Contagious Communities:
The Politics of Bodily Contact in Victorian Novels

By

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Introduction

My dissertation intervenes at the nexus of two discourses that helped to define the nineteenth century: political economy and public health. Both asked critical questions about what it means to be a community: What are the criteria for community membership? Who gets in and who gets left out? Under what conditions and to what extent does a community member have an ethical responsibility to care for another, and what form should such care take? What materials, resources, and affects should be shared between members and what should be kept private? In this project, I argue that Victorian novels engage in these debates in ways that not only enrich but alter, disrupt, and re-form the worlds that public health and political economy imagine.

The story I want to tell begins before Victoria's ascension to throne, with the public struggle of the late 1820s and 1830s to redefine the social body. As Mary Poovey explains, this period was characterized by shifts in (1) what it meant to imagine the nation as a body and (2) who was included in that body and on what terms. The earlier concept of the "body politic," which was comprised only of politically and economically enfranchised actors, was falling out of use in favor of the more inclusive concept of the "social body," which posits everyone, even those without political influence or economic power, as "constitutive of the state" (Gilbert, *Citizen's Body* 6).[1] At the same time, with the political emancipation of Catholics via the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1829 and the extension of the franchise to land renters in the Reform Act of 1832, the number of British people who were included as political actors was increasing. Although this expansion of the franchise was perhaps more significant in the cultural imagination than it was in sheer numbers, it prompted a reconsideration of the qualifications for

[1] See also Mary Poovey, *Making a Social Body*, 57-60.

inclusion in British citizenship. No longer could fitness for citizenship be defined in terms of religion or property ownership; a new rubric was required.

Mary Poovey and Pamela Gilbert have shown how, in the absence of qualifiers like religion or property, fitness for citizenship came to be defined in terms of domestic behaviors and private desires—in particular, desires and behaviors related to the management of money and the maintenance of the body. To determine whether someone deserves inclusion in the healthy social body, they suggest, Victorians looked to how individuals took care of their *money* and how they took care of their *bodies*. Economically, the British citizen differentiates him or herself from the pauper, the antithesis figure of citizenship—what Gilbert calls the "anticitizen" (60)—not through the material fact of property ownership but rather by a certain immaterial "attitude toward property" (Poovey 7). This attitude is characterized by a basic understanding of and subscription to the tenets of classic political economy, a willingness to sacrifice immediate wants in order to save for future needs, a careful modulation of expenditure to income in order to avoid bankruptcy or unpaid debt, and above all, a desire for upward mobility (Gilbert 21-23). Physically, the citizen distinguishes him or herself from the pauper by maintaining proper hygiene habits and having particular bodily desires. While the pauper is satisfied with the "minimum of the means of life, upon which existence may be prolonged," (Kay 20) the worthy citizen ought to both be and desire to be "well-fed, well-groomed…upright and manly, a little repulsed by the proximity of others, taking in its food alone, reading its individual newspaper, hungering for larger quarters with more separate rooms, more privacy" (Gilbert 60).

In this two-pronged definition of citizenship, political economy and public health become entangled to such an extent that they are almost inextricable as separate disciplines. James Phillips Kay blurs this distinction in his description of the problem of pauperism, which he

claims is characterized by "[w]ant of cleanliness, of forethought, and economy" and is "found in almost invariable alliance with dissipation, reckless habits, and disease" (81). In Kay's formulation, lack of "economy" leads to disease just as lack of "cleanliness" does; proper hygienic habits and proper economic habits are all of a piece. This entanglement of public health and economics is particularly evident in the issue of housing reform, which, as Gilbert notes, becomes "one of the chief means of sanitary intervention" by the 1860s (83). Overcrowded housing was both a public health problem and an economic problem,[2] and a family's ability to extricate themselves from overcrowded housing was a sign of their internalization of the teachings of both political economy and public health. Their willingness to spend money on higher rent instead of more immediate wants revealed their appropriate desire for private, hygienic domestic space. Their ability to manage their income in order to consistently pay that higher rent revealed their understanding of political economy on a domestic scale. The internalization of the tenets of public health motivates the behaviors for which political economy advocates; the habits of domestic management that working class people learn from political economy fund their ability to create a domestic space that conforms to the expectations of public health.

The overlap between political economy and public health is complex and varies across time, but I am most concerned with four shared attributes: (1) both are concerned with the relationship between the private desires and behaviors of individuals and the wellbeing of the nation as a whole, (2) both attempt to mediate between the health of individual bodies and the health of the larger social body, (3) both are concerned with sanctioning certain forms of contact and affiliation between people and proscribing others, and (4) both assert, sometimes implicitly

[2] For more on housing reform, see Gilbert's *The Citizen's Body*, Chapters 5 and 6.

and sometimes explicitly, the political importance of domestic and social life. All of these attributes are also applicable to a third discursive space in which the questions that political economy and public health address often come together: the Victorian novel.

Pamela Gilbert, Catherine Gallagher, and other critics have described the Victorian novel as complicit in the process of educating the desires and disciplining the behaviors of their readers to become the kinds of subjects and citizens imagined by public health and political economy. For Gilbert, novels as disparate as Harriet Martineau's *Deerbrook*, Charles Kingsley's *Two Years Ago*, Oliphant's *Miss Marjoribanks*, Gaskell's *North and South*, Dickens's *Bleak House* and *Our Mutual Friend*, and George Eliot's *Middlemarch* all instruct readers in one way or another about how to appropriately manage their bodies, their money, and their desires. Victorian novels depict, she argues, "the fit body…in terms of continence," the "fit subject" as "marked by a painfully achieved moral and physical self-containment," (11) and the lack of "possessive individualism" as a "threat to the larger social body" (134). Even more than political tracts or commentaries, these novels "normalize the assumptions about the social and the self that underlie them and form their conditions of possibility," operating as "forces that inculcate as truth the assumptions underlying their arguments" (117). The novel, for Gilbert, is an apparatus by which the tenets of political economy, public health, and other discourses of nineteenth-century citizenship are internalized by individual Victorians.

I agree with these scholars that form matters—that novels function differently from political tracts and parliamentary speeches. When novelists take up themes of political economy and public health in the medium of fiction, they do not replicate pre-existing discourses; they alter, remold, and create something new. Though I draw on many of their premises, I ultimately see this "something new" from a different angle than Gilbert, Gallagher, and Poovey. For

Gilbert, the novel strikes deeper than the tract. Rather than appealing to rationality via argument, it shapes the cultural understandings of subjectivity and desire in such a way that the arguments of political economy will not only be thinkable but will appear self-evident and require no argument. For Catherine Gallagher, the novel fleshes out the tract. She writes, "The novels therefore gave political economy something it ordinarily lacked: a sustained encounter with the states of vitality and sensation it invented but failed to explore fully" (6). Although she draws attention to some of Dickens's discomfort with certain features of political economy, she ultimately argues that the work of novelists like Dickens and Eliot functioned to further ensconce the ideas of thinkers like Bentham and Malthus in Victorian culture by making them "culture-friendly" (157). For these two scholars, the Victorian novel enriches and abets the ideological projects of political economy and public health.

Alternatively, Poovey suggests that social problem novels like those of Gaskell challenge the terms and epistemology of political economy. I also claim that Victorian novels challenge political economy and public health, but I do so on very different grounds from Poovey. Poovey claims that Gaskell sees the "novel [as] a mode of representation superior to classical political economy" because it is removed from politics—because, by focusing on "individual characters" and appealing to sympathy, it can "transport middle-class readers into the homes and minds of the poor" (143). For Poovey, the focus on "mental distress" and interior psychological drama in a novel like *Mary Barton* crowds out any meaningful attention to social problems like poverty and shifts any "hopes for 'improvement'" away from political or activism in favor of "the utopian potential culturally ascribed to love" (153). In this project, I seek to work against this binary between politics or activism on the one hand and affect, sympathy, or love on the other. I am interested, and I believe the novelists whose work I focus on in the dissertation

were interested, in the political efficacy of affect, both to reinforce oppressive systems of power and to resist them.

I want to argue that Victorian novels self-consciously intervene in the debates raised by public health and political economy in ways that unsettle (rather than inculcate, as Gilbert suggests) the fundamental assumptions of those discourses. The Victorian novels I discuss do not position themselves *outside of* the masculinized, statistically-minded discourses of public health and political economy, but neither are they necessarily complicit in disciplining their readers in accordance with those discourses. In depicting the ways that embodied characters come into contact with one another and the materials, affects, and language that circulate around those embodied interactions, they enter into the debates dominated by political economy and public health in ways that change the terms of the conversation.

I argue that Victorian novels by Harriet Martineau, Elizabeth Gaskell, Charles Dickens, and George Eliot challenge some of the most fundamental premises of these two joint discourses: (1) that the ideal citizen ought to be self-contained and impervious to the influence of his or her neighbors, (2) that contagion is necessarily bad, (3) that self-interest is productive and appropriate, and finally (3), that the maintenance and protection of "Life" is and should be, as Gallagher puts it, "the ultimate desideratum" (3). The four novelists on which I focus in this dissertation challenge these premises in different ways, and not every novel challenges every premise. When viewed together, though, we can see in these popular and canonical Victorian novels a trend of literary resistance to the tenets of political economy and public health that shaped conceptions of citizenship, community, and nation in the nineteenth-century. In their imagined worlds, the joint influence of political economy and public health is not the key to a healthy social body but rather an ethical problem and a cause of both social and medical disease.

Finally, I argue that these novels construct alternatives, not by retreating away from politics but by imagining different forms of community from which a new politics would emerge. One of the most common criticisms of the Victorian novel is that it makes no real political intervention, turning away from the kinds of legislative reforms that might actually "change the way a nation distributes goods and services to its population" (Armstrong, *How Novels Think* 144) in favor of the "limited salvation" of an idealized domestic space that is only available to certain segments of the population (Gilbert, *Citizen's Body* 151). It is certainly true that the novelists I discuss locate solutions to social problems more in the social and domestic realms of embodied interactions and affects than in the political sphere of legislation and reform. One of the fundamental claims of my dissertation, though, is that reimagining the terms and forms of social community and domestic life is an act that has political potential. Although these authors are not intervening in "politics" as such, I argue that they are laying the groundwork for a new politics altogether.[3]

Key Terms: Affect, Visceral, Natural

My central claims are grounded in close readings of textualized affects. I follow Deborah Gould in defining "affects" as unnamed, unstructured "but nevertheless registered experiences of bodily energy and intensity that arise in response to stimuli impinging on the body" (19). These bodily intensities may not be nameable or culturally legible, but are felt in the body in response to some moment of contact between it and the world. I also draw on Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth's assertion that affects are "born in in-between-ness" (2). Affects arise in the

[3] Whether this new politics actually ever came to fruition is another question, and one that is frankly outside of my dissertation's scope and methodology. I address the problems and potentials of comparing "what might have happened" with "what did happen" in the conclusion.

interstitial spaces where bodies come together—the space of touch that is not quite me and not quite you. Like Sara Ahmed, I am interested in the adhesive properties of affects. Ahmed explains how affects involve a certain "stickiness" (15). They can bind communities together, sticking body to body; they can make certain signs or ideas "stick" to certain objects or bodies (Ahmed 13). Affects have the capacity to "mark a body's belonging," to fix it into a social network, as well as to mark its "non-belonging" and place its bearer outside of the boundaries of the community (Gregg and Seigworth, 2). Reading affect is thus central to my project of understanding the function of bodily contact in Victorian community formation.

I also use the descriptor "visceral" to characterize a range of interactions, experiences, and responses depicted in the novels I discuss. Overlapping with affect in some ways, "visceral" signals the involvement of the "gut"—the internal organs, especially those of the digestive tract—in a sensation or event described in the text. Sometimes, these visceral events literally involve the materials of digestion, as when Margaret Ibbotson cleans fecal matter from the beds of the cholera-stricken Platt family. In other cases, interactions between characters evoke "gut feelings" that seem to arise directly from the body, absent of cognition or conscious thought. By referring to a character's response as "visceral," I seek to emphasize that it is experienced as embodied, spontaneous, and non-cognitive. The term is also useful to me because it gestures toward mutual vulnerability. To experience something viscerally, you have to have viscera; to have gut feelings, you have to have a gut. The body that eats and digests is a body that has holes, can be hungry, can die—a "body that eats and drinks" is "a body that is open" (Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* 107). Viscerality involves the kind of in-between-ness, the contact between self and world that throws the boundary between them into question, which provokes an affective

response. The visceral is thus a useful lens for thinking about community outside of the rubric of the self-enclosed, autonomous individual.

It is important to note that while I have characterized both affect and viscerality as non-cognitive, I do not mean to suggest that they are irrational, primitive, or unreliable. Affect and viscerality both signal ways of knowing that are "outside of but not necessarily contrary to conscious, cognitive, sense-making" (Gould 24). Nor do I want to suggest that either affect or the visceral is free from the influence of ideology and politics. I follow Deborah Gould in maintaining that affective states "are what temper and intensify our attentions, affiliations, investments, and attachments; they help to solidify some of our ideas and beliefs and attenuate others" (27). Affects are central to the process by which *ideology becomes visceral*, causing political differences to be felt as physical aversions. Attending to these "gut feelings" affords an opportunity to understand how "systems of meaning" get "lodged in the gut" as well as how affect might be mobilized to change those systems of meaning (Holland, Ochoa, and Tompkins 395).

The novelists that I discuss all participate, in different ways, in projects of mobilizing textual affects in order to disrupt, change, or transform dominant systems of meaning. They are each concerned with the circulation of affect: how it *does* circulate, how it *should* circulate, and how it has *been prevented from* circulating. Although there is much of interest to be said about the affective responses of novel readers, such study falls outside of the scope and methods of this project. I engage in close readings of affective experiences as authors depict them within the text. As such, the affects that I read are curated ones—not direct physical responses but artists' rendering of those responses, which I read in order to understand the logics and belief systems that govern the worlds that those authors are imagining. In these readings, I sometimes use the

adjective "natural" to describe certain affective responses, as they are rendered by the author. I employ this term cautiously, knowing how often it has been used to pathologize marginalized groups and understanding that the distinction between what is "natural" and what is "unnatural" or "perverted" is much more political than biological. In designating particular affects as "natural," I mean to signal not that those are the biologically or spirituality correct ways of feeling, but rather that they are the ways of feeling that serve the author's political goals. Just as the rhetoric of "the natural" can be deployed to reinforce dominant systems and structures of power, it can be redeployed and used to resist them. The authors that I read are engaged in such redeployment, designating as "natural" certain affective responses and social practices that disrupt economic and political power structures.

Chapter Summaries

My dissertation opens with a chapter covering two of Harriet Martineau's major works: her *Illustrations of Political Economy*, which were published serially from 1831-32, and the novel *Deerbrook*, published in 1839. Martineau's writing is simultaneously an outlier from and a foundation of the novels that I discuss in subsequent chapters. It is an outlier in the sense that Martineau's *Illustrations* emphatically, even dogmatically promotes political economy as a social good, while subsequent authors challenge and criticize it as an ethical problem. In the *Illustrations*, Martineau is quite literally doing what Gilbert claims later Victorian novels do—that is, using literary work to try to instruct and discipline her readership into certain behaviors that are endorsed by political economy as well as (though to a lesser extent) public health. But in planting the lessons of political economy into the medium of fiction, Martineau does more than "flesh out" the lessons she aims to teach her readers. She also reveals certain paradoxes and

problems internal to political economy. First, she shows that laissez-faire capitalism is not, in fact, a self-regulating system. Rather, in order to function in the way that Martineau wants it to, unregulated capitalism must both regulate affect from the top down and outsource the task of micromanaging supply and demand to the poor. Second, she highlights a problem of overlapping bodies. Martineau simultaneously imagines the individual body, the social body, and the economy as organic wholes, as "bodies," but these bodies overlap in ways that put the poor in paradoxical and untenable positions. Finally, she reveals how this friction between bodies of different scales, which situates medical care for the poor as mutually exclusive with economic care for the social body as a whole, places doctors in the untenable position of choosing between a repudiation of political economy and a refusal to provide care.

Martineau returns to this doctor's dilemma in *Deerbrook*, published in 1839, which centers on the provincial surgeon Dr. Hope. For the majority of the novel, Dr. Hope is protected from this dilemma because malicious rumors lead the town's poor to reject his care before he has a chance to consider whether his professional duties conflict with his commitment to the teachings of political economy. When a cholera epidemic strikes *Deerbrook* in the final chapters of the novel, however, Martineau diverges from the position she took in *Illustrations of Political Economy* by depicting her hero choosing to prioritize embodied care over the abstract tenets of political economy. Ultimately, Martineau presents the ethical imperative to care for one's neighbors as more important than upholding the teachings of political economy, as well as protecting one's own body from contagion. Even from the pen of the nineteenth century's most famous popularizer of political economy, the novel challenges some of that discourse's fundamental premises.

This critique of political economy becomes much more explicit in Elizabeth Gaskell's industrial novels. Although Gaskell claimed to know little about political economy, I argue in my second chapter that *Mary Barton* and *North and South* constitute an important systematic critique of Victorian industrial capitalism. Through her depiction of public health issues in *Mary Barton* and *North and South*, Gaskell picks up on the aspect of laissez-faire capitalism by which Martineau was most troubled: the imperative to let people die for the sake of allowing market forces to act unimpeded. Because of the centrality of this "laisser mourir" function, Warren Montag and Mike Hill describe laissez-faire capitalism as "necroeconomic" (263). Gaskell not only highlights how industrial capitalism is a necroeconomic system—that is, a market system that utilizes death and disease for the purposes of its own expansion—but also takes her critique further to show that industrial capitalism is also "pathoeconomic," systematically making bodies unhealthy and then utilizing that ill health for its own power. Although Gaskell, like Martineau, sees embodied care as central to the solution, Gaskell views this solution in a somewhat different light than her predecessor. For Martineau, to choose care was a kind of tragic concession—a decision to risk one's own life instead of letting another die. Martineau still thinks in terms of a kind of scarcity model, whereby only so many people can live, and the imperative to care can only be upheld at the expense of some quantity of life.

But for Gaskell, embodied care motivated by sympathy has the potential not only to coexist with life but to actually disrupt necroeconomic capitalism and reshape the economy into a life-oriented system. While most critics have read Gaskell as encouraging an apolitical infusion of sympathy into capitalism in order to make relations between masters and workers more compassionate without altering the larger power structures that produce inequality, I show that Gaskell presents sympathy as a mode of instinctive, embodied affiliation that is inherently

disruptive to necroeconomic capitalism and that has been systematically repressed and pathologized by the conditions of modern industrial production. In the necroeconomic capitalism that Gaskell decries, bodies are raw materials that can be used and abused by male industrialists to produce money. But the alternative form of capitalism she imagines inverts that formula: money becomes a raw material that can be used by sympathy-driven female managers of capital to produce healthy bodies and communities.

In the third chapter, which focuses on Charles Dickens's *Bleak House*, I turn away from the explicitly industrial themes of Martineau's and Gaskell's fiction. While Gaskell challenged a specific pathological system of industrial capitalism, Dickens challenges the pathology of a broader conceptual model of both economics and health in which money and vitality are treated as scarce commodities. Dickens shows that this inverse model creates a social body wherein the health of some depends on the disease and death of others. I seek to illuminate Dickens's critique by pointing out its similarities to Foucault's description of the particular form of racism, which, in Foucault's reading, forms the ideological foundation for the killing function of the modern biopolitical state. Through his depiction of Harold Skimpole's outright cruelty as well as Mrs. Jellyby's and Mrs. Pardiggle's so-called "philanthropy," he reveals the workings of an inverse model of health in which the powerful seem to gain vitality from the death of others.

Dickens reveals the condition of possibility for this model to be *distance* between self and other, between rich and poor, between healthy and sick. In episodes involving Jarndyce and Esther in particular, Dickens shows how collapsing that distance leads to a new model of health—a direct or "contagion" model, in which disease in the other spreads to the self. This model is threatening; it exposes people to disease. But it also, I argue, forms the basis for a new model of community and, more broadly, of the social body. In the "contagious community" that

Dickens imagines at the end of *Bleak House*, there are no qualifications for inclusion and no justifications for exclusion. Community membership and concurrent ethical responsibility to others in the community spread epidemiologically, like a contagious disease, without regard for class status or fitness for citizenship.

My final chapter, and the novels on which it focuses, represents a return to some of the original, foundational questions of political economy and public health. In *Middlemarch* and *Felix Holt*, both of which are retrospective novels set around the time when Martineau was writing her *Illustrations*, Eliot's worldview at times appears to resemble Martineau's. In these two novels, Eliot expresses a preoccupation with independence and self-containment and a desire to be free from the contagious influence, both physical and social, of others. A closer look at the conditions on which Eliot asserts independence and immunity to contagion, however, reveal how radically the terms of the debate have shifted since 1832.

I argue that in these novels, George Eliot presents the desire for money as an immunity-compromising pathogen that makes individuals vulnerable to unhealthy influence by others and thereby makes social contact dangerous. Individuals build their social immune system and their capacity to resist such unhealthy influence by undergoing what I refer to as "scenes of inoculation." In these moments, individuals abdicate financial self-interest and replace the content of their personal desires with an outward-oriented desire to help others. In doing so, they gain both social independence—the freedom from being influenced or used to further the goals of others—and social immunity—the freedom to engage in contact with socially tainted individuals without fear of contagion. The model of the social that Eliot presents replaces as the basic motive for productive action the human desire for wealth, which she defines as disruptive to both social community and democratic government, with a deep-seated personal longing to

doctor the social body. Ultimately, Eliot turns bourgeois individualism inside out, presenting one of its central tenets—rational economic self-interest—as the greatest threat to the health of the individual. Her model bourgeois citizen is a fundamentally vaccinated one; for Eliot, the individual can only be intact, independent, and fit for citizenship by placing the needs and desires of others at its very core.

CHAPTER ONE

Political Economy's Paradoxes and the Doctor's Dilemma in the Works of Harriet Martineau

It may seem strange to begin a dissertation that challenges political economy with fiction written by one of that discipline's most ardent supporters, Harriet Martineau. Martineau, born in 1802, provides both an introduction to the internal paradoxes of political economy and a bridge from the earlier period of those ideas' origins to the later period of the Victorian novel's critique of them. When her father's business failed in 1829, Martineau transformed a hobby into a job and began to publish her writing for profit (Logan 29). She become well known for her *Illustrations of Political Economy*, a series of fictional "tales" illustrating the ideas of political economists, an almost overnight success that made both her fame and her financial independence (Logan 30). The publication of these tales (itself a sort of illustration of political economy in the sense that Martineau's industriousness prevented her from falling into a dependent state) increased layperson conversance in the concepts of political economy. Estimates of the readership of the initial serial numbers stand at about 144,000 (Webb 113) and the tales were consequently reprinted in volume form, translated into Dutch, German, Spanish, French, and Russian, and even adapted for use in the French public schools (Logan 35). It is quite possible that Martineau's versions of political economy reached a wider Victorian audience and influenced Victorian thought more deeply than her source materials. In this chapter, I claim that Martineau did not simply transplant the ideas of Smith or Malthus into fictional form; she adapted those ideas, and in doing so, she highlighted some of the ethical problems and paradoxes at their cores. In this sense, Martineau can be said not only to have contributed to the Victorian preoccupation with political economy, but also to have laid the groundwork for its critique.

Between 1832 and 1834, Martineau wrote 25 of these tales, first published individually and then republished in nine volumes in 1843. Her tales are essentially didactic novellas, meant to use narrative to illustrate certain tenets of political economy and thus educate the novel-reading populace about the ideas of thinkers like Smith, Malthus, and Ricardo. Just in case the lessons were not clear to readers, Martineau concludes each novella with a section titled "Summary of Principles illustrated in the volume," which lists the axioms that the narrative was supposed to teach. Martineau was prompted to write the tales by her frustration with literature of the time that focused on "ambitious intrigues" instead of the more "magnificent subject" of social and political reform based on principles of political economy ("Achievements" 454). She goes on to ask, "What can afford finer moral scenery than the transition state in which society now is! Where are nobler heroes to be found than those who sustain society in the struggle; and what catastrophe so grand as the downfall of bad institutions, and the issues of a process of renovation?" (454). Political economy, she claims, is not only *an* appropriate subject to explore in narrative literature but is literature's *most* appropriate subject matter. Martineau's intervention into the genre of the novel—her fusion of the political tract or treatise with the fictional story—lays the groundwork for a half-century of what would come to be called "social problem novels"[4] ranging from Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* to George Eliot's *Felix Holt*.[5]

Although Martineau's expressed purpose in her tales is to educate her readers about the precepts of political economy, I am less interested in the success of those lessons and more interested in the complicated ideological knots she gets into as she tries to square her total

[4] For more on the Victorian social-problem novel, see Josephine Guy.
[5] See Logan, Introduction, 41. For more on Martineau's influence on other novelists, including Charles Dickens, Benjamin Disraeli, Elizabeth Gaskell, and Charles Kingsley, see Louis Cazamian, pg. 51-54; for her influence on Frances Trollope, Charlotte Elizabeth Donna, and Elizabeth Stone, see Monica Fryckstedt, pg. 12-13, 16; for her influence on Harriet Beecher Stowe, see Claire Midgley, pp. 97; for her influence on the Brontes and George Eliot, see Valerie Sanders, pg. 195.

allegiance to an amoral, laissez-faire economic system with her moral commitments to social justice and community health. Rather than straightforwardly espousing the tenets of political economy, Martineau's tales reveal the problems and paradoxes involved in claiming adherence to political economy as an ethical good. Ultimately, Martineau is not just concerned with political or economic theory—she is concerned with how people ought to live. It is this focus that leads her to write tales instead of tracts, narrative instead of theory. In doing so, she reveals central questions about the appropriate relations between individuals, bodies, and resources within a healthy community that later novelists will try to answer.

Section One: Martineau's Two Body Problem

One of the most basic of these questions occupies several of Martineau's tales: What is the relationship between my wellbeing and prosperity and those of my neighbor? How do his gains or losses influence my success? Martineau seems to struggle with herself on this question throughout the tales, coming to a paradoxical joint conclusion wherein an individual's wellbeing is both directly opposed to and also simultaneously continent upon his or her neighbor's wellbeing. On the one hand, Martineau repeatedly argues that middle and working class people must subsist on a finite "fund" comprised of the difference between revenue and the cost of production, minus "profit enough to make it worth [the owner's] while to invest his capital" (216).[6] The scarcity of resources makes all workers into competitors for the same set of resources. As Martineau emphatically summarizes at the conclusion the tale entitled "A

[6] Notably, Martineau does not address the appropriate division of total profit between the investor's private share and the fund that will support the workers through wages. How much profit is required to "make it worth his while to invest" is left conspicuously unstated. Based on the number of capital-owning class characters who are making just enough to provide for themselves and cover costs in Martineau's fiction, I think its fair to speculate that her opinions on the capitalist's appropriate share of profit differ from those of contemporary Wall Street executives.

Manchester Strike," "THE PROPORTION OF THIS FUND RECEIVED BY INDIVIDUALS MUST MAINLY DEPEND ON THE NUMBER AMONG WHOM THE FUND IS DIVIDED" (215). Martineau makes this oppositional relationship between individuals subsisting on the same set of resources even more striking when she writes that "every one that is born must help to starve the living" in "Weal and Woe in Garveloch" (111). There is an inverse relationship, she suggests, between my wellbeing and that of my neighbor. Everything he gains is something I cannot gain. Taken to the extreme, Martineau suggests that my neighbor can only live and thrive to the extent that I starve.

This belief shapes Martineau's understanding of activism and grounds some of her most anti-progressive political claims—in particular, her condemnation of strikes and her call to abolish poor relief and other government-funded entitlement programs. The only effective means of improving the condition of the poor is either to increase the "fund" of capital that they divide among them (through increased top-down investment and effective management) or to decrease the number of people among whom it is divided (through birth control and delayed marriages or through death). Any tax-funded benefit program is antithetical to Martineau's goals because it reduces the all-important "fund," removing from the economy money that could be invested as capital. This inverse relationship between the wellbeing of neighbors means that charity is futile: "Individual distress cannot be so relieved without inflicting the same portion of distress elsewhere" (*Illustrations* 287). In Martineau's view, entitlement programs like the Poor Laws do not reduce the amount of misery in society—they merely redistribute it, shifting suffering from one individual to another but leaving the net total suffering unchanged.

This foundational belief also leads Martineau to vehemently oppose strikes—a tactic whose futility she tries to illustrate in "A Manchester Strike"—as a means of improving the

condition of workers. The strike, Martineau claims, is not only ineffective but also harmful; it is, as she puts it, "worse than in vain" (197). Not only does the strike fail to accomplish either of the only two goals Martineau deems effective—increasing capital or decreasing the number of workers—but it also occasions "wasting capital" and thus runs the risk of decreasing the overall fund and ultimately decreasing the workers' wages that come out of it (216). "Strikes must fail," she argues: "Nothing can permanently affect the rate of wages which does not affect the proportion of population to capital" (196, 216). Martineau's argument here is more than just a reactionary admonition against unruly or disruptive working-class organizing. It is a denial of the possibility of any working-class political action whatsoever. Martineau only allows for two avenues of action for shaping wealth distribution and quality of life across one's population: increasing capital and decreasing population. She concedes that the working class is not in a position to increase capital, and thus, the worker's only available interventions are to *not strike* and to *not have children*. Martineau's working class can find power only in their scarcity, not in action or collectivism. Only when "there are permanently fewer workmen than are wanted" can "the men hold the power" (196). As long as there are "more than are wanted…the power is in the masters' hands" (196). Moreover, the emphasis Martineau places on the zero-sum division of a finite fund of resources between workers seems to advise against collective action. Under a model in which one worker can only gain to the extent that another loses, collective action becomes logically inconsistent.

Yet at the same time, Martineau resists this oppositional model, insisting that individuals in society ought not to see themselves as competitors for the same set of resources but rather as cooperative members of an interdependent whole. She argues, for example, that suffering and misery stem from men's mistaken "fancy" that "their interests [are] opposed to each other,—

which the interests of men in society can never be" (79). Even as she sets up workers as opponents, competing for a finite fund of resources such that one can only gain at the expense of another, she criticizes "jealous neighbors" who see themselves as opponents and try to interfere with each other's success (79). I contend that the key to this apparent paradox lies in the fact that Martineau imagines two different biologized, purportedly self-regulating "bodies" operating side by side: the social body and the capitalist economy as body. Drawing on Adam Smith and the earlier physiocrats, Martineau imagines the capitalist economy as a kind of organic body, governed by certain predictable, immutable "natural laws" or "truths," of which she hopes to inform people through her *Illustrations*.[7] At the same time, she depicts England's population as a body—the "body of the people," whom she exhorts to "understand those natural laws" by which the economic body works (Preface xi, 115).[8]

These two bodies are adjacent to each other and interact with one another, but they are decidedly non-identical. What makes Martineau's goal so complicated is that she is trying to make both bodies healthy at the same time. The social body, the "body of the people," subsists on the fruits of the economic body—Martineau wants readers to understand the economic laws "under which and by which they subsist" (115)—but the people who comprise that social body are also operational parts of the economic body off of which they live. Martineau suggests that the economic body stands above and, to some extent, beyond the influence of the social body. Its laws are written by nature and no human intervention from workers or from masters can change those laws. Just as workers are helpless to raise wages by striking, so are masters helpless to "coin the stones under your feet into wages, or knead the dust of the earth into bread" (196)—

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[7] For more on this idea of an economy as an organic body, see Catherine Gallagher's *The Body Economic*. In particular, see pages 22-24.

[8] She is also drawing on Smith in using this phrase; Smith repeatedly describes the population as "the great body of the people" in *Wealth of Nations*.

these natural economic laws, she suggests, are above men altogether. But the reason Martineau thinks it is so crucial to understand those laws is because that economic body supports the social body. The purpose of understanding them is to maximize the health of the social body. Angus, one of Martineau's fictional proponents of political economy, claims that his goal in preaching population management, saving, and other tenets of political economy is "that society should be made as happy as it can be made" (133). The only way to achieve such happiness is to understand the immutable rules by which the economy functions and modify human behavior to fit those rules. The economic body both supersedes and supports the social body; the social body is both subject to the economic body and is that body's raison d'être.

The workers of and to whom Martineau writes are part of these two bodies simultaneously. Inasmuch as they are part of the body-like system of the capitalist economy, workers are themselves a kind of economic good or resource. They constitute the labor supply, and each new child born into the working class must both (1) increase the supply of labor and thus decrease the wage-rate of laborers as a whole and (2) increase the demand for food and other necessities and thus drive prices up. Working class people are thus in an oppositional relationship to all other working class people, and "every one that is born must help to starve the living" (111). But to the extent that workers are members of the social body, they must collaborate to produce the healthiest economic body possible. Martineau gives an example of one community of competing workers who "united to make a road": "where all helped to give each other the fair advantage of a road," the community grew into a "flourishing settlement" (79). In contrast, competing farmers who were "leveling each other's fences in the dark" soon saw their crops trampled by "wild cattle" and had to desert their land "in search of food, leaving their fields to grow into a wilderness once more" (79). Pooling resources to create improvements that

benefit a whole community is just one of the ways that Martineau suggests that workers should cooperate for their mutual good. She also suggests that factory workers should contribute to communal "mutual relief" funds designed to help families survive period of low wages or unemployment due to downturns in trade (197), and that working class people should collectively place their children in occupations "least likely to be overstocked" in order to avoid an oversupply of labor in any one industry (197).

These suggestions to working class people, and the last one in particular, reveal something crucial about how Martineau depicts these two adjacent bodies. Martineau's capitalist economy is self-regulating in the sense that it will always return to a balanced equilibrium on its own according to predictable laws. As a body, it maintains its own health as long is it is left alone to function without government intervention. If demand for a commodity outpaces supply, the price will rise until the supply matches the number of buyers willing to pay that price. If there are more workers than jobs, wages will be low and some workers will die until the right balance is once again struck. But when this self-regulating economy is left entirely alone to regulate itself, it does not nourish the social body in the way that Martineau wants. That is to say that from the perspective of the economic body, there is nothing "unhealthy" about workers dying off until the supply of labor matches the demand for said labor. From the perspective of the social body, however, the starvation of masses of impoverished people is unhealthy. In her quest to keep both of these bodies healthy at the same time, Martineau is left with a dilemma. She does not want to institute legislative regulation because that will interfere with the healthy functioning of the economic body. But she also does not want to leave the economy to function entirely on its own, because that may cause death and disease to plague the social body.

The solution, for Martineau, is to essentially delegate economic regulation to the people themselves. This is basically what she is suggesting in her above advice to working class people about how to choose professions for their children: they should understand the natural laws of the economy and then modify their behaviors in order that it will produce the most equitable results. We see another example of this in "Weal and Woe in Garveloch." After months of famine caused by a poor harvest during which no food is available to buy even at the highest prices, a ship arrives with food to sell to the starving inhabitants of Garveloch. Angus, who acts as a sort of working-class mouthpiece for Martineau's ideas in the story, refuses to buy more food than he needs even though he has plenty of savings and a large family nearing starvation. He states, "We have enough for the present, and I will neither take what others want more than we, nor raise the price by increasing the demand" (119). In the version of laissez-faire economics that Martineau is promoting here, the ideal individual does not simply act according to rational self-interest. Instead, the ideal individual modifies his or her behaviors in order to manipulate the outcome of the economic engine in a way that will produce a healthier social body.

Angus's conscious choice to adjust his economic behavior according to his understanding of political economy is a microcosm of what Martineau seems to imagine as the ideal relationship between the economy and the social body. She writes that there will always be "great distress" in society until "they that hold the power in their own hands—not the king, not the parliament, not the rich only, but the *body of the people*, understand those natural laws by which and under which they subsist" (115). In order for the social body to be healthy, the people who comprise it must understand the laws which govern the purportedly self-regulating body of the economy and then adapt their behavior in order to make the economy better serve the social body. In other words, Martineau's laissez-faire economy cannot actually be let alone. If it is to

sustain a healthy social body, it must be managed from the bottom up by the "body of the people" it is supposed to support.

Section Two: Managing British Affect

A second and related question that Martineau's work raises is this: What is the relationship between (1) the affective experience of coming into close contact with another person and (2) the large-scale management of the social body? For all of the authors I discuss, this relationship involves some discomfort or disruption. As I argue in later chapters, Dickens, Gaskell, and Eliot all ultimately celebrate the power of intimate contact to disrupt large-scale economic, political, and social structures. In her *Illustrations of Political Economy*, Martineau similarly recognizes the power of contact to generate affects that disrupt larger economic structures—but for her, this is the *problem* of affect, not its potential. In Martineau's depiction, the benevolent affects that spring up through contact between individuals interfere with the proper capitalist management of resources and thus must be resisted from the bottom up as well as re-routed from the top down.

Like several of the other novelists of her time, Martineau begins with the presumption that witnessing working-class suffering should naturally evoke sympathy in the hearts of middle-class observers. In "Cousin Marshall," a didactic novella meant to illustrate various problems with the Poor Laws, Martineau takes for granted that middle class British people do feel sympathy when they see poor Brits in need. The novella includes a long conversation between a thoughtful country doctor named Burke (not unlike *Deerbrook*'s Dr. Hope) and his philanthropic-minded sister Louisa about the nature of charity and the effects of the poor laws. Dr. Burke accepts as fact that it would "make [Louisa's] heart ache" to see the "children born

puny from the destitution of their parents, or weakly boys and girls, stunted by bad nursing, or women who want rest and warmth more than medicine" among his Dispensary patients (241). Martineau suggests that it is natural to feel sympathy in response to the bodily suffering of others. Moreover, Martineau depicts Louisa's ready sympathy in the face of suffering as the rule, not the exception. Dr. Burke, whose dialogue in the novella reads as a narrative exposition of Martineau's own views on political economy, states that "British benevolence" is "vast…in amount" (242).

But both Dr. Burke and Martineau claim that this "vast benevolence" is a problem—for them, this "kindness of heart" creates no remedy, but in fact does a great deal of well-intentioned harm. Dr. Burke explains that the "tenderness of sensibility" (241) that middle-class Britons naturally feel towards the poor leads to the creation of charitable institutions like the Dispensary and the Lying-In Hospital, which he describes as "an evil to society" (239). Martineau criticizes and calls for the abolition of these institutions, both of which provide free medical care to the poor, because they tend to increase population and decrease capital — cardinal sins in Martineau's political economy. She claims that these institutions do nothing to truly eradicate the "misery" they seek to remedy, and that while the "charitable fund" grows in size every year, "distress is more prevalent than ever" (242).

It is the very immediacy of sympathy that is a problem for Martineau. The "heart ache" that arises in the breast of the benevolent middle class Briton is too quickly converted into charity: people "look no farther than the immediate relief of distress, and [think] the reality of the misery a sufficient warrant for alms-giving" (241). While Martineau sees sympathetic affects as natural, she wants to place a medium in between those affects and the actions that arise as a result of them. She claims that "wisdom," and specifically the "wisdom" of political economy, is

required to "convert that tenderness into true charity" (241). Political economy is, for Martineau, the medium that must intervene between natural individual feeling and social action in order to give that feeling the "right direction" (242) and "convert" it into social good. Martineau essentially says to those who want to help the poor, "Don't trust your gut." She wants people to resist the sympathetic impulse that they feel when they come into contact with suffering others—to act against their own affects.

What is perhaps most troubling about Martineau's scheme to re-route national affect through the medium of political economy is the distinction she draws between middle-class affect and working-class affect. The surplus of mismanaged benevolence that she imagines is, in Martineau's paradigm, strictly limited to the British middle and upper classes. The poor, in contrast, she criticizes for an alleged dearth of "tenderness of sensibility" in response to the suffering of their peers. Dr. Burke claims that if charitable institutions like alms-houses for the elderly were abolished, "we might see some revival of that genial spirit of charity and social duty among the poor, whose extinction we are apt to mourn, without reflecting that we ourselves have caused it by the injudicious direction of our own benevolence" (243). She suggests, in other words, that misdirected middle-class benevolence has flooded the affective marketplace, leaving no need for working-class benevolence. Withdrawing that surplus affect, then, will create a demand for and thus stimulate working-class benevolence. She essentially proposes to force the poor to become more affectively similar to middle-class people by forcing middle-class people to resist their own affects. In a paradoxical way, Martineau's laissez-faire political economy requires an almost socialist management of affects on a national scale, stopping them up where there is a surplus in order to solicit them elsewhere.

Section Three: Medical Care under Political Economy

Immediate, visceral benevolence is also a problem for Martineau because it leads to immediate rather than long-term solutions. The true cause of suffering for Martineau is always population: too many people trying to subsist on a finite fund of resources. Providing free food for the hungry, free medicine for the sick, free housing for the homeless—these things alleviate immediate suffering but they do not decrease the population. In fact, they tend to increase the population both by saving lives and by, in Martineau's view, encouraging the poor to marry and reproduce because they feel confident that their children will be provided for by the state. In other words, Martineau sees a temporal problem with British charity. The alleviation of acute hunger, sickness, or pain in the short term serves only to produce more suffering in the long term by increasing the population without increasing the fund of capital that provides their wages. Dr. Burke makes an analogy between his views of British charity and his medical practice. To give handouts to the poor because your "tenderness of sensibility" compels you to do so is like "keeping the heart soft by giving green gooseberries to a griped child" (238-39)—that is, giving a child with an intestinal illness a delicious treat that is pleasant in the short term but will only make his illness worse in the long term. The "better charity" would be to give the child "bitter medicine," which is unpleasant in the short term but will lead to long-term remedy (239). Martineau wants benevolent institutions to expand their temporal scope, accepting that there will be some unpleasantness in the short-term (the removal of aid and alms relied upon by the poor) en route to long-term remedy (reduction of population to a sustainable level and development of saving habits that will help poor families survive future fluctuations in trade).

The problem, though, with applying this individual medical metaphor to a collective social problem is that the acute suffering and the long-term payoff become severed from one

another. In Dr. Burke's medical example, the same child who swallows the bitter medicine is the child who is cured. The experience of temporary suffering is directly, viscerally connected to the benefit of permanent cure. When this medical metaphor gets expanded and transposed onto the social body, such a connection no longer holds. The "bitter medicine" that Dr. Burke (and Martineau) wants to apply to the social body is the abolition of all charitable institutions that tend to "lessen capital" or "increase population," including Dispensaries, Lying-In Hospitals, Foundling hospitals, workhouses, and alms-houses for the aged (242). To remove those institutions "intrepidly, steadily, and at a gradually increasing rate" (242) would of course cause acute suffering. It would leave orphaned children, unmarried or widowed pregnant women, and disabled elderly people who lacked benevolent neighbors or extended family totally unprovided for, and although Martineau tiptoes around explicitly saying so, many of these people would die. Perhaps she is correct that the abolition of the Foundling Hospital would discourage "excessive" reproduction among the poor in the long term, but it would certainly leave infants to suffer and die in the short term—bitter medicine, indeed.

Unlike in the case of the "griped child," though, the short-term suffering and long-term cure do not take place within the same body. The long-term cure that Martineau imagines—a reduction or even elimination of both poor rates and indigence—happens on the level of the social body as a whole. The short term suffering, on the other hand, happens to the physical bodies of individual poor people, many of whom will not survive to become part of the "healed" social body that arises as a result of the "bitter medicine" they take on its behalf. Martineau conflates social problems with physical maladies in such a way as to rewrite the death of paupers as the temporary discomfort of swallowing unpleasant medicine en route to health. By using this analogy, Martineau instructs her readers to register the death of paupers and their children due to

hunger, exposure, or disease as *discomfort* and not as death. She wants to rewrite death as not-death. In order for this slippage to work, readers have to imagine paupers not as individual bodies but rather only as parts (and specifically a disposable part, like a diseased appendix) of the social body. Just as there was a disjunction between the poor person's place as part of the body of the economy and his or her role in the social body, there is also a discrepancy between the poor person as a component of the social body and the poor person *as body*.

In this scale-shifting medical metaphor, Martineau thus reveals capitalism's underlying "necroeconomic" tendencies. This term comes from Warren Montag and Mike Hill, who use it to elucidate how Adam Smith's political economy depends upon a "notion…of 'letting die' that is consubstantial with the science of governing through 'laissez-faire'" (*The Other Adam Smith* 263). "The innovation proper" of eighteenth-century political economy, they claim, is not just "the discovery of the immutable and immanent order of what would come to be called the market" but, more importantly and more disturbingly, "the advocacy of a broadening of the sovereign power of 'exposure' from the mere right to expose subjects or citizens to death in battle at the hands of an enemy to the legitimate power to expose them to death through hunger" (263). Political economists, that is, not only make descriptive claims about how the market behaves when allowed to operate freely; they also claim the government's right and even duty to abandon citizens to starvation in order to maintain the freedom of that market's operation. This is precisely what Martineau advocates for when she argues that aid to paupers should be withdrawn. As much as Martineau wants to draw attention towards "preemptive checks" like delayed marriages and away from mass famine and death, there is no avoiding that her political economy condones and certifies the death of the surplus population.

This way of thinking that Martineau's espouses leaves the doctor (like Dr. Burke, one of the protagonists in "Cousin Marshall," but also like *Bleak House*'s Allan Woodcourt or *Middlemarch*'s Dr. Lydgate) in a dilemma. In Martineau's political economy, there is a conflict of interest between caring for the individual bodies of poor patients and caring for the biologized social body as a whole. The metaphorical "bitter medicine" that Dr. Burke thinks the social body needs is, quite literally, the withdrawal of actual medicine from the poor. From the perspective of the indigent, this measure is not "medicine" at all; it is indirect violence, a willing and intentional abandonment to death. The withdrawal of care Dr. Burke calls for extends beyond traditional medical care to include the material resources necessary for good health, like food and coals. When he explains to his sister that many of his patients need "rest and warmth" or "better food" more than medicine, Louisa responds, "How you must wish sometimes that your surgery was stocked with coals and butcher's meat!" (241). But Dr. Burke disagrees, claiming that "the evil would only be increased, provided this sort of medicine were given gratis, like my drugs" (241). Inasmuch as Dr. Burke imagines himself as a doctor of the social body, a practitioner of "public health," he is compelled to refuse medical care to those patients who cannot pay for it. In Martineau's clearly problematic scheme, to be a good social doctor is to *refuse* to act as a medical doctor for certain populations.

Section Four: *Deerbrook*

Martineau's *Illustrations*, in which she sets up this contradiction between caring for the social body and caring for the individual body, predate Victoria's reign by five years. When Martineau writes *Deerbrook* in 1838, just after attending Victoria's coronation, she centers the novel on a doctor protagonist who will, by all appearances, need to navigate this dilemma.

Edward Hope, the country surgeon at the heart of *Deerbrook*, is the appointed medical provider for the almshouses on the outskirts of the town. Like Dr. Burke in "Cousin Marshall," one of Martineau's *Illustrations*, he is paid by the municipal government to provide free care to the indigent poor living in the almshouses. Dr. Burke undergoes a sort of crisis of conscience as a political economist as a result of his position as medical provider for almshouses and other safety net institutions. Convinced that providing free care for paupers is an "evil" that interferes with the natural laws of political economy and ultimately increases "the number of the indigent," Dr. Burke decides to give up his position as the doctor for these institutions (241). For the sake of what he considers to be the health of the economic engine and the body of the nation as a whole, he chooses to withdraw care from the individual bodies of the poor. Burke claims that leaving poor laws and entitlement programs as they are will lead to the disease and even death of the British social body: "in a few more years the profits of all kind of property will be absorbed by the increasing rates, and capital will therefore cease to be invested; land will be let out of cultivation, manufactures will be discontinued, commerce will cease, and the nation become a vast congregation of paupers" (247). Caring for the individual bodies of the ailing indigent will lead to systemic ailment in the social body as a whole, Dr. Burke argues, and so he makes a deliberate choice to refuse to provide care to the poor.

Although Dr. Hope in *Deerbrook* holds similar medical appointments to those of Dr. Burke, he does not undergo the same crisis of economic conscience. I will argue that this change signals not only a shift in Martineau's thinking, but also the beginning of an important shift in Victorian thinking about ethical responsibility that I will continue to chart in subsequent chapters. In part, Dr. Hope does not have this crisis of conscience because he is not given a chance to have it. Before a period of scarcity (similar to the one Dr. Burke labors under) arrives

in Deerbrook, the poor themselves have already rejected Dr. Hope's care of their own accord. Due to a series of malicious rumors, the almshouse inhabitants become convinced that Dr. Hope is their enemy. They throw stones at him from the hedges as he travels to the almshouse (343), prevent him from approaching the bedsides of his patients (344), and undo any measures he does manage to take as soon as he departs from the establishment (345). Despite this "unpleasantness" and against the warnings of the town patron, Sir William Hunter, who advises Dr. Hope to "stay away" and warms that the "consequences may be serious" if he continues to attempt to provide care at the almshouses, Hope persists in attending his poor patients (349). Sir William Hunter's warnings turn out to be all too prescient, as a mob of the Deerbrook poor attack Hope's home that same night, breaking windows, destroying Hope's surgery, and burning an effigy of Hope on a bonfire in the backyard (368-69). Unsurprisingly, Hope soon finds himself relieved of his almshouse duties by Sir William Hunter and replaced by a newly arrived rival physician, Dr. Walcot. Hope is not given the option of withdrawing care from the poor; they withdraw themselves from his care, against his will and to his great displeasure.

The primary rumor that leads to this rejection of Dr. Hope is that he is a "Burker"—that is, that he is stealing dead bodies from graveyards (or perhaps even killing patients on purpose) in order to use the corpses for dissection. The term "Burker" derives from the Burke and Hare scandal of 1828, in which William Burke was convicted of murdering 16 people and selling their bodies to Edinburgh doctor Robert Knox for dissection. (Hare avoided prosecution by turning king's evidence and providing testimony against Burke.)[9] Although the Burke and Hare case gained notoriety because the men were not just digging up already deceased corpses but were

[9] Burrell, S. & Gill, G. V. "The Liverpool Cholera Epidemic of 1832 and Anatomical Dissection--Medical Mistrust and Civil Unrest." *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, vol. 60 no. 4, 2005, pp. 478-498. *Project MUSE*, muse.jhu.edu/article/187401.

actually murdering people, the term "Burker" came to be identified with all extralegal practices of acquiring bodies for medical dissection and research. This scientifically-motivated grave-robbing is what the Deerbrook mob is accusing Dr. Hope of when they make "jokes about church-yards," (345) suggesting that he is digging up bodies for dissection. In the same vein, they suggest that he has "cut off a sound limb for the sake of practice and amusement"—that is, they accuse him of using their bodies as raw material for profit and professionalization in a grotesque way (355). Moreover, after a young girl dies at the almshouse (as a direct result of their ignoring Dr. Hope's medical advice), her neighbors set up a nightly vigil in the graveyard to watch out for Hope coming to dig up her body, which is maintained until they "beg[in] to feel the want of their regular sleep" after ten nights and give it up (347). Later, when the mob attacks the Hopes' house, they target his surgery because it is "the place where the people expected to find the greatest number of dead bodies" (368). Of course, they find none.

Such accusations of "Burking" were not uncommon in life or in literature during the 1820s and 30s.[10] In life, fears of Burking were at the root of several riots, including one in Aberdeen in 1831 in which a mob of 20,000 attacked an anatomical theater;[11] in literature, Dr. Lydgate of *Middlemarch* is similarly accused of Burking and loses business and social standing as a result. But more interesting to me are the Deerbrook poor's accusations that Dr. Hope is similar to another Burke—the Dr. Burke above, from Martineau's "Cousin Marshall" tale.[12] The almshouse inhabitants accuse Dr. Hope of differentiating the medical care that he provides to

[10] These debates and protests changed but continued after the passage of the controversial Anatomy Act in 1832, which gave doctors the legal to claim for dissection the corpses of poor people who died in prisons and workhouses and largely ended the black market traffic in bodies.
[11] *Liverpool Journal*, 31 December 1831.
[12] I have no evidence to suggest that Martineau deliberately named Dr. Burke after the notorious murderer, but I do think that the coincidence is interesting. Martineau wrote "Cousin Marshall" in 1832, just a few years after the Burke and Hare scandal hit the news and right at the peak of the debates about the Anatomy Act—that is, during a time when the term "Burker" was certainly in wide circulation.

patients based on their class status. During Hope's final trip to the almshouse, an elderly man "growls" at him about not having fixed his failing eyesight: "Not a bit better could he see now than he could a year ago, with all the doctoring he had had: and now the gentleman would not try anything more! A pretty doctor indeed! But it would not be long before there would be another who would cure poor people's eyes as if they were rich: and poor people's eyes were as precious to them as rich people's" (344). The patient suggests that Dr. Hope does not care about his poor patients—that their bodies are less precious to him, less valuable than those of wealthy people—and thus provides them with a lower quality of care. This man is essentially accusing Dr. Hope of doing what Dr. Burke claims to be a doctor's moral imperative under political economy: denying adequate medical care to the poor as a direct result of their class status. But in the case of Dr. Hope, this accusation is entirely unfair. Although he criticizes their ignorance and domestic habits, Dr. Hope seems to value the lives of his poor patients just as much as he values the rich. Through a somewhat frustrating narrative evasion, Martineau prevents Dr. Hope from weighing in on the doctor's dilemma—the choice between (1) providing care or (2) upholding the principles of political economy. Hope is unfairly accused of being like Dr. Burke from "Cousin Marshall," and as a result, he is spared from making the choice that would reveal whether he is indeed like Burke or not.

Hope is concerned about the material consequences for the poor of this rejection of his care, wondering "what is to become of the sick" if he is forced away from the almshouse (349). This question is quickly settled with the arrival of the young Dr. Walcot, who is induced by Hope's enemies to come to Deerbrook and use Hope's unpopularity to build a practice for himself. The material consequences for the Hope family, however, are longer lasting. The loss of his position at the almshouses, as well as the majority of his private patients to Dr. Walcot,

leaves the Hope family with almost no income. The family is forced to subsist on the small inheritances of Hester (Hope's wife) and Margaret (Hester's unmarried younger sister), which "can hardly be called sufficient" even for "mere bread" (387-88). Over the subsequent months, they are compelled to give up many of the markers of gentility: they dismiss all their servants, including their beloved housekeeper Morris; Hope sells his horse and travels to see his remaining patients on foot; they give up purchasing meat, leading the local butcher to think he must have offended them (502); they no longer host friends for tea, much to the consternation of their biggest supporters in Deerbrook, the Grays (435).

In their sudden poverty, the Hope family becomes a model of the habits of domestic political economy that Martineau tried to instruct the poor to practice in the *Illustrations*. They moderate their spending to match their means, cutting back on everything they possibly can cut back on: "One superfluity after another vanished from the table; every day something which had always been a want was discovered to be a fancy; and with every new act of frugality, each fresh exertion of industry, their spirits rose with a sense of achievement" (420). With the "nicest management and the most strenuous domestic industry," they manage to live on their small means and still continue to pay rent. They bear it all with a sense of "cheerful sacrifice" (420), enjoying every "little extra comfort" that comes to them when Hope is able to obtain a small payment from a patient—"the dinner of meat," the "fire in the evening," or the "sack of apples" from a country patient with no money to spare who pays for Hope's services with the produce of his thriving orchard (491). Most importantly, they refuse to become dependent upon or indebted to anyone. Hope rejects the penitential offers of Mr. Rowland—husband of the originator of the worst rumors about Hope—to help Hope relocate to another town where he could start fresh,

and, unlike Eliot's similarly struggling Dr. Lydgate in *Middlemarch*, Hope and his family refuse to purchase anything "which they were not certainly able to pay for" (491).

The Hopes become a sort of living illustration of how to go about "the business of living" under the conditions of scarcity (425). Rather than providing the free medical care to paupers that Dr. Burke in "Cousin Marshall" found so objectionable, Hope instead becomes a kind of model for *how not to become a pauper*. In her *Illustrations* as in *Deerbrook*, Martineau sees pauperism (particularly as defined by dependence or a lack of economic self-sufficiency) as the primary disease of the social body, but her approach to the "cure" for that social disease shifts from the earlier tales to the later novel. Dr. Burke's method of withdrawing care eliminates pauperism in two ways: on the one hand, it removes one of the safety nets that Martineau thinks encourages dependence on the state, but it also literally leads to the death of individual paupers. In *Deerbrook*, Martineau seems less comfortable with this "letting die" function of political economy. Rather than depicting Hope willingly withdrawing care from paupers, Martineau shifts the agency behind that withdrawal to the paupers themselves who reject Hope's care. Hope is left to minister to the social body through his example of proper domestic behaviors under limited means—to demonstrate that it is "always possible for able and industrious people, in health, to obtain bread…provided that they can cast pride behind them" (387). That is, the Hope family functions to demonstrate that pauperism need not exist (at least among the able-bodied) as long as people conform to appropriate habits of spending, saving, and industry. This is still an attempt to eliminate the category of pauperism from the social body, but it is certainly a gentler physic than Dr. Burke's "bitter medicine."

But when a cholera epidemic strikes Deerbrook, the Hopes becomes more than just a didactic model of how to maintain bourgeois respectability and independence under conditions

of scarcity. They become an instructional example of appropriate social responsibility under conditions of *inter*dependence. Dr. Hope and his allies lament the fact that the epidemic brings out the most antisocial sides of their neighbors, from the poorest almshouse inhabitants to the wealthiest family in Deerbrook, Sir William and Lady Hunter. Hope is "disappointed" to find that the poor show "so little disposition to help each other," succumbing instead to either "apathy" or "selfish terrors" that he finds to be "worse to witness than the disease itself" (546). The behavior of the poor cannot be wondered at, Hope suggests, when the wealthy Hunter family sets such a poor example by "shutting themselves up," leading the Hope household to wonder "what sort of a heart" (575) the Hunters have:

> They keep their outer gates locked, lest any one from the village should set foot within their grounds; every article left at the lodge for the use of the family is fumigated before it is admitted into the house: and it is generally understood that neither the gentleman nor the lady will leave the estate, in any emergency whatever, till the disease has entirely passed away. (546)

Many of Deerbrook's middle class residents follow suit, doing all they can to avoid contact with their ailing neighbors. The shopkeeper Miss Miskin refuses to visit her lifelong best friend Mrs. Howell's sickbed until the dying woman sends a "message threatening to haunt [Miss Miskin] if she did not," at which point the reluctant Miss Miskin still "would not approach nearer than the door-way" (586). For her intense aversion to coming into contact with the potentially contagious, Miss Miskin is criticized as a "selfish wretch" (586). Even the Hopes' closest friends, the Grays, leave Deerbrook to take refuge in Brighton, hoping to escape the epidemic (553).

Margaret, Hester, and Dr. Hope, who reject the Gray's invitation to take refuge with them in Brighton, show none of this reluctance to come into contact with the sick. Dr. Hope, of course,

attends the sick (where he does not seem to get as much satisfaction as the reader presumably does when they apologize on their sickbeds for breaking his windows and burning him in effigy a few months prior) and the Hope family appears to share none of Sophia Gray's concern about "how very dangerous it must be" for medical men who must always be "going among so many people who are ill" (539). But their commitment to caring for their neighbors extends beyond Hope's professional obligations. In both their words and their conduct, the Hopes suggest that all members of a community, not just medical professionals, have an ethical obligation to put their own health at risk in order to care for their neighbors. Hester tells Sophia that it is "the duty of many to expose themselves at such times in an equal degree with the medical men...without selfish thoughts or ignorant panic," and Margaret soon enacts this duty by spending multiple nights in a squalid cottage caring for the poor Platt family, all of whom have been struck with cholera (539).

Margaret's entry into the filthy cottage is not just symbolic. Martineau goes into almost graphic detail about how Margaret "conveyed pailful after pailful of the noisome shavings to the dunghill at the back of the cottage"—that is, she removes bedding that is covered in human excrement with her own hands and then washes the bed and the sick woman's body (549-50). She holds the dying child, with "black blood which was still oozing from his nose, ears, and mouth," in her lap until he breathes his last (548). She does all this despite being met with hostility and threats of violence from the only inhabitants of the cottage who are strong enough to make any kind of protest; despite the fact that Mr. Platt turns out to be the masked housebreaker who stole Hester's watch and Margaret's prized turquoise ring; and despite the fact that the Platts have all the improvident "pauper" habits that Martineau criticizes both in *Illustrations* and, tacitly, in contrast with the prudent economy of the Hope household. The

implication seems to be that members of a community are obligated to care for their neighbors, even at real personal risk and even when those neighbors have not done anything to mark themselves out as especially deserving of such care.

The most important change from Dr. Burke's "bitter medicine" to Dr. Hope's "cheerful sacrifice" is the repositioning of the poor in relation to the health of the social body. In Dr. Burke's medical metaphor, the poor were like a diseased limb that needed to be amputated for the sake of the health of the social body as a whole. As individuals, they were ancillary and disposable to the larger social body; as such, their deaths could be rewritten as mere discomfort—the swallowing on a social scale of a bitter but salubrious pill or the unpleasant but necessary loss of a gangrenous limb. The philosophy that Martineau espouses in *Illustrations* is comfortable with death as an outcome, so long as it is the death of indigent populations figured as parasitically dependent upon and nonessential to the life of the social body as a whole. But the version of Martineau we get in *Deerbrook* seems to dispense with this distinction between the central and ancillary, between vital and disposable. The Platt family, who would without question be categorized as undeserving paupers and abandoned by Dr. Burke in *Illustrations*, somehow become *worth saving*, even at the risk of Margaret's life, in *Deerbrook*. The status of the poor has shifted; in *Deerbrook*, it is worth fighting to save the gangrenous limb even at the risk of spreading the infection more widely throughout the social body.

I use this metaphor of the gangrenous limb with a bit of irony, because one of the primary rumors that led the Deerbrook poor to reject Dr. Hope in the first place was that he was amputating the healthy limbs of the poor for practice or sport. It is only after he shows himself willing to venture into a space of contagion to try to save the poor, the metaphorical gangrenous limb, that he is redeemed in eyes of the town. In light of the comparison with Martineau's

Illustrations, I argue that this redemption signifies less as the personal salvation of Hope himself—a character who is so ethically laudable that he even endures some friendly mockery from the Grays for his moral "enthusiasm," as if Martineau is winking at readers to acknowledge that her main character is perhaps unrealistically unimpeachable—than a symbolic redemption of social medicine more broadly. The rumors that circulate about Hope unfairly make him into a sort of embodiment of the most troubling elements of what medicine might become if it were informed and directed by the tenets of political economy—that is, a system that affords different value to the bodies of the rich and the poor, that is capable of looking on as the poor suffer and die without intervening, that views the poor as expendable and nonessential. These are not fair accusations to make of Dr. Hope, as he proves in his conduct throughout and particularly at the end of the novel, but they are fair accusations to make of Dr. Burke and of Martineau as the author of *Illustrations*. The fact that Hope has to be *redeemed* of these accusations suggests a retrospective self-criticism of Martineau's own earlier work and, in particular, a belated questioning on her part of political economy's imperative to "let die."

The model of communal care that Martineau depicts at the end of *Deerbrook* still condones individual death for the sake of the social body—but in a new way that is almost directly antithetical to the "laissez mourir" function of Adam Smith's political economy. Whereas Smith's political economy (as well as Martineau's *Illustrations* of its tenets) condones the state's abandonment of poor citizens to starvation and death for the sake of economic market freedom and social health, *Deerbrook* advocates for putting oneself at risk of death in order to care for those very same poor citizens. Martineau thus sets up a critical Victorian problem—that the impulse to care for one's neighbors might conflict with the maximization of "Life," either of the individual, the larger social body, or the organicized economic body. Against her earlier

teachings in the *Illustrations*, Martineau seems, in *Deerbrook*, to give precedence to *care* over and above life. She suggests that the ethical imperative to care is more important than the life of the self or even the life of the social or economic body. In doing so, she sets up the question, which sits right at the conjuncture of political economy and public health. that the novelists in my subsequent chapters will attempt to answer in various ways—what is more important, providing care or maximizing life? And do we have to choose, or is there an alternative model of the economy or the social body that could resolve them?

CHAPTER TWO

Diagnosing Capitalism: Vital Economics and the Structure of Sympathy in Gaskell's Industrial Novels

In this chapter, I address how Gaskell positions sympathy in relation to a capitalist system. Many critics have discussed the depiction and function of sympathy in Gaskell's social problem novels, but I am doing so with a different understanding of how Gaskell imagines sympathy. In criticism of Gaskell's work, sympathy has generally been characterized either as something outside of capitalism that should be added to make capitalism more just or as something internal to capitalism that functions to discipline both working class and bourgeois subjects. I am arguing that Gaskell presents sympathy as *antithetical* to a necroeconomic system of capitalism. For Gaskell, sympathy is a natural impulse of embodied beings—a capacity that resides in the body and that is stimulated by embodied others. This natural, embodied sympathy is a problem for an unhealthy system of capitalism, and over the course of *Mary Barton* and *North and South*, Gaskell shows how capitalism has solved this problem by systematically repressing such sympathy. As Gaskell illuminates, this repression of sympathy happens at an institutional level. Therefore, her project is not simply to encourage sympathy in individual readers. Embodied individuals already have the capacity for and the impulse toward sympathy within them. Instead, in *North and South*, Gaskell imagines an alternative economic system that, instead of repressing such embodied sympathy, is founded upon it.

I differ from many critics in that I am not claiming that Gaskell is trying to encourage readers' sympathy for the poor as a catalyst for charity or philanthropy outside of a capitalist

economy.[13] More importantly, I am not arguing that Gaskell is advocating for sympathy as a mechanism of bourgeois or working class subject formation within the current system of capitalism, as some critics have argued in recent years. Carolyn Betensky and Melissa Schaub both argue that, in Gaskell's novels, sympathy functions to shape individuals into the kinds of subjects who will function in and maintain the current system of capitalism. For Betensky, the purpose of Gaskell's industrial novels is not to raise awareness about or materially alleviate the suffering of the poor, but rather to facilitate bourgeois identity formation through affective response. The effect of these and other similar novels, she claims, is not to produce social activism or material change, but rather to produce bourgeois feeling and allow bourgeois readers to understand themselves as both sympathizing and deserving of sympathy.[14] The novels, in this light, are not really about their working class characters but rather are about the formation of proper bourgeois subjectivity in their readers. In contrast, Schaub focuses on the working class characters themselves, but like Betensky, she claims that Gaskell's novels aim to produce subjects who are useful to a capitalist system. Schaub shows how sympathy "functions disciplinarily, as sympathy for the suffering of others becomes the force that will prevent workers from rioting and will teach them self-command as members of an emerging modern body politic" (Schaub 17). For Schaub, sympathy functions as a "vector of social control," preventing the suffering workers from acting out in violence or in revolt against the system that oppresses them (20).

These arguments are both deeply insightful, and there is much in them that I do not dispute. I think that both Betensky and Schaub reveal important limitations of Gaskell's project.

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[13] Elizabeth Starr claims that, in the scene depicting Mr. Carson's transformation after witnessing the distress of his workers in person, "the novel indicates that readers who have witnessed these scenes should be moved to similar sympathetic action" (391).

[14] See Carolyn Betensky, *Feeling for the Poor: Bourgeois Compassion, Social Action, and the Victorian Novel*.

In actual practice, it is likely that *Mary Barton* and *North and South* primarily led to bourgeois subject formation and bourgeois feeling as an end in itself rather than to any material change in the living conditions of the poor or to capitalism as a system. And it is certainly true that sympathy for the wealthy functions to discipline and limit the action of working class characters in both novels. At the end of *Mary Barton*, Gaskell suggests that sympathy for the mill owners would prevent workers from rising up in violence against those owners, and she shows how sympathy for a wealthy young girl disciplines a rowdy working class boy on the street. Additionally, near the end of *North and South*, Gaskell shows how sympathy for Thornton disciplines his factory hands into working harder and even working unpaid hours to try to keep his factory afloat. These are important points about how the function of sympathy in Gaskell's novels can become complicit with and support the ends of an oppressive system of capitalism. However, I argue that these risks are not part of Gaskell's project but rather are shortcomings of it. In fact, in my view, the complicity of sympathy in an oppressive system of capitalism is antithetical to Gaskell's primary project, which aims to show how capitalism has become oppressive precisely through the systematic exclusion of natural sympathy.

I argue that Gaskell's novels do *not* suggest that sympathy should be added to capitalism; rather, I argue that Gaskell shows how and why sympathy has been systematically *subtracted* from capitalism. I am departing here from Adam Smith's idea of sympathy as a cognitive process ultimately driven by and comprehensible in terms of self-interest. I believe that Gaskell depicts sympathy as a natural, embodied response to embodied, vulnerable others. People naturally and impulsively feel sympathy when in the presence of embodied others, and that sympathy conveys a moral obligation to care for others who are suffering, often against one's own self-interest. As Gaskell shows in these two novels, however, this sympathy interferes with the operation of

industrial capitalism. In her depiction of the working of industrial capitalism, Gaskell reveals how this natural sympathy has been systematically repressed and disincentivized. For this reason, I am moving away from the claim that Gaskell tries to teach or instill sympathy in her readers. For Gaskell, sympathy does not need to be taught. Rather, I argue that Gaskell shows how an oppressive system of capitalism has managed to stifle the sympathy that people naturally feel and would act upon if not for this interference.

Not only does Gaskell show how capitalism has repressed sympathy; more importantly, she reveals why it needs to do so. Gaskell shows how industrial capitalism is systematically creating the very kinds of bodies that most inspire this kind of natural sympathy—vulnerable, suffering, unhealthy bodies. Moreover, she shows that capitalism is invested in keeping the bodies of workers in this state of poor health—that the workers' physical vulnerability is actually an instrument of capitalist power. The natural sympathy that people feel in response to the suffering bodies of others would interfere with the interests of capitalism, because it would lead wealthier individuals to aid and nourish vulnerable workers and thus would remove that instrument of power. In this way, Gaskell depicts Britain's industrial capitalism as a necroeconomic or pathoeconomic system: an economic system of which death and poor health are necessary and operative parts.

With all this in mind, I do not see Gaskell's project as an attempt to inspire sympathy in her readers, either as a mechanism of social control, a tenet of bourgeois identity formation, or a catalyst for charitable action. Instead, I consider *Mary Barton* and *North and South* as a joint project, leading toward the alternative vision of capitalism that Gaskell presents at the end of *North and South*. Given a necroeconomic capitalist system that represses sympathy on an institutional level, it is not enough to encourage sympathy in the poor or the rich. Perhaps

working class sympathy for the wealthy might limit riots or violence, like the Thornton mill riot in *North and South* in which Margaret is injured; perhaps owning-class sympathy for the poor might limit unnecessary cruelty, like the younger Mr. Carson's caricature of the starving workers in *Mary Barton*. But the individual lack of sympathy across class lines is merely a symptom of a diseased economic system. Thus, individual realizations or transformations like those of John Barton and Mr. Carson are not enough, because they do not alter the problematic system itself. Instead, what is required is an alternative system of capitalism—one that, instead of creating unhealth and thus requiring the suppression of sympathy, creates health and is fueled by sympathy, and one that Gaskell begins to imagine at the end of *North and South*.

Section 1: Gaskell's Depiction of Industrial Capitalism as Necroeconomics

In a short scene situated in the midst of the strike, Gaskell highlights the connection between economics and health. Mr. Thornton runs into Dr. Donaldson on the street, and they discuss how their relative businesses—industrial production and medicine—affect one another. Referring to the economic downturn and the ongoing strike, the doctor says to the mill owner, "Your bad weather, and your bad times, are my good ones. When trade is bad, there's more undermining of health, and preparation for death, going on among you Milton men than you're aware of" (213). He claims that when manufacturing business is waning, the medical business is booming. For readers who have just been learning about Bessy's illness and the "clemming" of the workers and their families, this comes as no surprise. Of course downturns in trade, reductions in wages, and strikes lead directly to the bodily suffering, illness, and death of laborers. Dr. Donaldson is well aware that money can be used to make people healthier, that

unstable access to money can make people unhealthier, and that trends in the market have material effects on the bodies of vulnerable populations.

But in an act of willful deafness, Mr. Thornton seems to deeply misunderstand Dr. Donaldson's comments. He assumes that the doctor is concerned about the health of the mill *owners*, and responds by assuring the doctor of his own hardiness and ability to withstand the anxiety of the strike: "I'm made of iron. The news of the worst bad debt I ever had, never made my pulse vary. This strike, which affects me more than any one else in Milton,—more than Hamper,—never comes near my appetite. You must go elsewhere for a patient, Doctor" (213). Thornton does not seem to recognize the irony of assuring the doctor that his appetite is still healthy during the strike while his workers are dying because they lack food to satiate their own appetites. Even as he offers to buy anything that could aid the dying Mrs. Hale because he knows that "money is not very plentiful" in the Hale household, he does not seem to consider the wider effects of money's scarcity on the health of the workers of Milton.

I would like to suggest that this deliberate misunderstanding on Mr. Thornton's part is not just ignorance or callousness; rather, it is part of how (bad) capitalism works in Gaskell's view. Industrial capitalism in Milton both creates and instrumentalizes the bodily vulnerability of the mill workers. We can see how the workers' poor health is used as an instrument of the capitalist owners during the strike. Thornton's success in his conflict with the workers actually depends on their bodily vulnerability in comparison to his "iron strength." He feels confident that he can prevail and prevent the success of the strikers precisely because he can essentially starve them out—or perhaps more accurately, he can out-starve them. That is, he can last longer than they can without work because their bodies are closer to starvation than his body is. The same problem that leads the workers to strike—wages that are too low to support healthy bodies or to

accrue any savings—prevents their success, because their bodies are already weak and starving before the strike begins and they do not have savings with which to buy food when they are not receiving wages. A healthy body can negotiate—can hold out for a better offer, can weigh options, can think a proposal through—in a way that a starving body cannot. Mr. Thornton's well-fed, steady, powerful body exists in a different, slower, less urgent temporality than that of the workers' starving bodies, and this gives him leverage in their conflict. The poor person is thus denied economic negotiating power by the bodily vulnerability that comes along with poverty.

The hunger of the workers also becomes an instrument of the capitalists' power because it turns vulnerable laborers into advocates for their own unhealthy working conditions. Just after this exchange between Thornton and Dr. Donaldson, Margaret learns that her working class friend Bessy Higgins has died. The young woman finally succumbed to her long factory-borne illness in the morning, perhaps at the same time that Thornton was discussing the strike's impact on health in Milton with Dr. Donaldson. Bessy's fatal illness originated during her time working in a "carding-room" in a textile factory, where "raw cotton is combed out so that the fibres are ordered for spinning and any seeds removed" (note 1, pg. 102). In these carding rooms, bits of material "fly off fro' the cotton…and fill the air till it looks all fine white dust" (102). This "fluff got into [Bessy's] lungs" and made her ill. According to Bessy, this is a common plight of carding-room workers; she tells Margaret, "there's many a one as works in a carding-room, that falls into a waste, coughing and spitting blood, because they're just poisoned by the fluff" (102). This health hazard can be easily prevented by installing a "great wheel at one end o' [the] carding-rooms to make a draught, and carry off th' dust," but Bessy explains that "between [the objections of both] masters and men," these wheels have not been successfully implemented

(102). Masters object to installing a wheel, unsurprisingly, because it "costs a deal o' money—five or six hundred pound, maybe, and brings in no profit" (102). Seeing as masters have no trouble procuring willing workers in their mills, it is no surprise that they do not choose to take several hundred pounds out of their profits to pay for machinery that will improve working conditions.

More surprising, though, is the fact that the workers themselves object to the installation of the wheels. The bodily vulnerability brought on by prolonged poverty and undernourishment makes them not only unable but also unwilling to negotiate with the masters for safer working conditions. Bessy explains their objections: "I've heard tell o' men who didn't like working in places where there was a wheel, because they said as how it made 'em hungry, at after they'd been long used to swallowing fluff, to go without it, and their wage out to be raised if they were to work in such places" (102). The half-starving workers depend on having their stomachs artificially filled up by the unhealthy byproducts of their labor. The factory air, contaminated by the raw material of industry, is yet another numbing drug (like alcohol, tobacco, or opium) that helps the workers forget their hunger, their pain, and their poverty. It is, from the perspective of the factory owners, the perfect drug: it numbs the workers without making them unruly, it makes them dependent on factory labor to get their fix, it makes the ill-treated workers into advocates for their own poor working conditions, and rather than costing the masters anything, it excuses them from the cost of buying new equipment. As was the case in Thornton's strike negotiations, it is in the interest of the masters to keep the bodies of their laborers starving and vulnerable. They are able to avoid cutting into their profits to purchase equipment that will improve working conditions and prevent Bessy's lung disease precisely because their workers are perpetually hungry and cannot bear to go without the cotton fluff filling their empty bellies. In this version of

capitalism, the body of the perfect laborer is not robust and strong; it is hovering above the threshold of starvation, addicted to harmful substances, and dying of industrial diseases.

In this way, Gaskell suggests that industrial capitalism in Milton operates according to what Warren Montag and Mike Hill call "necroeconomics" (The Other Adam Smith 263). Their term builds on Achille Mbembe's work on "necro-politics," which helps us to understand that the biopower of modern governments functions not only through the management of life but also through the "controlled exposure [of populations] to want, dearth, and deprivation" (Hill and Montag 263). Montag and Hill bring this idea into their analysis of Adam Smith's economics, claiming that the "laissez-faire" economy he imagines is underwritten with the concept of "laissez mourir," or letting die. The economic system that he and other political economists put forth not only posits an "immutable and immanent order of what would come to be called the market," but it also advocates for the "legitimate power to expose [citizens] to death through hunger…in the name of the laws of [that] natural order" (263). In a necroeconomic system, death is a "necessary moment in [the market's] growth and function" (264). Death is built into the system that purports to support and maximize life. Thus, in a laissez-faire economy, we see the emergence of a "a strategically conceived retreat, a leaving alone or an abandonment [of citizens to death], often in the face of powerful counterforces" (264). This strategic exposure of citizens to starvation is not a malfunction or a shortcoming in the system; rather, it is a necessary, operative part of the system itself.

The industrial capitalism that Gaskell depicts both exemplifies and extends this necroeconomic logic. First, in her depiction of the strike in *North and South*, Gaskell highlights the integral function of "laissez mourir" in the free market economic system, as the Milton mill owners feel both empowered and required to abandon their laborers to death by starvation in the

name of the laws of political economy. Gaskell particularly shows this strategy to be an ethical problem after Margaret sees the distress of the Boucher family and sends them basket of food. The Hale family proceeds to deliberate about whether they acted rightly in assisting the family of the striking worker. Mr. Thornton earlier attempted to dissuade the Hales from helping the "turn-outs," claiming that doing so would only "prolong the struggle" (158). When pressed to arbitrate between Thornton's laws of political economy and his wife and daughter's act of charity, Mr. Hale can only come to an "unsatisfactory" and logically inconsistent compromise. He claims that Margaret and Mrs. Hale have "done quite right" in helping Boucher and "could [not] have done otherwise" under the circumstances (158). At the same time, he claims that what Thornton said about how the economy worked was "very true" and that it was therefore "clear enough that the kindest thing was to refuse all help which might bolster" the workers in their misguided efforts to obtain higher wages by striking (158). Mr. Hale's illogical conclusion here highlights his inability to square his ethical commitments with his belief in the laws of a free market economy. He is confronted with the "laissez mourir" side of a laissez-faire economy, and he is made profoundly uncomfortable by it.

But Gaskell shows that free market capitalism's necroeconomic tendencies go beyond a purportedly passive but actually actively strategic "letting die" of starving turn-outs. As she shows in her description of factory conditions, capitalism's strategic repertoire also includes a systematic "making ill" of worker's bodies. In a strategy that could perhaps more accurately be called "pathoeconomics," the mill owners benefit from keeping the bodies of their workers close to death. This pathoeconomic strategy does not just expose the workers to potential death by starvation; it also both creates and instrumentalizes their poor health while they remain alive. In *North and South*, Gaskell thus reveals the necro/patho-economic logic of Thornton's political

economy. In Gaskell's depiction, Thornton's free market capitalism is a system that depends on the willful abandonment of citizens to death by starvation and the production and instrumentalization of vulnerable, suffering bodies.

Section 2: Capitalism's Problem with and Repression of Sympathy

But capitalism's tendency to produce vulnerable, suffering bodies creates for itself a problem, because, as Gaskell repeatedly shows, vulnerable and suffering bodies naturally arouse the sympathy of those who come into contact with them. In both *Mary Barton* and *North and South*, Gaskell depicts scenes in which people come into close contact with suffering others with whom they are not inclined to sympathize, but then find themselves sympathizing against their own predispositions in the face of the bodily vulnerability of the sufferers. We see this in *North and South* when a reluctant Mrs. Thornton visits the dying Mrs. Hale. She "doubt[s] the reality of Mrs. Hale's illness" and only submits to her son's entreaty that she go with "as bad a grace as she could," full of "contempt for Mr. and Mrs. Hale, and positive dislike to Margaret" (240). As soon as she arrives and comes into close proximity with the dying Mrs. Hale, however, she forgets her resentment and feels sympathy for her. Mrs. Thornton is "softened all at once" and her dislike is "struck into nothingness before the dark shadow of the wings of the angel of death" (241). Once Mrs. Thornton is in the physical presence of Mrs. Hale's vulnerable, suffering body, witnessing the "heavy moisture of terms…on the eyelashes," the "hand groping feebly over the bedclothes," she feels sympathy and submits to Mrs. Hale's request (241). The clear suffering and vulnerability of Mrs. Hale's body provokes a visceral sympathy response in Mrs. Thornton, one that goes against her cognitive opinions about the Hales. Sympathy occurs as an instinctive response of one body to another body, trumping cognition.

This phenomenon occurs more dramatically in *Mary Barton*. We see intra-class visceral sympathy overcoming cognitive resistance when the boatman Sturgis takes pity on a lost, completely vulnerable Mary, "interested in her in spite of himself, and his scoldings of himself" (290). He takes her home with him to safety, "swearing at himself while he did so for an old fool" (290). It is actually Mary's bodily suffering and vulnerability that keeps her safe in Liverpool, because it generates sympathy that leads to care. The boatman and his wife feel sympathy for Mary, a total stranger to them, in response to her physical weakness—how her "cheek flushed, and then blanched to a dead whiteness; a film came over her eyes, and catching at the dresser for support in that hot whirling room, she fell in a heap on the floor" (301). She does eventually explain her situation to them, and they begin to care for her based on a cognitive understanding of her difficulties, but they feel sympathy for her before that. Mrs. Sturgis feels the impulse to "pity and to help" Mary without knowing anything about her, deciding that the strange girl "shanna leave the house to-night, choose who she is,—worst woman in Liverpool, she shanna" (303). Sympathy occurs before knowledge, as a visceral, pre-cognitive response to a vulnerable and suffering body.

A similar process occurs in the famous scene near the end of *Mary Barton*, when the elder Mr. Carson feels sympathy for his son's dying murderer, John Barton. Only in the presence of the total bodily vulnerability of John Barton (as well as Mary Barton) does Mr. Carson begin to feel sympathy for his enemy. Mr. Carson returns to the Barton home to find John Barton "fallen across the bed," unable to move and barely able to breath, and an exhausted Mary struggling "in vain" to "raise him" (358). Both John (literally) and Mary (symbolically) are at the very brink of life: John dies and Mary falls unconscious just minutes after Mr. Carson arrives. John Barton is almost like a representative of bodily vulnerability itself, clinging to life by a

thread. He is as close to death as possible without actually being dead, merely able to look "with gratitude" at the man who raises him up and holds him as he dies (358). Only in the close physical presence of this extreme bodily vulnerability does Mr. Carson begin to feel sympathy for the man who killed his only son. Even in this extreme case, the visceral impulse to sympathize with a vulnerable, suffering body is stronger than the cognitive predisposition against sympathy.

In addition to being aroused by the body of the other, Gaskell's form of sympathy also seems to be best expressed through and by the body rather than with words. We can see this in Mr. Carson's sympathy toward John Barton, which is first expressed through the physical action of lifting the dying man and holding him. Gaskell also depicts Mary's sympathy toward Mrs. Wilson when Jem is imprisoned in this physicalized way. Mary speaks comforting words to Jem's mother, but the real communication of sympathy happens through Mary's bodily presence and actions, not through her words:

> [S]he spoke in a low gentle tone the loving sentences, which sound so broken and powerless in repetition, and which yet have so much power, when accompanied with caressing looks and actions, fresh from the heart; and the old woman insensibly gave herself up to the influence of those sweet, loving blue eyes, those tears of sympathy, those words of love and hope, and was lulled into a less morbid state of mind. (244)

It is not Mary's words but rather her affectively expressive body—her eyes, her tears, her looks and actions, the tone of her voice—that expresses her sympathy for Mrs. Wilson. For Gaskell, sympathy is a visceral response felt by one embodied being in the physical presence of another embodied being, so it makes sense that she also depicts the expression of that response as primarily embodied.

The kind of sympathy that Gaskell is depicting here is, importantly, *not* the sympathy that Adam Smith describes in *Theory of Moral Sentiments*—sympathy that takes place exclusively within the imagination of the bounded individual, through that individual's willed cognitive act of imagining themselves experiencing what they see someone else experiencing and thinking about how they would feel in that situation. Smith's version of sympathy allows for no real transmission of affect or feeling between individuals. For him, "our own person is an absolute horizon" (112). For Smith, sympathizing with another is really just a cognitive process of relating to oneself, of imagining one's own potential feelings in a situation, and is ultimately rooted in self-interest. Smith's sympathy is not immediate or instinctive; it requires conscious thought. Nor is it rooted in the body; it happens exclusively in the mind, a space that Smith argues can be independent from the body through self-mastery and stoicism.

Gaskell is imagining something very different—a sympathy that is immediate, instinctive, and embodied, and that involves real affective permeability between individuals.[15] I draw here on Mike Hill and Warren Montag's work in *The Other Adam Smith*, in which they juxtapose Adam Smith with Spinoza, suggesting that Smith's description of sympathy is an attempt to efface and render unintelligible Spinoza's version of sympathy. In fact, they describe Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* as an attempt to radically redefine sympathy in a way that removes any possibility of permeability between individuals: his argument in *Theory of Moral Sentiments* is

> constituted by a double gesture that preserves the idea, or perhaps merely the term 'sympathy,' only to the extent that it empties of it any content or significance that would

[15] In making this claim, I differ from Rae Greiner, who claims in *Sympathetic Realism in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* that Adam Smith's depiction of sympathy in *Theory of Moral Sentiments* aligns with the project of Victorian realist novelists. She does not specifically apply Smith's definition to Gaskell's writing, but my argument diverges from hers in that I do not view Adam Smith's work on sympathy as a useful "critical tool" for understanding how sympathy works in Victorian novels.

> exceed the boundary of the individual. In other words, Smith may be seen as…not merely abolishing the transindividual or interindividual dimension, but doing so by means of the very language and lexicon of transindividuality itself. (108)

He is redefining sympathy in a way that empties it out of all its defining characteristics, as described by earlier works such as Spinoza's *Ethics*.

This matters for my project not only because Gaskell's depiction of sympathy closely resembles Spinoza's version of sympathy—the version of sympathy that Hill and Montag claim that Adam Smith is trying to efface. More importantly, it matters because, as Hill and Montag explain, Smith's radical redefinition of sympathy is instrumental to capitalism. It configures a kind of individual necessary for the success of free market capitalism: "To be able to 'consult his interest'…and to seek his own advantage, the individual must be made separate and solitary, impervious to the affects and desires of others, indifferent to or contemptuous of their suffering and deprivation, immune to the affective contagion whose effects other authors so feared" (144). It enables him to minimize and explain away the suffering of the laboring poor, and it works to render unintelligible the masses and collectives that both arise as a result of and threaten industrial capitalism (117-128, 146). Smith's is a form of sympathy that does not threaten and in fact ideologically enables capitalism. I am arguing that Gaskell is trying to recover or revitalize a form of sympathy that *does* threaten capitalism—a sympathy that, like Spinoza's, is immediate, precognitive, transindividual, and embodied, and a sympathy that Gaskell sees as more natural, real and capable of ethical world-making.

Gaskell alerts readers to the fact that Mr. Thornton's capacity for this kind of sympathy is inhibited through his denial of his own embodiment in the conversation with Dr. Donaldson in *North and South* to which I referred above. Mr. Thornton claims that he is not vulnerable to

suffering from ill health as a result of the strike, stating, "I am made of iron" (213). Thornton seems to be insisting that he is outside of the realm of bodily vulnerability in which sympathy circulates. He essentially asserts that he is not a human body. Instead of vulnerable human flesh, he is made of iron. His pulse does not vary; his appetite does not alter. Mr. Thornton asserts this physical invulnerability as a positive personal attribute, but in light of Gaskell's depiction of sympathy as rooted in shared bodily vulnerability, we can see this claim as a character flaw in Mr. Thornton and a problem that the novel needs to solve. To see oneself as physically invulnerable and ironclad is to be cut off from the circulation of sympathy.

As Gaskell shows in both novels, however, this belief of Thornton's is not just an individual failing or an isolated character flaw. Rather, it is evidence of the problematic way in which capitalism disciplines subjects into repressing their own sympathy, thus interfering with natural human communal relations. In both *Mary Barton* and *North and South*, Gaskell shows how the success of capitalism depends on the artificial withholding of this natural sympathy. In the case of the strike, Mr. Thornton's success in outlasting the striking workers depends on his withholding of sympathy for their starving families. In the case of poor working conditions, the mill owners' success in accruing the most profit depends on their lack of sympathy for both illness and hunger among their workers. Their power as capitalist owners requires the suppression of their natural sympathy. If they were to feel sympathy for the workers and provide food for the children who are dying of starvation, they would undermine their own power over their workers. Gaskell reveals several mechanisms by which industrial capitalism systematically interferes with the natural flow of sympathy between embodied human beings.

The simplest but perhaps most crucial mechanism is by restricting contact between masters and men. As shown above, the sympathetic response is aroused by intimate, close

contact between bodies, and the system of industrial capitalism shown in *Mary Barton* and *North and South* structurally limits such contact between masters and workers through the employment of middle management intermediaries. Gaskell illuminates the effects of this practice in *Mary Barton*, when George Wilson speaks to the elder Mr. Carson in hopes of obtaining an infirmary order for the gravely ill Mr. Davenport. When Wilson tells the mill owner that his employee is very ill, Carson responds with confusion: "Davenport—Davenport; who is the fellow? I don't know the name" (68). After Wilson assures Mr. Carson that Davenport has "worked in your factory better nor three years," Carson responds, "Very likely; I don't pretend to know the names of the men I employ; that I leave to the overlooker" (68). By employing "overlookers" to stand between themselves and the laborers, the mill owners are able to avoid the close contact with their men that would stimulate the sympathy that would pose problems for them as capitalists.

Perhaps less obviously, Gaskell also shows how the illusion of merit-based social mobility also functions to limit cross-class sympathy. As he reveals in a conversation with the Hales, Mr. Thornton espouses a deep belief in merit-based upward mobility, essentially claiming that anyone who "deserves" to part of the middle class *will* become part of the middle class. He states that any working class person who lives with "decency and sobriety of conduct, and attention to his duties," with "self-denial", despising any "indulgences not thoroughly earned" will be able to raise himself up and "come over to our ranks…on the side of authority and order" (84-85). In his view, the suffering of the poor laborer is the "natural punishment of dishonestly-enjoyed pleasure"—the fitting reward for "self-indulgent, sensual people" who deserve his "contempt for their poorness of character" (85). He is essentially making an argument that capitalism is a merit-based system, wherein merit is judged by how well an individual conforms to the standards of bourgeois morality. Anyone who acts like a proper bourgeois subject will rise

financially and become part of the capital-owning or managerial class; those who do not embody those values and habits deserve their inferior economic position and their suffering and do not earn any sympathy from Thornton. His belief that industrial capitalism ultimately rewards merit justifies his lack of sympathy for his workers; his experience of raising himself from the position of worker to master justifies his feeling of contempt for any worker who has not been able to do the same.

Gaskell suggests, however, that merit-based upward mobility in industrial capitalism is actually an illusion, in two ways. First, she draws attention to the external influences and elements of privilege that contribute to determining an individual's professional success. After Mr. Thornton tells his story of his own rise from rags to riches, Mr. Hale gently questions whether his success was solely due to merit by drawing attention to Thornton's privilege. Mr. Hale believes that Thornton was aided in his professional success by "the rudiments of a good education," even thought Thornton denies that his early education helped him at all as a manufacturer (85). After Mr. Thornton leaves, Margaret also asserts the importance of his privilege, claiming that he "owes his position" to the "training which his mother gave him" (86). While they acknowledge that Mr. Thornton is a "remarkable man," (88) both Margaret and Mr. Hale doubt that his rise to the position of mill owner is really the result of pure merit, bringing attention to other factors such as early education and the influences of family.

Second, and more important, Gaskell throws Mr. Thornton's definition of "merit" into question. Nothing is more important to Thornton's version of bourgeois merit than financial prudence. He locates his own worth as a man in his history of financial planning and self-denial. After his father's death, leaving the Thorntons in poverty, John worked in a draper's shop at a salary of fifteen shillings a week. He was able to provide for his mother and sister and still "put

by three out of these fifteen shillings regularly" (85). This careful, prudent saving allowed Thornton to accrue the capital that would eventually lead to his ownership of his own mill. Thornton certainly sees his careful husbanding of resources in order to accrue more resources as meritorious and morally right, but I argue that Gaskell suggests that financial improvidence among the poor is often not a vice but actually a sign of their merit. Throughout *Mary Barton* and *North and South*, Gaskell repeatedly highlights the moral value of improvidence and recklessness in service of hospitality, selfless care, and communal bonds.

Mary Barton opens with a scene of financial extravagance enacted for the sake of sympathy, friendship, and community. The Bartons, who are grieving after the disappearance of Mrs. Barton's sister Esther, invite the Wilsons over for an impromptu tea party. Mary is sent to buy eggs, ham, milk, a loaf of bread, and a bit of rum to share with the visitors. Spending this money is an "extravagance" with real financial consequences for the Bartons—when Mrs. Barton dies the following night, the tea-party expenditure leaves them "short of money" for funeral expenses (22). To spend money on a tea party[16] instead of saving it for necessities seems improvident, unless you think of communal bonds as necessities of life, as Gaskell's working poor do. These moments of extravagant hospitality build up the culture of sympathy and communal care that John Barton believes is unique to the poor community. He complains to

[16] In both *Mary Barton* and *North and South*, we see the wealthy mill owners throw extravagant parties for their friends during times of downturn in trade. In *Mary Barton*, an out-of-work John Barton sees the wife of his former boss buying delicacies for a party while Barton's son is dying at home for want of "good nourishment" (24). And in *North and South*, the Thorntons throw an extravagant dinner party during the strike, while the children of many workers are starving. Bessy Higgins questions, "Suppose Thorntons sent 'em their dinner out,--th' same money, spent on potatoes and meal, would keep many a crying babby quiet, and hush up its mother's heart for a bit!" (150). I've been struggling with this a bit—why extravagance for the sake of throwing a party is a merit in the poor and a vice in the rich. I think it comes down to the purpose and goal of the party and the purpose of the food at the party. The purpose and the end of the Barton's little tea party is genuine sympathy, and the purpose of the food at the party is genuine nourishment. In contrast, the purpose of the Thorntons' dinner party is magnificence and conspicuous consumption, and the purpose of the food is to impress and excite rather than to nourish.

George Wilson that the rich do nothing to help the poor. They do not bring food to the starving or ill, share their plenty with the freezing, hungry man who is out of work in the winter, or comfort the grieving when their family members die—"No, I tell you, it's the poor, and the poor only, as does such things for the poor" (11). The extravagance of hospitality that the Bartons show, and that Alice Wilson shows later when she invites Mary and Margaret for tea and spends her morning's wages on "half an ounce of tea and a quarter of a pound of butter," is part of the same ethos of the poor that values communion and sympathy over personal property (29).

As we see later in *Mary Barton*, the development of a culture of sympathy among the poor is actually a matter of life and death, because the kindness of neighbors is the only safety net for those who fall on hard times. This is best demonstrated after the fire at the Carson mill, which puts many men out of work, including George Wilson and Ben Davenport. Wilson gets by on the wages of his son Jem, but Ben Davenport comes "down wi' the fever" (57) and has several children who are all too young to work. When George Wilson and John Barton go to help the Davenports, the two men reveal what we might call a proletarian morality that differs from bourgeois morality in its profound commitment to selflessness and sympathy, even when practicing such sympathy requires financial improvidence or even recklessness. After seeing the situation at the Davenports' cellar, John Barton pawns his only good coat and handkerchief to buy food, candles, matches, and coal for the family. In an unquestionably improvident act, Barton essentially gives up all of his savings, everything that he could sell for food if he were starving in the future, to provide for the immediate needs of a family he does not even know except through the connection of George Wilson.[17] The demands of working class sympathy require that one's own future security be sacrificed for the immediate needs of the other. Gaskell

[17] This also speaks to the fact that working class community functions like contagion, spreading through mutual connections, mutual friends, and mutual loved ones.

presents these acts of financial improvidence for the sake of communal bonds and wellbeing as signs of Barton's merit and moral goodness. Thus, she throws into question Mr. Thornton's bourgeois belief in the correlation between financial prudence and merit.

In these ways, Gaskell suggests that Thornton's rise is not attributable to pure merit but rather is the result of the combination of privilege and a morally questionable ethos of financial prudence. But his mistaken belief that industrial capitalism is a merit-based system, in which the deserving rise to the top,[18] works to prevent his sympathizing with those at the bottom. Margaret's objections to Mr. Thornton early in the novel seem to arise from her objection to both Mr. Thornton's version of merit and the myth that prevents him from sympathizing with those who do not embody that flawed model of merit. Margaret criticizes Thornton for thinking that the poor are "out of the pale of his sympathies because they had not his iron nature, and the capabilities that it gives him for being rich" (88). She claims that Thornton has been able to become rich because of his "iron nature." This phrase implies that he is strong and steadfast, but also that he lacks the embodied vulnerability that facilitates sympathetic communion. The qualities that make him capable of rising to a high position in industrial capitalism—qualities that he sees as his virtues—also make him hard and unsympathizing, and differentiate him from the working class morality described above.

Even more importantly, Margaret's criticism implies that this capitalist myth—that those qualities which allow a man to succeed as a capitalist are virtues and those that prevent his success are vices—allows Thornton to avoid sympathizing with his workers because of the very qualities that make them morally superior to him. It is their lack of an "iron nature" that justifies his contempt for them. It is their softness, their embodied humanness, their physical vulnerability

[18] This is not just Thornton's belief, but rather a systematic myth of industrial capitalism.

that differentiates them from Thornton and inhibits their ability to rise in social class. While Mr. Thornton is physically invulnerable and financially prudent, the poor are physically vulnerable and generously improvident. As shown above, these qualities in the working class people are linked to their readiness to sympathize with their fellows: sympathy arises from close contact between vulnerable bodies, and it often prompts financial imprudence in service of communal care. But it is these very qualities that Thornton uses as reasons not to sympathize with the poor. In other words, Thornton refuses to sympathize with the poor because the poor are too inclined to show sympathy to one another. Gaskell reveals the problematic capitalist logic behind Thornton's views about the poor early in the novel: through the myth of merit-based social mobility, their working class ethos of sympathy, communal care, and sharing of resources becomes the justification for why they do not deserve the sympathy of the wealthy.

Some of the mill owners go further than Thornton: instead of just failing to sympathize, they actually try to police the circulation of sympathy among their workers. We see this when Hamper (another mill owner) tries to forbid his workers from sympathizing with the unemployed. After the strike, Hamper requires all of his hands to pledge that "they'll not give a penny to help th' Union or keep turnouts fro' clemming" (292). In order to gain access to the profits of capitalism, even at the lowest level, individuals have to foreswear sympathy for their fellows and promise to let the turnouts starve. Nicholas Higgins does not believe that such pledges actually produce the kinds of subjects that the mill owners hope to produce: subjects who obey authority, keep their earnings to themselves and do not share, and repress sympathy for the other members of their communities. Instead, Higgins claims that forcing workers to take the pledges just produces "liars and hypocrites" who will say anything the masters ask of them and then act differently when the masters are not around—a result that he believes is bad, but not

as bad as "making men's hearts so hard that they'll not do a kindness to them as needs it, or help on the right and just cause, though it goes again the strong hand" (292). But Nicholas will not be hypocritical or hard-hearted, and so refuses to take the pledge and thus is left out of work. He encapsulates the problem when he describes his plight to Margaret: "I've been a turn-out, and known what it were to clem; so if I get a shilling, sixpence shall go to them if they axe it from me. Consequence is, I dunnot see where I'm to get a shilling" (292). Nicholas insists on maintaining his commitment to sympathy, generosity, and sharing his personal wealth, and as a result, he cannot get any wealth to share. Hamper's anti-union policy makes explicit what for Thornton was only implicit logic: that those who participate in unsanctioned sympathizing with their fellows ought to be excluded from the profits of capitalism.[19]

Gaskell's anti-union stance in her industrial novels has often been interpreted as conservative or reactionary.[20] Certainly, she does criticize the actions of the trade unions quite

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[19] Somewhat hypocritically, the masters also punish the workers when they feel that they do not sympathize *enough* with their fellow workers, as when the striking workers gravely injure the "knobstick" coming for work in *Mary Barton*. The masters are "indignant, and justly so, at the merciless manner in which the poor fellow had been treated; and their indignation at wrong, took (as it often does) the extreme form of revenge. They felt as if, rather than yield to the body of men who were resorting to such cruel measures towards their fellow-workmen, they, the masters, would sooner relinquish all the benefits to be derived from the fulfillment of the commission, in order that the workmen might suffer keenly" (176). Some of the mill owners claim that the workers' violence toward the knobsticks is the primary reason not to acquiesce to their demands, saying that "if it were only for" their treatment of the knobstick, they would "stand out against them" (177). Another claims, "Ay, I for one won't yield one farthing to the cruel brutes; they're more like wild beasts than human beings," to which Gaskell adds, "(Well, who might have made them different?)" (177). Based on the rest of the book, she really does not go far enough in her reproach of the masters here, because it is not just that the masters could have made them different, but that they actually made regulations and policies that contributed to giving the workers the very characteristics to which they are objecting. Or perhaps more accurately, the masters profit from a system that functions to discipline sympathy out of both masters and men, and therefore, it is hypocritical to punish the workers for failing to sympathize with their fellows without attempting to also change the system that creates and incentivizes such behavior.

[20] See John Lucas, *The Literature of Change*, p. xiv.; Sally Minogue, "Gender and Class in *Villette* and *North and South*," Geoffrey Carnall, "Dickens, Mrs. Gaskell, and the Preston Strike." Patrick Brantlinger makes a more complex argument about Gaskell's depiction of unions in "The Case Against Trade Unions in Early Victorian Fiction," but he ultimately comes to the conclusion that Gaskell believes in the laws of political economy and thinks that strikes cannot be successful in raising wages.

heavily in both *Mary Barton* and *North and South*. But I want to challenge the idea that Gaskell's criticisms of unions are signs of her conservatism by noting that her critique centers on the fact that unions ape the tactics of the mill owners by similarly policing and restricting the natural sympathy of their members. As Higgins explains to Margaret, the union gets reluctant workers to join by denying them any sympathy or fellowship in the workplace until they do:

> If a man doesn't belong to th' Union, them as works next looms has orders not to speak to him—if he's sorry or ill it's a' the same; he's out o' bounds; he's none o' us. I' some places them's fined who speaks to him. Yo' try that miss; try living a year or two among them as looks away if yo' look at 'em; try working within two yards o' crowds o' men, who, yo' know, have a grinding grudge at yo' in their hearts—to whom if yo' say your glad, not an eye brightens, nor a lip moves,—to whom if your heart's heavy, yo' can never say nought, because they'll ne'er take notice on your signs or sad looks…just yo' try that, miss—ten hours for three hundred days, and yo'll know a bit what th' Union is. (232)

The union does almost exactly the same thing that the mill owners do, forcing its members to pledge to deny sympathy to outsiders, though for a different end. Higgins admits that carrying such tactics amounts to a "crime," but he believes that the ends justify the means in this case: "It may be like war; along wi' it come crimes; but I think it were a greater crime to let it alone. Our only chance is binding men together in one common interest" (233). For Higgins, it is worth committing an act of "tyranny" so as to create a unified working class that can demand its rights from the mill owners. Like Thornton, he sees the relationship between masters and men, between bourgeoisie and proletariat, as a battle, and feels that the proletariat must use the means put in place by the masters in order to gain power as a class.

But Mr. Hale and Margaret disagree with Higgins and condemn the actions of the union. Margaret objects to the union's means—the "tyranny" of the union, the "slow, lingering torture" of workers who do not join—which directly mirror the means of mill owners like Hamper. Mr. Hale goes further, objecting to the union's end. He claims that the union would be "beautiful, glorious,—it would be Christianity itself—if it were but for an end which affected the good of all, instead of that of merely one class as opposed to another" (233). Margaret and Mr. Hale (and, I think, Gaskell) object to the union not so much because it disrupts capitalism, but rather because it is *too much like* capitalism. It relies on the same artificial repression of men's natural sympathy for others. Moreover, it continues to operate under a paradigm of oppositional social classes, within which the gains of one class come at the expense of the other. In this light, Gaskell's critique of unions is not a concession to capitalists; rather, it is part and parcel of her critique of capitalism itself. It is a necessary part of a radical critique of a system founded on the repression of embodied human beings' natural sympathy for similarly vulnerable others.

Section 3: The Manufactured Risks of Sympathy

I have argued that Gaskell shows how capitalism systematically interferes with the circulation of real sympathy. I am, of course, not arguing that the characters in Gaskell's novels never feel or act upon real sympathy. Far from it—Gaskell's novels are filled with characters who show sympathy to their fellows, often against the disciplining mechanisms of industrial capitalism and their own self-interest. In both *Mary Barton* and *North and South*, Gaskell shows that this work of sympathy is overwhelmingly performed by two groups of people—unmarried middle class women and the poor. Unmarried middle class women function as a sort of sympathy labor force within the bourgeois family, filling the gap created by capitalism's strategic

repression of sympathy. The poor, who are further away from the center of capitalist power, sympathize in spite of the systematic repression of sympathy, sacrificing their own needs to care for their neighbors. The people who engage in this marginalized sympathy work, however, are still negatively influenced by capitalism's restriction on sympathy. The capitalist suppression of sympathy imposes physical risks and affective burdens onto such sympathizing. This short-circuiting of sympathy not only forces the greatest burden of affective labor onto society's most vulnerable populations, but it also imperils sympathy, making unhealthy and vulnerable people even more unhealthy and vulnerable.

In *North and South*, Gaskell shows how unmarried middle class women[21] function as supplemental sympathy generators for bourgeois communities, providing all the sympathy that has been systematically eliminated. Margaret is a prime example of this, functioning as a producer of sympathy in all the domestic situations into which she is placed. She is often seen as a sort of sympathy mill, from which other characters can draw emotional support. Margaret fills this role most often in her own family. For example, instead of telling Mrs. Hale himself, Margaret's father asks her to tell her mother about his decision to leave the Church and move to Milton as a private tutor. Margaret spends the whole day engaged in the exhausting affective labor of calming and comforting her mother, "bending her whole soul to sympathize in all the various turns [Mrs. Hale's] feelings took," before she can finally let out her own sorrow in bed at night (46). Once in Milton, both Mr. and Mrs. Hale are "equally out of spirits, and equally [come] upon Margaret for sympathy" (66). Margaret's affective labor becomes even more strenuous when her mother is dying, and her father draws heavily on her emotional resources:

[21] Working class unmarried women, and actually all working class women, also do enormous amounts of affective labor, but they occupy a different position. Their sympathy is part of this larger community of materially and emotionally selfless, counter-capitalist, reciprocal working class sympathy. Unmarried middle class women inhabit a unique position within the bourgeois family, in which they are expected to provide sympathy that is emotionally selfless but unreciprocated.

"Poor Margaret! All afternoon she had to act the part of a Roman daughter, and give strength out of her own scanty stock to her father" (243). As an unmarried, non-working, non-procreative woman, her emotional resources are her "stock"—the good that she can offer to the capitalist community.

When Margaret joins the Shaw-Lennox household after the death of her parents, her value as a producer of emotional support becomes even more apparent. Her move into the Shaw/Lennox household is a sort of business arrangement in the guise of familial, emotional connection. The Shaws have a "claim upon" Margaret because they "brought her up," and this gives them the "right" to claim her, in Mr. Bell's words, "as if she were a lap-dog belonging to them" (359). In the most unromantic terms, the Shaws invested materially in Margaret, providing for her when she was young, and now they expect to receive her affection and emotional labor in return. Margaret's role in the Shaw-Lennox household is that of an unpaid affective laborer, providing the same kind of emotional support to those around her that she provided to her parents when they were living:

> The course of Margaret's day was this; a quiet hour or two before a late breakfast; an unpunctual meal, lazily eaten by weary and half-awake people, but yet at which, in all its dragged-out length, she was expected to be present, because, directly afterwards, came a discussion of plans, at which, *although they none of them concerned her, she was expected to give her sympathy*, if she could not assist with her advice; an endless number of notes to write, which Edith invariably left to her, with many caressing compliments as to her eloquence du billet; a little play with Sholto as he returned from his morning's walk; besides the care of the children during the servants' dinner; a drive or callers; and some dinner or morning engagement for her aunt and cousins, which left Margaret free, it

> is true, but rather wearied with the inactivity of the day, coming upon depressed spirits and delicate health. (373-74, emphasis added)

Margaret is expected to perform an enormous amount of affective labor in this household, and, despite the Shaws' kindness, her sympathy is not emotionally reciprocated in any deep way by her needy cousin or her prim aunt. Mr. Hale reveals the inequality of the emotional exchange when he tells Mr. Bell that "Margaret loves [Edith] with all her heart, and Edith with as much of her heart as she can spare" (349). Edith receives Margaret's full love, and Margaret only receives the surplus love that is leftover after Edith attends to her primary relations. Mr. Bell's offer to pay 250 pounds per year to the Shaw-Lennox's for Margaret's keep is an only somewhat successful attempt to lessen the strength of this tacit obligation to perform affective labor.

Margaret does her job as an affective laborer well, producing an enormous amount of sympathy for those around her over the course of the novel. Because of the capitalist short-circuiting of sympathy, however, she is forced to produce an unnatural amount of sympathy while receiving very little in return, and she suffers as a result. Margaret undergoes great personal sorrow and stress over the course of the novel—the removal from her beloved home, the violence enacted upon her during the riot at Thornton's mill, the death of her mother, her father, her friend Bessy, and her friend and guardian Mr. Bell, the threat of death to and the reality of separation from her brother Frederick, and so on. And yet, she spends most of her time comforting others and is given almost no time to deal with her own anxiety and grief. It is only when she is left completely alone (during her father's trip to Oxford, where he unexpectedly dies) that she can indulge her own feelings instead of laboring to ease the feelings of others:

> When her father had driven off on his way to the railroad, Margaret felt how great and long had been the pressure on her time and her spirits. It was astonishing, almost

> stunning, to feel herself so much at liberty; no one depending on her for cheering care, if not for positive happiness; no invalid to plan and think for; she might be idle, and silent, and forgetful,—and what seemed worth more than all the other privileges—she might be unhappy if she liked. For months past, all her own personal cares and troubles had had to be stuffed away into a dark cupboard; but now she had leisure to take them out, and mourn over them, and study their nature, and seek the true method of subduing them into the elements of peace…. (344)

Gaskell here depicts the unequal circulation of sympathy. Margaret's emotional resources are flowing outward to those around her at an unsustainable rate, draining and emptying her out to the point that she is unable to deal with her own sorrow and care. This is the result of a capitalist system that turns unmarried middle class women like Margaret into sympathy generators, tasked with filling up the vacuum created by the systematic repression of sympathy.[22]

While unmarried middle class women fulfill the role of unreciprocated sympathy workers within the bourgeois family structure, the poor perform unsanctioned sympathy work outside of the bourgeois community. As I have argued above, industrial capitalism incentivizes the repression of natural sympathy. Those incentives hold less force, however, over those people

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[22] When Margaret enters into the working class world through her friendship with Bessy and Nicholas, her sympathy is treated differently. Despite the difference in economic standing, the relationship between Margaret and the Higgins family is much more sympathetically equal. They give "heart-service and love-works" reciprocally. For example, Margaret notes that Bessy has made her feel better just as she was making Bessy feel better (138) and when Mrs. Hale dies, Nicholas goes to Mrs. Hale's funeral and won't accept pay for Mary's service. He also does Margaret the great (though perhaps accidental) service of explaining to Mr. Thornton what really happened with Frederick and restoring Thornton's belief in Margaret's chastity and virtue. This non-monetary relationship is reinforced when they part, as Higgins refuses to take Margaret's money: "I'm not going for to take yo'r brass, so dunnot think it. We've been great friends, 'bout the sound o' money passing between us" (371). Margaret tells him that the money is for Boucher's children and reassures Higgins, "I would not give you a penny" (371). Unlike Margaret's relationship with the Shaws, this relationship is entirely separate from material exchange and is much more emotionally reciprocal. No money passes between them; they exchange heart-service for heart-service, love-works for love-works.

who are furthest away from capitalism's power and profits. The laboring poor, who gain little from capitalist production and often define themselves in opposition to the owners of capital, have less to lose (both psychologically and materially) by ignoring or resisting capitalism's decrees, both tacit and implied, against sympathizing. Gaskell highlights this inverse relationship between social class and readiness to sympathize in the scene in which George Wilson attempts to obtain care for the ailing Ben Davenport. The underfed John Barton sympathizes immediately, before he even physically sees the sick man and his starving family. George Wilson's description of the Davenports' suffering is enough to spark his sympathy; compassionate concern spreads from one man to the next like a virtuous virus. Barton's sympathy is immediate and his generosity is total; he gives them nearly all of his very small stock of food and money, going hungry so that the Davenport children can eat.

But sympathy does not spread so easily when George Wilson brings his concern to the Carson household. The family's servants, who are a socioeconomic step above Barton and Wilson, sympathize only belatedly and in moderation. As they prepare the family's meal, they fail to notice that George Wilson, the "gaunt, pale, unwashed, unshaven weaver" waiting to speak with their master, is sick with hunger (68). Gaskell states that, "They were like the rest of us, and not feeling hunger themselves, forgot it was possible another might" (66). However, the cook does eventually recognize his hunger and gives him some food: "when she had had time to think, after breakfast was sent in, [she] had noticed his paleness…[and] had meat and bread ready to put in his hand when he came out of the parlour" (69). This cook is able to sympathize with Wilson, but in a much more tempered fashion than that of John Barton's sympathy with the Davenports. Her sympathy with the suffering man does not impose itself upon her with the immediacy that Barton's does; she only feels sympathy once she has a bit of leisure time to

think. Nor does her sympathy require her to sacrifice her own wants or needs: instead of giving up her own dinner and going hungry, she merely gives away surplus food.

The wealthy mill owner Mr. Carson is even less sympathetic, with either the physically present George Wilson or the sick man Wilson describes to him. He does not provide the inpatient order Wilson asks for because he "doubt[s] if [he has one] to spare" (68). He refuses the request, giving only what he can "spare," only the surplus that he will not miss or perhaps even notice is gone. Neither Carson nor his son are at all emotionally affected by the hardship brought before them; the younger Mr. Carson leaves the house "gaily" to seek out "a smile from the lovely Mary Barton" (69). In contrast to the poor John Barton, who cannot resist getting emotionally invested in the wellbeing of the Davenports and gives what he *cannot* spare, the Carson men retain their emotional equanimity and give only what they will not miss. In light of Gaskell's critique of capitalism for its systematic repression of natural sympathy, this inverse relationship between social class and sympathetic response is not surprising. As mill owners, the Carsons are much more invested in the perpetuation of the economic status quo than laborers like John Barton, who exist in an ambivalent state of both dependence upon and opposition against industrial capitalism. As a result, the burden of sympathy work falls primarily upon the poorest and most vulnerable sectors of society.

For Gaskell, the capacity for and the practice of sympathy is an unquestionable moral good. When the poor practice sympathy in the problematic socioeconomic paradigm that Gaskell describes, however, it makes them vulnerable to increased physical harm. This is because sympathy involves exposure: it involves physical closeness and thus creates exposure to physiological disease; it involves emotional and psychological openness and thus creates exposure to negative affects. I have argued above that Gaskell presents such exposure as natural

and necessary for moral conduct. To prevent such exposure to the bodies and affects of others is to repress one's natural ethical responsiveness, to become less human—to become "made of iron." This openness to exposure is what creates the possibility for friendship, love, and communal bonds. However, in a socioeconomic system in which capitalism is actively creating unhealthy bodies, those who open up their physical and affective boundaries enough to perform sympathy are also at risk of being exposed to all kinds of disease. Gaskell emphasizes in her depiction of typhus in *Mary Barton*, though, that the problem is not the boundary-compromising practice of sympathy itself, but rather the creation of unhealthy bodies by an anti-sympathy system of capitalism.

When John Barton and George Wilson provide care for the Davenports, they make themselves vulnerable to physical harm in a variety of ways. First of all, John Barton sells his small stock of valuables to pay for food, candles, and coal for the family, leaving himself without any savings for the future and thus more vulnerable to starvation and want in the case of future unemployment. More urgently, by going into Davenport's home and caring for him and his family, both men expose themselves to the "virulent, malignant, and highly infectious" fever that eventually leads to his death (59). Wilson also exposes the rest of his family to the contagious illness by bringing two of the Davenport children back to his home to be cared for by his wife, and indeed, the Wilson family pays dearly for their kindness. Although the Davenport children do not catch their father's disease, the "ghoul-like fever was not be braved with impunity, and baulked of its prey," and soon after Davenport's widow is back on her feet, she finds out that George Wilson's youngest sons have come down with the same fever. Soon afterwards, they die. Although Gaskell does not explicitly suggest that Wilson's children catch the fever from the Davenports, it is strongly implied. Gaskell takes pains, however, to show that despite the spread

of the illness through sympathetic care, the sympathy is not to blame and should not be regretted.

First of all, Gaskell very explicitly states that this disease is caused by poverty, unhealthy social conditions, and fluctuations in trade. She notes that it is "brought on by miserable living, filthy neighborhood, and great depression of mind and body" (59). Davenport was employed at the Carson mill and has been out of work since the mill fire. All of the risk factors that Gaskell notes for this disease, later referred to as typhus, are caused by the disruption of trade and the factory's failure to provide any kind of safety net for the workers while the equipment is replaced. As Gaskell shows earlier in the chapter, the Carsons actually prolong the shutdown of the factory, enjoying their newfound leisure time and using insurance money to renovate the factory with up-to-date equipment without the "weekly drain of wages given for labour" (56). Without those weekly wages, Davenport is forced to relocate to a damp cellar in a filthy slum, to go without food and warmth, and to suffer in mind from his inability to provide for his hungry, crying children. Gaskell emphasizes that Davenport's disease is generated by the social conditions created by an economic system that produces unhealthiness and represses sympathy. In other words, Barton and Wilson are only exposed to disease through their sympathy because the system of industrial capitalism created that disease in the first place.

Moreover, neither the characters nor the narrator express any regret over the choice to enter the Davenport home and care for the family, even after it leads to the death of the young Wilson twins. This stands in contrast to a novel like *Bleak House*, in which several characters regret Esther's show of sympathy toward the ailing Jo and subsequently blame Jo for spreading his illness to his caregivers, and in which Esther quarantines herself in order to prevent the further spread of the disease. In *Mary Barton*, nobody blames the Davenports for the death of the Wilson twins, nor does anyone seek to isolate the twins once they fall ill. Hearing of their illness,

both Alice and Mary Barton immediately go to the Wilson home to help care for the twins. Only once does Gaskell's narrator address the etiology of the disease, when the two men first enter the Davenport home; she notes, "[T]he poor are fatalists with regard to infection; and well for them it is so, for in their crowded dwellings no invalid can be isolated. Wilson asked Barton if he thought he should catch it, and was laughed at for his idea" (59). The men laugh at the idea of trying to prevent exposure to contagion, and even after the disease spreads to Wilson's own family, they (like others in their community) continue to willingly expose themselves to contagious diseases in order to provide sympathetic care.

Here Gaskell evokes a common lament of public health reformers, who often complained that the poor believed that they could not alter the course of a disease and thus did not follow the instructions of doctors and sanitary officials. This trend was often cited as a reason for the failure of various public health initiatives.[23] But Gaskell presents their response to contagious disease in a different light. She agrees that the poor ignore the possibility of disease transmission via close physical contact, but she does not present their fatalist approach as regrettable, mistaken, or ignorant. Instead, she suggests that the poor community's approach to disease is a strategic and morally laudable response to the material conditions of poverty created by a pathological system of capitalism. George Wilson and John Barton are not ignorant of the possibility that disease might spread through physical contact; Wilson brings up the possibility as they enter the Davenport home. However, viewing disease as a physical entity spread through close contact is not a tenable position for the poor under their current material conditions. They cannot quarantine sick individuals because they do not have space; they cannot avoid coming into contact with sick family members, neighbors, and coworkers; they cannot hire sick nurses or get

[23] See, for example, Anne Hardy, *The Epidemic Streets*, 274 and Pamela Gilbert, *Cholera and Nation*, p. 35, 51.

their loved ones into fever wards, so they must either directly care for the ailing or else abandon the sick to suffer and die alone. Thus, they participate in a community-wide strategic choice to ignore the possibility of contagion and to explain disease through fate rather than etiology. This choice of fatalism allows them to preserve both sanity and communal sympathy under social conditions that preclude the isolation of contagious individuals.[24]

By refusing to focus on the moments of contact that led to the death of the Wilson twins, Gaskell shifts attention away from the pathways of contagion and towards the root causes of disease. Gaskell is concerned about filthy living conditions and diseases of poverty, but she is not focused on changing the social norms of working class communities to better align with the recommendations of public health officials. Instead, she is addressing a pathological system of capitalism, which is systematically creating unhealthy bodies. By refusing to express regret for the sympathetic care that led to the spread of typhus or to place blame on the men for being ignorant about the spread of infection, Gaskell is emphasizing that the pathology lies in capitalism, not sympathy. Sympathy is not in itself dangerous or disease inducing; it is made dangerous by a system of capitalism that creates social conditions that lead to disease. The danger involved in sympathizing is a side product of this system of capitalism. Gaskell does not want to limit or alter working class practices of sympathetic care. Instead, she wants to alter the system of capitalism that is making those practices of sympathy dangerous. She wants to replace a necroeconomic system that generates both disease and profit with a new vital economic system of capitalism that generates health.

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[24] There were certainly concerns as well among medical professionals and public health officials about the ethical implications of contagionism, as Pamela Gilbert describes in Chapter 5 of *Cholera and Nation*, p. 95.

Section 4. Gaskell's alternative vision of capitalism as public health project

We can see the beginnings of this new economic system in Thornton's "experiments" at the end of *North and South*. Although Thornton downplays the importance of the changes he is instituting at his mill, he is actually fundamentally altering Milton's system of industrial capitalism by removing the conditions that made the system pathoeconomic. First, he subverts the most important mechanism of sympathy suppression by actively creating "actual personal contact" between masters and men (32). Previously, we have seen how personal contact between masters and men was systematically eliminated in order to prevent the arousal of potentially disruptive sympathy. Thornton is reversing this pattern by deliberately building interclass personal contact into the institution of industrial capitalism. Moreover, Thornton's communal kitchen inverts a pathoeconomic system that thrived upon its workers' bodily vulnerability and proximity to starvation. His "dinner-scheme" is essentially a public health project, designed to nourish his workers and create healthier bodies. This dining room project, importantly, is not a charity; Thornton is not doing philanthropic work outside of his role as a mill owner. Rather, this is an intervention within the institution of industrial capitalism. He is redefining the methods and goals of the factory. Instead of systematically creating unhealthy bodies and instrumentalizing their vulnerability, Thornton is trying to use the institution of capitalism to systematically create healthy bodies. In explaining his experiments to Mr. Colthurst, Thornton uses the language of health, claiming that personal intercourse between masters and workers is "the very breath of life," and that without it, his project "would lose its vitality, cease to be living (432). By altering the mechanisms that made industrial capitalism pathological—the restriction of close sympathy-producing contact, the creation and instrumentalization of poor health among workers—Thornton is engendering an alternative version of health-based capitalism.

In order to bring his alternative business model to fruition, however, Thornton needs the investment backing of Margaret Hale, who, as a recent heiress with a middle class background, is uniquely positioned to fund Thornton's vital capitalism. As I have argued above, middle class women's sympathy is not suppressed but rather expected and required in the bourgeois domestic space as affective labor, filling the vacuum created by the systematic suppression of other channels of sympathy. Unlike traditional capitalist investors whose sympathy has been disciplined out of them, Margaret has been disciplined *into* heightened sympathy. And indeed, her investment in Thornton's mill is motivated by sympathy for both the workers of Milton and for Mr. Thornton himself, not by the desire for profit. She hopes to create jobs for unemployed workers in Milton and support the projects that Thornton has been forced to give up; she is not concerned with accruing more personal wealth. Notably, Margaret displays no desire to financially back Thornton's plans until she hears about his public kitchen and his newfound belief in close personal intercourse between masters and men. Only after Thornton transforms from a stakeholder of necroeconomics (in which bodies are raw materials that can be used and abused to produce money) into an advocate for vital capitalism (in which money is a raw material that can be used to produce healthy bodies) does Margaret offer her financial backing. The transfer of money at the conclusion of the novel is a model of the kind of investment that would support an alternative, health-based version of capitalism; it is capitalist investment as public health and community-building project. Moreover, Gaskell suggests that capitalism has created within itself the alternative investor who makes this new system possible—the middle-class woman, whose sympathy has not been suppressed but rather accentuated.

Gaskell's solution, then, involves and requires sympathy, but it is not a simple call for readers to be more sympathetic towards the poor. She imagines, rather, an unfamiliar and almost

uncategorizable alternative economic system to replace profit-driven industrial capitalism. In Gaskell's system, land-based wealth gets transferred to middle class women, who then invest that wealth according to their sense of sympathy rather than their desire to accrue profit. It is not exactly philanthropy, because money is still distributed as wages for labor; it is not exactly socialism, because the means of production are still privately owned; and it is not exactly capitalism, because it is does not operate according to the logic of profits. It is a strange hybrid of the three, in which women like Margaret Hale privately own the means of production and, like an ideal socialist state, manage those means of production, with no private desire for profit, in order to generate a healthy social body. Gaskell's economic solution essentially imagines taking the means of production and putting them into the possession of her middle-class female readers. This solution brings us back around, oddly, to the novel's purported function as an instigator of imaginative readerly sympathy. In the fantasy of this alternative economic system, Gaskell's novel serves a potential educational function, teaching her readers how to manage the means of production according to sympathy, like Margaret Hale. It is perhaps true, then, that Gaskell wants to inspire imaginative sympathy in her readers. She wants to do so, however, not to stimulate apolitical kindness or charity, but rather to facilitate the creation of a class of non-profit-driven female managers of capital who will make possible an alternative system of capitalism-as-public-health, which will in turn create healthy citizens and healthy communities and restore the natural flow of embodied sympathy through the social body.

CHAPTER THREE

Contagious Community in Dickens's *Bleak House*

Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* is often seen as an entirely apolitical novel—a novel that turns away from legislative solutions in favor of domestic ones; a novel that mercilessly criticizes women who neglect their domestic responsibilities in an attempt to intervene in the public sphere; a novel in which "private charity transforms a bleak house into a home but the city's bleakness remains untouched" (Gilbert, *Citizen's Body* 151); a novel that essentially concedes defeat to a litany of political problems and takes refuge in an idealized domestic space. This chapter challenges that reading. I argue that in *Bleak House*, Dickens calls for a reformulation of the social body on new and more inclusive principles, which has the potential to alter the terms and assumptions of politics on a fundamental level. In this reading, I argue that we can see the lampooning of the undomestic Mrs. Pardiggle and Mrs. Jellyby in favor the appropriately domestic Esther Summerson not just as an antifeminist commentary on the role of women but rather as a critique of a particular model of the social body and an elaboration of an alternative. This alternative, which is modeled on contagion as both figure and material fact, imagines the possibility of a biopolitical community that is not based on exclusion.

I posit that Dickens presents two competing models of community health in *Bleak House*. In the first, which I refer to as the "inverse model," health is treated as a commodity that obeys the laws of scarcity; in the second, which I call the "direct model," health does not obey the laws of scarcity, but rather acts like a contagious disease, proliferating when shared between people. I argue that Dickens presents the former as a problematic model of health: not only inherently unethical but also doomed to fail. He shows that health is not a scarce commodity; when various

characters in the novel treat it as such, they end up producing more of the diseases, disorders, and social problems that they purportedly seek to cure. Contagion, however, functions to disrupt this first model, unsettling its foundational premises, and leads to the more tenable and ethically responsible second model. In the conclusion of this chapter, I claim that this second model has the potential to be the basis for a reformation of a more inclusive social body.

What I refer to as the "inverse model of health" operates on the following logic: "As you get healthier, I get sicker, and as you get sicker, I get healthier. As your stock of health and vitality depletes, my stock increases." Health is imagined here to operate as a scarce commodity. This logic suggests that there is a finite quantity of health or vitality available and that said quantity must be divided up between all involved parties. With only a limited stock of health available, each party can only gain to the extent that another loses. The health of self and other are thus inversely proportional: when one goes up, the other goes down and vice versa.

This is the model that the institution of Chancery—the legal institution that purportedly seeks to determine the rightful inheritor of the Jarndyce estate—represents in an economic sense. As an institution designed to divide up a finite set of resources between a set of opposed "suitors," Chancery operates on the premise that one person can only gain to the extent that another loses. We see Richard Carstone increasingly thinking in these inverse terms as he becomes more involved in the Jarndyce and Jarndyce suit. He comes to view John Jarndyce as his adversary because both he and Mr. Jarndyce are "interested parties" (551). That is, they are both possible recipients of the same finite fund of resources and therefore are necessarily "at issue" (553). Richard comes to see the world on Chancery's terms, believing that his interests must necessarily be inversely proportional with Jarndyce's interests.

The outcome of the Jarndyce and Jarndyce suit reveals this apparent inverse model of economic prosperity to be a trick. The suit finally ends not because the court reaches a decision about the rightful inheritor of the Jarndyce estate; rather, it ends when the entire estate has been "absorbed in costs" (901). None of the "interested parties" actually receives any of the money from the case, because the entire estate is eaten up in legal costs. It becomes clear in the end that Chancery does not actually distribute anything; it merely consumes. The false promise of inversely proportional prosperity enables and obscures Chancery's true function of consumption. Chancery functions as a sort of cannibalistic institutional machine that preys upon the belief of suitors like Richard in this inverse model of prosperity. This function is gruesomely realized in the moment that the suit ends, when the lawyer Mr. Vholes, leaving the court with a "slowly devouring look," gives "one gasp as if he had swallowed the last morsel of his client" (901). In the realm of economics, the Chancery plot reveals the inverse model of prosperity to be a deception designed to serve a specific predatory group—in this case, lawyers.

The same proves to be true in the realm of health. Dickens depicts several instances in which various characters espouse an inverse model of health that proves to be both illusory and functionally enabling of predatory practices. We can see this model of health evoked by Harold Skimpole, the manipulative hanger-on who neglects his own family while milking his "friend" Jarndyce for all he is worth. Skimpole reveals his reliance on this inverse model of health when he first sees Esther after she has fallen gravely ill and subsequently recovered. Upon seeing her again, Skimpole bursts into a rapturous speech, claiming that he has been "shedding delicious tears of joy and sympathy…on [her] account" (549). He goes on to claim that because of her illness, he

> understands the mixture of good and evil in the world now; felt that he appreciated health the more, when somebody else was ill; didn't know but what it might be in the scheme of things that A should squint to make B happier in looking straight; or that C should carry a wooden leg to make D better satisfied with his flesh and bone in a silk stocking. (549)

Skimpole sets up an inverse relationship between Esther's suffering and his own happiness, between her grave illness and his fullest experience of health. He claims that her sickness has enabled and supported his health. This inverse relationship justifies, in Skimpole's view, the "mixture of good and evil in the world." His response to Esther's illness here reveals one of the key functions of evoking this inverse relationship—justifying the suffering of some as a necessarily enabling force behind the pleasure, health, or joy of others.

In the conversation with Esther cited above, Skimpole describes an inverse relationship of health between two individuals. But elsewhere in the novel, he shows us what it looks like when this inverse model of health becomes the foundation for social and economic relations between groups. During one of Skimpole's little orations about work, responsibility, and business (and why he is, or should be, exempt from all of them), he makes a statement about slavery in America that gives us a sense of how this inverse relation of health functions between groups of people:

> Take the case of the Slaves on American plantations. I dare say they are worked hard, I dare say they don't altogether like it, I dare say theirs is an unpleasant experience on the whole; but, they people the landscape for me, they give it a poetry for me, and perhaps that is one of the pleasanter objects of their existence. I am very sensible of it, if it be, and I shouldn't wonder if it were! (273).

He acknowledges the "unpleasantness" of slavery, but he suggests that said unpleasantness on the part of enslaved people is converted into pleasure on his part. And although he doesn't explicitly say so, he suggests that his pleasure is a sort of justification for the institution of slavery. Skimpole's inverse model of health slips seamlessly, insidiously, into a justification for one of the most extreme and most violent impositions of racial inequality.

Skimpole's choice of race-based slavery as his example here is fitting, because his "inverse model of health" operates according to a similar logic to that of the particular form of biopolitical racism that Foucault illuminates in his lectures at the Collège de France. This form of racism establishes an inverse relationship between the overall health of a central social body and the exclusion and death of marginalized, racialized others. This racist ideology, Foucault argues, grounds and enables the modern biopolitical state's "right to kill" in the name of protecting the vitality of the social body. By highlighting the similarities between Foucault's biopolitical racism and the inverse model of health presented in *Bleak House*, I aim to illuminate the political potential of Dickens's rejection of that model and enumeration of an alternative.

In the latter part of his 1975-76 lectures, which were later published as *Society Must Be Defended*, Foucault explains the foundational role of a certain kind of racism for the exercise of biopower. I depend here on Foucault's definition of biopower or biopolitics as the exercise of power that is "directed…at man-as-species" (243). In a biopolitical system, the state seeks to regulate and manage population-level trends such as birth rates, mortality rates, and the spread of endemic diseases in order to maximize the total vitality of the population it controls, particularly with the aim of maximizing the productivity of that population as an economic work force. Biopower takes various forms, from public hygiene campaigns to interventions in urban planning and design to tax incentives for reproduction—any mechanism by which the state seeks to

manage and optimize the life of its people as a species. Biopower takes "life as both its object and its objective": it acts *upon* life, enacting discipline upon individual bodies and seeking to regulate population-wide biological trends, and it acts *for* life, aiming to maximize the vital force of the population as a whole (254).

In the lectures that comprise *Society Must Be Defended*, Foucault raises a crucial paradox, which other theorists have since taken up in more depth: If this is how modern power works, if maximizing life is power's aim and function, then how can that power kill? The same biopolitical regimes that enforced mandatory vaccination, drained cesspools, and funded hospitals also built concentration camps, the modern prison-industrial complex, and the atomic bomb. The period during which, according to Foucault, biopower becomes the predominant mechanism of state control is simultaneously a time when states begin to expose citizens to death on an unprecedented scale. Foucault lingers on this apparent paradox, ultimately pinpointing racism as the key to its resolution:

> How can a power such as this kill, if it is true that its basic function is to improve life, to prolong its duration, to improve its chances, to avoid accidents, and to compensate for failings? How, under these conditions, is it possible for a political power to kill, to call for deaths, to demand deaths, to give the order to kill, and to expose not only its enemies but its own citizens to the risk of death? Given that this power's objective is essentially to make live, how can it let die? How can the power of death, the function of death, be exercised in a political system centered upon biopower? It is, I think, at this point that racism intervenes. (254)

Racism is the ideological tool that allows biopower to reconcile this apparent contradiction between claiming life as the desideratum of power and utilizing death as the instrument of power.

Foucault explains that racism fulfills this role in two ways. First, racism fragments. It subdivides the biological field of the population, "introducing a break…between what must live and what must die" (254). Racism "establish[es] a biological-type caesura within a population," allowing the state to "subdivide" the population, to break up the presumed organic whole of the nation's citizenry into biologized subgroups (255). More important for my purposes, though, is what Foucault calls racism's "second function"—the establishment of a "positive relation" between the death of the other and the health of the self. Foucault summarizes this relation thus: "The very fact that you let more die will allow you to live more" (255). In other words, the modern biological racism that Foucault describes makes possible the inverse health relationship that I have described above. It creates an ideological foundation for the idea that my health is inversely proportional to the health of the other—that if I want to become healthier, he needs to become sicker. It enables the promise that the suffering of the other will translate into my health and the threat that the other's health or prosperity must result in my suffering or death.

It is important to note that what Foucault describes as "racism" only minimally overlaps with contemporary colloquial definitions of racism that focus on individual prejudice and systemic oppression of groups of people based on phenotypic traits or ethnic background. Instead, Foucault uses the term to refer to a specific technology of state power that is largely unrelated to the use of phenotypic differences to place people into hierarchical racial categories. What Foucault terms "racism" is a discursive tool, deployed by the state, to first designate certain people as "unsuitable participants in the body politic" and, second, to frame "such

internal exclusions" as "necessary and noble pursuits to ensure the well-being and very survival of the social body" (Stoler 62). In Foucault's usage, "[r]acism is not based on the confrontation of alien races, but on the bifurcations within Europe's social fabric" (Stoler 60). Instead of pointing outward toward the people of another nation, it points inward toward perceived threats or "others within" the state. Foucault's racism is about the production of a privileged category of whiteness within the European nation-state through the exclusion of a range of "others"—many of whom might today be categorized as "white." Thus, in Foucault's terms, it makes sense to suggest that the technology of biopolitical racism is deployed against someone like the pauper child Jo in *Bleak House*, who is ostensibly ethnically and phenotypically "white" but has been designated as an "unsuitable participant in the body politic" who must be excluded for the sake of that social body's wellbeing. It is perhaps a fair criticism to say that Foucault uses the term "racism" too loosely—that he does not sufficiently attend to historical specificity, failing to differentiate between the violent racism experienced by African-American slaves and the state racism experienced by someone like Jo. I do not seek to refute that claim, but merely to include it as a caveat and to note that, in this chapter, I am using the term "racism" in the limited and specific way that Foucault defines it in *Society Must be Defended*.

This biopolitical racism moves beyond what we might call the ancient health inverse relationship of war—the idea that I need to kill my enemies so that they don't kill me. The modern, biopolitical racism that Foucault describes here changes that relation—"If you want to live, the other must die"—and makes it function in a new way. A military relationship of confrontation turns into a biological relationship of inverse health distribution. The logic of this racism establishes a causal connection between the death of the other and the vitality of the self:

> The fact that the other dies does not mean simply that I live in the sense that his death guarantees my safety; the death of the other, the death of the bad race, of the inferior race (or the degenerate, or the abnormal) is something that will make life in general healthier: healthier and purer. (255)

It is by setting up this inverse relationship between the health of some people and the death of others that racism functions as "the precondition for exercising the right to kill" in the name of life. In order for a system of power simultaneously (1) to position itself as being in service of life and (2) to kill or to expose citizens to death, it needs this racist ideology, which imagines the health of some to stem from the death of others.

It is important to note that when Foucault refers to "killing" or "death," and by extension, when I refer to killing and death in this argument, I am not merely concerned with *murder as such*. I am in fact much more interested in what Foucault calls "indirect murder"—that is, exposing some groups of people to greater risk of death or disease through expulsion, exclusion, or refusal of care (256). This indirect murder is the kind of state killing characteristic of biopower. Instead of "making" a citizen die through the spectacle of execution, biopower more often quietly "lets" groups of citizens die through a withdrawal of care or an exposure to risk. At its most radical, this biopolitical racism serves to justify the genocidal machines of the Holocaust, but far more frequently, it functions as the ideological basis for slower violence, to use Rob Nixon's evocative phrase. It lies behind innumerable unspectacular acts of killing—the dumping of toxic chemicals into water sources that are used by marginalized groups; the exclusion of certain groups of people from social services; the prohibitive price-gauging of certain life-saving medications.

Harold Skimpole enacts this kind of indirect killing on an individual level in his treatment of Jo, the young street-sweeper, in *Bleak House*. Jo, an orphaned pauper child, pops up repeatedly in the novel as a friend to the mysterious Nemo, a rejected witness at Nemo's inquest, a secret guide to Lady Deadlock in disguise, and a confused informant to Mr. Tulkinghorn. Esther encounters the "wretched boy" after he has fallen gravely ill, and her young maid Charley, an orphan herself, hears about his case from a common acquaintance named Jenny (450). Esther and Charley go to Jenny's cottage and, after seeing the state of the case, bring the ailing Jo back to Bleak House to care for him. When they present Jo's "sorrowful case" to Mr. Jarndyce, Mr. Jarndyce consults Skimpole, who, although he never actually practices medicine in the novel, was originally trained as a physician (454). At Jarndyce's request for advice about what to do with the boy, Skimpole responds, "you had better turn him out" (454). Unfazed by Jarndyce's rare "almost stern" response, Skimpole goes on to explain, "I have a constitutional objection to this sort of thing" (454). Skimpole is making a claim of exclusion on behalf of a perceived opposition between his body and Jo's body. His "constitution" is threatened by Jo's inclusion in the domestic space, and in Skimpole's mind, this serves as sufficient justification for turning Jo out into the street.

In this moment, Skimpole illuminates something really important about this inverse model of health: it avoids, rejects, and actively opposes contact with the people who are perceived as other. It doesn't only kill; it also *distances*, and these two functions are inextricably intertwined. They are intertwined literally, because the act of distancing that Skimpole calls for is actually an act of indirect killing. When Skimpole instructs Jarndyce to "put him out in the road," Jarndyce asks, "and what is he to do then?" (455). Skimpole responds, "Upon my life, I have not the least idea what he is to do then. But I have no doubt he'll do it." (455). But, of course, Jo is

going to die if they put him out in the road. He is going to suffer, starve, freeze, and die. There is really no question that by calling on Jarndyce to distance Jo from Bleak House, he is calling on Jarndyce to let Jo die.

These two functions of the inverse model of health—the killing function and the distancing function—are also fundamentally intertwined in the sense that it is only through continual, systematic distancing that this model actually holds together. When people are brought into intimate, mutualistic contact, it falls apart. It is, I argue, the narrative function of the contagion that spreads from Jo to Charley to Esther to illustrate this failure. Neither Charley nor Esther shies away from contact with the sick: without hesitation, Charley goes up to the ailing Jo to care for him, "[drawing] his rags about him and [making] him as warm as she could" and "standing by him" in the hall at Bleak House while the adults confer about his fate (454). And after Charley subsequently falls ill, making it clear that this disease spreads through contact, Esther still very willingly "[sits] by Charley, holding her head in [her] arms" (460). And indeed, just as Charley is beginning to recover, Esther falls ill as well.

The illness that Jo, Charley, and Esther suffer from has generally been read as smallpox,[25] and it certainly bears many similarities to that disease: it is highly contagious through airborne droplets as well as physical contact; it leaves scars that can disfigure the faces of its victims for life; and it can cause blindness and hallucinations. The progression of Esther's illness also follows the timeline of smallpox, progressing from a symptomless incubation period through a brief flu-like "pre-eruptive" stage and then into a longer and much more serious eruptive stage characterized by skin lesions, high fever, delirium, and blindness and during which about a third of smallpox sufferers die (Kinney 268-70). Dickens never names the disease, though, and Gilian

[25] See Michael S. Gurney, "Disease as Device: The Role of Smallpox in *Bleak House*."

West has argued that its origin and symptoms align more closely with typhus, resulting in a secondary infection of erysipelas (West 30-35). The fact that the disease originates with Jo, a denizen of the slum known as Tom-All-Alone's, does bring the specter of typhus into the picture. Though its precise etiology was unknown until the twentieth century, typhus was known to originate in slums and boarding houses for the poor. Dickens associates typhus with Tom-All-Alone's when Snagsby and Bucket venture into the "undrained, unventilated" street in search of Jo (330). As they enter the slum, they have to step aside to make way for "the fever coming up the street"—that is, for typhus victims being carried to the hospital in a "shabby palanquin" (331). Bucket's guide confirms that the tenements are all "fever-houses" and that residents have been "carried out, dead and dying 'like sheep with the rot'" for "months and months" (331). By tracking the disease's origin back to Jo, a resident of this typhus-ridden housing tenement, Dickens links typhus to Esther's illness even as her symptoms suggest smallpox.

For my purposes in this argument, I am not interested in "diagnosing" Esther's illness or finding its most exact corollary in Victorian medicine. Rather, I contend that Dickens deliberately yokes together elements of typhus and smallpox in order to serve his narrative purposes. Smallpox was one the few diseases widely accepted to be interpersonally contagious in the 1850s. While several other diseases (that have since been proved to spread from person to person) were often attributed to "miasma" or "bad air," smallpox was generally understood to be transmissible through contact with an infected person (Schwarzbach 22-23). Typhus, on the other hand, was widely attributed to poverty, overcrowding, and poor domestic hygiene—and rightly so, because typhus is spread via body lice, although typhus was largely eradicated by public health measures long before doctors understood its louse-borne etiological pathway (Hardy 191-95). By drawing on common attributes of both typhus and smallpox, Dickens produces the effect

of a disease that is both highly contagious from person to person and inextricably linked to poverty and inadequate housing. He thus forges a medical connection between interpersonal contact and larger social conditions.

This spread of contagion from Jo in Tom-All-Alone's to Esther in *Bleak House* shows us that, once contact is introduced into the equation, the inverse model of health does not work. The health of the self and the health of the other are directly, not inversely, related. When Jo gets sick, Esther also gets sick. When A gets sick, B does not get healthier in proportion; B gets sick, too. When A's stock of health decreases, B does not get the health A has lost; B's stock of health also decreases. That is to say, health is not a resource that obeys laws of scarcity. There is not a finite supply of health that must be divided up between people, with some people gaining only to the extent that others lose. Instead, health obeys the laws of contagion, proliferating when shared. The way that illness spreads from Jo to Charley to Esther enacts this proliferation and proves the lie of the inverse model.

But I argue that, in *Bleak House*, Dickens shows us that this relationship is not only negative. Disease can spread and multiply through contact, but health can also proliferate in this way. Dickens shows us several instances in which good health, good fortune, and good affects spread between people like contagion. For example, we see good health proliferate through contact when Esther attends Caddy Jellyby's postpartum sickbed. Caddy, the eldest daughter of the so-called philanthropist Mrs. Jellyby, has fallen ill after giving birth to a baby girl. Esther befriended Caddy earlier in the novel during a stay with the Jellyby family on her way to Bleak House and goes to nurse her during her illness. In her narrative, Esther relates,

> Caddy had a superstition about me, which had been strengthening in her mind ever since that night long ago, when she had lain asleep with her head in my lap. She almost—I

> think I must say quite—believed that I did her good whenever I was near her. Now, although this was such a fancy of the affectionate girl's, that I'm almost ashamed to mention it, still it might have all the force of a fact when she was really ill. (711)

Esther's close physical presence acts upon Caddy like medicine, making her healthier with "the force of a fact" regardless of any actual physiological explanation. Caddy draws on Esther's strength, but this does not lessen Esther's stock of health—rather, it augments it. After Esther travels to London to visit Caddy several days in a row, Jarndyce suggests that they take possession of lodgings in London so that Esther will not become worn out by constant travelling. To this offer, Esther replies, "Not for me, dear guardian…for I never feel tired," and she goes on to note in her private narration that this "strictly true" (711). In these moments of contact between Esther and Caddy, vitality spreads between the two women like a healthy contagion. There is a direct and positive relation between the health of the two: as Caddy's health improves, Esther's health also improves. Rather than behaving like a scarce commodity to be divided between interested parties, health proliferates as it is shared. The total amount of health and vitality has not stayed constant, as it would under laws of scarcity; instead, it has increased.

John Jarndyce's approach to happiness and prosperity also follows this "direct" or "contagion" model. Jarndyce does not treat prosperity as a finite quantity to be divided between people, but rather as a sort of salutary contagion that can be shared between people and can multiply in the exchange. We can see this in his resistance to the divisions that Chancery imposes between the suitors in the Jarndyce and Jarndyce case. Jarndyce does not accept he and the other suitors must be "distrustful foes" and attempts to "counteract the suit" by bringing Richard and Ada into his home and incorporating them into his family. Instead of accepting that his happiness is opposed to theirs, Jarndyce essentially makes Richard and Ada's happiness *his*

happiness (517). Nowhere is Jarndyce's "contagion" model of happiness more evident, though, than when he "gives" Esther (along with a miniature version of Bleak House) to Allan Woodcourt. This moment has often been read as one of self-sacrifice—that is, Jarndyce sacrifices his own desire (to marry Esther) to satisfy what he realizes to be the desires of Esther and Woodcourt (to marry each other). But it seems to me that such a reading of Jarndyce's choice is only possible if we ignore or distrust both his own words and Esther's description of his affects and body language. In his own words, Jarndyce is very clear that he does not view this choice as a sacrifice of his happiness—that if he can "share [their] felicity sometimes," he sacrifices "nothing" (891). He calls the day a "day of joy" and tells Esther "exultingly" that he has "looked forward to it…for months and months" (890). Esther corroborates Jarndyce's claim of genuine happiness in her description of his appearance and behavior on the day that he reveals the new Bleak House to Esther. He is "so quaintly cheerful" as he shows Esther the house; Esther has seen the joy brewing "in [his] face for a long while" (888). Esther describes Jarndyce on this day in terms of natural vitality: he speaks "genially, like the ripening weather" and acts "radiantly and beneficently, like the sunshine" (890). As he leaves Esther and Woodcourt together, he notes that the wind is "due West"—his way of saying that all is right with the world and he is pleased (891).

We could read this, perhaps, as Jarndyce just trying to be nice and prevent the happy couple from feeling bad for him, but I think we should take his language here more seriously. There is nothing in the text to suggest that Jarndyce is not being entirely truthful about his feelings. He seems to feel happiness in a communal way; he is genuinely made happy by the happiness of others and he is genuinely grieved by the sorrow of others. In this light, his "gift" of Esther to Woodcourt really is not a sacrifice, because it makes Esther and Woodcourt deeply

happy and their happiness spreads to and multiplies in Jarndyce. For Jarndyce, happiness does not respect boundaries between individuals. It flows between people and grows in quantity as it is shared. Just as Bleak House replicates like a beneficent version of a contagious pox, multiplying from its original and grafting itself onto the Yorkshire countryside, happiness multiplies and grafts itself back from Esther and Woodcourt to Jarndyce. Jarndyce has a "selfless" worldview, not in the sense that he sacrifices his happiness for others, but rather in the sense that he does not see the bounded individual "self" as the owner and possessor of happiness. Instead, happiness is something that spreads and multiplies through interaction and exchange. In a community where emotions are shared between individual members, one does not have to sacrifice one's own happiness to give happiness to others.

I believe that this commitment to contagious emotion is crucially different from a bourgeois individual commitment to self-government or self-control. Nancy Armstrong, for example, claims that the good modern subject is, paradoxically, defined by the possession of individual desires that exceed his or her social situation but also by the ability to channel and control those desires so that they are socially beneficial and do not infringe on the rights of others: "For the expressive individual to become a good subject, his desires must not only be strictly his; they must ultimately serve the general interest as well" (33). In other words, the individual is jointly defined by an innate drive toward self-expression and a capacity for self-control to keep that drive in check. In her view, the drive toward self-expression is more important for the eighteenth-century protagonist, while the capacity for self-control and self-government becomes more central for the Victorian protagonist. I can see how the ending of *Bleak House* could be read in this way, but I believe that there is something else going on here. I think that Jarndyce is more than a model bourgeois individual who governs and controls

individual desire; I argue that, for him, pleasure and happiness are genuinely contagious and can spread between individuals. If we take Jarndyce's claims that he is not making a sacrifice seriously—that is, if we do not read with the assumption that desire and pleasure exist only or even primarily on an individual level—we can see a contagion model of emotion, not just an exercise in self-control.

It is their commitment to this contagion model—their understanding that health and happiness spread and proliferate between people when shared—that differentiates Jarndyce and Esther from Mrs. Pardiggle and Mrs. Jellyby, the ineffective female philanthropists Dickens satirizes in *Bleak House*. Both women are always at work on "missions"—Mrs. Pardiggle focuses on visiting and haranguing the local poor while Mrs. Jellyby works to resettle England's unemployed on the banks of the Niger to farm coffee beans. There is no question that Dickens is mocking and even condemning these two ambitious, self-important, indefatigable women and is meanwhile celebrating Esther Summerson and holding her up as a positive counterexample. This has often been read as a condemnation of the overreaching public woman in favor of the self-effacing private woman who limits her range of action to the feminine domestic sphere. To some extent, I understand and agree with that criticism of this novel. It is fair to say that Dickens seems to mock these women for their ambition while simultaneously criticizing Richard Carstone for his *lack* of ambition, thus reifying traditional gender roles. But I contend that thinking about the two different models of health that I put forth in the chapter—the inverse model and the direct model—gives us another way of reading the difference between Mrs. Pardiggle and Mrs. Jellyby, on the one hand, and Esther, on the other.

The problem with Mrs. Pardiggle's and Mrs. Jellyby's versions of philanthropy is that they both operate according to this problematic inverse model of health. While Esther's care of

Caddy represents the direct model, with Esther gaining strength as Caddy also gains strength, Mrs. Pardiggle's philanthropy represents the inverse model, with Mrs. Pardiggle gaining strength while those around her become increasingly tired and ill. In saying that she "never feels tired" while nursing Caddy, Esther is actually echoing the mantra of Mrs. Pardiggle, who says over and over again throughout the novel that she never feels tired. She asserts, in fact, that never being tired is her defining personality trait. Upon meeting Esther and Ada, she says of herself:

> I love hard work; I enjoy hard work. The excitement does me good. I am so accustomed and inured to hard work that I don't know what fatigue is. […] I do not understand what it is to be tired; you cannot tire me if you try! … The quantity of exertion (which is no exertion to me), the amount of business (which I regard as nothing) that I go through, sometimes astonishes myself. I have seen my young family, and Mr. Pardiggle, quite worn out with witnessing it, when I may truly say I have been as fresh as a lark! (116)

There is an inverse relationship between Mrs. Pardiggle's health and the health of her family—the excitement "does her good" while her family is "worn out" from witnessing it. The effect of her philanthropic efforts, on the level of her family, is to increase her stock of health and decrease the health of her husband and children.

But this is not just the relation of health on the domestic level; it is also the relation of health between Mrs. Pardiggle and the people she purports to be helping. When Mrs. Pardiggle brings Esther and Ada along on her "rounds"—that is, when she goes to the cottages of poor people and forcibly reads didactic books at them like an "inexorable moral policeman carrying them all off to a station-house"— she seems almost literally to grow stronger and healthier as a result of the poor people's suffering and ill health. During the visit to the brickmaker's cottage, Esther describes how Mrs. Pardiggle leads them into a "damp, offensive room" containing "a

woman with a black eye, nursing a poor little gasping baby by the fire; a man, all stained with clay and mud and looking very dissipated, lying at full length on the ground, smoking a pipe…and a bold girl doing some kind of washing in very dirty water" (118, 121). When their visit is greeted with a mix of apathy and antagonism, Mrs. Pardiggle says again, "I told you, you couldn't tire me, you know. I am fond of hard work…and the harder you make mine, the better I like it" (121).

The actual content of the "hard work" that she likes, though—the "excitement" that "does her good"—seems to be *witnessing the ill health of the cottagers*. Aside from the reading of a didactic sermon, which is unnarrated in the novel, Mrs. Pardiggle's visit mainly consists of an angry litany in which the man of the house preempts Mrs. Pardiggle's questions, asserting all of the ways in which he and his family are dirty and unhealthy:

> Is my daughter a washin? Yes, she *is* a washin. Look at the water. Smell it! That's wot we drinks. How do you like it, and what do you think of gin, instead! An't my place dirty? Yes, it is dirty—it's nat'rally dirty, and it's nat'rally onwholesome; and we've had five dirty and onwholesome children, as is all dead infants, and so much the better for them, and for us besides. (121)

Finally, as if to actualize this inverse health relationship between Mrs. Pardiggle and the people she patronizes, the sick "gasping baby" dies just as Mrs. Pardiggle leaves the cottage, asserting again that she is "never fatigued" (122).

Upon first glance, Esther's visit to Caddy and Mrs. Pardiggle's visit to the brickmaker's cottage seem somewhat similar: in both cases, middle class women visit the sick in order to "help them" without offering any kind of material aid or medical intervention. The difference, I argue, lies in the model of health that each woman represents. Esther seems to subscribe to a

direct model of health, understanding both disease and health to grow in herself only in proportion as they grow in others—for better and for worse. She has visceral knowledge of this direct relationship, having suffered through a shared illness with Jo and Charley, and she brings this knowledge with her when she shares health with Caddy. Mrs. Pardiggle's philanthropic efforts, in contrast, operate according to the logic of what I have referred to as the inverse model of health: her vitality increases in proportion with the disease and ill health of others. Although she claims to be helping the poor, her philanthropy conforms to the same logic that Foucault refers to as racism under biopolitics: "the death of the other, the death of the bad race, of the inferior race (or the degenerate, or the abnormal) is something that will make life in general healthier." Mrs. Pardiggle seems to literalize this relationship, growing "fresh as a lark" through her exchange with the "onwholesome" poor and their dead and dying children.

Moreover, Mrs. Pardiggle's philanthropy actually manufactures, as its own byproduct, a sort of marginalized racial subgroup—her own children. When Mrs. Pardiggle introduces the children to Esther and Ada, listing the philanthropic contribution each child has made out of their allowance "under her direction" and clearly against their will, Esther notes that she had never seen such dissatisfied children:

> It was not merely that they were weazened and shriveled—though they were certainly that too—but they looked absolutely ferocious with discontent. At the mention of the Tockahoopo Indians, I could really have supposed Egbert to be one of the most baleful members of that tribe, he gave me such a savage frown. The face of each child, as the amount of his contribution was mentioned, darkened in a peculiarly vindictive manner, but his was by far the worst.

In a strange way, the Pardiggle children have become the "other", the "bad race" that Foucault describes. In their appearance, the health and maintenance of their bodies, their manners, their desires, their ways of interacting with the world, they are somehow "not really English."[26] Her flawed system of philanthropy actually produces more of the group of people that it purportedly seeks to eliminate: the racialized pauper class that is coded as degenerate and not properly English. Not only does she fail to inculcate proper bourgeois Englishness into the pauper families she visits and thus reduce the size of this pauper class; her children actually augment that group by becoming part of it.

I thus read the distinction between Esther and Mrs. Pardiggle not so much as a matter of appropriate gender roles (the public woman vs. domestic woman), but rather as matter of the model of health upon which each woman's philanthropy is based. Mrs. Pardiggle's philanthropic efforts are based upon and reinforce a problematic inverse model of health, while Esther's care for Caddy stems from the healthier and more ethical direct model. In this contrast, we see again that interpersonal contact seems to be incompatible with Mrs. Pardiggle's inverse model. Even as Mrs. Pardiggle inserts herself into the domestic space of the brickmaker and his family, she does not engage in any real contact with the family. Esther notes that "there was an iron barrier" between the poor family and their uninvited visitors (122). Mrs. Pardiggle's "mechanical way of taking possession of people" is strangely disembodied (122). Even as she enters the poor people's physical environment, she bears some similarity to Skimpole, telling Mr. Jarndyce to "turn Jo out." She engages with the poor only in a machine-like, disembodied way, always maintaining an "iron barrier" between her physical body and theirs. In contrast, Esther's

[26] We see this same rhetorical move made all the time today—that such-and-such is not a "real American"—in order to support claims that doing harm to that group of not-real Americans is going to make the 'real' America healthier or purer or better.

"philanthropy" (although she never refers to her actions as such) is characterized by close physical contact with the people she seems to help. She takes up the baby's body in her arms after it dies at the brickmaker's cottage and does "what she could to make the baby's rest the prettier and gentler" (123); she "raise[s] [Caddy's] head so that it should rest on [her] lap" (57); she "take[s] [Peepy] up to nurse" after he has been injured and holds him until he "fell fast asleep in [her] arms" (49); she sits "by Charley, holding her head in [her] arms" while Charley is ill (460). Esther's direct-model philanthropy is rooted in bodily contact, while Mrs. Pardiggle's inverse model depends upon resisting actual embodied contact with those she patronizes.

The same qualities that make Esther a "good" philanthropist also make her male counterpart Jarndyce a good philanthropist, further supporting the case that the distinction between good and bad philanthropy is not simply a matter of appropriate versus inappropriate femininity. Like Esther's, Jarndyce's philanthropic efforts are based in contact and evocative of the direct model of health. These qualities emerge particularly when we compare his humanitarian actions with the supposedly benevolent projects of Mrs. Jellyby. Mrs. Jellyby's philanthropic scheme attempts to resettle England's unemployed population to Africa to settle on "the left bank of the Niger" and farm coffee (48). Like Skimpole's request to turn Jo out into the street, her project is a *distancing* project. That is to say, her project literally consists of systematically placing distance between herself and a racialized subgroup of English people—the pauperized unemployed. She attempts to accomplish this through the writing of an enormous amount of letters, at times receiving "as many as from one hundred and fifty to two hundred letters respecting Africa in a single day" and sending "five thousand circulars from one post-office at one time" (51). Jarndyce also conducts philanthropic business via letter writing, but he does so for precisely the opposite end—for the purpose of *eradicating* distance between people

rather than creating it. Jarndyce writes letters in order to make himself the guardian of Ada, Richard, and Esther and bring them to live at Bleak House and then writes another set of letters asking that all three young people meet him "as old friends, and take the past for granted" (74). Mrs. Jellyby's philanthropy works by sending English people away to Africa, and Jarndyce's philanthropy works by bringing strangers right into his home and insisting that they do not see themselves as strangers. In concert with his willingness to bring Jo into his home, Jarndyce's letter writing produces affective bonds between strangers by bringing them into physical, intimate contact with one another. In contrast, Mrs. Jellyby's letter writing refuses and avoids contact. (In fact, she does not even have any physical contact with the material letters themselves, merely dictating their content while her unwilling amanuensis Caddy handles the inky job of physically producing the letters.) In this sense, Dickens seems to suggest that to practice philanthropy is to bring about contact—to invite in rather than to expel out, to touch rather than to push away.

Even more starkly than in the case of Mrs. Pardiggle, Mrs. Jellyby's distancing philanthropy also functions to produce the very racialized subgroup it purports to eliminate, to the point of tragic absurdity. In the last chapter of the novel, in which Esther recounts the fate of several of the minor characters, readers learn that Mrs. Jellyby's "African project" (47, 114) did not work out quite as planned. Esther notes that Mrs Jellyby "has been disappointed in Borrioboola-Gha, which turned out a failure in consequence of the king of Borrioboola wanting to sell everybody—who survived the climate—for rum" (912). In effect, what Mrs. Jellyby's philanthropic scheme ends up doing is sending England's surplus population out of the country to be sold as slaves in Africa. She ends up actualizing the inverse relation that was, for Skimpole, only an imaginative one—founding her own sense of health and wellbeing on a process of

excluding and racializing an English subgroup. Moreover, her seemingly endless energy and vitality quite literally derive from the labor of those she excludes—that is, from African coffee. Esther marvels at Mrs. Jellyby's capacity to work without rest, noting that when she went to bed at "nearly midnight," Mrs. Jellyby was still "among her papers drinking coffee" (52). By including in the final chapter this note about the result of Mrs. Jellyby's African project, Dickens highlights the problematic inverse relation between the so-called philanthropist's energy and the exploitation and enslavement of the object of her philanthropy.

I do want to be clear that I am by no means advocating that we take Dickens as a model of anti-racism, anti-imperialism, or multicultural progressivism. Without question, his novels draw upon and sometimes perpetuate racist and xenophobic stereotypes, as can be seen in some of the quotations above. For Dickens, to be racially non-White and culturally non-British is to be savage, ferocious, inappropriate, or generally bad, while to be British is to be civilized, appropriate, and generally good. Dickens certainly places his own nation and his own race above all others and does not seem to view such hierarchizing as a problem, and his writing must thus be considered "racist" in a very basic way. I do want to argue, though, that this novel has the potential to unsettle one of the foundational assumptions upon which a particular form of domestic, biopolitical racism operates—that is, the racism that Foucault describes occurring within the biopolitical nation, directed toward the citizens of that nation.

This specific form of racism is founded upon an inverse health paradigm, within which the health of the self or the in-group depends upon and grows only in response to the illness or death of the "other." In *Bleak House*, Dickens criticizes and challenges this inverse health paradigm, revealing it to be not only unethical and exploitative but also counterproductive, and illustrates a countering direct health paradigm in the actions and experiences of Esther and

Jarndyce. The implications of such a paradigm shift, I contend, extend far beyond the realm of philanthropy and domesticity in which Dickens situates his critique. As Foucault explains, this inverse relation is the foundation of the biological racism that grounds the killing function of biopolitics. It is the ideological cornerstone that sits below and supports biopolitical acts of "killing in the name of life"—genocide, holocaust, forced sterilization, systematic imprisonment of populations, and so on. To challenge the inverse health paradigm is to challenge the justification for exercising the power to kill, which, in Foucault's description and particularly in Achille Mbembe's reading of Foucault, is a foundation of the modern biopolitical social body.

I argue that in *Bleak House*, Dickens attempts to imagine how a social body might function if this necropolitical foundation were removed. We can see what this social body might look like in Esther's description of her personal model of philanthropic care. She tells Mrs. Pardiggle, "I thought it best to be as useful as I could, and to render what kind services I could to those immediately about me, and to try to let that circle of duty gradually and naturally expand itself" (117). Esther describes here a sort of contagion model of ethical responsibility, wherein responsibility spreads through contact. The multiple overlapping plots of the serial novel serve particularly well to illuminate this contagious spread of responsibility. Esther and Richard become linked to Skimpole through their contact with him at Bleak House and feel compelled to pay his debt when the collector comes to arrest him; as a result of this episode, Esther, Ada, and Jarndyce feel compelled to check on and care for the debt collector's young children after he dies; the eldest of these children, Charley, becomes Esther's maid; Charley knows Jenny, the brickmaker's wife, who knows Jo, the sick child, and tells Esther of his plight; Esther visits and feels compelled to care for Jo; through connection with Esther, both Woodcourt and George Rouncewell later feel compelled to care for Jo. Duty to one another spreads like a contagion—it

happens through contact, it occurs "naturally" without effort or forethought, and is indiscriminate with respect to class and social group. Like an epidemiological map of an airborne illness, it builds outward as moments of contact multiply, exponentially growing the web of ethical responsibility.

It is important to note that this "ethical contagion" does not depend upon traditional modes of sympathy. Esther and Richard readily give up their life savings to pay Skimpole's debt; they feel compelled to offer care even though Skimpole is quite frankly horrible. And although Jo bears none of the sinister manipulativeness of someone like Skimpole, he is not "sympathetic" in the way that someone like Adam Smith characterizes sympathy. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith claims that "mere poverty excites little compassion. Its complaints are too apt to be the objects rather of contempt than of fellow-feeling. We despise a beggar" (144). Not only is Jo a beggar, but Dickens dwells on his mundane repulsiveness. He is like the "blinded oxen" (237) in the marketplace; he is like a stray, "degenerate" dog (238); he is a "horrible creature" (240); his clothes are like "like a bundle of rank leaves of swampy growth, that rotted long ago" (659) and he himself is like a "growth of fungus…produced in neglect and impurity" (660). He disgusts Lady Dedlock when he is excited to see a rat crawling into the ground in the graveyard (243); he offends Mrs. Snagsby by yawning at the Reverend Chadband's proselytizing (290); he frightens Charley with his fear of Esther when she cares for him in the brickmaker's cottage (454). Nor does Jo "moderate" his expression of his own suffering or show stoic "self-command" so that observers will be more likely to sympathize with him, as Adam Smith suggests (146). Rather, he whimpers, complains of being "a chivied and a chivied, fust by one on you and nixt by another on you, till I'm worrited to skins and bones," and threatens to "go and make a hole in the water"—that is, to commit suicide (660).

Neither, Dickens notes, is Jo's poverty redeemed by being exotic or interesting. He is not "softened by…unfamiliarity," like "Mrs. Pardiggle's Tockahoopo Indians" or "Mrs. Jellyby's lambs" (669). He is, rather,

> the ordinary home-made article. Dirty, ugly, disagreeable to all the senses, in body a common creature of the common streets, only in soul a heathen. Homely filth begrimes him, homely parasites devour him, homely sores are in him, homely rags are on him; native ignorance, the growth of English soil and climate, sinks his immortal nature lower than the beasts that perish. Stand forth, Jo, in uncompromising colours! From the sole of thy foot to the crown of thy head, there is nothing interesting about thee. (669)

There is nothing redeeming about him, nothing to make him "deserve" Esther's care, except that she comes into contact with him through Charley and Jenny. He is, in his own words, just a "reg'lar one" (239). Jo is not a special exception, and this is crucial. In this model of community that Esther represents, the effect of contact applies to everyone. Even in the case of the horrible Skimpole and the "ugly, disagreeable" and utterly "reg'lar" Jo, these moments of contact forge bonds of duty, linking everyone together in an ever-expanding web in which all members are bound to care for one another, even at the risk of personal harm.

Esther's approach here as been criticized as limited, as too local, as lacking in any real strategy for political change. Pamela Gilbert claims that the conclusion of *Bleak House* shies away from any call for wide-reaching change, offering no political or social solutions to the problems it highlights: "Dickens finally has nothing better to offer than the ever-more-perfect separation between domestic and public life, in which the public is hopelessly corrupt and the domestic offers a tenuous and limited salvation for those within a small 'circle of duty'" (151). Armstrong raises this issue more generally when she notes the limitations of Victorian novels

that use the household as the "model for imagining social relations" (143). Even progressive or feminist novels often fall into the trap of merely "replacing a household composed of the heterosexually monogamous couple and their biological offspring with another version of that household that can do little to change the way a nation distributes goods and services to its population" (144). This organic solution, they argue, is ultimately apolitical, offering nothing that will bring about systemic change.

In some ways, this is a fair criticism of Dickens's novel as an agent of change. *Bleak House* does not offer any specific strategies for political reform. Dickens does not outline methods for reforming the parasitic institution of Chancery or plans for cleaning up the slum of Tom-All-Alone's. He does not dream up a system-wide solution that will educate and provide for the countless other poor children like Jo who do not happen to bump into Esther Summerson by chance. What *Bleak House* does offer, though, is a model of community that has no justification for exclusion—no conditions under which the citizen is excused for caring for his or her neighbor. It is an organic model of the social body, but it is radically different from the biopolitical social body that Foucault and Agamben and others describe, which is founded upon the exclusion or killing of some "other." For Foucault, this is the racialized subgroup that has been fragmented from the biological field; for Agamben, this is zoe, bare life. Dickens imagines a social body that no one is outside of. It is generated by spontaneous growth through contact rather than through an act of exclusion that constitutes a border.

Although Dickens's inclusive social body remains fictional, the act of imagining it is still a powerful political challenge. In his influential essay "Necropolitics," Achille Mbembe writes, "Sovereignty means the capacity to define who matters and who does not, who is disposable and who is not" (27). That is, the right to determine who is disposable is the basis of political power.

In *Bleak House*, Dickens creates a world in which *no one* is disposable—and in which *no one* has that right that Mbembe claims to be the foundation of power. This is not a retreat from politics, but an attempt to unsettle the foundation upon which the political status quo is based.

CHAPTER FOUR

Eliot's Undone Individual: Monetary Desire, Social Contagion, and Citizenship in *Middlemarch* and *Felix Holt*

Though written in the early 1870s, *Middlemarch* is set in the early 1830s against a backdrop of both the First Reform Bill of 1832 and the first major cholera outbreak in England. The First Reform Bill, which significantly increased the size of the electorate, stimulated nationwide debate about citizenship: who is fit to be considered a citizen? What kind of person should be eligible to take part in the politics of the nation? As Pamela Gilbert notes in *The Citizen's Body*, the answers to these questions often emphasized individual boundedness, mental independence, and bodily closure. Politically, the good citizen ought to see himself as an independent individual, not as a part of a unified social class; physically, he should be "a little repulsed by the proximity of others, taking in its food alone, reading its individual newspaper, hungering for larger quarters with more separate rooms, more privacy" (60). Pauperism stands in contrast to citizenship, and is defined by the blurring of individual boundaries; the "'huddled masses' of pauperism, sharing sex, food, wastes, and political opinions indiscriminately in basements" represent the "anti citizen" (Gilbert 60).

At the same historical moment when citizenship was expanding, with individual boundedness emphasized as the rubric for civic fitness, cholera first struck England. Though cholera was not as deadly as several diseases endemic to England, such as tuberculosis, it provoked disproportionate public anxiety. Gilbert attributes this public reaction to cholera's propensity to undermine the bodily closure and individualism that grounded the emerging ideology of English citizenship described above. Coming to England from India via imperial

contact, cholera undermined national boundaries; causing the body to uncontrollably and often fatally expel its contents, it compromised bodily closure. Cholera threatened to turn English citizens into everything they defined themselves against: a huddled mass of undifferentiated bodies and fluids, uncontrollably receptive and expulsive at once, lacking both privacy and national identity. The public response to cholera in England participated in and drew upon the same discourse of individual continence and privacy that shaped debates about citizenship.

By presenting both the 1832 Reform Act and the first cholera outbreak as historical backdrops and topics of debate in *Middlemarch*, Eliot signals her concern with individual boundedness and the pathways of transindividual influence and contagion. Many scholars have written about *Middlemarch* in terms of these ideas, often citing the spread of scandal from the unscrupulous banker Bulstrode to his business partner, the ambitious young Dr. Lydgate, as an example of influence gone wrong. Athena Vrettos sees Eliot's presentation of transindividual influence as primarily negative, reflecting "cultural anxieties about physical and emotional contagion" (16). Laura Otis describes Eliot's network of influence as neutral—something that can "enable/empower" as well as "control/restrict/entrap" (90). For Otis, it is not the social network itself but Lydgate's failure to understand how it works, his "confidence in his own autonomy" that prevents him from succeeding (101). Kirstie Blair argues along similar lines, suggesting that Lydgate fails because he believes, incorrectly, that science and medicine are autonomous and free from the influence of social issues in the community (154).

I agree with these scholars that Eliot is concerned with tracing how influence, both positive and negative, spreads across networks via contact between individuals. I am arguing, though, that Eliot does not present all instances of contact as equally threatening channels of influence. Rather, she presents some forms of contact as sites of uncontrollable contagion and

other forms of contact as sites of safe, healthy interaction. In this chapter, I seek to determine how Eliot distinguishes healthy contact from unhealthy contact and to explore how that distinction contributes to our understanding of Eliot's intervention into debates about liberal individualism and citizenship. I argue that Eliot places monetary self-interest at the crux of this question, suggesting that personal desire for monetary gain opens up human interactions to the spread of pathological influence. This vulnerability to unhealthy influence can only be avoided through the vaccination-like effects of abdicating financial self-interest. Ultimately, Eliot turns bourgeois individualism inside out, presenting one of its central tenets—rational economic self-interest—as the greatest threat to the integrity of the individual.

Section 1: Monetary Desire as Binding Agent and Boundary Destroyer

In *Middlemarch* (as well as *Felix Holt*, as I will discuss later), Eliot presents the healthiness of human contact as a function of the monetary self-interest of the individuals involved. To put it simply, contact between individuals is made dangerous when the desire for monetary gain enters into their interaction. This is not to say that any interaction in which money is exchanged between individuals is necessarily unhealthy or dangerous. Eliot presents several interactions over the course of the novel in which money is exchanged without opening up a channel of contagion or unhealthy influence between the individuals involved: Caleb Garth receives money from Mr. Brooke and Sir James Chettham to manage the Freshitt and Tipton estates; Dorothea gives money to Lydgate to help with the hospital and, later, to repay Bulstrode. In these cases, money passes between individuals without any concurrent spread of physical disease or social scandal. As Eliot presents it, the threat of uncontrolled influence between individuals only opens up when the *desire* for monetary gain is introduced into their interaction.

Monetary desire acts like an enzyme in a chemical interaction, binding two individuals together and opening up a channel between them that neither individual has the power to close. When two individuals become connected in this way, social taint spreads irrepressibly between them and each is at risk of being used as an appendage of the other.

This is perhaps best illustrated by the relationship between Dr. Lydgate and the unscrupulous banker Nicholas Bulstrode, who funds the Fever Hospital and later gives Lydgate a personal loan of 1000 pounds. Upon settling in Middlemarch, Lydgate recognizes both Bulstrode's power in the town and his tendency to garner enemies. Lydgate is confident, however, that he can benefit from Bulstrode's patronage without compromising his own values. He "proudly" claims that he will not mind about religious sectarianism and local politics, asserting that he is only concerned with how Bulstrode "spends large sums on useful public objects" and thus "might help [Lydgate] a good deal in carrying out [his] ideas" (112). Eliot signals to readers that Lydgate's understanding of cooperation and partnership might be flawed, as Lydgate's claims about Bulstrode echo the narrator's description of the Middlemarchers' predominant view of Lydgate: "Not only young virgins of that town, but grey-bearded men also, were often in haste to conjecture how a new acquaintance might be wrought into their purposes, contented with very vague knowledge as to the way in which life has been shaping him for that instrumentality. Middlemarch, in fact, counted on swallowing Lydgate and assimilating him very comfortably" (99). Just as residents of Middlemarcher viewed Lydgate primarily as an instrument to be used toward their own purposes, Lydgate views Bulstrode as an instrument to be used to bring about his medical ambitions. All other aspects of Bulstrode's personality and reputation, Lydgate is both content to and confident that he will be able to discard.

Lydgate's friend Farebrother is rather more wary, however, and takes time to warn the overconfident Lydgate about the risks of becoming tied to others and being driven by their inclinations and goals—of "wear[ing] the harness and draw[ing] a good deal where your yoke-fellows pull you" (111). Lydgate believes that settling in provincial Middlemarch is precaution enough, because it will remove him from the "empty bigwiggism, and obstructive trickery" of London (112), but Farebrother warns that Middlemarchers "have our intrigues and our parties" as well and argues that Lydgate needs to be careful to "keep [him]self independent" (111). Lydgate thinks that Farebrother is referring to avoiding the ties of marriage, but Farebrother resists this interpretation. He claims that marrying "a good unworldly woman…may really help a man, and keep him more independent," citing Caleb Garth's wife as an example of such an unworldly woman (112). Maintaining independence is not about avoiding familial or social ties altogether; rather, it is about preventing oneself from becoming "yoked" to others. Farebrother does not explicitly tell Lydgate the difference between healthy social ties and unhealthy yoking, nor does he explain how Lydgate can enjoy the former while avoiding the latter. Farebrother's actions immediately following this conversation provide a hint, though: Farebrother gives Lydgate leave to vote against him in the upcoming election for the chaplaincy of the new hospital, assuring him that he will not lose Farebrother's friendship as a result. Though Farebrother "should be glad of the forty pounds" given as salary for the chaplaincy, particularly as he supports several dependent relatives, he abdicates any claim on Lydgate's loyalty, saying, "You must not offend your arsenic-man [Bulstrode]. You will not offend me, you know" (113). Farebrother takes his own monetary interest out of his interaction with Lydgate, giving up the opportunity to influence the vote in his own favor in order to create the kind of social tie that he deems healthy.

Eliot's narrator tells us that Lydgate's primary flaw is his unexamined attachment to material wealth and wealth-based social status. Despite his cutting-edge scientific training and progressive plans for medical reform, Lydgate retains traditional ideas about wealth and consumption:

> That distinction of mind which belonged to his intellectual ardour, did not penetrate his feeling and judgment about furniture, or women, or the desirability of its being known (without his telling) that he was better born than other country surgeons. He did not mean to think about furniture at present; but whenever he did so, it was to be feared that neither biology nor schemes of reform would lift him above the vulgarity of feeling that there would be an incompatibility in his furniture not being of the best. (97)

Indeed, when he marries, he does not choose the type of "unworldly" woman that Farebrother admires, but rather the refined, materialistic, social-climbing Rosamond, who Mrs. Bulstrode claims was brought up "in too worldly a way" (216). And when Lydgate prepares for marriage, he rents an expensive home and purchases all the household goods that he considers, based on his upper-class upbringing, to be "ordinary" without any particular "notion of being extravagant" (217). Rosamond continues this precedent in her housekeeping once they are married, "simply…ordering the best of everything" (364). Soon afterwards, having "bought and used a great many things which might have been done without, and which he is unable to pay for," Lydgate finds himself deep in debt (364).

This half-conscious desire for class status and conspicuous material consumption causes Lydgate to lose the "independence" that Farebrother cautioned him to protect. Once Lydgate realizes the extent of his debt, Eliot describes him as "a man galled with his harness" (365). Between the conversation with Farebrother described above and this acknowledgement of debt,

Lydgate has acquired the "harness" that he was previously so confident he could avoid. It is his complacent desire for material goods and subsequent monetary expenditure that makes him vulnerable to becoming "yoked." Lydgate is already wearing the harness when, after claiming that "Bulstrode is nothing to me…except on *public* grounds," (283) he appeals to Bulstrode as "the only other man who may be held to have some *personal* connection with my prosperity or ruin" (423, emphasis added). Through he initially rejects Lydgate's request, Bulstrode sees that he has the opportunity to create "a strong sense of personal obligation" in Lydgate that might be useful as a "defense" against any accusations made by Raffles (435). Lydgate is temporarily "overjoyed" when Bulstrode extends to him the loan, but there soon "crossed his mind, with an unpleasant impression, as from a dark-winged flight of evil augury across his vision, the thought of that contrast in himself which a few months had brought" (237). This contrast, from an independent man to a man yoked to Bulstrode, comes about as a result of Lydgate's failure to let go of his materialistic desires.

This yoking of Lydgate to Bulstrode opens up a channel of contagion between the two men through which Bulstrode's "diseased motive" infects Lydgate. This social stigma is repeatedly described in terms of physical disease. Farebrother worries that the scandal surrounding Bulstrode "might be of malignant effect on Lydgate's reputation," (444) and later notes that "character…is something living and changing, and may become diseased as our bodies do" (454). Lydgate himself claims that "Bulstrode's character has enveloped me, because I took his money. I am simply blighted—like a damaged ear of corn" (471) and that Middlemarchers now treat him "as if [he] were a leper" (457). Fittingly, the pathological connection between Lydgate and Bulstrode is actualized in the Middlemarch public mind at a meeting held to address the first occurrence of cholera in the town. Bulstrode and Lydgate attend the meeting in hopes of

controlling the physical spread of a disease that compromises individual boundaries; instead, they enact the spread of social infection between yoked individuals. Lydgate's choice to "g[i]ve his arm to Bulstrode" confirms the suspicions of the onlookers that Lydgate accepted Bulstrode's money as a bribe to keep quiet about past scandal and perhaps to tamper with the treatment of Raffles (450). Taken out of context, the tainting of Lydgate might seem like a cautionary tale about the risks of social contact: always act alone, because the character flaws of your associates will infect your own reputation. But the transmission of social infection from Bulstrode to Lydgate is only made possible by Lydgate's earlier economic desires, which fitted him with a harness and enabled Bulstrode to make an instrument of him.

Bulstrode himself has become "stained" or "unclean" (384) as a result of his own desire for monetary gain. Eliot writes that when Bulstrode was young and zealous, "He believed…that God intended him for special instrumentality" (381). However, his understanding of how to be an instrument of God's work altered after he was exposed to material wealth:

> Then came the moment of transition; it was with the sense of promotion he had when he, an orphan educated at a commercial charity-school, was invited to a fine villa belonging to Mr. Dunkirk, the richest man in the congregation…whose wealth was due to a flourishing city and west-end trade. That was the setting-in of a new current for his ambition, directing his prospects of 'instrumentality' towards the uniting of distinguished religious gifts with successful business. (381)

Bulstrode "reconciled himself" to the management of a morally questionable business and the concealment of Mrs. Dunkirk's living daughter because he convinced himself that "they made him a stronger instrument of the divine glory" (384). But in fact, his desire to accumulate material wealth and higher social status fitted him for a different kind of instrumentality; like

Lydgate, he puts himself in a position to be utilized as an instrument by other men and become infected by their sins and scandals. In turn, he calls upon Raffles's desire for money in order to utilize him as an instrument, thus opening up the channel of social contagion between them that leads to Bulstrode's (and Lydgate's) downfall.

When social contagion spreads between characters who are thus connected through channels of influence, those characters often respond in terms of disgust or repulsion. These responses evoke the Victorian response to cholera; "caused by feces taken in through the mouth, causing the body to leak more feces, and finally converting the apparently healthy body into a cadaver in a matter of hours," cholera was "the epitome of a disgusting disease" (*Cholera and Nation* 106). In her work on affect, Sara Ahmed explains that disgust is not an innate, apolitical "gut feeling" (83). Rather, disgust is a culturally-dependent response to proximity or contact with an object that threatens to breach or otherwise undermine the boundaries of the individual. Disgust does important cultural work, performatively (re)instantiating the boundaries that were threatened by the disgusting object by "registering of the proximity as an offense" (85). Given this definition, it is no surprise that Victorians (and people today) would feel disgust in response to cholera—either in response to the bodies of their sick or dead neighbors, or merely in response to the thought of contracting cholera themselves. Cholera quite literally threatens to breach the body's boundaries, entering and overtaking the body and undermining its continence. In the violence of its symptoms, cholera seems to mock our presumption of individual human boundedness, coming inside the body and turning the body inside out. Disgust is an always futile but nonetheless culturally important affective attempt to reinstantiate boundaries that are constantly being undone.

In this novel, however, set upon a backdrop of cholera, Eliot almost never presents characters becoming disgusted by diseased bodies—by cholera itself. Instead, characters are repeatedly "disgusted" or "repulsed" by people who compromise themselves for money. Bulstrode describes Raffles as "repulsive" (425)—the same word that Lydgate twice uses to characterize Farebrother's gambling habit (114, 115). Lydgate later feels "disgust with himself" after he goes into debt and himself engages in gambling in an attempt to win the money he needs to pay that debt off (364, 419). Rosamond's feelings toward her husband turn to "disgust" (411) and "repulsion" (434) after he goes into said debt, and her similarly-indebted brother Fred feels himself in a "disgusting dilemma" (71) when he is forced to ask Bulstrode for a letter verifying that he did not try to borrow money on the strength of his hopes of inheriting Featherstone's estate. Only once is the word "disgusting" used to describe physical filth that might cause disease, and this occurs in the context of unscrupulous actions for the sake of monetary gain: when Fred Vincy enters an "unsanitary" alleyway in hopes of "disposing advantageously of his horse" in order to make quick money to pay off his debts (151). Disgust might seem to be an unusual reaction to have in response to people who fall into debt or gamble to gain easy money, but it makes sense in light of Eliot's depiction of the effects of monetary desire. In *Middlemarch*, monetary desire imperils the boundaries of the individual, yoking people together like oxen and creating uncontrollable channels of influence and contagion between them. Eliot suggests that the desire for monetary gain, perhaps more than cholera, threatens to break down the boundaries between individuals and undermine the closure of the self.

Importantly, Ahmed notes that disgust is always "deeply ambivalent, involving desire for, or an attraction towards, the very objects that are felt to be repellent" (84). Think, for example, of the desire to look at a gruesome injury, followed by the pulling away in disgust; only because we

are first compelled to look are we subsequently compelled to distance ourselves. All of these characters—Bulstrode, Lydgate, Rosamond, Fred Vincy—feel the desire to accumulate material wealth in one way or another. It is this desire that puts their individual boundaries at risk and thus compels the distancing action of the disgust reaction in order to reinstantiate those boundaries. This disgust reaction is notably absent in Caleb Garth, a man who Eliot repeatedly describes as uninterested in the accumulation of wealth. Although he engages in business, Caleb has "no keenness of imagination for monetary results in the shape of profit and loss" (159) and "often decline[s] to charge at all" for his services (159). This lack of interest in monetary gain corresponds with a freedom from the disgust reaction that his neighbors feel in response to people whose boundaries have been compromised by their desire for money. For example, when the Middlemarchers are sizing up Joshua Rigg, the illegitimate son who inherits Featherstone's estate, Eliot writes that "Caleb's were the only eyes, except the lawyer's, which examined the stranger with more of inquiry than of disgust" (207). Caleb Garth here exemplifies Eliot's narrator's statement that "for the majority, who are not lofty, there is no escape from sordidness but by being free from money-craving" (401). Caleb's freedom from "money-craving" means that his boundaries are not vulnerable to social infection in the way that those of other characters are, and thus, he does not need the performative distancing of disgust to shore them up. Because he lacks the desire for monetary gain, proximity and contact are not threatening to him; he can move freely among his neighbors without fear of social infection.

Caleb's lack of desire for monetary gain essentially works like a social vaccine[27], making him immune to infection via contact with others even when those others are themselves socially

[27] I am, of course, playing pretty fast and loose with medical metaphors, here. There was no cholera vaccine at the time Eliot was writing (in fact, there was no cholera vaccine until about 5 years ago!). The only disease that had a viable vaccine was smallpox, which is not mentioned at all in Middlemarch. Cholera, meanwhile, is most effectively prevented though water sanitation, a fact that was discovered

tainted. Unlike Bulstrode's attempts to physically distance himself from Raffles or Lydgate's attempts to socially distance himself from Bulstrode, Garth's vaccination method is effective, preventing him from becoming "infected" by any of the Middlemarch social scandals. While Garth is able to successfully pursue his land management goals and turn Fred Vincy into a "rather distinguished" farmer at Stone Court (511), Lydgate is forced to quit Middlemarch and give up his medical reform goals, for which he "always regard[s] himself as a failure" (512). In the context of the above discussion of social vaccination, we can see that Lydgate's social failures in Middlemarch parallel his misplaced medical research priorities, in that both mistakenly privilege distancing over immunity. Early in the novel, Lydgate wishes to emulate Edward Jenner, the physician credited with the discovery of smallpox vaccination, but instead works with Bulstrode (unsuccessfully) to establish a fever hospital. Vaccination works within the body to create immunity to infection, thus making contact with infected individuals safe. In contrast, a fever hospital works by preventing contact—by establishing distance between infected individuals and the rest of the community. In Eliot's representation of both medical science and Middlemarch society, creating distance between individuals proves to be an ineffective strategy for preventing the spread of contagion. Immunity, which renders contact innocuous, is required.

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before Eliot wrote *Middlemarc*h. I'm arguing, though, that Eliot in *Middlemarch* is really not that concerned with actual modes of disease transmission, but rather with the concepts of contagion and contact. Cholera makes conceptual sense as a backdrop upon which to explore these questions, because it is associated with ideas of openness and individual boundaries in the public imagination. Eliot was certainly very well informed about contemporary science, but she is really not making an argument about science in *Middlemarch*. She is using disease conceptually, as an embodiment of a more general threat and fear.

The characters who prove immune to social infection all go through what I am referring to as "scenes of inoculation,"[28] in which they are exposed to the threat of becoming instrumentalized through monetary desire and are able to resist and neutralize that threat. Both Caleb and his daughter Mary Garth undergo separate inoculation-like trials, in which they are offered money in exchange for acting on behalf of another. For Mary, this occurs when Featherstone attempts to bribe her into privately burning his latest will just before his death. The tactless Featherstone explains his proposition in bald-faced terms, saying, "Missy…look here! take the money--the notes and gold--look here--take it--you shall have it all--do as I tell you" (199). After Caleb Garth hears about Bulstrode's past indiscretions from Raffles and decides to give up working for him as a result, Caleb receives a somewhat similar proposition, though Bulstrode phrases it in much more guarded terms: "You would not wish to injure me by being too ready to believe a slander.…That is a poor reason for giving up a connection which I think I may say will be mutually beneficial" (429). In both cases, Bulstrode and Featherstone are attempting to use money to buy the Garths' agency—each man offers "gold" (199) or "benefits" (430) in hopes of getting the Garths to act as his "agent" (429) or to "do as I tell you" (199). They are quite literally presenting Mary and Caleb Garth with the opportunity to become pathologically yoked to another individual through monetary desire. They are bringing the Garths into direct contact with the source of social infection, opening up a potential channel of contagion and inviting the Garths to connect themselves to it.

[28] To be precise, this is more like inoculation than vaccination, in the sense that Mary and Caleb are coming into contact with "active virus." A vaccine introduces a similar but inactive disease into the system in order to make the body produce the antibodies that will combat the original disease. Inoculation just introduces a small amount of the disease itself, and does have the potential to actually infect the subject with the original illness. A smallpox inoculation can actually cause a case of smallpox, while a smallpox vaccine cannot. In that respect, this is more like inoculation.

Both of the Garths are able to use their internal resources to resist the threat and prevent themselves from becoming attached to this potential source of social contagion. They both repulse the threatening offer with repetitive actions of rebuff, using both words and body language in an almost compulsively repetitive way until the threat is neutralized. To the imploring, increasingly desperate Featherstone, Mary repeats the same basic repulsing phrase several times: "I cannot touch your iron chest or your will….I will not touch your iron chest or your will….I will not touch your key or your money, sir….I will not touch your money. I will do anything else I can to comfort you; but I will not touch your keys or your money" (199-200). In his parallel interaction with Bulstrode, Caleb repeatedly makes a physical gesture of rebuff, putting up his hand against Bulstrode's offers and pleas; over the course of the short interaction, he is described as "making a slight gesture with his right hand" (429), "waving his hand" (430), "lifting up his hand" (430), and "lifting his hand deprecatingly" (430). In response to these resolute refusals, both Bulstrode and Featherstone are beaten into submission, with Featherstone breaking down and "cry[ing] childishly" (199) and Bulstrode "cower[ing]" before Caleb (429). In these interactions, Mary and Caleb Garth are able to establish their resistance to social contagion. Like bodies successfully responding to inoculation, they use their internal resistance to render the threat "passive" and "impotent"—both words used to describe Featherstone after this interaction with Mary (200). Once they have gone through this inoculation ritual, they are able to come into contact with individuals involved in social scandal without becoming infected through that contact. For example, Caleb later arranges for Mary and her husband Fred Vincy to live at and manage Stone Court, the former estate of Featherstone, inherited by the illegitimate Rigg and purchased by the disgraced Bulstrode, and yet none of the scandal attached to Featherstone, Rigg, or Bulstrode gets transferred to the Garths. In other words, after these trials

of inoculation, both Caleb and Mary Garth acquire a social immunity that renders them able to engage in social and business contact with all of Middlemarch's primary vectors of social scandal without fear of contagion.

Section 2: Eliot's Alternative Individualism

These perfect in their little parts,

Whose work is all their prize—

Without them how could laws, or arts,

Or towered cities rise?

In the preceding section, I have argued that social contact in Eliot's novels can be healthy, unthreatening, and mutually beneficial as long as the individuals involved have undergone prior "social inoculation" rituals. What these rituals all have in common is that require individuals to act against their own monetary interests. In other words, Eliot is suggesting that social contact in a community can only be healthy if the individuals who comprise that community are willing to act against rational economic self-interest. This representation of community health puts Eliot into both conflict and conversation with the political economy discourse of her day. Although Eliot described political economy as "a subject of which I know so little," Dermot Coleman demonstrates in *George Eliot and Money* that Eliot was conversant on economic issues of her day and familiar with the work of Adam Smith, Ricardo, Thomas Chalmers, John Stuart Mill, and other prominent political economists (18-25). She was certainly aware of Adam Smith's famous assertion that self interest drives economic production and societal progress—that "[I]t is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker

that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest" (*Wealth of Nations* 1.2.2). Eliot's vision of healthy community asks individuals to reject what Smith would consider to be the "self interest necessary to progress" (Montag and Hill 241).

For Smith, though, it is this individual self-interest that drives people to take actions that contribute to the progress of the community as a whole. Smith represents the "natural selfishness" of human beings as a sort of engine behind human progress and action. Writing about landowners and, as we might describe them today, "job creators," he claims that

> though the sole end which they propose from the labors of all the thousands whom they employ, be the gratification of their own vain and insatiable desires, they divide with the poor the produce of all their improvements. They are led by an invisible hand to make nearly the same distribution of the necessaries of life, which would have been made had the earth been divided into equal portions among all its inhabitants, and thus, without intending it…advance the interest of the society and afford means to the multiplication of the species. (*Theory of Moral Sentiments* 184-85)

The insatiable desire for wealth is, for Smith, the driving force behind human society and the continuation of the human species itself. Through the mechanism of the invisible hand, economic self-interest becomes the energetic force that animates the social body. From the perspective of Smith and other similarly minded political economists, to give up individual desire for wealth would be to threaten the very fabric of human society and community. Yet Eliot is suggesting that, in order to make such communities healthy, individuals need to do exactly that.

I argue that Eliot replaces Smith's self-interest with another motive force—a deeply rooted personal desire to care for the social body as a whole. Although several characters in *Middlemarch* express similar sentiments, we can see this desire to care most fully in Caleb Garth

and Dorothea Brooke. Eliot makes it clear that Caleb Garth does not work hard at "business" because of a desire to make money or even because of a sense of obligation or responsibility. He speaks of business with "fervid veneration," with "religious regard" (158). He is overcome by his appreciation for "the indispensable might of that myriad-headed, myriad-handed labor by which the social body is fed, clothed, and housed." The sights and sounds of productive labor — the "echoes of the great hammer where roof or keel were a-making, the signal-shouts of the workmen, the roar of the furnace, the thunder and plash of the engine"—are to him "a sublime music" and impact him like "poetry without the aid of the poets" (158-59). He feels a passionate, almost religious desire to "have as effective a share as possible in this sublime labor," looking at "good practical schemes, accurate work, and the faithful completion of undertakings" as his "divinities" (159). This desire to work, though, is entirely apart from any desire for monetary gain. Eliot notes that "[I]t must be remembered that by 'business' Caleb never meant money transactions, but the skillful application of labor" (341). He has "no keenness of imagination for monetary results in the shape of profit and loss" and only participates in "the many kinds of work which he could do *without handling capital,*" often "declin[ing] to charge at all" for his labor (159, emphasis added). Garth's business is driven by his deep-seated desire to do good work rather than any desire for profit. He is only interested production as a generator of material improvements for the social body—in the "indispensible might of that myriad-headed, myriad-handed labour *by which the social body is fed, clothed, and housed*"—and not in production as means of generating personal wealth (159, emphasis added).

Dorothea shows a similar fervency of desire to help feed, cloth, and house the social body, though, as a young woman, her efforts are more often mocked, dismissed, and frustrated than Caleb's. Caleb himself notes a similarity between their desires, stating that Dorothea has "a

head for business most uncommon in a woman" and being reminded of his own young ambitions when she describes hers: "I should like to feel, if I lived to be old, that I had improved a great piece of land and built a great many good cottages, because the work is of a healthy kind while it is being done, and after it is done, men are the better for it" (341). Both Dorothea and Caleb feel this desire to care for the social body—to protect it, to shelter it, to make it stronger and healthier. And as with Caleb, Dorothea feels this not as a social duty or an obligation or a means to some other end; she feels it deeply as an *active desire*, a *personal longing*. This is reinforced when her desire to doctor the social body is frustrated by the lack of need at her married home of Lowick: "She felt some disappointment, of which she was yet ashamed, that there was nothing for her to do in Lowick; and in the next few minutes her mind had glanced over the possibility, which she would have preferred, of finding that her home would be in a parish which had a larger share of the world's misery, so that she might have had more active duties in it" (50). When Casaubon wonders why she "seem[s] a little sad," Dorothea admits that she is "feeling something which is perhaps foolish and wrong…almost wishing that the people wanted more to be done for them here" (50). Dorothea's desire to be herself of use to the social body cannot be satisfied by the knowledge that her help is not presently needed, because she is not motivated by a theoretical sense of duty but rather by a deep personal longing.

This distinction between personal desire and theoretical belief seems central, for Eliot. Abstract belief or theoretical intentions to act in ways that benefit the community are insufficient as a motive force for the social good. Eliot illustrates this particularly in the character of Bulstrode, who struggles between his religious theories and his personal desire for money. When Eliot relates Bulstrode's personal history—his decision to become involved in a morally questionable business, his choice to cover up his knowledge of his stepdaughter in order to keep

the money that would have been hers—she describes him as "a man whose desires had been stronger than his theoretic beliefs" (383). Later, when Bulstrode longs for Raffles's death but resolves not to do anything to hasten it, Eliot writes that "Bulstrode set himself to keep his intention separate from his desire" (435). Bulstrode is engaged in a constant struggle between his personal desire for wealth and his theoretical religious and ethical beliefs, and desire wins out in the end. We are on familiar Victorian ground with Bulstrode's struggle. Novels are rife with characters who try (and sometimes fail) to balance personal desires with religious and ethical commitments, and critics have ably demonstrated the role of Victorian fiction in both constructing a cultural understanding of appropriate desire and illustrating the exercise of self-control and discipline to contain those desires deemed excessive or inappropriate.[29] What is interesting here, though, is that Eliot does not exactly suggest that Bulstrode should exercise more self-control in order to keep his unruly desires in check. Instead, she suggests that he should *have different desires*. It is not that Bulstrode simply needs to do a better job placing quantitative ethical limits upon his normal desire to acquire personal wealth; rather, Bulstrode needs to replace his desire for personal wealth with a qualitatively different desire to care for the social body.

Eliot is by no means alone in suggesting that there are correct and incorrect desires for proper English citizens to feel. In *The Citizen's Body*, Pamela Gilbert explains how liberal, free-

[29] There is a divide between those suggesting that desires are inherently deviant and bad and thus we need to control them, and those suggesting that desires are healthy in moderation and just need to be kept at appropriate levels. Nancy Armstrong, for example, locates the fiction of the Bronte sisters as a marker of Victorian fiction coming to see individual desires in terms of "disruption and deviance requiring containment and discipline," (*Desire and Domestic Fiction* 174) and describes the role of the novel in producing a gendered cultural understanding of the social need to control and contain individual "deviant desires" (221). Pamela Gilbert represents the alternative in her description of Charles Kingsley's treatment of desire, claiming that his novels present desire as the source of both healthy manliness and temptation. The appropriate European man, in Kingsley's representation, feels strong desire but is also capable of controlling those desires. The man who cannot control his desires is presented as "savage," but the man who lacks strong desires is presented as feminine. (*Cholera and Nation* 153-56)

market capitalist society depends on individuals choosing to act in appropriate ways because of the incentives and personal rewards attached to those behaviors. Early political economists took for granted the fact that "establishing financial security, increasing social status, and nurturing a family" were universal human desires, and therefore assumed that anyone who did not act in accordance with those incentives must simply be "ill-informed" (3). It soon became clear, however, that these desires were not universal, as large numbers of people remained who "displayed desires that were antithetical to the notion of fitness championed by liberal thinkers" (3). These people came to be defined as "paupers," a moral-economic category that implied not just poverty but also a cultural and social ethos deemed unfit for English citizenship. This class of people "remained a social problem in the mid-century precisely because they…did not seem to desire the right things or act economically in ways designed to fulfill those desires, and therefore they could not be managed through those desires" (42). In a choice-based liberal society, people are not managed through coercion but through the mobilization of their desires—through incentives that make them *want* to behave in socially appropriate and useful ways. Liberalism in the mid-nineteenth century thus constructs citizenship as "dependent on the internalization of certain kinds of desire and their enactment as consumption of goods and services (especially housing) and information" and thus suggests that "to make the pauper into a good citizen, it is necessary to teach him or her to desire appropriately—usually framed as desire for marriage, financial security, and upward mobility" (7).[30] The good citizen, in other words, has the right desires, and the pauper who is unfit for citizenship has the wrong desires. Becoming fit for citizenship, then, is not just a matter of exercising self-control over unruly desires but of having the *right* desires in the first place.

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[30] For more on the social education of desire with relation to sexuality, race, and colonialism, see Ann Stoler's *Race and the Education of Desire*.

Eliot is working within this paradigm by suggesting that there are proper and improper desires, but she is crucially inverting which desires are seen as proper. In the public discourse that Gilbert describes, the "proper" desires for citizens center on the accumulation of personal wealth and upward social mobility. Gilbert's fit Victorian citizen is motivated by a desire to acquire money; such monetary desire is seen as fundamentally proper and necessary for the healthy functioning of liberal society. In contrast, Eliot is suggesting that the desire for personal wealth shown by Bulstrode and others is fundamentally *improper* and leads to a pathologization of human contact within liberal society. Like liberal social reformers, Eliot seems to want to alter and reeducate individual desires, but while those reformers wanted to teach paupers (who appeared to be satisfied with meeting their most basic physical needs) to desire larger homes, private rooms, better clothing, and other economic markers of upward mobility, Eliot seems to advise bourgeois readers against this normative desire for economic gain. Instead, she suggests that proper individual desire is actually oriented outward, away from the individual and toward the care of the community as a whole. Instead of having predictable and normative self-interested desires that can be mobilized to make individuals act in ways that benefit the community, Eliot suggests that individuals should *directly desire* to act on behalf of the community. Eliot's formulation of proper desire removes the crucial middle step, wherein the liberal government uses incentives and rewards to manage citizens' behavior by means of their desires, suggesting instead that the content of citizens' individual desires ought to be the betterment of the social body as whole.

Eliot's most exemplary characters, then, share an odd similarity with the paupers that posed such a problem for liberal governance in the mid-nineteenth century. Paupers were unmanageable because they were frustratingly void of normative desires for personal wealth

accumulation and upward mobility. Caleb Garth and Dorothea are similarly void of these economic desires. Dorothea tells Will, "I have no longings […] for myself. Except that I should like not to have so much more than my share without doing anything for others" (244). Caleb and Dorothea are also, like paupers, somewhat "unmanageable" due to their lack of normative monetary desires. Dorothea is repeatedly referred to as "troublesome" by Lydgate, Casaubon, the narrator, and even by herself (60, 127, 260, 489). Caleb is "sometimes troublesome to his employers" precisely because he is often suggesting schemes such as buying houses just to pull them down "as a sacrifice of property which would be well repaid by the influx of air and light on that spot" (428), and he frustrates Bulstrode, who attempts to use the promise of money to persuade him to continue managing his estate, with his willingness to "renounce his benefits" for the sake of his sense of ethics (430).[31] Like paupers, these characters do not have normative desires and, as a result, they are "troublesome" and difficult to manage. Eliot represents these characters not as anti-citizens, though, as Gilbert describes paupers, but rather as *ideal* citizens, because they do not require management via normative personal desires to contribute to the social good. They do so without interference, in order to satisfy their deeply-held personal longings to care for the community.

Another of Eliot's novels, *Felix Holt*, gives us insight into why it might be necessary to remove the intermediating force of personal economic desire from the mechanism by which citizens contribute to the public good. Like *Middlemarch*, *Felix Holt* is strategically retrospective, set just before the First Reform Act (1832), which grappled with and rethought what citizenship in a representative government meant for England. Many of the electoral reform

[31] Will Ladislaw is similarly described as "troublesome," (237) and although I have not discussed him in this chapter, he also proves himself unmotivated by and willing to forgo monetary gain: he is described by Farebrother as "disinterested, unworldly fellow" (444), and he immediately rejects Bulstrode's "ill-gotten money," glad only that Bulstrode has "kept the money till now, when I can refuse it" (386).

issues addressed by the Reform Acts centered on the relationship between money and political power: how much property must a man own in order to be eligible to vote? Should "pocket boroughs" — electoral districts inhabited by a single wealthy landowner and his financially dependent tenants and employees — be eradicated? In other words, must men have money in order to have a political voice, and is there a limit to how much political voice your money can give you? Eliot contends with these same issues in *Felix Holt*, following the machinations and electioneering leading up to the Treby Magna parliamentary election. Throughout the novel, Eliot shows how personal economic desire can interfere with the aims of representative government. Election managers repeatedly use monetary incentives to manipulate voters, changing the election from a space of independent public discourse into a marketplace in which votes are a commodity that can be bought and sold.

In *Felix Holt*, Eliot essentially tackles the same issues that election reform tackles, but she comes at those issues from the other side of the coin. Instead of putting electoral reforms in place to limit how much wealthy individuals can use their money to influence politics, Eliot wants to change the personal desires of the individual voter, eliminating their desire for money so that they can no longer be manipulated by electioneers. Throughout the novel, she works to redefine what it means to be an independent citizen and voter. The Sproxton pub owner Chubb embodies a certain definition of independent citizenship, in that he is, first, self-employed and financially independent and second, unattached to any particular party. Like Adam Smith's theoretical economic man come to life, Chubb "had thoroughly considered what calling would yield him the best livelihood with the least possible exertion, and…had prospered according to the merits of such judicious calculation," becoming "a forty-shilling freeholder" (128). He looks forward to his vote, not being "one of those mean-spirited men who found the franchise

embarrassing, and would rather have been without it: he regarded his vote as part of his investment, and meant to make the best of it" (128). "Making the best" of his vote, however, does not mean using it to bring about healthy political change or to achieve the enactment of his values. Instead, he approaches the vote with the same calculating, rational self-interest with which he chose his profession: "there's no man more independent than me, I'll plump or I'll split for them as treat me the handsomest and are the most of what I call gentlemen; that's my idee. And in the way of hacting for any man, them are fools that don't employ me" (132). Chubb embodies most of the qualities of the proper liberal citizen, rationally seeking his own interest like Adam Smith's model individual and keeping himself free from the amalgamating ties of identification with a particular social class or political party. In practice, however, this means that Chubb is happy to become an agent for whatever politician will pay him best and that his vote is a commodity for sale to the highest bidder.

Felix displays a different kind of independence—independence from personal desire for wealth and thus freedom from being manipulated into acting according to the goals of others. Felix's lack of monetary desire is perhaps his most dominant character trait: he is introduced in the novel as a son who stops his mother from profiting from the sale of quack medicines (61) and he ends up as a husband who says "he will always be poor" (476). In a statement that seems to foreshadow Bulstrode's fate in *Middlemarch*, Felix claims that exposure to wealth actually breeds the desire for wealth: "Let a man once throttle himself with a satin stock, and he'll get new wants and new motives. Metamorphosis will have begun at his neck-joint, and it will go on till it has changed his likings first and then his reasoning, which will follow his likings as the feet of a hungry dog follow his nose" (64-65). Exposure to wealth alters a man's natural desires, giving him "new wants" and "likings." Felix suggests that, like the yoke of debt that controlled

and limited Lydgate's actions in *Middlemarch*, these economic desires can "throttle" a man, preventing him from independent action and causing him to dumbly seek more wealth like a hungry dog seeks food. To avoid this, Felix rejects the pursuit of wealth and social position altogether, choosing to work as a watchmaking artisan despite the access that his higher level of education could give him to the middle class.

Through this abdication of financial self-interest, he makes himself immune to management and manipulation by others, much to the frustration of those who wish to control him. Harold Transome's unscrupulous election manager Jermyn is frustrated by the inconvenience posed by "Felix Holt, whom he knew very well by Trebian report to be a young man with so little of the ordinary Christian motives as to making an appearance and getting on in the world, that *he presented no handle to any judicious and respectable person who might be willing to make use of him*" (185, emphasis added). He cannot be instrumentalized by anyone, because there is nothing with which anyone could bribe him; he makes decisions based on his convictions and values rather than his rational self-interest. Like Caleb and Dorothea, Felix is unmanageable—and this is precisely what makes him an ideal citizen. As Eliot shows throughout *Felix Holt*, individuals with normative desires for wealth and increased social position can indeed be easily managed through the mobilization of those desires, not just by liberal governments but also by other individuals. This vulnerability to management by others prevents these individuals from being truly independent decision-makers; their votes are not meaningful enactments of democratic decision-making but rather commodities to be purchased. Eliot implies that the individual who is truly deserving of the franchise is the *un*manageable citizen, the citizen who rejects normative economic desires and thus is capable of genuinely independent action.

In *Middlemarch* and *Felix Holt*, Eliot suggests that the economic man posited by political economists like Adam Smith — the rational, self-interested agent who acts to maximize personal wealth and minimize labor — is incompatible with both community and democracy. This model of the individual rests upon a foundational human desire for wealth as the basic motive for productive action, and for Eliot, that desire is a problem. Politically, that desire for money makes voters into consumers, willing to vote for whichever candidate will either directly bribe them or else will institute policies that benefit them financially. Democratic government is rendered meaningless, since voters are not independent decision makers but rather mere agents acting on behalf of whichever politician pays the highest wage. Voters are instrumentalized as a result of their desire for money; they lose their independent power of action and instead act on behalf of those who provide them with financial incentives. The desire for money creates a similar problem in social communities. Those who desire financial gain are easily manipulated into acting as instruments for others, as Raffles acts for Bulstrode. But this instrumentalization of one human being by another erodes the outlines of individuality, opening up channels through which social infection and pathological influence can spread unchecked.

In highlighting these channels of influence as a threat, Eliot shows that she is concerned about the same "dangerous contiguity" that Victorian politicians, commentators, public health officials, and social reformers feared—the unruly spread of contagion, influence, desire, feeling, or identity between people who are so closely yoked together that they have lost their individual boundaries (*Citizen's Body* 35). What is remarkable about Eliot's intervention in these novels, though, is that she locates this amalgamating, boundary-destroying threat in precisely the opposite position from where mainstream Victorian commentators locate it. For Victorian reformers, this threat of "massification" came from *below*—both from paupers content to live in

undifferentiated heaps in filthy cellars as well as from working class organizers, who encouraged people to see themselves as part of a unified social class.[32] For Eliot, however, the threat lies *within* the definition of bourgeois individuality itself. It is not pauperism or working class mobs that put people at risk of losing their individual boundedness and becoming subject to contagion by other people's needs and desires; it is, rather, the normative bourgeois desire for personal wealth. Eliot radically relocates the greatest threat to bourgeois individuality from the antithesis of the bourgeois (that is, paupers and lower-class mobs) to the very heart of the bourgeois (that is, rational economic self-interest).

While Eliot questions the normative Victorian model of bourgeois individual, she remains deeply invested in the concept of the individual.[33] She by no means suggests that we abandon the category of the individual in favor of a "massified" community through which desires and influences and contagions spread willy-nilly. Rather, Eliot suggests that we need a different kind of individual, one with alternative desires and motives. Eliot's model individual has been emptied out of any desires for personal gain and filled up with a deeply-held personal desire to benefit the social body as a whole. In this model, contributing to the social good is no longer an act of duty, self-discipline, or altruism; it is an expression and fulfillment of personal desire. Eliot's individual does not need to be managed into contributing to the overall social good via incentives and rewards designed to appeal to individual self-interest. There is no need, in Eliot's model, for this kind of intermediation by which self-interest is made into a motivating force for the public good. By revising the content of individual desires, Eliot renders the whole mechanism of the invisible hand unnecessary.

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[32] For more on this, see Pamela Gilbert's *The Citizen's Body*.

[33] Eliot revealed her investment in individualism when she claimed in a letter that Poor Laws were a problem between they were a "communistic provision" and not "individual, personal responsibility and action" (Coleman 26).

The model of individuality that Eliot ultimately presents is a deeply paradoxical one. The only way to protect the individual from contagion and pathological influence, she suggests, is to empty it of all self-interest, to turn its most private desires outward toward the public good. The only way to maintain one's independence, to avoid being "made use of" by others, is to desire nothing other than to be of use to the social body. Eliot's individual can only defend the integrity of its personal boundaries by emptying itself of the desires that would generally consider "personal" and replacing them with community-oriented goals. In this redefinition of individuality, Eliot takes all the central mechanisms of bourgeois liberalism and rewires them into a sort of communitarian ethics. Private personal desires are crucially important, but they must be oriented toward public goals. Individual independence is paramount, but it can only be achieved through the abdication of economic self-interest. In a novelistic sleight of hand, Eliot's model of individual independence and proper citizenship defends the values of bourgeois individualism by emptying them out of their primary meaning and redefining them on her own terms.

CONCLUSION

Reading *Bleak House* Under Trump

I have argued that a century and half ago, novelists like Elizabeth Gaskell and Charles Dickens imagined healthier communities: communities that are not based on exclusion; that prioritize ethical care over fear; that value the lives and bodies of the powerless as much as the lives and bodies of the powerful. I am painfully aware that, in 2017, this vision is not a reality. I cannot argue that these novels changed politics in the way that I believe they sought to (nor would my methodology be suited to supporting such a claim). Certainly, the structure of medical care has changed since the end of Victoria's reign: the establishment of the National Health Service in 1948 assured all British citizens access to healthcare, and the creation of Medicaid in 1965 provided the American poor some access to medical services. The idea that every citizen deserves care, that it is an ethical and national problem to let the poor die because they cannot pay for medical care, has been written into law in Great Britain and, to some extent, in its former colony. And yet, though the terms and conditions have changed, we are still having the same debates that Gaskell and Dickens were intervening in when they wrote the novels I have discussed: Who counts as "one of us"? Who deserves to live in our nation and, on a more basic level, who deserves to live? Do prosperous citizens have an ethical responsibility to sacrifice resources or put themselves at risk in order to ensure the lives of others?

These debates have become particularly urgent under Theresa May's anti-immigrant, anti-refugee policies in the United Kingdom and Donald Trump's presidency in the United States, which explicitly and unapologetically seeks to build a national community founded on (Muslim) exclusion and to systematically deny access to medical care for the poor. One hundred and fifty

years later, I believe that the Victorian novel is still relevant to these debates. I do not mean to say, of course, that reading *Bleak House* will make people reject the Muslim ban and support socialized medicine, nor do I want to claim a facile connection between reading habits and moral goodness. But I do claim that what Eve Sedgwick calls a "reparative" reading of these Victorian novels can "extract sustenance" that has the potential to feed contemporary resistance to xenophobic and anti-poor social and political policies (Sedgwick 150).

Many scholars before me have applied the hermeneutics of suspicion to reveal these novels' complicity in oppressive ideologies and systems of power—work of which I unhesitatingly acknowledge the value. I, too, am interested in how close reading can reveal underlying ideologies and belief systems, but I am less focused on how dominant ideologies are written into works of literature and more focused on how we can read, in those same works, modes of resistance and alternative ways of structuring the world. As Isobel Armstrong does in *Novel Politics*, I am actively "reading for the antihegemonic" (7). More specifically, I am interpreting these novels according to what we might call a utopian hermeneutic.[34] That is, I am reading for the alternative, imaginary, sometimes idealized worlds that authors produce in the space of the novel. I thus follow Anna Kohnbluh in understanding the project of the realist novel as a critical and projective one rather than a mimetic one—an act of creating self-consciously imaginary worlds, not of "recording" or "reiterating" existing ones (11, 14). The realist novel "opens portals onto not only what *is*, but also what *could* or *should* be" and this is what makes it valuable (Kornbluh 15).

In a world that increasingly resembles dystopian fiction, I want to assert the value not just of these novels but also of a utopian reading practice that seeks out the imaginary "could be"

[34] For a much fuller enumeration of what a utopian hermeneutic might look like, see José Esteban Muñoz, "Queerness as Horizon: Utopian Hermeneutics in the Face of Gay Pragmatism."

instead of the mimetic "is." No matter that the utopian "could be" that Dickens and Gaskell imagined never actually came to be. The same reading practices that attend to "what might have happened but didn't," as Eve Sedgwick puts it, give readers tools to envision how "the future may be different from the present" (146). Now more than ever, we need ways of imagining *what might still happen* that move beyond the boundaries of our established reality. Certainly, we still need the kind of deeply insightful "suspicious" reading that reveals the workings of power and ideology within the structures that exist. But we also need constructive, utopian reading practices that imagine what other structures might look like—structures that will inevitably be flawed and insufficient themselves but that give us ground from which to move forward. Such reading, of course, is simultaneously a critical and a creative act, producing utopian visions that the author may never have imagined. But the point, in my view, is not what the author imagined; the point is what the author allows *us* to imagine.

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On January 12th, 2017, a young adult novelist named Lauren Morrill tweeted, "My biggest problem in these ACA [Affordable Care Act] debates? I don't know how to explain to you why you should care about other people." Her message received over 40,000 "likes" and was retweeted by over 20,000 twitter users (including me), prompting the relatively unknown writer to temporarily shut down her account while she dealt with tens of thousands of unexpected notifications and emails. Of course it is unfair to claim that all opponents of the Affordable Care Act do not care about other people; more likely, they subscribe to a worldview in which the "other people" whose lives the Affordable Care Act could save are either viewed as not part of

their community of responsibility or, more extreme, as threats to the safety of those whom they have a responsibility to protect. But her tweet points to a strategic problem for progressive politics—armed only with the tools of rational debate, it is hard to argue that someone should feel empathy for someone they do not already empathize with, or that someone should put themselves at risk for the sake of someone to whom they do not already feel a sense of ethical responsibility. It is very difficult to *explain why* we believe what we believe about ethical responsibility in a community. Such convictions about our responsibility to others—about what community I am a part of, about who is included in that community, about who I have to care about and who I need to be scared of, about whose health matters and who is a threat to that health—these convictions are held close to the body, in a place that "argument" or "explanation" often cannot access. Opposing arguments register as visceral affronts, and conversation fails.

I optimistically believe that a utopian hermeneutics of the novel, and particularly the Victorian novel, offers one possible way out of (or at least one space outside of) this hostile stasis. Many commentators, from contemporary reviewers of Victorian novels to twentieth century New Historicists, have characterized the Victorian novel as an apparatus for training emotions and affects. Rachel Ablow has argued that experiencing the novel's emotional pedagogy, which D.A. Miller and others have at times characterized as a subtle education that sneaks up on readers and taints their entertainment with ideology, was in fact the "explicit goal of novel reading" for many Victorian readers (Ablow 201). If the novel can teach readers to feel the emotions and sensations that form them into docile subjects of liberal capitalism, it can surely also teach readers to experience more disruptive feelings as well—for example, to feel a binding affiliation that crosses class boundaries upon a single, chance moment of contact; to feel compelled by another's physical vulnerability to provide self-sacrificing care, even in the case of

personal dislike; to feel the need to care for others as a visceral impulse, stronger than the desire for personal gain or even the attachment to one's own life. A utopian hermeneutics has the potential to reveal the disruptive feelings that might have been and to guide us towards those that yet may be.

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