VALUES IN THE AIR: COMMUNITY AND CAPITAL CONVERSION IN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY NOVEL

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VALUES IN THE AIR: COMMUNITY AND CAPITAL CONVERSION IN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY NOVEL

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Kentucky

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VALUES IN THE AIR: COMMUNITY AND CAPITAL CONVERSION IN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY NOVEL

Values in the Air argues that nineteenth-century authors attempted to challenge the individualizing and atomizing effects of the increasingly powerful and abstract investment economy by portraying the necessity of other fields of capital (cultural, social, domestic) to the formation and maintenance of local, knowable communities. I first look at the depiction of a successful integration of diverse capitals embodied in the figure of the male mill owner, wherein the idea of land stewardship is repurposed to include factories. Chapter 2 depicts an encroaching pessimism about tradition’s ability to answer the demands of the modern industrial economy even as the possibility of bringing women into the center of industrial capital as equal participants is foreclosed. With chapter 3, I turn my attention to the way that the abstract nature of the investment economy obscures the value of—and relationships between—different fields of capital. The focus of chapter 3 is how land becomes implicated in the abstract economy, revealing the country estate to be little more than a bargaining chip, and reducing its ability to act as a foil for capitalism. Finally, the relationship between women and the country bank depicts the clash of the myth of separate spheres and the myth of a logical economy. While the scales of Victorian studies generally emphasize the novel’s development of the individual, or its representation of uncountable populations, Values in the Air plots a middle stratum wherein novels model networks and relationships that structure local, knowable communities. Within these communities, it is possible to imagine individual women in positions of financial power even as it is unclear how multiple forms of value can be gendered and exchanged.

KEYWORDS: English literature, nineteenth-century literature, Victorian literature, economy, capital, gender

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INTRODUCTION:

Values in the Air: Community and Capital Conversion in the Nineteenth-Century Novel

The nineteenth-century novel is frequently pointed to as the example, par excellence, of Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital and its relation to other forms of capital, in particular economic capital.¹ Put another way, nineteenth-century novels are rife with characters jostling one another in pursuit of money, art, romance, prestige, social position, and political power, among a number of other interrelated goals and desires.² This view of the nineteenth-century novel, and the Victorian novel in particular, emphasizes the individual and how successful (or not) that individual is at obtaining a desired position. Yet, a position describes a locational relationship to others and implicitly involves multiple people. How, then, do this individual’s actions and position interact with and correspond to their larger milieu? How do they engage with the other individuals near them? How does capital move between fields and between characters? What, in a word, about community? Literature, capital conversion, and community: these are the touchstones of this dissertation, which focuses on literature’s portrayal of the relationship between community formation and capital circulation between fields in the face of nineteenth-century England’s

² In *One vs. The Many*, Alex Woloch offers an analysis of characters competing for narrative space in the novel, arguing that this competition produces the “social dimension of form” (18). Supritha Rajan in *A Tale of Two Capitalisms* considers the competition inherent in the capitalist marketplace, its representation in the novel, and how one narrative of capitalism beat out the other, rival narratives during the nineteenth century. William Makepeace Thackery’s *Vanity Fair*; Charles Dickens’s *Great Expectations*; Anthony Trollope’s *The Way We Live Now*; and George Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda* are paradigmatic examples of the marriage market, financial market, art market, and social climbing.
economic transition from agricultural to industrial to investment capitalism. While the scales of Victorian studies emphasize the novel’s development of the individual, or its representation of uncountable populations, *Values in the Air* plots a middle stratum in which novels model networks and relationships that structure local, knowable communities. Focusing on community formation in the Victorian novel makes clear the ways in which non-economic capitals are essential to forging lasting connections and networks between characters. These novels show that money is inept at forging connections that last beyond momentary utility and that money does not inspire “the image of…communion” (B. Anderson 6) necessary to building stable social networks. This distinction is most clear in *The Way We Live Now* when characters emphasize the difference between visiting and staying with the Melmotte family. Without social, cultural, and domestic capitals and the ability to move these disparate capitals between fields—what I term capital conversion—community is impossible. Capital conversion is predicated upon recognition of, and respect for, the values of different fields. Such recognition and respect, as the novels of this study illustrate, are possible only when characters invest their time and resources in learning the values of other fields. In learning the values of different capitals, and the rules governing their exchangeability, characters attain a common understanding with other characters that acts as a foundation for community.

My title, *Values in the Air*, is borrowed from George Rae’s 1885 “Bills of Exchange”—an educational article that describes the process of “kite flying” or what we might call “cheque floating,” in which money is ostensibly present, but *where* the money is located is uncertain. My title is also intentionally reminiscent of Karl Marx’s “All that is solid melts into air” (70). By selecting this for my title, I emphasize the way that the
foundations of the nineteenth century—political, social, economic, and cultural—world were in flux. In *All That is Solid*, Marshall Berman discusses how in fundamental ways the experience of life in the twentieth century is the same as it was in the nineteenth century: what remains fixed is change itself. Berman calls our attention to the completely enveloping sense of disorientation produced by the contradictory tendencies of “disintegration and renewal” which create “an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth…and, at the same time…threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are” (15). To put it mildly, change causes a great deal of anxiety. For the novelists in my study, anxiety about how individuals relate and come together to form communities, and who has what forms of power in those communities, takes center stage. Characters such as Anthony Trollope’s Augustus Melmotte and Margaret Oliphant’s Catherine Vernon possess—or are reputed to possess—significant economic power, but their economic power appears incommensurate with domestic capital and does not bring them into the fold of their local communities. These characters’ inauspicious homes ultimately cost them not only their economic wealth, but their very lives. And yet, Charlotte Brontë’s Robert Moore successfully converts his economic power into a leading role in his Yorkshire community, thanks to the assistance of his wife Caroline Helstone. These examples, which will be further unpacked in the chapters that follow, indicate that the rules for exchangeability shifted throughout the century. However, the central tenet of capital conversion remained firm: regardless of which fields one is trying to move capital between, the exchange is never a simple one-for-one.

*Values in the Air* argues that nineteenth-century authors attempted to challenge the individualizing and atomizing effects of the increasingly powerful and abstract investment
economy by portraying the necessity of other fields of capital to the formation and maintenance of local, knowable communities. The communities in the novels on which I focus are spatially, if not always geographically, limited. The restricted space of a gentlemen’s club in London may offer the same community as a country town. The importance in both is that specific boundaries, whether the walls of a building or the lines on a map, define the space of community. Such limits allow the novelist “to show people and their relationships in essentially knowable and communicable ways” (Williams 163) whether in a country town or the midst of London. Drawing on Bourdieu, I use capital to refer to the currency of a given field: a delimited setting containing consenting participants and agreed upon rules of engagement (Distinction 3-4). What has value and is exchangeable between actors in a given field varies by what a field deems desirable: knowledge of Latin is valuable to scholars and the clergy, but less so (if at all) to the mill owners of Manchester. Furthermore, a character’s ability to navigate different fields of capital is mediated by one’s gender, class, and race. I necessarily limit my study of such mediators to gender, although issues of class and race underpin this work.³ As Values in the Air illustrates, established relationships between fields were thrown into disarray by the economic changes wrought during the nineteenth-century: the increasing power of the investment economy challenged traditional hierarchies, particularly because of its abstract nature. Whereas a farm or factory’s success is visible and tangible, the stocks and bonds of

³ Within this study, the characters Robert Moore and Augustus Melmotte are sometimes read as racially other because of their foreignness. For Robert Moore, see chapter 5 in Carl Plasa’s Charlotte Brontë. For Augustus Melmotte, see chapter 2 in Jonathan Freedman’s Temple of Culture. For more general studies that engage directly with race and capital see Pascale Casanova, The World Republic of Letters; Anne McClintock, Imperial Leather; Peter James Hudson, Bankers and Empire. For more general studies that engage directly with class and capital see Sarah Amato, Beastly Possessions; Bruce Robbins, Upward Mobility; Terry Eagleton, Marxism and Literature.
investment are not: the “bits of paper” (Trollope 91, 92) that represent investments give no indication of the state of the system of which they are a part. Abstraction, then, refers to the lack of concrete evidence, and the reliance on belief that is a defining characteristic of the investment economy. Throughout Values in the Air, I contrast the notion of abstraction with that of tradition. When I use the term “tradition,” I am invoking configurations of capital that insist on hierarchical relationships: between the aristocracy/landed gentry and their tenants centered on the concept of noblesse oblige; between men and women centered on the concept of separate spheres; and between the country and the city centered on the possibility of knowability.

The country house novels of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century depict the “tradition” against which the nineteenth-century authors measure such change. For example, Mr. Knightley of Jane Austen’s Emma (1815) is a character who embodies ideas of noblesse oblige and effective land stewardship. While Beth Fowkes Tobin has pointed out that Mr. Knightley would have been participating in and benefiting from modern movements such as enclosure, he still represents (particularly in his marriage to Emma) a paradigmatic example of investment in a rural English estate community. The world beyond Austen’s Highbury appears to be of little consequence to the economic relations of the novel and it is hard to find fault with Mr. Knightley or his actions within the novel.\(^4\) Even by the time Austen was writing, however, we see traditional structures beginning to unravel: Austen’s Persuasion (1817) and the unfinished Sandition move away from the country house formula for which Austen is so well known. Persuasion sees the country house rented to a military man and his wife to save the Eliot family from ruin due to Sir

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\(^4\) Excluding, of course, what Kathleen Anderson identifies as the potentially discomforting transition of Mr. Knightley from father-figure to lover.
Eliot’s spendthrift ways, and concludes with the heroine Anne Eliot becoming a naval wife and traveling with her husband, Captain Wentworth. The main character of *Sandition*, Charlotte Heywood, is the daughter of a country gentleman, but the action follows her movements away from her father’s home to the seaside resort town of Sandition. As these later novels suggest, economic changes that make it imperative to look beyond the boundaries of the local estate community disrupt the relationships between men and land, owner and tenant. To be clear, I am not arguing that novels of either century depict the historical reality of their settings. Rather, I am concerned with the perception and representation of change by writers.

*Values in the Air* traces literature’s representation of an historical progression through Charlotte Brontë’s *Shirley* (1849), Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South* (1855), Anthony Trollope’s *The Way We Live Now* (1875), and Margaret Oliphant’s *Hester* (1883). During the time these novels were written and published, England witnessed the full-flowering of the investment economy which had begun well over a century before. In *Genres of the Credit Economy*, Mary Poovey traces the lineage of literature and economics from the end of the seventeenth century through the eighteenth century to reveal that literature and economics are sister disciplines born from paper fictions: “because [paper money] simply represents, instead of embodying, value paper always defers its ground” (57) causing instability and anxiety in the financial realm. Essentially, the abstract economy induces anxiety in investors not only because it marks economic change, but because there is no real scale of value at its core. To counteract this anxiety, as Poovey

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5 For more on the joint origin of literature and economics see the introduction of Jean-Joseph Goux, *Symbolic Economies*; For more on the economy as a fiction, see Matt Seybold, “Confidence Tricks” and the introduction and chapters 2 and 3 in Quinn Slobodian, *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism*.  
explains, economists turned to math and distanced themselves from literature: their discipline, economists argued, had logic and rules governing it, while the discipline of literature was the domain of imagination and fancy. In her discussion of the stock market, Audrey Jaffe highlights the relationship between the stock market and literature when she writes that Victorians believed investments “follow the law of gravity—‘what goes up must come down’—as well as the psychological equivalent of that law, which dictates that those who have profited…must eventually see their winnings disappear” (Jaffe 42). Thus, as the nineteenth century wore on and agriculture and industry held less significant shares in the economy (or at least were perceived thus), authors’ fictional portrayals of community and different configurations of capital became less certain. Whereas Brontë’s *Shirley* integrates industrial capitalism into traditional forms of value, Gaskell, Trollope, and Oliphant depict increasing confusion about how these different domains relate to each other and what their equivalencies might be, especially as they map onto gender roles.

Focusing on capital conversion, non-economic capitals, and how gender mediates value reveals that—somewhat counter to separate spheres ideology—women are not just a detox center for men engaging in the public sphere, but rather possess a symbolic importance in an increasingly abstract economy. Amanda Anderson argues that “if women somehow naturally or intuitively preserved tradition, men could be actively modern without experiencing vertiginous rootlessness,” (45) but this only partially explains how gender and economic relations play out across novels. Rather than merely “preserving tradition,” women are actively crafting modernity. Notably, all the major female characters in the novels of this study embrace modern life: Margaret Hale confronts a mob of angry working-class men on strike, and Hetta Carbury takes a solitary journey on an omnibus to
confront her rival in love, who was herself brought to England by steamship. Yet their engagement with modernity is tempered with domesticity and the possession of social and cultural capitals. Because the power to shape community lies in non-economic capital, and this power is intimately connected with the cultural production and reproduction that is linked to women, women are uniquely able to wed tradition and modernity.6

In order to explore the ways in which different fields of capital relate to each other and how a character’s gender mediates relationships between fields, I first look at the depiction of a successful integration of diverse capitals, of traditional hierarchies and modern economic practices embodied in the figure of the male mill owner, wherein the idea of land stewardship is repurposed to include factories (Chapter 1). Chapter 2 depicts an encroaching pessimism about tradition’s ability to answer the demands of the modern industrial economy even as the possibility of bringing women into the center of industrial capital as equal participants is foreclosed. In this chapter, the regional stasis of non-economic capital precludes the possibility of capital conversion and, with it, the possibility of insulated and atomized groups coming together to form a community that blends traditional and modern industrial systems of value seen in chapter one. With Chapter 3, I turn my attention to the investment economy and the way that the abstract nature of the investment economy obscures the value of—and relationships between—different fields of capital. Unlike Charlotte Brontë and Elizabeth Gaskell’s using the symbolic value of land to legitimate the industrial economy, Anthony Trollope implicates land in the abstract

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6 In *Inalienable Possessions*, anthropologist Annette B. Weiner explores the ways in which women possess their own wealth, frequently tied to their roles as vessels for cultural reproduction, particularly in pre-industrial societies. Even in heavily patriarchal societies such as those in Oceana that Weiner studies, she argues that women are intimately connected with inalienable possessions, reciprocity, and systems of exchange. This connection and the types of wealth it brings to women gives them power within their community and society.
economy, revealing the country estate to be little more than a bargaining chip, and reducing its ability to act as a foil for capitalism. In the world of Trollope’s novel, the only viable communities are those that are heavily structured by traditional relationships between forms of capital, even as they engage with the modern economy in limited ways: the domestic sphere and the Gentleman’s Club. These spaces do not represent a “separate sphere” but rather function as gender-dependent permeable membranes: some elements of the traditional and the modern can enter, while other parts are kept out. Finally, the relationship between women and the country bank depicts the clash of the myth of separate spheres and the myth of a logical economy. To maximize the prosperity of individuals and community, public and private spheres must be reconfigured so that women have access to the abstract economy without the domestic home suffering neglect (Chapter 4).

Looking at nineteenth-century texts for the interplay between the changing economy, changing gender roles, and community formation is important for two reasons. First, by foregrounding gender’s determining role in what capital can be converted and how it can be converted, I productively complicate Bourdieu’s theories of capital with an eye to how they operate as complex modes of discourse that form relationships between characters rather than the impersonal jostling of abstract “fields.” Second, this framework highlights the ways in which nineteenth-century texts anticipate contemporary discussions about the tension between the local community and the global economy. To use Quinn Slobodian’s summary of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century’s narrative of capitalism, “the market is omnivorous, relentlessly transforming land, labor, and money into commodities, until the basis for social life has been destroyed” (16). I contend that Victorian authors work through anxieties about the changing economy and the perceived
atomization of individuals no longer yoked together in traditional relationships by triangulating non-economic forms of value, gender, and community formation. In doing so, authors highlight the possible sites of resistance to structural inequalities, as well as the difficulty and necessity of challenging entrenched modes of relationships.

My argument brings together several different subfields of criticism within Victorian literature, primarily economic criticism and gender studies. I agree with Nancy Folbre that “we need to reject the view that the markets automatically either represent progress or decline, sin or salvation. Their efforts cannot be disembedded from the social institutions that create the environment in which they operate. Markets require not merely the rule of law and regulation of state, but also the economic infrastructure of families and communities” (13). Yet Folbre’s study never quite manifests an investigation into the “economic infrastructure of families and communities” as she considers the link between assumptions about gender and assumptions about self-interest across several centuries. A major concern in the field of economic criticism since the 1980s is the fictionality of economic terms, the seeming scientific authority of numbers, and money as a representational problem, although there is some disagreement among critics about how aware the Victorians were of this fictionality. Mary Poovey, for example, insists that it was “most Britons’ impression that, in its own way, capital was as substantial—as real—as land” (*The Financial System* 3). To the contrary, I argue that the effort authors invested in showing the abstract economy “was as substantial—as real—as land” coupled with the

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7 Victorian studies avid interest in the relationship between literature and the nineteenth-century’s economy has spark the question of whether or not we have entered a period of “Capitalist Criticism” (Rose 489). For examples of the breadth of economic criticism, see the essay collections: *Victorian Investments* edited by Nancy Henry and Cannon Schmitt; *Abstracting Economics* edited by Daniel Bivona and Marlene Trompe; *Economic Women* edited by Lana L. Dalley and Jill Rappoport.
frequency with which this mask slips reveals that for many middle-class Victorians, finance capital was anything but substantial and real. As late as the 1920s, economists were attempting to give investors a sense “of ‘the economy’ as a complex but unified system that operated according to its own internal logic” (Friedman 13). Bringing attention down to the level of the individual, Aeron Hunt in *Personal Business* argues that scholars have failed to attend to the personal and the importance of character in business writing because they have treated the abstract nature of finance as implicitly impersonal. In the transition from economic-man-as-producer to economic-man-as-consumer, Regenia Gagnier suggests that identity becomes “as fluid and exchangeable as other commodities” (63). Hunt and Gagnier both point to the changeability of the individual as a mirror of the changeability of the economic system. However, shuttling between the one and the many elides the question of the community: how did changing individuals in a rapidly changing economic system engage with the slowly changing hierarchies and social systems that shape communities? Community, or the idea of “deep, horizontal comradeship” (B. Anderson 6), appears to be in opposition to the idea of an investment economy because there is no fraternity in the stock market. There is no kinship in competition. Yet studies of the “rise” of nationalism and biopolitics rely on there being some sort of tie between all these atomized individuals, all these self-made *homo economicus*. Community, or at least the ideal of community, provides the link and an explanation for how larger collectives manifest despite the pervasive call to self-interest.

The question of gender acts as a mediating factor in capital conversion because gender ideals and what is (or is not) socially acceptable at a particular time in a particular group of people affects ones’ ability to interact with that group. If a character cannot
perform the correct moves, they will be excluded from the group. What the “correct” moves are relies heavily on class-dependent, socially constructed definitions of what it means to be a man or a woman, or more specifically for the novels in my study, what it means to be an English gentleman and an English middle-class lady. For example, in *Dandies and Desert Saints*, James Eli Adams points to distinctions between mental and physical labor falling along class lines. He argues that “increasingly, middle-class professionals…legitimated their masculinity by identifying it with that of the gentleman” (6) even as the middle-class were excluded from the ranks of the aristocrat and the landed gentry because they worked for a living. This legitimation was required because “manual labor was also represented as the preeminent symbol of manly industry, which created a contradiction between the representation of ‘manliness’ and…any employment that relied upon mental labor rather than physical” (Danahay 7). Physical labor was the domain of the working-class man.8 Women, similarly, were measured against the feminine ideal (but not historical reality) epitomized by Sarah Stickley Ellis in her works *The Wives of England* and *The Daughters of England*, which preached the importance of being the moral center and emotional support for one’s husband and family. The feminine ideal and the masculine ideal were yoked together in the ideology of separate spheres which dictated that the public, the rational, and the civic were masculine and the natural realm of men while the private, the emotional, and the domestic were feminine and the natural realm of women. Recent works such as John Tosh’s *A Man’s Place* have shown how domesticity was an important attribute of masculinity for the Victorians, and works by Nancy Henry have shown how

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8 While Muscular Christianity emphasized this importance of strengthening the physical body, I exclude it from this discussion because even as it argued for physical displays of manliness, it did not argue for the body to be developed through manual labor.
femininity was not incongruous with being an active investor. Where these scholars consider actual lived existence and how it was at odds with the professed ideals of the Victorian age, I consider how authors gender their characters and the ways in which these portrayals do, and do not, affect characters’ ability to navigate multiple fields of capital. Their navigation sometimes accords with the ideal and/or the lived experiences of men and women, and sometimes they do not. I am less concerned with whether or not the novels in my study are “historically accurate” and more concerned with how and why the performance of gender by characters helps or hinders their attempts to convert capital. Attending to when gender assists or challenges conversion shows us the ratio of tradition-to-modern that society will accept at a given time. In some novels, such as *Shirley*, tradition outweighs modernity, but the ending of *The Way We Live Now* suggests modernity holds a larger share in community formation.

To highlight the historical arc, *Values in the Air* is arranged chronologically. I begin with Charlotte Brontë’s 1849 novel *Shirley*, which is the earliest representation of new forms of capital exchange; along with being the earliest, Brontë is the most optimistic and simplest in her solution. “Mooring Points: Manly Leaders, Trade, and Charlotte Brontë’s *Shirley*” argues that Brontë responds to industrialization by repurposing the idea of land stewardship to include factories, turning the once demonized mill owner into an industrial manor lord. Brontë is confident that capitalism can be integrated into the community, and that the triumph of industrialization is beneficial for the Yorkshire region. In *Shirley*, rather than collapse distinctions between classes, Brontë reinforces class distinction and traditional hierarchies with the triumph of the Moore brothers as community and industrial leaders whose strategic marriages consolidate social, cultural, and economic power,
allowing for the local community to thrive and grow. Because of its historical setting, Shirley functions as a kind of a fantasy of what could happen or could have happened.

In my second chapter, “Manufacturing Community in Elizabeth Gaskell’s North and South,” I explore how Gaskell’s contemporaneously set 1854 novel takes up the same forms of exchange as Shirley to argue that capitalism precludes the possibility of modern manufacturing communities. North and South reveals more complexity in the exchange of capital, especially for women, than Shirley does. Gaskell’s depiction of how capital is distributed does not allow for community because the only form of capital that circulates is financial. The north recognizes certain capitals and the south recognizes certain capitals, but these capitals are mutually exclusive to each region. Despite the narrator’s—and even characters’—arguments for a balance between north and south, between new industry/economics and old social/cultural, all other forms of capital are put in the service of industrial capitalism. Gaskell attempts to unite multiple capitals in the figure of female industrial landownership, and in doing so, instigate the flow of non-economic capitals to create a community. However, this move is unable to rectify the divisions of non-economic capital and region, and the novel concludes with a marriage between representatives of the north and the south. The marriage masks the pessimism and unsolved problems of the novel as it consolidates industrial capital and land ownership in the hands of the male hero.

My third chapter, “Abstract Wealth and Communities in The Way We Live Now” centers on Anthony Trollope’s 1875 portrayal of a world in which there are no clear rules of exchange. Rampant investment capitalism makes all forms of exchange hopelessly confused: land doesn’t mean what it used to, the value of any capital is unclear, and the abstract nature of the economy makes it subject to the prevailing winds of gossip. Without
clear rules dictating how older forms of value represented by the country estate interact with new financial systems, the novel risks revealing the deterioration of stable class and gender hierarchies that serve as the foundation for community. Rather than transforming the economic leaders in his novel into investment manor lords the way that I argue Charlotte Brontë and Elizabeth Gaskell create industrial manor lords, Trollope uses his failed investment lords to create a tension between the desirable stability and legitimacy of land and the impossibility of achieving that stability. Despite the apparent pessimism of Trollope’s scathing satire, the interaction between the financial world and society creates new pathways for the circulation of wealth and people that place women as the beneficiaries and offers two models of community: the domestic home and the gentleman’s club.

Finally, “Domesticity and Capital Exchange in Margaret Oliphant’s Hester” argues that the domestic sphere is essential to the function of the public sphere, even as the novel insists that the spheres need not follow traditional gender divisions. Tradition in the form of domesticity must be preserved, but the novel does not name who should perform the preserving. Through the character of Catherine Vernon, Hester (1883) suggests that while women can successfully cultivate financial, social, and even business capital, they can only do so at the expense of their domestic capital. This trade-off damages the individuals involved because the larger community of which they are a part is unable or unwilling to support the exchange of capital. Structural inequalities rooted in the separate spheres ideology collide with anxieties about the abstract economy. The novel’s ending suggests that women’s cultivation of non-domestic capital is ultimately unsustainable within the current social structures of England, yet the novel is ambivalent about leaving banking and
business strictly to men. *Hester* (1883) calls for the reconfiguration of the public and private spheres, and the division of labor between them as necessary for the prosperity of both individuals and the community, but Oliphant is unable to imagine the shape of such a configuration.

In addition to offering a historical progression, the novels in this study offer four different configurations of the flow of economic wealth between men and women. These different configurations suggest that who controls the money is not necessarily the center of a given community. Furthermore, they suggest that the historical progression I trace is a process of time, but not a process of improvement. As the authors of this study experimented with different configurations of non-economic wealth and community, they were experimenting with what this meant for locating the power of financial wealth. *Shirley* offers the earliest possibility: a straightforward transition of financial wealth from women to men, from Shirley to the Moore brothers.

\[
\text{Women} \quad \xrightarrow{\text{£}} \quad \text{Men}
\]

This flow of wealth reflects who holds power within the community, in part because it is heavily traditional and follows land ownership. *North and South*, however, offers a radically different configuration. Gaskell locates financial wealth in the hands of men, briefly transfers it to women, and then returns it again to men.

\[
\text{Men} \quad \xrightarrow{\text{£}} \quad \text{Women} \quad \xrightarrow{\text{£}} \quad \text{Men}
\]

As in Brontë’s novel, who controls the money corresponds with who controls the land. Unlike Brontë, no identifiable community is formed: north and south, workers and owners
remain separate groups loosely connected by the industrial economy. With *The Way We Live Now*, we see the reversal of *Shirley*: financial wealth flows from the men of the novel to the women of the novel.

![Men ➔ £ ➔ Women]

Trollope’s pathways do not necessarily include land ownership and communities do not necessarily include women. Finally, *Hester* opens with control of wealth split between men and women. Oliphant goes on to consolidate wealth in the hands of a female character where it remains for the majority of the novel, before flowing back exclusively to men.

![Women ➔ £ ➔ Women ➔ £ ➔ Men]

By the end of the century and reminiscent of the much earlier *Shirley*, who controls financial wealth in *Hester* enables community formation, but unlike *Shirley*, this figure is separate from the community-at-large rather than being at the center. Ultimately, these models suggest first, the necessity of circulation of economic capital to community formation, even as economic capital on its own is not enough, and second the cyclical nature of these relationships. The same tenets are returned to, modified, and discarded throughout the century, which showcases, among other things, the resiliency of male-controlled economic power. Of all the authors in this study, Trollope alone concludes his novel with women controlling substantial amounts of financial capital. Yet this move almost appears to be accidental as the novel ends before women have the opportunity to stretch their financial wings. Nonetheless, cycling money through women as Gaskell does in *North and South*, or settling fortunes on women as Trollope does in *The Way We Live*
Now is essential to community. Women’s representation and possession of social and cultural capital is increasingly important in this time of economic change, because it also represents tradition and stability. Women’s non-economic capital is more familiar and more humane than bank notes, making women important figures for stabilizing the new economy and social structures. The only community in this study that does not rely on women is Trollope’s gentleman’s club, but this anomaly is less strange when the domesticity and the weightiness of traditional hierarchies that undergird the club are flushed out, as I do in chapter 3.

As the complexity of attempting to graph the gendered flow of financial wealth against who holds power in the community would indicate, the narrative of capitalism I trace is ultimately one of entropy. As capitalism intensifies and economic wealth is portrayed as increasingly more accessible and more powerful, the process of integrating it into small communities through capital conversion becomes murkier. The progression from Brontë’s early attempt to integrate industrial capitalism with traditional forms of value to Oliphant’s ambiguous and paradoxical response reveals increasing confusion about how different domains can relate to each other and what their equivalencies might be, especially as they map onto changing gender roles. As the authors in my study show, such confusion does not preclude the necessity or the desire for other fields of value. The authors of this study agree on very little, but they are unanimous in the insistence that community formation depends upon non-economic forms of capital. Money may create temporary interpersonal alliances (as seen in Gaskell’s North and South), but it is not enough to erect a stable community. Traversing a middle ground between criticism that emphasizes the individual and the recent turn toward biopolitics and the uncountable
masses, my research charts how literature depicts the economy as an immersive system capable of shaping local community even as the economy itself is being shaped by individuals’ actions.
CHAPTER 1:

Mooring Points: Manly Leaders, Trade, and Charlotte Brontë’s Shirley

In 1849, Charlotte Brontë wrote to W.S. Williams that “Labour [work] is the only radical cure for rooted sorrow” (Smith 224). With the publication of Terry Eagleton’s Myths of Power nearly forty years ago, much of the criticism of Shirley has focused on the Luddites and middle-class women, and how the positions of these two groups align. By addressing all three elements Brontë identifies in her letter—labour/work, radical cure, rooted sorrow—I expand the discussion of Shirley to encompass the way Brontë proposes a “radical cure” for the “rooted sorrow” of England’s social issues through the work of industrialization and the figure of the mill owner. Considering Charlotte Brontë’s novel as a recuperation of factories and industrial capitalism diverges from how the “Condition of England” is commonly discussed and offers a dynamic change for how we think about locations of industry in literary studies. Rather than reviling factories and owners, in the vein of Thomas Carlyle, Frances Trollope, Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna, and Charles Dickens, Brontë insists on their ability to save England from starvation and unemployment. Brontë’s recuperation of factories is embodied in her character Robert Moore and the way she aligns him physically with industrialism throughout the novel—his features are

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9 For recent explorations of the Chartists and the Luddites, see work by Ken Hitlner and Albert D. Pionke. Peter J. Capuano discusses the similarity of positions between the middle-class woman and the lack of labor for their hands with the unemployed laborers whose hands are also idle. Eric G. Lorentzen explores the links between middle class women and laborers through Brontë’s portrayal of reading and education. Anna Silver and Beth Torgerson both link the women of the novel to its unemployed workers through themes of hunger and starvation. One of the foundational works linking the two is, of course, Sally Shuttleworth’s Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology.

10 The “rooted sorrow” of Brontë’s letter refers to the death of her sister Emily Brontë in December 1848. The “labour” Brontë finds to be a “cure” is the authorship of Shirley. For a larger discussion of how Shirley fits into Charlotte Brontë’s oeuvre and biography, see Janet Gezari’s introduction to the Oxford edition of Shirley.
“chiseled” (24) like the stone of his mill, his physical “hardness” (44) is compared to the structure of his mill, and he rules Caroline’s exercise book for her with a mechanical regularity that she and others are incapable of, echoing the machines in his mill (62, 66). By the closing of the novel: Moore’s machines, his mill, and his person undergo near-fatal attacks but manage to survive and thrive, strengthening the local and national community and economy. Through the survival and success of Moore and his mill, *Shirley* advocates for a specifically English locale as a mooring point from which England’s economic leaders, her trade, and her people can continue forward into prominence.

Brontë repurposes land away from a site of pastoral nostalgia to serve a stabilizing function for both England's men and the industrial economy: Robert Moore says, “I can line yonder barren Hollow with lines of cottages, and rows of cottage-gardens…I will get an act for enclosing Nunnely Common, and parceling it out into farms” (540). Caroline voices resistance to repurposing the land: “And root up the copse?...Horrible! You will change our blue hill-country air into the Stilbro’ smoke atmosphere.” Moore, however, argues for the economic strategy behind such a move, telling Caroline that “the houseless, the starving, the unemployed shall come to Hollow’s-mill from far and near.” Enclosure would allow the land to be used for cottages for laborers and other industrial endeavors rather than to continue apparently idle. “The mill,” Robert Moore goes on, “shall find salaries for a master and mistress, and the squire or the Clothier shall give a treat once a quarter.” (emphasis added) aligning the idea of the landed gentry with that of industry and the wealth industry creates—enough to “find salaries” so that the owners can “treat” the

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11 Pauline Nestor in her book *Female Friendships and Communities: Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell* shows how *Shirley* is organized around polarized masculine (mill/industry/head) and feminine (home/nature/heart) worlds, which critics have continued to be guided by in subsequent decades.
working class, blending two previously distinct figures and legitimizing the mill owner in the process. In response, Caroline “mutely offered a kiss.” Pastoral resistance gives way to the vision of repurposed land. Caroline and her objections are silenced—albeit not answered—and, according to the narrator, Robert Moore’s “prophecies were, partially, at least, fulfilled” (541). While the “partially, at least” may be read as a partial-failure, this is more accurately read as foreshadowing the turmoil of the 1840s that is yet to come as the novel closes. “[P]artially, at least” is one point of connection between the novel’s setting (1811-1812) and the time when it was written (1848) and published (1849), connecting the two periods through the rhythms of economic expansion and recession inherent in capitalist systems. These rhythms, so different from the natural cycles of seasons, of planting and harvesting, highlight the tension between the preindustrial use of land which Caroline defends and land in industrial societies. The new, non-pastoral use of the land and the relationship between land and local leaders in Shirley centers on how Moore is repeatedly conflated with the mill throughout the novel, primarily through the Luddite attacks that escalate from the breaking of frames to an assassination attempt. The mill serves as a point around which Moore can root his masculinity and gender performance—“The machinery of all my [Moore’s] nature; the whole enginery of this human mill; the boiler, which I take to be the heart, is fit to burst” (444). Ultimately, even as the novel emphasizes tensions between the agricultural and the industrial, between Shirley’s Eve myth and Moore’s enclosure, it glosses over them, representing Moore’s rootedness as unproblematic and a smooth transition from old to new.

Descriptions of Moore’s family history repeatedly emphasize the themes of heredity and soil, stressing the importance of land and material structures to Moore’s new
brand of community leadership and to Brontë’s recuperation of the industrialist. “Trade,” we are told, “was Mr. Moore’s hereditary calling” (25), but, the narrator insists, “Mr. Moore, indeed, was but half a Briton, and scarcely that. He came of foreign ancestry on the mother’s side, and was himself born, and partly reared, on a foreign soil” (emphasis added).\textsuperscript{12} Moore’s pedigree, while not purely English, is purely commercial.\textsuperscript{13} Despite the pedigree, Moore’s family history is flawed. The previous generation bankrupted the Gérards and the Moores: “disastrous speculations had loosened by degrees the foundations of their credit. The house had stood on a tottering base for a dozen years; and at last, in the shock of the French Revolution, it had rushed down a total ruin.” Because major events, such as the French Revolution, impact global trade and because of the common belief that stocks and investments “follow the law of gravity—‘what goes up must come down’—as well as the psychological equivalent of that law, which dictates that those who have profited…must eventually see their winnings disappear” (Jaffe 42), Shirley implies that economic ventures without material structure eventually result in “total ruin.” Because the “foundations of their credit” were abstract, the Gérards’ ventures were more susceptible to shifting political and economic currents. Repeated attempts by financiers to legitimate investments and trading failed; no formulation of the market or code of conduct was “enough to bestow an effect of solidity” (Jaffe 49) on these abstract ventures and as Mary Poovey has extensively documented, suspicion of money and the slippage between

\textsuperscript{12} Prior to the 1981 British Nationality Act, the first principle of British subjecthood was \textit{ius solis}, literally the “law of the soil,” meaning that a person’s place of birth is what matters in determining citizenship. Ian Baucom explores this concept and its relation to colonialism in \textit{Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity}. Within my work, soil is important because of its ability to bestow not just national identity, but also gender identity—the masculinizing effects of land ownership.

\textsuperscript{13} For the concept of business acumen as an inheritable character trait, see Aeron Hunt, \textit{Personal Business: Character and Commerce in Victorian Literature and Culture}, specifically the introduction.
speculators/speculation and panic/mania was present in print media throughout the
nineteenth century. The lack of solidity, of firm foundation is contrary to the vision
Moore prophesizes for Hollow’s-mill.

The differences between Moore’s vision and his family’s history are evident from
the beginning of the novel, and these differences emphasize the importance of material
connections to England to help counter the risks of speculation and to stabilize the
economy. Moore’s first appearance is in the counting house of his mill waiting for new
machinery that does not arrive—Luddites intercepted and destroyed the frames. The
counting house and the Luddite attacks locate Moore and his economic ventures in a
particular English landscape unlike the detached, trans-national speculations of his Gèrard
heritage; it is the particularity of this rooting that ultimately helps Moore succeed. In his
focus on rebuilding his family’s fortunes, Moore is dismissive of the Luddites and their
demands on him. The narrator suspects Moore’s dismissiveness is evidence of “a hybrid’s
feeling on many points,” causing Moore to be “unapt to attach himself to parties, to sects,
even to climes and customs” (25)—particularly the Yorkshire region and its people. The
Moore siblings’ “hybridity” and foreign upbringing evokes not only their mother’s
ancestry, but their father’s abandonment of England to become “resident in Antwerp” (25)

14 See Mary Poovey’s Genres of the Credit Economy for an in-depth study about the development of
economics as a discipline and her collection of primary sources in The Financial System in Victorian Britain.
More recently, Marlene Tromp and Daniel Bivona Abstracting Economics considers the idea of an abstract,
immaterial economy from a variety of angles. Finally, Peter Logan in Nerves and Narratives considers
contemporary Victorian accounts of the stock market’s negative effects on men and the nation.
15 While Moore suffers financial duress throughout the novel, this is because of a lack of ready capital, the
result of being forced by the bankruptcy to start with nothing. Through conversations between Moore and
Shirley, it is made clear that his challenge is surviving until the trade embargo is lifted, at which point his
trade will (and does) flourish. Unlike his speculating predecessors, Moore has capital invested in the mill
which he could access, but while it would save him from bankruptcy, it would not save his work.
16 Albert D. Pionke and Janet Gezari both point to how this dismissal is not unique to Moore: even the narrator
dismisses the demands of the Luddites as irrational and instead leaves “even the most sympathetic reader to
surmise that hunger is to blame” (Pionke 91).
which preceded the financial failure of the firm. Carl Plasa asserts that while Moore is “economically superior…[his mixed heritage] also makes him unpatriotic” (109) and lower in the social hierarchy than even the poorest of his native-born employees. Yet, by the end of *Shirley*, we see how Moore’s attempts to redeem his heritage result in him abandoning “foreign soil” for solidly English roots and this causes his hybridity to fade from view—even his “outlandish” accent which the narrator and characters like Mr. Helstone, Mr. Yorke, and Caroline comment on (24, 44, 106, 172) ceases to be mentioned. Rather than abandon England and the Yorkshire region like his father did, Robert Moore roots himself in the area, investing his money in the local mill and marrying a local girl; he succeeds where his father failed. In addition, Brontë’s emphasis on the inheritance of the Moore family and blood ties between the brothers links industrialism to the landed estate and the perceived stability of the landed gentry.

To rebuild the house though, Moore first needs to stabilize the family’s credit, to settle a firm foundation previously weakened by “disastrous speculations.” To stabilize the credit, he devotes his wealth entirely to his mill and the production of cloth, and, as critics since Terry Eagleton have pointed out, takes on a paternalist role towards his workers. In doing so, Moore entrenches himself in the English countryside: he takes an English “cloth-mill in an out-of-the-way nook of an out-of-the-way district… a cottage adjoining it for his residence, and to add to his possessions, a pasture for his horse, and space for his cloth-tenters, a few acres of the steep, rugged land that lined the Hollow through which his mill-stream brawled” (26). From this particular moment in time and

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space, he begins “to rebuild the fallen house of Gérard and Moore on a scale at least equal to its former greatness” (25). Moore’s success is clear by the end of the novel when the narrator sees “the manufacturer’s day-dreams embodied in substantial stone and brick and ashes...there I saw a mighty mill, and a chimney, ambitious as the tower of Babel” (541). In the same way the physical land is materially invested in the “substantial stone” of the mill, enabling its rebirth, material ties to the region enable the rebirth of the Moore family. The language of the final scene of the mill and the Hollow hearkens back to the language of the houses of Gérard and Moore at the opening of the novel. The legacy of Robert Moore has come full circle: the old has fallen and a new foundation of credit, embodied in the stone buildings, cottages, and highway of the transformed Hollow, has been laid. “What would you think if, one day—perhaps ere another ten years elapse—Louis and I divide Briarfield parish betwixt us...certain of power and property?” (539) Robert asks Caroline, underscoring the relationship between the Moore family, Robert’s industrial endeavors, and the land.

The certainty “of power and property” that Robert Moore achieves at the close of the novel is in the form of familial claim to the mill and its land. For much of the novel, Moore is not the legal owner of the mill, despite referring to it repeatedly as “my mill” (Brontë 25, 540). Ken Hiltner emphasizes that “[a]ll the capital, the mill itself, is owned by Shirley” and that if there is a capitalist villain in the novel, it’s the eponymous heroine rather than Moore (153). The “synergy” (154) Hiltner notes existing between the land owner Shirley and her tenant Robert Moore culminates in Shirley’s marriage to his brother, Louis. In Judith Wilt’s study of the dual courtship plot, she discusses how Shirley’s marriage to Louis enables Robert to “[reach] through the material body of his brother to
the Property” (3). Through marriage and the legal doctrine of coverture, Shirley’s property becomes the property of the Moore family. Robert, as Louis’s brother, gains a blood connection, a familial claim to the property he has been improving and investing in throughout the novel. The question of ownership matters because of land’s significance to manly identity and leadership within the larger community. Throughout the novel, Shirley is portrayed as having a masculine streak. She calls herself “Captain Keeldar” (173) and “Esquire”: “I am an esquire: Shirley Keeldar, Esquire, ought to be my style and title. They gave me a man’s name; I hold a man’s position: it is enough to inspire me with a touch of manhood” (172). However, our last glimpse of Shirley at the close of the novel is free of any “touch of manhood”: “very bonnie and grand [Mrs. Louis and Mrs. Robert] looked; but Mrs. Louis was the grandest, she always wore such handsome dresses…there is no such ladies now-a-days” (541). Eric Lorentzen and Peter Capuano both attend to the line “there is no such ladies now-a-days” in their arguments about the alignment of women and laborers, pointing to it as evidence of the establishment of bourgeois femininity: there are “no such ladies” anymore because Shirley and Caroline’s public activity in the novel is incompatible with the domestic ideology that dominates the mid-nineteenth century. I agree that this line indicates a shift in gender roles, but in addition to the establishment of bourgeois femininity, it indicates a transference of Shirley’s masculine traits.

When the ownership of the land and the mill passes from Shirley’s direct control because of marriage, her status as “Esquire” and “Captain” and the “touch of manhood” that land ownership bestows also passes from her to the Moore brothers. In Dandies and Desert Saints, James Eli Adams points to distinctions the Victorians made between mental and physical labor that fell along class lines, a distinction upheld by Victorian masculinity
scholars. However, such a distinction does not hold for the mill owner, which we see more explicitly in Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South* when first Margaret and later her brother incorrectly conflate manufacturers with tradespeople like bakers and butchers. Industry and the mill itself are associated with physical labor, and while Robert may not have been performing physical labor in the same way that his employees were, he “haunted his mill, his mill-yard, his dye-house, and his warehouse,” (53) taking a hands-on role in production. Adams argues that the distinction between mental and physical labor occurs because “middle-class professionals (including male writers) legitimated their masculinity by identifying it with that of the gentleman” (6). This legitimation was required because “manual labor was also represented as the preeminent symbol of manly industry” (Danahay 7). Unsure of how to gender a figure who falls between categories, the mill owner’s masculinity and thus his relationship to others in the community is in question because of his liminal status. Through Robert Moore’s and his brother’s association with, and repurposing of, the land, they are able to stabilize both their masculinity and the economy of the local area. While not the focus of this article, it’s important to note that like his brother, Louis Moore is able to legitimize his masculinity through this alliance and land ownership. In his words, Louis Moore has “flung off the tutor” to stand before Shirley a “gentleman” (520). The bestowal of the land on the Moore brothers through Louis’s marriage to Shirley familially links Robert Moore to his mill and is the culmination of what Brontë symbolically developed throughout the novel.

18 The term manufacture means literally “to make by hand.” Peter Capuano explores the irony of this term coming to denote the mechanical and industrial in *Changing Hands: Industry, Evolution, and the Reconfiguration of the Victorian Body*. 
Furthermore, in a novel as “passionately devoted to its place as Shirley” (Boumelha 29), the dual courtship plot with its resulting naturalization of the Moore brothers, and what Penny Boumelha calls “the domestication of [their] desire,” is a necessary aspect of the financial recovery of the House of Moore. The business capital of Robert Moore is united with the social capital of Caroline Helstone; the social and financial capital of Shirley Keeldar is accessible to Robert Moore through his brother because of Louis Moore’s marriage to Shirley. Both marriages enable the Moore brothers to enter into the local society as accepted leaders rather than remaining as outsiders. In the frequently studied chapter “Coriolanus,” Robert Moore and Caroline read Shakespeare’s play of the same name and debate the titular character’s actions. Caroline argues that “it would be better for you [Moore] to be loved by your workpeople than to be hated by them” (80) because love would inspire loyalty and acceptance of Moore as a manly leader. Caroline’s desire for Robert Moore to be loved foreshadows the change that takes place by the end of the novel with her assistance. The acceptance of the Moore brothers is important because, as the events of the novel show, economic prowess alone does not endear a man to the local community: to lead effectively, a man needs to be perceived as invested in the community. Caroline and Shirley’s status within the Yorkshire region—“Everybody admires his future wife…she will one day see him as universally beloved as even she could wish: he will also be universally esteemed, considered, consulted, depended on” (Brontë 539-540)—brings their new husbands into the fold of the community. The economic plot that is supported by and intertwined with the courtship plots in the novel maps the arc of the Moore brothers’ fortunes, their movement from fallen house to house rebuilt, from old failure to new ambition.
Part of this movement from fallen house to house rebuilt is the way Robert Moore and his mill are portrayed. Through physical description, Brontë allies her industrial hero to his industry’s technology. Robert Moore is “rather a strange-looking man…thin, dark, sallow; very foreign in aspect” who is yet possessed of “symmetry, clearness, regularity” (Brontë 24) of feature. Like Moore, the frames would be “foreign in aspect” to the laborers of Yorkshire, yet regular, symmetrical, and clear in their design. Brontë links the violence perpetrated against the frames—they are “shivered to smash on Stilbro’ Moor” (29)—and the violence that the frames are capable of perpetrating in the form of factory accidents both to the manliness of her hero, and to the violence perpetrated against him. Moore, like the mechanized frames which can both break the Luddites and be broken by the Luddites, can be the perpetrator and victim of violence. Violence and forms of aggression must be “moderated in a consistent flow of energy harnessed for productive purposes” (Sussman 34) according to the prevailing norms of nineteenth century manhood. Robert Moore works steadily despite violence and intimidation, and he calmly decries the threat of death, of being “shivered to smash.” Like the frames, Moore will “make [his] cloth as [he] please[s], and according to the best lights [he has]” (117), harnessing his energy “for productive purposes.” While Judith E. Pike argues that the violence of Robert Moore’s defense of his mill which leaves one man dead and six more wounded “unmans him” (275), I disagree. In the attack on the mill, Brontë makes it clear that Moore “has been forbearing; no one can accuse him of rashness” (290) and later, in his pursuit of justice, his actions are balanced: “Moore restrains [the magistrates] with admirable prudence” (307). Moore is not

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19 See introductions to Jamie L. Bronstein’s Caught in the Machinery and Peter Capuano’s Changing Hands for discussions of factory accidents and the potential for violence and bodily harm from machines in mills and factories.
the one perpetrating or perpetuating the violence, but instead works steadily to avoid escalation which is emblematic of the restrained masculinity prized throughout the nineteenth century.20

Moore’s regularity, the balanced nature of his actions, is important because such traits help to abate the anxieties surrounding the economy: if not only the machines, but the men in charge are regular, balanced, and rooted in England, then England’s economy can be regular, balanced, and rooted in England, effectively “curing” England of her social turmoil. *Shirley* encourages reading Robert Moore as positively mechanized because of how he is characterized and because the attacks move from the machines to the mill to the manufacturer. Contrasted with Moore and his machines are the Luddites. Brontë depicts the luddites as anything but regular, instead being prone to violent outbursts. Moore predicts their violence when he insists “[t]he utmost you can do…is to burn down my mill, destroy its contents, and shoot me” (116). While Moore acknowledges that they could succeed at destroying him, they ultimately would be unable to destroy the progress of industry. His warning is akin to Elizabeth Gaskell’s mill owner John Thornton’s observation that some Masters and men must always fall to the march of competition and progress and participate in the race no more (Gaskell 152). Carl Plasa argues that “*Shirley* is a fiercely regional text…But the novel’s regionalism is interwoven with more worldly perspectives” (121). The importance of the regional interweaving with the global for Plasa is that it makes readers aware of Brontë’s engagement with the Irish famine and the “paradoxical circularity of migration in *Shirley*” (123). In the same way, the regional and worldly perspectives make readers aware of, not only the migration of people, but the

20 See *Dandies and Desert Saints* by James Eli Adams, *Gender at work in Victorian Culture* by Martin A. Danahay, and *A Man’s Place* by John Tosh.

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potential migration of wealth. Just as the characters Plasa describes who leave the region and never return, the destruction of a source of wealth could cause wealth to leave the region and never return. Yes, a “better gig-mill would rise,” rebuilt by another “more enterprising owner” (116)—underscoring the importance of both the land and the owner for economic success in the region—but a “better gig-mill” could rise in a separate region, or because the mill, while it is being rebuilt would not be producing and would be unable to participate in trade, the Yorkshire region would be left to flounder as the global economy sped onward. Implied in the vision of Moore’s death and the destruction of the mill is that such violent actions almost certainly will cripple the area. The Luddite characters do not heed Moore’s words and press forward with their attacks on Moore and his mill.

The sequence of the attacks reveals that the Luddites recognize that Moore is his mill; the nearly interchangeable descriptions between the mill and Robert Moore conflate the owner with the property, foreshadowing the ownership change that comes by the end of the novel. The sequence of violence is relevant because of how it affects time in the novel. Time’s function in relation to the attacks in the novel is important for two reasons. First, the placement of the attacks in the narrative gives the effect of compressed time. The compression of time mimics the increasing rhythm of capitalism, by which I mean the temporally recurring patterns such as the cycles of economic growth and recession, patterns of production and destruction, and the acceleration of time through industrial-technological innovations that are associated with modernity under capitalism. The quickening rhythm of capitalism underscores the necessity of fusion between man and mill to keep pace. The necessity of man and mill’s fusion as a response to economic instability is that as the pace of trade increases, men’s ties to the economy must become closer to remain competitive
and keep English mills running and English workers busy. By removing any separation between the man and his mill, the man’s activity becomes the mill’s activity. The metonymic relationship between Robert Moore and the mill will help the Yorkshire region and England as a nation remain competitive within the rapidly expanding global market. Second, the sequence maps the conflation between Moore and his machines and the mill, linking the three ever more tightly as the novel continues. The attack on Moore’s new frames opens the novel. Chapter VIII of Volume II—almost exactly halfway through the novel—depicts Moore’s mill under attack and in Chapter VII of Volume III the person of Robert Moore is attacked. If we tally the amount of diegetic time between each attack, roughly the same length of time elapses for the characters: several months separate each scene. However, the attacks fall at the beginning, halfway through the novel, and three-quarters of the way through the novel; the narrator elides more and more narrative time as the novel continues.²¹ Time’s elision offers formal support to Brontë’s thematic linking of Robert Moore and his mill: as time in Shirley becomes compressed, man and mill become fused, making it clear that there must be physical ties between England’s economic leaders and England’s industry. Unlike the abstract speculations that Audrey Jaffe argues investors were cautioned not to identify with (44), the factory and the land on which it sits require close ties and identification with the owner. Contrary to the “tottering” speculations of the merchant house of the Gérards, the land is a stabilizing feature upon which Moore builds a solid foundation of industrial investment and production. The conflation of Robert Moore with his mill enables the Moore family to “rise” again, which portrays this stabilization and conflation as necessary for the economic recovery of the region. For England to achieve

²¹ My use of “diegetic time” and “narrative time” follows Gérard Genette’s framework in Narrative Discourse: An Essay on Method.
economic dominance and community security once again, her leading men must, to borrow a phrase from Ken Hiltner, be “not a person within a factory, but…a complete factory within a person” (150), a sentiment that echoes Moore’s own description of himself as a “human mill” (444).

The compression of time within Shirley is further evocative of the way communities that come under capitalism experience a speeding up of time, of the way that production is sped up because of technological innovations like the frames. Brontë writing in the 1840s—roughly thirty years after the novel’s setting—would be able to trace in the economic changes the speeding up of production that Moore’s beloved frames promise in the first chapters. Yet a love of technological advancement like Moore’s love for his frames is often considered an author’s shorthand for indicating a character’s limitations; a love of machinery and the precision that accompanies the mechanical is often a negative trait indicative of a character flaw à la Gradgrind and Bounderby in Dickens’s Hard Times. Technophilia is a portion of a character’s personality that ultimately needs to be adjusted, but Brontë challenges this notion. “Mr. Moore loved his machinery,” (29) we are told. “He had risked the last of his capital on the purchase of these frames and shears which to-night had been expected” (29). Moore’s love of his frames is not a character flaw so much as one of the early examples of intimacy between Moore and his machines/mill. As Tamara Ketabgian insists “this image of deadening machines and tragically alienated workers represents only one register within a complex symbolic field” (2); we must begin to

22 Hiltner applies this description to the different types of clothiers who would have lived in Yorkshire during the historical period in which the novel is set rather than to Robert Moore, but the description is apt for the vision Brontë sets forth in Shirley.
23 In addition to her extensive historical research that Hiltner and others note, Brontë also had a personal connection to the technological advancement of the region through her father Patrick Brontë who was personally involved with the Luddite riots and their aftermath.
consider how texts show productive relationships between people and machines and *Shirley* is a deeply rich text for exploring positive representations of alliances between people and machines. This is not to say that Robert Moore does not require emotional growth—his naturalization over the course of the novel, particularly through his marriage to Caroline, indicates the importance of the human, affective element in industrialization—nor is it to imply that the loss of the natural world is not mourned. In the scene when Shirley tells Moore “my nurse used to tell me tales of fairies being seen in that Hollow. That was before my father built the mill” (199) which scholars such as John Condon Murray and Deborah Denenholz Morse cite as a lament for the natural world, we learn that Moore, while he cannot engage with the absent fairies, communes with Michael Hartly, “that mad Calvinist and Jacobin weaver.” The substitution of Hartly for a fairy encounter suggests that while enchantment may be gone, Moore’s relationship with his machines and the destruction of the pastoral makes possible the development of affective industrial ties between Moore and the man who later shoots him: industrial community trumps nature. Because Hartly still shoots Moore, there are clear limitations on the communion between man and man in a fairy-less, industrialized landscape. In another act of paternalism and restraint, Moore does not pursue Hartly legally for the assassination attempt. Upon Hartly’s death, Moore “gave his wretched widow a guinea to bury him” (532). Rather than preclude affective ties, then, Moore’s mechanization and the disappearance of the fairies helps to situate Moore within the Yorkshire community, and yet the replacement of fairies by Hartly glosses over of the loss of the natural world. Like Caroline’s concern for the copse later in the novel, Shirley’s reminder of what industrialization costs is buried as Moore refocuses the conversation towards his experiences and vision, which are what ultimately returns the
region to economic prosperity and enables community growth. Thus, intimacy between the mechanical and the organic is not only, as Ketabgian argues, part of understanding “industrialism as an emphatically human project” (168) but part of Brontë’s stabilization of community hierarchy through physical ties between men and the economy of the particular region in which they live.

The second attack, which is on Hollow’s-mill, emphasizes the conflation of man and mill. Moore, we are told, “had expected the attack for days” and had prepared for it: “He had fortified and garrisoned his mill…he stood to defense with unflinching firmness” (291). As Terry Eagleton and others have observed, the scene of the attack on the mill is far removed from the viewpoint of Robert Moore: the scene is narrated from the perspective of Caroline and Shirley, who are atop a hill looking down upon the mill and the men involved. Shirley draws several parallels between Robert Moore and his mill. She compares his lack of sentimentality and his “cold man-of-business vein” with the fortification of the mill, with the strength of the stones and gates: the mill “in itself was a strong building: he was a cool, brave man” (291). In fact, Moore does not physically appear at all during the attack. Instead, the mill is personified. When “the hitherto inert and passive mill woke” (290), in Shirley’s words “Moore speaks at last!” (290), and Moore’s actual voice follows shortly. In his voice, Shirley and Caroline hear “his soul…now warm with conflict” (290) as “fire flashed from [the] empty window-frames” (290) of the mill. The descriptions of the man and the mill are interchangeable throughout the episode: for example, the novel could read “Fire flashed from” his soul and the empty window-frames were “warm with conflict” without the tone of the scene changing. After the attack the mill is largely unharmed; the yard was “thickly bestrewn with stones and brickbats…glittering
fragments of shattered windows” (292). Similarly, when Moore finally appears, he is bleeding, but “his hurt is really a mere graze” (293). Moore and his mill are both “mere[ly] grazed” in this attack, the evidence visible only on the earth of the mill yard and the surface of Moore’s brow. The failure of the attack on the mill structure leads the Luddites to target the body of Moore, the human mill. As with the attack on Hollow’s-mill, the reader is removed from the immediate situation of the assassination attempt. The power of this, similar to the mill attack, is that Brontë is able to describe the scene and the effect of it while drawing parallels between Moore and his mill. Like the broken windows and the debris strewn ground of the mill yard, Moore needs repairs. However, Brontë “reminds her reader of his potential physical power as Mrs. Horsfall must care for this man ‘six feet’ with ‘his manly thews and sinews’” (Pike 274). Even when injured, when “pallid, lifeless, helpless” (Brontë 470), Moore remains solid; he heals and is ultimately able to produce, becoming an active member of the community, and bolstering the local—and by extension, the national—economy. To be successful, England requires economic leaders whose activity is seamlessly integrated with their means of production, matching the rapid rate of capitalism. When Moore heals, the trade embargo is lifted, his mill begins to produce again, and the novel ends with his vision for the Hollow and its mill coming to pass, midwifed by his and his brother’s marriage. The attacks and the way they further concretize the connection between Moore and his mill is significant for the way it further emphasizes the importance of materiality.

What I am suggesting with this close study of one character within one novel by one author is the need to reconsider how masculine ideals, trade, and national identities are sometimes conflated by authors revealing not only well-explored anxieties of the era, but
possible solutions—however naïve or experienced, symbolic or realistic—to these anxieties. The repurposing of the land away from the pastoral—“the copse shall be firewood ere five years elapse…and my mill, Caroline—my mill shall fill its present yard” (540)—is an attempt to stabilize the industrial economy and the local community, especially in terms of class hierarchy. In her character Robert Moore, Brontë portrays a manly leader who is rooted in a particular Yorkshire locale, and who, by the end of the novel, is able to help the region recover from unemployment and threats of starvation. Moore’s transition from maligned foreigner to local leader occurs in part because of his marriage to Caroline Helstone who, in addition to being the voice of the pastoral, also embodies the importance of social capital and community ties. Caroline and Shirley, albeit in different ways, usher in the prosperity visible at the end of the novel because their unions with the Moore brothers legitimize the Moores both professionally and personally, enabling them to succeed in their endeavors and for the region to succeed economically. Shirley does not attempt to solve the workers’ problems, but rather thinks about how industry and mill owners can thrive. The mill at the center of the novel becomes the mooring point from which the hero of the novel, and along with him England's economy, can move outwards into dominance, changing the very landscape of global trade in the way Moore changes the very landscape of the Hollow.

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In Shirley, the possibility of female ownership of industry and land is closed off by the end of the novel and the power instead shifts to the industrial hero, a move echoed by North and South, which is the focus of the next chapter. By shifting the property and non-economic capitals from the heroines of Shirley to the heroes, Brontë arguably turns the
women into preservers of tradition—it is the men who develop the new relationships with land and property—and “If women somehow naturally or intuitively preserved tradition, men could be actively modern without experiencing vertiginous rootlessness” (A. Anderson 45). Brontë makes her men “actively modern” through her portrayal of Robert Moore’s relationship with his mill and machinery. We see Moore’s mechanical frames and shears inseparable from the mill: even when they are intercepted and destroyed by Luddites, his frames end ultimately arrive at the mill. Whether Moore ordered additional frames or repaired the broken ones, Moore’s machines are united with the mill. The mill is inseparable from the land on which it stands; even its name, “Hollow’s-mill,” links the mill with the immediate region because it is situated in a hollow surrounded by hills from which Shirley and Caroline watch the Luddite attack on the mill; the technological and industrial mill is in the heart of the hills, in the heart of the region. Through the frames to the mill to the land, Moore is rooted within the English landscape. Like his mill, Moore’s name resonates with the landscape surrounding his mill: Stilbro’ Moor. In advocating for England’s need to have economic leaders rooted in their local regions, Brontë reframes the conversation about industrialism in England away from the horrors of it showcased in novels like Frances Trollope’s Life and Adventures of Michael Armstrong, the Factory Boy (1840)—a novel Brontë explicitly calls out in Shirley (52)—as well as the popular novel Helen Fleetwood (1841) by Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna. Instead, Brontë positively aligns the power of (mechanical) industry—something Tamara Ketabgian insists enraptured and alarmed the Victorians—with the power of industriousness, of the self-made man.

The debates about industrialism and the “factory question” that were raging during the second quarter of the nineteenth century were more than battles over legislation and the soul of the working class.\(^{25}\) These debates touched on increasing anxiety about the relationship between new modes of production, new economic systems, and traditional forms of value such as land. What Peter Brooks called the “generally anti-industrial and antitechnological” (45) attitude of the Victorians has been extensively documented,\(^ {26}\) but recently, scholars such as Joseph Bizup and Tamara Ketabgian have begun to challenge what Ketabgian terms “the pastoral bias” (10) of criticism of British literature, showing how the Victorians were—in many ways—technophilic. I would like to extend Ketabgian’s challenge to the anti-industrial to include not just the factories and machines of industrialization, but also the manufacturers who owned the factories and machines she seeks to redeem. Contrary to Carlyle’s criticism of the “Captains of Industry,” Charlotte Brontë in *Shirley* sees the potential for heroic material in the industrial leaders of the North. Brontë’s depiction of industrialists in their novels as members of an emergent class attune to the rhythms of (increasingly) urban populations positions industrialists as good economic powers and leaders within their communities anticipates Elizabeth Gaskell’s exploration of industrialization and capital conversion in *North and South*.\(^ {27}\) In both writers’ novels, their industrial heroes come to embody some of the paternal ideals, including restraint, of earlier-century heroes, but those ideals are augmented by their

\(^{25}\) See Beth Fawkes Tobin’s *Superintending the Poor* for an in-depth discussion of whose right and duty it was to engage in charity work and offer relief to the poor. For a discussion of the factory question and leadership, see Joseph Bizup’s *Manufacturing Culture*. While neither author explicitly addresses the other’s debates, they are related issues embodied in the figure of the manufacturer, as I will show.

\(^{26}\) See work by Elaine Freedgood, Joseph Bizup, Tamara Ketabgian, and Susan Zlotnick.

\(^{27}\) While Bronte, unlike Gaskell, was not a city resident, her novel *Shirley* depicts the beginning of urbanization with the way the Hollow is transformed by the end of the novel from verdant pasture land to paved roads, houses, and industrial spaces like the new mill.
association with industrialization and the foregrounding of their labor and economic roles. However, even as Brontë imagines a symbolic solution to help stabilize the economy, her very solution represents the increasing instability of class structures and relations. Gaskell’s later novel takes up this instability as she rebuts Brontë’s portrayal of the possibility of community.

\[28\] Concerns about class relations, in particular, radical working-class behavior, and their economic effects added to the on-going anxiety surrounding revolution. Depictions of stable class relations were used to combat these concerns and anxiety; for example, the report of “general civility and perfect good humour” (“On Strike”) of the working classes even in the midst of the Preston Strike paints class conflict as a collegial disagreement between classes rather than as radical behavior in which the working classes are attempting to cross or subvert class lines and claim ownership of property.
CHAPTER 2:

Manufacturing Community in Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South*

The schematizing title of Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South* (1855) dictates a binary that the novel does not, in fact, uphold. In the same way that it has become a truism that Gaskell wrote *North and South* “to redress the perceived imbalances of *Mary Barton*” (Surridge 333), it has become a bit of an axiom to argue that in *North and South*, “Gaskell’s intention was to investigate and problematize, not entrench, regional typologies” (Hammond 395). Despite this, the ways she uses the circulation and flow of capital between regions to problematize her schematic requires more scrutiny because of what it can tell us about ideas of industrial capitalism and community formation at mid-century. The different fields of capital primarily present in *North and South* are cultural, economic (financial and business), social, and domestic capital. Of the myriad of capitals present, all of them are geographically restricted except for economic capital, as I will show in more detail during the first section of this chapter. The geographic restrictions of capital support traditionally locating land and culture in the south while relegating capitalism to the north. However, the apparent rigidity is no more than a layer of ice covering a river: capital is flowing. Money moves between the north and the south, involving both regions’ inhabitants in the capitalist system. Thus, economic capital, while it is located ideologically in the north, circulates between the two regions.

*North and South*, then, portrays a series of small, atomized communities connected by economic capital. The communities form because of location-specific capital, but these

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29 It is worth noting that Gaskell wanted to call her novel *Margaret Hale* and the schematizing title *North and South* was chosen by Charles Dickens (Hammond 404).
capitals do not circulate beyond their individual groups within the novel. Thornton’s Latin lessons do not earn him southern cultural capital, nor does Margaret’s domestic capital and philanthropy earn her a place in the north. The northern masters, the northern proletariat, and the southern gentility remain separate groups with economic relations and periodic interpersonal interactions. Despite the web of economic ties connecting these individual communities, they remain emphatically separate, with different systems of value, allowing for the fantasy of a quarantined capitalist system. Pierre Bourdieu argues that “the appearance of reality which satisfies the need to know is in fact achieved by that semblance of reality which allows the reader to ignore the real state of things, to refuse to see things as they really are” (The Field 158). Gaskell’s novel appears to support Bourdieu’s assessment because the portrayal of “things as they really are” is buried. Gaskell glosses over how the separate communities are connected by money, allowing her readers the illusion of a capitalist system relegated to the north and supporting the erection of a stable, industrial manor: contemporary reviews of North and South liked “the firm friendship …[between north and south, and] the appreciation that arises out of better knowledge” (“Review” 338). Nonetheless the novel is insistent that economic capital is not enough to foster a larger community beyond the “firm friendship” of a few individuals. Economic capital when not supported by other capitals is enough, however, to erode belief in the stability of traditional relationships and configurations of capital in which Charlotte Brontë’s Shirley took refuge. The stasis of non-economic capital precludes the possibility of capital conversion and, with it, the possibility of less-insulated, less-atomized communities that include both traditional and modern industrial systems of value.
Unable to reconcile the atomization of her characters, Gaskell glosses over it. *North and South*’s charm and optimistic gilding lies in part in its ability to “[deal] with serious matters without asking to be taken seriously” (Bourdieu, *The Field* 158). And yet, Gaskell’s struggles over *how* to conclude her novel and the difficulty in parsing Gaskell’s problematizing of the titular schema suggest a more complex reality than Bourdieu allows for in his theorizing. The nexus of economics, gender, narrative, tradition, and modernity begs for the reader’s attention and to be taken seriously even as Gaskell effectively obscures it. The reaction of contemporary newspaper reviewers and modern literary critics in viewing *North and South* as an optimistic revision of the more radical *Mary Barton* illustrates the degree to which Gaskell buries her pessimism about the capitalist, industrial economy’s effects on community relations. Yes, Margaret and Thornton learn to respect one another, and Thornton and Higgins form a working relationship, but the larger groups which these characters represent remain apart and suspicious of these interpersonal connections. Even Thornton’s “kitchen scheme,” which I return to later, is a limited microcosm of which his mother disapproves. The perceived “steady dissolution” (Hammond 405) of north and south, then, mirrors the flow and intermingling of economic capital rather than an understanding or exchange of alternative fields of value between regions and between groups. However, the narrator’s insistence that there is a north and a south allows readers their fantasy of a quarantined capitalist system, or, in Bourdieu’s words “to ignore the real state of things.” The benefit of enabling this fantasy on a surface level while challenging it on a deeper level is that Gaskell can test the limits of what forms of community and capital configuration her society is willing to accept. The novel’s insistence on traditional hierarchies as a basis for community reveals a deep pessimism
because traditional hierarchies are unable to answer the demands of the modern, industrial economy, but no other arrangement appears possible as the novel uses Margaret’s impending marriage to foreclose the possibility of female industrial ownership or of uniting northern and southern capital in one person.

In a novel that depicts the introspective growth of its hero leading to a better understanding between him and his employees, the pessimism of *North and South* is surprising. The “steady dissolution of regional, provincial, class, and gender stereotypes on which the plot depends” (Hammond 405) suggests that communities *can* form in the industrial manufacturing cities of the north. Like in Charlotte Brontë’s *Shirley* (1849), communities depend upon the ability to unite various forms of capital. Yet, the union between John Thornton, “the representative of the north” and Margaret Hale, “the personification of the south,” (“New Publications 1”) is not an equal partnership, nor an equal distribution of capital. In *North and South*, despite the narrator’s—and even characters’—arguments for a balance between north and south, between the new industrial economy and the old social hierarchy, all other forms of capital are ignored or put in the service of industrial capitalism. Contrary to other authors in this study, Gaskell depicts a world in which capital cannot be converted. Community formation is theoretically possible, but never actually realized. The isolated, limited communities that are present in *North and South* reinforce the class, gender, and socioeconomic lines that Gaskell spends the majority of the novel challenging. Unlike Brontë’s novel, in which the traditional hierarchy is upheld as a cure, as offering stability and community roots in the face of economic change, Gaskell’s return to tradition suggests a pervasive pessimism about the ability to connect in the face of alienating and atomizing capitalist systems. The structures of class and gender
inequality that Brontë models in her novel and to which Gaskell returns do not offer stability. Instead, they offer characters in *North and South* the potential only for interpersonal connection, without providing a foundation for larger community.

Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South* is frequently read as a failed industrial novel that retreats into the domestic while leaving the status quo largely unchallenged. And yet, to consider Gaskell’s work “as a failure to sustain a critique of social relations” (Elliott 48-49) is to lose Gaskell’s contribution to the question of what configuration of men, industrialization, and land will provide the most stability for England’s economy and her communities? As with Charlotte Brontë’s earlier novel *Shirley* (1849), Elizabeth Gaskell’s response to industrialism and the triumph of capitalism is embodied in her hero, John Thornton. Unlike Brontë’s Robert Moore, who was considered in detail in the first chapter, John Thornton is already a wealthy and successful manufacturer at the open of the novel. Thornton represents what it means to be a mill owner as well as the limitations of that position, particularly with regard to how he relates to his workers and his (in)ability to convert capital. Like Robert Moore, Thornton cannot overcome his inability to connect with his workers, and, by extension, alienation from a larger industrial community, without making the correct marriage to a member of the middle class, which brings with it social, cultural, and domestic capital as well as land and property ownership. And yet, the union of Thornton and Margaret ultimately calcifies the limitations, rather than dismantling them:

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30 For discussions of Gaskell’s novel as a direct connector between Jane Austen’s and George Eliot’s domestic novels, see essays by Arnold Kettle, A. B. Hopkins, W. A. Craik, and Janine Barchus. Full citations in works cited.

31 D. W. Elliott is drawing on and—to an extent—challenging Catherine Gallagher’s argument that Gaskell advocates for “the continued isolation of the family from society” (148). Gallagher, like Rosemarie Bodenheimer and Barbara Leah Harman in various ways, reads the union of Thornton and Margaret as either an equal exchange or appropriation.
there is a tension between the events of *North and South* and the interpretation the narrator offers about the value and necessity of the south.

Gaskell manipulates the schematics of her title in multiple ways, one of which is the rigidity of where capital is located. Capital’s rigidity in *North and South* upholds traditional configurations of capital—wherein the south’s non-economic capital is labeled more valuable—even as it paradoxically reveals the insufficiency of traditional configurations. The first section, then, primarily concerns how Gaskell sets up the fossilization of capital’s location and how the geographic distribution of capital mimics the title’s schematics. The second section illuminates how the rigidity of capital is ultimately undercut by Gaskell’s portrayal of who holds wealth within the novel. Despite the novel’s insistence on economic capital belonging to the north, southerners are active participants in the industrial, capitalist system. Ultimately, the novel is unable to satisfactorily wed the tensions between the north and the south and instead effaces them, allowing for the depiction of a smooth consolidation of capital, the diffusion of different viewpoints, and a reinforcing of class and gender power in the marriage of Margaret and Thornton.

**Tradition and Capital in Stasis**

*North and South* is remarkable within my study for the variety of capital it represents. Characters trade in cultural, economic (comprised of business and financial), social, and domestic capital. Business capital is economic acumen as well as a reputation for knowledge and success in business, whereas financial capital is “hard” cash or the ability to purchase goods and services or pay debts. I divide them out because within the world of the novel, the characters who possess financial capital are not always the ones who understand and act in business. Gaskell locates domestic and cultural capitals in the south,
with economic capital being relegated to the north. Social capital is located in both the south and the north, but they are not congruent currencies. Margaret’s London “habits of society” do not translate into a social position in Milton Northern, and Thornton’s social position among the other manufacturers does not give him pride of place in London. Contrary to the earlier *Shirley* or the later *The Way We Live Now*, social capital in *North and South* is more dependent on one’s geographic location and how that geographically restricted community interprets and values different fields: economic capital is necessary for a place among Milton Northern manufacturers, but Margaret does not need the same amount of economic capital to be a part of southern society.

Gaskell establishes Thornton’s social position from the outset of the novel. One of the first indicators of Thornton’s status and the recognition of his social and economic capital is when the Hales’s new Milton Northern landlord refuses to change the wallpaper for them, but agrees to do so at Mr. Thornton’s request: “There was no particular need to tell them [the Hale Family], that what he [the landlord] did not care to do for a Reverend Mr. Hale, unknown in Milton, he was only too glad to do at the one short sharp remonstrance of Mr. Thornton, the wealthy manufacturer” (65). Like an epic epithet, the tag of “manufacturer” follows Thornton throughout the novel. The weight of the epithet is in its synecdochal relationship to Thornton’s activity and position, but the epithet is curiously inexact. “Manufacturer” emphasizes the mill and physical production of cloth, but these are only two elements of many that enable Thornton to earn and maintain his position. There is the contracting of orders, the managing of employees, upkeep of the mill, meetings with other mill owners, and the minutia of everyday business that make-up Thornton’s daily activity, little-to-none of which is his personal involvement in the physical
production of cloth. Thornton’s actions earn him business capital, which facilitates his financial capital. The focus on the physical equates to a focus on the financial capital because it makes Thornton’s wealth appear to be tangibly realized. The landlord’s use of “manufacturer” and his willingness to change the wallpaper at Thornton’s request indicates evidence of Thornton’s social capital and its relation to economic capital in Milton Northern. It also evidences how the recognition of his wealth and business success is reliant on the tangible aspects of his work.32 Thornton is an influential local leader, possessing economic capital, comprised of both business capital and financial capital, which earns him social capital among Milton Northern’s manufacturers.

Despite his leading position within Milton Northern, Thornton does not possess social capital beyond the north. Thornton’s first interaction with Margaret sees him “more awkward and self-conscious in every limb than he ever had [been] in all his life before” (64). Surprised by Margaret and her “different type” of being in the world, Thornton’s “unready words” would not come (61, 62). Margaret “felt no awkwardness: she had too much the habits of society for that” (61) and “assume[s] some kind of rule over [Thornton]” despite the “habits of authority” he possesses (62). Because he is unaccustomed to southern “habits of society,” Margaret usurps Thornton’s control of the situation in a moment that is both paralleled and flipped in the final scene of the novel when Thornton—having

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32 Thornton’s active interest in his mill and its operations violates the separation of types of labor—physical versus mental—which is a distinct class division in North and South. While Thornton and his fellow manufacturers did not necessarily perform manual labor themselves, they were also not strictly reliant on mental labor the way many middle-class professionals—like writers and bankers—were. Manufacturers worked closely with the working class, and were active about the mills they owned and managed—John Thornton uses both “his hard penetrating intellectual, as well as bodily labor” (325)—blurring categories based on non-laboring and labor-based class lines. Both Thornton and Brontë’s Moore are portrayed as hands-on mill owners, involved in the actual production of the cloth and in the administrative and managerial aspects of the mill. In this way, manufacturers avoid being “implicitly feminized” the way Martin Danahay argues many middle-class professionals were (30), but they are too close to manual labor for the contemporary middle class to consider them gentlemanly or members of the middle class.
rectified his failings and assumed both a new industrial masculinity and associated capitalism—reclaims power and authority from Margaret. Long before that final scene, in the first meeting, Margaret notes Thornton is “not over-brushed, nor over-polished” and categorizes him as a tradesman (63). When reprimanded by her father not to call manufacturers tradesmen, Margaret replies that “I apply the word to all who have something tangible to sell” (65), revealing the misrecognition of Thornton’s social position even as, akin to the landlord, Margaret emphasizes physical production over Thornton’s business acumen. Neither Thornton or Margaret quite know what to make of the other, suggesting they cannot read one another’s acquired capital and positioning. While Thornton is not conflated with his mill quite in the same way Robert Moore is in Shirley, Thornton’s status as manufacturer permeates the novel, as does the physicality of manufacturers and industrialism. Also, like Moore, Thornton’s inability to gain ground in non-economic fields hinders the development of a community beyond the manufacturing class in Milton Northern. Thornton’s antagonism toward the working class and southern opinions about Milton suggests that he does not care whether he is part of a larger community. One of the primary lessons Thornton learns in the novel is that he should care.

The emphasis that “manufacturer” places on tangibility strategically effaces Thornton’s lack of realized, financial wealth. For Gaskell, the tangibility associated with landed property and the ownership of it is key to community formation, and ownership of land and property is necessary for claiming a leading position within that community. In Gaskell’s earlier novel Mary Barton, the narrator remarks: “What was birth to a Manchester manufacturer, many of whom glory, and justly too, in being the architects of their own fortunes” (162) and this metaphor of architecture reappears, nearly verbatim in
North and South: the narrator describes Thornton as “architect of his own fortunes, he attributed this [his success] to no special merit or qualities of his own,” (419) attributing his success to every day work ethic rather than personal talents. The manufacturers are architects, designers and builders of their fortunes; the physical structures of the mills and factories as referent are visible, concrete reminders of their wealth and their work. And yet, Thornton’s fortune is distinctly shapeless and abstract for most of North and South. Thornton numbers among the Hale family’s friend Mr. Bell’s “tenants, and houses, and mills there [in Milton Northern]” (Gaskell 38-39). At the beginning, the novel flirts with how Thornton is a tenant rather than an owner, but does not engage with it directly. Thornton was “sharp to the hour at the meeting with his brother magistrates—giving them the best assistance of his strong sense and his power of seeing consequences at a glance…older men of long standing in the town, men of far greater wealth—realized and turned into land, while he [Thornton] was all floating capital, engaged in his trade—looked to him for prompt, ready, wisdom” (212). The presence of the distinction between greater wealth of longer standing realized in land, and floating capital engaged in trade proves the ongoing weight land holds economically and in the literary imagination. The contrast between the types of wealth—realized versus floating—is de-emphasized through its status as a bracketed aside in the sentence while the focus on Thornton and his standing among his brother magistrates is emphasized, carrying the recognition and respect that the Hale family’s landlord has for Thornton into the restricted group that is his economic peers. While the older landowners listen to Thornton’s “prompt, ready wisdom,” the distinction suggests tension between the power of his economic capital and the traditional weight
property ownership continues to hold. This distinction becomes more important later in the novel when Thornton’s “floating capital” is not enough to sustain his operations.

Like Robert Moore and his conflation with his mill in *Shirley*, Thornton is inseparable from his mill; his domestic life and his financial livelihood are visibly, spatially intertwined. The different responses to this from northerners and southerners indicate the different values applied to different fields of capital (economic versus domestic) as well as their incommensurability. Milton Northern and Thornton’s mill and home are made more tangible by the invisibility of the country or suburbs of Milton that Margaret references in her mind: the reader never sees the surrounding country because the action and focus remain within Milton Northern. Even when Thornton takes an omnibus into the country to walk after Margaret rejects his first marriage proposal, the focus is on Thornton’s thoughts rather than the surrounding environment. Like the later novel *Hester*, this emphasizes a community delimited by geography. The mill/house connection functions both as a marker of Thornton’s lack of domestic habits, his northern social position, and as a stabilizing force, adapting the land to industrialism, invoking tradition and normalizing the figure of the industrialist. The tangibility of his mill, like the solidness of Thornton himself—Thornton is “straight,” “tall,” “massive,” and the lines of his face “were few but firm, as if they were carved in marble” (80, emphasis added)—underscore the importance of materiality and rootedness for the economy and the men leading it. Unlike the country or suburb, and unlike Mr. Hale who is “soft,” “waving,” “almost feminine,” “slight,” (80) an ineffectual leader, and an economic liability rather than a provider, Thornton and his mill—with their physicality and their physical productivity—benefit Milton Northern and the economy in material ways. The metonymic relationship between Thornton and his mill are
further solidified when he becomes the actual owner of the property at the end of the novel. In this way, both Brontë’s and Gaskell’s novels show that contrary to land “always directing us…to the past, to the authentic, English, ‘then’” (37) as Ian Baucom argues, some authors moved to reclaim and repurpose the land within the industrial economy. Nostalgia, like the “slow days of careless ease” (Gaskell 81) of the agricultural south, can serve no purpose in the active and industrial north. While landed property still retains its association with English identity and community, it is no longer enough for land to be ideologically relegated to the country estate and the pastoral. Instead it must be considered in relation to urbanization and industrialization which was changing the landscape of the English countryside and its social networks. In Milton Northern, we see the culmination of Robert Moore’s forecast that “the copse shall be firewood ere five years elapse . . . and my mill, Caroline—my mill shall fill its present yard” (Brontë 540) to the economic benefit of the region.

In another echo of Shirley, Thornton’s association with the mill and its physical structure is present even where it should not be, such as in his home. Thornton’s domestic space, because it is indivisible from his industrial work space is a direct challenge to what John Tosh highlights as one of the most important aspects of separate spheres ideology: a separate, domestic space that turns “calculating machines” back into men. This theme is maintained throughout the century, appearing again in Margaret Oliphant’s much later Hester. Thornton’s home is both literally and figuratively in the shadow of his mill—a constant reminder of the source of his wealth and the blurring of boundaries between the

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33 See the introduction and chapter 1 of Tamara Ketabgian’s Lives of Machines for an in-depth investigation into Victorian attitudes towards machines and the materiality of industrialization.
domestic and the industrial economy. As such, his home lacks traditional forms of domestic
capital recognized by Margaret and the narrator:

an immense many-windowed mill, whence proceeded the continual clank of
machinery and the long groaning roar of the steam-engine, enough to deafen those
who lived within the enclosure. Opposite…was a handsome stone-coped house,—
blackened, to be sure, by the smoke, but with paint, windows, and steps kept
scrupulously clean…Margaret only wondered why people who could afford to live
in so good a house, and keep it in such perfect order, did not prefer a much smaller
dwelling in the country, or even some suburb; not in the continual whirl and din of
the factory (Gaskell 111).34

“The disfigurement of industrialism” (Tosh 7) from which the home is supposed to provide
relief is visible outside Thornton’s windows and the “continual whirl and din” presses
constantly against his home. Margaret Hale’s repugnance at such a prospect is evident from
her questioning why the Thorntons do not live removed from the mill. Margaret’s
confusion and repugnance, particularly when juxtaposed with her efforts to maintain a
home for her parents that does not bear the mark of industrialization, places domestic
capital in the hands of the south and southerners. Not only are the stones of Thornton’s
home literally blackened, bearing the results of industry’s immediacy on its face, but even
when one is inside, where the “evidence of care and labour…to preserve ornament from
dirt and destruction” (112) is clear, “the ceaseless roar and mighty beat” (418) of the mill

34 The Victorian need for separation between the domestic and the industrial is related to the mechanization
of workers and life previously discussed in relation to Robert Moore in the previous chapter, and to the effects
of industry on the English countryside. These effects on the countryside were foreshadowed by the changes
surrounding Hollow’s-mill in Shirley and produced a fairly prevalent, although not ubiquitous, negative
response to the rise of factories and urban life. The “accruing value” of Margaret’s Milton property is a brief
glimpse at the continued urbanization and the increasing demand and cost for urban space. Proto-sociological
studies like Friedrich Engels’s The Condition of the Working Class in England and Henry Mayhew’s London
Labour and the London Poor series in the Morning Chronicle highlighted the ways class status and urban
geography intersected. The ability to remove one’s family from the immediate area and influence of factory
life was an indication of means and class status. Rejecting this signifier of class marks Thornton as other to
Margaret.
pervades the home making it difficult for those unaccustomed to the noise—like the middle class Margaret and her father—to communicate. In this way, Thornton’s home and mill embody the impossibility of capital exchange between groups. Without communication or mutually recognized capitals, the characters cannot build a community.

To the contrary, Margaret’s southern domestic influence presents itself through her philanthropic and moral endeavors within Milton Northern even as it fails to earn her northern capital. As in Shirley, domestic capital in the form of charity and moral duty facilitates relationships with the working class. However unintentionally, Margaret is responsible for Thornton’s relationship with Nicholas Higgins because she sends Higgins to speak with Thornton. While Thornton’s job offer to Higgins is a result of his own desire that “all men should recognize his justice…and he dreaded the admission of any thought of her, as a motive to what he was doing solely because it was right” (324-325), Higgins approached Thornton only at Margaret’s urging. The interpersonal relationship Thornton develops with Higgins helps to solidify his position of leadership in Milton Northern, just as the Moore brothers find themselves benefiting from the work of Shirley and Caroline. Thornton’s changed relationship to the working class, and Margaret’s responsibility for it, is evident during the party at Edith’s immediately before the ending of the novel. At this party, Thornton tells a member of Parliament present that “My only wish is to have the opportunity of cultivating some intercourse with the hands beyond the mere ‘cash nexus’” (431) because he has “arrived at the conviction that no mere institutions, however, wise, and however much thought may have been required to organize and arrange them, can

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35 The binary between sound and silence in the novel is as pervasive as the din of the factories are; positive descriptions, such as when Thornton is enthralled by Margaret serving tea, usually include “noiseless” (79) or some synonym, while negative descriptions such as the mob are noisy, “demoniac”, and “inarticulate” (177-178).
attach class to class as they should be attached” (432). The attachment of class-to-class for Thornton comes from his belief, encouraged by Margaret’s influence, in collaboration and dialogue between the groups. Thornton believes that the inter-class communication “may render strikes not the bitter, venomous sources of hatred they have hitherto been” (432). Although, he admits that “A more hopeful man might imagine that a closer and more genial intercourse between classes might do away with strikes. But I am not a hopeful man,” (432). Nor, as *North and South* shows, is Gaskell hopeful. Thornton tells Margaret that, “I had a round-robin from some of my men—I suspect in Higgins’ handwriting—stating their wish to work for me, if I ever was in position to employ men again on my own behalf” and Margaret agrees that that is “just right” (432). Margaret and Thornton’s differing opinion on class relations is reminiscent of the disagreement between Robert Moore and Caroline Helstone in the “Coriolanus” chapter in *Shirley*. In both novels, the male characters ultimately move toward the women’s community-centric viewpoint, to their benefit. Gaskell diverges from Brontë in her portrayal of the limitations of connection: class-conflict is not resolved, and separate groups remain separate, if slightly more respectful of individual representatives of the other groups. Thornton is tolerated, but the other masters are not, and Thornton loves Margaret, but his mother loathes her.

Inter-class dialogue and relations beyond the “mere cash nexus” benefit Thornton, his industry, and capitalist endeavors more generally increasing their economic capital. With less frequent strikes and strikes that, when they do occur, are less hate-filled and more cordial, manufacturers will not lose as much time and money. Additionally, as the narrator tells us, when Thornton’s fortunes are failing “Higgins and another man stopped over-hours that night, unknown to any one, to get the neglected piece of work done” (421).
Because of the personal relationship between Thornton and his men that Margaret brought about, they work to keep him in business even when they are not being directly paid for it. Yes, keeping Thornton successful keeps their jobs secured, but as *North and South*’s earlier chapters about the strike showed, there are many masters and manufactories should Thornton fall, as he does. Thus, their sense of loyalty and connection to Thornton directly benefits him more than it directly benefits the men who are staying late and working after hours for no pay. More importantly for Thornton’s position within Milton Northern, it positively influences perceptions of Thornton as a leader if his men are willing to maintain loyalty to him without pay and will return to him given the first opportunity. Thus, while Margaret’s concerns about rectifying the “tainting sin” of industrialism and capitalism come from a moral center, that moral center is put in the service of the very thing it seeks to correct, allowing for the appearance—but not the substance—of community to begin taking root. No community forms that includes both Master and Men: Thornton and his employees still exist in separate worlds even as they work together for their mutual benefit. Once their interests clash, as Thornton insists they will, the interpersonal relations will not keep the groups together and the separate communities will atomize once again.

**Flowing Capital and the Challenge to Tradition**

Throughout *North and South*, the narrator repeatedly asserts the importance and necessity of domestic, cultural, and social capital associated with Margaret and the south, despite the lack of direct benefits they bring to characters in the novel. Rather, the most important capital the south holds that Thornton needs, is financial capital. While economic capital is associated with the north, with Thornton and Milton Northern, much of the realized wealth is in the hands of southerners. Mr. Bell owns Thornton’s house and mill in addition to other
“property there, which has very much increased in value since Milton has become such a large manufacturing town” (Gaskell 38) and Margaret is “to have [his] money and [his] goods when [he] die[s]” (364), which he does a few chapters after announcing Margaret as his heiress. Margaret “is residuary legatee—the legacies being about two thousand pounds, and the remainder about forty thousand, at the present value of property in Milton” (413). When Margaret saves Thornton, it is with wealth she possesses through industrialization rather than through domestic, social, or cultural capital. Margaret’s southern capitals, while they assist Thornton in his relations with his workers and at southern social events, do not save him from bankruptcy or maintain his position in Milton Northern. The friction between the events of the novel and what the narrator claims is downplayed by the conclusion of the novel, which helps reinstate Thornton among manufacturers, but does not unite the disparate communities.

The reinforcing of class-power through capital consolidation starts with a misrecognition of Thornton’s actions on the part of the Hale family and culminates in Thornton’s marriage to Margaret and his establishment as a property owner.36 In the industrial novel, the marriage plot is often considered as “a healing of class antagonism” (Shuttleworth 184). An effective marriage could shore up a man’s class and gender positions while also helping men establish legitimacy in a variety of fields. Thornton’s marriage to Margaret consolidates Margaret’s financial, southern social, cultural, and domestic capitals with Thornton’s business and northern social capital. In this way, the

36 Men’s relationship to their community and with the land is predicated upon uniting the continuing value of other types of capital, such as moral or cultural capital, and the powerful, albeit suspicious, value of industrial economic capital. Prior to their marriage, Margaret and her father facilitated Thornton’s movement into the middle class in the eyes of Gaskell’s middle-class readers because the Hales perceived his tutoring with her father as evidence of a desire to improve himself, to become more gentlemanly, as evidence that he could “perceive [his] own deficiencies, and strive to remedy them” (69).
marriage market allows for the negotiation of value transference between fields in ways closed off to men who remain single or who did not select an appropriate partner. Thornton and industrial capitalism are purified by land and property ownership, entering land and property ownership into the service of the north’s industrial capitalism despite the two forms of capital being represented as antagonistic. The value of southern domestic, social, and cultural capital appears reaffirmed in the face of technological and economic change when what is actually occurring is the south is normalizing industrial capitalism. Industrial capital passes into the hands of southerners, who make it appear more respectable to readers because, like traditional land ownership, they are not working for their income. As such, financial capital undergoes a sort of representational money laundering to appear congruous with cultural and domestic capital. Yet, Gaskell’s desire to cross boundaries and create connections results in traditional, southern forms of capital either repurposed (land for industry) or appropriated (Margaret’s moral capital).

One of the ways in which Gaskell normalizes without challenging capital rigidity and northern industrialization is by enrolling Thornton in Latin lessons. Associated with cultural capital and the south, Latin is only so much “gibberish” to both his employees and his fellow Northern manufacturers. Thornton’s Latin lessons, however, result in nothing: while they instigate his connection with the Hale family, he does not gain cultural capital or any other capital. The lessons appear only as an expenditure, a pursuit that Thornton follows in his leisure time, which is not so very different from his consumption of delicacies at his dinner party. Where Latin lessons and dinner party delicacies do differ is in the way the two expenditures are coded by the Hale family. Latin lessons, unlike the consumption of commodities, are not recognized as consumption by the southern Hales. This is one
explanation for why Margaret finds Thornton’s classical studies absurd from the beginning: “What in the world do manufacturers want with the classics, or literature, or in the accomplishments of a gentleman?” Margaret asks, “looking scornful” (39). She sees Latin in terms of cultural capital, whereas Thornton sees it as an activity for his leisure time. As with Thornton’s eventual property ownership, Latin lessons help disguise the industrial origins of his wealth, and, more importantly, the strictly economic nature of the relationship between north and south. Mr. Hale moves his family to Milton Northern to make an income from teaching and interactions between the Hales and Thornton start and stop with Thornton’s paid lessons.

Thornton’s status as a consumer—albeit one who claims not to desire ostentation—coupled with his assertion that he does not strive to be a gentleman collide in his private tutoring and Latin lessons. Like material goods and the trappings of respectability, Thornton has access to private tutoring and dead languages because of his wealth. The economic power his wealth gives him allows the acquisition of another language only available to a select few—the cultural and/or financial elite—and should translate into cultural capital.37 Accepting Bourdieu’s argument that language, at a minimum, reinscribes class lines would mean that Thornton’s lessons function as a way to consolidate middle-class power without the converting of capital.38 However, while the southern gentility is dominant in cultural capital, neither region clearly dominates the other in totality. Latin lessons mark the blurring of north and south as happening on the level of language. “One

37 Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of symbolic power argues that the inability to understand the language of the dominant class is the inability to challenge the dominant class. Acquiring the language of the dominant class is the first step to joining and/or challenging that class (Language 45-51).
38 See Pierre Bourdieu’s Language and Symbolic Power for a further discussion of symbolic power, language, and domination, especially the introduction and chapters 1, 3, and 7 therein.
had to learn a different language, and measure by a different standard, up here in Milton” Mr. Hale tells Margaret after a visit to the working-class Boucher family (Gaskell 159). Whether it is Margaret’s use of an oceanic metaphor that Bessy Higgins does not understand or Thornton’s acquisition of a dead language, characters’ engagement with language in the novel represents their way of being in the world.39 While it is unsurprising that working class characters like Bessy Higgins and her father have a different way of being in the world than does Margaret Hale, similar distinctions between the Hale family and Thornton are drawn and then effaced by their use of language.

Margaret and Thornton’s different ways of being in the world and their eventual consolidation of capital to the benefit of the north are ultimately portrayed through the acquisition of new language. “I see you persist in misunderstanding what I said the other day,” (Gaskell 118) Thornton tells Margaret in response to her criticism of relations between Milton masters and men. Characters’ use of language, and who understands a given language, supports the triumph of capitalism because it brings the south and its associated capital in line with the north, rather than bringing the north in line with the south. In the same way that Thornton acquires Latin and Greek, Margaret also acquires a new vocabulary: “And if I live in a factory town, I must speak factory language when I want it. Why, mamma, I could astonish you with a great many words you never heard in your life. I don't believe you know what a knobstick is” (237). Margaret’s education in factory slang

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39 Hilary Schor investigates the use of language to draw distinctions between classes in *North and South* through the miscommunications that take place between Margaret and Bessy Higgins. In one instance, Margaret compares the city to the ocean, but having never been beyond the city, Bessy does not understand the metaphor. Thus, even “Margaret’s seemingly innocent oceanic metaphor reveals the inequity between” (Schor 139) the classes and shows Margaret as a member of the dominant class. Like Thornton’s Latin lessons, the metaphor is “a manifestation…of the socially constructed character of Habitus” (Bourdieu, *Language* 17).
does not carry the cultural weight that Thornton’s education in classical languages does, but Margaret does not need to gain cultural capital. Instead, Margaret’s use of factory slang, serves to legitimize Thornton and other manufacturers to other middle-class characters as well as middle-class readers. Language acquisition in North and South parallels how Thornton’s blurred domesticity of mill/home with its “taint” of industrialism slips from sight with the acquisition of Margaret and her property. Margaret and Thornton’s eventual union makes tangible what has been occurring in her language over the course of the novel.

Thornton’s motivation for learning the classics is never revealed and his engagement with southern capitals are unobtrusive, often appearing to be little more than convenient plot devices. It pervades the novel, but it doesn’t do anything unlike Margaret’s acquisition of slang. Latin does not earn Thornton cultural capital, and Thornton appears to have no desire for acceptance as a southern gentleman. For example, when Mr. Bell comments on Thornton’s “enjoyment of the power and influence which money gives. You [mill-owners] are all striving for money. What do you want it for?” Thornton “was silent. Then he said, ‘I really don’t know. But money is not what I strive for’” (Gaskell 333). And yet, Thornton’s rejection of money as his goal aligns him with the south and its emphasis on non-economic, non-capitalist fields of value. His rejection, however, is undercut by the earlier scene of his dinner party: Margaret, “with her cultivated London taste, felt the...

Near the beginning of the novel, Margaret is depicted reading “the Paradiso of Dante, in the proper old Italian…by it lay a dictionary, and some words copied out in Margaret’s hand-writing” (23). Later in Milton Northern, Margaret is disappointed that she must attend to getting the house ready for tea with Thornton when she had “planned other employments for herself: a letter to Edith, a good piece of Dante” (75). Italian as a “modern” language would have been suitable for a woman to learn and, because of that, carried less cultural weight than Latin. However, it still serves as an indication of Margaret’s class status and education: Margaret already possesses the sort of education Thornton desires.
number of delicacies to be oppressive” (160). The oppressive number of delicacies at the dinner supports Margaret’s initial conclusion that Thornton is “tainted by his position as a Milton manufacturer…testing everything by the standard of wealth” (87). Yet, the narrator asserts that the goal of Mr. Hale’s students is to become more gentlemanly—to “remedy…deficiencies” (164)—but Thornton rejects the identity of gentleman for “the full simplicity of the noun ‘man’” (164) just as he rejects money as his primary goal. Thornton’s definition of man does not accord with the southern definition of gentleman, nor does it correspond to any gender ideal in the north. Thornton’s focus with how a man relates not just in “regard to his fellow-men, but in relation to himself,—to life—to time—to eternity” (164) is highly individual. Thornton’s definition of man is not dependent on the recognition of anyone but himself, but Thornton is keenly aware of both northern and southern recognition of his abilities. Questions about community and the recognition of symbolic, economic, financial, cultural, social, and domestic capitals become a knot that cannot be detangled. The southern “gentleman” represented by Mr. Bell and Mr. Hale cannot meet the needs of modern exchange and community, but neither can Thornton’s “cast-away lonely as Robinson Crusoe—a prisoner immured in a dungeon for life—…a saint in Patmos” (164) masculine ideal answer to the demands of Milton Northern’s complex networks.

Margaret’s socializing with the working-class attempts to intervene in Milton Northern’s complex networks and stems from philanthropic impulses cultivated by her role as a reverend’s daughter in the south: women’s charity and philanthropic work operated from “the common assumption that it was merely an extension of women’s domestic role”
To justify the use of factory slang to her mother, who refuses to engage with the north, Margaret first claims linguistic economy: she “shall have to use a whole explanatory sentence instead” if she removes “knobstick” from her vocabulary (237). When Margaret’s mother rejects that explanation, Margaret compares it to military slang with which her mother is more familiar, and which carries cultural and class power. While Hilary Schor argues that “Latin becomes the image for a closed language, one that is ‘gibberish’ to those who do not ‘know the meaning o’ the words’” (110), the same must be said for the other languages, whether foreign tongues or various slangs, in the novel. By linking military and factory slang, Margaret closes the gap between Thornton and her family since her brother Frederick was in the navy; it symbolically brings factory slang and manufacturers into the fold of Margaret’s way of being in the world. Margaret says at the beginning of the novel that “I like all people whose occupations have to do with land; I like soldiers and sailors, and the three learned professions, as they call them” (Gaskell 19), separating out tradesmen and—to Margaret’s mind—manufacturers, a distinction which her comparison of factory and military slang later undercuts. In this way, Margaret attempts to linguistically unite disparate communities. This gives the illusion of the blurring of lines between Margaret and Thornton, south and north, old and new that recent critics and the original reviewers noted. As with the misrecognition of Thornton’s Latin lessons, using factory slang ostensibly increases Margaret’s domestic capital because it allows her to better interact and communicate with the working classes. Yet, Margaret’s intervention earns her no northern capital, although it brings heavy criticism from the manufacturing

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41 I more thoroughly explore women, domestic capital, and philanthropy in my fourth chapter on Margaret Oliphant’s *Hester*. For full length studies on the connection between domesticity and charity/philanthropy, please see D.W. Elliot, *The Angel Outside the House* and Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Superintending the Poor*, especially their introductions.
class and has ambiguous results, at best, for the working class. No capital is actually converted, and the rigid division of value remains. Language appears to facilitate capital conversion because the two characters who readers see learning another language unite. Margaret and Thornton’s union is a consolidation of capital, but not a conversion. Their consolidated capital culminates in Thornton’s ascension to industrial manor lord through Margret’s “realized wealth” and property ownership.

Gaskell constructs Margaret as a landlord and propertied heroine and then mutes Margaret’s role in the industrial economy. Through her position as a landlord, Margaret becomes enmeshed in a system she originally challenged. Margaret’s property ownership and her marriage to Thornton are what solidify Margaret, land, and the south’s complicity in the service of northern industrial capitalism. The apparent opposition of north and south, Thornton and Margaret, economic and cultural/moral capital, actually mystifies the extent to which Margaret and other southerners such as Mr. Bell already participate in industrialization and profit from it in spite of their moral critique. The construction of Margaret as a landlord is evidenced in Gaskell’s letters from when she was composing *North and South* and underscores the importance of land for Gaskell. Unsure of how to end the novel, Gaskell asks her correspondent “What do you think of a fire burning down Mr. Thornton’s mills and house as a help to failure? Then Margaret would rebuild them larger & better & need not go & live there when she’s married” (qtd in Schor 141). Hilary Schor uses this passage to emphasize the centrality of language and the instability of the plot structure in *North and South*. While plot is certainly in question in this letter, so is property ownership and the power associated with such ownership. Not only would Margaret have the option to “rebuild them larger & better,” which would ostensibly increase Margaret’s
profits, but because all of this would occur prior to marriage, she would have the power to choose. She could rebuild the house, let the house to another tenant, or leave the property in ruins, giving her jurisdiction over whether she goes to “live there when she’s married.”

The power of Margaret’s ability to choose is significant because it is only possible through her property ownership. Yet, upon marriage, her power to choose and the property which bestows it would be transferred to Thornton. “The novel,” Schor writes, “is explicit about the ways her money allows Margaret this independence” (147). It is the very explicitness of power Margaret possesses through her financial independence and the way it is simultaneously taken for granted that helps disguise the fact that her power and property are possible only because of the very industrial capitalism she seeks to change, making her complicit in the tainting sin for which she berates Thornton and the Milton manufacturers more generally. Her fortune is built upon a group of people with whom she does not interact. Her departure from Milton Northern after her parents’ deaths places her in the position of an absentee landlord who relies on her agent Henry Lennox to act for her.

Like Shirley’s ultimate failure to use the masculine power she has claim to through her ownership of land—Shirley is unable to revitalize the region as the Moores do by the conclusion of the novel—Margaret is also ineffective in her attempts at influencing change in Milton Northern. This task falls instead to Thornton, who enacts programs such as his kitchen scheme to help his workers: Thornton purchases food wholesale at lower cost for the working classes. This scheme is a revision of Robert Moore’s squire and clothier giving

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42 Here is another echo of Brontë’s *Shirley* in which Robert forecast the building of a “better gig mill” should the Luddites successfully destroy his mill.

43 In the chapter “Shirley Seeks to be Saved by Works” Shirley decides to set up a system to assist the local residents who are poor and starving, but she leaves the decisions, creation, and orchestration to Rev. Helstone, saying she will be guided by him in this matter. While she provides the capital, she does not engage with the actual business side of her charity.
“a treat once a quarter,” a feast provided by the land owner as thanksgiving and a promise of good faith to his tenants. Thornton’s purchasing of food at wholesale prices that the workers pay for rather than Thornton “treating” them is a less-feudal revision of the relationship between a country manor lord and his tenants; it is another connection between the north and the south in which the capitalist nature of the arrangement is disguised, hidden beneath a traditionally paternalist and aristocratic façade. However, unlike in Shirley, Thornton’s scheme does not form a community between Thornton and his employees. Thornton only joins the men when directly invited (362) and the arrangement is explicitly economic: “They pay me [Thornton] rent for the oven and cooking-places at the back of the mill; and will have to pay more for the new dining-room. I don’t want it to fall into a charity” (363). Nonetheless, the arrangement at which Thornton and his men arrive is more than Margaret is able to achieve. Upon acquiring her property, Margaret does not visit or live near/on it, acting instead through her lawyer Henry Lennox. When Margaret does decide to act, to save Thornton, she—like Shirley and her failed charity scheme—is unable to describe the business proposal which Lennox put together for her. “‘Oh! here it is! And—he [Lennox] drew me out a proposal—I wish he were here to explain it’…she went on looking for some paper on which were written down the proposals” when Thornton interrupts her: “‘Take care.—If you do not speak—I shall claim you as my own in some strange presumptuous way’” (435-436). Fumbling the business proposal provides Thornton with the opportunity to take control of the situation and turn it into a marriage proposal. This is a parallel yet flipped scene to the much later one in Margaret Oliphant’s Hester between Catherine and Old Rule. In Hester, as I explore more fully in chapter four, Old Rule comes to Catherine for assistance and Catherine acts rapidly to save the bank and
claim a position of economic and social power within the community. Where Margaret is unable to act in the business realm and has her business proposal turned into a marriage proposal, Catherine, despite a similar lack of formal training, grasps the opportunity to become a leading business “man” rather than a wife. The mirroring of the two scenes speaks to the changing position of middle-class women in the economy even as it underscores the way that Gaskell’s novel is still heavily entrenched in traditional hierarchies and systems.

Unlike in Shirley, we do not see the results of Margaret’s marriage and Thornton’s acquisition of her lands and wealth, but what North and South does establish through Margaret and Thornton is an example of a modern relationship with land in which the country estate has become an industrial manor. Despite the binary in the title of the novel, by the end it is clear that the contrast between the north and the south is somewhat of a misnomer: everyone, whether Margaret on her moral high ground; or Mr. Hale with his seemingly disconnected academic pursuits; or Henry Lennox with his law career in the south, participates in capitalism even as the novel seeks to relegate it to the north.\textsuperscript{44} Economic capital is flowing between the two regions, even as non-economic fields of value are geographically restricted. The capitalist power consolidation that appears reinstated at the end of the novel was never as upended as we would, perhaps, like to believe. Margaret in her role as facilitator of inter-class communication and her role as landlord and property owner in Milton Northern does participate in the heavily masculinized world of capitalism, but only from a distance and by proxy. Margaret, much like Brontë’s Shirley, may be

\textsuperscript{44} Margaret becomes an industrial landlord; Mr. Hale makes a living tutoring wealthy manufacturers and their sons; Henry Lennox is Margaret’s lawyer and hopes to marry Margaret and thus invest her industrial wealth in his career.
“strong-minded” and capable of “gain[ing] the acknowledgement of her right to follow her own ideas of duty” (Gaskell 417) after she inherits Mr. Bell’s fortune and property, but her newfound strong-mindedness is limited. Her business proposal is fumbled, costing her quite literally everything—her property, independence, and legal identity. Contrary to this, Thornton, even as he struggles financially and personally, is able to realize his ambitions, which are strengthened and made possible through Margaret’s property. The fantasy of quarantining the capitalist system is revealed as precisely that: a fantasy. The north and the south may have mutually exclusive capitals, and the novel may attempt to locate all economic capital in the north, but the reality of the novel is that financial capital flows between the north and the south, and the south is complicit in the hierarchized capitalist system

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The modern relationship between man and land, between manor and industry illustrates that material structures and the rootedness of a tangible location are necessary elements of individual and community success. Thornton is reinstated as a wealthy manufacturer with the added security of owning the land and structures of his manufactory. His business capital is added to the social, cultural, domestic, and financial capital of his wife. When he is at Edith’s party, Henry Lennox acknowledges that Thornton is “the very man to give Colthurst [the member of parliament] all the facts he wanted coaching in” (Gaskell 431). This reputation for industry knowledge and business prowess, part of his business capital (rather than financial capital) is a type Margaret will never possess associated with the north, but that is necessary to further developing wealth and trade. Consolidating Margaret’s property and domestic capital—her steadfast criticisms of the social problems
in Milton Northern as well as her attempts to fix them by facilitating dialogue between
classes—with Thornton’s reputation as a manufacturer catapults the couple, and in
particular, Thornton, into a position in which they are “sure of power and property” (Brontë
539). Rather than having to choose between the landed gentry and the industrial capitalist
as Bodenheimer posits occurs in much industrial fiction, Gaskell weds them in a
consolidation and conversion of capital remarkable for the way it represents new
configurations of land, wealth, and community, whereas Brontë kept the manufacturer and
the land owner separated, albeit closely related in one family. In North and South, Gaskell
presents a new locus for economic activity in the form of an industrial manor where
industry and domesticity, north and south, manufacturers and landed gentry are brought
together in material structures to provide a stable power center even as it is not the center
of a new, industrial community.

Thornton’s proposal implies Margaret’s and his own return to the North where,
upon marriage, he will be landlord and mill owner in one. Margaret’s distance from the
economic realm is further underscored in this scene by her request for the leaves from
Helstone which Thornton says he has and his reply “you must pay me for them” (436).
While certainly a moment of playful banter, it is also a moment in which we see Margaret’s
disconnect from the market contrasted with Thornton’s constant immersion in it: Margaret
believes the leaves should be hers by default because they came from her home village,
neglecting the expense and labor undergone by Thornton to attain them. Thornton,
however, in requesting payment for the goods he gathered, for services rendered is

45 Thornton and Margaret’s implied return to Milton Northern is so explicit that the 2004 BBC miniseries of
the novel sets the proposal scene on a train platform with the happily engaged couple boarding the train to
return North as the credits begin to roll.
cognizant of nearly everything’s participation in the realm of exchange, harbinger of the world of *The Way We Live Now*. The exchange is further evidence of Margaret’s unfitness, her ineffectiveness as an industrial property holder, contrasting it with the fitness of Thornton for the modern industrial economy. Finally, the moment showcases the progress Thornton has made as he reclaims his “habits of authority” from Margaret, parodying the scene of their first meeting and foreshadowing the power dynamics of their marriage. Margaret and the traditional capital of the south that the narrator insists is necessary are brought into the service of Thornton through capital manipulation. Rather than allowing for communities to form and grow, the capital manipulation in *North and South* ossifies the small, independent groups and forecloses the possibility of capital conversion. Unlike other novels in this study, *North and South* depicts capital conversion as a fantasy. Like the other novelists, however, Gaskell depicts the necessity of multiple fields of value—not just economic ties—to building and maintaining a community in the face of an increasingly powerful capitalist system.
CHAPTER 3:
Abstract Wealth and Communities in *The Way We Live Now*

The passing of the Reform Acts (1832, 1867) as well as the Factory Acts (1833, 1844, 1847, 1850, 1856) meant that the Condition of England and the figure of the mill owner slipped from their places of prominence in print culture as more-pressing concerns occupied the middle-class and literary imagination.\(^{46}\) Swapping the tangibility of mills and the concerns about industrialization for an abstract financial system and concerns about stocks and bonds meant that bank runs, stock-market crashes, and fraudulent companies, et cetera, “could operate as an easily realizable way of articulating instability” (Wagner 5) in nineteenth century-literature.\(^{47}\) Already a stock character in fiction, the stock market swindler became the economic villain of the day because he embodied middle-class anxieties surrounding an increasingly abstract and professionalized economy. While many of Anthony Trollope’s novels deal directly with swindlers and scams in the credit economy, *The Way We Live Now* offers one of the best opportunities for studying the interplay of literature, economics, and community formation in the face of economic abstraction because the novel portrays a world in which economic systems are not simply the mathematical, disinterested entities economists described, but volatile systems able to shape identity because they are all-encompassing for characters. In *The Way We Live Now*,

\(^{46}\) The Reform Acts extended the vote to white men who were not large property owners as well as redrew some voting districts to account for larger urban populations deserving more representation. The various Factory Acts restricted work hours, defined safety standards, and created government oversight to enforce the new laws.

\(^{47}\) See Mary Poovey’s *Genres of the Credit Economy*, Tamara S. Wagner’s *Financial Speculation in Victorian Fiction*, Eleanor Courtemanche’s ‘The Invisible Hand’ and British Fiction, 1818-1860, and Patrick Brantlinger’s *Fictions of State: Culture and Credit in Britain, 1694-1994*, especially the introductions of these books, for explorations of the intersection of suspicion of money capital and nineteenth-century British realist fiction.
characters perceive the abstract nature of the economy as immersive because it is equated with air and, as such, inescapable, reaching into all areas of modern life. This immersiveness complicates the possibility of capital conversion because it confuses the value of non-economic fields necessary to community formation. Without the mills of the earlier chapters to anchor the economy and its value, characters are left to a system that appears to have no logic or rules governing it.

In portraying the economy as a system without logic, Trollope reproduces anxieties about England’s economic systems, portraying community decay and atomized characters. In *The Way We Live Now*, as in *Shirley* and *North and South*, capital conversion remains necessary to individual and community stability, but unlike earlier novels, the increasingly powerful and abstract investment economy obscures relationships between—and the value of—different fields of capital because it overthrows previously established relationships between fields. Community formation, however, depends upon non-economic capitals. As a result, the only viable communities depicted in the novel are those that are tangentially, rather than directly, involved with the abstract economy: the domestic sphere and gentlemen’s clubs. Both the home and the club are closed communities whose borders can be policed, and both depend on gender and class: middle-class women make a home and only men of a certain class can join clubs. Furthermore, both spaces require attention to multiple forms of capital for entry and membership. Trollope indicates that if the home and the club are properly maintained, they are not subject to the fluctuations of the abstract economy, allowing for stability and the formation of interpersonal connections. For example, when the purveyor of the Beargarden Herr Vosner absconds with money, the club recovers quickly and is largely unaffected. When characters over-react to the presence of
the investment economy, they are unable to find success or a community. The characters Augustus Melmotte and Roger Carbury represent the extremes of over- and under-estimating the power of money. Examining these extremes enables us to better understand how and why gentlemen’s clubs and the domestic sphere can withstand the atomizing influence of the abstract, investment economy.

The difficulties posed by the abstract economy including atomization stem from two related effects: confusion over the values of other types of capital and their relation to economic capital, and the implication of land within the cash nexus. While Mary Poovey contends that it was “most Britons’ impression that, in its own way, capital was as substantial—as real—as land” (Introduction 3), Trollope’s *The Way We Live Now* refutes this impression and underscores the ideological importance of land to counter new economic practices. The emphasis on finance capitalism suggests a movement away from the centrality of land I discuss in earlier chapters, but the importance of estates and Melmotte’s desire to purchase Pickering, one of the country estates owned by the Longstaffe family, shows that land remained a significant component in legitimating the abstract economy by grounding it in the real, tangible world. Land becomes implicated in the abstract economy when negotiations between characters reveal land to be little more than a bargaining chip, challenging the symbolic value of land and reducing its ability to act as a foil for capitalism. Without clear rules dictating how older forms of value represented by the country estate interact with new financial systems, the novel risks revealing to readers the deterioration of stable class and gender hierarchies. Trollope represents this through the fraudulent purchase and destruction of Pickering, which was
“purchased,” but never paid for, by Melmotte. Rather than transforming the economic leaders in his novel into investment manor lords the way that I argue Charlotte Brontë and Elizabeth Gaskell create industrial manor lords, Trollope uses his failed investment lords to create a tension between the desirable stability and legitimacy of land and the impossibility of achieving that stability.

The repeated mentions of various estates and the importance to Roger Carbury, Augustus Melmotte, and others of retaining or gaining ownership of country estates illustrate how land and the idea of land remain central to constructions of Englishness, community, and a stable gender and economic hierarchy. While both Charlotte Brontë and Elizabeth Gaskell allude to the destruction of the natural world and violence against the land in their novels—“root up the copse? Horrible!” (Brontë 540)—it is portrayed as ultimately beneficial because it leads to the erection of a stable, industrial manor. The off-stage destruction of land in Brontë and Gaskell’s fiction occurs again in Trollope, but an English estate is destroyed, not an empty hollow. Importantly, this destruction does not make way for a new, stable economic hierarchy. Rather, the fraudulent purchase and destruction of Pickering indicate that the most recognizable symbol of English community—the English country house—has entered into the economic market and been unable to withstand the maelstrom: “The Pickering estate had been the joint property of him [Mr. Longstaffe] and his son [Dolly]. The house had been already pulled down, and now the purchaser offered bills in lieu of the purchase money!” (Trollope II.217). Rather

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48 Historians are still debating how frequently wealthy businessman like Melmotte actually purchased country estates because of the sheer expense not only of the initial purchase, but of ongoing support and maintenance. According to Tom Nicholas, country estates like the fictional Pickering needed to turn at least a small profit to support their upkeep (43). Thus, by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, land ownership was very much an economic burden rather than a boon.
than challenge the capitalist system, land becomes a part of it. The significance—that land is perhaps no different from any other commodity to be bought and sold, despite its ideological freight—makes the estate an impotent signifier of modern English community. The destruction of Pickering suggests destruction of gender and economic identity and stable community relations. Because it was the “joint property” of Mr. Longstaffe and Dolly, the sale of Pickering is a point of contention between father and son that fractures the already tenuous family relations. It also represents the destruction of patriarchal legacy and intergenerational power. The fracturing of intrafamilial relations spirals out into social interactions beyond the family, as Georgiana Longstaffe’s subplot illustrates.  

No great conflagration destroys Pickering, the fate of other earlier, mid-century estates in *Jane Eyre* and *Aurora Leigh* and one Elizabeth Gaskell considered for Thornton’s mill in *North and South*. However, the lack of spectacle belies the extent to which Pickering’s destruction is emasculating and destabilizing.

Land’s impotence is visible again in Roger’s failed courtship of Hetta Carbury. Despite his possession of an estate and how “a more manly man to the eye was never seen” (Trollope *TWWLN* I.51), Roger concludes the novel depicted as an impotent pseudo-uncle. Roger Carbury’s land’s slow leeching of economic resources from him, the nearness with which Carbury Manor came to being a commodity in Melmotte’s portfolio through Felix’s courtship attempts, and Roger’s impotence throughout the novel are symptoms of this violence against the land and the ideological role the land continued to hold in gender and

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49 Georgiana’s pursuit of a husband is brought to a point of desperation by her family’s financial problems, which leads her to the home of the Melmottes and an attempted mercenary union with Breghert. This union ultimately fails to occur because Georgiana is unable to fully emancipate herself from her previous social circles. The loss of her social capital because of her association with the Melmottes, in conjunction with her and her family’s anti-Semitism, mean that the lower value of Breghert’s strained financial circumstances will no longer – to her mind – balance.
economic hierarchies. I will address in the third section how this disempowered position paradoxically allows for an alternative circulation of wealth and capital. Yet the new circulation depends on the clash of tradition and modernity to reveal the limitations of a landed, entrenched patriarchy. By the publication of The Way We Live Now, abstract capitalist systems had infiltrated the majority of English life. The off-stage violence against the country estate—Melmotte’s theft and destruction of Pickering—symbolizes the violence capitalism does to the land and, through it, to English communities. The symbolic violence against the land and the way land becomes implicated in the capitalist system through Melmotte reduces land’s ability to stabilize individual and community identity as I argue it does for Brontë’s Moore and Gaskell’s Thornton. Without the symbolic value of land to support him, Roger Carbury’s ability to be a virile, economic leader in the traditional sense is undercut.

Land’s implication in the abstract economy rather than acting as a foil to it suggests a lack of understanding among the characters about the way the economy functions. Journalists’ and writers’ attempts to tutor the general public about the investment economy led to the publishing of research articles, fictional pieces, and self-help literature with the goal of curtailing swindlers and protecting the middle-class through education. The press made the stock market and rumors about the stock market more available, even as the study and alleged understanding of economics became more mathematically specialized and

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50 For example, W.E. Aytoun’s “The National Debt and the Stock Exchange” (1849) describes the origin of stock companies and how “the creation and transferable character of public funds, necessarily involved the existence of a class of men who deal in such securities” (134). Anonymous articles like “Stockbroking and the Stock Exchange” in Fraser’s Magazine (July 1876) tried to teach basic skills requisite for investing, such as how to read the stock reports in newspapers and what the various numbers and columns meant to prospective investors. Meanwhile, in Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine, Laurence Oliphant (July 1876) turned to fiction, anthropomorphizing a joint-stock company who then informs the audience about its existence and the way dishonest men can manipulate it.
distinctly less *accessible* to a general audience. The press built an imagined community of investors even as professional economists attempted to limit the community, the end result being that non-specialists fueled the market even as they were frequently investing blindly. This blind investing was exacerbated by the newspapers’ and periodicals’ placement of stock prices and economic news next to serialized fiction and poetry, which effaced distinctions and made it difficult for investors to ascertain if they should take heed of the published information: was it fact or fiction? As Mary Poovey explains, “this curious relationship between the financial community and the press, in which secrecy and misinformation were sometimes considered more valuable than accuracy, meant that the members of the public could not always find out what they wanted to know or know when they could trust what they read” (Introduction 25). Yet, as both *The Way We Live Now* and economic history indicate, understanding how the economy works is not necessary for participation in the economy, nor is the economy’s ability to function dependent upon investors’ understanding. In this way, investment capitalism parallels capital exchange in the novel. For Trollope, it appears that it is less important for characters to know the value of various capitals than it is for characters to continue exchanging, converting, and maintaining multiple fields because circulation prevents over-investing and stagnation. Furthermore, circulation forces participants to obey the unwritten rules of exchange, and

51 I am drawing on Benedict Anderson’s theorization of imagined communities and the role of the press in forming those communities: “It is performed in silent privacy, in the lair of the skull. Yet each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion. Furthermore, this ceremony is incessantly repeated at daily or half-daily intervals throughout the calendar. What more vivid figure for the secular, historically clocked imagined community can be envisioned? At the same time, the newspaper reader, observing exact replicas of his own paper being consumed by his subway, barbershop, or residential neighbours is continually reassured that the imagined world is visibly rooted in every day life” (35-36).
in doing so, forge interpersonal relationships and networks. Among the values exchanged by these networks is information in the form of gossip.

In *The Way We Live Now*, gossip is circulated by non-specialists: the “members of the public” from Poovey’s historical work are active participants in the exchanges of Trollope’s novel. The narrator relays the rumors, emotions, and the general knowledge of “the world at large,” “everyone,” and “they,” even while “everyone” and “they” are never quite defined. In addition to their function in the novel’s narrative, rumor, gossip, and “common knowledge” influence and are influenced by the economy, revealing the economy as an immersive system that shapes and is shaped by people’s daily interactions. As several critics before have done, I take the “everyone”/“they” to be the “world at large”/the “We” of Trollope’s title and to refer to the middle- and upper-class society on which he focuses. The majority of studies that address the ways “more was known, or said to be known” (Trollope I.344) in *The Way We Live Now* usually read it in terms of gossip and the spread of information. While this scholarship has focused on gossip generally, I want to emphasize the ways in which the novel’s gossip is frequently financial in nature. Repeatedly in the novel, “the world at large” buys and sells stocks and is active in the market based on (mis)information gleaned from the press and word of mouth. The fervor over Melmotte’s railroad stocks and company caused by gossip and (mis)information circulating in the print media exposes the world-at-large’s influence and

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52 For more in-depth explorations of Trollope’s narrator see work by Amanda Anderson (“Trollope’s Modernity”), Shirley Robert Letwin (*The Gentlemen in Trollope*), Monica C. Lewis (“Anthony Trollope and the Voicing of Victorian Fiction”), and Tamara Wagner (*Financial Speculation in Victorian Fiction*) among others.

53 Tara MacDonald links gossip and the economy in the Victorian novel, but she argues “that gossip in the novel, and in Victorian society more generally, constitutes its own economy wherein private information functions as treasured currency” (180) rather than exploring the economic impact of gossip.
susceptibility. As Matt Seybold explains, the world of finance “require[s] the collective voluntary suspension of disbelief. When we buy stocks, or even so much as make a bank deposit, we implicate ourselves in the illusion that a few slips of paper, a few drops of ink or a few lines of code are interchangeable with bushels of wheat, parcels of land and weeks of labour.” The investment economy, then, shapes and is shaped by people’s actions and shared beliefs. When gossip is printed, discussed, and acted upon, it influences the stock market, which in turn leads to more gossip being printed which may or may not be acted upon by those who read it. The abstract and unpredictable nature of rumor in the novel functions in much the same way that the economy does, forging momentary connections between people and fields. This is radically different from earlier industrial novels because investment capitalism offers no tangible economic node to observe. In Brontë and Gaskell, the action of the mill at the heart of each novel evidenced the state of the economy. Social gossip is alluded to, such as when Margaret is seen late at night with a “strange man” who is actually her brother, but this gossip is removed from the economic plots. Not so in Trollope. In Trollope, the estate’s status as a commodity means it can offer no information about the economy, and without a tangible check on whispers about those involved in the economy, we see gossip begin to have economic ramifications that land cannot mediate. Similarly, as will be explored in more detail in the following section, gossip and the exchange of information influences the perceived value of non-monetary objects (club memberships, ball tickets, et cetera), instigating exchange even when exact value is in question.
The Over/Under: Augustus Melmotte

Trollope depicts two very different reactions to the spread of (mis)information about the economy—and the resulting unknowability of values—in his characters Augustus Melmotte and Roger Carbury. Melmotte over-invests, whereas Roger underinvests in the financial realm. Neither of these responses allows the men to be successful members of a community or to develop interpersonal relationships in which they are respected. They are two of the loneliest characters in the novel alienated by their economic practices, which represent two extremes of engagement with modernity. To unpack their lack of success and general lack of community requires an examination of how they engage with different types of capital, followed by an analysis of each man’s social worlds and their positions within them.

As Trollope’s major character most immersed in the credit economy, Melmotte represents the worst effects caused by abstraction, which include blinders toward the different fields of capital. Active participants like Melmotte come to see the financial field as omnipotent in its pervasiveness and seek both to exploit and hide the lack of tangibility: if it surrounds everything, all other fields must give way to the financial realm. Paul Montague, for example, determines he cannot “rush away from these abstract speculations” (I.394) because there is nowhere he can go to escape from the abstract economy. Ayse Çelikkol reminds us that capitalism depends upon the paradox of constant expansion even as physical distances must be shrunk to provide goods and services in a timely manner (13). In The Way We Live Now, this paradox is present in the railroads, all of which would (theoretically) be built off-stage and in other countries with the intention of connecting

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54 Georgianna Longstaffe is also lonely and falls into many of the same traps that Melmotte and Carbury do regarding her attempted manipulation of capital and valuation of the marketplaces.
goods and people. While the South Central Pacific and Mexico Railway will physically connect the United States to Mexico, its stocks economically connect the United States to England. Neither the United States nor Mexico is part of the British empire, but their presence in the novel is both distantly off-stage, and as near as Melmotte’s offices in the City. *The Way We Live Now*’s status as both a realist novel and a satire mimics this paradox of distance because characters can be read as both individuals (near) and composites (distant), and thus, their interactions with the economy as both unique and stereotypical.

Melmotte’s opaqueness for much of the novel is indicative of his role as a composite character: readers are kept at a distance and rarely get insight into his thoughts until his schemes begin to break down, at which point his confusion and dashed hopes are revealed. The flash of insight and intimacy—the shrinking of distance—immediately preceding his death undercuts strictly considering him a composite even as he never quite attains individuality. Such character positioning calls for the necessity of considering Melmotte as a man attempting to position himself within a particularly English community, rather than more narrowly reading him as a stereotypical swindler, a possibly Jewish “other,” or a foreign threat of contagion. 55 Too-closely examining Melmotte in terms of character “type” obscures how the lack of tangibility of the economy gives the impression of the economy as pervasive and immersive because “type” suggests a preset character as opposed to an individual engaged in the economy. 56 Such obfuscation in turn makes it

55 For Melmotte as Jewish “other” see Freedman’s chapter 2 in *The Temple of Culture*; For Melmotte as swindler see Letwin’s chapter 10, *The Gentlemen in Trollope: Individuality and Moral Conduct*; and Skilton, “The Construction of Masculinities”; For Trollope as foreign, see Wagner’s introduction and conclusion in *Financial Speculation in Victorian Fiction*; and Van, “Ambivalent Speculations” among others.

difficult to detect the impact this impression has on individual men and their ability to participate within a community.

Melmotte’s inflated wealth hinders his understanding of how value transfers between fields, undergirding his belief in all other fields’ inferiority to the realm of finance and the City. Unable to see the value of other fields, Melmotte does not learn their rules. He cannot comprehend that objects such as a ticket to a ball, which represent social capital, may be more highly prized than money. Because he does not learn their rules, he cannot see their value or how the fields relate. This is ultimately his undoing. Melmotte’s limited understanding of capital conversion is displayed in several ways during the novel, the first of which is when he fails to realize until too late that his financial wealth does not excuse him from observing social mores and etiquette. Nor does his financial wealth give him automatic access to that knowledge. His failure in the social realm is seen immediately upon readers’ introduction to Melmotte when at Madame Melmotte’s ball, “considerable skill was shown in keeping the presence of his royal guest a secret from the host…[because Melmotte] would probably have been troublesome and disagreeable” (Trollope, TWWLN I.42). As the novel continues and Melmotte’s financial success and notoriety increase, he moves from possessing “awkwardness and incapacity” (I.88) to flagrant rudeness which others translate as a and disregard for social rules. Based upon Trollope’s other novels and An Autobiography, critics including David Skilton have concluded that for Trollope, “

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57 Whereas Shirley Robin Letwin views Melmotte’s misreading of situations as “fantasy” and argues that “Melmotte’s sense of reality was sound. What was missing was something subtler and more profound,” which is that fantasy is dangerous (176-177), there is no indication in the novel that Melmotte is acting on anything other than his interpretation of value which is less fantasy than it is a mistaken reading of relationships between economic fields.
‘manhood’ is achieved by reaching a state in which a character fits without effort into his family and the society of men and women, and, importantly into the masculine institutions of his fellows” (Skilton 130). In the novel, everyone attends—or wants to attend—Melmotte’s parties, but they go because of the social capital associated with being seen among the invited guests, rather than because they desire or perceive benefit in direct association with Melmotte himself.

His financial capital and its power thus have limits in terms of forging real social bonds, or even the effective performance of them. “It was pleasant to see…the sweet intimacy with which he [Melmotte] called his Lordship Alfred” (I.36) elicits nothing by disdain because the intimacy is unearned. Rather than Melmotte being perceived as “pleasant,” such behavior is interpreted by Lord Alfred and others as at best ignorant, but more likely intentionally vulgar. 58 As such, socialization for Melmotte has a price tag, but what the price tag is does not get specified. “‘It is all very well saying that it isn’t right’” The Duchess says to her son Lord Buntingford in response to his objection to dancing with Marie Melmotte, “‘but what are we to do about Alfred’s children’” (I.33). Lord Buntingford acquiesces to his mother for one dance and then disappears from the novel. The family trades a dance with a Lord for Melmotte managing the Grendall family’s debt, but only because the Melmotte “money was certain” (I.33). Yet even that certainty of money is not worth continued or consistent intimacy with the family, as Georgianna Longstaffe learns to her detriment. Everybody visits them, but nobody “condescends to come and stay with” the Melmottes, as Georgianna’s frenemy Lady Monogram chastises

58 Melmotte’s physical appearance as “a big man with large whiskers, rough hair, and…an expression of mental power on a harsh vulgar face” is one that the narrator describes as likely to “repel you by his presence” (Trollope, TWWLN I.80). The vulgarity of his face, especially his mouth and eyebrows, are noted throughout the novel (I.31, I.188, I.223, II.38, II.343, etc.).
her (I.302-304). *Going* suggests a temporary alliance to move capital around. *Staying* suggests an affinity for the “abominations” and their poor social abilities. Melmotte’s attempts at capital exchange across fields are negotiations that ultimately fall apart because the terms and agreements are undecipherable: no one is quite clear on how close to get to Melmotte, how long to interact with him, or the exact compensation for a dance, which leads to unstable situations.

Ultimately, Melmotte’s cash flow problem results from his lack of social and cultural capital and his lack of understanding about how fields of capital interact.59 His misunderstanding is somewhat ironic because of the way Melmotte understands and describes credit: “Gentlemen who don’t know the nature of credit, how strong it is,—as the air, —to buoy you up; how slight it is, —as a mere vapour, —when roughly touched, can do an amount of mischief of which they themselves don’t in the least understand the extent!” (Trollope, *TWWLN* I.379-380). Melmotte’s understanding of financial credit as abstract, powerful, and delicate could also be applied to the way social capital works in the novel, yet Melmotte fails to realize this. As Pierre Bourdieu describes, “In this game, the trump cards are the habitus, that is to say, the acquirements, the embodied, assimilated properties, such as elegance, ease of manner, beauty and so forth, and capital as such, that is, the inherited assets which define the possibilities inherent in the field” (149-150). Melmotte has not received the “education sentimentale” necessary to understand the value

59 Tara McGann argues persuasively that Melmotte is ultimately undone by the way narrative time slows down. “As cash flow problems beset Melmotte” time in the novel slows down and single days are spread over many chapters which is contrary to the first half of the novel when chapters contained days or even entire weeks or months (149-153). The temporal change McGann notes supports my reading of capital conversion because the meticulous cataloguing of events that slows the novel are all social in nature. The narrator conveys financial information quickly and concisely, if at all.
and power of *habitus* and effectively navigate society.\(^6^0\) Moments in the novel such as when “everyone” is attempting to get tickets that cannot be had for “love or money” (II.81) to Melmotte’s dinner and ball raise the question of how different forms of capital can be converted, even while they foreclose the possibility of Melmotte converting his own money into social cachet. In this instance, the only currency with any value is that of social capital.

When Melmotte does focus attention on the social rather than the financial, he does so at the wrong times and in the wrong manner. As rumors of his forgeries begin to spread prior to the Emperor’s dinner, rather than go into the City for work, he spends the day “pottering about among the chairs and benches in the banqueting room” (II.68). This leads even his supporters to criticize him because “at such a time as this and in such a crisis as this, he should have been in the City” (II.68), indicating again his failure to achieve acceptance from homosocial institutions he seeks to join. It also indicates Melmotte’s misunderstanding of capital conversion. His financial wealth is not social wealth despite people wanting to attend his parties, and his great parties translate into neither social nor financial success. While, as Denise Lovett explores, possession of a ticket to Melmotte’s parties indicates the possessor’s social capital, it does not indicate Melmotte’s (Lovett 700). Building on Lovett, it is the accumulated social power of the other invited guests that makes the tickets desirable and this knowledge is spread through gossip and rumor. Minor characters with substantial social capital such as The Duchess attend Melmotte’s parties in the hopes of inducing financial assistance for dilettante family members of her extended family. Other characters, such as Georgianna Longstaffe’s friend Lady Monogram attend

\(^{60}\) Pierre Bourdieu borrowed “*education sentimentale*” from Gustave Flaubert’s novel by the same name: [continued from the above quotation] “These trump cards determine not only the style of play, but also the success or failure in the game of the young people concerned, in short, the whole process Flaubert calls *education sentimentale*” (149-150).
Melmotte’s parties in the hopes of being seen in the same company as The Duchess et al. The majority of his guests, then, are interested and invested in other guests, not in the Melmotte family who are little more than part of the landscape for them. Despite his genius for finance and abstract trading, Melmotte fails to realize this. His most infamous transgressions among his “peers” occur in Parliament when he does not observe the formalities of Parliament such as removing his hat and addressing fellow members by district rather than by name (II.180-181). When he returns to Parliament after dinner intoxicated and falls onto Mr. Beauchamp Beauclerk (II.318), Melmotte’s actions are interpreted by the men in attendance (and those who hear of it secondhand) as disrespectful to the sacred institutions of England, something no true man, let alone an Englishman, would do. Melmotte, of course, is not an Englishman, but he aspires to be. Such flagrant disregard for a gentleman’s code of conduct alienates him even further. The over-indulgence occurs when Melmotte has already fallen financially and immediately precedes his suicide by poison. Yet the reaction to his audacity and behavior at Parliament that night is considered as in keeping with his character as opposed to being the last gasp (so to speak) of a fallen, broken man even though all the witnesses know Melmotte is undone. Other characters’ interpretation of Melmotte’s actions and their lack of empathy, understanding, or even consideration that perhaps Melmotte’s behavior is the result of something other than his inflated ego stresses Melmotte’s failure to effectively cultivate social capital or to participate in capital conversion with fields of capital outside of the financial field.

Part of Augustus Melmotte’s failure to cultivate social capital is his refusal to observe social rules or to make himself agreeable company, which directly contributes to his downfall. Contrary to many other men in the novel, Melmotte is portrayed as
unattractive and unkempt, undercutting his ability to represent an English masculine ideal predicated upon restraint and adherence to social norms. Melmotte “scowl[s]…from under his bushy eyebrows” (I.32) in such a way that those “who had many dealings with him often found [the bushy eyebrows] very disagreeable” (I.218) and “the countenance and appearance of the man were on the whole unpleasant” (I.31). In many of his novels, Trollope portrays normative masculinity as a combination of appearance, behavior, and acceptance within homosocial circles (Skilton 130) which corroborates John Tosh’s assessment of mid-century masculinity. Homosocial acceptance builds community, at least among men. Nearly all the descriptions of Melmotte undercut his gentlemanliness within the novel, casting a negative light on the character. His physical appearance is hyperbolically masculine: “Melmotte himself was a large man, with bushy whiskers and rough thick hair, with heavy eyebrows, and a wonderful look of power about his mouth and chin” (I.31). The seeming contradiction between a hyperbolic masculinity resulting in a character falling short of manliness is less paradoxical when we consider the hyperbolic aspects of Melmotte’s gendering as both a misunderstanding of the role of an English gentleman and a distraction from Melmotte’s shortcomings. His over-performance, which increases as he gains power, is an attempt to distract from the lack of substance undergirding the man and the South Central Pacific and Mexico Railway company. Both man and company are full of nothing but hot air: in a word, inflation.

Melmotte’s gendering and physical presence in the novel reflect Trollopian anxieties about the effects of financial capital and inadequate transfers between fields had on men. Anxiety about eroded social standards is evident in Melmotte’s physical appearance. Like the inflated stock of the South Central Pacific and Mexico railway,
Melmotte’s physical size and presence grows larger as the novel unfolds. Jonathan Freedman links Melmotte’s embodiment with speculation—“the swelling of money by illegitimate means” (85)—arguing it represents the threat of consumption, “the swelling of the body through the assiduous pursuit of pleasure” (85) that culminates when he tears a document he forged into tiny pieces and eats it. I, too, read the inflated body of the “bloated swindler” (Trollope, *TWWLN* I.221) as a metonym for his “inflated glory” (I.428) and his inflated bank account, but my emphasis rather than on the threat of consumption is on the apparent contradiction between the economy’s lack of tangibility and Melmotte’s girth. By displacing the lack of concreteness in the economy onto Melmotte’s corporeal body, Trollope temporarily distracts readers from the economic abstractions in which Melmotte participates, a move that mimics the distraction of the novel’s other characters. By making Melmotte a metonym for the economic, Trollope emphasizes the inflation to which an abstract economy is susceptible. Similar to Brontë’s Robert Moore and Gaskell’s John Thornton, Augustus Melmotte’s physical descriptions parallel his economic endeavors. Contrary to Moore and Thornton, rather than be solid and hard like the stones of their mills, Melmotte is bloated, inflated, and taints the air around him with the false promise of inflated bank accounts: “money was the very breath of Melmotte's nostrils, and therefore his breath was taken for money” (I.325). When his breath leaves him with the assistance of prussic acid, he is no longer “bloated” but is instead simply “the big-framed man” (II.343). Mr. Croll, Melmotte’s clerk, makes the following assessment about his late employer:

‘He vas passionate, and did lose his 'ead; and vas blow'd up vid bigness.’ Whereupon Croll made an action as though he were a frog swelling himself to the dimensions of an ox. ‘'E bursted himself, Mr. Fisker. 'E vas a great man; but the
greater he grew he was always less and less vise. 'E ate so much that he became too fat to see to eat his vittles’ (II.449).

Because Melmotte does not have solid wealth and tangible financial capital in the ways that Moore and Thornton do, his physical presence and body must be larger than theirs to stand in place of tangible wealth and tangible ties to the economy (i.e. a mill). By focusing on Melmotte’s embodied presence, Trollope paradoxically emphasizes how empty Melmotte’s wealth, investments, and speculations are. His body is not only a metonym for consumption, but an invitation to contrast the corporality of his girth with the ephemerality of credit. And, for a time, Melmotte’s embodiment succeeds in disguising the insubstantial nature of the investment economy. He obscures the fact that he contributes no real value or, as George Rae wrote about “kite flying” (a practice of “floating” bills of exchange), Melmotte has “bills drawn against crops in expectancy and values in the air” (Rae 56). The joint deflation of man and stock destroys the illusion of wealth and, in Karl Marx’s words, it all “melts into air.”

During Melmotte’s inflation, Lord Alfred’s unceasing desire to kick Melmotte is a point of comic relief, but it also functions as a litmus test for how far beyond the acceptable bounds of propriety Melmotte moves. Like Melmotte’s vulgarity, Lord Alfred’s reaction to it is displayed from the outset: in response to being called by his Christian name, “Lord Alfred had a remnant of feeling left, and would have liked to kick him [Melmotte]” (I.36). Lord Alfred’s “remnant of feeling” gestures towards eroded standards among English men by suggesting that at one time he would not have accepted such a man as Melmotte into his life. Later, in the scene with the Chinese Emperor in the chapter “The India Office”, the narrator notes that “the more arrogant [Melmotte] became the more vulgar he was, till
even Lord Alfred would almost be tempted to rush away to impecuniosity and freedom” (Trollope, *TWWLN* II.35). Melmotte’s blindness to social etiquette’s importance in this scene is displayed both in his insistence he be introduced to the Emperor at the India Office and voicing his belief that “I think myself quite as great a man as any Prince” (II.42). Fittingly, it is Lord Alfred’s son Dolly who delivers the blow that deflates man and stock, which gestures toward the tension between concrete and abstract: Melmotte’s abstract investments effect how characters interpret his physical girth, and Dolly’s “kick” dismantles investments and girth.

**The Over/Under: Roger Carbury**

Melmotte’s social positioning and self-promotion is in direct contrast with that of Roger Carbury. Because of this, despite the modern elements of the novel that scholars such as Amanda Anderson have explored, *The Way We Live Now* is often read as “a nostalgic response to a nation and culture into which speculation had already deeply penetrated, a longing for the old world of Roger Carbury and a removal of speculative activity from the domestic to the foreign” (Van 78). Yet, if *The Way Live Now* is “a longing for the old world,” the depiction of Roger Carbury in the novel demonstrates that the old world is no longer viable. While Roger appears to fit effortlessly into his social milieu, his total refusal to engage with the abstract credit economy leaves him comparatively impoverished and a quaint relic of older times. Roger may be a responsible landowner and the embodiment of

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61 The Chinese Emperor functions as a convenient plot device and a point of collision between different fields of value. England’s best representatives of different fields are introduced or presented to the Emperor, but Melmotte and finance capitalism takes a starring role, which is ultimately a national embarrassment when he’s revealed as a fraud. For more on the Chinese Emperor see Elsa Nettles, “Wharton and Trollope” and Shirley Robin Letwin.

62 A. Anderson argues that Trollope’s construction of character is based on the importance to Trollope of honesty, which is in tension with the systemic dishonesty present in *The Way We Live Now*. 
duty and quiet noblesse oblige, but this very quietness costs him the spectacle necessary to his standing in society and the maintenance of social connections.\textsuperscript{63} Roger’s apparent quietism understates how he is remarkable as the only major character to consistently read and understand traditional rules of capital transference.\textsuperscript{64} We see this most clearly in the guidance he gives to other characters, such as when he counsels Father Barham about how to be more successful both socially and vocationally. Despite his clear sight for others, Roger is passed over as both an adviser and a love interest. Multiple characters ask Roger for advice—most notably Paul Montague and Lady Carbury—only to ignore it. Roger is unable to win Hetta Carbury’s affections and ultimately ends up an impotent pseudo-uncle to Hetta and her children by his former friend and rival-in-love. Roger passes his name and estate to the next generation, but doesn’t reproduce biologically suggesting that in the terms of the novel, only Roger’s configuration of economic and social status is valuable. Much like his fate in the novel, Roger Carbury is frequently dismissed by critics. Studies of masculinity and economics centered on Trollope’s novel most often focus on Augustus Melmotte or the idle young men of the Beargarden with their paper IOUs.\textsuperscript{65} Roger Carbury, however, despite his critical obscurity embodies contemporary fears about the credit economy, its enervating effects on men, and the difficulties of attaining a sense of community in the face of abstraction. Roger Carbury’s ability to navigate non-financial

\textsuperscript{63} Regenia Gagnier’s tracing of how economic man transitioned from man-as-producer to man-as-consumer during the nineteenth century helps to explain why Roger’s lack of spectacle and conspicuous consumption hurts others’ perception of him in spite of his other talents.

\textsuperscript{64} Melmotte, as discussed earlier in this chapter, does not understand the complexities of how fields of capital interact and why, sometimes, values cannot be transferred. Georgiana Longstaffe fails to see the difference between people going to visit the Melmottes and staying with the Melmottes, which costs her social capital.

\textsuperscript{65} See Freedman, \textit{The Temple of Culture}; Letwin, \textit{The Gentlemen in Trollope}; Markwick, Morse, and Gagnier, \textit{The Politics of Gender in Anthony Trollope’s Novels}; Markwick, \textit{New Men in Trollope’s Novels}; and Slakey, “Melmotte’s Death: A Prism of Meaning in \textit{The Way We Live Now}.” In all of these works, and others, Carbury is mentioned in passing (if at all) and relegated to being nothing more than a metonym for Old England.
fields of capital and social situations paradoxically does not create a community, as evidenced by the tension in his relationships with other characters. From this paradox, however, and despite his impotence in the novel, Roger creates potential new pathways for the circulation of wealth and capital even as these new pathways leave him behind at the novel’s close.

Roger’s control of his finances and his debt-free life contribute to the impression of membership within a community even as it injures him. “Carbury of Carbury,” we are told, “had never owed a shilling that he could not pay, or his father before him” (I.50). To avoid debt, particularly in The Way We Live Now, should indicate good character, but readers are quickly informed “His orders to the tradesmen at Beccles were not extensive, and care was used to see that the goods supplied were neither overcharged nor unnecessary. The tradesmen, consequently, of Beccles did not care much for Carbury of Carbury” (I.50). The comedic element of this moment masks the inherent discord in it: the nameless tradesmen would rather risk not being paid by a debtor with a large order than to have the hard cash of a small order from Roger. As Jill Rappoport discusses in regard to several of Trollope’s other novels, “financial obligations are painful and emasculating” (651), and so Roger Carbury’s fiscally responsible life should endear him to everyone, particularly the tradesmen who always receive payment from him. Yet, the narrator indicates that Roger’s debt-free life is considered equally unfortunate because it alienates the community of which he is reputed to be a part. Only “perhaps one or two of the elders among [the tradesmen] entertained some ancient reverence for the family” (Trollope, TWWLN I.50, emphasis added). It is only perhaps the older generation who respects Roger Carbury’s

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66 See the introduction to Aeron Hunt’s Personal Business for more exploration of the business and character.
debt-free life. Even then, the respect given to Roger stems from “some ancient reverence for the family” rather than Roger’s financial practices, suggesting Roger’s individual insignificance in the community even as it speaks to the importance of tradition and the Carbury family name to the community.

Roger’s commitment to taking care of his land—the luxury which “of all luxuries is the most costly” (I.48)—and fulfilling his duties without extravagance means that even though “there had been no ruin, —no misfortune…the Squire of Carbury Hall had become a poor man simply through the wealth of others” (I.48). In the same way that debt once indicated a character flaw, Roger Carbury’s comparative poverty is now suspect. While Roger Carbury is not actually poor and readers meet characters of smaller incomes with greater financial challenges than his, those characters are not called “poor”: Roger Carbury is the only individual character described as “poor.” Even if Trollope is being ironic in the use of this epithet, it is worth considering the uniqueness of any character possessing an epithet, ironic or otherwise. Tamara S. Wagner argues that authors “helped to drive an ongoing vilification of commercial acquisition as the nouveau riche’s vulgarity was rejected in favor of… the symbolic and cultural capital of the shabby genteel” (24). Roger may not be a member of the “shabby genteel” like the Hale family in Elizabeth Gaskell’s North and South, but his financial practices and refusal to engage in the abstract, credit economy make his position within the community uncertain. As I showed in chapter two, the Hales are actively engaged in the industrial economy, but Roger refuses to engage in the investment economy that surrounds him. He knows how to behave socially, but not how the social links to the financial. Thus, in The Way We Live Now, the dynamic between

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67 Yes, Roger’s friend the Bishop was popular with “the poor” but this is an abstract group whom we do not see in the novel.
Augustus Melmotte and Roger Carbury is more ambiguous than Wagner’s binary. Melmotte is punished, but Roger is not rewarded, questioning the value of traditional capitals that Roger prizes.

Roger Carbury’s ability to read and navigate between traditional fields of capital appears in his attitude and opinions about the Melmotte family, his wide-range of associates, his refusal to use credit, and his reputation for wisdom among other characters. From the beginning, Roger is skeptical and censorious of Melmotte. When asked if he’s heard of him, Roger replies to the great dismay of Lady Carbury, “I have heard of the great French swindler who has come over here, and who is buying his way into society” (Trollope, *TWWLN* I.67). Roger, unlike Lady Carbury and many others, understands that even if “everyone visits them” (I.67) they are not accepted into society.68 The importance of Roger’s refusal to engage with the Melmotte family despite “everyone” visiting them is not that he knows that Melmotte is a swindler—this is an open secret in the novel. Rather, Roger correctly reads the limitations of Melmotte’s ability to “buy his way into society” and he does so prior to Georgiana Longstaffe’s lesson that people visit, but do not stay, with the Melmottes. The limitation that Roger sees, but “everyone,” especially those who support Melmotte for Parliament, fail to recognize, is that Melmotte cannot infiltrate very deeply into society because financial capital and social capital are not a one-for-one even exchange. Roger may under estimate the importance of the financial realm, but he recognizes that capital conversion is more complicated than stock trading: it is not a simple

68 Those injured by Melmotte are largely an unseen presence in the novel – the shareholders of the Railroad stock. Of those depicted, no one else’s losses are quite as grand as Melmotte’s, but the Longwood family’s Pickering estate is destroyed, and they are not paid, and Breghert loses a great deal of money even if it does not ruin him.
case of giving X for Y. To move into the social realm, Melmotte would need to cultivate relationships with others beyond those whose time he can buy, something at which Roger is adept. Roger recognizes that Melmotte misses: hosting social events does not earn you a recognized place in the community. Like purchasing a place in Parliament, playing the host is an immediate and temporary outlay of cash and not a long-term investment in the community. Investing in the community requires a larger network than that of impoverished aristocrats.

Coupled with Roger’s sense of duty, his cross-class network provides him ample experience in how communities interact with different fields of capital. Similar to the jostling of minor and major characters that Alex Woloch describes in *The One vs. the Many*, the jostling of many different classes within Roger’s story is a key source of his knowledge and gives value to his advice, even as the different classes and characters threaten to overwhelm him. He is the only character in the novel who converses with characters above, below, and equal to his social standing. Roger works in his fields, follows politics, debates religion with Father Barham, counsels Ruby Ruggles and her grandfather Daniel Ruggles, attends dinners with the Longstaffes, and is generally known to both major and minor characters. Melmotte, by contrast, is solitary and ignorant of gossip and what his servants witness. To use an apt economic metaphor, Roger has a diverse portfolio of social investments. Because of its well-rounded nature, he is more well-informed and will not suffer the risk of over-investing in one area. The blending of many-into-one that takes place

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69 I omit discussion of cultural capital for the most part because social and financial capital receive the majority of attention in the novel. That being said, cultural capital is also not a one-for-one exchange and complicates the already fraught relationships between fields. Lady Carbury’s attempts at a literary career and trading conversation and flirtation for positive reviews of her book illustrate an attempted exchange between the social and the cultural, which never quite works out in her favor as much as Lady Carbury desires.
with Roger creates the impression of steadiness of character through his grounding in the tangible, everyday world of the novel that the majority of other characters lacks and gives Roger the reputation for wisdom and knowledge, making him a desirable adviser. And yet, Roger’s diverse social investments belie the extent to which Roger’s communities are atomizing. Roger is able to forge interpersonal relationships, but these individual relationships do not cohere into a community, and the other parties do not necessarily respect him.

The consistency with which Roger’s advice is sought out and then ignored indicates this ambiguity of positioning and contributes to his ineffectiveness within the novel. Roger’s ineffectiveness is both a cause and effect of his inability to fully participate in a community. When it comes to advice and counsel, he is a Cassandra, bound to be ignored. Lady Carbury seeks Roger’s advice regarding her son, her finances, and her daughter, but unfailingly ignores it. Roger’s advice about Felix is simple: Lady Carbury should “refuse to have anything to do with him while he continues in such courses [drinking and gambling]” (Trollope, TWWLN I.60) because Roger believed that “the remedy for the evil ought to be found in the mother’s conduct rather than the son’s” (I.66). Roger suggests that Felix be sent to the colonies, a suggestion which “increasingly came to [be seen as]...reassuringly honest and virile for youths likely to be tempted by London’s dissipations” (Sanders 58). Lady Carbury’s avoidance of Roger’s sound advice nearly ruins

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70 I follow Raymond Williams theorization of knowable communities in which they are built on “a matter of consciousness, and of continuing, as well as day-to-day experience” of members within a delimited geographic location (166).
71 Roger is perhaps not being entirely fair here: Lady Carbury appears to be deft at handing finances and works hard to support her family, playing the necessary games and exchanging social capital for cultural capital that brings her limited financial capital. Felix, an adult, should be held accountable for his own actions, which ultimately see him mildly disfigured and exiled from England.
her and causes her to turn to Mr. Broune for assistance. Mr. Broune echoes Roger, but Lady Carbury *listens* to Mr. Broune. Mr. Broune’s success to influence change where Roger failed, while seemingly minor, implies changing hierarchies and capital relations. Mr. Broune is a newspaper editor, an intellectual, and a bachelor. Roger owns a country estate, represents an ancient family, and is in the prime of life. The differences between the two men’s situations with Roger possessing more of the outward indicators of success and inhabiting the role of a proper English gentleman indicates a system in flux in which traditional markers of gender and status retain their symbolic weight, even as they are less influential in the community at large. Like the “ancient reverence for the family” that the tradesmen have, Roger’s failure here draws a distinction between the value of Roger’s position and his individual influence within the community. While at one time, the value of Roger’s position may have influenced the community, “the way we live now” requires a different type of relationship. Mr. Broune succeeds because of his personal relationship with Lady Carbury and because he has a more modern form of capital as an intellectual, not because of his status within a traditional community or hierarchy. Lady Carbury recognizes the value of Mr. Broune’s capital, and yet his position in London is what originally enabled the personal relationship. It is not an either/or, but rather a both/and, which is what Roger does not seem to understand. Success depends upon one’s position and development of interpersonal relationships by engaging strategically with modern elements in the world. It depends on tradition and engaging with the new capitalist economy since that is an inescapable component of “the way we live now.”

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See Martin Danahay’s *Gender at Work in Victorian Culture: Literature, Art and Masculinity*. 
Yet it is important to note that the characters most adept at engaging with modern forms of capital and exchange without relying on speculation (Fisker, Marie Melmotte, Mrs. Hurtle) do not remain in England. They disappear off-stage, presumably to continue their successful endeavors in other countries (specifically America). While not my focus, the specter of the global economy haunts this study and is particularly present in *The Way We Live Now*. England’s failure to create communities and circulations of capital results in economic capital flowing elsewhere. The value of individual capitals is indeterminate, but a mass exodus of finances suggests future problems for England. What, then, of those who remain in England? *The Way We Live Now* showcases that in modernity there just aren’t that many great options for a nice marriageable girl and that this is a problem for English communities. If Hetta is—as critics including Annette Van have argued—representative of good, wholesome England, then her union with Paul should be cause for concern. With the economically successful characters leaving England and the bumbling Paul Montague the successful suitor for good, wholesome England, it becomes questionable how England will remain dominant and competitive in an abstract, capitalist economy with the specter of its global scale ever-present on the novel’s edges. Today’s audience continues to find Paul a disappointing match for Hetta to the degree that in the 2001 BBC adaptation of the novel, the writers send Paul to America to work physically on the railroad and write letters to Hetta about his concerns for the company. The BBC’s writers’ attempt to redeem Paul and turn him into a new man full of power and vitality glosses over Trollope’s strategic construction of Paul as unappetizing. While the narrator attempts to redeem and vindicate Paul, claiming that his follies “will be forgiven him” (I.441) and that his atrocious behavior

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73 Breghert is a successful and ethical businessman, but while he does not disappear to another country, he does retreat to regroup from his losses with Melmotte.
towards both Mrs. Hurtle and Hetta Carbury is due to “an aversion to the giving of pain” (1.442), such repeated defenses are evidence that the narrator, and likely Trollope, are uncomfortable with Paul’s bumbling success. Paul is cowardly and inept in his relationships, both professional and personal. And yet, Paul wins the hand and heart of Hetta Carbury over Roger. Despite being impulsive and a bad businessman, Paul, unlike Roger, is willing to engage in the abstract economy in limited ways, despite (or perhaps because of) his limited understanding of it. Trollope may not approve of the investment economy, but he makes it equally clear that abstaining completely is not the solution. Whether one participates or abstains, community appears to be beyond characters’ grasps. The men of the novel circulate like so many atomized stocks and IOUs. They move from situation to situation without accumulating at one place. Constant exchange and circulation make a community impossible and so does avoiding exchange. Both reactions appear to stem from confusion about the value of different types of capital. Melmotte overvalues financial capital. Roger acknowledges the need for money, but dismisses the abstract economy and prizes traditional configurations of capital. It is significant that Melmotte and Roger never meet. Their physical and financial distance, with other characters sliding between them, represent the spectrum of possible positions across fields of capital. If Roger and Melmotte are two poles of English middle-class manhood (country//city; gentleman//trade), Paul is a midway point between the two. While this does not make Paul

74 Paul ends up involved with Melmotte through Fisker, but he is involved with Fisker because he had already made poor investments in the United States and did not have enough money to pull completely out of involvement with Fisker. These poor financial decisions, and his time in the States spent trying to fix them, are the catalysts for how he ends up involved with Mrs. Hurtle.
necessarily desirable or a pillar of the community, it does mean that he is able to survive Melmotte’s literal demise and Roger’s fading into obscurity.\(^{75}\)

Trollope’s ambivalence about rewarding Paul is seen in the returned focus to Roger’s role in the house and Roger’s interactions with Hetta. Paul may have won the courtship battle to become her husband, but he fades into the background in the final chapters. Roger, despite his ineffectiveness for the majority of the novel, orchestrates Hetta’s removal from London to Carbury, temporarily leaving Paul behind. (II.468). Roger then arranges his affairs and dictates to Hetta the terms under which he, she, and Paul shall live. Paul is not consulted by Hetta or Roger. Hetta agrees to Roger’s terms independently of Paul, but Roger’s assumed position of family patriarch is entirely dependent on Hetta’s cooperation (II.472). Even as Trollope appears unable to imagine a successful, strong English community in the face of a pervasive abstract economy, he creates a new family configuration and circulation of wealth with Hetta at the center. We see in this configuration echoes of Brontë and Gaskell: the power to determine who lives where and to control money stays with the women in Trollope’s novel, whereas Brontë and Gaskell return this power to their male heroes. In keeping women in power, Trollope anticipates Oliphant’s set up in *Hester*.

*At Home and in the Beargarden*

Deborah Morse and others have argued that Trollope’s pessimism about the state of the world is palpable in his inability to propose any solution other than a complete retreat into the domestic. Such arguments rightly focus on the expulsion of capitalists at the end of the

\(^{75}\) Deborah Morse in her article “The Way He Thought Then: Modernity and the Retreat of the Public Liberal in Anthony Trollope’s *The Way We Live Now*, 1873)” argues that readers’ dissatisfaction with Trollope’s novel and the modern feel of Trollope’s novel lies in “his vision of the wreckage of public life—and the private life as salvage” (2).
novel contrasted with the family unit of Roger, Hetta, and Paul. Yet in doing so, critics gloss over why this domestic space works when no other household in the novel withstands “the way we live now.” For Trollope, a retreat to the domestic at the end works not because it represents a “separate sphere” but because it functions as a permeable membrane: some elements of the traditional and the modern can enter, while other elements are kept out. The only other space to function this way in the novel is that of the gentlemen’s club, making that the other viable option for community and interpersonal connection. Despite obvious differences, both spaces depend on class and the appropriate performance of gender roles in conjunction with limited engagement with the abstract economy. Gentlemen’s clubs such as the Beargarden rely on a complex balance of social and financial capital. The successful home similarly relies on tradition tempered by modernity. Overly traditional homes in which the marriage or financial market is too emphasized ultimately fail, and clubs appear to be the only place bloated fortunes have no power. Only by policing the entry of clubs to maintain their balance of tradition and modernity, and reconfiguring the domestic to have women at the center of circulations of wealth and people does the home provide a viable retreat from “the way we live now” and a proto-model of other potential communities.

In the Beargarden, ideas of investment are central to the functioning of the group, but the primary field is that of social capital, rather than financial. This is seen clearly when Melmotte’s situation is juxtaposed with the environment of the Beargarden. Melmotte’s doom, which comes at the unlikely hands of Dolly Longstaffe, could have been avoided through the cultivation of habitus, of social capital, by observing etiquette and mores. Dolly knows that Melmotte does not have the money for Pickering: “I don't know why Mr.
Melmotte is to be different from anybody else,’ [Dolly] had said to his father. ‘When I buy a thing and don't pay for it, it is because I haven't got the tin, and I suppose it's about the same with him’” (II.69). But it is precisely because Melmotte is different in social status, if not in his motivations for withholding payment, that Dolly speaks out. This behavior is radically different from Dolly’s actions in the Beargarden among his peer group. In the Beargarden, the circulation of paper IOU’s is (somewhat) regulated by social etiquette and understandings of honor, duty, and class. Only by breeching the unspoken-but-understood social laws of the club does a man become a social outcast, something the reader witnesses happen to Sir Felix Carbury over the course of the novel. Sir Felix’s ostracism builds as he first pays an outsider in IOU’s, second accuses Miles Grendall of cheating, and third boasts about his “heartless” treatment of Marie Melmotte (II.434). Thus, in the Beargarden, cheating (or forging) is not cause for ostracism but accusing someone of cheating is. A gentleman does not behave at Marie as Sir Felix does: being a rake is largely passé. Social rules prevail. Sir Felix may have lost his social group, but (with the exception of Melmotte) no one seeks payment from him. The unspoken agreement between the men of the Beargarden regarding debt and paper IOU’s, particularly concerning patience and lack of forced payment, is precisely the sort of congenial, social capital-based agreement Melmotte needed with the Longstaffes. It also indicates that the impoverished aristocrats hold power over Melmotte, for all his money, because patience can only be granted from a position of privilege and the comfort of a long-standing situation. Economic capital is not omnipotent. Melmotte’s failure to develop the social capital that would secure patience led to him being pressured for payment, which directly influenced his fall and suicide. Without a social group to belong to, Melmotte is left exposed.
The Beargarden details how fields of capital interact in clubs and Lord Alfred’s club The Peripatetics, which “Melmotte was anxious to get into,” (I.36) appears to follow the same unwritten rules in which the social prevails. Melmotte’s entry is refused because he does not, or perhaps refuses to, understand and invest in the social institutions and practices of his (would be) peer group. Such actions reflect a man unable to inspire a community or lead others effectively as do characters in Trollope’s other novels, including John Gray or Plataganet Palliser who act both as social and economic role models for their communities and readers. As a result, despite his wealth, Melmotte is not given special treatment by The Peripatetics: “it was decided that the club could not go beyond its rule, and could only admit Mr. Melmotte out of his regular turn as soon as he should occupy a seat in the House of Commons” (I.421). While Melmotte’s brief financial success and subsequent fall suggests an overall erosion of England’s standards for what constitutes a proper man and community leader, his inability to gain membership to a club suggests the world is not so dismal as Trollope would have readers believe. He was not admitted “out of his regular turn” to the club he desired to join, because the “noble lord” whose approval was needed is “old fashioned” and would not grant it despite the desire of other members (I.421). Melmotte’s brief financial success occurs because the other men in the novel allow it and support it with their participation, even if they do not allow him entry to their social ranks. Such distinctions parallel the domestic situations in the novel: admittance occurs only after the proper courtship period when a man invests his time and energy, and proves he understands the social law. Trollope does not depict a solution or way to combat eroding standards, but he clearly illustrates the limitations and dangers of holding up men like Melmotte and calling upon them as leaders. Trollope’s illustration of this is concentrated
in the revelation that the power of Melmotte’s money only extends so far into the social realm. It can give him access to society, but it cannot shore up his standing among the men he desires to have as his peers.

Like Melmotte himself, his domestic home is overly invested in the financial realm and as such cannot serve as a retreat, nor can it survive the novel. Because it is overexposed and unable to effectively sort and balance tradition and modernity, the home is in disarray to Melmotte’s detriment. We see traditional patriarchal power structures actively subverted, but no new system replaces it: Melmotte’s daughter and his servants deceive him and regularly withhold information from him.76 “In that house,” the narrator says in regard to the Melmottes’ servants, “nobody ever told anything to Monsieur” (Trollope, *TWWLN* I.233) showing that financial capital is not domestic capital. Melmotte’s frequent absence from his home, coupled with his repulsive nature and behavior, cause his servants’ reticence toward him. That reticence enables Marie to meet secretly with Felix Carbury and to plan their elopement, expressly against Melmotte’s wishes. A well-ordered home was essential to “winning social recognition as an adult, fully masculine person” (Tosh 3) and so Melmotte’s lack of domestic control calls his masculinity into question.77 Marie remains one of the few characters who consistently and stubbornly goes against Melmotte’s wishes. Surviving the physical trauma and abuse, Marie escapes her father and England with a fortune to her name (in the company of Mrs. Hurtle, who also winds up with money),

76 For the importance of domesticity to masculinity during the middle part of the nineteenth century, see John Tosh’s *A Man’s Place*. While *The Way We Live Now* was written and published in the overlap between what Tosh identifies as a “domestic masculinity” and Deane’s “imperial masculinity” and does not fall neatly into either date range, the importance of patriarchal control within the home remains constant.

77 While masculinity during the Victorian period is often contradictory—men must be both virile and restrained, caring but distant—the inability to control one’s own household remained a sign of failed masculinity throughout the century. For more on this contradiction, see Herbert Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities: Manhood and Masculine Poetics in Early Victorian Literature and Art*. 
suggesting new women-centric pathways for the circulation of wealth. Melmotte’s failure to control his daughter contributes to his fall, and his use of violence demonstrates his failure to inhabit an appropriate domestic role and relation to his daughter. Had she signed over the money he placed in her keeping for just such an emergency, the novel suggests, he would have been able to hold on long enough to put all to right. Lack of connection and domestic capital cost him everything. Drawing on John Tosh’s work on masculinity and homosociality, even if Melmotte did not earn affection from his family, control over his family and domestic space would have earned him social capital. More interested in his financial “house” in the City, Melmotte manages his domestic house poorly.

Melmotte’s market-minded reading of the relationship between rank and money contributes to over-exposing his domestic sphere. Melmotte’s attempts to marry his daughter to a nobleman is telling in this regard. Melmotte tells Felix Carbury that “money expects money” (Trollope, *TWWLN* I.222). Felix is incredulous, and his incredulity is explained much later by the narrator during the justification for Lord Nidderdale’s renewed suit to Marie Melmotte: “Rank squanders money; trade makes it;—and then trade purchases rank by re-gilding its splendor. The arrangement, as it affects the aristocracy generally, is well understood” (II.59). Lord Nidderdale understands it as his duty to marry an heiress to put matters “right” regarding his family’s embarrassments (II.59). While Melmotte realizes that his wealth is why Marie can marry a titled man (assuming he can

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78 Time and again, whether in regard to her marriage or to signing over the money to her father, Marie would rather be “cut to pieces” (II.254) than acquiesce. Marie’s refrain that she be cut into “pieces” or “bits” occurs six times in the novel and always in relation to disobeying her father’s direct wishes. Marie’s refrain and her father’s attempts to beat her into submission serve to obscure the violence of the credit economy by providing an immediate spectacle of physical violence. The off-stage pulling-down of Pickering, although more impressive in its finality, does not possess the same immediacy of spectacle. Pickering, though returned to the rightful, legal owners, is not physically restored since those same owners have not possessed the money throughout the entirety of the novel. Melmotte may have been exorcised, but the damage has been done.
prove that he has money in hand), Melmotte never appears to realize that the rank he is purchasing is for his daughter rather than for himself. Melmotte’s “daughter was valuable to him because she might make him the father-in-law of a Marquis or an Earl” (I.233). Rather than recognizing that his daughter would be a Marchioness or a Countess, Melmotte imagines his higher status, seeing Marie as a coin whose only value is her potential to be invested. “The higher [Melmotte] rose without such assistance, the less need he had of his daughter’s aid” (Trollope, *TWWLN* I.233), emphasizing Melmotte’s misunderstanding of the relationships between fields and the potential power marriage has to convert capital.

Melmotte’s interpretation of the value in marriage is radically different from the successful unions portrayed by Gaskell and Brontë in which marriage between social and financial capital is necessary for the advancement of the men. In addition to hindering his ability to form a homosocial group or gain membership in a club, Melmotte’s misunderstanding of the relationship between rank and money contributes to his cash flow problem. Importantly, while Melmotte is able to “purchase” a position as Member of Parliament, he is not able to infiltrate the ranks of the aristocracy with his money. The former is a straightforward laying out of cash; the latter is a long-term investment of wealth into social structures and a single family, akin to following the proper channels to join a club. Infiltrating the aristocracy requires his daughter. Exchanging women is a highly traditional maneuver, counter to Melmotte’s modern form of abstract financial capital.79 Marie’s first engagement to Lord Nidderdale ends because “Melmotte had not objected to the sum…but had proposed to tie it up. Nidderdale had desired to have it free in his own

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79 Gayle Rubin and Annette B. Weiner discuss sociological and anthropological exchange of women and how this exchange structures inter and intra-clan relationships: the exchange of women underwrites economic transactions.
grasp, and would not move on any other terms” (I.32). Settling money in such a way that it would go to Marie’s children would not have been unusual, but for someone with Nidderdale’s entanglements, it would be inconvenient. If this is how Melmotte “proposed to tie it up,” he would not be violating English practices, but it does show the need for inducements beyond money even in an explicit attempt to “purchase rank.” It also suggests that Melmotte does not have the social capital yet to act the role of the English gentleman and to set terms for the aristocrats. Like the ability to be patient, setting terms depends on a position of power, which Melmotte does not have. Patience and the setting of terms undercuts the apparent omnipotence of money in The Way We Live Now. If the tying up is of another, more market-minded nature, the proposal would not only be inconvenient, but a misunderstanding of how trade can “purchase rank” similar to Melmotte’s misunderstanding about Gentlemen’s clubs.

The matter-of-fact invasion of market forces into the domestic that we see with the Melmottes is also present in the way Lady Carbury tries to marry off her children. Her attempts to marry Felix to Marie Melmotte and Hetta to Roger Carbury are unsuccessful. Whereas Felix’s courtship is that of a straightforward mercenary similar to Georgianna’s interest in Breghert, Hetta’s is more complex. Lady Carbury’s motives are market minded, but Hetta resists such a mindset. It is Hetta’s resistance and Roger’s genuine interest that enables, ultimately, the formation of a functioning domestic sphere. While Roger ends up romantically alone, he lives with Hetta and Paul at Carbury Manor and Roger “was prepared to settle Carbury on Hetta's eldest boy on condition that such boy should take the old name. He would never have a child whom he could in truth call his own” (II.469). Roger furthermore requests that Hetta lean on him “as a daughter leans on a father”
In transitioning himself from a romantic suitor into a father figure to Hetta, he unsexes himself, admitting defeat and forgoing the desire to leave Carbury Manor to a child of his own. Instead, Carbury Manor shall go to Hetta’s child—fathered by Roger’s rival in love—under the condition that the child takes Carbury for his name. Eileen Cleere’s study of avuncularism provides some insight into the potential economic benefits of Roger-as-uncle because the “avunculate provided...a particularly elastic term for understanding the intersection of the commercial world with the affective family” (32). However, as Cleere discusses, even as the avuncular reinforces the patriarchy, it also challenges and rearranges it, providing new pathways for the circulation of wealth. These new pathways, in turn, rearrange the relationships between characters. For the men involved, there is no straightforward winner. Paul gets the girl and will reproduce, but his identity becomes subsumed by the Carbury family and Roger, not Paul, will be the head of the household. Roger’s family name will continue, but only by proxy. Hetta benefits most from the rearrangement of wealth and relationships, as do her future children. In the case of The Way We Live Now, rearranging relationships illustrates how economic systems shape identity and the family. Such shaping proves harmful to leadership and community patterns of old England as represented by Roger and Carbury Manor, but potentially beneficial for modern England. Like the Beargarden with its circulation of IOUs, Carbury Manor looks toward a modernity through its rearranged pathways of inheritance. Significantly, this modernity is tempered by relationships based on traditional social and gender roles. While tentative, Trollope’s biting satire ends on an optimistic note.

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By the 1870s, communities built around an industrial masculinity like those championed by Charlotte Brontë and Elizabeth Gaskell were no longer present in novels canonical or otherwise, or even symbolically practical to alleviate the anxieties over England’s men and economy. While land is important to several characters and in several plots, the abstract, speculative stock economy was no longer grounded in it in the way that Moore’s and Thornton’s mills are tangible and visible economic nodes. To return to the old world of Carbury Manor is to sacrifice power and influence within the community, but to actively engage in the abstract economy is to risk Melmotte’s isolation and death. The only male characters in the novel that seem to succeed in their endeavors and to participate in the economy are outsiders: the working-class John Crumb and the Jewish Ezekiel Breghert. Amanda Anderson argues that “The Way We Live Now offers in Breghert an insider/outsider critic with characterological integrity. Breghert is depicted as honest and entirely forthright” (526). Yet, neither Crumb or Breghert are depicted as potential community leaders who could help England and maintain her political and economic prominence on a global scale.  

The consolidation of wealth and property in the hands of Marie Melmotte and Hetta Carbury at the end of The Way We Live Now reverses the arc of earlier novels in which female ownership of industrial property and female controlled wealth is foreclosed. In both Gaskell’s and Brontë’s novels women are necessary components of community and capital conversion and consolidation. In Trollope, the role of women is more ambiguous. Hetta appears to be the central node for a burgeoning, albeit

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80 I exclude Fisker and other American characters from this discussion because I am focused on English communities. For an exploration of Fisker, please see Anette Van’s “Ambivalent Speculations: America as England’s Future in The Way We Live Now.”

81 Hetta’s control is not as direct as Marie’s, but her power to agree to Roger’s terms and command Paul should not be discounted. As Annette B. Weiner explains, the power of items like landed property is intimately linked with cultural production and reproduction which falls within the domain of women.
secluded community and the circulation of wealth. Marie is expelled from England, but she has possession of a substantial fortune, which the novel indicates she will retain possession of under American law, even with her marriage to Fisker. And yet, the world of Gentlemen’s Clubs operates smoothly without women and offers the only real community in the entire novel. Perhaps there is no appetizing modern man in the novel because, much to the apparent chagrin of the narrator, men are not equipped to properly manage communities in the face of abstraction. Women, to the contrary adapt to modernity’s conditions: Marie, Hetta, Lady Carbury, and Mrs. Hurdle all embrace solitary travel and money management even as they remain in the domestic sphere. The quickness with which the novel redistributes wealth, proposes new pathways of circulation, and then ends suggests discomfort with these changes to community structures even as they appear necessary within the world of the novel.

Trollope makes it clear that money, in fact, cannot do anything even as he acknowledges the inescapability of the abstract economy. No one understands capital conversion or how the economy works, but that doesn’t matter. As long as characters invest diversely, particularly into social institutions (clubs, family, etc.), they are protected from the dangers of investing too-heavily in one field. Melmotte fails to recognize the limitations of money or how it interacts with other fields of capital. Unlike John Thornton and Robert Moore, Melmotte does not marry a wife who can help him navigate and consolidate capitals beyond finance, nor a wife who will help naturalize him within the community. Roger Carbury, alone and unsexed at the end of the novel, lacks the virility to produce his own heir and so his property will descend to Hetta and Paul’s children. The woman he loves and the man who—to his mind—stole her will live with him, in a new, alternative family
and economic structure that benefits women with only ambiguous results for the novel’s men. The hope of a more appetizing future lies in the promise of Hetta’s son, a male heir who will take his blood from Paul and his ancestors from Roger. While radically different characters, when juxtaposed, Augustus Melmotte and Roger Carbury share the common bond of representing authorial and middle-class anxieties over the effects of the modern abstract economy on men and the communities of which they are a part, even as they reveal the old world and its ways to be impotent. These concerns and anxieties will shift in the upcoming decades to focus not only on the economy, but on shifting gender relations already suggested in Hetta’s comparative triumph over Roger and Paul and Marie’s independent fortune and total triumph over her father.
CHAPTER 4:

Domesticity and Capital Exchange in Margaret Oliphant’s *Hester*

In *Hester: A Story of Contemporary Life* (1883), the character Catherine Vernon is synonymous with banking and prosperity in the community of Redborough, yet her talents that endear her to the community at large cause her family to reject Catherine, and refuse Catherine her place in the familial, domestic circle. Catherine achieves her professional status in Redborough—and her outcast status in her family—when she uses the independent fortune she inherited from her mother to save the Vernon family bank from her cousin John’s mismanagement. In saving the bank, she takes on the role of business “man” and head of the family. Assuming these roles requires Catherine to leave the traditionally feminine domestic sphere for the masculine, professional world of finance, a movement which the novel reveals as one way: Catherine cannot convert economic capital back into domestic capital. Through Catherine, Margaret Oliphant illustrates one set of conditions for capital conversion in which gender is the determining factor of convertibility. While the novel depicts women’s success at cultivating capitals beyond the domestic and social, the ending of the novel—near ruin of the bank, Catherine’s death, and the return of power to the Vernon men—suggests that her conversions are a presently impossible ideal within the domestic and professional structures of nineteenth-century England. And yet, the novel is ambivalent about leaving banking and business strictly to men. Oliphant’s *Hester* calls for the reconfiguration of the public and private spheres, and the division of labor between them to maximize the prosperity of individuals and the
community, even as Oliphant appears unable to imagine what shape such a configuration would take.

Even with the overall shape of a new configuration unclear, Vernon’s, the country bank from which the Vernon family derives its economic wealth and social prestige, remains at the center of both the Vernon family and the larger community of Redborough. Country banks like Vernon’s are tied to a particular geographic region with a family history, even while they engage in the anonymous, abstract, cash nexus making them hybrid nodes of economic exchange. Because of this hybridity, banks are variously portrayed as solid institutions worthy of investment and as threats to people’s savings.82 Throughout Hester, in ways reminiscent of Charlotte Brontë’s and Elizabeth Gaskell’s mills and mill owners, the bank and its physical structure are associated with Catherine and her body: Catherine is the embodied solid protector of the bank—her physical presence helps prevent two bank runs that would destroy the bank—even as her position at Vernon’s challenges traditional gender roles. The association of Catherine with the bank is a result of her commitment to the banking house, but her professional commitment is not balanced by domesticity meaning modernity and the abstract are not grounded in tradition. This imbalance ultimately enables the dishonesty of her adopted son Edward, precipitating the second run on the bank.83 Vernon’s and the Vernon family are saved, but the effort costs Catherine her life, suggesting that while women may have better heads for business, their

82 Bank runs and bankruptcy were a frequent plot device in fiction—Elizabeth Gaskell’s Cranford is a well-known example—but banks as protectors of wealth also serve as plot devices such as in M.E. Braddon’s Aurora Floyd when the numbers of bank notes are used to prove one character’s guilt and another’s innocence of murder.
83 Edward is not officially adopted by Catherine. His parents and siblings are mentioned, but never seen. I will refer to him as Catherine’s adopted son throughout this chapter because that is how their dynamic is represented throughout the novel.
movements into the professional realm of finance are unsustainable within societal structures present at the time of Oliphant’s writing, because such movements create structural instabilities by challenging women’s role as preservers of tradition. The crises and the role of women in the novel, especially coupled with the unmarried status of Catherine and Hester, respond to middle-class anxieties about shifting gender relations and finance capitalism.

Concerns about women’s movement beyond the domestic sphere and their participation in the abstract economy were more than anxiety over how women related to men. Women moving into the public sphere also put pressure on how different fields of capital related to one another: if men and women inhabit public and private equally, are there separate spheres? If not, what is the value of one’s home? How does it connect to work? If the spheres are separate, who will maintain their separation, how will they maintain it, and to what end? Just as Oliphant’s novel treats women ambiguously as having a genius for business even while being integral to the domestic realm, she was the mother of two sons and also a prolific writer and commentator on society in her role at Blackwood’s. Ultimately, the novel suggests that while women can successfully cultivate financial, social, and even business capital, they can only do so at the expense of their domestic capital. This trade-off damages the individuals involved because the larger community of which they are a part is unable or unwilling to support women maintaining financial rather than domestic houses, or, in the terms of this study, the exchange of domestic capital for financial capital. Structural inequalities rooted in the separate spheres ideology collide with anxieties about the abstract economy.
Separate spheres ideology dictates that women are the moral centers of the domestic realm and men are the logical actors of the public realm, a division which earlier novels in this study largely uphold. According to this ideology, men are most-suited to the public realm because men are considered more rational and the economy is believed to be mathematical, logical, and not subject to the passions of individuals. Yet in *Hester*, the actions of individual men threaten the myth of a logical economy by causing panics and bank runs, from which Catherine rescues the bank both times. The men cause the bank runs through their selfish approach to money, embodying the distillation of rational self-interest and *homo economicus*, whereas Catherine acts selflessly, investing all of her assets to save the bank both times.\(^8^4\) The binary of selfish/selfless maps seamlessly onto the binary of separate spheres. Maintaining the myth of separate spheres, then, requires the acknowledgment of the susceptibility of the economy to individual passions. However, admitting the economy does not obey predictable, logical rules would wreak havoc on a financial system dependent upon the suspension of disbelief. To maintain the myth that the financial system is stable and logical, then, separate spheres must be violated by recognizing women are talented and capable at business. In addition to violating separate spheres, this movement causes confusion about where to locate tradition, which is necessary to balance the modern banking system. This resulting fracas limits Catherine to unidirectional capital conversions that restrict her ability to form interpersonal connections even as they enable the formation of community around her. The clash of myths’ resulting instability is precisely what makes the physical structure of the bank so important within

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\(^{84}\) Within the separate spheres ideology, flawed women were often portrayed as selfish in the sense that they were frivolous and followed their whims and fancies, potentially to the detriment of their home and family. Catherine’s actions were, thus, aligned with the feminine ideal of domestic spheres ideology.
the novel and within Victorian culture more generally. As Mary Poovey argues, “most Britons were willing to invest their coins and bank notes in bank accounts or shares only if they believed that the particular institution or individual they could actually see, like a local bank or London broker, belonged to a system that was both effective and trustworthy” (Introduction 3, emphasis added). The opening sentence of the novel supports Poovey, telling readers that “The Banking House of the Vernons was known through all the Home Counties as only second to the Bank of England in stability and strength” (Oliphant 5) and that to the people of Redborough, “Vernon’s bank was the emblem of stability, the impersonation of solid and substantial wealth” (5, emphasis added). Because “impersonation” is used as a noun, Oliphant was naming the solid and substantial wealth embodied within, and perhaps by, the bank.\(^85\) Even so, the use of the term brings to mind falsity or a masquerade, which is reinforced a few sentences later in the description of how “the very cellars of the banking-house, according to popular imagination, [were] filled with gold” (5).

What I term “domestic capital” is the capital—or power and influence—that a woman possesses as the wages of her (erased) labor in the private sphere, including her moral duties and emotional labor, in addition to the management of her home. The more successful her home, —happy husband and children, obedient servants, comfortable and elegant well-kept rooms—the more domestic capital she will have. Domestic capital has power because of the separate spheres ideology which, in theory if not entirely in practice, relegated women to the home and gave them power within that home—and, frequently, within the local community—to act as the moral center of her family, and is closely related

\(^85\) See OED
to women’s role in representing and preserving tradition as a basis for community. Caroline Helstone and Margaret Hale are examples of this from earlier in the century: both characters embody many of the domestic ideals and serve as helpmeets to their public-oriented husbands. Regardless of how accurate the separate spheres narrative was at describing lived or even fictional experiences, it created a potent motivator and influenced perception of the world for the middle classes. The popularity of conduct manuals such as those written by Sarah Stickney Ellis is evidence of the persuasiveness of the narrative. Unlike for men, domestic capital and economic capital are seen as mutually exclusive for women. John Thornton and Robert Moore are able to successfully develop domestic and economic capital by marrying the correct woman. Melmotte’s failure to cultivate non-economic capitals is a product of his actions rather than a structural condition of the world in The Way We Live Now. The Married Women’s Property Acts (1870, 1882) slowly challenged this exclusivity by giving married women legal identities separate from that of their husbands, which made them capable of possessing their own income under common law, but for the majority of the century, women could not possess both.86 Social capital, however, was seen as working in tandem with domestic capital—for example, Margaret Hale in Elizabeth Gaskell’s North and South uses her middle-class domesticity to forge social bonds with working-class characters that ultimately shore up her husband-to-be’s position of power in Milton Northern. It can also work against it: for example, Edith Dombey in Charles Dickens’s Dombey and Son (1848) is appealing to her husband precisely because of her social capital (good looks, ability to hold a conversation, play the

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86 Catherine Hall and Leonore Davidoff’s Family Fortunes discusses how there were legal mechanisms to settle money on women or future off-spring which a husband would be unable to access. Such legal mechanisms figured prominently in novels (see The Woman in White and Can You Forgive Her) but such settlements required a male relative to have the foresight to act on behalf of the woman.
piano, etc.) but she uses this as a weapon against Dombey, cultivating a different social group from the one he desires and eventually eloping with his manager, destroying Dombey’s domestic sphere and business in one fell swoop.

Thus, while it is not my explicit focus, we need to acknowledge that fields of capital relate differently to one another for men than they do for women. Different field relationships, however, do not preclude the possibility of the movement and exchange of recognized power between fields, or what I refer to as capital conversion. Instead, it means that conversion remains a possibility, albeit with different rules and different rates of cost/benefit. As this chapter will show, Catherine can exchange her domestic retreat for the public sphere, but this exchange forecloses the possibility of familial affective ties for Catherine. At the same time, her conversion enables the town of Redborough and Catherine’s family to form communities, albeit ones from which Catherine is excluded. Within the novel *Hester*, the cost of women in the professional realm appears greater for individual woman than the benefit, although the benefits to the community are more ambiguous. Patricia E. Johnson argues that *Hester* “goes on to challenge this idea [that women should be excluded from business] by dramatizing how it represses the reality of a more complex relationship between women and business” (8). Yet Johnson herself oversimplifies the novel’s depiction of the relationship between women and business by failing to consider the larger social milieu in which the business is taking place. Vernon’s Bank and Catherine Vernon do not exist within a vacuum. Roland Ashton explains how women’s capital conversion works during a conversation with Hester: “‘These women, who step out of their sphere, they may do much to be respected, they may be of great use;

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87 For example, in *Shirley*, the Moore brothers’ marriages enable them to move beyond their economic roles into socially powerful positions.
but—’ ‘You mean that men don’t like them,’ said Hester, with a smile” (307). Roland replies that women do not like such women either and Hester is unable to refute this explanation of the cost to women’s social capital that such conversion holds. Catherine experiences this when she becomes the head of the bank rather than continuing to be the object of bank clerks’ wistful longing. “Women who step out of their sphere” risk their own alienation from the community, as well as the potential atomization of the community as a whole: removing or altering domestic capital from the equation reduces tradition’s ability to balance modernity and confuses the value of different capitals, which we saw to an extent with Melmotte’s home in *The Way We Live Now*. Reminiscent of Trollope’s Melmotte, *Hester*’s Catherine appears to depict how over-investing in one area—whether economic or domestic—creates dangerous blind spots for the individual and fractures the community. Yet the surface level similarities between Melmotte’s and Catherine’s struggles are a misnomer, as the rules for capital exchange for the two characters are different because of their different genders.

*Hester*’s depiction of gender is a mixture of progressive and conservative representation. For the majority of her adult life, Oliphant navigated a similar mixture. She was in the traditionally male role of provider, supporting her sons, herself, and several members of her extended family. Many Victorian women wrote to support families, but Oliphant is distinct from other female breadwinners such as Mary Elizabeth Braddon because of the way she forefronts and insists on the domesticity of her role, frequently publishing under “Mrs. Oliphant” rather than her full name or a male pseudonym. As Deirdre d’Albertis comments, “Oliphant’s upending of certain convenient binarisms—

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88 See Elisabeth Jay’s biography of Oliphant for full details about Oliphant’s publishing habits, family, and financial obligations
public/private, domestic/economic, mass fiction/literary art—complicates our understanding of Victorian culture and the place she was able to obtain for herself with the culture as a woman of letters” (806). For Oliphant and her novel Hester, domesticity and economics are inextricable. Like the fictional Edward Vernon, Oliphant’s sons’ “expensive education [was] wasted in dissolution” (Davis and Nellis ix) which brought criticism down upon her. “One cruel man the other day,” writes Oliphant, “told me I had ruined my family by my indulgence and extravagance” (qtd. Sanders 54). Oliphant’s intrepid work ethic and prolific output coupled with the failure of her sons to amount to anything is not unique, but Valerie Sanders argues it was more common with male authors like Charles Dickens: “the mid-Victorian novel’s preoccupation with the idle middle-class son is a significant cultural marker, embodying all that hard-working fathers feared about their tenuous hold on social position and security of status” (65). Sanders’s alignment of Oliphant with hard-working fathers highlights Oliphant’s complicated gender positioning in ways reminiscent of Catherine Vernon’s oscillation between gendered spheres in Hester. Similarities between Oliphant and her novel provide context for the stakes Oliphant had in questions of economics, gender, and community. In drawing attention to them, I want to emphasize Oliphant’s and the novel’s non-linear, often paradoxical evaluations and commentaries on conflicting gender roles.89 In highlighting Oliphant’s complex positionality, I seek to expand work done by critics like Wendy Jones, Tamara S. Wagner, and Elsie Michie by uniting Oliphant’s depiction of gender with her depiction of the function and abstract nature of the investment economy.

89 See Wendy Jones’s book Consensual Fictions: Women, Liberalism, and the English Novel for a discussion of the ways Oliphant’s political views changed throughout her life and the different ways she expressed them in her works.
By the time *Hester: A Study of Contemporary Life* was published, middle-class women were moving into the public professional sphere at levels previously unknown, putting pressure on assumptions about how the professional and domestic sphere related to one another in “Contemporary Life.” It is not simply the fear of women’s professionalism, but also their aptitude for it, as the elderly bank clerk Rule points out: “Women—when they do take to business—are sometimes better than men” (80). Catherine Vernon’s uncle Captain Morgan replies, saying “That is natural…it is not the common women, but those of the noble kind that ever think of trying; so of course they go further and do better than the common men” (81). This conversation offers the idea that perhaps anxiety is less that women are attempting to compete for the same jobs, and more that “they go further and do better” than “the common” men calling into question men’s role in society and their relation to women, and implicitly challenging separate spheres ideology. Women taking to business does not mean men have gotten worse at business, but Oliphant’s depiction of a potential new dynamic between the genders anticipates Mona Caird’s 1888 concerns about “the daily increasing ferocity of the struggle for existence” (1602). Caird’s solution is for society to “readjust its industrial organization in such a way as to gradually reduce this absurd and useless competition…and to bring about in its place some form of cooperation” so that women’s labor will cease “to make the struggle only the fiercer” (1602). Like Caird, Oliphant appears to be ultimately concerned with triangulation between men, women, and economics. In *Hester*, the changing nature of these relationships trouble and sustain the hierarchy of gender positions in regard to the abstract economy.

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90 See work by Edward Higgs and Amanda Williamson which analyzes census data to trace the increasing numbers and variability of work by women during the nineteenth century.
The genius who brought Vernon’s bank its success and prestige and who managed to turn Vernon’s into “the emblem of stability” (Oliphant 5) for the surrounding community was the legendary John Vernon, and his work is protected by his great grand-daughter, Catherine Vernon; the intervening generations witnessed changes in economics as well as gender ideals, the latter of which is heavily emphasized in the novel in terms of fashion and Hester’s mother’s meditations on the home and clothes she used to have when she was Hester’s age. “It was the fashion in those days” is a frequent refrain in the novel, occurring over 60 times. Primarily the phrase is applied to clothes, furniture, and hairstyles, but sprinkled throughout are references to education and professional trends: “But it was the fashion of the time to be unpractical just as it is the fashion of our time that women should understand business and be ready for any emergency” (Oliphant 10). Fifteen years after the publication of *Hester*, Sir Walter Besant similarly observed that “whatever things are taught to the young man are taught to the young woman” (1606). Unlike the focus on women’s educational and domestic practices, very few mentions are made about men and their fashions, implying that unlike the position and trappings of women, men’s fashions have remained constant. Yet, if both sartorial and educational fashions have remained constant for men, something else has changed: between John Vernon the legendary bank founder and John Vernon, Hester’s father (henceforth referred to as “John Jr.” for ease of differentiation), who almost ruined the bank at the opening of the novel, there appears to be a steady decline in business acumen among the Vernon men. Aeron Hunt studies this seeming decline in terms of genius and Victorian understandings of heredity.91 I would like

91 For Hunt, *Hester* offers a case study for the challenges authors experienced in trying to represent contemporary understandings of science and character in relation to business. She argues that “the novel’s unconventional mapping of talent, heredity, and gender challenged its readers to reevaluate not only the categories through which they conceived business character but also the narratives that shaped them” (146).
to suggest that the intensification of capitalism during the nineteenth century raised the question of how older forms of capital related to finance and whether or not finance capitalism could be integrated into a small community. The decline Hunt notes should be considered in conjunction with anxieties about the abstract economy and shifting gender relationships caused by women’s entry into business toward the end of the century.

Catherine’s distribution of capital and the way it influences her relationships with both the community of Redborough and her family reveals the tension between the concrete and the abstract that Oliphant seeks to mediate. Catherine’s rescuing of the bank sets up the ongoing challenges to separate spheres for which her smile comes to act as a gauge. Catherine’s smile marks her visibility and position in the public sphere, which the community of Redborough accepts despite the violation of separate spheres. A domestic sign of welcome in the beginning, her smile becomes ironic and sarcastic. Markers of her domesticity and femininity disappear or become a mockery of what they once were. During Catherine’s sabbatical, her smile becomes “lurking” (61) and “half-mocking” (60) rather than a sign of genuine welcome. And yet, throughout the novel, Catherine and her smile serve as the concrete and feminized indicator vindicating the townspeople’s faith in the abstract economy. Catherine’s economic capital results from her business acumen that saved the bank and helps it to prosper, which reassures the townspeople’s belief in the economy and in Catherine. Her economic capital and business acumen, along with the townspeople’s belief, are all intangible elements of the abstract economy. To unpack the tension between the public and the private, represented by Catherine’s smile of welcome in the bank, we need to consider the two separate-but-related themes I have identified within the novel. First, the repeated collisions of the myth of a mathematic and logical
economy with the myth of separate spheres threatens the stability of Redborough’s economic and social hierarchies. To stabilize the community, the myth of separate spheres must be sublimated to the myth of the logical economy, even though this solution is unsustainable long-term. Second, the domestic realm is required for capital conversion to occur within the community, but domesticity need not be facilitated by a woman: the existence of domesticity, rather than the gender of the spheres is what matters. Together, these two through-lines support the need for a new configuration of public and private, gender and economy, even as the novel fails to propose a new order.

*Catherine and the Clash of Myths*

Reinforcing the economic and social hierarchy at the expense of the gender hierarchy maintains the illusion of a sound financial system that operates based on logic. At the same time, ceding the gender hierarchy injures Catherine’s ability to develop capitals whose value is heavily dependent on traditional gender relations, such as domestic capital. Roland’s assertion about disliking women who step beyond their sphere proves true in this regard and corresponds with Elsie Michie’s argument that it was the rule rather than the exception for the figure of the rich woman to be a nexus of cultural fears about economic developments throughout the nineteenth century, and thus a disliked but tolerated figure (xii-xiii). We see the disjuncture between social and domestic capital in the difference between how the townspeople deify her while her family demonizes her. Described as looking down from “serene heights” (60) throughout the novel, Catherine’s physical presence, her organization of the Vernon family, and all the geographical spaces named after her, give readers and the townspeople alike the illusion of tangibility and solidity. But the parallels between Catherine and Vernon’s (the bank) suggest geographic restrictions to
her power for maintaining the illusion of a concrete, logical economy. Without this illusion, the disembodied capitalist investment economy does not clearly belong to any community, and how communities facing shifting gender relations interact with this economy remains in question throughout *Hester*.

From the start of the novel, the physical structure of the bank is tied to its perceived stability even as that perception is acknowledged as a fiction, an act of popular imagination. This act of imagination is only required or possible because of the abstraction of financial transactions. The physical structure and solidity of the bank is divorced from the actual wealth it supposedly embodies. It inspires confidence even as money attributed to the bank may or may not be within the building. Contrary to the mills of Elizabeth Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë, whose production or idleness indicate market activity at a given time, the physical bank is no indication of the state of the economy. There are no smoke stacks or looms to give tangible evidence of stocks and bonds—there is only the public faith, or imagination, in abstract financial transactions. “It was in the air” (Oliphant 9), the narrator says of the panic that caused the first bank run that opens the novel, “it” referring to rumors about the bank’s financial struggles. The bank was still standing, but that did not deter the panic because the townspeople were forced to admit that their act of imagination was precisely that: a fantasy. Thus, the hybrid nature of the bank as a concrete space embedded in the abstract economy is known, but (generally) ignored. Unlike the stock exchange in London or even the Bank of England, whose primacy in the region is challenged by Vernon’s, the physical presence of Vernon’s is paramount to its power. The importance of the structure of the bank is recognized even by Emma Ashton, who is supremely ill-equipped to notice anything not directly related to her marriage prospects: “I should like to
see the Bank where all the Vernon money comes from. The Vernon money has never done us any good I believe, but still when one is connected with money one likes to see all about it at least” (240). When Emma says she wants to see “where all the Vernon money comes from” she means how the Vernon family has made a living; however, she equates the how with the geographic space from which she thinks their wealth derives, and so it sounds as if she wants to see a manufactory where the wealth is physically produced just as in Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South* the Hale family tours Thornton’s mill.92

Similar to the reassuring tangibility of Vernon’s Bank, Catherine Vernon’s physical presence accompanied by large boxes of the Bank of England’s actual, material aid helps to forestall the two runs on the bank: “Next day everything happened as had been foreseen. There was a run on the bank, and a moment of great excitement; but when Miss Vernon was seen at the door of the inner office smiling…the run and all the excitement subsided as by magic” (Oliphant 22). The significance of Catherine’s body in the bank is that it aligns Catherine with the bank through their solidity and ushers in the erasure of separate spheres. Catherine’s smile is a feminized bodily presence associated more with being welcomed into a home rather than a house of finance, and the “magic” of Catherine erases her business acumen in the way domestic labor is erased. “Magic” rather than logic further suggests a general lack of understanding about how the abstract economy works, tightly linking the economy with the intangible and the fantastic. Erasing Catherine’s business acumen and attributing the saving of the bank to magic is a double-edged sword. The erasure supports separate spheres logic, but in maintaining that Catherine has performed no labor, the novel implicitly raises the question of whether it is labor that directs the bank,

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92 See Elaine Freedgood’s *Factory Production in Nineteenth-Century Britain* for more information on Victorian factory tourism.
or if the abstract market is beyond human (male) control. This question is eventually sidestepped by Catherine’s acknowledgement as a “man of business” (24) possessing a great deal of economic capital. Yet this move violates the narrative of separate spheres. In the world of the novel, it is better to challenge gender roles than it is to acknowledge that the economy may not be a mathematically logical system with understandable rules, because the economic myth sustains the community of Redborough.

Like Catherine’s work at the bank, her converting of capital occurs off-stage. Prior to the first bank run, Catherine is described as engaging in domestic home-making and care-giving. She would bring her grandfather “down in the morning [to the bank] in her pony carriage…calling for him in the afternoon, running in in the middle of the day to see the old gentleman had taken his biscuits and wine” (Oliphant 16-17). The bank clerks all fall in love with Catherine as a consequence of her demonstration of domesticity within the professional world of the banks: juxtaposing her youth, beauty, wealth, and devotion to her grandfather with the modern, impersonal world of banking creates a desire in the clerks for the domestic space to which she retreats. While none of them pursue her because of differences in rank, they recognize her as a desirable domestic companion. After her grandfather’s death, she “disappeared from all visible connection with it [the bank]” (17) and kept herself secluded in the domestic realm until Mr. Rule, the bank clerk, went to her desperate for assistance in preventing the first bank run. Unable to offer Catherine a domestic house in his youth, the old clerk offers Catherine a financial house in his maturity and she accepts him. In the same way accepting a marriage proposal would have led

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93 Compare Catherine’s movement into the public sphere and financial power with Melmotte’s described in the previous chapter. Unlike Catherine, Melmotte is never mentioned as having any other capital than economic and his domestic sphere is entirely enmeshed in economic market forces.
Catherine to exchange one home for another, one position for another, Rule’s request for her (helping) hand leads Catherine to claim a new position in her father’s house of finance. The scene of Rule’s “proposal” reads as a distorted marriage proposal. Mr. Rule approaches Catherine with “anxiety,” pride, and “tears in his eyes” from worry about her response only to feel “relief of his soul” and “joy” when Catherine responds with her help (19-20). She answers his joy as she did “in her fine youthful days…a kind acknowledgement of [his] adoration,” making Rule desire to “have kissed her hand” (20). Rule’s proposal draws attention to the similarity and permeability of the “separate” spheres. The resemblance between Rule’s business proposal and a marriage proposal furthermore evokes the scene I highlight in chapter two between Margaret and Thornton in which Thornton turns Margaret’s business proposal into a marriage proposal, but in *Hester*, Catherine’s “yes” turns her into a business woman, not a wife.

Catherine’s ability to accept Rule’s proposal and save the bank depends on the independent-of-Vernon’s fortune that her mother left to her: “I have been living very quietly, you know,” Catherine tells Rule, “I spend next to nothing; my mother’s money has accumulated till it is quite a little fortune” (Oliphant 20). Unlike Margaret Hale in *North and South*, Catherine’s proposal scene sees her an adept business woman able to claim her place in business rather than being relegated to the home as Margaret is. To save the bank, Catherine threw her mother’s fortune “into the common stock with proud confidence in Vernon’s,” (423) and it is this fortune which fills the boxes that surround her smiling presence and help save Vernon’s the first time. Without this independent fortune, Catherine’s acumen and presence would not have been enough to stem the bank run, a point the novel makes later when Catherine tells Hester that the younger, impoverished
woman would be incapable of saving the bank as Catherine did in her youth (72-73). Yet, despite this, throughout the novel, Catherine’s mother’s side of the family is devalued as not being “real” Vernons by other members of the Vernon family. The paternal family’s acknowledgement of where the money came from to save Vernon’s stops at Catherine. In the same way that separate spheres ideology is subverted to the need of maintaining the myth of a logical economy, Catherine’s maternal fortune that supports her domestic sphere in the beginning is subsumed by the need to maintain the patrilineal bank. This is, furthermore, parallel to how women were perceived as preservers of tradition. Catherine, with her maternal legacy, preserves her father’s bank. When Catherine leaves her position at the bank with the inclination to return entirely to the domestic sphere, she does not take her mother’s fortune out of Vernon’s, suggesting the inconvertibility for women of financial and business capital back into domestic. Once Catherine’s mother’s fortune enters the paternal house of finance, it remains there. Thus, while we see Catherine retired at home with Edward in quaint, domestic fireside scenes, there is always an undercurrent of Catherine’s power over Edward reminiscent of her position of power at the bank: “Edward had found means from the beginning to please his patroness and relative…Edward did not oppose his aunt in [her critique of Harry] any more than in other things” (123-124). Edward acquiesces to Catherine in all things—whether domestic or professional—because Catherine continues to have a vested interest in the bank and the professional expertise to understand what is happening with her money.

Throughout the novel, concrete signs of Catherine’s professional power are seen in her ongoing position as the head of the family and town leader. Her name and decisions shape the very geography of the town. This is one way in which the novel’s focus on
physical geography offers an illusion of concrete wealth. Just as the community’s collective economic fantasies of institutions of finance gather around the physical edifice of Vernon’s Bank, the tangibility of Catherine’s presence through her geographic avatars adds to the perception of Catherine’s stability and embodied presence:

The Vernon Almshouses, which had fallen into great decay till she took them in hand, were always known as Catherine Vernon’s Almshouses. Her name was put to everything. Catherine Street, Catherine Square, Catherine places without number. The people who build little houses on the outskirts exhausted their invention in varying the uses of it. Catherine Villas, Catherine Cottage, Catherine Mansion, were on all sides; and when it occurred to the High Church rector to dedicate the new church to St. Catherine of Alexandria, the common people, with one accord, transferred the invocation to their living patroness. (23)

These honors, which were bestowed upon Catherine in response to her philanthropy, are given “with one accord,” evidencing both the presence of a community and Catherine’s separateness from it. Catherine’s philanthropy and separateness stem from her power and position in Vernon’s bank. Complementing how the people of Redborough imbue their town with her presence by naming streets and houses after her, Catherine further determines the geography of the town by deciding who lives where among her family. The White house goes to Harry and his sister Ellen; Edward (much to his chagrin) lives in the Grange with Catherine; and the apartments of the Vernonry are filled at Catherine’s direction and discretion. The townspeople, in granting Catherine social capital, efface Catherine’s ties to money and the bank. In viewing her as “their living patroness,” they link her with both the idea of noblesse oblige and religious imagery, rather than depicting her as a living Lady Credit, which would have been in keeping with the practice of gendering
finance female. Catherine’s family also code her actions as patronage, but unlike the townspeople, they react to her actions negatively, insisting she is indeed a Lady Credit: “Catherine Vernon, according to their picture of her, was a woman who, being richer than they, helped them all with an ostentatious benevolence, which was her justification for humiliating them whenever she had a chance, and treating them at all times as her inferiors and pensioners” (58). The townspeople’s impulse to code Catherine as a patroness obscures the abstract origin of Catherine’s wealth because it evokes the traditional relationship dynamic of the country estate and noblesse oblige, earning her public, social capital even as it reinforces a wealth and power differential. Her family, however, refuses to let the power differential be obscured, foregrounding the impersonal modern, economic relationship.

At the risk of relying on a separate spheres typology that never quite manifested itself in reality, thinking about the tension between Catherine’s public persona and her domestic reception through the role of philanthropy within separate spheres ideology helps us to understand why even apparently domestic actions do not earn Catherine domestic capital. As Brenda R. Weber argues, “the domains of the public and private were never separate and non-permeable spaces, but the ideology of separation and difference created...

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94 Claudine van Hensbergen explains that “when the British relationship with money began to take its modern shape, finance was gendered as female.” According to the Bank of England’s archives, the establishment of the Bank in 1694 also established “Britannia sitting and looking on a bank of money” as the official seal of the bank (Britannia). Nearly two decades after the bank was established, Joseph Addison’s Mr. Spectator finds himself dreaming of the Bank of England. In his dream, he sees “towards the Upper end of the Hall, a beautiful Virgin seated on a Throne of Gold. Her Name (as they told me) was Publick Credit.” The “Publick Credit” of Addison becomes a female “National Credit” in a 1724 engraving by William Hogarth (“The Lottery”). Here, the female Credit reigns supreme over misfortune, grief, sloth, and despair. The figures of the Bank of England and Addison’s and Hogarth’s female Credit belong to a millennia old tradition of gendering money female. The Greek goddess Tyche was frequently represented on the reverse side of Hellenic coins. Although her Roman counterpart, Fortuna, was less associated with coins and more frequently depicted with the wheel (of fortune) or a cornucopia. The presence of a female fortune existed through the middle ages despite attacks from St Augustine (see City of God, iv. 18-18; v.8: “How, therefore, is she good, who without discernment comes to both the good and to the bad? It profits one nothing to worship her if she is truly fortune... let the bad worship her...this supposed deity.”) and others.
a fantasy of a sex- and class-segregated order that called for prescriptive divisions between actors, bodies, and identities” (8). One of the clearest examples of permeability was women’s philanthropy, in which Catherine heavily engages. Portrayals of women’s philanthropy in literature represented an “inherent challenge…to the domestic ideology of separate spheres…despite the common assumption that it was merely an extension of women’s domestic role” (Elliot, The Angel 5-6). Philanthropy for the middle class engages with the community beyond the home. To D. W. Elliot’s point, then, women’s philanthropic activity proved the spheres permeable, making the domestic sphere involved with the process of community building and community engagement. Catherine’s public philanthropy was in keeping with a woman’s role in middle-class separate spheres ideology, but the method of her philanthropy challenges traditional gender roles in the same way that her work at the bank does. The earlier novels in my study separate women’s philanthropy from the economic market by veiling their charity in the domestic sphere (cooking, sewing): for example, bringing baskets to the poor as Margaret Hale does in North and South or sewing for the charity baskets as Caroline Helstone does in Shirley.95 Catherine, however, does not perform domestic labor. Instead, she invests financially in philanthropic institutions. In bypassing the domestic sphere, Catherine foregrounds the role of money and the abstract economy. Catherine’s patronage is another instance of the novel pitting the abstract economy against the domestic sphere because her patronage asks the question of whether her relationships are economic or affective, impersonal or personal. This question arises because Catherine’s treatment of the townspeople and her family

95 Several different causes for the baskets are mentioned in Shirley—“The proceeds of such compulsory sales are applied to the conversion of the Jews, the seeking up of the ten missing tribes, or to the regeneration of the interesting coloured populations of the globe” (Brontë 96)—all of which, along with the practice of charity baskets themselves, are mocked by Brontë.
mirror one another. Whether the relationships are economic or affective is indeterminable to the recipients of her charity. Because the nature of her relationships is indeterminable to the other parties involved, and the difference between family and public is undecipherable, it cannot result in domestic capital since tradition dictates that the domestic sphere is, in theory, separate from the economic sphere. As such, Catherine’s patronage can earn her public social capital, but it creates a deficit of private domestic capital.

Catherine’s public persona and her position as a career woman bleed into her domestic realm. In addition to linking her to the abstract economy, Catherine’s metonymic relationship to Vernon’s creates metaphorical distance from Redborough, thus anticipating and necessitating her exclusion from the familial. Her ordering of the bodies of her relations causes them to resent her and to reject her return to the private home from the house of finance: “Her givings were always large…reaping envy and resentment where she should have got gratitude and love” (129). Because Catherine’s attachment to her family is one of “ostentatious benevolence” that maintains a relationship of “inferiors and pensioners” rather than affection, her family refuses to acknowledge any conversion when she tries to reinvest in the domestic sphere. Like Melmotte, Catherine appears to believe her financial capital should translate into other realms, that her wealthy patronage should earn her “gratitude and love.” Her family, which should be part of her domestic sphere rather than her professional sphere, refuses to grant her the place she desires, relegating her attentions to them as an extension of her public position. Like any other currency, domestic capital depends upon its recognition by others. Catherine’s family, in refusing recognition of her domesticity, relegates her to the public realm. The townspeople, moreover, have no reason for bestowing recognition on her as a domestic woman. Domestic capital, as the currency
of separate spheres ideology (and thus, a separate field with a separate audience), cannot be granted by the public who worships Catherine. The deification of Catherine distances her from the community and separates her from the home. She may be an angel in Redborough, but she is not an angel in the house. For the public, Catherine is a fixture of the public sphere, as indicated by their honoring her with place names and their faith in her stability. No amount of hosting dinner parties at her home adds to her domestic capital because some “hospitality and show” (9, 64, 65) are expected to keep clients and customers happy. Augustus Melmotte’s dinner for the Chinese emperor operates in the same fashion, albeit on a grander scale, as Catherine’s Redborough dinners. Catherine’s dinners, despite taking place in her home, are perceived of as an extension of her professional life, demonstrating once again that for Catherine, her spheres are emphatically not separate and the professional overpowers the domestic.

**Catherine and the Domestic Sphere**

The key for capital conversion in *Hester*, then, is that the domestic realm exists, rather than that it is a woman who must make the home. For business men, the domestic sphere was a place where they could return and be restored from “calculating machines back into men” (Tosh 7). Catherine’s lack of a domestic sphere untainted with business means she has no way to be transformed back from a cold, calculating machine into a human with “tender regard for other people’s feelings” (Oliphant 32). Roland Ashton’s beforementioned observation that men do not like women who transgress, even if they are successful business women, reminds us that there was no willing male equivalent to Margaret Hale or

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96 The term “Angel in the House” is taken from Coventry Patmore’s 1854 poem “Angel in the House” which celebrates the woman as retiring, sexually chaste, submissive to her husband, and devoted to her children. While this is an important stereotype during the century, I avoid explicitly drawing on it because my treatment of femininity in this chapter and others does not bear out this construct.
Caroline Helstone who balance and help Catherine redistribute her capital. While this also implies that with the proper partner, Catherine could have cultivated domestic capital, the novel is not optimistic about the possibility of this, not just for Catherine, but for women in general. The men of the novel, whether good, bad, or indifferent, clearly indicate that they will not fill the role of helpmeet for an ambitious woman. Part of the novel’s progressiveness is that it argues for women’s ability and success beyond the home and part of its conservativeness is that it does not offer alternatives for men. Hester’s insistence on separate spheres and positions of dominance and subordination undercut this progressiveness: the business person requires a traditional domestic sphere for balance, but men will not accept the feminized position within the home. Nor does the novel, apparently, expect them to accept a feminized, subordinate position. Hester, who has the potential to be a second Catherine, finds her attempts to move beyond the domestic realm repeatedly frustrated. The narrator, despite sympathizing with Catherine and Hester, does not fault the attitude of the (good) men in the novel. For the narrator and, likely, Oliphant, there is no tidy solution. Thus, Catherine’s solitude produces and is produced by the inconvertibility for women of business and financial capital back into domestic capital. Catherine’s attempts to convert economic capital into domestic capital enable Edward’s access to the bank’s funds, nearly destroying the town, the bank, and the Vernon family.

Hester’s ending and its portrayal of who manipulates capital ultimately suggests that while women may be more adept at capital manipulation, England’s financial well-being expects the maintenance of a domestic sphere and the tradition therein symbolically located. In Elizabeth Gaskell’s North and South and Charlotte Brontë’s Shirley, women are

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97 Harry wants a wife, as does Edward. Roland is a flirt who does admits to not liking women who step beyond their sphere, even as he admires Catherine’s work.
an integral part of capital conversion and consolidation—it could not happen without their participation—but women are not the main actors in the process: the novels’ male heroes actively work to consolidate and convert capital. Contrary to this, as Catherine illustrates in *Hester*, women can be the main actors in consolidating and converting capital to gain power within the family and larger community, but such an act fractures the community and isolates the woman because the move toward modernity is not balanced with tradition: “Thus Catherine Vernon, though she was a clever woman, misconceived and misunderstood them all” (Oliphant 125). Even as readers see the potential benefits of women in positions of power, Catherine’s fate warns “middle- and upper-class women about the limits of what their culture will tolerate” (Young 194) in terms of challenges to the gender status quo. *Hester* concludes with Catherine selling the Grange to pay some of Edward’s debts and moving into the Vernonry briefly before she dies. Although, Catherine’s “misfortunes, and the noble courage with which she had stood up against them at the end brought back all the fullness of the love and honour with which she had been regarded when she first became supreme in the place” (456), she is punished for disturbing the traditional gender and professional order. Her house, power, and reputation are forfeit. Only because Catherine manages to rectify Edward’s wrongs before dying does her death bring “back all the fullness of love and honour” for her into the hearts of the townspeople. The silence of the narrator on the part of her family implies there is no change in Catherine’s status among them to record. She may have “come down in the world” (452) from her peak of ironic benevolence but, with the exception of Hester, the Vernon family maintains their interpretation of Catherine as an outsider, further underscoring the necessity of recognition in capital distribution.
As I detailed in the previous chapter, gossip and what everyone “knows” can have economic ramifications, and this idea is present in *Hester* as well: “But when once the first whisper of suspicion has been roused it flies fast…where it was the first suggestion came from, nobody knew. Probably it did not come from any one—it was in the air, it struck two people, all at once, talking to each other” (Oliphant 9). The frequency with which gossip occurs in *Hester* indicates the presence of a social, knowable community. “But a knowable community, within country life as anywhere else, is still a matter of consciousness, and of continuing as well as day-to-day experience” (Williams 166). As readers, our knowledge of gossip depends upon the “continuing…experience” of Catherine, who “had for so long been all-powerful, and sure that the means were in her hand to help those that wanted help, and to regulate affairs in general for the benefit of the world, that it had become a necessity, almost a duty on her part, to keep herself informed of everything that went on” (121). Yet Catherine’s experience precisely does *not* continue once she retires from the bank: her attempted change of position ruptures her “day-to-day experience.” Catherine is described as “contemplating the world from a pinnacle of irony, chill but smiling” (Oliphant 71)\(^98\) three times during the novel, evoking her visibility to, but separateness from, the community of Redborough and her family. Prior to the first bank run at the opening of the novel, Catherine has “heard some of the wicked reports that are flying about” (18) regarding her cousin John Jr. and Vernon’s. At this time, Catherine inhabited a traditional domestic role with a defined place recognized by all, making her a member of the community. The second bank run that closes the novel, the one caused by her adoptive son

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\(^98\) This quotation is actually in reference to Hester: “deep disgust which would fill her when she felt herself, like Catherine, contemplating the world from a pinnacle of irony, chill but smiling,” yet because it directly aligns Hester with Catherine’s position and echoes other language used to describe Catherine, the imagery and metaphors stand.
Edward comes as a surprise to Catherine who learns of Edward’s actions only by following him out of the house and eavesdropping on his conversation with Hester. Gossip can only circulate in the novel through “day to day” experiences of members of the community. Gossip’s inability to reach Catherine suggests that she is not a part of the knowable community. Despite the power she wields within the area of Redborough, she cannot access all the information available to the community. Her ability to access some of it indicates she holds a peripheral position as a result of the community’s perception of her capital distribution. Upon retiring, she is no longer a “business man” in the public realm but nor is she fully invested in the domestic sphere. Catherine’s relation to the community as being one of “serene heights” from which her family’s ingratitude “did not harm her” (60) implies distance that interrupts communication pathways.

The outsider character of Roland corroborates the presence of the knowable community and its role in capital conversion within the novel. Roland observes that Catherine is amused at her family’s “ingratitude, [taking] almost a malicious pleasure in it” and this dynamic “surprised him less than that among all who surrounded her there was no one who gave to her a real and faithful devotion. And her faith in Edward…seemed to Roland in his spectatorship so pitiful…he was sorry for her all the more that she was so little sorry for herself” (189). Yet because Roland is an interloper and an interpreter who is not part of the town’s community or economy, he cannot intercede in capital exchange in Redborough: any social influence he has comes entirely from being an attractive young man with family ties to Catherine. Because his position comes largely from Catherine, Roland cannot influence Catherine’s distribution of capital within Redborough. Furthermore, because he is a member of her mother’s side of the family, and thus devalued
by the Vernons, he cannot influence her family’s interpretations. And Roland, for all his sympathy for Catherine, never relays his thoughts on Edward to her. While they like one another, the community ties necessary for gossip or for confidential discussion are not present between the two of them or between Roland and the rest of the Redborough. The shock of the second bank run illustrates their mutual ignorance. Yet, Edward’s unworthiness is hinted at—but left hanging in the air, unsaid—early in the novel during a scene in the Morgans’s home. Catherine is extolling the virtues of the young men she selected as her successors:

To this there was no reply, but a little pause pregnant of meaning…[Hester] understood no reason for it, but she understood it. Not so Catherine, who took no notice…And again there ensued that little pause. Was it possible she [Catherine] did not observe it? No one echoed the sentiment, no one even murmured the little nothings with which a stillness, which has a meaning, is generally filled up by some benevolent bystander. What did it mean? (80-81)

The pauses, we come to learn relate to Edward’s unworthiness which is known—or at least suspected—by the larger community but not relayed to Catherine. Such gossip directly affects the security of the bank, but because the conversation occurs during the “Sabbatical period of her life,” (25) it does not reach Catherine. She is not a part of the family, but no more is she directly part of the banking world as she used to be.

Catherine’s ostracism is a product of her inability to return from the masculine world of business to the feminine world of “ritual exchange of courtesies which characterized middle- and upper middle-class social life” (Beetham 91). This results in her domestic house becoming a sort of shadow house of finance debilitating to Catherine’s abilities to participate in the local community, a problem forecasted by Gaskell in North and South with Thornton’s house located “in the shadow” of his mill. Catherine, in her bid
for domesticity, treats it as a business transaction rather than as an emotional investment and such behavior is precisely what alienates her family from her, even as it enables her to conduct business successfully in the financial realm. Catherine dictates and watches from her peak of ironic observation:

[Catherine] knew she had been substantially kind. It is so much easier to be substantially kind than to show that tender regard for other people’s feelings which is the only thing which ever calls forth true gratitude…in her solitude she had become a great observer of men and women: and was disposed to find much amusement in this observation. (32-33)

All members of Catherine’s family rebel against this treatment, which is shown primarily through the actions of the inhabitants of the Vernonry and, to a lesser extent, through Ellen Vernon’s insistence on going against Catherine within social circles. Catherine’s detached kindness belongs to the public world of philanthropy whereas the “tender regard for other people’s feelings” belongs to the private sphere and requires an emotional investment. Yet, the only time we see Catherine make an emotional investment is in her maternal role with Edward, which is her eventual downfall.

Catherine’s maternal role matters because of the insistent way other characters and the narrator code her as a mother to Edward. Her resulting complex position as childless matriarch challenges separate spheres ideology in similar ways to her position at the bank. Julia Kristeva argues that single or lesbian motherhoods “can be seen as one of the most violent forms taken by the rejection of the symbolic…as well as one of the most fervent divinations of maternal power—all of which cannot help but trouble an entire legal and moral order, without, however, proposing an alternative to it” (76). Catherine’s seeming omnipotence and love of Edward reads as a “fervent divination of maternal power.” Yet,
like Rule’s distorted marriage proposal, the power of Catherine and Edward’s relationship as an index for change is that readers can recognize the mother-son bond even as many of the traditional aspects of that bond is rejected. Near the beginning of *Hester*, we are told that Catherine “had the good of other people’s children in a wonderful degree, but it was impossible she could have the harm of them” (24) since she was free to pick and choose her successors from among her many Vernon cousins. Yet, the foundation of the narrator’s assertion that Catherine avoided the worst and possessed the best of motherhood erodes almost as soon as it’s made. Mrs. John says of Edward’s misconduct that “it is a terrible thing to set your heart upon a child and have him turn out badly. There is nothing so heartrending as that” (310). It is worth noting that Mrs. John is the only other single mother figure in the action of the novel, and she happens also to be the only Vernon pensioner sympathetic to her benefactress.\(^9^9\) Despite Mrs. John’s status as a pensioner, she is not resentful of Catherine and actively tries to please her. “There was no rancor in her mind,” the narrator says of Mrs. John, and “systemic disparagement [of Catherine] puzzled the poor lady” (56). Mrs. John’s firm rooting in tradition coupled with her lack of understanding of non-domestic matters makes her less threatening than Catherine. Even so, Mrs. John produces Hester, a potential second Catherine, who is eager to continue “troubl[ing] an entire legal and moral order” despite Oliphant’s attempts to contain Hester within marriage.\(^1^0^0\)

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\(^9^9\) I am omitting the widowed mother of four, Mrs. Reginald Vernon of the Vernonry because of her minor role in the novel and her lack of interiority as presented by the narrator. Nonetheless, mentions of her in the novel indicate her willingness to please Catherine, albeit because of her fear of eviction.

\(^1^0^0\) Whether Oliphant herself found Hester’s desire for autonomy troublesome or if Oliphant was bowing to what her readership would accept in a woman is beyond the scope of this study.
Yet considering Edward and Catherine’s bond as a mother-son relationship oversimplifies the situation. While Oliphant does not depict Catherine treating Edward as a business or philanthropic arrangement and shows genuine maternal affection on Catherine’s part, Catherine initially gives Edward a position at the bank and in her home with the expectation of a quiet retirement from business. Edward when he first meets Hester describes his situation, saying that Catherine “brought me here to work in the bank; the bank is everybody’s first thought…it was a great advancement for me” (49). Like the rest of the Redborough Vernons, Edward refuses to grant Catherine’s exchange of business capital for domestic capital,—“Love her,” Edward scoffs at Hester during that same scene, “Come you must not get into metaphysics”—even as he codes his own relationship to Catherine as domestic: Edward

bitterly felt that while other men could taste the sweetness of freedom and of love, he was attached to an old woman's apron-strings, and had to keep her company and do her pleasure, instead of taking the good of his youth like the rest. It was a sudden crisis of this bitterness which had made it impossible for him to bear the yoke which he usually carried so patiently, and which she, deceived in this instance, believed to be pleasant to him, the natural impulse of a tranquil and home-loving disposition (129).

The tension of Edward’s and Catherine’s relationship being both business and domestic complicates how Catherine’s actions are interpreted by Edward and the rest of her family (except Mrs. John). The public/business realm’s power to subvert the domestic throughout the novel means that Catherine’s relationships are ultimately interpreted as business rather than affective connections. In this one-way conversion that results in traditional hierarchies turned topsy-turvy, the domestic arrangements leave Edward responsible for emotional labor to “keep her company and do her pleasure” (emphasis added). Edward’s duty to
maintain “a tranquil and home-loving disposition” places him in the unwilling position of the angel in the house. He, rather than Catherine, must make the Grange, her home, a haven from the public sphere. Hester illustrates that the issue is less that Catherine “troubles an entire legal and moral order” and more that she does not “propose an alternative to it.” Tradition need not be located in women in the home, but to balance the abstract economy, tradition must be located somewhere and be guarded by someone. The lack of alternative arrangement ultimately means that the challenge Catherine offers is unsustainable—eventually the tension must give and, in giving, the traditional hierarchies snap back into place.

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The violations of separate spheres ideology within Hester and the mixture of positive and negative results illustrate the need for the relationship between the public and private spheres to be reconceived. Yet, the novel does not offer a new configuration of people and capital within the community. The restoration of a more traditional configuration with men in the bank and women in the home suggests that Catherine’s irregular, albeit powerful, distributions of capital must be sublimated and rerouted through tradition for the well-being of the community. Catherine is able to save the bank, but she inadvertently enables the second bank run, nearly ruining the very community that she saved. Hester is not granted work in the bank, but the novel ambivalently suggests that her influence over whichever man she chooses for a husband will allow her inherited Vernon business acumen to benefit the town without the potential dangers of a second Catherine. Hester’s happiness and abilities, the novel implies, must be tempered for the sake of the community: traditional
gender dynamics and faith in the mathematical, logical, economic system must be maintained for Redborough to thrive.

Considered in conjunction with Margaret Oliphant’s complex relationship to feminism and elements of her biography, such as her role as breadwinner, *Hester* appears at first glance to be a surprising and refreshingly honest portrait of the potential for success when a competent woman is in charge. The novel depicts a powerful woman who does not need to marry. At the same time, she is ultimately undone by men and her lack of, yet desire for, a traditional domestic space. As Rene Girard contends, desire is contagious and arises from the awareness that others desire the same object (14, 96). Awareness of another’s desire implies a knowable community and recognition within that community. The majority of characters’ inability to recognize Catherine’s desire for domesticity even as she is able to recognize it in others such as Harry Vernon suggests breaks in the pathways of recognition and communication. Margaret Oliphant’s *Hester*, then, can be considered a continuation of Trollope’s concern about the way women utilize capital conversion, in this case to move from the home into the work place. Even as women challenge men through the entirety of the novel, the conclusion of the novel illustrates the unsustainability of the dynamic: the steadfast Englishman is reinstated as the center of power and the modern woman does not survive the near-destruction of everything she saved. *Hester* reveals that we can neither return to the past nor completely overthrow it.

Geographical particularity and tangibility are coded as stability even as the novel depicts the fantastic nature of this stability. The abstract economy cannot be avoided—nor does anyone in the novel argue that it should be—but attention must not be given to its intangible nature. This paradox makes it difficult to fully decipher the economy’s influence
on community formation and relationships. This is exemplified in the closing paragraph of the novel:

And as for Hester, all that can be said for her is that there are two men whom she may choose between, and marry either if she please—good men both, who will never wring her heart. Old Mrs. Morgan desires one match, Mrs. John another. What can a young woman desire more than to have such a possibility of choice? (456)

The possibility of Hester having any career beyond the home is foreclosed. She has the choice of a husband and that is “all that can be said for her.” The final sentence both mocks and is mocked by the entirety of the novel that came before it. Mockery aside, its weight as the final sentence in the novel and the implication that Hester has options that were closed to Catherine suggests that Catherine’s career is closed to Hester: “It is a great pity…that instead of teaching or doing needlework, you should not go to Vernon’s, as you have a right to do, and work there…you would be an excellent man of business, but it cannot be” (454) Catherine tells Hester. Catherine points to the fact that Hester is young, and a traditional married life is still open to her, that she is still desirable to fill the domestic role. Catherine explains no further and dies a few moments later. The lack of additional explanation for why “it cannot be” corresponds with the novel’s indecision about whether to be progressive or conservative. Why “it cannot be” is ultimately because with women in the professional spheres, there will be no one to cultivate domestic capital and maintain tradition to balance modernity located in public, economic capital. Balance between the two maintains both the myth of a logical economy and the myth of gendered spheres. The collision of myths that Oliphant depicts calls for new relationships between the two myths, even as it establishes a hierarchy wherein the economic myth must be preserved even at
the expense of the gender myth. And yet, simply subverting one myth to the needs of the other is unsustainable, resulting in a second bank run and a fractured home. The tensions between the myths, between a progressive modernity and a conservative tradition that drive the action of *Hester* calls for a new system of relations, but stops short of proposing a new order.
**CONCLUSION:**

*Only Connect!*

The configurations and circulations of capital I have highlighted in this study involve complex interactions between gender, social, and economic hierarchies. Frequently, the power arrangements we are familiar with, specifically patriarchal modes of control and inheritance, are challenged in order to erect a new kind of stable foundation for community that can respond to a rapidly changing economy. It becomes apparent that the key to creating community is less about over-throwing established social structures or rejecting new modern arrangements than it is about utilizing various forms of capital to negotiate and navigate between tradition and modernity, between the tangible and the abstract. Ultimately, characters create community by using a flexible set of rules for converting and consolidating traditional and modern forms of capital. At times these strategies can appear contradictory, as in *The Way We Live Now*, when tangibility is only to be found in face-to-face social interactions between characters. The texts at the heart of this study reveal authors may have been reflecting a reality already in existence, but in the act of reflecting these authors were constructing a new social reality, modeling potential networks and modes of connection to maintain local, knowable communities. In the negotiation of tradition and modernity, women’s connection with cultural (re)production and transmission uniquely positions them to facilitate community formation. All the novels considered in this study portray women as possessors of cultural and social capital necessary to the formation of community. In chapters one and two, the heroines’ possession of social and cultural capitals directly benefits the men of their novels. In chapter three,
Hetta’s future role as mother is important to the transmission of capital from one generation to the next, and chapter four’s Catherine challenges and upholds women’s role in intergenerational transmission through her role as adoptive single mother to Edward. In this brief summing up, I bring together the patterns of capital conversion I have sketched throughout this study, suggest what they reveal about nineteenth-century economics and gender, and extend the discussion into twentieth century by looking briefly at E. M. Forster’s Howards End.

Like the authors who make up the body of this study, Forster depicts a world in which non-economic capitals collide (and sometimes collude) with economic capitals, and it is precisely the recognition and conversion of multiple forms of capital that allows for new communities to form. Rather than focus on one character’s ability to achieve individual success, Values in the Air is concerned with the local, knowable community. Money, as it turns out, can do a lot, but it cannot do everything.\textsuperscript{101} It cannot “attach class to class as they should be attached” (Gaskell, North and South 432). Community in Shirley, North and South, The Way We Live Now, and Hester depends upon characters drawing from traditional and modern forms of capital to foster recognition and understanding of multiple capitals as a foundation for communion and connection. The women of these novels are especially situated to foster community development because tradition is associated with the feminine, the domestic, the social, and the cultural. In Shirley and North and South, we see the conversion and/or consolidation of feminine, traditional capitals with economic capital to legitimate the new industrial economy enacted through the marriage plot. With The Way We Live Now and Hester, confusion over the values of different capitals

\textsuperscript{101} Charles Dickens’s Paul Dombey tells his son “Money, Paul, can do anything” (111). Dombey and Son, of course, goes on to prove this assertion false.
and where—or in whom—to locate tradition complicates, and, in complicating, stimulates community formation.

As the century progresses and the economy becomes more abstract, concrete symbols of traditional value systems such as the country estate are unable to answer the demands of modernity. Yet, as Talia Schaffer reminds us, “Modernity, is not all Modern” (xii): it builds from tradition, and elements of the past continue to survive in our contemporary world. Modernity, we find, is less a rupture with the past than a reconfiguration of it. Community in modernity, the novels in this study suggest, springs from the mingling of the masculine, the professional, and the linear with the feminine, the domestic, and the cyclical. Counterintuitively, we see such mingling in the way the circulation of IOUs in the Beargarden enables connection among its members. Contrary to the Beargarden, John Thornton’s “hard penetrating intellectual” (Gaskell 325) encounters Margaret Hale’s “habits of society” (61) to create a modern, industrial manor, albeit one devoid of actual community. Modernity is often read as linear, and “linearity has a tendency to become conflated with the notion of progress” (Jay 3), but the sequence of negotiations and configurations I trace subverts this idea. Networks, circulations of wealth, and how to navigate an increasingly interrelated but atomized world is revealed as cyclical, more akin to a spiral staircase than a ladder: the male control of economic wealth that ends Shirley is reversed in The Way We Live Now. Margaret Hale’s economic power in North and South is undone when Thornton turns her business proposal into a marriage proposal at the end of the novel, but the later Hester sees a pseudo-marriage proposal at the opening

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102 Hélène Cixous argues that women and in particular “écriture feminine” disorients masculine arrangements in the world, “emptying structures, and turning propriety upside down” (887). Using subversion, women write to “smash everything, to shatter the framework of institutions, to blow up the law, and to break up the ‘truth’ with laughter” (888).
of the novel as catalyst for Catherine’s seizure of power. The paradox of doubling back while moving forward seen in who controls economic and social wealth in Brontë, Gaskell, Trollope, and Oliphant does not disappear with the close of the century. This complexity is present in Forster’s *Howards End*, where it is commonly read as one of the novel’s alleged flaws.

Forster’s position within the literary cannon has always been complicated. Even as he is acknowledged as a major modern novelist who plays with limited viewpoints of the narrator, symbolic patterning, and intertextual allusion in difficult and ambiguous works, Forster also perpetuates the nineteenth-century tradition of an intrusive narrator relaying a story in chronological order. Forster’s role as Janus, looking both forward to modernism and backward to the Victorians is one reason critics such as Lionel Trilling deemed Forster “sometimes irritating in his refusal to be great” (qtd in Lodge xxii). Forster’s position as Janus is precisely why I invoke him here, at the end of *Values in the Air*. The impossible triumph of connection witnessed at the conclusion of *Howards End* brings us nearly full circle back to Charlotte Brontë’s *Shirley*.

In a review of *Howards End* (1911) for the *Westminster Gazette*, an anonymous critic wrote that “E. M. Forster has written a very remarkable book, though he has hardly achieved an altogether satisfactory novel” (*Westminster Gazette*). *Howards End* recounts the chance friendship between Mrs. Wilcox and Margaret Schlegel. When Mrs. Wilcox dies, she desires to leave her home, Howards End, to Margaret. Mrs. Wilcox’s desire sets in motion the collision of the two families that culminates in the eventual marriage of Margaret to the widowed Mr. Wilcox, and the scandalous pregnancy of Margaret’s unmarried sister Helen. Critics, such as F. R. Leavis, Lionel Trilling, and Barbara
Rosecrance, identify the book’s flaws as relating to the unbelievability of the plot; the narrator’s inconsistencies; and the poetic language that “sound[s] like George Meredith on a bad day” (Lodge xxvi). The unbelievability of plot and sentimental language coalesce in the protagonist Margaret Schlegel’s desire for people to “Only Connect!” which she urges as “the whole of her sermon” (159).

Connection in *Howards End* centers around the related-but-distinct factions of the middle class in the form of the Schlegel and Wilcox families, a much later interaction of families that evokes and revises the Thorntons and the Hales from Gaskell’s *North and South*. Like the division of north and south in *North and South*, the Schlegel and Wilcox families have very different ways of being in the world depicted through binaries that cannot recognize one another: the inner vs. the outer life, Arnoldian culture vs. finance capitalism, feminine vs. masculine, cosmopolitanism vs. imperialism, et cetera. Yet, in ways reminiscent of Gaskell, focusing on these binaries effaces the way that the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes utilize the same “techniques of wealth.” When Mr. Wilcox broaches the topic of wealth prior to their wedding, Margaret says “What a mercy it is to have all this money about one!...Helen wouldn’t agree with me...She dislikes all organization, and probably confuses wealth with the technique of wealth. Sovereigns in a stocking wouldn’t bother her; cheques do” (Forster 154). Yet, whether the two families pay by sovereign or by cheque, the source of their wealth is largely the same: abstract investments in international companies. Mr. Wilcox’s wealth is clearly tied to foreign investments through his business, called the Imperial and West African Rubber Company. The narrator explains in the first chapters of the novel that Margaret and Helen Schlegel have increased their income by selling out their investments in domestic railways and putting the money into
“foreign things” (11-12). Helen, the narrator tells us, “owing to the good advice of her stockbrokers, became rather richer than she had been before” (219). Our knowledge of the sources of wealth of the two families is imparted by the narrator, but the concrete details of their income is less attended to than the characters’ discussions about wealth in the abstract, such as Margaret’s meditation on how the Schlegels stand upon their wealth as upon islands, or how to most effectively help those in need of money. Yet, the missing details represent the power and tenacity of English notions of respectability and traditional pathways for the circulation of wealth that the novel both approves and upends.

_Howards End_ opens and closes at the titular house which is aligned with tradition throughout the novel, but in the middle, we see the traditional, legitimate circulations of wealth rejected in favor of illegitimacy. The intervening chapters, specifically Helen’s pregnancy outside of marriage that happens therein, “provoke a defense of family order, legitimacy, and inheritance” (Gibson 111) which nearly conquers the day. Yet, Margaret “who had never expected to conquer anyone, had charged straight through these Wilcoxes and broken up their lives” (Forster 291). Many critics have attended to the violence of this language as well as the body count—literal and metaphorical—that must accumulate for the ending to be what it is. Nonetheless, the illegitimate order with inheritance determined by women outside of legal boundaries triumphs. Mrs. Wilcox forecasts this new, illegitimate order with her desire to leave Howards End to the kindred spirit she found in Margaret Schlegel, rather than her biological male offspring. The family arrangement Margaret establishes is a potent subversion to the Wilcox lifestyle and a necessary amendment to the Schlegel way of being. Both ideologies lose a member, and a male member at that: Leonard Bast, the father of Helen’s son, dies of heart failure at the hands
of Mr. Wilcox’s son Charles, who is sent to jail for manslaughter. Leonard and Charles represent the failed philosophies of either party. Leonard only wants to talk literature despite (or because of) the economic realities of his life, and Charles wants nothing to do with the social or cultural capital that builds communities. Arnoldian culture is unable to save Leonard, and Charles is inept at business. With these extremes expelled, the remaining parties possess the potential, through an alternative family structure underwritten by an alternative mode of inheritance to oscillate between the innovative motorcars and the traditional symphony to form a small community. This community, literally on the edge of London which is present in the red rust “eight or nine meadows” over (289) and metaphorically on the edge of polite society, is forecasted by Forster to have “such a crop of hay as never!” even as the novelist closes the novel before it comes to pass. Without dismissing the smart critiques, especially those that highlight the classism in the Howards End, we must consider Margaret’s success in forming a small community, blended from different clans living harmoniously together, a triumph. Her triumph, arguably a fantasy of what could be, returns us to the fantasy of community made possible by Robert Moore’s triumph in Shirley.

The authors featured in this study and their anxiety about community anticipates the developments of the twentieth century and the ongoing role of literature in creating and constructing a social reality for their readers, even as it represents or tries to reflect a reality already in existence. The future which Forster looked toward in 1911 witnessed “the development of a planet linked by money, information, and goods, where the signature achievement of the century was not an international community, but an ever-integrating object called the world economy” (Slobodian 17). Forster’s encroaching rust of London
has arrived. And yet, such pessimism is somewhat disingenuous. Literature and community have, in recent years, regained supposedly lost ground. Book clubs and independent, brick and mortar bookstores are thriving as sites of people connecting with, and through, literature. While the narrative of capitalism I trace is ultimately one of entropy, such confusion does not preclude the necessity or the desire for other fields of value. Perhaps more importantly, the narrative I articulate does not preclude the potential for new systems and structures. *Values in the Air*, as its name suggests, must end in question. What shape might new systems and structures take? Do any authors in the nineteenth century or beyond propose successful and actionable models of network and connection? Is the ideal of a community *not* founded on economic relationships feasible in a world in which globalism is emphatically *not* a global community? These questions and more are areas for further study. For the authors at the heart of *Values in the Air* and for Forster the answer is emphatically, yes. In the words of Forster’s favorite composer Beethoven, “Many assert that every minor piece must end in the minor. Nego!...Joy follows sorrow, sunshine—rain” (Beethoven qtd. In Kerst 15).

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103 See the list of nearly 100 articles from the last couple years about independent book stores and book clubs compiled by the American Book Sellers Association.
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“The celebrated monastery of Ford Abbey, in Dorsetshire, with its splendid demesne and a rental of 2,000l. a year, will create some competition, it is believed, amongst the great capitalist to-morrow, when Mr. Robins is instructed to offer it to the best bidder, in pursuance of Mr. Gwynne's will.” *The Morning Post*, London, 8 July 1846. *19th Century British Library Newspapers: Part I*


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