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An Economic Model of Literary Studies

(TITLE)

BY

Devin Charles Black

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Arts in English

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

2010

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Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge my Thesis Committee for all of their help and challenges they brought to this project. Without them, this project would have suffered. In his capacity as Chair, Dr. Randall Beebe was extremely helpful in guiding the thoughts in my head to the written page, as well as being the calming voice for my fears and worries. As Readers, both Dr. Marjorie Worthington and Dr. Dana Ringuette challenged my assumptions and helped me clarify and navigate my thought through what has proven to be a complex topic. I cannot thank them enough for helping bring this project into being.

Abstract

While much scholarly discussion exists on the future of literary studies and its value to society at large, much of this discussion revolves around economic terminology, such as value, without discussing the issues and concerns of literary studies in a larger economic framework. In this project, I look at the advent of literary theory as the catalyst that transformed literary studies into a capitalist economic system. This project aims to look at the complexity of value systems operating within the discipline without championing one theory over another or, indeed, championing or arguing against theory itself. Instead, an economic model allows us to navigate the complexity of relative values within literary studies with a greater precision because the study of economics is itself concerned with value and perpetuating value within systems. Ultimately, I use my project to conclude that the capitalist model shows that literary studies promotes intellectual markets just as a capitalist economic system drives itself to expand its own markets.

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Preface

In my first semester as a graduate student, I was tasked to present Leroy Searle's "The Conscience of the King: Oedipus, Hamlet, and the Problem of Reading" for a graduate seminar in literary studies. I remember arguing that Searle's focus—that, propelled by literary theory or other ideological predilections, scholars' "knowledge or foreknowledge" can lead to misreading a text (323)—had little bearing on any ultimate benefit of the text. For example, assume Orwell's *Animal Farm* was (1) *not* meant to be an allegory of the early Soviet Union and (2) had many instances where critics have disregarded some textual indicators that point against that reading. If subsequent criticism still focused on a reading of Snowball and Napoleon as Trotsky and Stalin, what would be lost in our idea of the fixed truth of the novel or, even more important, the teaching of the novel? A student who had never learned of the Soviet Union would still experience *Animal Farm* as a catalyst to explore the topic and add meaning to the text. The discussion of knowledge and reading fascinated me—to say the least—but I started forming ideas about how to frame this discussion with an economic model. In fact, I think an economic model is uniquely suited to the topic of the problem of reading and looking at how literary studies functions—I noticed and argue that this function shifted subtly after the boom of literary theory in 1970s—because I could look at the complexity of value systems operating within the discipline without championing one theory over another or, indeed, championing or arguing against theory itself. Instead, an economic model allows us to navigate the complexity of relative values within literary studies with a greater precision because the study of economics is itself concerned with value and perpetuating value within systems.

Although I now realize Searle's ideas on the subject are much more complex and nuanced—theory itself does not cause a scholar to misread a text, but it can be misapplied according to a scholar reading their own "foreknowledge" into a reading where such foreknowledge is not supported by the text—at the time I could not help but ponder what "value" reading a text correctly had over misreading it. Intertwined with the question of literary value is the issue of the literary canon: every judgment made in regard to the composition of the canon—opening it with an emphasis on multiculturalism or restraining it to a concentration of western history and culture—deals with the value of literature or how literary studies benefits society. Thus, any discussion of value of possible futures in literary studies is incomplete without dealing with the changes in the canon and the canon's changes to the discipline of literary studies. These changes include new concerns about knowledge beyond misreading a text such as *Animal Farm*: since more texts have been set into the canon of texts to be studied and taught, how can a literary department decide on who is a knowledgeable student or even scholar? Thus my initial questioning about the "value" of correct readings is a core question about what constitutes an education in literary studies. Should more or less Shakespeare be taught? I myself managed to go through four years as an undergraduate and two years as a graduate student and have never read important Shakespeare plays such as *Macbeth* or *A Midsummers Night's Dream*, have read only two stories from *The Canterbury Tales*, and have never read *Paradise Lost*. While the texts I have encountered in place of these works are also important, it remains that I would have been a failure in the university system not too long ago because of this "problem of knowledge." Ultimately, I use my project conclude that the capitalist model shows that literary studies promotes intellectual

markets just as a capitalist economic system drives itself to expand its own markets: the problem of knowledge, then, is a result of the tension between from the boom of theory and the consequent emergence of new intellectual markets and questions of knowledge and value.

Confronted with these issues, I researched issues dealing with the future of literary studies, such as the canon debate about closing/opening the canon, and the history of the discipline—notably, Gerald Graff's *Professing Literature*. One theme that ran throughout these texts centered on notions of value. For example, Bruce Fleming's own vision of the future of the discipline is entitled "The Value of Literary Studies." Similarly, Graff mentions terms such as "value," "production," "specialization," and "self-regulating" all in his opening chapter. It seemed as if many of these scholars dealt with these issues through economics in a roundabout way; that is, they used economic terms to supplement their arguments rather than centering on economics or economic models as an argument itself, although they found economic terms to be helpful. That is not to say that these scholars had a economic grounding to their argument; instead, it shows that such terminology is effective in dealing with issues, futures, and observations about literary studies. Treatment of economics and literature in the past has focused on wide variety of topics from Pierre Bourdieu's cultural capital in *Persuasion* to Marxist theory for reading literature. Yet, even with this precedent, coupled with the proclivity of scholars writing about literary studies to use economic terminology, using an economic model to illustrate the structures and functions of literary studies has not been a major focus for commentators in literary studies. I began this project with the idea of illustrating literary studies and surrounding issues through an economic model, not

knowing what sorts of conclusions I might draw beyond some preliminary ideas about literary theory and the division of labor. After further exploring literary studies through economic models, however, I found that this division of labor—the idea that laborers are separated by specific trades or, for literary studies, scholars focus their criticism through discrete, specific theoretical perspectives—drove to the heart of the problems of knowledge and reading, primarily over the perceived battle between theory and literature in roles of prominence in the discipline. Perhaps more importantly, the capitalist structure of literary studies suggests the probability of certain possible futures to occur over others.

The goal of my thesis is to demonstrate how literary theory, as an agent of specialization, transformed the structure of literary studies into a capitalist market. This transformation has created concerns about the problem of knowledge, about how to read a text, and about the justification and value of literary studies as a whole. I use Adam Smith's economic theory to characterize literary studies and how theory changed the discipline as well as where the discipline might head in the future. This is a positive analysis in that I do not argue whether theory or the transformation of literary studies is good or bad. In looking at the possible futures, I do not endorse a particular future over another as much as use the capitalist model to predict what is likely to occur.

I imagine some concerns arise from using Adam Smith as the backbone of this economic model as opposed to Karl Marx, who is much more studied and used in literary studies. Yet, that familiarity is the exact reason that I did not consult his work: it would be too difficult to separate the work that this project is trying to do with literary studies from Marxist criticism of literature. Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* may have flaws

and detractors—Marx being one of them—but it does share a sense of *newness* with this project. Smith endeavored to show how trade, competition, and the division of labor imparted wealth to a society and how that society could gain more wealth, and he is considered the founder of economics for doing so. It is fitting, then, to use Smith to start the exploration of literary studies as a capitalist model because I could see many of the same things, such as the division of labor—theory and subsequent theoretical perspectives found in criticism—operating within literary studies. The justification of using a capitalist model to look at literary studies is akin to studying any industry through economic analysis: to understand the facets of production, value, and wealth within an industry.

To better understand how literary studies functions, I begin my project with an introductory discussion of literary theory and the “problem of knowledge,” which justifies a closer look at how the problem of knowledge came about. Of course, the term literary theory is not static in its definition, and this project uses it somewhat fluidly but for good purpose. When speaking about literary theory, I am speaking first of the explosion of theory onto the literary scene at some point around the 1970s. Afterwards, even what was seen as a non-theoretical study—New Criticism and humanism, for example—is theoretical, I argue, because the awareness of what constitutes a theoretical perspective changes after theory finds a place in literary studies. Thus, when I am speaking of criticism, I mean essays or other tangible products of scholars as opposed to some sort of ideology that is “non-theoretical.” Nevertheless, when I mention “traditional criticism” I am referring to the work produced before the coming of literary theory in the 1970s and the re-definition of theoretical. After a brief look at the

economics of the foundation of literature departments in the United States, I outline the structure of the modern English department in terms of central authority and regulation using Graff's "field-coverage" model, which he believes literary departments find themselves in. In turn, the unregulated department proved to be a breeding ground for new ideas, leading to an influx of theoretical perspectives. Because these competing perspectives added more canonical texts to the discipline, it became possible for further specialization of the discipline—through literary theory—beyond the divisions of geographical region/time period such as Restoration British literature. Now, a scholar can be a Marxist focusing on Restoration literature and, because of the amount of study involved to become a master of a particular theory, less time and labor can be devoted to other theoretical perspectives. Consequently, theory has even made the problem of knowledge a concern for scholars themselves. Interestingly, to hire a new faculty member, the candidate's particular theoretical perspective is of great significance because theory has replaced the measurement of objectivity—displaced because of the problem of knowledge—with itself; in other words, since no objectivity can be had due to theory, theory is perhaps one way to select a suitable candidate.

In the second chapter, I narrow the focus to how specialization breeds competition and increases production in a capitalist system. Consequently, the specialization—another economic term that is used to describe the division of labor—of literary studies leads to an increase of production of literary criticism and other scholarly work. In essence, this chapter serves to show how literary studies can be viewed through economic terminology. While that endeavor may indeed fill many volumes of books, I restrict this discussion to specialization and the division of labor, competition, value, capital, and

wealth. By showing how literary studies has been transformed by theory and how this transformation can be shown through a lens of economic terminology, I posit that the discipline behaves as a capitalist market does: the structure of capitalist markets serve to expand production and capital within the system.

To show the relationship of literature to theory, I use *The Turn of the Screw* and *Dracula* from the *Case Studies of Contemporary Criticism* series as cases in point in the third chapter. The purpose of the series, according to Ross Murfin in the early pages of *The Turn of the Screw*, is to initiate “college students to the current critical and theoretical ferment in literary studies” (v). The introduction makes it very clear that the literature is helpful to understand the theory as opposed to the other way around. I was most struck by *The Turn of the Screw* volume because the ratio of pages of the literary story and extratextual elements such as critical histories and theoretical perspectives: the story itself comprised less than half the pages in the volume. These conflicting variables reflect a shift in emphasis from literature alone to both literature and the industry surrounding it. This is itself a shift from the purpose of studying literature to studying the critical industry around literature, which has pervaded literary studies in such a manner as to warrant a volume, such as *The Turn of the Screw*, or even an entire series.

In the last chapter, I deal with likely outcomes of the canon debate while demonstrating how this model would predict the changes to come about under any camp in the debate of the canon or other futures. I engage with futures envisioned by proponents of the canon debate in addition to Graff’s famous push for “teaching the conflicts” and Leroy Searle’s desire to look at the meta-narrative of social justice, which he believes underlies all the work done in literary studies. I wish to make the distinction

that I apply the capitalist model to all of these futures: I do not endorse one of these futures over another. I also account for how capitalist model could break down through a radical shift akin to an economic bubble wreaking havoc in an economic system and, subsequently, how a society views its own beliefs about economics. In the end, I look at the problem of knowledge and Searle's problem of reading and apply the capitalist model to see if those issues would continue to persist or fade in the future.

I started this project fully intending to show that theory had "subverted" literature and was of primary focus. I thought this found expression in no place better than the *Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism* volume of *The Turn of the Screw*, where criticism far outpaced the literary text in terms of pure page numbers. As I started to formulate my thinking through writing, I found that I was shifting away from that argument, and my use of "subversion" terminology was hollow, generic, and not an accurate description of the situation of literary studies. What I had discovered in the place of "subversion" was a struggle of primacy between literature and the industry surrounding it—including literary theory and criticism—that revolved around a meta-narrative of production. The focus of literary studies, in the economic model of production, is not what we talk about—a literary text—or even how we talk about it—a discussion prompted by literary theory. Instead, the focus is on the "talking about," as it were. In such a system, the productive powers of competition need ambivalence and ambiguity in the place of dominance and submission, whether dealing with literature versus theory or even among individual theoretical perspectives, in order to further increase production.

This project has not, by any means, exhausted the avenue of literary studies as a capitalist market. In the course of analyzing *The Turn of the Screw* and its critical history, it is apparent that James's story is a wealth of industry: the amount of criticism centered on such a small novel is amazing. In a way, *The Turn of the Screw* is extremely valuable to the discipline due to the potential critical market surrounding it. Although I have not addressed what literary texts are more valuable to the discipline in terms of production and exchange, I nonetheless hope that these topics are explored in the future in order to better understand literary studies. For example, the discussion could drive at the core question of what exactly we value in literary studies: perhaps the *Turn of the Screw* is more valuable than other texts precisely because the wealth of critical industry that surrounds it perpetuates the exchange and competition of ideas between scholars. In other words, it could provide another perspective and analysis of questions about the discipline in which scholars are continually engaging.

Chapter One - Literary Theory and the Problem of Knowledge

Perhaps the largest contributor to the arguments of both the defenders and detractors of the literary discipline is the rise and dominance of literary theory. More specifically, theory's role through certain specializations such as feminism and multiculturalism in transforming the traditional literary canon has been a significant factor in the push away from a Western, male-dominated canon. Consequently, to critics falling onto differing sides of the canon debate, theory exists in a continuum where it functions as a method of opening and expanding the discipline, on the one hand, but is contributing to the dismantling of the canon and basis of knowledge that are paramount to maintaining the discipline, on the other hand.

The issue with the basis of knowledge arises from the opening of the canon. When past institutions focused on the "classics" such as Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton, students could demonstrate their knowledge in a select set of works that scholars focused and taught. After opening the canon, students no longer necessarily encounter this set selection of works. For example, it is now not so rare that a student may complete a four-year university degree in literature and never take a class that spends any length of time on Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, or other authors whose works were at one time considered essential in any literary curriculum. Instead, English departments teach a diverse curriculum that has no method in which to test whether the students have attained knowledge that professors might hope. In "Prospects for Theorizing," Searle observed the same trend for scholars and the discipline as a whole: "What we do in literary and cultural studies is not crisply delineated by fact and concept, but draws at times upon convictions and aspirations that are often hardest to see clearly because we

are so directly involved with them” (37). What becomes necessary then, is not only to step back and search for the “convictions and aspirations” that drive literary studies, but also to discover the events that have created and influenced the structure of the literary discipline; more specifically, how the founding of the English department and subsequent prominence of literary theory led literary criticism into a model that looks and functions remarkably similarly to a capitalist market. In this chapter, I outline the history surrounding the formation of the English department as it pertains to my project; afterwards, I sketch the problem of knowledge in the literary discipline in terms of critical production and its ties to literary theory.

Capitalism and the Formation of Literary Studies

By the end of the nineteenth century, academia had come a long way in terms of developing an English department in America that we would recognize today. In *Professing Literature*, one of the most comprehensive accounts dealing with the history of the English department, Graff observes that in only half a century, the state of language in the university system shifted away from “the primacy of the classical over the vernacular languages in American colleges” (1). The dominance of Latin and Greek diverge further from contemporary literary studies as they were used as a method of teaching language or rhetoric; essentially, literature functioned as an instrumental good as opposed to an intrinsic good. Thus, literature in the early nineteenth century carried only deferred value that was only realized in the attainment of some other academic goal. Hans Gumbrecht observes that literature was viewed more as a “leisure activity” (502) rather than as an object of study before the establishment of literary studies, reinforcing

the idea that modern literature provided little value to the university system beyond existing as an instrumental tool for other disciplines. As the nineteenth century came to a close, academics within the university system had started voicing concerns about the lack of prominence given to literary studies. For example, James Morgan Hart, in a published article from 1884-1885 entitled "The College Course in English Literature, How it May Be Improved," argued that, in order to improve the discipline to a point where it would be accepted into the university, literary studies would "depend in great measure upon the proportion of time allowed to it" (34). His argument signifies that literary studies had not, in fact, been given much importance in a college curriculum and could only be remedied by increasing labor allowance which, in turn, would reflect the discipline's increased value in the eyes of the university.

Even at this early stage, Hart had recognized the importance of literature as a product of culture, noting that in regards to teaching Anglo-Saxon texts:

I must confess that everything anterior to the Conquest is as foreign to our way of thinking as if it had been expressed in a foreign tongue [...] I do not see what literary culture our undergraduates can possibly derive from any English writings anterior to Chaucer's. (36)

This emphasis on the value of transmitting some form of culture from English texts points to an early argument for the discipline's worth being tied to cultural exchange through native language texts. Previously, literature that had only deferred value for study in languages and philosophy was much broader in scope than purely national literatures. Gumbrecht asserts that the United States and Great Britain both developed their study of literature based on "universal human values" (503), which enlarged the

amount of possible texts to include those “without any specific national or historical restrictions” (503), although this expansion was limited in large part to white, Western, male writers. This proclivity towards the universal makes Hart’s complaint against the discipline’s lack of national literatures—English literature after Chaucer—in the university progressively more significant because it foreshadowed the call for closing the canon for cultural reasons; that is, restricting the canon to include only Western-based authors and ideas.

Besides having value defined by cultural significance, literature benefited from the pure economic swing of the time: namely, the industrial revolution allowed books to be published *en masse*. Mark Morrison argues that “mass market publishing was partially made possible by the new and more affordable consumer products and sophisticated commodity advertisements” (86). Thus, the shifting social climate that allowed for working-class laborers to become consumers of literature heightened the sort of push for a cultural identity that could be expressed through national literatures. Whether or not Hart’s argument for literary culture was caused by this new consumer group with considerable purchasing power, the new consumers certainly accelerated the demand of national literatures in their own native language, as they lacked the classical, humanistic education afforded to the upper and middle classes.

The economic transformation coupled with a pronounced push for national literatures allow for what Adam Smith and other economists call exchange-value. In other words, national literatures serve a function by allowing a source culture to discover its own cultural and linguistic history through the literary medium. Consequently, exchange enables members of a source culture to participate in their shared history in

terms of debate and discussion about what makes that culture unique. Raymond Williams analyzed this exchange in *Culture & Society*, ultimately arguing that literature grants readers a chance to access “a record of our reactions, in thought and feeling, to the changed conditions of our common life” (295). Of course, this is not to say that the diffusion of culture through a textual medium is of no added value to developing the need for a strong literary discipline. Without an increase in demand for novels, the most abstract of books might require a high level of labor to understand, but if there were no demand, such labor would only be needed in short supply.

Yet, this process of buying books in order to receive cultural enlightenment indicates a deferred-value similar to literature’s previous function as a means to attain other academic objectives. Therefore, while publishing companies and others involved with the making and selling of the book may profit, English departments only have a small part of what is needed to, as Hart mentioned, increase “the proportion of time allowed to it” (34). While Morrison’s observation of increased advertisement and production speaks well as to the physical supply and demand of literature, it does not fulfill Hart’s desire of more labor devoted to literature in the university. In order to achieve Hart’s goal, not only the exchange-value, but also the labor-value of both reading and, more importantly, studying literature must be increased to pressure academic forces to divert more time towards the study of literature.

The Unregulated Department

When literary theory became popular in the university, much of Hart’s wish in terms of labor-value was fulfilled. Yet, before the Formalists and Freudians and

Feminists, the humanists dominated any discussion of literature. Only a challenge from New Criticism would derail traditional study in the literary discipline. Searle jokingly asserts that the established humanists he knew “still had not forgiven the New Critics for contaminating literature with ‘Ideas’” (38). Graff observes that the growth of literary theory found similar resistance with the New Critics:

It is also worth pondering that traditional humanists of the same era indicted research scholarship for many of the very same sins for which later traditionalists indicted the New Criticism and present day traditionalists indict literary theory: elevating esoteric, technocratic jargon over humanistic values, coming between literature itself into an elitist pastime for specialists. (4)

Consequently, Graff argues that literary studies operates in a cyclical manner that challenges the established ideas in the discipline. Thus, humanists were the traditionalists much like the New Critics became the traditionalists for literary theorists to challenge.

How literary theory challenged New Criticism parallels how mass production challenged traditional notions of what was valuable enough to be printed or, in a larger sense, what constitutes literature. In other words, some the same mechanisms that spurred on the industrial revolution—specialization and the division of labor—were introduced in a similar fashion by literary theory to the literary discipline. The origin of this specialization lies in the structure of the literary discipline. Graff argues that ostensible “pretenses” such as “humanism and cultural tradition” has led to deep ideological differences within the discipline, while shutting out the public from such conflicts (6). More important to Graff than public perception is the “field-coverage

principle,” which Graff claims “accompanied the modernization and professionalization of education in the late nineteenth century” (6). Under this model, a literature department organized its staff along time periods for literature instead of any another avenue of organization. This would ensure that the department could ostensibly cover any major period in literature—still primarily British and American at the time—and thus be fully staffed. As Graff observes, it is easy to take such a model and ignore it since it has become so familiar (6). Yet, if a department were organized along themes in literature, for example, the department would operate in a wholly different manner.

Under Graff’s field-coverage model, the department was largely what he calls “self-regulating”:

By assigning each instructor a commonly understood role—to cover a predefined period or field—the principle created a system in which the job of instruction could precede as if on automatic pilot, without the need for instructors to debate aims and methods. Assuming individual instructors were competently trained [...] instructors could be left on their own to get on with teaching and research, with little need for elaborate supervision and management. (7)

While “self-regulating” properly describes how literary departments maintained high standards through individual action, the term “unregulated” might be a more accurate term for this model in terms of a central governing unit and the individuals operating underneath it, though it can carry the connotation of being chaotic. In this case, however, it better reflects the amount of direction given by the head(s) of the department.

Operating with our earlier example of a department organized towards literary themes,

the department would, by necessity, have to regulate the faculty to a greater degree; indeed, Graff's observation that faculty members do not have "to debate aims and methods" under the field-coverage theory would also be untrue (7). If the department were organized along themes in literature, who would pick the themes that would be studied? Obviously, such choices would be scrutinized within and throughout the discipline. In terms of regulation—beside hiring along themes the department believes to be worthy of study—the department would have to inspect each faculty member's research and teaching practices to ensure minimal deviation from the established themes.

Overall, choosing an unregulated model over a regulated one breeds creativity and introduces ideas to the discipline that may have otherwise never entered into the discipline. Under a thematic model—or, perhaps, many other models—challenges have a higher probability of being perceived as "disruptive" and something "to be expelled or excluded" (Graff 7). On the other hand, the unregulated field-coverage model allowed for new ideas to be absorbed by the department, "simply adding another unit to the aggregate of fields to be covered" (7). Graff even goes so far as to borrow one of Adam Smith's most famous phrases—"the invisible hand"—to explain how order somehow kept departments from descending into chaos. That is not to say that the growth of literary studies under a thematic model would be static. Themes would be included after they gained widespread acceptance. Yet, widespread acceptance would be difficult to achieve because a newer theme such as postcolonialism would not be embraced by scholars because of the fear that their work would be frowned upon. Subsequently, themes would only be added if, somehow, that particular theme found acceptance in a wide variety of areas outside the discipline or if the theme could be argued in such a way

as to convince the central authority that the discipline would greatly benefit from the inclusion of that theme. In *Beyond the Culture Wars*, Graff notes a study closely related to English departments and regulation: in the Berkeley Experimental Program, the curriculum was designed to focus on “great books... with a heavy emphasis on ancient classics” (175). Students entering the program had to agree to take classes only within the guidelines of the experiment. As a result, both the curriculum and the classes that students could take were regulated by a central authority. Graff argues that this experiment was a total failure because it “limit[ed] the number of students and professors to whom it could appeal” (175-176). Thus, even if a thematic department could integrate new themes, it would still face the challenge of attracting students and scholars. In the most basic sense, fewer scholars would contribute to fewer ideas and stunt growth further. In other words, literary theory may never have burst onto the scene if the department functioned under a more regulated system such as a thematic model.

In contrast to Graff, John Guillory, in *Cultural Capital*, believes the structure of the department is “by no means structurally organized to express the consensus of the community; these social and institutional sites are complex hierarchies in which the position and privilege of judgment are objects of competitive struggle” (27). While Graff’s self-regulating department also would not express consensus in the sense that there are many different themes, theories, and works focused on in the department—in the broad category of different time periods—Guillory’s idea of complex hierarchies need not be seen as antithetical to an unregulated department. Instead, Guillory’s suggestion of competition between groups within the field reinforces the idea that there is no regulated gold-standard beyond that which is afforded by peers through competition.

In other words, deconstruction could be the dominant theory and all scholars associated with it would have greater position in the discipline, yet only if and so long as other academics cede that that particular theory is the most valuable.

Yet, Guillory notices many of the same trends in terms of regulation as does Graff, though he makes the distinction between graduate teaching—which he views as relatively unregulated—and undergraduate teaching. The difference between the two, according to Guillory, is noticeable in “the relatively greater autonomy of the graduate teacher, which is in turn the condition for the transferential cathexes necessary for the propagation of theory. The relative nondetermination of the graduate syllabus by any higher administrative power is the sine qua non of theory” (261). Guillory’s “relative nondetermination” mirrors Graff’s self-regulated department in the sense that, all in all, central authority does not regulate the actions and study of the faculty beneath it.

Operating under the field-coverage theory of organization, along with the expansion of the middle class and easier access to books due to mass publishing/marketing, literary theory came onto the scene to challenge and integrate itself into the discipline much like New Criticism had challenged it earlier. Graff notes that the New Critics now sided with the traditionalists against the bombardment of theories such as deconstruction. In fact, the original traditionalists, as well as their newfound New Critic allies, “were now confronted with theories and interpretations that made those of the New Critics seem tame and respectable by comparison” (241). As New Critics had gained footing and prominence in the unregulated academic marketplace, so too would literary theorists.

The Canon

One of the larger impacts that literary theory has had on the discipline is the opening of the canon. Of course, the use of the word “opening” connotes that the canon was and is hostile to changes made to it, though in this project it refers only to the addition of new texts to the canon in order to achieve some solution to the dispute from theorists such as feminists, multiculturalists, and those engaging in cultural studies. These arguments have run the gamut from including teaching works at random with no discernable canon, adding or restricting works to one canon, or having many different canons, discrete and separate from one another. For instance, feminists such as Mary Eagleton and Elaine Showalter have argued that more women should be included in the canon or that women should have a canon of their own; or that the mere idea of a canon is itself exclusionary and not conducive to equality, espoused by critics such as Toril Moi.

Thus, instead of the canon consisting of Greek and Roman works or traditionally studied works of English literature such as Chaucer and Shakespeare, it can now include Willa Cather, Zora Neale Hurston, Aphra Behn, Olaudah Equiano, or Black Elk. Yet, in the presence of time constraints and overlap in the teaching of literature, a student may read only a few of these or may not read any of the traditional “classics.” Furthermore, Guillory explains that, alongside the opening of the canon to other works of literature, literary theory “breached the disciplinary fortifications between literary texts and texts derived from other discourses, such as linguistic, the psychoanalytic, the philosophical” (176). As a result, the literary canon no longer contains only literary texts or, more accurately, the definition of what constitutes literary characteristics has changed.

The pushback against opening the canon to such a great degree by critics such as Allan Bloom is an ongoing argument running parallel to those who believe the traditional canon is flawed. In *The Closing of the American Mind*, Allan Bloom states that education should consist:

of reading certain generally recognized classic texts, just reading them, letting them dictate what the questions are and the method of approaching them—not forcing them into categories we make up, not treating them as historical products, but trying to read them as their authors wished them to be read. (344)

Bloom is arguing for two things: the teaching of “classic texts” and reading them for their own value and aesthetics as opposed to adding meaning to them.

In a sense, both of these accusations speak to the problem of knowledge as related to the rise of literary theory. Besides the opening of the canon to include other works—to the detriment of the classics according to Bloom—theory has also accomplished, in Bloom’s words, the destruction of the texts themselves because scholars, teachers, and students now “forc[e] them into categories we make up” (344). Graff counters that point in *Beyond the Culture Wars*, noting that “in teaching any text, one necessarily teaches an interpretation of it” (74). Bloom’s argument reaches into the heart of literary theory, the old adage that theory subverts the meaning of a text in order to conform to the theory’s meaning.

Specialization

Beyond the opening of the canon and imparting meaning on the text, literary theory has increased the level of specialization in the profession. Admittedly, one might take the original separation of the field into time periods and geographical region—such as nineteenth-century British literature—to be the original specialization of the discipline as opposed to literary theory. This is true to an extent. Much like a pre-industrial town having work divvied up between a cobbler, a butcher, and a blacksmith, the English department also has a division of labor inherent in the field-coverage model. Yet, literary theory runs deeper than that division of labor. In fact, it is very possible to have a Feminist reading of Chaucer just as easily as of a modern work by Virginia Woolf—the very kind of reading Allan Bloom would abhor. Consequently, a professor of theory may primarily be a deconstructionist focusing on twentieth-century American literature, which is more similar to a shoe factory than to a cobbler because the workers confine themselves to a specific task in the overall goal of creating a shoe: one person cuts out the shoe from the material, one person assembles, and so on.

One of the marks of this specialization is that criticism written in this specialized mode will, as Graff observes, “be gibberish to people who have not been socialized into the literary or intellectual community” (81). This linguistic complexity occurs to a greater extent within a specific theoretical background, as the scholar speaks not only the language of literature but also of their studied theory. Take this sampling from Derrida’s *Writing and Difference*—and, subsequently, deconstructionist criticism—as an example: “The economy of this writing is a regulated relationship between that which exceeds and the exceeded totality: the *différance* of the absolute excess” (75). A student trying to

understand this statement would be befuddled to the extreme with only the understanding the sentence through the different forms of “excess.” Were he or she to do so, what would follow would be an extended trek into trying to define and/or discover the meaning associated with the word “*différance*.” Similarly, in “Prospects for Theorizing,” Searle analyzes one passage from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and concludes that “the minimum pre-requisite for this lecture is a prior knowledge of any of a dozen anthologies of criticism that covers the period since the early 1960s” (54). To be sure, jargon exists in most professional settings—the humanists and New Critics all had their own technical language systems. Nevertheless, different theoretical perspectives operating in the discipline simultaneously means that there are multiple systems of jargon to learn instead of one. In short, even a faculty member, not to mention students, would probably not have the full and complete knowledge with which to understand even one given passage by a theorist in terms of meaning and connections with other theories.

Thus, unlike a cobbler or a shoe factory, the product of this academic specialized labor is and of itself something to be labored over. The equivalent requirement of understanding a shoe would entail being familiar with the entire process of its production: the origins of the product, the country and surrounding area and other context, how it is put together and the jargon associated with that process, and knowing more about who made the show, not to mention the major historical and contemporary figures dealing with shoemaking and the theories of production challenging traditional notions of the shoe business.

The Problem of Knowledge

Each of these issues—the opening of the canon, the addition of meaning beyond authorial content, and specialization—has an effect on the problem of knowledge previously mentioned. Each issue still sparks argument and challenges throughout the academic system of English, as Searle notes in “Prospects for Theorizing”:

Every decision continues to be contested, whether it is priorities for hiring, revisions to the curriculum, requirements for the major, or the admission of graduate students, with no effective agreement about what constitutes intellectual excellence, best practices, or even “good” work. (41)

Here, Searle shows Graff’s field-coverage model in action: in his hypothetical example, Searle hires a medievalist who also concentrates in cultural studies. Instead of an English department looking to hire a Chaucerian and determining who the most accomplished, brilliant Chaucerian is on the market, theory has added in the extra variable of hiring with a certain theoretical background. This is not the fault of the department in disregarding who the very best candidate is in terms of the candidate’s knowledge of Chaucer, but of the lack of an objective measuring mechanism for knowledge, especially since the knowledge of a humanist reader of Chaucer would differ greatly from a feminist reader. In essence, theory has not only derailed the notion of how to measure what a potential faculty member knows, it has itself replaced that measurement with itself; in other words, since no objectivity can be had due to theory, theory is perhaps one way to select a suitable candidate.

Overall, this problem of knowledge affects the discipline because there is no real measure by which an English student can be judged, especially outside the university

system. Furthermore, as Searle notes, “we are losing our students at only a slightly slower rate than we are losing our public audience [...] the only people buying our books or reading what we write are, evidently, other professors and the students [...] that we still have” (42). Guillory calls this “capital flight,” or the decreasing enrollment of students in literary studies due to the economic realities of the students themselves (45). Basically, when scholars within the discipline are researching, theorizing, or arguing about the crisis in the humanities, it is this capital flight that spurs their discussions whether acknowledged or not. While this flight is most likely the result of many causes as opposed to one only, the problem of knowledge cannot be discounted as a factor because it has become much more difficult to justify to potential students what knowledge they can accrue from literary studies. Because the university exists to educate students, the complexity of knowledge within literary studies can be undesirable when compared to math or any of the sciences.

In Searle’s article, “The Conscience of the King: Oedipus, Hamlet, and the Problem of Reading,” he outlines a specific problem when it comes to knowledge in the literary disciplines: that of reading itself. Even when done correctly in Searle’s eyes, reading only allows for a scholar to engage in “persuasion primarily because we would not know how to carry out a demonstration or a proof” (320). Searle is touching upon the idea that the interpretation of literature involves arguments and persuasion as opposed to the empirical observation, testing, and proofs that one can find in the sciences or math. Even before the opening of the canon and different theoretical screens with which to read, this lack of empirical proof of truth in a literary work has provided the basis of the crisis of the humanities—specifically, literature—and Guillory’s resulting capital flight.

With the rise of literary theory, the persuasion that Searle mentions has taken on a specialized mode, meaning that instead of having only a few dominant critical interpretations, scholars now engage in a multitude of discrete interpretations in which no theoretical perspective necessarily holds sway over another. This specialized mode of critical interpretation, then, is what allows for a scholar to misread a text from a specific theoretical perspective. For instance, Searle makes the case that a Freudian reading of *Hamlet*—that Hamlet cannot kill his uncle due to his fixation on his mother—ignores textual evidence in the “play within a play” that shows, as Searle observes, a nephew killing the king as opposed to the brother committing the deed (336). Hamlet, then, misreads the play similarly to how Freud and other readers misread the play or any other text. Yet, Searle’s belief that authors deserve their texts to be read in such a fashion as to acknowledge “what the text says” notwithstanding (327), Freud’s misreading of *Hamlet* and other texts spawned many a scholarly career in the name of reading literature and other texts through the lens of psychoanalysis and those influenced by it.

With this specialized theory, texts could be and still are read *looking* for oedipal fixations in the text. What changed, then, was the degree of importance afforded to the text when juxtaposed with a theoretical perspective. One of the primary causes of this change is the precedent set by early influential figures such as Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx, a precedent that showed two scholars reading a text through their own theories. In other words, the texts functioned as explications for their own social/economic/psychological theories. Subsequently, the background of literary theory is entrenched with the notion that the text itself was of only secondary importance. Even

the term oedipal complex uses a literary example to illustrate the types of fixations that Freud believed the male mind was engaged in.

Even without this precedent, the shift in focus from literary texts to the critical industry surrounding literature would have occurred as more scholars became engaged in the specialized divisions of labor brought out by literary theory. Recalling Searle's example of Spivak—or any literary theory or literary text that can be prescribed—he mentions that the passage requires knowledge of “thirty years of theory” (54). The reader, according to Searle, must be aware of

Marx, by way of Gramsci and Althusser, including an acquaintance with Marx's 1844 manuscripts. Next is Derrida, from “Plato's Pharmacy” to *Of Grammatology*, and on to at least an opening of the pages of *Glas*—known not according to Derrida's excesses, from his partiality in interpreting Plato's *Phaedrus* to his imaginative flights in reading Hegel, but as a methodological master. So too any reader's understanding would be seriously impaired without at least some awareness of the post-war interpretations of Hegel by both Hippolyte and Kojève by way of their influence on Louis Althusser, and cognizance of debates concerning subject positions, hegemony, subaltern studies, post-colonial discourse, and throughout, the cultural-political archaeologies that take their lead from Foucault's study of the early modern “episteme”—and so on, and on, and on. (54)

The amount of time and labor devoted to such an exercise is extremely intensive and extensive. Thus, to read *Robinson Crusoe* under the lens of postcolonial theory, for

instance, requires a monumental knowledge of the background of postcolonial theory that would make it rather difficult to have as extensive and certain knowledge in another area of literary theory. Consequently, it is unlikely that a theorist has a masterful grasp over more than one theory. It stands to reason then, having devoted so much time to study, learn, and understand a particular theory, that the theorist sees his or her theoretical background as something to be valued in terms of the amount of labor involved. As such, theorists with this invested background, whether intentionally or not, would treat the theory with primacy over a literary text.

Of course, thus far the discussion has not touched upon what literary theory has done to the structure of literary criticism or why departments or critics welcomed theory, given its penchant for jargon, primacy over text, and sheer labor involved in mastering a particular theory. In the second chapter, I will define in terms of the economic need of English departments why this specialization occurred and will define value in literary studies and how theory transformed these notions of value. Also, I will show how literary theory has ingrained itself within the discipline of literary studies.

Chapter Two - Literary Theory and the Economic Structure of Literary Studies

Specialization and Competition

One of the mainstays of classical and modern capitalist economics is that competition benefits all parties involved: competitors find ways to revolutionize and to make efficient their business model, inventors create new products—and demand for them—and consumers benefit from lower prices. In this sense, literary theory benefits literary studies because no longer do traditionalists hold a monopoly of what is accepted to be studied. Instead, many theories—it would be foolish to consider literary theory one entity, after all—vie for supremacy at any given time. This competition creates a system that functions similar to a capitalist market, involving similar ideas and concepts such as value, capital, exchange, demand, and so on, though these terms have to be defined in the context of literary studies.

Before delving into these definitions or even looking closer at competition, discovering why specialization—the division of labor—occurred within literary studies is necessary. Recall Hart's argument that the prominence of literary studies "will depend in great measure upon the proportion of time allowed to it" (34). Since literary departments formed in the United States as well as in Britain, we can assume—if Hart's assertion is true—that literary studies was proportioned more time. Now, while this was most likely the result of a confluence of factors—such as the increased labor in reading the emerging Modernist texts—in the early history of literary studies, the introduction of literary theory accelerated the process tenfold.

Bruce E. Fleming noticed literary theory as an accelerant in "What is the Value of Literary Studies?" in which he observes that literary studies originated in the notion that

reading literature “makes us better people” (459). This teleological aim also underscores what he calls the “wisdom paradigm,” as opposed to the “knowledge paradigm,” that literary studies now finds itself in. In the latter system, which Fleming believes to be unsuited for literary studies, scholars look for “new authors worthy of attention ... [and read] an already-canonical author in a new way” (463). Fleming’s second statement echoes many arguments of those wishing to limit and restrict the canon to one purpose or another: namely, that theorists are using their ideas to read *into* texts instead of just *reading* them for what they are. Fleming touches upon an important observation concerning the knowledge paradigm:

The imperative implicit in the knowledge paradigm is this: produce, produce. I also call this the accretive paradigm because, in much the same way Marx thought capitalism intrinsically sought new markets, this sort of relation with the world constantly seeks new fields about which to be knowledgeable [...] The value of the enterprise as a whole is in the very impulsion forward, though its motion is towards a goal it can never, by definition reach, not even asymptotically—namely, the attainment of all knowledge about literature. (460)

Here, the impact of literary theory is made manifest: it provided a catalyst toward production. Perhaps much of the current focus on the crisis within the English department has much to do with theory and the knowledge paradigm’s goal and its ability to reach said goal. In any case, this proclivity towards ever more progressive production is itself a symptom of the division of labor and specialization effects of theory on literary studies.

Adam Smith was one of the first to codify the term “division of labor,” and spends the first part of his major work, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), studying the effects of the division of labor:

The division of labour, however, so far as it can be introduced, occasions, in every art, a proportionable increase of the productive powers of labour. The separation of different trades and employments from one another, seems to have taken place, in consequence of this advantage [...] In every improved society, the farmer is generally nothing but a farmer; the manufacturer nothing but a manufacturer. (13)

Accordingly, Hart’s drive toward having English studies apportioned more time finds its ultimate manifestation in literary theory, the agent of specialization that propelled literary studies ever more towards divided labor. The specialization of literary criticism into a continuum of theory-based, not to mention specializations of existing, criticism expands the production of literary criticism by allowing each school to reciprocate ideas with one another. The further specialization of these groups into areas such as New Criticism and deconstruction only intensify this reciprocation. If Smith is right in arguing that division of labor leads to an improved society, the parallel argument is that competing theories of criticism leads to an improved discipline in terms of efficiency and productive output.

Part of Smith’s discussion on the division of labor centers around an example of a pin factory that employs divided labor to great effect. Instead of being able to produce ten to two-hundred pins in a day, the employees’ divided labor—and thus, familiarity with the job—enabled them to make upwards forty-thousand pins every day. The corollary with literary studies, then, would allow more production through the division of

labor. For instance, if feminism had not become a major movement in the literary discipline, we could postulate a number of discrete consequences. First, the number of people in literary studies might be smaller because of a decreased attraction to those who would have otherwise found a place studying feminism within literary studies. Second, this lack of newer people in the discipline translates into fewer new topics that could be explored in areas that previously had been closed to anything remotely feminist. For example, Old English can be seen, at present, through the lens of feminism, whether concentrating on poems about or possibly by women or the treatment of women and gender of our linguistic forbearers, greatly increasing the potential amount of work in the discipline. Third, as Smith puts it, scholars would lose “the advantage which is gained by saving the time commonly lost in passing from one sort of work to another” (16). In other words, concentrating on literary texts from a feminist perspective is more efficient than switching theoretical lenses. Fourth, scholars would lose the benefit of Smith’s idea of “how much labour is facilitated and abridged by the application of proper machinery” (16). Of course, this last point could be taken to mean actual machinery such as computers and typewriters, but all have that access in any case. Instead, the “proper machinery” is precisely the knowledge of feminist theories; similar to how one must know thirty years of theory-history to understand Spivak, a person steeped in feminist theory takes much preparation, but this preparation allows for a much more efficient model of creating ideas and criticism.

Production

The division of labor can be seen in different literary theory strands—as well as their relationship with more traditional criticism—and their increase in production. While it is easy to discover what “production” denotes in Smith’s pin factory example, the production of literary studies is more abstract as it can involve different types of work. Leaving out teaching as a service—an important one, to be sure, but one that lays outside the scope of this section of production—rather than manufactured product and pure study since it produces no tangible product, what survives is actual criticism such as articles and books, presentations, and anthologies as the bulk of production. Certainly, with the opening of the canon more and more anthologies are being created such as *Norton* and *Heath* in addition to the new editions of theory anthologies.

Jeffrey Williams, in his article “Packaging Theory,” effectively traces the history of literary theory anthologies—starting with anthologies of literary history—that outlines the increased production in the number of anthologies on the market. He notes that the first wave of anthologies dealing with criticism dealt mainly to a “criticism that is amenable to and consonant with formalist method” (281). He notes that, consistent with the wisdom paradigm that Fleming advocates, the anthologies “do exhibit a remarkable span and tell a coherent and instructive narrative” (282). Keeping with the idea that literary theory spurred the discipline into the knowledge paradigm, the earlier critical anthologies were able to maintain cohesion in the sense that a teleological end for literature existed. This cohesion dissipated with the anthologies of the 1970s according to Williams. Williams believes that “the current generation of theory anthologies announces a markedly different scene of criticism and definition of theory. In a

significant way, they mark a paradigm shift: literary studies move from a criticism-based discipline to a theory-based one,” though it is important to note that the date of publication for his article was in 1994 (282). Williams echoes Fleming’s idea of a shift from a wisdom-paradigm to a knowledge-paradigm because of the loss of having a dominant narrative in literary criticism. William’s assertion dovetails with the idea that theory helped catapult literary studies towards the problem of knowledge—ironically in the paradigm that Fleming names after knowledge.

Perhaps the most intriguing moment in Williams’s discussion of critical anthologies deals with the “subtle shift” that he sees occurring in the anthologies of the 1970s (282). For Williams, if this marks where New Criticism and Formalism began to recede as literary theory started to find acceptance, then it stands to reason that this coincides with the shift from the wisdom to the knowledge paradigm to which Fleming refers. Yet, Ellen Wood opposes the notion that there has been a paradigm shift at all. Instead of seeing the 1970s as the point in which modernity became postmodernity, Wood rejects that the two categories mark two different periods of intellectual thought. Instead, Wood terms the change as “the maturation and universalization of capitalism,” which she calls “late capitalism” (539). What accounts for the shift between early and late capitalism is, according to Wood:

[A] mass production of standardized goods, and the labour associated with, have been replaced by flexibility: new forms of production—‘lean production’, the ‘team concept’, ‘just-in-time’ production, diversification of commodities for niche markets, a ‘flexible’ labour force, mobile capital and so on, all made possible by new informational technologies. (540)

Thus, the method and style of production has evolved along with new technologies. But the shift itself began, as Wood dates it, in the 1970s—she mentions that Marxist critic David Harvey gives the specific year as 1972. Looking at the anthologies themselves provide some detail: from Allen Gilbert's 1940 *Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden* to Hazard Adams's 1971 *Critical Theory since Plato* to David Lodge's *20th Century Literary Criticism: A Reader*. In fact, Williams observed that five early critical anthologies had been released in or near the 1970s, including two that had been published earlier but with second editions published in the 1970s. Beyond Williams's examination of the texts leading to his theory that a small shift had started to occur in these volumes, the number of the anthologies published within this time period coincides with the shifting attitudes towards capitalism into late capitalism. In other words, the anthologies reflect a growing concern about potential work regarding theory and literature. Even if these volumes did not deal with any of the new structuralist theory coming out of the 1970s, their popularity still reveals a growing awareness and questioning of the critical discipline.

The cultural changes, then, also lead to similar characteristics as Wood describes, especially diversification. While the word "niche" carries the meaning of specialized role in its definition, the *Oxford English Dictionary* provides another, more business-oriented definition: "A position from which an entrepreneur seeks to exploit a shortcoming or an opportunity in an economy, market, etc.; (hence) a specialized market for a product or service" (*OED*). The shift into late capitalism parallels the drive toward literary theory, itself a specialized reaction to the established order of literary studies. Yet, this type of reaction—as with real businesses according to Wood—did not mean to necessarily overthrow the established order as much as to exploit the areas that such an order did not

or could not pursue. In these terms, theorists would still have seen traditional criticism as lacking in many areas, but wanted themselves to be the ones to exploit newfound potential as opposed to shifting the entire area of study towards theory where traditional critics could exploit potential resources. For once these niches are filled, they cease to carry the same import and cease attracting as many new adherents as once existed. Thus, when Williams' study focused on theory anthologies of the late 1980s and early 1990s, he noted the "establishment or entrenchment of theory," which he observed also "paradoxically... mark[ed] a kind of *closure* to theory" (283).

While theory may have found closure in Williams's eyes—by closure one cannot help but imagine that Williams believes that theory is now an established, static, exercise with limits as opposed to its earlier dynamicity when exploring niche markets—it still, in any case, provided the injection of late capitalist tendencies into literary studies, altering the structure just as the structure of capitalism changed with new technologies.

Value

In the wider perspective of literary studies, critics have often found difficulty in justifying literary criticism in the face of an increased social proclivity towards empirical observation and science. Inevitably, terms such as use, value, usefulness, and worth course through the discourse surrounding these justifications. The economic tint of these terms lends well to the incorporation of economic theory to develop a lucid explanation of the complexities surrounding the social relationship involved in these defenses. Theory maintains a prominent role in discussion because it interrupted established forms

of the discipline that had—according to those espousing such traditional forms—teleological justification.

When discussing value in the context of literary criticism, humanistic terminology of improvement gave way to multiple theories with no definitive answer to the question of justification. Prior to the twentieth century, the justification of literary studies originated in the sort of moralism that Fleming notes “makes us better people” (459). However, the shift from the wisdom paradigm to the contemporary knowledge paradigm parallels the shift between the coherent, didactic answer and the current chaotic crisis of value. According to Fleming, the current paradigm disallows a definition of value to be placed upon literary studies (464). Reflecting Fleming’s thesis, Murray Krieger calls contemporary criticism and theory “ultimately fruitless” (3). Krieger’s assertion hinges upon the preconception that the function of criticism is to benefit society in a tangible manner; that is, literature, through criticism, can improve the moral and mental health of an individual. The rejection of the role of the critic or theorist as a mediator between the reader and the text who explicates the moral base of a literary piece diminishes the “value” of literature in the usefulness it provides society; thus, according to Krieger, if literature no longer transmits morals and ethical knowledge, it loses its purpose and, consequently, its value. If literature loses its value, then the surrounding atmosphere of literary studies—including theory and criticism in general—loses its value as well.

Nevertheless, as Williams notes with his anthology study, “theory is no longer subordinate” to this previous notion of traditional criticism (282). Thus, the problems and arguments over contemporary theory—in its justification to society as a whole—have become serious issues concerning the field of literary studies. Interestingly, much of the

discussion about the discipline emanates from within it, with critics putting forth strategies that will get literary studies back onto the “right track.” When Searle claims that theory “too often erects a barrier to reading by representing the text primarily as a case for theory,” he is not only making the claim that reading should have primacy over a scholar’s theoretical perspective, but is speaking with the urgency of seeing literature devalued by the misuse of diverse, conflicting theories (341). Reading’s primacy over the misapplication of theory, then, is needed to rebuild criticism and literary studies by way of the justification of its value according to Searle’s model.

Keeping with the trend of scientific advances and the support that science tends to garner from the public versus the humanities, others have attempted to tie literary criticism itself with science. For example, Ben Agger argues that critical theory, poststructuralism, and postmodernism are valuable “for the methodological and empirical work they can do” in fields such as sociology (106). Additionally, the small group of Literary Darwinists “emphasizes the discovery of the evolutionary patterns of behavior within literary text” (Peterson B7). By grafting literary criticism to the sciences, their hope is to revitalize the field and transform it into a form competitive with other disciplines. Yet, Literary Darwinism has not—as of yet—come into the mainstream of contemporary criticism (Peterson B7). With all of these conflicting ideas about the role and direction theory and criticism, how is one theory, criticism, or type of research valued over another? Among the theories of value, those with the most prominence include use-value, labor-value, and exchange-value.

Use-Value

In terms of usefulness or utility, Literary Darwinists and other science-driven critics would seem to have the upper hand over those arguing for a purely textual-based or theory-based criticism. Even without the argument for science, the early humanist argument for improving people's lives would surely provide a better justification than theory. However, because these models have either yet to become significant or have been long abandoned by the majority, then it becomes progressively more difficult to find value in the usefulness of a particular product of theory or criticism using use-value. Usefulness itself, then, is not the primary factor in what literary scholars themselves value; similarly steel, an infinitely more useful product than gold, is, nevertheless, valued lower in terms of price. Adam Smith noticed this trend as well:

The things which have the greatest value in use have frequently little or no value in exchange; and, on the contrary, those which have the greatest value in exchange have frequently little or no value in use. Nothing is more useful than water: but it will purchase scarce any thing; scarce any thing can be had in exchange for it. A diamond, on the contrary, has scarce any value in use; but a very great quantity of other goods may frequently be had in exchange for it. (34)

So, usefulness to the world as a whole means little within the discipline in terms of the value of a particular piece of criticism. Therefore, literary criticism holds little-to-no value to those outside literary studies or, at least, the academic system. Nevertheless, value is meant to be more oriented towards socially-held worth and esteem rather than one person or a small group of academics, a fact that speaks to Guillory's capital flight of

students and supporters away from the discipline. Even within the discipline, usefulness does not really explain the prominence of, say, poststructuralism over Literary Darwinism when the latter could be useful in tying the discipline into the sciences and then used as justification for more funding because the discipline has become more science-based.

Labor Value

Classic economists—including Adam Smith, David Ricardo, and Karl Marx—believed that labor is normally a factor in the value of a commodity. Smith goes so far as to say that the value “of any commodity... is equal to the quantity of labour which it enables him to purchase or command. Labour, therefore, is the real measure of the exchangeable value of all commodities” (36). In a certain sense, this underscores how the literary department grew: the labor of reading modernist texts gave way to the labor in interpreting texts with literary theory, which is itself a laborious and time consuming venture to master. As a result, at least in the early history of literary studies, labor may have been a factor as to the value of the discipline. However, that does not explain the more recent pushback against theory, labor-intensive though theory may be.

Accordingly, while the labor-value model has held true in the early-phase capitalism and birth of literary studies as a serious discipline, the advent of theory and late-capitalism seems to have taken that model apart because theory should have made the discipline radically more valuable due to the amount of labor involved in understanding criticism after theory.

In terms of value within the discipline, however, the type of labor used by scholars is so similar to one another that it negates any extra effect on the value. For example, it would be difficult to assert whether a scholar writing an article with a postcolonial bent on *Dracula* is working harder or has had to go through more or less labor in terms of study than a deconstructionist writing an article on the same novel. It would be even more difficult, then, to explain why one theory waxes while the other wanes in terms of labor-value alone.

Addendum: Marginal Utility

In regard to the amount of labor involved with theory, it is important to note that beyond pure exchange-value (discussed later) that labor-value has been replaced by marginal utility in neoclassical economics, or the idea that value *is* dependent on utility, but diminishes in value when more than one piece of a commodity is obtained (McCulloch 249). Thus, in Smith's water and diamond value paradox, the diamond is worth more simply because to obtain it is much more difficult. Smith notes that, with a commodity, "the toil and trouble of acquiring it" is also an important factor in value (36), which explains the difference of value due to the difficulty in obtaining precious stones versus that of water. On the other hand, marginal utility demonstrates that if water were to become so scarce that only very little could be had, the value of water would skyrocket past that of the diamonds because the value of the first ration of water is necessary for survival.

To become a part of the literary theorist market, potential scholars must, per Searle's argument of the labor in mastering theory, pour much of their labor into studying

all the aspects of the theoretical background to which they wish to adhere. While they may find it worth their time to accomplish this—both in terms of doing what they like and receiving adequate compensation for it—it is unlikely that mastering another theory is worth the time. In the terms of marginal utility, the subsequent mastering of theories yields less and less value to a particular scholar.

Exchange-Value

One might put forth that use, by which I mean the current popularity and reference of a type of criticism within the scholarly community, is a good measure of value due to the fluctuation in the accepted theoretical thinking that occurs over time; some ideas that are in the forefront today will soon be in the background tomorrow and, as such, one theory is valued over another. This creates another problem: if a scholar references the criticism of another scholar, does the former add value to the latter's argument? Adam Smith offers another term in place of commodity-price: "exchangeable value" (34). What is left for value within literary studies, then, is a system where exchange is the basis of value. Neoclassical economists, besides those who subscribe to marginal utility, believe that exchange-value—regardless of labor or utility, is the only real measure of value (McCulloch 250).

Within the realm of literary criticism, when the word "use" enters the conversation (in the sense, "how do we use criticism," not what use is criticism), it signifies an exchange of ideas. One critic can now read and utilize another's idea in his or her own criticism, which can lead to yet another critic using ideas from that piece of criticism. Referring back to Fleming's idea of a wisdom and knowledge paradigm, the

current knowledge paradigm necessarily focuses on one idea: “produce, produce” (460). Theory, by virtue of shifting cultural tendencies toward late capitalism—or postmodernism, if you will—has led the discipline into this economic model of production that breeds production precisely because it negated use-value and labor-value and left exchange-value as the pure measure of worth within the discipline. To illustrate, in instances such as Literary Darwinism, the market forces that Smith describes in the price of a marketable item fall into play: “When the quantity of brought to market exceeds the effectual demand, it cannot be all sold” (54). In the market, this would drive down prices. In criticism, this implies the rejection of Literary Darwinism as a theory because no demand exists for it. If, on the other hand, demand for it raised, the exchange-value of it—because the criticism is small in amount—would skyrocket for each participating author or his or her criticism. This whole system of value in literary studies no longer concerns itself with whether Literary Darwinism is useful in justifying the discipline or how much labor is spent in acquiring the skills necessary to integrate evolutionary science and literature. Supply and demand also holds true for established theories as well. If, for example, deconstruction has become less popular in recent years, it is not because deconstruction is necessarily less useful or labor-intensive, only that demand has for it has dropped.

Of course, there is no measurable price that can be used to value theory or criticism with literary studies. Using price as a quantifier of value fails for literary criticism or, for that matter, any criticism of intellectual work commenting on another intellectual work because the value lies in the ideas and not the physicality of an object. Therefore, while Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition* may have a price-value attached

to it, that value lies in the manufacturing of the book rather than in the ideas espoused within it.

Smith's Social Theory

The driving forces for literary studies' foray into a Smithian model are not limited only to economics. For instance, to bargain with another, according to Smith, is to "address ourselves not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their own advantages" (22). Consequently, persuasion plays a large role in bargaining. In fact, Thomas Lewis believes that, for Smith, "the propensity to persuade [...] is the foundation of the propensity to exchange" (283), signifying any criticism—itsself as argument—participates and drives in the human impulse to exchange ideas.

The notion of self-interest plays a large role in both Adam Smith's economic and social theory. Though often misinterpreted as greed, self-interest is actually grounded by a social system of reciprocity somewhat similar to economic exchange. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith argues that humans ground their self-interest with an internalized social check of their behavior from the point of view of an "impartial spectator." In any action a person does, he or she "must always bear some secret reference, either to what are, or to what, upon a certain condition, would be, or to what, we imagine, ought to be the judgment of others" (162). Thus, a regulated self-interest is at work, meaning that automatic checks exist in the system of exchange and persuasion in literary studies, similar to Graff's argument about self-regulation: even though the department is unregulated from the standpoint of a central authority, Graff still uses the

phrase “self-regulate” because he notices that there is still some sort of order maintained in the discipline. The order that he speaks of comes from the same impulses that Smith describes, which also provide the basis of his economic theory of self-interest.

Within the realm of literary criticism, critics can be seen as attempting to persuade others to their point of view. The aforementioned idea from Leroy Searle—that readers misapply theory, which preempts the text too often—not only functions as a means to persuade others to his point-of-view but, more importantly, it also is used, following Lewis’s idea, to “persuade others that what they had to exchange [...] was useful to others” (284). Therefore, within literary studies, a particular theory vies with other theories not in the sense that one theory will win out over another, but to entrench itself into a system of exchange-value and increased production. The idea of dominance is a fatal one to the idea of exchange: if one theory actually persuaded all that it was not only useful to them, but also that it was correct, the system of exchange would collapse. By not having such a dominant theory but, instead, multiple and competing theories, literary criticism has fallen into this system of exchange because it transformed the very structure of literary studies and criticism. With so many theories abound in criticism, the field seems to have no definable nature, especially because many of the schools of thought are often at odds with one another. Nevertheless, building from Adam Smith’s ideas, Vernon Smith believes that when people function noncooperatively in an area, it “maximizes the gains from exchange” (10). If this is the case, the more competition between theories, the more the discipline as a whole can gain from the struggle under this model.

Capital and Wealth

Capital, in the traditional sense, must be a tangible good that is most often used to gain more capital and wealth. Adam Smith outlines three chief types of capital: capital of immediate consumption, fixed capital, and circulating capital (164-166). The first yields no money and consists of items needing to be consumed immediately, such as food and other necessities (164). The latter two, on the other hand, are used in gaining profit and wealth. For the purposes of this discussion, fixed and circulating capital best characterize the capital found in criticism within literary studies, as the first has no mechanism with which to expand capital. The second capital, fixed capital, deals with the “all useful machines and instruments of trade” (166). A farmer, for example, invests much of his capital into a milk cow, the cow then becomes a capital good; in this case, it is a fixed capital good because it provides the farmer milk as well as potentially more milk cows. In other words, the cow benefits the farmer without the farmer having to sell the cow. If the farmer, on the other hand, raises cattle to sell, then that is considered circulating capital because “it affords a revenue only by circulating or changing masters” (166).

Of course, in the academic world, money and capital do not function in the exact same way as does with the example with the farmer above, though there are some similarities. The discussion about the amount of labor required to acquire a satisfactory knowledge is really a discussion about acquiring fixed capital, in the sense that the knowledge that is gained through study and instruction always stays in the mind and never changes masters as opposed to slipping from one scholar to another. What this fixed capital good can acquire for the scholar is position and salary, so it in fact functions as in the farmer example above. It also enables the scholar to create criticism—articles,

books, websites, and so on—which is a product that *does* leave the scholar, thus making it a circulating good. Though the idea is somewhat muddled in the information age because an article can be sent via email without leaving the author, it does represent a circulation of intellectual ideas.

Thus, while the intellectual fixed good of gaining knowledge allows for the scholar to attain wealth in a very real sense, not to mention enabling the scholar to write the circulating good of criticism, it does not figure into exchangeable value because, simply put, it has nothing to do with exchange beyond functioning as an instrumental good. The circulating capital of critical production, however, deals directly with exchange. What do scholars gain from their production of criticism? They do, in the academic system, maintain their full-time status and achieve tenure under the requirements of the university to produce academic work. In that sense, the circulating capital, in addition to fixed capital, has benefits in terms money and job security. Yet, measuring the benefit that circulating capital has for the author in terms of exchange is more challenging.

Being integrated into the academic system allows for scholars to use and cite other scholars' work in order to strengthen their own. Consequently, it propels the system of production ever onward. Nevertheless, that is not a measurable good for the scholars themselves. Instead, when scholars use other ideas, they must provide citations for such articles. Beyond reasons dealing with plagiarism, intellectual honesty, and allowing other scholars to verify sources, citing sources is a method of giving proper credit, as it were. Delving deeper into the etymology of "credit," one would find that the roots of the word, according to the *OED*, lie in the Latin *credere*, meaning "to trust,

believe.” In view of this fact, the use of the word credit for citing sources is itself a capital that is garnered by the original author. For instance, all scholars who have cited a work by Slavoj Žižek have given him a certain sort of intellectual capital. By citing him, even those against his ideas would be potentially spreading his ideas around. In turn, if Žižek were to cite another contemporary theorist, he would, in short, imply that he trusts or believes in the argument, or that he believes the argument to be from a source important enough to refute. This trust and belief recalls the persuasion that Searle believes that theorists and critics engage in, as well as Thomas Lewis’s view that persuasion provides the basis of exchange. In other words, intellectual credit is the capital gained from circulating articles and other such methods of communicating ideas.

Guillory sums up his concept of aesthetic and critical value as “a totality of conflict and not consensus” (282). Yet, where Guillory says conflict, I would say competition. Instead of the struggle of conflict, I would say exchange among competitors. Theory has driven literary studies into a late-capitalistic arena of competition, where exchange occurs between critics regardless of agreement or disagreement of ideas. The ever-increasing production and specialization of criticism through theory has created a structure similar to that of Wood’s late capitalist society. Fleming’s paradigm shift from wisdom to knowledge is a manifestation of this movement towards a late-capitalist model.

Chapter Three - The Curious Case of Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism

In the course of this project, I have posited that literary theory has functioned as an agent of specialization that transformed literary studies in a variety of ways, including, but not limited to, a change of the structure of literary studies into an intellectual capitalist market and transition from a focus on literature onto the literary industry. Admittedly, much of this analysis centers on the shifting paradigm climate in the 1970s in terms of the trend towards late-capitalism as well as the trends that occur with systems because of the specialization of labor. However, that is not to say that there exists no physical quantification or manifestation of literary theory's specializing and transformative effect on literary studies.

Although critics such as Searle and Williams have argued that literary theory has rapidly expanded from the 1970s to its contemporary prominence, the manner in which this growth occurred remained rather separated in terms of physical commodities. For instance, theory has often found its home in literary theory anthologies separate from anthologies of literature. Likewise, because of the nature of articles, a literary text is often not included even if referenced at great length by a particular theory. For example, Searle's own piece of criticism, "The Conscience of the King: Oedipus, Hamlet, and the Problem of Reading," references both *Hamlet* and *Oedipus Rex* at great length, but only contains snippets of text for obvious spatial restrictions inherent to journal articles, which is also true for literary theory treated at book length such as how Luce Irigaray's "This Sex Which Is Not One" is not bundled with a literary text. Alternatively, many past editions of literary texts such as *Hamlet* did not contain theoretical articles bundled with the text, though historical context was and is often provided.

The importance of the physical distinction between literary theory and the texts a particular theory represents cannot be overstated. Even if theory transformed the discipline and replaced literary texts in prominence in such a manner as to be noticeable to critics, each still operated in its own separate sphere physically; the interplay between a literary text and theory as well as questions as to which maintained primary importance over the other were only theoretical intellectual questions as to which text was being “read” and which was interpreted. Physically, the separation of the two from each other allowed for this conflict to only become apparent within academia, and only then among faculty, graduate students, and select undergraduate students in literary studies. A non-academic or a student uninitiated in this discussion would see an edition of a novel and read it for the novel itself. If they are aware that a large world of academic criticism surrounds the novel, that fact can be ignored or put away because the consumer of the book is not confronted with a wave of criticism and theory. For example, a student reading *The Turn of the Screw* in a class on modernism would be primarily concerned with the text, using criticism and theory to better understand the text because the text was presented to them as the primary object of study.

Yet, that physical separation dissipated in the 1990s with the *Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism* series offered by Bedford/St. Martins, which couples examples of literary theory with a classic literary text. For the purposes of this project, I will focus on two volumes from this series—specifically, their second edition of Henry James’s *The Turn of the Screw* and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* provide an interesting contrast in terms of the length of the literary text and in terms of how popular each is with the reading public. While *The Turn of the Screw* will represent the major part of this chapter, I use *Dracula*

in parts so as to provide an example in this series where the novel is not considered a novella in addition to confirming similarities between volumes within the series. The analysis of these volumes will deal little with the literary texts themselves or even the theoretical and critical arguments surrounding the text—both metaphorically and, in these volumes, physically; instead, I will demonstrate how the physical aspects of these volumes—cover, stated purpose, setup of the text in juxtaposition to criticism and theory—illustrate the transformation of literary texts by theory and criticism to a system where the literary text functions as a means to perpetuate the industry of theory and criticism in literary studies. Furthermore, this tension extends to the theoretical perspectives themselves: just as it is difficult to discern whether or not the theory and criticism accompanying the volume has dominance over the literary text, it is impossible to discern any dominance of a particular theoretical perspective over another. The tension is necessary to maintain a high level of competition, which increases production and serves to further the industry surrounding the literary texts in these volumes and, indeed, a manifestation of the greater meta-narrative of production underlying literary studies.

Cover

The cover of both of these editions is set up in a similar manner: the title and author of the literary work at the top of the cover with a solid background. In the case of *The Turn of the Screw*, this consists of the title in white with a yellow font for the author all on a blue background while *Dracula* is similarly set up but on a solid dark green background. This presentation of the author and title of the literary text uses about one-

third of the space of the cover. Almost two-thirds of each volume is covered by an image, a painting, situated on the bottom of the cover. More importantly, separating the solid block of text from the painting is a thin white banner containing the editor of each volume in black print. As covers go, it represents the stories themselves to a much greater degree spatially than what would be expected from the amount of pages focusing on criticism in the volume. However, the use of white to offset the information from the much darker background of the rest of the cover bespeaks the tension between the literary text and the criticism inside: even though the literary text is presented as the major component from the front cover, the banner with the editor information is easily noticed and suggests that there may be a growing significance to such placement. In addition to the color of the banner as well as its placement between the two large portions of the cover, the font itself is offset by its darker color and the fact that it is sans serif unlike the text introducing the literary text. To a prospective buyer or for a student looking at the volume for the first time, these front covers betray the nature of their contents only subtly.

The back cover displays the real focus of these volumes much more clearly. The title and author of the literary texts are nestled in between the series name, "Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism," and the editor information at the very top. Normally, one might expect that the back cover continues the illustration from the front cover and/or provides a synopsis of the work inside. Because the front cover features the literary text itself most prominently, the back cover would then normally provide a synopsis on the text itself. Yet, in both *Dracula* and *The Turn of the Screw*, the back cover proceeds with a blurb "About this Volume" followed by another short passage describing the series

itself, followed by other books in the series. Of special interest is the idea that the main focus of the book is now on the volume itself instead of the literary text. For example, the volume information on the back cover of *The Turn of the Screw* reads: “This revised critical edition of the Henry James’s classic 1898 short novel presents the text of the 1908 New York edition along with critical essays that read *The Turn of the Screw* from four contemporary critical perspectives.” This stands in stark contrast to the front cover in that the reader is confronted by the notion that the novel itself may not be the primary text here, but that the critical perspectives are used by students and scholars to “read” the story. The sentence itself uses “critical edition” as the subject as opposed to the novel, and the phrase mentioning the four perspectives treat the essays as the primary focus because the student uses those essays to read the novel through those theoretical perspectives. Admittedly, such a role of reading or clarification of the literary text may put the critical perspectives below the novel in terms of importance, but it is clear that the tension between the purpose of this book and traditional focus on this literary text—as opposed to the industry around it—itsself is increasingly heightened the more the volume is analyzed.

Stated Purpose of the Series

Although the back cover hints at the actual purpose of this series, Ross Murfin, the editor of the series as a whole, explains within the early pages of *The Turn of the Screw*:

Volumes in the *Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism* series introduces college students to the current critical and theoretical ferment in literary

studies. Each volume reprints the complete text of a significant literary work, together with critical essays that approach the work from different theoretical perspectives and editorial matter that introduces both the literary and the critics' theoretical perspectives. (v)

While the second sentence illustrates *how* this series accomplishes the goals, its actual goals are stated in the first sentence. In other words, the first sentence, which does not mention the literary text even in general, shows that the true goal of this series has to deal with theory-driven criticism as opposed to the text. The text, then, is merely a tool to understand the theory as opposed to the theory offering insight to the literary text. Admittedly, the criticism provided *does* offer insight to *The Turn of the Screw*, but the purpose of these particular commodities—as they are marketed—show the increasing prominence of theory over the text themselves, echoing Searle's fear that a scholar engaging in theory-driven criticism is easily able to misread the text.

Physical Divisions within the Volumes

Even though the stated purpose is to introduce a specific audience—college students—to literary theory, this purpose does not entail that the text of the volume itself supports this. For instance, much criticism exists in any Norton anthology of literature, for instance, but that criticism finds its home as footnotes to a particular poem, short story, or excerpt from a longer work. The mere spatial representation of a footnote connotes that one text is primary, while the other the footnoted text is submissive; the same system is true of any marginalia that, by definition, is only of marginal importance. However, these volumes represent the theoretical perspectives not as footnotes or

marginalia but, structurally, as an equal component to the text. The table of contents splits each of these volumes into two major sections: the first part deals with “The Complete Text in Cultural Context” (xi) while the second division focuses on “A Case Study in Contemporary Criticism” (xii). Thus, neither the literary text nor the criticism following it are spatially subservient to the other. Additionally, the two major divisions—besides being a logical method of organization as it would make little sense to interrupt the story with an article midstream—underscores the physical division and separation of criticism and literary texts that has existed before these types of critical editions had come to market. Consequently, although criticism and literature has been bound together as one physical text, the tendency is still to maintain an ostensible division with the inclusion of major partitioning of the volume.

Nevertheless, besides the stated purpose of the volumes, the amount of physical pages devoted to the literary text versus extratextual elements—from historical background to theories pertaining to the literary text—demonstrates that theory has trumped the literary text itself within these volumes. A glance at the table of contents for this volume of *The Turn of the Screw* yields two interesting details: first, the space in the table of contents—consisting of over fifty entries total—allows only one entry for the literary text itself, while the dozens of remaining entries direct the reader to different theoretically-driven criticisms of *The Turn of the Screw* and biographical, historical, and other background documents that enable the reader to build a sense of context of the story. Thus, only two percent of the number of entries is dedicated to the story. Second, even disregarding the contextual information supplied for the story, the theory-driven criticism and glossary of theoretical terms consists of twenty entries, even granting that

the boldface text for the entry of the story itself reads “The Complete Text” (xi). Although the entry does not mention the title of the work, the reader is able to notice the boldfaced text much more than the surrounding entries. Nevertheless, other major headings such as “Cultural Documents and Illustrations” (xi) and every major entry of theory-criticism such as “Psychoanalytic Criticism and *The Turn of the Screw*” (xiii) as well as the main piece of criticism underneath are also in a boldface font. As it stands, the literary text entry is only one of fifteen bold entries, while those focusing on theory consist of twelve of the entries. Consequently, even taking into account font features that offset text, the literary text occupies minimal prominence in the table of contents.

All details about the story’s prominence in the table of contents aside, the *Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism* series best illustrates the transformation of the focus from literature to literary industry in terms of the number of pages devoted to the story as opposed to the extratextual elements. Of this 386-page volume, only 99 pages are devoted to the story. To restate, the actual text of *The Turn of the Screw* makes up less than half of this volume. Along with the series’ stated purpose, the literary texts spatial minority muddles the concept of central and peripheral texts. To be sure, the theoretical pieces are split along ideological bents such as gender criticism and Marxist criticism, but still maintain cohesion from being grouped together as part two in this volume in opposition to the text, which is situated in part one. The question becomes, then, which of these groups is the main text? Thus far, the title of the volume points to the literary text, but the purpose and the ratio of pages point towards the theoretical perspectives. Naturally, tradition would lead readers toward the former answer, so what remains is tradition vying with the growth of literary studies into the knowledge paradigm

dominated by theoretical perspectives. In truth, neither of these opposing forces win against the other; nevertheless, the tradition of a literary text retaining primacy over extratextual evidence is being eroded by a volumes such as this.

Admittedly, *The Turn of the Screw* is a rather short novella, so the five theoretical perspectives included outnumber the literary text because of its shortness. To provide another example from the same series, *Dracula* is a much longer novel and will not suffer the same ratio disparity as *The Turn of the Screw*. In this volume, 347 out of 642 pages consists of the main literary text, while the rest—like *The Turn of the Screw*—is taken up by extratextual evidence. In this case, then, the text of *Dracula* makes up only a little more than 50% of the text of the volume. Still, the truth is that, in each of these volumes, the literary text averages only a little more or less than half of the pages of the physical product as a whole. Given the page lengths and the tension between the traditional primary text and the stated purpose of the series, it is safe to say that the literary text and extratextual information are on par with each other in terms of importance in these volumes.

Parent/Child Element Reflection

Perhaps this newfound equality is best manifested and observed by the elements that accompany the literary text and those that accompany the theoretical texts. As might be expected in a volume aimed towards students, the literary text is accompanied by contextual information drawing from the author's biography and historical period, which functions as an introduction to the literary text. For *The Turn of the Screw*, Henry James's tension with his brother, his sexual identity, and other aspects about his life open

this contextual chapter, followed by a works cited. The story itself is followed by a section titled “Cultural Documents and Illustrations,” which functions as a mechanism of comparison of the literary, artistic, and critical work in the periods of both when the book was written and when the story takes place. Such information in this section includes other short ghost stories published near the date of the publication of *The Turn of the Screw* as well as journals from ghost clubs at the turn of the century whose purpose was to document ghost sightings. As it stands, the text is surrounded by contextual information that—since both of these sections are in part one along with the story—introduce the reader to the novel.

Such a volume itself—consisting of the sections included in part one of this volume—might be popular for how it deals with extratextual information in that it displays the story not as an isolated text, but as something that requires contextual information in order to be better understood. Noticeably absent from this major section of the volume is any of the theoretical perspectives promised in the “About the Series” introduction. Thus, the contextual information in part one functions to better illuminate and illustrate the literary text, though the argument could be made that the story functions only as a gateway to understanding the attitudes of the time it was written. In any case, this only serves to better emphasize the importance of the theoretical perspectives in part two. Already seemingly on par with the literary text in terms of page ratio and purpose of the volume, the theoretical perspectives parallel the literary text in the contextual information that better help the reader understand them.

The second part opens with a critical history of the literary text. So, for example, in the *Turn of the Screw*, the volume editor, Peter Beidler, mentions that the main concern

that spawned the various critical articles on *The Turn of the Screw* in the past and the present deal with ghosts: were they real, who could see them, and so on (189).

Consequently, this opening section of part two functions similarly to the historical and biographical information opening the first section: namely, it functions as an introduction, although it introduces criticism and the use of theoretical perspectives for *The Turn of the Screw* as opposed to directly providing contextual information for the story. This critical history, like the introduction to the literary text, features a works cited. Beyond the legal and ethical obligations of including a works cited, including referenced work to introduce a selection of criticism serves to strengthen the theoretical perspectives so as to be as valuable as the literary text in terms of physical, contextual pages.

However, if the purpose of this series is, indeed, to initiate “college students to the current critical and theoretical ferment in literary studies” (v), a history of the criticism surrounding *The Turn of the Screw* provides context to criticism revolving around the story, but it adds little to the understanding of the theory-driven criticism itself. In fact, the section culminates in many questions about the literary text and the surrounding criticism as opposed to answers provided by criticism—questions such as:

What is the governess *really* like? Are the ghosts *really* real? Is Flora *really* corrupt? How does Miles *really* die? [...] How are we to react to the fact that scholars have written thousands of pages interpreting this one little story of less than one hundred pages? Do we praise critics for their marvelous ingenuity? Do we blame readers for not reading more carefully? Do we praise James for the wonderful and all-encompassing

ambiguity of his story? Do we blame James for this chaos, wishing that he had made his meaning clearer? Or do we dispense with all praise and blame and take on the stance of one kind of reader-response scholar and say that virtually any reading is legitimized by the very fact that some reader, somewhere, has offered it? (214)

This very brief analysis of what the criticism surrounding *The Turn of the Screw* has offered speaks directly to the fear and concern that literature may not, by necessity, be of primary importance compared to criticism. Instead, it shows Searle's problem of reading in a tangible commodity and shows that the industry of criticism is of more significance than the story—also evident by the page ratios—in literary studies. Also, the passage illustrates that *The Turn of the Screw*—as well as any other literary text—contains scenes, characters, and ideas that cannot be comprehended in that no consensus can be built by multiple readers. The ratio given, thousands of pages criticism to less than one hundred pages of the story, shows that a critical industry has arisen over the complexities and unanswered questions of this book. Thus, the section of critical history functions not so much as to introduce the reader to theory, but it illustrates the problems that vaulted theory into the spotlight and even—in terms of this project—how this propelled a critical industry through literary studies.

The existence of such an industry has allowed a volume, and a series, such as this to be published. While the critical history provides an interesting parallel with the bibliographical history of the literary text, it serves—even, as it is, tailored to one specific literary text—as a justification for the purpose of the book and, indeed, the justification to have theory-driven criticism at all. The notion that a critic reads his or her own meaning

and ideological background into a literary text is not so grave a crime if no consensus of meaning can be reached. Indeed, Searle himself is aware that the proclivity to read literature through a theoretical lens has a partial basis in the fact that “there are genuine interpretive dilemmas, paradoxes, and aporias in criticism,” though he denies that theoretical perspectives are the most effective way to solve these literary problems (317). In other words, a scholar using theory to read a meaning into a literary work where no consensus exists is not the same accusation that the scholar is using theory to “misread” the literary text, though perhaps that first step of using theory blossoms into that misreading along Searle’s framework of reading.

Thus, when perusing this volume, a reader is given this justification to the four theoretical perspectives that follow. For *The Turn of the Screw*, these perspectives include reader-response, psychoanalytic, gender, and Marxist criticisms. These four sections, along with an included glossary of theoretical terms, consist of over 150 pages on their own, much more than the literary text. And beyond the critical history that opens this section, each theoretical perspective is accompanied by an introduction to that particular ideology, which functions as a true introduction in the sense that it outlines what, exactly, a particular theory is. For instance, Bruce Robbins’s “‘They don’t much count, do they?’: The Unfinished History of *The Turn of the Screw*” is the provided example of Marxist criticism (333-346). This article is preceded by a section, written by series editor Ross Murfin, entitled “What is Marxist criticism?” The article deals with what one might expect in an introduction to Marxist theory targeted at an uninitiated college student: its foundation, what it concerns itself with, and how it has been used in reading literature. Yet, besides a transition offering an outline of Robbins’s article that

follows, the thirteen-page introduction does not mention *The Turn of the Screw* at all. Consequently, each of these introductions to the theoretical perspectives helps fulfill the purpose of the series of introducing students to literary theory. This ratio of importance in this section manifests itself in the selected bibliography following the introduction to each theoretical perspective. It lists, for Marxist criticism, primary works by Friedrich, Lenin, Marx, and Trotsky along with more introductory and classic texts for Marxist theory. Out of the fifty selections, only five are listed under the section “Marxist Approaches to *The Turn of the Screw*” (330-332).

To further the purpose of this volume, instead of including “classic” criticism of *The Turn of the Screw* from different theoretical perspectives, the volume includes articles written with the purpose and structure of the volume in mind. For instance, Wayne Booth’s reader-response article—not the introduction to reader-response but the criticism that focuses *The Turn of the Screw*—begins: “No one who reads Peter Beidler’s ‘Critical History’ of *The Turn of the Screw* (pp. 189-214 in this volume) is likely to call the readers of *The Turn of the Screw* a ‘hushed little circle’” (239). In truth, the fact that these pieces of criticism were written or tailored to this volume reflects and promotes the self-growing industry around *The Turn of the Screw*, as other volumes in the series promote industry around other novels, and literary studies—through literary theory and shifting paradigms—encourages the expansion of its own industry. This encouragement is effectively represented in the glossary of terms in the final pages of the volume: in this series, a glossary of theoretical terms—for example, this one includes absence, affective fallacy, base, and canon on the first page alone—helps college students increase their knowledge of literary theory and the literary studies industry.

Thus, half the book is devoted towards understanding theory and furthering the expansion of the industry of literary studies: if each perspective is preceded by an introduction to that theory, then the theoretical criticism that reads *The Turn of the Screw* is presented in such a way as to be an example of theory that has the text provided so as to better understand the theory. Imagine what the converse would look like. If it were meant for theory to illustrate the text, no “What is Marxist Criticism?”—or parallel introductions for the other perspectives—would exist, nor would a critical history remain as necessary to the volume. Any bibliography of a theoretical perspective would focus on further reading for that theory’s approach on the story or other articles that read the story from the same perspective. Instead of having only five of the fifty bibliographic entries in the Marxist section, that five would be expended and the others cut because the focus would shift from understanding the theory to understanding the story. While the target of audience could still be college students, the stated purpose would focus on reading the story through theoretical perspectives to better understand the story. This change of focus might have other ramifications in terms of page ratios. If the literature was of primary importance, would there be as much perspectives packaged in the volume? Perhaps a viable alternative would be to include a selected bibliography of articles instead of the articles themselves, or the editor could bundle parts of a theory in a footnote under a particular scene and lead the reader to further exploration of the topic through other perspectives. Of course, these theories may no longer be made for this volume—and, thus, for understanding that theory—as much as it would be the best article that provides insight to the story. In either case, theory is marginalized or cut—along with other extratextual elements—while the story remains secure. In essence, the *Case*

Studies in Contemporary Criticism series would look very different—similar to the provided converse example—if the focus of literary studies were on literary texts as opposed to the industry around it. The series focuses so much on theory and criticism because precisely because it reflects the industry focus of literary studies.

Overall Purpose

These differing variables—text ratio, stated purpose, etc.—are a manifestation and continuation of the question of primacy and why literary theory has been so entrenched into the literary discipline. The success of this type of volume hinges directly on the shifted emphasis from literature to texts, ideas, and criticisms—the industry of the text—surrounding or beyond literature. The structure of the discipline reflects the structure of these *Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism* volumes: literature is no longer the primary focus, nor yet has it fully given up that claim. These volumes invite students to not only buy more books but also think critically about literature through theory, which—if they were to enter the field—would lead to an increase in specialized, theoretical production outlined in the previous chapters. Consequently, these volumes are a result of the transformed, capitalist structure of literary studies, a structure that drives for a larger and ever expanding market and industry.

The tension in the literary text and these theoretical perspectives in how they are packaged side by side shows the culmination of Smith's economic system of exchange and exchange-value. Because the literature and theory is situated with an uneasy tension with one another, it promotes competition and conflict between the two. In other words, it helps promote the discussion about literary theory and literary studies itself, such as

Searle's concerns about the misapplication of literary theory. Additionally, each theoretical perspective is treated with the same validity as the other. Searle would argue that this should not be the case because treating theoretical perspectives as the lenses through which reading the story is accomplished is the very scenario under which theory is misused by readers that results in a misreading of the story. While this equal treatment may underscore the difficulty in reading *The Turn of the Screw* in the first place, it also illustrates how necessary it is for these perspectives to remain relatively equal in terms of the presentation of their validity so that production may continue to increase. For example, imagine if a critical volume of *The Turn of the Screw* contained the same four theoretical perspectives that the *Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism* has, but that it made it very clear that the gender perspective and critical essay was the most suited for *The Turn of the Screw*. Gender theory would be more popular in terms of this literary text, meaning that more and more scholars would subscribe to that reading than any other, giving those scholars that write within that perspective on the story more intellectual capital and wealth. This is, in essence, a type of intellectual monopoly because little attention would be paid to the other theoretical perspectives in this hypothetical critical volume—which could be made clear in the introduction to the perspectives. This monopoly would destroy the industry around *The Turn of the Screw* because there would be only one intellectual theoretical market from which to mine wealth. Instead of having a situation where scholars have “written thousands of pages interpreting this one little story of less than one hundred pages” (214), the one potential market around the literary text would reach would be mined by scholars to its full capacity. Under the capitalist model that literary studies is now operating in, it could

very well be that such a monopoly would actually devalue *The Turn of the Screw* because it would no longer support an expanding literary industry around it. Only the current cultivation of equally valid criticism allows for the system of exchange and production to continue, translating into a high exchange-value for *The Turn of the Screw*.

Chapter Four - The Future of Literary Studies

A Capitalist Model of the Canon Debate

While there is much debate as to what direction literary studies *should* go in the future—fueled by concerns such as the problem of reading and the canon debate—less is said about how factors like its structure could limit the possibilities of where the discipline *can* go. For example, Bruce Fleming pushes for a shift from a knowledge paradigm back to a wisdom paradigm, which would restrict the canon to a defined set of “classic” texts. The tangible goal would be to restrict the base of studied books in order to shift the paradigm back—or forward—to the wisdom paradigm. At that point, knowledge could be measured in the discipline by a student’s knowledge of the limited canon and the perspective with which Fleming would want students to study. Consequently, Fleming would accomplish giving both a justification for literary studies—as he says, “because it makes us better people”—and solving other concerns about the discipline. Why does this argument not attract more popularity? To be sure, there are counterarguments in terms of canonical exclusion and that literary studies should be a method of introducing students to a variety of cultures, East and West, contemporary and ancient. Yet, this argument overlooks the structure of the industry of literary studies itself. Inherent to Fleming’s beliefs is the idea that literary studies shifted into a wholly different paradigm. However, according to the *OED*, the definition of “paradigm” suggests that this reversion or progression is not so easily accomplished: “A conceptual or methodological model underlying the theories and practices of a science or discipline at a particular time; (hence) a generally accepted world view.” More importantly, if the current knowledge paradigm is an extension the paradigm of late

capitalism, then it feeds on discontent and disunion as does a capitalist market. In other words, such traditional scholarly discussion about changing the current knowledge paradigm only serves to further expand it.

That is not to say that such a shift is impossible. Nevertheless, this model can help navigate the difficulties in establishing how a critical exchange-oriented discipline would most likely change, and what a paradigm shift would take in terms of a cataclysmic shift in thinking throughout the literary community. The kind of change that allowed for the *Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism* series, where the literary text might well comprise only a minority of the pages, cannot be easily changed. Indeed, the shifted emphasis from the literary story to the critical industry surrounding it—theoretical perspectives and critical essays in this series' case—seems to no longer be “literary” studies as much as “literary studies” studies, if such redundant terminology may be used to describe the shift in emphasis.

Thus, literature still maintains a major position in the discipline, but the focus—along with the discipline—has expanded to include extratextual criticism and theory. Concerns about the problem of reading and knowledge, along with the canon debate, stem directly from this expansion because not only has the pool of possible texts expanded, but the possible readings of those texts has also increased to a degree that a student could encounter a Marxist reading of *The Turn of the Screw* only to find out that another professor finds that reading insufficient. In this chapter, I will deal with likely outcomes of the canon debate while demonstrating how this model would predict the changes to come about under any camp in the debate. Additionally, this late-capitalism model can provide information as to the future of the issues of knowledge and reading

introduced in the first chapter. My purpose is not to predict the future of literary studies or even gauge long-term arguments of justification, but I will apply the capitalist model in order to discover what outcomes are more likely to occur than others given the capitalist structure.

The debate about the future of literary studies is often directly tied to questions of expanding or contracting the canon. For example, Fleming's argument for moving towards a wisdom paradigm entails contracting the canon, while a multiculturalist would want to expand the canon (or, perhaps, do away with the concept of a canon altogether). While differing ideologies feed into the call for these changes, the ideologies themselves are not sufficient to predict as much as to wish, desire, and push for a particular outcome. Yet, these ideologies not only have to contend with one another, but they also contend with or are helped by the capitalist structure itself. Instead of looking at all ideologies and how those who espouse them wish to change the canon, I will break up this discussion into two divisions that deal not with the ideology but its possible effect on the canon. I will analyze two broad categories under the lens of this capitalist model: (1) maintaining and expanding the canon or (2) contracting it.

Maintaining and Expanding

Retaining the status quo and expanding the canon are grouped together because they represent the shift away from only reading the classics of Shakespeare and other major literary figures as opposed to the reversion back to classic works or some other select canon that would result in decreasing the number of acceptable books to be studied in literary disciplines. Thus, this category represents a number of ideological calls for an

expanded canon from those who espouse many different theories including but not limited to feminism, multiculturalism, queer theory, and cultural studies as well those unassociated with such ideologies but still wish to see the inclusion of more texts in the discipline.

This canon expansion can also include a push for the inclusion of separate canons or the abolishment of them. For instance, Elaine Showalter believes her major work, *A Literature of Their Own*, was “a book that would challenge the traditional canon, going far beyond the handful of acceptable women writers to look at all the minor and forgotten figures whose careers and books had shaped a tradition” according to her musings in “Twenty Years On: ‘A Literature of Their Own’ Revisited” (405). Her ideas led Toril Moi to claim that Showalter wanted “to create a separate canon of women’s writings, not to abolish all canons” (78). Whether Showalter wants to rid literary studies of the canon concept altogether or create a separate feminist canon, the end result would be to allow more texts into the discipline. If there were no canon, a sort of free-for-all selection of literary texts could be used, thus increasing the amount of texts that could be studied, expanding the literary discipline further. If, however, a separate canon is proposed, while the scholars who study that canon may be limited to only that canon—itsself a form of specialization—literary studies as a whole would have more texts available because of the use of multiple canons. In fact, the number of acceptable texts might expand faster because of the division of labor involved in having separate canons; for example, the criteria for accepting texts into a feminist canon would be different, as such criteria would lead to books not found in other canons to gain prominence. A scholar without a

feminist ideological perspective may become involved with a text because of the critical industry growing around it.

Overall, different ideologies can spur the expansion, but the current system necessitates expansion regardless. To illustrate a non-academic, market capitalistic corollary, one needs to look at the energy market. Those with free-market ideologies might believe importing oil and other resources is the best way to facilitate larger goals of economic globalization. Others may support green energy, while others yet wish only to use domestic sources of energy. Although these are not mutually exclusive, each demonstrates how different ideologies serve to expand the energy market in terms of jobs and trade. Having competitive ideologies is more productive than consensus because ideology can be the factor that drives a particular industry or, in terms of literary studies, theoretical perspectives that fuel the industry of criticism.

Because literary studies has transformed into the knowledge paradigm—which includes characteristics such as the division of labor, competition, and exchange—that reflects a capitalist model, what is the major goal of a capitalist system? When Adam Smith wrote the *Wealth of Nations*, what was his goal? A hint appears in the full name of his economic text: *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. Given the full title, “wealth” is no longer the primary concern as much as “nature” and “causes” of wealth. Inherent in exploring the nature and causes of what allows a nation to obtain necessities and luxuries is the unstated assumption that increasing this capacity is the primary purpose of following the tenets of capitalism. The expansion of the canon—because it allows for more critical work to be done with literary texts—increases the wealth of the discipline. Even scholars who wish for the accumulation of wealth in

terms of tenure benefit from such a system and expansion. For example, while *Hamlet* has been part of the canon since the formation of literary departments, the entrepreneur-scholar who realizes that being able to study, say, female detectives in Victorian yellowback fiction, will open unexplored ground and, indeed, has more potential topics of interest, importance, and significance to cover. In an industry looking for new ideas, being able to add new texts to the canon of study allows for an ever-expanding market of potential sources of wealth. In fact, given the division of labor that is theoretical perspectives, endless potential markets exist to use Marxism, feminism, or some other perspective. In turn, the discipline could open its focus to ever more texts and topics. Consequently, this capitalist model predicts that the canon would further expand—or dissolve altogether—in order to increase the wealth of literary studies.

Canon Contraction Incompatibility

Alternatively, the model does not seem to work as well with those who wish the canon to revert back to a defined set of classics. This reversion would be the equivalent to government regulatory agencies deciding that green energy technology will no longer be tolerated, or that it will be the only energy tolerated. The energy system—power plants and automobiles, for example—already relies on the existing system. So, the regulated change would either destroy the green industry—which shrinks industry and overlooks future profitability in terms of maintaining high energy use—or radically overturn the infrastructure. Of course, the system could be nudged that way, but what would have to take place is some sort of paradigm shift where the streams of academic, political, and popular thought converged. Similarly, the same must occur for the

contraction of the canon. The call for a contraction—whether from those who wish to transmit Western cultural values through literature, from those who believe that too many canonical texts makes it difficult for students, or from those who espouse other ideas that would result in the reduction—would most likely come from authority figures unless through a paradigm shift. Literary departments themselves, however, exist in an unregulated field-coverage model—that is, scholarly work is not closely monitored and guided by a central authority. In a sense, the current capitalist model the discipline is in would have to go through a paradigm shift for regulation to become more prominent in an academic literary department.

In addition to regulation inconsistent to this paradigm, a shift to less canonical works would decrease the potential for industry. The very reason that expanding the canon would work to the advantage of increasing industry under this capitalist system suggests that limiting the canon would decrease the volume of industry. Depending on the ideological background of the scholar arguing for fewer canonical texts, the scholar may wish to cut female writers, minority writers, writers from other countries, or even a writer such as Henry James, whose work may not have the cultural value as does Shakespeare in that system. When Peter Beidler mentions that “scholars have written thousands of pages interpreting this one little story of less than one hundred pages” in the *Case Studies* edition of *The Turn of the Screw*, would such an industry exist with a reduced canon? Admittedly, having a sharper purpose—to transmit Western cultural values, for example—might have attracted scholars otherwise not concerned with literary studies. Yet, theory and the expansion of the canon have allowed an influx of thinkers that might not otherwise participate in the literary studies industry. This has increased

the amount of labor, production, and academic exchange, which the example of *The Turn of the Screw* illustrates: those thousands of pages required countless hours of historical and critical research along with a mastery in a specific literary theory, not to mention garnering academic capital for the authors of such articles. In fact, that explosion of critical work leads to competing ideas and counterarguments, furthering the industry of that one literary text. In terms of pure probability, contracting the canon decreases the likelihood of finding such a story around which a critical industry can be built to the point that a volume of that book can be released with less than half of the pages committed to the story.

Another Future: Fleming and the Change of Ideology

This increasing industry does not mean that concerns about expanding the market are unfounded: Fleming's separation of the history of literary studies into the wisdom and knowledge paradigms shows an awareness that perhaps one solution for the problem of knowledge lies in reducing the number of canonical works, but that "paradigm" suggests this has to be the will of the body politic. In fact, Fleming realizes that the reason for the expansion of the canon had good causes also, and thus believes that the new wisdom paradigm "should not be constraining" (472). So while Fleming might believe that the current expansion of the canon has led to a problem in providing justification and value to literary studies, his reversion to the wisdom paradigm does not necessitate a reversion to a limited canon. In that sense, literary studies could continue to grow in terms of potential markets of study.

Instead, the change would come from not what literary studies focuses on, but how it does so. For example, under this model, *The Turn of the Screw* is still a valid text to read and study as literature. Why read it? Fleming's wisdom paradigm calls for a morality-based system of study that would answer, as Fleming words it, "because it makes us better people" (459). What actually changes is less reliance on theoretical perspectives or, at least, those perspectives that cannot justify their use under Fleming's wisdom paradigm. In that sense, less specialization and division of labor would exist, being superseded by an instituted program of tying literary studies to a moralistic system. This would damage production to a degree, although one could argue that the reading and criticism from a moralistic perspective is already specialized labor. Subsequently, if such a specialization kept the same rate of expansion along with justifying literary studies' value with potential students and non-academics, it could very well be possible under this current capitalist system, although the capitalist model would further specialize the labor under the wisdom paradigm. The real obstacle to Fleming's transformation—as for those who argue for a restricted canon—is regulation. Because scholarly work is, on the whole, unregulated, the wisdom paradigm would have to follow the same path as would those espousing the limiting of the canon: the body politic would have to shift in its thinking. Fleming himself argues that his definition of paradigm is more "amenable to conscious manipulation" than other traditional definitions (459). Nevertheless, this conscious manipulation would less likely succeed in converting a host of scholars as opposed to a few. To select a few that would impact the discipline the most, the manipulators would have to influence those in power and overcome the structure of non-regulation. While Fleming's future is more likely than a future envisioned by those who

wish to limit the canon, his vision remains a less likely future than the status quo under the capitalist model of literary studies.

Graff, Searle, and the Study of Literary Studies

Beyond the debates that focus on literature—in terms of how much and in what ways it should be studied—the future of the discipline has also been postulated by critics who believe that the most beneficial object of study is literary studies as a whole—that is, that the problems, benefits, and functions of the discipline is most beneficial to scholars in literary studies. Both Graff and Searle have written about future scenarios of literary studies that take the focus off literature and onto the discipline itself, similar to how theory has shifted the emphasis away from literature towards how to think about it and the product, criticism, of that thought. Consequently, a shift towards Graff and Searle's futures would continue the shift away from literature due to theory—evident in *The Case Studies of Contemporary Criticism* series—and towards study of literary studies and the industry that it promotes.

In *Professing Literature*, Graff readily remarked that the debate between traditionalists and theorists was less likely to be won in pure ideas because “the most formidable obstacle to change is structural rather than ideological,” an argument with which this capitalist model agrees (262). Nonetheless, Graff still outlined a future of literary studies in that work as well as the more recent *Beyond the Culture Wars: How Teaching the Conflicts can Revitalize American Education*. While Graff believes that the unregulated department has increased competition and production, he argues that the university system sees this competition as a conflict that scholars “interpret [...] as

symptoms of disintegration” (8). In a sense, this represents, for Graff, a shift away from “the growth economy that for so long enabled the university to cushion its conflicts by indefinitely expanding the departmental and curricular playing field” (7). Graff’s “growth economy” most likely refers to the economy as a whole as opposed to an academic market system of literary studies. Because of restricted funding, departments have a very real physical restriction on how much they can expand. Yet, literary studies itself has functioned as a growth economy, producing mass quantity of articles under an expanding definition of what literary studies could do. This crisis, for Graff, requires the university to create “a focused curriculum out of its lively state of contention” (11). Within literary studies, Graff believes it matters little “whose list of books wins the canon debate” because the discipline is not focused (11). If that is the case, an expanded canon coupled with Graff’s focus on teaching the conflicts fits under the capitalist model because Graff’s suggestion would breed more scholarship by opening up a field that studies the discipline itself. In fact, there already exists a work edited by William Cain that is built around this very topic: *Teaching the Conflicts: Gerald Graff, Curricular Reform, and the Culture Wars*. Unlike *The Turn of the Screw* volume, these works are two separately published commodities, which serves to show an industry of criticism and scholarly thought being created in reference to Graff’s call for a study of academic study itself.

The leviathan nature of consuming ideas into the capitalist system is the main obstacle of anyone trying to change or influence it. Graff is right to claim that the structure of the discipline is the main obstacle of change, but he does not realize that the structure itself perpetuates the expanding discipline, not only funding from the

government benefiting from a strong economy. Thus, a scholar can respond with a counterargument to Graff's opening marketplace and increase the potential wealth of the discipline because the structure of literary studies enables contrary ideas to expand that marketplace.

The future that Searle outlines for literary studies in "Prospects for Theorizing" runs the same gamut as does Graff's "teaching the conflicts." Like Graff, Searle sees the persistent problem of literary departments, noting that "we end up every budget cycle in a tight spot for resources as we constantly add to the list of things we ought to do, with nothing like compelling arguments for why we should get what we ask for" (42). Again, this issue of long-term profitability arises in the sense that the discipline must change in some manner in order to justify its existence in the academic system. Searle's solution is akin to Graff's in that it angles the focus on literary studies to reflect on itself: he argues that we should focus on what meta-narrative drives work in literary studies—since scholars have spent so much time and have familiarity with deconstructing meta-narratives—which he believes is "a commitment to *a discourse of social justice*" (45). This discourse runs parallel with theory and shapes scholars' ideas about opening the canon, studying gender, and other issues concerned with social justice (45). This meta-narrative, Searle believes, has "created a consensus about it as a value [and] is not an ideology like any other" (61). Thus, unlike Graff, who believes that the discipline is filled with *conflict* that needs to be studied, Searle posits that there is entirely too much *consensus*:

In almost all cases, it appears that arguments have been taken up on the basis of value positions about which there is already a consensus, which

actively *constrains* discussion. To engage in such debates is to risk the immediate opprobrium of being thought a sexist, racist, or elitist, for example, even if one's objection were only to the practical choices for selecting a course of action. (44)

Roughly speaking, while Graff wishes to explore the space in between and surrounding the differences in ideologies, Searle desires to discover what drives all these ideologies and restricts real debate. In terms of the structure of literary studies, Searle's posited future is the most likely to occur because it promotes conflict and competition that will lead to further expansion of intellectual markets with the literary discipline. The key to this future is that Searle's arguments confront literary studies as a whole: in other words, instead of saving the discipline by arriving at a position of consensus, only by blasting apart our unstated consensus will the discipline progress.

In fact, any of these challenges is not only helpful but necessary for literary studies to operate in this model, and not for the reason of justification that Fleming, Graff, and Searle observe. Even in *Professing Literature* in 1987, Graff believes that the theory will "be defused not by being repressed but by being accepted and quietly assimilated or relegated to the margin where it ceases to be a bother" (249). While the *Case Studies of Contemporary Criticism* series contradicts the idea that theory has been marginalized—indeed, it is in a position to usurp literature in those volumes—the capitalist model can account for Graff's possibility that theory can become assimilated into the discipline by scholars and become, somehow, less valuable to the discipline. The equivalent of having a large number of theorists produces the same effect as a large number of businessmen trying to engage in the same market, which, as Adam Smith

notes, decreases the profit amount: “When the stocks of many rich merchants are turned to the same trade, their mutual competition naturally tends to lower its profit” (89). Alternatively, “the acquisition of new territory, or of new branches of trade, may sometimes raise the profits” because the market is “less fully supplied with many different sorts of goods. Their price necessarily rises more or less, and yields a greater profit to those who deal in them” (91). Consequently, Graff’s assertion—that theory could become oversaturated in the market and devalue the work in established theoretical and critical fields—fits with Smith’s model of profit. Both Searle and Graff’s arguments present new market opportunities where a few scholars contribute to that field and, given a demand for their activity, that field generates more wealth per scholar in terms of intellectual capital than established fields such as literary theory. These fields, of course, can become filled with scholars too, and the capitalist structure will be in want of newer or less explored markets as with the case of literary theory. For example, Searle’s focus on social justice can be mined for wealth by, at first, a few individuals who are lauded for their exploration of the topic. As more and more scholars follow, the work becomes less valuable after the demand for that work peaks and decreases.

Perhaps ironically, the very system that was born out of the explosion of scholars using theory can easily pass theory by as the law of supply and demand wills. This is not to say that Graff’s prediction of theory losing value is correct, but that the system created by theory better interweaves with the suggestions of Searle and Graff precisely because it impacts the structure less than a total revision of curriculum and study toward a highly-selective canon or moralistic teleology, which would start limiting the potential markets for intellectual exploration. Nevertheless, the very arguments—as in the physical essays

and criticisms—raised by critics such as Allan Bloom add markets that would not otherwise be explored, despite the fact that following their arguments would shrink the potential market. The very fact that a canon debate exists speaks of a market where ideas are exchanged and reputations made. Thus, even dissent is necessary, even if unlikely to alter the direction of the discipline.

How a Paradigm Shifts: The Literary Studies Bubble Scenario

Economic bubbles may present a scenario where, in fact, the current paradigm might shift—possibly towards a reversion in the canon or in the value of literature to the wisdom paradigm. Succinctly summed up in the *Wall Street Journal*, Justin Lahart shows that economic bubbles “emerge at times when investors profoundly disagree about the significance of a big economic development” (A1). What might such a situation look like within literary studies? Bubbles are notoriously hard to predict in the first place, but if, as Lahart suggests, they are “marked by huge increases in trading,” then a theory bubble would see a rush of adherents to a particular theory (A1). For example, if postcolonial theory experienced a rush of scholars because they believed that engaging in that theory would provide them with the most profit and capital, it stands to reason that this influx of scholars may draw others towards postcolonial theory as well. While there would be skeptics who might believe the theory is too popular compared to its value to the discipline, these skeptics remain relatively silent in a bubble situation because they are unaware of what exactly is occurring. According to Lahart, the bubble bursts “only when skeptical investors act simultaneously” (A1). The immediate, collective loss of faith heightens the negative impact as it brings down other markets around it. Thus, not

only would postcolonial thought suffer as scholars abandon it all at once, but there would be a loss of faith in all theory or even all of literary studies because of the rapid departure of scholars.

A bubble situation would look different if dealing with literary departments collectively as opposed to a particular theoretical perspective. If departments hire more faculty to study growing literary markets under the capitalist model while student enrollment suffers, then, perceivably, the hired faculty would be over-valued because sparse enrollment would most likely cause universities to take a hard look at how big the department should be. Before that happened, the influx of new faculty might attract more students to the literary discipline. In other words, it would appear as if the department was growing in terms of student enrollment and attraction of scholarly work. Then, overall enrollment would sharply drop, leaving departments with a large pool of faculty but less justification for maintaining or expanding that pool. As with postcolonial theory and literary theory as a whole, the reverberation of this loss of belief in literary departments could cause similar immediate crises in other disciplines.

If one of these scenarios occurs—or any bubble scenario—it would cause such a large, immediate crisis that its reach would extend farther than the busted bubble market. The crisis could raise serious questions about how literary studies is structured, what, how, and why it achieves a purpose, if a purpose is indeed definable. If the system fails so utterly, perhaps the traditional Western canon and cultural values is the correct method of teaching. These would no longer be only theories existing within the capitalist system, but a path from the darkness in regaining credit in the eyes of potential students and taxpayers. Under a drastic crash, it is more likely that a paradigm shift occurs allowing

scholarly thinking to synchronize against the capitalist structure, enabling dissenting thought to function as more than a way to expand an academic market.

The Problems of Knowledge and Reading

Because this project started in large part due to the questions concerning reading, knowledge, and theory, I will close this project with little closure to the topic. Part of this is due to the intrinsic differences between the humanities and sciences: the humanities do not have a scientific method that is used to postulate empirically provable—or at least, arguable—theories. Instead, it needs competition to survive not because competition will enable one theory to become law, but because conflicting theories and criticism make up the scholarly work of the humanities. When it comes to reading, Searle's argument that readers can misuse theory and produce misreading may very well be true—this truth would assume that literary texts to have some objective value and truth—but is not conducive to expanding potential markets. If *The Turn of the Screw* had a definitive answer as to readers' questions, then scholars will have had a few ideas as to the nature of the ghost in the story, but they would have quickly built towards a theory with a degree of consensus. With the capitalist model, misreading *The Turn of the Screw*—in the subtle manner that Searle believes reading from a theoretical perspective can do—is much more profitable. Not only can no consensus be reached with readings of the story that might do the text justice, but misreading the story enables new markets of argument/counterargument scholarly work and, ironically, the questions and concerns that led Searle to respond with his own article in this capitalist system.

The problem of knowledge is directly related to the same boundaries of the capitalist system and how the humanities differ from the sciences. Since it is most likely that the canon will not revert to a smaller selection of texts, the same situation that allows a student of literature to never read *Macbeth* or anything from Chaucer will prevail in the future. That is not to say that the texts that the student studies in the place of *Macbeth* are undeserving, only that a student of literature could never read the play is a shocking prospect. Also like the problem of reading, the problem of knowledge fuels intellectual markets. This project has already dealt with the link between an open canon and the problem of knowledge and potential markets in the sense that more literary texts that can be potentially studied stimulate an expanding potential market. However, the lack of a mechanism to measure knowledge within the literary discipline has increased the potential of discussion around it, whether that includes Bruce Fleming and his moral teleology, Searle and reading, Allan Bloom and a Western canon, or this project.

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