transfer of value (5). The lower middle class was precariously perched between the working class and the middle class and, as Bast’s character demonstrates, could easily fall into the “abyss”—the great mass of unindividuated humanity made up by the working class and the chronically poor. Like Pamela, Bast, Prufrock, and Louis turn to literacy to assert themselves as individuals—that is, to differentiate themselves from the abyss. But in each case, literacy fails them. Bast realizes that his conditions of existence will never allow him to “form his style to Ruskin” (34): his apartment is simply too dingy to inspire the florid prose of “the rich man . . . speaking to us from his gondola” (34). Prufrock is unable to ask “the overwhelming question” (10), and he finds it “impossible to say just what I mean!” (104). And although Louis aspires to be a poet, he only wants to translate poetry: “To translate that poem so that it is easily read is to be my endeavour” (95). This “endeavour,” he insists, will prevent him from falling into the abyss, “this aimless passing of billycock hats and Homburg hats and all the plumed and variegated head-dresses of women” (95).

Schleifer writes, “The emergence of the lower middle class in Britain in the late nineteenth century enacted or re-enacted the confrontation between landed ‘real estate’ and the semiotics of a moneyed economy that occurred, in a different register, in the eighteenth century” (16). In other words, the political struggle that the emergence of the novel enacted on behalf of the bourgeois individual during the financial expansion that ushered in the British hegemony, Scheifer contends, is replayed in the latter financial
expansion. Only the major players are different. Schleifer, then, concurs with Baucom’s “hauntological” reading of Arrighi’s cycles in which “an older deep-structural form” surfaces in the later era. But we would do ourselves a disservice to stop at that observation. The lower middle class subject that emerges in novels need not merely repeat or assume the form of the modern novel’s bourgeois subject. Woolf’s Louis will provide us with a model for considering the contours of the lower middle class subject of modernism. Whereas Forster’s Bast is prematurely killed off by a defender of bourgeois morality, and whereas Eliot’s Prufrock seems never to have left the abyss, beginning and ending his poem as “a pair of ragged claws/ Scuttling across the floors of silent seas” (73-4), in *The Waves*, it is Louis’s interpretive framework, his way of seeing the world that comes to dominate the final pages of the novel.

The final few pages place Bernard in a restaurant sounding very much like Louis had in the eating-houses of the earlier episodes. Observe, for example, Louis’s thoughts in the eating-house:

Meanwhile the hats bob up and down; the door perpetually shuts and opens. I am conscious of flux, of disorder; of annihilation and despair. If this is all, this is worthless. Yet I feel, too, the rhythm of the eating-house. It is like a waltz tune, eddying in and out, round and round. The waitresses, balancing trays swing in an out, round and round. The waitresses, dealing plates of greens, of apricot and custard, dealing them at the right time, to the right customers.

(94)

And later, Bernard:

Lord, how unutterably disgusting life is! What dirty tricks it plays us, one moment free; the next, this. Here we are among the breadcrumbs and the stained napkins again. That knife is already congealing with grease. Disorder, sordidity and corruption surround us. We have been taking into our mouths the bodies of dead birds. It is with these greasy crumbs, slobbered over napkins, and little corpses that we have to build. Always it begins again; always there is the enemy; eyes meeting ours; fingers twitching ours; the effort waiting. Call the waiter. Pay the bill. We must pull ourselves up out of our chairs. We must find our coats. We must go. Must,
must, must—detestable word. Once more, I who had thought myself immune, who had said, ‘Now I am rid of all that,’ find that the wave has tumbled me over, head over heels, scattering my possessions, leaving me to collect, to assemble, to heap together, summon my forces, rise and confront the enemy. (293)

Bernard had begun the novel, as Louis notes for the reader, a gentleman’s son. He can look forward to a life of leisure and privilege. But by the end of the novel, it is not only his rhetoric that resembles Louis’s. His life does as well. To support his family he finds himself “clapping a hat on [his] head” like innumerable other men and heading off to work:

Clapping my hat on my head, I strode into a world inhabited by vast numbers of men who had also clapped their hats on their heads, and as we jostled and encountered in trains and tubes we exchanged the knowing wink of competitors and comrades braced with a thousand snares and dodges to achieve the same end—to earn our living. (261)

If Louis has lived his adult life among “chimney pots” and “mangy cats,” Bernard now lives among “breadcrumbs and stained napkins.” Like Louis has feared the English gaze that will necessarily recognize his inferior outsider status as a returned colonial, Bernard is now subject to the gaze of “the enemy; eyes meeting ours; fingers twitching ours.” And like Louis who looked out the window of the eating-house and feared being absorbed into the nondescript masses and desperately turned to his open book to reassure himself of his exceptionalism, Bernard is now just one among many, a member of the formless “We.” At novel’s end, Bernard “tumble[s]” into the abyss. He comes up, briefly gasping for a new beginning, a “sense of the break of day” an “eternal renewal,” but in the end “The waves broke on the shore” (297).

Louis is not, of course, Woolf’s first lower middle class character. Septimus Smith is also a clerk “of the better sort” who turns to literacy for self-realization (84). Like Bast and Louis, Septimus “read in the evening after the day’s work, on the advice of well-
known authors consulted by letter” (84). But as I suggest above, Septimus, like Bast, is little more than an urban curiosity—“London has swallowed up many millions of young men called Smith” (84)—that momentarily piques the interest of the liberally minded Clarissa Dalloway but can just as easily be dismissed when his presence makes too much of a demand on bourgeois consciousness. By the time Woolf writes *The Waves*, however, the lower middle class can no longer so easily be dismissed. It is in this class, the novel suggests, that fascism threatens to take root.\(^{17}\) Drawing on Woolf’s letters and diaries of the late 20s, Gabrielle McIntire shows that Woolf was intensely aware of and concerned about the increasing influence of fascism in Europe while she was writing *The Waves*. And she goes on to argue that, although Woolf never explicitly mentions fascism in the novel, *The Waves* can nevertheless be read as an anti-fascist polemic; indeed, McIntire argues that the novel is “a sustained meditation on the nearness of fascist rhetoric and sentiment to the politics and rhetoric of everyday English life” (30).

However, if Woolf’s novel sets into relief the centrality of fascism to early twentieth-century British “politics and rhetoric” as McIntire argues, it also locates fascism in the urban space of everyday life, specifically in how the space of London, as the breeding ground for the lower middle class, encourages “an absolute conflation of the individual with the nation”—the nationalistic foundation of any fascist politics (McIntire 36).

Although other characters enact elements of a fascist politics—Susan, for example, articulates a quasi-fascist vision of heroic motherhood\(^{18}\)—Louis, indelibly marked by his accent as not-English, is most conscious of Englishness as a national identity. Louis’s resentment of those who can lay claim to authentic Englishness and his desperate desire to reproduce that Englishness in himself—“I will wait and copy
Bernard. He is English. They are all English” (19)—makes him an explicit, albeit unwitting, proponent of a fascist politics. In 1927, Woolf traveled to Mussolini’s Rome, and in her letters home she remarked on the city’s “almost pathological orderliness” (McIntire 36). Louis is the character that most appreciates order because it is order that allows him to participate as one of the many. For example, he appreciates the school rituals: “‘Now we march, two by two,’ said Louis ‘orderly, processional, into chapel . . . We file in; we seat ourselves. We put off our distinctions as we enter’” (34). In this same scene, he takes comfort in the authority of a figure head: “Now all is laid by his authority, his crucifix, and I feel come over me the sense of the earth under me, and my roots going down and down till they wrap themselves round some hardness at the centre” (35). Although all the characters worship Percival, who, as McIntire argues, is the object of one of the novel’s “most conspicuous critiques of fascist power” (39), Louis is enamored of all such loyalty to a personality or group of personalities. In that same section, Louis expresses admiration for and resentment of popular boys: “They are always forming into fours and marching in troops with badges on their caps; they salute simultaneously passing the figure of their general. How majestic is their order, how beautiful is their obedience! If I could follow, if I could be with them I would sacrifice all I know” (47). When Louis leaves school and is forced to make his way “vaguely” (65) in London where he will “consort with cockneys and clerks” (67), he expresses concern about the “disorderly processions”—the masses of non-descript, unindividualted humanity—that are constantly passing through London and that he observes through the eating-shop window: “The streamers of my consciousness waver out and are perpetually torn and distressed by their disorder” (93). He determines, then, “Yes; I will
reduce you to order” (94). And indeed, the next time Louis speaks of London “All are merged in one turning wheel of single sound. All separate sounds—wheels, bells, the cries of drunkards, of merrymakers—all churned into one sound, steel blue, circular” (135). It should be no surprise that this passage, attributing order and harmony to London, appears in the section where the six characters meet Percival for dinner. It is during these dinner scenes that order becomes most prominently fetishized.20 But throughout the rest of the novel, as Bernard gradually morphs into Louis by the end, London’s teeming chaos—the chaos that Woolf so appreciated and took as inspiration for her formal experiments—is characterized by a surprising kind of order. Rather than expressing anxiety at the disorder of London as Howards End and Tono-Bungay do, The Waves expresses anxiety over an apparent and problematic ordering of the masses by a unique component of the London landscape, the London Underground.

The first allusion to Tube travel in the novel comes on the heels of Percival’s death. Mourning Percival, Bernard says, “let me tell you, men and women, hurrying to the tube station, you would have had to respect him. You would have had to form up and follow behind him” (154). It is fitting that Bernard would address his mourning to Londoners rushing to the Tube stations: they are already organized—“formed up,” that is—by the orderliness of the underground system itself; and it is precisely this ability of the underground system to impose order on the masses that motivates Woolf’s association of Tube travel with the nationalistic tendencies of fascism. The most prolonged attention to the Tube in The Waves is paid by Jinny whose monologue in the seventh section begins in the Underground’s Piccadilly Circus station:

Here I stand,” said Jinny, “in the Tube station where everything that is desirable meets—Piccadilly South Side, Piccadilly North Side, Regent
Street and the Haymarket. I stand for a moment under the pavement in the heart of London. Innumerable wheels rush and feet press just over my head. The great avenues of civilization meet here and strike this way and that. I am in the heart of life. But look—there is my body in that looking glass. How solitary, how shrunk, how aged! I am no longer young. I am no longer part of the procession. Millions descend those stairs in a terrible descent. Great wheels churn inexorably urging them downwards. Millions have died. Percival died. I still move. I still live. But who will come if I signal? (193)

In this passage the London Underground is figured as the nerve center of the British nation-state. As such it is a unique space in London where the strategies of a nationalistic fascism prevail; it is an absolutely ordered space that channels people through its station doors, down its escalators, into its trains, and back out again. And Jinny, who had been able to confidently attract the attention of desiring men to her singularly beautiful body fears absorption into the abyss, just as Bernard does when he claps his hat on and descends into the Tube on his way to earn his living.

The modern bourgeois individual imagined by the novel of character was one of Britain’s most important weapons in the struggle for investment-seeking capital during the phase of financial expansion that ushered in the British hegemony. Great Britain was able to attract global capital in part because it had created, a nation of individuals—individuals defined by character rather than feudal rank, and therefore individuals who ostensibly earned privilege instead of being born into it. In other words, the novel created an individual who obfuscates the exploitation on which capitalism depends, and global capital naturally found such an individual conducive to its own ambitions. But almost two centuries after Pamela wrote herself into existence as one of the quintessential modern individuals, global capital has abandoned the bourgeois individual for what Keynes despises as the speculating American masses. The enterprising individual that Keynes nostalgically elegizes in The General Theory is very
much the modern, bourgeois individual, the positivist who can know the value of an investment just as confidently as it can know the value of its character. Indeed, Keynes fondly looks back at a time when individuals “of sanguine temperament and constructive impulses” made sound business decisions. Keynes worries that speculation introduces a kind of uncertainty—the uncertainty of mass psychology—into the economic equation with devastating potential. But despite his nostalgia for the enterprising subject, he also recognizes that the uncertainty—the uncertainty of the speculating subject—is itself a source of value that must not be regulated away. *The Waves* expresses a similar ambivalence toward the model of collective subjectivity for which it has so often been celebrated. Woolf’s novel does not share Keynes’s (and George’s) nostalgia for the bourgeois individual, shedding light instead on how that model of subjectivity is bound up in a repressive gender dynamic recorded by the history of the novel. And in imagining a collective model of subjectivity, it does not begin with the bourgeois subject as its foundation. This is perhaps where *The Waves* arguably breaks with its predecessors *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*. *The Waves* takes the middle-class subject as its starting point, and in this sense gestures toward the emerging American hegemony, characterized as it is by a perceived social leveling in which every class identifies as middle class. But *The Waves* expresses deep reservations about the middle-class subject. It worries that the nation-state may be the medium, much as writing was for the bourgeois individual, through which the middle-class subject finds expression. The novel’s concern is clearly justified, but not just because World War II retroactively confirmed the novel’s warnings against fascism. If the bourgeois subject aided Britain’s ability to attract investment-seeking capital during the eighteenth-century
financial expansion, the middle-class subject who realizes itself in the narrative of nationalism stands to be yoked into a last-ditch attempt to win the twentieth-century struggle for global capital, a struggle that by the time of Woolf’s writing the United States was clearly winning with its own weapon, the speculating subject.

1 See John B. Davis.

2 See Katz for a thorough discussion of this tension in The Waves.

3 Wicke draws on the work of Keynes’s contemporary Hazel Kirk to establish this point rather than looking to Keynes himself.

4 Such critical analyses are abundant, but for examples see Minow-Pinkney, Transue, and Wallace.

5 Caughie warns against trying to locate “the ‘essential Woolf’” and argues that Woolf criticism should instead follow Woolf’s lead and fold her tendency to “equivocate” into the structure of its project (8).

6 Woolf’s diaries indicate that Forster was an important influence/antagonist for her work. See Hoffman and Ter Haar.

7 For an excellent reading of the importance of London in Mrs. Dalloway see Katz.

8 Beer notes that Orlando and The Waves stand out from Woolf’s earlier work because they do not reference World War I (56).

9 See Beer, Marcus, Banfield, Low, and Utell.

10 See Briggs, 245 and Rudikoff, 180-201.

11 Rudikoff describes this aspect of the estate’s history, but more interestingly (or amusingly), she meticulously identifies the six degrees of separation between Woolf, the Maharajah’s descendents, and the Guinness family (192-201).

12 As a further irony, the son of the Maharajah, Prince Frederick Duleep Singh, bought and preserved aristocratic relics and churches in the Suffolk/Norfolk region that the local aristocracy and gentry could no longer afford to maintain (Rudikoff 190-2).

13 The most enduring of these arguments is Marcus’s “Britannia Rules The Wave.” See also McGee, Laura Doyle, and Dickenson.

14 See Monson. Cramer, on the other hand, argues that The Waves positions Bernard unequivocably as the representative of patriarchal language and narrative.

15 See Langbauer, Motooka, Ross, and Spencer.

16 Beer observes the similarities between Louis’s and T. S. Eliot’s biographies: their colonial origins, their careers, and their devotion to the classics. She also cursorily notes the similarities between Louis’s speech and Eliot’s verse. But the similarities between Louis and Eliot are far less provocative to me than those between Louis and Eliot’s lower-middle class anti-hero.
Schleifer notes that the lower middle class “is often taken to be the significant base of twentieth-century fascism” (“The Young Man Carbuncular” 6).

Transue astutely observes that Susan possesses many of the heroic qualities of Percival. She is, Transue writes, “physical, strong-willed, stubborn, and essentially unreflective, a potential hero” but “[h]er only option for fulfillment . . . is marriage and family” (129-30). Susan, then, exemplifies the heroic femininity—the idealization of motherhood as a means of maintaining racial purity—that underwrites fascist ideology. See Garrity for a discussion of racialized and nationalistic discourse of motherhood in Great Britain between the wars.

Minow-Pinkney says of Louis, “He reveres authority and orderly progress, erasing individual differences in the name of generality. Clearly he belongs to that realm of voracious ego and proto-Fascism that Woolf most hates” (159)

See Katz 190-1.
CHAPTER 6
THE UNHOMELY MOMENT OF FINANCE CAPITALISM IN JEAN RHYS’S VOYAGE IN THE DARK

I began this dissertation with a novel motivated by its concerns about the “nomadic civilization” it associates with early twentieth-century London. Rampant real estate speculation is uprooting the British rentier class, displacing them from their ancestral homes. But the Schlegels of Howards End do not have to suffer the civilization of luggage for long. The end of the novel has them settling down to spend their remaining days just outside of London in the quintessential English country house. As I argue in my introduction, the conclusion of Howards End sets to work the machinations of place, the arresting of time in space that lays claim to a particular configuration of social relations as authentic and enduring. In her influential study Space, Place, and Gender, Doreen Massey excavates the intersections and parallel structures between constructions of place—the “attempts to stabilize the meaning of particular envelopes of space-time”—and constructions of gender (5). Chapter 2 demonstrates how the conventional association between woman (herself fixed in a singular, local identity that confirms the universality of masculinity) and home transforms home into place, a place that guarantees a stable identity because it is seemingly inoculated from the social struggles that make space and are allegedly located in the home’s traditional opposite, the public sphere.

If gender constructions have historically aided in the reification of place, then in order to resist the gender constructions that underwrite the coincidence of femininity and place Massey admonishes us to “keep moving!” (11). To be sure, the protagonist of Jean Rhys’s Voyage in the Dark does just that. But does the extraordinary mobility of
Anna Morgan make her a figure of resistance to the articulations of place, their reliance on gender constructions, and their essential role in shoring up national identity? Some feminist critics have identified Anna as a figure of resistance to patriarchal language, but such arguments tend to rely on a marginalization of the novel's interest in the politics of colonialism.¹ In these arguments the colonial landscape of Anna’s West Indian childhood becomes an idealized site of resistance; but this logic elides the ambivalence Anna expresses in her memories. Other scholars, criticizing this approach, read Anna Morgan through the theoretical lens of Homi Bhabha’s “unhomely moment” to argue that Anna enforces an uncomfortable remembering of “imperio-colonial history” (Dell’Amico 41).² In this chapter, I will follow in these critics’ footsteps and read Anna through Bhabha’s lens. However, in so doing, I seek also to understand how the novel registers the role that finance capitalism played in the colonial history that created the problem of Anna Morgan—for Anna is a problem for everyone she encounters: her fellow characters, her readers, and her critics. Rhys’s novel, though drafted as a journal in the months leading up to the First World War, was not revised for publication until World War II lay on the horizon. These were the twilight years of Britain’s global hegemony. Already the British sterling was forced to share the stage with the American dollar, and in another decade, Great Britain would be devastatingly in debt to the then indomitable United States. As Great Britain faced its own global demise, Rhys’s novel links finance capitalism to an intensification of what Carol Dell’Amico calls the “geopolitical forgetting” of empire (41).

Like Tono-Bungay and The Waves, Voyage traces its protagonist’s movement from the estate, in this case the colonial estate of Anna’s childhood memories, to
London. The feudal estate system had served Britain well in its colonial endeavors, especially in the West Indian islands where it was a natural fit for the slave-based, agricultural economies in which labor was legally tied to the land. As we have seen, spatial regimes play a central role in the reification of social structures and, by extension, national identity. This remains true of the colonial estate, whose establishment in the colonies was a means of enforcing these hierarchies as defining features of English identity in the imperial periphery. The estate maintained the settlers’ Englishness by imposing the spatial regime that underwrote the authority of the class relations governing the metropole. But with the abolition of slavery in the British Caribbean in 1838, the colonial estate found it difficult to adapt to a system of wage labor for reasons that are still very much up for debate. As Veronica Marie Gregg notes, the post-slavery period “is one of the most ideologically contested moments in Caribbean history—then and now” (8). Much of the controversy surrounds the reasons freed persons left the plantations instead of staying on as wage laborers. Many proponents of slavery propagated the image of the lazy freed slave: “He lies under his mango-tree, and eats the luscious fruit in the sun; he sends his black urchin up for a breadfruit, and behold the family table is spread. He pierces a cocoa-nut, and, lo! there is his beverage” (qtd. in Gregg 11). This passage articulates a common fear that freed persons would take advantage of what was depicted as an abundant, almost Edenic landscape instead of working to supply their needs on the estates. Edenic paradise aside, there was indeed very little economic incentive for freed persons to work on the estates for wages. A contemporary observer asks, “Why should they work for the planter, and bind themselves to a new tyranny? Where is the moral obligation that
chains them forever to the serfdom of estate labor? Why should they work for a master when they can work more profitably for themselves, and enjoy at the same time a perfect independence?” (qtd. in Gregg 14). One freed person agrees in a document protesting the below subsistence-level wages: “It is offered three bitts to one guilder per day for our labour per day. We are told we must pay for our provision ground, doctor fees, finding ourselves with all necessar ys, etc. What will remain for us in case of sickness?” (qtd. in Gregg 18). And another letter written by freed persons wonders if, given these conditions, the workers are truly free: “Now we are free men (free indeed), we are to work for nothing. Then we might actually say, we become slaves again” (qtd. in Gregg 19). The freed persons of the West Indies recognized that the wage labor system just represented a new form of tyranny, and their resistance to what amounted to this new form of enslavement was the motivation behind a formative event in Jean Rhys’s family history: the burning of her family’s estate. The June 1844 Guerre Negre of Dominica was a week-long protest against a census that freed persons feared would be used to re-enslave them and, importantly for my reading of Rhys’s novel, it resulted in the burning of Rhys’s ancestral home, Geneva Estate. Gregg provocatively argues that even though Rhys would not be born for another fifty years after this event, it nevertheless “marks the obsessive beginning of Rhys’s writing” (8). It is also, I would argue, the “obsessive beginning” of Rhys’s heroine Anna Morgan. Like the Schlegels then, Anna’s story begins with the loss of her home.

That Anna’s story begins with the loss of her home does not make it unique. Stories often begin with the uprooting of a protagonist. Indeed, such a dynamic serves as the point of origin for every novel we have looked at thus far. And besides, critics
have long taken for granted that Anna’s story begins when she leaves the West Indian island of her childhood. But I will argue that Anna’s story begins much earlier with the destruction of her family’s estate. In *Home, Maison, Casa*, Erica Johnson poses the questions that most critics would agree seem to be the source of conflict for Rhys’s troubled heroine: “Did the child of European background, born and raised in the colonies, ‘belong’ in the land of her birth—in which case home was lost upon her repatriation to metropolitan Europe? Or did she belong in the unfamiliar reaches of Europe—in which case she could only desire a sense of belonging unavailable to her in the land of her birth?” (17). Drawing on the work of Homi Bhabha, Johnson notes that the notion of home is an intrinsically problematic category for writers like Rhys because “the meaning of home emerges from the differences between metropolitan and colonial countries as a means of establishing and protecting the cultural borders of the metropole against the (inevitable and mutual) process of cultural hybridization that occurs in the contact zones of empire” (15). Not surprisingly, imperial discourse calls on the idea of “home,” the paradigmatic example of place, to do its bidding and efface the social struggles that are its *raison d’être* by essentializing boundaries between self and other. In Johnson’s argument, as in most scholarship about Rhys’s novel, the problem of home is cast along the geopolitical scale of homelands, so the problem of home in Johnson’s discussion of *Voyage* manifests as the irreconcilability between Anna’s West Indian past and her English present. Thus, in Johnson’s reading, home can never function for Anna as place; instead, home represents a meaning-loss that only appears “through her imagination” (64). But the problem of home in Rhys’s novel originates on a much smaller scale than the geopolitical one. Questions of home only become relevant
to Anna on a geopolitical scale with the destruction of her family’s estate—with the
destruction of the home that could have functioned as place for Anna by clearly
demarcating a space for her on the island and in the British Empire. The family estate,
as place, would have rendered the geopolitical struggle of empire irrelevant to her
everyday life in which the spaces of the estate, like those of Howards End and
Bladesover, would have meticulously regulated social interactions to enforce the social
relations of empire as natural and authentic.

Anna speaks for the first time about Constance Estate in the scene in which her
first lover, Walter, initially alludes to her “predecessor” (51). In this scene Anna can no
longer deny that she is a just a temporary ornament in Walter’s life, though he, by
contrast, is everything of value that exists in hers. In an effort to prepare her for life after
their relationship, Walter asks her, “What would you really like to do?” and she replies, “I
want to be with you. That’s all I want” (50). Walter’s question is meant to be a rather
mundane one. Walter intends for Anna to respond with an example of what she would
like to do to earn a living when their relationship ends. But Anna responds to his
question as if it is the question whose answer defines her very being; in Lacan’s
particular jargon, she answers the question Chez vuoi? As with so many of Lacan’s
aphorisms, Chez vuoi? can be and has been interpreted various ways: “What do you
want?”, “What do you want from me?”, and in Zizek’s lengthy translation, “What’s
bugging you? What is it in you that makes you so unbearable not only for us, but also
for yourself, that you yourself do not master?” (par. 3). Translations and interpretations
of Lacan’s numerous aphorisms and abundant jargon—“Woman is not whole,” “There is
no such thing as sexual relations,” objet petit a, the Other, and so on—tend to
proliferate because they are place holders for absences. *Chez Vuoi?*, for example, marks the radical alterity and inaccessibility of the two subjects between whom the question hangs unanswerable. And it is the very unanswerability of the deceptively simple and ostensibly generous question, “What do you want,” that inevitably leads to the resentful attitude captured by Zizek’s translation and manifested in Walters’s “sneering” reply, “Oh, you’ll soon get sick of me” (50). In her disconcertingly candid response, Anna asks something of Walter she knows he does not want to give and, according to Lacan’s economy of desire, he cannot give. She asks him to identify his desires with hers—that is, to acknowledge that his desires originate in and with the Other, an acknowledgement that, according to Lacan, we spend our lives deploying the Symbolic in an effort to avoid. But the Symbolic works for some people better than for others—it works along gender, class, racial, and other nodes of identification out of which social antagonisms are constructed—and clearly Anna is at a disadvantage in the patriarchal, Western imperial Symbolic in which she finds herself. Indeed, she is entirely unable to play its game. As Nancy R Harrison points out, Anna “is unable to counter linguistic moves against her . . . with a language or speech use of her own” (84).

Anna Morgan can be a difficult character for readers to digest. Anne B. Simpson observes that Anna “often baffles readers” and leaves “audiences in the dark” (84). Dell’Amico similarly marvels at Anna’s “ability to disconcert” (41). It may be tempting to sympathize with Walter when he channels Zizek (albeit anachronistically) and admonishes her, “Don’t be like a stone that I try to roll uphill and that always rolls down again” (50). Why does Anna reply so candidly to Walter’s question when she knows Walter does not “want” her in the same way? And in what way does Anna “want”
Walter? She does not seem to “want” him in the conventional sense. She certainly does not take pleasure in his company. Nor does she seem to want him for the material comforts that he can provide for her. Why would she otherwise refuse to take the money he offers her when he ends the affair? And why can she not just turn the situation to her advantage like Laurie does? Readers are left wondering, as Ethel does, whether Anna is “all there” (145). In a similar vein, Raiskin likens all of Rhys’s early heroines, including Anna, to zombies: “Like the zombie, they lack will and autonomy” (132). This is an especially appropriate comparison for Anna, who recalls a childhood fear of zombies and worries that she resembles one, “looking in the glass and thinking sometimes my eyes look like a soucriant’s eyes” (163). Anna Morgan, then, is such a frustrating character for readers and her fellow characters alike because she represents both terror and absence, the embodiment of the Lacanian Real that marks the constitutive, and thereby eternal, failure of subjectivity. Her disconcertingly ingenuous response to Walter’s question is a plea for her very being, and it is a plea that cannot be satisfied by love, money, or “plan”—late in the novel Anna hopelessly tells herself, “I’ve only got to pull myself together and make a plan” (142)—but can only echo off the unfriendly walls of her various and temporary haunts.

Significantly, it is immediately after Walter callously dismisses Anna’s candid expression of the ultimate desire that she first alludes to her family’s estate. She says to Walter, “I wish you could see Constance Estate . . . That’s the old estate—my mother’s family’s place. It’s very beautiful. I wish you could see it” (52). In the face of traumatic rejection, Anna turns to a very old source of credibility and identity: family history and property. She repeatedly tells Walter that “I’m a real West Indian . . . I’m the fifth
generation on my mother’s side” (55). In making claims to family history and property, Anna anachronistically reproduces a common scene in Victorian novels—characters living in reduced economic circumstances lay claim to cultural capital through repeated assertions of illustrious family ties. Those characters are often the object of gentle (the ladies of Elizabeth Gaskell’s Cranford) or sometimes unrelenting (Mrs. Sparsit of Hard Times) mockery because they too were supposed to be anachronisms. The comedic element of this dynamic in Victorian novels is possible because such logic did wield influence despite the British novel’s best efforts to teach readers to attach value to character. But there is no trace of bathos in Anna’s reply. Like virtually every moment in Anna’s story, this one is saturated with the pathos of tragedy. Anna’s claim is pathetic not only because by the time she articulates it, such claims had been discredited by modernist novels like Woolf’s, but also because colonial ancestry would never have served as a source of credibility in Britain. Anna cannot lay claim to what the novel identifies as the most basic element of cultural capital in the metropole, Englishness. But what does it mean to lack Englishness in Anna’s world? The multifaceted answers to this question will help us to better understand the relationship between Anna’s story and the larger historical process with which this dissertation is concerned: the financialization of the British economy and its role in Britain’s imperial decline.

In the novel, Anna’s stepmother Hester serves as the quintessential example of and gatekeeper for Englishness. Anna offers the following description of her: “She had clear brown eyes which stuck out of her head if you looked at her sideways, and an English lady’s voice with a sharp, cutting edge to it. Now that I’ve spoken you can hear that I’m a lady. I have spoken and I suppose you now realize that I’m an English
gentlewoman. I have my doubts about you. Speak up and I will place you at once.

Speak up, for I fear the worst. That sort of voice” (57). Anna’s description of Hester is almost Dickensian; it is more of a caricature than a characterization. A couple of features, Hester’s eyes and voice, are magnified to such a degree that they overwhelm any other aspect of her character and render her absurd or even grotesque. Such an anachronistic style is appropriate for Hester, whose middle-class Victorian sensibilities seem so out of place in Anna’s precarious world of urban survival. If she is reminiscent of a Dickensian character, she is also reminiscent of George Ponderevo’s mother, who “knew with inflexible decision her place” (13). George’s mother could be so sure of her place because, as Wells’s novel explains, her days were governed by ritual, most importantly the ritual of afternoon tea parties: each day, “tea lasted for nearly three-quarters of an hour . . . and day after day the talk was exactly the same” (16). Rhys’s novel similarly directs our attention to how Hester’s life is governed by ritual, a characteristic that stands in stark contrast to Anna’s peripatetic life. The first thing the reader learns about Hester is that she “usually came up to London for the January sales” (57). And when she goes to meet Hester, Anna runs into her while she is eating what is described as a routine lunch in her hotel:

There were two middle-aged women at our table and a young man with a newspaper which he read whenever he stopped eating. The stew tasted of nothing at all. Everybody took one mouthful and then showered salt and sauce out of a bottle on to it. Everybody did this mechanically, without a change of expression, so that you saw they knew it would taste of nothing. If it had tasted of anything they would have suspected it. (58)

One gets the sense that this is the way these people eat lunch every day: they taste the food and then add salt; they do this “mechanically, without a change of expression” because they expect the food to be bland; if the food were suddenly to show up one day
full of flavor, they would be suspicious. If Hester’s voice marks her as English, so do her eating habits. Flavorful food would be suspect on Hester’s plate because spices are not “English.” They are a product of empire, and this point is punctuated when Anna makes note of the advert on the back of the man’s newspaper: “What is Purity? For Thirty-five Years the Answer has been Bourne’s Cocoa” (58). The appearance of this ad in the middle of a very English lunch is of course a point of irony for Rhys and her heroine because cocoa, advertised as the essence of purity, has been imported into English culture from the distant reaches of empire: yet in this scene Hester repeatedly identifies purity as an intrinsic characteristic of nation, race, and gender.

In a passage that links proper national identity to proper gender identity, Hester categorizes Anna as impure and thereby not English because of her hybrid speech:

I tried to teach you to talk like a lady and behave like a lady and not like a nigger and of course I couldn’t do it. Impossible to get you away from the servants. That awful sing-song voice you had! Exactly like a nigger you talked—and still do. Exactly like that dreadful girl Francine. When you were jabbering away together in the pantry I never could tell which of you was speaking. (65)

Anna’s West Indian speech patterns first mark her as unladylike according to Hester’s metropolitan rubric, and then her failure to perform properly feminine behavior marks her as not-English. This coincidence between gender and national identity is reinforced by Anna’s later revision of the newspaper add: “‘What is Purity? For Thirty-five Years the Answer has been Bourne’s Cocoa.’ Thirty-five years . . . Fancy being thirty-five years old. What is Purity? For Thirty-five Thousand Years the Answer has been . . .” (59). The ellipses that end this statement leave the reader wondering how Anna intends to finish the sentence. What has purity been for thirty-five thousand years? Anna has a habit of making provocative statements and leaving her reader to infer what she means.
This frustrating tendency is an example of how Anna seems to be “not all there” and the most often cited example of this takes place during her liaison with Carl when she must again admit to herself that she is a temporary ornament in another man’s life. Imagining how he speaks of her to his friends, she imitates his voice: “‘I picked up a girl in London and she . . . Last night I slept with a girl who . . .’” And continuing in her own voice, she observes to herself, “That was me. Not ‘girl’ perhaps. Some other word, perhaps. Never mind” (157). The word Anna is looking for is of course “tart.” Here again we see Anna categorized as improperly feminine. The denominator “girl” cannot be applied to her because she is a prostitute. Returning to Anna’s earlier question then, purity for thirty-five thousand years has of course been chastity, the defining feature of proper femininity and guarantor of national purity. As Jane Garrity explains, the policing of female sexuality has long served the interests of the nation-state in general and the British empire specifically:

British women were viewed primarily as mothers, not daughters, in the eyes of the State. Valued for their role as reproductive conduits, white Englishwomen’s bodies were subjected to a variety of regulatory practices that sought to construct them, physically as well as spiritually, as potential mothers of the British race. Chiefly valued as national assets because they could bear healthy white citizens, these select Englishwomen would both stabilize the imaginary borders of the nation and contribute to the expansion of its empire. (1)

Anna, then, is neither properly feminine nor properly English because she does not serve the interests of the nation as a “reproductive conduit” of the British “race.” If Anna cannot claim British identity, she cannot claim femininity and vice versa. And if she cannot lay claim to femininity or national identity, then she cannot lay claim to home.⁶ That Anna’s failure to be properly feminine and properly English leaves her placeless is made apparent in the passage in which Hester criticizes Anna for her West
Indian speech. She gives a very specific example of a moment in which she was especially confounded by Anna’s speech: when Anna and Francine were “jabbering away” in the “pantry” she could not tell the difference between the two women. Anna’s violation of ladylike and English speech patterns is compounded by a spatial transgression that blurs the class and racial boundaries between Anna and Francine, the family’s black servant. Recall that George Ponderevo’s lack of place in Bladesover is figured as repeated spatial transgressions, and he notes that he similarly tasted “illegal snacks—the unjustifiable gifts of footmen—in pantries” (3-4). Just as George’s novel directs our attention to how the meticulously regulated space of Bladesover house is no longer relevant to the “coming age,” Hester’s admonishment of Anna’s spatial transgression is another way that her character is marked as anachronistic. Virginia Woolf famously sees the “change in human nature” that she identifies with 1910 in the increasingly mobile Georgian cook: “The Victorian cook lived like a leviathan in the lower depths, formidable, silent, obscure, inscrutable; the Georgian cook is a creature of sunshine and fresh air; in and out of the drawing-room, now to borrow the Daily Herald, now to seek advice about a hat” (“Mr. Bennett” 746). What Woolf is describing here is the middle-class leveling that I discuss in the previous chapter; and importantly, as in The Waves when at novel’s end Bernard, formerly a public school boy, claps his hat on his head and starts for the tube, this leveling is marked by a greater movement in and between the spaces that the Bladesover system had so rigorously disciplined to enforce class hierarchies. But whereas The Waves, as so many of Woolf’s novels do, celebrates movement in and across different kinds of spaces than those that had once been used to enforce bourgeois hierarchies, Rhys’s novel shows how that mobility is enabled by
the place of nation. In other words, the figure of home is still operative in a novel like Woolf’s; it just operates on a national or geo-political plane.

Anna’s extraordinary mobility is clearly an impediment to her ability to create a stable means of subsistence and sense of self. The original cause of this mobility is the destruction of her family’s estate, the place that by design is supposed to arrest all movement and time. Even in its ruined form, Constance Estate continues to enforce spatial boundaries and by extension categorical distinctions: “Thinking of the walls of the Old Estate house, still standing, with moss on them. That was the garden. One ruined room for roses, one for orchids, one for tree-ferns. And the honeysuckle all along the steep flight of steps that led down to the room where the overseer kept his books” (52). Even though the estate ruins had become overgrown with island foliage, they nevertheless still manage to separate different types of plants: each variety of plant has its own room.

However, I do not want to suggest in making these observations that Rhys’s novel is nostalgic for the colonial estate and its particular spatial regime. The novel also recognizes that it is this same logic that categorizes Anna as not-feminine and not-English. Take, for example, Anna’s account of Hester’s tirade against her uncle. Anna laughs when Hester threatens to tell her uncle that he is “not a gentleman” (64). In Hester’s view, Anna’s uncle is “not a gentleman” because an English gentleman does not have “illegitimate children wandering about all over the place called by his name”(64). Here again, we see how national and gender identity are mapped onto and through space. Anna’s uncle violates English social taboos not only by laying claim to his illegitimate children, but also by allowing them to run “about all over the place.” An
English gentleman would not only deny the existence of illegitimate children; he would also meticulously regulate their movement so his legitimate children could be quickly identified as such by their presence in his home. Anna laughs at Hester's threat because she knows her uncle does not govern himself according to the English distinctions with which Hester identifies. But living in the metropole, Anna is still governed, through Hester's judgment, by the logic of the feudal estate; and importantly, in Rhys's novel this is true in London as well.

If *Howards End* and *Tono-Bungay* oppose the seemingly undisciplined space of London to the disciplining space of the feudal estate or its Victorian middle-class variant, the country house, *Voyage*, by contrast locates a “homely” disciplining of space in London. Whereas these earlier novels are enamored of what they depict as an overwhelming heterogeneity in London, Anna remarks repeatedly on a disturbing uniformity that she sees governing London, and indeed all of England. One of the things Anna cannot get “used to” in England is that the towns “always looked so exactly alike” (8). And London is no exception: “this is London—hundreds of thousands of white people rushing along and the dark houses all alike frowning down one after the other all alike all stuck together—the streets like smooth shut-in ravines and the dark houses frowning down” (17). Whereas the London of the earlier novels defies the idea of boundaries and seemingly cannot be contained by novelistic representation, the London of *Voyage* is “stuck together” and “shut-in.” Anna’s description of London stands out for its emphasis on the places that underwrite the bourgeois hegemony characteristic of the novel of character: the domestic spaces of “the dark houses frowning down.” Throughout the novel, Anna anthropomorphizes spaces and thereby sets into relief the
work that spaces perform in the arbitration of social categories. Anna has good reason for such figurative depictions of unwelcoming houses: she has repeatedly been asked to leave them. When she and Maudie are looking for rooms in Southsea, their landlady initially turns them away because she does not let to “professionals” (8)—a label that could equally mean stage performer or prostitute, but in either case connotes a femininity that is improper because it involves constant mobility and is thereby antithetical to the construction of home. The landlady, thus, fears that their presence in her home will be “Getting my house a bad name” (9). Similarly, Anna is asked to leave her first room in London when the landlady accuses her of “Crawling up the stairs at three o’clock on the morning” (30). Though it wasn’t actually three o’clock, Anna was nevertheless in the wrong place—the semi-public stairs—at the wrong time—at night—when a proper woman would have been in bed. Again it is her movement in space that marks her as improperly feminine, so her presence in homes threatens to undermine the work they do in the reproduction of bourgeois hegemony.

The threat that Anna represents to bourgeois space goes beyond simply damaging the reputations of a few individual houses. Instead, she stands in for a much more significant threat to the very idea of home. This is evident in the way she anthropomorphizes Walter’s house, which like the rows of “dark houses frowning down” seems to “sneer” at her: she says his house is “dark and quiet and not very friendly to me. Sneering faintly, sneering discreetly, as a servant would. Who’s this? Where on earth did he pick her up?” (49). The equation of house with servant suggests that the house arbitrates with the authority of place much like Bladesover does (George’s mother is as offended by his transgressions as the “Olympians” she serves), and it
sneers at Anna precisely because she has no place. The indicting question “Where on earth” is of course its own answer: nowhere and everywhere, but who cares because it’s not here. The question implies that Anna originates in a spatial void—the not here, which is nowhere. Again, Anna is shown to mark a site of radical negativity that I have previously interpreted through a Lacanian lens. Here, though, it is best understood via Bhabha’s notion of the “unhomely,” a term that usefully allows us to insert the problem of empire into Lacan’s seemingly transhistorical economy of desire. As Bhabha writes, “The unhomely moment relates the traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence” (11). Although Bhabha describes the unhomely as “a paradigmatic colonial and post-colonial condition” (9), it should not be construed simply as a state of being. Instead, the “unhomely” is an articulation or, in Bhabha’s words, a “presence” that undoes the work of “home”—the symbolic work of boundary construction upon which the social identities and power structures of empire are built and maintained. In Bhabha’s account, home, emerging as it does out of the distinction between public and private that it creates, is one of the fundamental elements of the symbolic that allows the Western imperial subject to maintain its imaginary integrity. Quoting Hannah Arendt, Bhabha describes home as marking “the distinction between things that should be hidden” (read: the traumatic absence at the core of subjectivity) “and things that should be shown” (10). In other words, the unhomely does its work by revealing that which has been “disavowed” through the construction of a private space that, like subjectivity itself, effaces the social struggles in and through which it manifests as a discrete place (10).
This returns us to the problems Anna encounters when she asserts her West Indian origins and attempts to lay claim to family and property—when she repeatedly asserts that “I’m a real West Indian . . . I’m the fifth generation on my mother’s side” (55). By making such a claim she associates herself with one of the primary objects of metropolitan disavowal: slavery. As Seymour Drescher explains, the presence of slavery irrevocably corrupted the colonies from the perspective of the British metropole, which prided itself on being “an island of liberty in a world filled with slaves” (Capitalism and Antislavery 17). The lack of slavery in the British metropolis was a sign of its national and cultural superiority that paradoxically justified rule over its empire, slavery and all:

On the one hand it was recognized that slavery was a social and economic response to peculiarities of climate or production. On the other hand many metropolitans contemptuously concluded that the quality of their fellow Britons clearly degenerated as one moved beyond the line. Adam Smith implied it was the jailbirds and flotsam of European society who became the masters of slaves. (Drescher 18)

Anna’s identification with her slave-owning ancestors aligns her with this abject social position: “West Indians were always outsiders, corrupted by ruling slaves” (Drescher 19).

It is right after Anna lays claim to her fifth generation status that she also tells Walter about the slave list she found as a child at Constance Estate. She says that she will never forget “All those names written down”—“It was in columns—the names and the ages and what they did and then General Remarks . . . Maillotte Boyd, aged 18, mulatto, house servant” (52-3). In Tono-Bungay George recalls seeing a similar kind of document, the peerage, in virtually every room of Bladesover (13). The peerage, of course, records the alliances of British nobility and serves to remind everybody living in
the estate system who inhabits its upper echelons. George points out that the “upper servants” at Bladesover, including his mother, knew the peerage by heart: “if you had asked . . . how such and such a Prince of Battenburg was related to, let us say, Mr. Cunninghame Graham or the Duke of Argyle, you would have been told upon the nail” (13). The peerage records with unmistakable clarity the value of individuals as determined by family relationships that are timeless and cannot be nullified by death or exchange.

The slave list that Anna discovers is like the peerage insofar as it serves as documented evidence of the value of individuals living within the system, but it is a kind of inverse peerage, recording a value that originates with an imposed lack of familial claims and increases with exchangeability. If the peerage is the central, defining document of the metropolitan estate system, the slave record is the defining document for the colonial estate system, and the difference between the two documents helps to explain why the metropolitan estate system continued to exert power after its economic viability had long passed away while the colonial estate did not. As a record of kinship relations, the peerage elides the economic foundations and systems of exploitation upon which the metropolitan estate was built and thereby reifies the institution as a fundamentally cultural one central to national identity. The slave record, by contrast, defines the colonial estate as a fundamentally economic institution whose viability depended on a system of enslaved labor. When slavery was abolished in the 1830s, unlike the metropolitan estate, the colonial estate could not draw on cultural capital to retain its cultural and political authority. Rhys’s novel exposes this dynamic when Hester scoffs at “Morgans Rest,” the “estate” purchased by Anna’s father toward the end of his
life: “Estate! Fancy calling a place like that an estate” (62). If Morgan’s Rest had been an economic success, Hester likely would have had no problem calling it an estate. But without economic viability, a colonial estate like Morgan’s Rest lacks the cultural capital to be called an estate, which in Hester’s mind is a peculiarly English cultural institution.

If the presence of the peerage in Bladesover house lends credibility to that estate, the presence of the slave record in the ruins of Constance Estate irredeemingly associates the colonial estate with its slave-owning history, so it cannot wield the cultural capital that the metropolitan estate does. This logic is made explicit in Hester’s warning: “The sins of the fathers . . . are visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation” (53). As someone who can lay claim to Englishness, Hester does not see herself as being implicated in those sins. But of course each and every British citizen is implicated in slavery’s plunder. Slavery, then, enters into Rhy’s novel as the “disavowed,” and Anna marks the “unhomely” resurfacing of that legacy. Indeed, as I have argued, it is the legacy of slavery that created Anna Morgan. It was the promise of slavery’s plunder that drew her ancestors to the West Indies, and it was the abolition of slavery that induced Anna Morgan’s peculiar placenessness and set her into perpetual motion. Moreover, it is slavery’s legacy that makes her ill-equipped, as the novel suggests, for anything other than the role that she ultimately fills, a role that she likens to slavery. Toward the conclusion of the scene that has been the focus of this chapter, after Anna has fulfilled her amorous responsibilities, in which she takes no pleasure, she repeats to herself, “Maillotte Boyd, aged 18. Maillotte Boyd, aged 18 . . .” (56). Anna identifies with the woman whose name was recorded on the slave record and recognizes her own status as a commodity. Like Maillotte, Anna’s name, age, and
“General Remarks” could presumably be recorded on a list that contains all of her “predecessors” as well. But this is not the only instance in which the novel encodes Anna as a commodity. The first time Anna meets Walter, she has set out with Maudie to buy some stockings, and just as she closely scrutinized the stockings before she purchases them, Walter “looked at [her] sideways once or twice—very quickly up and down, in that way they have” (11). When she goes to dinner with Walter for the first time, she resents the way he “sniffs” the wine and declares it “corked;” later, he kisses her and she fears she too might be “corked”: “I remembered him smelling the glass of wine and I couldn’t think of anything but that, and I hated him” (22). And finally, as I have already mentioned, she identifies with the cocoa advertised on the back of the newspaper: “Fancy being thirty-five years old.” In this example, she worries about her own claims to purity and about the effects those claims will have on her value as a commodity, which can only decline as time goes on.

In the second chapter of this dissertation, I argue that Sherlock Holmes represents a re-emergence of the eighteenth-century Quixote who was so important to the development of the British novel during the phase of finance capitalism that ushered in the British hegemony. At the conclusion of the dissertation, my reading of Rhy’s *Voyage in the Dark* looks forward to the end of the British hegemony. But insofar as Anna Morgan’s origins lie in the eighteenth-century slave trade, Rhys’s novel also gestures back to that earlier phase of finance capitalism, during which, as Ian Baucom argues, the Atlantic slave trade helped to draw global capital into Great Britain’s jurisdiction. In Chapter 2, I criticize Baucom for collapsing the British and American cycles of accumulation into one “long durée.” As I point out, there are significant differences
between the phase of finance capitalism that ushered in Britain’s hegemony and that which led to its decline. For example, during the earlier phase, capital was flowing into Great Britain while during the latter phase capital was flowing out. And importantly, much of the capital that was flowing into Great Britain helped to fund what Marx calls “primitive accumulation” and what David Harvey, in *The New Imperialism*, revises as “accumulation by dispossession.”

Marx used the phrase “primitive accumulation” to refer to a phase in capitalism’s historical development in which non-capitalist modes of production were absorbed into capitalist modes of production. The most famous example of this in British history is the enclosure of the commons, a centuries-long process that peaked in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and involved the privatization of land that had been used by peasants as grazing pasture for livestock (Moore 25-29). The enclosure of the commons not only transferred public land into private hands, an essential condition of capitalist production, but it also displaced millions of peasants who migrated to the cities and became the labor power of British industrialism. But in *The New Imperialism*, which builds on David Harvey’s career-long interest in capitalism’s tendency toward over-accumulation and economic crises, Harvey points out that “primitive accumulation” is not a historical phase of capitalism. Rather, he argues that it is an enduring component of capitalism’s reproductive strategy, and this is why he prefers the phrase “accumulation by dispossession,” a phrase that also captures the violence and coercion that is intrinsic to the process.

Because the sole purpose of a capitalist enterprise is to accumulate value, this commitment to accumulation for accumulation’s sake inevitably leads to the production
of a surplus value above and beyond that which can profitably be reinvested in the expansion of an enterprise. This process is called over-accumulation, and Harvey is interested in moments when over-accumulation happens on a global scale—when the global capitalist economy has too much surplus value to profitably reinvest in itself. Because of this tendency to over-accumulate, Harvey argues that capitalism needs something outside itself that can serve as an object of profitable investment. This “outside” can come in many different forms: it can be “some pre-existing outside,” such as a non-capitalist territory; or, alternatively, capitalism “can actively manufacture it” by destroying part of itself (141). Examples of the first instance include, among other things, imperial enterprises, the transforming of peasant populations into wage labor, and the privatization of public lands and non-capitalist sectors of the economy; examples of the second instance are gentrification efforts, in which real estate is allowed to depreciate in value so it can be razed and rebuilt at a greater profit, and the creation of vast labor reserves by engaging in practices that induce mass unemployment. The history of slavery in British capitalism includes both of these instances of accumulation by dispossession. In the first instance, the British slave trade, which, as Baucom argues, forcibly transferred labor power from parts of the world that were not feeding the networks of global capital to parts of the world that were (as I explain in chapter 2, the slave-based economy of the southern U. S. was the primary supplier of cotton to the British textile industries). And in the second instance, the abolition of slavery within the British empire transformed that labor power into a vast labor reserve, driving down labor costs in the metropole and colonies alike.
As Seymour Drescher explains, the reasons for the nineteenth-century abolition of slavery have long been a source of intense debate because there was no apparent economic incentive for abolition: the “economic ‘natural-limits’ of slavery were nowhere in sight during the abolitionist process” (Mighty Experiement 4). Abolition was imposed on the colonies by an industrialized metropole that was thriving on a system of wage labor and that was more concerned about the stain of slavery on claims to national identity than about the economic benefits of slavery. To understand this, it is important to remember why Marx does not categorize slavery as a capitalist mode of production even though it does, like wage labor, produce surplus value. As Marx points out, “Capital did not invent surplus labour” (344); but “What distinguishes the various economic formations of society—the distinction between for example a society based on slave-labour and a society based on wage-labour—is the form in which this surplus labour is in each case extorted from the immediate producer, the worker” (325). In other words, what makes wage labor capitalist is the way that wage labor disguises the process of extracting surplus labor by making it seem like the laborer freely enters into the exploitative relationship. Slavery, on the other hand, does not disguise this process of extortion and is thereby unsustainable as a process of production. The difference between production via slavery and production via wage labor is not one of value accumulation but ideology; capitalist ideology—the daily practices that reproduce capitalist social relations—disguises the systems of exploitation on which it depends while slavery does not. So even if the abolition of slavery did not contribute to global capitalism’s bottom line, it did contribute to the reproduction of capitalism in two significant ways. The presence of slavery in the British empire threatened to expose the
systems of exploitation on which capitalism is built, so even though it continued to be profitable, Britain did have incentive for abolishing it. And as an added benefit, the abolition of slavery created a vast reserve of cheap labor in the West Indies that would later become important to the maintenance of Britain’s post-World War II, post-hegemony economy—as evidenced by the waves of West Indian immigrants seeking jobs in the British metropole in the 1950s—and that would continue to serve global capital to this day.

It may be stating the obvious to point out here that within this history the interests of the West Indies are nowhere to be found; but Rhys’s novel goes to great lengths to direct our attention to just this problem. This is not to say that maintaining a system of slavery was in the best interests of the West Indies—indeed, such a statement implies that the West Indies has an identifiable and unified interest; rather, it is to say that within this logic the West Indies merely serve as an exotic, undifferentiated backdrop on which the metropolitan drama of abolition is played out. And Rhys’s novel repeatedly directs our attention to how the world of the West Indies does not compute in metropolitan England. Indeed, the novel poses this problem in the very first line in which Anna complains, “It was as if a curtain had fallen, hiding everything I had ever known” (7). A paragraph later, she continues, “Sometimes it was as if I were back there and as if England were a dream. At other times England was the real thing and out there was the dream, but I could never fit them together” (8). Most critics offer up these opening pages as evidence of the psychic trauma that necessarily informs the experience of the colonial subject. In other words, they cite these passages in an effort to articulate Anna’s peculiarly liminal status. When critics read Anna as an “unhomely moment”—
recalling, as I explain above, that in Bhabha’s formulation “the unhomely moment relates the traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence” (11)—their efforts tend to focus on understanding Anna’s “personal psychic history” through “the wider disjunctions of political existence.” I want to reverse this paradigm and think about how Anna’s “personal psychic history” can help us understand “the wider disjunctions of political existence” that characterize her historical moment of economic financialization. The second phase of finance capitalism intensified the process of “geopolitical forgetting” that informs the relationship between the imperial metropole and its periphery.

In the often-cited opening pages of the novel Anna draws a very specific contrast between the landscape of her childhood island and the landscape of England. She contrasts the “Market Street” of the West Indian island with the “Corporation Street or High Street or Duke Street or Lord Street” that she finds in every English town (7-8). This juxtaposition of the West Indian “Market Street” and the metropolitan “Corporation Street” suggests that Anna’s West Indian memories do not translate into her English present, in part at least, because the different parts of the globe operate on two different economic planes. In his history of global capitalism, Arrighi, building on the work of Fernand Braudel, divides the economy into a three-tiered structure, which includes material life, the lowest level at which decisions are made according to basic needs; the market, the level at which decisions are made according to exchange values; and the top-most tier, which Arrighi calls the “anti-market” or “capitalism itself,” where decisions are made based on the interests of a coterie of wealthy and well-connected groups and carried out via a fusion of those interests with the nation-state. Popular discourse
locates capitalism in the so-called free market, but Arrighi contends that a truly free market would generate too much competition and undermine the accumulation of capital on the large scale that capitalism needs to survive. Arrighi points out that markets existed long before capitalism; it was not until localized markets came to be coordinated into a large-scale globally hegemonic system by joining forces with the nation-state that capitalism emerges. But most importantly for my purposes here, this top-tier of “capitalism itself” operates beyond the knowledge of the average individual whose economic behaviors take place on the levels of the market and material life. Because the everyday activity of ordinary people takes place on the level of the market, it is the market to which economists pay most attention. But, according to the logic of Arrighi’s argument their attentions are misplaced: the global economy is actually determined by what happens in the top-tier anti-market. Citing Braudel, Arrighi writes, “a few wealthy merchants in eighteenth-century Amsterdam or sixteenth-century Genoa could throw whole sectors of the European or even world economy into confusion, from a distance. Certain groups of privileged actors [were] engaged in circuits and calculations that ordinary people knew nothing of” (24). Surely the economic collapse of 2008 is a more immediate example of how the actions of a few select interests operating beyond the view of ordinary people, and with the consent of the nation-state, can dramatically influence the health of the global economy. Although the buying and selling of houses happened on the level of the market, it was the bundling of mortgages and the trading of derivatives on the part of financial institutions that led to the collapse. Indeed, the bundling of mortgages occurred under such shadowy circumstances that
many homeowners attempting to prevent foreclosure were unable even to determine who owned their loans.

Arrighi’s tripartite economic schema provides us with a new way of reading Anna’s relationship with Walter Jeffries. Their relationship allegorically reproduces the incommensurability of the two economic planes on which the West Indies and metropolitan England are operating. The novel is careful to point out that Anna knows Walter “worked in the City” as “one of these Stock Exchange blokes,” but beyond those basic facts, “he doesn’t talk much about himself,” so Anna knows nothing more about him (45). He belongs to a world that Anna cannot access and therefore cannot comprehend, and he deliberately keeps her in the dark because it is in his best interests to do so: he is, in Maudie’s words, “the cautious sort” (45). Moreover, he and Anna always seem to be talking at cross purposes. The climactic example of this is the one I offer above when he asks Anna what she wants to do with her life and she responds with an answer that takes the question to an entirely different place that ultimately frustrates Walter. But this paradigm begins much earlier and is repeated throughout their relationship. On their first “date” Anna worries that “all the time I was talking he kept looking at me in a funny sort of way, as if he didn’t believe what I was saying” (21). And later, when she and Walter are in the country with Vincent and Germaine, she does not understand why Walter and the others are laughing, so she “put the end of [her] cigarette down on Walter’s hand” and she “jammed it down hard and held it there” (86). Like Anna’s earlier response to Walter’s question, this action seems to be incommensurate with what Walter is doing and saying.
If Walter’s world of finance capitalism at the top tier of the global economy is inaccessible and incomprehensible to Anna, the market tier world of the West Indies that Anna remembers is not. Indeed, the passage in which Anna describes “Market Street” provides one of the richest and most vivid images in the novel:

I would pretend I was standing outside the house at home, looking down Market Street to the Bay. When there was a breeze the sea was millions of spangles; and on still days it was purple as Tyre and Sidon. Market Street smelt of the wind, but the narrow street smelt of niggers and wood-smoke and salt fishcakes fried in lard. (When the black women sell fishcakes on the savannah they carry them in trays on their heads. They call out, ‘Salt fishcakes, all sweet an’ charmin’, all sweet an’ charmin’.) It was funny, but that was what I thought about more than anything else—the smell of the streets and the smells of frangipani and lime juice and cinnamon and cloves, and sweets made of ginger and syrup, and incense after funeral or Corpus Christi processions, and the patients standing outside the surgery next door, and the smell of the sea-breeze and the different smell of the land-breeze. (7-8)

This idealized description of “Market Street” imagines a non-alienated world in which the sights, sounds, and smells of nature and social relations are immediate, direct, and tactile. There is a plenitude in this passage that stands in stark contrast to the sparseness of Anna’s depictions of London, and that stands in stark contrast to Anna herself.

As I mention above, Anna’s depiction of London differs strikingly from her contemporaries’ depictions, which overflow with an abundance that threatens to consume their books. This difference finds a parallel in the representation of Anna when read alongside the characters of previous chapters. Whereas George and Teddy Ponderevo as well as the characters of The Waves are troubling for the abundance of experiences, ideas, and language—George’s “impressions” pile up on one another and threaten to overwhelm his book—there is an equal but opposite tendency toward sparseness in Anna’s character. But if there is a frustrating sparseness in Anna’s
character, that sparseness is mirrored in London and the financialized world that Walter represents. If Teddy’s behavior and speech patterns find congruence in London and his financial empire, and if Woolf’s formal experimentation imagines a speculating subject whose value emerges as a process of textuality rather than character, Anna Morgan is the opposite side of the same coin. She similarly encodes a world “melted down” (to use Forster’s phrase) by the logic of London and finance capitalism, but the “unhomely” sparseness with which she does so draws attention to the intensification of nationalism, typical of phases of financial expansion, that makes possible the modernist novel’s “unhoming” of space.

1 See Kloepfer and Maurel. Emery describes the problem feminist scholars face when writing about Rhys: “For feminist readers, the problem becomes especially acute since we wish to draw well-deserved attention to Jean Rhys as a woman writer and perhaps to do so we must somehow redeem her seemingly ‘failed’ female characters. If we are unable to view them as victorious, we become trapped in victimology” (64). Feminist critics tend to idealize Anna's West Indian childhood it allows them to construct an alternative to these two possibilities. Anna would be victorious had she not been uprooted from her home.

2 See also Johnson.

3 Slavery was nominally abolished in 1933, but “freed persons” continued to be subject to compulsory labor until 1938 (Gregg 22)

4 See, for example, Raiskin, Wilson, Murdoch, Seshagiri, and Dell’Amico.

5 Howells agrees, arguing that Anna suffers from “the condition of blankness attributed to [those who are] positioned outside the norms of an imperialist tradition and so deprived of their power to signify” (70).

6 Critics tend to locate Anna’s placelessness in her Creole identity. Seshagiri writes, “To be Creole is to be born displaced, to label as not-home the land of one’s birth” (488). But here we see that it is her doubly liminal status as woman and Creole that renders her homeless.

7 Dell’Amico similarly argues that Anna “functions in the novel as the embodiment of colonial history coming home, as a material bearer of ambiguous colonial traces and meanings” (46). But I am looking at the particular trace of slavery in this dynamic.
Each of the final three novels I look at writes against the grain of the novel of character that had been the dominant novelistic mode in Britain since the mid-eighteenth century and which formally merged three usages of character—literary character, the distinctive mark of writing, and the unique aspects of personhood—to naturalize the modern individual. But, the legitimacy of the modern individual, whose value was attached to character rather than to land and family, was built on a paradox. Character could only wield power in a world of relational values and exchange, but its credibility could only be rendered legible within a system of intrinsic values associated with the domestic sphere. For a century after Pamela wrote herself into existence, the British novel maintained a precarious balance, much like double-entry bookkeeping, by enclosing the feminine figure within the home where she guaranteed the character of her husband. Within this paradigm, home is the quintessential place; it effaces the social struggles that are its raison d’être. But, the placeness of home began to unravel along with the paradox of character in the late nineteenth century when British manufacturing began to decline and Britain’s relationship with its empire began to change.

If *The Moonstone* offers a critique of Britain’s colonial project, it does so, in part, by exposing how the English country house is implicated in the plunder of imperialism. In Collins’s novel, home, whose metonymic conflation with nation had long served the interests of empire by establishing symbolic boundaries between the imperial metropole and the contact zones of empire, becomes itself a site of the geopolitical struggle its very existence is supposed to deny. As an extrapolation of home, nation likewise served
as guarantor of character much like it served as guarantor of credit. But when the contours of home and nation become murky as they do after the “devilish Indian Diamond” enters the Verinder household along with the cosmopolitan Franklin Blake, so too do the contours of character. Collins’s novel forestalls a full-blown crisis in character by intensifying the domestic logic of Richardson’s *Pamela* and imagining a character whose credibility can only be guaranteed by a denial of the public value of that credibility. Rachel Verinder shores up the logic of character by sacrificing the public appearance of her own and thereby denying its value within a world of exchange.

The logic of Collins’s resolution is not sustainable, and by the end of the century Arthur Conan Doyle’s first Sherlock Holmes novel ceases to seek a solution and begins the process of detaching literary character from personhood by resurrecting the figure of the quixote who was so important to the consolidation of domestic poetics in the eighteenth century. But, unlike the eighteenth-century quixote, Sherlock Holmes possesses narrative authority and thereby lends credibility to discrete systems of knowledge. While the eighteenth-century quixote was a weapon in the war chest of the novel, which “won its title” by appropriating and abjecting “competing ways of thinking about the individual” (Armstrong, *How Novels Think*, 10), the turn-of-the-century quixote gains respectability as the expert so that conflicts between different systems of knowledge need not be resolved into one, authentic representational system. Jefferson Hope need not be villain or hero; he can be villain and hero when read through two different modes of novelistic writing, the detective story and the chivalric romance. That Doyle upholds the both/and of character through the two parts of his novel draws attention to the literariness of character and detaches it from the “thingly” world that
Baucom associates with phases of material expansion. Of course the logic of the quixotic expert that Doyle’s novel celebrates also has its problems because at some point those competing systems of knowledge must be reconciled into policy, an issue Doyle’s novel conveniently eludes by Hope’s death. The novel never has to decide whether or not to prosecute Hope for the “grisly” murders of the detective plot that are later vindicated as acts of justice in the romantic plot.

The unraveling of character in these late nineteenth-century novels is symptomatic of the shift toward financial modes of accumulation during that time period. Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* registers that shift in the way it imagines how a world that has often been celebrated by readers as being, like *Howards End*, a place apart from the financialized spaces of London is actually infused by the logic of London. The novel inadvertently demonstrates that in such a space the model of femininity that had underwritten the hegemony of the novel of character is no longer possible. Hardy runs into trouble with the reception of his novel because he is still trying to work within the paradigm of the novel of character while proposing a new way of understanding feminine virtue. The failure of his novel to reconcile the novel of character with this new mode of urbanized femininity suggests that the representation of London requires a different kind of novelistic poetics that the early twentieth-century novels of *Howards End* and *Tono-Bungay* can only begin to explore. *Howards End* attributes the loss of home to the rampant real estate speculation, which renders London a space of perpetual mobility antithetical to place and the consolidation of character that it makes possible. *Tono-Bungay* draws attention to the mutually supporting categories of place and character by linking them to the spatial regime of the feudal estate, the spatial
regime upon which the nineteenth-century bourgeois hegemony and manufacturing economy had been built. Wells’s novel likewise locates the origins of the novelistic character in this spatial regime, whose hegemony is fading by the time George Ponderevo sits down to tell his story. Hit by a “transverse” force of class mobility, George lacks a place in the estate system, so he journeys to London and embarks on an effort to imagine how a new novelistic poetics based on the hegemonic and disorienting spaces of London may better account for the kind of character he—or more accurately, his uncle—represents, a character whose value can no longer be linked to the virtues of honor but must be grounded in something else that his novel only begins to suggest might be, like value under finance capitalism, a perpetually reconfigured fiction.

George’s meditations on novelistic form do not translate into formal experimentation. By conjuring the “lady writing” at Elvedon Estate, Woolf similarly sets her novel up against the novel of character that the “lady writing” in Pamela inaugurates. But whereas Pamela’s mode of novel writing transparently transcribes a presupposed character and thereby links literary character to personhood, in Woolf’s novel, writing becomes itself the spectacle so that character is always already literary, a product of style and a confluence of textual marks much like the speculating subject of John Maynard Keynes’s General Theory. Following the lead of George Ponderevo, Keynes longs for a world of substantial values, where investments are made based on the “character” of a company instead of the capricious whims of popular opinion. But like George he must admit the days of the staid family firm are past, and political economy must develop new ways of accounting for the “new instability” (to use George’s phrase)
of a finance-based economy. Woolf’s novel translates this logic of speculation into its formal encoding of a collective subjectivity that replaces the bourgeois individual of the feudal estate with the middle-class subject of urban space. But Woolf’s novel is not as naively sanguine about such a model of subjectivity as are many of her late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century critics. *The Waves* anticipates the potential for this urbanized subjectivity to be re-ordered into the home-like place of the nation through a fascist politics.

With the image of the “lady writing” and Bernard’s writing fantasy, *The Waves* exposes the gender politics that inform the logic of character as the source of individuality and value, but the novel of character and its gender politics continue to haunt Jean Rhys’s heroine. When Anna rightly worries that Walter will soon tire of her, she reads herself against the marriage plot of a Pamela-esque novel: “Everybody says, ‘Get on.’ Of course, some people do get on. Yes, but how many? What about what’s-her-name? She got on, didn’t she? ‘Chorus-Girl Marries Peer’s Son.’ Well, *what* about her? Get on or get out, they say. Get on or get out” (74). To “get on” means to get married, preferably, like Pamela, to a “Peer’s Son.” Mary Lou Emery points to this scene as an example of modernist irony in the tradition that Paul Fussel identifies as having originated with the horror of World War I. Modernist irony, Emery writes, “concentrates on the negative, acknowledging a loss of power and hope” and it is best exemplified by “the great trick” of World War I, which was so much worse than could have been anticipated (68). Modernist irony arises in Rhys’s novel in the gulf between the supposed ease of “getting on,” promised by a long novelistic tradition and by the brief informality of the phrase itself, and Anna’s actual situation: Anna’s story ends, not with a
marriage, but with a botched abortion. Rhys’s novel is saturated with modernist irony, and another example is in the gulf between “Market Street” and “Corporation Street,” between Walter’s world of finance capitalism and Anna’s market-level status as a commodity. Critics have attended a great deal to the gulf between Anna’s West Indian memories and her metropolitan present, but this gulf is mapped onto a corresponding one of economic playing fields in which the metropolitan center is operating according to a system inaccessible to the market-level realities of everyday life in the colonies and on the streets of London.

In order for character to function as a source of value it must, as George points out, like a novel have a “beginning, a middle and an end,” which are all “congruous with one another” as their “proper size of tombstone” will reflect. The end of “characters” lives will merely be an extension and confirmation of their beginnings, just as the end of a conventional novel follows directly out of its beginning. This is also the logic upon which Keynes’s faith in the family-based firm rests. It is the logic of an age of material production in which value is manifested in the “thingliness” of the commodity. But in a world where value accumulates according to a very different logic of momentary constellations of popular opinion, wealth accumulation actually requires uncertainty, and in the British modernist novel that uncertainty is encoded and decoded in the way the placelessness of London finds expression in the purely textual character, who exists like value as a series of inconsecutive and contradictory fictions.
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