NOVEL PLASTICITY: AESTHETICS, POLITICS, AND FORMAL ARRANGEMENTS IN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH AND FRENCH NOVEL

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

(ENGLISH)

AT THE

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

2015

DATE OF FINAL ORAL EXAMINATION: MAY 14, 2015

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DEDICATION

FOR MY PARENTS, CHRISTIE & DOUGLAS MCGRATH

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is of course ironic that I should have so much difficulty finding a form that might even begin to reflect and express my gratitude to all of those without whom this dissertation would never have been finished. And so, with the understanding that gratitude, like the novel itself, is a continual process, let me begin.

To Caroline Levine: As you know, I am not a fan of straight lines – those that divide, that lead to a pre-determined end, or that cut off, cross out, or exclude. But there is one important exception. Nothing could be more elegant in its simplicity or more encouraging than the single lines you've drawn in pencil under the words of many, many drafts. Those lines are the mark of an attentive and encouraging reader, an extraordinary teacher, and an inspiring colleague. Our conversations and collaborations have been the highlight of my time at UW-Madison and I look forward to what the future will bring. Thank you.

To the members of my committee: Thank you for encouraging my ambition and challenging me to write more cogently and more effectively at every turn. Mario, I cannot thank you enough for helping me to see theory as something that I could read in the same fashion as novels. Our conversations over coffee at Barriques about Derrida, de Man, and Adorno remain one of my fondest memories of graduate school. Russ, thank you for encouraging me to think in such inventive ways about aesthetics and politics. Nancy, I am incredibly grateful to you for teaching me to think carefully about the intersections between literature and visual culture and for so enthusiastically stepping in at the last minute. And Susan, thank you not only for consistently going out of your way to provide thoughtful and motivating feedback but for encouraging me to think about seriality as a formal concept. I also very much appreciate all of

the ways that you, as Director of Graduate Studies, worked to improve the living and learning conditions for graduate students in the department. On that note, I also want to thank Robyn Shanahan for being an endless fount of knowledge, cheerfulness, and compassion.

To Theresa Nguyen: I will be eternally grateful that you chose me to read and respond to your dissertation. Our friendship – intellectual and personal – has been a sustaining force for me and a constant source of inspiration. I am indebted to you for your inventive and original arguments and their influence on my own work, as well as for always being willing to read, to discuss, to commiserate, and to celebrate.

To my friends and colleagues at Boise State University – Alicia Garza, Jason Herbeck, Mariah Devereux Herbeck, and Adrian Kane – I feel so lucky to have been so warmly welcomed into your community. You have made me feel at home from the beginning and your interest in my work and my success has helped to keep me going through the last stages of writing.

To Uncle Craig and Uncle Colin: Thank you for being my home away from home and for all that you have taught me about life and about family. Your love, support, and encouragement mean the world to me.

À Bob et Gina: Je ne saurais vous remercier de m'avoir accueillie si chaleureusement dans la famille Leclercq. Toutes vos délicates attentions – coups de téléphones, e-mails, bises, et soutien moral – m'ont profondément touchée.

To my parents: I'm not sure that I'll ever be able to find the words to thank you. I am truly privileged to have parents who not only consistently placed my dreams ahead of their own but also showed a remarkable confidence and faith in my abilities. You've taught me strength and independence, that my opinions are important and valuable, and that I have something to contribute. This accomplishment is as much yours as it is mine.

And finally, to Benoît: While it is possible (though unlikely) that I could have finished my doctorate without you, I wouldn't have had nearly so much fun along the way and my understanding of French literature wouldn't be nearly as rich. You were always willing and enthusiastic to accompany me on excursions across the Channel and to discover the world of the Victorian novel. I've learned more from you than I think you'll ever fully recognize or acknowledge and I continue to be surprised and delighted by the innumerable ways that you've showed me you care about me *and* my work. Thank you for all of the sacrifices you've made, for the Mike & Ikes and the wine, and for making sure that I've always felt loved and supported. Je t'aime.

ABSTRACT

My dissertation advances a new theory of the 'formal plasticity' of the novel and contributes to a resurgence of interest in and vibrant redefinition of formalism in literary and cultural studies. Since the rise of modern novel theory, studies of novel form have emphasized wholeness, totality, and the synthesizing power of the ending. Where novel theory has traditionally held that form achieves its final iteration alongside narrative closure, I contend that the ending is only one in a series of arrangements of the multiple forms of the novel. *Novel Plasticity* theorizes novel form not as singular, static and whole, but as a dynamic, multiple, process. Like Dickens's Mr. Venus who articulates miscellaneous bones into fully articulated skeletons that fetch a pretty price on the West End, I too understand novel form as a continual process of re-articulation or rearrangement.

Drawing from Jacques Rancière's theorization of the *partage du sensible* (the distribution of the sensible), and in line with recent work in New Formalism, I define form as the structures and patterns that organize not only aesthetic but also social and political phenomena. To wit, the chapters of my dissertation analyze literary forms, like description, character, and trope, as well as social and political forms, like the family, the museum, or the sewer. By attending to the many arrangements the novel plays out for us, unrestricted by narrative space, structural position, or narrative progress, *formal plasticity* avoids evaluating the success or failure of these arrangements only by the novel's ending, which simplifies and reduces the complex formal work of the novelistic middle. The close readings of novels by Charles Dickens, Emily Brontë, Henry James, Émile Zola, and Victor Hugo at once demonstrate the prevalence of *formal plasticity* across national traditions as they highlight the novel's potential to offer new or previously

unrecognized arrangements of social, political, and aesthetic forms. Thus, I argue that the novel matters, not simply as a reflection of social realities, but as an active and influential agent in shaping and rearranging the forms that order aesthetic and social experience.

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INTRODUCTION

Panoramas, world exhibitions, grand tours, railways, telegrams, department stores, Greenwich mean time, surveys like Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor*, and the crowd scenes of William Powell Frith all pay tribute to the persistent challenge and temptation to place the part in relation to the whole over the course of the nineteenth century. We might well see the novels of Charles Dickens as exemplary of this impulse too. While the tiniest of corners and the poorest of chimney sweeps are gradually brought into connection with the most impressive of bosoms, patriarchs, or fortunes by means of an inevitable mutual friend, Dickens's novels also point to forms greater, grander, and more myriad in variety than even the greatest of Great Exhibitions could contain. Consider, for example, *Our Mutual Friend*, in which Mr. Venus, taxidermist and "Articulator of human bones" whose objectionable "art" makes quite a profit on the West End, is charged, like nineteenth-century authors, with the task of making wholes of the "warious" parts strewn about the crooks and crevices of his shop (83). The light of a single tallow candle guides us to the entrance of Venus's shop, which is so "dark," "greasy," and tucked away that it can hardly be discerned in the "narrow alley" (78). Once inside, in the company of Silas Wegg, we are given "the general panoramic view" of: "Tools. Bones, warious. Skulls, warious. Preserved Indian Baby. African ditto. Bottled preparations, warious … What's in those hampers over them again, I don't quite remember. Say, human warious. Cats. Articulated English baby. Dogs. Ducks. Glass eyes, warious. Mummied bird. Dried cuticle, warious" (81). Wegg pays a visit to the shop to see whether "he" is "still at home" (referring to his amputated leg) as, having come into some money, he "'shouldn't like … under such circumstances, to be what I may call dispersed, a part of me here, and a part of me there, but should wish to collect myself like a genteel person'" (79, 82). Mr. Venus explains that Wegg's dispersed part is indeed still at home: "'I don't know … to what to attribute it, Mr. Wegg. I can't work you into a miscellaneous one, no how. Do what I will, you can't be got to fit'" (80). Wegg surmises that his un-articulable bone cannot be worth much as a result and attempts to bargain a lower price for the restoration of himself to himself. And yet, though Wegg's part may not be of value to a fully articulated, whole skeleton, Venus will not part with 'Wegg' at the moment, as it "'might turn out valuable as yet, as a' … 'as a Monstrosity, if you'll excuse me'" (82). Wegg and his bone, which cannot be made to fit within any whole, no matter how "miscellaneous," point to an alternative economy of value that, unlike the drive for whole subjects, nations, artworks, or taxonomies, is even more valuable *dispersed* than integrated or contained.

Wholeness – the organic, coherent, or articulated relationship of parts to wholes – has long been aligned with the concept of form in literary criticism and the discipline of literary studies. Think for instance of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who proclaimed: "The spirit of poetry, like all other living powers, must of necessity circumscribe itself by rules, were it only to unite power with beauty. It must embody in order to reveal itself; but a living body is of necessity an organized one, - and what is organization, but the connection of parts to a whole, so that each part is at once end and means!" (655). In a similar vein, Honoré de Balzac undertook "cet effroyable labeur" of painting "les deux ou trois mille figures saillantes d'une époque, car telle est, en définitif, la somme des types que présente chaque génération et que *La Comédie humaine* comptera” (302).[1] Of principal importance to Balzac, inspired by the taxonomies of Swedenborg, Saint-Martin, Leibniz, Buffon, and Charles Bonnet, was “l’*unité de composition* [qui] occupait déjà sous d’autres termes les plus grands esprits des deux siècles précédents” (278).[2] Where for Balzac, the best form is an exhaustive one, Henry James valorizes the economy of a living yet seamless form. In the preface to *The Tragic Muse*, James sets forth a paradigm in which “life,” a “deep breathing economy and an organic form” maintains value, whereas “waste” “the accidental and the arbitrary” are nothing but the “queer elements” of the now infamous “large loose baggy monsters” of fiction (84). In each of these examples, we are made to understand that, as Robert Louis Stevenson has it, the form of the novel must be controlled and finite: whole. Stevenson explains:

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[1] [“this frightening task” of painting “the two or three thousand salient figures of an epoch, for such, in sum, the total of types that each generation introduces and that *The Human Comedy* will tally” (translation mine).]

[2] [“the *unity* of composition that was already – in different terms - occupying the greatest minds of the two previous centuries” (translation mine)]

[3] Cleanth Brooks’s *The Well-Wrought Urn,* or the works of Jean-Pierre Richard and Jean Rousset are exemplary in this respect.

[4] For additional recent examples of this understanding of the novel, see: James Buzard, *Disorienting Fiction*, Nicholas Dames, *The Physiology of the Novel*, Catherine Gallagher, "Formalism and Time," Alison James, "Introduction: The Return of Form," Anna Kornbluh, "The Economic Problem of Sympathy," and Stefanie Markovits, "Form Things."

[2] [“the *unity* of composition that was already – in different terms - occupying the greatest minds of the two previous centuries” (translation mine)]

[5] Herbert Tucker eloquently signals one of the dangers of wholeness in the disciplinary

> From all its chapters, from all its pages, from all its sentences, the well-written novel echoes and re-echoes its one creative and controlling thought; to this must every incident and character contribute; the style must have been pitched in unison with this; and if there is anywhere a word that looks another way, the book must be stronger, clearer, and (I had almost said) fuller without it. Life is monstrous, infinite, illogical, abrupt, and poignant; a work of art, in comparison is neat, finite, self-contained, rational, flowing, and emasculate. (312)

I argue here that theorists of the novel have too readily continued to echo Stevenson's understanding of its form as *singular, static, and whole*. Russian Formalism, for example, emphasized the *autonomy* of the text. To take one example, Todorov understood figuration as a mechanism for creating a whole from the discrete parts of the literary text. Like Henry James's "Figure in the Carpet" or Causabon's "key to all mythologies" the interpretive aim is to find the figure that will unite and in relation to which all of its elements can be understood. The New Criticism championed the text as a self-contained unit, stressing unity and coherence in their readings.[3] And, Marxist scholars, like Gyorg Lukács or Frederic Jameson, understand the relationship of parts to wholes in terms of the dialectic and totality, arguing that the novel seeks to resolve or resist social contradictions through formal totality.

This is not just a bygone tradition. To take three recent examples of the continued valuation of wholeness over dispersal, Tina Young Choi observes "that closure characterizes not just the novel's resolution, its close, but also the entirety of its contents, the closure and containment of its universe" (316). Similarly, Alex Woloch's *The One vs. the Many* maps formal finitude onto character space in the novel: "Focusing on the character-system – and the character-spaces that it encompasses and puts in relation – highlights the way that the 'human aspect' of character is often dynamically integrated into, and sometimes absorbed by, the narrative structure as a whole" (18). And, according to Kent Puckett, "novel form … is a closed system; its rules are, we take it, internally coherent and refer only to content within the systems for which they are rules; its temporal influence ends with the end of the novel" (126). The novel in these accounts emerges and achieves a final or ultimate form at the 'end'; it takes shape as a static container; and it operates as a finite economy in which formal resources are scant.[4]

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[3] Cleanth Brooks's *The Well-Wrought Urn,* or the works of Jean-Pierre Richard and Jean Rousset are exemplary in this respect.

This continued emphasis on wholeness – whether understood as unity, coherence, or totality – seems counterintuitive given the legacy of poststructuralist and Deconstructive arguments for rupture, *différance*, and irony and in the wake of more recent calls to read beyond the familiar wholes of the nation, the subject, or even the historical period. However, I contend that an emphasis on wholeness in the novel continues to crop up in two key ways: first, in the conflation of the form of the novel, one of our most powerful cultural products, with the form of the family and secondly, in the continued conception of the novel as quintessentially a form that resolves instabilities through the progression to the ending.

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[4] For additional recent examples of this understanding of the novel, see: James Buzard, *Disorienting Fiction*, Nicholas Dames, *The Physiology of the Novel*, Catherine Gallagher, "Formalism and Time," Alison James, "Introduction: The Return of Form," Anna Kornbluh, "The Economic Problem of Sympathy," and Stefanie Markovits, "Form Things."

Exemplary of both tendencies towards wholeness is Nancy Armstrong's recent contribution to the forum, "Futures of the Novel." Armstrong acknowledges the growing force of the critique of wholeness in literary studies, one which she claims "require [s] us to imagine community as made of *singularities* rather than *subjects*, as held together by *love* and not by *desire* in the name of *commons* instead of *property*, and as assuming the form of *multiplicity* rather than *unity*" and yet she remains resistant to their claims "for the very reason that they render the family obsolete" (9). Drawing on her well-known argument from *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, Armstrong echoes D.A. Miller's claim that the novel resolves instabilities through its form:

> As I have argued elsewhere, the novel provides a means of mediating between individuals … and a human aggregate made of such individuals; the modern household (also known as the family) has served as an apparatus of and the model for a modern liberal society. As it unfolded in narrative form, this mediating structure provided the telos and resolution of a form that took up the impossible task of patching rifts between private consciousness and the material conditions of embodiment. (8)

A close reading of Armstrong's familiar claim yields a troubling methodological conflation between the form of the novel and the form of the family. When she writes, "as *it* unfolded in narrative form," in the second sentence of the quotation, a casual reader might assume the *it* to refer to the novel. However, the *it* here is not the novel but family – a *social* form. Armstrong conflates two separate forms – the literary *representation* of the family (not to mention the critical construction of the literary representation of the family) with the *social* form of the family. The situation grows murkier as Armstrong characterizes the family as something that "unfolded in narrative form" before arguing that it "provided the telos and resolution of a form that took up the impossible task of patching rifts." Which form is at work here? Is it the form of the family in its literary representation that provided resolution to the narrative form of the novel? Armstrong will ask: "What is the future *of* the novel once the household no longer shapes the future in *novels*? Does the obsolescence of the traditional family mean the obsolescence of the novel as well?"(8). Where Armstrong will argue that only "contemporary novels are providing imaginative access to what fully comes after the family," I will make the case that we recognize the *multiplicity* of forms – aesthetic, social, and political – at work in the novel and that some of the most canonical nineteenth-century novels were already doing so.

This discourse of wholeness, whether achieved through narrative resolution, the conflation of literary and social forms, or desire as a structuring principle, champions the organic and the coherent, or the "finite" and the "self-contained" over that which has either been artificially constructed or which, like Silas Wegg, remains dispersed. As literary scholars we have used the yardstick of wholeness to recognize forms – both in the sense of our ability to read for them and to grant them "official" recognition. We have also routinely subordinated parts to wholes, which is itself a kind of oppression. In Schiller's discussion of aesthetics, for example, the sculptor "metonymically represents the whole at the expense of the part" a process that, as Russ Castronovo has observed, is violent. "Coherence, unity, and beauty contribute to an artwork's perfection, but these same qualities invite authoritarian control when translated to a political register" (190). *Novel Plasticity* will argue that, by continuing to adhere to a binary of form and formlessness, in relation to miscellaneous parts that have little value in themselves, literary scholars risk a similar violence. For Georges Bataille:

> *formless* is not only an adjective having a given meaning, but a term that serves to bring things down in the world, generally requiring that each thing have its form. What it designates has no rights in any sense and gets itself squashed everywhere, like a spider or an earthworm. In fact, for academic men to be happy, the universe would have to take shape. All of philosophy has no other goal: it is a matter of giving a frock coat to what is, a mathematical frock coat. On the other hand, affirming that the universe resembles nothing and is only *formless* amounts to saying that the universe is something like a spider or spit. (31)

When we correlate form with wholeness, we "bring down" the formless and strip it of its value. The violence here comes through devaluation and lack of recognition. Those parts – those fragments – that cohere within a whole, a recognizable social, political, or aesthetic form, gain recognition and value. To take one example, we have a name for the marriage plot – but what about Miss Havisham's experience in *Great Expectations*? It is not enough to simply call it a failed marriage plot or a stalled marriage plot. Doing so not only devalues the complexity of her experience but also papers over the constellation of forms that participate in the creation of her character. As Christopher Herbert reminds us, "this property that things have of sticking together, of forming 'wholes' or unified systems, [has been transformed] from a purely cognitive or descriptive category into a principle of value: to be coherent is to be beautiful, good, desirable, 'true'; to be incoherent … is to be the opposite" (185). In reading with an eye to coherence, we've missed the important formal *and* political work of the novel's parts – its forms.[5]

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[5] Herbert Tucker eloquently signals one of the dangers of wholeness in the disciplinary embrace of New Historicism and cultural studies as "interpretation zoomed out from the

Novel theory has typically imagined the relationship between aesthetics and politics through a limited range of figurative analogies: the novel as a mirror that reflects its historical moment; the novel as a container that resolves social contradictions and strives for totality in formal closure; and the novel as a form that negatively reflects or resists homogenizing or oppressive social forces through its own fragmentation. Indeed, even those theorists who are most critical of wholeness still tacitly embrace its rhetoric. Giorgio Agamben's reading of the exception in *Homo Sacer* provides one brief example of a politics of form that ultimately remains imprisoned within its own binary of power and subversion: the exception and the example are equally constitutive of the whole that is sovereign power. Or, in another example, Lee Edelman understands the refusal of queer negativity in *No Future* as a reproduction of the "triumph of narrative as the *allegorization* of irony, as the logic of a temporality that always serves to 'straighten' it out, and thus proclaims the universality of reproductive futurism" (26). Both Edelman and Agamben gesture toward a discourse that understands the politics of form according to false closure, totality, fragmentation, or as a paradigm in which lyric only serves to interrupt narrative, totality inevitably dissolves into fragmentation, and contradictions remain suspended within false closure. In each case, the lesser term of the binary can only be recognized in relation to the greater: the non-normative is defined in terms of the very thing it resists. This is yet another example of our continued tendency to read the part in relation to the whole, to

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consideration of a whole poem to that of a whole culture ….You welcomed, on the whole, the radical enlargement of vista that came with Cultural Studies to quicken the novice, rejuvenate the old hand, and make scholarship matter to the world. Great, yes, *on the whole*. But what about the *part*?"(533).

establish coherence as the grounds of our arguments. Reading solely for coherence distracts us from the formal operations of the novel's individual parts – not just in relation to some larger whole, but independently and in relation to other parts.

Where critics, especially in the Marxist tradition, have understood aesthetic form as singular in part because they have read for as an overarching resolution of social contradiction, I argue that nineteenth-century novels offer a rich archive of solutions through the arrangement and rearrangement of aesthetic, social, and political forms. Even a single novel might advance a range of potential solutions that are not the forms of exclusion, repression, or compromise, characteristic of methodologies that implicitly valorize coherence, but instead inventive and creative ways of thinking through the social, the political, and the personal. Reading for the novel's formal plasticity then allows us to not only consider its 'atomic' power but also the 'nuclear' reactions of its individual forms – social, political, and aesthetic – in their continual arrangement and rearrangement. If some of the key texts in our canon – some of our foundational narratives – are not, in fact, coherent or whole in the way we've previously believed, it opens the door to the revaluation of any number of narratives, peoples, or concepts that have been previously devalued.

The goal of this dissertation is then to begin to understand that what has previously seemed to be formless or incoherent is in fact a form and one that *does* something. A form that works.

II. Formal Plasticity

In this dissertation, I advance a theory of what I term the *formal plasticity* of the novel in order to read the *forms* of the novel. To do so, I explore the figure of the collection as a mode of formal plasticity. Rather than ask about the relationship of parts of the novel to the whole, formal plasticity reads the various forms in and of the novel in their continual arrangement and rearrangement. My definition of form captures literary forms, both microscopic (like description, figurative language, and repetition) and macroscopic (such as the marriage plot or formal closure), and extends the meaning of form beyond strictly literary structures to include social, historical, and political patterns and organizations. For example, Chapter Three: "Formal Arrangements: Novel Form and the Family in *Wuthering Heights* and *The Golden Bowl*," draws attention to the ways in which a heteronormative model of the form of the family has implicitly determined our understanding of the form of the novel. Reading the many arrangements and rearrangements of the form of the family in Henry James's *The Golden Bowl* and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, I propose that nineteenth-century novels offer far more inventive and eclectic images of what the family looks like than novel theories that revolve around more traditional forms like the marriage plot and narrative closure can recognize. Indeed, as Henry Turner reminds us, "the very term 'form' in the singular tends to reify and render static something that is better regarded as both a plurality – as a collection of forms, across many different scales – and as an ongoing process" (584). To read the novel as a series of arrangements and rearrangements of multiple forms, rather than as an end-driven narrative that seeks to fix the relationship between parts and wholes, is to undertake a revision of key elements of formalism. Thus, formal plasticity proposes coherence that does not entail continuity, activity that does not entail production, and form that does not require exclusion.

While plastic and plasticity appear throughout scholarship on literature, the arts, and in philosophy, they generally denote flexibility, adaptability, or a broader (and frequently positive) mutability, without gesturing toward a more specific conceptual elaboration. The *OED* defines plasticity, in its adjectival form as "the quality of being plastic; *spec.* the ability to be easily moulded or to undergo a permanent change in shape" and also provides a definition for its more specialized use in the biological sciences: "Adaptability of (part of) an organism to changes in its environment; *spec*. the ability to alter the neural connections of the brain as a result of experience in the process of learning, etc." The introduction of plasticity into French and German in the early nineteenth century incorporated a mutation that expanded the application of the term from bodies to subjects. As Catherine Malabou explains, "'Plastic', as an adjective means two things: on the one hand, to be 'susceptible to changes of form' or malleable … and on the other hand, 'having the power to bestow form, the power to mold" (8). As a result, plasticity speaks to the ability of an individual – or, for our purposes, a novel – to participate actively in its own formation or transformation.

As I will show in the chapters that follow, formal plasticity is not a methodology that reads for surface or depth, system or symptom, but instead offers a less totalizing, less rigid formalism that allows us to read for the form in the apparently formless. I find inspiration for such a move in Roland Barthes's *Fragments d'un discours amoureux*. In an ambitious catalogue (a task not be undertaken by the world's cynics), Barthes takes the discourse of love seriously and captures it via the "figure," which he distinguishes from its rhetorical namesake. The discourse of love, like the lover who "ne cesse en effet de courir dans sa tête," is perpetually restless (7).[6] The figure, for Barthes, should be understood "au sens gymnastique ou chorégraphique; bref, au sens grec … ce n'est pas le 'schéma'; c'est, d'une façon bien plus vivante, le geste du corps saisi en action, et non pas contemplé au repos" (8).[7] The figure is an aposiopesis of a sentence the completion of which couldn't be of less importance. "'Il/elle aurait bien pu …' ; 'Il/elle sait bien pourtant …' : pouvoir, savoir quoi ? Peu importe, la figure 'Attente' est déjà formée. Ces phrases sont des matrices de figures, précisément puisqu'elles restent suspendues" (10).[8] What Barthes achieves here is the recognition that such fragments are indeed forms that capture a subtle, but nonetheless significant, form of activity. Though he labels them fragments, doing so does not dismiss or diminish their force. Following Barthes's lead, formal plasticity does not define such fragments as stubborn, resistant, or subversive – as formless – but instead attends to the latent possibilities inherent in such figures.

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[6] The discourse of love, like the lover who ["indeed does not stop running in his mind"] is perpetually restless (7).

Reading the novel's formal plasticity ultimately reconfigures the relationship between aesthetics and politics. This reconfiguration relies on the understanding that social forms – like the couple or the family – are not organic but instead take shape and operate according to their own formal principles. I argue that we can productively read the relationship between the social and the political and literary or the aesthetic by investigating the formal principles that are inherent to both. That is, aesthetics, politics, and the social all depend on organizations and arrangements, and all can be subjected to reorganization and re-arrangement, a process I describe using the word form.[9] To wit, the chapters of *Novel Plasticity* analyze literary forms, like description, character, and trope, as well as social and political forms, like the family, the riot, or the sewer.

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[7] ["in the gymnastic or choreographic sense; in short, in the Greek sense … it is not the 'schema'; it is in a much more lively way, the gesture of the body captured in action, and not admired at rest."]

[8] ["He/she could well have …'; 'He/she knows full well …': to be able to do, to know what? It doesn't matter, the figure 'Waiting' is already formed. These phrases are the matrices of figures precisely because they remain suspended."]

My conception of the political and social stakes of the novel's formal plasticity is strongly informed by Jacques Rancière's theorization of the *partage du sensible* (partition or distribution of the sensible), wherein aesthetic and political practices participate in the partition of the sensible, delimiting what and who can be seen and heard. If aesthetics "is a delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience" and "politics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time," then aesthetics is deeply active in the *poiesis* of the common (13). As such, we can think of the formal plasticity of the novel as an ongoing aesthetic experiment – as the novel at work.

In reading what is at work *in* or *on* the novel, as is the case here, we have neglected to ask *how the novel works*. "Le bruissement," Barthes explains, "c'est le bruit de ce qui marche bien. Il s'ensuit ce paradoxe: Le bruissement dénote un bruit limite, un bruit impossible, le bruit de ce qui, fonctionnant à la perfection, n'a pas de bruit; bruire, c'est faire entendre l'évaporation même du bruit" (100).[10] Where novel theory has traditionally held that form achieves its final iteration alongside narrative closure, I contend that the ending is only one in a series of arrangements of the multiple forms of the novel. Formal plasticity provides a framework for reading the infinitely varied and subtle work of the novel – not at moments of crisis, contradiction, resolution, or paradox – but rather where the work seems to be going along smoothly and effortlessly, in its *bruissement*.

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[9] Other scholars are also beginning to understand both the aesthetic and the social in terms of form. For example, see: Caroline Levine, "Strategic Formalism," Colleen Lye, "Racial Form," Samuel Otter, "An Aesthetics in All Things," Ellen Rooney, "Form and Contentment," and James Vernon, "The Social and Its Forms."

III. Form, Temporality, Order

My theorization of formal plasticity comes on the heels of a renewed interest in formalism as a productive and necessary means of asking questions about politics, aesthetics, and literature. This 'New Formalism' emerged from a tradition of thought about form that we can trace through Russian Formalism, the New Criticism, (Post)-Structuralism, Deconstruction, Marxist Aesthetics, and more recently, a New Historicism informed by Foucault. Caroline Levine has surveyed these developments and offers three rubrics that helpfully situate historical and emerging attention to the politics of form ("Formal Pasts"). The first, "Form as Ideology," characterizes a predominantly Marxist tradition wherein the work grapples with an incommensurate social and political reality to which it ultimately fails to give coherent form. In the work of key theorists of this tradition, including Adorno, Lukács, Jameson, and Moretti –

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[10] ["the rustle is the noise of things running smoothly. From which follows this paradox: the rustle denotes a limit-noise, an impossible noise, the noise of that which, running to perfection, makes no noise; to rustle is to make audible the very evaporation of the rustle" (translation mine).]

formal failure, manifest as contradictions, fragmentation, or impossibility in the literary work, becomes instrumental to an understanding of social and political conflict. The second, “Form as Manifestation” describes a tradition of formalism that likewise subsumes the literary to the social or the political. Whereas “Form as Ideology” depends upon totality as a methodological and political principle, in this highly Foucauldian formalism, “form becomes an index – a manifestation – of power relations, and a reading practice that focuses on form is one way for scholars to gain access to the political forces that shaped Victorian culture” (“Formal Pasts”). Important thinkers in this camp, such as D.A. Miller and Nancy Armstrong, rely upon a model in which the dispersal and dissemination of power is at the service of regulation and discipline. While the “strategy of containment” has been eschewed, this version of formalism nevertheless continues a practice of reading that renders form an after-effect of social and political realities. More recently, Levine writes, we have witnessed an approach to form that restores form to the literary, in considering the “self-conscious” and deliberate approach to formal choices that authors “deploy” for social and political ends. Form no longer serves as a static index or reflection of larger political phenomena, but as an active and powerful agent in shaping or critiquing such phenomena (“Formal Pasts”).

These “formal pasts” have ushered in an invigorated attention to form in the present – an attention that not only seeks to make formalist analyses themselves more plastic but to reconceive the relationships between literary form, politics, history, and the social. Anna Kornbluh and Benjamin Morgan recently ignited an energetic debate about methodology in the field of Victorian Studies with the publication of the “Manifesto of the V21 Collective.” Diagnosing a case of rampant “positivist historicism” in the field, Kornbluh and Morgan contend:

> One avenue emerging for post-historicist reading is a critical rethinking of form and formalism. Taking energy from Foucault and Rancière, from postcolonialism and feminism, new formalisms and new ways of working with form explicitly pursue the politics of form, challenging us to reconsider how forms persist across artificially designated historical time periods, while recentering formal analysis as the province of literary critical knowing. How can we further develop formalist interpretations that are politically astute and intellectually supple?[11]

My own theorization of the formal plasticity of the novel responds to just such a call and, in doing so, joins a rich cohort of scholars who are currently at work reshaping the contours of formalism.[12]

While any number of critics has taken up the question of the form of specific novels over the last two decades, no major investigation of the novel as a form, akin to Susan Wolfson's *Formal Charges* for Romantic poetry, has emerged. This study then brings formalism and the novel back together to address what Frances Ferguson has characterized as a longstanding critique that "formalism was out of its depths when it tried to deal with prose" (157). Additionally, many scholars working in sympathy with new formalist re-imaginings of the relationship between form and context (broadly understood as historical, social, and political context) have advanced provocative readings of the novel, the novel in these accounts nevertheless continues to be understood as a circumscribable shape, a totality, or a coherent whole.

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[11] In a similar vein, John Bowen has argued that "an attunement to temporalities that are not region, progressive, periodising or chronologically contained may enable a less defensive and disavowed intellectual formation" in his appeal to scholars of Victorian culture to question the dominance of historicist frameworks (291).

[12] See, for example, work by Susan Wolfson, Mario Ortiz-Robles, Lauren Goodlad, Meredith Martin, Mary Poovey, Amanpal Garcha, Andrea Henderson, Robert Colson, Mathias Nilges, Jesse Reeder, Mary Mullen, or collected works that investigate form in exciting ways, like: *Narrative Middles* (Levine and Ortiz-Robles, eds.), *Decadent Poetics* (David Hall and Murray, eds.) and *Victorian Hybridities* (Knoepflmacher and Browning, eds.).

Perhaps the most ambitious recent attempt to retool the foundations of formalism is Caroline Levine's *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network*, which calls for a "strategic formalism" that reads for the ways in which aesthetic, social, political, and historical forms collide in surprising and peculiar ways. Like Levine, I share an interest in the intersections of aesthetic form, history, and politics, and draw from her vivid imagining of form as inherent to aesthetic, social, and political domains. Moreover, we are equally concerned with bounded wholes and containers, multiple forms, and temporality. However, my study of the novel's formal plasticity is distinct from Levine's compelling arguments in *Forms* in the emphasis I place on dispersed forms. While Levine traces the ever-expanding contours of the networked plot in Charles Dickens's *Bleak House*, the scope of her critical activity expands beyond both the nineteenth century and the plots of its novels. What is especially intriguing about Levine's arguments for form is her take on the whole and its political stakes. Asking about the "affordances of literary and political forms," or the active or latent capacities or uses of a form, Levine argues that "we cannot do without bounded wholes" and is most drawn to "their power to hold things together" – a power that "makes some of the most valuable kinds of political action possible after all" (27). Thus, where Levine probes the "positive affordances" of bounded wholes, I focus less on what allows for coherence than on the force of individual parts – forms – in their shifting arrangements, no matter how ephemeral.

In order to read the form in the fragment, we must call into question the implicit centrality of narrative temporality to our understanding of the form of the novel itself. Narrative form has traditionally been seen as what imposes order and coherence on the disordered contents – descriptions, devices, plots, characters, etc. – of the novel. Henry James's declaration that – "life being all inclusion and confusion, and art being all discrimination and selection" – subtends the understanding that the role of the artwork – and of the novel in particular – is to impose an order, a coherence, on the varied stuff of life and literature. Moreover, novel form continues to be understood as imposing this order and coherence through progressive, forward-moving narrative – a concept whose tense seems predominantly to be the future perfect. That is, novel form has been characterized as a process occurring in time and one that will simply arrive at a final determination or simply end.

Recently, for example, Alison James has argued that novels "offer us a sense of infinite possibilities that are then *narrowed down to a specific narrative development*. Like many other literary works, they stage their own emergence from an everyday life that is not an amorphous mass, but already a field of potential meanings and forms" (84 emphasis mine). Catherine Gallagher, addressing an implicit contradiction between formalism and the novel, inveighs against formalist readings that "arrest narrative flow" and argues that "formalist analyses seem bent on showing that, although a novel represents a temporal sequence by means of temporal sequence, it nevertheless has, or should have, a form that can be made apprehensible all at once, in a picture or a fractal" (230). And, according to John Plotz, for example, novels matter not because they are rife with latent possibilities but because they are committed to "showing events unfolding in time” (24). Writing about *Our Mutual Friend*, Plotz observes: “The significance of ‘clues’ in novels lies not so much in their seeming significance or insignificance as in the fact that the reader understands implicitly that the question of significance or insignificance remains yet to be determined: had Bella not married John, the childhood foot stamping would have had to be redefined as something else altogether” (25). What Plotz implies here is that what counts in the novel is what comes to be significant *in light of the ending*.

Echoing the idea that narrative is the active and productive axis of novel form, this dominant understanding of novel form condemns description as distinctly non-formal; not simply interrupting the narrative but sabotaging its attempts to fend off the amorphous, the excessive, and the static.[13] In contrast to a tradition that has determined novel form according to the binary of narrative and description, where the first is correlated with form and the second with formlessness, I make the case that we can instead identify constellations of multiple social, aesthetic, political, and historical forms. Though these constellations may not endure, their presence should neither be necessarily be read in relation to narrative closure nor should it be dismissed as a fragment or discarded as ephemeral and thus lacking form. Indeed, formal plasticity allows for a reinvigorated exploration of description and the activity of its forms in the novel.

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[13] Consider, for example, Genette’s characterization of description: "la description est tout naturellement *ancilla narrationis*, esclave toujours nécessaire, mais toujours soumise, jamais émancipée" [Description is quite naturally *ancilla narrationis*, a slave – always necessary but always subjugated, never emancipated (translation mine)] (157). Or, to quote Riffaterre: "Descriptions have traditionally been treated by critics and readers alike as if they were no more than icing on the narrative cake" (6). Chapter Two, “’Queer Circuits’: Dynamic Forms in *Great Expectations*,” explores the status of description of as a formal concept at greater length.

Rather than understand the novel in this way, I propose to explore the *multiple orderings* and arrangements of the multiple forms of the novel. The recent upsurge in material culture studies highlights the panoply of things that clutter and circulate within and beyond the novel as a discrete form, thus implicitly questioning the novel's role in organizing, containing, or collecting this *bric-à-brac*. Remembering that many of the novels that come to us gathered up and bound by paper backs and covers were originally published and circulated in parts implicitly challenges any attempt to pin down *the* form of a novel, particularly given the fragility of the printed lines that set them apart from advertisements, non-fiction, essays, and reviews in the periodical press.[14] While not all of the novels I discuss in this dissertation were published serially,[15] publishing practices like the periodical press or the anthology nevertheless provide compelling historical correlates for a theory of the novel's formal plasticity.[16] Where, as Caroline Reitz has remarked, "we tend to see the form of the Victorian novel as a coherent, consistent whole that begins with the hero as a child and ends with "Reader, I married him," this critical paradigm discounts both the *material* forms of the novel and the range of discontinuous, distracted, or other popular nineteenth-century reading practices (72). To again draw on Reitz, "How does this change our theories of the novel if, to paraphrase the language of Moretti, we don't take it as a given that narrative is only about what lies ahead but also includes what lies to the side?" (72). Although *Novel Plasticity* does not explicitly trace the many arrangements and rearrangements of its corpus of novels in their serial forms, it does gesture toward a theory of the novel that can accommodate the novel in its many material and historical permutations. Reading the novel with an emphasis on narrative progress and closure belies the inherently plastic nature of the novel as a serial form as well as the inherently formal quality of seriality as such.

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[14] Emily Steinlight adopts what could be characterized as a sister method to *formal plasticity* in reading the connections between the text of Dickens's *Bleak House* and its accompanying "Advertiser" in "Anti-Bleak House."

[15] For the British novels, Dickens's *Great Expectations* was serialized in *All the Year Round* but neither Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* nor James's *The Golden Bowl* was published serially. In the case of French novels (which were published *en feuilleton* starting in 1836), Hugo's novels were never published serially (he disliked the serial form and, perhaps more significantly, did not have the same financial imperative of someone like Balzac to publish in parts). Zola's *L'Assommoir* was published in *Bien public* starting in 1876. Moreover, for Zola,

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we can also argue that the *Rougon-Macquart* (of which *L'Assommoir* is a part) is itself a kind of serialization.

[16] Peter Stallybrass's conceptualization of "discontinuous reading" and Leah Price's investigation of the practices of excerpting, abridging, and anthologizing are of particular interest for considering the intersection of seriality and *formal plasticity*. As Stallybrass reminds us: "When cultural critics nostalgically recall an imagined past in which readers unscrolled their books continuously from beginning to end, they are *reversing* the long history of the codex and the printed book as indexical forms. The novel has only been a brilliantly perverse interlude in the long history of discontinuous reading" (47).

If form is a way of arranging or ordering, a specific pattern or logic, then the novel teems with forms beyond those traditionally recognized as literary, like the Gothic, free indirect discourse, or narrative perspective. Think, for example, of Michel Foucault's discussion of the strange order of Borges's "Chinese Encyclopedia" in *Les Mots et les choses*. For Foucault, the "uneasiness that makes us laugh" in Borges becomes the "sick mind" of the aphasiac who, "unable to arrange [skeins of wool] into any coherent pattern" becomes "more and more disturbed, and teetering finally on the brink of anxiety" (xviii). Order, for Foucault, exists where there is coherence and, much like syntax, "causes words and things (next to and also opposite on another) to 'hold together'" (xviii). I contend that such "holding together" has been one of the dominant understandings of novel form across a range and traditions of schools – whether the glue that binds the novel's parts is desire, plot, or the tension between the two sides of a dialectic. What might it look like to imagine multiple orders, multiple arrangements that need not rely on these contours in order to hang together? To read not for disorder but for multiple orders, multiple forms, within a single novel? According to Foucault,

> there is a worse kind of disorder than that of the *incongruous*, the linking together of things that are inappropriate; I mean the disorder in which fragments of a large number of possible orders glitter separately in the dimension, without law or geometry, of the *heteroclite*; and that word should be taken in its most literal, etymological sense: in such a state, things are 'laid', 'placed', 'arranged' in sites so very different from one another that it is impossible to find a place of residence for them, to define a *common locus* beneath them all. (xvii).

What I want to suggest is that there is indeed a place of residence for so many different glittering orders: the novel.

IV. Methodology: Collections and Formal Plasticity

What then does it look like to read not the form of the novel but its *forms*? To read the tense of form not as the future perfect but in the present progressive, in its plasticity? We can find a critical vocabulary for a more plastic reading of novel form in the work of Walter Pater and Walter Benjamin. Where Benjamin and Pater suggest ways of approaching history and time as non-linear and non-diachronic, they also sketch a model of form that entails the arrangement and re-arrangement of multiple forms, that is: formal plasticity. In the infamous "Conclusion" to *The Renaissance*, Pater describes both the plasticity of experience and of impression, without explicitly using the term. Significantly, Pater turns away from "solidity" and wholeness: "And if we continue to dwell in thought on this world, not of objects in the solidity with which language invests them, but of impressions, unstable, flickering, inconsistent, which burn and are extinguished with our consciousness of them, it contracts still further" (151). In this light, we can read Pater's injunction to "burn always with this hard, gem-like flame" as a model of formal plasticity, as it maintains a sense of coherence through the movement of its dynamic multiplicity. Alongside Pater's recalibration of aesthetic temporality, I draw from Benjamin's equally plastic theorization of history. I understand history as a force but not as a movement or progress that can be interrupted. Moreover, this understanding of history does not ignore the very real effects of history (as Jameson puts it, "history is what hurts") but instead turns away from history as progress, as dialectic, and as chronology or continuum to the somewhat more ambiguous but equally as powerful concept of the Benjaminian constellation. For Benjamin, History, when it "flashes up" across a spatially and temporally dispersed field of *correspondances* in the form of a constellation, carries an urgent meaning but is infinitely variable (255).

In order to read for such constellations, I turn to the figure of the collection as a mode of formal plasticity. Collecting, as a process, seeks to maintain some broader coherence (no matter how general or arbitrary) among what might otherwise seem a disordered jumble, while simultaneously inviting and encouraging the incorporation of the new. As a result, collecting, as a mode of formal plasticity, ensures a minimum of coherence while also enabling forms – aesthetic, social, political – to operate outside of the temporal, teleological structures of historical specificity or narrative.

In conceptualizing collecting as a mode of formal plasticity, I draw principally from the work of Walter Benjamin. Whether in his conception of history, his study of German tragedy, or in the *Arcades Project*, the logic of collecting deeply informs all of his work – most especially in his passion for quotation. Hannah Arendt notes that – as opposed to much academic writing – his collection of quotations "was not an accumulation of excerpts intended to facilitate the writing of the study but constituted the main work, with the writing as something secondary. The main work consisted in tearing fragments out of their context and arranging them afresh in such a way that they illustrated one another and were able to prove their *raison d'être* in a free-floating state, as it were" (47). I take inspiration from Benjamin's use of quotation in both theorizing and reading for the formal plasticity of the novel; the chapters that follow rely heavily on quotations to illustrate both the multiplicity of forms present within a single passage, as well as their surprising and compelling arrangements. While these arrangements may be at odds with the sequential order of the novel's narrative, I do not, like Benjamin, tear fragments from their original context. That is, the quotations in this dissertation are read in relation to their context in the novel, as well as their social, historical, and literary context.

As I sought to theorize the possibility of multiple orders in the novel, I continually returned to Benjamin's discussion of his own bibliomania. The 1931 essay, "Unpacking my Library: A Talk about Book Collecting" stages the scene of the cluttered and chaotic installation of Benjamin's book collection. The invitation for the reader to join him in "the disorder of crates that have been wrenched open" frames a reflection on collecting that implicitly poses questions about form. Benjamin valorizes disorder, tying it to the immediacy and materiality of "air saturated with the dust of wood, the floor covered with torn paper" as well as the abstractions of fate and memory. Though the essay is set among a single collection, it favors the dynamic relationship between a collector and his books - the very act of collecting in its most generalized form - over the "obscure" particularity of the individual collection. This choice of subject is informed by a firm commitment to the process of collecting as a persistent and continually renewed activity that does not reject but instead passes beyond the factual reality or utility of any given object to consider its "fate," or the continued rebirth that occurs each time an object is acquired by a new collector. The *longue durée* perspective of an object's "fate" emphasizes the precarious logic of any given collection, which Benjamin defines as "a disorder to which habit has accommodated itself to such an extent that it can appear as order" (60). What emerges from the compact reflection on his bibliomania is an understanding of collecting as a form of engagement, a process, that maintains the history of the discrete objects in the collection at the same time that it subjects them to a process of renewal or rebirth. Collecting, like historical materialism seizes hold of the past as it "flashes up" regardless of the demands of chronology or order. Collecting remains attentive to the "constellations" that rearrange the "continuum of history" and establishes "a conception of the present as the "time of the now," which is shot through with chips of Messianic time" ("Theses" 263).

In line with this method, the chapters of my dissertation purposefully collect, constellate, and rearrange the pieces of nineteenth-century novels and theories of form. Each chapter at once develops the theory of the novel's formal plasticity and explores collecting as a mode of plasticity. Thus Chapter Two, which reads Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*, not only explores the principles of order, disorder, and temporality that are central to collecting by highlighting not only the multiplicity of forms at work in the novel but also in its argument about the temporality of Miss Havisham's "queer circuit." Chapter Three, which pairs Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and Henry James's *The Golden Bowl*, considers the possibility of arrangement and rearrangement central to collecting as a mode of formal plasticity. In order to do so, I draw on the explicit trope of collecting in *The Golden Bowl* and trace the many arrangements of the family *as a collection* in both novels. Chapter Four extends the trope of collecting and brings it into explicit conversation with Rancière's theorization of the *partage du sensible*. In doing so, I read the explicit collections of the Louvre in Émile Zola's *L'Assommoir* and the cesspool collections of the Parisian sewers in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* alongside the arrangement and rearrangement of history and political experience in nineteenth-century France.

The pairing of novels from both British and French traditions contributes to the increasing interest in and calls for transnational and comparative work in Victorian Studies. Sharon Marcus reminds us of the rich legacy of Anglo-French relations in the nineteenth-century and the heavy circulation of material objects, texts of all genres, translations, and authors from one side of the Channel to the other. Marcus argues that Victorian Studies needs comparative work because it "offer[s] a welcome corrective to the Victorianist tendency to see the world through English eyes only, and they challenge us to conduct our scholarly journeys into the nineteenth-century past speaking in tongues other than the English one" (685). While a broader investigation of my theory of the nineteenth-century novel's formal plasticity in the vein of Franco Moretti's *The Novel,* lies beyond the scope of this dissertation, my comparative approach does make a first step toward the more international perspective Marcus calls for and acknowledges the significance of Anglo-French relations in shaping the novel as a genre.

Many of the most prominent theories of the novel found their claims in a canon of Western novels that also, not coincidently, form the canon itself. Hallmark studies such as those by Ian Watt, Gyorg Lukács, Frederic Jameson, Peter Brooks, Mikhail Bakhtin, Benedict Anderson, Nancy Armstrong, and Franco Moretti read canonical novels by Scott, Austen, the Brontës, Dickens, and James, among others in order to develop theories of the novel and, frequently, point to such novels as theory. Moreover, many of the key works of novel theory, such as Bakhtin's *Dialogic Imagination,* Jameson's *Political Unconscious,* Auerbach's *Mimesis,* and Brooks's *Reading for the Plot,* draw their claims from readings both British and French novels. As a result, I draw my examples from canonical works of nineteenth-century British and French novels in order to respond - in kind - to the many theories of the novel that characterize its form as singular, static, and whole. In reading the forms of the novel at work, I also explore the theories, concerns, and questions about form that arise from the novels themselves. Accordingly, I purposefully blur the line between literature and theory in reading novels through other novels. For example, my reading of Henry James's *The Golden Bowl* relies as much on Jacques Rancière's work as it does on Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. To move beyond a discourse of formal finitude, structural unity, or success of canonical novels to a paradigm of plasticity and rearrangement begins to break down certain conceptions of "literariness" on which the canon relies. Rethinking the novel as a site of formal multiplicity then potentially deconstructs binaries of formal failure or success that marginalize previously "non-canonical" texts and authors. More pointedly, this dissertation turns away from lesser-known works - the great unread - to demonstrate that the formal plasticity of the novel is not in fact an exception but the rule. This approach moves in a different direction from those of Margaret Cohen or Franco Moretti, both of which point to the great unread as a corrective to the generalizations about the novel that have been drawn from a minority of the genre's exemplars. The task of this dissertation is to trouble the discourse on the novel from within.

Each chapter of *Novel Plasticity* serves as a methodological experiment in theorizing formal plasticity and attends to the many experiments in the novels of Charles Dickens, Emily Brontë, Henry James, Émile Zola, and Victor Hugo.

Chapter Two, "'Queer Circuits': Dynamic Forms in *Great Expectations,*" draws on the concepts of 'chrononormativity' and 'teleoskepticism' from current debates in queer theory to explore the formal work of description in Dickens's novel (1860-61). Where formalism and narrative theory have traditionally assumed that narrative action lends dynamism to novel form, I draw on the novel's descriptions of Miss Havisham to propose the concept of *dynamic stasis*, a form that occurs not in the plotted activity of the text but in the descriptions. Rather than interrupting the narrative action, these descriptions are themselves dynamic forms that force us to reconsider the formal dynamics of the novel and the stability of the "closure" derived from socio-temporal forms, like the marriage plot or the *bildungsroman*.

Chapter Three, "Formal Arrangements: Novel Form and the Family in *Wuthering Heights* and *The Golden Bowl*," offers an alternative to the tradition of narrative theory and studies of the novel, which have taken marriage and inheritance as two of the most common means of structuring novel form. I read the series of arrangements and rearrangements of the form of the family in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1848) and Henry James's *The Golden*

Bowl (1904) as a kind of ongoing experiment. What results from this formal morphology is a range of different possibilities for arranging one of the most important social forms: the family. While *Wuthering Heights* advances a model of formal plasticity through its experiments with the form of the family, *The Golden Bowl* rearranges the form of the family in relation to prominent debates that sought to give solid form to ideologies like separate spheres, the dividing line between the public and the private, or the nature of work itself.

Chapter Four, "*Le Partage du Sensible* and the Politics of Form in *Les Misérables* (1862) and *L'Assommoir* (1887)," considers the ways in which reading the formal plasticity of the novel allows us to revisit and re-evaluate scenes that had previously been read as fragments and failures. My readings in this chapter pair two scenes from Hugo's and Zola's novels: Jean Valjean's participation in the 1832 Insurrection and his later flight through the sewers of Paris in *Les Misérables* and the famous parade of a working-class wedding party across Paris to the Louvre in *L'Assommoir*. In juxtaposing these scenes, I explore the representation of the common by drawing on Rancière's notion of the *partage du sensible* (the distribution of the sensible) as the particular arrangements of order and disorder of social, political, and aesthetic space. In Hugo, we find a surprising and elegant model for reading *formal plasticity* in the extended “digression” on the sewer and its redistribution of literary, political, social, historical, and aesthetic forms. In Zola's novel, the intricate circulation of multiple forms, like the rules and regulations guiding visits to the Louvre and the trope of *ekphrasis*, catalyze a series of redistributions of the sensible that not only allow the working class characters to take part in the common but to do the ‘work’ of the narrator. Thus, reading the formal plasticity of the novel enables a recuperation of such ‘fragments’ and ‘failures’ as subtle and significant instances of the complex interplay between aesthetic and political forms.

Finally, the **Coda**: "*Formal Plasticity* and World Literature" sketches the ways in which *formal plasticity* might effectively intervene in debates surrounding the novel and the study of world literature. In contrast to Franco Moretti's proposal for a mode of scholarly collaboration that divides the work of synthesis and analysis across comparative literature and national literature departments – what he terms "distant reading" – I articulate a model of collaboration that couples the kinds of close reading that are the hallmark of formalism with the theoretical ambitions of the study of the novel in world literature.

Ultimately, *Novel Plasticity* pursues a discussion of form that, as much as possible, resists any attempt to be structured according to strict coordinates. It is a rather eclectic array of theorists who first helped me to conceptualize what is at risk in any system organized around rigid positionality or that operates according to a relational logic, and whose work reverberates throughout these pages. What each of these theorists evoke – in their own ways – is the value of the ephemeral, spontaneous, or distinctly non-normative, at the same time that they recognize aesthetics or politics as a continuous but non-teleological activity. *Novel Plasticity* seeks to offer a politics of novel forms that rejects totality, the whole, and the organic, to think through the literary forms that would otherwise fall under the shadow of passivity, stasis, or marginalization. At stake in my argument for formal plasticity is the potential for the novel to offer new or previously unrecognized solutions in its arrangements of social, political and aesthetic materials. Neither reflection nor fragmentation, the novel conducts experiments in form. By attending to the many arrangements that the novel plays out for us, we can avoid judging the success or failure of such experiments only by the novel's 'ending.'

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CHAPTER TWO

"QUEER CIRCUITS": DYNAMIC FORMS IN *GREAT EXPECTATIONS*

What kind of formal work do descriptions undertake and how does this activity modify our understanding of novel form? In this chapter, I turn to descriptions of Miss Havisham in Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1861-1862) to consider the threat to form posed by descriptive stasis.[17] Of description's supposed dangers, its presumably static nature seems most troubling to critics. Indeed, excessive description can readily be dismissed as the inevitable result of authors who were paid by the word, as a display of authorial bravado, or more simply as something to be skipped over. Yet, authors and critics endow descriptive stasis with the idiosyncratic power to render other prose elements static – by temporarily interrupting, arresting, or detouring them – or through what Roland Barthes has referred to as the "adjectif funèbre."[18] Far from simply inconvenient, tiring, or cumbersome, description becomes *unnatural*. I want to suggest that Dickens registers anxiety about stasis in the form of Miss Havisham's "queer circuit." Where formalism and narrative theory have assumed that narrative action lends dynamism to the novel form, I draw on the novel's descriptions of Miss Havisham to propose the concept of *dynamic stasis*, a form that occurs not in the plotted activity of the text but in the descriptions. Rather than interrupting the narrative action, these descriptions are themselves dynamic forms that force us to reconsider the formal dynamics of the novel and the stability of the "closure" derived from temporal forms, like the marriage plot or the *bildungsroman*.[19] *Great Expectations* not only

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[17] Consider, for example, Garrett Stewart's colorful evaluation of Dickens's prose: "Heavy-handed comparison, strident parallelism, deliberate contortions of idiom, rampant neologism, extended metaphor, phantom puns and phonetic undertones, these effects and countless others … work to turn the Dickensian sentence into a histrionic scenario all its own, with grammatical subjects battling with objects for priority, adjectives choking the life out of nouns before they can manifest a verb, adverbs riding on the coattails of remorseless verb chains, and, everywhere in dialogue, slips of the tongue hitting home" (138). While Stewart obviously appreciates Dickens's linguistic prowess, his comments about the author's use of subjects and objects, adjectives and verbs, offers a vivid image of description's dangers.

[18] "De là à comprendre ce qu'est la description : elle s'épuise à rendre le propre mortel de l'objet, en figurant (l'illusion par renversement) de le croire, de le vouloir vivant : 'faire vivant'

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veut dire ‘voir mort’. L’adjectif est l’instrument de cette illusion; quoi qu’il dise, par sa seule qualité descriptive, l’adjectif est funèbre” [“Whereby we may understand what *description* is: it strives to render what is strictly mortal in the object by feigning (illusion by reversal) to suppose it, to desire it living: ‘as if it were alive’ means ‘apparently dead.’ The adjective is the instrument of this illusion; whatever it says, by its descriptive quality alone, the adjective is funereal” (68)] (72).

[19] Holly Furneaux’s *Queer Dickens* offers a provocative revision of many dominant perceptions about Dickens’s writing as exemplary of domesticity and traditional family values. Although Furneaux focuses on “the ways in which Dickens’s portrayals of nurturing masculinity and his concern with touch and affect between men challenge what we have been used to thinking about Victorian ideals of maleness,” her reading of the endings of *Great Expectations* resonates with mine (7). According to Furneaux, “Pip’s life with Herbert and Clara offers an emigrant experience of a family of choice, in a reworking of domesticity that promises similar possibilities to that Gayatri Gopinath attributes to the queer diaspora” (174). Ultimately, these

teaches us that the formal work of the novel occurs in its parts, no matter how static, insignificant, or "queer" they might seem, it also points us to a more sophisticated approach to the temporality of the novel, not as a cumulative and linear series of events, but as a plastic process.

At the center of this chapter's discussion of description and form is time. I have argued that form has been yoked to a teleological understanding of the novel that progresses toward an 'ending' that - whether or not it bestows meaning on what comes before - certainly determines a novel as either fragmented or whole.[20] Against this narrative understanding of novel form,

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"Emigration plots allow for an exploration of queer desires that do not cohere with domestic life scripts, providing a space for the narratives of wilful itinerants" (175).

[20] One particularly salient example of this is Frank Kermode's anecdote about the *tick* and the *tock* of the clock as one microscopic representation of the human experience of time. Kermode writes: "The clock's *tick-tock* I take to be a model of what we call a plot, an organization that humanizes time by giving it form; and the interval between *tock* and *tick* represents purely successive, disorganized time of the sort that we need to humanize" (44). Kermode's description of the "middest" as "purely successive" time elicits fascinating questions when read in the context of the novels of Charles Dickens, whose novels are deeply intertwined with the notion of succession, understood as seriality. The novel of interest here, *Great Expectations*, was serialized in the periodical he "conducted," *All the Year Round* from 1860-1861, before being published in three-volume form in 1861. Susan Bernstein has suggested to me that in conceptualizing narrative seriality, it is necessary to distinguish "between sequence (which implies a set order) and seriality more broadly (which could be episodic and therefore not contingent on beginning/middle/end sequencing." Thus, seriality offers the potential to open up

description becomes increasingly hard to accommodate. Narratologists understand narrative as the dynamic, temporal, progressive plane and consistently align description with a static, spatial plane. However, description seems to resist their neat classifications. In this way, description poses a threat to the flow of narrative progress; it becomes not a spatial but a *temporal* obstacle: pausing, stalling, slowing down, or worse yet, stopping narrative all together. In this respect, description could hardly be seen as productively contributing to form. I disagree with this conclusion, however and propose that we can explore the formal *work* of description in temporal terms that are nevertheless non-linear, teleological, and non-narrative.

One model for such a reading comes from recent debates around queer theory, historicism, and temporality. According to Aida Hussen, "Against the grain of conventional understandings of time as universal, forward-moving, and irretrievable, contemporary theorists of queerness and time have turned, with growing interest, to such figures as recursivity, non-linearity, and anachronism." Elizabeth Freeman, in *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* offers "chrononormativity" to describe "the use of time to organize individual human bodies toward maximum productivity" (3); Lee Edelman calls for a resistance to the ubiquitous ideology of "reproductive futurism," and Valerie Traub describes the larger trend toward teleoskepticism as a "curvature of time [that] has fueled epistemological and methodological

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novel form from the temporality of narrative plotting that, to again draw from Kermode, "presupposes and requires that an end will bestow the whole with duration and meaning. To put it another way, the interval must be purged of simple chronicity, of the emptiness of *tock-tick*, humanly uninteresting successiveness" (45). As my argument in this chapter suggests, we can certainly understand Miss Havisham's "queer circuit" as a form of seriality that creates meaning not in spite of but instead through "successiveness."

innovations, productively disturbing developmental and progressive schemas whether such schemas are conceived in psychological, narratological, social, or historical terms" (22). The teleoskepticism championed and explored by these critics, among others, explores multiplicity but also tends toward a reading of time that is cyclical, redoubled, or modeled on Freudian repetition and return. What I find challenging in these models is their reliance on pre-set patterns that nevertheless imply a certain linearity or geometry (arrows, circles, spirals). While I am not certain that it is possible to think about activity or temporality in non-linear or non-geometric terms, I do want to begin to explore the formal work of description in teleoskeptic terms. To do so, I draw inspiration from the work of Anne-Lise François and Rei Terada, whose writing about literature, temporality, and phenomenology, does not privilege organic life or normative social models as models for characterizing or resisting temporality.

In a recent segment on NPR's *Fresh Air*, Maureen Corrigan advanced a definition of novel form that, like much criticism on the subject, argues that description, far from being an essential element of the novel, instead threatens its status from within. "Let's get the negative stuff out of the way first," Corrigan suggests. "Teju Cole's *Every Day Is for the Thief* is not much of a novel. Forget plot or character development: This is a piece of writing that is all about setting. If you take what Cole is offering here and value it on its own terms, you'll probably appreciate the curious magic at work in this slim not-quite-a-novel." Corrigan's assessment of Cole's highly descriptive text speaks to understandings of description as static, subordinate to narrative, disruptive, and potentially dangerous, that run throughout twentieth-century scholarship on the novel and its more recent counterparts. As Caroline Levine and Mario Ortiz-Robles remark in their introduction to *Narrative Middles*, "theorists of narrative have made much of beginnings and endings, but it is in the vast, bulky middle of the nineteenth-century multiplot novel that narrative theory is inclined to let us down. It is not that theorists have overlooked the middle: it is that they have too often cast the middle in functionalist terms, as *on the way* to an ending that will bestow it, retrospectively, with meaning"(6). It seems to go without saying that the form of the novel is inherently narrative and that this form is marked by the familiar trifecta of the beginning, middle, and end. And yet, when we collapse our theory of novel form onto one possible narrative (the above sequential teleology) we risk losing sight of the formal work done by elements that do not fit into this model.

To take one example that continues to inform our understanding of novel temporality, Peter Brooks, in *Reading for the Plot* effectively ties temporality to narrative, by coupling teleology with desire. This understanding of narrative, premised on Freudian psychoanalysis, understands desire as a linear force that progressively seeks satisfaction or discharge. Where Brooks critiques narratological models as being too static and limiting because they have "too much neglected the temporal dynamics that shape narratives in our reading of them, the play of desire in time that makes us turn pages toward narrative ends" the elevation of 'the end' and the framework of desire developed by subsequent narrative theory have become equally as static and limiting as the narratological units or formalisms that Brooks critiques (xiii). Plot becomes both the mechanism for Brooks to revive narrative dynamism, as well as the signpost of a "golden age of narrative" (xi). Broadly generalizing, Brooks argues that "authors and their publics apparently shared the conviction that plots were a viable and a necessary way of organizing and interpreting the world, and that in working out and working through plots, as writers and readers, they were engaged in a prime, irreducible act of understanding how human life acquires meaning" (xi). By historicizing plot in this way and by, at the same time, attributing to it not only the function of instilling order but, more significantly, of revealing "meaning" in human life, Brooks instantiates a paradigm in which novel coherence relies on progress and the creation of a “meaning” recognizable to nineteenth-century Victorian readers.

In this respect, his readings of Balzac’s *La Peau de chagrin* and of *Great Expectations* are exemplary. Reading Balzac's tale of a young man's fateful encounter with a 'magic skin' or talisman that both diminishes in size as it fulfills Raoul's wishes and diminishes the length of his own life. Brooks writes:

> Yet this magic skin retracts and shrinks with the realization of desire, in a kind of postcoital quiescence which Freud, too, adduces as an example of the relation between the pleasure principle and the death instinct. The self subjugates through the realization of desire, but that realization diminishes the self, retracts it, until the point where the skin - lying, at the last, in Pauline’s hand - shrivels away to nothing. And here the paradox of the self becomes explicitly the paradox of narrative plot as the reader consumes it: diminishing as it realizes itself, leading to an end that is the consummation (as well as the consumption) of its sense-making. If the motor of narrative is desire, totalizing, building ever-larger units of meaning, the ultimate determinants of meaning lie *at the end*, and narrative desire is ultimately, inexorably, desire *for* the end. (52)

Drawing, as he clearly is, on a model of masculine desire, Brooks emphasizes the *finality* and irreversibility of the ending. When read in relation to *Great Expectations*, Brooks can only successfully apply his model to Pip and reaches an impasse with Miss Havisham. Repetition is here the antithesis of plot and Miss Havisham its phantom: “The craziness and morbidity of Satis House repose on desire fixated, become fetishistic and sadistic, on a deviated eroticism that has literally shut out the light, stopped the clocks, and made the forward movement of plot impossible. Satis House, as the circular journeys of the wheelchair to the rhythm of the blacksmith's song 'Old Clem' may best suggest, constitutes repetition without variation, pure reproduction, a collapsed metonymy where cause and effect have become identical, the same-as-same" (119). Rather than the very thing that ensures meaning - iterability - Brooks reads Miss Havisham's queer circuit as a failure to "master" the past and to bring its "energies" … "to effective discharge" (123). Brooks does not recognize the dynamism still at play in Satis House because its movement is not the "rhythm of continuity," forward moving progress, but instead an altogether different relation to time, a *dynamic stasis*. Indeed, dynamic stasis, detached from a sense of beginning or ending, would seem incomprehensible to a paradigm of chrononormative narrative desire. According to Brooks, "The deviance and error of plot may necessarily result from the interplay of desire in its history with the narrative insistence on explanatory form: the desire to wrest beginnings and ends from the uninterrupted flow of middles, from temporality itself; the sense of an existence, the meaning of life" (140). And yet, what of the desire to remain in the middle? The kind of *dilatory* pleasure, to borrow from Amy King, or the phenomenophilia Rei Terada highlights?[21] What of the desire that aligns itself with that other bastion of the nineteenth-century novel, description? In developing a paradigm that links the novel to a progressive, teleological desire manifest in plot, and by exiling description to the margins of novel form, Brooks and much of the narrative theory that followed erected a model that could neither recognize the formal work of description nor the "meaning" to be found in descriptive passages or other formal elements that failed to align to a chrononormative paradigm.

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[21] King argues that "our canonical accounts of the novel form, arising out of formalist, psychoanalytic, structuralist, or Marxist interpretive practices, tend pervasively to occlude or ignore altogether one of its most salient elements: description" (460). King seeks to redress the situation by highlighting "*dilatory description*, which lingers and dilates rather than presses on toward closure" as an "important and undertheorized portion of nineteenth-century British narrative" (461). While King's return to description as an important and productive element for the study of the novel is laudatory, her conceptualization of *dilatory description* reproduces the terms of activity and stasis I critique here. That is, she draws our attention to "the single page or

Perhaps most significant of these is the formal work of description. For, if the middle has been a relative critical outcast, description has consistently been subordinated to narrative. While scholars like Mieke Bal, Phillipe Hamon, Cynthia Wall, and Elaine Scarry have taken description to be a serious subject of research, its history has more often been one of marginalization, if not quick dismissal or harsh appraisal of its threats to narrative form.[22] Within novel studies,

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even paragraph that owes little or nothing to the advancement of the plot but that instead might even be said to still narrative progress" (461). Nevertheless, King, like Terada, makes an important contribution to novel theory in highlighting the desire for the middle and its pleasures.

[22] Naomi Schor argued in 1987 that "to focus on the place and function of the detail since the mid-eighteenth century is to become aware that the normative aesthetics elaborated and disseminated by the Academy and its members is not sexually neutral; it is an axiology carrying into the field of representation the sexual hierarchies of the phallocentric cultural order. The detail does not occupy a conceptual space beyond the laws of sexual difference: the detail is gendered and doubly gendered as feminine" (4). Schor's comments highlight the devaluation of the detail and by implication of description, concepts that are "bounded on the one side by the *ornamental*, with its traditional connotations of effeminacy and decadence, and on the other, by the *everyday*, whose 'prosiness' is rooted in the domestic sphere of social life presided over by women" (4). More recently, scholars have begun to return to description and to re-evaluate its

description has been consistently characterized as subordinate to narrative, a static impediment to plot, or a dangerous threat. As Genette has it, "la description est tout naturellement *ancilla narrationis*, esclave toujours nécessaire, mais toujours soumise, jamais émancipée" [Description is quite naturally *ancilla narrationis*, a slave – always necessary but always subjugated, never emancipated (translation mine)] (157). Description's much maligned status tends to stem from its primary association with objects. As Bal explains, the "distinction between narrative and descriptive elements ‘had been based on the ontological status of the object described” - actions, events, - narrative, things, places, characters – descriptive"(100). This ontological divide underlies well-known accounts of novel description like Barthes's "reality effect" or what Elaine Freedgood calls "weak metonymy" in Balzac. Until relatively recently, a perception of literary descriptions as static, both in their ability to interrupt the narrative flow and in their ontology, has been perhaps the driving force behind the understanding of them as dangerous to the narrative whole. Gerald Prince's definition of description in his *A Dictionary of Narratology* is emblematic of description's critical status:

> **Description.** The representation of objects, beings, situations, or (nonpurposeful, nonvolitional) happenings in their spatial rather than temporal existence, their topological rather than chronological functioning, their simultaneity rather than succession … A description can be more or less detailed and precise; objective or subjective; typical and stylized or, on the contrary, individualizing; decorative or explanatory/functional (establishing the tone or mood of a passage, conveying

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role in the novel. See for example, Cynthia Wall’s *The Prose of Things,* Elaine Scarry’s *Dreaming by the Book,* Amanpal Garcha’s *From Sketch to Novel,* and José Manuel Lopes’s *Foregrounded Description in Prose Fiction*.

> plot-relevant information, contributing to characterization, introducing or reinforcing a theme, symbolizing a conflict to come); and so on and so forth. (19)

While Prince's definition does not employ any of the adjectives that time and again appear in discussions of description (static, dangerous, disruptive) it does make a clear statement about description's contributions, none of which might in the broadest sense be considered 'formal'. More telling is Prince's definition of form:

> Following Hjelmslev, and as opposed to SUBSTANCE, the relational system determining the units of the two planes of a semiotic system (the EXPRESSION plane and the CONTENT plane). In the case of narrative, the form of the content can be said to be equivalent to the STORY components (existents and events) and their connections; and the form of the expression to the constituents (NARRATIVE STATEMENTS) that state the story and, more specifically, determine the ORDER of presentation, the narrative SPEED, the kind of COMMENTARY and so on. (33)

Description's absence from Prince's definition of form is significant (unless we read "connections" or "commentary" as euphemisms for description). The picture that emerges from Prince's definitions is one in which description may add a flourish or embellishment – its work is largely decorative. To quote Riffaterre, "Descriptions have traditionally been treated by critics and readers alike as if they were no more than icing on the narrative cake" (6). In this light, the traditional distinction between narration and distinction is not only qualitative but more importantly, value-laden.

Description seems to be to narrative theory what Miss Havisham is to Brooks's *Reading for the Plot*: thwarted and stuck in a perpetual present, lacking development and, as Pip himself fears, potentially contagious. Pip fears contracting the rampant decay while at Satis House: "In the heavy air of the room, and the heavy darkness that brooded in its remoter corners, I even had an alarming fancy that Estella and I might presently begin to decay" (89). Ruth Ronen diagnoses "[t]he problem posed by description" as "that of naturalizing and integrating descriptive elements into the linearity and structure of texts. Description resists integration into the narrative because of its static nature" (278). Outside of the normative temporality of narrative and unable to be "naturalized" into the text, description figures an anti-chrononormative queer time. Indeed, for Lukács, "Description debases characters to the level of inanimate objects" (133). Here again, Miss Havisham, who lives in the perpetual present of " twenty minutes to nine," fittingly embodies the critical reaction to description (Dickens 58). To again quote Lukács, "the best modern narrative has been able to infuse the dramatic element into the novel by transferring events into the past. But the contemporaneity of the observer making a description is the antithesis of the contemporaneity of the drama. Static situations are described, states or attitudes of mind or human beings or conditions - still lives" (130). Recall, of course, that Miss Havisham is described as an uncanny "waxwork," at once frozen and alive. Pip recounts: "Once I had been taken to see some ghastly waxwork at the Fair, representing I know not what impossible personage lying in state. Once I had been taken to one of our old marsh churches to see a skeleton in the ashes of a rich dress, that had been dug out of a vault under the church pavement. Now, waxwork and skeleton seemed to have dark eyes that moved and looked at me" (Dickens 58). Miss Havisham, this waxwork-skeleton, description – these are all kinds of still life that, much like the key conceptual term of this chapter, *dynamic stasis*, offer a productive antimony, naming what lies on the margins of a chrononormative narrative theory and in a more plastic conception of novel form.

Descriptions in *Great Expectations* distinguish themselves both in the images of dynamic stasis to which they give form, as well as in the form of those same descriptions. Throughout Dickens's *Great Expectations*, we encounter a series of images that frustrate any convenient understanding of stasis. Like Pip's expectations, these images evoke a sense of lingering, waiting, or anticipation - the slightest or subtlest forms of activity. Notably, such forms of what I term *dynamic stasis* occur outside the narrative plane, which formalism and narrative theory have long rendered the active or dynamic plane of the novel. Instead, we find examples of dynamic stasis in the novel's descriptions. Rather than interrupting the narrative action, these descriptions are themselves dynamic forms that force us to reconsider the formal dynamics of the novel.

I'd like to begin by exploring the more subtle images of dynamic stasis that infuse the descriptions in *Great Expectations*. In his descriptions of Barnard's Inn, Pip's first home in London, Dickens evokes dynamic stasis through alliteration and repetition. Situated in "a melancholy little square that looked to me like a flat burying-ground," the Inn has "the most dismal trees … the most dismal sparrows, … the most dismal cats, and the most dismal houses" (173). The Inn is not simply dilapidated, but rather dilapidat*ing*: "I thought the windows of the sets of chambers into which these houses were divided, were in every stage of dilapidated blind and curtain, crippled flower-pot, cracked glass, dusty decay, and miserable makeshift" (173). The description eventually becomes rhythmic: "while dry rot and wet rot and all the silent rots that rot in neglected roof and cellar - rot of rat and mouse and bug and coaching-stables near at hand besides" (173). The description also juxtaposes the sense of abandonment with ongoing activity. "To Let To Let To Let glared at me from empty rooms, as if no new wretches ever came there, and the vengeance of the soul of Barnard were being slowly appeased by the suicide of the present occupants and their unholy internment under the gravel" (173). Like the waxwork skeleton, descriptions in *Great Expectations* frequently offer an uncanny blend of the animate and the inanimate, the living and the dead.

Such descriptions often rely on anthropomorphism, attributing active, human traits, to inanimate objects. Both Barnard's Inn, where Pip first settles, and Hummums, where he stays following Wemmick's warning not to return home, provide examples of such anthropomorphic forms. In the latter, Pip encounters a "despotic monster of a four-post bedstead …, straddling over the whole place, putting one of his arbitrary legs into the fireplace and another into the doorway, and squeezing the wretched little washing-stand in quite a Divinely Righteous manner" (366). And so the bed is transformed into a monstrous, sexually *active* man. Once tucked into the bed, Pip remarks on a series of dormant figures - caught in a state of dormant activity. "There was an inhospitable smell in the room, of cold soot and hot dust, and, as I looked up into the corners of the tester over my head, I thought what a number of bluebottle flies from the butchers', and earwigs from the market, and grubs from the country, *must be holding on up there*, *lying by* for the next summer" (366). Waiting, like Pip's own expectations, for the proper moment, these presumably static forms maintain a minimum of activity to escape death. Moreover, inanimate objects are rendered dynamic in Hummums: "The closet whispered, the fireplace sighed, the little washing-stand ticked, and one guitar-string played occasionally in the chest of drawers" (366). The recurrent trope of "portable property" - Wemmick's professional *and* private dogma - also relies upon a similar paradigm of dynamic stasis. Like the bluebottle flies, earwigs, and grubs, portable property is "lying by" until it is needed - inanimate (for the rings and other gifts bestowed on Wemmick do not earn interest) until put back into circulation. Dickens introduces a subtle but significant distinction into the rhetoric of stasis in a number of characters who recall these antithetical images of static activity.

Perhaps the most morbid exemplar of dynamic stasis, the trope of live burial runs throughout *Great Expectations*. Dickens experiments with the limits of life in the novel, juxtaposing different examples of live burial, or different forms of dynamic stasis. Of these, Magwitch - Pip's convict - is perhaps the most suspenseful and traditionally plot driven. Yet here too, Dickens manipulates singular literary forms and sets them in motion. Before Pip has learned his benefactor's true identity, he accompanies Wemmick on a tour of Newgate prison. Wemmick not only cultivates portable property - caring for objects until he needs to realize their value - but also convicts. As Pip relates, "it struck me that Wemmick walked among the prisoners, much as a gardener might walk among his plants. This was first put into my head by his seeing a shoot that had come up in the night" (260). When they cross a convict who will soon meet his executioner, Pip narrates: "With that, he looked back, and nodded at this dead plant, and then cast his eyes about him in walking out of the yard, as if considering what other pot would go best in its place" (262). While some portray prisons as a site for reform or moral growth, a plant hardly seems a fitting symbol for this transformation. The prisoners here are at once plants that must be tended in order to grow *and,* in what more readily fits with popular image and etymology, something or someone that is confined - static.

Magwitch is perhaps the most extreme example of imprisonment as dynamic stasis. Magwitch appears to meet his death - or exile - only to be resurrected, but without trading in the Gothic. Magwitch's story is only given in parts throughout the novel - and often indirectly. This is of course central to Pip's education - as he learns to make judgments for himself, yet it also suggests a different way of thinking about the forms of the novel. When Magwitch returns to reveal himself as Pip's benefactor, he includes a warning: "'Because, look'ee here, dear boy,' he said, dropping his voice, and laying a long finger on my breast in an impressive manner, 'caution is necessary.' 'How do you mean? Caution?' 'By G - , it's Death!' 'What's death?' 'I was sent for life. It's death to come back. There's been overmuch coming back of late years, and I should of a certainty be hanged if took'" (323). Magwitch's warning playfully redefines familiar terms like death, only to then subvert them. Death here does not arise from exile, which he redefines as "life" ("I was sent for life") characters who are removed from the character system - but instead in 'coming back'. And yet this definition is immediately complicated; the consequence of 'coming back' is death and this death in life is again punished with death ("I should of a certainty be hanged if took"). Within the dictates of Britain's judicial system, Magwitch's definitions are logical (they even point to the very trends that would concern politicians and bureaucrats - "there's been overmuch coming back of late years." But the novel complicates the legibility of this legal process through the introduction of Jaggers and his careful maneuvers. Instead of a lesson in the law, Pip learns to reconcile - conceptually if not in practice - death and life.[23]

I argue that this reconciliation does not take place at the intersection of Dickens's infamous multi-plots, nor even in narrative, but rather in the creation of an alternative novel temporality.[24] Dickens seems to blend the two conceptions of time, narrative time and descriptive time, through the concept of play. In doing so, he takes repetition as a figure, at once productive in the sweeping rise of industrial labor, and dilatory or cyclical, in Pip's play at Satis House. Dickens explicitly frames Pip's admittance to Satis House according to a work-play binary, while also highlighting the seeming absurdity of being made to play. "'She wants the boy to go and play there. And of course he's going. And he had better play there,' said my sister, shaking her head at me as an encouragement to be extremely light and sportive, 'or I'll work him'" (51). Mrs. Joe's rather unreasonable expectations crumble as Pip encounters Satis House and its inhabitants for the first time. Miss Havisham explains: 'I want diversion, and I have done with men and women. Play.' I think it will be conceded by my most disputatious reader that she could hardly have directed an unfortunate boy to do anything in the wide world more difficult to be done under the circumstances. 'I sometimes have sick fancies,' she went on, 'and I have a sick fancy that I want to see some play. There, there!' with an impatient movement of the fingers of her right hand; 'play, play, play!'" (84). And, when Pip proves unable to engage in a kind of 'free play' (he "had a desperate idea of starting round the room in the assumed character of Mr. Pumblechook's chaise-cart"), Miss Havisham sends for Estella and offers a more regimented alternative: cards. The possibility of any 'free play' quickly fades and Pip soon falls into a routine at Satis House, one in which play and work undergo a curious conflation.[25]

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[23] Catherine Gallagher's *The Body Economic: Life, Death, and Sensation in Political Economy and the Victorian Novel* also takes an interest in the themes of suspended animation and life and death in Dickens. However, Gallagher does not discuss *Great Expectations* and her rich readings of *Hard Times* and *Our Mutual Friend* are concerned with the temporality of labor and of suspended animation in relation to biopolitics and economics.

[24] Anna Kornbluh offers a compelling reading of the temporality of *Great Expectations* in *Realizing Capital.* Commenting that "[t]he shaky beginning and uncertain ending bookend the novel's curiously disjointed temporality," Kornbluh argues that these "enigmas of the text, its

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unfinished business – these are the crenulations of *Great Expectation*'s financial form. It is through these aesthetic contours, rather than through any referential portrayal of banking and trade, that its financial thinking unfolds" (46).

[25] Kristin L. Parkinson explores the role of card games and game playing more broadly in *Great Expectations*, drawing from nearly contemporary rule books and Victorian stereotypes about card players and gambling to argue that Dickens not only offers a "negative representation

When Pip returns for his second visit, he again finds his surroundings too daunting to invite playfulness. As a result, Miss Havisham proposes that he do what Mrs. Joe made clear he should be doing all the time: work. “Since this house strikes you as old and grave, boy,’ said Miss Havisham, impatiently, ‘and you are unwilling to play, are you willing to work?’” (84). Dickens’s further confuses the boundaries between work and play as Pip ‘walks’ Miss Havisham by recalling Pip’s first thought when made to play on his first visit: Mr. Pumblechook’s chaise-cart. “Accordingly, I started at once, and she leaned upon my shoulder, and we went away at a pace that might have been an imitation (founded on my first impulse under that roof) of Mr. Pumblechook’s chaise-cart” (85). This work is indeed another kind of play, “an imitation” of the very thing that Pip associates with forced play (not to mention all of the other unpleasant associations Mr. Pumblechook brings to mind). More importantly, narrative seems to fall entirely out of the picture as any progress, any teleology is quickly replaced by a seemingly static and unending repetition. For the better part of a year, Pip undertakes “regular occupation of pushing Miss Havisham in this chair (when she was tired of walking with her hand upon my shoulder) round her own room, and across the landing, and round the other room. Over and over and over again, we would make these journeys, and sometimes they would last as long as three hours at a

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of game-playing” but that the playing of games in the novel – whether understood as Jaggers’s legal manipulations or Miss Havisham’s manipulation of men – foreshadows Pip’s ultimate acceptance of “the middle-class Victorian values of loyalty, hard work, and honesty, and finds that they trump the games of trickery and chance played by many of the novel’s other characters” (120). Thus, in contrast to my reading, the playing of games and of cards in *Great Expectations* does not, for Parkinson, gesture toward a queer temporality but instead symbolically prefigures how a character will turn out ‘in the end.’

stretch" (90). This circuit, Pip's "work" is inevitably followed by a game of cards with Estella. Though a game of cards suggests narrative and teleology (Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot uses a game of bridge as a means of reconstructing and solving a murder in *Cards on the Table*), any sense of plot or progress is quickly thwarted by sheer repetition. "We returned to her room, and sat down *as before*; I was beggared, *as before*; and again, *as before*, Miss Havisham watched us all the time, directed my attention to Estella's beauty, and made me notice it the more by trying her jewels on Estella's breast and hair. Estella, for her part, likewise treated me *as before*; except that she did not condescend to speak" (emphasis mine, 90). Pip's narration of these events even turns descriptive, as each time was just *as before*. "I insensibly fall into a general mention of these journeys as numerous, because it was at once settled that I should return every other day at noon for these purposes, and because I am now going to sum up a period of at least eight or ten months" (95). And yet the seemingly descriptive time of Pip's play is hardly static.

Indeed, Dickens's peculiar blend of narrative and descriptive time results from the transposition of the blacksmiths' song, 'Old Clem' to Miss Havisham's 'queer circuit'. Pip explains:

> There was a song Joe used to hum fragments of at the forge, of which the burden was Old Clem. This was not a very ceremonious way of rendering homage to a patron saint; but, I believe Old Clem stood in that relation towards smiths. It was a song that imitated the measure of beating upon iron, and was a mere lyrical excuse for the introduction of Old Clem's respected name. Thus, you were to hammer boys round - Old Clem! With a thump and a sound - Old Clem! Beat it out, beat it out - Old Clem! With a clink for the stout - Old Clem! Blow the fire, blow the fire - Old Clem! Roaring dryer, soaring higher - Old Clem! One day

> soon after the appearance of the chair, Miss Havisham suddenly saying to me, with the impatient movement of her fingers, 'There, there, there! Sing!' I was surprised into crooning this ditty as I pushed her over the floor. It happened so to catch her fancy that, she took it up in a low brooding voice as if she were singing in her sleep. After that, it became customary with us to have it as we moved about, and Estella would often join in; though the whole strain was so subdued, even when there were three of us, that it made less noise in the grim old house than the lightest breath of wind" (96).

This parade bears all of the hallmarks of dynamic stasis. It is as if Miss Havisham "were singing in her sleep," evoking that liminal period between waking and sleeping, as does the barely audible, "subdued" noise of their song, which is anthropomorphized as "the lightest breath of wind" (96). In addition to these markers of dynamic stasis, the transposition of the work song 'Old Clem' onto their circuit orders and regiments it in the very way a blacksmith's work is regulated by the song.

In *The Bourgeois*, Franco Moretti maps the socio-political changes of the 'serious century' onto the narrative/description divide. In prose that somehow recalls Virginia Woolf's distinction between "moments of being and non-being," both of which stand in contrast to major narrative events. Wielding a more 'brass tacks,' or perhaps more bourgeois vocabulary, Moretti juxtaposes the 'events', or turning points, of traditional narrative with "fillers" and descriptive pauses. His definitions of fillers emphasize their mendacity: "fillers are what happens *between* one turning point and the next"; "they don't really do much; they enrich and give nuance to the progress of the story, but without modifying what the turning points have established"; they are, "narration: but of the everyday" (71). Yet this narration (which would presumably make up the entirety of

Biffen's fictional *Mr. Bailey, Grocer* in Gissing's *New Grub Street*) serves, according to Moretti, a powerful and important purpose: "fillers function very much like the good manners so dear to nineteenth-century novelists; they are a mechanism designed to keep the 'narrativity' of life under control; to give it a regularity, a 'style'"(72). And here we find the keyword for fillers: regularity. "Why fillers, in the nineteenth century? Because they offer *the kind of narrative pleasure compatible with the new regularity of bourgeois life*" (81). In a "serious century," fillers offer a kind of narrative pleasure equivalent to train tables, 'afternoons', and the social season. These background events, Woolf's moments of non-being, Moretti argues, rise to the foreground and "all they have to offer are people who talk, play cards, visit, take walks, read a letter, listen to music, drink a cup of tea …" (71). What I find so intriguing about Moretti's argument is how it becomes confirmed and yet *completely inverted* in *Great Expectations.* Pip's strange blend of play as work takes on the very regularity of Moretti's fillers, even finding its anthem in the rhythm of the blacksmith's work song.

Yet they are hardly in keeping with the ideological underpinnings Moretti assigns to fillers and descriptive pauses. Moretti argues that fillers are the expression of a bourgeois objectivity - a certain rationalization of the otherwise chaotic nineteenth century - that allows for the regulated progress necessary to capitalism. Description, on the other hand, manifests formally a political conservatism. Citing Auerbach's reading of Balzac (who "places the human beings whose destiny he is seriously relating in their precisely defined historical and social setting, but also conceives this connection as a necessary one" (92), Moretti argues that "in political philosophy and literary representation alike, the present becomes a sediment of history; while the past, instead of simply disappearing, turns into something visible, solid, *concrete* - to quote another keyword of conservative thought, and of the rhetoric of 'realism'" (93). Thus

Moretti, like many before him, continues to divide up the formal elements of the novel according to a temporal paradigm. The compromise forged between them results from the “strange mix of capitalist turbulence and conservative persistence.” Ultimately, “capitalist rationalization reorganized novelistic plot with the regular tempo of fillers - while political conservatism dictated its descriptive pauses, where readers and critics increasingly looked for the ‘meaning’ of the entire story” (94). Thus, the "deepest vocation" of nineteenth-century novels "lies in forging *compromises between different ideological systems*"(93). However *Great Expectations* is distinctly at odds with the political rhythms Moretti ascribes to fillers and descriptive pauses. Where fillers syncopate the forward moving teleology of past-present-future, what Moretti terms the "rhythm of continuity,” Satis House and its fillers operate according to an entirely different temporality. While both are "incessant in quiet action" Miss Havisham takes the latent "possibilities" Moretti sees in fillers, which "'reawaken' the everyday, making it feel alive, open" and renders them uncanny (82, 75).

Moretti's interest in "the rhythm of continuity" harks back to Shlovsky's comments in "Art as Technique" that "the rhythm of prose, or of a work song like 'Dubinushka,' permits the members of the work crew to do their necessary 'groaning together' and also eases the work by making it automatic … Thus the rhythm of prose is an important automatizing element" (24). The work song is particularly appropriate here, as for Moretti too this rhythm is a working rhythm: "It's the grammar of prose as *pro-vorsa*, forward-oriented; the grammar of *growth*" (56). The 'rhythm of prose', indeed of the novel itself, is in both instances, progressive, forward-moving, regular, "of the capitalist spirit" (Moretti 56). In *Great Expectations*, Dickens queers this rhythm, defamiliarizes it – denaturalizes it.

In the twenty-second chapter of Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*, Pip has come to

London to be educated and to live as a gentleman under the generosity of some unknown benefactor/tress. Pip is to stay with Mr. Pocket, who is educated – though not wealthy – and who initiates him into the forms of gentlemanly society. While the two young gentlemen share their first meal, Herbert fulfills his promise to tell Pip all that he knows of Miss Havisham. The story within a story (Miss Havisham's story in the midst of the larger story of *Great Expectations*) is frequently interrupted by Pocket's instructions to Pip about polite manners. The passage can initially be coded as an analepsis, filling in the ellipsis of both Herbert's speech act (I promise to tell) as well as the overt ellipsis of Miss Havisham's past, either of which fall squarely within typical narratological structures. In the example at hand, Herbert's promise to Pip, as a speech act, is "redeemed" not by the story about Miss Havisham, but rather by a brief lesson in dining etiquette – a social form.[26]

When Pocket begins to tell Miss Havisham's story, he immediately turns to social forms – that is the proper comportment of a gentleman – remarking on the social patterns by which give form to the otherwise ambiguous figure of the gentleman:[27]

> 'Her father was a country gentleman down in your part of the world, and was a

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[26] For an engaging example of a pervasive form - pockets – and their role as a gendered social form in Victorian literature and culture, see Christopher Todd Matthews, “Form and Deformity.”

[27] Ambiguous because the 'gentleman', as a trope in nineteenth-century fiction can be recognized by a number of traits, including his dress, wealth, speech, manners, sympathy, courtesy, etc. However, the traits that render him recognizable are also what frequently lead him to be mistaken or to go unrecognized, leading to any number of comic, tragic, or otherwise tricky situations.

> brewer. I don't know why it should be a crack thing to be a brewer; but it is indisputable that while you cannot possibly be genteel and bake, you may be as genteel as never was and brew. You see it every day.' `Yet a gentleman may not keep a public-house; may he?' said I. `Not on any account,' returned Herbert; `but a public-house may keep a gentleman.' (180)

It is not entirely clear why Pocket needs to explain Mr. Havisham's status as a brewer, nor why he needs to expand the discussion to point to the inherent contradiction: gentlemen and public houses, two separate social forms, exist in a paradoxical relationship to one another. "A gentleman may not keep a public house … but a public-house may keep a gentleman." Following this, Pocket again picks up the story before once again interrupting it to expound upon the proper form of taking drink: "Take another glass of wine, and excuse my mentioning that society as a body does not expect one to be so strictly conscientious in emptying one's glass, as to turn it bottom upwards with the rim on one's nose'" (180). Once again, what is 'outside' the story intrudes upon it. An intrusion that is rendered less criminal by the formal ties that bind it: manners. That is, Pip is so intensely absorbed in the narrative that he does not heed the other forms which are termed "excessive": "I had been doing this, in an excess of attention to his recital" (180). Indeed, Pip's mistake in manners is the result of his good manners in paying close attention to Pocket's "recital," another form, which calls for the faithful attention of an audience. Nearly as soon as Pocket resumes his narrative, he interrupts it once more to alert Pip to the proper form of treating a napkin:

> 'Now, I come to the cruel part of the story -- merely breaking off, my dear Handel, to remark that a dinner-napkin will not go into a tumbler.' Why I was trying to pack mine into my tumbler, I am wholly unable to say. I only know that I found

> myself, with perseverance worthy of a much better cause, making the most strenuous exertions to compress it within those limits. (180)

While Pip's exertions with the napkin could simply be explained as another instance of Dickensian humor, the image itself is suggestive. Within the passage, we have "story," "breaking," "pack," "compress" and "limits" – words that, at a literal level refer to the interruption of the story by Pip's ignorance as to how to treat his napkin, but figuratively suggest the challenge and indeed strenuous exertion required to "compress" a story "within those limits." Neither Pip nor Pocket finds any explanation for compressing the napkin into the tumbler and, as the passage suggests, neither can the text rationalize compressing itself into the limits of a single form.

Although one might be tempted to say that Miss Havisham's story takes the form of a failed marriage plot or a gothic romance, through the 'interruptions' of Pocket's sagacious advice, the text calls attention to the multiplicity of forms apparent at any given point in the tale. Indeed, this passage presents a series of nested forms: a story-within-a-story, marriage plot, gothic romance, adventure tale or suspense plot, and a miniature *bildung* of Pip's education. Miss Havisham's story, interspersed with Pip's education, does not interrupt the narrative of the novel, nor is it a fragment, nor does it slow it down. Indeed, the story is fully accounted for in the narrative logic. Pocket serves as a kind of false 'helper' (providing Pip with more information concerning Miss Havisham and encouraging, though perhaps inadvertently, his suspicions that the ghostly bride is indeed his real donor) as it also serves to cement the friendship between the two men, who feel more at ease with one another following the discussion.

Moreover, Pocket's closure of his story with "never since" lends it a note of finality and recalls the ending of a gothic fairytale: "When she recovered from a bad illness that she had, she laid the whole place waste, as you have seen it, and she has never since looked upon the light of day'" (182). Yet Pip remains unconvinced, asking immediately afterwards: "`Is that all the story?'" (182). His question is rather perceptive, as it calls attention to the ‘contradiction' of the story's marriage plot. While the story has achieved closure, the form persists in a paradoxically static/dynamic state. The maleficent suitor having "practised on her affection in that systematic way," that is, systematically or even strenuously observing the forms of courtship, leads Miss Havisham to observe all the proper forms and manners of a bride: "The marriage day was fixed, the wedding dresses were bought, the wedding tour was planned out, the wedding guests were invited" (183). Dickens seems to be at pains to underline the finality, to lend the story of Miss Havisham a deathly sense of closure. “Without this arrest of everything, this standing still of all the pale decayed objects, not even the withered bridal dress on the collapsed form could have looked so like grave-clothes, or the long veil so like a shroud” (60). Moreover, she is described as "corpse-like,” as a "figure of the grave,” and imagined as a mummy (60, 239). This image of Miss Havisham as a spectral, frustrated, thwarted lover, highlights the overlapping chrononormativity of a teleology-founded narrative theory.[28]

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[28] In his reflections on beginnings, Saïd, like Brooks, couples the form of the novel with that of life (despite his insistence on the difference between the two, in the novel’s ironic reduplication of reality, through which novels “create another sense altogether by repeating, by making repetition itself the very form of novelty”) – understood through the lens of Freud and Kierkegaard – and with the family. What Saïd refers to as *Great Expectations*’ “most insistent pattern of narrative organization” – and what I would call form – is “how Pip situates himself with the center of several family groups.” Indeed, for him Pip “is at once the novel’s condition for being, the novel’s action, and the character in it” (96). Reading the novel’s duration as the

This, of course, is Peter Brooks's reading of the novel, in which Miss Havisham is caught in the compulsion to repeat of the Freudian death drive. Yet, as in my earlier examples of dynamic stasis, what initially appears calcified betrays subtle activity. Although the clocks have all been stopped and the "place" has been "laid to waste," we know from Miss Havisham's queer circuit between the two rooms that it is very much still active. The wedding cake and the reception table are in an active state of decay, with all manner of insects scurrying in and about them. Pip describes the banquet room:

> It was spacious, and I dare say had once been handsome, but every discernible thing in it was covered with dust and mould, and dropping to pieces. The most

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challenges faced by Pip as he encounters the "molestations" of false families as the very form of the novel itself participates in imposing chrononormativity on novel form. Indeed, Saïd aligns the novel with the logic of reproductive futurism, writing: "The sheer length of the classical novel can almost be accounted for by the desire to initiate and promote a reduplication of life and, at the same time, to allow for a convincing portrayal of how that sort of life leads inevitably to the revelation of a merely borrowed authority" (94). Given this perspective, it is perhaps not surprising that he would characterize Miss Havisham as antithetical to Pip in her "solitary paralysis." "Where he generates life for himself, whose falseness is more and more manifest, she does next to nothing memorialized in the sarcophagus of Satis House" (95). As I argue in this section, Miss Havisham is involved in activity of dynamic stasis that the progressive teleology of reduplication and reproduction cannot accommodate. Miss Havisham's "beginning intentions" is not that of the Western author Saïd describes, nor that of the modern Arab novelist, but instead an intention to do by undoing.

> prominent object was a long table with a tablecloth spread on it, as if a feast had been in preparation when the house and the clocks all stopped together. An epergne or centre-piece of some kind was in the middle of this cloth; it was so heavily overhung with cobwebs that its form was quite indistinguishable; and, as I looked along the yellow expanse out of which I remember its seeming to grow, like a black fungus, I saw speckled-legged spiders with blotchy bodies running home to it, and running from it, as if some circumstance of the greatest public importance had just transpired in the spider community. I heard the mice too, rattling behind the panels, as if the same occurrence were important to their interests. But, the black-beetles took no notice of the agitation, and groped about the hearth in a ponderous elderly way, as if they were short-sighted and hard of hearing, and not on terms with one another.

The anthropomorphism of the earlier examples of dynamic stasis reaches an apotheosis here, as the “speckled-legged spiders” and “mice” are depicted as two thriving societies, with their own “public interests.” Moreover, Miss Havisham's dress and other bridal apparel and accessories, along with the bride herself, are actively and doggedly employed in a similar degeneration. In describing them, Dickens employs a rhythm similar to that of ‘Old Clem’: “she in her once white dress, all yellow and withered; the once white cloth all yellow and withered; everything around, in a state to crumble under a touch” (89). Or, describing Satis House, “there were no pigeons in the dove-cot, no horses in the sty, no malt in the storehouse, no smells of grains and beer in the copper or the vat” and, in relation to Estella, “She hung upon Estella’s beauty, hung upon her words, hung upon her gestures, and sat mumbling her own trembling fingers while she looked at her, as though she were devouring the beautiful creature she had reared” (302). What Brooks views as a static repetition even infuses Miss Havisham’s speech, punctuated into repeated triplets.[29] How can we conceptualize this repetition, this syncopation outside of plot, of narrative teleology? Can we read it as something other than a debilitating compulsion to repeat?[30]

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[29] Such triplets are characteristic of Miss Havisham's speech. To offer two additional examples, she exhorts Pip to ‘play, play, play!’” (84) and also pleads that he "Love her, love her, love her!" (239). Garrett Stewart has remarked that “the least work in Dickens can have a directionality, a dynamism, a suppressed etymology all its own” (148).

[30] Alex Woloch takes up the subject of description and Miss Havisham in *The One vs. the Many* in terms of the “problematic relationship between narrating protagonist and minor character” (182). He writes that “[t]he novel abounds with caricatured portraits and descriptions of fragmented persons, portraits and descriptions that are motivated by the misaligned character-system as a whole” and that these portraits “help construct the ubiquitous visual norm that emphasizes human exteriority (as configured in an asymmetric narrative field” in terms of fragmentation” (183). Ultimately, in Woloch’s account of *Great Expectations*, both description and Miss Havisham as nothing more than the “projective ‘embodiments’ of Pip’s fancy” (207). Nicola Bradbury echoes this account of Dickens’s novels, both in her emphasis on the protagonist’s psychology and on the unity of the narrative. She writes of *Dombey and Son* that “[t]he narrative union between characters corresponds in plot terms to the psychological drama creating integrity within the individual. This momentary and still imperfect apprehension of wholeness comes with a sense of relief, rather than triumph, recognition rather than new perception. It is the conclusion of a work in which imaginative unity contends throughout with disjunctive or dialogic tactics: where the reader’s textual experience mirrors the protagonist’s psychological processes” (160).

A number of recent critics have begun to question the relationship between the novel and teleology, that is, an understanding of narrative or of plot that is based on demonstrable action and progress, both of which are social and political constructs. Anne-Lise François, in *Open Secrets*, for example, "contests the normative bias in favor of the demonstrable, dramatic development and realization of human powers characteristic of, but not limited to, the capitalist investment in value and work and the Enlightenment allegiance to rationalism and unbounded progress" (xvi). Against Enlightenment Rationalism or an aestheticism that relies on fulfilled desire (however briefly glimpsed), François reads moments of "reticent assertion," "nonappropriative contentment" "recessive action" and the "open secret of fulfilled experience." François cleaves apart narrative temporality with the concept of *enough* – something that is equally important to Dickens in *Great Expectations*: "'Its other name was Satis; which is Greek, or Latin, or Hebrew, or all three - or all one to me - for enough.' 'Enough House,' said I; 'that's a curious name, miss.' 'Yes,' she replied; but it meant more than it said. It meant, when it was given, that whoever had this house, could want nothing else. They must have been easily satisfied in those days, I should think'" (56). Estella's comment here is piercing, signaling, as it does, the inconceivability of satiation in the realm of the *bildungsroman* or the nineteenth-century novel. Significantly, the concept of "enough" defies both the narrative necessity for change or transformation, as it rescues repetition from its negative Freudian associations. Indeed, Brooks reading of Miss Havisham's actions as repetitions is too quick to fit them into a logic of beginnings and endings, a narrative logic.[31] Dickens openly criticizes such a move, as Pip tries to fit his experience into a fairytale narrative: “She had adopted Estella, she had as good as adopted me, and it could not fail to be her intention to bring us together. She reserved it for me to restore the desolate house, admit the sunshine into the dark rooms, set the clocks a going and the cold hearths a blazing, tear down the cobwebs, destroy the vermin - in short, do all the shining deeds of the young Knight of romance, and marry the Princess”(231); a fantasy that seems unlikely even before the true nature of Pip's expectations is revealed. As Pip's fantasy reminds us, beginnings and endings are here beside the point. Miss Havisham is not a figure *out of time* but one so deeply *within* it that it no longer holds meaning for her. As she tells Pip, "I know nothing of the days of the week; I know nothing of weeks of the year" (62).

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[31] For a fascinating re-contextualization of character, description, and repetition in Dickens, see Athena Vrettos's "Defining Habits." Vrettos contends that "[b]y situating Dickens within a wider historical context, we can see how his fiction contributed to an ongoing

Against the chrononormativity of narrative theory, founded as it is upon the stanchions of marriage and death, Miss Havisham’s queer circuit seems decidedly unnatural.[32] To borrow from

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philosophical debate about the social and psychological effects of habit (broadly defined here as patterns of repetitive behavior), and how this very mode of characterization – particular in his most eccentric characters – confronted the tensions between individuality and mechanization that came to be at the center of this debate” (401). Vrettos article is particularly interesting in its finessing of the line between habit as inducing “a static form of development” or as a means of “conserving energy for more difficult or novel tasks” (400). However, what Vrettos explores under the umbrella of characterization, I would argue is actually a formal operation – and one that, in the terms of Victorian psychological debates – relied on an understanding of form as a finite economy of forces to be conserved or expended.

[32] Miss Havisham’s ghostly nature contributes to this sense of un-timeliness. In her study of the figure of the ghost in Victorian literature, Jennifer Bann notes a distinct shift in the representation of ghosts that comes in the period of spiritualism’s rise in the 1850s and the height

Rachel Blau DuPlessis, this is not simply what happens “beyond the ending” but more importantly a novel mode in which progress means destruction. Or, more accurately, a novel mode in which the temporality of "Enough" powerfully takes hold, opening up a realm between narration and description, or between forward-moving progress, and the idea of an interruption, an excess, or a superfluity – a time/space of non-teleological prose. The non-teleological lingering, waiting, lying by of Dickens's dynamic stasis evokes what Rei Terada has theorized as the experience of the phenomenophile. In *Looking Away: Phenomenality and Dissatisfaction, Kant to Adorno*, Terada slows down the phenomenological encounter of appearances to capture the ephemeral and fleeting "perceptual experiences … that seem below or marginal to normal appearance" (4). Within the world of the Kantian *Critique of Reason,* these fleeting perceptual experiences, the "cultivation" of which Terada terms "phenomenophilia,” register a moment of subjective, private, non-coercive, resistance to the otherwise tacit social pressure to accept the world 'as is', or to endorse the given, the factual. Terada situates her intervention within the larger problem of the conflation of fact and value and the attendant difficulty of determining

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of its popularity in the latter part of the century (664). She argues that when the “limited dead, ” or the ghosts appearing before the rise of spiritualism, “walked, it was not to deny death’s role as agency’s ultimate terminus, but to reaffirm it. For Marley, and potentially for Scrooge, death represents not transformation but limitation, and ghosts not agency’s continuation but an emphatic demonstration of its temporality” (664). In contrast, “[i]n the supernatural fiction of the later nineteenth century, death began to bring freedom: shackles, silence, and regret were cast aside, and ghosts became active figures empowered rather than constrained by their deaths” (664). No longer “constrained” by the ending, the depiction of Miss Havisham’s “queer circuit” becomes all the more active when read in relation to Bann’s argument.

"what it means to 'value' facts (14). In other words, "the various sense of 'value are also, as a consequence of the fact/value conflation, secondarily conflated. The more you conflate fact and value, the more you're going to *count* identifying the bare existence of something *as* endorsing it" (14). Hence the importance of appearance and illusion to her argument. To recognize the appearance of something is in fact a self-conscious mode of object perception that delays the acceptance of the object as fact (or, conversely, to dismiss it as illusion). That object perception can be self-conscious, and not an immediate acquiescence to fact or to acceptance, suggests that there is room for dissatisfaction, non-declaration, and potentially liberating effects in a society in which "the asymmetrical resistance to negative, but not positive, feelings about givens is tendentiously normative" (17). Dissatisfaction, or the refusal (however delicate) to accept or endorse the world 'as is' is figured as an isolating paranoia, a skepticism to which one has no right. However, those 'phenomenophiles' who chase transient perceptual phenomena, lingering in the "mental reservation" implied by attention to appearance as such, do not transgress against the fact/value/satisfaction triad but rather "barely registers as refusal; difference is the real issue" (32). By replacing each object precisely where she placed it, Miss Havisham does not so much repeat the events of her wedding day but refuse to bring them to an end. Thus, each description opens up room for dissatisfaction, a delicate refusal. Even her actions are described using the gerund, avoid any demarcation of the beginning of one action and the end of a next but stretching out the moment before she must either recognize or conform to her betrayal and heartbreak as fact. Indeed, even when she does meet her 'end', nothing seems to have changed: "Though every vestige of her dress was burnt, as they told me, she still had something of her old ghastly bridal appearance; for, they had covered her with a white sheet loosely overlying that, the phantom air of something that had been and was changed, was still upon her" (402).

Miss Havisham's queer circuit, like the many other examples of dynamic stasis in *Great Expectations*, offer a powerful alternative to a chrononormative narrative theory by opening up a subtle time/space, most often through the novel's descriptions, that resists teleology and the yoke of "the ending." Indeed, Dickens quietly emphasizes this image of dynamic stasis by pairing each side with the antinomy of the sea wind.[33] The dynamic stasis of Miss Havisham's queer circuit, set to the rhythm of "Old Clem," "was so subdued, even when there were three of us, that it made less noise in the grim old house than the lightest breath of wind" (Dickens 96). Satis House is at once unchanging, unmoved, static, and a site of struggle and intense emotion. "To be sure, it was a deserted place, down to the pigeon-house in the brewery-yard, which had been blown crooked on its pole by some high wind, and would have made the pigeons think themselves at sea, if there had been any pigeons there to be rocked by it" (Dickens 63). If, as I argue in the next chapter, James offers us the image of a cloud for novel form, Dickens offers the wind as a way to capture dynamic stasis.

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[33] These images crop up throughout, including: The brewery buildings had a little lane of communication with it; and the wooden gates of that lane stood open, and all the brewery beyond, stood open, away to the high enclosing wall' and all was empty and disused. The cold wind seemed to blow colder there, then outside the gate; and it made a shrill noise in howling in and out at the open sides of the brewery, like the noise of wind in the rigging of a ship at sea"(55).

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CHAPTER THREE

FORMAL ARRANGEMENTS: NOVEL FORM AND THE FAMILY IN *WUTHERING HEIGHTS* AND *THE GOLDEN BOWL*

Every ten years of the nineteenth century, enumerators charged with conducting the Census sought not only to count the population but also to categorize it. Much of the difficulty faced by the Census enumerators arose from the obligation of imposing pre-determined forms onto a naturally unwieldy population. No list of occupations and sub-categories, however exhaustive, could contain the range of possible responses from the surveyed population. The 1901 Census laments that "the satisfactory definition of what constitutes a house, has, however, baffled successive generations of Census authorities" (37). Where the previous censuses employed "persons" and "families," both terms proved unsatisfactory in accounting for the age, sex, and occupations of the number of persons inhabiting a given "house." The 1891 Census defines a house as "all the space within the external and party walls of a building" but makes an exception for tenements, based on the number of rooms. The 1851 report, by contrast, carefully specifies the household:

> The first, most intimate, and perhaps most important community is the FAMILY, not considered as the children of one parent, but as the persons under one head; who is the occupier of the house, the householder, master, husband, or father; while the other members of the family are the wife, children, servants, relatives, visitors, and persons constantly or accidentally in the house. The head of the family supports and rules the family, - occupies the house. 'Family,' in the sense which it has acquired in England, may be considered the social unit of which

> parishes, towns, counties, and the nation are composed. (1851 Census xxiv)

While the family continued to be an important social unity, its particular composition repeatedly confounded any attempts to give it a singular, definitive form. What nevertheless remained consistent across these families was a hierarchical structure that placed power in the male head of household. Karen Chase and Michael Levenson explain that in the 1851 Census, a "picture of the household as a social pyramid – a complex of relations, by no means all biological, that receive their coherence only from the form-giving power of 'householder, master, husband, or father' – is not merely a concise sketch of patriarchal domesticity; it is also a rule of methodology" (4). Whether they were called families or houses, the census sought less to represent or reflect the arrangement of the population than to impose form upon it, to create what Chase and Levenson call a "countable community" (4). As older social forms failed to accommodate changes wrought by a century of political, economic, and social change, the Victorians sought new ways to regulate and order all aspects of their daily lives. The culture of paternalism expanded the definition of the family to include relationships between England and its colonies, a factory owner and his employees, or the relationship between state and religious authorities and their communities. Any number of legal reforms and challenges, ranging from Lord Lyndhurst's Act (1835), which made marriages of affinity and consanguinity absolutely void, to the Infant Custody Act (1839), the Matrimonial Causes Act (1857), the Married Women's Property Acts (1870, 1882, 1893), or the Deceased Wife's Sisters Act (1907), which reversed the previous prohibition against a man's marrying the sister of his deceased wife, bear witness to a desire to better order and arrange people into families.[34]

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[34] For more on the family in nineteenth-century Britain, see Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall's seminal *Family Fortunes*. See also: Steven Mintz, *Prison of Expectations*;

Where Chapter Two laid the foundation for thinking about the novel's ability to accommodate multiple orders and temporalities and the social stakes of doing so, this chapter turns more explicitly to the concept of collecting. Reading the many arrangements and rearrangements of the form of the family in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and Henry James's *The Golden Bowl,* I argue that nineteenth-century novels offer far more inventive images of what the family looks like than novel theory, which has focused considerable attention on the teleological propulsion of the marriage plot, can recognize. Surprisingly, perhaps, Brontë and James share an interest in depicting women who structure their lives around two husbands. Not only do we find the well-known Catherine-Heathcliff-Edgar trio, but also, in *The Golden Bowl*, James 'couples' Charlotte, the Prince, and Adam Verver, *and* offers the more unusual combination of Maggie, the Prince, and Adam Verver. And yet, heterosexual marriage has been understood in both instances as the mechanism for formal closure and formal stability, while social forms like adultery, along with any number of other less easily labeled social forms, are deemed illicit and formally unstable. In *Wuthering Heights*, scholars have traditionally read the marriage of Little Cathy and Hareton as a means of restoring order to a novel that poses considerable problems for paradigms that value marriage as a legal and social relationship between two people. In *The Golden Bowl*, the Prince's "return" to Maggie, accompanied by the "exile" of her father and Charlotte to American City, has been read as a similar return to traditional social forms. These are not unusual conclusions: within the tradition of narrative theory and studies of the novel, marriage and inheritance provide two of the most common means of structuring novel form. While any number of critics has questioned the gender politics

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Anthony Wohl, ed. *Victorian Family;* Mary Jean Corbett, *Family Likenesses*; Leila Silvana May, *Disorderly Sisters*; and Eleanor Gordon and Gwyneth Nair, *Public Lives*.

of these narrative resolutions, none has thought to question the reliance of our theories of novel form on this model.[35]

Critics have recently begun to re-examine the relationship between the novel and the social that move beyond an understanding of the aesthetic as a 'mirror,' passively reflecting its world, to an active force in shaping and disciplining its readers, to a more recent consideration of the ways in which the novel both draws from, critiques, and contributes to the social. Many of the most compelling contributions to this trend have revitalized questions about the novel's agency by probing the mechanisms of its organization of human life into print. Most importantly, the work by these critics and others asks us to recalibrate our narratives of cause and effect by overturning the *apriori* nature of some of the most entrenched social and aesthetic forms. Perhaps the best known of these, Alex Woloch's *The One vs. the Many*, argues for the "social dimension [of] narrative form as such" through readings of character space and the distribution of attention (17). Michael Lucey, in *The Misfit of the Family,* offers a perceptive new account of Balzac's sociological interest in sexual forms, arguing that the author of *La Comédie humaine* recognizes the multiplicity of family forms, enabled by the understanding that the vision of the heteronormative family is a construct, equally dependent upon such institutions as the Code Civil as it is on the practices of any individual family. Lucey's Balzac is particularly adept at demonstrating that “the numerous ways of conceiving of the interests embedded in family structures might be taken as making finally untenable a reading of *any* family structure as presocial, natural, human, disinterested” (19). To take another recent example, Jacob Jewusiak argues against readings of social marginalization and the novel that tend to prioritize spatial concerns. In response, Jewusiak offers the “old man” in readings of Charles Dickens as an emblem for “Dickens’s attempt to represent modernity and the temporal limitations of his realism” (195). And, Emily Steinlight has recently argued that “the prevailing critical models for reading Victorian fiction do not address – indeed, are designed not to address – the political questions raised by this notion of an excess of human life” – of the supernumerary – and instead considers the formal resonance between the domestic and the socio-economic spheres arguing that “the domestic economies of Dickens’s novels are determined by the same logic of equilibrium that governs the human population at large” (231).[36]

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[35] Of particular importance here is Nancy Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction*. Like Armstrong, I argue for the political force and centrality of "domestic" novels. However, to take the example of the Brontës, where Armstrong reads acts of displacement, containment and flattening, in line with a project of cultural hegemony that humanized and naturalized institutional power, I argue that Emily Brontë and Henry James offer striking alternatives to this image of the middle class family.

In concert with these critics, I argue that we can productively read the relationship between the social and the political and the literary or the aesthetic by investigating the formal principles that arrange or organize both. In what follows, I read the multiple forms of the family in *Wuthering Heights* and *The Golden Bowl*, and suggest that we begin to think of the novel as an ongoing aesthetic experiment. As Henry James reminds us in "The Future of the Novel,” the relationship between fiction and society *is reciprocal*, capable of both receiving *and* bestowing form:

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[36] See also Barry McCrea, *In the Company of Strangers* and Talia Schaffer, “Refamiliarizing Ourselves with Victorian Marriage,” or her current project, *Familiar Marriage: Rereading the Victorian Marriage Plot.*

> The future of fiction is intimately bound up with the future of the society that produces and consumes it. A community addicted to reflection and fond of ideas will try experiments with the 'story' that will be left untried in a community devoted to travelling and shooting, to pushing trade and playing football. There are many judges, doubtless, who hold that experiments - queer and uncanny things at best - are not necessary to it, that its face has been, once and for all, turned in one way, and that it has only to go straight before it. If that is what it is actually doing in England and America the main thing to say about its future would appear to be that this future will in truth more and more define itself as negligible. (282)

James's view of the situation echoes many of the familiar Realist maxims without actually employing them. Instead, James points to the radical potential of the novel: its ability to conduct “experiments.” If we are alert to the novel experiments in *Wuthering Heights* and *The Golden Bowl*, we can begin to question the forms of private and public life in the nineteenth century that tend to separate and circumscribe activities and behaviors. Just as *Wuthering Heights* advances a model of formal plasticity through its experiments with the form of the family, *The Golden Bowl* rearranges the form of the family in relation to prominent debates that sought to give solid form to ideologies like separate spheres, the dividing line between the public and the private, or the nature of work itself.

The households in *Wuthering Heights* and *The Golden Bowl* would pose a considerable challenge to even the most intrepid Census official. Both novels offer an elegant minimalism in plot and setting: *Wuthering Heights* follows two families (ten characters) as they move between the Thrushcross Grange and the Heights, and *The Golden Bowl* recounts the affairs of three families (seven characters) and their placement across two principal residences, Portland Place and Eaton Square. Where the Census turned to the boundaries provided by walls and doors to give form to families, both Brontë and James spread families across several different houses. Thus, all of the female characters in *Wuthering Heights* (Nelly Dean, Catherine, Little Cathy, and Isabella Linton) move back and forth between the Heights and the Grange, adopting a new role with each change of place. For example, Nelly Dean initially behaves like a sibling to Catherine and Heathcliff, later works as a servant at the Heights, acts as a mother to Little Cathy at the Grange, and finally serves as a housekeeper, nurse, and companion to Lockwood during his tenancy. At the beginning of *The Golden Bowl*, Adam Verver and his daughter, Maggie, live together at Eaton Square; following her marriage, Maggie and the Italian Prince Amerigo take up residence at Portland Place; Maggie's childhood friend and Amerigo's lover, Charlotte Stant, initially stays at Cadogan Place (home to the Assinghams) before eventually moving to Eaton Square (after her marriage to Adam Verver). The Assinghams, neither of whom is related to the other characters, either by blood or by marriage, are as much a part of the family as Charlotte and Amerigo. Indeed, Fanny "had naturally come to be frankly and gaily recognized … as filling in the intimate little circle an office … It was naturally led to her position in the household as she called it, to considerable frequency of presence, to visits, from the good couple, freely repeated and prolonged, and not so much as under form of protest" (*GB* 143). What at times reads like a taboo game of musical chairs is all subject to comment by the Assinghams, whose Abbott and Costello dialogue not only fills in the necessary context but also reveals the extent of Fanny's own involvement in the marriages and infidelities of her friends.

In both novels it quickly becomes clear that the minimal setting belies an insistently plastic understanding of family. Though Maggie Verver is mistress of her own household as wife and mother, her domestic arrangements in *The Golden Bowl* point to a less conventional family life. Fanny informs her husband, the Colonel, that Maggie maintains a considerable wardrobe at her father's house and that "she has her room in his house very much as she had it before she was married and just as the boy has quite a second nursery there" (301). Bob Assingham ventriloquizes the reader's impression that the situation "is rather rum there" (301). Maggie and her child are not only "spread" across two houses, but their simultaneous residence also undermines Charlotte's control over her "own home," so much so that "should [she] wish a friend or two to stay with her, she really would be scare able to put them up" (301). One can readily imagine the difficulties a census enumerator might face in an attempt to trace the relationships between father, daughter, and grandson, particularly without the convenient explanation of a deceased husband – not to mention the existence of a living Mrs. Verver.

In *Wuthering Heights*, the relationships between characters are equally "rum" – a word which clearly suits Lockwood's impression of the situation at the Heights. Lockwood even steps into the role of census enumerator, as he puzzles over the relationships between the characters he meets at the Heights. However, Lockwood's mistakes work to produce order amid chaos. According to Kent Puckett, mistakes "make visible the space between what is and isn't done, [produce] a range of coherence effects within the novel at the related levels of character, plot, and narration" (4). In *Wuthering Heights*, Lockwood's woefully inaccurate misreadings stem from his desire to make the individuals he encounters at the Heights cohere in a specific understanding of the form of the family – a desire that intersects with national campaigns like the Census.

II. Novel Forms: *Wuthering Heights*

Lockwood's first efforts to arrange the odd assortment of characters into meaningful social relations begin with the first lines of the novel. We are introduced to his "landlord," a term that establishes a fairly restrictive social relationship, primarily dictated by commercial interest, before we learn that his landlord is also his "solitary neighbour" (Brontë 3). Where landlord invokes a rigidly structured power dynamic, neighbor instead suggests community and hospitality. Despite Lockwood's praise of the moors as a "perfect misanthropist's heaven," he aligns himself with Heathcliff in a contradictory gesture: "Mr Heathcliff and I are such a suitable pair to divide the desolation between us" (3). The two are acting together separately, a suitable pair that can only divide rather than share what they hold in common. During his initial visit to the Heights and his ghostly sleepover, Lockwood mistakenly identifies a spectrum of deceased, living, and fictitious persons. A repeat reader of the novel knows that the 'family' consists of Heathcliff, his nephew by adoption, Hareton, his niece (both by marriage and adoption), who is also his daughter-in-law, little Cathy, and the current servants, Joseph and Zillah. Lockwood, on the other hand, identifies and misidentifies Catherine as "Mrs. Heathcliff," an "amiable hostess," a potential love interest ("I must beware how I cause her to regret her choice!"), Heathcliff's wife, Hareton's wife, Heathcliff's daughter-in-law, and a widow (3, 10, 11). As for Hareton, he “began to doubt whether he were a servant or not” before deciding that Hareton must be Heathcliff’s son and Cathy’s husband (9). In addition to these mistakes, Lockwood also infers a “mother,” a “stout housewife,” “Catherine Earnshaw-Heathcliff-Linton,” “Hindley,” who in Catherine’s marginalia is only a “detestable substitute” for Catherine’s father, and his wife, Frances Earnshaw, a “chaplain,” “the Reverend Jabes Branderham,” a ghostly child-Catherine, a swarm of “ghosts and goblins,” not to mention the guard dogs he mistakes for pets before transforming them into a “hive,” a “herd of possessed swine,” and a “brood of tigers,” or the “heap of dead rabbits” he imagines to be Cathy’s “favourites” (8-22). Lockwood’s desperate and often humorous attempts to order and arrange the characters at the Heights into recognizable social forms like the family or the married couple seem to suggest that this particular family subverts, resists, or fails to conform. And yet, they also make a powerful case for re-evaluating such forms. To what extent does Lockwood’s failure stem from the failure to recognize order in disorder and unfamiliar or unrecognizable social forms?

Lockwood, like many of his fellow Victorians, gives form to the family in a manner that distinctly recalls middle-class ideologies of separate spheres. Scholarship on the family and on separate spheres ideology in the Victorian period often remains wedded to the same normative or traditional forms as Victorian thinkers. All too often, we deploy an oppositional model, in which variations on the received norm (the middle-class family) are assessed in relation to the rubric provided by the middle-class family.[37] Foucault locates the repression of sexuality and its restriction to the family home in the nineteenth century. At the center of the "Victorian regime" is the "legitimate and procreative couple," which "imposed itself as a model, enforced the norm, safeguarded the truth, and reserved the right to speak while retaining the principle of secrecy" (3). Foucault infuses the family and the couple with a particular power, not simply as subjects and agents in a repressive sexual regime, but as forms. Where the Census organizes the population according to the forms of the family and the household, Foucault organizes Victorian sexuality according to the form of the procreative couple.

In reading for the forms of the family, I argue that we must attend to forms that we do not already recognize. In *Wuthering Heights* and *The Golden Bowl*, it is especially tempting to enlist familiar forms. The many critics who have drawn on Catherine's famous cry: "Nelly, I am Heathcliff," elevate the couple as a structuring form – thus eclipsing any previously unrecognized social forms and the political work of the 'domestic' novel. Raymond Williams's reading of *Wuthering Heights* structures the novel around two opposing desires: the desire "for" and the "desire in another" (66). Though Williams acknowledges the force and originality of Brontë's novel – it is a "novel without a history: a novel without precedents or descendants" – the originality of his reading cannot move beyond the very same conventional social forms he employs to describe the novel's singularity. Thus, with Catherine's marriage to Edgar Linton, "so great a breach is made in all necessary relationships that only in another generation, and then through time, is any effective fabric restored" (Williams 67). Here again, the form of the novel reaches a final resolution, and this formal resolution relies on the structuring logic of a familiar social form, the couple.[38]

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[37] It is important to note that scholarship on the middle-class family often account for its exclusive focus on the middle class in relation to its phenomenal rise and political and economic centrality, all of which are indeed compelling explanations. However, accounts of working-class, aristocratic, or upper-class families must also complement this focus on the middle-class family, so that our readings of the family in Victorian fiction are not determined by it. Len Platt's *Aristocracies of Fiction* is one example of the relatively few works that treat the British aristocracy and the upper classes.

However, I would argue that what *Wuthering Heights* offers is the possibility of social relationships that do not depend upon predetermined or restricted roles by calling attention to their multiplicity. The marriages and inheritances that are central to the plot of the Victorian novel are indeed prominent in *Wuthering Heights*. The novel highlights the markers of a traditional genealogy, and Lockwood is eventually able (with Nelly Dean's help) to piece together the rhizomatic branches of the family tree. Catherine Earnshaw, descended from a line of Earnshaws dating back at least to 1500, the date inscribed "among a wilderness of crumbling griffins and shameless little boys" above the principal entry to the Heights (Brontë 4). This family line continues over the course of the novel, which introduces three more generations. Mr. and Mrs. Earnshaw are survived by Hindley Earnshaw, Catherine Earnshaw, and their adoptive son, Heathcliff. Upon their death, Hindley marries Frances, who gives birth to their son, Hareton Earnshaw. Catherine Earnshaw marries Edgar Linton and gives birth to their daughter, a second Catherine Linton. Heathcliff marries Isabella Linton, who gives birth to Linton Heathcliff, who will later marry Catherine Linton. Following the deaths of Edgar Linton, Linton Heathcliff, Isabella Heathcliff, Catherine Linton, and Heathcliff, Catherine Heathcliff will marry Hareton Earnshaw, and the Earnshaws will once more take possession of the Heights. The full scope of these dizzying arrangements takes the form of childish graffiti: "The ledge, where I placed my candle, had a few mildewed books piled up in one corner; and it was covered with writing scratched on the paint. This writing, however, was nothing but a name repeated in all kinds of characters, large and small – Catherine Earnshaw, here and there varied to Catherine Heathcliff, and then to Catherine Linton" (Brontë 16). These inscriptions are akin to a generational palindrome; read from left to right, we find the first Catherine's story, and from right to left we read that of the second Catherine. As Lockwood remarks when he awakens from his nightmare,

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[38] For additional examples of readings that implicitly determine the form of the novel according to the logic of familiar social forms, see: Leo Bersani, *A Future for Astyanax*, David Cecil, *Victorian Novelists*, Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, Q.D. Leavis, *Lectures in America*, Anita Levy, *Other Women*, Terry Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Mad Woman in the Attic,* William R. Goetz, "Genealogy and Incest in *Wuthering Heights*," Evelyn Hinz, "Hierogamy versus Wedlock," Matthew Kaiser, *The World in Play,* Sharon Marcus, *Between Women*, Leila Silvana May, *Disorderly Sisters*, J. Hillis Miller, "*Wuthering Heights*: Repetition and the Uncanny," Eric Solomon, "The Incest Theme in Wuthering Heights," and John Allen Stevenson, "'Heathcliff is Me!': Wuthering Heights and the Problem of Likeness."

"the air swarmed with Catherines" and the novel itself can be describe as a swarm of Lintons, Heathcliffs, and Catherines.[39]

Brontë reminds us that social forms like the couple or the family are themselves constructions that arrange social relations and explores such arrangements in "a situation so completely removed from the stir of society" (3). This isolation, praised by a naïve Lockwood, is not only a "perfect misanthropist's heaven" but also a perfect setting for a controlled experiment. Formally, the novel's juxtapositions call attention to these experiments, which either deconstruct or so overwhelm social forms as to open up new possibilities. The initial juxtaposition of the Lintons and the Earnshaws gestures to one form such an experiment could take, as it traces the fates, à la Zola's Rougon-Macquart, of the heteronormative, nuclear, Linton family (the control group) and the Earnshaws, who not only adopt an orphaned child but whose servants also hold an intimate place in the family (the experimental group). However, the novel rejects the form of a binary experiment to instead explore a multiplicity of possibilities, through their frequent juxtaposition. Curiously, the novel describes the 'traditional', 'civilized' Linton family, only to quickly dispense with it. Heathcliff highlights the juxtaposition of the two families as he details his adventures at Thrushcross Grange, where they go to see "whether the Lintons passed their Sunday evenings standing shivering in corners, while their father and mother sat eating and drinking, singing and laughing, and burning their eyes out before the fire" (38). Peeping into the Linton's elegant drawing-room, Heathcliff and Catherine see that "Edgar and his sister had it entirely to themselves; shouldn't they be happy? We should have thought ourselves in heaven! … Isabella … lay screaming at the farther end of the room … Edgar stood on the hearth weeping silently, and in the middle of the table sat a little dog … which … they had nearly pulled in two between them" (38). Instead of a civilized family passing an evening reading or listening to music together, the Linton parents are absent and their children are abandoned to their own wicked games (39).

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[39] Although *Wuthering Heights* was not serialized, the image of the novel as swarming with what can be described as a *series* of Lintons, Heathcliffs, and Catherines is provocative. This understanding of seriality as a formal concept, rather than a principle of narrative teleology or print publication, draws on Umberto Eco's *The Limits of Interpretation*. Eco's understanding of the series as a form that can accommodate both "repetition and innovation" through a principle of "variability" accords with my own understanding of *formal plasticity* as a series of arrangements and rearrangements of the form of the family in both Brontë and James. As Eco explains, "what is of interest is not so much the single variations as 'variability' as a formal principle, the fact that one can make variations to infinity. Variability to infinity has all the characteristics of repetition, and very little of innovation. But it is the 'infinity of the process that gives a new sense to the device of variation. What must be enjoyed … is the fact that a series of possible variations is potentially infinite" (96). This understanding of the series both as a process and one that is potentially infinite further supports my own argument for reading the novel outside of a framework of narrative teleology where the 'final arrangement' is also the ultimate and determinant one.

At the Heights, the novel initially juxtaposes Nelly with Heathcliff, both of whom wuther between adopted children and servants. When Nelly begins to recount the history of the two families to Lockwood, she is sure to clearly situate her family within the branches of the Earnshaw family tree. "I was almost always at Wuthering Heights because my mother had nursed Mr. Hindley Earnshaw, that was Hareton's father, and I got used to playing with the children" (28). In addition to being a bosom sister to Hindley, Nelly also seems to have been adopted by the Earnshaws – a suspicion that is confirmed by her use of pronouns in the passage. As Mr. Earnshaw prepares to leave, Nelly explains that "he turned to Hindley; and Cathy, and *me* – for I sat eating my porridge with *them* … He did not forget me, for he had a kind heart. He promised to bring *me* a pocketful of apples and pears, and then he kissed *his children* good-bye" (29 emphasis mine). Nelly tells Lockwood that "it seemed a long while to *us* all" and relates their eager anticipation of Mr. Earnshaw's return: "there were no signs of his coming, however, and at last *the children* got tired of running down to the gate to look" (29 emphasis mine). In this short passage, Nelly moves between the *us* (Hindley, Catherine, and herself) *as siblings* and the *them* (the Earnshaw children and the family servant, Nelly). This passage opens directly onto the introduction of Heathcliff into the family, a character who, like Nelly, will also vacillate between the *us* and the *them*.

Nelly initially classes Heathcliff as an "it" and Mrs. Earnshaw "was ready to fling it out of doors" (29). Nevertheless, Mr. Earnshaw introduces Heathcliff into the house, creating the necessity for a new arrangement. Where Nelly was "frightened" and considered part of the family moments before, she quickly returns to her status as servant, displaced by Heathcliff, when "Mr. Earnshaw told me [Nelly] to wash it [Heathcliff], and give it clean things, and to let it sleep with the children" (30). Such rearrangements continue in quick succession. The children and Nelly (us) reject Heathcliff (it); Nelly is "sent out of the house" for her "cowardice and inhumanity," a punishment not meted out to the equally guilty Earnshaw children (them); Nelly, who has her own family name (Dean) returns to find that "they had christened him 'Heathcliff'; it was the name of a son who had died in childhood, and it has served him ever since, both for Christian and surname," a christening that at once confirms Heathcliff's place within the family as it underlines his incomplete adoption by them (Mr. Earnshaw calls Heathcliff "the poor, fatherless child") (30). Nelly and Hindley come to "hate" Heathcliff – Hindley "saw Heathcliff as a usurper of his parent's affections and privileges" – while "Miss Cathy and he were now very thick," once again rearranging the *us* and the *them* (31). At this point, Nelly immediately passes from sibling to mother, "when the children fell ill of the measles and I had to tend them, and take on the cares of a woman at once" (31). This rapid succession of rearrangements continues over the course of the novel, as Heathcliff becomes a servant under Hindley Earnshaw's reign at the Heights, and ultimately master of both the Heights and the Grange (and so too of his former sibling/mother, Nelly) and Nelly takes on the role of servant (to Catherine, Hindley, and Heathcliff), nanny and mother to Hareton and little Cathy (her almost nephew and niece), and a nurse-companion to Lockwood.

In this chapter, I offer a perspective on the novel in which the Catherine-Heathcliff couple does not serve as a focal point. Focusing on doubles, as a familiar literary form, ultimately serves, like the focus on the heterosexual couple as a social form, to mask other compelling and unexplored literary and social forms. Despite the thematic and critical emphasis on couples and doubles, *Wuthering Heights* offers a series of less familiar – and often uncomfortable social forms. Most notable among these is the Catherine-Heathcliff-Edgar trio. Yet I argue that this trio, as an alternative social arrangement, is not simply another one of the familiar triangles of Girard or Freud. Instead, when read as one arrangement within a series of plastic arrangements, the trio becomes a social form that allows Catherine to be with both Heathcliff *and* Edgar. Significantly, Catherine's understanding of this arrangement sidesteps social taboos like incest as it redefines marriage. As a young Catherine shares her doubts about her decision to marry Edgar with Nelly, she explains that the obstacle is in her head and her heart, or "in whichever place the soul lives" (62). Despite its isolation, external social pressures come to bear on the families in *Wuthering Heights*, and Catherine understands that "it would degrade [her] to marry Heathcliff now" whereas Edgar "will be rich" and Catherine "shall like to be the greatest woman of the neighborhood" (61-63). Yet Catherine does not frame her relationship with Heathcliff in romantic terms. Moreover, she refuses to understand marriage as an impediment to her continued relationship to Heathcliff: "'He quite deserted! we separated!' … I shouldn't be Mrs. Linton were such a price demanded! He'll be as much to me as he has been all his lifetime" (64). Most importantly, Catherine's famous declaration, "Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff" suggests a chiasmic form of subjectivity that cannot easily be accounted for within the traditional social forms of marriage or family.

Standing before the graves of the ill-fated lovers, Lockwood reflects on the act of closure.

"I lingered round them, under that benign sky; watched the moths fluttering among the heath and hare-bells; listened to the soft wind breathing through the grass; and wondered how any one could ever imagine unquiet slumbers for the sleepers in that quiet earth" (Brontë 258). Unsatisfied with Nelly's proposed ending (marital bliss), Lockwood is seemingly haunted by the absent presence of Catherine and Heathcliff. Even at the gravesite, where he cannot imagine "unquiet slumbers" for the trio, Lockwood encounters signs of unrest. The "moths fluttering" and the "soft wind breathing through the grass" create images of wavering or movement that undermine the peaceful tranquility of eternal slumber. This doubly final image reminds us that the novel – by definition – wuthers. Catherine proves to be more creative than many of her critics; she refuses the monogamy we assume she desires and instead opts for the "romanticized." Brontë's novel doesn't refuse to choose between the forms available to it but instead offers a more plastic conception of family, swarming with Catherines, and experiments with the arrangements and rearrangement of its forms.

III. Re-forming the Social in *The Golden Bowl*

Unlike *Wuthering Heights*, explicit references to experimental arrangements span *The Golden Bowl* and infuse the speech of all six principal characters. More importantly, these arrangements directly relate to the form of the family. Through free indirect speech, the narrator shares Maggie's thoughts on her relationship to her father and underlines the singularity of her family arrangement: "they liked to think they had given their life this unusual extension and this liberal form, which many families, many couples, and still many more pairs of couples, wouldn't have found workable" (*GB* 329). This form, composed of couples and pairs of couples, is notably a "workable" form. What's more, it is "as people in London said, a special 'form' – which was very well so long as the form was kept only for the outside world and was made no more of among themselves than the pretty mould of an iced pudding or something of that sort, into which, to help yourself, you didn't hesitate to break with the spoon" (*GB* 345). This definition of form – and more precisely the form of the family – emphasizes its composite nature (made up of couples and pairs of couples) as it gestures towards the plasticity of form in a particularly elegant metaphor. Form here is something that you don't "hesitate to break" and which, as a "liberal" form, maintains allowances for re-composition. That the form is "workable" and "kept for the outside world" returns explicitly to the idea that the form of the family in *The Golden Bowl* is "produced and preserved" by a series of arrangements.

The characters explicitly refer to this work – of producing and preserving appearances – as making arrangements. When Charlotte and Fanny meet at the Ambassador's Ball, Fanny is surprised to see Charlotte without the Prince – with no sign of either Maggie or her father. After questioning the propriety of leaving one's husband at home, Fanny receives a lesson in making arrangements from Charlotte. "'The fact of our distinct establishments … 'makes [Maggie] really see more of [her father] than when they had the same house … she's always arranging for it … and the result of our separate households is really, for them, more contact and more intimacy. To-night for instance has been particularly an arrangement" (*GB* 215). Responding to the need of the Verver father and daughter to be alone, Fanny asks Charlotte whether she is "'so placed that you have to arrange?' 'Certainly I have to arrange.' 'And the Prince also – if the effect for him is the same?' 'Really I think not less'" (215). What all of these arrangements enable is an organization of the family centered around multiple couples and multiple houses.

> When she went home with Charlotte … she regularly found that Amerigo had either come to sit with his father-in-law in the absence of the ladies or to make on his side precisely some such display of the easy working of the family life as would represent the equivalent of her excursions with Charlotte … It divided them again, that was true, this particular turn of the tide – cut them up afresh into pairs and parties; quite as if a sense for the equilibrium was what, between them all, had most power of insistence. (353)

Instead of the traditionally hierarchical Victorian family, in which duties, responsibilities, authority, and spheres are divided up by gender, this form of the family draws its strength from its combination of couples.

The orchestration of these arrangements links social forms to aesthetic forms through the trope of collecting. The activity of collecting occurs on two parallel planes: order and innovation. In the case of *The Golden Bowl*, the Verver 'family', as a kind of collection, maintains coherence and keeps up appearances as it accommodates innovations in *both* the social and domestic spheres, welcoming new family members with their unique contributions. Whereas Adam Verver collects art, Fanny Assingham curates the social. This combination of matchmaking and collecting works to reconcile coherence with innovation and offers a model of form as compelling for the social as for the aesthetic.

Though her social position differs prominently from Adam Verver's, Fanny too is described as "bold and original" in her matchmaking. Fanny's originality in bringing about social arrangements is hailed in terms that distinctly recall the rhetoric of expedition and discovery we find in Adam Verver's own transformation from industrialist to aficionado and collector.

> There reigned among the younger friends of this couple a legend, almost too venerable for historical criticism, that the marriage itself, the happiest of its class, dated from the far twilight of the age, a primitive period when such things – such things as American girls accepted as 'good enough' – hadn't begun to be; so that the pleasant pair had been, as to the risk taken on either side, bold and original, honourably marked for the evening of life, as discoverers of a kind of hymenal Northwest Passage. (*GB* 50)

This description distances Fanny's "bold and original" match from that of Maggie and the Prince. Rather than an anecdote or gossip, we find a "legend" that is so widely accepted that it is nearly beyond "historical criticism." Further, such a match did not take place in the last twenty or thirty years but in a far twilight of the age, a primitive period" of sexual exploration. With the passage of time, Fanny's marriage and its "risks" have been rendered quaint and the *parvenue* securely seated as social director. Indeed, Fanny "accepted resignedly the laurel of the founder, since she was pretty well the doyenne, above ground, of her transplanted tribe, and since, above all, she had invented combinations, though she hadn't invented Bob's own" (51). James's description of Fanny as the doyenne of such arrangements aestheticizes her 'matchmaking' – the invention of combinations and their arrangement – and juxtaposes them with Adam Verver's collecting.[40] The trope of objectification in the novel further supports the intersection of social and aesthetic forms: the Prince, sees Charlotte as “a cluster of possessions of his own”; he himself is described as a “morceau de musée”; Fanny asks the Prince whether he is conscious “every minute of the perfection of the creature of whom I’ve put you in possession”; and Adam Verver views his grandson “in the way of precious small pieces he had handled nothing so precious as the Principino … whom he could manipulate and dandle … as he couldn’t a correspondingly rare morsel of an earlier pâte tendre" and who cares for “precious vases only less than for precious daughters” (58, 33, 46, 133, 162). These individual objectifications find their counterpart in the image of the family itself as a coach that “lumbered and stuck” as though it were “lacking its full complement of wheels” (341). “Having but three … it had wanted another, and what had Charlotte done from the first but begin to act on the spot, and ever so smoothly and beautifully as a fourth?” (341). As the family integrates new members into its collection, it nevertheless maintains coherence – from one arrangement to another – in such a way that “no visibility of transition showed, no violence of accommodation, in retrospect, emerged” (*GB* 124).

Out of such arrangements emerges a family that prioritizes couples – or pairs of couples – in order to at once maintain ‘appearances’ and satisfy their individual desires. The work of keeping up appearances relies on the kind of ‘humbugging’ long practiced by Maggie and her father. In what must be one of the more amusing of *OED* entries, we read that humbug means “practise humbug upon; to trick and make a jest of; to impose upon, hoax, delude” and we read that the verb takes the local American form: “about: to make less progress than expected, to flounder about, to wallow." Charlotte and Amerigo's infidelity represents only one instance of humbuggism in the novel. Indeed, once Maggie knows of the affair between her husband and her stepmother, she feels that "the difficulties of duplicity had not shrunk while the need of that course had doubled. Humbugging, which she had so practised with her father, had been a comparatively simple matter on the basis of mere doubt" (*GB* 477). This invocation of humbuggism blurs the two meanings: while Maggie certainly practices a kind of duplicity in 'keeping up appearances' to protect her father from learning of his wife's affair, her use of the word to describe her life with her father complicates the picture. As a young widower, Adam Verver and his daughter spent her childhood visiting the "bourgeois back parlours, a trifle ominously grey and grim from their north light," "watering places prevailingly homes of humbug," and collecting, as Maggie puts it: "like a pair of pirates – positively stage pirates, the sort who wink at each other and say 'Ha-ha!' when they come to where their treasure is buried" (182, 34). While the convergence of 'humbug' and collecting leads us to suspect that many of the objects on display in Verver's museum will be less than authentic, this practice of deception also gestures towards a relationship that is far more taboo than the adultery committed by Charlotte and Amerigo.[41]

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[40] Though doyen refers to any leader or superior in a group or society, it is also frequently used to designate the director or head of museums and art academies, like the Royal Academy.

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[41] In Adam Verver's dream to establish an American Museum, we hear echoes of P.T. Barnum's own American Museum. "Deception, hoaxing, humbugging, cheating, these were some of the words Americans commonly associated with Barnum," whose American Museum was a cultural phenomena in the late nineteenth century (Harris 57). Unlike its counterparts in Europe, Barnum's American Museum, or circus, paired artifacts of natural curiosity with elaborate deceptions, which aimed to incite controversy and attract large crowds.

As Maggie grows into an eligible woman – and as her own sexual desires become more pronounced – securing a husband for her becomes an increasing necessity. Though Maggie is wildly attracted to the Prince, his marriage to Maggie is most frequently described as a transaction in which Fanny and Adam are the key parties. After Fanny introduces the Prince to Maggie and her father, it is Adam Verver who obtains the Prince as "a part of his collection … one of the things that can only be got over here" (33). As Maggie tells him, "You're a rarity, an object of beauty, an object of price. You're not perhaps absolutely unique, but you're so curious and eminent that there are very few others like you – you belong to a class about which everything is known. You're what they call a morceau de musée" (33). This emphasis on the 'cost' of the Prince – significantly higher since he comes with an entire room of archives to certify his authenticity – also suggests another motive in finding a husband for Maggie: the desire for an heir.[42] Although Verver may accept imitations in his pursuits as a collector, he certainly will not accept anything less than perfect in an heir. The 'humbug' practiced by Maggie and her father applies equally to their aesthetic pursuits and their domestic relationship. Once married, Maggie realizes that her peculiar relationship to her father may be challenged by the presence of her husband. As she explains to her father: “It was as if you couldn’t be in the market when you were married to me. Or rather as if I kept people off, innocently, by being married to you. Now that I’m married to some one else you’re, as in consequence, married to nobody. Therefore you may be married to anybody, to everybody” (151).[43] Thus Maggie – with Fanny’s help – contrives to marry her father so that he, as she explains to him, can reclaim “’the advantage, the happiness of being just as you were – because I was just as I was – that’s what you miss.’ ‘So that you think,’ her father presently said, ‘that I had better get married in order to be as I was before’” (152). Because Maggie is married to both her father and to Amerigo, her father must marry so that he can be as he was before – married to Maggie. What this confusing domestic arithmetic leads to is Adam Verver’s marriage to his daughter’s childhood friend and his son-in-law’s former lover, an arrangement that, like a good ‘humbug’, has an outward appearance of propriety that conceals the truth.

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[42] Charlotte and Adam Verver never give birth to a child and the novel subtly implies that he may be impotent. Reflecting on the importance of equilibrium in the family arrangement, Maggie "had wondered again if the equilibrium mightn't have been more real, mightn't above all have demanded less strange a study had it only been on the books that Charlotte should give him a Principino of his own" (396). Moreover, a child resulting from incest would be at risk for any number of birth defects. While Verver "cared that a work of art of price should 'look like' the master to whom it might perhaps be deceitfully attributed," he is far more demanding regarding his heir, "whose Italian designation endlessly amused him" (133).

In a crucial turn, Maggie Verver’s childhood friend, Charlotte Stant, is brought to Fawns in order to provide security – to fend off perpetual suitors for Mr. Verver’s hand – following his daughter’s marriage. Charlotte’s presence acts in and of itself in a given setting, which charges the novel’s descriptions of Charlotte with providing more than a vivid image of her character. Indeed, such descriptions capture Charlotte at work. Discussing the arrangement with Adam Verver, Fanny Assingham comments: “’And she had been sent for, on the very face of it, to work right in. All she had to do after all was to be nice to you’ … ‘To you and to every one. She had only to be what she is – and to be it all round. If she's charming, how can she help it? So it was, and so only, that she 'acted' – as the Borgia wine used to act'" (168). Charlotte's "work" does not entail any particular concerted effort or force – attributes generally essential to the definition of work. Indeed, Charlotte simply 'works' in the manner of an element introduced in a chemical experiment; her work consists of 'being' – "she had only to be what she is" – and, like the poison added to the wine, it is not a particular exertion or behavior that she undertakes but rather her mere presence that here constitutes work. That Charlotte "acts" simply by her presence suggests that seemingly static states of being, and not simply actions or progression, equally contribute to the "work" of the novel. In other words, 'is' and 'are' are recovered from the field of mere description and understood equally to be equally as active as verbs like 'embrace', 'departed', 'journeyed', 'married', or 'died'. Rethinking aesthetic activity and work in the novel thus opens a perspective on the activity of shaping, ordering, or arranging by both narrative and non-narrative forms in the novel as work. In the case of *The Golden Bowl*, this approach enables us to consider work as an activity that seeks to preserve or maintain, as well as to produce or create.

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[43] For more on incest in *The Golden Bowl*, see: Joseph A. Boone, “Modernist Maneuverings,” Daniel Brudney, “Knowledge and Silence,” Mary Jean Corbett, *Family Likeness*, and Anat Pick, “Miracles of Arrangement.” Julie Rivkin’s *False Positions* further explores incest in other works by James.

The Golden Bowl not only deconstructs the division between gender and separate spheres, it further rearranges the working world to relocate it in the nursery. In a further alteration to what historically has seemed a fixed form, Charlotte's "worldly work," undertaken with Amerigo, is a matter of both public and private concern. As the narrator explains, "what further propped up the case moreover was that the 'world,' by still another beautiful perversity of their chance, included Portland Place without including anything like the same extent Eaton Square" (261).[44] Just as the family here is no longer restricted by the walls of a single house or the ties of kinship or blood, so too does the idea of separate spheres evade gendering. Because Amerigo and Charlotte undertake the public, social, work of being a 'Prince' or accepting invitations, Adam Verver can play the continually feminized role of the stay-at-home dad. Although Verver is infantilized, this description serves to suggest his ease – the extent to which he is at home in the nursery, rather than a loss of power. While "home was always an ambivalent marker of masculinity" and the "man who withdrew from male conviviality and spent his time at home in the company of women was exposed to the charge of effeminacy," the descriptions of Verver's domesticity do not feminize him (Tosh 108). Thus the family arrangement creates a peculiar variation of the maxim that masculine public work ensures domestic bliss. Maggie and her father "had sat at home in peace, the Principino between them, the complications of life kept down, the bores sifted out, the large ease of the home preserved, because of the way the others held the field and braved the weather" (*GB* 341).[45]

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[44] The assignment of family houses to different spheres seems to run the risk of re-inscribing the fixed, familiar forms I argue the novel sets in motion. However, the narrator is

In his study of *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, John Tosh continually underscores the importance of work to conceptions of masculinity, which equally advocated middle-class values of individualism and social mobility. Though these values emerge in the middle class, which increasingly reconciled manliness and domesticity through

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quick to add: "the latter residence [Eaton Square] did on occasion wake up to the opportunity and, as giving itself a frolic shake, send out a score of invitations" (261).

[45] Charlotte also takes on the 'public' work related to the Verver collections. At the end of the novel, she entertains guests and takes them on a tour of Verver's art collection at Fawns: "Their curiosity might be vague, but their clever hostess was distinct, and she marched them about, sparing them nothing, as if she counted each day on a harvest of half-crowns" (*GB* 536).

Evangelicalism, Tosh notes that “there is an important sense in which manliness transcends class” – which would seemingly legitimize the Prince’s ‘effeminate’ social work (94). The relationship between men and the home underwent a series of changes over the course of the modern period. Though the culture of paternalism established the father as the ultimate authority in the household, his absence and reliance on the female family members and servants worked to undermine his authority, especially given the authority invested in women to oversee the moral and spiritual upbringing on their children. Tosh observes that, in line with the increasing authority of women in the home, “Victorianism became more rigid and formulaic with every decade, and this was certainly true of the middle-class home, where ceremonial diversified and rigidified” (109). Yet Verver’s relationship to his noble grandson hardly fits this model. Following the birth of his grandson, Verver literally retreats to the nursery: “His visit to his grandson, at some hour or other, held its place, in his day, against all interventions, and this without counting his grandson’s visits to him, scarcely less ordered and timed, and the odd bits, as he called them, that they picked up together when they could” (*GB* 140). Although the Principino appears with “much pomp and circumstance” and, like many children in the period, is segregated from the rest of the household, Verver’s time with his grandson is instead rigorously quotidian. Further, while Amerigo does – by arrangement – fit the mold of the ‘absent father’, Adam Verver is quite the opposite of the ‘domestic tyrant,’ the archetypical Victorian alternative.

Ultimately, Verver spends time with his grandson and his daughter not as a grandfather but rather as a father and a husband. James highlights the innovation in their arrangement: “It was of course an old story and a familiar idea that a beautiful baby could take its place as a new link between a wife and a husband, but Maggie and her father had, with every ingenuity, converted the precious creature into a link between a mamma and a grandpapa" (*GB* 140). Though Verver is here referred to as a "grandpapa," within the context of the other descriptions of Verver's relationship to his daughter, we understand that the pair very much understands their relationship to be a marriage. If Adam Verver needed to marry in order to be as he was before – married to Maggie – Maggie recognizes that she "had been able to marry without breaking, as she liked to put it, with her past. She had surrendered herself to her husband without the shadow of a reserve or a condition and yet hadn't all the while given up her father by the least little inch" (328). Notwithstanding, the relationship between Maggie and Adam is not quite as it was before; with his grandson and daughter, Verver has, for the first time, the opportunity to lead a domestic life. In the mold of a traditionally absent father, Verver "had had to like forging and sweating, he had had to like polishing and piling up his arms," working outside of the home to create the vast fortune that pays for his current lifestyle (131). Though he and Maggie spent years alone together following the death of her mother, this time is not spent seated by the hearth, at home in American City. Rather, Maggie reminisces about "the way we've sat together late, ever so late in foreign restaurants, which he used to like; the way that, in every city in Europe, we've stayed on and on, with our elbows on the table and most of the lights put out, to talk over things … There were places he took me to – you wouldn't believe! – for often he could only have left me with servants" (577). Not only does Maggie accompany her father as a wife, she leaves behind the nursery and the domestic sphere for "adventures" in what can hardly be considered 'respectable' places. As a result, Verver realizes his "great idea," the life of a collector and the American museum, but at the cost of any domestic tranquility. Thus, his retreat to the nursery, so far removed from the world and "hardly more accessible" enables him to experience life as a father and a husband. Adam, Maggie, Charlotte, Amerigo, and the Assinghams arrange to keep up appearances, as the couples tend to the work of the public and the private across the houses that make up their household. Thus the family, in its multiple forms, maintains coherence as it also enables innovative experiences that disrupt any traditional notions of productive labor, gender spheres, or the marriage plot. Keen attention to the dynamic activity of these multiple arrangements, or forms, of the family can alert us to the possibilities for alternate forms of family life that remain central to current discourse. Yet, if we read only for the forms we recognize – from literature or from history – we are likely to miss these possibilities.

The Golden Bowl calls out for an eponymous reading that conflates the form of the novel with that of its title object. According to J. Hillis Miller: "Maggie is aware that she could with a few words shatter the apparent 'serenities and dignities and decencies' of their family circle into 'terrors and shames and ruins, things as ugly as those formless fragments of the golden bowl she was trying so hard to pick up'"(243). Yet the mistake here is to view the bowl as whole in the first place.[46] If anything, *The Golden Bowl* dramatizes the possibility of a more plastic form at the same time that it warns against wholes. While many critics seize on the importance of arrangements and multiplicity to the novel, they nevertheless insist on implicitly determining the form of the novel by that of the symbolic bowl. As the reader learns, the bowl is itself a particularly adept instance of the 'humbug'. The dealer shows Charlotte and Amerigo "a drinking-vessel larger than a common cup, yet not of exorbitant size, and formed, to appearance, either of fine gold or of some material once richly gilt" (*GB* 107). Amerigo, though, is quick to make out the bowl's secret: not only is the bowl made of crystal, not of gold, but it also has a flaw. Significantly, the golden bowl "doesn't break … like vile glass. It splits – if there is a split" (110). On first appearance, a solid, singular form, the bowl is in fact composed of pieces, gilt with gold that "you couldn't scrape off … it has been too well put on … by some very fine old worker and by some beautiful old process" (108). The 'humbug' of the golden bowl, or the Verver family, only works for those outside the family circle, for whom appearances must be kept up. Where Miller argues that "the smashed bowl's three pieces … bring the secret out into the open, where all who can read may see," I understand the humbug – common to the bowl and the family – instead as a kind of 'open secret' (243). For, if we read the bowl as a symbol of the novel, its fracture stands as a verdict on the novel's experiments. However, if as I argue, we can avoid collapsing the form of heteronormative family onto that of the novel, and instead read the dynamic and multiple arrangements of the forms of the family, then we no longer automatically foreclose the latent potentiality of these forms. This version of formalism seizes on the importance of experimentation that I find at work in *Wuthering Heights* and *The Golden Bowl*. While I find many of the formalisms advanced by critics in the Marxist tradition less than fully satisfying, I do adamantly contend that literature offers formal solutions. These solutions, however, are far more subtle, dynamic, and myriad than those we have yet learned to identify. For the novel, according to James, "can simply do everything … Its plasticity, its elasticity are infinite; there is no colour, no extension it may not take from the nature of its subject or the temper of its craftsman" ("Future" 140).

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[46] Other formalist readings of *The Golden Bowl*, while addressing structures of multiplicity and arrangement, nevertheless maintain a model of novel form determined by the form of the golden bowl that further elevates the progression toward an 'ending' as the act that renders form whole. See, for example: Stephen D. Arata, "Object Lessons," Joseph A. Boone, "Modernist Maneuverings," David M. Craig, "The Indeterminacy of End," Theo Davis, "Out of the Medium," Jennifer Sorensen Emery-Peck, "'Clearnesses,'" Kevin Kohan, "*The Golden Bowl* and the Subversion of Miraculous Forms," Anat Pick, "Miracles of Arrangement," Anne-Marie Priest, "'A Secret Responsive Ecstasy,'" Margery Sabin, "Henry James's American Dream," and L.A. Westervelt, "The Individual and the Form."

IV. Conclusion

In my readings of *Wuthering Heights* and *The Golden Bowl*, I have argued that both novels advance a far more plastic understanding of social and aesthetic form than do our own critical approaches. In doing so, I have also argued that literature on both novels has typically collapsed a reified form of the family onto that of the novel. I too have enlisted social forms to read *Wuthering Heights* and *The Golden Bowl*; however, these forms arose from the novels themselves – not from pre-existing forms that have been imposed on them. What results are a series of provocative experiments with the forms that structure family life: marriage, inheritance, and the gendered public and private spheres. These novels powerfully demonstrate alternative approaches to reading the relationship between the politics of the domestic. Finally, I read these experiments without the evaluative measure of the 'ending' implicit to many of the literary forms that structure our understanding of novel form, like the marriage plot or the *bildungsroman*. The novel arrangements in Brontë and James offer compelling hypotheses for the reading nineteenth-century novel and for approaching timely debates surrounding marriage and family life.

To return once again to James – and, perhaps to read him against the grain – we again encounter a rhetoric of arrangement:

> Many people speak of [fiction] as a factitious, artificial form, a product of ingenuity, the business of which is to alter and arrange the things that surround us, to translate them into conventional, traditional moulds. This, however, is a view of the matter which carries us but a very short way, condemns the art to an eternal repetition of a few familiar clichés, cuts short its development, and leads us straight up to a dead

> wall …In proportion as in what she offers us we see life without arrangement do we feel that we are touching the truth; in proportion as we see it with rearrangement do we feel that we are being put off with a substitute, a compromise and convention. (*Art of Fiction* 73)

As I understand James's serpentine understanding of the novel, his use of "arrangement" corresponds precisely with a negative imposition of form that imposes "conventional, traditional moulds" on "the things that surround us." For James, only when we see life "without rearrangement" – that is, without the restrictive molds of traditional or familiar forms – do we 'touch the truth'. Life itself is infinitely plastic and it is the task of the novel – and the critic – to capture this same plasticity.

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CHAPTER FOUR

LE PARTAGE DU SENSIBLE AND THE POLITICS OF FORM IN *LES MISERABLES* AND *L'ASSOMMOIR*

Where does the form of the novel begin and where does it end? Are there clear bookends – singular instances of form giving and closure? A traditional understanding of novel form would suggest that form begins at the beginning and ends at the end – shaped and driven by narrative progress and eventual closure. But what might form look like if that weren't the case? To borrow an example from history – and Mary Favret's reading of it – what if we asked the same questions of form that she asks of the Napoleonic Wars? As the very name Waterloo suggests, the Napoleonic wars, unlike many of the novels we read, repeatedly "kept not being over." Where the "end of warfare is conventionally dated with the signing of treaties … the Napoleonic Wars distinguish themselves for the repeated abrogation of peace treaties" (4). As Favret suggests, we speak of the Hundred Days or of the dates of Napoleon's return from or to exile with certainty but "the large penumbra of events that fall under the label 'Napoleonic Wars' – not to mention the experience of that wartime – defies such certainty. Like other times of war … but in an idiosyncratic way, the Napoleonic Wars illustrate the limits of periodization, linear chronology, and the conventions of naming we reach for when we try to nail down the past" (1).

Victor Hugo asked similar questions about the form of history two hundred years prior in *Les Misérables*. In attempting to come to terms with an event that presumably pales in comparison to the Napoleonic Wars – the Insurrection of the 5th and 6th of June, 1832, Hugo questions the very forms we employ to categorize historical phenomena:

> De quoi se compose l'émeute? De rien et de tout. D'une électricité dégagée peu à peu, d'une flamme subitement saillie, d'une force qui erre, d'un souffle qui passe.

> Ce souffle rencontre des têtes qui pensent, des cerveaux qui rêvent, des âmes qui souffrent, des passions qui brûlent, des mères qui hurlent, et les emporte. (395)[47]

The form of the riot is far from concrete – it is as diffuse and, surprisingly, as subtle as an errant force or a passing breeze. Moreover, while historians might retrospectively enclose it in a clear beginning and end, what Hugo describes is something more akin to the more catholic and more *plastic* novelistic middle. In this final chapter, I argue that reading the formal plasticity of the novel – the continual process of the redistribution of multiple social, aesthetic, and political forms – allows meaning to emerge that is otherwise discounted by traditional linear, sequential, narrative models of novel form. My readings of 'parts' of Émile Zola's *L'Assommoir* and Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* consider the ways in which reading the formal plasticity of the novel allows us to revisit "parts" of the novel that have typically been read as failures, distractions, or fragments in relation to the larger "wholes" of which they are a part. In that respect, this chapter – unlike the novel – offers something of a cumulative perspective on *formal plasticity*. In the pages of Hugo and Zola we find the dynamic activity of description, the intersections of social and literary forms, the multiple orderings and temporalities, as well as collections – historical, political, and material – that shaped the argument for *formal plasticity* in my readings of Dickens, Brontë, and James.

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[47] ["What is a riot composed of? Of nothing and of everything. Of an electricity that escapes little by little, of a flame, suddenly projected, of an errant force, of a passing breeze. This breeze encounters heads that think, brains that dream, souls that suffer, passions that burn, mothers that yell, and it takes them all."] I have elected to provide my own translations, given the importance of the original syntax to my argument. In many of the fine existing translations of Hugo's novel into English, this syntax is more poetically rendered and thus not accessible to the English reader. I have occasionally consulted Norman Denny's translation for Penguin Books, 1982.

Nineteenth-century novels, as the story goes, developed sophisticated multi-plot narratives and a clear regime of forms like the *bildungsroman* or the marriage plot that would later be shattered and fragmented by the formless and impressionistic narratives of modernism. Yet this distinction – like many accounts of periodization – is built on a fragile foundation that assumes that the nineteenth-century novel is in fact a form that privileges perspective and forward driven narrative to lend coherence. But what if this were not the case? Jacques Rancière, borrowing from Virginia Woolf, asks a version of this question in examining the "mode of … linkage," a phrase that we might take as a definition of form. In "The Thread of the Novel," Rancière stages a conflict between the microsensory events of daily life – we might think here of Woolf's "shower of atoms" and the familiar plots of marriage, inheritance, and death – what Rancière terms the "lie of the plot." How can we reconcile, Rancière asks, "two types of whole: the luminous halo of life" and "the organic link of the fiction with a beginning, a development, and an end, which also means a story of wills, actions, successes and failures" (201)?

Traditionally, formal studies of the nineteenth-century novel have resolved this question by subordinating the former – the "luminous halo of life," to the latter. But such an arrangement fails to represent the more dynamic and far more diffuse nature of both the novel and of life. What I want to suggest – in reading Émile Zola's *L'Assommoir* and Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* – is that, if we read the novel more plastically – seeking out the multiple forms in their varied arrangements and rearrangements – we might begin to approach an understanding of the novel that more fully accounts for the "luminous halo of life."

To do so requires expanding our definition of form to include social and political phenomena and, as a result, not simply reading form against history but reading the forms of the novel *and* the forms of history. In this chapter, I draw on the historical instances of redistribution that prime the canvas for the literary *partage du sensible* in both Zola and Hugo. I argue that both authors manipulate historical event and phenomena into new arrangements – akin to Benjaminian constellations – through their juxtaposition with other historical phenomena, social and political forms, and literary forms like description, ekphrasis, and chiasmus. This redistribution occurs at multiple plateaus: the narrative form (both story and discourse), the level of character and theme, the historical and cultural allusions made in the novel, and at the level of the sentence (syntax, trope). Significantly, both Zola and Hugo stage these instances of *repartage* through the *chronotope* of the procession through the city: the parade of a working class wedding party for the former and a funeral procession for the latter.

Published in 1877, Zola's novel of alcoholism and life in the Paris slums follows a laundress, Gervaise, whose life and death roughly correspond to the rise and fall of the Second Empire (1851-1870). While national and international events re-played tragedy as farce, the landscape of Paris underwent considerable changes under the hand of the Baron Haussmann. Under the extensive public works, Haussmann sought to make a coherent whole or the scattered parts of Paris. As David Harvey writes, "instead of 'collections of partial plans of public thoroughfares considered without ties or connections,' Haussmann sought a 'general plan which was nevertheless detailed enough to properly coordinate diverse local circumstances.' Urban space was seen and treated as a totality in which different quarters of the city and different functions were brought into relation to each other to form a working whole" (111). Though 'zoning' was hardly so neat as to entirely segregate one class from another, many of the working class neighborhoods were moved to the periphery of the city (*la ceinture rouge*). And yet, despite Haussmann's efforts, Paris was far from a coherent whole.

On the day of her wedding to Coupeau, Gervaise and the wedding party depart on a kind of *grand tour*. Although the characters in Zola's *L'Assommoir* originally planned to spend an afternoon outside the city limits, foul weather has spoiled these plans. One proposal to instead visit the Père Lachaise cemetery is quickly struck down; the guests reluctantly agree to pass the time before the wedding feast at the art museum. As the most bourgeois of the characters, with the dubious distinction of "patron," M. Madinier, explains, "'Il y a des antiquités, des images, des tableaux, un tas de choses. C'est très instructif ... Peut-être bien que vous ne connaissiez pas ça. Oh ! c'est à voir, au moins une fois" (97).[48] The party sets off on their first visit to the museum under inauspicious circumstances, as a violent lightning storm illuminates the sky.

L'Assommoir vividly captures the effects of Haussmann's new order, an historical instance of the *partage du sensible* that facilitated the influx of workers to the city center at the same time that it sought to render impossible the construction of *barricades*. As Gervaise scans the streets from the window of her apartment, she organizes the slum in the manner of an unfortunate, immobile *flâneuse*. "Lentement, d'un bout à l'autre de l'horizon, elle suivait le mur de l'octroi ... Quand elle levait les yeux, au delà de cette muraille grise et interminable qui entourait la ville d'une bande de désert, elle apercevait une grande lueur, une poussière de soleil, pleine déjà du grondement matinal de Paris" (21).[49] Dawn in Montmartre and La Chappelle gives rise to a mechanized procession: “Il y avait là un piétinement de troupeau, une foule que de brusques arrêts étalaient en mares sur la chaussée, un défilé sans fin d’ouvriers allant au travail, leurs outils sur le dos, leur pain sous le bras; et la cohue s’engouffrait dans Paris où elle se noyait, continuellement” (21).[50] Zola’s metaphor at once conveys the brutal force that drains the suburbs of its men, as it emphasizes the dismal ease with which this passage takes place.

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[48] ["'There are ancient statues, and drawings, and paintings, all sorts of things. It's very instructive ... Oh it's certainly worth seeing, at any rate once'" (73).]

[49] ["Slowly, from one edge of the horizon to the other, her gaze followed the line of the octroi wall ... When she looked up, beyond that grey, unending wall which girded the city with a

Where the newly ordered boulevards speed the flow of workers into the city, they obstruct the course of working-class pleasure seekers. As Rancière explains, the *partage du sensible* entails: “Cette répartition des parts et des places se fonde sur un partage des espaces, des temps et des formes d’activité qui détermine la manière même dont un commun se prête à participation et dont les uns et les autres ont part à ce partage” (12).[51] For the working-class characters of *L’Assommoir*, their access to the city’s cultural center is impeded in two key ways by the *partage du sensible* of a Haussmannized Paris. First, in the current distribution of time and activity, the working class does not typically have the time either to make the difficult journey to the city center or to take time away from their principal activity: work. Second, where “new

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band of barren space, she could see a great glow, a blaze of dusty sunlight already filled with the rumble of the city’s awakening” (6).]

[50] [“It was like the trampling of a herd, a mob which would stop suddenly, spreading out and overflowing on to the roadway, a measureless procession of men going to work, carrying their tools on their backs and their loaves under their arms: and the throng went on being swallowed up by Paris, sinking into it, never ending” (7).]

[51] [“This redistribution of the parts and places is founded upon a distribution of the spaces, times, and forms of activity that determine the manner in which a common makes itself available to participation and in which each has access to this distribution” (translation mine).]

thorough-fares are to open the shortest route between the barracks and the working-class districts," such shortcuts do nothing to facilitate the movement of the working classes into the city center for leisure and entertainment ("Paris" 160). Zola juxtaposes the early scenes of the workers' commute – "the trampling of a herd" to the more perilous journey of the wedding party to the Louvre.

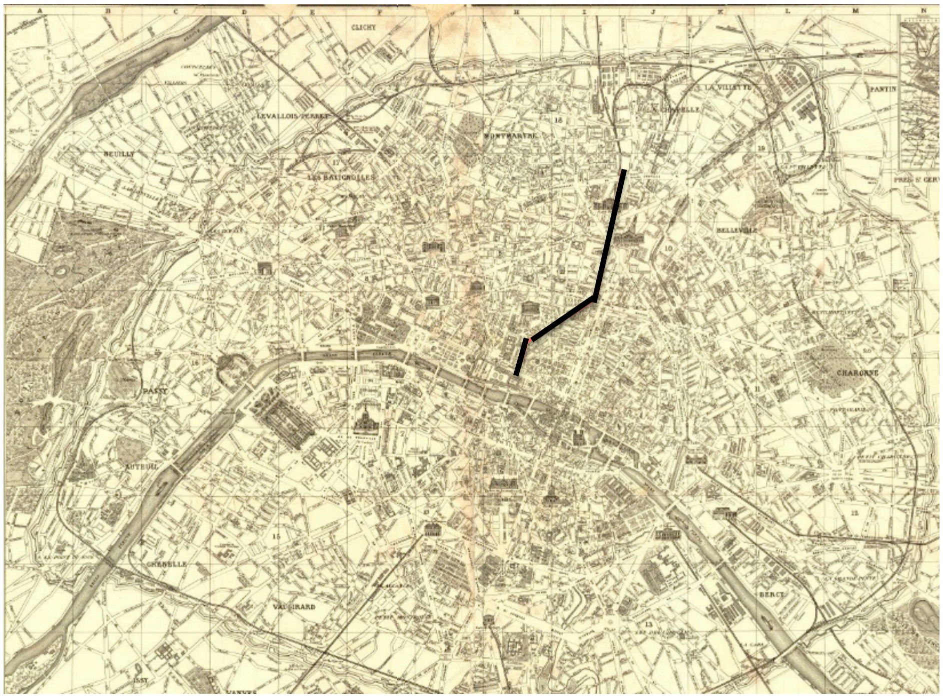
CLICHY
LA VILLETTE
PANTIN
LEVALLOIS PERRET
MONTMARTRE
LES BATIGNOLLES
NEUILLY
BELLEVILLE
CHARONNE
PASSY
AUTEUIL
GRENELLE
VAUGIRARD
BERCY
ISSY
VANVES

Fig. 1. Nouveau plan complet et illustré de la ville de Paris, divisé en 20 arrondissements et en 80 quartiers. Gravé par L. Sonnet. Map. Paris: 187? University of Chicago Library. Web. 10 Jan. 2013.

Unlike the majority of the novel, which takes place in their cramped slum, the visit to the Louvre takes them far from home (Fig. 1). As the line I've traced on the map illustrates, the party crosses boundaries that divide the wealthy *faubourgs* from working-class slums, like Saint Denis, en route to the museum. Along the way, they not only face the blisters and fatigue that are natural by-products of a long walk, but also the dangers of the grand boulevard.

> La noce, débouchant de la rue Saint-Denis, traversa le boulevard. Elle attendit un moment, devant le flot des voitures; puis elle se risqua sur la chaussée, changée par l'orage en une mare de boue coulante. L'ondée reprenait, la noce venait d'ouvrir les parapluies; et, sous les riflards lamentables, balancés à la main des hommes, les femmes se retroussaient, le défilé s'espaçait dans la crotte, tenant d'un trottoir à l'autre. (99)[52]

Crossing the boulevard, the wedding party resembles nothing so much as the earliest game of "Frogger." Indeed, Margaret Mauldon, in her English translation of the novel, renders the vaguely reptilian quality of the wedding party explicit in describing the "jolie queue" as a crocodile (98).[53] Literally crawling in the mud, the vivid and repeated image of the crocodile heightens the sense of trespassing. Mary Elizabeth Leighton and Lisa Surridge point to the symbolic association of the crocodile with Empire - both in France and in Britain - and their catalogue of its traits not coincidentally parallels those attributed to the working classes. Much like the characters in *L'Assommoir*, the crocodile feeds voraciously, supposedly possesses an equally excessive and ‘deviant’ sexual appetite, and becomes a sign of the “colonized other.” Indeed, as Leighton and Surridge write, “it symbolically inhabits the underbelly of empire, the slime at the bottom of the river” (249). On the eve of Napoléon III’s coup d’état, what better symbol for the *classes dangereuses* than the crocodile?

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[52] ["The wedding party emerged from the Rue Saint-Denis and crossed the boulevard. After waiting a moment because of the stream of carriages, they ventured on to the road, which the storm had turned into a sea of liquid mud. It was starting to rain again so the group put up their umbrellas, and under those pathetic gamps which swayed about in the men's hands the ladies walked, holding their skirts high; the crocodile straggled out over the mud, stretching from one pavement to the other" (74).]

[53] Zola writes: "On était douze. Ça faisait une jolie queue sur le trottoir" (98). Mauldon plays on the double meaning of "queue" as both an animal's tail and a line.

Where Zola explores a *partage du sensible* through the displacement of workers in the city - and their eventual access to a common in which they do not typically have the time to participate - Hugo explores a *partage du sensible* incited by the law. Arising from within the reign of the ultra conservative Charles X (the last of the Bourbon monarchs and the swan song of the Restoration), the July Monarchy (1830-1848), catalyzed by the Trois Glorieuses (July 27, 28, and 29 1830), saw a bourgeois monarch seated on the throne. While this political upheaval may have pleased bourgeois liberals, the radical republicans, conservatives, and the legitimists (or carlistes) saw their hopes for a new regime or a return to the old regime sorely disappointed. It is within this context, that the June Days Insurrection (5 and 6 1832) takes place (Garrigues 27). The right of association, severely restricted by Article 291 of the Napoleonic code, remained central to political debates and uprisings throughout the nineteenth century. Given its potential to crack down on political dissent and revolutionary activities, Article 291 was not only embraced but eventually strengthened (by closing a loophole having to do with cells) over the course of the century and its increasingly democratic regimes. It reads: “‘No association of over twenty people whose aim is to meet every day or on particular days to concern themselves with religious, literary, political, or other aims may be formed without the authorization of the government and under any conditions set by the authorities’” (Harrison 27). It would not be until 1901 that the French would truly gain freedom of association. As the *partage du sensible* “c’est un découpage des temps et des espaces, du visible et de l’invisible, de la parole et du bruit qui définit à la fois le lieu et l'enjeu de la politique comme forme d'expérience" any violations of Article 291 serve to instantiate a new *partage du sensible*.[54]

Such is the case with the 1832 Insurrection. Funeral processions provided a particularly appealing forum for oppositional political activity, as they were authorized by the government and generally attracted large groups of people as they moved throughout the city. Thus, the Republican opposition followed in the footsteps of 1823, 1825, and 1827, this time using the occasion of the funeral procession for General Lamarque, one of the great voices for the opposition in the Chamber (Garrigues 27). Hugo's description of the procession and the ensuing insurrection offers a detailed palimpsest that fixes a succession of such *partage du sensible*. The funeral procession itself, which unites "deux bataillons … dix milles gardes nationaux … des jeunes gens … les officiers des invalides … une multitude innombrable, agitée, étrange … les sectionnaires des Amis du Peuple, L'École de droit, l'´Ecole du médecine, les réfugiés de toutes les nations … des tailleurs de pierre et des charpentiers qui faisaient grève en ce moment-là, des imprimeurs,"[55] makes visible the forms of sanctioned political experience at the same time that gesture towards their redistribution: "Sur les contre-allées des boulevards, dans les branches des arbres, aux balcons, aux fenêtres, sur les toits, les têtes fourmillaient, hommes, femmes, enfants; les yeux étaient pleins d'anxiété. Une foule armée passait, une foule effarée regardait" (408).[56] The mention of the stonemasons and carpenters is especially telling; not working allows them to undertake political activity (strike), at the same time that it allows them to participate in sanctioned or, in the government's perspective, legitimate political activity. The visibility of work is especially present in Hugo's description of the funeral procession. Drawing from Plato, Rancière reminds us: "Les artisans … ne peuvent pas s'occuper des choses communes parce qu'ils n'ont *pas le temps* de se consacrer à autre chose que leur travail. Ils ne peuvent pas être *ailleurs* parce que *le travail n'attend pas*" (13).[57] Yet the political foment of the funeral procession ultimately reframes the meaning of work as it employs the unemployed in the work of political protest. "Un nommé Jacqueline, homme d'expédition, abordait les ouvriers quelconques qui passait: - Viens, toi! - Il payait dix sous de vin, et disait: - As-tu de l'ouvrage? - Non. - Va chez Filspierre, entre la barrière Montréal et la barrière Charonne, tu trouveras de l'ouvrage. On trouvait chez Filspierre des cartouches et des armes" (407).[58] Those who might have the time to engage in political activity - *faute de travail* - instead, in this partage du sensible - must find work in order to engage in politics.

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[54] ["is a delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience" (*The Politics of Aesthetics* 12).]

[55] ["two battalions … ten thousand members of the national guard … some young people … the officers of the *Invalides* … an innumerable multitude, restless, strange … the members of the Society of the Friends of the People, the students of the School of Law and the School of Medicine, refugees from all nations … some stonemasons and carpenters who were on strike at the time, some printers."]

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[56] ["side alleys of the boulevards, tree branches, balconies, windows, roofs, were swarming with the heads of men, women, children; eyes were full of anxiety. An armed crowd was passing, an alarmed crowd was watching."]

[57] ["Artisans … cannot occupy themselves with common things because they *do not have the time* to devote to anything other than their work. They cannot be *elsewhere* because *work does not wait*" (translation mine).]

[58] ["One, named Jacqueline, a shipping agent, quickly dispatched any worker he encountered: - You, over here! – He would offer them ten *sous* of wine and say – Do you have

In both *L'Assommoir* and *Les Misérables*, I contend, formal plasticity makes legible an alternative model of progress where perceived failure – of the wedding party's visit to the Louvre or of the 1832 Insurrection – is not merely a formal contradiction but itself a form of progress. Most importantly, in doing so, they recalibrate our understanding of progress and success in ways that previous criticism has missed or dismissed. Where a procession normally suggests linear progress, from point A to point B, both the parade and the funeral procession instead catalyze a *partage du sensible* that makes visible other formal arrangements. Ultimately these formal arrangements offer potential solutions to aesthetic, social, and political problems that linear or teleological formal paradigms eclipse. In *L'Assommoir*, Zola momentarily fells the barrier that separates the working class characters from the kinds of aesthetic experiences they typically cannot access – not only because of the distance that separates them from cultural sites but also because of the absence of leisure time. While critics have traditionally read the visit to the Louvre as an example of the failed efforts to kindle aesthetic appreciation in the working classes, the *partage du sensible* that gives form to the well-known scene of the *noce au musée* makes a different kind of aesthetic appreciation visible as the characters ultimately do the work of the novelist; it is their descriptions that provide the reader access to the paintings. In *Les Misérables*, Hugo argues for the importance of a practice of reading that seeks out or actively creates such redistributions, most strikingly in his discussion of the 'failed' 1832 Insurrection. The lengthy "digressions" – both on the difference between *l'insurrection* and *l'émeute* and on

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work? – No. – Go to Filspierre, between the *barrière* Montréal and the *barrière* Charonne, you'll find work. Both weapons and ammunitions could be found at Filspierre."]

the history and operation of the sewer – are not interruptions or distractions from the progress of the narrative but instead key sites of redistribution. Indeed, the chapters on the sewer offer the only concrete solution to the *misères* the novel depicts: one that tellingly redistributes the city's detritus to fertilize the fields of France.[59]

II. Sous l'égout de Paris: History, Temporality, and Form in Hugo's *Les Misérables*

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[59] The formal principle of recycling underlies the sewer's elegance as a solution: "Employer la ville à fumer la plaine, ce serait une réussite certaine" ["Using the city to fertilize the fields, that would be a sure success"] (545). Hugo's antimetabole is apposite: "Si notre or est fumier, en revanche, notre fumier est or" ["If our gold is waste, our waste is gold"] (645). Antimetabole is a subtype of chiasmus wherein the words are repeated in reverse order (chiasmus neither requires exact repetition of words nor structure). "Fumier" might more readily be translated as "manure," however I have chosen "waste" here to emphasize the human, rather than animal, contribution. Drawing on his extensive research, Hugo a surprisingly technical and specific solution: "Un double appareil tubulaire, pourvu de soupapes et d'écluses de chasse, aspirant et refoulant, un système de drainage élémentaire, simple comme le poumon de l'homme, et qui est déjà en pleine fonction dans plusieurs communes d'Angleterre, suffirait pour amener dans nos villes l'eau pure des champs et pour renvoyer dans nos champs l'eau riche des villes, et ce facile va-et-vient, le plus simple du monde, retiendrait chez nous les cinq cents millions jetés dehors" [A dual tubular apparatus, with valves and sluices, sucking in and pouring out, an elementary drainage system, as simple as the human lung, and which is already in use in several English cities, would suffice to bring clean water from the fields to our cities and to return to the fields the enriched water of the cities, and this easy exchange, the simplest in the world, would save us the five hundred million that we've been throwing out"] (647).

The plot of *Les Misérables* fits squarely in the linear form of a family novel, developing toward the eventual climax of Cosette's marriage to Marius. In accounts of the novel's form, the forward-looking narrative arc has emerged as the major principle of organization. Such would seem to be the case with *Les Misérables*, whose plot revolves around the teleological forms of Jean Valjean's salvation, Marius's *bildungsroman*, and Cosette's marriage to Marius. However, while the reader enjoys all of the pleasures of reading for the plot, Hugo complicates the forward moving narrative drive at multiple levels. As Kathy Grossman observes, the opening line of the novel:

> 'In 1815 Monsieur Charles-François-Bienvenu Myriel was Bishop of Digne. He was then about seventy-five and had presided over the diocese of Digne since 1806' repeatedly shifts the temporal frame of the novel, from Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo, to Myriel's appointment to Digne, to his birth in 1839. This gesture is repeated at the novel's end when the death of the outlaw hero, Jean Valjean, in 1833 - is immediately relegated to the distant past by the description of his tombstone: 'No name can be read there. Only many years ago, a hand wrote on it in pencil … four lines, which have gradually become illegible under the rain and the dust, and are probably gone by now.' (3)

Where the reader might expect narrative closure to coincide with Valjean's death in 1833, the novel's temporal frame becomes relative as a result of the phrase "many years ago." "Is the narrator, for example, speaking from the mid-1840s, when most of the text was initially drafted? From June 1848, the last period of historical significance discussed amid its many digressions? From the early 1860s, when Hugo revised and completed his manuscript? Or perhaps from some unspecified point closer to our own age, the narrator's omniscient eye surveying Jean Valjean's grave from an imagined future?"(Grossman 3). Such temporal shifts appear throughout *Les Misérables* as a constant impediment to the easily flow of narrative progress. To take one example, at the beginning of the excurses on Waterloo, we move from the scene of Fantine's death in 1823 to a chapter which begins: "L'an dernier (1861), par une belle matinée, un passant, celui qui raconte cette histoire, arrivait de Nivelles et se dirigeait vers La Hulpe" (403).[60] Hugo complicates narrative progress here in several ways: he refers to the narrator as "celui qui raconte cette histoire" thus placing the narrator and the reader in the present tense of the story, he stages three temporal shifts moving from the present of the story to 1861 while also invoking both the year 1860 ("l'an dernier") and 1815.[61] Moreover, this temporal shift marks the beginning of what is perhaps the best known "digression" of *Les Misérables*: the seventy-page reflection on and account of the battle of Waterloo. While Hugo occasionally references the novel that he has interrupted during the account of Waterloo ("Revenons, c'est une nécessité de ce livre, sur ce fatal champ de bataille," (465))[62] the digression nevertheless by and large leaves what is generally understood to be the hallmark of novel form behind: the plot. Far from a simple flashback or prolepsis, Hugo's frequent temporal shifts radically and productively destabilize the apparent teleology of the plot.[63] Though a far cry from Woolf's evanescent image of the "luminous halo," I argue that Hugo provides a model for formal plasticity in his peculiar constellation of history, narrative, and description in the sewers of Paris.

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[60] ["Last year (1861), on a beautiful morning, a passer-by, he who tells this story, was traveling from Nivelles to La Hulpe."]

[61] The remainder of the chapter is precariously balanced between 1815 and 1862. To take one example of this narrative time travel: "Retournons en arrière, c'est un des droits du narrateur, et replaçons-nous en l'année 1815, l'avenir de l'Europe était changé" ["Let's go back, it's an author's prerogative, and set the scene in the year 1815, the future of Europe was changed"] (412).

[62] ["Let's return, it's a necessity of this book, to this fatal battlefield."]

The chapters on and in the sewer comprise one of the many "digressions" in *Les Misérables*, keeping company with the lengthy excurses on Waterloo, religious institutions, and the barricades, among at least six others. As one contemporary critic, Alfred Nettement laments: "Il y a d'abord dans l'ouvrage un vice cardinal de composition: l'action est sans cesse interrompue par d'interminables digressions, qui ne sont pas même des épisodes. Ces morceaux de philosophie, d'histoire, d'économie sociale, font l'effet de robinets d'eau froide lâchés sur le lecteur glacé et découragé. C'est l'hydrothérapie appliquée à la littérature" (364).[64] Nettement continues to colorfully criticize Hugo's formal choices: "La machine de Marly, avec l'enchevêtrement de ses roues, était un jeu d'enfant, à côté des complications inextricables de cette imagination" (317).[65] Nettement goes on to deplore what Hugo explicitly acknowledges throughout the novel - the number of "digressions" that mar, as one would have it, or enhance the novel.[66] Such digressions were a well-established feature of Hugo's prose, as they previously appeared in other narrative works, including *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1831). And yet, those in *Les Misérables* were cause for offense to contemporary reviewers (though the novel was a popular success); exact figures were given to account for the extent of such excurses (Fig. 2).

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[63] Benoît Leclercq, in his study of criminality in the nineteenth-century French novel, draws from Hugo's character descriptions, alongside historical sources, to make a compelling argument for Jean Valjean as a "synthèse de l'homme et de l'infini, un personnage que son crime même confine dans une atemporalité. Ses identités successives ne parviendront jamais à mettre sa faute 'derrière lui', la linéarité du temps s'est interrompue avec son incarcération (et pendant), il demeurera l'ancien bagnard, 'ancien' se désémantisant ici en 'potentiel' ou 'de nature'" (78). [A synthesis of man and infinity, a character whose very crime confines him to atemporality. His successive identities will never succeed in putting his transgression 'behind him', linear time is interrupted with (and during) his incarceration, he will remain the ex-convict, ex connoting both 'potential' and 'inherent'" (translation mine).] Leclercq thus cogently reads the overlap of multiple forms: narrative, plot, identity, the 'yellow passport' and nineteenth-century theories of criminality, as well as temporal forms, like the prison sentence.

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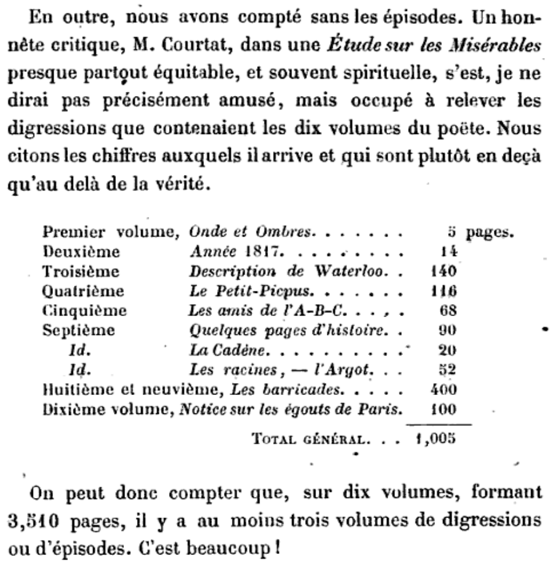
[64] ["First of all, there is a cardinal vice in the composition of the work: the action is continually interrupted by interminable digressions, which are not even episodes. These bits of philosophy, of history, of social economy, create the effect of cold tap water turned on to the frozen and discouraged reader. It's hydrotherapy applied to literature" (translation mine).]

[65] ["The Marly Machine, with its tangle of wheels, was a child's toy next to the inextricable complications of this imagination."]

[66] The first two volumes of the novel (there are a total of five parts, each divided into books (48 in total), which are then divided into chapters (364 in total) were published first in Brussels and then in Paris in 1862 and did not appear *en feuilleton*. As a result, the digressions, which represent a significant component of the novel, do not create the same kind of suspense that longer descriptive passages in other serialized works might achieve.



En outre, nous avons compté sans les épisodes. Un honnête critique, M. Courtat, dans une *Étude sur les Misérables* presque partout équitable, et souvent spirituelle, s'est, je ne dirai pas précisément amusé, mais occupé à relever les digressions que contenaient les dix volumes du poëte. Nous citons les chiffres auxquels il arrive et qui sont plutôt en deçà qu'au delà de la vérité.

Premier volume,	*Onde et Ombres.*	5 pages.
Deuxième	*Année* 1817.	14
Troisième	*Description de Waterloo.* . .	140
Quatrième	*Le Petit-Picpus.*	116
Cinquième	*Les amis de l'A-B-C.*	68
Septième	*Quelques pages d'histoire.* . .	90
Id.	*La Cadène.*	20
Id.	*Les racines, — l'Argot.* . .	52
Huitième et neuvième,	*Les barricades.*	400
Dixième volume,	*Notice sur les égouts de Paris.*	100
	TOTAL GÉNÉRAL. . .	1,005

On peut donc compter que, sur dix volumes, formant 3,510 pages, il y a au moins trois volumes de digressions ou d'épisodes. C'est beaucoup !

Fig. 2. Courtat, M. *Étude sur les Misérables*. In Nettement, 318.

Nettement acts here as a porte-parole for a theory of the novel that remains significant to our understanding of the novel today that privileges forward-moving narrative drive over "static" description as the formal engine.

Hugo's exhaustive digressions insist on calling attention to the *details* and, characteristically, to what is generally overlooked or forgotten. In the digression on l'émeute and l'insurrection, Hugo speaks directly to the distinction between literature and history. Speaking as the author of the novel and as the narrator, Hugo cautions us that:

> Les faits qui vont être racontés appartiennent à cette réalité dramatique et vivante que l'historien néglige quelquefois, faute de temps et d'espace. Là pourtant, nous y insistons, là est la vie, la palpitation, le frémissement humain. Les petits détails, nous croyons l'avoir dit, sont, pour ainsi parler, le feuillage des grands événements et se perdent dans les lointains de l'histoire. L'époque dite *des*

> *émeutes* abonde en détails de ce genre. (406)[67]

In an anachronistic echo of Favret and Rancière, Hugo suggests that what the historian might eschew, "faute de temps et d'espace," the novelist can unearth and "mettre en lumière" without the same constrictions. Moreover, such details - the "digressions" - are the kinetic force for Hugo of the novel, where we find "la vie, la palpitation, le frémissement humain." What Hugo suggests here is that it is not the action or the plot that lends coherence or form to the novel but instead the "sujet": "Là où le sujet n'est point perdu de vue, il n'y a point de digression" (543).[68]

What would it look like to take subject as the driving force behind form – as Rancière's "mode of linkage"? Hugo offers a striking image of such reading in the chapters on the sewer where he at once describes the form of the sewer as he gestures towards a more diffuse understanding of the novel: "On se fera une image plus ressemblante de cet étrange plan géométral en supposant qu'on voie à plat sur un fond de ténèbres quelque bizarre alphabet d'orient brouillé comme un fouillis, et dont les lettres difformes seraient soudées les unes au autres, dans un pêle-mêle apparent et comme au hasard, tantôt par leurs angles, tantôt par leurs extrémités" (650).[69] Despite the sewer's right angles, its "geometric" organization into corridors and channels (much like Hugo's own intricately organized novel, divided into volumes, parts, books, and chapters, each with its own title), the sewer overwhelms attempts at linear understanding, offering instead an image of plastic arrangements and rearrangements "dont les lettres difformes seraient soudées les unes aux autres, dans un pêle-mêle apparent et comme au hasard." This image, which anticipates Benjamin's "constellation" introduces the detailed survey of the sewer's vast and surprising "collections."

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[67] ["The facts that will be recounted pertain to this dramatic and lively reality that the historian sometimes neglects for want of time and space. Here, however, we insist, here is the life, the palpitation, the quiver of the human. The small details, we believe we have already said it, are, in a manner of speaking, the foliage of great events and lose themselves in the vast distances of history. The so-called epoch of riot abounds in details of this genre."]

[68] ["Where the subject has not been lost from view, there can be no digression."]

The "digression" on the sewers begins with what appears to be a non sequitur. Having saved his daughter, Cosette's, lover from imminent death in the barricades, Valjean and an unconscious Marius find themselves stranded between the upturned *pavés* of the barricade and the cold, impenetrable houses. Valjean seizes upon the grill leading to the sewer and realizes his salvation. As Hugo begins the next chapter, the tumult of the barricades is as distant as the flight of Valjean and Marius: "Paris jette par an vingt-cinq millions à l'eau" (645).[70] Thus begins a twenty-page retreat from the narrative action. And yet, as Hugo has explained, the subject is still in view. While neither Valjean, Marius, nor any of the novel's other cast of characters make an appearance in the digression on the sewer, the subject of the fighting in the barricades and the sewer is the same: progress. For Hugo, the 1832 Insurrection "C'est là une des phases fatales, à la fois acte et entr'acte, de ce drame dont le pivot est un damné social et dont le titre véritable est : *le Progrès*" (628).[71] Like the form of the émeute itself, progress is not a neatly bounded form, with a clear beginning and end.[72]

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[69] ["We can come closest to imagining this strange geometric outline by supposing that we are looking - against a background of shadows – at some bizarre oriental alphabet jumbled together in a muddle, the deformed letters of which are visibly welded together in a pell-mell, at times by their angles, at others by their extremities."]

[70] ["Paris pours twenty-five million francs down the drain each year"]

Ultimately, what the sewer represents is a version of history and of form that has less to do with a linear narrative of cause and effect, or a teleology that charts clear progress, than a more diffuse "constellation" of artifacts. In giving the history of the Parisian sewer, Hugo does not confine his account to the development of sewers in France but considers those of England and Rome, but also those "au Moyen-Âge, au Bas-Empire, et dans ce vieil Orient" in addition to the sewers of "Bénarès," "Téglath-Phalasar," "Munster" and "Kekhscheb" (648, 650).[73] Moreover, his account of the sewer's crude evolution eschews any semblance of linearity. While there are narrative interludes - most notably that of the intrepid Brunseau and his exploration/renovation of the sewers - the diegetic and extra-diegetic references are tangled as artifacts from one century wash up next to those of a far distant one. Like the constellation of historical sewers, we find similar constellations of artifacts that, significantly, date from both well before and well after the novel's present. While such anachronisms occur throughout the novel – even in its first pages – they appear in heightened concentration in the chapters on the sewer.

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[71] ["It is one of the fatal phases – at once act and entr'acte of this drama whose hub is a social outcast and the true title of which is: Progress."]

[72] Indeed, as Victor Brombert observes: "Revolution became for Hugo the life-giving force of modern history. But the monstrosity of revolutionary violence, which truly obsessed him, also explains the dream of transcending revolution, of seeking a higher harmony through an exit from history, through the negation of the destructive principle which he associated with any linear historical concept" (9).

[73] Hugo revisits this theme in his poem, "L'égout de Rome," in the collection, *Châtiments* (1853).

In order to attend the sewer's atemporal constellations, the narrator adopts a familiar Hugolian device and provides the rather peculiar panorama or 'birds-eye' view of the sewer.[74] "Qu'on s'imagine Paris ôté comme un couvercle, le réseau souterrain des égouts, *vu à vol d'oiseau*, dessinera sur les deux rives une espèce de grosse branche greffée au fleuve" (649).[75] What surfaces from this vantage point is a strange historical potpourri. Adopting a similar shift in scale to the bird's-eye, the narrator exclaims:

> partout, la vase, que les égoutiers en étaient venus à manier intrépidement, abondait en objets précieux, bijoux d'or et d'argent, pierreries, monnaies. Un géant qui eût filtré ce cloaque eût eu dans son tamis la richesse des siècles. Au point de partage des deux branchements de la rue du Temple et de la rue Sainte-Avoye, on ramassa une singulière médaille huguenote en cuivre, portant d'un côté un porc coiffé d'un chapeau de cardinal et de l'autre un loup la tiare en tête. (658)[76]

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[74] As Yves Gohin observes in his footnotes to the novel, a similar phrase appears earlier: "Cf. IV, 13, II (t. II p.482): 'Paris à vol d'hibou."

[75] ["If we were to imagine Paris, removed like a lid, the subterranean network of its sewers, from a bird's eye perspective, would look something like a large branch grafted onto both banks of the river."]

[76] ["Everywhere, sludge, which the sewermen had intrepidly come to handle, abounded with precious objects, gold and silver jewelry, gemstones, coin. A giant, running a sieve through

Alongside such material wealth, the description of the sewer also collects historical 'treasures' including ""les maillotins au quatorzième siècle, les tire-laine au quinzième, les huguenots au seizième, les illuminés de Morin au dix-septième, les chauffeurs, au dix-huitième" (650).[77] The reach of such historical litter is vast, stretching across five centuries: "Le Moine-Bourru était éclos sous la voussure fétide de l'égout Mouffetard; les cadavres des Marmousets avaient été jetés dans l'égout de la Barillerie; Fagon avait attribué la redoutable fièvre maligne de 1685 au grand hiatus de l'égout du Marais qui resta béant jusqu'en 1833 rue Saint-Louis presque en face de l'enseigne du Messager galant" (655).[78] As Hugo reminds us:

> L'histoire passe par l'égout. Les Saint-Barthélemy y filtrent goutte à goutte entre les pavés. Les grands assassinats publics, les boucheries politiques et religieuses, traversent ce souterrain de la civilisation et y poussent leurs cadavres. Pour l'oeil du songeur, tous les meurtriers historiques sont là … Louis XI y est avec Tristan,

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this cesspool, would have had the wealth of the ages. At the intersection of two branches of the rue du Temple and the rue Sainte-Avoye, a singular Huguenot medallion in copper was picked up, bearing on one side a swine wearing a galero and on the other a wolf with a tiara on its head."]

[77] ["Maillotins in the fourteenth century, Tire-Laines in the fifteenth, Morin Illuminati in the seventeenth, Chauffeurs in the eighteenth."]

[78] ["The Moine-Bourru [specter/phantom] hatched under the fetid arch of the Mouffetard sewer; the corpses of *Marmousets* had been thrown into the Barillerie sewer; Fagon had attributed the redoubtable malignant fever of 1685 to the large opening in the Marais sewer, which remained agape until 1833, almost directly across from the sign for the Messager Gallant Inn, on the rue Saint-Louis."]

> François Ier y est avec Duprat, Charles IX y est avec sa mère, Richelieu y est avec Louis XIII, Louvois y est, Letellier y est, Hébert et Maillard y sont, grattant les pierres et tâchant de faire disparaître la trace de leurs actions. (652)[79]

Yet Hugo's representation of the sewer is not simply a gold mine for scholars of thing theory and material culture. Complicating levels of historical reference, Hugo incorporates literary allusions, in the form of artifacts, into his descriptive constellations. Thus, allusions to Molière and Shakespeare bob alongside literary tropes, including:

> le masque de Basile … le faux nez de Scapin … Là, un cul de bouteille avoue l'ivrognerie, une anse de panier raconte la domesticité; là, le trognon de pomme qui a eu des opinions littéraires redevient le trognon de pomme; l'effigie du gros sou se vert-de-grise franchement, le crachat de Caïphe rencontre le vomissement de Falstaff, le louis d'or qui sort du tripot heurte le clou où pend le bout de corde du suicide, un foetus livide roule enveloppé dans des paillettes qui ont dansé le mardi gras dernier à l'Opéra, une toque qui a jugé les hommes se vautre près

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[79] ["History flows through the sewer. The perpetrators of Saint Bartholomew seep, drop by drop, between its cobblestones. The great public assassinations, political and religious butcheries, roam this underworld of civilization and get rid of their cadavers there. To a pensive eye, all of the historical murderers are there … Louis XI is there with Tristan, François I is there with Duprat, Charles IX is there with his mother, Richelieu is there with Louis XIII, Louvois is there, Letellier is there, Hébert et Maillard are there, scrubbing at the stones and trying to erase the traces of their actions."]

> d'une pourriture qui a été la jupe de Margoton. (652)[80]

These cesspool constellations invert the realist formula of the novel as mirror to the world: "L'histoire des hommes se reflète dans l'histoire des cloaques" at the same time that they figure a more plastic form of the novel and of history (650).[81]

Hugo's representation of the sewer *as* History thus materializes Benjamin's description of the work of the historian: "Thinking involves not only the flow of thoughts but their arrest as well. Where thinking suddenly stops in a configuration pregnant with tensions, it gives that configuration a shock, by which it crystallizes into a monad" (262). Benjamin's image is suggestive not only of the flow and obstruction of the sewer (described in epic tones in Hugo's recounting of Brunseau's exploits) but also of the form of Hugo's novel. For what are Hugolian digressions if not an "arrest" from the "flow" of the plot, "pregnant with tensions"?

The constellations in *Les Misérables* render the temporality of history spatial – not only by extending across geographic boundaries but also by capturing connections between forms from diverse planes of literary, social, and political history – and 'arresting' them for our perception. Moreover, while these digressions from the story of the novel appear completely disconnected, I argue that Jean Valjean's flight into the sewer forces an encounter between individual history and History. Where, for Lukács, the "mediocre hero" in historical novels is the mechanism for more vividly capturing the totality of an historical era, in Hugo, the hero – who, despite his humble origins is anything but mediocre – is simply a blip on the radar – one "artifact" among many others that not only precede but also post-date him. The contradictions of historical progress do not, as in Lukács, come into relationship with one another "through the plot" and the mediocre hero through which "a neutral ground is sought and found upon which the extreme, opposing social forces can be brought into a human relationship with one another" (36). Instead, in *Les Misérables,* it is neither story nor character that serve as the quintessential form but the subject. The excursus into the sewer radically reframes the form of the novel not simply by disrupting the understanding of the *story* as continuous, forward-moving progress but by reframing and re-contextualizing that story far beyond its first and final words. Rather than a dialectic notion of history as *process,* this formal iteration of history offers an understanding of history as a discontinuous process – a multiplicity of shifting constellations. In that respect, *Les Misérables* is a novel that, like the Napoleonic Wars, keeps not being over.

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[80] ["the mask of Basil … Scapin's false nose … Over there, the bottom of a bottle confesses drunkenness, a basket handle tells of domesticity, over there, the apple core that had literary views has once again become an apple core; the effigy of a large penny honestly turns green, Caiaphas's spit meets Falstaff's vomit, the gold Louis of the gambling den collides with the nail from which hangs the end of a suicide's rope, a pallid fetus rolls around, enveloped in glitter that danced the last mardi gras at the Opera, a wig, which passed judgment on men wallows near rot that had once been Margoton's skirt."]

[81] ["The history of men is reflected in the history of cesspools."]

III. Re-forming Pleasure: Working Class Aesthetic Experience in Zola's *L'Assommoir*

Hugo's image of the sewer provides a lens through which we can advance a new reading of Zola's *L'Assommoir.* Where Hugo's collects and assembles literary, historical, and political forms across the boundaries of the narrative/descriptive divide or of the fictional sewer, in Zola, such boundaries have been far more fungible. Just as the sewer gives rise to a certain formal logic in *Les Misérables*, so does the Louvre in *L'Assommoir*. Indeed, the Louvre, like the novel itself, hosts a number of social, political, and aesthetic forms that we can trace in their arrangement and re-arrangement. Days after the attack on the Tuileries palace, home to a prisoner-King and a royal collection of art, the Republican Assembly passed an act that strikingly materialized the ideals of the Revolution by declaring the palace and its collection to be national property. And yet, the aesthetic pleasure newly available to the public at the Louvre was to become as regimented as any of Haussmann's boulevards. Émile Zola's *L'Assommoir* (1887) famously depicts the parade of a working-class wedding party across Paris to the Louvre. Their visit to the museum intersects with critical debates about the politics of aesthetics and the move to cultivate Taste and regulate pleasure in the nineteenth century. While many critics have read the 'uninformed' or 'puerile' pleasure the characters take in art as symptomatic of a society that seeks to maintain an aesthetic hierarchy, I instead read the Louvre as the site of shifting political and social forms that unsettle the marginalization or degradation of working class aesthetic pleasure and argue that the novel enacts a formal redistribution of the discursive control of the aesthetic space of the Louvre. In contrast to the third-person omniscient narration that elsewhere seeks to impose order and uphold bourgeois forms of aesthetic appreciation, the works of art in the Louvre are subject to ekphrastic description by the wedding party. As these characters describe and comment on the works of art, they do the work of the novelist. Consequently, the novel invests their “uncultivated” pleasure with value and gestures toward a *partage du sensible* that can accommodate multiple forms of aesthetic experience.

That the wedding party would consider a trip to the Louvre - or have access to its galleries - is the product of both political and cultural revolutions. Initially constructed as a medieval fortress under Philippe Auguste in 1190, the Louvre witnessed a series of afterlives as a royal palace - home to a number of monarchs including, most notably, Louis XIV - and as the seat of the fine arts in France (“Histoire du Louvre”). Following the French Revolution, the buildings of the Louvre not only housed the King and the national collection of art, but also the

Convention Nationale. With the Revolution's literal seizure of the cultural heritage of France and its ambition to make that heritage publicly accessible, the royal palace began its transition to a national museum. The literal juxtaposition of political power and national culture signaled the steadily increasing use of the arts and the museum for political ends throughout the nineteenth century.[82]

I argue that what the unique interaction of the forms of politics and the forms of aesthetics highlights in the Louvre is not simply its malleability as a political symbol, but its legacy – similar to the *barricades* – as a locus for re-distributions of the sensible. Monarchs, emperors, presidents, and revolutionaries all benefited from the political force of the museum as an historical monument and cultural heritage. Andrew McClellan explains that in the eighteenth century, "the royal collection came to be seen as national property, part of the nation's cultural patrimony that had to be preserved for posterity... The Crown became the guardian of transcendent cultural values embodied in works of art that belonged in the public sphere and to the public as much as to the king" (7). Thus the monarch became the private caretaker of a public collection - a task, which, through the nation's pride in its patrimony, ultimately strengthened the position of the king. Given that the throne blurred public and private spheres in curious ways, the Revolution's seizure of the museum in order to make it what it supposedly already had been - public property - nevertheless represented a powerful political act. The continued association of the museum with sovereignty - whether popular or royal - further served to entrench the Louvre as a symbol of political legitimacy and authority. Both Napoléon I and his nephew turned to the

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[82] For an extensive account of the intersection of politics and the museum in the nineteenth century, see Dominique Poulot's excellent *Une histoire des musées de France, XVIIe-XXe siècle*.

Louvre as a theatre for staging their legitimacy and placing themselves within an older tradition. Though the palace had already made the transition to a public museum, it nevertheless continued to serve exclusive, private, political ends. Napoléon notably wed Marie Louise of Austria in the Louvre's Salon Carré in 1810 (McClellan 110). On an international scale, the museum reasserted its power as a public symbol of *pride* and political power under Napoléon. Throughout the First Empire, the Louvre showcased - as public property - works that had been seized in war or as part of the growing imperial conquest. Indeed, Napoléon's conquest of Egypt - a campaign whose French mascot was, fittingly, the crocodile - yielded many of the treasures the wedding party will encounter in the Assyrian Gallery (Dominique Poulot 103).

While we can certainly point to the Commune and the fire that destroyed the Tuileries Palace as political events that instantiated new regimes of political power, I want to suggest that we can also look to something far more quotidian - like umbrellas - to understand the social forms that circulate in the Louvre and which Zola's novel constellates alongside his depiction of the fictional wedding party. Thus, I argue that the Louvre, as a form, enacts a *partage du sensible* that registers not only at the scale of Rancière's "lie of the plot" but also at the scale of the "microsensory events" of daily life. The museum, after all, was also the site of public festivities, official visits, arts education and - much to the chagrin of the authorities – a temporary shelter to the homeless. Like many provincial French art museums, the Louvre opened its doors to all citizens during the Second Empire. Yet, unlike many of the spectacles available to entertain Parisians, admission to the Louvre was either free or affordable to all income levels. Although priority admission was often reserved for art students and artists, the Louvre, much like the other great public space of the second half of the nineteenth century, the department store, welcomed all classes and genders to mix freely within its galleries. As a result, the Louvre, as a site of the common, continually redefined and expanded the activity to which it lent itself and who could take part.

As expected, the redistributed encounter between classes and genders - outside of a rigidly hierarchized social structure - ignited a number of anxieties. In large part, I contend, this anxiety arose from the clash between social forms, like the rules guiding visitor conduct in the museum, and political forms, like strict class hierarchies. Among the most polemic of such regulations, according to Daniel Sherman, was the requirement that visitors check umbrellas and walking sticks upon entry to the Louvre. Drawing from an archive of letters to newspapers across France, Sherman notes the energetic contestation of these regulations - despite the commonsensical reasons behind them. While public outcry against regulations did not often result in a change to museum policy, umbrellas proved to be a telling exception. Sherman explains that, “whereas people from all classes carried umbrellas in the rain ... only bourgeois, and especially bourgeoises, carried them regardless of the weather” (54). Thus the wedding party in *L’Assommoir*, who only visit the museum *because* it is raining, check their umbrellas, alongside their bourgeois counterparts. Given the affinity between umbrellas and bourgeois identity, the interdiction of their presence in the museum itself would have been understood as the erasure of an important class marker. Yet, the concession by museum authorities to demands that umbrellas and walking sticks recuperate their right to tour the museums alongside their owners, ultimately signals a subtle yet powerful redistribution of the museum as a site of the common.

Once the wedding party finally reaches the museum, I argue that they encounter a set of institutional and cultural forms that work to shape their behavior and their ability to participate in the museum as a site of the common. The characters enter the Louvre through the Assyrian

Gallery, the collections of which represent the booty of an Imperial campaign that took the crocodile as its symbol. Their tour of the Assyrian Gallery recalls the earlier dangers of crossing the boulevard: "Et, lentement, les couples avançaient, le menton levé, les paupières, battantes, entre les colosses de pierre, les dieux de marbre noir muets dans leur raideur hiératique, les bêtes monstrueuses, moitié chattes et moitié femmes, avec des figures de mortes, le nez aminci, les lèvres gonflées" (Zola 100).[83] The reaction of the wedding party evokes a sublime experience - they are equally awestruck and discomfited by the statues that ironically recall their own status as "other." While their behavior continues to take the form of an orderly, quiet, and respectful tour of the galleries, their response to the museum's exhibitions is far from the educated appreciation encouraged by Museum authorities. The wedding party remains relatively unimpressed by the works in the Assyrian Gallery and - perhaps most offensively - too readily identifies with them. Like the visitors in Daumier's sketch, "A l'Exposition universelle. Section égyptienne" (Fig. 3), Zola's characters "trouvaient ça très vilain" (100).[84] Moreover, they remain "stupefied" by the Phoenician script, "une inscription en caractères phéniciens les stupéfia. Ce n'était pas possible, personne n'avait jamais lu ce grimoire,"[85] and - as fellow stonecutters - even find that "on travaillait joliment mieux la pierre au jour d'aujourd'hui" (100).[86] Rather than an "aesthetic" appreciation of the artworks, the characters respond to them as what Rancière calls "manières de faire"; that is, they still relate to the artisanal character - the value as a form of work - rather than evaluating it according to purely aesthetic criteria, as "art."

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[83] ["Slowly, tilting up their chins and blinking their eyes, the couples walked along between the giant stone statues, the silent gods of black marble in their rigid hieratical poses, and the monstrous creatures, half-cat, half-woman, whose pinched noses and swollen lips made their faces look like death masks" (76).]

[84] ["thought them all very ugly" (76).]

[85] ["an inscription in Phoenician characters left them flabbergasted. No, it wasn't possible, nobody had ever read that scribbling" (76).]

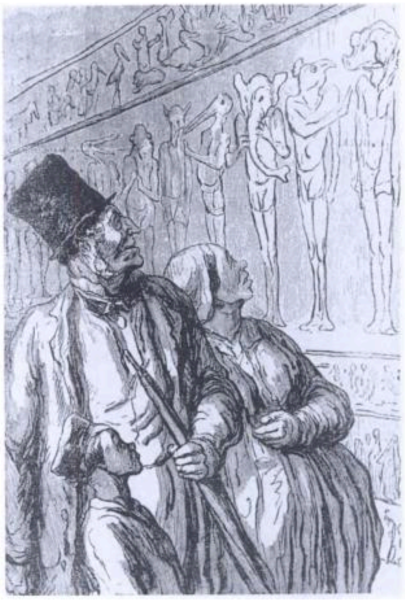

Fig. 3. Honoré Daumier, "A l'Exposition universelle. Section égyptienne. Vrai! Les anciens égyptiens n'étaient pas beaux." ["At the Universal Exhibition. Egyptian Section. The Egyptians weren't good looking!"]. Wood engraving, 1867. McClellan (1994): 11. Print.

What I read as the temporal forms that govern the ability to visit the museum, as well as the pace and duration of that visit, again produce a telling *partage du sensible*. Ignorant of the impossibility of viewing all of the museum's collections in a single visit, the characters rush to make the most of their excursion. Despite M. Madinier's pretensions to expertise - he has previously visited the museum in the company of an "artist" (who, in fact, produces commercial sketches for cardboard boxes) - he quickly gets lost. Museums like the Louvre demand significant amounts of leisure time from their visitors. And yet - despite the rapidly increasing avenues for seeking pleasure in the city - many of its workers nevertheless found themselves with little time for fun. As a result, the temporality of the museum most readily lent itself to those privileged with spare time, as well as spare change. The material realities that give form to cultural institutions, like the museum, then work against the Republican desire to make the museum and its cultural heritage the property of *all* French citizens. Further, these realities give form to the museum as a political experience, as they determine – to return to Rancière – who can take part in the common: "Les artisans, dit Platon, ne peuvent pas s'occuper des choses communes parce qu'ils n'ont pas le temps de se consacrer à autre chose que leur travail. Ils ne peuvent pas être ailleurs parce que le travail n'attend pas" (13).[87] Given the discrepancy between the leisure time at the disposal of the characters and the time required to view the galleries, the visit to the museum literally becomes painful. "Encore des tableaux, toujours des tableaux ... qu'on ne comprenait pas ... une débandade de gens et de choses dont le violent tapage de couleurs commençait à leur causer un gros mal de tête" (102).[88]

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[86] ["People worked stone a hell of a lot better these days" (76).]

These social and political instances of *repartage* encounter aesthetic forms most directly in the characters' experience of the museum's collections and in the novel's description of that experience. In *L'Assommoir*, Zola seizes upon curatorial practices as a key formal principle in the *partage du sensible* and echoes Hugo's concerns about the nature of aesthetic experience structured according to teleological or chronological coordinates. Prior to the late eighteenth century, art museums in Europe privileged a dense, mosaic-like hang that juxtaposed works that shared a similar subject, formal feature, or technical practice (McClellan 2-4). This display aimed to impress visitors with the opulence of the princely collections and called on educated visitors to engage with a central theme or technique in each of the juxtaposed artworks. With the rise of taxonomies in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, art museums adopted a similar logic to give form to their own collections. Curators turned to principles of chronology, movement, or school - key to the academic discipline of art history - to organize their collections (McClellan). According to McClellan, this "ubiquitous and largely contemporaneous shift in the organization of European collections defined the art museum as a site of public instruction in the history of art" (4). And yet, both exhibition practices require their viewers to share some level of education in either art history or aesthetics. Although the Louvre embraced an exhibition practice that potentially promoted public instruction, it failed to realize its edifying mission in rendering that organization transparent to its visitors.

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[87] ["Artisans, Plato says, cannot concern themselves with the common because they do not have the time to devote themselves to anything other than their work. They cannot be elsewhere because work does not wait" (translation mine).]

[88] ["More pictures, and still more pictures … of men and women whose faces meant nothing to them … a confusion of people and things in such a busy riot of colours that everyone was beginning to get a nasty headache" (77).]

At the time of the novel's publication, Zola faced accusations of plagiarism, stemming from the similarity between his representation of working class characters in the museum and an earlier, well-known depiction of the same scene in Denis Poulot's *Question sociale, Le Sublime, ou le travailleur comme il est en 1870 et ce qu'il peut être*.[89] Poulot underlines the challenges to the museum's edifying mission by citing its anecdotal failures. "Le dimanche, remarquez dans les groupes, devant un tableau sentimental ou historique, vous trouverez l'ouvrier; écoutez ses commentaires; ce n'est ni question de lumière, de formes ou de couleur qu'il apprécie, c'est le sujet" (50).[90] Although Poulot nevertheless remains convinced by the potential for art - and painting in particular - to "développer les bons sentiments de la classe laborieuse" [91]– he cites one of the most glaring obstacles: the absence of any signage or educational materials to orient visitors to the museum. Yet Poulot's comments point us toward another example of the "subject," as opposed to chronology or narrative temporality, as a formal principle. As one of Zola's characters opines: "c'était bête de ne pas écrire les sujets sur les cadres" (101).[92]

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[89] [*The Social Question: The Sublime or the Worker as He Is in 1870 and What He Can Be*]

In reading Zola's depiction of the wedding party at the Louvre, it is important not simply to historicize or contextualize the characters' experience but also to consider the ways in which the particular arrangement and re-arrangement of aesthetic forms (like style of gallery hang), political forms (like the attempt to democratize the national cultural heritage), and social forms (like the *mode* of strolling with an umbrella – whatever the weather), incite multiple *partages du sensible*. Readers and critics of *L'Assommoir* often remark on the clash between the educational and moralizing mission of the museum, and the resistance of the working classes - at whom this effort was principally directed - to this mission. Most critics take the scene to be a poorly disguised opportunity for Zola to advance his own aesthetic theories, through the mouthpiece of the narrator, or – what is perhaps a more serious accusation – as a blatant criticism of both the working class characters and the edifying mission of the museum. Gradually, the characters in *L'Assommoir* become a form of spectacle for the other museumgoers; as their fatigue increases, their careful attention to the "correct" forms wanes. The wedding party, "perdant son respect, traînait ses souliers à clous, tapait ses talons sur les parquets sonores, avec le piétinement d'un troupeau débandé, lâché au milieu de la propreté nue et recueillie des salles" (102).[93] Their dissonant behavior accompanies an ever-noisier and less "appropriate" commentary on the paintings they encounter, which critics like Robert Lethbridge and Jean-Philippe Mathy cite as evidence of either the novel's judgment of the working classes themselves, or of the failure of the museum's Republican mission to give create a coherent cultural experience across classes. Mathy, for example, argues that the presence of the workers in the Louvre, and the moralizing discourse of the omniscient narrator, serve to "mettre au jour tout à la fois les limites du projet républicain d'émancipation, l'imposition culturelle opérée par le musée, et la résistance que lui oppose le cortège ouvrier, contraint à délégitimer et à désacraliser la culture savante" (451).[94] Yet, this relatively popular reading of the novel - both at the time of publication and in current scholarship - implicitly aligns the Republican project with an elitist aesthetics, and uses that aesthetics as its standard of evaluation. In this reading of the novel, the characters ultimately remain fragments of a larger social whole, alienated from the art and its cultural and societal forms.

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[90] "On Sundays, watch the groups in front of a sentimental or history painting and you will find the worker; listen to their comments; it is neither a question of light, nor of forms nor of color that he appreciates, it's the subject" (translation mine).

[91] ["develop the moral sentiments of the working class"]

[92] ["It was silly not to include the subjects on the frames" (77).]

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[93] "And the wedding-party, weary now and no longer so intimidated, dragged their hob-nailed boots and clumped their heels on the noisy floors, sounding, in the bare and tranquil orderliness of the galleries, like the trampling of a stamping herd" (78).

[94] "at once to bring to light the limits of the republican project of emancipation, the cultural imposition enacted by the museum, and the resistance to it by the cortege of workers, forced to delegitimize and desacralize learned culture."

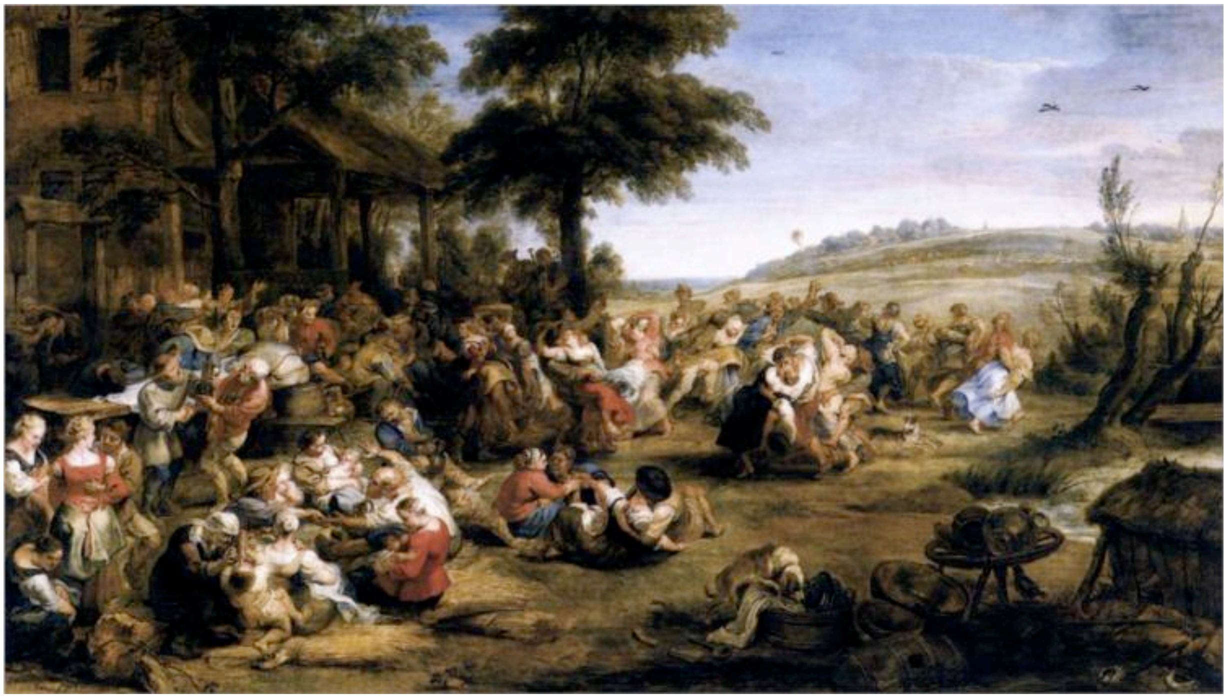

Fig. 4. Peter Paul Rubens. “The Kermesse.” 1638. Oil on panel. *WikiPaintings*. Web. 02 Feb. 2013.

As a result, the narrator’s descriptions of the wedding party seem to denigrate the characters as ignorant and puerile. The wedding party focuses on the scatological aspects of the paintings, and the narrator highlights the lewd character of their descriptions. Although the narrator’s perspective, which views the wedding party as itself a spectacle, seems to align with that of an educated reader, I argue that the introduction of ekphrastic description – by these same characters – initiates a fleeting but no less significant redistribution of the discursive space of the novel. On all but one occasion, the narrator describes the experience of the characters in the museum using free indirect speech. In the singular, errant example, the characters do the work of the novelist as they describe Rubens's *Kermesse* (Fig. 4).

> M. Madinier se taisait pour ménager un effet. Il alla droit à la Kermesse de Rubens. Là, il ne dit toujours rien, il se contenta d'indiquer la toile, d'un coup d'œil égrillard. Les dames, quand elles eurent le nez sur la peinture, poussèrent de petits cris ; puis, elles se détournèrent, très rouges. Les hommes les retinrent, rigolant, cherchant les détails orduriers. 'Voyez donc! répétait Boche, ca vaut l'argent. En voilà un qui dégobille. Et celui-là, il arrose les pissenlits. Et celui-là, oh! celui-là... Ah bien! ils sont propres ici. (103)[95]

While the passage begins with the third person omniscient narration typical of the novel, it ends with Boche's call to "Voyez donc !" Under the guidance of the characters, the reader – for the first time – encounters a verbal representation of one of the visual representations in the museum more commonly known as *ekphrasis.* Ekphrastic descriptions of artworks were not only common but significant contributions to reviews, salon catalogues, and other works that brought the art world closer to distant readers. Undertaken by some of the key thinkers and tastemakers – like Dénis Diderot – these descriptions carried a certain intellectual weight and authority.[96] Thus, in charging the characters with the only description of a painting, Zola has them do the *work* of the narrator.

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[95] ["Monsieur Madinier was keeping quiet: he had a surprise up his sleeve. He strode directly over to Rubens' *Kermesse*. There, still saying nothing, he simply rolled his eyes salaciously in the direction of the picture. The ladies, when they'd got right up close, gave little shrieks then looked away, scarlet in the face. But their menfolk, sniggering, made them stay with them while they searched the canvas for smutty details. 'Take a look at this!' Boche kept repeating. 'This is worth a fortune. Here's someone puking. And there's someone watering the dandelions. And that one – oh! as for that one! … Well! This 'ere's a fine lot, I must say'" (78).]

[96] Diderot, Dénis. *Salons*. Ed. Michel Delon. Paris: Gallimard, 2008.

Moreover, these descriptions confront the traditional forms of aesthetic discourse with a language that is as difficult for the novel's bourgeois readers to understand as the Phoenician characters are for the wedding party. Editions of *L'Assommoir* include a glossary that translates the slang particular to the Paris slums for both the novel's original readers and its current readers. Yet another of the novel's many foils, the wedding party's caption to a painting of a wedding party inverts, rather than simply resists, the forms of the museum's edifying mission. What results is not only a new arrangement of forms within the Louvre but within the representational space of the novel as the social, political, historical, aesthetic, literary, and linguistic forms catalyze significant "microsensory events" that the "lie of the plot" ultimately cannot capture.

Most of the literature on *L'Assommoir* reads the novel as politically disengaged or as promoting a fatalistic view of the impact of the slum environment on the working class. These readings rely on an understanding of form - and novel form - as singular, static, and whole. Drawing from some of the best-known commentaries on *L'Assommoir*, we find readings that emphasize narrative teleology, reading the characters' experience in the museum simply as a prognostication of what is to come later in the novel. *L'Assommoir* is certainly an intricately structured novel that situates the scene at the museum directly in the center - and at the peak - of its narrative.[97] However, we foreclose a number of imaginative possibilities by habitually imposing the “ending” or narrative resolution as the standard of evaluation. What Rancière’s theory of the *partage du sensible* teaches us is that multiple political, literary, aesthetic, and social forms encounter each other, overlap, and engage in a dynamic fashioning of the common. Given that this distribution is a continual process, taking the ending as our standard of evaluation proves equally as troubling as evaluating the pleasure the characters take in the museum according to bourgeois or elitist ideas about leisure and aesthetic appreciation.

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[97] Lethbridge observes that "the echoes of the episode [at the Louvre] echo back and forth through the novel, reappearing (at whatever level of deliberation)" and notes that, among the other novels of the *Rougon-Macquart*, *L'Assommoir* "is exceptional only in its structural reliance, most visible in its original subdivision into twenty-one chapters, on the 'tableau' …

By redistributing the forms of fictional representation to encourage the characters to participate in them as a common experience, *L’Assommoir* offers a compelling example of how the forms of the novel can participate in the *partage du sensible*. Ultimately, this *partage du sensible* – however brief – offers a powerful instance of representing collectivity that is not overshadowed or usurped by an ending that reinforces the marginalization of the already marginalized characters.

Within what Mitterand calls ‘une narratique exposante’, the visit to the Louvre is sectioned off, framed not only by repeated terms but also by the ‘crotte’ (p. 442) and the ‘tas d’ordures’ (p.448) on either side of it” (51).

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CODA

FORMAL PLASTICITY AND WORLD LITERATURE

One important avenue that this dissertation has yet to explore is the encounter of New Formalism and research in comparative literature, transnationalism, and world literature. Canonical French and British novels, often more broadly representative of the Western novel, have frequently been the standard bearer of a tradition of formal imperialism in which, as Carlos Alonso succinctly puts it, the "third-world novel" is understood according to a "foreign-form-local materials" distinction" (4). As Alonso notes, the adoption or adaptation paradigm has received significant criticism over the last two decades. If, however, the form of the novel is not in fact fixable, stable, or singular, then its circulation and role as a cultural export cannot remain intact. In the "Introduction," I argue that the formal study of the novel has been and continues to be oriented around the relationship between parts and wholes, to the detriment of our understanding of not only the force of such parts but also of their surprising and suggestive relationships to one another.

While it may not entirely level the playing field, studying the multiple forms of the novel might, by helping us to discover and trace new forms, allow us to consider formal relations outside of a strict center-periphery paradigm. To read the novel as a genre that accommodates plasticity and rearrangement calls forth important questions about a more expansive, more plastic theory of the novel and its forms and the contours of world literature. In other words, approaching world literature through *formal plasticity* may bring to light formal operations that are not imperializing, subordinating, fragmented, or necessarily hegemonic. Consider what it would look like if we approached world literature as a dynamic process of collecting in which scholars and the novels they study are continually caught between the home and the world, encountering previously unrecognized forms and seeking to understand their global footprint.

What form might such a collection take? How can we find a place for the particular and the detail and, in doing so, allows for a study of world literature that can effectively toggle between close and distant? One prominent and promising model comes in the form of academic collaboration, pairing specialists in national literatures with their comparatist counterparts to navigate both the local and the global. Franco Moretti's "distant reading," offers one polemic, and ultimately highly problematic model of collaboration that combines formalism with world literature.[98] With the publication of "Conjectures on World Literature" and its nearly contemporaneous "Slaughterhouse of Literature", Moretti begins to describe his work as a kind of "quantitative formalism" and "distant reading" and even embraces Jonathan Arac's description of his methodology as "Formalism without close reading" (41). In "Evolution, World-Systems, *Weltliteratur*," Moretti sketches the form of the novel in world literature in the same terms of wholeness and inequality that I critique throughout this dissertation: "Italy, Brazil, Indonesia, the Philippines, Japan, Bengal … The specifics obviously differ from case to case, but the formal logic is always the same: these novels are all 'amalgamations of different traditions' – and all of the same kind: they combine *a plot from the core,* and *a style from the periphery*" (132). Moretti goes on to explain that this combination is "possible because the novel is a *composite* form, made of two distinct layers of 'story' and 'discourse' – or in my slight simplification, of plot and style" (132). However, as *Novel Plasticity* has shown, the form of the novel cannot so handily be divided into two layers; the multiplicity of forms and their continual arrangements and rearrangements point instead to multiple layers, a form far more rhizomatic than composite.

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[98] Nirvana Tanoukhi helpful groups the critiques of Moretti's "Conjectures" into two main categories: on the one hand, "critics of 'distant reading' who are most concerned with the displacement of hermeneutic authority, and perhaps the implication that they may be 'mere' specialist to whom 'close-reading' would be conveniently outsourced" (606) – alongside the dominant trend to, as Frances Ferguson remarks "privileg[e] acquaintance over description" (326); and, on the other, critics who claim "that his seemingly ambitious model actually circumscribes the full cartographic potential of the comparative enterprise" (607). For critiques of Moretti's "distant reading," see: Gayatri Spivak, *Death of a Discipline*, Emily Apter, *The Translation Zone*, Wai chee Dimock, "Genre as World System," Jale Parla, "The Object of Comparison," Mario Ortiz-Robles, "Local Speech, Global Acts," Jonathan Arac, "Anglo-Globalism," Christopher Prendergast, "Negotiating World Literature," and David Damrosch, "Toward a History of World Literature."

This "composite form," the product of a literary system that "is itself one and unequal," extends beyond the diffusion and form of the novel to the academic discipline of world literature (127). Moretti's approach to world literature by way of formalism is structured according to a "division of labor" between the abstract theoretical work undertaken by comparatists and the supporting, concrete close readings by national specialists. I agree with Moretti's claim in "Conjectures" that "[f]orms are the abstract of social relationships: so, formal analysis is in its own modest way an analysis of power" (59). And yet I find it surprising that Moretti would instantiate an unequal power dynamic in the very form of the division of academic labor he proposes. Just as the system of world literature "and its various components – the world's many national and local literatures – are often thwarted in their development by their position within the system as a whole" so too are those scholars of national literature who are delegated the task of "analysis" as opposed to the abstract, theoretical work of "synthesis" (127). Faced with the inevitable problem of limited linguistic competence (even for those who are multilingual), Moretti writes:

> Once it became clear that the key variable of the experiment was the narrator's voice, well, a genuine formal analysis was off limits for me, because it required a linguistic competence that I couldn't even dream of (French, English, Spanish, Russian, Japanese, Chinese and Portuguese, just for the core of the argument). And probably, no matter what the object of analysis is, there will always be a point where the study of world literature must yield to the specialist of the national literature, in a sort of cosmic and inevitable division of labour. Inevitable not just for practical reasons, but for theoretical ones. (59)

According to Moretti, comparatists, charged with the abstract work of synthesis, explore "the waves" of world literature, what he describes as "the obvious uniformity engulfing an internal diversity" (60). Moreover, they do so "*because [they] are convinced that that viewpoint is better*" (61). Moretti's description of the comparative study of waves as having "greater explanatory power" and being "conceptually more elegant" distinctly recalls the unequal power relations he ascribes to the form of the novel in world literature. While Moretti later finesses his claim that the novel in world literature can be understood as an "autonomous development" in the core and "a compromise between Western influence and local materials" in the periphery, he nevertheless reaffirms the uneven power dynamics between Western and "world" novels (116). He qualifies that "the picaresque, captivity narratives, even the *Bildungsroman* could not exert the same pressure over French or British novelists that the historical novel or the *mystères* exerted over European and Latin American writers: (117). When the Western form – which he will later describe as the "plot … the main point of a novel," which "must be as solid as possible" – forces a compromise in its adoption in non-western novels, it "produce[s] more unstable and dissonant results" (117).[99] In Moretti's theory of *Weltliteratur* and academic collaboration, comparatists pursue the "conceptually more elegant" whole and scholars of national literatures are left with the fragmented and "unstable" parts.

In contrast, I want to suggest that *formal plasticity* offers the potential to reimagine the forms of world literature and its academic study. For it to do so, we need to return to the problem of scale, shifting from whole literatures, nations, and genres to the smaller – often microscopic – but equally powerful formal arrangements that the chapters *Novel Plasticity* has brought into relief. In other words, just as I've argued that our study of the novel needs to move from form in the singular to the novel and its *forms*, so do I contend that our study of world literature could equally benefit from a conceptual shift from form to constellations of multiple forms. I envisage an approach that reads world literature in its *formal plasticity* taking two primary avenues. The first would be to trace constellations of multiple forms that are inherently transnational. In Chapter Four, "*Le Partage du sensible* and the Politics of Form in *Les Misérables* and *L'Assommoir*," Victor Hugo points the way to what such an approach might entail. His cesspool constellations are transnational, not only in their allusions to other (primarily Western) works of literature, but much more broadly in their arrangement of transnational social, political, and historical forms that, even in their particularity, achieve a global scale. The second avenue of research would entail a practice of academic collaboration that, unlike Moretti's, would call on scholars of the world's literatures to engage in work that is equal parts theoretical conceptualization and close reading. That is, scholars would collaborate to explore whether and how a particular formal arrangement arises in texts from diverse national and linguistic traditions. Drawing from examples in *Novel Plasticity*, one such collaboration could entail tracing the kinds of arrangements of the form of the family in Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and James's *The Golden Bowl* across literatures. Such a critical endeavor might entail, drawing solely from my own, admittedly Western-centric knowledge, contributions that consider similarly shifting forms of the family in Anthony Trollope's *The Warden*, Honoré de Balzac's *Le Père Goriot*, George Sand's *Indiana*, Tagore's *The Home and the World,* Leo Tolsoty's *Anna Karenina,* Sarah Orne Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, and Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm*. Rather than a single novel bearing the weight of representativeness, the burden of influence, or the reductiveness of national allegory, reading the novel as a series of arrangements and rearrangements breaks apart the hegemony of the novel as a Western export.

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[99] Tanoukhi offers a persuasive critique of Moretti's "formal compromise" thesis. She writes that, for Moretti, "compromise" is akin to Shlovsky's concept of "refunctionalization," "formal adaptation to historical change" (606). However, Tanoukhi explains, "when [Moretti] applies it to describe a process of adaptation to *geographic* change (when refunctionalization becomes a process of *domestication*), an interesting tautology arises. 'Local form' is initially proclaimed the *synthesis* of 'foreign form and local materials.' But when 'form' is simplified quickly into 'narrative voice,' it emerges a [*sic*] *symptom* of incomplete refunctionalization (of impossible domestication). For Moretti and his informants … the postcolonial compromise with the novel's foreignness forecloses the condition in the symptom; the landscape in the detail; the 'law' (60) in the 'unit of analysis' (60)" (606).

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