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STATES OF DISPOSSESSION: VIOLENCE, PROPERTY, AND THE SUBJECT IN
AMERICAN LITERARY REGIONALISM FROM 1880-1900

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

States of Dispossession: Violence, Property, and the Subject in American Literary

Regionalism from 1880-1899

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This dissertation examines the ways in which American writers of regionalist fiction contended with the shifting political and economic landscape between 1880 and 1899. As the nation transitioned to a market-based economy after the Civil War, antebellum notions of property realigned to conform to an increasingly nationalizing and incorporating economy. Yet regionally-focused writers of the period demonstrate that pre-Civil War definitions of subject categories and rights shaped by local economic structures persisted. These writers resolve those conflicts instigated by the tensions between regional and nationally standardizing conceptions of property and ownership through violent formal tropes which function to metaphorically restructure their fictional subjects' relationships to property within the region in question.

By investigating three sets of literary works, each attuned to a region within the U.S., this dissertation identifies three regionally and economically distinct tropes of violence. In doing so, it also argues that each regionalist writer uses violence on the level

of literary form to resolve the problem of wage labor's effect on property rights after the Civil War, with each trope necessitating the regional subject's confrontation with the marginalizing effects of economic stratification. The first chapter discusses Southern local fiction's attention to the violence inherent in the persisting designation of the ex-slave body as property after the decline of the plantation economy. The second chapter examines urban literature's stylistic declaration and resolution of the violence of immigrant labor exploitation within New York City's industrialized economy. And the final chapter considers the structural function of symbolic violence within regional fiction of the male agrarian laborer in the West in light of those redefinitions of ownership precipitated by railroad speculation.

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgments	iv
Introduction: The Vagaries of Property	1
The Politics of Form	5
Resistance	8
Chapter One: Subjected Property.....	11
Joel Chandler Harris as Postbellum Local Color Writer	20
The Body Property Postbellum	33
The Subject Body.....	44
Contract and the Subject Property: Harris's "The Awful Fate of Mr. Wolf"	54
Chapter Two: Alien Interiors	71
The City as Region.....	74
Crane as Regionalist.....	90
Inversion and the Logic of Property	113
Violence and the Naturalization of Industrial Economic Development	125
The Privatization of Public Violence	136
Alien Perspectives	145
Owning Unhappiness.....	154
Catastrophes of Accumulation	168
The Wolf at the Door: Jacob Riis's Hell of the Dispossessed	188
Chapter Three: Masculine Propriety.....	220
Garland as Formalist	241
Producerism	253
Landed Men	257
Speculative Violence	264
Consumptive Masculinity	274
Masculine Ruination	285
"Up the Coolly" and "Under the Lion's Paw"	292
Represented Perception and Productive Power	303
Masculine Designs	307
Wage Slavery and Black Masculinity	316
Insurrection.....	326
Productive Masculinity	337
Works Cited.....	342

Introduction: The Vagaries of Property

“Alongside of modern evils, a whole series of inherited evils oppress us, arising from the passive survival of antiquated modes of production, with their inevitable train of social and political anachronisms. We suffer not only from the living, but from the dead.”

-- Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume One*

“[W]age labor arises out of the dissolution of slavery and serfdom [...] In all these real historic transitions, wage labor appears as the dissolution, the *annihilation* of relations in which labor was fixed on all sides, in its income, its content, its location, its scope etc. *Hence as negation of the stability of labor and of its remuneration.*”

-- Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*

American regionalist literature of the post-Civil War period is frequently considered a cultural response to nationalization. Economic growth quickened in the 1850s, and after the war, industrial capitalism expanded into the South and West from its northern stronghold, heralding the standardization of factory production, nationwide corporations, the nationalization of the gold standard and banking system, the establishment of continental railways, and the ossification of an upper-middle-class audience for cultural production. However, by dint of retroactive projection of contemporary experience of globalization onto the past, the postbellum period is often

treated by many critics as immediately and unequivocally dominated by the effects of industrialization and incorporation. One of the most widely accepted readings of regionalism's reactivity to nationalization remains Amy Kaplan's assessment in "Nation, Region, and Empire" (1988). Kaplan argues that "[t]he decentralization of literature contributes to solidifying national centrality by reimagining a distended industrial nation as an extended clan sharing a 'common inheritance' in its imagined rural origins" (250). Other works in this now-classic school of regionalist thought include Richard Brodhead's *Cultures of Letters* (1993) and Donna Campbell's *Resisting Regionalism* (1997). Similar interpretations persist in more recent work on American literary regionalism, displaying an insistence upon the binaristic relay between the local and the national effects of industrial capitalism to explain regionalism's inception.¹

However, there can be no understanding of what the "national" is as the country underwent postwar nationalization without a consideration of the regional distinctions that persisted, even as the market economy intensified its reach. I will argue in this dissertation that the instantiation of the industrial capitalist mode did not occur evenly across the country, and that regionalist fiction, rather than looking to the past for what is lost or the future in trepidation, responds to the disruptive alteration of the terms of political economy within the region in question. To assume that regionalist writers foresaw the homogenizing processes of nationalization is to commit a teleological error. Furthermore, the market economy did not immediately transform each region, nor did it

¹More recently, Stefanie Foote, Mark Storey, and Philip Joseph have added to the critical movement identifying regionalism as a genre which attempts to mediate between the local and the consolidating "national." In *Regional Fictions: Culture and Identity in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (2001), Foote posits "Although regional texts focused almost exclusively on rural concerns, their nostalgic tone shows them to have been profoundly shaped by an awareness of the globalizing and standardizing tendencies of urbanization and industrialization" (3). Foote argues that regionalism is marked by binarism between the local and the national, rather than by its engagement with the primarily local repercussions of economic change, writing that regionalism "offers critics a way to analyze one of the nineteenth century's most effective literary strategies for managing the conflict between local and national identities" (4). In

transform each region homogenously. The South, the North, and the West were each defined by a distinct form of economic production prior to the Civil War. These latent or residual economic forms of production marked the alteration of the terms of political economy for each group within each locale. Property was, and remains, both the most intimate and the most politically consequential conduit of economic change, defining subjects' political agency and, often, their rights. Regionalism's fixation on property can be understood both historically and geographically. Historically, the Civil War destabilized property relations, and in its wake wage labor became the method of work on which capitalism was supported and defined, thus necessitating changes in the way antebellum notions of property within all distinct regions affected ownership and production. The geographical nature of regionalism's focus on property is motivated by its historical reality. For as each U.S region in the antebellum period was demarcated by a distinct form of production, it was, therefore, marked by the marginalization of a certain group through the market economy's redefinition of property. Following in Alan Trachtenberg's discussion of corporate capitalism's instantiation in *The Incorporation of America* (1982), I argue that this period of national transition to an incorporated market defined by free labor was not instantaneous, and its process was marked by both ideological and literal conflict, wherein "economic incorporation wrenched American society from the moorings of familiar values" and "the process proceeded by contradiction and conflict" (7). Literary regionalism of the American South, the North, and the West was precipitated by these deep structural shifts in property relations. The genre maps the terms of property as they change, reformulating the local subject's agential relationship to political economy in the moment at which this mode is changing.

To the extent that any one category can be said to shape the terms of the American subject's political agency, it is property. The nation's founders conceived the social stability of the early nation to be dependent upon its anti-aristocratic classlessness, and egalitarian property ownership would effect this stability. Property, then, in early American legal and national discourse, stood in for class, establishing an alternate form of hierarchy. As Gregory Alexander explains in *Commodity and Propriety* (1997), property "anchored the citizen to his [...] rightful place in the proper social hierarchy. Property, of which the only important form was the freehold estate in land, was more than wealth; it was authority, or at least a source of authority" (4). In the early Republic and persisting into the antebellum period, "White males stood at the top of the property-owning hierarchy, and it was they to whom republican ideology looked to create and perpetuate the proper social order and the proper polity" (Alexander 5). Property continued to determine an individual's "autonomy to act in the marketplace," and in turn influenced the market's direct and indirect encroachments upon the individual's rights (Alexander 11). If the early American republic sought to throw off the class strictures of aristocratic Europe, it also transferred the structural function of class to a purportedly more democratic set of laws and practices around property. As Eric Schocket notes in *Vanishing Moments: Class and American Literature* (2006), "the obfuscation of class is [...] the product of a liberal discourse that [...] insistently attempts to contain class in one or another reification — to discover it (repeatedly) in the shape of poverty, to ennoble it in the stance of resistance, to materialize it in [...] an identity" (x). Those identity categories which regionalism has historically been defined by — race, ethnicity, and gender — are effectively negated by the genre's use of property to reconfigure its subjects'

relationships to their region's economic structures. After the Civil War, the hierarchical structures of race were at least officially negated by emancipation, and culture became the way in which Americans came to understand the terms of difference. But cultural distinctions formed based upon the regions in which these cultures were located, and these regions were defined by their forms of production. Regionalism's consistent use of the category of property to renegotiate its marginalized subjects' relationships to their modes of production, no matter the region in question, contests race, gender, and ethnicity as socially valid constructions warranting particular groups' subjugation. Regionalist literature thus argues that cultural difference is, at base, the operating term of class stratification, sublated into artificial constructs of identity which local political economies divide into those who may possess, and those who must be prohibited from possessing.

The Politics of Form

This project's methodology is informed by recent interdisciplinary critical works of American literature. It takes its lead from works such as Brad Evans's *Before Cultures* (2005), Gregory S. Jackson's *The Word and Its Witness* (2009) Stephen M. Best's *The Fugitive's Properties* (2004), and Eric Schocket's *Vanishing Moments: Class and American Literature*. This dissertation is also influenced by earlier criticism in the fields of cultural studies, including Alan Trachtenberg's *The Incorporation of America*, and New Historicism, including Walter Benn Michaels's *The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism* (1987). I consider regionalist literature primarily through the lens of materialism, using history, legal theory, and economic theory to fully interrogate the function of regionalism in the period from 1880 to 1899.

My argument pays particular attention to regionalism's form. In much critical treatment of regionalism, the formal contours of the writing have been overlooked. But form is particularly important to regionalism's agenda, for the genre's structure, I argue, reflects the very economy of the region it is set in. As Fredric Jameson notes in *The Political Unconscious* (1981), it is only within a narrative's formal structure that we can locate its "symbolic act" which defines "the individual utterance or text" as "a symbolic move in an essentially polemic and strategic ideological confrontation between the classes" (85). For regionalism in particular, however, it is important to consider the gestures its formal structure makes to reconcile the relationship of its characters to the economy, for while in all texts, Jameson asserts, "formal processes as sedimented content" carry "ideological messages of their own, distinct from the ostensible or manifest content of the works" communicating the cultural responses to overlapping modes of production, regionalism in particular is overtly defined by its economic contours, for the genre is clearly a literary response to capitalism's uneven development within the U.S. (99). If all texts are a "perpetual cultural revolution" expressing "permanent struggle between the various coexisting modes of production" at any given point in time, then in this dissertation I take Jameson's project one step further, analyzing not only the genre's expressions of the "permanent struggle" between modes of production, but the genre's manifest project of historical rupture when uneven development clearly exists across the nation and thus differentially defines the subject's relationship to property (Jameson 97). The theory of uneven development thus informs my argument as well, for the regional disparity of particular American sites before the Civil War underscores the ways in which

the nation's preexisting disparate regions of economic development define the problematic of property in America in different ways.

In the 1850's, as the nation's market economy grew stronger, capital's geographical development became increasingly uneven. The development of any particular region is dependent upon the resources it has: soil amenable to growing cotton in the South, access to ports in the North, and farmland in the West initially determined these regions' modes of production. Uneven development is the marker of an advancing capitalist economy, and in the U.S., urban centers and rural areas became more distinctly defined as industrialization intensified and the South maintained its feudal plantation economy. Across any national or international model of uneven development, class stratification and dispossession accompanies increasingly disparate economic development, for use values are extracted and exploited to augment the capitalist's holdings based upon the particular region's economy. The capitalist's success, as David Harvey explains in *Spaces of Global Capitalism* (2005) depends upon "an aggregate degree of accumulation through dispossession that must be maintained if the capitalist system is to achieve any semblance of stability. Uneven geographical development through dispossession, it follows, is a corollary of capitalist stability" (93). As a nation, the U.S manifested this increasingly uneven development in the antebellum period: it was defined by its regionalism. As a genre, regionalism cannot undo its attention to the nation as economically articulated by its distinct regions, and, in turn, as divided by its disparate regions. Formal attention to regionalism's texts is thus necessitated by its content.

I argue that regionalism formally attends to the agency of its subjects as they become dispossessed and marginalized by the shifting modes of production within their

regions by creating violent structural solutions to their dispossession. In fact, the genre of American literary regionalism is *defined* not only by its attention to property, but also by its formal use of violence to redefine property's terms. Regionalist writers articulate their subjects' agency through their violent relationships to property. The violence caused by property disputes within regionalism is primarily an economic metaphor, for the constricting market economy in these works impedes these marginalized subjects' agency to the extent that, these writers argue, their subjects must metaphorize through violence a structural overhaul of their assigned relationship to property in order to regain political agency. I argue, furthermore, that regionalism relies on deep structural signification to propel its plot forward. Reflecting its attention to economic ruptures and these ruptures' effects on subjects' rights, regionalism's narratives are only made fully legible when foregrounding the narratives' structures against the particular region's economic background. Furthermore, characters' agential status are always formally embedded, accessible through an analysis of the meaning of those symbols, perspectival techniques, inversions, and structural tensions against the plot's implications. The national market for regionalist literature in part determined the genre's ability to overtly signify its characters' agency and reclamation of property, for memories of the Civil War's violence were still fresh. The political climate necessitated regionalism's covert (yet still detectible) formalization of the unfeasibility of persistent dispossession.

Resistance

In the following chapters I discuss the ways in which regionalist writers mobilize their characters' political agency by formalizing structural violence to destroy those

contemporary definitions of property that threaten to marginalize them. Chapter One, “Subjected Property,” discusses the formal instability of Joel Chandler Harris’s work of Southern local color, *Uncle Remus: His Songs and Sayings* (1880), in order to illuminate how the Civil War and Southern local color address the postbellum persistence of the black body as property. The genre of Southern local color, I argue, functions to reiterate the categorization of the racial body as property which the Civil War was meant to undo. Harris’s fiction provides insight into the structural function of violence in regionalism in its inability to activate this metaphorical violence on the level of the contemporary subject. *Uncle Remus: His Songs and Sayings* exhibits unresolved formal instability manifested in the tension between the stories’ frame narratives and violent fables, indicating its treatment of the slave and ex-slave’s status as property as a persistent problem in the postbellum South even as it resists prescribing structural resolutions to this problem.

In Chapter Two, “Alien Interiors,” I assert that certain works of urban fiction should be considered under the rubric of regionalism, for regional modes of production in this period are not confined to agrarianism. I argue that Stephen Crane’s *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, published in 1893, and Jacob Riis’s *How the Other Half Lives*, published in 1890, use the formal structures of inversion, represented perception, and synchrony to indicate the persistence of the body’s commodification through labor after the war. *Maggie* and *How the Other Half Lives* resolve the danger of commodification that labor exploitation threatened urban immigrant subjects with by enabling these subjects to withhold their bodies from circulation in the industrialized market economy. In *Maggie*, violence against the self preserves the self’s subjectivity and withholds it from circulation

in the industrialized market economy. By committing violence against themselves, Crane's characters maintain the property of unhappiness, the accumulated social energy of the self that would otherwise be exhausted through wage labor. I also describe Jacob Riis's use of synchrony in *How the Other Half Lives* to demonstrate immigrants' resistance to the market's temporal logic. Finally, in Chapter Three, "Masculine Propriety," I continue the analysis of wage labor's relationship to property in my discussion of Hamlin Garland's short story collection *Main-Travelled Roads* (1891). Garland uses violent symbolism of the landscape and the technique of represented perception to demonstrate the mode of resistance by which the white male agrarian laborer can prevent his consumptive assimilation into the speculative economy of the American West.

In analyzing these particular works of regionalist literature, I hope to demonstrate that American literary regionalism of the postbellum period communicates the marginalization of almost every subject position in this time period. From the ex-slave to the ethnicized immigrant to the working-class white man, regionalism suggests that economic marginalization in the postbellum period is the norm, rather than the exception: dispossession is the epitome of the American experience. However, regionalism does not merely describe dispossession; it advocates for the subjects' metaphorically violent agency to restructure the terms of property which subjugate them, and by extension to restructure the political economy which define this marginalization. Exposing dispossession and alienation as the terms of the American subject's relationship to advancing capitalism, they also suggest that it is the subject's right, and the subject's responsibility, to effect structural redress.

Chapter One: Subjected Property

In much critical discussion of postbellum American literature, the descriptor “local color” is often synonymous with “regionalist.” And, from the perspective of the literary marketplace, local color and regionalist fiction are inarguably the same: both were, as Richard Brodhead writes, written with an elite urban audience in mind². In this dissertation I will, however, follow a particular strand of critical interpretation which establishes Southern local color as distinct from regionalism in its formal qualities, while arguing that Southern local color literature informs regionalist fiction’s subject matter. The racially-focused literature of the postbellum South formally overlaps with plantation literature in many ways. Within this framework, Southern local color fiction can be understood to share with regionalist fiction its focus on economic stages, property, and violence. However, Southern local color literature is formally distinct from regionalist fiction in that it raises, yet fails to resolve, the political economic consequences of chattel slavery’s configuration of the black body as property after Reconstruction. Within the realm of the literary marketplace, the genre of Southern local color fiction was composed by white writers and marketed to address nationwide curiosity and promote national reunification, attempting to correct prevalent animadversion to the American rural South after the Civil War.

Southern local color can be considered synonymous with some plantation fiction in its superficial formal qualities. However, while Southern local color gained popularity during Reconstruction for its revisionist portrayal of the antebellum South, it was unsuccessful in fully submerging the region’s contemporary problematic of race, property,

² See *Cultures of Letters* for Brodhead’s analysis of the metropolitan literary marketplace.

and violence under the auspices of nostalgia. Thomas Nelson Page's, Thomas Dixon's, and Joel Chandler Harris's fiction thus unintentionally problematizes chattel slavery's categorization of the slave body as commodity. My argument takes its lead from Brad Evans's assessment of local color's rise immediately after the Civil War. Evans situates local color's inception at Reconstruction's official end in 1877, explaining that local color developed in response to "the dissolution of the master-slave relation," when "race and social organization became divergent, at least before the law" (6). While all regional writing is described as local color fiction in the contemporary postbellum period, Southern local color writing in particular is consumed by race, without being able to resolve its consumption. It often focuses on the plantation in order to rehearse the terms of antebellum slavery which define postbellum racial categories. It also uses the plantation for national reunification and northern investment in southern industrialization after the war. One characteristic of plantation fiction which I apply to Southern local color is its intention, in Brodhead's terms, to "excus[e] the North's withdrawal from the plight of the freed southern slave" by "deploy[ing] a black rustic figure, an ex-slave but still-faithful retainer, to testify to his love of the old days and his lack of desire for equal rights" (Introduction, *The Conjure Woman and Other Conjure Tales* 5). Southern local color is essentially concerned with, and concerned about, the postbellum acknowledgment of racial equality. Yet, unlike regionalist literature, it is in its political project actively invested in subverting racial equality. Written as contemporary violent conflicts of the South expose the region's inability to accept the ex-slave's body's new legal definition, this genre, and particularly Joel Chandler Harris's first book of Uncle Remus tales, looks backward to construct the economically stable antebellum plantation

economy and justify chattel slavery by retroactively presenting it as racially stable. Yet it is unable to fully execute its project of apologism, for it is perpetually troubled by allusions to the violent political economic upheaval that it attempts to escape.

I thus posit Southern local color as distracted by the social and economic possibilities of the black subject within the post-Reconstruction South's political economy even as it tries to establish this black subject position as unthreatening. In doing so, I follow those literary critics who, in addition to Evans, single out local color as a particular form of regionalism concerned with addressing racial hierarchization after the Civil War. In "Nation, Region, Empire," Amy Kaplan writes that "[t]he regions painted with 'local color' are traversed by the forgotten history of racial conflict with prior regional inhabitants" (256). Southern local color writing in particular is not marked by forgotten racial conflict, but by its attempt *to* forget. Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse contend in *Writing Out of Place: Regionalism, Women, and American Literary Culture* (2003) that regionalist literature is written about a particular culture (or ethnic "color") from the status of an "insider." According to Fetterley and Pryse, while its popularity may have ridden on its marketability as cultural tourism, regionalism is distinct from local color in that it allows "regional persons to insert articulations of their own understanding of region" (5). These articulations expose regions as "discursive constructions," enabling regionalism to "critique the commodification of regions in local color as a destructive form of cultural entertainment that reifies not only the subordinate status of regions but also hierarchical structures of gender, race, class, and nation" (Fetterley & Pryse 5-6). Regionalism is opposed to local color in that, in Fetterley and Pryse's analysis, it "uncovers the ideology of local color and reintroduces an awareness

of ideology into discussions of regionalist politics” (6). Southern local color, on the other hand, seeks to position itself as an objective, relatively unconstructed encounter with the racial other. This encounter is marketed as objectively interesting due to this group’s primitive social ranking. It is by this sleight of hand that local color attempts to disengage, while never doing so entirely successfully, from addressing the problematic of violence over contemporary racial equality.

The genre thus often conveys as its unstated project the reiteration of the racial body as property which the Civil War was meant to undo. Jennifer Rae Greeson writes in “Expropriating The Great South and Exporting ‘Local Color’: Global and Hemispheric Imaginaries of the First Reconstruction” (2006) that “the term ‘local color’ itself [...] participated from its coining in a broader western imperial discourse invested in maintaining and relating hierarchies based upon geographical location (locality) and racial categorization (color),” so that in the late 1870s, when the term appeared, “it denoted what we might now discern as a mutually constitutive narrative process of peripheralization and racialization” (502-503). The “local” of the South, in other words, was in national consciousness economically underdeveloped implicitly because of its continuing racial hierarchization. Describing both local color and what I categorize as regionalism, Brad Evans writes that all local color “was written around the subject of a particular place, usually in dialect, with a narrator who was an outsider directing an ethnographic gaze on a peripheral community” (11). Dialect’s presence in Southern local color literature written by whites marked the fictional white narrator’s encounter with the ex-slave. While often used in later regionalist fiction to indicate class markers, dialect functions in this type of local color literature to both articulate the discomfiting alien

presence of freedmen and delineate the unsurpassable obstacle of legal equality for such a racially distinct other. My argument is deeply informed by Evan's emphasis on the ethnographic inception of local color, though unlike Evans I seek to split the terms of Southern local color and regionalism in order to highlight the formal qualities of these two strains of local writing³.

It is at this point necessary to introduce the formal relationship between Southern local color and regionalism by way of race and dialect. In forthcoming chapters, I use the term "regionalism" to describe the formally complex and regionally based literature which foregrounds overlapping modes of production as motivating foundational shifts in property relations and negotiates the effects of these property relations on various marginalized subject positions. On the other hand, the formal function of black dialect written by a white author in postbellum local color fiction particularly distinguishes local color from regionalist literature in its attempt to *undermine* the social and economic terms of emancipation. All regionalist writers and critics of the postbellum period, including midwestern regionalist Hamlin Garland, referred to regionalist fiction as local color fiction. But "regionalism" is a term developed by relatively recently by literary critics⁴. Walter Benn Michaels' argument in "Local Colors" (1998) provides an illumination of

³ In *Before Cultures*, Brad Evans uses "local color" as the sole term to describe regionally-based writing in order to emphasize the ethnographic function this local writing played in determining what we now consider culture. Local writing is a manifestation of the popularity of the "ethnographic imagination" in the period: local color posits "new ways of perceiving and portraying social coherence — of thought, of action, of symbolism — despite the absence of a concept of culture" and in place of what we now understand to be "cultural coherence" (11). While I wholeheartedly agree with this assessment of local writing, within the parameters of my argument the relationship between the formal contours of each type of local writing must be further developed to enable the specific interrogation of the relationship between form and political economy.

⁴ As Jenna Lewis points out in her unpublished dissertation "The World of Regionalism: American Local Color as a Visual Problem, 1830-1900," local color as descriptive of the category of regional writing was replaced by "regionalism," for "'local color' was deemed a derogatory label that relegated women writers to the sidelines of realist writing, while 'regionalism' denoted an aesthetically serious literary endeavor" (7).

the distinction I am making between Southern local color and regionalist fiction. Michaels regards local color fiction and regionalist fiction as equivalent; he does not distinguish between the two genres. But his discussion of the function of dialect in *regionalist* fiction helps to situate the alternative project of early Southern local color writing, in which dialect functions to mark the racial other as other and to keep this other at a legal distance. Michaels analyzes Kate Chopin's fiction to demonstrate that race as category is a marker that transcends the culture of a locale. Building on Michaels' analysis, I argue that Southern local color fiction, unlike the regionalism of Kate Chopin's fiction, does *not* acknowledge race as an indelible marker of political economic difference but rather attempts and fails to dismiss race as problematic in its continuing signification of the human body as property in this region. In discussing Kate Chopin's "La Belle Zoraide," originally published in *Vogue* magazine in 1894, Michaels writes that Chopin is committed to demonstrating how, even as a shared dialect between black and white may seem to function culturally to elide racial difference by way of indicating a shared culture, this difference problematically persists:

[T]he fact that dialect marks regional rather than racial identity can now be seen not as the expression of a certain indifference to race but rather as a commitment to what we might call the *autonomy* of race. There is, in other words, a certain tension in Chopin's local color, a tension between the local and the color, since it is only by contrast with the shared affiliations of speech and place (the local) that the difference of race (the color) can be identified. And that difference--the difference between "white" and "not white"--will be essentially *portable*, i.e. not

confined to any particular place, not identified with any particular set of mores and folkways (741).

In Chopin's fiction, dialect functions to overtly indicate Chopin's contention that racial difference persists as a socioeconomic problem. In Southern postbellum local color fiction, however, dialect does not gesture to the category of race itself as troubled and socially troubling. In local color, dialect is not deployed as a deliberate formal maneuver. Instead, it functions to cordon off racial subjugation as a contemporary fact that needs no deeper questioning. In the case of "La Belle Zoraide," the mark of dialect indicates that the only difference in regional peoples is race, a signifier of a difference that should not continue to exist — and that this should not mark a legal boundary between two racial groups. In local color, dialect often functions regressively. It segregates blacks, marking the holdover of the social conception of the black body as property, while implicitly denying that the freedman's presence and circulation in white Southern society creates tension in regional economies. It functions, in other words, indeliberately, rather than formally, to mark the narrator's uneasiness with the appearance of the speaking ex-slave subject. And it functions in tandem with the other major formal element of local color's genre, the plantation setting, which attempts to cast this subject back into the realm of antebellum slavery.

In his 1894 essay "Local Color as Art," published in the volume *Crumbling Idols*, Garland heralded that genre which I group under the term regionalist writing as having "such quality of texture and background that it could not have been written in any other place or by any one else than a native" (64). In its plantation settings, however, local

color writing of the South features an obtrusive lack of local “texture and background⁵.” In fact, it does not directly address the physical landscape of the broken Reconstruction South, or the racially motivated lynchings and attacks prevalent in the postwar region. Its structural “texture” does not make use of regionally relevant symbolism or allegory in the way that regionalist literature does. Instead, local color writing often features a loose formal structure of unintegrated juxtaposition, very much like segregation itself. This structure reflects the uncomfortable relationship between its subject matter and its political project of the New South: an uneasy coexistence of the closeup racialized subject and an idealized view of plantations that were built by slaves under duress. Freedmen whose alien race is marked in dialect and often accentuated by gestures redolent of minstrelsy coexist alongside nostalgic accounts of slavery undercut by unavoidable references to slavery’s violent consequences for the slave body and the postbellum South.

Although Southern local color attempted to gesture to Reconstruction’s failure by indicating the peaceful coexistence of the races before the war, I argue that it assumes as its unacknowledged project the process of sifting through the ashes of a *failed* plantation economy that formerly dictated the economic success of the South, and yet led to the horrifically violent Civil War. By dint of its economic project, it is confronted with an equally horrific reckoning with the slave trade that structured this economy. Though its manifest subject matter was aimed mainly at white wealthy audiences, not at a Southern

⁵ In “American Regionalism: Local Color, National Literature, Global Circuits” (2005), June Howard traces the roots of local color/regionalist fiction to Washington Irving’s *Sketch-Book* (1819-1820) and to English writer Mary Russell Mitford. Both authors’ works were published in periodicals and gift books; of these stories’ structure, Howard writes, their “episodic form, foregrounding atmosphere and a web of relationships rather than plot, links them to many later regional fictions” (121). As Howard points out, “‘regionalism’ has sometimes been defined as geographically specific literature that also illuminates the general human condition [...] with the term ‘local color’ reserved for work considered narrow, quaint, and minor” (123).

readership, it tends to address the trauma which southern residents struggle to come to terms with. Joel Chandler Harris, journalist and proponent of Henry Grady's New South, began publishing his earliest Uncle Remus sketches in the *Atlanta Constitution* in 1876 as Reconstruction's failures became more obtrusive than its successes. Bryan Wagner points out in *Disturbing the Peace* (2009) that these early Remus stories were oriented towards the project of referencing the gritty "fallout from emancipation" (125). Only later would Harris's Brer Rabbit tales turn backwards to recall the antebellum scene, when Remus inexplicably moves from Atlanta to the plantation upon which he was enslaved to tell his former master's young child violent folktales which indirectly allude to Reconstruction's destabilized present. Yet emancipation's fallout in the South — its irreconcilable presence of an irretrievably racialized body recently defined as laboring property turbulently introduced into the political economy of a newly industrializing and economically bankrupt region as a legally free subject - still functions as the locus of Harris's Uncle Remus's tales.

Southern local color is thus distinct in its failed attempts to enforce the denial of Reconstruction's political economy. Marked by its disjointed juxtaposition of regionally accurate dialect as a reminder of the presence of the ex-slave in Reconstruction, the obtrusive racial presence of the ex-slave clashes with its obsessive fixation on a romanticized antebellum South, with its simplified economic definition of the slave body's legal status as property. Its form is thus defined by these divergent yet overlapping projects. It does not maintain the complex formal structure that regionalist literature develops and deploys to figurally resolve the problematic of agency of marginalized groups when shifting modes of production disturb previous definitions of

property. In its uneasy incorporation of these elements of dialect's racial "color" and its fixed gaze on the local Southern plantation, however, Southern local color complements regionalism's more fully resolved formal coordination of the terms of agency, property, and violence against the backdrop of a regional economy in transition.

Thus, while local color fiction of the South directly informs the genre of regionalist literature, the terms are not interchangeable. Southern local color laterally engages with the tropes of property and the violence inherent in an economic system which relegates the body to a form of property. But it does not employ form to *resolve* these issues in the same way in which the category of American literary regionalism does. Joel Chandler Harris's *Uncle Remus: His Songs and Sayings* is formally complex, and in its formal complexity structurally suggestive of resolutions to the problematic of the body as property and its reclamation by freedmen during Reconstruction. But in his frame narratives, Harris withholds overt formal resolutions to the inescapable violence featured in the Brer Rabbit fables, which taken alone could otherwise be read as allegories of Reconstruction Georgia's racial violence. And in preventing resolutions in his frame narratives by disabling Uncle Remus from actualizing the reclamation that the embedded frame narratives suggest is necessary to end the violence against the body and body politic, Harris also resists advocating for the prescriptive remediations that the fables suggest as a corrective to slavery's negation of the subjective potential of the black body.

Joel Chandler Harris as Postbellum Local Color Writer

Southern local color broadly focused its attention on Reconstruction's attempts to dramatically reorganizing the economy, and most significantly those definitions of property which undergirded the economy. After the Civil War, the South actively sought

a radical shift in its economic mode from a plantation economy to an industrialized form of production. Redefinition of all property relations was needed, for the South had depended upon the black body's definition as property to drive its plantation economy. Thus, this region's local color is fixated upon the consequences of the relationship between the economy and property in the aftermath of the war's violence and the continuation of local racial conflict.

The Southern definition of property likely instigated the Civil War. As historian James L. Huston explains in "Property Rights in Slavery and the Coming of the Civil War" (1999) the war was motivated by two economies' definitions of property: "southern secession grew out of the irreconcilability of two regimes of property rights: one in the South that recognized property in humans and one in the North that did not" (251). Huston notes that earlier in the nineteenth century, the nation's economic landscape was "fragmented into small market areas," thus the Northern and Southern regimes did not conflict (251). But "the transportation revolution stitched market areas together, and no longer could the effects of slavery be confined to the South" (251). Northerners understood that as the market economy became nationalized, the southern labor system would force down the wages of its free laborers, while "southerners, who had placed vast amounts of wealth in slaves, opposed any restrictions upon their property rights" (251-52). If the Civil War was fought over those conflicting definitions of property which underwrote Northern and Southern economic interests, the North's victory precipitated not only a drastic economic overhaul but also an ideological break when the racialized body could no longer be defined as property. And reactions to this economic and ideological break, this rupture, echoed the literal violence of the war itself, for, as Huston

points out, “[t]here is no known mechanism by which a market (or even a nonmarket) society can revise its definitions of property without eliciting a violent reaction” (252). The actual process of revising these definitions of property became the work of Reconstruction, and continued after Reconstruction ended in 1877.

The South’s economy was devastated after the Civil War, in large part due to the loss of wealth caused by the federal nullification of slaves as property. The value of the South’s property in slaves is estimated to be around \$3 billion; “slaveholding comprised far more national wealth than railroads and manufacturing enterprises combined” (Huston 254). In 1865 more than 250,000 men had died in the war, decimating the South’s workforce, and many Southern whites were reduced to poverty as land prices fell drastically, according to Joseph A. Ranney’s *In the Wake of Slavery* (2006) (91). In the aftermath of the loss of wealth and property, the South also had to create a free labor system which could absorb the millions of ex-slaves that now sought employment (Ranney 92). Yet, as Dylan Penningroth indicates in *The Claims of Kinfolk*, “[f]ormer slaveowners wanted to preserve the system of centralized labor control,” with full control over black labor: they “expected their black employees to do all the different kinds of work a plantation needed, even work that had nothing to do with the plantation’s main crop, and they expected to oversee it all” (142). New property laws limited ex-slaves’ access to land for purposes of farming and subsistence: whereas open-range laws had previously allowed those who wished to hunt, fish, and graze on unfenced plots of neighbors’ lands, “fence” laws were passed which “threatened to bind black people into dependency,” as they prohibited open use of owned land (Penningroth 143). Those who continued to use privately owned land were legally trespassing. Blacks were not only

charged with trespassing; if caught, they were likely to be jailed, and then hired out to work in forced labor gangs for the state (Penningroth 143).

Whites thus fought to maintain the racial and economic hierarchy of the antebellum plantation. However, many ex-slaves used legal recourse to attempt to legalize their claims to labor and property. During Reconstruction, as Penningroth notes, thousands of blacks went to the Freedmen's Bureau in the late 1860s "to complain about landlords beating them, refusing to pay wages or to divide the crop, kidnapping their children, or otherwise violating their lawful, duly signed contracts" (Penningroth 144). Ex-slaves also attempted to legally buy land in the 1860s and 1870s, and in this attempt they were often thwarted, for the legal system itself was unstable, biased towards white interests: "'the law' became one of many weapons in southerners' ferocious disputes over property, and it often breathed new life into ideas and practices that dated back to slavery" (Penningroth 150). Disputes over labor and property informed a great deal of the violence of Reconstruction and after. And many of these disputes centered upon interpretation of labor contracts, which were more often than not skewed towards white employers' interests.

Thus, the violence of particularly regional redefinitions of property informs both the Civil War and Reconstruction. If Southern local color as a genre developed in direct response to Reconstruction, then this genre, as well as regionalism overall, is shaped by the violent process of reconfiguring the economy, and within it those definitions of agency, property, and power that inform the region's economy. Southern local color writers attempted to contend with the legally mandated status of ex-slaves by establishing a fixed and agentially marginalized post-Reconstruction role for freedmen while

romanticizing and justifying the social neatness of the antebellum plantation economy. Yet the presence of formally erratic violence in these stories suggests that local color uses violence as an inchoate formal term to contend with the present, as this violence indicates the ways in which ex-slaves' rights continue to be redefined. In Southern local color literature, as opposed to regionalism, violence is a symptom of the continuing instability of the freedman's status, not a formal mode of advocating for agency as it is in regionalist fiction.

I will argue that Harris's work indirectly indicates the seismic shift in political economy necessitated by the Civil War's end and, more specifically, that the depth of this shift is reflected in the stories' formal instability, which references the actual instability of property's postbellum status during Reconstruction and after. The fulcrum which Southern local color literature turns upon, and which causes its formal structure to waver unresolvedly, is the instability of the black body's status as ex-slave and thus ex-property. This chapter will mainly focus on Georgia's Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction histories, though I will also at times note trends in the South overall. Its focus is localized in order to better explicate the complicated and violent racial context against which Harris composed *Uncle Remus: His Songs and Sayings*, and because Georgia presents a particularly interesting case study of the South.

Reconstruction Georgia featured a mix of both rural plantation and industrializing urban economies. Atlanta was quickly becoming industrialized and modernized, one of the South's major cities after its establishment as the state's new capital in 1868. Relatively soon after it was named the state's capital, it was perceived as "the capital of the New South," as Bryan Wagner writes in *Disturbing the Peace*: between 1868 and

1880, “Atlanta was transfigured. The local population almost doubled during this long decade, and new houses and office buildings were materializing week by week” (128). Georgia, as Charles Flynn writes in *White Land, Black Labor* (1983) was “in many ways [a] representative southern state. Its black belt, upper piedmont, mountain, wiregrass, and coastal counties typify all important subdivisions of the South except the sugar districts of Louisiana,” and Georgia, “like the rest of the South, was overwhelmingly rural” (5). Juxtaposed against the slow postbellum economic development of these rural regions, Atlanta’s rapid industrialization stands out as particularly stark. Thus, not only does the South manifest uneven development even after the Civil War as compared to the North’s relative abundance of industrialized cities, but Georgia in particular can stand as a metonymy for the problematic of conflicting modes of production as the South began its troubled transition to a mixed industrial capitalist economy after the Civil War.

In Georgia, the holdover of the plantation economy’s ideology seems to contradict the Atlanta’s transition to industrialization. However, the antebellum conception of the slave as commodity served in part to define Atlanta’s modernization. Bryan Wagner insightfully identifies Atlanta’s police department as the primary symbol of the city’s progression into a modern metropolis even while it exposed the city’s retrogressive interpretations of freedmen’s rights. For while the postbellum police department officially prohibited white violence against blacks, it also actively mobilized laws which truncated ex-slaves’ freedom. As Wagner writes, with “new police and court systems in place, Atlanta began to enforce misdemeanor laws specifically designed to entrap freed slaves. Discarding the pretense to rehabilitation, the city seized the opportunity to extract as much labor as possible from its convicts” (132). The system of convict leasing negated

the *Atlanta Constitution*'s praise of the police as a progressive, fair, and just department. Wagner explains, "the police were presented in the *Constitution* not simply as one of the city's many modern features but rather as the requirement for its modernization. By this reasoning, there were no modern societies where individuals retained the right to violence" (128). Edited by Henry Grady, who used the paper as a vehicle for his New South doctrine, the *Atlanta Constitution*, like the city itself, depended upon a particular form of self-advocacy by which it espoused Atlanta's economic progressiveness while also quietly supporting the conservative racial practices which defined the region's antebellum past.

Georgia, with its postbellum admixture of rural regions dominated by plantations and its modernizing industrial center of Atlanta, presents a particularly useful regional setting for understanding the ways in which the South responded to federally imposed laws mandating ex-slaves' rights. The southern region's relatively abrupt transition from a plantation economy to a free labor economy can be juxtaposed against Atlanta's rapid industrialization. Comparison of the ideologies of these two modes of production within the state indicate that legally oppressive treatment of freedmen can manifest itself in both rural and urban areas, so that while the doctrine of free labor underwrites industrialization in theory, the contract system and even implementation of federal law that accompanied nationalization of industry was nearly as oppressive as chattel slavery. Violence between blacks and whites, in Georgia as well as the South as a whole, can be traced directly to the ideological and terminological instability of this economic transition. Labor laws and contracts functioned to effectively bar freedmen from assuming rights and wages equal to whites. In rural Georgia, "[b]etween January and mid-November, 1868, in the

congressional district that included Dougherty and Lee counties, at least 113 freedmen were murdered or ‘attacked with intent to kill.’...fully one-half [of these attacks] were directly attributable to some argument over work” (Flynn 12-13). Atlanta’s police brutality complemented, yet inverted, the structure of landowner and vigilante white violence which pervaded the countryside.

Joel Chandler Harris’s stories offer important insight into the region’s struggle to integrate the ex-slave as an equal subject. In Harris’s Brer Rabbit stories, I contend, the frame narrative, while developed as “a formal device that fits the fantasy in the tales into the *Constitution*” (165), in Bryan Wagner’s terms, also prevents narrative relegation of this violence to the primitive past. Wagner’s convincing take on the Remus frames posits that the frame narratives relay between the fables and the newspaper’s New South agenda to effectively advocate for police brutality. The frames, set during Reconstruction, position the violent world of the slave tales as the world of primitive African “nature” that “is coextensive with warfare” and thus provide a case for the newspaper’s support of the police: that “[t]he police should be adequately supplied to prevent society from sliding into the chaos of warfare” (Wagner 167). But if the fables and frames are examined for their particular attention to property, they also indicate that this warfare is rendered contemporary by blacks’ struggles for agency as they attempt to claim property rights. Harris’s choice of slave-composed fables, particularly those most violent, indicates his inability to turn away from Georgia’s postbellum struggles over ex-slaves and their historical status as property.

Joel Chandler Harris's *Uncle Remus: His Songs and Sayings* was published in 1880 by Appleton, a New York City publishing house. Its title character, Uncle Remus, lives peacefully on his former master's plantation. This setting is romanticized in the tradition of both antebellum and postbellum plantation fiction. Postbellum plantation fiction, according to June Howard, depicts scenes of white aristocracy in antebellum Southern life who are "freedmen still loyal to their former owners and longing for the happy, orderly days of slavery;" Thomas Nelson Page's sentimental plantation fiction, for example, "undertakes the re-creation of a regional past that implies a vision of the nation" (134). Jeremy Wells explains in *Romances of the White Man's Burden* (2011) that "what made the plantation South especially worthy of attention, its proponents contended, were the ways in which it, almost alone among the world's societies, could be seen as having succeeded in overcoming the problem of multiraciality" (5). Yet early postbellum local color's romanticization of the plantation was motivated specifically by the New South creed in order to advocate for "a new future for southern history premised on the region's gradual assimilation to the national mainstream" (Wagner 127). The plantation is in these frame narratives the site of racial peace, not the racial subjugation of slavery. By fixing Remus in a romanticized plantation setting, Harris attempts to align with the New South contention that the antebellum plantation system was not so prohibitively abusive as to prevent ex-slaves from returning, and that the plantation is a primary site of racial harmony amidst the conflict of postbellum race relations. Many of the slave fables, however, feature graphic violence instigated by property transgressions and theft while narrating the triumphant agency and reclamation of property by slave figures.

Critical interpretation of Harris's Uncle Remus stories has varied widely, with responses ranging from praise for Harris's preservation of the black tradition to indictments of the racist stereotypes of Remus's character. Most analyses fall somewhere in the middle, acknowledging that while the Uncle Remus character may be a function of the New South political project, Harris's inclusion of authentic and meticulously recorded slave fables indicates that the stories on the whole are doing cultural work which is divergent from that of the apologist project of plantation fiction. All note to some degree Harris's use of the trope of the loyal slave. Robert Hemenway asserts in his introduction to *Uncle Remus: His Songs and Sayings* (1986) that Uncle Remus's character "appears too often as less human being than Southern myth," but that "one must also admit that Uncle Remus goes beyond stereotype," for the stories "create a racial utopia in which black and white love one another and share a childhood" while also enabling the revolutionary folktales to be published; Remus's character "reassured Southern whites about their darkest fears: free black people would love, not demand retribution" (18-20). Brad Evans sees Harris's insistence on the international reach of the tales's cultural sources as confirmation of the growing social conception of culture as an open system: "[T]hese tales offer a fundamentally material provocation of the racial lines that have defined social affiliation in the United States. At least since the 1870s, when Harris and other folklorists began to circulate them in print, Brer Rabbit stories have had little to do with either living in the South or having roots in a black tradition. [...] Politically, Brer Rabbit [is] circulating culture, not cultural property" (Evans 80). However, Evans also asserts that Harris's particular political project must not be overlooked, as Harris's apologism for slavery intensified after the first volume's publication. In *To Wake the*

Nations (1993), Eric Sundquist argues that Harris's true assessment of southern race relations is communicated in the breach between the frame narrative and the animal fables: "the nightmare effect of the tales, as racial commentary, resides precisely in the contrast between the animal violence and the false pastoral tranquility of old Remus's avuncular affection for the little white boy" (344). Bryan Wagner sees Harris's political project as crucial to understanding the function of the frame narratives in the Remus tales. For, after the Atlanta sketches in which Remus is a mouthpiece advocating for the repressive function of the Atlanta police department, he is firmly installed back on the plantation as "Uncle Remus." The violent folktales narrated by Uncle Remus as loyal slave indicate to *Constitution* readers that "Remus mattered to the current events in the adjacent columns only in an attenuated sense as their obscure prehistory": the tales serve to prove that "[b]lack tradition was prepolitical. It came from a time before the law. It was static, in contrast to the law's development" (Wagner 169).

Another strain of criticism, however, has represented Harris's fiction as either intentionally or potentially subversive of the very project of racial hierarchization which the Uncle Remus character is meant to solidify. This line of thought begins with the assumption that there is more resonance than rift between the frame narratives and fables. My argument enters into the dialogue of this critical movement. Christopher Peterson contends in *Bestial Traces* (2012) that Uncle Remus does not present as unthreatening a figure as previous critical consensus would have him be: for example, in one story, Remus threatens to whip the little boy when he questions Remus's accuracy in storytelling. The boy bursts into tears, and Remus pays penance by offering to strike his own head against a doorjamb. However, in a subsequent tale, Remus places the same

whip around the boy's neck as he sends him home, telling him that his mother should use it if she finds him stealing sugar again. "That a simmering hostility lies just under the surface of Remus's seemingly contented and benevolent countenance suggests that the frame narrative and the animal tales are not nearly as segregated in terms of the presence or absence of violence as critics [...] have supposed" (Peterson 53). In *Romances of the White Man's Burden*, Jeremy Wells is less willing to decisively determine Harris's intentions for including excessively violent fables, writing that the tales simply left open the possibility for a wide range of responses, from Remus's "black simplicity and slavelike devotedness" to "someone more subversive — an ex-slave who exploits white notions of how a 'negro' should conduct himself, all the white telling folktales in which the dominant animals come across as dim-witted and doomed to failure" even as "the oppressed class routinely outwits and occasionally wreaks violent revenge upon its oppressors" (50). The tales are, as Wells writes, "both/and": Harris's Uncle Remus stories, at the least, communicates that he will intentionally "try very hard yet fail to convey fully how well he comprehends black culture" (50, 52). While it is impossible to conclusively assert Harris's true motives in aligning such antagonistic formal elements as the passive post-Reconstruction ex-slave and the violent retributive projects of slave fables, it seems to me that Harris's Uncle Remus tales signify at the least a formal irresolution which indicates Harris's investment in divergent political agendas. It is this formal irresolution which I will interrogate in the remainder of this chapter.

My argument focuses on the violence that stems from conflicts over property and the resonance between the imagined violence of the stories, in which the slaves murderously reclaim rights to property of the self, home, and land, and the violence of the

Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction periods. The stories present two differing economies - one antebellum, one postbellum - and yet the frame narratives interweave these economies together, suggesting that the figural violence of the antebellum period instigated by contentions over the black body as property is coextensive with the postbellum violence in which black agency is legally promised yet effectively withheld. In this way, the Remus stories are about the shifting economies of the South and the violence over the body as property, as well as the contingent signification of property within the plantation economy which instigated the Civil War. The folktales demonstrate that the antebellum misapprehension of the black body as property must be resolved through figurative violence which in no uncertain terms overthrows the political economy which the plantation economy depends upon. Within these fables, Brer Rabbit and other slave figures assert their rights to self-ownership and their ability to exercise volition without fear of slaveholders' retaliation. The frame narratives, set in the contemporary postbellum plantation, obliquely reference the fables' figuratively violent revolution which must occur if freedmen's agency is to be asserted. However, the frames do not structurally provide affirmation or protocol for the shift in political economy that must commence if, as in the world of the slave fables, the black subject will actually be able to achieve agency. In other words, the frame narratives impede actualization of the fables' prescription for the antebellum black subject. Yet in oblique ways, by referencing the fables, the frames confirm there must be some characteristic methods by which blacks may exercise the control over their property, and thus their rights, as the characters imagined in the fables. Harris, however, does not elaborate upon these methods; but Charles Chesnutt's fiction picks up where Harris's left off.

This chapter ends with consideration of Harris's fiction as a direct precursor to the regionalist Charles Chesnutt's dialect fiction. This lineage retroactively attributes to Harris's folktales a deeper potential for formal complexity and social critique⁶. Chesnutt was of mixed race, yet was light-skinned enough to "pass" as white throughout his life, and he did not include reference to his racial heritage in his biography when his writing was published⁷. *The Conjure Woman* (1899) appeared, in structure and form, to echo Harris's particular version of plantation fiction, yet it overtly resolves the questions of black property and agency which Harris's fiction raises and leaves in many ways unanswered.

The Body Property Postbellum

As noted earlier, the political project of Harris's stories involved emphasizing slavery's decided closure in order to appease Northern investors as well as excusing slavery's racial hierarchization. However, many of his Uncle Remus tales in fact disallow the distancing of slavery's racial practices, even as they advocate for the future of black agency. In other words, neither slavery nor Reconstruction is actually over in Harris's stories. Harris himself referred to Reconstruction in the introduction to the tales as ineffective: "that practical reconstruction which has been going on to some extent since the war in spite of the politicians" (47). This enmeshment between the antebellum and postbellum ideologies of political economy can prompt at least two readings of the valence of the tales. Either slavery was never truly as abhorrent as Northerners claimed,

⁶ See Eric Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations*; Elizabeth Duquette, *Loyal Subjects* (2010); Richard Brodhead, *Cultures of Letters*; Tynes Cowan, "An Anxiety of Influence" (1999), Christopher Peterson, *Bestial Traces*.

⁷ As Tynes Cowan notes in "An Anxiety of Influence," this omission caused many contemporary readers to assume that the genre of the Conjure Woman tales followed in the plantation tradition, and "[t]here was no reason to expect any radical change in vision" as compared to Harris's stories, because "many thought they were reading the work of another white man following in the plantation tradition" (234).

and the relationship between Uncle Remus and the little boy is proof that its racial hierarchization promotes peaceful race relations. Thus, the fables are merely stories of the past. Or, the black body is still in the postbellum era treated as property, and this problem is noted by references in the post-Reconstruction frame narratives to the property issues raised in the animal fables; yet the frame narratives will not suggest the mode by which this problem can feasibly be resolved, for the frames and fables are governed by differing political agendas, and thus the frames must to some extent cover the tracks of the fables' resolutions.

I argue that the latter is true of the Uncle Remus tales. The frames and fables are governed by differing political projects, in part because the content of the frames is written by a white journalist at a conservative southern newspaper, and the content of the other is composed by blacks; and, in part, because Harris himself was at the least racially moderate, yet his newspaper's agenda was not. As Jeremy Wells points out, "Harris was no radical egalitarian or even antiracist, but he was insistent in several essays published during his lifetime that African Americans had not yet been given the chance to show whether they could contribute to U.S civil society and that they deserved the opportunity" (54). These differing political projects emphasize the unresolved tension that the formal slippage between frame and fable creates: the antebellum and postbellum treatment of blacks as property are not so divergent, and this is a tension that actively indicates the South's troubled apprehension of race. Not only is this violent world of the folktales, as Wagner claims, "a world that is always potentially still with us," it is the world that is perpetually still with readers of the *Constitution*, as well as a world that is familiar to Southern readers overall (Wells 167). The shift from a plantation economy to a free labor

economy was economically disruptive for whites, but for the black ex-slave, it heralded explicit and multi-pronged literal violence towards their subjectivity. And the promise of abolition was not kept: blacks were still essentially treated as property. Their skin, like the race of Uncle Remus, obtrusively marked in the stories through dialect, marked them as unequal in the eyes of whites.

The interplay between frame narrative and fable deeply destabilizes Remus's status as free. Remus's return to his former master's plantation to live and work marks his ill-defined status as freedman. His return recategorizes his freed status as that of a "loyal slave:" a trope that enacts a "sentimentalized, prestate idea of loyalty," the loyal slave "enacts at the level of culture and narrative the assumptions underwriting late-nineteenth-century defenses of the contract" and "the conservative judicial philosophy that enfeebled the citizenship rights supposedly guaranteed by the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments" (Duquette 140). As neither a slave nor a citizen but a liminal subject somewhere in between, Remus exhibited many of the qualities associated with the slave popularized in antebellum abolitionist literature: Remus's relationship with the master's son, the slave cabin which he occupies on his former master's property, and his perpetual hunger all contribute to a sense that in fact he has never left the plantation, and that he is for all intents and purposes a slave in the frame narrative.⁸

Remus's prominent narratorial presence also destabilizes the political attempts that these stories make to formally contain the violence of slavery's past by disconnecting it from the world of Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction racial harmony. As the

⁸ Jeremy Wells writes, "Having returned to the plantation on which he had once labored as a slave to work for his deceased master's sister and her family, Uncle Remus embodies the popular postbellum idea that plantation life and work were more preferable for black southerners than the alternatives, namely city life in an industrializing 'New South' or emigration to an industrialized North. [...] The character seems so content to remain on the plantation and serve its white owners, after all, that, in the eyes of some, he might as well have remained a slave" (41).

primary narrator of the fables, which take up the majority of textual space within the tales, Remus's highly racialized narrative voice dominates the stories. Harris privileges Remus's racial perspective, and thus his association with the content of these fables, over the omniscient white frame narrator's. In doing so, Harris destabilizes Remus's position as a fixed and unthreatening freedman, for he allies Remus's perspective with that of the slave who reclaims his property. In the fables, when the slave asserts his legal claims to property, he is also asserting his equality to whites. Brer Rabbit and other slave figures fight to establish and maintain boundaries of their bodies and their families' bodies in order to protect them from the predatory intentions of the Wolf, Fox, and Bear, the characters who represent slaveholders. This perpetual struggle over the property of the self and the property owned by the slaveholder is iterated in various forms throughout the stories. But this struggle was not confined to slavery. Debates over land, the property of one's labor, and the property of the self's in the form of rights and land ownership, as I will demonstrate in the next section, continued into Reconstruction and after.

The story I will examine here demonstrates that even the Brer Rabbit tales in which the slave/animal figures' bodies are threatened resonate with the subject position of Uncle Remus's liminal social and legal status when he returns to the plantation. As Stephen Best indicates, "slavery threatened to leave, in perpetuity, its unique scandal of value; and it seems that [...] revolution (even that which would dispense with the institution of slavery) promises to remain largely inefficacious at the level of the semiotic" (13). If blackness excused slavery's commodification of the black body in the antebellum period, the stories seem to implicitly question whether blackness as semiotic indicator is in fact unproblematic. The relationship between the frames and fables suggests not. Thus,

Remus's dominant presence in these stories, that presence which is linguistically marked by his dialect and indicates that he is black and an ex-slave, gestures to the freedman's continuing struggle to define his body and volition as separate from white's attempts at control: to define his status beyond the commodity. His prominently racialized presence indicates that after the Civil War, the terms of racial subjugation have merely been altered, not abolished. In Best's words, there is "a fundamental historical continuity in the life of the United States in which the idea of personhood is increasingly subject to the domain of property. Slavery is not simply an antebellum institution that the United States has surpassed but a particular historical *form* of an ongoing crisis involving the subjection of personhood to property" (16). Harris's emphasis on Remus's racialized speaking voice conflicts with Remus's potential authority which he could otherwise leverage towards self-ownership. And this conflict is underlined by Remus's contemporary affiliation with the struggles of the animal characters to maintain the boundaries of their subject positions and resist their definition as property.

As associate editor of the *Constitution*, Harris received in November of 1877 an advance copy of *Lippincott's Magazine* that included William Owens' "Folk-Lore of the Southern Negroes," as Florence Baer discusses in *Sources and Analogues of the Uncle Remus Tales* (1980) (13). In reviewing the article in the *Constitution* that month, Harris noted that he found it "remarkable for what it omits rather than for what it contains" (qtd. in Baer 13). Harris believed Owens failed to include accurate representations of Southern black dialect. And Harris's early experience with the speakers of this dialect may have influenced the complicated racial views which are manifested in the stories. At the age of 13, Harris began working for Joseph Addison Turner in Georgia as a printer for the

newspaper *The Countryman*. He stayed at Turnwold, the plantation, from 1862 to 1866 at the plantation. As Turner trained Harris as a printer, he also influenced Harris's perspective on slave narratives and possibly slavery as well. Turner believed that the songs of the plantation slaves should be preserved, and, furthermore should be transcribed in the specific dialect in which they had been sung. Harris's interactions with the slaves at Turnwold involved listening to their fables, which he would later publish within the frames of the Remus stories. He claimed that "it was on this and neighboring plantations that I became familiar with the curious myths and animal stories that form the basis of the volumes credited to Uncle Remus" and, he emphasized, the fables were never "cooked," or changed from their original content (Baer 15, 13).

Thus, the animal stories' plot lines are faithful to the narratives as they were recounted to Harris by the slaves at Turnwold. In order to confirm the fables' details before their initial publications in the *Constitution*, Harris would always seek approval of the tales' veracity from a "reliable source," an ex-slave. Realizing that his memory would not be sufficient to recollect the slave stories he had been told during the antebellum period, "he would need an oral version, preferably more than one, told to him by Negroes who had lived on the plantations before the war" (Baer 16). Harris placed advertisement in the *Darien Timber Gazette* in December 1879 which reads:

We would be glad if any of our readers who may chance to remember any of the Negro fables and legends so popular on plantations would send us brief outlines of the...main incidents and characters....The purpose is to preserve these quaint myths in permanent form. Address J.C. Harris, c/o *Constitution* (qtd in Baer 16).

Harris would then chose the most representative version of the tale in question for publication. Whether ex-slaves muted the revolutionary nature of these tales is unanswerable; however, Harris seemed only to have published stories whose postbellum details coordinated with the fables he was told at Turnwold. The fables' focus on property, as well as violence, then, comes directly from the oral tradition of slavery, in which the folktales were circulated and potentially changed to address the slaves' circumstances. Only the stories which were relevant to the slaves' experiences were kept in circulation: as folklorist Florence Baer points out, "[i]f a tale cannot be related to current concerns of the community, it stops being told" or is altered (166).

Harris's "The Wonderful Tar-Baby Story," for example, features a fable which literalizes the "stickiness" of blackness's persistent and pernicious association with the inanimate commodity, and lays blame for this problem upon white notions of race, caste, and miscegenation. The "racially bifurcated society" which dominated Southern white ideology, in other words, never truly existed, and never would exist (Flynn 31). Harris's framing of the fable corrects white supremacist notions while also implying that continued fixation upon blackness as a semiotic marker indicating status is incorrect: and Remus's narration of this tale serves to emphasize Remus's own blackness and the way in which it informs his liminal status as freedman, while also signifying the very ways in which he is in fact unlike the mute, unthinking, and passive tar baby. The story involves Brer Rabbit's encounter with a tar baby on the road: a "contrapshun" which Brer Fox, the stand-in for the Southern white slaveholder, sets up in a plot to ensnare the Rabbit (57). The Fox seeks to teach Brer Rabbit a lesson about social status, because the Rabbit has been manifesting behaviors which imply that he considers himself an equal to the Fox.

As the Rabbit nears the tar baby, he exhibits an overabundance of confidence which the Fox, who is hiding in the bushes, regards as transgressive of caste boundaries: Brer Rabbit came ““pacin’ down de road — lippity-clippity, clippity-lippity — dez ez sassy ez a jay-bird”” (58). The Rabbit then sees the tar baby and attempts to exchange social niceties. But the tar baby, representative of the commodity form by which whites identify blacks, cannot respond: a simulacrum of a slave subject constructed by the ideology of white slavery, the tar baby is merely an object, lacking in agency and volition. Harris’s version of the fable emphasizes the tar-baby’s muteness six times: the tar baby, Remus reiterates, ““ain’t sayin’ nuthin’”” and ““keep on sayin’ nuthin’”” (58). The Rabbit, however, like Uncle Remus himself, is highly verbal. Both Brer Rabbit and Uncle Remus, in fact, manifest greater linguistic and intellectual deftness than their white counterparts throughout all of the stories.

The Rabbit, offended by the tar baby’s silence, which he considers rude and snobbish — ““Youer stuck up, dat’s w’at you is”” — resorts to striking the tar baby to elicit a response (58). This may be a metaphor for the Rabbit’s anger as he realizes that he is confronting those white perceptions of his intellectual and social inferiority which are used to justify slavery. The more the Rabbit lashes out against the blackness that stares mutely back at him, reflecting his own commodity status, the more he becomes “stuck” to the tar, and the tar becomes stuck to him. The connotations of property which blackness carries with it will always be insidious, sticky, impossible to shake: ““de Tar-Baby, she ain’t sayin’ nuthin’. She des hilt on [She just held on]”” (59). The first half of the story ends with the Fox confronting the Rabbit and pointing out that he placed the tar baby in his path to teach him a lesson about social status and the Rabbit’s propensity for

overreaching. The boy asks Uncle Remus whether the fox ate the rabbit, to which he replies “‘Some say Jedge B’ar come ‘long en loosed ‘im — some say he didn’t’” (59). While the frame narratives don’t often resolve the problems of race and property that the story raises, this frame tale seems to confirm the story’s allegorical relevance to post-Reconstruction society. While some believe that the Civil War and its aftermath settled notions of blackness’s correlation with the commodity, others attest that it could not undo the social infractions that had already been committed.

In the second half of the story, “How Mr. Rabbit Was Too Sharp for Mr. Fox,” Brer Rabbit accepts that he cannot undo the blackness which confers commodity status and continues to constrain his agency. Instead, he must undermine its tenacious grip, its stickiness, by using his wits. The Fox informs him that the Rabbit’s stasis, as he is stuck to the tar baby, which metaphorically relegates him to the status of property, is not of the Fox’s own doing — it is, in other words, the Rabbit’s fault. The Rabbit brought it upon himself by insisting on being treated as an equal by the Fox and the tar baby: “‘Who ax you fer to come en strike up a ‘quaintance wid dish yer Tar-Baby? En who stuck you up dar whar you iz? Nobody in de roun’ worril’. You des tuck en jam yo’self on dat Tar-Baby widout waitin’ fer enny invite’” (63). The Fox then tells the Rabbit that, because he is not free - he is still stuck to the tar baby - that the Fox is absolutely going to barbecue him “dis day, sho” (63). But the Rabbit uses reverse psychology to trick the Fox into releasing him. The Rabbit tells the Fox that he can do anything, including hanging him, drowning him, and snatching out his eyeballs, as long as he doesn’t throw him into the briar patch. This of course prompts the Fox to comply with the Rabbit’s actual intention by slinging him into the patch. Proclaiming his triumph, the Rabbit cries out, as he sits on

a log in the briars and combs the tar out of his fur, “““Bred en bawn in a brier-patch, Brer Fox — bred en bawn in a brier-patch!””” (64).

The Rabbit’s triumph over the Fox in this story indicates the slave’s knowledge of the unwritten rules of race, and indeed the slave’s mental prowess overall. The slave knows better than the slaveholder the social boundaries which he may or not break. He knows specifically the means by which to counteract the social and economic limitations of his blackness, or his “stuckness” to the tar baby. While he may be limited by white conceptions of his status, constantly re-stuck to the social prescription of blackness which white slaveholders constructed as the Fox constructed the tar baby, he will use his deeper knowledge of race relations to target the Fox’s prejudicial ignorance and extricate himself from his status as property. In confusing the Rabbit’s blackness with the inanimate, mute, deaf function of an actual commodity, the Fox underestimates the Rabbit’s capacity as an intellectual equal. But indeed, the Rabbit proves that he is his superior, for he was “born and raised” with the curse of his blackness. While it condemns him to innumerable acts of racism and a social status limited by the political economic caste system of white society, he can also use this limited system to his advantage by identifying and subverting assumptions of his agency and volition.

Harris’s description of Uncle Remus in the story’s opening scene of the frame narrative indicates that, like Brer Rabbit, Remus withholds more than he lets on to the boy. This move effectively affiliates Remus’s character as the Rabbit’s counterpart and social equivalent, even and yet especially as Harris asserts that Remus is as black as the tar-covered Rabbit. As Remus answers the boy’s question of whether the fox killed and ate the rabbit “when he caught him with the Tar-Baby” attempting to fight against his

prescribed subject position, Harris writes that “the old darkey [...] chuckl[es] slyly” (62). Remus assures the boy that the Rabbit is never eaten, and never beaten. In other words, the Rabbit’s agency is never consumed by the commodity status that his race confers upon him. In fact, the Rabbit ““wuz a monstus soon beas’,” as he says to the boy: ““don’t you go en make no udder kalkalashuns, kaze in dem days Brer Rabbit en his fambly wuz at de head er de gang w’en enny racket wuz on han’, en dar dey stayed’” (62). Thus, at the same time that Harris iterates Remus’s blackness which is never unstuck, he also confirms his power of agency as Remus describes the Rabbit’s power to maintain control of his body as his own property against the ignorantly consumptive intentions of the Fox.

The Rabbit’s presumptiveness, the Fox implies when he catches him, goes against the laws of race and caste; Brer Fox must remain at the top of the plantation’s hierarchy. The Fox tells the Rabbit that he has ““bin cuttin’ up yo’ capers en bouncin’ ‘roun’ in dis naberhood ontwel you come ter b’leeve yo’s’e’f de boss er de whole gang’” (63). But the relationship between the frame tale and the fable indicates that the story’s true social transgression occurs when the Fox initially underestimated the Rabbit’s intelligence in his denial of the Rabbit’s status as an equal. It is the slaveholder who established and enforces enslavement and defends it with the fallacy of racial inequality metaphorized by the Fox’s placement of the tar baby in the Rabbit’s path. The Fox expects the Rabbit to succumb to the tar’s constraints, for the Rabbit in his eyes is no smarter than the tar baby. But it is the slaveholder who is marked inferior, figuratively tarred, for believing that slaves will passively accept the social construction of race.

As Harris aligns Remus with the Rabbit, he implies that the problem of race’s visual semiotic function which condemns blacks to treatment by whites as commodities

continues into the post-Reconstruction period. Remus, like the Rabbit, is verbally adept, sly, and cunning. He is none of those things that white planters uphold to justify black oppression and enslavement. In other words, he is no inanimate piece of property: no tar baby. The only similarity between Remus and the tar baby, as between the Rabbit and the tar baby, is their darkness: the color of the “pitch” that the Rabbit attempts to remove from his fur. Harris’s emphatic repetition of the tar baby’s muteness in the fable, along with his description of Remus as a “sly old darkey” and his parallel mapping of Remus onto the Rabbit, confirm that the social problem of black skin’s equivalence to property continues in Remus’s era. And while the frame narrative does not resolve this problem, the fable does: it is mental aptitude, verbal cunning, and resistance which enable the Rabbit to break free of the constraints of racism’s commodifying hold.

Southern local color cannot resolve the slave’s nor the ex-slave’s definition of property. Its form is constrained by its political agenda, which stems from its region’s economic agenda. Harris attempts to position the South as having undergone a decided shift in property relations: a before and after, an antebellum and a postbellum. The race problem motivating enslavement has been fixed. But the frame and fable of the tar baby story suggest the problematic of the black body as property while failing to address the allegory’s fully manifest relevance to Uncle Remus himself.

The Subject Body

Harris’s stories attempt and fail to elide the significance of the black body’s presence after the Civil War. Yet, paradoxically, the plotlines within the fables of the Uncle Remus tales are centered upon the very issue that motivated the Civil War: the volition and agency of black subjects and their relationship to property. The violent fables

contained within the Remus stories are particularly suggestive of this dynamic. As I have noted earlier, some critics have argued that the violence of these tales is contained within the fables, and on the level of content in this first volume of Uncle Remus stories, this is indeed the case. However, in pursuing the formal qualities of those stories in which the fables are embedded, I find that the signifying indeterminacy of symbols and themes regarding Uncle Remus's relationship to Reconstruction-era policies and racial conflict pulls violence and the question of agency into the frame tales set during Reconstruction. Therefore, the formal instability and irresolution between the frames' symbolic register and the violent fables gestures in itself to the instability of Southern political economy during this period, particularly in terms of the era's unfinished promises of black emancipation. Donna Campbell asserts that the local color fiction written after the Civil War (which term she uses interchangeably with regionalism) "frequently denies or ignores the events immediately surrounding its creation, a strategy to 'universalize' the work that results from unwillingness to dwell on the cause of the disruption and loss that the region had suffered" (7). If we refine Campbell's point and apply it specifically to Southern local color literature, as opposed to regionalism overall, then the argument stands: Southern local color "denies or ignores" the war itself to repress its implications for the sake of national reunification. But I would add that Southern local color is never fully *successful* in its repression of the causes and aftereffects of the war. While regionalism attempts to expose these causes and aftereffects in its formal renegotiation of the subject's relationship to property, Southern local color literature, on the other hand, functions to process the trajectory of the Southern economy's valuation of the black body as commodity, the contested agency of this racial group, and the violence that must

follow both persistent dehumanization and a region's "reconstruction" of the economic system which previously succeeded only due to violent dehumanization.

In other words, the formal implications of these tales exposes rather than conceals the fact that emancipation is, in Saidiya Hartman's words in *Scenes of Subjection* (1997) "both a breach with slavery and a point of transition to what looks more like the reorganization of the plantation system than self-possession, citizenship, or liberty for the 'freed,'" for other "forms of involuntary servitude [...] followed in the wake of slavery" which accompanied "the reign of terror that accompanied the advent of freedom" (12-13). Thus, Harris's iteration of Southern local color formally manifests its own inadequacy to disguise the particularly violent structural and social repercussions resulting from the ethical transgression of chattel slavery as it gestures to the economic instability of the region.

Joel Chandler Harris's Uncle Remus stories indicate in their frame narratives the political goal of apologism, and by extension seek to dismiss the violence of antebellum enslavement and the Civil War's economic motivations. But the stories' persistent violent thematic acknowledges that violence is the inevitable result of classifying people as property and the attempts to forcefully maintain this classification by imposing dehumanizing limits on black volition. Many of Harris's stories, either despite themselves or by dint of what some critics identify as Harris's subtle use of irony, revolve not only around the body as property and its boundaries but on the violence that results when volitional subjects are defined as property and thus consistently deprived of their agency.⁹ Additionally, the stories reference the aftershocks of volitional deprivation as

⁹ Wells notes that Harris often exhibits "a predilection toward irony" indicated by his comparison of the Uncle Remus tales to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (44).

ex-slaves attempt to regain agency by defending the self as property and obtaining property rights.

To understand the multiple types of antebellum violence that the stories allude to and which continued after Reconstruction, we must first take a step back and examine the ways in which the system of slavery necessitated violence in order to exist. Chattel slavery was only possible because slaves were denied equal agency and humanity based upon their race, as noted in the previous section. But chattel slavery could only persist if slaves were physically coerced into performing labor. Its violence was thus both humanistic, because it was only justifiable by southern plantation owners if the subjectivity of these commodified bodies was initially denied, and physical. If blacks were subhuman, then they did not have equal volitional capabilities, and their inferior status warranted forced unpaid labor and their valuation as commodity. The system's definition of and reliance on the slave as property, in other words, can be understood as the root of slavery's violence as well as the Civil War's occurrence. Hartman describes the humanistic violence of slavery as psychically double-edged: "the barbarism of slavery did not express itself singularly in the constitution of the slave as object but also in the forms of subjectivity and circumscribed humanity imputed to the enslaved" (6). In order to define slaves as property, slaveholders had to circumscribe their humanity. But their "property" continued to resist this circumscription. Thus, slavery cannot be likened to other forms of property ownership because, as historian James Huston points out, "the property itself had volition" which had to be controlled. "Other forms of property could be agreed upon as personal property by simple social consensus, without the use of

government. When consensus breaks down, laws or judicial rulings are required to resolve the conflicts; and in conflicts over property, owners do the fighting. The property itself does not become a participant in the fray because most property is inert” (Huston 257). Slavery had to repress the slave’s equal capacity for volition and agency, essentially correlating the slave’s agency with that of any laboring beast of burden.

However, because the slave had no choice but to exercise volition in order to physically and psychologically survive despite the plantation system’s denial of its existence, the slave’s subjectivity consistently asserted itself out of the slave’s demarcated commodity form. And this assertion necessitated physically violent repression by slaveholders to enforce the delimited human agency that would accept forced labor. Slaves “possessed volition and could actively contest the directions and commands of the slaveholder. It should not be forgotten that one of the synonyms of slavery was ‘involuntary servitude,’ and, in order to obtain involuntary labor from a sentient person with the capacities of volition, physical force or the threat of it must be applied” (Huston 257). When slaves would refuse the brutality of forced labor and the violence of the slaveholder, the unresolvable problem of their equivalent capacity for agency became apparent: “[t]he volition of the slaves made them a most unstable form of property” (Huston 257-258). A number of fables in Harris’s first volume of stories narrate the vengeful acts of this human “property,” in which the animal correlates to slaves become volitional participants and attempt to change the terms of their economic definition by claiming and defending property of their own. Slaves’ agency thus perpetually disrupted the peculiar institution’s violent enforcement, and it was the

system's initial humanistically violent transgression which necessitated further violent enforcement.

Through the form of the contract laws governing labor, the Black Codes, and vigilante violence of the Ku Klux Klan, in addition to other coercive acts, the humanity of the slave continued to be denied after the Civil War. Yet Harris's stories, despite their commitment to the project of apologism, do not fully accomplish the denial either of the slave's agency or the psychic violence that attended chattel slavery's existence during the antebellum period. Because the formal structures of these stories allows the violent agency of the fables's slave figures to inform and confirm Remus's limited agency as freedman, the stories also effectively acknowledge the persistence of chattel slavery's violent repressive apparatuses in altered form after the Civil War. My argument is informed by Hartman's contention that "emancipation appears less the grand event of liberation than a point of transition between modes of servitude and racial servitude," for "self-possession" did not "liberate the former slave from his or her bonds but rather sought to replace the whip with the compulsory contract" (6). Reconstruction's failure, as Hartman writes, is the result not only of troop withdrawal and legal reversals; the social capacity of the ex-slaves' "persons, rights, and liberties" were also essentially left unchanged, for "involuntary servitude and emancipation were synonymous for a good many of the formerly enslaved" (Hartman 6, 13). These violent Brer Rabbit stories obliquely function to address the failure of the nation to disable the correlation between blackness and property in the years after the Civil War.

As Robert Hemenway has noted, the Brer Rabbit tales were circulated amongst slaves "as a means of acculturation, a technique of adaptation to the environment of

bondage;” Brer Rabbit’s world is “one of unrelieved hostility” (26). I will argue that the relationship between the frame narratives and the fables of these violent tales in particular suggests that, whether intentionally or not, Harris gestures specifically to the contentiousness of property’s boundaries which persists into Reconstruction and after. Dylan Penningroth notes “[t]he ‘cardinal principle of slavery,’ according to one 1827 summary of southern law, was ‘that the slave is to be regarded as a thing, — is an article of property, — a chattel personal.’ Because they were property, slaves could not legally own property” (45). Racially motivated violence by whites in the postbellum period, through Reconstruction and after, was primarily fueled by contentions over property: whether those ex-slaves perceived as property could and should in fact own it. Dylan Penningroth notes, “By far the most violent confrontations blacks had were with whites” over property:

“Ex-slaves’ newly won access to the law and legal institutions became vitally important during the mid-1860s because white people across the South launched vicious campaigns of terror against blacks. Between 1865 and 1868, federal officers, who recorded the freedpeople’s complaints in ledgers, compiled a staggering catalogue of ‘outrages’ by whites against the freedpeople. White landowners cheated blacks out of their wages and property in every way imaginable and bullied them when they could not be cheated. [...] These threats, beatings, and murders [...] had a calculated goal: to maintain white supremacy as the South’s guiding principle. But despite the risks of speaking out, many African Americans went to the provost courts and Freedmen’s Bureau to demand justice” (Penningroth 120-21).

If blacks owned property, this ownership would attest to their equal status. It would mark them as upwardly mobile, and whites “described upwardly mobile blacks, not as improving their position, but as destroying the proper social order” (Flynn 87). After the war, when many white planters and farmers were to a greater or lesser extent impoverished and rendered politically impotent by Northern control over their regional governments, large landowners, forced “into the position of political impotence characteristic of the less socially prominent and well-to-do,” fought to ““protect their society,”” resorting to that “vigilante behavior traditionally associated with the lower classes [...] Moral violence helped them ‘to redeem’ their society” (Flynn 54). The majority of physical violence against blacks was thus motivated by property ownership, for property “should” not be allowed to own property.

Southern white landowners also used the power of the contract, which was designed to prevent abuses of black labor, in order to enforce the repression of black volition and agency that might lead to property ownership. After emancipation, the power of the contract to ensure ex-slaves’ equality was promising to freedmen: Amy Dru Stanley explains in *From Bondage to Contract* (1998) “Emancipation apocalyptically achieved the transition from status to contract, appearing to destroy all traces of bondage in the republic by affording free slaves the right to own themselves and enter into voluntary relations of exchange” (4). Ideally, after emancipation, “the abstract rights of freedom found concrete embodiment in the contracts of wage labor and marriage - that the negation of chattel status lay in owning oneself, in selling one’s labor as a free market commodity, and in marrying and maintaining a home” (Stanley xi). Equality, in other words, would be enforced through the legal contracts that would guarantee a living wage

paid to ex-slaves for their labor, formalize their control over their own bodies, and, as a result, enable them to buy property. Yet manipulation of the terms of these contracts ensured that the agency of many ex-slaves was in reality deeply limited by the terms of these contracts. Through the legal power of the contract, planters illegally undermined the economic and even physical volition of ex-slaves in order to prevent their social mobility. After the war, “opposition to black landownership was indeed intense, and it continued. In 1896 and, for that matter, 1936, most white landowners still opposed the selling of land to blacks” (Flynn 64-65).

The violent fables within many of the tales, including “The Awful Fate of Mr. Wolf,” focus upon the same contentiousness over property ownership. Notably, however, they are set in the antebellum period. Thus, their attention to violent encounters over property does not reference Reconstruction’s violence. But if we accept that chattel slavery existed after the Civil War in an alternate form, the stories address the same problematic that post-Civil War violence does. The fables, though, instead of merely narrating the violence of slavery or referencing it, *resolve* the violent limitation of agency which defines the system of slavery. Violence is in fact a metaphor for agency within the folktales, a metaphor which stands for the intensity of structural change necessary to effect full expression of freedom under the multiply violent limitations of bondage. To throw off these bonds, slaves must effectively redefine the boundaries of self and of ownership against the prohibitions of white society’s racism.

The fables’ metaphorical violence demonstrates that antebellum prohibitions to black equality which severely restricted slave agency could not be resolved through the

death of the particular slaveowner, but through the death of the treatment of the race as property. The fables work to grant agency to the slave figure of Brer Rabbit by metaphorizing and reversing the direction of the psychic violence that was used against slaves to enforce their servitude and lack of volition during slavery. Brer Rabbit, who represents the slave, kills the slaveholder figures who threaten his claims to bodily integrity and property. Murder here signifies the obliteration of the body property and the beginning of the subject who can own property. Violence as political economic trope for structural change, as I will explain in later chapters, is a trademark of regionalist fiction. The Brer Rabbit tales alone can thus be considered a prelude to regionalist fiction, for they resolve the property-specific prohibitions against agency which slavery requires. But within the context of Harris's tales, this violence also functions to reference the literal and inordinate amount of racist violence, and thus the persistence of volitional denial, against blacks in the post-Civil War period in the South and in Georgia specifically.

The stories' frames are thus notable not for their resolution of the commodification of the raced body, but for their inability (or refusal) to contend with the problematic of property and agency. In other words, the frames posit Uncle Remus as suspended between slave and free. They also attempt to fix his suspended agency as unproblematic. Yet the symbolic associations between the frame narratives and fables trouble his unproblematic status, undercutting the work of the frames and positing Remus's agency as troublingly contingent. But the frames, unlike the fables, cannot resolve the economic problem of this contingent status, for to do so would confirm that slavery itself was inherently transgressive and that the postbellum economy and race relations still suffer from the instability of the terms of property left in slavery's wake.

Specifically, as noted earlier, the frame narratives are invested in confirming Remus's status as a postbellum loyal slave. But in this project they draw attention to his similarity to Brer Rabbit and thus symbolically invite correlation between Remus's threatening similarity to these enslaved and agential characters. In suggesting without fully confirming Remus's threatening agency as freedman, they acknowledge that Brer Rabbit's agency is truly the most structurally violent element of these tales. Additionally, in inviting comparison between Remus and Brer Rabbit, they acknowledge that the work of Reconstruction can be understood as a failed attempt at ensuring racial equality. Thus, the Civil War is never addressed in these animal stories written by Harris, because to do so would confirm to the North the existence of its essential continuation into the postbellum period. Acknowledgment of the Civil War would also attest to the economic vulnerability which the South experienced during and after Reconstruction. Yet the frames which Harris composed for the slave fables inevitably confirm such a truth regardless of Harris's political intentions for the stories' reception. The stories cannot unremember the present, because it is as unstable as the antebellum past.

Contract and the Subject Property: Harris's "The Awful Fate of Mr. Wolf"

The postbellum labor contract was one strategy which had the effect of determining freedmen's agential power, thus their ability to earn money and own property. The practices of planters in the black belt after the Civil War in Georgia were particularly skewed towards depriving blacks of their rights as noted by the head of the Freedmen's Bureau in 1865 and 1866. The head of the Bureau wrote that planters would "adamantly refused to pay the freedmen reasonable wages," and would often "compel them by threats to contract for from one to three dollars per month, the laborer to furnish

his own clothing and medicine” (qtd in Flynn 32). When Bureau chiefs requested that planters change the terms of the contract, insisting that such limited and constraining terms of employment would not be permitted by the Bureau, planters simply refused to annul the contracts. Plantation owners also wrote into the contracts prohibitions against allowing freedmen to travel to other parts of the state where they might be able to secure better-paying work. The Georgia Bureau chief noted that black freedmen who traveled to counties known for better-paying labor “were arrested and imprisoned. [...] Every possible expedient was resorted to for frightening [blacks] and keeping them at home [on their antebellum plantation], in order to enable employers to hire them at shamefully inadequate wages” (qtd in Flynn, 32). Labor contracts were intended to perpetuate the terms of enslavement; to white Georgians, “exploitative contracts seemed perfectly legal and acceptable,” for the very reason that they allowed planters to subvert the terms of emancipation by enforcing what one federal general stationed in Macon reported as ““a modified condition of Slavery similar to peonage”” (Flynn 33).

If freedmen refused to sign contracts with their antebellum slaveholders or with the plantation owners who reoccupied the land that freedmen had been promised, freedmen were in turn subject to vagrancy laws, enforced throughout every state of the South except Tennessee and Arkansas by 1866. Vagrancy laws worked in tandem with the contract system to pressure freedmen to accept the terms of the contracts. These vagrancy laws threatened an even more exploitative system of labor than the contracts: if a freedman was stopped without a labor contract, he would be declared a vagrant and fined. And if he could not pay the fine, he was arrested, then hired out to planters or forced to labor for the state on public roads for up to a year (Hartman 145). Thus, many

ex-slaves were essentially coerced into remaining on their former plantations to work in order to avoid potential arrest and unpaid labor for the state. The alternative was simply accepting the terms of the labor contracts, which were not designed to provide fair pay and enable freedom of movement. Freedom ostensibly promised by contracts was “a fiction,” for the contract system “was employed to enforce black subordination and legitimize a range of coercive measures,” including even “the regulation of domestic affairs”: the system “served rather efficaciously in the transition from slavery to involuntary servitude” (Hartman 146).

The repressive interdependence of the contract system and vagrancy laws were pervasive throughout Georgia and the rest of the South. It is thus significant that one of the most violent fables in *Uncle Remus: His Songs and Sayings*, “The Awful Fate of Mr. Wolf,” opens with the scene of Uncle Remus performing an act of labor in a slave cabin on his former master’s plantation. Remus “was half-soling one of his shoes, and his Miss Sally’s little boy had been handling his awls, his hammers, and his knives to such an extent that the old man was compelled to assume a threatening attitude” (89). To Southern readers of the *Atlanta Constitution*, it is likely that this scene would affirm freedmen’s enforced servitude for very low pay on the plantation¹⁰. To Northern readers of *Uncle Remus: His Songs and Sayings*, it may merely have suggested that Remus was content to assume his antebellum role as a slave. But the symbolic correlation between this and other scenes of Remus’s labor and the violence of the folktale in “The Awful Fate of Mr. Wolf” suggests that there is a discrepancy between Remus’s performed

¹⁰ While Remus’s labor is focused on one of his own possessions in this particular scene, scenes of laboring on plantation tasks is echoed in the beginning of other Remus stories as well: Remus braids “strips of ‘wahoo bark’ into horse collars (106), repairs farm implements with “hog’s bristle” (113), and, with “a board across his lap, and, armed with a mallet and a shoe-knife,” made “shoe-pegs” (147).

contentment and the postbellum resistance of freedmen to the terms of these labor contracts. By extension, these symbolic correlations suggest a correlative relationship between the pacific world of the frame narrative and the violent world of the fables. Whether Harris could not or would not contain this slippage is unanswerable. But it ultimately troubles Remus's status, exposing Reconstruction's divisive racial relations even as it attempts to confirm the unproblematic continuity between antebellum and postbellum Georgia.

The animal fable from which "The Awful Fate of Mr. Wolf" derives its title uses symbols of labor, fire, and violence to metaphorically reinvent Brer Rabbit's relationship to property. Two of these terms, labor and violence, are cross-referenced in the frame narrative. The formal instability created by this cross-referencing allows for further resonances between the symbol of fire in the fable and arson's prevalence in Reconstruction Georgia. Thus, the story's formal slippage may to southern readers have occasioned recognition of Reconstruction violence in which freedmen used arson to burn their employers' homes and retaliate against the terms of their employment as inscribed in postbellum labor contracts.

Within the folktale, the Wolf frequently raids Brer Rabbit's home, whether Brer Rabbit builds it out of straw, pine treetops, or bark. Brer Rabbit "'ain't seen no peace whatsumever,'" according to the fable (90). This language echoes Remus's admonition of the boy in the frame preceding the story as he warns him against meddling in the labor Remus is performing on his shoes: "'Folks w'at's allers pesterin' people, en bodderin' 'longer dat w'at ain't dern, don't never come ter no good eend. Dar wuz Brer Wolf; stidder mindin' un his own bizness, he hatter take en go in pardnerships with Brer Fox, en

dey want skacely a minnit in de day dat he want atter Brer Rabbit.” Remus warns that the Wolf “‘kep’ on en kep’ on twel fus’ news you knowed he got kotch up wid — en he got kotch up wid monstus bad” (89). The Wolf not only destroys the Rabbit’s property in these raids, but also steals a child each time. Harris’s direct linkages between the boy’s interference in Remus’s labor when he steps inside his cabin, Remus’s continued work on his antebellum plantation, and the Wolf’s “raids,” might have evoked in some Southern readers Remus’s structural similarity to that of postbellum freedmen on plantations whose employers accused them of stealing part of the farm’s crop and would thus raid their homes. Dylan Penningroth describes the terms of labor motivating these raids: former slaves would demand a portion of the “general crop” by asserting their legal right to it, and former slaveowners resented sharing ownership of these cash crops with the ex-slaves who claimed their right to it on the basis of their exerted labor. Former masters forbade ex-slaves from storing a portion of the crop in their cabins, for to them, “there was little difference between letting the freedpeople store the crop and letting them steal it” (152). In order to ensure that the ex-slaves weren’t stealing the cash crop, landowners “constantly demanded to look into their tenants’ houses to inspect ‘their’ property,” but “[b]lack tenants [...] believed that their houses were not public spaces for looking at property and that the landowners had no absolute claims over a crop that had not yet been divided” (153). The resonance between these “raids” that white landowners performed on the slave cabins of black tenants living on their plantations and the Wolf’s raids on the Rabbit’s homes to claim property would be clearly separated as postbellum and antebellum events but for the fact that Remus implies in the frame narrative that the boy is “pestering” and “bothering” him in his home, a slave cabin, as he labors.

Neither in this frame narrative, nor in others, is Remus identified as earning wages for his labor. His work, and thus his self-ownership and the products of his labor, are still controlled and owned by his white employer's family. That the boy "pesters" and "bothers" him by handling his tools and disallowing him from performing labor seems to indicate that the line between Remus, his labor, and the control over his property and the products of his labor are blurred. The terms of the labor contract for Remus are not equal, for he still does not sell his labor for a wage; instead, he is loaned a cabin that is not his own, tools that may not be his own, and land that is his former master's. The relevance of the raids themselves to this scene lie in the lack of ownership over the self and labor, understood by Remus's lack of ownership over the boundary lines of his property, and confirmed by his inability to declare the tools his own or demand wages. While this relationship is not necessarily suggested to be problematic, the fable's plot line narrates retaliation by slaves over incursions of property boundaries that do present violent conflicts during Reconstruction.

The inequality and deprivation of property rights ensured by labor contracts after the Civil War was in part due to Southern racism: "*Black* meant labor. Even while the law defined black croppers as tenant-partners, whites often referred to them as laborers, hands, servants, workers, or even as slaves. Landowners were determined to preserve as best they could relatively traditional relations between black workers and themselves" (Flynn 87). But the poverty of the southern planters after the Civil War also motivated planters to deprive free blacks of pay in these contracts, and incited them to raid those houses of freedmen on their plantations who they believed might be stealing their cash

crops. After the war, the sharecropping system became the norm: “[b]ecause of postwar poverty, many planters could not pay their workers in cash, and compensation in the form of a share of the crop quickly became common” (Ranney 98). The system after the Civil War “gave the landlord an inherent advantage,” because it “enabled planters to free up what little cash they had for other purposes, and it gave landlords greater rights of supervision over sharecroppers than other tenants” (Ranney 98). Ex-slave tenants paid a fixed rent to the landlord in the form of the crop. They did not own the tools and other supplies that they used to farm, for they weren’t paid in cash; they usually obtained these supplies on credit, which would be repaid at harvest time (Ranney 98). The poverty of postbellum Southern planters was often extreme, and landlords would accuse blacks of stealing in justification of their raids of their cabins because of their indebtedness after having been bereft of the value of their slaves. Georgia, as one of the cotton-producing states, suffered some of the greatest property losses in slaves after the war. “By one estimate, the two million slaves in the five cotton-producing states (South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana) were worth \$1.6 billion in 1860, or 45.8 percent of the total wealth held by every resident of those states. This was nearly twice the value of all the farmland and buildings in those states, which was only \$868 million” (Penningroth 133). It is thus not surprising that planters would construct contracts which not only attempted to maintain black subordination, but would deprive freedmen of adequate wages or subsistence.

The state of Georgia presents a unique case in which racial tensions were escalated over property contentions, labor, and poverty. Land confiscation of Confederate sympathizers by the Union army in Georgia during and immediately after the Civil War

was more widespread than in other Southern states, and forced some whites to rely on creditors in order to farm. In Georgia, the Union army seized plantations throughout the state, but additionally, a large swath of land was confiscated from Confederates by General Sherman with the specific intent of distributing it to freedmen. Some of this land included within General Sherman's Field Orders fell within the geographic area of the lowcountry rice coast and islands off of the Georgia coast. It was not cotton-producing soil, but it was land that ex-slaves could own and work. Sherman promised each freedman or freed family forty acres of land. All confiscated land in Georgia and other southern states was managed by the Freedmen's Bureau and parceled out to freedmen. However, as Eric Foner explains in *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution* (1988), President Johnson issued special orders in July of 1865 ordering the restoration to pardoned owners "of all land except the small amount that had already been sold under a court decree" (159). Most of the seized land, including the land contained under Sherman's orders, was returned to its rightful owners in the years following the war. When the land was reclaimed by its former owners, those freedmen who had been granted the right to settle it by the Freedmen's Bureau were now encouraged, and often coerced, to remain on the plantations and sign labor contracts with the original owners. Vagrancy laws, as I have noted, aided in the enforcement of these labor contracts. By mid-1866, "half the land in Bureau hands had been restored to its former owners, and more was returned in subsequent years" (Foner 161). Many freedmen in Georgia felt betrayed by the Freedmen's Bureau and angered by their renewed poverty and propertyless status. However, in the interim between confiscation and land restoration, white former landowners were also incensed, forced to rent land when they had owned it

before, and likely driven into debt by these circumstances. In some areas the process of land restoration was delayed by court challenges into the 1870s, and poor white renters in the meantime exercised much of their frustration onto the sharecroppers they hired (Foner 161). Raids on freedmen's cabins to ensure that they weren't stealing the crops, beatings, and even shootings were pervasive throughout Georgia.

One example of private correspondence between a Georgia planter named Sarah Stevens and her creditor provides insight into the extent of planters' fall from wealth to indebtedness, and the effect that this poverty had on distrust of black laborers on her plantation. It also enables insight into the types of circumstances that would encourage planters to raid freedmen's cabins. Sarah Stevens was compelled to rent land in Savannah, Georgia after her father's plantation had been confiscated by the Union army after the war. Left poor at war's end, Stevens paid for her rented land on credit. On March 2nd, 1866 she received a letter from her creditor, S.G. Haynes, that read, in part,

Enclosed please find Bills & Statement showing your indebtedness to be to Me [sic] showing \$23 & 32/100 a pretty considerable amt. but you have most of it charged against the Several Negroes and I hope with what Cotton you can get to Gin this Cost of the giving will be materially Reduced. [...] Tell those Hands and Negroes if they don't Gin & send their Cotton to me along I am done with them forever & won't keep them next year a bit. I consider they have treated me shamefully given what goods & provisions they needed & now don't Care. Watch them closely or next thing they will be selling their Cotton off & leave you in the lurch. I don't think they are too good to do it. [...] Don't surrender all [of the] place to those hazard Negroes yet don't Replace them though until you get all

their cotton ginned & shipped to me (Emory University's "Reconstruction Miscellany Collection," 1865-1873).

Haynes blames Stevens's ostensible inability to pay him back on the freedmen which Stevens hired to pick and gin her cotton. Haynes implies that the freedmen are lazy, for they won't gin all of the cotton, and without proof he accuses the freedmen of stealing and selling the cotton. It is likely that his suggestions encouraged Stevens to search their cabins for stolen crop in order to prevent the "surrender" of her authority to "those hazard Negroes." In illuminating the terms of poverty which whites experienced and the distrust this poverty motivated in ex-slaves, this letter also provides insight into another of their motivations for constructing contracts that delimited freedmen's agency. For if ex-slaves stole or left the plantations with part of the cash crop in order to sell it, these actions could force planters to default on their debt payments.

Contract disputes over wages and theft were frequently documented in the Georgia branch of the Freedmen's Bureau. Many reports indicate that white violence was instigated by ex-slaves' questioning of the terms of their labor contract. For example, when a freedman simply demanded pay for his labor, his employer would respond as if provoked. For example, in 1868 freedman Henry Clay Carswell was shot after obtaining a summons for nonpayment of wages from the Freedmen's Bureau in Dougherty County and presenting the summons to his employer, W.C. Bray. Bray told Carswell "not to come to his place anymore" before firing his gun (*Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Georgia*). Another report filed with the Bureau in 1868 identified violent labor disputes between brothers Andrew and Washington Harris and their employer. Andrew was "struck over the head twice with a big hickory stick and fell down insensible.

Flesh wounds of the ligaments of the skull. Washington received a cut on the hands and across the hips. Both unable to work for sometime.” The “cause” listed for this attack was the terms of their labor contract: “both boys had received permission from their father for a share in the crop, not to work on Saturday evening. The overseer Tryce (white) found them at the house after dinner and when they refused to go to work, beat them as stated” (ibid). Tryce was later tried in court. The record indicates that after Tryce was tried, George Harris and his sons were dismissed from the plantation without pay for their labor: “N.B. The father of the boys, George Harris, who prosecuted Tryce has been discharged and driven from the place with his boys after working up to August 31 without any settlement or one cent pay for his labor” (ibid).

And yet raids upon slave cabins and attacks by employers were not the only examples of white brutality against freedmen motivated by labor and property disputes during Reconstruction. Vigilante violence against freedmen was also, of course, common. Ku Klux Klan attacks were widespread throughout Georgia, particularly in areas of the upper piedmont and black belt and in counties to the northwest and west of Atlanta. The Klan’s “association of property right with moral right” was economically motivated, necessitated by Southern poverty (Flynn 47). Whites’ poverty “made them value what they had not only because they had so little but also because that little mattered a great deal to their livelihood. To attack a man’s property was very often to attack his well-being” (Flynn 48). The Klan punished arsonists, thieves, and swindlers, including and especially blacks who committed these crimes. The Freedmen’s Bureau in Georgia often failed to address white violence against blacks. Paul Cimbala writes in *The Freedmen’s Bureau and Reconstruction* (1997), “Throughout the Bureau’s existence, the most

commonly reported action taken by the civil authorities in cases of white violence against blacks was that the civil authorities had taken no action at all. By late 1868, may freedpeople decided that it was not worth their lives to testify against whites or even to complain to the Bureau about the violence they suffered at the hands of their ex-masters” (208).

In “The Awful Fate of Mr. Wolf,” the frame’s scene of labor coupled with the fable’s reference to raids functions to allude to the prevalent violence over labor and property. This formal slippage ruptures the frame narrative’s attempts to position the reader in a peaceful plantation scene that would confirm slavery’s copacetic race relations, and which conforms to Northern readers the postbellum similarity of plantation relations. If Remus is a freedman who labors on the plantation of his former master, his subject position is in reality akin to the ex-slave who is coerced into remaining on the plantation, signing a contract agreeing to minimal if any wages, and withstanding raids and abuses from his employers.

The fable also tells another story, though, which functions to further destabilize Remus’s status as loyal slave. Brer Rabbit’s use of fire aligns Remus with the contemporary freedman, undercutting Remus’s status as a freedman content to maintain his antebellum slave status enforced by the terms of the labor contract. Within the fable, Brer Rabbit does not tolerate repeated incursions by the Wolf onto his property. Instead, he decides to hire carpenters to build him a ““a plank house wid rock foundashuns. Atter dat he could have some peace and quietness”” (90). The Wolf then schemes to gain access to the Rabbit’s home by manipulation rather than force. He tells the Rabbit that the

plantation's dogs are tracking him. The Rabbit allows him to enter, knowing that this a ploy, and only after hiding the "little Rabbits" in the stone cellar (90). Brer Rabbit proceeds to convince the Wolf that the safest place for him to hide is within a large clothing chest. The gullible Wolf, underestimating the Rabbit's intelligence, jumps into the chest, and the Rabbit shuts him in. It is at this point in the fable that the Rabbit uses fire to punish the Wolf for his disregard of the Rabbit's right to property. The Rabbit puts a kettle full of water "on de fier," drills holes into the chest, then "'went out en git some mo' wood, en fling it on de fier,'" so that, he tells the Wolf, "'you won't git cole, Brer Wolf.'" The Rabbit then "'commenced fer ter po' de hot water on de chist-lid'" (91-92). The Wolf is scalded to death inside the chest, punished for misapprehending the Rabbit's property, including his right to self, as the Wolf's own. In other words, he is killed for being "'bizzy wid udder fo'kses doin's,'" as Remus explains to the boy (92).

The Rabbit's use of fire to kill the Wolf functions as both a metaphor for his ability to exercise his agency and self-possession against the constraints of chattel slavery, and an expression of revenge. While the use of fire to redress grievances over labor and property disputes is limited to the fable itself, it is noteworthy that Harris chose to frame this tale with references to Remus's brief labor dispute with the boy and the "threatening attitude" this dispute impels him to take towards his white employer's son (89). For while the death of the Wolf metaphorizes Brer Rabbit's reclamation of his rights within the fable, the Rabbit's specific mode of retaliation by fire creates further slippage between the frame narrative and the folktale. When coupled with Remus's threatening attitude, the Rabbit's successful revenge against the Wolf's claims to his property resonate with the

contemporary prevalence of freedmen's arson in Georgia during the Reconstruction period.

Freedmen would often use fire to destroy their former employers' property in order to express their anger at the unmet terms of labor contracts. The unmet or meager terms of labor contracts impeded the freedmen's abilities to obtain self-ownership and wages to buy property of their own; in turn, the freedmen would exercise their agency by devastating their employers' property. As Charles Flynn explains, "Arsonists [...] usually struck out of anger following a settlement — which meant at the end of one year or beginning of the next when croppers or wage hands (particularly unhappy ones) were most likely to change employers" (98). Arson "made effective revenge" against employers whom freedmen felt had cheated them out of the wages that they were due at the close of their yearlong contracts (99). And while arson was common during the antebellum period, it was more frequent after the war: in Georgia, burnings "added up to well over a hundred per season for ginhouses alone" (99). Used as a tactic of revenge, arson was "an economic weapon in an economic war," indicating not only that the labor dynamics between the landowner and laborer were essentially unchanged between the antebellum and postbellum periods, but that the economic practices underlying chattel slavery were still very much in effect after the war had ended (99). Harris may have intended for the frame narratives to communicate to Northern readers the progressive nature of race relations which slavery instilled in the South and the stability of the southern postbellum economy. But instead, the Rabbit's use of fire to kill the Wolf gestures to the regional labor market's instability.

The story's potential to resonate with crimes of arson also serve to mark Remus as a potential agent of violence himself. When Remus assumes a "threatening attitude" toward the boy, he does so specifically because the boy is interfering in his process of labor, and by extension preventing Remus from working and potentially obtaining a wage or a share of the crop. It is likely that the boy's family continued to own the implements that Remus used to repair his shoes and do other odd jobs. The violence of the Rabbit's structural exertion of agency creeps into the frame narrative, for Remus, too, like the freedmen who burn their former employers' houses, could potentially exert his claims to property because he feels cheated by the terms of his employment. Indeed, Christopher Peterson notes the "simmering hostility" which "lies just under the surface of Remus's seemingly contented and benevolent countenance" (53). Peterson suggests that though Harris assigns "the most spectacularly brutal acts of violence to nonhuman animals," he "envision[s] a human frame story whose ostensible nonviolence is conditioned precisely by a disavowal and projection of human brutality onto his animal characters" (53). To borrow Peterson's phrasing, Remus's agency in the frame tales, particularly in "The Awful Fate of Mr. Wolf," is *ostensibly* nonviolent. But if we consider Harris's alliance of Remus with the Rabbit, not only in this story but throughout the tales, Remus's threats may indicate more than a humorous minstrelized physical gesture. Southern readers would likely grasp that most freedmen in circumstances similar to Remus's would not be content in their positions on plantations. These freedmen were coerced by vagrancy laws into signing labor contracts which often established or implied work without pay, confinement to a slave cabin with no guarantee of privacy, accusations of theft, and threats of violence by employers. Southern readers might note that Brer Rabbit's violent

agency inverses Remus's position, for in the fable Brer Rabbit acquires all of the conditions of self-ownership which Remus cannot obtain even as a freedman. Remus's narration of this fable to the boy might suggest to southern readers that Remus, while not literally violent, is motivated by the same circumstances which compel Brer Rabbit to throw off his passive acceptance of the Wolf's transgressions.

Ultimately, Harris's political goal of the frame narratives had to demonstrate to readers the differences between Uncle Remus's and the Rabbit's positions. They in fact fail to do so. Instead, they indicate that the problem of property, particularly the commodification of the black subject, motivates the vengeance within these tales. The violent fables resolve this problem through overthrowing the slaveholders' claims on the slave figure's body and rights. Structurally, Brer Rabbit's freedom is actualized when he forecloses any future attempts the Wolf may exert to stake claims on his body and property. In order to do so, the Rabbit commodifies the Wolf, displaying his skin on the back porch of his home in order to assert his agential power and warn others who attempt control his volition: "[E]f you go to Brer Rabbit's house *right now*, I dunno but w'at you'll fine Brer Wolf's hide hangin' in de back-po'ch, en all bekaze he wuz so bizzy wid udder fo'kses doin's'" (92, italics mine). Thematically and, as this closing sentence demonstrates, grammatically, Harris introduces the problem of property into the present, further encouraging formal slippage between the frames and fables.

While the story of "The Awful Fate of Mr. Wolf" does not resolve Uncle Remus's status as property, it fails to maintain its unproblematic status. Remus is still property, and the relationship between frame narrative and fable indicate that during the antebellum period and during the postbellum period, in their resonances with racial violence over

property relations, the repercussions of addressing a category of people as property continue. The violent tension between the frame and fable also demonstrates that Remus's contingent status must be resolved, for Uncle Remus's subject position is perilously close to Brer Rabbit's, and the Wolf's transgressions perilously close to those of white planters in Georgia.

Chapter Two: Alien Interiors

Critical approaches to the genre of regionalism have often contended that its manifestations in the nineteenth century are confined only to fiction of rural locales. The perpetuation of this assumption likely stems from the period's contemporary definition of regional literature as "local color."¹¹ The "color" in part refers to stylistic emphasis on the vernacular to depict the idiosyncracies of a particular place, such as in Kate Chopin, Mark Twain, Sarah Orne Jewett, and Joel Chandler Harris. A specific regional dialect, in these rural narratives, signifies the homogenous culture of a circumscribed and isolated location, with the important distinction that its homogeneity is still intact because of its peripheral relationship to an urban center. The implication here is that regionalism can only tell a cultural story if that culture, in other words, is one "color" - if the region's culture is disconnected from any pervasive mixing. In critical accounts of this nature, the urban "center," on the other hand, is described as culturally muddled and fraught, with no differentiating culture or cultures of its own, and at the same time homogenous in its function, in that any urban area is the same as another because it metonymizes the rapidly industrializing nation as a whole. In urban areas, poor immigrants of different ethnicities and races alongside assimilated whites, the lower class alongside the upper class, all inhabit "the" city together, mixing their cultures in the rapidly circulating market of a

¹¹ In "Local Colors," Walter Benn Michaels recounts local color writers' determination to authentically depict regional cultures through the color or "pigment" of their writing: a combination of 'views' and 'dialect' which together would guarantee that the story was 'a real story of real life'" (737). See Brad Evans, *Before Cultures* for an alternative reading to this take on local color fiction. Evans situates local color's cultural function as circulatory, rather than contained, wherein local color is "more visible in connection to the treatment of folklore as 'circulating culture'" and is situated "more directly in the context of an early-twentieth-century, modernist trade in exotic objects" (114). My argument owes much to Evans's contention that readings of local color fiction as a nativist "therapeutic retreat from the transient uncertainties of modernity that many associated with immigration, urbanization, and mass culture" (112) confine it to the overly simplistic "category...of naive nationalism and antimodernism" (113).

generic epicenter that ostensibly drives the industrialization and impending mass conformity of the nation.

However, I'd like to add to the recent critical movement that contests an implicit or explicit formulation of regionalism as a genre limited to rural narratives.¹² It seems necessary to me to expand regionalism's definition to include particular urban narratives, especially those that focus on the worlds of the immigrant and poor, who indeed experience their own form of circumlocuted culture within the midst of a cosmopolitan city. Thus, my consideration of certain urban narratives as regionalist builds upon recent critical approaches that evaluate regionalist fiction as defined by their stages of economic development such Mark Storey's and Hsuan Hsu's. In "Country Matters: Rural Fiction, Urban Modernity, and the Problem of American Regionalism," Storey writes "By reading rural representation in the context of the increasing similarities between geographically distinct areas of rural life, and by reconsidering many of the works that we currently gather under the 'regionalist' rubric as, instead, 'rural,' we may better understand the standardizing and flattening processes of modernity itself" to "understand...and unveil...the transregional transformations of urban-capitalist modernity (194). If the category of the rural in regional discussion, then, as it must be, it is necessary to note the ways in which the urban maintains itself as a distinct region, to fully grasp, in Storey's words, "transregional transformations." To understand regionalism's inception, it is imperative to consider that narratives of specific urban centers offer access to those city's own particular cultural contours, molded by these narratives' determinant stage of

¹² Critical models that describe regionalism outside the center/periphery binary include Brad Evans, *Before Cultures*, Jennifer Fleissner, *Women, Compulsion, Modernity: The Moment of American Naturalism* (2004); Stephanie Foote, *Regional Fictions*; Mark Storey, *Rural Fictions, Urban Realities: A Geography of Gilded Age American Literature*; Hsuan Hsu, *Geography and the Production of Space in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (2010).

economic development, industrialization. Regionalism cannot be fully “mapped” if only those narratives written from sites informed by pre-industrial or proto-industrial modes of production are considered.

In this chapter I will continue to demonstrate that regionalism focuses on fictionalized violence, especially violence over and related to property. By juxtaposing the Southern region of the United States, especially Georgia, during Reconstruction, and the Northeastern area of the United States, especially New York City, in the late 1880’s and early 1890’s, it is possible to see the pattern that defines regionalism more clearly. Although the regions of the South and New York are in drastically different stages of economic development during this time period – in fact, they are at almost opposite ends of the spectrum of development – both Harris and Stephen Crane represent violence regarding property as a result of the region’s economic structures. *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* and Crane’s short stories set in New York, as well as Jacob Riis’s *How the Other Half Lives*, also share certain formal congruencies with Joel Chandler Harris’s post-sentimental structure, its buried plots of retaliatory violence over property. Crane’s most significant violence is the interior, property-driven, and intimate domestic violence of a cross-section of immigrants who in their particular regional circumstances exemplify another American anxiety, in addition to the racialized anxiety of Harris’s stories: the struggle to own property and to self-actualize as aliens in a new country, as impoverished inhabitants experiencing social stratification in another extreme form. I consider violence on both literal and symbolic levels, and pay special attention to the structural maneuver of reversal or inversion that Crane uses to critique the industrial capitalist system, the newly dominant economic stage of the fin-de-siecle. By further investigating both the

literary-historical representations, as well as the formal turns, of Crane's literature, violence clearly shows itself to function metonymically in this regionalist fiction in relation to the psyche of a country in the throes of conflicting modes of production and multiply defined ways of articulating agency.

The City as Region

Regionalism can be defined by the way in which it uses violence both mythically and metaphorically to contend with its subjects' relationships to property in a locale undergoing economic shifts. Only considering modes of rural production limits a broader conceptual notion of the *different* ways in which regionalism provides solutions to the problematic of political economies under duress. Regionalism is not singular, but rather represents *multiple* subject positions, articulating diverse groups' struggles to assert agency within the nationalizing market that threatens to economically marginalize them. Furthermore, if we insist on considering regionalism as a purveyor of pure cohesive cultures threatened by disparate cultural mixing and the multiplicity of market exchange in urban sites of industrialization, we may fail to consider the ways in which regionalism insists on declaring culture as something disparate and under development in itself.¹³ Regionalism, expanded to include narratives in urban settings, thus is less a model of center/periphery, instead illuminating and metaphorizing the conflicts embedded in multiple locations in the midst of their synchronous transitions from one dominant

¹³ See, for example, Evans's argument in *Before Cultures*: regionalist fiction provides insight into the Gilded Age's "notions of society attuned to localized populations, a deep knowledge of everyday life, and the vitality of folk(loric) environments" (10). Local literature, then, demonstrates the period's socioliterary interest in "new ways of perceiving and portraying social coherence - of thought, of action, of symbolism - despite the absence of a concept of culture" through "the provocative tensions of the ethnographic imagination" while also providing a problematic: that regionalism, while evidencing its project of "thinking through coherence, which only later came to be understood as being *cultural* coherence, [was] also never far removed from a growing awareness of ruptures between languages, peoples, and things as they were disseminated across the nation and the globe" (10-11).

economy to another.¹⁴ As Alan Trachtenberg writes in “Experiments in Another Country” (1982), the “city” and the “country” each defined the other’s development in tandem, and it is thus necessary to consider cities, particularly major metropolises, as regions in themselves that have to be considered alongside rural areas. The city “had become an entity without clear demarcation, a form without precedent. Its rise and the doom of the countryside were one and the same, simultaneous and contingent on each other” (“Experiments” 113). Regionalism is, I contend, “about” economic development; thus, its generic qualities will be seen in fictions attending to not just one but many different modes. A full picture of how uneven capital development was represented during this time period will show the nation’s regional fiction, like its regions themselves, as differently constituted but mutually informed by common concerns about property and subject position. It will also show its subject positions as differently and violently constituted, and expose the anxieties over these differences.

The New York of the 1890s presents a complex example of capitalist development. Writers often thought of as naturalist or realist, such as Stephen Crane, Theodore Dreiser, William Dean Howells, have treated the city as a site of significance for its locality. In this chapter I propose to read Stephen Crane’s *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* as regionalist, for it, like other regionalist texts, interrogates the way in which violence can effect a new relationship between the individual and property relations as these property relations are specifically illuminated by the region’s stage of production. The site of a major metropolis as a dense locus of industrialization and one of the primary

¹⁴ For examples of the center/periphery model regarding the urban as center of nationalism, empire and industrialization, and the rural as nostalgic, see Amy Kaplan, “Nation, Region, and Empire” and *The Social Construction of American Realism* (1988); Richard Brodhead, *Cultures of Letters*; Donna Campbell, *Resisting Regionalism*; and Philip Fisher, *Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel* (1985).

sites of incorporation, New York seems to be nothing so much as an amalgamation of cultures and classes, with no representative “culture” to speak of but the shifting cosmopolitanism shaped by market forces and consumerism. But it is also a site of marginalization, where those who experienced the greatest effects of a city built on the prosperity of factory production and financial speculation are the most dispossessed. Immigrants, their first- and second-generation children, and a rising middle-class and elite society lived within a market system built on the increasingly mechanized production and consumption of commodities, along with the very fact of overpopulation that fed factory labor.¹⁵ This made for a working-class culture distinctive of New York City, and only New York City. New York thus was not only a “city,” it was a “great city,” a metropolis; far from being a generic urban sprawl, it was a distinct region in its own right, with its own distinct culture. “The sheer intensity of growth, in population, in territory, in material shape, resulted in a critical crossing of a line between ‘city’ and ‘great city,’ ... With the rise of the metropolis (New York and Chicago the most typical) came an awareness of new regions of mystery” as Trachtenberg points out (“Experiments” 104). These “regions of mystery” were perceived as culturally divergent from the traditional urban epicenter: New York and Chicago were represented in political and sociological discourses as “fused with the sense of immediate menace”: “poverty, crime,

¹⁵ For an extensive discussion of the ascendance of consumer culture initiated by industrialization’s mass production and its religious and social implications, see *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History 1880-1980*, ed. T.J. Jackson Lears. Also see Lears’s *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920*: Lears writes that mass production brought technical innovations but also “new problems of marketing and distribution” that were solved by advertising and incurred fears of excess and intensified class stratification: “Major enterprises began to place heavier emphasis on advertising consumer goods for an expanding urban market. As the economy started slowly to shift from a producer to a consumer orientation, the urban bourgeoisie were encouraged to place an even higher premium on purchasing material comfort and convenience — or ‘luxury’ from the old republican view. Thorstein Veblen’s famous satire of ‘conspicuous consumption’ in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899) was rooted in part in republican outrage over sybaritic waste among an overcivilized elite” (28).

threat of insurrection, political corruption, and the physical dangers...of exploding gas mains and inflammable electrical wires” (“Experiments” 104). The metropolis was a unique and distinct region in itself, in other words; it was mysterious because of the effects its concentrated form of capitalism incited. This “mystery” would not have been conceived as particular to New York City itself had not industrialization enabled the accumulation of wealth within the city to the point that New York could also become incorporated, creating destabilization in its political economy, particularly among its poor and in their relationship to property. So within this metropolis grew an articulated set of local cultures not designated by race or ethnicity so much as class: “The corporate mode inscribed itself in a continental system. Its principal was coordination, and its method subordination of individual units (factories, offices, retail counters — and whole cities) to metropolitan headquarters. Not rationalization alone, not the production-distribution nexus, but the principle of hierarchy governed the development,” in Trachtenberg’s words (“Experiments” 116-117). Rigid socioeconomic capitalist hierarchy, in other words, defined the means by which subjects articulated their relationships to property in industrialized regions, just as rigid plantation hierarchies continued to define the means by which black subjects could articulate their relationships to property in Southern regions.

Within the metropolis of New York City, slums became the micro-regional sites in which formed a culture of the lower-class worker. These slums were primarily composed of immigrant workers and their children. The slum was explicitly distinguished from the cosmopolitan mixing of the city both spatially and ideologically, and by both observers and residents. New waves of immigration in the mid-1880s, especially from

Asia and southern and eastern Europe, “compounded anxieties about unassimilated, and especially Catholic, immigrants from northwestern Europe, who continued to distress those who identified American values with Protestantism,” David Ward writes in *Poverty, Ethnicity, and the American City* (1989) (48). Ethnicized workers who lived in tenement slums were mainly wage laborers, and because of this, Trachtenberg writes, “an aura of a more general cultural foreignness began to attach itself to manual wage labor” (*Incorporation* 88). The workers were mostly unskilled, with no industrial experience, and “the foreign born or their children counted for a major percentage. Immigrants alone represented a third of the total population increase between 1860 and 1900, and by 1870 one out of every three industrial workers was an immigrant (the proportion would remain constant until the 1920’s)” (*Incorporation* 87-88). The slums served as an enclave of these threatening and unassimilated persons who were linked to a new economic mode; the slums were described as a region of their own, an almost hellish “social ‘abyss’” (Ward 52), and immigrants were increasingly accused of violence, criminality, and pauperism (Ward 51). The site of the slum was thus the site of a divided region in itself, isolated by class, not by distance, and in its dividedness inherently regional. Trachtenberg writes, “working-class families tended toward ethnic and racial enclaves where native languages and styles of life prevailed... In the popular press, workers found themselves stereotyped as the unwashed, unenlightened masses, swayed by disreputable-looking bomb-throwers and associated with brutish caricatures.... On every count, labor seemed to represent a foreign culture, alien to American values epitomized by successful representatives of capital” (*Incorporation* 88). Thus, while regionalism has historically been categorized as a literature of the geographic and cultural “backwater,” a “cultural

elegy” for the homogeneous pastoral community quickly being assimilated into a national industrialized culture, I argue that the genre includes urban regionalism’s city narratives (Brodhead 117, 120). These are forward-looking perspectives of region centered not on one culture but *a* culture of the working class. It articulates a community of marginalized individuals united by class stratification, not by univocal ethnic determination, and in doing so addresses national anxieties about class as well as race. Urban regionalism, indeed all regionalism, might well be read for its attention to the region’s particular economic stage of development because this attention articulates different marginalized groups depending on the economic stage the region in question is transitioning towards. Read in this way, it not only performs the generally perceived cultural work of uniting the North and the South after the Civil War, but emphasizes the geographic outlay of a nation united only by its disparate modes of production, and united only by the different subject positions classed by the limitations of property.

Slums were indeed a source of fear to native middle-class Americans, signifying as they did a broader shift in political economy: “Fears about the expanding mass of slums were part of a growing concern over the threats posed to American social ideals by the growing scale of urbanization. To the degree that American culture was identified with small towns and petty proprietorship, the growth of large cities was viewed with apprehension” (Ward 46). Deeper instantiation of industrialization portended that many Americans would at some point live in or around cities, and advancing industrialization, in one way signifying the possibilities of the U.S imperial project, hinted at future instability of property and business ownership because of its affinity with the slums that

housed its dispossessed workers.¹⁶ Americans' utter fear of poverty because of the economic depression of the 1870s exacerbated this apprehensiveness of the slums and all they came to represent. As Ward points out, "changes in the scale and organization of several major industries...were reducing the chances of advancement from wage earner to independent proprietor and threatened to polarize urban society into antagonistic classes" (47). In other words, the same lines of stratification that trapped the urban poor into segregated slums could ostensibly isolate and trap the middle-class to poor wage laborers. The working class poor were limned off, a source of intense interest: "[t]he new scale of urban life had dramatically increased the degree to which the poor were isolated," as advances in transportation and suburbanization enabled "the upwardly mobile to move to new housing on the edge of the city" (Ward 47). Slum life thus became a source of regionalist material because, centered as it was in the midst of the metropolis, literature of the poor provided access to city life under the distancing auspices of reform and through the safety of cultural distance. Yet and still, this life, to middle-class readers, seemed a harbinger of things to come as consumer culture ascended and markets quickened. Insight into this world of this city would provide access to daily life within the most advanced form of capitalism the country had seen yet: "city dwellers became more and more enmeshed in the market, more and more dependent on buying and selling, selling their labor in order to buy their sustenance; the network of personal relations, of family, friends, neighbors, comes to count for less in the maintenance of life than the impersonal transactions and abstract structures of the marketplace" (*Incorporation* 121). Regionalist writers of urban narratives capitalized upon the middle-class interest in this new political economy and its novel property and social relations.

¹⁶ See Amy Kaplan's "Nation, Region, and Empire."

Thus, the “mysterious” city of New York, with its tenement slums, was very much a region in and of itself. In popular imagination its regionally specific culture was informed by, a potentially criminal lower class that, from its dark “abyss,” menaced the future of the industrializing nation. While regionalist writers such as Stephen Crane and Jacob Riis capitalized upon the public interest in the urban demographic, for the most part they worked against its popular reputation as a criminal class. New York City’s slums offered a locally specific culture shaped by its political economy just like any other region, with its own dialect, code of ethics, and community, and with dispossessed residents who responded to their circumstances in much the same way as any other dispossessed subject did under duress of a transforming economy. Yet Crane, as well as Riis, who I will discuss at the end of this chapter, both access the ambient violent reputation of the poor in order to provide a critique of the poor’s structural dispossession. We know that regionalism as a form alludes to phenomenal violence in order to launch a critique of the property relations shaped by systemic forces; Crane and Riis similarly gesture to the violent and criminal reputation of the poor and the underclass to signify upon this. Their writing is informed by allegorical and mythical tropes of violence that place the burden of violent transgression not on the subject but on the system itself. Thus it is important to note that urban regionalism, as in rural regionalism, does not work wholly on the mimetic level, but is informed by mythical and thus universalizing narratives of violent agency, and, structurally, it metaphorizes the way in which individuals can refigure their relationship to property through violence in response to the systemic economic violence of their modal economy. In the case of New York City, Crane and Riis signified upon the palpable fear of slum violence and crime based on

stereotypes of immigrants and fear of violent class insurrection. Their narratives tell stories of violent dispossession of the self and political agency, and the redemptive subject position of this dispossession.

For Crane and for Riis, the site of the tenement house sets the stage for narrative articulations of urban subjecthood and the violently metaphorized environment of political economy. The tenement house is symbolically weighted: the working class that occupied the tenements were too poor to own their homes, and because the majority of this class were immigrants, and their political worth validated by land ownership, the subjects of these narratives are dispossessed politically as well as economically. Furthermore, the rent levels set for the tenement apartments were prohibitive, denying many residents the ability to save enough to own their home, and tenements were often subletted to agents: “the agent obtained a maximum yield by neglecting repairs and services and extracting the highest possible rent, and the absentee owners ceased to have any direct responsibility for their property or tenants” (Ward 38). The tenements, in short, stood as testaments to dispossession. Between 1880 and 1890, New York City’s population saw a net increase of more than 300,000 people (Gibson, census.gov). This influx was mainly composed of immigrants who came to work in low-paid industrial jobs for which unskilled labor was in high demand. Unable to afford to buy homes further inland and to pay higher rent for accommodations, many immigrants crowded into “tenant-houses.”¹⁷ The ethnic composition of New York City’s immigrants between 1830 and 1860 was predominantly Irish and German, while from 1880 to 1890 (and through 1920), immigrants to New York City were mainly from Southern- and Eastern-European

¹⁷ “The name tenant-house is applied to all buildings containing three or more families” (“The Sanitary and Moral Condition...”).

nations. According to journalist and social reformer Jacob Riis in his landmark work *How the Other Half Lives*, an example of urban regionalism, published in 1890, the population of New York in 1880 was 1,206,299, and by 1890 it had risen to 1,513,501 (Riis 219).

The conventional take on this time period is something like this: New York City becomes overcrowded, and a culture clash between “native-born” residents of New York City and these new populations as well as amongst the new populations of immigrants themselves is imminent.

Immediately relevant are these statistics: the population of New York City *living* in tenement housing was 1,093,701 in 1888, from only 468,492 in 1869 (Riis 219), while the estimated population living in tenements in New York in August 1890, only two years later, had risen to 1,250,000 (Riis 222). In 1880, the density of population per acre in New York City as a whole was 48.4, while in 1890, it was 60.8 (Riis 220). Even more representative, though, of areas of the city in which tenements were thought to foster social unrest and violence, are statistics demonstrating the congestion of particular “wards,” or sections, within New York City. For example, population density per acre within the Tenth Ward, where the immigrant-dense “Bowery” was located, in 1880 was 432.6, and by 1890 the density of population had increased to 522 people per acre (Riis 220). Social reform literature set in the New York City of the 1890s registers hyperbolized violence of the tenement wards as result of a clash of cultures or social classes. or as a function of a corrupt “underclass,” or as a result of a primitive immigrant working class who had not yet learned to discipline their ethnically-rooted urges. Much of this genre of writing would have it that violence is a straightforward representation of cultural tensions between immigrant groups or between immigrants and native-born

Americans in a setting in which overcrowding and poverty are the main social problems. Or, criminal and violent activity is representative of biological corruption on the individual level, and drives the growth of the underclass.¹⁸ Or finally, violent crime is rooted in ethnic primitivity or otherwise ethnically attributable characteristics: the poor immigrant has very little control over his actions because of the primitive status of his ethnicity in the diachronic line of racial progress, and cannot exert control over his circumstances or his inborn violent biological traits.¹⁹ Fear of urban violence instigated by the underclass permeated much American thinking as industrialization heightened: labor strikes of the 1870s, the Chicago Haymarket Bombing of 1886, and in the 1890s the economic depression all engendered middle and upper class fear of current and future violence perpetrated by the dispossessed.²⁰ And indeed, these fears were substantiated:

¹⁸ For an excellent discussion of the social and literary conception of the “underclass,” “that bottommost rank of society into which the poor were always in peril of sinking,” see Mark Pittenger’s “A World of Difference: Constructing the ‘Underclass’ in Progressive America” (1997) (27). Pittenger writes that the term “underclass,” coined in the Progressive era, categorizes a group that was “often represented primarily as the product of fixed behavioral and cultural traits, and only secondarily as the spawn of socioeconomic factors” (27). Pittenger describes the social investigators who went undercover to “pass” in order to explore the world of the poor, and to what extent these writers perpetuated a false distinction between the working poor and the underclass by “conflation of the categories of class, race, and culture” (28).

¹⁹ Immigrants were attributed characteristics ostensibly ethnically-rooted which condemned them to violence and criminality. In “Foreign Criminals in New York,” published in 1908 by police commissioner Theodore A. Bingham, Bingham accuses immigrants of inherent criminality: when 85 percent of the New York City population is made up of immigrants or children of immigrants, then, he writes, “it is only a logical condition that something like eighty-five out of one hundred of our criminals should be found to be of exotic origin” (383), and “nor is it strange that in the precinct where there are not four native-born heads of families in every hundred families, the percentage of criminality is high” (383). Immigration, he writes, brings “among us the predatory criminals of all nations, as well as the feuds of the Armenian Hunchakist, the Neopolitan Camorra, the Sicilian Mafia, the Chinese Tongs, and other quarrels of the scum of the earth, but aliens have introduced here the unspeakable ‘white slave’ traffic, whereby our streets are overrun with foreign prostitutes, and foreign anarchists openly advocate murder and arson in our slums” (384). See also *The Dangerous Classes of New York and Twenty Years’ Work Among Them* by Charles Loring Brace (1872). For further critical consideration of Progressive Era correlations of violence with poverty and immigration, see Daniel E. Bender’s “Perils of Degeneration: Reform, The Savage Immigrant, and the Survival of the Unfit” (2008) and Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820–1920* (1978).

²⁰ See Michael Robertson, *Stephen Crane, Journalism, and the Making of Modern American Literature* (1997) for more on the urban environment’s violent connotations in the late nineteenth century.

the working class was mobilizing through strikes and protests against wage cuts in the 1880s and 1890s, which were instituted to increase productivity. As Jackson Lears writes in *Rebirth of a Nation* (2009), “As federal troops were withdrawn from the South, they were reassigned to put down strikes in Chicago and other Northern cities. Civil war gave way to class war” (79). The Knights of Labor consolidated the working class under one rubric to help “producers” oppose the “parasites” of capital when labor strikes continued to be suppressed by policemen and soldiers (*Rebirth* 82, 86).²¹

Social investigators, in the form of journalists and social scientists, wrote about the “down and out,” or underclass, in print media that circulated amongst a rapidly growing readership during the mid- to late-nineteenth century. The rise of journalism as a career, made possible by the rise of the mass-circulation press, as well as public interest in the poor and working-class, bolstered these investigations. As Michael Robertson notes in *Stephen Crane, Journalism, and the Making of Modern American Literature*, in the years before the Civil War, “the penny press and the political-mercantile papers coexisted. After the war the mass-circulation press soon dominated” (3). The “new journalism,” as the type of writing of this mass-circulation press came to be known, reached many more readers than previous forms of journalism could; “Joseph Pulitzer’s *New York World*, the most dazzling example of the new journalism, reached more than a quarter million readers in the 1880s and employed dozens of reporters” (3). Stephen Crane, like many writers, began his career as a newspaper reporter.²² Crane inaugurated a

²¹ For a comprehensive overview of labor strikes and the Knights of Labor in the Gilded Age in the context of monopoly capitalism, see Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation*, 80-91.

²² Robertson writes, “Stephen began working for his brother’s news bureau when he was sixteen, copying hotel registers in order to report on arriving guests. This is not to say that Crane began life as a hack reporter, indifferent to poetry and fiction; his early literary ambitions were equal to those of Howells and

style of journalistic writing in his New York City “sketches” that attempted to cross the line between moral observer and the poor or dispossessed that had previously marked much of this “down and out” or “cross-class passing” writing. Mark Pittenger notes in “A World of Difference” that the tradition of writing about, and often from, the perspective of the lower class was most popular in the Progressive Era because it was during this time that “poverty was commonly associated with immigrants, and immigration restriction was a sharply-debated public issue;” thus, some journalistic and sociological writers, “[I]n a peculiar dialectic of attraction and repulsion...often saw the poor both as more vital and alive than themselves, and as a devolving, degenerating threat to civilized order” (29). Their writings either yielded “a tolerant, cosmopolitan stance,” or promoted “nativist and racist exclusionism” (30).

The metropolis had set the stage for Stephen Crane to interrogate agency from another angle, the angle of regionalist writing. Crane’s New York sketches were some of the first to attempt to transcend the utterly distanced, sociological accounts of the poor, and the melodramatic accounts (the “gaslight” tours that emphasized either “immanent dangers or forbidden pleasures”) that had also gained in popularity (“A World of Difference,” 32). In his “Experiment in Misery” (1894), Crane aimed not to judge the poor but to fully inhabit their perspectives, as Pittenger, Trachtenberg, and Keith Gandal have argued.²³ He may have been influenced to do so because of exchanges with

James. However, almost everything Crane published for the first five years of his career appeared in newspapers, as did much of what he wrote afterward” (55).

²³Gandal writes in *The Virtues of the Vicious* (1997) that Crane asserts an “alternative ethics” in his emphasis on environmental factors on behavior, as opposed to individual “vice,” to establish “a morality in which the ethical equipment and the ethical processes are not the same as they are in traditional Protestant morality or, for that matter, in Christian or even classical ethics. When Crane uses the word ‘soul’ at certain points in *Maggie*...[h]e means something else, something like deep feelings or emotion, intimate feelings about others and oneself, including self-esteem” (9). Gandal points out that Crane’s characters, or his

intellectuals with proletarian leanings, particularly the political economist Walter Wyckoff.²⁴ In breaking with a tradition of dehumanizing or sensationalizing the poor as violent, corrupted, and animalistically primitive, Crane had already begun early in his career to separate preconceptions of the poor from the reality of their circumstances. He would move on, in *Maggie*, to attribute violence directly to the city's socioeconomic structure, and not to the poor themselves, thus breaking completely with a tradition of writing about the poor that automatically predetermined them towards destructive tendencies. Stephen Crane used violence in order to prove a different point: that violence can be seen from a different angle if its seen from the perspective of the poor themselves, and the violence that they see is of a systemic and theoretical kind, the violence they experience of self-preservation rather than destruction.

In *Maggie*, violence is inherently related to property and, primarily, dispossession, property's lack. But dispossession in itself is not a subject position that discounts Maggie's and other characters' perspectives: without property, they are not complicit in the violence of market forces, because their property cannot be commodified and marketed. Violence in *Maggie* becomes a way to prevent property from becoming a part of the market, and in a culture of consumption, even the self is subject to commodification. The self, in other words, in urban regionalist fiction, is property, too. Violence against the property of the self strangely preserves the status of personhood. Thus Crane articulates the redemptive subject position of a later-generation immigrant

"heroes," as he puts it, "have managed to preserve a sense of self in the face of a tyrannical environment, against which they are thus able to fight" (10).

²⁴ Pittenger explains in "A World of Difference," "According to Crane biographer Christopher Benfey, Crane also may have been inspired by the proletarian wanderings of political economist Walter Wyckoff, whose then-unpublished two-volume chronicle of his adventures as an itinerant worker would soon become a milestone of down-and-out writing. However, the connection between the two men is at best hazy" (33).

girl in a slum environment as a particularly American regional perspective. This was particularly radical, given the anxiety over the unknown elements of the slums and the metropolis. He Americanized New York City by demonstrating its regional-economic characteristics. Crane's work in *Maggie* extends a particularly local and confined set of ethics to the New York slums in place of a more conventional moralizing in his contemporaries' slum fiction.²⁵ Crane refused to moralize on the subjects of his slum writing, as evidenced in his New York sketches, and extended this negative version of ethics to his construction of *Maggie*.²⁶ While his novella is indeed violent, its domestic violence is so repetitive as to effect a stylization, rather than an expose, of conflict. Furthermore, the novella's main characters, Maggie and her mother Mary, exert definite agency in response to their socioeconomic conditions. In its stylization of violence, *Maggie* presents a differing historical perspective on the true violence of New York City tenements. Crane participates in the growing genre of regionalist fiction, theorizing the relationship between property and violence as based on inversion and resolution, and uniquely shaped by the regional and economic context of New York City.

If fiction can be conceived as that which is created to invent imaginary solutions to real social and historical contradictions and tensions, then regionalist literature is a

²⁵ Gandal notes that Crane "imagines the distinctive codes and values - together, the distinctive ethics - that lie behind the distinctive slum action...Maggie is not seduced, and not by a playboy of a higher class; she falls in love with a tough. The significance of the sexual action is misinterpreted because the local ethical code is not understood: a portion of Crane's Bowery has no prohibition against premarital sex...the girl's inner experience is misrepresented [by Crane's contemporaries who wrote similar narratives of the fallen woman] because her values do not correspond to those of the middle class - because, in particular, chastity is not an ethic for her: Maggie experiences no temptation and resistance to sin and no remorse for the act; rather, she is attracted to a tough because he is, in her ethics, a moral exemplar" (50-51).

²⁶ Gandal asserts, "In the early 1890s, Stephen Crane set out to reinvent the tenement novel. His inability to find a publisher for *Maggie* is an indication of his success - especially when one considers that at the time slum fiction was in vogue, and certain books about the poor were becoming bestsellers. The scandal of Crane's work was not its setting, but, rather, his refusal to judge slum life according to middle-class standards" (39).

genre that resolves the nation's questions about the effects of advanced capitalism and industrialization in different regionally-specific forms, yet with a similar drive to expose concerns pivoting on violence and property. As Jameson writes in *The Political Unconscious*, "ideology is not something which informs or invests symbolic production; rather the aesthetic act is itself ideological, and the production of aesthetic or narrative form is to be seen as an ideological act in its own right, with the function of inventing imaginary or formal 'solutions' to unresolvable social contradictions" (79). Crane's journalism-inspired stories of poor immigrants locate violence *within the home* in order to resolve national anxieties about alien "others" and property ownership as well as the status of the family. His fictionalized violence seems to interpret the pressure on the immigrant lower classes to declare their citizenship through becoming landowners, and symbolizes their inability to do so because of their lowly positions within the constraints of advanced capitalism. In Crane's representation of interior spaces and minds, interfamilial beating and neglect become a manner of interrogating and postulating the thwarted pursuits of equality that immigrants faced, and, paradoxically, a way of resolving national fears about immigrants' actual achievement of equality through ownership. Crane's description of violence in these stories, more specifically, is not journalistic, although Crane himself was a journalist; it is repetitive, flat, monotonous, sickly, and unexplainable within the literal realm of the stories. Therefore, examining the illumination of violence in immigrant households within tenements that Crane elucidates on a literal level or a straightforward historical level will only tell part of the story of the 1890's regional experience in New York City.

Crane as Regionalist

Because of *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, Stephen Crane is often considered a naturalist writer, part of that movement of late nineteenth century fiction writers who constructed narratives assigning the origin of human actions to environmental surroundings or inborn biological characteristics rather than individual agency. And on the level of superficial plot progression, Crane's novella indeed seems to ascribe Maggie's premature death by suicide to her upbringing in New York City's tenement housing. Read as a naturalist text, Maggie's future is ostensibly "determined," as she is conditioned by the pernicious and immoral environment of the slums to believe that prostitution is a viable occupation after being ruined by a suitor. Within the naturalist framework, her suicide is symbolic of a life corrupted and foreshortened from its inception because of environmental influence. In fact, Crane signed an inscription into copies of *Maggie* upon its initial publication noting that "it tries to show that environment is a tremendous thing in the world and frequently shapes lives regardless" (qtd in Gandal 49). And thus the takeaway is simple causality: tenement housing leads to prostitution and death.

However, I will argue that *Maggie* is not only a naturalist text but a regionalist one as well, and as a regionalist text can be considered for its insight into property relations and political economy based on Maggie's characterization. Crane figures Maggie as property, and if regionalism is a literary mode in which property relations in a given zone are reformulated so that violence becomes the symbolic mode by which characters engage directly with the dominant economic mode, then Maggie's deliberate

choice to self-destruct through embracing commodification seems to express the inverse of self-preservation in a society of commodity fetishism. Maggie does indeed assert her agency in the narrative, reevaluating her relationship to property by viewing herself as such and foregrounding her value as a commodity in order to, paradoxically, escape commodification's stranglehold. *Maggie* traces the title character's perspective of the violence of the new consumer culture's inversions, wherein Maggie attempts to invert her "self" to preserve it from the market. Seen from this light, *Maggie* is first and foremost about the assertion of agency, though an unconventional assertion as such. Its status as a naturalist text has frequently prevented critical attention to Crane's redefinition of agency in the age of consumer culture. Its actual causality occurs on the deep structural level of the text. And its graphic, repetitive violence demonstrates that the symbolic register is the locus by which the plot's actual forward movement functions. I will then break with critical tradition, not focusing on Maggie's thwarted agency as a predetermined problem, but instead examining how Crane poses as the problematic of the narrative the lack of available or appropriate mediating terms between the stratification of ownership and poverty that structured Maggie's life and the social modes of engagement she needed to survive this life. Thus, it is possible that what Crane is demonstrating is that Maggie and her family, as well as other immigrants in the text, invent a different kind of property as a mediating term: a property of violent unhappiness. Maggie's family privatizes violence so that they can exercise force against, in a private form, some version of the violence that is built into their very environment, that environment shaped by the base-superstructure mode of advancing capitalism, literalized in the form of tenements.

Therefore, at the very least, by reading this narrative on its political-symbolic order rather than simply on its literal, overly simplistic causal level, Crane's account of the *real* violence that follows from the *symbolic* structure of property and its negative, dispossession can be more deeply explored. Crane emphasizes the physical environment, through the trope of buildings and their interiors, for a symbolic purpose that goes beyond a conventionally "naturalist" cosmopolitan interest in recording, and reaches levels of social and economic critique that I argue are characteristic of regionalism as a genre. Critical inattention to these features may be because definitions of naturalism itself has undergone frequent renaissances, causing the texts that make up the naturalist canon to be tacitly reinstantiated even as its terms are contested.

Critical definitions and interpretations of the American literary naturalist movement have invariably changed since Emile Zola's naturalist manifesto "The Experimental Novel" (1880). However, in the majority of cases, with some variation, naturalism is described by way of its presumed philosophical preoccupation, determinism, and its contextual fixations, social status and economic conditions. One dominant strain of this tradition is its contention that writers, characters, or both writers and characters not only experience the effects of socioeconomic stratification but are to a great extent controlled or "determined" by economic circumstances. Georg Lukacs's essay "Narrate and Describe" (1936), Walter Benn Michaels' *The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism*, and Michael Fried's *Realism, Writing, Disfiguration: On Thomas Eakins and Stephen Crane* (1988) all replicate the naturalist writers' subjects' ostensible predicaments. They argue that naturalist writers, like the characters they have created, have little agency in determining their own characters' social and political personhood,

and thus are unable to write distinct social critique into their works. According to Lukacs, naturalist writers and characters lack political agency, because writers believe that social circumstances and biological factors such as heredity determine themselves and their characters' agency.²⁷ Walter Benn Michaels writes that the industrial capitalist "culture of consumption" directly fosters dichotomous tension that causes the characteristic flattening-out found in naturalist texts: that tension between production of the self (for "sale") and public consumption ("buying") of the commodified self (13). Thus, naturalism is representative of the culture of consumption in its inadvertent endorsement of the capitalist society it examines. To Michaels, form is completely fixed by an era's ideology. This negates the writer's ability to determine even his own symbolic pattern, so that the text's symbolic surface is only useful for affirming the strength of the ideology that naturalist writers fail to adequately critique. Fried asserts that Crane's naturalist work contends with the materiality of writing through vertical and horizontal "spaces" of representation (99). Crane's work, he writes, uses figures of upturned faces to symbolize the horizontal sheets of paper that a writer must use to portray character, and the violent disfigurement of those faces (and bodies) to represent what writing does to the writer himself - writing is an "excruciated" process (101). His account, while an interesting example of deconstruction and notable in its emphasis on the violence in Crane's writing, reiterates the critical view that naturalism is "about" little else than the writer in question's struggles or ideology as translated into character or form. Thus, there seems to

²⁷ In "Narrate and Describe," Lukacs establishes traditional realist fiction and naturalist fiction as aesthetically and politically distinct forms. Realism "narrates" scenes to show how social conditions inform rounded characters and the story's arc, in the process articulating those characters' operative relationships to their historical moment. In contrast, naturalist fiction flatly "describes...in monographic detail" (113) to present "social facts, as results, as *caput mortem* of a social process" (113-114), giving the effect overall of a series of "still lives" (130). Writers and readers are "observers" in nineteenth century society and in naturalist fiction, noting the static effects of bourgeois culture without being able to intervene (116).

be a prevalent consensus that successful social critique is absent from naturalist works, which leads to a dearth of critical attention to latent critique in texts that, if this critique were noted, could be read as more than naturalist.

The application of a movement's philosophical influence to its writers' own process of creation often leads to naturalist criticism's second dominant strain, its tendency to overlook an exploration of the formal and stylistic qualities of the genre in favor of a focus on the determined nature of plot and character. Some critics who inform this series are Donald Pizer, Mark Seltzer, and June Howard. Donald Pizer defines naturalism in terms of its thematic focus on environmental or biological determinism. In *Realism and Naturalism in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (1966), Pizer focuses on the tension in naturalist texts between the writer's application of deterministic plotline and a deterministically dissonant, competing heroism or redemptive morality. Formally, Pizer focuses only on the symbol and strictly links it to determinism. He writes that the symbol functions "ironically within the structure of its novel" (35) to track the stasis or decline of a socially or biologically determined character. In *Bodies and Machines* (1992), Mark Seltzer offers one of the more critically engaged accounts of Crane's naturalism through readings grounded theoretically and historically. The naturalist text, to Seltzer, mediates and reconciles the "relays" between the body and the machine, and how they may in fact perform similar functions (4-6). This body-machine dichotomy is often convincing, but tends to confine his formal reading of naturalist texts to symbols referencing what he argues are the two dominant contemporary discourses, nature's reproductive and restorative capacity and the sterility of technological futurity. Selzer thus reads for surface instead of structure, for "representation;" his readings reveal

fictional characters who, circumvented by authorial control, are shaped directly by interactions between the valuation of commodities in consumer culture (the machine) and, for example, the reality of interiority (the natural). Form is merely an effect of ideology, not independent ideological critique. June Howard similarly reads for form as dictated by presumed determinism in *Form and History in American Literary Naturalism*. Using the form of the naturalist novel to examine the historical conflicts it gestures to, Howard argues that naturalism as a genre speaks to not a passive reinscription of its time period, but a reshaping of it, contending “not that naturalism has an ideology or reflects an ideology, but that the form itself *is* an immanent ideology” (12, ix). Her attention to form as ideology is notable, but her readings tend to be circumscribed: the plot and brutish characters present in naturalism are mainly meant, in her analysis, to narrate a sympathetic character’s deterioration to symbolize the middle-class’s fear of “proletarianization” (96). The presumption of determinism often leads to readings which overlook the function that characters or symbols outside of a deterministic framework play.

Naturalist criticism, then, has overlooked the more complex literary qualities of form and style in its presumption that writers are merely “describing” their social milieu rather than interpreting it. An exception to this trend is Lee Clark Mitchell’s work in his 1989 study *Determined Fictions: American Literary Naturalism*. Here, he approaches naturalism through the lenses of narratology and philosophy, asserting that it is actually naturalism’s characteristic style, reflective of its philosophy of determinism, that needs the greatest attention. Mitchell’s readings focus on characters’ ability to choose: these characters, such as Maggie, “all appear troublingly diminished beings because they act

over and over as they must. Yet however diminished, they still are able to choose the actions by which they are known” (6). Mitchell argues that, through attention to stylistic elements of naturalism, we can see that naturalists philosophically “depicted the ways in which ‘agency’ itself is constructed only after the fact...What distinguishes the naturalists...is their sensitivity to the logic that informs such rationalization, not just at the level of narrative plot but at those of syntax and verbal style” (xi). The naturalists’ intent was to draw on dominant notions about the “coherent self,” thus rejecting “the very category of the ‘self’” (Mitchell xii). If we consider that many naturalist texts have been overlooked formally and thus may indeed have been cursorily placed into the category of naturalism, we can, as in the case of *Maggie*, properly identify the text’s dominant generic qualities based on a closer critical inquiry.

Donna M. Campbell and Jennifer Fleissner are among the few critics to discuss regionalism and naturalism as mutually constituted genres. Both Campbell and Fleissner provide insight into women regionalist writers’ stylistics of social intervention through the thematic of control asserted from within a rural setting over a rapidly industrializing, market-driven postbellum society. However, their categorizations of regionalism are gendered as female-dominated, which constrains readings and articulates artificial boundaries that disallow redefinition of the genre. Traditionally, much work on regionalism has either been gendered or defined by a certain region, lacking in relative comparisons over a broader swathe of landscape and gender inclusiveness. Both authors emphasize the sense of control over, and opposition to, social change in local color literature as moral rather than economic, and both emphasize local color literature’s response to futurity as motivated by fear. Both also focus only on women’s local color

writing when discussing regionalism, demarcating local color fiction as deliberately parochial in its confinement to smaller, rural areas ostensibly disengaged from the progressive politics and industrialized corridors of cosmopolitan cities. I argue, in contrast, that local color fiction, whether written by women or by men, enters directly and assertively into conversation with the contemporary economic mode that determines the region and the ideological implications of that new mode. It also, therefore, engages with the national expansion of the marketplace and industrial capitalism's effects on subject positions. I maintain, further, that the "local" need not be confined to rural, preindustrial or proto-industrial regions. Any region in which the economy and thus the culture itself rapidly shifts in the late nineteenth century becomes a site from which regionalist fiction explores shifting definitions of property and uses violence to metaphorize the ways in which individuals structured their resistance to or compliance with these shifting definitions. While regionalist literature is insistent on its particular region's circumscription by its particular economy and geographic location, and thus its uniqueness, this uniqueness includes cities as well. *Maggie*, then is, regionalist, too. Set in the cosmopolitan city or the rural countryside, regionalism is invested in active critique, and its emphasis on violence in many forms attests to its attention to the futurity of the subject positions it articulates through that violence.

My argument does take much from both Campbell's and Fleissner's works. In *Resisting Regionalism: Gender and Naturalism in American Fiction, 1885-1915*, Campbell posits that regionalism, construed as a women's-only genre by the male naturalists, focuses on the domestic and the everyday of women's lives, yet articulates resistance to "paternalistic codes of order" by inscribing "strategies of control, ways of

countering the bewildering array of threats from an increasingly industrialized posbellum world” (14,19). This is an important point, and one that my argument owes much to: regionalist literature expresses reformulated subject positions created by fictional violent intervention. But Campbell contends that both “the outside world” and “physical violence” are absent from regionalist fiction: “specific location of the story in time, overt politicizing, and sensational actions or physical violence,” according to Campbell’s readings of women’s local color fiction, are not present (21). Especially interesting is Campbell’s contention that “overt physical violence is rare in most local color fiction, though there is an abundance of the emotional variety” (21). I contend, arguing for a redefinition of regionalist literature as defined largely by its focus on uneven stages of development and thus its attention to the region’s economy, that both physical and emotional violence is a characteristic of regionalist literature when regionalist literature is not confined to a particular gender or stage of development. Campbell also mainly interprets both sets of texts through the lens of gender, rather than form. She explains that her textual interpretations of naturalist texts as gendered reflect “the naturalists’ perceptions about local color rather than the actual demographics of its practitioners” she neglects to interrogate the necessity for maintaining this divide (6).

Jennifer Fleissner, in *Women, Compulsion, Modernity: The Moment of American Naturalism* (2004) also discusses regionalism and naturalism as genres informed by each other. Fleissner, however, does not differentiate regionalism from naturalism, instead implying that regionalism is a subset of naturalism. Beyond a discussion of what she deems its most import foci: women, the domestic sphere, and nostalgia, Fleissner does

not define regionalism's distinguishing formal or stylistic features.²⁸ Fleissner thus argues that regionalist and naturalist texts are part of the same gendered literary movement of naturalism responding to the pervasive fear of futurity, a futurity that involves women as self-determined subjects. Naturalism formalizes that fear and possibility into textual patterns of compulsion. Its intrinsic formal and narratological attribute, she argues, is "compulsive activity as a dialectical process, in which every attempt at a more perfect order leads inexorably to order's failure (and thus repetition of the attempt)," and most often featuring women engaged this compulsive activity (10). Through this theory of compulsion, Fleissner attempts to overcome previous critically binaristic evaluations of naturalism to reframe its representative generic qualities and historical significance so that agency as it is conceived of in these texts is also neither determined nor utterly dominating, but somewhere in between: so that "compulsion...name[s] an understanding of agency in which individual will and its subjection to rationalizing 'forces' appear as more deeply intertwined" (9).²⁹

My argument on the whole owes a great deal to Walter Benn Michaels's, Mark Seltzer's, and Jennifer Fleissner's theories, particularly in their approaches to Gilded Age economic development and dialectics. Michaels argues that commodity fetishism relies on its inverse, the person as socially constituted commodity, in order to be perpetuated in

²⁸ Fleissner dismisses recent critical attention that has been paid to regionalism's contemporary nostalgic appeal for a preindustrial moment, and its potential status as commodifiable cultural relic marketed for industrial capitalist consumption. Fleissner argues that women regionalist writers, penning the "great indoors," have their characters obsessively attempt to control their domestic spaces in the same way that the "masculine quest story" has its male characters assert dominance over the frontier (78). Collapsing regionalism into naturalism, Fleissner implicitly asserts that only New England "local color" fiction constitutes regionalist fiction, ignoring the well-established writing of, to name but a few, Hamlin Garland, Sui Sin Far, Kate Chopin, George Washington Cable, and of course, Joel Chandler Harris.

²⁹ In discussing naturalism, Fleissner rightly argues that "[O]ur treatment of naturalism remains limited...naturalism is seen as either fatalistic or nostalgic in the face of modern life," its fatalism supported by plots featuring individuals without agency or "vitality," its plots of "the strenuous life" critically taken for simple nostalgia (7).

the Gilded Age's era of heightened market forces underwritten by industrialization.³⁰ His claim that the rise of commodity fetishism influences the way in which naturalist writers shaped their characters is especially significant, for Maggie does define her relationship to her social milieu through her understanding of the power of the commodity. Mark Seltzer's theorization of naturalism as dialectical is also useful for its insight into the ways in which he argues that fictional encounters between the natural and the machine engender a dialectic of "revitalization" in naturalistic fiction (38). Fleissner's theory in particular has major implications for how we may read agency in naturalism: as simultaneously informed and informing history through compulsive activity itself. However, I am not entirely convinced that Fleissner is actually engaging with the dialectical process she claims she is when referring to naturalism's "oscillatory" tendencies; her description of naturalism's character attempts at order, order's failure, and repetition, as quoted above, seem to me to suggest not so much a dialectical progression but, as Fleissner herself describes it, a "stuckness in place" (27, 9). Therefore, when I deal with dialectical processes in Crane's and Riis's work, I will be using a definition of dialectics that hinges not on Fleissner's references to compulsion but to inversion, reversal, and overturning, or the more traditional Marxist model of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis: in Marx's words, the thesis,

this thought, opposed to itself, splits up into two contradictory thoughts...The

struggle between these two antagonistic elements comprised in the antithesis

constitutes the dialectical movement....the contraries balance, neutralize, paralyze

³⁰ "[B]eing oneself depends on owning oneself, and owning oneself depends on producing oneself. Producing is thus a kind of buying — it gives you title to yourself — and a kind of selling too — your labor in making yourself is sold for the self you have made. There can be no question, then, of the self entering into exchange; exchange is the condition of its existence" (13). Also, Michaels writes, "the logic of capitalism produces objects of desire only insofar as it produces subjects, *since what makes the objects desirable is only the constitutive trace of subjectivity those objects bear*" (20).

each other. The fusion of these two contradictory thoughts constitutes a new thought, which is the synthesis of them. This thought splits up once again into two contradictory thoughts, which in turn fuse into a new synthesis (91).³¹

It is important to note the difference between the traditional theory of the dialect, which Marx reformulated to discuss political economy and capitalism around the time of the Gilded Age (*The Poverty of Philosophy* and *Capital: Volume One* were published in 1847 in German, and 1867 in German and 1887 in English, respectively) and recent critical assertions of the dialectic as it applies to naturalism's form. If we reduce naturalism to a binaristic oscillation, constraint, or confluence of two opposing forces, we risk misreading the ways in which naturalist texts implicitly prompt a readerly "synthesis" of these binaries, and the ways in which these texts propose underread solutions to questions of political economy. For example, in asserting naturalism's "compulsive" tendencies, it seems Fleissner comes dangerously close to reinscribing something that looks like a deterministic plot, in which characters are doomed to repeat their actions without satisfactory consequences, and in which the only agency lies in debilitating compulsion. Reading oppositions in naturalist texts purely for their binaristic presence, without examining the more subtle machinations of these texts' formal attributes, it is too easy to overlook the ways in which these texts do not just iterate opposition between the

³¹ The entirety of this particular explanation of the dialectic in *The Poverty of Philosophy* is "this thesis, this thought, opposed to itself, splits up into two contradictory thoughts – the positive and the negative, the yes and no. The struggle between these two antagonistic elements comprised in the antithesis constitutes the dialectical movement. The yes becoming no, the no becoming yes, the yes becoming both yes and no, the no becoming both no and yes, the contraries balance, neutralize, paralyze each other. The fusion of these two contradictory thoughts constitutes a new thought, which is the synthesis of them. This thought splits up once again into two contradictory thoughts, which in turn fuse into a new synthesis. Of this travail is born a group of thoughts. This group of thoughts follows the same dialectic movement as the simple category, and has a contradictory group as antithesis" (91).

individual and the social or the socioeconomic, but suggest resolution out of these oppositions.

In *Maggie*, Crane is, I contend, invested in articulating depth of character for the purposes of social critique. The critical propensity to deny naturalism rich characterization and nuanced style in favor of dichotomous accounts of fatalistic determinism and its limited symbolic register has, I believe, led to a premature categorization of Crane's *Maggie* as a purely naturalistic text. The thinking seems to have occurred along these lines: surely Maggie as a character must be flat, must be voiceless, and must be devoid of agency, because she is a character in a "naturalist" text. And this assumption has led to superficial accounts of Maggie's characterization which read Maggie's character not for what she is, but for what she is expected to be, a naturalist "type." Most critical readings show her as lacking in agency, yet pay little attention to how much of the text is narrated in part through Maggie's represented perspective, and how in many scenes Crane articulates her voice using free indirect discourse, which then of course reinforces the assumption that this is a naturalist text. Critics from a variety of traditions contend that Maggie's value lies in her status as deterministic symbol rather than in her character's decisions.

For example, Donald Pizer in "Stephen Crane's *Maggie* and American Naturalism" (1965, repub. 1966 in *Realism and Naturalism*) posits that while the novella might not be purely naturalist, Maggie is flat, beginning as an "expressionistic symbol of inner purity uncorrupted by external foulness" (143). In his 1995 essay on *Maggie*, "Maggie and the Naturalistic Aesthetic of Length," Pizer does argue for the presence of characters' agency despite the widely accepted notion that Crane uses determinism as the primary mode by

which to unfold his plot (76). But Pizer asserts, rather vaguely, that it is only through Crane's characters' aesthetic "sensibility" - their *affinity* for commodities - that Crane offers glimmers of the characters' sociocultural awareness and power (76). Other critics dismiss Maggie's agency because they cannot find it in her verbal expressiveness. In *Bodies and Machines*, Mark Selzer claims that Maggie lacks interiority for the majority of the novella, gaining it only when she imagines class mobility: in other words, when she gains a sense of class consciousness: "What the barely articulate Maggie begins to see in seeing the difference between talking dolls and persons, between imitation persons and real ones, is at once the possibility of imitation itself and the dependence of persons on the possibility of representation and imitation" (93). June Howard also takes Maggie's lack of verbal assertiveness for dearth of agency: "Like the flower found and devoured by the 'Brute' of [Frank] Norris's sketch, Maggie appears from nowhere, uncaused; *she makes no resistance and understands nothing about why she is destroyed*. All that Maggie sees, and virtually all that the reader knows, is that she cannot survive in this brutal world" (99). Howard refrains from doing a formal reading of *Maggie* beyond her insistence that its plot consists of a "sequence of deterioration" (83). Maggie is thus a mere flattened character, or a vessel symbolic of helpless determinism.³²

³² See also David Fitelson, Donna Campbell, and James Giles. In "Stephen Crane's *Maggie* and Darwinism," Fitelson writes that Crane's characters are completely determined by Crane's use of Darwinism as the driving force of the narrative: "Crane is presenting characters whose lives are rigidly circumscribed by what appear to be inexorable laws... Their fundamental condition is violence... because the world is *governed* by violence" (184). This violence is scientifically natural and thus literal, according to Fitelson, not economic or political. Fitelson ascribes the violence of *Maggie*, then, to the ostensible influence of Darwinism on Crane, not to Crane's own exploration of the social realities of the time, and thus Fitelson himself fails to note, in defining Maggie's character in terms of external violence, that Maggie is intentionally violent in her own self-destructiveness, and this violence itself is a means by which she expresses her agency. Campbell reinscribes Maggie as passive and inarticulate: "Maggie Johnson... is passive and almost wholly reactive in her use of language. She early adopts a protective silence, first in sheltering her baby brother from their parents' violence, and later in distancing herself as much as possible from her environment" (117). James Giles posits Maggie's total victimization: Maggie is "constantly

On the contrary, though, if we were to read a bit deeper, we would see that Maggie does indeed understand why she may be destroyed, and recognizes this fact early in the text. When Maggie reaches the age of courtship, a suitor named Pete, enamored both by the trappings of social mobility and by her beauty comes calling. Soon after he leaves, “Maggie contemplated the dark, dust-stained walls, and the scant and crude furniture of her home. A clock, in a splintered and battered oblong box of varnished wood, she suddenly regarded as an abomination. She noted that it ticked raspingly” (27). This is one of the first direct instances of how Crane uses Maggie’s represented perspective to indicate her full awareness of and ability to shape her social circumstances. The only way we can understand, for example, why the clock ticks “raspingly” in this scene is because this rasping is Maggie’s emotional projection of her dispossession onto her home’s clock. Her poverty strikes her as a death-rattle; her tenement apartment as a coffin, “a splintered and battered oblong box of varnished wood.” Without noting Maggie’s represented perception and the implied causality behind it, these adjectives may seem stylistically excessive and irrelevant. Read carefully, though, they gesture to Maggie’s interiority and comprehension of her social status, and they foreshadow Maggie’s deliberate choices to prevent herself from being determined by her economic circumstances. Other critics have also gestured to Maggie’s interiority, opening up a path for reading her character through her observations and choices. Lee Clark Mitchell writes of Crane’s characters that “precisely because his characters do have the capacity to address such questions [of behavioral laws], we tend to attribute further capacities to them they may not have” (98). Alan Trachtenberg, while conceding Crane’s attribution of

depict[ed] as a victim...She is victimized not only by her mother, Jimmie, and Pete but also by the cumulative environment of the ghetto” (*The Naturalist Inner-City Novel in America*, 23).

interiority to his characters, argues for their inability to escape this interiority: in *Maggie* and *George's Mother*, "Each of the characters in these two novellas lives inwardly in a withdrawn psychic space, possessed by the shadowy feelings and escapist yearnings of the city's popular culture. Each is self-deceived, estranged from all others, occupying an imaginative world of his own" ("Experiments" 145). Indeed, Trachtenberg's insight proffers the possibility of reading Maggie's perspective as one of utter alienation; to experience one's interiority and yet not express its significance in positive actions or words would seem to indicate that a subject is alienated beyond any possibility to redress the cause of this alienation.³³ But, in fact, Maggie does negotiate the terms of her relationship to her socially defined subjectivity.

Thus, if we consider Crane's *Maggie* as not only naturalist, but regionalist fiction, then we are better able to consider the text for what it suggests for Maggie as a character and the way in which she negotiates the social effects of an increasingly rigid mode of industrial production. The way in which Maggie's agency becomes formulated, in other words, provides a synthetic solution to the problematic effects of an industrialized economy and its concomitant emphasis on commodity and consumption. Crane asks us to question whether, in fact, Maggie's violently self-destructive actions, as well as the violence of those subjects around her, is actually appropriate, and whether it is in fact that industrialized economy itself that is inversely logical. If people can so easily become property, isn't this economic mode itself inherently backwards? Crane is then inherently interested in agency as it relates to economic value *and* moral values, as Michael Warner

³³ See also Christophe Den Tandt's *The Urban Sublime in American Literary Naturalism* for a cursory take on what he deems to be Crane's use of the alienated gaze: "I believe that Crane's gaze is classless insofar as it embodies a stance of radical alienation - an existential commitment that places the writer in the tradition of Melville's and Hawthorne's city fiction and of Sherwood Anderson's and Ernest Hemingway's (proto)modernist works" (31).

has pointed out.³⁴ Character appears flattened, as Warner has noted, because Crane does not explore the problematic of agency with conventional narratorial strategies: Maggie's agency is articulated indirectly through her redefinition of value.³⁵ Maggie attempts self-preservation by deliberately articulating herself as an object of value — a commodity — “pricing” herself so as to avoid being priced as worthless by others. To escape market circulation, she is her own buyer and seller, long before she decides to become a prostitute, assessing and reassessing her worth and evaluating the possibility of class mobility in a rigidly stratified urban market. And if the specific political economy of Maggie's environment is essential to understanding Maggie's character and actions - if Maggie's responses her region's political economy are the crux by which action is instantiated, violence occurs, symbols take their referents, and from a level of socioeconomic specificity a universalizing critique is launched - then this is a regionalist text.

Besides its focus on property and value as its major locus of content, *Maggie* can be considered a regionalist text because of its reliance on “deep” structure to further its plot progression. Causality occurs, and thus the plot moves forward, in *Maggie* based on characters' conceptions of and violent responses to their regional political economy. The symbols of their status regarding political economy are always buried, accessible through

³⁴ Michael Warner discusses agency in Crane's work in his article “Value, Agency, and Stephen Crane's ‘The Monster,’” positing that “Crane's interest is in the relation of values to action and in our means of adjudicating values — roughly, that is to say, in morality, although his attention is more closely focused than the generalized formulation suggests. He works out that interest...through a problematic of agency,” which in turn causes character to appear “flattened” (84).

³⁵ Warner describes, for example, Crane's “habit of naming,” in which Crane substitutes titles such as “the youth” for a proper noun, as “a practice alarmingly poised between realism and allegory, an unthinkable mode in which the general and the particular seem uncannily confused” (89). Warner also argues that Crane's refusal to enable conventional moral judgement and thus valuation of Maggie's character, especially her descent into prostitution, is epitomized in Crane's decision to drop Maggie's name from the narrative in Chapter 17, when she has fully inhabited the position of prostitute: “she has become ‘a girl’” in her final days of solicitation and suicide (90).

an analysis of the meaning of those symbols to the particular character's represented perspective that Crane uses to view those symbols.³⁶ *Maggie* is told predominantly through Maggie's represented perception and free indirect discourse; thus, Maggie does not only articulate her agency, but the plot hinges on her symbolic articulation of agency. It is thus important not to overlook the fact that it is through Maggie's eyes that we have this story of the tenement and slum.³⁷ Maggie's perspective, beginning with her account of the tenement interior which symbolizes her own interiority, guides the narrative.

On this level of deep structure, violence indicates regionalism's characteristic mythical and allegorical tendencies. Like that of Joel Chandler Harris and Jacob Riis, Crane's style combines the specific with the universal and allegorical.³⁸ On the level of deep structure, Maggie thus shows us what theoretical dispossession universally *means*. Crane's use of allegorical violence and imagery communicates the universal and timeless enactment of agency in the face of opposition. Maggie and her mother are particularly drawn to exercising violence in destructive or self-destructive forms in order to negotiate and stabilize their relationship to property, and thus the region's particular political economy becomes a site of almost mythical conflict. In scenes of hellish violence, Crane

³⁶ In "Ironic and Symbolic Structure in Crane's *Maggie*" (1962), Joseph X. Brennan reads symbolic structure primarily as ironic and deterministic in *Maggie*, but does note Crane's use of symbolism to structure the narrative from chapter to chapter as well scene to scene, indicating Crane's use of symbolism as a mode of plot progression.

³⁷ Critics have invariably contended that regionalism cannot be set in urban environments because these sites are cosmopolitan, and thus culture itself, growing out of frequent commercial exchange, is unfixed in the urban setting. But if we consider regionalism as a genre that invariably relates culture to definitions of property particular to a geography's economy, then not only naturalism but regionalism, too, frequently deals with the city as a site of the industrialized economy. Campbell writes that the male naturalists "valued the city over the local color village" (9), but there is no reason to see the city as separated from the "local." Any urban space can constitute a population's own "local," particularly if that population is segregated by class, or dispossessed, from the wider cosmopolitan modes of exchange.

³⁸ Michael Warner argues that Crane's formal maneuvers should not be confused with irony, for "Crane's technique markedly complicates the relation between the two meanings or values; the hidden does not simply reverse or supplant the apparent...Crane's style is calculated to question the superficial or literal in exactly the same way as irony, without implying, as irony does, that a real value can be determined" (89).

freezes time to expose the unstable structures precipitating this violent conflict, thus enabling readers to access the layers of a socioeconomic system that is destabilized and made nonsensical by the rapid instantiation of a new form of production. And if violence is the formal logic by which every individual's life is determined in the post-Reconstruction period, and thus this particular regionalist story, and any particular regionalist story, becomes universalizing. When the form of production changes, all political subjects experience their subjectivity violently. *Maggie*, as many other regionalist stories also do, incorporates elements of myth in its freezing of time in which violence occurs, and in its "demonic imagery," in Northrop Frye's terms in *The Anatomy of Criticism* (1957): it is "the world of the nightmare and the scapegoat, of bondage and pain and confusion" (147). Maggie symbolizes the "demonic erotic relation," the "harlot...a physical object of desire which is sought as a possession and therefore can never be possessed;" Maggie is also "the *pharmakos* or sacrificed victim, who has to be killed to strengthen the others" (Frye 148-49). Maggie lives in a tenement, which Crane uses to signify a prison. While all of these images, considered for their mythical significance, can seem rather superficially symbolic, it is what Crane does with them that is most important, not that he uses them. In *Maggie*, the violence in this demonic world becomes liberatory, so while the conditions of violent subjection may be of a mythical past, it is actually in the power of the protagonist to, as it were, *react* to her own signification. Though Maggie's life ends in implicit suicide, which also has its mythical resonance - "the world of water is the water of death, often identified with spilled blood" - her deliberate co-opting of violence reinscribes the possibility of agents to assert their

subject-positions in the contemporary world of the fin-de-siecle while indicating a universal relevance of her story to all readers (Frye 150).

So, rather than looking backward, I contend that *Maggie*, like all regionalist fiction, engages with the present through its violence's mythical resonance. Myth and allegory, in other words, in *Maggie* and other regionalist fiction, undergird these stories because they validate historical agency in the face of opposition. In *Maggie*, if the only violence that is socially effective is self-destruction, it is still politically efficacious, for it expresses the absence of alienation in positive form. As Jameson writes in *The Political Unconscious*, latent forms of previous modes of production persist in current modes of production, as they persist in later forms of genres. Crane and other regionalists, in their attention to production, provide exemplary opportunity to examine "the ideology of form," and to identify "the formal persistence of such archaic structures of alienation — and the sign systems specific to them — beneath the overlay of all the more recent and historically original types of alienation — such as political domination and commodity reification — which have become the dominants of that most complex of all cultural revolutions, late capitalism, in which all the earlier modes of production in one way or another structurally coexist" (Jameson 100). Thus, regionalists, in their emphasis on violent conflict as indicative of agency, also gesture to the prevalence of violence's relationship to economic stages and agency in a distant past, and in doing so, suggest a synchronic, time-absent universality of alienation and its expression in conflict despite the text's focus on specific region. At this point we may also remind ourselves that *Maggie* focuses on violence because, universally, "History is what hurts, it is what refuses desire and sets inexorable limits to individual as well as collective praxis, which

its ‘ruses’ turn into grisly and ironic reversals of their overt intention. But this History can be apprehended only through its effects, and never directly as some reified force” (Jameson 102). In other words, violence is structured formally because it must be construed as an effect, as a structural symptom, that indicates the past’s structurally repetitive denial of agency. Violence in regionalism indicates what “hurts,” history’s dehumanizing story of alienation - but also, and interestingly, how to make it *stop* hurting. “History,” to use Jameson’s term, declares its synchronic rupture in the narrative’s violence, where the layers of modes of production make their presence known, and where alienation has and will trigger action.

I have thus established that it is the deep structure of the text, the simultaneously mythical and political-economic structure of the text, on which Crane’s seemingly gratuitous violence makes sense in *Maggie*. The narrative’s deep structure is itself formalized by a critique of political economy that hinges aesthetically on submerged inversions and resolutions of relations. The main inversion Crane structures the text around and resolves dialectically is the privatization of social violence, in which individuals internalize, and by internalizing attempt to control, a relatively new form of production and its concomitant shifting definitions of property. Individuals in the narrative disown everything but a “property of unhappiness,” whereby they reject commodification in all of its forms and decide to own nothing but their own emotion of sadness in order to prevent their possessions and even themselves from being swept into market circulation. This property of unhappiness, which can also be considered as accumulated labor power or social energy, drives their violent acts of rebellion against the market system. It is the way in which characters in *Maggie* reframe their relationship

to property, and thus, the dominant economic mode of industrialization. Thus, Maggie's personal relationship to violence is in fact a reflection of the newly established socioeconomic system of industrialization. This "property of unhappiness" can be considered metonymic of Crane's technique of inversion and resolution. Just as a property of unhappiness represents an anti-productive mode — there is no there there — so does his structure of inversions represent an anti-mode of industrialization.

His technique is often mislabeled as irony in *Maggie* and other works, for this term seems the nearest approximation of Crane's structural approach using "doubleness of meaning or narrative value" (Warner 89).³⁹ But Crane does not simply establish an ironic and derogative dismissal of one system or set of ethics and imply an alternative. Instead, his formal structure suggests, beyond ironic distance, entire systemic overhaul through inversion and resolution, beginning with the structure of capitalist property relations literalized in the form of buildings. These buildings are symbolic of industrial capitalism's structure, ostensibly hidden by its cultural superstructure, in which the relationships between subjects are hidden by market relations but determined by labor. Crane turns these buildings inside out to expose their interiors and the lives, and true

³⁹ Many critics have attributed the doubleness of Crane's writing to irony. In *Realism and Naturalism in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*, Pizer writes that the narrative displays traits which do not seem to comport with naturalist fiction, such as Crane's "verbal irony," which prompts the reader to "look beyond literal meaning, to seek beyond the immediate discernible for the underlying reality" (144). Michael Robertson writes in *Stephen Crane, Journalism, and the Making of Modern American Literature* that "*Maggie* is remarkable for its irony" (79). In "Populist Crane: A Reconsideration of Melodrama in *Maggie*," David Huntsberger states that Crane's "portrayal of Bowery theater" is informed by "a measure of irony" (294). In "Ironic and Symbolic Structure in Crane's *Maggie*," Joseph X. Brennan argues, Perhaps the most remarkable single characteristic of *Maggie* is its insistent, and at times even oppressive, ironic tone. In its sustained and almost vehement irony *Maggie* was as much without precedent in American fiction as in its daring subject matter, and even today, in spite of all that the school of naturalism has produced in this manner, Crane's short narrative still marks some-thing of the limits to which the method can go" (304). See also Trachtenberg's "Experiments in Another Country" in *American Realism: New Essays*: "For Crane the plot [of *Maggie*] was an occasion to tell a familiar tale with vividness, with exactness of observation, and most of all, with sufficient irony to make it apparent that the characters themselves viewed their world melodramatically" (145) and James Nagel's essay "Crane is a Literary Impressionist" in *Readings On Stephen Crane*.

relationships, of their occupants. Characters' interiors are then similarly exposed in *Maggie*. Finally, Crane contends with the consequences of Maggie's attempts to live a life in defiance of the market's overdetermined power. Crane himself might say that what seems like irony in *Maggie* is akin to the mistake subjects make when taking the thing for its surface rather than its inverse, because they do not consider the false and chaotic power of agency attributed to industrially-impelled market forces rather than social actors. What looks like private catastrophe in *Maggie* is really public, as Maggie carries the load of social contradictions and prohibitions that aren't actually individual at all. Causality as Crane establishes it occurs on the base level of the story, not on the surface, so while it seems like Maggie has no agency and is determined by her social circumstances, Crane would like us to see that the "action" of this story, and thus its critical significance, lies in Maggie's symbolic recognition of the way in which the economic structure attempts to determine her life, and, in return, how Maggie attempts to control and reorder her circumstances. In inverting an individual's relationship to the violent social construction of property and value, so that Maggie's relationship to property is explained through her psychic interior, Crane shows that while Maggie's attempts at reordering her life seem to be self-destructive, they are actually wholly logical. Crane ultimately demonstrates that it is not Maggie's agency that is upside-down, illogical, and irrational, but the system of industrial capital itself, and Maggie's violent self-destructiveness the necessary and paradoxically self-preserving response to a disordered and violent social system.

To assemble the relationship Crane invents between the individual and the region's industrialized form of production — the property of unhappiness which accumulates and builds to violence — he uses many material objects as symbols of

political economy. For example, the publicly perceived tenement building becomes the symbol of property, and in its demonstrate industrialism's tenuousness. Through the symbol of the tenement and other buildings, Crane gestures to the urban setting's significance in relation to the characters' interaction with the city's industrialized economy. It is thus only by examining the social circumstances at work as transfigured through the regional setting's materiality that we can understand the characters' private miseries. Crane encourages us to carry out this inversion of foreground and background by showing us not simply "Maggie," but what Maggie sees – the buildings and objects of tenement New York City, the destructive force of capitalism behind the erection of these edifices. It would deprive the reader, then, to see this solely as a naturalist text. Crane's critique is launched mainly on this level: that the very poor face valuation in all forms, cannot actually own significant assets including a home, and are therefore liminal in their political importance, and their experience exposes a system so unstable that it only makes sense in multiple inversions and violent resolutions. Beyond a sociological work, beyond naturalism, Crane develops a version of regionalism that is relevant most specifically to the dispossessed inhabitants of urban centers.

Inversion and the Logic of Property

Maggie: A Girl of the Streets is not predominantly an exercise in determinism using characters as placeholders for a society in decline. Instead, Crane foregrounds Maggie's characterization as well as that of her family's through the violent means by which they renegotiate their relationships to an industrialized economy. Crane furthers the narrative through his characters' responses to the socioeconomic world of industrialized New York and its culture of consumption on the deep level of the text

more so than on the surface level. This buried plot progression has led some critics to argue that *Maggie* is essentially without plot, causation, structure, or order.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the causality in *Maggie* hinges on the force of symbolic inversions, thus seeming to move not in a line but in a dialectical fashion. These inversions are then resolved into solutions epitomized by other symbols. Because, then, the causal progression of the narrative is referentially buried in the text, *Maggie*, and the characters within, seems to be about reactive responses to environment, nothing more. Studied further in its formal maneuvers, though, *Maggie* is *only* legible through the symbolic inversions that reference the relationship between property, the self, and the confoundingly rapid transition of New York's economic system.

Some critics have commented on Crane's usage of images, referring to it variously as symbolically referential, decidedly non-referential, aesthetic, impressionistic, expressionistic, modernist, and romantic.⁴¹ However, for the most part, their insistence to

⁴⁰ June Howard says that Crane is "utterly uninterested in causality" (99). "We have little information about the specific determinants of Maggie's character and choices, no direct analysis of the causes of her despair, but rather a series of almost disconnected scenes unified by style, by defamiliarization, above all by the plot of fatality...Maggie appears from nowhere, uncaused; she makes no resistance and understands nothing about why she is destroyed. All that Maggie sees, and virtually all that the reader knows, is that she cannot survive in this brutal world" (99). Lee Clark Mitchell, in *Determined Fictions: American Literary Naturalism*, argues that *Maggie*'s interest lies in its lack of causality, and that Crane deliberately excises causality in order to defy any sort of predetermined readerly expectation: "More flamboyantly than other naturalists, Crane strips his fiction of the familiar causal tissue that reinforces those projective assumptions [that readers bring to any narrative], in order to offer a textual approximation of the experience his characters have of events" (99). James Nagel, in "Crane is a Literary Impressionist," writes that Crane's narratives "tend...toward aggregates of episodes rather than continuous action...composed of episodes of a few pages strung together by continuities of character and place but not of action...Nor does Crane characteristically provide expository links to explain what happened between episodes" (70).

⁴¹ In *The Vast and Terrible Drama: American Literary Naturalism in the Late Nineteenth Century*, Eric Carl Link refers to Crane's work as "accurate romanticism," and his naturalism as influenced by the genre of the romance. Link examines Crane's *Maggie* and "A Dark Brown Dog" in terms of their romantic influence, particularly in how they exhibit the 'imaginary' of the romance in the "fantastic, the symbolic, or the uncanny" (37). Crane, Link argues, asserted his writing as associated with Howellsian realism, but actually does not follow in Howells's footsteps: his work is "something approaching the tradition of the modern romance" with Maggie's "surreal dream-vision sequences...and the symbolic and allegorical underpinnings of works like *The Red Badge of Courage*, 'The Open Boat' (1894) and 'A Dark-Brown Dog' (1901)" (60). While Crane aligned himself, Link points out, with Howells's and Hamlin Garland's calls for

see *Maggie* as a naturalist text flattens their treatment of this symbolism, relegating its possible meanings to Crane's reference to generic categories and in analysis only applying symbolism to a preconceived notion of the determined nature of the narrative itself, and never outside of it to see its significance to a broader relevance to political economy.⁴²

Crane's first level of inversion exists in the relationship between the market's violent tendencies of subjugation and the domestic space's ostensible protection from the market's infiltration. This is made evident even in the first few pages of the narrative: the story does not begin with a description of Maggie, but with a fight on the street between adolescent Irish-American gangs. After the fight, Crane cuts to a description of a tenement house that looks out onto the jail on Ryker's Island. He writes, "From the window of an apartment house that upreared its form from amid squat, ignorant stables, there leaned a curious woman... Over on the Island, a worm of yellow convicts came

attention to detail and proper depictions of external reality, he mixes this realist aesthetic with romanticism in his naturalist works in his attempt to stake out the "truth" (61). James Nagel in "Crane is a Literary Impressionist" writes "Crane's Impressionism, with its stress on unique sensory evocations and personal interpretation of experience, tends toward isolation, individuality, discrete human personalities" (66). Donald Pizer, in his 1995 essay "Maggie and the Naturalistic Aesthetic of Length," argues that Maggie evidences an uncommon brevity which seems to clash with its status as a naturalist text. Pizer writes that Crane uses the "modernistic" techniques of "impressionis[m]" "montage," "surreal" and "expressionistic" imagery to implement that brevity (82). Brad Evans argues, "Stephen Crane's *Maggie* (1893), while ostensibly about the ghetto, seems even more to be about blowing apart the contrived staging of reform journalism (especially Jacob Riis's *How the Other Half Lives*) with an exercise in pure aestheticism - 'The girl, Maggie, blossomed in a mud puddle'" (141).

⁴² For example, Alan Trachtenberg writes in "Experiments In Another Country: Stephen Crane's City Sketches" that by the time Crane had gained experience writing the sketches that were part fiction, part journalistic inquiry for newspapers, and started to write his early stories *Maggie* and *George's Mother*, "Crane had discarded the moral posture of the tourist and had tried to convey physical landscapes equivalent to his perception of the subjective lives of his characters... For Crane the plot was an occasion to tell a familiar tale with vividness, with exactness of observation, and most of all, with sufficient irony to make it apparent that the characters themselves viewed their world melodramatically, through lenses blurred with the same false emotions they inspired... in the many popular tellers of their tale. Crane aims at accuracy, not compassion" (144-145). This "vividness," "exactness," and "accuracy" were hallmarks of naturalist convention, but in focusing more on Crane's naturalist impulses in his use of space and its representativeness of the characters' interior worlds, Trachtenberg bypasses Crane's use of symbolism, assuming it refers only to characters' determinedness by this spatiality, and not how the characters respond in turn to the defamiliarizing structures that shape their lives.

from the shadow of a grey ominous building and crawled slowly along the river's bank"

(4). In their aggressive and threatening agency, the tenement building and the jail become the impetus for the otherwise unexplained "gang" violence between the boys Crane describes in the first scene. In other words, Crane frames these characters as functioning reactively to the oppressive social power of the buildings themselves, and not to each other. Overcrowded buildings, representative of ownership, poverty, crime, and burgeoning industry, are, significantly, the only actors that are given transparent logical and emotional agency in the first few pages of this story. Where the boys fight without apparent motive, the tenement, the basis of industrialization's housing, decidedly "upreared its form," as though in combative protest against the simplistic pre-industrial function of the "squat, ignorant stables." Meanwhile, a "curious woman" apathetically droops out of the tenement house, for no apparent reason. Readers aren't given an explanation as to what she is curious about. She is not interested in the "yellow convicts" (who may be literally yellow in uniform, or might be cowardly, listless, without power, and driven to crawl by their inability to push back against the "the shadow of a grey ominous building": the jail, emblematic of the state's oppression). We are not told whether these convicts are even in her line of sight. But they are under the reader's gaze as one helpless slinking organism, driven forward by the building's shadow, and, being driven forward by this shadow and not their own intentions, they are not given any agency, either. Blatantly symbolic, this passage figures the convicts as inhuman, controlled by the "shadow" of economics a state of lawlessness. It's important to note, though, that Crane is not setting up these characters' torpor in a direct causal relationship to the force of their surroundings. It is not the state of the jail or tenement itself that

causes or does not cause the characters to respond this way; it is the symbolic power of the buildings. Causality in *Maggie* operates on a symbolic level, where it is the emotional power behind what the buildings stand for and what has erected those buildings that incites or depresses. Thus, Crane begins by foregrounding buildings as the primary force of apathy or violent depression: they symbolize the oppressive economic structure that dictates a series of economic and emotional property relations.

As the novella continues, the boy, Jimmie, from the opening fight, is being dragged by his father towards his family's own tenement building. Here again, irresoluteness, or (diametrically similar), senseless chaotic agitation, characterizes the residents of the tenement building:

Eventually they entered into a dark region where, from a careening building, a dozen gruesome doorways gave up loads of babies to the street and the gutter. A wind of early autumn raised yellow dust from cobbles and swirled it against an hundred windows. Long streamers of garments fluttered from fire-escapes...In the street infants played or fought with other infants or sat stupidly in the way of vehicles. Formidable women, with uncombed hair and disordered dress, gossiped while leaning on railings, or screamed in frantic quarrels. Withered persons, in curious postures of submission to something, sat smoking pipes in obscure corners. A thousand odors of cooking food came forth to the street. The building quivered and creaked from the weight of humanity stamping about in its bowels (7).

Outside this tenement, children are left unattended and sitting "stupidly in the way of vehicles." Their parents seem to have forsaken them to chance, though whether this was

deliberate we don't know. Women, who for some reason are "formidable," though we don't know why, lean on the railings of the building while gossiping, again indeterminately, or "scream in frantic quarrels," with whom and about what we're not told. And old men, in similar attitudes of indirection, smoke pipes "in curious postures of submission to something." These characters remain anonymous, because Crane doesn't ascribe their actions and emotions rationales. But the emotions of apathy and agitation as emotional states themselves also lack direct causal impulses: these are both emotions of stasis. These characters are trapped within these emotions. The only actor that has any agency here is the tenement house: its doors "gave up loads of babies to the street and the gutter"; the building is "careening", the cause of the tenants' emotional discord; it "quivered and creaked" in response to its residents, who in turn only strike "postures of submission to something."

Crane's narrative is shaped by forms of inversions on the level of materiality as well as the level of the figurative. These examples are quite simple illustrations of inversion, and are so innocuous that they are easy to miss in their seeming conventionality. But if we look a bit closer at the types of inversion in these previous passages, we see here that Crane introducing inversions of greater social significance. Thus, if we look closer, there is no direct cause on the literal level for these characters' emotional states; but symbolically, their emotions are easier to comprehend: they are driven to inhabit these emotions because they are socially dispossessed as recent immigrants, and are therefore forced to inhabit static emotional states with no correlative social "payoff" (no hope for greater communication). They are symbolically fixed in these inert emotional states like they are literally trapped within the tenements, with no

hope of social mobility. The submerged causality behind this seemingly a-causal fixedness is the economic social structure that has created this literal system of tenement housing, that has also trapped them emotionally. Therefore, the inversion here is that their symbolic grasp of their social situation has literally stranded them emotionally. The unnamed characters are, then, dispossessed down to the very level of their emotions. We see here Crane is leading us to an analysis through processes of inversion of property on the literal and the symbolic levels: this is a story of dispossession.

Structurally significant inversions of property in the public and private spheres in this text show us both how Crane critiques the impact of industrial capitalism's instantiation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on property relations; and how he deploys, yet ultimately dissolves, naturalism's generic hold on social determinism as the explanation for economic circumstances. Crane shows us on both literal and analogical levels that property, if it goes unquestioned as natural - an indisputable and "naturalized" element of the economic workings of the public sphere - becomes chaotic and destabilized by advancing modes of capitalism, but that we will most blatantly see this destabilization in the private sphere of the home, and then in the even further private space of the self. His inversions show us how inherently unnatural industrialized capitalism's structuring of property relations is. What is fixed and taken for granted at the beginning of the narrative becomes as turbulent and uncultivated as can be by its end.

Initially we believe that disordered social interactions in reaction to these corrupt social structures will be confined to the sphere that incited these conflicts, the public sphere, as on the street outside of Maggie and her brother Jimmie's tenement apartment in the beginning of the narrative. This would be a straightforward mode of causality, a

naturalist mode of causality. And initially these expectations are met when Crane shows us a fight between Jimmie and his father on the sidewalk close by their tenement. Jimmie has been instructed by a protective elderly woman living below his family to buy her a pail of beer in exchange for allowing him to stay in her apartment until the fight between his parents died down (“An old woman opened a door. A light behind her threw a flare on the urchin’s quivering face. ‘Eh, Gawd, child, what is it dis time? Is yer fader beatin’ yer mudder, or yer mudder beatin’ yer fadder?’” (11)). We assume that her speech is hyperbolic, that neither father nor mother is beating or being beaten. When Jimmie meets his father on the street on the way back to the woman’s apartment,

The father wrenched the pail from the urchin. He grasped it in both hands and lifted it to his mouth. He glued his lips to the under edge and tilted his head. His hairy throat swelled until it seemed to grow near his chin. There was a tremendous gulping movement and the beer was gone. The man caught his breath and laughed. He hit his son on the head with the empty pail. As it rolled clanging into the street, Jimmie began to scream and kicked repeatedly at his father’s shins (13).

While we can see here that Jimmie’s father is not in fact paternal, we do expect that his drunken and abusive behavior, occurring in direct relation to his social circumstances, will not occur inside the walls of the tenement but in the unjust world outside, in protest (albeit muted and warped) against dispossession.

However, we soon see that the characters do not delimit the expulsion of their frustration to fights or, as we saw earlier, apathetic displays, only on the streets. Paradoxically, Maggie’s family not only allows, but actualizes, violence within their

home, so that what aggression they feel about their subjugation is deliberately directed inwards. And so what should be the private sphere here is transgressed by violence, its boundaries between public and private split, where the actions of Jimmie's family mirror the question of their limbo: whether the domestic space of tenement housing constitutes the conventional private sphere, because the private sphere can only exist if someone in the family owns that domestic space. Tenement dwellers did not have the financial means to own their homes, and so they were renters. In a good number of scenes, then, the public violence of social dispossession exercise through property dispossession comes into the home as Maggie's family assumes the hostility directed towards them in the public sphere and deliberately destroys what few possessions they do own. The integrity of the domestic interior is not respected, because it doesn't seem to figuratively exist; in fact, the characters' actions seem to suggest that they do not feel a true divide between the public sphere and the private sphere. Maggie's and Jimmie's parents' disregard for their own family, that family that could be considered part of their private property, itself is metaphorized in repeated scenes of Maggie's mother and father annulling their possessions.

There was a crash against the door and something broke into clattering fragments. Jimmie partially suppressed a howl and darted down the stairway. Below he paused and listened. He heard howls and curses, groans and shrieks, confusingly in chorus as if a battle were raging. With all was the crash of splintering furniture.[...] Jimmie stood until the noises ceased and the other inhabitants of the tenement had all yawned and shut their doors. Then he crawled upstairs with the caution of an invader of a panther den. Sounds of labored breathing came through

the broken door-panels. He pushed the door open and entered, quaking. A glow from the fire threw red hues over the bare floor, the cracked and soiled plastering, and the overturned and broken furniture (14).

In these domestic disputes between Maggie's and Jimmie's mother, Mary, and their father (who is never given a name throughout the narrative), not only do their parents abuse each other, but they use the few possessions they own to beat each other in their drunken battles while destroying the small number of things they can legally call their own. While we can ignore Crane's heavy-handed metaphors, his unnecessary attempts at "literariness" (Jimmie approaches the apartment door with "the caution of an invader of a panther den", and inside, red hues from the fire reference the bloody domestic dispute), we should look at the more subtle symbolism that Crane employs through what appears at first simply description. Jimmie first sees when he arrives at his family's tenement apartment "broken door panels," through which he can hear "sounds of labored breathing." It is significant that these door panels are noted as broken, not only to underline the severity of the violence taking place behind those doors, but also to demonstrate that, through the symbolic violence of property relations, there is no clear delineation between internal and external, between public disparity and the private miseries this subjugation causes. But again, Crane does not compare these broken door panels to the broken system outside – the strength of his symbolism lies in his reversals, the immediacy and materiality of the broken door panels which clearly show us the lack of security these characters experience on all literal and symbolic levels. Also seemingly a description, seemingly lacking in symbolic resonance at first read, is the "cracked and soiled plastering," an element of the interior tenement apartment indicating not only the owners'

neglect, but the utter lack of agency these tenants are given in terms of how they much control they can exercise over their economic circumstances: this already cracked and soiled plastering is given to them, thus their poverty and alienation is a part of their existence, and is not negotiable or easily repaired, and it reflects and effects the way that they live even their deepest emotional lives.

On a structural level, the “cracked and soiled plastering” and the broken door panels also indicate the encroachment of external judgments and pressures into the home, and the effect these pressures have: to rupture the stability of the divide between private and public. We see here then how there is no direct line of causality between environment and actions in the way Crane has configured this narrative so far. If the buildings of tenements and jail caused the tenement dwellers on the streets to become apathetic or to become aggressive on a symbolic level, but they expressed these emotions out on the streets, we would assume that causally, they would not do so in the buildings’ interiors; that these symbolic responses to oppression would only continue outside where the structural outposts of capitalism are most apparent. But soon we see Jimmie’s and Maggie’s parents take their violence inside, into an interior where, for Jimmie’s perspective, there is a broken door, there is nowhere to hide, and where the effects of property relations have been internalized and inverted. Crane is not, then, drawing a strict naturalist relationship between a certain set of surroundings and a certain set of actions. Responses to levels of dispossession and subjugation occur in all of these environments, but the most violent occur, paradoxically, in the most personal and private of spaces. Crane refutes the conventional causal relationship between environment and actions by his inclusion of characters’ emotional awareness: he shows that there is a level of self-

consciousness and intuition on the part of the tenants, but the tenants don't acknowledge it because it's obvious to them. Thus, Jimmie comes to face the broken door of his home, but we don't see his emotional reaction to it, understanding then that Jimmie comprehends the economic and social injustices his family is oppressed by, but that as readers it is the objects themselves – the broken door itself – that stands in for the story of Jimmie's emotional reactions. Therefore, the broken door and soiled plaster frame the “overturned and broken furniture” to suggest a different kind of movement of interpretation of property relations: there is no explicit question as to “why” things have come to this but both the cause and effect in the description of the interior itself and in the interior's very lack of legal and personal distinction from the street. And there is no motive for the destructive arguments that take place in this interior but the description of the interior itself.

The reader notes the result of one of these destructive arguments in the “the overturned and broken furniture” lying on the ground of the apartment when Jimmie walks into it in this scene. If we've been discussing the difficulties of being literally and figuratively dispossessed because of social status in this time period, we would have to wonder why Jimmie's father and mother would destroy the only things they do actually own. Taking into account, though, the function of the various framing details of this scene – the broken door, the soiled and cracked plaster – these characters, Maggie's family, seem to be attempting to control the fact that there is no clear divide for them between the public sphere of social injustice and dispossession and the private one of emotional suffering by pre-emptively destroying what they do own, making apparent what to them was implicit and, in the process, manipulating their circumstances in the

way that is most direct. In an unsafe, unsound, rented tenement apartment, this destruction is symbolically significant because destroying their own furniture means destroying any stability of home life, thus destroying stability, but finally claiming some kind of ownership through destruction because their meager ownership of a few possessions can only be made real to them through destruction. It only becomes tangible when it has been broken; and at least Maggie and Jimmie's parents can take responsibility for breaking what they questioned they had. There is some kind of proof in this.

Violence and the Naturalization of Industrial Economic Development

Characters in *Maggie* grapple with their desire to violently destroy each other and to self-destruct. Violence in *Maggie* is rampant to a voyeuristic degree, and forces of destruction are an innately intimate part of these characters' private lives.⁴³ However, these forces of destruction are not attributable simply to characters' biological impulses, or to their uncontrolled responses to their environment.⁴⁴ Destruction performs a

⁴³ Donald Pizer writes that "The life of the family is that of fierce battle with those around them and among themselves. The novel opens with Jimmie fighting the children of Devil's Row. He then fights one of his own gang. His father separates them with a blow. Maggie mistreats the babe Tommie; Jimmie strikes Maggie; Mrs. Johnson beats Jimmie for fighting. Mr. and Mrs. Johnson quarrel. Mrs. Johnson beats Maggie for breaking a plate; Mr. Johnson strikes Jimmie with an empty beer pail. Mr. Johnson comes home drunk and he and Mrs. Johnson fight" (*Realism and Naturalism in American Literature*, 145). Pizer argues that Crane's intention in inscribing these violent scenes is that the domestic space is not safe from the battles of the external world, instead it magnifies these battles, and that in the home "the animal qualities encouraged by a life of battle - strength, fear, and cunning - predominate" (145). Pizer uses these examples to show that there is no moral stability here; but on the contrary, I will argue that these instances of violence indicate the presence of a controlling ethical, if inverted, reaction to the unethical world of capitalism.

⁴⁴ Jillmarie Murphy applies psychoanalytic theory in *Monstrous Kinships: Realism and Attachment Theory in the Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Novel* to analyze the domestic violence in *Maggie* in light of the rampant alcoholism of Maggie's parents, arguing that Crane seems to have written the narrative "in order to expose and address the relationships among alcoholism, heredity, and environment" (103). In employing psychoanalysis as the primary mode of interpretation, though, Murphy psychologizes the characters as "real" people and overlooks the function of violence in the text's overall structure. Murphy argues that the Johnson parents' violence is an uncontrolled response to the brutality of their environment,

structural function in Crane's work, acting not only on the level of the plot but formally, to expose the effects of uneven economic development: specifically, in the case of New York City, the industrialization of an urban space and the subsequent psychological impact of the ideology of mechanization. Repetition of destruction enables Maggie's narrative agency because destruction always signals or triggers symbolism that stands for inversion, and as Maggie is increasingly enabled to "read" this symbolism through Crane's expanding represented perspective of Maggie's interiority, the urgency of her responses to this destruction grows. and enables Crane's use of perspective to open up the deep structure of the text? Lay it out here. Maggie's reactions to her political economic status effect resolutions to her predicament, and structure the forward motion of the text, resulting in Maggie's ultimate articulation of agency and self-preservation: her suicide.

The violence occurring in Maggie's home is in fact ordered and logical. This violence metaphorizes characters' natural responses to their circumstances, despite the violence's seemingly impulsive and interiorized characteristics. While violence in *Maggie* may seem as spontaneous and disordered as the wreckage strewn throughout her tenement apartment, it is actually not aberrant. The major protagonists, Mary and Maggie, privatize and order the upheaval and socioeconomic dispossession which registers as a violence done to their social relevance. As industrialization came to define the economy and the division of labor in New York City and other urban centers, the notion that machines and factory work were natural and useful outgrowths of society's inevitable

and is thus a relatively straightforward and determined response to their conditions: "Mr. and Mrs. Johnson are incapable of understanding their children's needs, first, because the brutality of their environment is so severe they are able only to respond with comparable violent behavior and, second, because of the cyclical and intergenerational nature of alcoholism and domestic abuse, they themselves were no doubt treated with the same disrespect and contempt by their own parents" (103-104). In "Experiments in Another Country," Trachtenberg refers to the violence in Crane's urban fiction as "ignitable": "Crane's city people seem always ignitable, verging toward the discharge of feeling in riot" (154).

progress became more prevalent. Public figures such as Carroll D. Wright, the chief of the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor, purported the naturalness of industrialization. Wright went so far as to claim that society was a type of factory in itself. Public figures and intellectuals believed that the individual self's exertions were destined or "determined" to become intertwined with machines, and thus the self was fated to become more machinelike, "determined" by external structures (Trachtenberg 42, 44). From proponents of Herbert Spencer's point of view, a machinized self was inevitable. Alan Trachtenberg notes, "Buried here is a Spencerian notion of evolution from simple to complex forms, from independence to interdependence, from simple tools to intricate machines. The social division of labor, then, as exemplified by machine production in factories, is made to seem natural, an inevitable and 'legitimate' evolution. The notion of the self consisting of a material 'mechanism' had been present in American and European thought since the late eighteenth century; now the image struck a note which resonated with perceptions of expanding factories, railroads, and dynamos" (45). Crane, however, writes against this prevailing Spencerian notion of the factory and its socially deterministic possibilities as a natural outgrowth of social progress. Instead, the factory and social mechanization are not natural, organic and ordered; they are implosive and fragmenting, violent, in their unnatural force.

Crane inverts contemporary notions of progress and the social effects of industrialization from a dominant, Spencerian conceptualization of the public sphere's advancement into an actualized resolution of political economy in the private sphere and in his characters' interiorities. In this way, Crane adds to the cultural critiques prevalent of 1880's and 1890's that deemed a Spencerian progressive evolution as destructive; but

Crane does not merely declare an impending determined social destruction. He particularizes the destructive capabilities of incessant development, and, through violence, articulates the modes by which an individual has the ability to navigate and survive within an industrialized society. To reverse the social status resulting from ownership from an advantage to the liability it truly is, he has Mary and her family internalize the social violence done to them by the public sphere's abrupt transition to an industrialized economy with its reliance on commodity production and consumption. In internalizing this social violence, Mary and Maggie attempt to reject the industrialized market's emphasis on commodification. As Trachtenberg points out, in this new system wage laborers and the family members who were dependent upon them did not have the "opportunity...to change their status within [the system]; [it] assumes a permanent class of wage earners" (43). Mary is not granted the access to upward mobility and, after her husband dies of alcoholism, she is committed to an invalidated social position because her family is compressed within a social class which keeps them poor because their labor is not valued enough to pay them adequate wages. When her husband did work, we can assume, he was a laborer. Most laborers were immigrants, drawn to the promise of upward mobility through hard work; with the ascendance of industrialization and its increasingly rigid stratification, this disappeared. The inability to achieve class mobility alienated immigrants, condemned them to poverty.

Additionally, the lower class was not considered to be politically significant *because* of its inescapable poverty. Nor was the lower-class's emotional subjectivity conceived of as equivalent to those of the middle and upper classes. In short, they were considered disposable, alien, and threatening in their anger and in their very alienation.

The class of workers and their families to whom Mary belongs were considered to lack complex emotion; not suffer psychologically in a comprehensive manner; and be insensitive to the drastic changes of the urban environment. In his 1884 study “American Nervousness: Its Causes and Consequences,” sociologist George M. Beard only considered the “brain-workers” to be susceptible to the implicitly higher-level condition of “nervousness” (205). The “muscle-workers,” those of the lower-class, were only able to produce unproductive “worry,” the “converse of work” (202). Thus, the lower-class, the “muscle-workers,” were not really considered American at all — because only brain-workers suffered the American condition of nervousness, the brain-workers were the only truly American subjects, epitomizing the truly American condition.

However, Mary’s nervousness, her violence, her drunkenness, are inherently American, too. They are the effects of the new economic bedrock. As Mary internalizes the violence of her social devaluation, Crane exposes the truly destructive and uniquely American consequences of an economic system which negotiates the social value of individuals in accordance with their asset ownership, operates through mechanized production, and determines the worth of laborers based on their similarity to the factory’s machines. Mary understands that she is not simply an interchangeable part, she is a disposable part: a part of the system which is the lowest of the low, expendable because they are commodifiable by their labor or lack of labor, and their lack of money and lack of political importance.

To demonstrate, Crane inverts the public violence of the market economy into the private domestic economy. Mary thus understands any and all possible commodifiable objects in her domestic space as symbols of the industrialist market economy that

destroys her social worth and essentially her existence as a subject, and sees these objects as necessary to destroy in order to control the violence done to her that these objects represent. The presence of commodifiable objects in her domestic space threatens Mary's attainment of the disconnected, protected emotional stasis which she takes refuge in. As we have seen in Crane's depiction of the nameless, emotionally static and deadlocked characters in the beginning of *Maggie* ("Formidable women, with uncombed hair and disordered dress, gossiped while leaning on railings, or screamed in frantic quarrels. Withered persons, in curious postures of submission to something, sat smoking pipes in obscure corners", wherein characters occupy emotional states that have no relationship to direct causality), when the socioeconomic structure is in turmoil, Crane's characters' natural emotional response is to retreat into a constructed world in which an acquired and unchanging singular emotional state is the safest response, and in which causality is taken out of the equation. For Mary, all that she would have left to "own" after destruction of these objects of commodifiable status, then, is static emotion, self-contained, predictable but individuated: individual to herself. That emotion which she can produce but will never be rented or sold. This emotion can never in itself be a product, and is therefore protected from the market system that is at work destroying her. Violence to achieve a place of stasis is her rebellion against and her ordered response to the market system. And it is violence against her children most significantly that is, to Mary, the logical solution to her dispossession, for her children present a substantial threat to a psychic positioning of stasis.

Many critics have helpfully framed the cultural response to the American Industrial Revolution as well as elements of its characteristic generic mode, Naturalism,

as dialectical, citing variations on regression vs. progress, destruction vs. production, or nature vs. machine.⁴⁵ Other critics have cited American literary regionalism itself as oscillatory: the text presents but does not take a critical stance on such binaries as “city and country” and “the costs and benefits of progress,” offering a thoroughly depicted scene in place and time and yet remaining neutral as to the conflicts this scene inspires within the text.⁴⁶ It is upon these insightful conceptions of dialectical movement that my analysis of structure and genre argument finds its basis, and to which I add my structural analysis of Crane’s *Maggie*. Anxiety about the economic consequences of “production and destruction” permeated suddenly industrialized urban areas such as New York, because, as one of the major sites of the industrial revolution, New York harbored for all of its lower-class inhabitants the frightening possibility that they might suddenly and violently be rendered inconsequential in the face of machinery that was in many ways more predictable, and certainly more exchangeable and interchangeable, than they were. Destruction of an individual’s usefulness was in the very air.

Crane’s work in *Maggie* takes the dominant conceptualization of a dialectical tension between violence and progress one step further in his use of inversions to

⁴⁵ See Fleissner, *Women, Compulsion, Modernity*; Mark Seltzer, *Bodies and Machines*; Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America* and “Experiments in Another Country: Stephen Crane’s City Sketches.” Trachtenberg writes in *The Incorporation of America*, describing the forces of mechanization that informed corporate business and the public’s fascination in progress, and fear of a certain violence, that workers in industrial plants experienced the age of the machine most acutely: “The process of continual refinement and rationalization of machinery, leading to twentieth-century automation, represented to industrial workers a steady erosion of their autonomy, their control, and their crafts. In the record, then, of mechanical change lay an intermingling of *production* and *destruction*, the scrapping of old machines, old processes, and human skills” [italics mine] (56).

⁴⁶ For an example, see Tom Lutz, *Cosmopolitan Vistas* (2004). Lutz writes that “[r]egionalist texts represent the arguments alive in the culture about city and country, nature and culture, center and periphery, tradition and modernity, high and low, masculinity and femininity, the costs and benefits of progress, and any number of other issues; but instead of resolving these debates, they oscillate between the sides, producing, finally, a complex symphony of cultural voices and positions whose only resolution lies in the reader-writer compact to survey the fullness of the scene” (31).

transcend the determinism of the dialectic's oscillation, rejecting a dehumanized future. If the place and time, the region, is engineering these developments, and these developments are specific to the place and the time, then a marginalized individual's perspective and agency in place and time can effect corresponding and unpredictable shifts that change the dynamics of foreseeable oscillation and instability. Thus, perspective becomes key in Maggie for overcoming the dialectical movement between progress and its violent backlash. When Maggie, for example, obtains a job in a textile factory when she is old enough to work, she experiences the modern reality of being ancillary to a machine, only useful insofar as she provides a body to activate the machine's productive capacity. But Maggie's power lies in her ability to identify her position as ancillary, just another girl, one of "various shades of yellow discontent": "By a chance, she got a position in an establishment where they made collars and cuffs. She received a stool and a machine in a room where sat twenty girls of various shades of yellow discontent. She perched on the stool and treadled at her machine all day, turning out collars, the name of whose brand could be noted for its irrelevancy to anything in connection with collars. At night she returned home to her mother" (22). Maggie needed no skill other than the knowledge to operate the machine itself, and there were "twenty girls" in the same room who could perform this same feat. Suffering the malaise of mechanized production, these girls are dehumanized by the exhaustion and repetition of factory work.⁴⁷ Crane brings the violence of this repetition, its effect on anonymity, to

⁴⁷ Jacob Riis writes of the lives of the "working girls of New York" in *How the Other Half Lives*, "It is estimated that at least one hundred and fifty thousand women and girls earn their own living in New York; but there is reason to believe that this estimate falls far short of the truth when sufficient account is taken of the large number who are not wholly dependent upon their own labor, while contributing by it to the family's earnings" (176-77). "A common cause for discharge from stores in which, on account of the oppressive heat and lack of ventilation, 'girls fainted day after day and came out looking like corpses,' was too long service. No other fault was found with the discharged saleswomen than that they had been long

bear upon the reader in his use of pronouns, in which he divorces Maggie's body from her name when describing her work at the factory: "she got a position," "[s]he received a stool and a machine," "[s]he perched on the stool," "she returned to her mother." Any one person could be "she," and any other person could be substituted for that "she" if need be.

Thus, while machine-driven production drove economic development, it could compress the worker's entity into anonymity, because all workers' relationships with the machine were essentially the same, and could quickly and destructively render those laborers who could not or would not participate adequately in mechanized production as irrelevant. For those who did participate, such as Maggie, the effect of repetitive work on individual self-conception was also destructive. And for immigrants who, because of their age or other circumstances could not learn to participate in mechanized production, such as Maggie's mother Mary, their skills were rendered irrelevant, destroyed by the pace of change and innovation. Thus, violence was done to all members of the lower class through industrialization, whether employed by factories or not. However, violence in Crane always leads to an enabling resolution. So while he shows us here that people are commodifiable — they can be bought or sold, exchanged on the market if they do not measure up, deconstructed into pieces according to their usefulness and rented, bought or sold — his text deals with the dialectic of progress and violence by enabling agency and resolution of this commodification, with Maggie providing us the means to see the viability of this critique: that by identifying the backwards nature of the market's

enough in the employ of the firm to justly expect an increase of salary" (177). The plot is a function of the structural development of the critique: "To the everlasting credit of New York's working girl let it be said that, rough though her road may be, all but hopeless her battle with life, only in the rarest instances does she go astray. As a class she is brave, virtuous, and true. New York's army of profligate women is not, as in some foreign cities, recruited from her ranks" (180).

commodity-based system, agency can be asserted in an otherwise backwards social structure.

While violence in *Maggie* seems repetitive, and almost mechanized in its repetition, its mechanization is a function of a formal mirroring tactic that reflects and inverts the mechanization of the public sphere into the private sphere and imposes a dialectical overturn in the process of inverting. Crane's domestic violence mirrors the mechanization of the market economy onto the private sphere of the characters, and that contained, mirrored reflection, paradoxically, serves to enable Mary and Maggie to develop their own mechanisms by which to deal directly with the pervasiveness of the market economy. Social market-based violence never reaches the deepest subjectivities of the characters themselves. For, if nothing else, Mary and her daughter Maggie maintain control, maintain ownership over, their deeply troubled and deeply personal subjectivities. While Mary's violent actions gesture to the logically ordered progression of a machine, her psyche strains against the false progress of this machine and insists on self-containment and protection to the point of stasis. Crane is suggesting through these uncannily ordered violent scenes that the public economy that is presented as natural is in fact inherently unnatural, while innate private responses to public economy that may seem at first unnatural are in fact completely logical. These private acts of violence epitomize Crane's configuration of the privatization of social violence, in which his characters invert and translate the unnaturalness of their surroundings into a controlled chaos within their homes in order to control and "possess" something that they can call their own – even if that something is purely personal, private and of their own making.

Crane has already shown us that property and property relations are perceived in the 1890s as fixed and ordered through his description of buildings as sites of judgment and volition, and therefore rational sites, in the public sphere. He sets up a dialectic in which buildings have agential emotions and sophisticated order, while individuals are directionless and irrationally driven, thus primitive and passive. He then shows us that when we invert that market-driven conception of property by looking at it through the historical-economic lens of regionalist literature, we can see how the public conception of property is exposed as askew, is troubled and chaotic *inside* the home of those disenfranchised by the social sphere. Thus, Crane transcends through inversion the first dialectic he sets up, showing that everything that *seems* irrational about violence if we take the structure of industrial capitalism for granted is then turned on its head when violence is revealed, through a different perspective, to be a logical and ordered response to social dispossession occasioned by this relatively new and incorporated system of property relations. What Crane gives us in his interpersonal and self-destructive violence in *Maggie*, then, builds on the inversion he has given us of property. If fixed, public sphere conceptions of property and ownership as rational are then actually proven to be utterly unnatural when the ins and outs, the details, of a dispossessed existence in the private sphere are exposed, then, in the private sphere, if we perceive violence in this story as unnatural, biologically driven, erratic and socially disconnected, and therefore discountable, we do so wrongfully. Violence in *Maggie* is repetitive, mechanical, lacking direct causality, but inherently a *natural* response of the characters', it is indicative of their agency as they work against an otherwise oppressive depersonalization, and this violence is not at all a chaotic individual anomaly but a social effect. Violence is not

destructive, in other words, here: violence is progress, for these characters. Violence helps them attain or restore a certain type of property, the property of unhappiness: the accumulated social energy of the self that Mary and Maggie refuse to exert in this consumer culture.

The Privatization of Public Violence

In showing us that repetitive violence is a natural response to social dispossession, Crane demonstrates through the violence in this domestic space that the perceptual division between the public and private spheres in bourgeois households that ostensibly marks the stop-point of the permeation of economic forces into personal life does not adequately function in instances of such extreme poverty and dispossession.⁴⁸ Mary's response to dispossession is so extreme and so marked because these individual, private miseries that public economic injustice causes are only partially mediated by her home's legal demarcation from the public sphere. As Karen Halttunen writes in "From Parlor to Living Room: Domestic Space, Interior Decoration, and the Culture of Personality" (1989), "The new organization of middle-class domestic space around 1900 is shown to be a critical mechanism for the making of what historian Warren Susman called 'the culture of personality' in America" (158). However, Maggie's mother Mary does not accept middle-class standards unquestioningly in her home; instead of "personal

⁴⁸ Pizer argues in *Realism and Naturalism in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* that middle-class values and morals pervade the Johnson's home life, where "the home [is] the center of virtue, and respectability...the primary moral goal. It is a value system oriented toward approval by others, toward an audience...The Johnsons' moral vision is dominated by moral roles which they believe are expected of them. These roles bring social approbation, and they are also satisfying because the playing of them before an audience encourages a gratifying emotionalism or self-justification" (147). However, Pizer again overlooks the formal maneuvers of Crane's text as well as the economic and political status of tenement renters: if Maggie's mother Mary senses that the external world that imposes bourgeois morality is unjust, she is not replicating but merely performing them in the public sphere. Middle-class values are not relevant in Maggie's home because their home is no home at all — they do not own nor rent their tenement apartment. To Maggie's family, then, the public/private divide of Victorian spheres is not applicable.

decorating” as Halttunen describes it, which is “the effort to decorate houses as the expression of personality,” Mary destroys any and all objects in their home (158). The tenement apartment itself lacks a living room as described in the narrative. There is only one main room that consists of both the kitchen and “living” room, as well as the washing room. Notions of Christian morality that Victorian home decorating connoted are also disposed of; there is no semblance of propriety in Mary’s home.⁴⁹ There is no space here for the perpetuation of middle-class values, and in fact this is a space of explicit rejection of those values: a space in which opposition to those values is worked out violently. Thus, needless to say, there is also no space here for a commodifiable personality. Mary’s intent, as will be Maggie’s, is to destroy personality, to destroy anything that upholds that system that dispossessed her family. As Halttunen describes, “The replacement of the parlor with the living room had collapsed the distinction between the public and the private self; the new focus of interior decoration collapsed the distinction between the self and the commodities surrounding it” (189). In rejecting not only interior “decoration” but the intactness of any object in her interior, Mary rejects the middle-class correlation of the self with the thing.

⁴⁹ Halttunen points out that Victorian modes of decorating that emphasized the ornamental and natural in addition to religious objects and icons was used to express a “moral aesthetic” were dominant in midcentury American homes (160), but this emphasis on a formal parlor and its implied propriety shifted in the late 19th century as the living room replaced the parlor, induced by “changes in the nature of middle-class social life,” first manifesting themselves in interior design in the summer homes of the middle-class (167). This living room or “living hall” was meant to be informal. Its popularity was also enabled by the larger homes of the suburbs, which in themselves were by the 1890s represented as “entirely distinct from the city. At its center was the ideal of a detached dwelling in a semirural setting, a home protected from urban noise, pollution, disease, and vice by miles of commuter tracks and separated even from its own winding, tree-lined street by an expanse of well-manicured lawn. But implicit in the new suburban ideal was the determination that there be little to fear from suburban streets” (168). Crane emphasizes the figural distance between the interiors of the suburban middle-class ideal and the city’s stark tenements, while implicitly critiquing middle class ideology as similarly insular through Mary’s repetitive smashing and dismantling of domestic objects.

In order to express her protestations, she beats Maggie and Jimmie constantly as she “get[s] her last rights”: “She raised her arm and whirled her great fist at her son’s face. Jimmie dodged his head and the blow struck him in the back of the neck. ‘Damn yeh,’ gritted he again. He threw out his left hand and writhed his fingers about her middle arm. The mother and the son began to sway and struggle like gladiators” (41). Maggie’s mother doesn’t believe in protecting her children; on the contrary, she exercises her frustrations on them like she does upon the furniture she breaks. They are expendable and disposable. This domestic violence is the epitome of the *privatization* of public violence.⁵⁰

Maggie’s mother responds to her few material possessions by destroying them, and then inflicts the violence of social circumstance on her children, the remaining occupants of the domestic interior. She does so in order to exert *control over the depth of her emotional response to dispossession*. Violence, we recall, is a mode of ordering responses to unnatural socioeconomic circumstances. By acting violently towards her possessions and her children, she is attempting to order her primary responses to the irregularity of the social world as property relations shift. Mary’s most significant act of

⁵⁰ Mark Seltzer describes Crane’s *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* as a narrative in part depicting the biologically and socially determining forces of the “mother and the machine”: “For both Crane and Riis, the slums themselves are personified in the form of the body of a monstrously productive mother. ... The slums are personified in the figure of the mother, and that figure provides also a visual and corporeal model of the social. The mother appears as a deeply embodied reproduction of the social machine, as, in a manner to which I will return, social ‘force’ made visible and corporeal” (87). Although Seltzer’s reading of the slums as corrupted, monstrous mother figures is in itself an astute analysis, it seems problematic that Seltzer would suddenly merge both the mother and the machine in one of his most specific readings of Crane’s works, after having kept the internal/external dichotomy of his figuration of realist literature clear up to this point, and without detailing why *Maggie* prompts this melding of the maternal and the metaphor of the socially destructive, socially powerful machine. For while this merging of the mother and the machine may explain why Maggie’s mother mistreats her – the internal and external of the biological and the social metaphorically unified would show that Maggie’s social status leaves her open to being abused by those who could be nurturing and protecting her – it does not explain why Maggie’s mother, according to Seltzer’s own theory, would abuse her daughter only in the confines of the tenement apartment itself. This undercuts Seltzer’s notion that the violence in *Maggie* is performed for the purposes of performance for other characters, and is performed mainly in the social milieu, where, he seems to be claiming, all individuals are “birthed” as classed citizens and therefore as interpellated individuals.

agency culminates in inverting the socioeconomically motivated structure of dispossession – that structure by which she has been dispossessed - by objectifying her children. She in turn possesses *them*, pulling them out of the cycle of market control, and qualifying her dispossession through effectual ownership. On the symbolic level, then, Mary exerts agency in response to her socioeconomic circumstance in this text. If this is the case, this text's traditional categorization of naturalism can further be called into question, for, in naturalist texts, agency in response to environmental pressures is very rarely enabled. After objectifying Maggie and Jimmie, she attempts to destroy them like she has destroyed the inanimate objects she has owned. Her reasons for doing this are bound up within protest of the forces of commodification: for, if she can successfully own Maggie and Jimmie and control their circulation as objects, she can prohibit their potential commodification in the market economy. By prohibiting their potential commodification, she can maintain emotional stasis, unthreatened by the further penetration of market forces into her home. In order to protect herself and her domestic space, both of which have already been breached to such an extent by the market's control, Mary's acts of violence, whether physical, in the form of beating her children, or psychological, in the form of degrading and objectifying them, function to order her emotional response and exert pressure against the burgeoning socioeconomic chaos caused by shifts in the economy and uneven economic development. That Mary's children become the "objects" of her violence in Crane's work is indicative of Crane's critique of the market's evolving transference of value into realms that should not be appraised or exchanged. The very meaning of property, in other words, is changing.

The possibility that children, or likenesses of children, would become essentially sold or exchanged in the market during the fin-de-siècle was high, partially due to the ascendance of photography, and partially due to sentimentality's sustained influence on cultural production and interpretation. In fact, photography was a new medium in the 1890s; it was Jacob Riis's use of photography in *How the Other Half Lives* that inaugurated journalistic interest in photography. Until the 1880s, newspapers did not include photographs at all. Only after *How the Other Half Lives* was published in 1890 did any sustained use of photographs appear in the press (Gandal 64).⁵¹ Children were very often represented in photographs that were used for many different purposes, but often in advertisements as representative symbols of class. Rebecca Stiles Onion notes in "Picturing Nature and Childhood at the American Museum of Natural History and the Brooklyn Children's Museum" (2011), "Historians agree that the widespread interest in childhood during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era coincided with the growing popularity of everyday photography in a mutually reinforcing way, resulting in a plethora of representations of children in photographs around the turn of the twentieth century" (434). Public interest in the child was bound up with Spencerian progress: an interest in the child's (and that child's economic class's) potential, whether potential that would be actualized, or potential that was being wasted. Representations of children through photography spoke to the growth in numbers of the lower class and national anxieties about the future of the masses of poor and uneducated, or spoke to the civilizing effects of cultural institutions such as education. Indeed, only certain children were included in the bourgeois conception of subject formation, "childhood," which was delimited by

⁵¹ See Gandal, *The Virtues of the Vicious: Jacob Riis, Stephen Crane, and the Spectacle of the Slum* for more on Riis's influence on journalistic use of photography.

class status. The relatively new cultural institution of childhood had emerged in the mid-nineteenth century and was drawn along class lines, where only middle-class children truly experienced childhood. Working class children had to labor in factories or other occupations in order to support their families. As Karen Sanchez-Eppler writes in her article “Playing at Class” (2000), “[I]n nineteenth-century America childhood itself is increasingly recognized as a sign of class status. The invention of childhood entailed the creation of a protracted period in which the child would ideally be protected from the difficulties and responsibilities of daily life – ultimately including the need to work” (819). Middle class children were idealized to recall nostalgia or indeed escapism for a vague preindustrial time in which work in a mechanized economy did not exist. Children who were not protected from having to labor at a young age were not considered to have a childhood, but could still be used in photographs to stand for issues of reform.⁵²

Additionally, many poor children were treated as mere things, outside of these commodifiable representations. Children were often treated as burdens, worthless objects, by parents who could not afford to keep them, and some social reformers such as Jacob

⁵² See Ward’s *Poverty, Ethnicity, and the American City* for another perspective on children in this time period: children were perceived as the future’s hope, and thus some slum children were removed from slums and sent to the west in order to prevent further negative environmental influence from the slums. Beginning in the mid nineteenth century, charitable services began to focus on preventing incarceration and delinquency by reforming children: “Children in particular were regarded as critical targets of reform since they had not fully assimilated the deviant values of their parents and might, therefore, become a positive influence on the behavior of adults. The poor, and especially their children, infested the city streets, thereby extending their immoral world into the public space...their homes lacked those properties of domesticity upon which moral order was based...Accordingly, under the leadership of Charles Brace, the Children’s Aid Society made arrangements to remove children from the slums of New York to the farms and small towns of the West, where their instinctive talents would flourish in the natural setting of their adopted families” (25).

Riis argued that parents should be held accountable for these children. Maggie's mother would have been a prime candidate for Riis's reformist principles.⁵³

Children and childhood were thus deeply imbricated in the actual rise of industry through child labor, and in representations of socioeconomic conditions, through a visual construction of class stratification. Depictions of the laboring child in media could signify optimism towards class mobility, the scourge of poverty, and national identity: "national ideologies of class promise that in the United States poverty, like childhood, is merely a stage to be outgrown" (Sanchez-Eppler 819). Thus, working class children *could*, theoretically, grow out of not only their childhood but also their poverty. However, photographic evidence of poor children and child workers were also used by social reformers such as Riis to motivate middle class viewers through their emphasis on the possibility that these children would not transcend their poverty if there was no intervention by the intended audience: "In the Progressive Era, photographers such as Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine used images of children to shock and move audiences, dramatizing not only material deprivation but also the loss of educational opportunity inherent in childhoods spent laboring" (Onion 435). Representations of children were generally dichotomous. Most positioned these children, whether poor or well off, as

⁵³ Riis writes in *How the Other Half Lives*, "these children with the training they receive - or do not receive - with the instincts they inherit and absorb in their growing up, are to be our future rulers, if our theory of government is worth anything. More than a working majority of our voters now register from the tenements" (135). "Sometimes I have doubted that anybody knows just how many there are about. Bodies of drowned children turn up in the rivers right along in summer whom no one seems to know anything about" (135). Riis's perspective is not about the commodification of children but about their wasted potential, of course: "The old question, what to do with the boy, assumes a new and serious phase in the tenements. Under the best conditions found there, it is not easily answered" (136). "Nothing is now better understood than that the rescue of the children is the key to the problem of city poverty, as presented for our solution to-day; that a character may be formed where to reform it would be a hopeless task" (139). "One gets a glimpse of the frightful depths to which human nature, perverted by avarice bred of ignorance and rasping poverty, can descend, in the mere suggestion of systematic insurance *for profit* of children's lives. A woman was put on trial in this city last year for incredible cruelty in her treatment of a step-child. The evidence aroused a strong suspicion that a pitifully small amount of insurance on the child's life was one of the motives for the woman's savagery" (144). Riis praises the charities who help children, though.

symbols of cultural significance used to sell cultural consumption. In photographs used for everything from newspaper articles to publicity for museums, middle-class children were used to symbolize innocence but also the capacity of the nation's potential in their cultural refinement and education.^{54,55} They represented, perhaps, the domestic sphere's sentimental defense against the crudeness of market forces and exchange. Working class children represented the darker side of industrialization: in essence, the deterioration of the social fabric and political potential, wasted resources and the savagery of the underclass.

The potential for commodification of children through circulation of their images was high, to say nothing of commodification of children through their valuation as disposable labor in factories. That children could be marked, then, as objects, by the circulation of their images, and replaced with a generalized cultural meaning, gestured to the tenuous nature of children's status in this time period, especially children in urban industrialized areas like New York. Indeed, Crane's choice of primary subject for *Maggie* gestures to the centrality of children in cultural discourse of the turn of the century: *Maggie* the novella narrates Maggie the character, which stands for Maggie's socioeconomic status, and this status stands for an entire class's socioeconomic status.

Whether symbols of poverty and dissolution, of transcendence of poverty via class uplift,

⁵⁴ Rebecca Onion writes, "As art historian Anne Higonnet shows, magazines and advertisers used sentimental illustrations by Smith, Green, and their contemporaries to sell consumer goods; these examples show how images of protected childhood could sell a vision of a middle-class life. Art historian George Dimock has written that the gap between Lewis Hine's photographs of child laborers and the serene portraits of children made by pictorialist contemporaries constitutes a dialectical relationship in which the working-class child is seen as exploited and yet somehow repellent, 'in need of rescue,' while the middle-class child is idealized, abstracted, and observed with attention to nostalgic detail" (435).

⁵⁵ Onion points out the sentimental abstraction behind photographs of middle class children: "The same era saw a proliferation of pictorialist images of childhood made by photographers such as Gertrude Kasebier, Clarence H. White, and Alfred Stieglitz; these photographers joined popular illustrators such as Jessie Wilcox Smith and Elizabeth Shippen Green in depicting childhood as an idyllic, idealized realm apart from adult activity" (Onion 435).

or symbols of middle class privilege and education and thus the advancement of the nation, children were at risk of being taken for what they could culturally stand for. But of course, for child laborers of poor families, they were also at risk of being taken for machines: dehumanized, rather than metaphorized. In the text, Maggie's mother does not seem to fear that Maggie will become dehumanized. In fact, she all but ensures it through her treatment of Maggie. Mary's deepest fear, though, is that Maggie will grow into the middle class: that her status as a poor and laboring child represents class transcendence and class mobility. And this class mobility, this entrance into the middle class, with all of its promises of sequestration of human relationships into commodities and ideologies that enforce Mary's poverty, would certainly threaten Mary's inhabitation of stasis. Pete's appearance in their domestic space heightens Mary's fears to a fury, as he suggests that he will assume ownership of Maggie, thus commodifying Maggie, and also drawing her into Pete's ostensibly bourgeois world. His presence portends commodification, in other words, and, as it is this process that has caused Mary to be dispossessed, it is Maggie's commodification that she must take control of by objectifying, commodifying and disowning Maggie.

Pete brings the threat of the petit bourgeois's commodity fetishism and the pretensions of the elite upper class. He comes to the Johnson's tenement apartment often, first to visit Jimmie, and then to court Maggie (or "ruin" her, as Jimmie says). As Andrew Lawson rightly points out in his article "Class Mimicry in Stephen Crane's City" (2004), Pete disrupts the demarcation between the upper class world and the lower class world of the Bowery when he sets out to court Maggie in earnest. Pete is working class and attempting to pose as upper class: "Pete seems to be the lineal descendant of the

Bowery b'boy as working class dandy, bringing uptown sophistication and self-esteem into the Johnson household" (597). His clothes, acquired secondhand from Bowery stores that sold used but high quality apparel of men from upper class families, such as his "checked" pants, "blue double-breasted coat, edged with black braid, buttoned close to a red puff tie, and his patent-leather shoes," duly impressed Maggie when Pete visit to Jimmie, and she worries that Pete disapproves of the interior design of her home (Lawson 597). That, on this first visit to their apartment, Pete's "patent-leather shoes...looked like murder-fitted weapons" is important: his footwear seems fit for murdering or fitted by a murderous violence, lethal in their suggestion of class mobility and pretense (23). His romantic attentions, running parallel in the storyline to Maggie's employment in factory work, cause Maggie to consider the processes of commodification by which she is controlled, and lead her to wonder which processes of commodification she can in turn control herself.

As Pete's courtship and Maggie's exposure to the mechanization and dehumanization of factory work make Maggie think how she may take charge of her fragmented status as an object and secure herself as an exchangeable commodity so that she may be owned, Mary becomes disturbed by the impending threat of Maggie's ruination by commodification outside of her own control. Maggie would bring upper class aspirations into the home, destabilizing Mary's attempts at emotional order via violence.

Alien Perspectives

Pete's repeated intrusions into the domestic interior of the Johnsons's household threaten Mary's desire to inhabit a static space unmanipulated by the vacillations of the

market. His appearances instigate Mary's temper, and Mary continues to degrade Maggie in order to prevent Maggie's full-fledged entrance into the world of the commodity. For the moment, though, it is Maggie's response to Pete's courtship her mother's violence that we will turn to, for it is Maggie's perspective that truly centers this narrative as a regionalist text.⁵⁶ Her represented perspective and free indirect discourse articulate recognition of her status as property, her awareness of and rejection of false consciousness, and her decision to commodify herself. Crane hinges these decisions primarily to the symbolic mode, driving the plot causality forward through the deep structure of the narrative.

It is during Pete's courtship of Maggie that Crane begins to provide access to her perspective.⁵⁷ At this point in the plot Crane stylistically employs the narrative mode of represented perception, defined by Gerald Prince in *A Dictionary of Narratology* (1987) as "a type of discourse whereby the narrator, instead of presenting the external world, presents a character's perceptions of it, presumably as they occur in his or her consciousness and without suggesting that the character has verbalized them" (81).

Maggie realizes soon after Pete begins to court her that she is ashamed of her rented,

⁵⁶ In "Experiments in Another Country," Trachtenberg notes Crane's use of perspective in works other than *Maggie*, but he does not apply this analysis to *Maggie* itself: in "The Men of the Storm," Crane manifests "a highly pointed study in the problematics of point of view. Drawn from a detached floating perspective, the sketch contains several limited points of view, each located spatially and each characterized by a feeling linked to its space... The narrator has subtly worked upon the reader's point of view, freeing it from the hold of customary feeling so that it might receive freely a newly discovered 'moral region,' the territory of 'half darkness' in which occurs another kind of existence" (146).

⁵⁷ June Howard suggests that Maggie as a character provides a safe dividing line between reader and slum life: "In *Maggie* Crane draws a line between the narrator and the reader and the characters, although perhaps Maggie herself - an extrusion of potential humanity into the alien world of the slums - marks the boundary by her uncompromising passivity, her inscrutable and virtually quietist victimage" (111). However, Howard seems to overlook Crane's use of discursive perspective in his work, which folds in Maggie's own thoughts and responses alongside the narrative voice. Maggie thus is not passive, nor quietist, but utterly expressive and dynamic in thought and choice, if not in word and assertive action. Her perspective does not create distance but closeness, as we see her social condition through her thoughts themselves.

disorderly tenement home. It symbolizes her family's dispossession and the full extent of their powerlessness towards the market's infiltration. She also comes to realize that the status of the home's interior defies the false consciousness that Pete seeks to maintain through his dress and his demeanor. Crane presents Maggie's newly altered economic comprehension of her home inflected by her emotional discernment: "Maggie contemplated the dark, dust-stained walls, and the scant and crude furniture of her home. A clock, in a splintered and battered oblong box of varnished wood, she suddenly regarded as an abomination. She noted that it ticked raspingly. The almost vanished flowers in the carpet-pattern, she conceived to be newly hideous. Some faint attempts she had made with blue ribbon, to freshen the appearance of a dingy curtain, she now saw to be piteous" (27). Through Maggie's eyes, Crane's structure of inversion that his critique of political economy hinges upon is clear: the interior of this home is already redolent of dispossession, of loss of worth and worthy people, and of social death. Maggie sees that its interior exhales the despair of true economic marginalization, and will deflate Pete's hopes of social climbing. Through Maggie's eyes we see "dark, dust-stained walls," never cleaned because never owned by the tenants, and the "scant and crude furniture." Maggie herself finally understands the social connotations of its crudeness. To her, the clock is an "abomination," revealing the social death of the dispossessed in its coffin, the "splintered and battered oblong box of varnished wood." It enforces an industrial time that invades the meaningless boundary between the mechanized public sphere and her apartment, sounding time like a death rattle "raspingly." The "hideous," barely existent flowers in the worn carpet and the rhyming "piteous" blue ribbon indicate Maggie's traumatically repetitive thought process about the hopelessness of attempting to stave off

and deny the extent to which her family's lives are controlled by economic forces out of the realm of their control. Maggie's voice comes through clearly in this scene as she feels contempt for her social position, and begins to formulate a plan to escape this veritable "tomb" of poverty.

Maggie decides, at this point in the narrative, to escape political marginalization, to dictate the terms of her commodification. She has already realized that her mother has viewed her as a commodity, a threat to her own property of unhappiness; in order to exert control over her *self* as property, she seeks to deliberately establish her value as a commodity to Pete. She perceives that Pete can provide her social mobility if she can perform her viability as a worthwhile female object. But she realizes that she may not be able to establish a clear enough distinction between the external world of deepening class stratification that Pete is attempting to overcome, and her own domestic space, which is not convincingly delineated from industrial capitalism. This leads her to focus on the telltale signs of dispossession in her home. Pete is her plan, and Crane communicates this turn in the plot through Maggie's free indirect discourse. She considers Pete to be as "a formidable man who disdained the strength of a world full of fists. Here was one who had contempt for brass-clothed power; one whose knuckles could defiantly ring against the granite of law. He was a knight" (27). Crane's narrative voice would not use the word "knight" to describe a character; this is Maggie's short-lived projection of hope onto Pete in her own words. If Maggie can successfully convince Pete that she is worthy of his attentions and protection from "the strength of a world full of fists," "brass-clothed power," and the "granite of law," she must establish a certain pretense of upper class

ownership. If she can do this, Pete will take ownership of her through marriage: he will use what she perceives to be his “formidable...contempt” for injustice to save her.

Maggie thus reacts to the domestic circumstances of violence and dispossession by articulating control over her relationship to the commodity. Maggie must demonstrate to Pete that she knows what the upper class “looks like”, including her comprehension of the status of a commodity and the status of woman as commodity. To her, the upper class means domestic order against the chaos of the market through the acquisition and ordering of domestic objects, and an upper class man who will take upon himself ownership of her to prohibit her circulation. It is because of her mother’s influence that she believes that to effect self-preservation, she must take control of her “market value,” and to do so, Maggie attempts to affix upper class markers in her home’s domestic space, to gesture to her viability. Thus, she “spent some of her week’s pay in the purchase of flowered cretonne for a lambrequin. She made it with infinite care and hung it to the slightly-careening mantel, over the stove, in the kitchen. She studied it with painful anxiety from different points in the room” (28). Now manipulating commodity fetishism because she understands its cultural currency, Maggie attempts to stabilize the disorder of her domestic space and to “class” it by designing and creating something merely decorative, merely symbolic of class, with no inherent use.

As her understanding of class markers becomes broader, Crane’s formal structural critique effects another inversion on a smaller scale within the inversion of the domestic interior absorbing and restructuring the social violence of the market. Its symbolic resolution shows us that as Maggie attempts to manipulate commodity fetishism for her own use, this “lambrequin” becomes reflective of Maggie herself. Ironically, like the

lambrequin she produces, Maggie is also the product of commodity fetishism: she is the result of commodities “standing in” for relationships. Her mother would degrade her to the status of an object because of dispossession, she works in a factory in which she is merely the limb of a machine, Pete appreciates her merely for her decorative qualities (he says to her “‘I’m stuck on yer shape. It’s outa sight’” (26)): utterly marginalized by forces fetishizing replacements for human relationships all around her, Maggie’s only agency comes through direct regard of her status as a commodity. Maggie, too, establishes herself as merely decorative with “infinite care” in the “slightly careening” domestic interior when Pete comes to court her. Crane limns out one of the most affectively sad scenes here as he articulates Maggie’s belief that she can take hold of her own circulation by using commodity fetishism to her advantage.

Andrew Lawson claims in his reading of this scene that Maggie’s behavior is indicative of the kind of “class mimicry” that Crane takes as the subject of *Maggie*, and that this class mimicry is a disruptive plot principle which similarly defines *Maggie*’s formal structure, leading to a text characterized by destabilization and lacking structural coherence. Lawson rightly points out that Maggie’s mimetic work can be characterized by commodity fetishism, “the process by which ‘the definite social relation between men themselves’ assumes ‘for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things’,” and that Maggie’s work in constructing the lambrequin marks her as the laborer she is instead of the upper-class girl she hopes to be when he writes that Maggie’s “consumption practice...connotes labor” (599). However, I do think it is necessary to note that Maggie’s work in constructing the lambrequin reflects not only on class “mimicry” but on Maggie’s class *awareness*, which Crane has us attend to through his symbolic

parallelism. It is only when we note her class awareness that we can see that Crane is delimiting an inversion and a resolution, here, not merely exploring class mimicry, for Maggie understands that it is only through commodity fetishism that she can escape the world of commodified labor, market circulation, and dispossession. But Lawson suggests that in constructing the lambrequin, Maggie backslides, through her lack of awareness, into the world of production, further marking herself as powerless to change her social situation and instead able only to mimic the upper class: “Here, emulation involves not merely the commodification of class, the packaging of a social relation for ready consumption: it looks back into the repressed world of production, the very coercive social relations class mimicry purports to escape” (599). If we note Crane’s use of inversions and resolutions as social critique, we can see that Maggie is instead very well aware of her social class, and even more importantly, she is very well aware of her own status as commodity. It is she who seeks the status of a commodity in order to ultimately escape commodity fetishism, and there is nothing unwitting about her *use* of commodity fetishism to arrange that escape.

The dynamism at work in the deep structure of this text, propelled by the triggers of symbolic objects above, though, helps us to see how Crane’s contribution to regionalism works through inversion and transposition. His critique hinges on a series of ordered transpositions and resolutions that produce a productive, not stultifying, irony. In this case, Maggie is transposed upon and exchanged with the lambrequin, the lambrequin is transposed upon and exchanged with commodity fetishism, and thus Maggie attempts to invert commodity fetishism to her advantage while she is herself representative of the absence of human relationships which constitutes commodity fetishism. These inversions

and resolutions fuel the structural cohesion that founds the basis of Crane's critique. Because his critique lies in the structure itself, the action in the deep structure of the text, is not to be overlooked. It is especially significant that we understand Maggie's agency here, for it is this agency articulated through her represented perspective and free indirect discourse which structures the events of the text. Maggie's perspective now, from this point on, become the defining motor for the story's progression. She has perceived that there is no distinction between her interior domestic space and the falsified exterior economic determination of that space; she now perceives the importance of property relations and attempts to manipulate her status as commodity. Without her perspective, we would not have those symbolically weighted scenes of her domestic interior, nor would we access her understanding of her position in the factory, nor her understanding of her role as commodity – and we wouldn't have the symbolic reversals that determine the direction of this narrative. Thus, understanding that her agency takes hold through her perspective, initiated by fixation on certain symbolic objects or scenes, is key to understanding Crane's modal tendencies.

Maggie's perspective vacillates between her represented perception, as in the scene above when Maggie takes note of her family's inferior domestic space and perceives the industrialized world is moving into the space through the coffin-like clock's box and its rasping death-rattle of a tick, and between free indirect discourse, when Crane narrates Maggie's thoughts verbatim, as, when Maggie, above, thinks that Pete is a "knight." The narrative moves freely, in and out of Maggie's represented perception, free indirect discourse, and, sometimes, other characters' represented perceptions, as in some instances of Mary's represented perceptions that I will describe below. Crane also utilizes

omniscient narration. Throughout the novella, movement amongst these perspectives attests to the complexity of Crane's narrative mode. This narrative mode and the structural apparatus of inversion that it generates is an intentional device to provide the characters an authorially sympathetic form of agency that is not exploitative, as other texts in the reformist school of writing were, but which enables space for multiple subjectivities to react to, and not simply be controlled by, their economic circumstances. In carving out space for Maggie's subjective perceptions, as well as for, to a limited extent, Mary's, Crane enables their ability to respond to their socioeconomic conditions. But he also crafts a story that is difficult to categorize because of its mixed narrative modes. Thus, *Maggie* is not quite a homodiegetic narrative, "a narrative the narrator of which is a character in the situations and events recounted," because Maggie doesn't narrate the entire story, and when scenes are described from her perspective, she doesn't narrate the scenes in first person (Prince 41). It is also not a narrative told predominantly from an omniscient narrator's perspective, as Maggie's internal point of view dominates the narrative: her represented perspective inflects many of the key scenes elucidating Crane's critique of a market economy based on rapid industrialization. Maggie's free indirect discourse and represented perspective serves at many points to bridge the realm of the surface structure to the deep structure, for it is her specific observations and fixations which enable the symbolic code to be perpetuated and thus allow the reader to see the social forces that Crane critiques. From this point of the narrative on, in other words, her perspective determines the most powerful scenes, those that can explain the seemingly acausal directions of the plot and Crane's critique. Not only is *Maggie: A Girl*

of the Streets about a character named Maggie: it is, Crane makes it clear, dictated by Maggie, a voice that needs to be heard.

Owning Unhappiness

When Pete begins to court Maggie, Mary perceives Maggie's understanding of her value as a commodity: she is threatened by Maggie's desire to portray herself as property, for it is property — its production, circulation, and ownership — that has led to Mary's dispossession. Maggie, in her realization of her status as commodity and her desire to transcend this through marriage to Pete, who would “own” and thus prohibit her circulation, threatens to introduce the world of the market that Mary has reordered her world against. Thus Mary must destroy everything, including Maggie, and including herself. With this turn in the plot, towards Mary's destructiveness of Maggie and herself, Crane asserts another inversion: violence within the domestic sphere can be revealed as alienation, expressed as the property of unhappiness. As Walter Benn Michaels points out, in the industrial capitalist consumer culture, “being oneself depends on owning oneself, and owning oneself depends on producing oneself. Producing is thus a kind of buying — it gives you title to yourself — and a kind of selling too — your labor in making yourself is sold for the self you have made. There can be no question, then, of the self entering into exchange; exchange is the condition of its existence” (*Gold Standard* 13). However, if the self and all of its property can be destroyed — made valueless — then the self cannot enter into exchange. If “the only way a person can get to be a person in the first place is by articulating in his or her nature the double nature of the commodity,” then socially articulated personhood must be obliterated (Michaels 26). Mary must deny Maggie's status as a person to prohibit her capacity to signify the commodity.

Mary's motivation to violently erase any relationships of affiliation and ownership through abuse and destruction within the confines of her home, and her claim to her only remaining possession of unhappiness, not only has a social basis, in accordance with her status as an immigrant, but an economic basis. In other words, the violence against her children does not occur in a vacuum of domestic space protected from the economy. Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge's polygraph "Happiness and the Work of Relationality" elucidates the relationship between the privatization of social violence and the capitalist system. Negt and Kluge explain the drive to destroy substantive intimate and familial relations in the domestic sphere as essentially market-based, where this drive to destruction occurs in a domestic economy which mirrors, contains, relates to and confounds the economic system of production in the public sphere. In the domestic economy of the private sphere, the characters' frustrated relationship "between expectation and a completely inadequate realization stores up a supply of aggressions and injuries," which, prefiguring a personal catastrophe, "adds up to a kind of fixed asset, *the inactive ownership of unhappiness*" (188). In *Maggie*, Mary Johnson's expectations of her own life and her family's lives are frustrated by the realities of poverty and discrimination against immigrants, and her resulting powerlessness to assert her right to ownership and therefore validate their subjecthood. She expresses her sadness at this inability to hold stake in the market economy and therefore participate in the "American dream" of ownership, sadness due to the "completely inadequate realization" of her own worth, through excessive drinking, when her volubility but also her vulnerability is most exposed. Drunk and serving her young children dinner early in the story,

The mother sat blinking at them. She delivered reproaches, swallowed potatoes and drank from a yellow-brown bottle. After a time her mood changed and she wept as she carried little Tommie into another room and laid him to sleep with his fists doubled in an old quilt of faded red and green grandeur. Then she came and moaned by the stove. She rocked to and fro upon a chair, shedding tears and crooning miserably to the two children about their ‘poor mother’ and ‘yer fader, damn ‘is soul’ (11).

Crane crystallizes the source of the frustration Mary feels into the distance between the reality of their monochromatic, dingy one-room apartment, containing the browns and grays of the rented lower-class industrial existence, even the fried potatoes and the “yellow-brown bottle,” and the quilt that she wraps her baby Tommie in, a quilt seemingly of the Old World, with its ideals of a life that will never come to pass, “of faded red and green grandeur.”

Soon after, Tommie dies (“He went away in a white, insignificant coffin, his small waxen hand clutching a flower that the girl, Maggie, had stolen from an Italian” (17)), signifying the irreparable distance between Mary’s ideals and her reality, and Mary begins in earnest her downhill trajectory towards perpetual drunkenness and arrests.

The mother had gradually arisen to that degree of fame that she could bandy words with her acquaintances among the police-justices. Court-officials called her by her first name. When she appeared they pursued a course which had been theirs for months. They invariably grinned and cried out: ‘Hello, Mary, you here again?’ Her grey head wagged in many a court. She always besieged the bench with voluble excuses, explanations, apologies and prayers. Her flaming face and

rolling eyes were a sort of familiar sight on the island. She measured time by means of spreeds, and was eternally swollen and disheveled (23).

Mary's abuse of her children stems from the sadness of her frustrated expectations, those which continued to build up into "a supply of aggressions and injuries," as Negt and Kluge write, and this sadness is also the reason for her drunkenness. As the narrative progresses, Crane describes the link between Mary's drunkenness and her frustration with her life more explicitly: "At home, [Maggie] found her mother often drunk and always raving. It seems the world had treated this woman very badly, and she took a deep revenge upon such portions of it as came within her reach" (36). While Mary rarely acknowledges her disappointment directly, instead "drunk and raving," she does take catastrophic revenge upon "the world," more specifically the world of her family, which she perceives as the extended world of the market economy.

Maggie's mother thus systematically and violently destroys all objects in her home, and then gets to work on her children, implicitly categorizing them as useless possessions on par with her crockery and stove. When Mary beats Jimmie and they struggle "like gladiators," Jimmie

"was leaning against the wall and swearing. Blood stood upon bruises on his knotty fore-arms where they had scraped against the floor or the walls in the scuffle. The mother lay screeching on the floor, the tears running down her furrowed face. Maggie, standing in the middle of the room, gazed about her. The usual upheaval of the table and chairs had taken place. Crockery was strewn broadcast in fragments. The stove had been disturbed on its legs, and now leaned

idiotically to one side. A pail had been upset and water spread in all directions”
(42).

Crane effectively places Jimmie and Maggie on the same level as the household objects that Mary has broken in this scene. Perhaps even more significantly, Crane demonstrates that Maggie understands this equation by directing the implied similes of children to objects through her gaze. Maggie’s agency is validated by her comprehension of her mother’s actions through her represented perspective. When Maggie sees the crockery their mother broke, she also perceives that Jimmie has been transmuted into a dehumanized accumulation of disembodied parts. She notes that the contrast of “blood...upon bruises on his knotty forearms” from scraping against the tenement interior is like the dishware “strewn broadcast in fragments” on the floor. Maggie sees the stove as “disturbed on its legs,” leaning “idiotically to one side,” having seen Jimmie leaning against the wall. Maggie’s “gaze” about the room reproduces the water, which was similarly dispersed, “upset,” mutely passive and dissipating, “spread in all directions.” Crane’s stylistic framing of the scene, leveling and inverting the animate and inanimate, organizes an objectively chaotic scene into an emotionally ordered one: Mary has moved methodically from one loci of destruction to another, from the furniture to her children, so that she is now applying her accumulated social energy (her agency) to her family, turning them into the children that she “owns” and systematically dis-owning them. By committing this ordered act of valuing and disowning her children, she acquires the property of her own unhappiness: Mary “lay screeching on the floor, the tears running down her furrowed face.” Now, having obliterated her material possessions and objectified her children, causing her to be able to own only her unhappiness, she

embodies unhappiness. And by embodying unhappiness, she becomes the embodiment of something that cannot be commodified: because unhappiness is always contingent upon relationality, and can never be objective, it can never be economically circulated.

Thus, by owning unhappiness, she resists becoming utterly absorbed in the undertow created by the restructuring of the economic system. In Crane's story, violence is an attempt to invert and control industrial capitalism's incursion upon the contingent leased private sphere by controlling this interior's objectification and commodification through deliberate destruction of traditionally owned objects and family members, with the last holdout for maintaining agency against it as unhappiness. Violent scenes such as this are significant to a regionalist critique of society because they frame and rationalize the violent results of class stratification. Crane situates violence as occurring most pointedly and extremely inside the home for symbolic purposes, because here, the effects of alienation find their most concentrated expression in the home, in the standardization of bourgeois ideals, which represents the stability of political subjecthood.

In Crane's construction of socioeconomic development in New York City, mechanization, whether taking form in animate or inanimate shape, is unnatural; impulsive but strangely repetitive emotional responses to this mechanization are natural. Throughout *Maggie*, Crane articulates the theory that industrialization and its forces of mechanization stultify human potential. It is this thwarting of human potential that is the cause of interpersonal violence and personal violence. When a machinelike existence becomes perceived as inevitable, and the natural human response of hystericized isolation to the fragmentation of human labor into interchangeable industrial parts becomes construed as savage and inhuman, Crane suggests, we have gotten things backwards: we

have inverted our understanding of organic social conduct and handed over social and cultural processes to machines. As Maggie continues her work in the factory, for example, she feels herself being taken over by the antisocial chaos of mechanized production, and her impulsive impulse of self-preservation reaches veiled hystericism against unnatural compression. The cause of her hysteria is implicit in Crane's syntactical construction articulated through Maggie's represented perspective:

The air in the collar and cuff establishment strangled her. She knew she was gradually and surely shriveling in the hot, stuffy room. The begrimed windows rattled incessantly from the passing of elevated trains. The place was filled with a whirl of noises and odors. She wondered as she regarded some of the grizzled women in the room, mere mechanical contrivances sewing seams and grinding out, with heads bended over their work, tales of imagined or real girl-hood happiness, past drunks, the baby at home, and unpaid wages. She speculated how long her youth would endure. She began to see the bloom upon her cheeks as valuable (35).

In this passage Crane illegitimizes the Spencerian discourse of a "natural" evolution both of the factory and the self as machine by giving the factory space irruptive, disordered and violent capability. Inanimate "air" in the factory "strangled" Maggie with more focused agency than any individual worker has. A byproduct of the factory itself, in other words, is given more conviction and power than Maggie in this setting. The "hot, stuffy room" caused Maggie to passively "shriveled." Filthy windows of the factory rattle as if they fragmented and disturbed in every sense from their frames, their dislocation occasioned by the other major product of industrialization, the train. "[N]oise and odors"

“whirl,” of their own accord, unmoored from any particular object compelling them to whirl except the “place” of the factory, the space of mechanization itself. As she feels stifled and “shriveled,” deprived of hope by the force of mechanization, Maggie’s impulse is to violently characterize the women around her as already past hope, fully mechanized themselves, “grizzled women...mere mechanical contrivances sewing seams.” However, tellingly, the women are not fully mechanized: they “sew seams” but they also “grind...out, with heads bended over their work, tales.” Like Maggie, they rebel against their enforced anonymity through individuation, in their case, “tales of imagined or real” events. Prompted by her conceptualization of their desperation to hold onto psychic distinction, she realizes that her youth may save her from becoming “grizzled” and “mechanical” as these women now are. And she “speculates” upon it.

Maggie’s response, then, to the unleashed and threatening mechanization which portends to turn her into a machine, a product of itself, if she remains in the factory is to push violently back against its force by taking up production and speculation of herself. She will sell herself in another way — at this point in the narrative, to Pete — to take control of her valuation from the deterministic to control her exchange rate as a young woman in the grip of commodity production. Her self-destructive response to the constriction of her labor conditions is to declare herself able to sell her physical value on her own terms, if sell she must. As corrupt a manifestation of agency as this is, it is still an act of agency in the face of a corrupted and inverted socioeconomic order. And it is one of the first examples of Maggie doing violence to herself in order to preserve her “self” as she speculates upon her worth as an object, in the same pattern as her mother’s

violence when Mary reduces and attempts control of socioeconomic relations through violent and destructive reactions.

In depicting Mary as a disillusioned and troubled mother whose self-destructiveness is fueled by her awareness of her poverty, Crane shows that the relationship between the domestic sphere and the public sphere, dominated by the new industrial market economy, is more complicated than a simple transference of the economic laws and values of labor and commodity to domestic arena. In Crane's work and in Negt and Kluge's exposition, Negt and Kluge do not strictly define the relationship between the private system of interfamilial/ interpersonal points of contact, labor, accumulation, and property, and the public system of labor, accumulation, and property. However, if, as Crane's narrative suggests, and Negt and Kluge's work asserts, the emotional system of the domestic takes its general principles of value and ownership from the world of market relations (where Mary takes her value to be dependent upon her productive capacity and her assets, i.e. her class) while at the same time reinterpreting these principles, then it is possible to assume that this private system is intimately informed by, while operating slantwise to, the public system of the market. The private system of interpersonal relationships and property, the "hidden story" of frustrated exchange and sadness, would then be uniquely different from and simultaneously formed and informed by the public system, where in the private sphere, this frustrated exchange, this "social energy," as Negt and Kluge put it, is "dammed up in a *private form* not at all designed to cope with such energy: it [the private form] is much too limited for that" (187-88). In effect, the domestic sphere, an arena based on interpersonal valuations, is not able to contain and process the extrapersonal social energy produced by the social or

socioeconomic “contradiction between expectation and [its] completely inadequate realization,” because the domestic sphere, in theory, should not be directly determined by the economic exchanges and equations of the market. The “private form” should not be influenced and determined by commodity fetishism, commodification, materialism, or the struggle for ownership and its inverse. It should not be governed by the effects of industrialization.

But it is, of course; and this is where social contradictions: the contradictions between bourgeois values and capitalistic laws — produce catastrophe. In *Maggie*, Crane inverts and expresses Mary’s frustrated expectations of economic equality and ownership in the public sphere as violence in the private sphere, causing the catastrophe of familial destruction and the even greater individual catastrophe of self-destruction. As Crane demonstrates, there is no firm boundary between the world of the domestic sphere and the world of the public sphere, especially in instances of extreme poverty. However, the boundary that is there *adulterates* the social energy meant to be expressed by individual production and exchange. The private sphere is not meant to contain the displaced social energies that would otherwise be expressed through labor. When this social energy is not expressed in the market economy, the laws of the market economy are incorrectly and inappropriately applied to the natural interactions of family, and build up to violent expression, because commodity fetishism does not operate within the domestic sphere.

Indeed, the superficial division between public and private spheres is a phenomenon historically concomitant with industrialization, created as if to justify the public sphere’s contamination by mechanized production and commodity fetishism and hold the private sphere as an idealized space. Negt and Kluge assert in a footnote: “In

classical theory, the *industrial landscape* and the *inner community*, because they have the same history, are a *single* object. The impression that there are two *different* objects comes out of the disciplines of sociology and psychology, irrespective of their founders' beliefs. The difference lies solely in the target of their questions. The working disciplines apply their different questions to the object so that two objects appear to be generated" (191). The fact that the "industrial landscape" and the "inner community" are, in the authors' terms, a "single community" is significant in that the economy of property relations within and related to the home in *Maggie* show the unique ways in which industrialization's main byproduct, alienation, is transfigured and interpreted across the boundary between the public and private spheres and *translated* into violence and the stasis of sadness. In *Maggie*, Crane draws attention to and complicates the sameness of the "industrial landscape" of New York City and the "inner community" of a family in a tenement home by limning out the very relationships which are supposed to be "natural" and protected from the destabilizing and destabilized economy, which are dominated by emotions, but which are actually formed and informed, and ultimately corrupted, by the alienating effects of an industrially-based economy. The characters' destructive tendencies, seemingly corrupt and "fallen," in the vocabulary of naturalism, are actually logically ordered and natural responses to the unnatural order of the market outside the home that pervades their home. But the moral order of bourgeois ethics that belies the capitalist reduction of people, especially the poor, to commodities, would belie expressions of alienation, of unexpressed social energy, as unnatural. Crane has his characters act violently to throw aside the moral "fabric" falsely dividing the bourgeois ethics of the private sphere from the capitalist laws of the public market.

Therefore, the inversions of domestic violence and ownership in *Maggie* that we have seen so far are actually economically determined, suggesting a heavy influence not only inadvertently but directly onto the private sphere by the economic laws of the public sphere. In order to impede economic determinism, to stave off its forces of utter dispossession, the characters in *Maggie* demonstrate their agency. However, the agency that they do carve out, because it is a response to a claustrophobic and tightening class system, is convoluted and catastrophic in response to the economic forces influencing their lives. However convoluted, it is an active form of agency, despite the forces at work against these characters' subjectivities. Thus, the characters actively translate the awareness of their economic alienation into destruction or self-destruction to protest the process of commodification. Transpositions of agency, in which characters act in what seems to be against their best "interests," so far include Jimmie's abuse by his father, the father's death by alcoholism, Maggie's and Jimmie's abuse by their mother Mary, Mary's objectification of Maggie and Jimmie, and Mary's disowning of Maggie.

Through the narrative, up to this point, we have seen catastrophe suggested in the deep structure of the text, the symbolic code effecting disturbing and destabilizing structural inversions foreshadows true catastrophes to come through the heightening hysteria of Maggie and her mother. The inversions of agency we have seen thus far, explicated by Crane's symbolism and inversions, belie a strict delineation between public and private, between the economic market and the domestic. It is this lack of separation between the market and the characters' private sphere that provides the illusion of a lack of agency on the part of the characters. It is because of poverty, but not because of a dearth of decisive action, that Mary "store[s]...up a supply of aggressions and injuries"

which manifests in abuse, leads to a rejection of their children, and which then results only in a property of unhappiness, a privatization of social violence.

This property of unhappiness can otherwise be considered as social energy, unexpressed in that labor which takes the modern visage of human contact. As Negt and Kluge state, “The energies that underpin and sustain this hidden story [of a personal relationship in ruins] are economic laws. Because everything occurs in the private sphere, however, these laws take on the transparency of an economy nowhere, rather they appear dangerous, obscure, ‘natural,’ anarchistic; they engender fear of contact” (187-188). By “contact” Negt and Kluge mean emotional contact. In other words, this “fear of contact,” the lack of meaningful social relationships, is caused by economic and social alienation. And the fear of contact, because it is initiated by capitalism-driven alienation, is governed by economic laws, even inside the home. For tenement dwellers especially, these economic laws govern their relationship to their home. But in no way are these economic laws “natural,” or governed by the individual self. They are imposed from without and enforce through containment, like a cage, or like the peeling walls and splintered door that enclose Maggie’s family in their tenement apartment. While there is a pretense of the maintenance of the line between public and private for Maggie and her family, wherein Maggie attempts to decorate the kitchen in the mode of a Victorian interior, Mary does not want the imposition of bourgeois norms into her home, nor the false consciousness, or, rather, false hope, of obtaining subjectivity that is not dispossessed. Mary’s urge towards self-destruction, established through and as a reaction to an implicit acceptance of their value-lessness, is stronger than the urge to emulate the upper class; emulating the upper class would, in fact, threaten Mary’s stasis, and threaten what we can understand as the

only property she wants to have, because it cannot be taken away from her: the property of unhappiness. Nobody can take away this property; in effect, she reverses her dispossession.

We have seen Crane puncture the false dichotomy between the public and private worlds already in *Maggie*; violence is more prevalent inside the home than without, because this violence is privatized as a mode of coping with the socioeconomic violence that has been imposed upon the family. The notions of a public and private sphere, created in the nineteenth century, are, of course, ideas meant to carve out and describe a bourgeois set of norms, behaviors, and expectations in which the private/domestic sphere is the site of order, morality, and familial unity. Maggie's family, unable to own their home, is instead forced to rent because as recent immigrants with very little pay, they cannot afford to buy a home. So while the ideology of public and private spheres, and with it the pretense that the market does not invade and determine relations within the private sphere, is prevalent in their social world, they cannot function within this ideology and therefore they are not beholden to this ideology, though they are aware of it. Crane chooses to focus on a family who is not constrained by or able to conform to the bourgeois norms of domestic life, and who choose to exercise their agency through self-destruction, because the Johnson family, a very poor family defined by their poverty, physical labor and renter status, best shows the truth of the impact of the industrialized economy on every individual and every family in the United States at the time. Not dominated by the ideology of the middle-class, Maggie and her family demonstrate unmitigated, "authentic" regional responses to alienation in their self-destruction.

Catastrophes of Accumulation

Crane exposes the effects of industrialization — alienation — by representing Mary's only real property as the property of unhappiness. So far he has effected two sets of inversions to demonstrate this: first, he inverts the market economy's social violence and sets it within the home by qualifying and adulterating the boundary between public and private worlds; and second, he further interiorizes domesticized violence by propelling it into the characters' subjectivities through represented perspective and free indirect discourse. By providing access to the characters' thoughts, Crane is able to unfold a deep symbolic structure of the text that signifies upon the characters' experiences and comprehension of their status within the political economy. Through the characters' logical and repetitive expressions of violence, Crane indicates that the source of alienation is the mechanized political economy; but through their gazes onto their world that he makes accessible to the reader, Crane demonstrates that these characters are not merely subject to their political economy but are fully aware of its destructive forces. Their gazes open up access to objects which, when acknowledged by the characters as significant, become symbolic of their own relationships to political economy. In many instances, Mary and Maggie are aware of these objects as symbols, and their emotional responses precipitate agential action in the form of self-destruction.

Negt and Kluge's theory can illuminate Mary and Maggie's propensity for commodification and self-destruction as agency, for their self-awareness of their status as property and their refusal to contend with the current state of market relations cannot translate into a productive expression of social validation within the home. Crane's third

inversion is this: in accumulating that which cannot really be commodified and that which can never be sold as property, Crane's characters invert the market's definition of property ownership as commodity accumulation and converts it to an inalienable possession. Negt and Kluge write, "what seems to be at stake is *personal property*...Where something is expressed as property, one finds also the process of accumulation...Within the intimate [or familial] relationship, this corresponds to dead labor. From a certain point of accumulation on, it can no longer be translated into living labor" (188). Instead of financial accumulation, Mary and Maggie accumulate the social energy of unhappiness. This unhappiness, this social protest, becomes their only remaining personal property — and an inherently *personal* property.

And it accumulates to the point of violent expression. What is at stake, in Negt and Kluge's words, is "personal property," or, more directly, personhood. Though socially alienated, by acting upon this alienation violently these characters' prevent their subjectivities from valuation by and absorption into the capitalist system. Instead, their subjectivities are asserted in personal catastrophes that signify upon the social catastrophe of capitalist contradiction. They assert their alienation, in other words, as a *positive value* which is indefinable in capitalist logic. "Dead labor" is equivalent to alienation, but these characters store up their dead labor, useless in capitalist terms, to use it as a form of protest. Marx defines alienation as devaluation: within an industrial capitalism,

The *devaluation* of the world of men is in direct proportion to the *increasing value* of the world of things. Labor produces not only commodities; it produces itself and the worker as a *commodity* — and this as the same rate at which it produces commodities in general...The product of labor is labor which has been

embodied in an object, which has become material: it is the *objectification* of labor. Labor's realization is its objectification. Under these economic conditions this realization of labor appears as *loss of realization* for the workers; objectification as loss of the object and bondage to it; appropriation as estrangement, as alienation (*Economic and Political Manuscripts of 1844*, 71).

The worker becomes alienated from the objects that his labor has produced and which his labor is translated into. Thus, all occupants of a market economy governed by the industrialization, and especially its workers, are subject to commodification. Individuals are devalued as individuals to make way for the translation of the value of their selves, their labor, into products. By storing up, or accumulating, "dead labor," the property of unhappiness, Maggie and her mother accumulate the estrangement caused by their devaluation within the market. Paradoxically, Crane implies, this estrangement be used in positive form to express alternatively valued subject positions based on revaluation of the self as not commodifiable. In order for the characters to do this, though, they have to control and destroy any semblance of market-driven commodification about themselves or their lives. It would be productive at this point too to consider the legal definition of alienation. While in legal discourse alienation means estrangement as well, it can also mean "conveyance or transfer of property to another" (*Blacks Law Dictionary*, 7th Edition). To be "alienated" in legal discourse would mean that a person is himself rendered property and is sold as a commodity. When the characters of Maggie embrace their dead labor of social alienation and accumulate it, acknowledging themselves as alienable, in effect they decide to own themselves, and do so by destroying their commodifiable traits and assets. If nothing about them can be commodified, nothing

about them can be alienable. They take their property of unhappiness, that inalienable quality that is essentially their own, out of circulation. When Mary destroys her productive capacity through drinking, she destroys her ability to be a productive and co-opted member of industrial society. When Mary razes her possessions and her children in her drunken rages, she tries to destroy any commodifiable assets. When Maggie decides to become seduced by Pete, she self-destructs to eradicate her value, the “bloom” on her cheeks.

Of notable historical significance: while Crane was inscribing the resistance of his characters to assimilation into the market of commodities, laws were passed by the Supreme Court defining property as having fully commodifiable characteristics. Alienability, as such, was ratified, giving wealthy capitalists the ability to sell any property they owned as a commodity. As Gregory Alexander explains, “The central issue in [the political debate over property, industrial capitalism, and the future of democracy in the late nineteenth century] was whether capitalist accumulation could be reconciled with democracy” and this issue was formulated through the fourteenth amendment, passed in 1868, which separated the public and private sectors into fixed spheres so that government would not have the capacity to declare any property inalienable, and therefore unable to be sold publicly in the market (250). The effect of this amendment was, essentially, as Alexander notes, to emphasize “the private commodified understanding [of property]. It sanctioned capitalist accumulation, the starkest sort of property-as-wealth, for a very broad array of business enterprises, and it created a large private domain of unregulated and unregulatable market activity” (275). While inalienable property, or uncommodifiable property, was generally relegated to its

capacity within protectionism and trusts, the nature of property as a commodity in its final expression was economic, subject to market valuation. Thus, if wage labor subjected all subjects of an industrialized and incorporated society to commodification, and all property was commodifiable, even the self as one's own property was, theoretically, subject to commodification. Even subjectivity could be commodified; it was "alienable" because anything that could be construed as property could be sold. But the one thing that Mary and Maggie accumulated, the property of unhappiness, could not be sold. Their resistance is anti-capitalist accumulation.

Thus, by the logic of inversion, violence in *Maggie*, as externalized or as self-destruction, is *productive*, but not in the capitalist sense. It results in defilement of publicly defined commodities while leaving only the property of unhappiness. By the logic of Crane's text, violence is the only means by which to acquire anything of true value. To use violence is to "fight fire with fire," to assert the market principle's use of violent commodification against itself, and to invert capitalistic production. Inversions and resolutions have so far manifested a structure for *Maggie*. If Mary believes that violent destruction is the only means to individual ownership, the market knows that mechanized production is the only way to sell great quantities of identical goods. Maggie's agency follows suit for a short time within Crane's text, but again, inversely: she not only embraces commodity fetishism, but commits herself to commodification, in order to attempt to control her circulation as commodity.

Maggie soon realizes, though, that it is impossible to control one's circulation in the market: the market will determine the flow and exchange of the commodity, and not

the other way around. Her mother's destruction of the lambrequin Maggie produced foreshadows this realization:

Her mother drank whiskey all Friday morning. With lurid face and tossing hair she cursed and destroyed furniture all Friday afternoon. When Maggie came home at half-past six her mother lay asleep amidst the wreck of chairs and a table.

Fragments of various household utensils were scattered about the floor. She had vented some phase of drunken fury upon the lambrequin. It lay in a bedraggled heap in the corner...When Pete arrived Maggie, in a worn black dress, was waiting for him in the midst of a floor strewn with wreckage. The curtain at the window had been pulled by a heavy hand and hung by one tack, dangling to and fro in the draft through the cracks at the sash. The knots of blue ribbons appeared like violated flowers. The fire in the stove had gone out. The displaced lids and open doors showed heaps of sullen grey ashes. The remnants of a meal, ghastly, like dead flesh, lay in a corner. Maggie's red mother, stretched on the floor, blasphemed and gave her daughter a bad name (29).

Maggie is literally and figuratively, stranded in this destruction "in the midst of a floor strewn with wreckage." Maggie's mother has broken chairs and a table, pulled down curtains, dirtied the stove, and has thrown leftovers of a meal aside on the floor, where they lay "ghastly, like dead flesh...in a corner." Her mother's body mirrors the image of dead flesh strewn on the floor, "red" and "stretched on the floor." Here, Crane uses the mythical to signify upon his social critique. Maggie's mother is a beast, destructive of objects and violent towards herself as well, relegating her own body to inanimate flesh to oppose its circulation in the market. In the mythical deep structure of the text, which

Crane establishes to gesture to the contemporary capitalist world, Mary is the “cannibal giant or ogre of folk tales” who has rendered the scene into an image of carnage (Frye 148). Mary’s capacity for self-destruction, though, gives her productive agency beyond the immediate scene of self-destruction. She begins to embody unhappiness, here, becoming the property of unhappiness she wishes to be. So while her violent tendencies occur in response to the violence of the traditional demonic world she is subjected to, the logic of these actions is inversely economically productive because the contemporary capitalist world in which she lives is inversely logical.

Pete, on the other hand, represents to Maggie what seems to be an alternate social order, in which there is justice and rationality, and in which justice for Maggie will be meted out. This, of course, is Maggie’s misconception. In believing that she can control the violence of the market by articulating bourgeois ethics, she fell prey to false consciousness, symbolized by the lambrequin’s “knots of blue ribbons...like violated flowers” that Mary destroyed. While Maggie had believed that she could control her commodification by using commodity fetishism to gesture to Pete her ability to have class mobility, her mother’s actions make symbolically clear to her the fact that the commodity determines its own circulation, not its creator (or laborer, in Marxist terms). These “violated flowers,” articulated as “violated” through Maggie’s represented perspective, also foreshadow Maggie’s decision to destroy her main commodifiable trait besides her appearance, her virginity, in order to fully determine her value.

When Pete begins to court Maggie in earnest after the scene above, Maggie is already latently aware of the impossibility of controlling her market worth as a commodity. In the ensuing “dance hall scenes,” Pete exposes Maggie to the recreational

world of the Bowery vaudeville act, and Crane uses Maggie's represented perspective to access her intuition of the unlikelihood of taking control of her commodity valuation in order to ensure social mobility. Pete often takes Maggie to see melodramatic plays, "in which the brain-clutching heroine was rescued from the palatial home of her guardian, who is cruelly after her bonds, by the hero with the beautiful sentiments" (38). It is through Maggie's gaze that Crane communicates the adjectival tone of this performance: Maggie perceives the heroine's home as "palatial," her guardian as "cruel," the hero as profferer of "beautiful sentiments." In this scene we are viewing the play from Maggie's subject position, and Maggie's insights dominate the scene's meaning. When "Maggie lost herself in sympathy with the wanderers swooning in snow storms beneath happy-hued church windows," it is Maggie's emotion that determines the otherwise uncharacteristic narratorial conviction "Joy always within, and they, like the actor, inevitably without" (38). She notes that the play is entertaining for its promises of rapturous wealth, for its offer of an inconceivable escape that miraculously elevates the audience out of their own poverty for night's worth of projection. But they are brought down to earth, with no plan to achieve that "joy within" when the play is over.

Most significantly, Crane articulates Maggie's realization of the play's escapist dangers when he has Maggie express the "ecstatic pity" of the audience in the pivotal line "they hugged themselves in ecstatic pity of their *imagined or real condition*" (38, italics mine). Maggie's own understanding of the play's empty promises of class mobility and the fantastical escapist promises that the play's promises of wealth make but can never live up to comes to the fore here when Crane uses her perspective to articulate and very nearly quote Marx's warning about commodity fetishism and its function in capitalist

society: “[T]he commodity-form, and the value-relation of the products of labour within which it appears, have absolutely no connection with the physical nature of the commodity and the material relations arising out of this. *It is nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things*” (*Capital: Volume One*, 165; italics mine). In other words, Maggie realizes that the spectacle of this Bowery vaudeville play functions as commodity fetishism functions, to perpetuate the false consciousness of those who fall prey to the promises of the culture of consumption, those who take the play to be reality, and those consume the commodity in seeking the social relations it substitutes. The glamour and sentiment of the play promises an escape from social alienation that, like the fantastic form of the commodity, it can never deliver.

When Mary disowns Maggie because of her improper relationship with Pete, it is the work of “catastrophe,” in Negt and Kluge’s terms, in which overaccumulation of the social energy of unhappiness must be expressed violently because even dead labor, dead social energy, breeds upon itself. This violence further aids her ability to declare her social power. Refusing to exert her social energy through labor, her stored-up unhappiness must be asserted as violence in order to perpetuate this property of unhappiness: in this scene, “The mother lay screeching on the floor, the tears running down her face” (42). Negt and Kluge explain: “Unhappiness...cannot lie still. Although amassed like a treasure, it does not stay at rest like a hoard of gold or implements of destruction; rather, it begins to breed labor power, even as dead labor. One might say: such internal supplies of the experience of unhappiness are at their most explosive when they lack points of human interaction (living labor), when they circulate among

themselves” (188). Defined by conventional social values, Mary’s dispossession of Maggie is an utter catastrophe: it seems inhuman to disown one’s daughter upon the basis of her threatening capacity to bring bourgeois ethics inside the home. Yet, again, the violence and objectification in this narrative is an ordered response to a disordered social system. In that light, Mary’s response is utterly human: it is motivated by self-preservation. She uses her accumulated labor power, or social energy, to protect herself.

By the time Maggie is overtly dispossessed by her mother, thrown out as an object of nuisance, she has already realized that aspiring to the status of a commodity in attempts to control the potential circulation and valuation of herself as a commodity is hopeless. As she sees her mother identify her as an object, a rejected commodity, she comes to the realization that it is up to her to devalue her worth in order to save herself — in order to accumulate her own property of unhappiness. Ironically, she performs the same symbolic actions as her mother. Mary, mythically beastlike, “upreared her head and shook her tangled locks,” saying to Maggie, “‘Teh hell wid him and you’” while “glowering at her daughter in the gloom. Her eyes seemed to burn balefully” (42). She condemns Maggie and casts her out, saying “‘Yeh’ve gone to teh deh devil, Mag Johnson, yehs knows yehs have gone teh deh devil. Yeh a disgrace teh yeh people, damn yeh. An’ now, git out an’ go ahn wid dat doe-faced jude of yours. Go teh hell wid him, damn yeh, an’ a good riddance. Go teh hell an’ see how yeh likes it’” (42). Fully conceiving of her mother’s depth of rejection, Maggie “gazed long at her mother” during this speech, and “began to tremble” (42). Finally, she accedes to Pete’s attempts at persuasion, to “[c]ome ahn out wid” him (43). But this accession is her own choice. She is no more seduced by Pete than she is unaware of her status as contingent commodity. In deciding to leave with

Pete, she decides to destroy this commodity status once and for all, to protect herself from her mother's wrath and the violence of the market's valuation. Thus, she decides to become that fallen woman that her mother already believes she is. In represented perspective, Maggie "cast a glance about the room filled with a chaotic mass of debris, and at the red, writhing body of her mother" (43). She sees a demonic infiltration of monstrous unhappiness, and a junkyard of a home in which social violence has wrought its wrath and Mary has countered it with her own: where all her mother has is her own unhappiness and fiercely defends it. In response to her mother's insistence that she "'Go teh hell an' good riddance'" once more, "[s]he went" (43). The phrase "she went" is represented in free indirect discourse, as though Maggie were herself telling her mother defiantly that she will indeed go to hell. While many critical readings of *Maggie* classify it as deterministic, this scene in particular belies a reading in which Maggie has no agency and bears no awareness of her subjectivity.

If Maggie's mother uses violence to assert agency in response to a perceived socioeconomic violence, in order to assert control over the only thing that can't be privatized – herself - *then violence is, from her perspective, the only means to ownership*, where the only possible possession is one's unhappiness. As Pete comes into the tenement apartment to take Maggie out soon after this factory scene, Maggie's mother says "'The *hell* wid him and you...Yer a disgrace teh yer people, *damn* yeh...Go to *hell* an' see how yeh likes it...Go teh *hell* now, and see how yeh likes it...Go teh *hell* an' good riddance" (43). Condemning Maggie to hell four times, Mary effectively disowns her, nullifying her familial relationship to Maggie. Maggie foresaw this occurrence during the aforementioned fight with Jimmie. Soon after the overt act of disowning by

condemnation, however, Mary blames Maggie for “ruining” or prostituting herself, when Mary herself had all but ensured it, sobbing: “‘Ah, who would tink such a bad girl could grow up in our fambly, Jimmie, me son. Many deh hour I’ve spent in talk wid dat girl an’ tol’ her if she ever went on deh streets I’d see her damned. An after all her bringin’ up an’ what I tol’ her and talked wid her, she goes teh de bad, like a duck the water’” (46). Mary demonstrates here that her only property is that of unhappiness, Crane’s metaphor for the accumulating stasis of alienation. She has demolished her few possessions, turning her children, who should be untouched by market value, into objects to be destroyed, systematically destroying them, and claiming for her own her self-made misery. As a reaction to the unnatural imposition of value onto all aspects of life in the increasingly industrialized market-driven public sphere, Mary establishes an order all her own within her domestic space, using violence in a logical and morally depraved way which reflects and transfigures the illogical, unmoored moral depravity of the public sphere. In her alienation and her struggle to resist the unnatural categories of the market, she has, ironically, made her children believe the only way to survive is to constitute oneself as an object in order to declare control over one’s potential commodity status. And we will see the implications of Maggie’s consciousness of her commodification in the decisions that she makes.

Maggie’s project in the rest of the narrative involves destroying her commodity value. Crane’s structure of inversion and resolution continues: if violence can destroy commodities, in the destruction of the commodity its contained social energy is released as agency. The more destruction, the more agency. Her virginity she destroys in taking up residence with Pete. Crane then recalls Maggie’s vision to maintain the “bloom on her

cheeks,” her beauty and the trappings of a well-decorated body, in a dance hall scene after she has been disowned by her mother:

A ballad singer, in a dress of flaming scarlet, sang in the inevitable voice of brass. When she vanished, men seated at the tables near the front applauded loudly, pounding the polished wood with their beer glasses. She returned attired in less gown, and sang again. She received another enthusiastic encore. She reappeared in still less gown and danced (54).

The dance hall seems a funhouse mirror with deceptive performances of fabled wealth and value. It is in Maggie’s eyes “a hall of irregular shape” now. It is not a well-defined field of space delineated by performer and audience as in the scene of sentimental melodrama. The men interfere with the singer’s performance “near the front,” this time not separated by the veil of fantasy and sentiment but instead “pounding” with their beer glasses demands for further display. When the singer appeases them by returning, they simply persist. Through Maggie’s represented perspective, her encores seem like a deathly repetition, and simplified to To Maggie at this point in the narrative, the concept of a commodified self is highly disturbing. On the deep structural level of the text, Maggie’s represented perspective enables access to the symbolic resonance of her recognition. Her fixation on what amounts to an essential striptease fosters her apprehension in which she conceives that attempting to control one’s commodity status will result in an endless loop of self-erasure. Maggie sees her future mirrored in the performer’s, stripping herself down to the bone to satisfy the market’s demands and yet never attaining enough value to transcend the market’s control. Maggie’s gaze also calculates the significant detail of the singer resorting to dancing, using her body as her

last vestige of value. Thus, Crane's symbolism in this dance hall scene gestures to Maggie's decision to refuse the uncontrollable marketing of the body as commodity by destroying the body's capacity to be commodified for its aesthetic and sexual worth.

And finally we have come to a key turn in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. If we had not noted the presence of Crane's inversions and resolutions, symbolic framework for these inversions that speak to the issues of agency and political economy, and especially that these inversions demonstrate that violence is productive in an anti-capitalist capacity in this text, that we might not be able to note this turn for what it is. When Maggie decides to become a prostitute after Pete rejects her once and for all, convinced she will prevent him from achieving class mobility, she does so in order to destroy her body's capacity to become fetishized as a commodity. Prostitution does not signify her acquiescence to commodification; on the contrary, she is fully aware that it will destroy her value as a woman in the market. Her social energy will be preserved in her own property of unhappiness if she avoids commodification through destruction of her valuation. Within this inversion, that of destroying the self as commodity in order to preserve the self as subject position, Crane inheres symbolic inversion on a minute level. As a prostitute having escaped the world of the commodity to embrace her world of self-preservation through destruction, Crane reminds us of Maggie's identification with the singer in the dance hall now that she is a prostitute: "Crossing glittering avenues, she went into the throng emerging from the places of forgetfulness. She hurried forward through the crowd as if intent upon reaching a distant home...A concert hall gave to the street faint sounds of swift, machine-like music, as if a group of phantom musicians were hastening" (76). Crane here reverses Maggie's perspective of the interior of the dance

hall and its market signification to Maggie's view of the dance hall spectacle from a position outside of its reach. In Maggie's represented perspective, the music, mechanistic and ghostlike, has no bearing upon her anymore. The dance hall scenes of her past are merely ghosts to her, beating time to the mechanized force of the market economy upon those who consent to its prices. This is a "phantom-like" past to Maggie, who has left behind the life of market determination to establish the ability to name her own body's figurative price, which she desires to be nothing at all. If prostitution in conventional social discourse of the period meant utter commodification, to Maggie, on the other hand, it means liberation from the burden of social contradictions that determine her subject position as circulatory thing. Without commercial value, which she destroyed relying on social prohibitions against prostitution, there is no risk of social determination against her will.

Throughout the narrative, Maggie's represented perspective and free indirect discourse articulates descriptive emotional nuance that in turn signals a symbolic narrative depth of what she sees in tenement life and Bowery culture. In the deep structure of the text her insight indicates action, for every moment that Maggie further conceives of her subject position in the industrialized market economy, Crane inverts normative modes of agency to define for Maggie a mode by which she can preserve her interiority in ways paradoxical to conventional survival in this region. Maggie's represented perspective guides the reader up until her death, which Crane uses to launch his final turn of the critique against industrial capitalism. In Maggie's final scenes, her sadness is clearly definitive of the property of unhappiness that she has accumulated. Her sadness is painted into the urban landscape itself: "The girl went into *gloomy* districts

near the river, where the tall black factories *shut in the street* and only occasional broad beams of light fell across the pavements from saloons” (77, italics mine). Maggie has, though, accumulated all that she wished to: by devaluing herself, she has effected self-possession. Her unhappiness is her unalienable and unmarketable property. It is at the end of Maggie’s life when Crane again hints at the mythic history of self-determined agency in a demonic setting: these gloomy districts are a labyrinth through which Maggie has to find her way. The reality of the city, its industrial factory foundation, is set up to challenge Maggie to confront her agency through, as Frye describes the mythical correlative, “the labyrinth or maze, the image of lost direction” (Frye 150). But Maggie has not truly lost direction.

She seeks the heart of the city’s grim maze, Crane’s symbolic and mythical maneuvers indicating that it yields some kind of insight into her next course of action. “She went into the blackness of the final block. The shutters of the tall buildings were closed like grim lips. The structures seemed to have eyes that looked over her, beyond her, at other things. A far off the lights of the avenues glittered as if from an impossible distance. Street car bells jingled with a sound of merriment” (77). In the urban labyrinth, the unreality of industry becomes particularly clear to Maggie: in free indirect discourse Crane notes her association of the buildings with the human power to judge and dictate, their shutters like grim lips. Productive power, in other words, is attributed to mechanisms of the market, not to individuals. Maggie thus intuits the buildings’ gaze as a built environment endowed with the human power to create, but with inhuman values and disproportionate power, one that dehumanizes the human, and humanizes the object. This attempts to diminish her value still, as it judges her capacity to produce and thus

ascertains her value as a commodity still, despite her apparently insignificant commercial worth. Maggie in this final scene seeks to grasp and assert her last vestiges of self-possession by declaring herself defined by her accumulated property of unhappiness, her alienation, and nothing more. This social energy builds and builds as she makes her way through the industrial labyrinth. When she confronts the “fat man” by the river, her next and final declaration of agency becomes clear.

Caught between factories and the fat man in the heart of the labyrinthine urban world, Maggie must decide whether she will continue to allow her value to be determined and consumed by the market. The fat man is her last customer; he is the only man who bears any interest in her as a prostitute. His presence does not signify a failure on her part to acquire interest, or a descent in the horror of prostitution, or a surrealist apparition, or a punishment meted out for her moral transgressions, or an ironizing of Christian morals that condemn Maggie for neglecting to conduct her life by means of a middle class system of ethics⁵⁸. Instead, Crane relies on myth and symbolism to distinguish the significance of this scene: the fat man becomes the minotaur at the center of the labyrinth that Maggie must contend with in order to declare her strength once and for all; as Frye writes “often” the labyrinth contains “a monster at its heart like the Minotaur” (150). At the interstices of the urban labyrinth of mechanized production and the river, marked within the system of the demonic world for death — “the world of water is the water of death, often identified with spilled blood” — Maggie confronts the Minotaur, symbolic in the moment of Crane’s regionalist tale of excessive consumption (Frye 150).

⁵⁸ For more on the possible interpretations of the “fat man” in *Maggie* and his relationship to the inner-city novel as a genre, see James R. Giles’s *The Naturalistic Inner-City Novel in America: Encounters with the Fat Man*.

When almost to the river the girl saw a great figure. On going forward she perceived it to be a huge fat man in torn and greasy garments. His grey hair straggled down over his forehead. His small, bleared eyes, sparkling from amidst rolls of red fat, swept eagerly over the girl's upturned face. He laughed, his brown, disordered teeth gleaming under a grey, grizzled mustache from which beer-drops dripped. His whole body gently quivered and shook like that of a dead jelly fish.

Chuckling and leering, he followed the girl of the crimson legions (78).

Maggie has two options here: to fight the Minotaur or to consent to his consumption by acquiescing to her residual commodity status. The "tall buildings" challenge her with their eyes like windows telling her she may not escape their mechanistic gaze and that she is thus not capable of producing a property of the self that she can value outside of the market's system of production, as this independence is at an "impossible distance," and the "merriment" promised by these lights of capitalism is merely a "sound," and is never attainable. The fat man effectively derides Maggie, laughing because she is terminally bound, despite her attempts at extrication, to her political economic condition as a commodity, for his appetite is fixated on her apparently consumable qualities. Thus Maggie is condemned on both sides to remain a subject of the market and nothing more. It is clear that she has not destroyed enough of the vestiges of her material worth, although she has indeed chosen to leave her family, lose her virginity, and destroy her symbolic social worth through prostitution.

What follows is the ultimate catastrophe of the narrative, simultaneously Maggie's ultimate assertion of agency. Forced to choose between reintegration into the urban world of production and the social insistence that she will remain a commodity no

matter her efforts, Maggie kills herself. “At their feet the river appeared a deathly black hue. Some hidden factory sent up a yellow glare, that lit for a moment the waters lapping oilily against timbers. The varied sounds of life, made joyous by distance and seeming unapproachableness, came faintly and died away to a silence” (78). Crane utilizes Maggie’s represented perspective through her last moments in order to assert that this act of suicide is in fact her choice. It is perceptible through the description of the water as “deathly black,” where we can determine that Maggie conceived of death as her final act of self-destruction; in her sightline of the “yellow glare” of the factory that emphasized the water’s proximity to the timbers she was standing upon, and thus showed her the feasibility of her plan; in the sounds “of life” that she rejects because they are in the last instance distant and “unapproachable,” lacking true joy when close up. And her represented perspective closes out as these “varied sounds...died away to a silence.” She dies, in other words, with her perspective intact, and thus with her agency intact. She chooses to rebel in this final act against the insistence of political economy’s falsely dichotomous choices.

Maggie’s only significant possession, her unmarketable property of happiness consisting of social energy, has led to this catastrophe, this final testimonial of its worth, and thus of her worth as an individual. We may note the “gloominess” and “grimness” of the heart of the urban scene, reflective of her awareness that she has done all that she could and yet cannot free herself from the constraints of the market. She uses this social energy of unhappiness to assert the self as inalienable. Negt and Kluge contend that suicides communicate an inherently economic statement: “It is the *property* of my death that I *produce* at the expense and to the exclusion of others” (188). In one fell swoop,

Maggie attests to the market that she can produce property that cannot be assimilated by its force, and that she can possess this property as an inhered marker of the self that can never be dissimilated without her consent. Her final act is an act of violent self-destruction, and thus occasions Crane's final inversion: property that can only be produced through violence indicates the corrupted truth of the industrialized economy itself. Construed another way, violent self-destruction was the only way for Maggie to express her actual relationship to property, her complete and utter control over herself. Maggie's success in self-ownership absent the market's influences is epitomized in suicide, for she dictates through this suicide the power she and only she has over her subject position.

Crane's final inversion and synthesis posits that the logic of industrial capitalism is so utterly illogical, causing agency to become so thwarted, that suicide is the only way that it can be expressed. His structural mode of inversions attest to industrial capitalism's convoluted status: only through an extensive series of reversals and their resolutions can he untangle its contradictions and express an effective assertion of agency within this system. Even then, Maggie's agency looks like self-destruction, but self-conscious alienation and its violent expression is the only truly "productive" mode of existence in this system. This is why Maggie's perspective is so valuable and so essential in this narrative. It is only through Maggie's eyes, through the eyes of utter dispossession and economic relegation, that Crane can depict the valuable subject position of alienation and its productive correctives to industrial capitalism. If self-preservation looks like self-destruction because in order to protect the self from becoming commodified, one must destroy every vestige of the commodity within oneself, then this is indeed a system built

on inversions. It is only through inversion that Crane can hold up a mirror to show the truth of its convoluted social effects. So while Maggie's death seems a failure, she has actually succeeded against the demonic forces embodied in this regional economy. Crane's social critique does not prescribe literal suicide to address the prohibition of agency within industrial capitalism, though. Suicide is a metaphor for how an individual may reconcile his or her relationship to shifting property relations within a newly dominant form of production. In broader prescriptive terms, suicide represents the violent reclamation of the inalienability of the self against the intrusions of the chaotic and antisocial market. Here, as in other regionalist works, violence is the only mode by which to reclaim one's rightful property.

The Wolf at the Door: Jacob Riis's Hell of the Dispossessed

Jacob Riis's work also seeks to penetrate the artificial dividing line between public and private spheres, in order to reframe the lives of the poor living in tenements in New York during the late 1880s and 1890s. Riis's narratives, unlike Crane's, are not literary as per the fictional mode of the novel or short story. But Riis's structural mode shares some particularly regionalist elements with Crane's *Maggie*. Both authors' modes are influenced by their work in literary journalism, thus their documentary styles (and in fact, many Gilded Age literary writers began their careers as journalists, Joel Chandler Harris, Stephen Crane, Jacob Riis, Theodore Dreiser, Hamlin Garland, and Frank Norris among them). Riis's work follows suit in its demonstration of literary techniques, particularly *How the Other Half Lives*, which, published in 1890, exceeds the bounds of journalistic account. In his narrative of the tenements, Riis presents a city that relegates its foundational workforce to tenement housing. He structures this account through

repeating scenes featuring motifs of verticality, in which the physicality of multi-leveled tenement buildings and their interiors metaphorize industrial capitalism's rigidly stratified socioeconomic hierarchy. These scenes are frozen in time through Riis's use of the narrative device of synchrony, and in them, through strategic use of detail that undercuts dominant logic, he compresses verticality to overturn contemporary notions of socioeconomic hierarchy. Riis also invokes the uniqueness of the tenement neighborhood as a defined region in these synchronic scenes, demonstrating that they are unaffected by the more fluid cosmopolitan exchange and class mimicry taking place in more affluent neighborhoods. So while these tenements manifest timelessness, they are clearly part of a space that has been determined solely by New York's urban industrial development.

In contesting the validity of contemporary notions of socioeconomic hierarchy through tropes of verticality, Riis makes explicit the socioeconomic critique Crane implies at the end of his novella. In the scene of Maggie's implicit death, Maggie "went into gloomy districts near the river, where the tall black factories shut in the street and only occasional broad beams of light fell across the pavements from saloons" and "[t]he shutters of the tall buildings were closed like grim lips. The structures seemed to have eyes that looked over her, beyond her, at other things" (77). Riis takes up where Crane left off by renegotiating his narrator's relationship to verticality through examining the moral assumptions that provide hierarchy its "scaffolding." In figuring the narrator's stance towards these moral assumptions (and thereby working through similar perspectives of readers'), Riis overturns the dominant American interpretation of Herbert Spencer's theory of social status in order to iterate and defend the (potentially violent) agency of the poor. Herbert Spencer was a prominent British philosopher and political

theorist who coined the phrase “survival of the fittest” in regards to Darwin’s work later published as *On the Origin of Species*, and was especially respected in the United States, where, as biographer Mark Francis claims, he “had many more followers than either Darwin or Marx” (8). In many of his writings, Spencer asserted that industry would enable society to evolve, and that the natural development of an industrial society would be the confluence of man and the machine, though any development in society was inherently furthered by conflict or struggle.⁵⁹ Many intellectuals and political philosophers took Spencer’s earlier theories as a defense of mechanization at any cost, even when the “progress” promised by mechanization would result in widespread poverty; the negative effects of industrialization would only affect those who were not morally or physically able to participate in progress. Jacob Riis sought to emphasize the importance of justice and equality, especially in regards to the poor, in response to such evolutionary theories as Spencer’s.⁶⁰ These dispossessed occupants of leaning tenement houses are subjects of a local hell in Riis’s conception, a contradiction in terms, and yet it is a particularly regional hell that could only have come about in New York because of

⁵⁹ Spencer also essentially argued that man would become confluent with the machine during the industrial age: that “the commercial struggle” is “accompanied by an industrial transformation of the human form. Evolution worked to bring human beings into correspondence with their environment in such a way that they became partly machines...Measuring instruments such as scales, thermometers, microscopes and barometers were extensions of the senses, while levers, screws, hammers, wedges, wheels and lathes were extensions of the limbs” (Francis 48). Spencer’s hope was that with the progress effected by the relationship between man and machine, “duty and privation would overcome desire and grief. Emotions would be renounced and the human psyche and society in general would be improved by their absence (Francis 48). But Spencer later rejected emotional renunciation itself, acknowledging that it resulted in “harshness and pathos” (Francis 48). Implicit in Spencer’s doctrine, as interpreted by American proponents of industrialization, was that mechanized labor would improve society as it was a necessary part of evolution, and any negative effects of industrialization were the expression inevitable conflicts that had to arise from any evolutionary progress, and thus not necessarily problems that needed to be addressed as such.

⁶⁰ Gregory S. Jackson writes in *The Word and Its Witness: The Spiritualization of American Realism* that Riis’s emphasis on agency was formed in part as a result of socialism’s influence, and in part as a response to Spencerianism and the predominance of “salvation through grace” which posited that the fallen should be left to contend with their given circumstances because their “natures” are irrevocably marred (249). Riis’s focus on human agency “made individual redemption inseparable from social salvation,” liberalizing Protestant humanism (250).

the effects of this city's rapid industrialization and urbanization. Riis freezes this hell in time to demonstrate that it is geographically fixed and temporally contained by the economic effects of urban industrialization. That hell is defined spatially and temporally from the fluidity of the cosmopolitan city by the very economic elements that have given rise to the city itself. The city's economic expansion, Riis's formal structure suggests, carved out a space of compression in which the "underworld" or "other half" is divided and sequestered from the middle and upper classes and in which a particular and specific cultural logic maintains itself because of that sequestration. Riis seeks to prove that this highly spatialized hell where time seems to stand still is one which is, despite its foreignness, shaped by the utterly temporal industry around it, and that its apparent timelessness provides opportunity to identify the impoverished as experiencing conditions which could happen, and which do happen, to all classes of readers. The "other half" thus shares an equivalent moral stake with the classes of more means, and this equivalent morality should, in Riis's view, lead to a deliberate dismantling of the moralization associated with economic hierarchies as well as acknowledgement of the subjectivities of the lower classes.

However, Riis's social reform writing, especially in *How the Other Half Lives*, has frequently been considered essentially uninterested in the poor as individual subjects. Critics have contended that Riis's narrator advocates sympathy for the poor by effectively stabilizing the line between reader and tenement dweller or tramp. In these critics' eyes, Riis's narrative serves to distance the reader from his subjects by frequently iterating the "other half's" lack of agency and stereotypical characteristics. They argue too that his photography, which often presents the poor in various environments of apparent squalor,

situates Riis, and by extension the reader, as the only possibly powerful character in the otherwise frozen and fixed, agent-less scene.⁶¹ But recent readings of Riis's *How the Other Half Lives* attend to Riis's formal narrative moves as much or moreso than his literal touristic movements into tenements and within the slums, thereby focusing especially on Riis's implicit enabling of agency in his subjects across class lines. Of these readings, my argument is particularly indebted to Gregory S. Jackson's *The Word and Its Witness: The Spiritualization of American Realism* in which Jackson discusses Riis's *How the Other Half Lives* as well as his virtual-tour narratives. Jackson asserts that the virtual world Riis created in his text and lectures serves create an allegorical space in which Riis establishes a "double narrative" of both representative tenement life and of Christian hermeneutics, wherein readers, recognizing themes and allusions of Christian allegories, are prompted to engage via Christian allegory with the tenements' "virtual immediacy of temporal experience with spiritual consequences" (Jackson 219). In engaging readers through this double narrative of touristic journey and Christian allegory, Riis invites contemporary audiences not only to identify but to transgress class lines between themselves and tenement subjects, for the sake of engaging with the poor as equalized on the basis of Christianity to his readers.⁶² If we can consider Riis's narrative

⁶¹ See Russ Castronovo's account of Riis's social reform writing in *Beautiful Democracy: Aesthetics and Anarchy in a Global Era*. Castronovo asserts that Riis's narratives, while invested in social reform, operate through distancing effects that sanitize their subjects for middle-class readers. Riis's emphasis especially on beauty and nature in the form of gardens and parks provides, in Castronovo's account, a simplistic disciplinary and environmental solution to the problem of the overcrowded tenement house and the criminal tendencies of slum areas. It also aestheticizes the reformer's desire to order the poor, while Riis's use of photography distances himself from the poor he captures in images, enabling him to categorize them as environmentally determined while remaining distinct as an agential subject himself. See also June Howard's *Form and History in American Literary Naturalism*: Howard describes naturalism, including Riis's work, as distinguished by its passive narrators who cannot intervene in their "brutish" subjects' victimhoods because of impermeable class boundaries.

⁶² Jackson argues that what may be misperceived as Riis's "Othering" in the text is actually a palpable closeness to the experience of mutual agency and responsibility effected through the narrative's allegorical

as working through buried formal logic in order to evaluate the economic system which has led to tenement housing, then Riis's work turns not on pure sentimentalized distance. It works on the level of the literary motif, not to create distance but to bridge that distance between his readers and subjects through empathetic recognition. Crane's and Riis's work, then, though superficially distinct stylistically, draw on similar structural movements that reflect the region of New York itself. Thus, while Jackson points out that Riis and Crane have been divided by critics into camps of sentimentalism and naturalism, respectively, I take his lead in uniting their texts' formal movements (230).

If Riis's *How the Other Half Lives* demonstrates influence of Christian hermeneutics, then Riis uses regionalist techniques in order to frame allegory to critique late-century New York City poverty and property relations. Riis "regionalizes" hell, because it is through this formal move that he enables readerly access to his subjects through allegory. In stopping time in synchronic scenes, Riis uses latent formal structures, as Crane also did in *Maggie*, to enable not simply a description of subjects' downfall but a critique of the local economic mode that causes readers to see these figures as fallen, and which caused these figures to fall. In his use of the trope of violence, too, Riis's reformist message hinges on regionalist technique. He structures a self-contained, regionally distinct space of hell that allows him ultimately to link violence with property relations. Thus, he establishes the relationship between the region's residents and that region's economic particularities as one of contentious dispossession, and suggests that

function. "Riis's visual texts are interactive for what they require from the audience: a recognition of sentimental tropes that in turn invite a creative act of misrecognition, or second sight. Through the aesthetics of immediacy, Riis framed these familiar images, using sentimental conventions to destabilize the semiotic production of realism - making the social world newly visible to audiences through an optics of the divine...suffering resonates with a chiasmic typology, where, in the popular parable of rich man and beggar, eternal Life rewards the suffering poverty of a Lazarus and eternal Death the selfish luxury of a Dives" (265).

dispossession, literalized in the form of the tenement (for the tenement can only be rented, and at exorbitant prices) is a hellishly violent “place” to inhabit.

In regionalist writing, violence is a trope to signal the protagonists’ engagement with property as the mediating locus by which subjects can control, order, destroy, or otherwise manage their direct relationships to the regional forms of production that define their subjecthood. Regionalism is a genre that utilizes embedded formal structures on the deep level of the text to mirror the mode by which individuals in particular regions order and reorder their lives in relation to that particular region’s dominant productive mode and its social effects. In the case of Crane’s *Maggie*, Crane uses narrative inversions, propelled by symbolism, to demonstrate how Maggie responds antithetically to her mother’s violence and to her own initiation into the industrialized world. Maternal violence and Maggie’s place in the market are two sides of the same coin; both interpersonal violence and the violence Maggie does to herself are ordered responses to industrialization. By attempting to shape and command the processes of commodification of herself as property, in an apparently self-destructive but contextually appropriate manner, Maggie inverts the processes of the market. Similarly, Riis establishes a structural mode in *How the Other Half Lives*, as I will show later in this section, in which synchronic, atemporal scenes of life in tenement housing are established as vertical, multileveled spaces of hell, with the very verticality of this hell suggesting a perpetual entrapment for the tenement residents. Because time is stopped in these scenes, though, Riis can introduce redemptive, sacred time, which enables his usage of Protestant allegory. Accompanying these synchronic scenes are scenes of diachrony that Riis uses to

explain the prevailing logic of industrialization in New York, and the alternate logic of the poor that threatens to break free of the regional tenements confining it.

Riis's writing on the lives of the poor offers a unique point of view shaped by his experiences as a penniless immigrant. Though my intent is to articulate the ways in which Jacob Riis's documentary journalism exhibits regionalist traits, and thus to demonstrate how two authors regionalized the city's economic development in similar structural modes, this is a particularly significant way in which Riis and Crane differ. While Stephen Crane was born in Newark, New Jersey, Jacob Riis was an immigrant from Ribe, Denmark.⁶³ In the first few months after his arrival in New York City in 1870 at the age of 21, he was nearly broke, attempting various jobs in menial labor with little success. One night, Riis was so poor he was forced to sleep at a police lodging-house. He had earlier befriended a stray dog that he had since adopted as his own, and the police forbade Riis from bringing the dog inside the lodging-house. In the morning, Riis discovered that the gold locket containing his estranged fiancée's hair had been stolen from his neck during the night, and when Riis brought this to the attention of the police sergeant on duty, the policeman denied that a man as poor as Riis could ever have owned such a possession in the first place. Outraged and embarrassed, Riis attempted to hit the policeman and was cast out of the shelter. Riis's dog was still waiting for him outside of the lodgings, and the dog, seeing the policeman handling Riis roughly, attempted to bite the policeman. The policeman, in turn, picked the dog up and killed him by beating him against the steps (Pascal 28).

⁶³ See Larzer Ziff's introduction in the Penguin Classics edition of *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* and Janet B. Pascal's biography of Riis, *Jacob Riis: Reporter and Reformer*, who writes that Riis was born on May 3rd, 1849 in a "fairy-tale town" (9).

No doubt this moment was a turning point for Riis, and in part determined the tone and form of his social welfare writing, particularly his framing of tenement housing in New York. As Pascal points out, Riis wrote in his autobiography *The Making of an American* years later that “The outrage of that night became, in the providence of God, the means of putting an end to one of the foulest abuses that ever disgraced a Christian city, and a mainspring in the battle with the slum as far as my share in it is concerned. My dog did not die unavenged” (Riis 74). Having been initially motivated to pursue reform work in response to a personally experienced act of injustice, Riis’s approach in writing about the tenements is informed by solidarity with the poor, yet, doubtless, it is also informed by conflicted emotions regarding his own status as an alien immigrant. Thus, Riis’s propensity for what could be read as racial and ethnic stereotypes⁶⁴ - for regulation and delineation, for creating overly simplified and compartmentalized constructions of the “other half” - could be read as ordering his own experience against and apart from that of the destitute immigrants living in slums and tenements. But this propensity could also be read as humanizing: if Riis does not expose the poor’s vulnerability by coming quite so close as to approximate their interiority in his study of their lives and conditions, as Crane did through Maggie’s subjectivity, it may well be because he sought to maintain a respectful distance between the reader and these subjects’ interior lives, when their vulnerability was all too real to him. The distancing⁶⁵ effect that some critics note seems

⁶⁴ Jackson notes that Riis’s early work is especially prone to racial and ethnic stereotypes, but that “he frames the space [of city wards “identified with the particular ethnic populations inhabiting them”] not so much to codify putative ethnographic stereotypes as to push his audience to question them, a strategy that would intensify over the course of his career” (248). Even if Riis’s early writing, including *How the Other Half Lives*, leans on stereotypes to make its point of social reform, Riis’s aim was not to reduce his subjects to stereotypes but to liberate them from all manner of publicly wrought indignity.

⁶⁵ Alan Trachtenberg argues in “Experiments in Another Country: Stephen Crane’s City Sketches” that while Riis’s stance in *How the Other Half Lives* seeks to establish the reader’s relationship to the tenement

to stem not from disengaged moral investment but an overpoweringly personal moral outrage that must be arranged in a controlled, structured method. And one element of that method was Riis's use of synchrony.

In Riis's *How the Other Half Lives*, periods of synchrony punctuate the narrative, in which time seems to stop to emphasize the hellish region of the tenement in paradoxically compressed verticality. Some parts of Riis's narrative do reflect the generic functions of a sociological study, in which relations between groups of people are laid out chronologically ("Turning the corner into Hester Street, we stumble upon a nest of cloakmakers in their busy season. Six months of the year the cloak-maker is idle, or nearly so. Now is his harvest...Seven dollars is the weekly wage of this man with his wife and two children, and nine dollars and a half rent to pay per month" (98).) Therefore, synchrony, in this text, is all the more notable for its literary qualities. Instead of shorter stories about subjects, these periods of synchrony enable the kind of buried formal logic of regionalism that propels the weight of the narrative's critique. When time stops inside these tenements, the tenants' relationship to property at that exact time and place can be codified into a moral lesson that Riis uses to leverage empathy for the poor. In this timeless space, Riis exposes the hierarchy that equates wealth with morality, and poverty with dissipation, as false because these tenants' relationships to property can be examined through an alternate logic of causality: the building itself functions as a symbol of regionally economic specificity that shapes the tenants' lives, and yet time drops out of that shaping. Riis thus demonstrates in synchronic scenes that the violence of this hell

and slum subjects as moral ire, Riis's moralized spatial tours serve ultimately to distance the reader from the poor who are depicted, because the morality itself "remains a touristic device," distinguishing the poor as limned off from the higher-classed and ostensibly outraged "tourists" (144).

that the tenants find themselves in is not of their own failures, whether in the material or in the spiritual world; it is that manifestation of the violence of the very oppressive economic verticality that threatens to bury them in darkness.

The synchronic mode in literature removes a scene temporarily from historical causality and locates associational causality inside the frame of the scene, rather than invoking linear causality. Riis uses synchrony because the dominant logic of progress is not useful to understanding the reality of tenement life. Repetition of synchronic scenes serves to establish a pattern for readers to respond to, a mode of time in which events occur as if in a cross-section of the region periodically frozen in time. Thus, Riis periodically disables traditional causality through the recurrence of disjointed scenes of tenement and slum life.⁶⁶ The theory of synchrony is especially useful to a consideration of Riis's work because of the unique yet timeless moment of the synchronic scene that enables any particular tenement description to assume the aspect of a universal hell. Saussure writes that applying a synchronic view to a particular language, object - or sociological study, in our case - opens up the full extent of this study's reality, for it maps only one univocal and essentially unmoving perspective. In his *Course in General Linguistics*, Saussure states, "In order to determine to what extent something is a reality, it is necessary and also sufficient to find out to *what extent* it exists" (89, italics mine). In other words, in my application of Saussure's theory to Riis's text, Riis uses synchrony to allow readers to see the relationship between this unmitigated explosion of industry and

⁶⁶ The terms "synchronic" and "diachronic" were developed by linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and transcribed in *Course in General Linguistics*, and in his original definition, "Everything is synchronic which relates to the static aspect of our science, and diachronic everything which concerns evolution" (81). These two states of any object (in Saussure's case, language, and in Riis's case, the existence of residents of a tenement dwelling) are related, in that diachrony is made up of a history of surface-level composition of every synchronic moment, and synchrony is one particular moment in time, a cross-section of that moment; but they are not interchangeable.

those who have labored to establish this stage of capitalism. The synchronic scene can display a cross section of a particular thing or a particular scene, with all of its networks, implications, and significances intact. Additionally, Riis's use of synchronic staging is significant to an understanding of how he is pushing against Spencerian logic of social evolution, for a synchronic scene's stasis does not rely on the maintenance of industrial time and, by extension, industrial logic, to signify development or meaning. While Benedict Anderson's "homogeneous, empty time," which signifies to readers of novelistic plot events and newspaper reports that events and characters are important because of their simultaneous presence in time, in synchronic time, "[t]he object of synchronic study does not comprise everything which is simultaneous, but only the set of facts corresponding to any particular language [or moment in time]" (Saussure 89-90). Riis's use of synchrony is meant to inhibit the narrative passage of time and its effectual dependence on the "clock and the calendar" to temporarily disrupt causality, coincidence, and interrelatedness, and to deconstruct what industrial dependence on the clock and the calendar have done to a region's people and the reader's sense of morality.

Early in *How the Other Half Lives*, Riis demonstrates the need for readers to view residents of the tenements not in the context of a cosmopolitan city, but in settings confined to hyper-regional tenement and slum detail. Riis first engages with the problem of figuring the tenement house diachronically. Denouncing the sanitary conditions of the tenement in chapter two, "The Awakening," Riis sets up the tenement house as an almost conscious being (recalling Crane's opening scene), arguing that the tenement will never improve its own dangerous condition as long as it exists as demonstrated by the newer tenements built: "These [new houses] are the houses that to-day perpetuate the worst

traditions of the past, and they are counted by thousands” (18). Riis then writes, in a move which flattens time and disjoints causality, “It is one of the curses of the tenement-house system that the worst houses exercise a levelling influence upon all the rest,” so that the tenements seem to act with an agency all their own in corrupting the others, almost as human, thus out of the realm of reality (19). Thus, this social problem cannot be conceptualized through traditional narrative means using linear causality. If tenements are given the ability to survive in their current form, Riis implies, any new tenement house will somehow, by an accursed logic of circulation, by information or by contagion, be cursed as well. Their deplorable conditions will proliferate indefinitely, confounded by the past to remain in a predetermined state of “foulness,” “evil,” and dilapidation (19). What if all tenements, though, were abolished, and these buildings’ past was wiped out, to be replaced with more suitable sources of housing? “[T]he old remain. They cannot be summarily torn down, though in extreme cases the authorities can order them cleared. The outrageous overcrowding, too, remains. It is characteristic of the tenements. Poverty, their badge and typical condition, invites – compels it [the “outrageous overcrowding”]. All efforts to abate it result only in *temporary* relief. As long as they exist it will exist with them. *And the tenements will exist in New York forever*” (19, italics mine). If tenements will exist in New York “forever,” with their contagion incurring endless production and reproduction, then overcrowding, at its root an indication of poverty, and poverty itself, will exist, too, unabated and endless, in New York. Tenements are perpetual here, because poverty is perpetual; and both, Riis asserts, will be perpetually characteristic of the city. Thus, traditionally narrating the development, characteristics of, and solutions to tenements and slum neighborhoods will not adequately address the

problem of their perpetuation. Distinguishing the sites the tenements as a region apart from one of the major cities of the American industrial revolution, thus removing it from the ideological power of industrialization and taking it out of linear time, allows Riis to use synchrony to show the relationship between industrialized production and the perpetuation of a markedly irrational cycle of inadequate solutions. There has been, and will be, no progress here to speak of: the site of the tenement is a site of a curse, where causality is only temporary and attests to the lies of progress. “The tenements to-day *are* New York, harboring three-fourths of its population” (20, italics mine). The tenements are metonymic of New York itself, though nobody can see that: the city, like the tenements, has been built on the deception of futurity, a futurity that cannot unfold if the tenements exist in New York “forever,” proliferating overcrowding and evil conditions. In this section, Riis shows that attempting to conventionally understand how the tenements came to exist through a diachronic narration of the tenements will not work: the clock and the calendar promise progress, but if the inevitable result of the clock and the calendar are the poor overcrowded in these houses, then progress is a lie, and trusting in a solution based on rebuilding will only lead to more degeneration. The people of the tenements are locked in a cycle determined by the presence of the tenements themselves. Time bunches and skips here, uncooperative, and the tenements can only be represented in dark stasis. This section sets up the need for synchrony as the only way “out” of this endless cycle. Synchrony will enable seeing beyond an endlessly replicating forever to a paradoxically conceivable ahistoricity.

Through scenes of synchrony, Riis thus draws on the regionalist imagination to launch social critique through deep structure. Causality in this deep structural mode

operates according to a logic at odds with surface level progression, pointing instead to an internal logic mediated by seemingly irrational, unhinged forces associated with pointed topical socioeconomic reference. In one of the first tenement scenes of the narrative, Riis captures the falling out of causality in the otherworldliness of a space that is ungovernable by the dominant logic of progress. In a tenement on Cherry Street, in a cordoned-off parochial hell, where the story of death is universal yet also universal only to the tenants themselves, and where time is not relevant,

Here is a door. Listen! That short hacking cough, that tiny, helpless wail - what do they mean? They mean that the soiled bow of white you saw on the door downstairs will have another story to tell - Oh! a sadly familiar story - before the day is at an end. The child is dying with measles. With half a chance it might have lived; but it had none. That dark bedroom killed it. 'It was took all of a suddint,' says the mother, smoothing the throbbing little body with trembling hands (38).

The reader is asked to listen at an apartment door and then without warning has crossed its threshold into a space in which Riis presents us a child who is already dying, and at the same time already dead: without the chance to survive that readers presume all children have, it will always have been dead. It is merely a “throbbing little body,” invariably alive and yet invariably dead. This is a scene structured so that there is no true day or night, no clock or calendar here, if during the day the child was alive and yet suddenly, simultaneously, is not. And there is no other way to understand the child’s death, if not by temporality, apart from accepting the alternative logic that structures the tenements: that the “dark bedroom” itself killed it. That dark bedroom of the tenement, itself erected by the market to perpetuate the market, is not dominated by the familiar

logic of the market, in which one event leads to another like the workings of a machine. Violence or destruction is not occasioned by a particular person, but by that vertical edifice built by industry. Here, synchrony is necessary, Riis suggests, to show readers the world in which death seems perpetual because the space literally killed the child by short-circuiting the logic of its birth and death. This is the logic that the tenement residents live by: a logic of compression, whereby redemption does not seem possible because there is no point at which to intervene, and in which the reason for a death occurring is because life was born into that space. It would seem, then, that this truly is hell, in which children are born into death. It is, however, and curiously, a hell of a particular region: the immigrant mother cannot articulate standard English, saying “It was took all of a suddint,” and unlit bedrooms are an identifiably local feature of a tenement apartment. If this is a hell of perpetuity, then, Riis establishes it as a hell of *regional* perpetuity, and that its location and culture are relevant to his message: it is the site of the tenement that perpetuates the tenement.

If death is not an event but a perpetual condition caused by the structure of the tenement itself, then the work that occurs inside the tenement is also perpetual, a function of its insularity from the realities of the market. However, its insularity from the market’s logic also provides a space of potential empowerment for its tenants. Riis mirrors the tenants’ relationship to labor and property in his use of the synchronic, so that his narrative structure mirrors the mode by which tenement residents develop an alternate logic of survival in response to their economically determined regional circumstances. For example, Riis shows readers images of a tenement in which workers labor without recourse to the public hegemony of factory time: “The bulk of the sweater’s work is done

in the tenements, which the law that regulates factory labor does not reach...But the tenement has defeated its benevolent purpose. In it the child works unchallenged from the day he is old enough to pull a thread. There is no such thing as a dinner hour; men and women eat while they work, and the 'day' is lengthened at both ends far into the night" (95). In this tenement space, too, time is reconceived: the reader is shown a life of endless labor, where night and day blend together. The tenement is not a space of refuge from factory time, but by encircling time within the tenement, Riis can demonstrate that their lives themselves, and their relationship to ownership, are not dominated by factory time, though at first this presents a hellishness of which workers seem not to be able to escape. In a similar scene, as Riis passes tenements in the Second Avenue Elevated Railroad at Chatham Square, his train speeding past seems, strangely (or not) to halt time, so that each window showing us the interior replicates the scene before it:

Every open window of the big tenements, that stand like a continuous brick wall on both sides of the way, gives you a glimpse of one of these shops as the train speeds by. Men and women bending over their machines, or ironing clothes at the window, half-naked. Proprieties do not count on the East Side; nothing counts that cannot be converted into hard cash. *The road is like a big gangway through an endless work-room where vast multitudes are forever laboring. Morning, noon, or night, it makes no difference; the scene is always the same* (96, italics mine).

Riis captures at once both endlessness and sameness in showing tenement residents who work in their homes, the scene set against the train's speed that functions not to change the view but to effectively reiterate it. By creating an image that is the nexus of seemingly contradictory terms of "every" and "one of," "nothing," "multitude," "endless,"

“vast,” “forever,” “same,” Riis shows that there is a different logic here than can only be captured by juxtaposing the stillness of this environment with the speed that has produced it. He renders the notion of perpetual timeless “Morning, noon, or night” sameness. Thus the insular nature of the tenement: it seems to be cut off from the market and the market’s conception of time because its residents are dispossessed, and thus disengaged from the market. This dispossession is their endless, similar hell, where “nothing” seems to change, where the “vast” “multitude” stays the same as circumscribed by the velocity of industry that has shaped it. Thus, at first it appears that synchrony is the mode by which Riis expresses tenement residents’ lack of agency, and not their potential for power and redemption, but it is his framing of the tenement as an othered space entirely that ends up redeeming these tenants.

Synchrony is thus a means by which Riis reorders the symbolism of Social Gospel space, and through revising these equivalences of hierarchy and morality, he opens up the possibility of the lower classes’ redemption. It is not enough to stop time and view the alternative temporal logic of tenement life. Riis thus rearranges moral equivalencies by overturning hierarchy. Space, too, then, is compressed in Riis’ writing in *How the Other Half Lives*, and in synchronic scenes where time does not pass, space is transmuted as well: the function of synchrony is also to show that, while market or industrial time is not the same in the hellish dispossession of these tenements, verticality as a mode of understanding morality also does not stand up under the scrutiny of synchrony. As Jackson points out, in constructing a scene referring to multiple levels of a house, Riis drew on the architectural trope of Social Gospel literature, in which all floors have differentiated meaning, whereby hierarchical divisions signify ascending allegorical

levels of religious morality. Jackson explains, “Descending from seventeenth-century Puritan heuristics and knowledge structures, Social Gospel literature capitalized on the relationship between architectural divisions and allegorical levels, between twin purposes of built environments and the emblematic rendering of moral and spiritual knowledge” (242). Historically, upper levels often signified spiritual wisdom and redemption and the morality that attended this status, and lower levels, those who had fallen from grace. Benjamin O. Flower, Riis’s contemporary, who published his Social Gospel narrative *Civilization’s Inferno; or, Studies in the Social Cellar* in 1893, also used this trope of architectural verticality to show the fallacy of equating spiritual enlightenment with economic status: in his frontispiece, he ironically displayed an illustration that ranked urban society by equating the upper classes with the highest level of morality.⁶⁷

Riis too applies the trope of moral verticality to the tenements to overturn the equivalence of morality with social status. He does through a literal compression of the tenement’s physical space. In an oft-quoted scene from *How the Other Half Lives*, Riis guides readers through the aforementioned tenement house in Cherry Street:

Suppose we look into one? No. - Cherry Street. Be a little careful, please! The hall is dark and you might stumble over the children pitching pennies back there....Here where the hall turns and dives into utter darkness is a step, and another, another. A flight of stairs. You can feel your way, if you cannot see it. Close? Yes! What would you have? All the fresh air that ever enters these stairs

⁶⁷ Jackson writes, “[T]he book’s frontispiece renders the social levels of the city as a moral hierarchy, depicting the wealthy in a ballroom vignette as the highest story of the urban house” and the bottom level as the “social cellar,” where the extremely poor gather in an alley around a man lying prostrate on the ground” (242).

comes from the hall-door that is forever slamming, and from the windows of dark bedrooms that in turn receive from the stairs their sole supply of the elements God meant to be free, but man deals out with such niggardly hand (38).

In Riis's scene of tenement life above, there are no distinct levels to speak of. This space of actualized hell is so dark that architectural verticality is effectively collapsed, so moral ranking is rendered irrelevant. The space is one of compression or collapse, and the structural logic within the tenement draws no coherent logic from its relationship to the outside world, because it is utterly closed off from it, a self-contained system: the hallway leads to steps, which cohere into stairs. But these stairs disappear, impossibly and immediately opening into a door, "a hall-door that is forever slamming." In this synchronic scene, the door does not slam in accordance with the tenants' departure for work in the morning or return to home in the evening – it is always slamming. The only fresh air in this space comes from the displaced hall-door, and from the windows that likewise do not access the outdoors, that draw air from the stairs instead. Riis interrupts time to ask the reader to examine a space where a building's verticality breaks down if its halls dive, its stairs lead directly to a door, and its windows open into stairs.

Conventional allegorical signification, too, breaks down, so that viewers are prevented from passing moral and spiritual judgment on these tenants when their world is so compressed as to be flattened out and to feed off of itself, and never opens out into light, literal or spiritual. It is not the morality of these residents that has failed, for this is not a hell of their own making: if this space references Dante's *Inferno*, all of the levels of hell have nevertheless been flattened into meaninglessness.⁶⁸ Riis has thus overturned conventional Social Gospel equations of hierarchy with morality and spiritual worth. In

⁶⁸ See Jackson, 246, for more on Riis's references to Dante's *Inferno*.

doing so, he also absolves the tenants of blame implicit in Spencerian-derived theories of “survival of the fittest,” in which those members of society who do not financially succeed are seen as merely unsuited to the changes in modern society. It is the very development and overdevelopment of modern society itself, Riis asserts, that has led to their dispossession, and that has built this tenement space which emblemizes parochial hell and endlessly reiterates the tenants’ poverty: the illogically reared windows that turn onto the stairs for air instead of into God’s world were built by other men, and this hell of New York is not visited upon the tenants for their sins but for the sins of other men who have until now pursued wealth with impunity: speculators, bankers, owners. Riis offers other scenes of compression in the tenements, furthering the trope of verticality, which serve to formally reject dominant Spencerian notions of financial means with moral and spiritual worth. In the same tenement on Cherry Street, “we grope our way up the stairs and down from floor to floor, listening to the sounds behind the closed doors - some of quarrelling, some of coarse songs, more of profanity” (38). If higher and lower architectural levels once had allegorical meaning, they no longer do in the tenement, that anomaly birthed of progress: each floor is interchangeable, whether Riis’s narrator goes up or down, groping in the darkness. Each door has no correlative, nor does any door relate to the sounds that come from it: there are no symbolic archways into lower levels of hell, or heights of redemption. The regionalist details of this scene - the “coarse” songs of immigrants, the profanity of their culture - serve to remind readers that even in this space that seems so timeless and distant, Riis as narrator, and the readers themselves, are on the same moral ground, listening outside the door, even, of these alien dwellers. So

while this space is timeless, and maintains its culture through insularity, it has been created by the very specific time and place of the American industrial revolution.

Riis uses these structural modes of synchrony and vertical compression as tools to show that tenants are agential and moral. In that time and space he introduces Messianic time, which allows allegory to intercede. If these tenants are worthy and moral, their mode of responding to their circumstances is valid; they can be saved, and they are worthy of being saved through Christian intervention. Synchrony takes out the logic of clock and calendar temporality so that Messianic time is perceived as immediate in the hell of the tenements, and indeed, so that hell could become immediately referential as a point of access for readers to begin to engage with the realities of these tenants' lives. In introducing allegory and scriptural reference by virtue of regionalizing Messianic time, the actuality of tenants' power can be validated, for readers are called upon to directly equalize these tenants' experiences with their own. Readers are enabled to see that the power the dispossessed have been deprived of is within their capacity, and that, if the moral and economic system that has secured these tenements goes unchecked, this power will be asserted in ways more forthright.

It is only *through* presenting these slums of the tenements as hell that Riis can use Messianic time and thus allegory to draw readers in to the necessity of immediate intervention. It is, to borrow Jackson's phrase, Riis's call for the "immediacy of experience" that will show Christian readers and reformers the meaning of the gospel in the present day (245). By stopping time to focus on the effects of the region's economy within the tenements, Riis opens up a space in which Christian "cyclical time," or, in

Benedict Anderson's interpretation of Walter Benjamin's concept, "Messianic time", can unfold.⁶⁹ Anderson expands on Benjamin's concept of Messianic time in articulating it as "the midiaeval conception of simultaneity-along-time," "a simultaneity of past and future in an instant present. In such a view of things, the word 'meanwhile' cannot be of real significance" (Anderson 24). This is a space of timelessness, a pause in which ahistoricity survives, and in Riis's work, synchrony opens up the possibility for Messianic time to enable audiences to suspend moral judgment and interpret Riis's allusions to allegories and themes of Christian hermeneutics.⁷⁰ Messianic time, conceivable and accessible to readers because of repetitive scenes of synchrony in the narrative, works to validate the otherwise inconceivable space of the tenements because this space has already been posited as timeless and insular, away from the metropolis. Riis frequently alludes to the

⁶⁹ Anderson writes that, because of mass production of newspapers and the emergence of the contemporary novel form (out of industrialization's ability to mass produce certain forms of writing), and its concomitant dissemination of the idea of "'homogenous, empty time,'" members of developed nations began to conceive of simultaneity as "transverse, cross-time, marked not by prefiguring and fulfilment, but by temporal coincidence, and measured by clock and calender" (24). The traditional realist novel, Anderson argues, functions as "a device for the presentation of simultaneity in 'homogenous, empty time,' or a complex gloss upon the word 'meanwhile'" (25). But the novel, as well as the newspaper, depends upon a concurrent temporality that nonetheless is a forward-moving one; although events occur simultaneously within it, they are understood to be occurring simultaneously within it because time is measured "by clock and calendar" (24). This notion of homogeneous, empty time can be thought of visually as a horizontal structure, a spanning in which individual events and lives are laid out side by side. But even though homogeneous time does not move forward, it is contingent upon the "clock," and the "calendar," marking it as diachronically dependent. Riis's work uses synchrony to open up space for Messianic or sacred time, for only when time is stopped can homogenous time give way to universal experience in which religious allegory will be effective for garnering empathy. Moments of circular, sacred time are enabled by the fullness of synchronic time to open up to narratives in which individuals replay a similar story of salvation over and over again. Ironically, it is circular time that enables progress, not horizontal, causal time, in Riis's work, because this circular or Messianic time allows the reader to intervene spiritually in the space that has been frozen in place. It enables a timeless allegory to unfold again and again.

⁷⁰ Jackson writes that the themes and allegories of Christian hermeneutics include "themes of awakening, atonement, redemption, nativity, hell's harrowing, and, above all, pilgrimage. Additionally, audiences familiar with homiletic practice recognized and developed the parallels between the tenement life depicted in [Riis's public] lantern lectures and Riis's repeated allusions to biblical parables, pilgrimage tropes, and the popular Christian allegories of the New Light sermon tradition, and the allegories of Bunyan, Dante, Edmund Spenser, and John Milton, among others" which opened up "allegorical space" to "engage...audiences in the virtual immediacy of temporal experience with spiritual consequences" (219). It is, I argue, the actual formal space opened up by the depth of synchrony in a vertical tenement, in which time appears to stop, by which Riis can narratively allude to these themes and allegories.

interior of the tenements as hell, as we have scene, in which vertical levels are bottomed out, death is not logical, and work is not logical. He extends this scene of hell to regional tenement neighborhoods, showing that its residents' parochial, discrete logic stems from their "regional" affiliation and maps onto Christian allegory:

Go into any of the 'respectable' tenement neighborhoods...where live the great body of hard-working Irish and German immigrants and their descendants, *who accept naturally the conditions of tenement life, because for them there is nothing else in New York*; be with and among its people until you understand *their ways, their aims, and the quality of their ambitions*, and unless you can content yourself with the scriptural promise that the poor we shall have always with us, *or with the menagerie view that, if fed, they have no cause of complaint, you shall come away disagreeing with me that, humanly speaking, life there does not seem worth the living* (122, italics mine).

The people of the tenement neighborhoods demonstrate distinct "ways," "aims," and "quality of their ambitions," because they are confined to their "conditions of tenement life" -- for them, New York *is* a tenement neighborhood. Riis suggests that the logic and perspective of these residents -- in other words, the mode by which they reconcile their existence in this hell and thus the logic by which they survive -- is a sympathetic one. However alien they seem to outsiders, Riis points out that their model of self-preservation within this hell is itself redemptive, and that in itself, their practices prove them to be exerting agency: "be with and among its people until you understand their ways" and then "you shall come away disagreeing with me that...life there does not seem worth the living." The lives they live, seemingly distinct, segregated, and timeless, must be

understood. Those lives are more logical for their absence from utter interpellation into the market than the one readers live. Riis uses a Biblical reference that illuminates the need for authentic interpretation of scriptural meaning, which emphasizes the necessity of intervening on behalf of Christian fellowship by including an allusion to verse: “unless you can content yourself with the scriptural promise that the poor we shall always have with us,” readers must admit that tenants’ mentality is indicative of a close relationship with redemption, even as this mentality stems from a hell on earth. Riis thus draws on the need to attend to their existence as equal to their own by acknowledging their worth, and the relevance of Messianic time.

Synchrony and compression, through disabling conventional notions of time and space, paradoxically expose the details of this regional hell to readers, opening up the opportunity for Riis to use religious allegory feasible only because of the timelessness and ahistory of the tenement region. But, ironically, it is Riis’s insistence on this space as hell that prevents readers from disengaging from these tenants and allows them to see dispossessed individuals as Christian equals. Throughout *How the Other Half Lives* Riis codes the tenement house and its slum neighborhood as the abyss, through tropes of darkness, depth, and death.⁷¹ The workhouse, an offshoot of the slums, is a “hell-box”: “This work-house comes next, with the broken-down hordes from the dives, the lodging-houses, and the tramps’ nests, the ‘hell-box’ rather than the repair-shop of the city” (192). In his use of Christian allegory and imagery, Riis enabled readers to view the space of the tenement as insular space that was distinct in time and space and thus safely walled off,

⁷¹ Jackson points out that Riis often emphasizes the metaphors to help readers identify the allegorical function of his scenes: “For those stuck in the literal, Riis rhetorically prodded the slippage between the literal and allegorical: as he narrated his audience’s descent down steep stairs into damp, verminous cellars, among families crowded into single rooms, he announced in the immediacy of the first-person plural, ‘We’ve descended into the underworld’” (219).

unthreatening in its strangeness, so that readers would be prone to engage with the alien as an “othered,” immaterial space. But, again, the irony is that this space was constructed because of the materiality of industrial development. Once readers were drawn into immediacy of experience necessitated by allegory, they would then have to identify the humanity of the sufferers, their validity as moral beings, and the inexcusability of the socioeconomic conditions that shaped the logic of this hell and the irrationality of the speed of the clock and calendar, the pace of modern, diachronic life, that put them there.

At varying points in the narrative, Riis unfolds a more traditional mode of storytelling that follows along a causal diachronic timeline. Like the diachronic story that did not work to narrate the birth of the tenements, this mode proves that the logic that the tenements abide by, that their residents created to contend with their circumstances, is actually more feasible than the dominant Spencerian, industrial-capitalist logic. Riis demonstrates that the domination of industrial-capitalist logic as well as the falsehood of spiritual equation with morality must be collapsed, or leveled. If their relationship to Christianity is as the reader’s is, one of equality, and if moral superiority is not determined by economic superiority, then the hierarchies, or “verticality,” that structure their lives also structure the viewer or reader’s. And if this is true, the structures must be false, and must be deemed as such in emotional engagement through Christian compassion and through economic equality. In Riis’s view, the only diachronic, evolutionary story-of’s that are worth telling, in Riis’s view, are those of tenement dwellers, as well as those stories that tell of the crumbling degeneration at the insistence of industrial logic. This is a degeneration in which the mythical and allegorical

timelessness that articulates social redemption through equality arrives in ghosts, wolves, and dreams on the New York streets. Synchronic scenes of tenements have set up for the reader the fact that these tenants are not immoral, fallen, or illogical; their internal logic which runs against the logic of industrialization, but because of that, it allows tenants to survive with their morality intact. And it is not only their morality to which Riis attends, it is their agency, for they maintain their potential power by dint of being dispossessed. Because tenement residents are not implicated in the market economy through ownership, their perspective is the one that readers should be listening to, because it empowers them to righteousness in all of its forms. But they cannot endure their dispossession indefinitely, because, as Riis shows, they have to overturn the hierarchy that confines them to a hellish existence. They will attempt to level that hierarchy themselves, and they have the capacity to do so.

Thus Riis unfolds, in the beginning, middle and end of *How the Other Half Lives*, scenes of New York governed by the logic that is, scenes of New York governed by the logic that could be, and a warning of what will occur if the city does not restructure its socioeconomic scaffolding according to the logic that it should. In the beginning of his narrative, before readers enter into the hell of the tenements, “We stand upon the domain of the tenement. In the shadow of the great stone abutments the old Knickerbocker houses linger like ghosts of a departed day” (26). Riis continues, “The years have brought to the old houses unhonored age... This one, with its shabby front and poorly patched roof, what glowing fireside, what happy children may it once have owned?... the broken columns at the door have rotted away at the base” (27). The stable economic structures, in other words, of the city’s past, are rotting “at its base.” The passing of time incurs not

economic progress but ghosts – transparent reminders of a time when the market did not warrant such a tenuously overreaching hierarchy resulting in widespread dispossession. Here, then, Riis demonstrates that the logic of progress, in which new continues to replace old, in the name of efficiency, is simply a logic of death itself.

In defining the corrupted logic of the present, he then points to two Biblical themes to suggest the perpetual death of the tenement that he will soon lead readers into: “The arched gateway leads no longer to a shady bower on the banks of the rushing stream, inviting to day-dreams with its gentle repose, but to a dark and nameless alley, shut in by high brick walls, cheerless as the lives of those they shelter. The wolf knocks loudly at the gate in the troubled dreams that come to this alley, echoes of the day’s cares” (27). While this passage speaks to the use of nostalgia that a good deal of regionalism is frequently accused of, in its idealization of a “shady bower on the banks of a rushing stream,” Riis does not linger in the space of a lost pastoral ideal. It is the region of the present that concerns him, the reality hell’s chasm signified by the “dark and nameless alley, shut in by high brick walls,” in which the allegorical wolf “knocks loudly at the gate” of the tenement. Riis’s wolf may be that of “Watching Out for Wolves” where Paul warns the Romans, “Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting” (*King James Bible*, Romans 16:17-18). Those who are prone to greed and who have succumbed to their appetites for wealth have created this landscape, this region of high

brick walls and darkness, and those appetites ignite the logic of progress, the landscape of ghosts and wolves, and fears of anti-futurity, an utterly logical deterioration.

But the local hell of the tenements has paradoxically preserved within itself a different mode of logic born by the need to survive apart from the domination of industrial logic. Dispossession created this hell, but dispossession will not enable this hell to continue; within the tenements, a truly rational logic prevails and will not continue to tolerate the irrationality of industrial logic. Midway through the narrative, Riis asserts, “[T]here is another story to tell. A story of thousands of devoted lives, laboring earnestly to make the most of their scant opportunities for good; of heroic men and women striving patiently against fearful odds and by their very courage coming off victors in the battle with the tenement” (121). While poverty in the slums has created gangs and alcoholism, the insularity of the tenements has on the whole wrought a set of people who, inhabiting a region built owned by capitalism, are able to nonetheless shape their own lives in a “heroic,” victorious fight against the wolves at the door. Riis freezes time in bouts of synchrony not to show that these people’s agency was determined by their hellish circumstances. Their logic, reflected in the logic of synchrony itself, resists definition by industrial time and resists succumbing to capital accumulation as a defining trajectory, is only detectable as rational in the context of their surroundings. Instead of falling victims to passive acceptance of a system, they created their own logic of morality and devotion to resist interpellation, and synchrony allows him to formulate that logic of morality and equality in scenes in which tenants are pitted against the destructive forces that tenements represent. Riis suggests that this logic be that which dominates the entire region of New York. He implies that tenement residents’ immersion in hell informed their moral

capacities to the extent that other readers' could not have been; that in fact, Messianic time did open up for them and enabled them to redeem themselves and exercise "courage" because of their exposure to and rejection of the abyss. Immersed in the end-game of industrial capitalism, in other words, they chose an alternative logic of redemption and self-determinedness. In doing so they rejected their status as dispossessed. And in narrating their overturning of the logic of dispossession, Riis suggests that readers do the same.⁷² Riis continues on to warn readers that those dispossessed subjects whose lives he has been narrating are justified retaliating against those who perpetuate the capitalist logic that has led to their state of violent dispossession, even if violence itself is the mode by which they articulate their alternative logic of equality.

Riis's warning at the end of *How the Other Half Lives*, narrated in traditional diachronic storytelling mode, formally enacts a final leveling move that defends the agency of the poor living in tenement housing even if their agency is expressed through violent means. If, Riis suggests, it is the violence of capitalist logic, of the "wolf at the door," that wrought their dispossession, then the dispossessed are justified in exerting violence to the extent that it rectifies corrupt socioeconomic hierarchy. Riis's subjects will violently effect that destruction against verticality themselves, a "danger-cry" portending the "solution of violence" (196). The extreme dispossession Riis represents formally in synchronic time opens up space to understand, then, that his subjects' relationship to their circumstances is one structured by agential attempts at leveling the inequality they experience, and, if ignored, this attempt at leveling will build to a violent

⁷² Jackson also gestures to Riis's formula of leveling by way of tropes of verticality: "By stratifying the urban occupants into the separate floors of a house, from the parlor's social elite down to the 'social cellar's' desperate poor, reformers like Riis used the architectural frame to help their readers not only to see the topography of urban poverty and racial and class hierarchies, but also to question and overturn these hierarchies by mapping the inverse relation between earthly success and spiritual redemption" (248).

revolution. If readers do not level extreme class stratification with justice, then these tenement “toughs” are legitimized in using violence. He provides his account of a story, ostensibly true, of a man slashing his knife into a crowd of the middle and upper class: “[t]here rose up before him the picture of those little ones crying for bread around the cold and cheerless hearth - then he sprang into the throng...blindly seeking to kill, to revenge” (196). Riis is stirring the fear of “public indignation,” “the danger-cry of which we have lately heard in the shout that never should have been raised on American soil - the shout of ‘the masses against the classes’ - the solution of violence. There is another solution, that of justice. The choice is between the two. Which shall it be?” (196). The formal significance of synchronic scenes that set out the tenement interior’s logic of morality and agency even in and because of dispossession set Riis’s scenes of diachrony in stark contrast, and allow his message to be broadcast strongly: violence in the hands of the poor is redemptive to society at large if justice cannot be served in any other way. It will solve the problem that the tenement thematizes, that of a subject’s relationship to property. If dispossession engenders violent circumstances but also reformulation of a subject’s relationship to property in terms of morality, then violence itself must be the circumstances by which those subjects must teach broader society as a whole how to rearticulate their relationship to property as well. On the last page of *How the Other Half Lives*, Riis writes,

The sea of a mighty population, held in galling fetters, heaves uneasily in the tenements...If [the flood] rise once more, no human power may avail to check it. The gap between the classes in which it surges, unseen, unsuspected by the thoughtless, is widening day by day. [...] Against all other dangers our system of

government may offer defence and shelter; against this not. I know of but one bridge that will carry us over safe, a bridge founded upon justice and built of human hearts. I believe that the danger of such conditions as are fast growing up around us is greater for the very freedom which they mock (218).

Whereas Crane represented violence as manifesting itself in self-destruction, Riis represents violence as manifesting in destruction of others, of their bodies and property. Riis inverts Crane's formal methodology. Each source of violence is initiated by the same event - dispossession in a wealthy urban center - and each results in destruction of property, because property, its promise, its value, is the wolf at the door. Violence threatens to become the only solution to the problem. Riis exposes the lives of the poor and their relationship to property from the outside, through stopping time in scene and photograph, and Crane by inhabiting Maggie's interiority. Both explore broader social property relations by entering the interiors of the tenements themselves. Riis writes, "[t]o get at the pregnant facts of tenement-house life one must look beneath the surface. Many an apple has a fair skin and a rotten core...In the light of what we have seen, does not the question arise: what sort of creature, then, this of the tenement? I tried to draw his likeness from observation in telling the story of the 'tough.' Has it nothing to suggest the man with the knife?" (197). The agency of the tenants, birthed from the apparent death of the tenement hell, is not the true source of violence, Riis tells readers: "[t]he danger to society comes not from the poverty of the tenements, but from the ill-spent wealth that reared them, that it might earn a usurious interest from a class from which 'nothing else was expected'" (197).

Chapter Three: Masculine Propriety

In the previous chapters, I have explored how regionalist fiction uses violence to symbolically recast a new relationship between the individual and property as the region undergoes a shift in political economy. In regionalist fiction of the South as well as the urban center of New York City, writers such as Joel Chandler Harris, Stephen Crane, and Jacob Riis carve out a metaphorically violent means by which the marginalized subject positions of African-Americans and impoverished immigrant families can reorder their relationships to property, in order to symbolize the very real way in which these groups might articulate their right to ownership and thus their right to be counted as politically relevant. Regionalist literature of the West set in the 1880s (in this definition I include the Midwest region of Wisconsin and Minnesota as well as the Great Plains states) exposes the violence psychologically inflicted and provoked by conflicting modes of production of agriculture and consumer capitalism in a more directly interpersonal configuration than regionalist literature of the South or urban centers of the Northeast. This violence is written into select plot lines of Hamlin Garland's *Main-Travelled Roads*, originally published in 1891. Less obvious in this Western regionalist literature is the cross-section of citizenry most drastically marginalized by these regionally conflicting modes of production. Because this group's interests are considered responsible for the contemporary rise of industrial capitalism and its concomitant effects of consumer capitalism, it is not at first immediately apparent that the group that Garland formally enables to commit violence to its regional political economy in order to reorder its relationship to property ownership is white men.

At stake in regionalist fiction of the West is the status of masculinity and its relationship to the American frontier, as well as the post-frontier reality of the West. In this region, historically, the conceit of masculinity is historically tied to control over and ownership of land. As T. J. Jackson Lears points out in *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America*, “Reverence for the man of the soil was rooted in the republican tradition. In his *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785), Jefferson articulated the antithesis that became central to agrarian politics (and to the producerist worldview in general) — the contrast between rural producers and urban parasites” (136). And in fact, as Diane Duvfa Quantic writes in *The Nature of the Place: A Study of Great Plains Fiction* (1995), Jefferson “first turned the nation’s attention to the importance of the interior. He sponsored Lewis and Clark’s expedition and outlined the size and distribution of the small farms that would enfranchise the most citizens and thereby assure the establishment of a true democracy” (5). *Notes on the State of Virginia* articulated Jefferson’s conviction that owning one’s land and directly working that land was the foundation of a powerful republican nation, for it would demonstrate the American man’s power as embodied in his productive capacity and self-reliance. Jefferson suggested that American settlers focus their energies on cultivation and leave the manufacturing of finished goods to Europe:

[W]e have *an immensity of land* courting the industry of the husbandman. Is it best then that all our citizens should be employed in its improvement, or that one half should be called off from that to exercise manufactures and handicraft arts for the other? Those who labour in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people, whose breasts he has made his peculiar deposit for

substantial and genuine virtue. It is the focus in which he keeps alive that sacred fire, which otherwise might escape from the face of the earth (170).

Jefferson argued that manufacturing fosters broad incorporation and speculation, weakening the citizenry and perverting their ethics:

Corruption of morals in the mass of cultivators is a phenomenon of which no age nor nation has furnished an example. It is the mark set on those, who not looking up to heaven, *to their own soil and industry*, as does the husbandmen, for their subsistence, depend for it [corruption of morals] on the casualties and caprice of customers. Dependence begets *subservience* and *venality*, suffocates the germ of virtue, and prepares fit tools for the designs of ambition (61, italics mine).

Implicit in Jefferson's declaration is the equivalence of renting, speculation, and incorporation with weakness. "Dependence" upon others to own and cultivate the immensity of the nation's land promotes womanly "subservience" and "venality" upon one's customers, including a propensity for susceptibility to bribery. Thus, owning one's land and producing as much as that holding could offer in order to attain one's income is the most inherently masculine — and American — life a (white, male) citizen can live. Jefferson promoted a productive, self-directed, agrarian existence and encouraged its expansion into the land in the west of the continent. The "immensity of the land" he refers to is the mainly uncharted Western frontier. Thus, Jefferson defined the virile Western agrarian existence as the most quintessentially democratic, and thus American, lifestyle.

It is important to note then that an agrarian form of production, and not an industrialized one, defined American masculinity at least from the eighteenth century on.

At first this seems a reversal of conventional tropes: in literary studies pastoral, rural areas are often coded as feminine. The European canon established precedence for this as early as the Renaissance, when, as feminist geographers Mona Domosh and Joni Seager point out in *Putting Women in Place* (2001), “the city was envisioned as an arena where the ideals of the mind — coded as masculine — could be expressed literally and symbolically. Renaissance urban thinkers and designers thought of the city as a unified, visual whole, that should reflect rational, geometric principles... These principles were exactly the ones assigned by Renaissance thinkers to the male sphere” (69). In contrast, “[t]he countryside (with its more earthy connotations) and the older medieval city were seen as the realm of the feminine” (69). However, the process of settling the frontier, as Domosh and Seager point out, was framed in literature as inherently masculine, with displacement of the local population and agrarian production both highly physical processes that destabilized the city/country dichotomy, wherein the order of taming the people of the countryside and the productive capacities of the land figured “the land itself...[was] seen and written about as female, so that male ‘penetration’ of it was seen as ‘natural’” (147). Ownership of the land was a prerequisite for this masculine act of “penetration,” and yet the land was seen primarily not as commodity but as an extension of male productive power. In other words, penetrating the land to yield agricultural output signified virility. It was valuable for the status it gave to men who might prove their potent self-sufficiency through their engagement with it. Thus, production of the land one owned signified masculinity moreso than simply accumulating large tracts of land. As Gregory Alexander explains, “Jefferson’s writing on the benefits of cultivated land owned in fee simple and worked by citizen-owners — the republic as constituted by

the ‘fee simple empire’ — is often taken to represent the paradigm of republican property” (32), where “fee simple” confers the ability for the owner of the land to sell it as he sees fit. The type of land *use* that Jefferson configured as masculine and thus the epitomization of republican values depended upon an agrarian form of production. Rather than rejecting commerce entirely, Jefferson articulated an opposition between “agricultural property and industrial property, ie, cultivation of land, which he assumed to have a commercial dimension, and manufacturing” (Alexander 32). It was the act of cultivation in addition to the act of ownership that defined the republic’s masculinized power.

This conflation of masculinity with an agrarian form of production continued into the nineteenth century. Yet in the late nineteenth century a new correlation between masculinity and the West developed, this time involving conquest and racial violence. Theodore Roosevelt actively articulated this narrative, for he had both personal and political motives at stake. In 1882, Roosevelt, a 23-year-old statesman in Albany, was openly derided by many political opponents and the media as effeminate. As Gail Bederman writes in *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (1995): “[d]aily newspapers lampooned Roosevelt as the quintessence of effeminacy...They ridiculed his high voice, tight pants, and fancy clothing” (170). In response, Roosevelt reinvented his image, drawing on imagery of Western expansion to do so. Roosevelt purchased a cattle ranch in South Dakota in 1883 in the process of transforming his image from “effeminate dude” to cowboy (Bederman 175). On the ranch he would practice cultivating his version of frontier masculinity by hunting large game. He would write of these violent pursuits in *Hunting Trips of a*

Ranchman in 1884, the first of three books chronicling his experiences as a Western conqueror of the frontier. In his description of these trips, encounters with and the slaying of large game animals nostalgically recreates what was at that historical point the long-effaced line on the frontier dividing civilization and wilderness. Roosevelt's next Western book, *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail*, which he would publish in 1888, detailed his encounters with Native American "savages," and depicted ranchers as the "pivotal characters" in the linear evolutionary trajectory between savagery and civilization: possessing enterprising skills and self-reliance indicative of civilized white men, yet enough bravery and primitive strength as the Indian savage, the rancher was the ultimate example of strong white manhood (Bederman 176). In 1887, while running for mayor of New York, Roosevelt touted himself as the "Cowboy of the Dakotas": "instead of ridiculing him as 'Oscar Wilde,' newspapers were praising his virile zest for fighting and his 'blizzard-seasoned constitution'" (Bederman 170). In order to invigorate his image Roosevelt drew on violent frontier imagery of the eighteenth century, maintaining that the American race was built upon the advancement of "civilization" against the barbaric wilderness of the West with its population of Native American races of "inferior manhood" (171). In 1888, Roosevelt began writing a frontier history entitled *The Winning of the West*, in which, in Bederman's terms, he "constructed the frontier as a site of origin of the American race, whose manhood and national worth were proven by their ability to stamp out competing, savage races...while the hero of the traditional Western adventure was a *man* whose race was implicitly white, the hero of Roosevelt's story was a *race* whose gender was implicitly male" (178). Roosevelt's narrative of American expansion into the West maintained masculinity as an inherently national trait rooted in

Western land acquisition, but one which found its primary expression in violent conflict and rather than peaceful cultivation.

In essence, Roosevelt's narrative of the American West as a site of violent masculine conquest recalled the discourse of Jefferson's vision of land ownership while emphasizing Manifest Destiny, thus inscribing a new, forward-looking myth of the West into public consciousness: masculinity based upon justification of imperialist expansion. Manifest Destiny, a nationalist doctrine created in the 1840s to promote support for national expansion into the West, functioned in the mid-nineteenth century to unite a nation divided into Northern and Southern sectionalism based upon Jefferson's concept of an "empire of liberty." As historian Richard White explains in *'It's Your Misfortune and None of my Own': A New History of the American West* (1993), expansionists resurrected Jefferson's vision of a just empire of equal landowners in the 1840s: "the imperial republic would remain a republic of white freemen who made their living farming the land and trading in agricultural products, but they added to it new rationales...Expansion, they claimed, would provide the key to economic stability and prosperity while simultaneously cooling sectional conflict by solving the dispute over slavery" (74). John O'Sullivan, the architect of the phrase, deployed metaphors to recall agrarian discourse, writing "It is a right such as that of the *tree* to the *space of air and earth* suitable for the full expansion of its principle and destiny of growth" (qtd in White, 73). Manifest Destiny ultimately led to the Mexican war and the annexation of Texas. In formulating this narrative which validated expansion through masculinist violence, Roosevelt implicitly drew upon the imperialist project of both Jefferson's empire of liberty and Manifest Destiny to create a narrative of the West which obliterated

Jefferson's producerist emphasis on land ownership. In place of a masculinity fostered in individual ownership and production, masculinity would be used to assert the dominance of the nation's "civilization" through acquisition only.

In *The Winning of the West*, Roosevelt drew on recent public memory of General Custer's "last stand" and effectively overwrote the contemporary economic troubles of the agriculturally settled West with a history of racial righteousness and masculinity. His project addressed not only his own, but a media-driven discourse, of a "crisis of masculinity." The rise of the middle class enabled by industrialization in eastern urban areas led to journalistic accounts and advertisements targeting men who feared that, in Melissa Dabakis's words in *Visualizing Labor in American Sculpture* (1998), ("the ideals of independence, self-reliance, competitiveness and risk-taking...were becoming lost to middle-class men in an industrialized culture" (94). Through his recreation of expansion and conquest, Roosevelt chronicled conflicts with Native American Indians a century beforehand, and Custer's recent battle with the Sioux in the Dakota Territory made this history especially relevant to the general public. The former Civil War soldier's Seventh Cavalry had led the conquest of the Great Plains in the 1860s, ultimately leading the military exploration of the Black Hills and setting off the "gold rush" for the Sioux territory of the Black Hills in Dakota Territory and the Indian war of 1876 in which Custer was slain. Implicitly evoking this most recent battle, Roosevelt characterized the masculinity of frontier settlers in the eighteenth century as inherently violent, and this violence traceable to their racial superiority: in his history of the West, Roosevelt wrote that American frontier settlers "proved their racial superiority by the potency of their violent masculinity — their ability to outsavage the savages" (Bederman 181). As

Richard Slotkin writes in *The Fatal Environment* (1985), the narrative that Roosevelt was to launch of violent masculinity on the frontier, while inherently linked to the land and landscape, was motivated by the “Myth of the Frontier,” which became most popular only after the Civil War. It is “arguably the longest-lived of American myths, with origins in the colonial period...Its ideological underpinnings are those same ‘laws’ of capitalist competition, of supply and demand, of Social Darwinism ‘survival of the fittest’ as a rationale for social order, and of ‘Manifest Destiny’ that have been the building blocks of our dominant historiographical tradition and political ideology” (15). This myth “has been most thoroughly and impressively set forth in the ninety years that followed the closing of the Wild West” (Slotkin 15).

The myth of the frontier’s importance to the nationalist project of expansion and imperialism was most necessary after the Civil War, though it drew on stories of frontier conflict occurring much earlier than that war. Slotkin points out that no historian of the period when the frontier was still open considered it as significant as Frederick Jackson Turner and Theodore Roosevelt (16). Turner proclaimed that the “closing” of the frontier — its complete exploration and acquisition by the U.S in 1890 — spoke to a potential future emasculation of the American man. In his speech “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” given to the American Historical Association’s meeting in 1893, Turner posited that encounters with frontier natives and the wilderness itself had defined the American character: “[t]he frontier is the line of most rapid and effective Americanization” for the early European colonists (Turner 33). In effect, the frontier had shaped American masculinity and individualism.⁷³ It had worked to “strip away” the

⁷³ For more on Turner’s use of frontier history and its appeal as a mass-marketed myth, see Jackson Lears’ *Rebirth of a Nation*.

European characteristics of the colonists in their encounters with the quintessentially native elements of the West. Turner claimed that, in the wake of the 1890 Census which declared that the frontier was now “closed,” or fully inhabited, Americans would have to seek out new frontiers, new “field[s] of opportunity” to replace the invigorating characteristics of the frontier upon the American personality, including the “coarseness” and “dominant individualism” that encounters with the frontier had helped foster (59).

The myth of the frontier, rising to ascendance in this postbellum period with the help of Roosevelt and Turner, reignited the nation’s interest on the West as the site of American individualism and opportunity. While the most significant proclamations shaping public perception of the myth of the frontier were made by Roosevelt and Turner after Hamlin Garland published *Main-Travelled Roads*, it is necessary to foreground a discussion of this discourse, as its development began earlier: William “Buffalo Bill” Cody, for example, began staging productions in 1882, inspired by the Custer conflict. Dramatizing the violent confrontations between soldiers and Indians and the cowboy’s frontier experience, “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West,” as he would come to call it, capitalized upon public interest in the Indian wars and promoted the increasingly popular frontier narrative of conquest. By 1886, he had taken his show on the road: “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West, America’s National Entertainment,” billed as “the drama of civilization,” opened in Madison Square Garden and showcased the justification of violent racial conquest through the myth of civilization’s progress inherent to the frontier myth later directly espoused by Roosevelt (Lears 41). This “mass-marketed mythology,” as Lears describes it, set the stage, as it were, for Roosevelt and Turner’s imperial frontier by combining “martial heroism and frontier manliness with industrial logistics and shrewd salesmanship”

(41). It helped to define masculinity as conquest itself, whether this conquest was enacted through violent conflict with Native Americans, imperial expansion on the international stage, or simply the “industrial logistics” involved in financial speculation in the great urban frontier of New York City.

In the reality of contemporary political economy, this myth erased the agrarian settlement emphasis within the history of Westward expansion and settlement. It thus worked to impede from national discourse the association of the contemporary West with farmers who were suffering from poverty, forced to mortgage the land they had once owned. As Slotkin writes, “The confrontations between borrowers and lenders, between laborers and contractors, are...as central to the story of Frontier development as the conventional opposition of the white man and the Indian, or the image of Daniel Boone gazing out in wonder on the natural beauty of an untouched wilderness”; but the myth perpetuated in the 1880s and 1890s was, in Slotkin’s words, “founded on the desire to avoid recognition of the perilous consequences of capitalist development in the New World, and [it] represent[s] a displacement or deflection of social conflict into the world of myth” (47). Consequently, the frontier myth’s redefined version of masculinity, what Roosevelt would call “the strenuous life,” was invested in the racial and nationalist superiority complex latent in Manifest Destiny and made over for the nation’s future imperialist projects.

In dominant national discourse of the 1880s and 1890s, masculinity was thus no longer defined by individual ownership and production but by occupation and consumption. In his 1899 speech “The Strenuous Life,” Roosevelt unequivocally established the correlation between imperialism and masculinity in a speech on foreign

relations in which he urged men in the United States to live the “strenuous life” by colonizing Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines.⁷⁴ He claimed that imperialism would counteract the “decadence” of overcivilization by correcting the effeminacy that had begun to emerge in a nation fully incorporated by men who were culturally sophisticated yet increasingly unable to assert their dominance through “the life of toil and effort, of labor and strife” (1). Men who have “those virile qualities necessary to win in the stern strife of actual life” must strengthen these qualities by colonizing nations who are in need of “wise supervision” (2, 9). He stated of potential colonial subjects, “with such people as those with whom we are to deal, weakness is the greatest of crimes,” thus clinching the association between virility and conquest (10). Moreover, Roosevelt deftly displaced the Jeffersonian agricultural equivalence of self-reliance, producerism and masculinity with a narrative of overtly racist expansion. For as he rewrote the history of Western expansion as one of racial conquest, in this speech he echoed the theme of expansion as masculinized racism: the confrontation and conquest of native populations was an inherently American and utterly male calling. Conquering non-white populations of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines was, in Roosevelt’s version of mythicized history, the next logical step in the aggressive proving grounds of American masculinity. As demonstrated earlier in Chapter One, the Civil War and its aftermath established in stark terms racial difference as justification for masculinized conflict and interracial equality as hazardous to the political economic hegemony, and thus the masculinity, of white men. Race is regularly thematized after the Civil War in both literature and public discourse because of its threat to white male power. When Roosevelt dictates the terms of

⁷⁴ For more on Roosevelt’s influence on Gilded Age definitions of masculinity, see Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*.

international imperialism through racial conquest and manliness, it is as much a projection of contemporary domestic turbulence amongst the nation's white men as it is a manifesto for dominance on the international stage.

The imperialism invoked by Roosevelt involved not only blatant dismissal of non-white races driven by fear of equality's consequences, it also encouraged and fed off of the speculative practices that grew in intensity as the market economy became more advanced. But, ironically, it was speculators themselves that Jefferson had denounced as effeminate in his emphasis on direct ownership and production of agricultural plots. Jefferson was opposed to speculation's emphasis on immaterial accumulation, rather than material production. Speculation, as Steve Fraser recounts in *Every Man a Speculator: A History of Wall Street in American Life* (2005), was antithetical to Jefferson's conception of the American landowner as a productive citizen, for increasing interest in speculation would lure citizens away from labor "to occupy themselves and their capitals in a species of gambling, destructive of morality" (20). While the smallholder agriculture Jefferson espoused was inextricably bound to the marketplace, especially through its exportation of grain to Europe, Jefferson feared the social consequences of openly encouraging speculation as a means by which to strengthen the drowning U.S economy. Speculation would entail an expansion and strengthening of American commerce, but, as Fraser points out, "[c]ommerce and the luxury it bred would be both civilizing and demoralizing, enlightening and cheapening, a source of advance in manners and morals and at the same time their corruption...[speculation] rewarded idleness instead of truly useful labor" (22). And it was this material labor and the material products it resulted in

that Jefferson counted as the emblem of Western masculinity. Speculation, from a moral perspective, was nothing so much as unproductive consumption.

Until 1880, the U.S was predominantly an agrarian economy, with most of its markets expanding regionally rather than internationally. Its definitions of masculinity as tied to the everyman citizen who owned land and produced on a small scale from it were, outside of the small group of soldiers conscripted to battle Native Americans for land, relatively untroubled. Statistically, the majority of Americans worked and lived on farms.⁷⁵ As William Leach points out in *Land of Desire* (1993), the culture, too, was “largely agrarian, republican, and religious; and most people — white people — controlled their own property or land” (8). After 1880, however, the notion of masculinity inherently bound to material ownership and production became acutely troubled by the influence of consumer capitalism as it made its mark on the agrarian areas of the Midwest and West. While Roosevelt and Turner rewrote the narrative of masculinity as violent imperial speculation and consumption, based upon a newly rejuvenated myth of the frontier populated with native peoples to whom American men must not show “weakness,” the agrarian political economy of the Western landscape had ceased to foster the overtly violent conflicts of the frontier. Instead, any violence on this land that was formerly frontier territory was being committed on a more insidious level to the traditional status of landed masculinity itself.

The nation, particularly its western portion, in which white men had owned and controlled the means of production, had begun to manifest a crisis in masculinity created

⁷⁵ See William Leach’s *Land of Desire* for more on the the economic and cultural networks complicit in the transition from the U.S. from an agrarian to a consumer culture. On the persistence of an agrarian lifestyle into the late nineteenth century: “Before 1880, the United States was largely an agrarian economy, with most Americans living and working on farms. As late as 1870 the average number of workers in any given factory was still fewer than ten. Most markets were local or regional, and the majority of businesses were independently owned and managed” (8).

by dispossession and the relatively novel notion of immaterial capital accumulation. From 1880 on, money itself, and with it property and ownership, took on a new significance as an increasing number of Americans lost their land and thus the ability to purchase tools to work it. They were thus “compelled to rely on money incomes — on wages and salaries — for their security and their well-being” while also increasingly relying on manufactured goods produced by others (Leach 7). Farmers were accustomed to producing their own goods within a decidedly more local economy, often using various types of currency as their mode of exchange before 1865 and occasionally bartering (Leach 7). This forced transition towards self-definition through consumer capitalism rather than small-scale production was felt by Western farmers as a violent incursion of a consumption-based market economy which epitomized industrialization. Industrialization, tied to managerial models of bureaucracy, credit, and corporations, was foreboding, threatening the very status of their masculinity.

In the late nineteenth century American West, the agrarian-based economy and the masculine ideology bound to it remained prevalent into the 1870s. Other agrarian regions in the postbellum period did not continue to foster similar associations between land ownership, production, and masculinity. The South, as I have demonstrated in the first chapter, underwent contentious disputes over rightful ownership and the definition of agricultural production in disparate plantations formerly farmed by slaves but possessed by white plantation owners. Land ownership in the South was therefore associated not with issues of masculinity so much as openly racialized definitions of citizenship. New England’s agricultural areas had taken on the air of resorts, and thus were painted with class markers, for while much of the region was still rural farmland, it had become a

destination for middle- and upper-class residents of the industrialized urban center of New York City who desired an escape from the congested sidewalks and ever-growing suburbs. In the 1870s and 1880s, then, the West served as the last region in which the philosophy of agrarian masculinity as defined by white male ownership and production not only survived but held dominant. However, the group most violently destabilized, both economically and in social capital, by newly conflicting modes of production in the American West was, ironically, that of white men. If masculinity was in the West determined by property ownership and production, then white men, in this patriarchal nation, had the most to lose when masculinity was abruptly redetermined as implicitly racialized conquest and speculation. For white laboring men of the West, their very gendered social role and thus their social relevance, as well as their economic aptitude, were called into question. In short, as with other groups marginalized in different regions in this time period, their political power and pertinence was at stake.

The West was first opened for official government-sanctioned settlement by the Homestead Act of 1862, which distributed land in the Midwest, Great Plains, and Southwest. In part, the Homestead Act led to the impoverishment of farmers in the West, though their dispossession was later greatly compounded by the infiltration of a speculative economy. The Homestead Act presumed that the West's climate and soil were similar to the Eastern half of the country's, thus it granted one hundred sixty acres of free land to individual landowners to aid in settlement of the country. But 160 acres of land was too small to productively farm on the frequently arid soil of the West. Thus, farmers began to buy more land on credit, from the railroad, the Timber Culture Act, or the Desert Land Act. As Richard White writes, "Without irrigation, a quarter-section

farm in the middle of the Great Plains or the Utah desert was not a ticket to independence but to starvation” (142). Only some land in Wisconsin was fit for farming — the southern portion — while the northern portion was given over to timber production. Because agricultural production was actually increasing between 1870 and 1900, in every region of the nation, the number of farmers who experienced poverty because of their inability to produce profitable crops from the land grew as well. Throughout the country, according to Catherine Stock in *Rural Radicals* (1996), “the number of farms more than doubled, jumping from 2.7 million to 5.7 million” (54). The Pacific Railroad Act, which was also passed in 1862 as a companion to the Homestead Act, meanwhile had given hundreds of millions of acres of better land and offered significant government loans to railroad corporations. Farmers who could afford to bought land directly from the railroads. However, buying from the railroads came with its own risks. Railroads, as Stock writes, “bought monopolies on the transportation of their crops. Farmers in the West and South...became dependent on banks and furnishing merchants to finance seed, implements, and domestics goods” while creditors coerced farmers into growing market crops rather than locally consumed, traditional crops. In order for farmers to plant these market crops, they had to purchase more domestic goods from merchants, for these crops required high-intensity agriculture that utilized tools such as threshers (Stock 57).

Thus, as farming increased across the nation between 1870 and 1900, tenancy also increased. Unable to produce enough in some areas to pay for their land’s upkeep, farmers also could not produce enough profit to continue to own their own land because even when they did have a “bumper crop,” speculators “bought and sold crops as commodities,” causing a collapse in crop prices (Stock 57). Farmers were then forced to

mortgage their farms using financing from creditors based in Wall Street, speculators, and the railroad companies themselves. Compounding the rise in tenancy was the fact that between 1865 and 1890, while population and business activity increased, the supply of money in circulation remained the same, so each dollar was worth more. A farmer's debts were thus increasingly difficult to pay off. For example, a farmer who "borrowed a thousand dollars in 1865 at 10-percent interest would have to pay back the equivalent of a hundred bushels of wheat. By 1880 he would have to produce twice as much to pay the same bill" (Stock 65). Poor from producing, poor from others' speculation, and poor from attempting to pay off debt, farmers had to mortgage to stay afloat and support themselves.

The railroads continued to constitute an increasingly destructive force to farmers in this political economy of the agrarian West, also contributing greatly to the rise in tenancy. Railroads billed farmers more per mile to farms west of the Mississippi, so farmers in the West suffered the most. In 1890 "it cost farmers as much to ship from Fargo, North Dakota, to Minneapolis as it did to ship from Minneapolis all the way to New York City...farmers had to pay mileage to the farthest eastern point on the line, whether or not that was their destination" (Stock 65). The high rates railroads charged for shipping, as well as the money spent to purchase seed and tools, impoverished farmers. But the railroad companies also encouraged farmers to directly engage in speculative enterprises. Those companies in the farmland surrounding Chicago especially goaded farmers to borrow money from banks to purchase good railroad land at exorbitant prices⁷⁶.

⁷⁶ As Jackson Lears writes in *Rebirth of a Nation*, "By the late 1880s, natural and market forces combined to create unprecedented hardship for farmers in much of the Chicago hinterland. They were battered by blizzards, bankers, and brokers; their profit margins were squeezed down to nothing by high railroad rates, tight money, and mounting indebtedness. When they got lucky and raised a bumper crop of corn or wheat, their prices plummeted...Part of their predicament was created by their own speculative fantasies, which were shamelessly encouraged by railroads and local boosters, and which led them to overextended borrowing for land at inflated prices" (143).

Railroads controlled a good portion of arable land in the West; as White points out, “A settler entering Kansas in the late 1860s and early 1870s, for example, would find one-third of that state closed to homesteading. Railroad grants alone tied up 20 percent of the state” (147). Not only were railroad companies encouraging speculation in farmers and in part funding it, speculation in railroad stock was arguably a primary cause of the economic collapses of both 1873 and 1893. Jackson Lears argues, “Railroad stocks, the high-tech stock of the day, epitomized the lurching inefficiency of economic advance. Throughout the 1870s and 1880s, railroads were ridiculously overcapitalized; their stock sold for top dollar while their roadbeds disintegrated and their locomotives lay rusting in ditches...But value was an elusive concept. From one point of view, stocks’ values depended on what investors would pay for them” (54). The railroads themselves epitomized speculation.

While tenancy rose and farmers became increasingly impoverished and dispossessed, the agrarian form of production still dominated the West. Farmers were unable to work their own land, sell at profitable rates the crops they produced, and even to pay for tools and supplies. The very value of the land they rented and the debts they owed climbed because of fixed currency. Thus, white men faced the violence of the overreaching force of a consumer- and credit-based, speculative economy as it manifested itself in the terms by which they defined their masculinity: land ownership and the value of their own labor. Despite recent critical work on regionalism which suggests that in order to do away with a center/periphery mode of metropolitan and rural classification, rural regions should now be read as developed and industrialized sites, the West persisted as an agrarian region. The ideological identifications of dispossessed men

in these agrarian regions continued to be shaped by the Jeffersonian ideal of masculinity. In the agricultural lands west of the manufacturing belt of New England, Pennsylvania, Ohio cities, New York, and Chicago, as Elizabeth Sanders writes in *Roots of Reform* (1999), “the engine of economic growth lay in the surrounding countryside” (15-16). Uneven development of the nation was strikingly clear in the agrarian regions such as Wisconsin, Hamlin Garland’s native state: Robert Nesbit, writing in *Urbanization and Industrialization 1873-1893: History of Wisconsin* (1985) writes that while in 1873, two out of every three Wisconsin residents lived on farms, by 1893 “the rural (mostly farm) population had increased by about one-third, but the urban population had nearly trebled. Nonetheless, agriculture remained a dynamic part of the economy in 1893” (1). The section of Wisconsin that Garland depicts in “Up the Couilly” in *Main-Travelled Roads*, connected to Milwaukee by railroads, is described by Nesbit as relatively poor farmland, yet “this land harbored generations of hard-working farm families who struggled, not always successfully, to achieve more than a subsistence level of existence” (4). Garland’s stories in *Main-Travelled Roads* track the contemporary lives of farmers in Iowa and Wisconsin to interrogate the status of masculinity as it is redefined by violent speculation in dominant political discourse, locating it instead in a West in which the only violent subjugation occurring is that of the white men themselves. Garland thus creates a symbolic economy in which these white men, far from the imperialist speculators who antagonize them in the plots, only exercise violence in order to reestablish their rights to ownership and their producerist-driven, regionally historical versions of masculinity.

In the Great Plains states, the fertile prairie land had by the early twentieth century, “encouraged political independence from dominant northeastern urban-industrial

interests” (Sanders 17). Throughout these states, “those who stayed to farm the high plains created a distinct culture. The settlement patterns predicated by the terms of the Homestead Act and the railroads resulted in scattered farm homes, at least a mile apart, connected by marginal roads to the small trading villages spread out along the railroad tracks” (Quantic 8). The agricultural mode, in other words, was sustained throughout the period of regionalist literary production of the West: most of the businesses were “small, owner-operated endeavors” (White 264). If agriculture still defined the regional economy, and not advanced industrial capitalism, then, by extension, responses to the violent dispossession and disempowerment in these works of literary regionalism took on violence itself to metaphorize the extent to which impoverished and dispossessed farmers were impelled to resist and reorder the effects of consumer capitalism’s destabilization.

In advocating for frontier masculinity, politicians and public figures, whether intentionally or not, deferred attention from the consumptive processes that emasculated upper class men in the late nineteenth century, and which threatened to emasculate farmers through impoverishment and their inability to own land. In renovating American masculinity as violent speculation fueled by imperialist intentions, they merged the history of the American West with speculation in one fell swoop. Hamlin Garland and, later, Willa Cather, correct this rising popular myth of the frontier in their regionalist writing of the West. Formulating the most quintessentially masculine of their characters as farmers and the speculators as effeminate, weak-willed and immoral consumers, they also articulate new ways in which both men and women can assert their symbolic virility through landownership. The character of the speculator in their narratives embodies the very characteristics Roosevelt had tried to leave behind when revising his own public

image as “cowboy.” Garland’s dispossessed protagonists commit literal and symbolic violence in turn against the forces of consumer capitalism which threaten to abrogate the political value of their voices. Masculinity in Garland’s work is thus refigured for a new age, based upon the regional history of the West: masculinity become a characteristic not only of men themselves but of a class of independent owners of all races and both sexes who create more than they consume. Accumulation of immaterial capital for the purposes of conspicuous consumption symbolically leads to impotence, for the characters in question and for the economy itself. Thus, if violence is the symbolic mode by which characters engage directly with their regional economy, then the violence of men in these regionalist stories of the West metaphorically reorders property relations so that the speculative and violent influences of the market economy are rendered for what they truly are: impotent examples of consumption.

Garland as Formalist

Recent trends in criticism of the rural American West at the turn of the century have indicated that this fiction is consumed by the market economy’s encroaching industrialization. This is a direct departure from earlier accounts of rural regionalist literature, which claimed that it preserved the disappearing cultural practices of a quaint pastoral backwater, and was created by its authors merely for the sake of market consumption in order to simultaneously satisfy the needs of the reading public as “a symbol of union with the premodern chosen at the moment of separation from it” and to assert to the “translocally incorporated social elite” the unthreatening and contained nature of local cultures (Brodhead 17, 123). Regionalist fiction of rural areas demonstrated stories of local cultures’ “supersession by a modern order now risen to

national dominance” in a time of great socioeconomic upheaval (Brodhead 121).

However, while newer criticism directly addresses the economic dynamics at work in Western regionalism, there is risk in reframing this literature in terms of the incursion of industrial capitalism as its dominant characteristic. The agrarian economy was still operative at the time these narratives were written. Thus, recent criticism tends to reinscribe a model of center/periphery which weighs industrialization and its incorporating tendencies as the most significant element of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In other words, this trend suggests that the only useful information Western regionalist literature can reveal is manifest in countless examples of “the machine in the garden,” to use Leo Marx’s conceptual framework in *The Machine in the Garden*. In describing the late nineteenth century, Marx writes “Within the lifetime of a single generation, a rustic and in large part wild landscape was transformed into the site of the world’s most productive industrial machine. It would be difficult to imagine more profound contradictions of value or meaning than those made manifest by this circumstance” (Marx 343). As Marx writes, “[t]he contrast between the machine and the pastoral ideal dramatizes the great issue of our culture. It is the germ...of the most final of all generalizations about America”: “the machine’s incursion into the garden” (353-55). However, focusing on the incursion of the “machine” to the detriment of agrarian or subsistence-based communities can overshadow the fact that this literature is “about” the conflicts inherent in the confrontation of one economic mode, and thus one ideology, with another. Regionalist literature of the West is not simply a description of a static landscape in which characters are frozen, staring at the oncoming train of industrialization. In the conflict between two modes of production, Western regionalist

writers expose the violence inherent in this conflict, the violence it provokes, and its marginalizing effects on white men. If we overlook this conflict itself by overlooking the dominant productive mode, in Western literature as well as other rural literatures of regionalism, we overlook the *source* of the violence and risk a reverse teleology: a fixation on the machine as predictive of our current era, rather than an examination of the subtleties inherent in the conflict between the region's persisting agrarianism and the imposition of the market economy itself and the groups degraded in the turmoil of this region's political economy.

Many critics have also recently acknowledged that some rural regionalist literature exposes the violence of two conflicting modes of production through its inclusion of the forces of industrialization. Hamlin Garland's work in *Main-Travelled Roads* (1891) has particularly been reassessed in light of his critique of the system that marginalizes urban and rural subjects alike. Eric Schocket's *Vanishing Moments*, Philip Joseph's *American Literary Regionalism in a Global Age*, Mark Storey's *Rural Fictions, Urban Realities*, and Stephanie Foote's *Regional Fictions* all discuss the way in which Garland's early fiction articulates the destabilizing force of the market economy, its concomitant industrialization, and the speculation that accompanies it as it makes its way into Western farmland. Yet, for the most part, their treatment of these conflicting modes of production remains primarily confined to the *industrialization* of the landscape rather than the very much current agrarian mode described in the writing. By overlooking the equally significant role of the regional agrarian economy, these readings overlook Garland's assessment of how this violent conflict between two modes of production affects the masculinity of the region's agrarian laborers. For agrarianism in the West

historically establishes a significant link between land ownership, its cultivation, and masculinity. As these laborers become dispossessed, and the market economy's idealization of the masculine commercialist and imperialist speculator is held as the new national standard for white men, their masculinity is called into question. In *Main-Travelled Roads*, I contend, Garland reorders the disruption of the agrarian ideological figuration of masculinity as this mode of production confronts industrialization's interference in the West. From the confrontation of these two modes, Garland creates a new and explicitly political, anti-capitalist subject position for white men to occupy, one which emphasizes anew and in contemporary terms the importance of production rather than consumption.

Scholars of the most recent trend in Western regionalist discussion have instead focused on tropes of industrialization and speculation to inform their discussions of Garland's figuration of the aesthetic (industrialization and the market economy) as opposed to the political (agrarian) in these stories. The cosmopolitan urban readership's expectation of regionalism's aestheticization of the less-developed regions, they argue in one form or another, prompted Garland to frame these rural areas of Wisconsin and Iowa as pictureque. Within this critical perspective, Garland's need to portray the utterly realistic poverty and politicized rage of the inhabitants of these regions provides the most notable manifestation of the agrarian ideology. Yet the ideology behind the economy is subsumed to a general discussion of Garland's biographical interest in "politics" often divorced from the actual politics of the agrarian laboring class's history of masculinity.

More specifically, recent critical attention to Garland's short stories in *Main-Travelled Roads* has mainly centered upon readings of "Up the Coolly."⁷⁷ Two persuasive and in-depth readings of this story by Stephanie Foote, in *Regional Fictions*, and Philip Joseph, in *American Literary Regionalism in a Global Age*, contend that Garland's motive in depicting Howard as a speculative artist is rooted in his personal misgivings regarding regionalism's potential exploitation through aestheticization of the poverty rampant in agrarian regions. Both Foote and Joseph iterate Garland's political project as running antithetical to his aesthetic project, contending that Garland thus divides his political project from his aesthetic project in "Up the Coolly" and fixes his radicalism in the characters of the laborers. However, while Foote claims that the character of Howard, the speculator, is in effect a straightforward representation of Garland's own misgivings about the potential for his art to exploit more than it reveals about the region of the West, Joseph approaches the story formally, presenting Grant and Howard's dueling perspectives as the starting point from which Garland reconciles the "significant" and the "beautiful" embodied by the brothers. For Garland, "True beauty [expressed in art]," Joseph writes, "hinged not on the suppression of farmers and their leaders, but on a national transformation initiated and undergone by them. It depended ultimately, in other words, on the collapse of the two categories in history" (45). Joseph writes that Garland censures Howard and advocates for Grant, and advocates for the agrarian laborer's reclamation of rights so that the laborer can express the most authentically national art of any economic group within the nation's citizenry. This is Garland's "dialectical" solution (50) to the dualism of aesthetics and politics.

⁷⁷ See Brad Evans, *Before Cultures*; Tom Lutz, *Cosmopolitan Vistas*; Philip Joseph, *American Literary Regionalism in a Global Age*; Stephanie Foote, *Regional Fictions*; Donna Campbell, *Resisting Regionalism*; Mark Storey, *Rural Fictions, Urban Realities*; and Eric Schocket, *Vanishing Moments*.

Joseph's argument turns upon his insistence that Garland is preoccupied with the necessity of "beauty" in literature, which seems a bit too narrow to describe "Up the Coolly." However, Joseph's consideration of Garland's general ideological project within the story is more attuned to Garland's formal and stylistic complexities. Joseph's treatment of the dialectic at work in Garland's stories is formally convincing, but his iteration of the content of this dialectic seems off. As I contend in Chapter Two, the dialectic does not manifest itself in the surface level of the plot (and thus any particular character's qualities cannot in and of themselves constitute a dialectical move). In regionalist literature, the symbolism and allegory within represented perception and dialogue effects the dialectical movement of the author's critique of the incorporating economy. Thus, particularly in "A Branch Road" and "Up the Coolly," the dialectic manifests itself within the resolutions implied through Biblical allegory, violent symbolism, and the insurrectionary political potential of the racialized agrarian laborer. My argument thus regards Garland's early writing through the lens of form as well as ideology in order to fully interpret the nuances of Garland's structural solutions to the political-economic dispossession of Western agrarian men.

Earlier critical treatments of Hamlin Garland's work were primarily written by Donald Pizer. In *Hamlin Garland's Early Work and Career* (1960), Pizer reintroduced Garland to academic consideration as an important yet infrequently considered regionalist writer. In this work Pizer discusses Garland's stories in *Main-Travelled Roads* in terms of their social themes and their use of the picturesque, emphasizing Garland's use of metaphor as well as Garland's intent to "'debunk' idyllic pictures of farm life" (74). While relatively superficial in its treatment of Garland's formal complexity, Pizer

usefully points out his attitudes towards gender roles: “Like Spencer, Garland believed that the political and social subjection of woman was a survival of an older stage of social evolution and was increasingly unjustified in an era of growing devotion to individual freedom and personality” (72). Pizer quotes Garland’s proclamation in the periodical *The Standard* in 1890: ““In my far-off ideal world the liberty of man and woman is bounded only by the equal rights of others. Woman stands there as independent of man as man is independent of woman”” (73), thus clarifying Garland’s radical stance towards women’s rights as well as his consideration of men’s roles: both sexes should “stand” equal to one another, but this can only be accomplished if all marginalized groups attain equal rights. No one, in other words, should remain dependent on another for his or her freedom. Pizer later treated Garland’s fiction more thoroughly in his essay “Hamlin Garland’s 1891 *Main-Travelled Roads*: Local Color as Art” in his introduction to the 1970 version of *Main-Travelled Roads* published by Charles E. Merrill. In this piece Pizer establishes the template for critical discussion of Garland’s work that many of the writers cited above would follow: “Garland’s angle of vision [...] is initially that of the ‘insider’ who knows the truth about farm life [...]. But he is also an ‘outsider’ who is aware of the rich life, the ‘beauty,’ which is both unknown and unavailable to the farmer” (*Realism and Naturalism in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* 130). Discussion of Garland’s work has also reprised Pizer’s original assertion of the “return theme” in these stories (139). Pizer’s work on Garland has clearly dictated both Garland’s induction to serious canonical consideration, as well as the terms by which we approach Garland’s writing in detail. And, indeed, these assessments of Garland’s work remain convincing. While I seek to build upon them in my treatment of Garland’s work in this chapter, Pizer’s assessments,

particularly his point that “Road and picture, rather than plot, constitute the permanently moving in the stories of the collection” (*Realism and Naturalism* 130) provide the groundwork for my argument as well.

My argument is also greatly informed by Brad Evans’ discussion of Garland’s work in *Before Cultures*. Evans posits Garland’s work in relation to a growing literary consciousness around the need for a national literature. For Garland, Evans contends, national literature could only be authentic if it were regionally based: Garland’s work serves to demonstrate that “During this period, regionalism’s nationalism worked by way of synecdoche rather than analogy — by isolating literary texts as specimens of the nation of which they were intrinsically a part rather than by pairing the scenes described in regional fiction with an abstract ideal of America” (86). In contrast to Donna Campbell’s rather cursory assertion that Hamlin Garland “coopted” the regionalist movement’s “emphasis on preserving regional identity,” turning it into “a jingoistic literary nationalism,” Evans figures the relationship between region and nation in Garland’s fiction not as an unexamined celebration of the nation’s greatness but as the cathartic potential of detail’s arrangement inherent in the work of synecdoche (Campbell 48). In both the redemptive and condemnatory specificity illuminated by regional detail, the nation is the manifestation of all of its regional communities. I thus seek to extend Evans’s point in my own argument here: for Garland, national masculinity, too, could only be authentic if it were regionally oriented, and specifically rooted in the region upon which is mapped the history of the nation’s first foray into the policies of landownership, the agrarian West.

Hamlin Garland's voice was the most dominant in the 1880s and 1890s in defining the tenets of American literary regionalism. While many realist writers did not necessarily agree with Garland, and in fact many opposed his claims that regionalism should serve as the epitome of national literature and thus should define the trajectory of realism as a whole, William Dean Howells was Garland's ally and advocate from the start of his career. Garland had been given a letter of introduction to Howells by the editor of the newspaper for which he had written a review of Howells's work *The Minister's Charge* celebrating the novel's treatment of character and scene. Having previously articulated his approach to American regionalism as the nation's ideal literary form in a manuscript influenced by his study of Lamarck and Taine entitled "The Evolution of American Thought," Garland brought it to Howells's attention in their first meeting. In 1887 in the parlor of Lee's Hotel in Auburndale, Massachusetts, according to Keith Newlin in "The Friendship of Hamlin Garland and W.D. Howells," Garland described to Howells his philosophy of American literature: "the men and women of the South and East and West are working, without knowing it, in accordance with a great principle which is this: American literature, in order to be great, must be national, and in order to be national must be spontaneous and must deal with the conditions peculiar to our own land and climate" (266). Howells confirmed to Garland that his work on the purpose of American literary regionalism in the context of a national art was original, and encouraged him to publish his book on the subject. From this point on, Howells would serve as reference for Garland, recommending editors' attention to and publication of his work.

While the writers took slightly different tacts in their approach to realism's political function: Howells advocated for a version of social realism that was nondidactic and spurred readers' consciousness of economic disparity through objective portrayal, whereas early in his career, Garland, as Newlin writes, favored a version of realism which would "raise the social conscience" of readers ("Friendship" 269). Howells served to influence Garland's early approaches to fiction by advising him against the use of realism for propaganda: Garland would concede, after Howells's mild counsel in a letter to Garland 1888 that it is "the novelist's business to keep out of the way," that the voice of the regionalist writer should "not solve the problem; he is content to set it before us as it is in life" (qtd in "Friendship," 270-71). Howells would go on to write a review of Garland's *Main-Travelled Roads* in 1891. Here he praises the stories as "full of the bitter and burning dust, the foul and trampled slush of the common avenues of life," and describes Garland's portrayal of the agrarian laborer as "heart-breaking in its rude despair," his sketches of those figures important because "our satirists find [them] so easy to caricature as Hayseeds, whose blind groping for fairer conditions is so grotesque to the newspapers and so menacing to the politicians" (35). Garland's publication of *Crumbling Idols* in 1894, a collection of polemical essays on American literature, art, and politics, would provoke objections and condescension for its rejection of academic tradition and embrace of the local in lieu of all other traditional generic modes in art and literature. Critics took him to task, Edward E. Hale among them, who wrote that "Mr. Garland is not persuasive: he is bellicose, obstreperous, blatant;" Garland's dismissal of tradition in its entirety showed narrow-mindedness, Hale wrote, for "being himself able to write excellent things of a certain sort, cannot conceive that there can be anything else

excellent of a kind totally different” (55). Howells would reassure Garland that his approach was “bold, and largely true, and people like neither courage nor truth” (as cited in “Friendship,” 274). The alliance between Howells and Garland stayed strong until Howells’s death, nearly thirty years later. Howells strongly shaped Garland’s career, and Garland, in turn, was an impassioned advocate of Howells’s social realism.

The literary regionalism that Garland shaped under Howells’s guidance, despite Howells’s gentle admonitions against its sometimes extreme polemicism, often approached a level of radicalism that may have prevented its popularity had it been published before or after 1891. The decade of the 1880s which preceded its publication fostered a cultural audience largely attentive to, if not always sympathetic for, the plight of the working class which Garland set against the pastoral background of the American West. This was a decade of fomenting class consciousness which exploded into an unprecedented number of labor strikes, the most the nation had yet seen in its history. In the 1890s, on the other hand, after the Populist Party formed as a national party and subsequently dismissed the most radical of its former Farmers’ Alliance member’s propositions, Garland’s version of regionalism, unabashedly radical in its politics and purposefully less polished than the more dominant styles of naturalism and social realism would find a less interested audience. However, the strains of radical American literary regionalism that Garland espoused and Howells supported did indeed persist into later regionalist writing, in a more formalized and less overtly politicized generic expression.

In fact, Garland directly influenced Stephen Crane’s writing, as Pizer points out in “Hamlin Garland and Stephen Crane: The Naturalist as Romantic Individualist” (1958). When Crane was working as a newspaper reporter writing on New Jersey shore news for

the *New York Tribune*, he was assigned to cover Garland's lectures on "American Literature and Expressive Art." Crane reported upon Garland's lecture on Howells, writing that Garland saw Howells as a proponent of "the progress of ideals, the relative in art" and that, according to Garland, Howells "does not insist upon any special material, but only that the novelist be true to himself and to things as he sees them" (qtd in Pizer 104). Crane became acquainted with Garland, speaking with him that summer and in the summer of 1892. Around this time, Crane would write in a letter in 1892, he rejected "the clever school literature," realizing that his concept of art was "identical with the one of Howells and Garland" (qtd in Pizer 104). Crane seems to imply here that not only was he influenced by Garland's transmission of Howellsian verity and Garland's own espousal of impressionism, but that he learned from Howells and Garland the significance of attesting to his instinctive perceptions of the underlying corruption that propelled the political economy of the urban world he would represent in *Maggie*. For example, Crane described in a letter in 1896 the ruling notion informing his recently published work, which included *Maggie*: "a man [...] is merely responsible for his quality of personal honesty" (qtd in Pizer 105). This implicitly political "honesty" is necessary to the project of regionalist fiction: it exposes, through various degrees of politicized formalization, the violent structural effects of a regionally specific political-economic engine, that engine which in turn violently shapes and delimits the demographic most vulnerable in that region. The synecdochal function of regionalism that Garland defined thus attests, albeit in a less blatantly radical format than Garland's own fiction, to the structural particularities of different regions that shape each American subject position differently and violently in accordance with the regional economy.

Though regionalist fiction preceding and following Garland's own dealt with the politicized subject position's agency in a more stylistically formalized manner to express its "political unconscious," Garland's contribution to regionalist fiction makes explicit its fixation on the honest portrayal of the machinations of political economy.

Where masculinity is contingent in Hamlin Garland's short stories, materiality of the land serves as the rhetorical and physical site where its uncertainty is stabilized. Throughout regionalist literature, various material motifs are used to figure regionalism's problematic of property: the home, in Joel Chandler Harris's Uncle Remus tales; the body, in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*; and the landscape, as in Garland's fiction. As with other regionalist literature, conflict over property, and this conflict's resolution of that destructive dispossession which is tied to a violent shift or conflict in economic mode, is expressed upon the material figuration of property and is the crux of Garland's fiction. Rhetorical formal solutions to this dispossession are therefore encoded in Garland's stylistic use of material figures of property, specifically the motifs of landscape and weather.

Producerism

Materiality and material production have a specific resonance with the region of the West in this time period. The "producerist" worldview, Jeffersonian in origin and dominant in rural areas of the country up through and beyond the Civil War, took on renewed political emphasis in the 1880s, when the Farmers' Alliance formed to, as Catherine Stock writes, "chang[e] the direction of American capitalism toward sustained, cooperative producerism" (67). If Jefferson's definition of the masculine American male relied upon this man's ability to physically cultivate the earth, producerists in the late

nineteenth century expanded this definition to include productive labor of any sort in order to enfold industrial workers into their movement. But this movement was initiated by Western and Southern farmers who formed the Grange, the Agricultural Wheel, the Farmers' Alliance, and then the Populist Party.⁷⁸ Stock notes that the effects of industrialization and incorporation on the rural West devalued workers such that "a culture dedicated to consumption is more than a society of men and women who enjoy consumer products. It is one that begins to judge individual worth in terms of possessions and material goods rather than of work products" (60). As the agrarian producerists became increasingly exploited by the incorporated industrial engine driving this culture of consumption, "rural people held more steadfastly to the dream of producerism in the late nineteenth century than they ever had before" (60). Imperative to the agrarian producerist project was individual landownership, which would enable farmers to keep the means of production within their own control: to farm what they chose and sell to whom they chose.

If laborers could control their individual productive capacity through control of the land (and of businesses, in both rural and industrial areas), they could put political and economic significance back into the hands of those who cultivated or created the products sold in the marketplace. This reclamation would thus place the source of

⁷⁸ The Populist Party formed out of the Farmers' Alliance almost immediately after Garland published *Main-Travelled Roads*. For more on the Farmers' Alliance, see Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation*, and Stock, *Rural Radicals*. Lears writes that the Alliance "began in Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Kansas as a counterforce to the feelings of isolation and impotence that enveloped the countryside in the 1880s" (155). The Alliance's "opposition to monopoly led to specific policy implications, which farmers first spelled out when they met in August 1886 in...Cleburne, Texas. Their immediate concern was challenging the dominant pattern of land sales. Scottish and English cattle syndicates as well as American railroads had bought up huge swathes of land for speculative purposes, leaving little public domain for settlement. Issuing a statement that became known as the Cleburne Demands, the Alliance insisted that speculative land be taxed, that foreigners be prevented from speculating in American land, and that speculators be required to sell land titles to settlers. Most important was their call for a federally administered national banking system...Concern for a federal currency and credit system was at the core of the Farmers' Alliance program" (Lears 157).

political power in the hands of the producers rather than the monopoly capitalists and speculators. If a narrative of frontier masculinity was being created to unleash the speculative and consumptive appetites of the public, particularly to whet mens' appetites for the consumptive conquests of imperialism, and the Gilded Age monopolists were heralded as the nation's primary models of masculine power — contemporary cowboys like Roosevelt himself — then producerism reestablished the source of masculinity in physical labor and individual ownership. Jackson Lears describes producerism in these terms: “Skilled workers believed in the redemptive powers of their own labor, its capacity to regenerate individual and society alike. They took pride in themselves and their participation in the honorable army of producers — people who produced economic value through their own efforts,” as opposed to “the ‘parasites’ (lawyers, bankers, brokers) who merely manipulated abstractions of other people’s money” (*Rebirth* 74). In calling upon the labor theory of value, producerists sought to unveil the origination of commodities: human production.

The labor theory of value, as Marx defines it, explains that money is in essence an idea which represents the general process by which labor-time becomes materialized into valuated commodities by the laborer. Money is thus a compressed universal “narrative” of the process by which labor is transmuted into any commodity with a commonly agreed upon market value. That process is the starting point at which market exchange can occur.⁷⁹ Commodities, the producerists seek to point out, are labor itself, valued: they are

⁷⁹ See David Harvey’s account of Marx’s clarification of the labor theory of value vs. the value of labor-power in *A Companion to Marx’s Capital*: Marx’s Chapter 10: “The Working Day” “begins by reminding us that there is a world of difference between the labor theory of value and the value of labor-power. The labor theory of value deals with how socially necessary labor-time is congealed in commodities by the laborer. This is the standard of value represented by the money commodity and by money in general. The value of labor-power, on the other hand, is simply the value of that commodity sold in the market as labor-power. While this commodity is like other commodities in certain respects, it also has some special

material manifestations of labor. Money thus should be understood not as an abstract number pricing a commodity at sea in the market, but as “registering” the amount of physical labor required to produce the commodity in material terms — as directly tied to labor. In Jackson Lears’ words, “Real value, from the producerist view, derived not from the mysterious power of money but from the sweat of the workers’ brow” (*Rebirth* 74). The producerists also drew upon the particularly American history of the labor theory of value to bring into play the ethics they implied will be lost in a fully incorporated political economy. Eric Schocket explains that, until the 1850s, freedom, work, and labor were strongly related terms, almost interchangeable, as established by sixteenth century Puritanism’s “doctrinal connection between work in one’s calling and spiritual salvation”: this “transvaluation” was “broadened and affected secular ideology in the eighteenth century, as the American Enlightenment turned sacred calling into civic duty” (38). Max Weber developed the concept of the “Protestant work ethic” from these connotations associated with a particularly American version of labor. Schocket writes that Weber’s term “*ethic*, which connotes an internally consistent moral code, captures one of the more salient aspects of this conception: labor was an act valued in and of itself — valued intrinsically — above what it could or did achieve in the world. The loss of this intrinsic valuation [...] came about with the advent of a new capitalist ethic and the turn to extrinsic valuations for labor” (38-39). For the producerists of the 1880s, labor needed to be recognized and respected both as the material basis for money’s increasingly abstract aspects and as an ethical, inherently American practice. Not in conflict of

qualities because there here enters in a historical and moral element” (135). In other words, labor-power itself is a commodity in market capitalism: the laborer sells his labor-power to his employer, and thus is paid wages for the alienable commodity of his own labor.

conquest and consumption, but in labor and production, would American masculinity be reinvigorated.

Landed Men

Regionalist fiction, in articulating the conflict between residual and expanding modes of production, emphasizes the property relations within those distinct regions which exhibit these differential manifestations of modes of production across the nation. In *Main-Travelled Roads*, Garland draws upon the motifs of property most relevant to the agricultural region of the West. Land and natural forces such as weather that affect this land become the sites of violence in these early works. Not coincidentally, the motif of the land represents the version of property of which the agrarian producerist movement was most often dispossessed, and this dispossession often resulted in extreme impoverishment. These motifs thus function simultaneously as sites which mark dispossession, and as material sites of the masculine violence on which agrarian laborers mobilize to address this dispossession. The motif of the land is thus, in Garland's fiction in *Main-Travelled Roads*, the theoretical figuration of property with which the white male subject can effect the most significant political-economic structural rearrangements to validate his political efficacy. Land was the dominant material form of politically significant property in the West until the 1880s. This region, as I have noted, had until recently been dominated by an agrarianism, with the speculative practices and industrialization of market capitalism as well as its practices of mass production and consumption irrelevant to the region's treatment of property ownership. Consequently, this region's economy was relatively closest to pre-modern forms of capitalism — wherein relations between producer and consumer, because they were tied to the material

production of the land itself, an utterly visible force — were more transparent than in the various mystified forms of production in market capitalism dominant in urban regions, and the effectively pre-capitalist, feudal system of land ownership dominant before Reconstruction. Violent agency attributed to the land itself thus symbolizes retribution to the violence done to the concept of unmystified production committed by consumptive speculation. These motifs of the land and landscape thus signify violence of the particularly masculinized connotations of that land's ownership and production. Because many agrarian laborers had to rent or mortgage the land that they worked, they were not truly able to claim full productive power and ownership of the means of production, nor were they able to use this ownership of the means of production to advocate for their political subjectivities. Thus, Garland uses land as the motif of property in his regionalist fiction to draw attention to the market capitalist production of commodities as inherently bound to the recent history of the physical production the laborer accomplished on individually owned land, enabling him to gesture to and demystify the increasingly commodified, fetishized and immaterial versions of property and ownership within market capitalism. In the process of gesturing to the rupturing degrees of removal surrounding the ownership norms of market capitalism, Garland implicates the wealthy white male consumer as weak and impotent, and the white male laborer as masculine in his productive capacity.

Garland formally structures the short story "A Branch Road" through two parallel narratives. One, the dominant narrative, consists of main character Will's development from collegiate farmer to educated speculator, returning to Iowa to reunite with a woman he had rejected in a moment of rage at her perceived flirtation. The story's symbolic

counterplot uses the motifs of land and landscape to expose the violence of speculative occupations upon the significance of the bond between land ownership and production, and thus the consumptive, consumerist nature of the accumulative occupation of the speculator. This counterplot also emphasizes the violent capacity of the landscape itself to metaphorize the dormant violence of the producerists cut off from their relationship with the land. The counterplot is guided by a voice aside from Will's represented perception; it functions to effectively denounce Will's acceptance of the contemporary rising narrative of masculinity, the myth of the Western frontier as one of speculation and conquest.

The story opens with the dominant narrative's optimistic description of a man, nameless at first, walking alongside a field in Iowa. Garland sets up the fact that this man's poverty does not preclude his masculinity and competence: in fact, his poverty redeems the condemnatory privilege afforded white men. At the same time, however, his poverty is established as problematic, "cheap and common," in the very first line of the story: "In the windless September dawn a voice went ringing clear and sweet, a man's voice, singing a cheap and common air" (Garland 5). According to this dominant narrative, his voice, and by extension his character, is morally sound, but the song he chooses to sing with this voice is "cheap and common," threatening the potential status of this man. Though he sings a song of the lower class, his redemptive qualities will uplift him and he will prove himself despite his poverty: the dominant narrator states, "*Yet* something in the sound of it told he was young, jubilant, and a happy lover." Though he is poor, he is well-suited for success. "He looked muscular and intelligent, and was evidently about twenty-two years of age" (5, italics mine). His poverty is established as a

justification for his ensuing decisions: this is a poor, yet potent, smart man. The dominant narrative then establishes that he is a farmer through the tools he carries: “He had a fork on his shoulder, a graceful and polished tool. His straw hat was tilted on the back of his head” (5). This man’s masculinity is attributable to his work on the land, but the dominant narrative does not take as its focus his masculinity, but rather his restlessness, his desire for status and social definition. It is not his physical strength that will serve him — not his bodily work — but his intellectual competence.

Tension is then almost immediately established between this unnamed man’s masculinity and the counterplot’s assertion of the motif of the land as equally forceful. In the very beginning of “A Branch Road,” the man’s power and the land’s power are in a state of equilibrium. The man, Will, still maintains the occupation of a farmer and has no explicit intent to become otherwise. But the reader is alerted to his inchoate resolutions for class mobility through his poverty as problematized in the dominant narrative, and through the violence threatened by the tenuous parallelism of the formal structure of the first landscape motif. Within this counterplot running parallel to the dominant narrative, Garland deploys symbolism of color frequently used in regionalist literature of the West. “Above the level belt of timber to the east a vast dome of pale undazzling gold was rising, silently and swiftly. Jays called in the thickets where the maples flamed amid the green oaks, with irregular splashes of red and orange. The grass was crisp with frost under the feet, the road smooth and gray-white in color” (5). The colors and structures in this passage signify a repressed but contentious antinomy between two forces, at uneasy peace for the moment, yet mirroring and underlining the opposing forces that the dominant and counter-narratives foreshadow between the man and the land, barely

reigned in ambition and the agrarian productive mode. The “level belt of timber,” a line of cool green anchored stably to the horizon, is set against the round, “vast” orb of “undazzling gold” of the rising sun. That the sun appears “silently and swiftly” suggests a sullenness, almost a passive-aggressiveness. It is autumn, harvest season, and the red and orange maples blaze and “flame” against counterpoint of the green oaks. The maples’ color “splashes” irregularly and unpredictably, unable to be completely contained by a straightforward binary. A final opposition is set between the spiky frost-crusting grass and the “smooth” road. The colors of red and orange used in this description of the land are often used to connote impending anger, violence, and bloodshed in Western regionalist literature. The landscape is already established as opposed to Will’s character, set to push back against him, gesturing to the reader the possibility that Will might fall prey to proving his “intellect” and seek validation through accumulation rather than production.

When Will follows the road construed in this first motif of the landscape as defined in opposition to the political economy of the land, he indicates that he is embracing market capitalism. This road is most easily passable: it is “smooth” and well-maintained, “gray-white in color.” It has already been laid out for him by his latent desires for prestige and his evident desire to prove his masculinity. The counterplot hereafter thus functions in “A Branch Road” to undermine the dominant narrative’s depiction of Will as a sympathetic character. Encoded within the counterplot is Garland’s submerged critique, formally characteristic of regionalism, of the incipient form of production as it encroaches upon the agrarian region. Gerald Prince defines the counterplot as “a unified set of actions directed toward a result opposite the result intended by the actions of the (main) plot: the antagonist’s actions and goals can be taken

to make up a counterplot” (17). We can consider the counterplot in this short story as driven not by an antagonist in the form of a person, but an antagonist in the form of the motif of the land. This motif symbolically questions Will’s claims to masculinity and power as a speculator, gesturing to his ineffectual exercises of dominance, by emphasizing the land’s, and by extension the farmer’s power. It counter’s Will’s swagger with the symbolized violence of materiality, the violence that those he seeks to exploit as a speculator could respond with. In effect, the counterplot demonstrates the violence *to* masculinity that a speculative occupation truly means, and the violence that speculators can expect from those they dispossess.

Violence is triggered in the counterplot’s motifs of the land when Will decides to walk along the path presented in the first motif, that path emphasized as man-made and thus distinct from the rest of the landscape. As he considers the horizon, Will “walked more slowly, mechanically following the road” (5). His automated acceptance of the road’s direction foreshadows Will’s unquestioning faith in capitalist progress as advancement, and his faith in speculation as utterly honorable. While critic Andrew Vogel argues in “Hamlin Garland’s Roads, the Good Roads Movement, and the Ambivalent Reform of America’s Geographic Imagination” (2010) that the motif of the road in Garland’s fiction indicates Garland’s political call for infrastructural reform of rural Wisconsin, and by extension further government attention to the poverty and isolation of this region, the path that Will takes along the road inevitably “leads” to urban-rooted speculation. We can assume this road is also the road of the collection’s title, because is not a dusty backcountry path: it is “main-travelled,” a primary artery of transportation. It is actually quite well-maintained, and does not isolate Will’s character

due to disrepair; it provides only too clear a route out of the countryside. Vogel's theory holds for the ill-tended paths of other Garland stories in the collection, but the untended road does not constitute Garland's primary problematic in the collection. A "main-travelled road" such as the one Will walks does not "represent [...] the exploitation of honest workers for the financial benefit of speculative capitalists," in Vogel's words, because the road is not of "poor condition" (Vogel 127). Garland's "main-travelled road" does not represent the path of the honest worker, but of the speculative capitalist. It is this "road," this path of speculation, which occupies the center of his political agenda in the collection.

Thus, the first quietly menacing imagery of violence the counterplot offers to critique Will's acceptance of the speculative version of masculinity is embodied in the "pale-red sun," which was "shooting light through the leaves, and warming the boles of the great oaks that stood in the yard, and melting the frost off the great, gaudy, red and gold striped threshing machine standing between the stacks [of wheat]" (Garland 7) at the farm where Will works. Anger and scorn are the subtext of this motif, where the sun, almost a character in itself, "shoots" to melt the frost from the mechanized thresher which recalling Will's "mechanical" steps along the road. This motif suggests that Will himself is increasingly becoming "great" if only in his own mind, "gaudy" and excessive in his aspirations. And indeed, the dominant narrative suggests through Will's represented perception that he is vaguely aware of the deleterious effects that will follow his embrace of market capitalism. The dominant narrative uses the machine to symbolize the industrialization that underwrites market capitalism. At the farm, the scene of men working had, in Will's represented perception, "a charm quite aside from human

companionship. The *beautiful* yellow straw entering the cylinder; the *clear* yellow-brown wheat pulsing out at the side; the *broken* straw, chaff, and dust puffing out on the great stacker, the *cheery* whistling and calling of the driver; the keen, crisp air; and the bright sun somehow *weirdly* suggestive of the passage of time” (8, italics mine). The adjectival progression of the scene indicates Will’s own assessment of it: from “beautiful” to “broken” to “weird,” Will’s apprehension grows as his appreciation of the mechanical stacker’s motions draws him in. The same sun of the counterplot’s motif is here “weirdly suggestive of the passage of time,” not inflicted with the color of aggression. Yet the disquiet of these words out of Will’s consciousness show the natural environment being split from the process of manual labor and production. The sun’s light, evocative not of cyclical seasonal agrarian production but of a clock’s regimented recording of *loss* of time, the passing of time, suggests to Will the regimented industrial time of the machine. This regimentation of time makes modern speculation possible, as mechanization underlines the process of mass production which drives market capitalism. It portends alienation from the ethical and masculinized relationship to the land that Will has until this point experienced, and the alienation of other workers that he will capitalize upon. The sun takes an oppositional position to the workers in his perspective, no longer working with them but acting as a clock that “weirdly” tracks their progress. Will’s discomfort with the sun’s ill-boding disciplinary function signifies his latent understanding of the enterprise he’s about to embark upon.

Speculative Violence

Yet Will’s masculinity is at this point in the narrative still defined through his physical relationship with the land. As he begins his work on the farm that day, Will “was

very happy in a quiet way. He enjoyed the smooth roll of his great muscles, and the sense of power in his hands as he lifted, turned, and swung the heavy sheaves” (8). His bodily potency is still intact, and he remains able for the moment to enjoy the fulfillment of production. But speculation will disintegrate his masculinity as it deteriorates the relationship between the man and the land, the man and the economy. As he embraces the speculative mindset, he embraces a violent alienation. And motifs of the land within the counterplot will reappropriate the violence of speculation to rebuild the relationship between materialism and production. The counterplot thus serves to correct: it offers an alternative to this destructive and predominantly white male occupation its very form. If the landscape represents the ideological perspective of a producerist farmer, and its violence is only activated when Will begins to be tempted into the realm of immaterial acquisition, then the motifs emblemize the power of the land’s productive capacity. Figuratively not lying fallow, the violence of the land encodes the reality of the materialist labor that drives market capitalism. This labor force can, the counterplot warns, be mobilized to assert the material base of speculation’s unreality. And the speculator, himself even more alienated from the material means of production than the industrial worker in his wealth based upon immaterial selling and material plots of land that he does not himself work, will be unable to respond with any substantial strength to this insurgency.

The counterplot, then, hints at the violent capacity of the labor movement. Indeed, all of the violence encoded in the land in these stories references the power of mob rule stemming from those men who work directly with concrete materials, whether land, metal, or the primary materials involved in mass production. Those farmers and miners

responsible for providing the raw materials upon which market capitalism depended are involved directly in producing the materials and transportation services marketed for circulation and sale by speculators. Yet at this time they are deprived of owning the means of production they actualize. This dispossession motivated mass demonstrations, or strikes, beginning in the 1870s and 1880s, which could often be violent and were often responded to by national militia. Thus, the type of violence encoded in Garland's work is historically correlative to violent or potentially violent events of the period. While the violence in other regionalist literature by writers such as Harris and Crane functions as a metaphor for the severity by which politically and economically marginalized groups must reclaim their agency and restructure property relations against the dispossession of industrialization's property relations, in Garland's work, it is directly historically relational to the potential violence of the strike. Riis's image of the man with the knife comes closest to the historical parallelism that Garland's work registers. Garland's violence mirrors the potentially physically violent and certainly the violent structural economic impact of the strike. As Eric Schocket writes, "[n]ot until the so-called Gilded Age, when the nation was hit by the longest economic depression to date and by high-level scandals in Washington and in the banking industry, did the strike come into its own. In the years between the Great Railroad Strike of 1877 and the Pullman Strike of 1894, the country experienced an unprecedented number of strikes, boycotts, and work stoppages" (70). The sheer number of strikes is notable: in the 1880s, over seven thousand strikes occurred.⁸⁰ Public narrative of strikers described "anarchism" and "irrationality," according to Schocket. The strikers' emphasis on "collective political

⁸⁰ As recounted in Schocket's *Vanishing Moments: Class and American Literature*, according to the U.S. commissioner of labor's statistics.

agency” was thus diffused by contemporary onlookers, muted into a theory of mob peer pressure, and this dismissal of irrational mob mentality covered up the fear that strikes instilled in incorporated business and government (Schocket 71-72).

The violence of the land in Garland’s work functions formally and ideologically similarly to the strike on the level of the text and on the level of political economy. Schocket describes the ideological work of the strike as an “act of negation.” The strike functions as “a moment of cessation in an industrial world ceaselessly in motion — much of the strike’s power came from its ability to *reveal what typically remained veiled*...the strike displayed not only the authoritarian relationship between management and labor but labor’s potential ability to change that relationship” (72). Strikes exposed the financial strength of the nation as resting upon laborers who were in control, if not in charge, of the means of production. Schocket writes,

[b]ecause it disrupted the process of production at the cite of production, the strike was inimical to both consumerism and the commodity form. The commodity was a reification of labor power; the strike abrogated that process. The commodity embodied a theft of labor power in the form of profit; the strike made manifest both that theft and its habitual mystification (73).

Thus, recalling the formal act of the strike, the violence of landscape motifs in Garland’s work “abrogate[s]” the “reification of labor power” imperative to the career of the speculator. That career capitalizes not only upon commodities but upon the value of commodity exchange itself, and upon the work of the laborer in making the land valuable. The laborer’s power is thus commodified in and of itself by market capitalism and its speculators. In “A Branch Road,” violence within landscape motifs irrput the

glorification and masculinization Will instills in the speculative process, instead allocating power to that material landscape which is figurally representative of the agrarian laborers who produce the “value” inherent to this landscape.

The dominant narrative meanwhile continues to validate Will’s masculinity. He considers that if he is to win his love interest, Agnes, he must assume the role of an imperialist “merchant.” His daydreams give rise to a version of popular contemporary frontier masculinity in their connotations of imperialism. In this next scene, nature provides access to Will’s ambitions, and in Will’s represented perception, he translates nature directly into finished objects of market exchange: “[T]he rustle of the *oak-tree* near by [...] was like the sound of a *woman’s dress*: on the sky were great fleets of *clouds* sailing on the rising wind, like *merchantmen* [on ships] bound to some land of love and plenty” (Garland 9, italics mine). “Love” to Will essentially is accessible only alongside capital accumulation: the only way to experience love is to become a contemporary appropriative merchantman. Will’s accumulative imperative, though, directly leads Will to consider Agnes as a commodity. He will consider Agnes his property, and suffer jealous rages as he enacts what he perceives to be the requisite masculine role of proprietor and conquistador.

But in assuming a speculative position even in his courtship of Agnes, Will is aware of a shift in his relationship with her: “[I]t seemed as if he had lost something sweet, lost it irrecoverably” (Garland 13). Burdened with the conception that he must assume the perspective of a capitalist in order to be acceptably masculine, he simultaneously suffers violent urges that he cannot actualize — because they are rooted in weakness. Angered when the workmen gossip about his relationship with Agnes, Will

attempts to silence them with threats, but cannot match them in physical power. Responding to his bluff, “the wolf rose” in Bill Young, who “moved forward, his ferocious soul flaming from his eyes” (14). Will attempts to convince himself that he is above the common laborer, yet, cowed by Bill’s strength, he resorts to insults, emphasizing Bill’s lower-class status and revealing his own elitist aspirations. Will says, ““If you make one motion at me, I’ll smash your head like an eggshell!”” but then renegs, backing away from confrontation: ““If you think I’m going to roll around on this ground with a hyena like you, you’ve mistaken your man. I’ll *kill* you, but I won’t *fight* with such men as you are”” (14). The violence that Will threatens here is not akin to the redemptive violence figured in motifs of the landscape. This overt violence rests upon empty threats. Bill’s violence, however, the violence of the “wolf” which Will attempts to degrade in reducing Bill to a parasitic “hyena,” is the violence of the land. Garland has Bill function as Will’s inverse, for both names are diminutives of William. Bill’s innate strength gestures to Will’s future role as speculator. While Bill can fight, still occupying a vantage point of production, Will is already unable to exert any effective physical or political power. He is weakened even now by his subjective inhabitation of his future role.

It is worth taking a moment to discuss why Will, and other characters in this short story collection including figures in “Up the Coolly” and “Under the Lion’s Paw,” are tempted to become speculators, and exactly what kind of negative connotations this position holds from a producerist standpoint. Speculation is defined by Edward Chancellor in *Devil Take the Hindmost: A History of Financial Speculation* (2000) as “an attempt to profit from changes in market price;” “forgoing current income for a

prospective capital gain is deemed speculative” (xi). Speculation inherently involves risk, moreso than straightforward investment: the capitalist “is confronted with a broad spectrum of risk with prudent investment at one end and reckless gambling at the other. Speculation lies somewhere between the two” (Chancellor xiii). Chancellor explains that speculation’s definition, derived from its conceptualization in the seventeenth century, still involves “reflect[ing] or theoris[ing] without a firm factual basis [...] The financial speculator still resembles the alchemist in that he is constantly constructing abstruse theories to turn paper into gold, normally with little success” (xii). The speculator was thus a man prone to risk-taking, tinged with the aura of irresponsibility and recklessness. He also attempted to make money off of others’ productive capacities. During the Civil War, speculation reached an all-time high, with a myriad of speculative bubbles. This spike in speculation was like any other the country had yet seen, and introduced the “outsider” to speculation in gold, petroleum, copper, and other domestic products (Chancellor 165). Speculation during the Civil War was in truth a democratic game; all classes and all occupations of people engaged in speculative practices, including farmers and store owners⁸¹. Stock operators fed upon the speculation of outsiders, who were less experienced in the ways of the market. After the Civil War, gold and metal speculation reached a new high. Farmers and small business merchants, having been introduced to speculation during the Civil War, continued to participate, and, lured by the railroads and mining companies advertising quick money, were especially susceptible to temptation of quick wealth.

⁸¹ See Edward Chancellor’s *Devil Take the Hindmost*, in which he writes that speculators during the Civil War “came from all classes and backgrounds. On the sidewalks of the financial district, young dandy speculators from Broadway jostled with farmers, store owners, lawyers, doctors, clergymen, mechanics, and penniless ‘gutter-snipes’” (166).

Speculation itself was not a process foreign to the Western farmer. During the Civil War speculation had opened up even to the common man. After the war, speculation affected the very price of their goods. While the expansion of the railroad into the interior of the country had bolstered the commercial potential of Western grain production, the railroads had also expanded all over the world. American farmers found themselves competing internationally for the sale of basic commodity crops. Commodity exchanges daily auctioned off agricultural product in amounts much greater than those actually produced by the farms. This caused the prices of agricultural goods to fluctuate to an extreme extent. To stabilize their prices, farmers often voluntarily chose to take out lines of credit ultimately based in the financial stronghold of the Northeast, which helped them to purchase their supplies, pay the exorbitant railroad fees and storage prices, and support their homesteads.⁸² These farmers, though, as previously noted, were not often able to pay off their debts, and became bankrupted due to the confluence of so many market forces — the commodity speculation on their own crops, debts that became compounded due to the insufficient amount of money in circulation, and railroad fees. They were then forced to mortgage their own property to another owner, often an absentee landlord, completely “bought out” by others who essentially owned their lives and means of production. To escape these depressing prospects, some farmers decided to evacuate this profession. They also found themselves outsourced by machinery which replaced their manual labor. Trachtenberg deems 1880s “the critical decade” in which

⁸² For more on the relationship between farmers and credit, see Steve Fraser’s *Every Man a Speculator*: “In a sense, the farmer was the looniest speculator, the most deluded gambler of them all. He was wagering he would somehow master this fathomlessly intricate global game, pay off his many debts, and come out with enough extra to play another round...Professional gamblers, however, spun the wheel voluntarily. The farmer had no choice. He was trying to reproduce himself and a way of life, the family farm. Instead he was drawn into a kind of social suicide” (197).

agriculture became mechanized; this is also the decade in which Garland was composing these stories. During these ten years, the agricultural workforce diminished from the rate of 44 percent of the population reached in 1880, even while production increased due to the efficiency of farm equipment, in which construction Eastern capitalists had invested to increase production of commodity crops (cotton, tobacco, and grain) (*Incorporation* 53).

Many farmers thus chose to migrate to urban centers in their attempts to avoid dispossession. Still others, though, chose speculation. The perspective of some middle-class, ambitious farmers splintered off in agrarian regions from the Jeffersonian producerist mentality: even speculation could be defended as an entrepreneurial enterprise if it involved individual ownership of one's "business." As Trachtenberg writes, "for some middle-class people on the rise, the immensity of capital and capitalists represented perfectly that ambition of mobility implicit in 'single separate ownership.' Was not the successful businessman the very model of a 'healthy and independent' America?" (*Incorporation* 73). Rural ambitious men interpreted careers modeled by prominent capitalists as examples of the American dream of success, but this time cultivated by "brain-work" rather than by manual labor. As Jackson Lears indicates, "[a]ny white male, at least in principle, could take a shot at the main chance," and "[w]hether it involved speculation in mining or real estate or paper, or simply retail purchase, engagement with the market evoked dreams of sudden self transformation" (*Rebirth* 52). Speculation, the primary means of becoming an "entrepreneurial" capitalist, could seem, in rural regions, to have an aura of modernized masculinity about it: "there was an undeniable if crude vitality about some of the more fabulous plungers" (Lears 54).

The market crash of the 1873 and its ensuing depression disillusioned many, fostering renewed distrust in speculators. Yet some men were still drawn to the occupation: it seemed to suggest to them nothing so much as a quintessentially American story of conflict, risk, and acquisition, a conflict waged on immaterial grounds. It might validate one's masculinity to gain one's fortune through a "conquest" of this sort: just like the popular revisionist history of the West as conquest, the speculator engaged in "a risk-taking virility that transformed [him]" from a confidence man to a "Napoleon...of finance" (Lears 54). The speculator engaged in a kind of financial warfare, and young men like Will sought out masculinity through this warfare. Laborers and small merchants, though, considered speculators to be dishonest, with "unbridled appetites": even in popular images of the successful businessman, of "robber barons and captains of industry," "business was a kind of warfare, in which all's fair which succeeds," and speculators, some thought, sought to succeed by any means necessary (Trachtenberg 81).

The figure of the speculator was, in short, considered by many as opportunistic and impulsive, but the successful speculator held a masculine appeal due to his aggressive, combative manipulation of the market. Yet he was not trustworthy because he dealt in abstractions, in hypotheses and glorified bets on prices rather than straightforward trade. Thus, from a producerist perspective, the speculator was weak and parasitic. He may be, as contemporary writer William Fowler described the role of the speculator in *Ten Years in Wall Street: Or, Revelations on Inside Life and Experience on 'Change* (1870), ruled by the passion of this risk-taking, consumed and enervated by it. Fowler writes:

He takes no note of time, save as an interval between his gains and losses; the thrill of the one and the pain of the other, grow duller as the years wear away, until at length he becomes the opium eater of finance, living in a world peopled by phantoms which haunt his waking hours, and flit through his dreams. The unsubstantial pageant vanishes as the alarm bell of his ruin peals out, and he awakes to the desolation of reality (45).

Farmers of the agrarian West seemed forced to choose between the worst of two evils: to continue to farm and become degraded by indebtedness and impoverishment, or to become gamers of the market, experimenting in a system most were not experienced in and becoming beholden to the dramatic rise and fall of various types of speculation while trying to manipulate it themselves.

Consumptive Masculinity

Will chooses the route of speculation, but he finds himself ruled by impulses that he cannot explain, weakened and susceptible to feelings of violent possession very much like those that drive impulsive market speculation. These feelings of violence portend Will's utter governance by these passions. He felt Agnes was too free with her flirtations towards other men, and immediately he "had an impulse that would have made him assault her with words as with a knife. He was *possessed* of a terrible passion which was hitherto latent in him, and which he now felt to be his *worst self*. But he was powerless to exorcise it" (Garland 14-15, italics mine). As an addict to opium might be, Will finds himself tempted to want to take in more, constantly seeking greater sources of accumulation, yet is disgusted by his overwhelming and disabling urges. Agnes becomes a commodity to him, yet he justifies this perspective. He is unable to see that this urge for

dominion, without working for it, is unnatural: “It was the instinct of possession, the organic feeling of proprietorship of a woman, which rose to the surface and mastered him” (15). Far from a natural feeling of ownership, this violent drive for proprietorship and accumulation marks him as a future capitalist. It is no coincidence that these feelings arise in him when he prepares for a role of a “merchantman” in a land of “plenty.”

Will’s impassioned response is further exacerbated by another perceived rejection from Agnes when he arrives late to pick her up for the country fair. Once at her home, he finds she has left with another man. He then decides to go “West,” “to escape from the sneers and laughter of his neighbors, and to make her suffer by it all” (Garland 23). This urge towards inflicting pain towards Agnes is inversely related to his drive towards usurpation: it signifies his progression towards enervation, the lashing out of a weak animal, and not a justified act of violence. This is why he cannot actually follow through on his violent impulses: he is becoming too weak to do so. Thus, Will is already becoming consumed by the speculative process even before he consciously decides to leave Iowa. When he declares in these moments of represented perception that he will leave to make Agnes “suffer” by it, he attempts to find affirmation of his masculinity in his role as speculator. And while Will’s masculinity has already suffered even from figuratively assuming the consciousness of a speculator, by the time he returns to Wisconsin seven years later, it will have debilitated him. He will be, in Fowler’s words, “leaving in a world peopled by phantoms,” driven by his impulsive will without any physical touchstone (thus the pun in his appellation). While he pursues consumption through speculation, speculation will meanwhile consume him.

Indeed, the process of speculation involves no active production. As opposed to the Jeffersonian-influenced, Western agrarian productive mode informed by ownership of the means of production, physical labor to create material goods, and direct market exchange, speculation is essentially a process of consumption. If we consider its negative use of the materials of production, wherein speculators make money by predicting the prices of commodities that they do not own nor produce, speculators effectively profit off of a material exchange which they never contribute to. For example, speculators in markets of the Middle West, beginning in the late 1840s, bet on “futures,” attempting to predict the prices of wheat, corn, cattle, and pigs into, Lears’ words, “airy abstractions with unpredictably fluctuating money value” (*Rebirth* 55). As Lears explains, “[t]he new practice of trading in ‘futures’ involved betting on the prospective rise or fall in the price of beef or pork, without ever having to deliver the steak or bacon. A successful bet could produce plenty of hard cash” (*Rebirth* 55). Speculation, in Lears’ words, became “the power of money to beget money” (55), and overrides the necessary physical labor traditionally used to beget commodities for money in return. The speculator thus bet on other peoples’ labor in commodity form, and consumed the value of that labor by manipulating the prices of its commodities. The “money power,” Wall Street, which financed speculative ventures, became the target of the producerist and the burgeoning Populist movement that was being organized as Garland was writing these stories. As Fraser describes in *Every Man a Speculator*, “The ‘money power,’ in the eyes of producerist laborers and pre-Populist laborers,

was not merely nonproductive, it was counterproductive, like an incubus sucking away at the economic vitality of households and businesses. When its critics

talked of ‘fictitious value,’ they meant not only to condemn but to explain.

Economic practices originating in Wall Street were ‘fictitious’ in the first instance because they were deceptive and unreal, resting on deliberate falsifications. But they were ‘fictitious’ in another impersonal, morally neutral sense as well.

‘Fictitious value’ was the systemic outcome of the mechanisms of trustification which, without anyone’s conscious connivance, produced a *parallel universe of paper values increasingly at variance with and greater than the underlying wealth-generating capacity of the tangible properties that underlay that house of paper* (201, italics mine).

In creating fictitious value, speculation overrode these “tangible properties” driving the economy itself, manufacturing paper value and allowing the speculator to consume this paper value without having to contribute to the base system of tangible production itself. As a figure, the speculator becomes the epitome of the consumer, for all he does is consume the profits generated by others’ work. The speculator was, as I’ve noted, also prone to *becoming* consumed by his own impulses. Those impulses were the motivating factors driving him to bet and make more money; yet even his impulses, his passions, were based in the fictitious parallel world of paper money rather than in a labor theory of value. As he consumes, then the speculator becomes weak, because he is not producing. He simultaneously becomes consumed *by* the impulsive force behind his occupation, which continues to feed his impulsivity.

In 1899, Thorstein Veblen published a critique of consumption entitled *Theory of the Leisure Class*. Veblen construed this “leisure class” as problematic because of its emphasis on “conspicuous consumption”: overt display of their wealth through

consumption and ostentatious presentation of expensive goods, cultivation of proper manners and good taste, and scrupulous grooming, fashion and self-presentation.⁸³ But even before 1899, as Lears points out in his essay “Beyond Veblen: Rethinking Consumer Culture in America,” the wealthy classes, particularly those who had become wealthy through “new money” rather than inheritances, were criticized for their ostentatiousness and their dearth of useful contributions to society. Between 1840 and 1880, moralists castigated the rich for their “extravagance” and “overconsumption,” and “flayed men for indulging in wine, cigars, and stag outings and criticized women for improvident expenditures on clothes and household furnishings” (84). The majority of this critique rested upon a loss of control associated with consumption when it is cut off from moral equity gained by hard work. Increasingly consumption and flagrant displays of commodities sent the message that appearance signified worthiness. This conflicted with the Protestant tradition which had laid the foundation of American religious and cultural thought and which had been the driving force of the Protestant Reformation: that there should be emphasis placed upon “faith” or “inner being” rather than outward form, and that meaning should thus not be constructed through objects, especially ornamental objects. In Lears’ words, Protestants “believed that the objective surface of things concealed rather than revealed meaning” (“Beyond Veblen” 76). Distrust of consumption for its own sake and its accompanying validation of artifice had persisted since the founding of the nation. Between 1880 and 1920, moral opposition to consumption grew to a fever pitch, as figures such as the financier, the speculator, and the middleman grew

⁸³ See Simon J. Bronner’s essay “Reading Consumer Culture” in *Consuming Visions* and Jackson Lears’ essay “Beyond Veblen: Rethinking Consumer Culture in America” in the same volume for more on Veblen. Bronner explains that this leisure class Veblen described was comprised of “financiers, manufacturers, and merchants cashing in on the opportunities of industrial America...As interpreted by Veblen, the upsurge in consumption was driven by the need to clarify uncertain social status by accumulating material things, and it also created a model of fashion for others to follow” (15).

prominent as the economy grew stronger, production mechanized and became stronger, and businesses became incorporated.

If consumption implied falsification and fictionalization, a play on surfaces to no worthy effect, to some it also implied effeminacy. Those men who attained wealth by market manipulation not only bought commodities and displayed them on their person or in their business dealings in order to be counted amongst the elite, they did not work with their hands to attain those commodities. Extreme wealth in its full array connoted “leisure time,” dissipation, the vitiating effects of idleness; it also connoted lapses in self-control such as only wealthy women were stereotypically excused for. William Sylvis, the head of the iron molders, castrated wealthy businessmen as “effeminate non-producers,” advocating for the laborers who were “the bone and muscles of the nation, the very pillars of our temple of liberty” (qtd in *Incorporation* 77). Veblen would write in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* of what he calls “the superior pecuniary class,” or the leisure class, that “any incentive to diligence tends to be of no effect”: in order to effect high social regard, the “most imperative...demand of emulation...is the requirement of abstention from productive work” (28). As they placed high value on showy displays of wealth, flaunting their consumption, this class of people which included the speculator was not only unengaged with production by dint of their mystical manipulation of currency once removed from production, but it also actively distanced itself from association with physical labor. As Veblen carefully hedges in order to achieve a semblance of objectivity, leisure “does not connote indolence or quiescence. What it connotes is *non-productive consumption of time*. Time is consumed non-productively (1) from a sense of the unworthiness of productive work, and (2) as an evidence of pecuniary ability to afford a

life of idleness” (33). Thus, purchasing commodities and displaying them, and deliberate, non-productive consumption of time itself, to the purpose of emphasizing status, held the aim of asserting power through class status. Yet consumption, from the eyes of the laboring class, was held to be morally corrosive and physically emasculating. The attire of the upper class epitomized both of these attenuating sides of consumption of the leisure class, material signs of wealth and signs of non-productivity. Veblen writes,

Much of the charm that invests the patent-leather shoe, the stainless linen, the lustrous cylindrical hat, and the walking-stick, which so greatly enhance the native dignity of a gentleman, comes of their pointedly suggesting that *the wearer cannot when so attired bear a hand in any employment that is directly and immediately of any human use*. Elegant dress serves its purpose of elegance not only in that it is expensive, but also because it is the insignia of leisure. It not only shows that the wearer is able to consume a relatively large value, but it argues at the same time that he consumes without producing (113, italics mine).

The “elegant dress” of the uppermost class indicated both consumption *of* commodities, and the process by which the leisure class *became* consumed by representations of wealth to the point of social wastefulness and uselessness. An unproductive man of the leisure class might have accumulated a good deal of wealth, but he could not exert physical force because of the constriction of the clothing he wore, and because of the attenuation of his very muscular power due to his lifestyle. To that end, he was both morally and physically becoming consumed by his occupation.

The most prominent historical example of the speculator as emasculated and detested public figure is Jay Gould. Gould became a living metaphor for all that was

corrupt in the intangible eschelons of finance, likely because he did not exude the ideal version of frontier masculinity: he was not physically strong, socially outgoing, or charming. He played the game of speculation in a way that hit too close to home for the public to accept it as an intriguing and worthwhile conquest: without masculinity, he merely seemed sneaky and deceptive. He was effeminate, and was, of all the prominent speculators including Vanderbilt, Drew, and Fisk, utterly disdained by the public. Lears describes him as “a sly and secretive man who raised exotic orchids” and who “epitomized the effeminate deceitfulness associated in the male imagination with money manipulators” (*Rebirth* 54). Gould was openly hated even by those who respected businessmen for the power that self-made wealth conjured. He “lacked all those features — the bon vivant athleticism, the backslapping good cheer, the robust, dominating physical presence — that sometimes redeemed his conferees. Diminutive, joyless, shy, unsocial, even bookish, he was easily likened [in the media] to a spider or snake, womanish like a treacherous siren” (Fraser 108). His physique and his conspicuous consumption epitomized by his hobby of orchid cultivation signified an effeminacy which undermined the standard narrative of the most successive speculators as representing a version of frontier masculinity, and the warlike financial conflict and risktaking inherent to his profession was not enough to redeem him.⁸⁴ The media’s abhorrence of Gould gestures to broader public sentiment of the period: speculation afforded material wealth while eroding personality and the very body itself of the

⁸⁴ Steve Fraser writes of Gould: “the high-wire emotional life of the Street[’s]...inherent maleness was [often] taken with deadly seriousness, its financiers portrayed as exercising the sort of dominion otherwise associated with traditional Western and military heroes. And nothing more clearly suggested the sexual magnetism of the Wall Street speculator than his icy composure, his capacity to remain under emotional control while others panicked around him. Earthiness, sexual prowess, folksy simplicity, imperial ambition, nerveless presence, and the gambler’s flash, each in its own way helped crystallize an oddly hybrid image of the great Wall Street speculator as plebian aristocrat” (101).

speculator. In consuming the rewards of the work of others, the speculator would get his own just rewards as he became, in turn, consumed – his masculine energy reduced to snakelike deceit and womanly manipulation.

Will returns to Wisconsin seven years after his departure to the West to convince Agnes to come to Arizona with him, where he is now a mine speculator. In this section of the story, the counterplot's violence becomes stronger, representing an impending ideological obstruction to and correction of Will's self-proclaimed masculinity which has controlled the represented perception of the dominant narrative thus far. On returning to Wisconsin, Will explores the sites he had been familiar with as a child, noting the increase in mechanized farms of wheat and corn that now dominate the landscape, and seeking semblance of the landscape that he has idealized in his absence. Lying by a creek he had visited when younger and absently observing small fish swimming against the current, the counterplot intervenes, rupturing his gaze with a violent emblem: "[s]uddenly a water-snake wriggled across the dark pool above the ford and the minnows disappeared under the shadow of the bridge" (Garland 25). The dominant narrative's motif of the untroubled landscape is again broken by the disturbing apparition of the violence that Will has provoked for breaking the contract between tangible production and consumption. Yet, seven years later, because Will senses his own weakness, this violent symbol of predation ignites in him a latent awareness that he bears responsibility in violating this contract. Garland uses represented perception to indicate his thoughts: "There seemed to be something prophetic in it" (25). The convergence of the counterplot's violent symbolism and Will's inchoate self-awareness signals his

forthcoming recognition of the errors that he has made in assuming without question the role of speculator.

The counterplot persists in pointing to Will's transgressions: he has benefited from market capitalism's dependence on alienating the laborer from the means of production in order to reap profits. In so doing, Will has mistaken an emasculating role for a masculinizing one. Thus, by believing the myth of the speculator as a frontiersmen, Will has mistaken man for machine, overlooking the violence that can be provoked by the persistent alienation of others. The counterplot corrects Will's transgressions, asserting that "[h]uman life does not move with the regularity of a clock" (25). This phrase recalls Garland's earlier line in "A Branch Road," "the bright sun" that was "somehow weirdly suggestive of the passage of time," which had denoted Will's latent trepidation as he began to conflate material production with the fictionalization necessary to produce value within paper money markets. In mistaking the sun for a clock, Will had assumed that immaterially produced and industrialization-driven accumulation would generate masculinity more powerful than physical labor could, for both resulted in financial gain — speculation would, if done properly, result in even more wealth. But the counterplot, in interrupting his idealization of the landscape, asserts that if stringent mechanization is imposed upon men in order to enforce production as though they were agentless instruments, they will not conform to it. These men will revolt and strike back like the snake itself. They will, then, assert the strength of their intact masculinity, their "human nature," while Will, dehumanized himself through the consumptive habit of speculation, will not be able to respond in turn.

Will's masculinity is diminishing. Externally, his face projects the powerful visage of a speculator, but his paranoia and sloth eat into this veneer of strength. While Will's face had become "bold, resolute, and rugged," his body had become "stouter, erect as of old, but less graceful" (Garland 26). His excess flesh signifies excessive consumption. He has transformed almost completely from the man that he once was: seven years later, he "bore himself like a man accustomed to look out for himself in all kinds of places. It was only at times that there came into his deep eyes a preoccupied, almost sad, look which showed kinship with his old self" (26). Will's conduct is distracted and delusional, symptomatic of a weakened mind — but in this region of agrarian laborers, he actually has cause for fear. There is latent animosity in the landscape itself, symbolizing the anger from the same class of working men that he has exploited elsewhere. Immediately before he meets Agnes' nephew, who tells him she is married to the farmer he had considered his antagonist, he is confronted with the reality of his decisions. His character and his personal strength seem unfit now, and the landscape reminds him of the obstacles he faces in the rage of the dispossessed and his own mistakes. Walking with a stick because he is not strong enough to take on the terrain himself, the stick functions to recall the cane of the leisure class, where Will, described in the counterplot's perspective, "rose at last, and taking his stick in hand, walked out to the wood again and stood there gazing at the sky. He seemed loath to go farther. The sky was full of flame-colored clouds floating in a yellow-green sea" (28). The fiery red tones of the clouds seem to suggest to him that he can go no further in dodging the effects of his decisions, that the violence he has wrought will in some way come to confront him. He "listen[s] to the crickets' ever-present crying, and facing the majesty of space, a strange

sadness and despair came into his eyes” (28). This last sentence suggests that soon the counterplot and the dominant narrative will converge. Will acknowledges the fury of the land as well as its despair and finally feels a reactive regret elicited by this coded violence that reflects the violence he has committed against the land.

Masculine Ruination

The climactic moment of this story occurs when Will confronts the ruins of Agnes’ family’s farmhouse which they had to sell in order to survive. The material effects of the immaterial speculative apparatus of conjecture and exploitation become apparent to him as he seeks nostalgia at the site of his youth where he had worked as a farmer: the garden has been destroyed, the house has been converted to a granary and its eyes shut as though laid to rest with “boards nailed across its dusty, cobwebbed windows,” the barn moved, and consequently, he realizes that he is “wasted, ruined,” as a man (Garland 30). In allowing a market ideology to infiltrate his treatment of Agnes and in dispossessing others for a living, he has destroyed his own ethical strength. This is what speculation has wrought, in the productive use of the land and in himself; his dissolution is mirrored in the wreckage of the dirty windows, eyes reflecting back to him the finality of his decisions: “[t]he tears started in the man’s eyes; he stood staring at [the house] silently. In the face of his house the seven years that he had last lived stretched away into a wild waste of time. It stood as a symbol of his wasted, ruined life” (30). It is here that the counterplot and the dominant narrative converge, for Will is no longer seeing his financial strength reflected back to him as masculinity. Instead he understands his own impotence. Speculation to him now seems “a wild waste of time,” where the discourse of the Wild West narrative crumbles into the dust of an abandoned home as the rampant

fantasy of conquest is juxtaposed with the “waste” that taking time and human agency for granted, for mechanizable forces, tangibly causes.

However, Will cannot at this point regain the capacity to make ethical decisions after seven years as a speculator: his masculinity cannot be rebuilt as long as he maintains that position. A neighbor who knew him as a child described him as a ““bad aig”” who has made his money in an ““awful scaly”” way, yet Will believes that he can remedy his past mistakes by offering Agnes money to redeem his character (Garland 29). In attempting to convince her to leave her husband, his only source of masculinity is the consumptive, seductive allure of money itself. Thus, while he recalls his cowardice in his treatment of Agnes before he left (“tired, hungry, sullen with rage and jealousy. Oh, if he had only had the courage of a man!” (30)), he still does not have the audacity even in the throes of self-awareness to walk away from his profession. In attempting to convince her to leave through the allure of wealth, he must use physical force founded in weakness as she tries to resist: “She rose flushed, wild-eyed[...] He put his hand gently upon her shoulder, and she sank down again” (41). Because Will is experienced in inspiring confidence in his investors, this at least his occupation has prepared him for.

The slippery and power of the “confidence-man,” so convincing in the moment, assures her of his sincerity. The confidence man, the most conspicuous anti-Republican specter of which was the gambler, is, as Karen Halttunen writes in *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America* (1986), “a man without principle, a man whose art it is to deceive others through false appearances” (2). This man is a character articulated in antebellum fiction and advice literature, particularly “American success mythology,” who worked by seducing naive youth into trusting him

by telling them stories and offering amusement (Halttunen 3).⁸⁵ Thus, in this scene, Will employs the trade secrets of a confidence man, channeling the impulses he frequently uses to access financial backing in the market, for “[h]is impetuous soul was carried to a point where nothing came in to mar or divert”: Will “went on with his appeal. There was something hypnotic, dominating, in his voice and eyes” (Garland 41). And he nearly succeeds in convincing Agnes to run away with him by spinning the same frontier narrative of rebirth through prosperity that he had constructed for himself: as he speaks, Agnes formulates fantasies of material comfort which mirror nearly exactly the dreams he himself had conceived before moving westward. His words “produced pictures that dazzled her” (41-42). Agnes envisions the same “land of plenty” and sees the same ships that Will had seen seven years ago as Will “seemed to open a door for her, and through it turrets shone and great ships crossed on dim blue seas” (43). Will’s narrative has created this world in her mind in order to convince Agnes that putting her trust in him is in her own best interest. Will’s only power, at this point, lies in his ability to secure confidence, and this is an inherently destructive power, but Agnes accepts it as a new and foreign display of masculinity to which she has not yet been exposed.

However, Will’s impotence nearly gets the better of him. He utterly neglects to incorporate Agnes’ child into their future, and his own lack of virility is exposed in this

⁸⁵ Karen Halttunen’s *Confidence Men and Painted Women* describes the rise of the figure of the “confidence man” during the antebellum period. The confidence man was an untrustworthy figure of the urban metropolis whose most dangerous traits involved deception and psychological manipulation to lure young men into trusting him, for the purposes of mental and financial control. This figure was a prominent character in literature and advice manuals of the antebellum period. Halttunen writes, “Since the Revolution, Americans had stressed that what made a republic great was the character and spirit of its people. The ultimate threat of the confidence man was thus his power to subvert the American republican experiment [...] The confidence game played on eighteenth-century republican fears of self-aggrandizing power” (9-10). The gambler was the ultimate confidence man. As Halttunen describes him, the gambler “approached the unsuspecting youth with a smile and an offer of friendship, lured him into granting him confidence, drew him gradually into fashionable society, and then thoroughly fleeced him. [...] Gambling was evil because it produced nothing. [...] Into the image of the confidence man as gambler, the advisers cast their antipathy for capitalist speculation” (17).

oversight, and his inhumanity undermines his facade of trustworthiness and financial strength. It does not go unnoticed by Agnes. Will, of course, has neither wife nor children. This, as I will explore further in my readings of “Under the Lion’s Paw” and “Up the Coolly,” is a recurrent trait of Garland’s sterile speculator. With Agnes, he plans to go to Europe, and move “East.” Yet in overlooking her child, he has shown he is not a true man: he does not care for the realities of her life, only for what she means to his repentance. Will’s oversight temporarily ruptures the spell that he has cast to bring her into his confidence. Agnes comes back into the room with her son, telling him “‘Mommie ain’t goin’ away and leave him — wicked mommie ain’t — ‘ittle treasure’” (44). Dialect here connotes Agnes’ lack of worldliness due to poverty, yet this lapse into colloquial expression signifies her resumed respectability rather than disadvantageous ignorance⁸⁶. It also functions affectively in the context of her relationship with her baby: as Agnes chastises herself for her lapse in maternal apprehension, the reader’s middle-class sympathy becomes allied with her own as the reality of child abandonment temporarily disables her fantasy of a life with Will. As she deems this averted abandonment “wicked,” she also classifies Will’s character as such. Rejoining the ethically upright world of the agrarian family, Agnes becomes “confused again” (44). But when she attempts to reject Will, she cannot follow through, and Will cannot relent.

Doubtful of his intentions yet convinced of her class-based subservience, Agnes “tried to speak, tried to say ‘Please go, Will.’ He designedly failed to understand her

⁸⁶ As Gavin Jones points out in *Strange Talk: The Politics of Dialect Literature in Gilded Age America*, “Dialect was understood generally as a way of talking: it could thus include judgments about the artificial, overly highbrow language of the cultivated, or the bombast of the political stump speaker, in addition to the provincialisms of Appalachia. Indeed, one of the most important distinctions of the era was not between the standard literary language and the nonstandard dialect but between the natural power of idiomatic, colloquial speech and the purportedly lackluster, over-redundant, and effete nature of artificial ‘book-talk’” (35). Will’s effeminate and illusory confidence-man speech is thus undercut by the veracity and authenticity that Agnes’ dialect entails.

whisper,” and hastily smooths over her doubts by “writing” the baby into the story, stating that he has a “French accent” (44). Intent on attaining the object of his present fixation, Will still treats her as a commodity to be won through money, thus unable to gain ground against his persistent misinterpretation of the individual for the commodity that individuals produce. Garland condemns him to perpetual alienation and leaves the reader unsympathetic towards Will’s character. This form of impotence is of the speculator’s own making, Garland suggests. It is a form of emasculation that Will has bought himself into and which will continue to eat away at him. Garland ends this story with an unflattering view of his protagonist’s deteriorated ethics which feed his impotent lack of empathy and loss of self-control. Will is diametrically opposed to the producerist ideal of masculinity: a morally upright man who considers himself a man of the Republic, self-possessed and virtuous, would not convince a vulnerable woman to come away with him in order to actualize a dream of his own. Yet this is how “A Branch Road” ends. While the denouement does not fully indict Will’s actions, our sympathy for Will has turned into distrust, and potential disgust at his “wicked” transformation into a self-interested confidence man intent upon cultivating his consumptive masculinity.

Garland follows “A Branch Road” with stories, including “Up the Coolly” and “Under the Lion’s Paw,” in which a speculator faces off against the actualized figure of the agrarian laborer and small merchant. Instead of the voice of the counterplot, the figure of the agrarian laborer himself observes the violence within the land as noted in his represented perception, transmogrifying his own violent intentions into the region’s characteristics. In his very ability to commit violence in order to reform political economy, as well as his relationship to the material means of production and his

commitment to the ethical premise of land ownership and Republican accountability, the laborer's masculinity is thus validated as righteous when paired off with the conspicuous consumption of the speculator figure. While there is no persistent foil to Will's character in "A Branch Road," two scenes in this story are worth briefly noting for their whispered promises of racialized labor's capacity for violence and the validation of the laborer's masculinity through this violence. Early in the story, before Will leaves for Arizona, he is working alongside the other farmers to thresh the wheat. They are forced to accommodate the mechanized motions of the thresher, and their hostility to its domination encodes their hostility to the distant forces of market finance which function as factory foremen. This scene sets up a relationship of enslavement to the machine:

As night drew on the men worked with a steadier, more mechanical action. No one spoke now. Each man was intent on his work. [...] The feeder, *his face gray with dust*, rolled the grain into the cylinder so evenly, so steadily, so swiftly that it ran on with a *sullen, booming roar*. Far up on the straw-pile the stackers worked with the steady, rhythmic action of men rowing a boat, *their figures looming vague and dim* in the flying dust and chaff, *outlined against the glorious yellow- and orange- tinted clouds* (16, italics mine).

Although they are forced to submit to the machine, Garland implies that these men will not in the end forfeit their agency as citizens to those who attempt to dictate the terms of their labor or their voices. The subtext of this scene is that of an impending slave insurrection, a trope that Garland explores in depth in "Up the Coolly." Here, the feeder's face is "gray with dust," signifying the dwindling of his political power to that of a plantation slave. Yet the "sullen, booming roar" of the machine seems a more apt

description of the feeder's potent rage than of this industrial technology; this description associatively slides into the feeder's agential power as his mechanical motions mimic and then overtake the cylinder's dominance. And while the men seem subjugated to the mechanical tempo of the machine, in fact they still "loom [...] vague and dim," their figures blackened and sinister against the explosive background of the sky. The laborers thus seem to draw and store power from their very servility to the (social) machine, coiling up their anger like the snake in the stream.

The other scene which suggests the violence of the laboring class and their power to mobilize when they decide to do so occurs when Will, fully ensconced as a speculator, returns to Wisconsin. The insidious threats of the laborers register in the form of a biting fly at Will's ear. Garland writes, "In the fields the men were harvesting the ripened oats and barley, and the sound of their machines clattering, now low, now loud, came to his ears. Flies buzzed near him [...] He noticed again, as he had many a time when a boy, that the softened sound of the far-off reaper was at times exactly like the hum of a bluebottle fly buzzing heedlessly about his ears" (24). Here, Will clearly perceives the potential for these men to assemble against managers such as himself: he "hears" their power very clearly in the buzzing of the fly, which in effect brings their imposing strength and destabilizing power uncomfortably close to his person. The violent slicing motion of the reaper grinder, another newly developed farm machine, has molded their efficiency and seems to determine and control their movements, as the thresher above. Yet the term "reaper," of course, carries an alternative definition of the Grim Reaper of death. While these men again seem bound to the machine and thus made helpless by it, in

truth, Garland suggests, they are gathering their strength for retribution against those who have enforced their dispossessed alienation upon them.

“Up the Coolly” and “Under the Lion’s Paw”

The agrarian laborer is featured as a primary character alongside the speculator in Garland’s stories “Up the Coolly” and “Under the Lion’s Paw”: unlike “A Branch Road,” in which the counterplot takes on the voice of the dispossessed laborer, Garland features the farmer’s perspective embodied to pose an actualized threat to the market economy’s incursion into the West. Thus, because the farmer’s perspective is embodied, there are fewer instances of represented perception of violence within landscape motifs in these stories, and more explicit recognition of the laborer’s potential for violence through the laborer’s speech and description itself. However, to a lesser extent, violence in the landscape and in mythical referents continues to emblemize the farmer’s power to respond to his broken relationship to the means of production caused by influx of the market economy’s speculators.

In these stories, Garland makes explicit that an unmitigated relationship to the means of production through property ownership has been caused by what Alan Trachtenberg calls “minority owners” (*Incorporation* 4). Proprietorship of land and business in this time period shifted to minority owners intent upon incorporation, causing a chasm between previously dominant regionally based small land and business ownership and “the legally established authority of a small group of directors and managers [who] act in the name of a larger, amorphous body of otherwise unrelated

stockholders” (*Incorporation*, 4).⁸⁷ Agrarian laborers manifest their presence in these stories not only for “local color,” but to demonstrate that the changing economic landscape of the West is no longer compatible with their interests and with their notion of masculinity. The destructive potential of the land that the farmer sees in represented perception in “Up the Coolly” and “Under the Lion’s Paw” works symbolically to suggest the laborer’s latent power to violently reorganize the relationship of his exploited and suppressed instrumentality within the contemporary political economy.

“Under the Lion’s Paw” is a shorter story than either “A Branch Road” or “Up the Coolly,” and displays many of the same thematic, formal, and stylistic techniques that Garland uses in these longer works. I will briefly discuss “Under the Lion’s Paw” before moving on to an extended reading of “Up the Coolly.” “Under the Lion’s Paw” exhibits Garland’s use of represented perception, yet as distinct from in “A Branch Road,” it is the farmer’s perspective that is opened to the reader. Violence in motifs of the land depicted within the farmer’s represented perception thus stands directly for the farmer’s rage at his dispossession. Significantly, Garland also racializes the agrarian labor here to augment the structural power of this rage. For example, the farmers laboring under fierce skies in the opening scene of the story become blackened by the mud their ploughs drudge up: “All day long the ploughmen on their prairie farms had moved to and fro in their wide level fields through the falling snow [...] — all day, notwithstanding the frequent squalls of snow, the dripping, desolate clouds, and the muck of the furrows, black and tenacious as tar” (Garland 130). The phrases “*all day*,” and “the *muck* of the furrows” suggest these laborers’ own thoughts as they move through the fields. The adversarial “squalls of snow”

⁸⁷ Alan Trachtenberg explains the rise of the minority class in the context of incorporation: “the corporation provided capitalists with a more flexible and far-reaching instrument than earlier forms of ownership such as simple partnerships and family businesses” (*Incorporation* 4).

and “desolate clouds” reflect their own rising anger and desolation, for many of these farmers likely do not own the lands that they work.

The main character of the story, Haskins, arrives at Council’s home with his family after being driven out of their farmland by a Biblical plague of locusts, the grasshoppers that, as Haskins says, “set around waitin’ f’r us to die t’ eat us, too” (134). Council, who is also a farmer but owns his farm and homestead, gives Haskins a loan to help him mortgage a farm from a speculator, Butler. Butler is a local landowner who cheats farmers by mortgaging farms at a low price, allowing them to increase the value of the land, and then, when they have saved enough to buy the land outright, telling them that the value of the land is much higher than it was when he initially mortgaged it to them because ““It was all run down then; now it’s in good shape”” (142). To this Haskins responds by threatening Butler: ““You’ll never rob another man, damn ye!”” (144). Haskins is “transformed into an evening demon” (144). But Haskins does not ultimately harm Butler. He is reminded of the productive masculinity he has allied himself to by his (rather sentimentalized) daughter’s laughter. The speculator is clearly the allegorical “lion” in this story, which Matthew Teorey suggests references the Biblical lions who embody a “physical and institutional threat” in these allegories as well as the contemporary political cartoons drawn by Thomas Nast of the large predatory cats who represent the greed and corruption in government and corporations (43-45). It is the farmer who is righteous by its end, for even though he is forced to continue paying the dishonest speculator for the increased value of his property, it is his labor that supports his family, while the speculator is proven weak, dishonest, and impotent: he has no home, no wife, and no family.

While Garland thus implies the racialized masculinity of the agrarian laborer in “A Branch Road” and “Under the Lion’s Paw,” his racialization of laborers in “Up the Coolly” is fully developed. It is articulated through represented perception and description, as well as these laborers’ explicit opposition to wage slavery. Here, it functions to rupture the validity of the represented perception of the speculator figure of Howard McLane, which dominates a good deal of the narrative. This racialization clearly denotes the laborers’ ability to rise up against members of the minority class, encoding labor’s power to mobilize in strikes which Garland paints with the disruptive and violent potential of antebellum slave insurrections. Garland suggests in “Up the Coolly” that while ownership of farmland had historically defined these farmers’ masculinity, and now its dispossession has to a certain extent alienated them, the farmer’s productive and thus creative capacity is still intact. Garland thus validates the laborer’s ideological perspective to national literature and to politics itself. Garland continues the theme of racialization and redemptive violence in “Up the Coolly” to suggest that the laborer’s strength lies in his ability to channel the power of his own economic subjugation and productive power. Formally, then, as in all regionalist fiction, the violence in “Up the Coolly” takes the form of a critique of contemporary political economy.

The masculine power of the laborers which is validated by the encoded violence of the land, that violence which they could choose to physically deploy, but do not, takes its symbolic weight from slaveholders’ antebellum accounts of slave insurrections. While slaveholders did not frequently publicize slave rebellions in the antebellum period in order to prevent copycat rebellions, when they did describe those rebellions, they framed them in the terms of natural disaster. This meant that the masculine power of these

African American slaves was so strong as to recall such images as an “earthquake,” evoking their direct relationship to and production of the land in the agrarian South and the masculine strength that this productive labor has given them. But pro-slavery metaphors of slave insurrections and rebellions as natural disasters also debased the masculine power that these slaves asserted, for if their rebellion took the form of an inhuman and unpremeditated natural event, the slaves’ humanity was thus negated: their actions cast as inherently involuntary and primitive. The potential structural consequences of slaves’ masculinized, civilized, and thus politically validated subject positions, as indicated through their insurrection, was thus also defused. As Maggie Montesino Sale describes in *The Slumbering Volcano: American Slave Ship Revolts and the Production of Rebellious Masculinity* (1997), supporters of slavery

represented [rebellions] as the reemergence of the supposedly innate savageness of dark-skinned people, a masculine-coded savageness that had been subdued but not eliminated by their subordination to so-called civilized people. When forced to do so, [advocates of slavery] typically employed images of volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and other natural disasters to describe slave rebellion, which they viewed as cataclysmic disruption of the natural order (63).

Garland reverses the derogating potential of this violent symbolism, for he uses violence in motifs of the land and racialized descriptions of laborers in “Up the Coolly,” and to a lesser extent “A Branch Road,” to emphasize these laborers’ dynamically political masculinity, and thus their equality. Motifs of natural disaster and violent natural symbolism in represented perception augment the laborers’ potential. In drawing upon the history of enslaved African Americans, Garland indicates the agrarian laborers’

capacity to violently rupture the system of political economy which has analogously subjugated these laborers through the introduction of the industrial capitalist economy into the West. Here, the history of the antebellum abolitionist movement and black activists' treatises are invoked. These treatises had referenced the rhetoric of the Declaration of Independence to argue for the equal treatment and equal rights of all men. In equating the political economic status of African-American slaves with white laborers, Garland also rejects the Rooseveltian mythic West and its contemporary usage to justify racial conquest for the purposes of mobilizing imperialism and speculation. It is not through revisionist racism and social hierarchization, Garland suggests, but through accessing and rejecting the nation's history of marginalizing groups by race, class, or gender, that a truly national literature can be created. By extension, the ideal American man recalls history for the purposes of equality, and not for the purposes of oppression, and in this way asserts his masculinity.

Garland's usage of race to inflect the laborer's masculinity and strengthen his subject position within Western regionalist fiction can also be explained by the West's importance to Jefferson's ideal of a nation of agrarian farmers. For a man to own property, he must not be "enslaved," or subjugated by public or private control or policy. As an advocate of the single-tax movement to which he was converted after reading Henry George's *Progress and Poverty*, later stepping up to lead the single-tax meetings of the Anti-Poverty Society in November of 1887 and assume a position of office in 1888, Garland contended that equal access to land was now impossible. In his 1887 lecture to the Boston branch of the Anti-Poverty Society, "The Social Aspects of the Land Tax," Garland argues that, because the tax system rewards speculators who hold large swathes

of land which is undertaxed because undeveloped as they wait for its value to go up, ““free land is a myth. [...] Land being held for use, not sale, farmers would use it in the natural, civilized way; they would draw together in groups”” to establish stronger and highly cultured communities (qtd in Newlin, *Hamlin Garland: A Life*, 102-103). Land should thus be taxed according to the value of the land around it, and not according to its development or lack thereof, for developed farms were taxed much higher than fallow lands. Garland here indirectly recalls Jefferson’s contention that

The earth is given as a common stock for man to labor and live on. If for the encouragement of industry we allow it to be appropriated, we must take care that other employment be provided to those excluded from the appropriation. If we do not, the fundamental right to labor the earth returns to the unemployed... It is not too soon to provide by every possible means that as few as possible shall be without a little portion of land. The small landholders are the most precious part of a state (68-69).

Jefferson’s purchase of Louisiana in 1803 underlined the necessity of westward expansion to his vision of a nation of small landholders. Garland’s racialization of the agrarian laborer of the West thus posits in stark terms the significance of the founder’s claims to equality based upon a “common stock” of land ownership of that land which extends into the West, the “right to labor the earth” that all men have, especially if that land lies fallow, and the historical preclusion of certain groups from this ownership of land, such as slaves and, now, wage laborers made too poor to buy back this land from speculators. Because wage laborers were bound by what they described as “wage slavery” to their mortgaged debt and to the commodification of their labor by absentee landowners,

they were effectively blocked from buying this land back from absentee landowners, or buying the more expensive and fertile land from speculators who were holding it to raise its price.

Additionally, Garland may have been influenced by Tom Watson's perspective on the necessity of a labor alliance between blacks and whites. Garland may have heard of Watson through his own involvement in the single-tax movement and its influence by other radical politicians. He observed Watson in Congress in 1891 immediately after *Main-Travelled Roads* was published, when he attended the Farmers' Alliance's assertion of their platform in Washington, D.C. Garland wrote in Benjamin O. Flower's radical publication *The Arena* in "The Alliance Wedge in Congress" that here, "actual farmers; not landlords and speculators, but working farmers," including Tom Watson, had gathered to make their case for a third party aside of the Democrats and Republicans (what would become the Populist Party) (448). Describing Tom Watson, Garland states, "His life of hard work and suffering has made him a commoner and a radical — 'a dangerous man' to some of the Southern people, — but a very moderate and fair-tempered reformer to me. He is simply one more of the scores of similar young radicals and commoners of my acquaintance" (450). Garland continues, "He stands for the further extension of the idea of liberty. His faith in man and the forward urge of the human mind never fail him" (450). Watson, as Jackson Lears writes, had since 1882 "courted the black majority" in Georgia, when he was running for state legislature: his platform throughout the 1880s continued to emphasize the equal rights of both white and black agrarian laborers (*Rebirth* 162). In his biography of Watson, Historian C. Vann Woodward explains that he campaigned upon such pronouncements as "the accident of

color can make no possible difference in the interests of farmers, croppers, and laborers” and, speaking to whites and blacks, “You are kept apart that you may be separately fleeced of your earnings... You are deceived and blinded that you may not see how this race antagonism perpetuates a money system which beggars both” (402). If Garland had at all been influenced by Watson’s views before the publication of *Main-Travelled Roads* throughout the course of the 1880s, Watson’s perspective on the congruous economic position of the white and the black farmer might have influenced Garland’s assessment of the similarity between white farmers and enslaved men. Watson was known throughout the country as a radical; when he joined the Farmers’ Alliance officially in 1889, as Woodward writes, “farmers did not have to be convinced of his loyalty. He was no overnight convert” (147). If Watson had paved the way for this association between black and white farmers, Garland collapses this similarity into a racialization of white farmers to further mobilize leftist sympathy for the labor movement as abolitionists had mobilized sympathy for the slave’s condition of bondage. Any man, white or black, who worked the land, should be able to own that land that he worked; only producerism would address the problem of inequality caused by conflicting modes of production in the West.

In “Up the Couilly” and other stories in *Main-Travelled Roads* as well, then, Garland’s alliance with Watson’s ideology is reflected in his rejection of the nationalized definition of masculinity as whiteness through his historicized use of symbolism and represented perception in Western regionalism. Garland locates agrarian laborer Grant’s power in his non-whiteness, his insurgent *blackness*, which threatens rebellion and recalls the Republican history revolutionary insurrections against colonizing power. Instead of attributing the laborer’s blackness to a stain on his whiteness, one that must be rubbed off

and whitened again in order for him to join the ranks of powerful white men, it the laborer's very darkness that gives him power.⁸⁸ And it is his power to strike which recalls the antebellum fear of slave insurrection. The end goal of both striking and of insurrection, slave insurrection, was to control one's valuation within the means of production and thus to control one's valuation politically. For white male farmers laboring in the West, land ownership would lead to owning the means of production, which would allow one to own one's own labor. Garland instantiates a new, racialized version of masculinity in "A Branch Road" and "Up the Coolly" especially, a masculinity based upon a righteous producerist land ownership in the West and thus the ownership of one's labor through owning the means of production, and thus the body's own labor, and asserting its power as an unregulated political subject. He thus exposes the structural similarity between white and black positions through violent imagery, racialized description, and dialogue underwritten by anger, in order to rectify the corrupted structure which has historically kept both groups subjugated.

Laborers in Garland's stories thus articulate the significance of maintaining a regional economy driven primarily by individual landowners. This regional community would enable a masculinity defined by property ownership and individual control of the

⁸⁸ In doing so, Garland also pushes back against the tendency of the postbellum labor movement to use, in David Roediger's language in *In The Wages of Whiteness* (1991) "racial language and racist precedents to oppose advancement of darker ethnic groups — the equation of blackness with the ethnicity of new immigrant groups" (179). Schocket claims that, in "Up the Coolly" as well as in other works of American literature that deal with labor and class, blackness is only used as a tool to narratively propel the racialized laborer to "whiten" himself, thus to ally himself with other white men, enabling the writer to paper over the problem of class by translating it into a superficial darkening that can be remediated: "race becomes a mode of social identification that avoids more painful economic realizations" so that "for American writers who saw racial formation and class formation arise at the same period, race and class have never been fully separable. Blackness is used to give evidence of class difference, which then instigates a search for what lies beneath. Inevitably, what lies beneath is a whiteness that can be claimed as common property in a nation economically divided" (64). However, throughout "Up the Coolly," Grant is never whitened; he becomes darker and darker, until finally he outwardly claims his affiliation with the enslaved. What is exposed in "Up the Coolly" is the common system of economic subjugation, rather than a common whiteness that resolves this subjugation.

means of production. Unlike the frontier masculinity of the speculator figure, this new version of masculinity would not contribute to the commodification of the self and the subjugation of others by promoting the nationally heterogeneous definition of masculinity as competition and conspicuous consumption in an incorporated market. Because farm land in the West is so closely associated with literalized production, if the laborer can once again own this land, he will control the means of production on an individual basis, reclaiming production as a force of unmediated contribution rather than mystified commodification within a market economy. His own body's laboring capacity, too, he will withhold from circulation as a form of commodity. Garland thus corrects the tendency for national manhood to, as Dana Nelson writes in *National Manhood: Capitalist Citizenship and the Imagined Fraternity of White Men* (1998), "substitute [...] itself for nascently radical, local democratic practices, energies, and imaginings, not replacing local manhoods so much as enlisting them for and orienting them toward a unified, homogenous national ideal" (x). In an ironic formal turn, through racializing the laborer of the West Garland relocates the history of white Western masculinity and its emphasis on land ownership as inherently necessary for the maintenance of a masculinity that surpassed confinement to any one particular race. This masculinity is symbolically multiracial, ethically informed and based not upon exploitation but upon self-determination.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ My argument about the function of racialization in Garland's work is informed by Brad Evans's interrogation of the influence of anthropology and ethnology on Garland's life and work. Evans writes in *Before Cultures* that, while Garland was heavily influenced by Hippolyte Taine, he did not transfer Taine's interest in racial determinacy and Lamarckian progress to his own work. Instead, he seemed to treat race (as it related to racial hierarchies) in and of itself as a topic not relevant to literary discussion except inasmuch as the "mixture of races" might be a subject of interest, as Evans points out. Instead, what mattered was what the environment of the region, and by extension the nation, brought out in all races. Garland's philosophy involved, Evans writes, a "quasi-total proposition of environmental determinacy." He "was notably silent on the question of race in his chapter on provincialism except to the extent that he recognized

Represented Perception and Productive Power

In “Up the Coolly,” Garland establishes the physical capacities of the laborer, particularly the figure of farmer Grant and his uncle, as powerful in their ability to create and produce from the land. The critical conversation around this point enables my discussion of the laborer’s productivity as an inherently masculine force which Garland uses to portend the laborer’s ability to violently restructure political economy.⁹⁰ Grant’s brother Howard, though, a creative artist by profession, is ironically assigned the role of speculator, for he is a member of the leisure class. When Howard returns to Wisconsin after ten years in New York City, he sees the region only for its aesthetic value, and thus its worth as a potential commodity. In his profession as playwright and producer he capitalizes upon the material production that his audience and patrons have done, rather than producing material value through physical labor. I hope to add to the critical conversation of “Up the Coolly” Garland’s complex treatment of masculinity. In addition to validating the masculinity of the producerist agrarian laborer by racializing him, he continues to juxtaposes the farmer with effete portrayals of the consumptive speculator

the ‘mixture of races’ as an apt topic for literary treatment; [...] The assumption would seem to be that [...] Garland imagined regional environments to be directly forging a new American art” (95).

⁹⁰ In *American Literary Regionalism in a Global Age*, Philip Joseph contends that “Up the Coolly” conveys the need for the farmer (or indeed any laborer of the working class) to obtain political power so that he can use the perspective of the inherently creative producer to shape the political landscape of an industrializing America. The farmer uses his creativity in a non-exploitative way, whereas the artist of the industrialized Northeast uses creativity to commodify others. Joseph neglects to point out, though, that Grant is given violent potential to rip the social fabric in Garland’s story. In *Regional Fictions: Culture and Identity in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*, Stephanie Foote argues that “Garland’s version of regionalism acknowledges what local color normally suppresses: how sharply rural culture registers the economic violence of uneven capital development” (43). This is an astute insight, although, of course, all regionalist fiction, I argue, registers this “economic violence of uneven capital development.” More specifically, Foote does not pursue this insight to its logical conclusion, failing to locate violence in any specific passage and overlooking the agency Garland gives these laborers to incite violence in response to their dispossession. This is the violence that takes center stage in Garland’s stories, not simply the already-committed violence of economic dispossession. See also Tom Lutz’s *Cosmopolitan Vistas*, in which he argues that for a good deal of “Up the Coolly,” “Grant’s anger is unabated” (67).

figure. While most treatments of Garland's work have emphasized the rage of Grant's and Haskins' characters as the rage of an irreconcilable political impotence, they have omitted consideration of these characters' latent potency, which Garland signifies through racialization and violent symbolism portending rebellious and revolutionary action. Brothers Howard and Grant structure the narrative as diametric oppositions both thematic and formally. On the level of form, and thus of political economy, their dueling represented perspectives dictate the story's structure as it straddles the fault line of two conflicting modes of production within the West. Howard's return to Wisconsin symbolizes the intrusion of Northeastern industrialization and incorporation into Wisconsin's economy. These two characters' perspectives shape the story through alternating represented perception, a stylistic hallmark of regionalism.⁹¹

Garland affords Grant more authenticity and ethical uprightness than Howard's, while Howard's ineffectual physical strength and political inferiority is exposed through represented perception. He relegates Howard to an inferior position of authority to Grant in "Up the Coolly" by using two competing versions of represented perception, in which both men's perspectives are limited by a particular ideology delimited by the modes of production that have shaped their occupations. The vacillation between their represented perceptions can be understood as "variable internal focalization," which, as Gerald Prince writes, provides readerly access to accounts of disparate scenes, so that "different

⁹¹ Tom Lutz writes in *Cosmopolitan Vistas* that "The narrative moves in and out of each brother's perspective, oscillating between condemnation of the actor's selfishness — he has been yachting and buying diamond stick pins while his mother and brother were forced off the family farm — and disapproval of Grants childish inability to rise above his own peevish envy, or even to see it as such" (67). However, he contends that such oscillation is a hallmark of regionalist fiction, suggesting "an implied author who stands above the fray, who sees both sides of the argument and can thus move back and forth, first empathizing here and then there, never finally taking sides" (68). Garland, I argue, very firmly takes a side here: he empathizes with Grant's character and empowers him through his productivity and masculinity, while devaluing Howard's character based upon his speculative weakness.

perspectives [...] present different situations and events” (32). Thus, as for much of regionalist fiction, represented perception functions to deliberately interrogate the politicized interiority of its main characters while foregrounding the latent agency of those who are marginalized within that particular region but whose perspectives might otherwise be dismissed by readers due to these characters’ powerlessness.

The story thus opens with a critique of Howard’s represented perception as he journeys by rail car to his hometown in Wisconsin. As he observes the landscape, Howard aestheticizes the land and mentally repurposes it as a commodity. His pretension comes through clearly in the effete vocabulary of his thoughts:

The ride from Milwaukee to the Mississippi is a *fine* ride at any time, *superb* in summer. To lean back in a reclining-chair and *whirl away* in a breezy July day, past lakes, groves of oak, past *fields of barley being reaped*, past hay-fields, where the *heavy grass is toppling before the swift sickle*, is a panorama of *delight*, a road full of *delicious* surprises, where down a sudden vista lakes open, or a distant wooded hill looms darkly blue, or swift streams, foaming deep down the solid rock, send *whiffs* of cool breezes in at the window (45).

Howard’s language connotes both the education and the disconnect of the leisure class.

Garland spares no time in indicting his character as frivolous and inconsequential.⁹²

Rather than seeing the landscape as a site of labor and dispossession, Howard sees it as an inert piece of art which was made only for him. In the language of the monied

⁹² Mark Storey’s analysis of the motif of train travel in rural fiction illuminates the train’s role in communicating class position. He writes: “the train functions in rural fiction to imply particular class positions. While the economic status and social position of the passengers are not necessarily traceable in Garland’s opening scene [of “Up the Coolly”], for instances, they are subtly present in their personal experience of train travel, even down to the view they have from the window” (27). Howard’s wealth is evident from his ability to ride a train car in an expensive seat with a “reclining-chair.”

consumer Howard “whirl[s] away in a breezy July day,” consuming the spectacle of the grass “toppling” under the “swift sickle.” The land outside the train car window is a “panorama of delight” with “delicious surprises” and “whiffs.” The sickle is not a tool — it is part of the scenery. Indeed, Garland’s critique of the conspicuous consumption and emasculating processes of ownership of the leisure class is made clear abundantly clear as we read Howard’s represented perception: “It was, besides, *his* West” — as he ruminates upon his return (45). To Howard, labor is not a process by which men exert their energy to produce; that labor is erased in commodity form. Howard thus erases the laborer entirely from this scene, instead imposing a passive construction over the active process of men yielding tools as they work in the fields: “fields of barley” were “being reaped,” “the heavy grass is toppling before the swift sickle” shows that Howard completely effaces the laborer from the land he has fostered. The tools operate of their own accord, and the productive work of the region is accomplished by the landscape itself. Men, in other words, are not needed to produce this scenery for Howard’s consumption, though indeed they have shaped the entirety of the landscape he consumes as well as his very profession.⁹³ Here Garland ironically implicates the artist himself as a consumer, his consumptive practices classing him with the speculator in his habit of taking advantage of the work of others for his own benefit. In structuring Howard’s

⁹³ This particular reading of mine is informed by Mark Storey’s related discussion of the picturesque in the train scene of “Up the Coolly,” wherein Storey writes that Howard can only see this scene as picturesque (and thus, I argue, commodifiable) because “[t]he landscape in this specific meaning is a curiously laborless space, somewhere emptied of the signifiers of real human toil in favor of a happy vision of contented and easy activity [...] it implies the leisured point of view of someone not part of the rural scene or connected to the industry of agriculture” (40-41). Additionally, Stephanie Foote’s insight is useful here: “The implicit critique in the story is that even a sympathetic reading — or artistic representation — of the region is implicated in its economic trouble.[...] Garland recognizes and valorizes the economy of aesthetic representation in these stories when it appears to be the ‘true’ expression of the people, but the kind of representation in which Howard engages is ‘false’ representation” (54-55).

character as the story's antagonist, Garland avoids self-censure by clarifying his awareness of the potentially exploitative and parasitic potential of the artist. And in attributing Grant the role of the protagonist and giving laborers similarly sympathetic characteristics, Garland makes his protagonist's struggle potentially discomfiting to upper-class readers. If Grant is an example of an American man who can truly claim the authentic history of the West as his own, and not the speculator's, Garland acknowledges his complicity in capitalizing upon the region for its aesthetic appeal and rural custom while also indicating how the most dispossessed of this region prohibit their exploitation. Throughout the story irony runs throughout Grant's represented perception, for Garland has to use seemingly exploitative means to show resistance to exploitation.

Masculine Designs

It is significant that Howard travels to this region in a first-class train car with a "reclining-chair." Like the business of the railroad itself, built upon speculation, Howard is only able to fixate upon those elements of the landscape that are aesthetically pleasing, and therefore marketable and lucrative. He is thus unable to maintain aesthetic interest in the town's poverty. "The town caught and held his eyes first. How poor and dull and sleep and squalid it seemed!" (Garland 50). Howard blames the town itself for its economic collapse, rather than the market system that he himself is implicated in.⁹⁴ And

⁹⁴ Brad Evans rightly points out that Howard himself doesn't seem to be able to accept responsibility for his family's poverty, which he could have prevented, and by extension Howard does not for much of the narrative see the relationship between his lifestyle and the region's subjugation to Northeastern commercial interests: Howard's represented perspective articulated through the voice of the narrator "frequently refers to events in terms of 'epic' and 'tragedy,' presumably in the formal sense of resisting the possibility that mere human agency might have altered the situation" (96). However, I extend Evans's interpretation of the story to argue that indeed, the story does not "resist [...], strenuously, the attribution of blame for the circumstances" (96), but that Howard's own inflection of the narrative suggests that he misrecognizes his role in these circumstances: while he cannot at first see that he bears the manner and attitude of the minority class of owners, Garland's narrator does attribute blame to Howard for his complicity in this class.

indeed, his implication in its collapse through his character's symbolic alignment with the railroad is imperative to Garland's critique. He stands as the history of the railroad's development as it incited broad scale market speculation and the national market crash of 1873.⁹⁵ Howard plays on his luck as a speculator does: "wonderfully successful," he reflects that, as a playwright and actor, he was "always in luck, and the best of it was he kept and made use of that luck" (50). Like Will, Howard's wealth is amassed not from hard work but from manipulating the demands of the theater-going market of New York City that finances and attends his productions.⁹⁶ Without the innocence of luck, Howard would not initially have been successful; but without deliberately maneuvering this luck by "keeping" it and "making use" of it — in other words, by speculating upon it — Howard would not have maintained his position in the leisure class. His reappearance in the West operates formally to invoke the money markets of the Northeast which have made their way into the interior by way of the railroad.⁹⁷

The railroad was synonymous with speculation in the mid to late nineteenth century: it provided the highest potential for speculative returns while depending upon speculation for its construction. New York City's Wall Street was the primary "fundraiser"

⁹⁵ As Mark Storey notes, the train literalizes the presence of capitalism in the rural areas of the West, and with the ascendance of market capitalism came speculation: "The train, as a vehicle born out of urban-industrial capitalist need, makes legible and tangible in the environment processes of incorporation and rationalization — it writes capitalism across the rural landscape" (32).

⁹⁶ Stephanie Foote points out that Howard's "testimony that he exists because people are *interested* in him means to his family that Howard is somehow living without working. Grant's shock at this discovery accords with the Populist or producerist critique of those who live off the labor of others, producing nothing themselves but managing to live well anyway" (54).

⁹⁷ Foote argues that Howard stands in for Garland himself, representing Garland's ambivalent attitude to regionalism: "As a professional observer, Garland is also a professional speculator, and as a professional speculator, his observation of the people he 'values' causes him profound anxiety" (51). And while Howard is indeed a speculative figure, this correlation is a bit too simplistic to explain the formal workings of "Up the Couilly," including Garland's emasculation of Howard.

for the railroad, for its brokers and bankers financed the railroads while also determining the credit lines that those people building lives along its newly laid track could open. And by establishing Howard's adoptive region in New York City, Garland draws a direct correlation between New York's money market and Howard's ideological blindnesses. The railroad system was dependent upon and ultimately ruined by the speculation inherent in the finance market of the East: "[r]ailroads were the principal, if not the only form of industrial enterprise whose capital needs were so enormous that they had to have resort to sources outside the [industrial] firm. [...] Speculation was nowhere more feverish" (Fraser 112). Railroads prompted speculation both by the lower classes and by higher-profile businessmen. These businessmen were focused primarily on the market for railroad stocks, "where manipulation was a fine art and consequently the investment returns more certain" (Chancellor 171). The stock operator aimed to gain a "corner" on the railroad stocks.⁹⁸ Stock cornering was one of the era's most advanced forms of market manipulation. To aid in attaining access to and control over stock information, powerful operators, such as Jay Gould, that most hated of speculators who operated the stock of the Erie Railroad, bribed the press by providing share tips in order to encourage writers to print misleading stock information (Chancellor 171-172).

Even the federal government was implicated in speculation, and often at the highest levels of jurisdiction. In 1872, the Credit Mobilier scandal was brought to light, exposing the dealings of businessman and Congressman Oakes Ames, manager of the Union Pacific Railroad. Ames had established a separate holding company for the railroad's construction contracts (which he called the Credit Mobilier) in order to "milk"

⁹⁸ A corner was "caught" when a stock operator would send out a false alarm by alerting feigned weakness of a stock to force owners to sell them on short-sales, and then, once the stock had been oversold, the operator would force the short-sellers to buy back at a raised price (Chancellor 171-172).

the shareholders of the Union Pacific by inflating construction costs. The shareholders of the Credit Mobilier grew wealthy through illegal manipulation of these construction costs. To maintain political support for this holding company, Ames gave shares of Credit Mobilier to politicians, including the future President James Garfield, the future Vice President Schuyler Colfax, and other senators and congressmen (Chancellor 175). Additional instances of corruption included the Harlem Railroad's collusion with legislators in the 1860s, and the Erie Railroad bribes of 1868, led by operators Gould, Daniel Drew, and Jim Fisk (Chancellor 176).

Manipulations such as these directly affected not only railroad shareholders but the economy nationwide; the negative effects of middle and upper class railroad speculation reached all members of society and extended across the country to include the working classes classes. Garland's indictment of speculation in *Main-Travelled Roads* likely directly references the catastrophic effects which the economic crash of 1873 had on all members of the lower and working classes, as the crash of 1873 was directly caused by the bursting of the railroad speculation bubble.⁹⁹ Speculation on the railroads grew astronomically between the years of 1865 and 1873, during which time, with over 30,000 miles of track laid costing nearly one and a half billion dollars, the railroad system nearly doubled in size (Chancellor 183). The crash was caused by the folding of Jay Cooke's bank, Jay Cooke & Co., America's leading bank at the time. Cooke & Co. had taken over the Northern Pacific railroad in 1869, and had invested much of its members' holdings in Northern Pacific speculation in order to enhance the sale of its bonds. In mid-September 1873, the New York Stock Exchange announced that

⁹⁹ See Edward Chancellor, *Devil Take the Hindmost*; Steve Fraser, *Every Man a Speculator*; Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation*; Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America*; and Mark Storey, *Rural Fictions, Urban Realities*.

bank had folded. For the first time in its history – three days into the ensuing financial panic – the New York Stock Exchange closed, finally reopening after ten days. The remainder of the year would see more than five thousand commercial failures announced, including the Northern Pacific Railroad and fifty New York brokerage firms (Chancellor 186). The depression would persist until the end of the decade.

Hamlin Garland had lived through this extensive economic depression. Not only did the railroads infiltrating the West symbolize the ascendance of a minority class of owners who threatened to destroy the possibility of individually owned farms and heralded the incursion of mechanized and mass-produced agricultural processes on absentee landlords' soil, but the railroads also symbolized the speculation-driven collapse of the nation's economy. Those creators of the culture of mythicized Wild West machismo were the very same that promoted speculation. Thus, in order to effect deep critique of this popular version of American male subjecthood in "Up the Coolly," Garland implicates Howard as a type of speculator from the onset of the narrative, and as a consumptive speculator, Howard is at the onset of the story already emasculated. But in this narrative Garland goes further than he does in "A Branch Road" to disconnect popular association of bellicose masculine power with pecuniary accumulation. For example, Howard's subject position is now so different from Grant's that Grant does not even recognize Howard (and, more importantly, does not recognize Howard as a *man*). The interplay of represented perception in their meeting exposes the violent dissonance of a political economy in upheaval, wherein the leisure class's fiscally wasteful consumption and the laboring class's state of dispossession incites the dispossessed class's barely repressed anger.

When Howard approaches Grant on his farm, Grant's lack of recognition prompts him to say, "'Don't you know me, Grant? I am Howard.' The man approached him, gazing intently at his face. 'You are?'" (Garland 52). Grant states that he is glad to see Howard, but that he cannot shake hands because the "'damned cow had laid down in the mud'" (52). Grant's hesitance to formally greet this man who he seems to not know is explained through his represented perception: Howard is another type of man entirely to Grant, and barely a man at all, warranting only Grant's disrespect. Grant perceives Howard's ornamentation as incongruous to their environment, his "cuffs, collar, and shirt, alien in their elegance" while an unearthly "glint of light shot out from the jewel of his necktie" (52). Yet Howard understands Grant's scrutiny only as jealousy and resentment of his fine clothing, not as the blame which Grant places on Howard's class for its complicity in his poverty. Howard's represented perception narrates that he "divined something of the hard, bitter feeling that came into Grant's heart, as he stood there, ragged, ankle-deep in muck, his sleeves rolled up, a shapeless old straw hat on his head," associating Grant's bitter feeling with his presumption of Grant's comparison between his "ragged" clothing and Howard's. Grant, however, experiences feelings of insurgent distaste and disrespect for Howard's wastefulness and, by extension, his emasculation. The "gleam of Howard's white hands angered him," their pristine condition connoting reliance on others. While Howard has wealth, this money does not, in Grant's producerist mentality, also indicate self-sufficiency. After taking in Howard's attire, Grant spoke to Howard "in a hard, gruff tone, full of rebellion" (52). Grant does not envy Howard's wealth — not the way that Howard "wears" it, in the way that Howard utilizes it.

Howard's status is feminine, but a stereotypically classed version: it is the weak Victorian femininity that speaks of dependence and helplessness.

Garland thus extends his initial assessment of the speculator as effeminate from "A Branch Road" to articulate in "Up the Coolly" the critique that speculation must be divorced entirely from a validated masculine subject position with political power. In addition to describing Howard's effeminate trappings, Garland establishes that, like Will, Howard is not married and has no children. He thus construes Howard as essentially impotent. Grant, meanwhile, is married to a woman whose intelligence and productivity defy any stereotypical version of dependent femininity, and they have two children together, a young boy and a baby girl. When their mother asks Howard whether he is married, he hedges with a colloquialism incongruous to his character, trying to effect down-home roguishness: "No, mother; and there ain't any excuse for me — not a bit" (53). The next day Howard intimates that he chiefly sees babies as theatrical props useful for increasing the popularity of his plays. Garland also pushes on the similarity of Howard's discursive style to that of a confidence-man as he describes the mother's praise of Howard's "exquisite enunciation and ease of speech," whereby Howard confirms in represented perception that assuming the role of a confidence-man has been an important part of his business strategy: "He had always been 'smooth-spoken,' and he had become 'elegantly persuasive,' as his friends said of him, and it was a large factor in his success" (55).

However, the most notable gesture Garland makes to evacuate Howard of masculinized political power involves Garland's use of represented perception to narrate Howard's attention to the decorative arts of the domestic sphere. In Gilded Age America,

while both men and women of the leisure and middle class engaged in conspicuous consumption, women primarily focused on cultivating the aesthetic appeal of the private sphere. However, Howard has outfitted his apartment with a purely and decisively decorative eye. Garland thus castrates Howard by exposing his recollection of his apartment in New York City through represented perception. Seeking escape from the conflict with his brother by imagining the refined domestic space of his home, Howard recalls “his beautiful bed, the sun shining in, his books, foils, pictures, around him [...] He could see the olive walls, the unique copper-and-crimson arabesque frieze (his own selection), and the delicate draperies; an open grate full of glowing coals, to temper the sea-winds” (58). Howard selected the “unique copper-and-crimson arabesque” himself: there is no womanly hand behind this decor but Howard’s own. Interior decorating became popular in the 1880s as the economy strengthened and department stores grew more widespread: the periodical *Ladies’ Home Journal* circulated its first issue in 1883 and published within it tips for decorating in the feminine taste. Jennifer Scanlon writes in *Inarticulate Longings: The Ladies’ Home Journal, Gender and the Promise of Consumer Culture* (1995) that the periodical capitalized upon the rise in consumerism by espousing a “domestic ideology that defined editors as experts, advertisers as prophets, and, most importantly, *women as consumers*” (3, italics mine). By 1889, the *Ladies’ Home Journal* was the best-selling magazine in the country. Lears explains in “Beyond Veblen: Rethinking Consumer Culture in America,” “the Victorian interior embodied the iconography of female experience; it domesticated and moralized natural fecundity and sexual energy with floral wallpaper, globular lamps” (87). Howard’s masculinity is excavated, his affinity for decorating aligned with “female experience;” and if

masculinity is symbolic of political virtue and ethical production in Garland's stories, Howard's decided lack of masculinity reveals the political vulnerability of his class.

The vulnerability that Garland exposes in Howard undermines the force of his economic power. Garland thus undercuts the popular narrative of the new American man, that imperialistically-minded frontier conqueror-businessman who must assert his strength through usurpation of others' land and labor.¹⁰⁰ Howard's character is instead revealed as merely dependent upon the material production of others. In construing Howard as a social dependent, Garland relocates masculinized political-economic strength in Grant, while exposing Howard's soft underbelly and figurally leaving the leisure class open to attack ethical and by labor. Garland then proceeds to validate Grant's masculinity through his productive labor in this story. Grant's political economic contribution is the more valuable of the two brothers in Garland's narrative of masculinity which runs counter to the nation's dominant conception: Grant represents a productive mode that does not alienate the relationship between the material processes of production and their transmogrification into commodification. He therefore does not see people through the upper-class prism which converts their value directly into commodity value; instead, he produces the materials that will lead to value through the work of his own hands. Howard vaguely realizes his brother's worth, noting that "[h]is brother was a

¹⁰⁰ Kristin L. Hoganson explains in *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (2000) that this mentality is also related to the jingoist desire to assert American "masculine" military strength in the postbellum period leading up to the 1890s. She quotes Rep. Joseph Wheeler's statement on the nation's Cuban policy: "Unless the world believes we are ready and willing, able and determined, to sustain our convictions, our policies, and our principles by force and by the sword, we must lose the prestige we have so long enjoyed and drop from the high place of the first nation of the earth" (40). Hoganson contends that American masculinity was defined by political and military participation in this period, for only men could vote, and most all men at this period could vote. Thus men were urged to vote for conflict and imperialist expansion to assert their own masculinity via the nation's aggressive role on the world stage. "The late-nineteenth-century belief that 'manly' character was a prerequisite for full citizenship and political leadership can explain why support for bellicose policies seemed politically astute at the turn of the century and why jingoes triumphed in political debate" (10). Roosevelt of course contributed to this expansionist propaganda, as I have noted.

man of great character. He could see that now. His deep-set, gray eyes and rugged face showed at thirty a man of great natural ability. He had more of the Scotch in his face than Howard, and he looked much older” (54). Grant’s “great character,” Garland suggests, has been shaped by the work that he does, for his “rugged face,” hardened by labor, in itself indicates his “great natural ability” to produce worthwhile political-economic contributions and an ethical subject position. His virility is likewise generated from this work, manifest in the masculine beard which grows on his sun-darkened face: he “wore a mustache only, though his face was covered with a week’s growth of beard. His face was rather gaunt, and was brown as leather” (55). The brownness of his face has developed from his labor, and the beard that indicates his natural virility and “ability” grows from this coarse work. Yet the descriptive term “brown as leather” does not merely function to establish Grant’s tanned skin; this descriptor serves as the first indication that Garland racializes Grant’s labor, and thereby racializes his masculinity, in order to indicate its power and insurrectionary potential.

Wage Slavery and Black Masculinity

In order to fully explore why Garland establishes Grant’s subject position as racialized, and therefore equally righteous in its masculinity and violent in its potential, it is necessary to briefly consider the relationship between property ownership, suffrage rights, and slavery when the ruling of universal white manhood suffrage was passed in the antebellum period. The racializing qualifications of these laborers that Garland continues to emphasize throughout the rest of “Up the Coolly” are underlined by the history of the labor movement’s use of the term wage slavery as it coincides with chattel

slavery, and has historical precedent in the history of white male citizenship and property ownership. The relationship between masculinity, power, and property ownership in “Up the Coolly” can thus be more clearly understood within the context of differing demographic usages of the term slavery. If Grant is clearly not content with his role as laborer, it is because he finds it necessary to own the land he works, in order to control the means of production and break free of the “wage slavery” he feels himself subject to.

The history of the term “wage slavery” coincides with the history of enfranchisement and the definition of property ownership. The “white manhood suffrage” movement in the 1820s and 1830s was initiated by wage earners (laborers and craftsmen) and resulted in the federal ruling of enfranchisement granted to white men who were wage earners but propertyless. The right to vote was contingent, however, upon wage labor: to demonstrate their potential for self-determination and their economic contributions to society, they had to be gainfully employed. Previously, only men who owned property had the right to vote: men who were not “landed” were not granted a political voice. Legal historian Robert J. Steinfeld explains in his article “Property and Suffrage in the Early American Republic” (1989) that prior to the white manhood suffrage movement, national consensus based upon the ideological tenets of the American Revolution held that only the self-determined should be granted a political voice. Because self-determination signified American freedom from colonial subjugation, all men granted the vote should have the capacity to self-determine. Before the white manhood suffrage laws passed, “only property ownership conferred genuine independence on a man. [...] Political rights must be based on property ownership. The propertyless, because they remain dependent upon and subject to the government of men

who control resources, cannot be included among the truly self-governing” because “they will continue to be dependent on and subject to the government of the wealthy” (Steinfeld 352). Thus, conceptually, the white manhood suffrage movement replaced the requirement of ownership of physical property with the capacity for labor. The increasingly commercialized economy of the Jacksonian period prompted this shift. Reformers of the 1820s and 1830s mobilized around the fact that, if economic independence connoted self-determination, property ownership alone in a commercialized economy could no longer attest to independence, for even property owners had to report to others in some capacity in a commercial economy. The changing landscape of the economy did not, though, automatically make these landowners subject to the “government of the wealthy.” Logically, it did not make sense to deprive wage earners of enfranchisement if all men were subject to the same hierarchies of a commercialized economy. Enfranchisement was thus granted to any white men who in essence owned their property in the version of their labor itself, and thus all wage labor was legally translated into immaterial property ownership.

But Grant’s conception of self-determining masculinity as dependent upon property ownership in the form of land then seems outdated, for wage earners in the 1870s and 1880s could vote even if they had become dispossessed. It is therefore important to note that when the universal white manhood suffrage laws were passed, wage earners almost immediately began using the term “wage slavery” to advocate for what they perceived as their constrained political rights based upon their economic subjugation. For while the manhood suffrage laws granted wage laborers political power through the right to vote, they also placed greater pressure upon the inferior position of

the laborer to his employer. If a propertyless man could vote because his labor qualified him for enfranchisement, his employer essentially defined his political rights. The economic structure of early capitalism was revealed in this law, for the employer owned the “property” of the means of production and was given the power to value what was politically not only the laborer’s effort but effectually the viability of the laborer’s subject position as citizen. The propertyless laborer was only valued as a citizen for his labor alone; that labor came to stand for his political and economic relevance and was subject to his employer and his employer alone.¹⁰¹

Foregrounding the reality of the continuing importance of property ownership, in many states in the nineteenth century (though not Wisconsin), if a man became unemployed, he would again fall into the category of the disfranchised. The “pauper clause” was affixed to the white manhood suffrage laws in some states to disfranchise wage earners who became paupers due to their inability to enter into labor contracts of their own free will. Self-determination was not an option for a pauper, for the state maintained control over where and how he exerted his labor. As Steinfeld explains, “As late in the 1880s, in some locales, paupers continued to be legally bound to serve the town which was supporting them” (Steinfeld 361). Thus, those who were on poor relief, and in some cases those who had been but were no longer on poor relief, would have their rights to vote revoked. Even as early as the 1840s, while these white manhood suffrage laws enabled propertyless men to vote, they began to instill in working men the

¹⁰¹ Steinfeld points out that, despite their enfranchisement, wage earners still understood that in effect only material property ownership made men “truly independent” and that “property conferred power” (367). As self-ownership replaced property ownership as the qualification to achieve political rights, property ownership, as I have explored in the preceding chapter, was becoming privatized and commodified. Thus, “[t]he dangerous truth that propertylessness involved subjection to other men had been partially neutralized” (Steinfeld 369) when labor viewed as property in itself could promise enfranchisement, while in reality, the confluence of the enfranchisement and pauper laws “reaffirmed the unarguable truth that property and independence *were* connected” (Steinfeld 368).

fear their rights would be abrogated: they might wind up “in the poorhouse” and would therefore be designated as unfit to vote (Steinfeld 366).

Wage earners began to use the term “wage slavery” to describe the conditions of their employment during the period of the 1840s. While this usage abated briefly during the 1850s during the prelude to the Civil War, it was resurrected in the Reconstruction period of the 1860s and 1870s.¹⁰² Beginning in the 1840s, as industrial capitalism became established in the North and abolitionist texts were circulated, laborers (in both pro-slavery and anti-slavery positions) invoked the rhetoric of antislavery, and thus of race, to emphasize the pressing political relevance of their cause.¹⁰³ Laborers’ usage of the term “wage slavery” in tracts and speeches did not always signify sympathy for slaves, and was often meant to indicate that their status as white men should automatically exempt them from the exploitation that slaves experienced. However, the concomitant rise of wage earners’ use of the term with the rise of a commercialized market and increased abolitionist agitation suggests that the working class was not uniformly opposed to

¹⁰² David R. Roediger quotes Eric Foner’s observation that “slavery metaphors were ‘eclipsed’ in labor’s language in the fifties” and “they rose like a ‘phoenix’ after the Civil War” (81).

¹⁰³ Roediger clarifies in *The Wages of Whiteness* that in the 1840s, the term “white slavery” was invoked more often in the popular press than “wage slavery.” The term “wage slavery” persisted into the period of Reconstruction and beyond, thus many historians have simply conflated both terms. He points out, though, that those agitators who used the term “white slavery” often were not allying the struggle of white laborers with slaves themselves, but rather in some cases were proslavery advocates. “White slavery” was abhorrent; its diametric opposite, “black slavery,” was admissible. “White slavery,” Roediger indicates, was often used interchangeably with “slavery of wages,” by “land reformers and utopian socialists in the last half of the 1840s,” but “its very precision and directness raised problems. Thus, tenant farmers and those imprisoned for debt were frequently discussed, but the problem of the latter was precisely that they could not enter the wage labor market” (72). Thus “white slavery” was the rallying term for enabling all whites to be able to enter the wage labor market, not to ally all current wage laborers with slaves. Additionally, many labor activists using this term to unite the producerist class in the 1840s were not rallying against large and faceless corporations or absentee landowners and railroads; their metaphorical “masters” could not feasibly be likened to slave masters because often times these employers were small-scale business owners. The goal was not to compare plantation owners with the employer, but rather to merely and vaguely treat the white worker better; if this was accomplished, then wage labor itself wasn’t the problem anymore, and the capitalist structure thus wasn’t the bone of contention. As Roediger establishes, “reforms could occur [...] and the comparison with slavery could be exorcised” (73). On the other hand, the term “wage slavery” “implicitly called all slavery into contention” (74).

antislavery. The force of the term lay in its invocation of the equivalence of chattel slavery's subjugation with wage labor. And in this equivalence, property ownership was key: if the basic political power of the citizen manifest through voting depended upon his property ownership of land and/or his own labor, and thus the working class's only validation of their political subject position was based upon their commodified labor, essentially their bodies were commodified in a similar way as the bodies of slaves were when sold or traded at auction. The slave, in effect, did not own his own body's value; the wage earner's use of the term "wage slavery" implied that, similarly, the worker did not own his own body, as his political voice was reduced to his body's valuation by capitalism. The difference, of course, was that the white male worker *could* vote by allowing his body's labor to be commodified, thus he did own at least this labor in some sort of political capital; the slave could not yield this labor in the form of political capital, for this labor gave him no rights.

Rhetorically, however, the political economic figuration the term "wage slavery" evoked was strong, and continued to be used in postbellum labor movements. In reducing the worth of the citizen's political voice based upon the value of his body's productive capacities and that value alone, the irony of white manhood suffrage and the longstanding effects of its market-based political thrust contradicted Republican ideals of equality: those of "liberty, democracy" and "independence," as Eric Foner writes in *Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War* (1981) (60-61). Thus, property was still the answer. If the only property that could enable one to vote and thus validate the subject position of the white men named in the "white manhood suffrage" law was his body, and that man had no other landed property and thus no control over the means of production, then

owning property in the form of land would still determine his valuation as politically relevant or irrelevant on the figural level of political economy and on the literal level of suffrage for those in the pauper states. Increasingly, extreme class stratification between the leisure class and minority owners, and the working class of laborers and wage earners, deepened fears of white working men regarding their propertyless status and their devaluation by market capitalism's standards in the postbellum period. When wage earners wielded the term "wage slavery," Foner writes, they recalled "an ideal stretching back to the republican tradition of the American Revolution" which "equated freedom with ownership of productive property" (*Politics and Ideology* 64), wherein being able to own "productive property" still essentially determined a man's freedom as exercised through his political power. Similarly, when Garland "blackens" Grant and his fellow laborers in "Up the Couilly," he underscores the relationship between property ownership, the self as property, and slavery to demonstrate that the only structural solution to the exploitation of the wage earner and the exploitation of the slave involves violently shattering the hardening strictures of hierarchized capitalist land ownership.

When Grant derogates Howard for neglecting to help their increasingly impoverished family while Howard left for New York City, he names him as complicit in the leisure class's structural exploitation of others' labor. In this passage, Grant references the Old Testament figure of Job. He directly compares himself to Job's "off-ox," recalling the plight of this Biblical figure who, in his impoverishment, also becomes racialized (in despair and exhaustion caused by ceaseless labor and poverty, Job cries out, "My skin is black upon me, and my bones are burned with heat" (*King James Bible*, Job 30-30). Grant blames Howard for enabling his dispossession: Howard did not consider

his family's poverty as his wealth grew, and he became wealthy through the appropriative conduct characteristic of the upper class. In drawing attention to Howard's consumptive transgressions, Grant further invokes his structural similarity to Job when he likens his status to that of a slave forced to produce for men of Howard's class with drastically insufficient recompense: "You might have known were were poor as Job's off-ox. Everybody is that earns a living. We fellers on the farm have to earn a livin' for ourselves *and* you fellers that don't work" (56, italics mine).¹⁰⁴ In recalling the Old Testament's story of Job, Garland enacts the allusion to allegory and myth common amongst regionalist writers. This emphasis on timelessness produces a narrative that is not only regional but national in relevance, yet at the same time utterly contemporaneous with the violent shifts in economic modes characteristic only of the Gilded Age.

The regionalist's allusion to allegory and myth also, as I have established earlier, draws attention the timelessness of oppressed subject positions, and recalls the stories of their triumph against forces of brutality. Grant is thus likened to Job to recall the prosperous farmer's faithfulness to God and unwavering morality, even and especially after God allows Satan to test Job's faith by destroying all he owns. Job is "perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil" (*King James Bible*, Job 1-1).

Grant's evocation of Job's "off-ox," while a regionalist expression in its own right,

¹⁰⁴ The colloquialism in which the speaker does not know someone from "Adam's off-ox" is a particularly agrarian expression: James Tidwell writes in "Adam's Off Ox: A Study in the Exactness of the Inexact" (1953) in *The Journal of American Folklore* that "Of Adam's two oxen, the near ox is better [and thus more recognizable] for two reasons: first, he is nearer the driver, and, second, the sight of him is unobstructed. We can say, then, that the off ox is less known than the near ox, who in turn is less known than Adam, who is not known at all" (291). The phrase "poor as Job's off-ox" seems to have evolved from this one, and is used by both Hamlin Garland and Mary E. Wilkins Freeman during the local color movement. Freeman has an impoverished hostel owner use it describe himself in *The Shoulders of Atlas: A Novel* (1908), set in "East Westland," seemingly code for "no place in particular," in rural America. The late nineteenth century substitution of Job for Adam seems to suggest that the farmer sought to directly relate his travails and poverty to Job's of the Old Testament.

recalls the wild ox of the narrative who is willingly faithful and servile, because God made him so. God reminds Job that while he could have made the strong and servile ox untrustworthy and rebellious, he has not. The phrase “poor as Job’s off-ox” suggests Grant’s deliberate servility and restraint for the sake of ethical principles even in the face of destitution and the natural temptation to rebel. Yet it also suggests the latent possibility of his rebellion. In the passage on the wild ox, God asks Job whether he trusts in his creation of strong and willful yet ethical creatures (the King James version of the Old Testament substitutes “unicorn” for “wild ox” in translation): “Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib? Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow? or will he harrow the valleys after thee? Wilt thou trust him, because his strength is great? or wilt thou leave thy labor to him? Wilt thou believe him, that he will bring home thy seed, and gather it into thy barn?” (Job 9-12). The wild ox’s strength and servility, like the slave’s, is made less trustworthy by his very “wildness,” his potential resistance to being bound. If Grant is both like Job, in his structural enslavement to the upper class and moral uprightness, and like the wild ox, in his strength and inherent resistance to being bound against his will, it is because he is now dispossessed like Job, beholden to an absentee landowner who underestimates his strength and rage.

In the racialization of the laborer, Garland thus negotiates slavery’s negation of self-determination, the success of market capitalism which was initiated on the backs of slave labor, and the continuation of the country’s economic ascendance upon wage earners’ exploitation. Garland’s critique in “Up the Coolly” stringently advocates for structural change of this national-historical pattern of subjection. His solution argues for the worker to own the means of production, and in the agrarian West, the means of

production lies primarily in the land itself. Masculinity itself in “Up the Couly” is then inherently racialized, for the worker’s resistance to this exploitation is likened to the slave’s as both positions had to struggle to attain enfranchisement through property ownership. Dana Nelson argues that a nationalized notion of antebellum masculinity was based primarily upon the concept of a “national manhood” defined through whiteness and market competition. This definition was formalized after the universal white suffrage act. As the commodified labor of white selfhood was clearly enfranchised in legal terms, white men were simultaneously “block[ed] [...] from being able efficiently to identify socioeconomic inequality as structural rather than individual failure” (ix). In “Up the Couly,” Garland corrects this tendency towards masculinity’s association with market competition and conquest, relocating masculinity instead within the strength of the unequivocally racialized laborer’s appraisal of structural inequality.

Garland establishes in “A Branch Road” the land’s vengefulness through the landscape’s violent irruptions into Will’s represented perception and laborers who are ceaselessly “looming vague and dim” against a flame-colored sky, that vengefulness which accompanies laborers’ racialization and their concomitant threats of insurrection. In the case of “Up the Couly,” violent motifs of the landscape narrated through Grant’s represented perception foreshadow the laborers’ blatant self-identification with slaves. Playing upon pro-slavery usage of the slave insurrection or rebellion as natural disaster, Garland instead asserts their potential to violently correct the unnaturalness of the Western political economy to the natural order of property ownership complicit with Jeffersonian agrarian production within a regional economy through these scenes of represented perception. For example, while Grant’s wife advises him not to blame

Howard for his class's mistakes, Grant cannot contain his anger: described as a "bitter and terrible silence," this anger is soon thereafter metaphorized by the weather. Grant sees that it "was beginning to cloud up. A thin, whitish, all-pervasive vapor which meant rain was dimming the sky" (Garland 67). Note that Garland uses the same root adjective, "dim," in both "A Branch Road" and "Up the Coolly" to describe the darkening of the sky as Grant's anger towards Howard deepens, and the darkening of the laborers as they prepare to reclaim their rights. Garland uses the term as a signpost of the laborers' power as a group: his association of this class with slaves deepens their agential power to incite violence and fear. Yet the reason none of his stories from the original publication of *Main-Travelled Roads* in 1891 include direct violence is likely because he did not want to associate the labor movement with physical violence. To do so would turn popular sentiment even further against the labor movement after the Great Railroad Strike of 1877 and the Chicago Haymarket riot of 1886.

Insurrection

Garland's readers in the 1890s would certainly associate the laboring mob's threatening insurrectionary power with the violent strikes of the preceding two decades. Large-scale strikes began in the 1870s in response to the market crash of 1873. The Great Railroad Strike of 1877 was the most significant strike prior to 1880: in response to a 10 percent wage cut by the owners of the Baltimore and Ohio line, the strike also spread to other railroad lines. Railroad workers in Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Chicago, St. Louis, Kansas City and San Francisco were joined by laborers from other industries, and the strike was supported by merchants, farmers, and even clergy and politicians. All participants acted upon their rage at the corrupt practices of the railroads. As

Trachtenberg notes, this strike induced fears of “a new civil war” as the “mass rebellion” turned bloody: business corporations and the national government furiously struck back by hiring local police and militia to protect their property against the strikers (*Incorporation* 40). President Rutherford Hayes called upon federal troops to protect the railroad companies; the strike ended with more than one hundred dead and millions of dollars in property destroyed (*Incorporation* 40). Perhaps more significantly, the decade of the 1880s “witnessed almost ten thousand strikes and lockouts” (*Incorporation* 89). In 1886, only a few years before Garland would publish *Main-Travelled Roads*, the Knights of Labor staged a strike against Jay Gould’s railroad, the eight-hour workday became and the Haymarket riot of Chicago took place. 1886 was the year of the “Great Upheaval,” the plan for a national strike on May 1st to rally for an “eight-hour” law, but while only 30,000 workers participated on May 1st, on May 3rd, four strikers were killed by police (*Incorporation* 90). To protest these killings a meeting was called to convene in Haymarket Square which ended in a dynamite bomb thrown into the section of policemen. The Haymarket Square riot ensued, in which seven additional policemen and four civilians were killed. The Haymarket Square bombing, as Jeffrey Clymer writes in *America’s Culture of Terrorism: Violence, Capitalism, and the Written Word* (2003), led to “an emergent notion of modern terrorism in America,” resulting in public rhetoric which “encouraged Americans to think of themselves as collectively opposed to radical politics” (36-38). The riot incited widespread fear and paranoia of an underground network of anonymous and anarchistic individuals who had begun their “campaign to overturn the American state” (Clymer 36). Yet the person or persons responsible for throwing the bomb was never identified.

Certainly, then, it is a risky for Garland to attribute rage and symbolically coded violent intentions to agrarian laborers if his motives for writing regionalist literature include invoking sympathy for their plight rather than fear. Public perception of the labor movement in the late 1880s and early 1890s was indeed more negative than positive: the movement's economically rational causes for agitation, including higher pay, the movement for the eight-hour workday, and better working conditions, were overlooked as strikers were dismissed for their unpredictability and irrationality.¹⁰⁵ The power of the Knights of Labor was irrevocably harmed by the Haymarket bombing. Strikes could (and were) easily be explained away as unacculturated mob-think, utterly unsympathetic anti-Americanism.¹⁰⁶ The universal white manhood suffrage law was called into question by prominent intellectuals and politicians during this period, as the influx of blatantly ethnic Irish and Italian immigrants who had become manual laborers seemed unable or unwilling to culturally assimilate and yet had the power to vote if they were wage earners. They were more likely to express their dissatisfaction with their working conditions than antebellum laborers, and they also had a tendency to convince other non-immigrant laborers to join them. These men, as Alexander Keyssar explains in *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (2009), with their "apparent inclination toward radicalism," were "the voters who backed 'demagogue' Ben Butler's

¹⁰⁵ Trachtenberg writes, "In part, the strikes were in response to maneuvers by industrialists: wage cuts designed to increase productivity by decreasing costs; an intensified application of advanced machine technology, eliminating many traditional crafts and speeding up the pace of work; a more fevered competition among businesses at a time of increasing consolidation and concentration of economic control" (*Incorporation* 90).

¹⁰⁶ As Alexander Keyssar explains in *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (2009), an anonymous writer publishing in *The Nation* in 1877, almost ten years before the bombing, wrote that "restrictions on the electoral franchise" would not have been removed if the antebellum government had understood what it would mean to put power "in the hands of the proletariat" (98). After the bombing, anti-labor and union sentiment only grew more extreme.

quasi-populist, anti-establishment campaigns in Massachusetts in the 1870s, as well as Knights of Labor and socialist candidates in later decades; these were the men who allegedly tossed bombs at Haymarket in 1886” (97). Garland’s references to violent insurrection on the part of his laborers in 1891 thus seems almost inexplicable.

However, because Garland allies agrarian laborers with slaves, he effectively realigns the stakes of the labor movement, reestablishing the labor movement’s foundation as resting upon natural rights rather than terrorism and anarchic violence. He thus enables the liberal reader to sympathize with workers through their associations with the discourse of abolitionist texts written by black activist and white abolitionist texts in the antebellum period. As Maggie Montesinos Sales writes in *The Slumbering Volcano: American Slave Ship Revolts and the Production of Rebellious Masculinity* (1997), the defining philosophy of the American Revolution has historically been used by African American writers and activists as a source of optimism regarding the nation’s stance on equal rights. In the antebellum period, “virtually every document of political protest written by African American men — and some by white and African American women — between the Revolutionary and the Civil Wars laid claim to the authorizing notion that ‘all men are born equally free’” (11). Garland thus uses represented perception to validate Grant’s subject position of agrarian laborer through invoking Jeffersonian tenets of equality based upon the importance of maintaining national and masculinized integrity through production of the land. Recalling, through association to slaves’ usage of, the Declaration of Independence’s rhetoric of “righteous masculinity” against political slavery to the British, through independent land ownership and production (to use Sale’s term), Garland recalls its promise of equality and the similarly “righteous” struggle of

African Americans against oppression and disfranchisement (Sale 12). Additionally, by enabling rather than emphasizing and then erasing these laborers' blackness, Garland avoids rejecting the racism inherent to the myth of frontier masculinity's conquest of racial Others. Here, the white laborer is simultaneously the racial Other.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, instead of validating these laborers' unruly violence, Garland persists in his symbolic denunciation of the myth of frontier masculinity by demonstrating in violent motifs of the land and Biblical allegory how laborers' rage is justified yet disciplined.

In "Up the Couilly," the pivotal scene in which the laborer's relationship to blackness and thus indirectly, by way of antebellum slave discourse, "righteous masculinity" and its indisputable reference to equality and political validation, occurs when one of Howard's childhood friends organizes a welcoming party for him at his childhood home. Most of the men in attendance are poor farmers who have been dispossessed by speculators' high mortgage rates. These men were "all very ill at ease. [...] Most of them crossed their legs at once, and all of them sought the wall and leaned back perilously upon the hind legs of their chairs, *eyeing Howard slowly*" (73, italics mine). It is clear from their glares in Howard's direction that they see him as a symbol for the recent changes in political economy which have led to their impoverishment and

¹⁰⁷ As Eric Schocket writes in *Vanishing Moments*, Garland's "Up the Couilly" provides a quintessential example of regionalism: "When regions collide (as they often do) in Garland's work, their contact is marked by corporeal evidence of what we might now call 'uneven development.' In 'Up the Couille' (to cite but one instance), Garland uses racial tropes to testify to the different class histories of two brothers — one of whom has stayed on the farm while the other left for the city" (64). Schocket argues that in this story, and in many other instances of American labor fiction, class-based differences are translated into racialized differences, whereby a problematic instance of white poverty is resolved by "whitening" the blackened working-class figure to return him to an alliance with white national manhood. While I believe that indeed, Grant, as well as the laborers in "A Branch Road," are indeed racialized to such an extent that they are meant to recall African-Americans, Garland racializes these laborers in rather dichotomous terms not to falsely resolve the essentially irreparable class conflicts of the period, but to in fact highlight the problematic nature of the similarity between the subjugated positions of dispossessed laborers and dispossessed slaves and freedmen, and to emphasize the capitalist system's dispossession of all but the most wealthy subject positions.

subjection to labor for other landowners. In this scene, Grant, speaking to the farmers without knowing that Howard is listening, bluntly articulates his anger towards the absentee landowner whose land he rents and to whom he sends most of the profits from his crop production: Grant states that the most infuriating aspect of his predicament is that ““a man can’t get out of it during his lifetime, and I don’t know that he’ll have any chance in the next [in hell] — the speculator’ll be there ahead of us”” (75). Grant places the speculator as a devilish figure, taunting him much like Satan taunts Job. Renting land from the absentee landowner comes with ““terms that skin a man alive.”” And with this, recalling Job’s blackened skin, Grant makes a proclamation which silences the crowd and absorbs their full attention:

More than that, farmin’ ain’t so free a life as it used to be. This cattle-raisin’ and butter-makin’ makes a nigger of a man. Binds him right down to the grindstone and he gets nothin’ out of it — that’s what rubs it in. He simply wallers around in the manure for somebody else. I’d like to know what a man’s life is worth who lives as we do? How much higher is it than the lives the niggers used to live? (76).

If a farmer cannot own the land that he works, and his labor is priced so inordinately low and land so utterly high that he will never be able to purchase this land, then, Garland asserts, he is a “wage slave,” effectively economically subjugated.¹⁰⁸ Garland provides an overtly racialized account of labor in Grant’s own words in order to call for the laborer’s masculinized assertion to his rights, including the right to own land. The solution to this problem will take some form akin to a strike, will assert the laborers’ control over their

¹⁰⁸ Trachtenberg’s description of the plight of the Western farmer in the 1870s and 1880s in *The Incorporation of America* will remind us of the terms of his dispossession: “The West poured its resources into the expanding productive system, contributing decisively to the remaking of that system into a national incorporated entity. Wheat and cattle enterprises came under control of Eastern capitalists, for whom the agricultural surplus provided a major source of new capital. [...] The translation of land into capital, of what once seemed ‘free’ into private wealth, followed the script of industrial progress” (23).

bodies rather than the market's commodification of their labor, and will force the rupture of the strictures of the current economy. When Grant states, "A man like me is helpless, [...] just like a fly in a pan of molasses. There ain't any escape for him. The more he tears around, the more liable he is to rip his legs off," one man asks "What can we do?" (76). All fall silent in response to this question, listening to Grant. But the answer comes in the form of William McTurg, an older laborer and uncle to Grant and Howard.

It is important to remember that the strike's function goes beyond its ability to temporarily abrogate the means of production. In demonstrating management or corporations' mistreatment of workers, in Eric Schocket's terms, the strike "displayed not only the authoritarian relationship between management and labor but *labor's potential ability to change that relationship*" (Schocket 72, italics mine). The strike instilled fear in the managerial class of their potential loss of power over labor, but did so creatively and constructively in its emphasis on local community-based action. To disable the industrialization's ceaseless output seemed an "act of negation," and indeed it was -- but ideally the strike, though a "negative act of production," was "producerist all the same," as Schocket points out (72). It "served to reaffirm the social bonds of collective labor" by combating the alienating effects of the process of labor valuation on the community: strikes were for the most part "positive, constructive, and constitutive of articulations of a working-class presence," highlighting the valuable social contributions of the working class on the level of economy and the body politic, and by emphasizing the power of local action within a national economy (73). William McTurg's fiddle performance in "Up the Couilly" attests to the creative power of the act, thus embodying the application of the producerist ideology to the strike. His performance demonstrates that the only

manifest violence in Garland's ideal version of collective action involves violence to the power of the market economy's tendency to commodify and discount individual workers' worth. This is proven through William McTurg's revelatory "answer" through music to the laborer's question "'What can we do?'":

Music had always been William's unconscious expression of his unsatisfied desires. He was never melancholy except when he played. Then his eyes grew sombre, his drooping face full of shadows. He played on slowly, softly, wailing Scotch tunes and mournful Irish love songs. He seemed to find in these melodies, and especially in a wild, sweet, low-keyed negro song, some expression for his indefinable inner melancholy (77).

As he plays, William too becomes racialized. His face taken over by "shadows," this racialization accesses and articulates an art expressing histories of oppression, most importantly for Garland's project the pain of dispossession suffered by African-American slaves. Metaphorically, Garland here thus validates local color writing by authenticating William's music as a particularly regional art form which simultaneously attests to a national history of subjection. Local color writing, like the strike that this "wild [...] negro song" portends, can thus function as an irruption to aesthetic as well as labor commodification. Garland's version of local color writing attests to the subjection of region-specific groups without neutralizing this subjection by removing the structure of political economy and substituting romanticization of these groups. Garland establishes the parallel status of the laborer and the slave to demonstrate how local color can explicitly avoid exploiting the laborer's plight in this rural region: through representing the laborer and the slave's creative production and the laborer's represented perception,

Garland demonstrates an art form that these subject positions produce and which local color echoes. Like the strike, local color calls attention through violence to the paradoxically creative potential of a form and of a people that develops in specific response to economic duress rather than the aesthetic trends of the market. By equalizing the slave's status with the laborer's, it is the economy itself that Garland shows local color addresses, as well as the political subject's creative potential to disrupt and change the political effects of this economy.

Like local color writing, like slave songs, and like the formative potential of the strike, William's music is an unmarketed creative expression of the contemporary dispossession suffered in the West. This music as an art form, much like the local color that Garland espouses, is produced directly for a local audience rather than a nationwide market. Thus, like slaves' "sorrow songs" that William's performance recalls, which W.E.B. Du Bois discusses in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), this music is not produced with the intention of broader consumption by the elite. Furthermore, the sorrow songs and William's local music are directed towards a regional community that experiences similar modes of institutionalized subjection. Thus, like Garland's ideal version of a local color writing that also functions as the epitome of a national literature, this music is created with the expectation that, first and foremost, the regional community is of utmost significance, not the broader consumer audience.

And like the strike, Du Bois describes the message of slaves' sorrow songs as "the music of an unhappy people, of the children of disappointment" -- yet these songs, like local color literature, also express latent protest and attest to the rights their creators are deprived of (538). These forms of protest are also creative, productive, producerist acts.

The sorrow songs, Du Bois writes, assert the claim that “Before the Pilgrims landed we were here. Here we have brought [...] a gift of story and song – soft, stirring melody in an ill-harmonized and unmelodious land; the gift of sweat and brawn to beat back the wilderness, conquer the soil, and lay the foundations of this vast economic empire two hundred years earlier than your weak hands could have done it” (545). The specifically localized creation and performance of William’s fiddle music, referencing various histories of subjection yet relevant to the regional audience because of their institutionalized economic and legal subjection, emphasize the farmers’ relationship to the local landscape in a way that only local audiences could fully understand. Yet this art functions as a national form as well. His music draws upon slaves’ sorrow songs to demonstrate that the racial justification for institutionalized oppression is relevant to other groups of dispossessed people as well, particularly to the lower class. While slave songs are locally rooted in the South, in their explication of a particularly racial cause for economic and legal oppression and the pain that results from this oppression they attest to an American history of oppression based upon institutionally mandated occupations and the rights that attend these occupations.

The presence of slave songs in this story thus draw a straight line between slavery and undervalued labor as the same outcomes of an institutionalized oppression which functions by delimiting occupation and property rights. Garland’s comparison of William’s fiddle playing with slave songs asserts not only the sorrow, but the historically authentic claim of the laborer to the land he works in the slave’s experience and in the laborer’s experience. Here Garland sets up slavery as precedent for and inherently related to insurrectionary actions of the laborers. The parallel art forms of slave song and

laborer's song serve as a warning of the community's and the region's mobilizing power to destabilize nationally institutionalized undervaluation of its citizenry. Garland's concept of local color literature combines the strike's act of economic resistance to the debasement of the local citizen and the aesthetic power of regional community to reconstruct the citizen's power and rights.

By racializing William McTurg and associating his blackness with melancholy and creativity following Grant's insurrectionary anger, Garland clarifies that the violence in his stories encode a *structurally* violent reconstitution of class relations and the economic terms that define these class relations, rather than a physically violent insurrection. The rights for these laborers, like the rights for African-Americans, are substantiated upon their inherently creative masculinity rather than the destructive masculinity of the businessmen or speculator. Garland thus amplifies the connection between masculinity, revolutionary impulses, and subjugation that white abolitionists and African American activists made visible in the antebellum period. But, ironically, Garland uses racialized masculinity as a means by which to *foreground* rather than *erase* the significance of the division between the producerist class and the managerial and upper classes, which the white manhood suffrage laws had done. These laborers are validated through the racialized history of their masculinity inherent in their producerist occupations. Masculinity no longer must exclude the racial or ethnic other to be validated as national. To exclude the black slave's assertion of masculinity, or the Irish man's or the Scottish man's, would be to exclude the history of their ethical struggles for equal rights. What makes a man masculine, in other words, is his open confrontation with the structures of oppression and his creative ability cultivated through his occupation as

producer, as laborer of the earth, to productively halt and rearrange these structures through the action of the strike.

Productive Masculinity

Thus, while, as Sale writes, “abolitionists’ use of the trope of the revolutionary struggle [...] disrupted both the original alliance of ‘all [free] men’ and the alliance of ‘all [white] men’ solidified in the 1830s,” thus “claim[ing] the discourse for the alliance of ‘all MEN’” in order to take race out of the equation entirely, Garland does not subsume race to masculinity for the sake of invoking a purely white revolutionary ideal. Instead, he creates an explicitly raced revolutionary working class to depict a new class of laboring men (63).¹⁰⁹ This class, because of their common struggles with blacks under oppressive political economic structures, is strengthened by acknowledging the multiply subjugated masculinities which constitute it. In doing so, Garland carries through the black man’s pain of subjugation as well as his “assertion of masculine gender as the most salient characteristic of the subject-position authorized to claim the discourse of national identity” (Sale 63). While thus recalling through racialization, as Sales puts it, “the anxiety of many white people throughout the United States who feared the violence and bloodshed that would result from a general uprising, fundamentally shaped dominant attitudes toward slave revolt” (63), he also posits as most important the constructive

¹⁰⁹ This “new class,” as Schocket discusses, is the working class, often racialized in much American literature in both the antebellum and postbellum periods. The problem of representing a new working class confronted writers who used blackness to “see a new class,” to in some cases use a sign that “established its visibility”: Schocket writes, “This problem haunted the labor narrative throughout its various revisions and reformations in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The figurative norms for the representation of slaves had been, in contrast, well established by the 1850s. Marked as Other by tropes of blackness, a conventional set of physical attributes [...] As property of another, the slave was both capital and labor; though physically distinct and singularly embodied, he or she nevertheless defined, by extension, the power of the master” (46).

masculinity of the nation that has its history in revolutionary action, but which takes as its motive an affirmation of the nation's constructive principles. William's creative performance indicates the vulnerability of the laborer — his humanity rather than his reckless rage: this is a side of the laborer that Grant rarely shows in the narrative, but one which attempts to fully redeem in the eyes of readers the violent irruption of political economy that Garland poses as a solution to these laborers' dispossession.¹¹⁰ The slave song that William plays communicates the righteousness of their cause to the eyes of outsiders, which righteousness is based upon the natural rights that the American Revolution and Emancipation also called for. Creative masculinity, figured in the character of William McTurg, and based on a historically revolutionary producerist mentality, is the only feasible approach that laborers should take to restructure their relationship to property ownership, and thus a validated subject position.

William's artistic performance prompts Howard's catharsis wherein he recognizes his own complicity in his brother's poverty and decides to buy his family's former farm and homestead back for them. However, Grant refuses the offer, stating "Money can't

¹¹⁰ In *American Literary Regionalism in a Global Age*, Philip Joseph argues that "William becomes a maker of art, not simply a passive object inside of it. In the music scene described previously, he turns life on the farm into a source of artistic production, rather than allowing it to remain only the instrument of art's negation [...] an implicit criticism of Howard's aesthetic method and form. For while William recognizes and incorporates material circumstances into his expression, Howard pursues an exalted art, out of touch with the pain and drudger of labor" (50). While I clearly agree with Joseph's reading of this particular scene, his broader proclamation of the function of race in "Up the Couilly" is less convincing: Joseph contends that Grant bears more anger towards the land itself than to Howard, and that his racialization indicates the land's (and thus the nation's) racially alienating tendency: "Grant despises the land that has, in his view, blackened and enslaved him" (36). Grant's Scottish heritage, highlighted at the end of the story, is in Joseph's argument an indictment of Grant's character, indicating his disruptive, antebellum-oriented "sectionalist" tendencies. He argues that Garland's emphasis on ethnicity in this story and others revolves around decrying the unnecessary alienation of Anglo-Saxon races who remain unassimilated but who are in Darwinian terms most suited to political glory in America: for Garland, "Anglo-Saxon national groups become competitors rather than partners in the cultivation of American soil, each group coveting its own plot of impoverished land and living independently from others" (37). This argument seems incomplete to me, not least because it ignores Garland's use of African American racialization to validate Grant's and William's creative potential and masculinity.

give me a chance now” and “I’m too old to take a late start,” thus implying that it is the systemic undervaluation of his family’s subject positions as poor agrarian laborers that must be addressed, and that he has in fact given up fighting for this recognition (Garland 87). Yet the story ends with ambiguity, leaving open the possibility that Grant may yet in fact assert the masculine power that has been attributed to him throughout the narrative. The two brothers wordlessly facing off: “The two men stood there, face to face, hands clasped, the one fair-skinned, full-lipped, handsome in his neat suit; the other tragic, sombre in his softened mood, his large, long, rugged Scotch face bronzed with sun and scarred with wrinkles that had histories, like sabre-cuts on a veteran, the record of his battles” (87). Garland’s description of Grant’s darkened face, “bronzed with sun” and “scarred,” suggests an impending revolution: for if one of the brothers will succeed in the contemporary battle between the classes, Grant will, as Garland attributes him experience, the “veteran” of such struggles.

Perhaps more significantly, Garland’s use of represented perception from *Howard’s* perspective amplifies the possibility that Grant’s power is merely being held in short-term abeyance. By having Howard, instead of Grant, recognize the violence of the land which stands in for the empowered and insurrectionary laborer in the form of a rainstorm, Garland again uses the Biblical allegory of the Great Flood to suggest an inevitable washing away of the scaffolding of the oppressive market economy in the West. Before Howard proposes his offer of the farm, the rain was “still falling, sweeping down from the half-seen hills, wreathing the wooded peaks with a gray garment of mist, and filling the valley with a whitish cloud;” it continues to fall through the end of the narrative, a “pouring rain,” a “desolate, falling rain” which makes Howard feel “a pang of

the old rebellious despair which seized him on such days” of farmwork in his youth (81, 83, 84). The dimming of the sky, which earlier in the story signaled Grant’s proclamation of his anger towards Howard’s class and at the same time the racializing of Grant’s masculinity, has now manifested itself in a constant downpour, and Howard himself intuits the rage of the laborer at his social circumstances. Garland seems to indicate through Howard’s represented perception that even the figure of the speculator understands that the despair driving this rebelliousness cannot and will not end until the laborers have reorganized their relationships to the market economy and reestablished the West as a site of “righteous masculinity,” as it was in the inception of the producerist movement, oriented around the self-ownership and ethical accountability of landowners.¹¹¹

Violence insinuated in “Up the Couilly” is sanctioned by a violent revolutionary ideal, yet Garland is not a proponent of radical working-class violence. Like all manifestations of violence in regionalist literature, this is a formal tool by which Garland demonstrates the historically informed necessity of the working class’s rights. The only truly masculine subject in this time period is that subject who is allied with the righteous masculinity of the producer, as the slave was, as the founders of the nation were. In “Up the Couilly,” Garland configures the agrarian laborer’s capacity for ethical political contribution through the use of formal structures of affiliation, allegorical symbolism, and stylistic access to interiority to demonstrate this. Represented perception thus marks

¹¹¹ John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), a work of Western regionalist fiction set in the Great Depression, echoes and amplifies “Up the Couilly”’s ending with a flood of epic proportions, recalling the Biblical Great Flood. This flood is symbolic of the labor movement’s burgeoning strength as it mobilizes to restructure the relations of production that will be washed away by its force: “And the water crept to the edge of the doorway, seemed to hesitate a long time, and then moved slowly inward over the floor. And outside, the rain began again, as it had before, big heavy drops splashing on the water, pounding hollowly on the roof” (449). The closing scene of the narrative has Rose of Sharon, who has suffered a miscarriage, breastfeed a starving laborer, foregrounding the flood’s symbolism of the rebirth of the labor movement.

the fault lines of conflicting modes of production, in “Up The Coolly,” and Garland uses it to convey a dialectical overturning of the conflict between these two modes of production: the symbolism it showcases in violent motifs works to signify the power of the most dispossessed subject position in these Western farm towns. Although he seems, as Maggie does in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, to be forced to indefinitely submit to dispossession and the devaluation of his subject position as determined by the market economy, his agency is formally reclaimed by the flood at the end of this story which signals an impending reclamation of the land by the agrarian laborer.

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