In the introduction to one of the best-known iterations of this conversation, a special issue of *Representations* called *The Way We Read Now* (2009), Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus write that in "the last decade or so," critics "have been drawn to modes of reading that attend to the surfaces of texts rather than plumb their depths" (1–2). A surface reading approach attends to "what is evident, perceptible, apprehensible in texts; what is neither hidden nor hidden; what, in the geometrical sense, has length and breadth but no thickness, and therefore covers no depth" (8). In concert with Latour’s assertion of an exhausted critique, such methods proposed "to move past the impasses" created by "an excessive emphasis on ideological mystification" (Best and Marcus 17–18). But according to John Kucich, one of several scholars so far to respond, this critical project is worrisome insofar as arguments against critical suspicion drift into arguments against historicism ("Unfinished").

This Coda opens up a dialogue between these conversations and the preceding chapters of *The Victorian Geopolitical Aesthetic*. At the outset of this book, I called for a critical practice that combined ethical critique with a formally nuanced, structurally acute, and synchronic as well as diachronic theory of the geopolitical aesthetic, attempting to show in subsequent chapters how that practice might look in relation to the realist fictional experiments of Anthony Trollope, Wilkie Collins, George Eliot, Gustave Flaubert, E. M. Forster and the AMC television series *Mad Men* (2007–present). As a scholar thus profoundly immersed in historicist, I believe that the attention to surface which organizes *The Way We Read Now* accommodates a variety of historicist methods. It is, I will argue, more explicitly Latourian arguments against context which cast historicism as a focal concern. Nonetheless, the critique of critique which underlies such calls for methodological change, poses difficulties for scholars who seek out "subtle, nuanced changes" and processes that "remain unperceived and imperceptible in the moment." Indeed, when the embrace of surface is defined as an ethical stance that critical suspicion subverts, the argument for attentiive reading, I contend, entangles itself in an anti-hermeneutic, neo-positivist turn to ontology, which is under-explicated and counter in many ways to the promised rewards of an anti-suspicious criticism. Such a critique thus exacerbates a habit of defining "historicism" narrowly and in terms of what we already know.

I conclude my book with these debates over "reading" in part to contrast the picture of Jameson’s legacy which has emerged from these discussions with the Jamesonian insights developed in *The Victorian Geopolitical Aesthetic*. In making *The Political Unconscious* ground zero for the "symptomatic reading" that holds meaning to be "hidden, repressed, deep, and in need of detection," Best and Marcus pin their discussion of the way "we" have been reading until quite recently, to the way that Jameson wrote in this early landmark (1). Felski

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1. The essays by Cheng, Cohen, and Price are self-evidently historicist; Nealon historicizes critique by way of articulating its conditions; even Crane, in grounding her case for cognitive theory, explores "the historical conditions that produced a theory of symptomatic reading" (83)—in other words, historicizes.

2. For discussion of the tendency among some critics to regard "historicism" as invariably synchronic and ideologically driven, see Goodlad and Sarot.
is even more emphatic about the lasting power of the 1980s when she holds up Catherine Belsey’s Critical Practice (1980) and D. A. Miller’s The Novel and the Police (1989) to exemplify a “suspicious” hermeneutic that “assumes the worst about its object” (“Suspicious” 220). Influential though these classic studies from the 1980s have been, it is worth questioning the extent to which they exemplify the current state of the art. Do scholars of literature today inhabit a mindset that tends them unreflectively to critical standpoints that were groundbreaking thirty years ago?2

According to Kucich, historicism is still very much with us but has gradually gravitated toward “methodological hybridity.” While the first wave of New Historicism used deconstructive techniques to turn the whole social text into an object of formalist analysis, today’s scholarship “pragmatically amalgamates empirical and theoretical methods” to explore “literary and social intersections” (“Praise” 62). A complete abandonment of critical suspicion, Kucich cautions, would amount to the “rejection of [a] political orientation” that still has much work to do (71). Crystal Bartolovich agrees: the surface reader’s appeal to the “text itself,” she writes, “marks a pointed withdrawal from politics and theory” (cf. Hack, Lesjak, Rooney). Kucich advises historicists to ground their political aspirations by integrating synchronic and diachronic methods of reading; showing how past inflects present and vice versa.

It is worth comparing his account of recent historicism to Felski’s nearly contemporaneous essay, “Suspicious Minds” (2011). Whereas Kucich sees pragmatic amalgamation, Felski perceives a need to rescue scholars from “entrapped within a suspicious sensibility”—a “mentality” she traces to the “medieval heresy trial” and the biological mandate to look out for “predators” (218–20). And whereas Kucich recommends historicism as an enlivening “foundation for humanistic study” (“Praise” 64), Felski associates it with interpretive modes “tightly bound to exposure, demystification, and the lure of the negative” (“Suspicious” 232). With no recent examples to illustrate this allegedly (still) dominant critical mindset, it is difficult to guess what she has in mind. Although Felski describes Sedgwick’s “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading” (1997) as a “virtuoso meditation” on the advent of suspicion (218), she deliberately distinguishes it from her own critique to avoid diagnosing the mental condition of scholars. Yet, by harnessing Latour’s agenda, Felski implicates her work in the very pathologization she seeks to avoid. To put this another way, literary criticism has become caught up in a *Methodenstreit*, the origins of which are in the social sciences; and yet some of its principal literary interlocutors seem unaware of the stakes of the battle they are helping to wage.

2 While Felski’s articles and the Best and Marcus special issue offer comparable interventions, they also differ. Felski foregrounds the hermeneutics of suspicion, while Best and Marcus question a hermeneutics of “depth” which includes suspicion but is defined instead by “symptomatic” unmasking. Whereas Felski perceives a still “ubiquitous” investment in suspicion, Best and Marcus discern a multi-faceted turn to surface which is gaining ground. For two related special issues, both published in *New Literary History*, see *New Sociologies of Literature* (2010), edited by English and Felski, as well as “Context” (2011), edited by Felski and H. Tucker.

In questioning “the present-day ubiquity” of a suspicious mentality (Felski, “Suspicious” 215), I do not suggest that no such mentality ever existed. While working on *Victorian Literature and the Victorian State* (2003), I noticed a tendency for scholars to favor Foucault’s genealogical insights into nineteenth-century disciplinary power even when Victorian writings seemed to require a more flexible analysis.4 In the decade since, I have been struck by the capaciousness and variety of scholarship on the nineteenth century. In researching nineteenth-century literature and geopolitics, I consulted a vibrant body of secondary writing which includes Emily Apter on the business novel, Carolyn Vellenga Berman on the Creole, Nicholas Birns on white settlement in Australia ("Receptacle"), Roberto Dainotto on the idea of Europe, Elaine Freedgood and Harry Shaw on realist metonymy, Sharon Marcus on Victorian marriage (Between), Helena Michie on Victorian honeymooners, and John Plotz on portable property. While each of these scholars is in some sense motivated by the precept to “always historicize,” none of these studies was written in the grip of high suspicion. Moreover, none is committed to “symptomatic” reading of any stripe—the presumption that “a text’s truest meaning lies in what it does not say” (Best and Marcus 1; emphasis added).

In fact, the book I am now concluding, while deliberately eclectic, is demonstrably more Jamesonian than any of the examples cited above. *The Victorian Geopolitical Aesthetic* comes together at the intersection of several critical innovations including the “new imperial history” with its use of networks and matrices to reformulate the space of empire; the transnational and global turn in theories of postcoloniality and the nation-state; the interest in politics and ethics as partners for literary criticism (including key terms such as sovereignty); the openness to the normative aspirations of both poststructuralism and the Enlightenment; and the rejuvenated focus on literary form. Nonetheless, the outlines of the “geopolitical aesthetic” developed in Jameson’s 1995 book on cinema, inform this study throughout. *The Victorian Geopolitical Aesthetic* has thus looked to form and aesthetics to explore their engagements with global situations that are at once lived and beyond the scope of individual experience.

Such a Jamesonian stance is hardly suspicious. To the contrary, it endows literature and art with a crucial capacity to articulate structures that elude ordinary cognition. Thus, whereas Felski writes that suspicious reading “pivots on a fealty to the clarifying power of historical contexts” that shape literature—but which literary texts themselves do “not see” (“Context” 574)—Jameson urges historicization to elucidate what texts do see. Nor does the geopolitical aesthetic insist that a “strong” criticism “must rewrite narrative in terms of master codes” to disclose the
text's "status as ideology" (Best and Marcus 4). Rather, as Carolyn Lesjak notes, the task of critical "unmasking" is but one half of Jameson's two-fold dialectical practice, "the other half of which" is his "articulation of the positive Utopian impulses that lie along negative critique" (18; cf. Bartolovich 117–18).3

Of course, as a scholar primarily of the eighteenth century, Jameson has never been the leading light of the New Historicism familiar to most Victorianists.6 Moreover, the relation between Marxism and New Historicism has often been contentious. In Practicing New Historicism (2000), Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt described the approach that the journal Representations had helped to forge as a "history of possibilities" best defined by the "lack of a given set of objects" (6). Beckoning scholars to "push beyond" unified histories so as to render a multiplicitous "social imaginary" (57), the leading theorists for this practice were Foucault and the anthropologist Clifford Geertz whose notion that "cultural fragments" such as the anecdote could "widen out" into larger social worlds fueled a project of "counterhistory" which was inimical to grands récits such as Marxism (26, 52). Gallagher tied New Historicism to the Left's disenchantment with Marxism: the "American radicalism of the sixties and early seventies," she explained, "bred just those predicaments that have tended to separate new historicist from Marxist critics" (36; cf. Greenblatt "Towards" 2). With Foucault's work to inspire them, New Historists rejected Marxism's "meta-narrative of class conflict" and insisted "that power cannot be equated with economic or state power, that its sites of activity are also in the micro-politics of daily life" (Gallagher, "Marxism" 43).

One of the problems implicit in such critiques is that Marxist theory, in espousing its dream of a classless future, hews to a responsibility to act that, at least in its original formulation, is relatively unintegrated with a countervailing responsibility to otherness. In Chapter 7, we saw how Forster's "queer internationalism" upheld the ethical encouragement of encountering otherness as distinct from an activist commitment to universal justice. By contrast, Marx's Hegelian conception of a revolutionary subject never prompted him (despite his clear sympathy for the victims of racism) to work out "the strategies of a politics that would combat racial hostility and division" (R. Peterson 240). Marx thus set aside the practical question of how of to negotiate the figural investments in the politics of difference which capitalist social relations help to foster—a "fateful gap in Marxist thought," writes Richard K. Peterson, given the reactionary effects of racism, nationalism, and sexism, as well as the democratic potential of the identitarian freedom movements that emerged in the 1960s (248).

3 For a recent example, see Jameson's discussion of the utopian dimensions of Walmart in Valences, Ch. 16.

4 Influential studies such as Miller's The Novel and the Politic, and Gallagher's The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction do not mention Jameson while N. Armstrong's Desire and Domestic Fiction and Power's Unseen Developments give him a passing nod before crafting practices more influenced by Foucault. As LaCapra noted in 1982, Jameson's effort to update Marxian "assumed surprisingly little explicit treatment" to Foucault ("Review" 88).


8 See Laclau and Mouffe, Hegemony and Social Strategy (1985).

In the wake of Stalinism and the failure of revolutionary student movements, the closing decades of the twentieth century saw a wave of radical theorizations of otherness, including Foucault's archeology of madness; Levinas's infinite responsibility to the Other; Derrida's differences; Irigaray's feminism; Said's "Orientalism"; and the rise of postcolonial, queer, and disability studies. In speaking for an ethical responsibility to attend the object of one's critique, proponents of surface reading are clear bearers of this poststructuralist mantle. There is, thus, no necessary disconnect between the new ethos of attentiveness to one's object and a historicism keen "to trace the connections among texts, discourses, power, and the constitution of subjectivity" (Gallagher, "Marxism") 40. By contrast, it should come as no surprise that such an ethos finds fault with a Marxism that, even in Jameson's modulated form, seems to defer its responsibility to otherness by locating the fulfillment of that ethical relation in the radically alternative future to which its unfastened politics aspires. As Marx himself put it, the point is not to interpret the world, but to change it ("Theses" 145). This arguably makes him one of the world's most suspicious readers.

Post-Marxist theorists such as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffé have sought to substitute radical democratic politics for the residue in Marxist theory of stagnism, inevitability, and naive faith in a revolutionary subject.8 Jameson shares with these latter-day theorists a determination to view culture openly, considering its "active role in defining social relations and resisting political domination" (Nelson and Grossberg, "Introduction") 3. But Jameson is also an unrepentant Hegelian whose dialectical materialism owes more to Georg Lukács than Antonio Gramsci. Famously, Jameson tries to renovate Hegelian dialectics through an innovative use of Althusser's notion of "absent cause" which Jameson defines as the nonrepresentability of "history itself" in a landscape of materialities so large in scale, complex in effect, and long in duration that it is not readily accessible to individual consciousness (Political 146).

Whatever one thinks of history as "absent cause," I believe we can affirm Jameson's conviction that the long and ongoing process of capitalist globalization is empirically real and, yet, fundamentally absent to individual perception as the totality of that process. This is not because of any ideological use that critics must demystify. It is, rather, because certain historical phenomena, however materially consequential, are (like Bourdieu's continental drift) not cognizable in the form of objects "in plain view" (Felski, "After" 31)—only globalization but also commodification, the turn to neoliberalism, the financialization of the world economy, the entrenchment of racism and sexism, the reduction of biodiversity, and climate change. Closer to the arguments of this book, we might think of the looming crisis over imperial sovereignty which "absent-minded" Britons disavowed for more than a century. The conviction that literature and art have the potential to pronounce on such "absent" realities thus offers a compelling critical optic. By placing articific form in dialogue with processes that are both real and
spatio-temporally complex, the notion of a geopolitical aesthetic posits a "surface" that is inextricable from its "depth."

Victorianists seeking to adapt Jameson's ideas will not find themselves mired in doctrinaire symptomatics; but they will encounter the reflexive privileging of Modernist forms. As we saw in Chapter 6, the tendency to uphold Modernist innovation at the expense of realism dates back to the nineteenth century. Since that time, Victorian-era realism has been criticized (or simply ignored), by Modernist authors such as Virginia Woolf as well as literary scholars working under the sign of the New Criticism, Marxism, structuralism, and poststructuralism. Jameson's specific contributions to this outlook have been a tendency to assume that realism fiction emerges from nation-bound and pre-imperial conditions as well as a related tendency to externalize the crisis of realist aesthetics which Lukács envisioned as the temporary effect of the failed revolutions of 1848. The Victorian Geopolitical Aesthetic has challenged the faulty assumption that nineteenth-century literature was autarkic. To uphold mid-Victorian fiction as the flavorless vintage of an insular culture, I have argued, is to overlook the intense global dynamism and of a period that saw major structural transformations in industrialization, finance, and telecommunications; continuous use of military force; and challenges to British power in Afghanistan, Canada, China, Egypt, India, Ireland, Jamaica, New Zealand, and South Africa.

As Marx put it in an 1853 article on India, "bourgeois industry and commerce" were creating the "material conditions of a new world" in the same way that "geological revolutions have created the surface of the earth." The "market of the world and the modern powers of production" advance an exploitative form of "human progress" which "drinks... from the skulls of the slain" ("Future"). The consequent yearning for a holism that could be mourned as the communal past—or sought as its future—was channeled by romance forms that, as Jameson writes, figure "a transition moment in which two distinct modes of production, or two moments of socioeconomic development, coexist." What was significant about such forms was less their accurate depiction of history than the work they did in cathexing the sense of "an organic social order in the process of penetration and subversion, reorganization and rationalization" (Political 148). For Jameson, as for Lukács, Walter Scott's historical romances were the bearers of this elegiac historicity, while Balzac's realism achieved a comparable effect by depicting "the present as history" (Lukács, Historical 82–3). Working both with and against this legacy, The Victorian Geopolitical Aesthetic has placed the mid-century fiction of Flaubert, Trollope, Collins, and Eliot at the heart of the "new world" evoked by Marx: an evolving world-system intertwined with a "literary system" that was equally determined to cross "the surface of the earth" (e.g., Kinoshiba 18).

Trollope's variation on Scott's historicism (as we saw in Chapter 3), was the "heirloom sovereignty" eulogized in The Warden (1855), while George Eliot (as we saw in Chapter 6), drew on Scott as well as George Sand in writing Romola (1862–3), a romance of Florentine republicanism with a female typical character at its center. While such novels take part in the overarching conjuncture of literature and geography, they also speak eloquently to spatio-temporal particularities of many kinds: e.g., the fallen ideals of the French Second Empire in Flaubert's Madame Bovary (1856); the trans-channel engagement of the novel of adultery for George Eliot; the forgotten history of Atlantic slavery in Collins's Armadale (1864–6); and the estranging effects of Disraeli's imperialism in Trollope's The Prime Minister (1875–6). As we saw in Chapter 5, Collins brought an almost Baudelairean sensibility to the task of innovating "sensational" styles to express the transnational experience of the racialized alien. If this phenomenological aesthetic invites symptomatic searching for history's forgotten traces, it simultaneously calls for meticulous attention to surface, from the "brown brown face" of the Shivering Sands (Moonstone 39) to La Grace de Dieu, the wrecked ship whose return to the surface stirs up guilty memories in Armadale.

Chapter 6 put forward Eliot as a prophetic Lukácsian who struggled to reinvent the kind of Scott novel which Balzac admired and Flaubert put on Emma Bovary's reading list. The writing of Romola entailed a formal merger of the historical romance, the sentimental novel of adultery, and the female Bildungsroman. As a narrative that concludes with the heroine taking her husband's place as the head of his mistress's family, Romola cries out for the "just reading" described in Marcus's Between Women (2007). Yes, from a geopolitical standpoint, Eliot's female alternative to heterosexual marriage is also a formal alternative to Flaubertian naturalism. Indeed, Eliot's apprehension of a naturalistic impasse was strong enough to split Daniel Deronda between the decadence of the "country-house novel" (Williams, Country 249) and a veritable Victorian Exodus narrative. In The Political Unconscious, Jameson affirmed Lukács's diagnosis of naturalism as the post-Flaubertian product of an "age of reification." He took Theodore Dreiser's Sister Carrie (1900) to exemplify "the congealing of language, fantasy and desire" in the wake of "bourjées" (139–40). But just as Europe's failed revolutions are too narrow in scope to compass the worldliness of nineteenth-century literature, so the reduction of naturalism to decadent private despair obscures the...
adequate account" (Narrating x). But it is one thing to define realism as a form that animates existing conditions of possibility and another to conclude that, precisely for that reason, it is "peculiarly unstable ... owing to its simultaneous, yet incompatible, aesthetic and epistemological claims" (Jameson, Signatures 158). In Signatures of the Visible (1992), Jameson goes on to say that

... the [realist] emphasis on this or that type of truth content will clearly be undermined by any intensified awareness of the technological means or representational artifacts of the world itself. Meanwhile, the attempt to reinforce and to shore up the epistemological vocation of the work generally involves the suppression of the formal properties of the realistic "text" and promotes an increasingly naive and unmediated or reflective conception of aesthetic construction and reception. Thus, where the epistemological claim succeeds it fails; and if realism validates its claims to being a correct or true representation of the world, it thereby ceases to be an aesthetic mode of representation and falls out of art altogether. If, on the other hand, the artistic devices and technological apparatus whereby it captures that truth of the world are explored and stressed and foregrounded, 'realism' will stand unmasked as a mere reality-or realism-after, the reality it purported to deconceal falling at once into the shreeshest representation and illusion (158).

Here Jameson aver's that the only way realist art can "validate its claims" to "true representation" is to deny its status as representation and perpetuate the illusion of its reality. Yet, there is simply no evidence that authors or readers in the nineteenth century or since, have taken up realist novels to convince themselves of fiction's "reality." Nor is there much to support the proposition that realist novels "suppress" their "formal properties" to promote naive conceptions of aesthetics.13

In fact, one of the leading Victorian enthusiasts of realistic fiction made the opposite point. Writing in the Westminster Review in 1858, George Henry Lewes described a lamentable tendency to associate great literature with an "ideal element." "A distinction is drawn," he wrote, "between Art and Reality, and an antithesis established between Realism and Idealism which would never have gained acceptance had not men ... lost sight of the fact that Art is a Representation of Reality—a Representation which, inasmuch as it is not the thing itself, but only represents it, must necessarily be limited by the nature of its medium; the canvas of the painter, the marble of the sculptor, the chords of the musician, and the language of the writer" ("Realism"). Here Lewes argues that the successful alignment of "Art and Reality"—as distinct from flattering idealizations of the world—requires authors who recognize that literature is "an art" (490). Moreover, no less self-conscious an aesthetic than Henry James agreed. James' wish in "The Art of Fiction" (1884) is to liberate the novel from its reputation as a didactic tool. Although his criticism is often remembered for its effort to distinguish his

11 In Antinomies of Realism, Jameson heeds to the convention of reserving "naturalism" for a post-Zola genre centered on the deterministic milieu of the "lower depths" (148). Hence, he never addresses the signal fact that Flaubert's "bovaryism"—with its focus on embourgeoisement—represents a strain of mid-nineteenth-century fiction which is less readily cordoned off from realism at large. In contrast to the recurrent naturalistic aesthetic described in this book, with its deliberate counter to Lukács' critique of naturalist realism after 1848, Antinomies defines naturalism as a short-lived, late-Victorian-era "sub-genre" that anticipates "the various emergent modernisms" (149–50).

12 Jameson reiterates the importance of science fiction in Antinomies while rehearsing the questionable claim that "the emergence of imperialism on a world scale" begins with the Berlin Conference of 1884–5 (289). Notably, Zola's first major work, Le tour du monde en quatre-vingts jours (1873), is a comic meditation on the same globetrotting Briton who recurs in works such as Trollope's The Way We Live Now (written in 1873). See also Chapter 5 on the science fiction and utopian dimensions of The Nineteenth-Century.
own aesthetic conviction from that of realist precursors, the overall message of the essay is, nonetheless, that the novel's purpose is to "compete with life" (503). While such a fiction does indeed proffer "true representation of the world," it is by means encourages "naïve and unmediated" conceptions of aesthetics. To the contrary, to "compete with life," for James, is to practice the Art of Fiction as a "search for form" (505; emphasis added).

These concerns notwithstanding, Victorianist scholars should welcome the arrival of The Antinomies of Realism (2013), the capstone of Jameson's thinking on nineteenth-century fiction after decades of provocative writing. With a new interest in effect as a constitutive component of realist form, alongside incisive readings of authors including Eliot, the book warrants closer consideration than this passing glance will afford. Still, for the purposes of this Coda, it is important to emphasize that, while The Antinomies of Realism is a not-to-be-missed elaboration of Jameson's long-cultivated views on realism, it is by no means a reversal and, still less, an occasion for upholding nineteenth-century literature as a realist geopolitical aesthetic. Rather, as the title suggests, Jameson's focal point is realism's antinomistic condition: the sense in which any attempt to seize it will invariably find realism morphing into something else: "not the thing itself," but its "emergence," or "degeneration," or "dissolution" into other forms including, of course, Modernism (Antinomies 1).

In making this case for an antinomistic realism, Jameson distinguishes himself from those influential "apologists"—Lukács, Bakhtin, and Auerbach—who take the formal resilience of realist fiction as their donnee (4). By contrast, his book sets out to explore the dilemma already set forth in Signatures of the Visible. Realism, he reminds us,

is a hybrid concept, in which an epistemological claim (for knowledge or truth) masquerades as an aesthetic ideal, with fatal consequences for both of these incomensurable dimensions. If it is social truth or knowledge we want from realism, we will soon find that what we get is ideology; if it is beauty or aesthetic satisfaction we are looking for, we will quickly find that we have to do with outdated styles or mere decoration (if not distraction). And if it is history we are looking for—either social history or the history of literary forms—then we are at once confronted with questions about the uses of the past and even the access to it which, as unanswerable as they may be, take us well beyond literature and theory and seem to demand an engagement with our own present (Antinomies 6).

It is the last (somewhat Delphic) claim that I hope especially to address in this Coda on historicization; but, before doing so, I want to compare this rather devastating assessment of realism's predicament to some words from a contemporaneous essay, "Antinomies of the Realism-Modernism Debate" (2012). Written as the afterword to Peripheral Realisms, a special issue on realist fiction from outside Europe and North America, Jameson's essay pauses to clarify Lukács's relation between realism and totality. He writes, "I believe that for Lukács totality was history" and that his conception of realism had to do with an art whereby the narrative of individuals was somehow made to approach historical dynamics as such, was organized so as to reveal its relationship with a history in movement and a future on the point of emergence. Realism would thus have to do with the revelation of tendencies rather than with the portrayal of a state of affairs ("Antinomies" 479).

In these few words, Jameson captures several ideas that have been central to The Victorian Geopolitical Aesthetic. First, he illustrates one of Lukács's most generative suggestions—the insistence on form as the one "category of literature that is both social and aesthetic" (Lukács qtd. in J. Bernstein 77). In addition, he shows why the most salient Lukácsian feature of realism form is not nationhood (as Jameson himself tends to allege) but historicity (which only sometimes concerns national histories). At the same time, Jameson demonstrates that literary historicity so conceived is a synchronic formation (a particular "narrative of individuals") that deliberately opens out onto a diachronic, ongoing, and encompassing horizon (part of "a history in movement and a future on the point of emergence"). Finally, he shows why Lukács is central to his own theory of the geopolitical aesthetic which, as we have seen, posits art's turn to formal experiment for the "revelation of tendencies" which everyday experience occludes. Yet, in all of these ways, this brief gloss on Lukács also demonstrates how Antinomies of Realism forecloses the very possibility of what the present study has put forward as a richly variegated, but still identifiable realist and Victorian-era geopolitical aesthetic that neither "degenerates" into the kind of naturalism Lukács deplored nor "dissolves" into the Modernist experiments Jameson prizes.

This is not to say that Antinomies of Realism lacks éclat as it "come[s] at realism dialectically" by taking up its "failure" as a kind of "success" (6). In his Romola chapter, Jameson's Eliot anticipates Sarre's proffering bad faith as a successor to moral absolutes; her "moralizing project" is, paradoxically, "her intent to persuade us that there are no villains and that evil does not exist." Behind this Sarrettian impulse is a "solution" to the "form-problem of the villain": a dilemma created when realism, which is committed to "inwardness," can no longer incorporate the melodramatic type of the stage villain (122, 116). Thus, the true protagonist of Eliot's experiment with Scott's form is not the "eponymous heroine"—who is "for the most part a witness rather than an actor"—but her husband, Tito. The latter's "psychological complexity" constitutes him as "a new type" that answers modernity's democratizing impulses by introducing minor characters as protagonists (124, 126). Merely embryonic in Romola, this formal strategy comes to fruition in Middlemarch (1871–2) with the creation of virtuous minor characters such as Casaubon and Bulstrode. Eliot thus mobilizes the dramatic potential of evil while discrediting "the metaphysical and moral ideologies" that underlie it (137). Yet, despite its efficacy, bad faith as narrative formation does not perdure; "examples of its later use are infrequent" (135). This historical failure is not so much demonstrated as it is foreordained by realism's antinomistic condition. That is to say,

44 One of the most intriguing perceptions to emerge from this enterprise is the notion that: realism's symbiosis of storytelling, description, and affective investment develops "towards a scenic present which in reality, but secretly, abounds the other temporalities which constitute the force of the tale" (11). I will return to this particular observation in future work.
Jameson has already made clear that a formal “battle” against “the dominance of point of view” will “exhaust and destroy” realism, leaving behind “an odd assortment of random tools and techniques to its shriveled posterity, who still carry its name on into an era of mass culture and rival media” (11).

Jameson’s seizing on “representations of villainy . . . from the inside” cannot but interest scholars of geopolitics insofar as his reading of Tito evokes the same stranger-in-exile that has haunted naturalistic narratives since Flaubert, producing the distinct affective structure of breached sovereignty through the mode of mimesis which Auerbach called “existential realism” (“Serious” 448). The reader of these chapters will also recognize Trollope’s Lopez as a remarkable variation on the type. Yet, Jameson’s demotion of Romola from typical character to the passive witness of her husband’s apothecaries obscures how Eliot’s response to “the Otherness of Woman” simultaneously switches the valences of Scott’s masculine genre, emphasizing Antigone’s (not Machiavelli’s) challenge to the reign of bad faith (Ch. 6).15

These remarks may, perhaps, establish that Eliot’s realist experiment fails neither as truth content nor aesthetic. But the question remains whether any art form can surmount the “unanswerable” questions about the past (which “take us well beyond literature and theory”) which Jameson puts to realism. By contrast, Lukács’s less esoteric understanding of literature’s historicity was (in Jameson’s own words) “the revelation of tendencies.” The question in that case becomes whether realism today is so “shriveled” that such revelations collapse into ideology or decoration. Notably, when Jameson discusses Modernist, science fiction, and fantasy genres in his powerful closing chapter on the future of historical fiction, he discerns a more active role for literature and a more auspicious account of its historicity. Setting aside imponderable questions, he asks how “the content of a given historical moment enables or limits its representational form” and “narrative possibilities.” He writes,

15 In *The Eastern Diamonds* (1871–3), the cartoonish Emilius instances the classic type of the stage villain even while anticipating a Judasized villain “beyond good and evil” in Lopez. Yet, for Jameson, Trollope functions only as a passing example of how realism from Scott loses the capacity to represent capacious standpoints on history as politics devolves into the “specialized” subject matter of “those institutionalized genres which deal with” Parliament (Antinomies 272; cf. 217). Of course, since Jameson continues to hold that the “stage of imperialism” was not launched for another decade, he is unable to discern Trollope’s profound engagement with the rise of a theatrical Tory mode of empire-building.

16 As Jameson writes in a later chapter, “the famous ‘average hero’ whose presence Lukács posits as a necessary mediation between everyday life and the great historical events is precisely the theatrical spectator” (268). He thus begs the question why Romola’s “witness” should preclude the character’s working as a gender-crossing variation on Scott. The compelling dialectical idea of switching valences derives from Jameson’s Valences of the Dialectic (2010).

17 Certainly in his afterword to Peripheral Realism, Jameson seems to cast the case for a more resilient realism as cushioned by the “manipulation of its political stakes” Not the seeming masses fighting on de Gaulle’s side for his promise of independence,” but, “rather the schools and departments, the theoretico-political tendencies which will secure recognition for their student and intellectual constituencies” (Antinomies 484).

The tension, in Marxism and elsewhere in social thought generally, between sociology and history, or better still, between structure and the event, between everyday life and its cultural continuities and the cataclysm of a genuinely historical turning point or paradigm shift—this tension . . . also makes possible moments in which the two kinds of realities overlap, and in which therefore complex or dual possibilities are momentarily available (Antinomies 264; emphasis added).

Here, I contend, while harking back to a comparable passage in *The Political Unconscious* (148), Jameson makes clear that the antinomies actually at stake in his book are not reducible to a formal mismatch between epistemology and aesthetics and—in fact—not reducible to realism at all. Rather, what might more properly be described as the antinomies of any historical literature concern persistent tensions “between sociology and history,” “between structure and the event,” between “cultural continuities” and the emergence of the new—and, from a formal standpoint, between “a narrative of individuals” and “historical dynamics as such.”16 Scott’s fiction could overlap these riddling tensions because, as Jameson goes on to say, “his focus on a specific kind of historical catastrophe” enabled him “to write a kind of social description of the past as well as to single out a historical event” (Antinomies 264).

Of course, in the centuries between the Waverley novels and our own turn-of-the-millennium, the “catastrophes” that beset literature’s historicity have dramatically deepened. In ways that recall us to the “structural amnesia” that television news exacerbates in an ever more presentist age, Jameson describes the recourse to a historiography so siren’s to the animating “cultural collectives” or dramatizing “historical events” to the extent one can even imagine it, veers toward “sheer anthropological description” (252)—or perhaps toward the macrosociological analytics that world-systems theory has long encouraged and “distant” reading now prescribes (Ch. I). “Still, the problem of what to do with the future in the historical novel,” Jameson assures us, “is scarcely an unrewarding one” (297). And, indeed, when he tells us that “historicity today . . . demands a temporal span far exceeding the biological limits of the individual human organism: so that the life of a single character—world-historical or not—can scarcely accommodate it, nor even the meager variety of our own chronological experiences of a limited national time and place” (502–3), he articulates a consciousness of history’s *durée* that would not have surprised many readers of Collins, Eliot, Flaubert, and Trollope. Can it really be true, then, that a realist form of historicity is no longer possible: that realism can no longer figure the clash of realities in transition or reveal “tendencies” that have yet to harden into a “state of affairs”?

The question is one that Antinomies declines to revisit, inasmuch as realist literature after Scott, Balzac, and Tolstoy does not enter the concluding discussion

16 One might compare this formulation to Raymond Williams’s efforts, discussed in Chapter 1, to theorize the “structure of feeling” as that which opens a space of encounter between history and literature by articulating concrete conditions of possibility from both “objective” and “subjective” standpoints.
of the historical novel. Among the many hurdles Jameson explores, historical fiction today must find a "dimension of collectivity" to take the place of Scott's typical characters and Balzac's engagement of a history still in progress (267). As he ranges across diverse examples—including The Wasteland, Proust, Ragtime, Hilary Mantel, Cloud Atlas, and Christopher Nolan's film, Inception—Jameson makes clear that Modernist aesthetics continue to resonate because they uphold the "overweening autonomy" of "an autoreferentiality of the aesthetic" (292). By contrast, postmodern science fiction and fantasy genres derive their strength from the rejection of realism's spatio-temporal constraints: since "the original no longer exists," there "can no longer be any question either of the accuracy or of the truth of representation, of the accuracy of mimesis" (293). Thus, as Nolan's Inception (2010) shows us, the "historical novel today" is "as an immense elevator that moves us up and down in time, its sickening lifts and dips corresponding to the euphoric or dystopian mood in which we wait for the doors to open" (301).

It is worth adding, however, that in a recent essay on the HBO television series, The Wire (2000–08), Jameson is decidedly less certain of realism's fatal shrinkage. Since the "ultimate structure" of reality in The Wire eludes the police in remaining "too abstract for any single observer to experience," he writes, the show "opens up a space for realism: for seeing things, finding out things, that have not been registered before" ("Realism," 361–2). To put this another way, The Wire's variation on realism's epistemological project invites the perceptions of a geopolitical aesthetic. Thus, so far from moribund, realism in The Wire gives rise to "a virtual Utopianism, a Utopian impulse" and—eventually—a "utopian project or program" (364).10

Most pertinent to this Coda, however, are the salient likenesses between Jameson's discussions of The Wire's "raw material" (366) and of Eliot's "musicale fort." As the "spread of a new kind of reason" psychologizes a wide range of aberrations, writes Jameson, "what used to be thought of as pathology" is now "human, in such a way that the very category of evil" has "drastically been reduced" ("Realism" 367). The Wire thus faces a form-problem much like that which challenged Eliot: "the melodramatic plot . . . becomes increasingly unsustainable" and "villains," with the exception of serial killers and terrorists, "become impossible too" (367). Although I am not sure that Jameson is right about the waning of villains or melodrama—reality television seems to generate no end of either, much as penny dreadfuls and their ilk did in Eliot's time—what is no less remarkable is the strain of recurrent realist experimentation he identifies across a span of more than a century.

It is worth emphasizing, then, that Jameson overlooks a crucial formal dimension of realism both then and now. Among the many differences that distinguish Middlemarch from Romola is the interesting fact that the serialization of the later novel was a great success while that of Romola was a disappointment: Eliot's detailed historical romance, as most commentators agreed, was much more enjoyable in its three-volume form than as a monthly feature in the Cornhill.11 With his minimal interest in seriality, Jameson obscures what is arguably the most compelling feature of a "quality" television series like The Wire. For on his reading, the "unique temporality" of a weekly serial (and, later, a DVD rental) exemplifies the "pleasures of repetition" (360, 366). "Repetition enhances the function of the television set as a consolation and security; you are not alone when it is on in the house with you, and you are not lonely or isolated when your space is populated by so many familiar faces and characters" (360). To this extent, The Wire is no different than episodic television genres (including game shows, situation comedies, home improvement shows or, to recall Bourdieu, the nightly news) which proffer repetitive pleasure in the absence of unfolding storylines that span multiple seasons. By contrast, as we saw in Chapter 8, serial television dramas—especially those "quality" series that cultivate the written aspects of nineteenth-century realism—recreate an experience that has been almost dormant since the serials of the mid-Victorian era. This entails something beyond the introduction of repeat characters into otherwise lonely parlor and bedrooms; it also about the more tantalizing perception that the modern reader or viewer is least alone when he or she joins the audience for a serial narrative that everyone is talking about.

PEOPLE FIGURE OUT HOW TO TALK ABOUT IT

Indeed, if The Victorian Geopolitical Aesthetic has stressed the importance of naturalistic narratives of capitalist globalization—in Flaubert, Trollope, Eliot's Daniel Deronda and the television series Mad Men—that is partly to make the case that this haunting expression of the mid-Victorian-era geopolitical aesthetic is timely in articulating a slow temporality, punctuated by dramatic rupture, which, so far from "shriveled," speaks volumes to our neoliberal world. The preceding chapters have argued that historicizing globalization requires a theory of networked space woven through an elongated stream of time—a temporal dimension that Fernand Braudel, the Annales school historian, called the longue durée.12 In Chapter 7,

21 See C. Martin's excellent discussion of this topic in her Chapter 4.

22 In a 2007 collection of interviews, Jameson described Braudel as the repressed theoretical "kernel of The Political Unconscious: 'I must have thought it was so obvious I didn't have to mention it' (Jameson 5). I am grateful to Marshall Brown for pointing this out to me in his response to an early draft of this Coda at the January 2012 MLA.
I appealed to Braudel’s idea to follow the story of realist innovation into the turn-of-the-century advent of New Liberalism. Whereas the years between Trollope and Forster saw realist fiction morph from the triple-decker series novel to the sleek quasi-Modernism of Where Angels Fear to Tread (1905), the new millennium has exploded with televisual arts that remake nineteenth-century forms. Clearly, serial formats are responding to recent cable and internet technologies, much as their precursors did to the dynamic print media of the nineteenth-century. But it is also true that serialized realism, in ways Jameson does not quite capture, proffers an apt formal structure for tapping the submerged historicity of any life that blends continuous transformation with the simultaneous perception of having reached an epochal if, nonetheless, crisis-prone “end of history.”

Consider the contrast between neoliberalism’s blend of market fundamentalism, endemic uncertainty, and self-conscious postmodernism on the one hand and, on the other hand, the morally and economically dirigiste Cold War-era liberalism that drove Lionel Trilling to seek an antidote in Forster’s “relaxed wit.” In a well-known book from the Cold War years, Frank Kermode had Forster’s works partly in mind when he undertook to explain how narrative fiction “makes sense of the world” (29). Fiction, he wrote, provides a vehicle for “humanizing time by giving it a form”: “the sense of an ending” (45). Notably, then, when serialized fiction also gives humanizing form to time, it does not pivot on the sense of an ending. Instead, seriality’s special illusion is never ending at all. Serial narratives foster dialectical movement between a slowly unfolding diachronic arc and the internal momentum of synchronous episodes or installments. In this way, serial narratives recognize that audiences lead serial lives pitched between what has already happened and what cannot yet: be foreseen. Such narratives oscillate between the event-based temporality of the newspaper—Braudel’s “L’histoire événementielle” (On History 3)—and a langue dure that individuals cannot compass but in which they nonetheless feel palpably immersed. Thus, more than a mimetic picture of “real life,” what serialized realism conveys is the real-life experience of inhabiting long-evolving structures that challenge our limited capacities to grasp ongoing histories.

Trollope’s The Prime Minister and Mad Men, I have argued, share a slow-burning pace that enables audiences to experience this condition vicariously (through characters) and communally (with fellow enthusiasts). Although part of what propels the comparison is a recurrent formal response to a lost “dimension of collectivity” (Jameson, Antinomies 267), it is also manifestly to do with a morphing material culture—that “whole spectrum of social practices for which” individual books (and, by analogy, individual television series), provide merely a “prompt” (Price, “From” 120). Thus, when Dickens chose a line from Shakespeare’s Othello to help brand the new weekly he launched in 1859—“The story of our lives, from year to year”—he was demonstrating more than keen business instincts. At a time when

The recurrent fascination with serialized realism is noteworthy even though present-day neoliberalism is, in many respects, quite unlike the mid-Victorian era’s blend of liberal individualism, civic republicanism, and rising Toryism (see also Goodlad, “Afterword”).

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All the Year Round was competing for sales and prestige in a burgeoning field of periodicals. Dickens drew on Shakespeare to express seriality’s power to portray and create collective experience through a material structure that resembled the audience for live drama on a scale both more “micro” (the individual parlor, kitchen, bedroom, club, or reading room) and more “macro” (the multiplication of these sites, in Britain and beyond, and the ensuing discussion and debate). AMC did something similar when the station chose “Story Matters Here” to signal its transformation from a vehicle for movie reruns to an acclaimed destination for “quality” television.

The 1860s were the crest of the boom for serial publication which the “unanticipated runaway success” of The Pickwick Papers had triggered in 1836 (G. Law 15). Not only All the Year Round, but also the Cornhill, Macmillan’s, Temple Bar, Argosy, the Fortnightly Review, Belgravia, Tinsley’s and St Paul’s Magazine joined established periodicals, such as Blackwood’s, in featuring long-running narrative fictions whose commercial success depended partly on “enormous length.” Rising literacy, cheaper paper, and tax reform were among the circumstances that turned serialized novels into high-octane fuel for a “publishing machine” that enabled profit-making at several stages: first serialization; then “triple-deckers” sold to circulating libraries such as Mudie’s; and, finally, the “cheaper reprints published at a later date” (Crawford n.p.). Readers on the Continent, in the United States, and throughout the imperial network provided a global audience. Given the high economic stakes of a work’s debut, no publisher was too dignified, and no author too much the artist, to spurn the chance to manipulate serial delivery to maximal advantage. We thus find John Blackwood writing in 1875 that he was considering “an interval of two months” between the parts of the forthcoming Daniel Deronda because the experience of Middlemarch had taught him that “it takes the public a long time to digest and fully appreciate the value of such food” as George Eliot offers, and to “talk to their neighbours about it” (qtd. in C. Martin 216).

In February 2013, Netflix, the online DVD rental and streaming service, became a serial innovator by trying a rather different experiment. The company’s first venture into producing its own serial content used digital streaming in lieu of broadcasting or cable technology and, in so doing, invited viewers to “binge” by watching an entire season of episodes at their own pace, without waiting for a prior serialization to conclude. Asked if he was concerned that Netflix’s delivery model loses “the weekly suspense and water cooler chatter” that emerges when “people discuss the episodes one-by-one,” the spokesman for Netflix replied that the new model empowered viewers to make their own decisions about the pace of consumption. While some might speculate that the company was angling for a more atomized viewer, willing to trade the pleasures of serial community for the greater autonomy of asynchronous viewing, Netflix took a different view: “People figure out how to talk about it,” said their spokesman. “It’s a different style of
water cooler. If you are on episode eight and I am on four, I know not to talk about five” (Farber).

As a paradigmatically neoliberal narrative, Mad Men, I suggested in Chapter 8, universalizes the condition of unassimilable otherness. Whereas Trollope’s The Prime Minister (like Eliot’s Daniel Deronda) splits between “Jewish” and “English” plots, Mad Men makes Don Draper a “virtual” Jew in whom exilic particularity becomes generalized. But there are also differences. As the creation of a largely unsung writer for The Sopranos, which aired on a low-prestige cable station with a cast of unknown actors, the show’s fusion of mid-twentieth century aestheticism and Flaubert-like naturalism—not unlike Madame Bovary in 1856—took criticism as well as admirers by surprise. The Prime Minister, by contrast, was the twenty-seventh novel from an author who, as the Examiner put it in 1876, was always “interesting” but “never very brilliant” (“Mr. Trollope’s” 825). Trollope’s forte was repeat characters so beloved by his readers that the Spectator did not hesitate to describe them as “people who have become a possession of the reading world” (“Prime” 922; my emphasis).

Contemporary commentators thus expressed keen ambivalence toward The Prime Minister. Though pleasurable in reviving characters “more real to us than half of the people we shall meet to-morrow,” Trollope’s novel was disturbing in subjecting these beloved figures to “degrading” naturalistic effects (“Prime” 922–23). Thus, according to The Times, the “capacity for making your characters so life-like that your readers grow into their intimacy” is a mixed blessing, inviting praise as well as “resentful criticism” (“Recent” 4). By means of the commonplace device of the double plot, The Prime Minister foregrounded the troubling proximity of Plantagenet’s “public” story of political failure to the “private” tale of Lopez’s failure to sustain his bid for insider status (“Prime” 922). More disturbingly still, the novel made this insidious stranger the protégé of “our old friend Lady Glencora”—to borrow a term of endearment from Richard F. Littledale’s write-up in the Guernsey Star (n.p.). According to The Spectator, Lopez was “a mere rogue” who makes the reader “glad when he is dead.” Would that Trollope could focus on much-loved “people” rather than vulgarize them with the pretentious conceit that such a “coarsely-conceived” cad (and a suspected Jew no less) could manage to penetrate “good society” (“Prime” 922).

Yet, according to The Examiner, Lopez was “an extremely well-drawn character” whose insinuation into the Wharton family instanced “marvelous adroitness.” For this reader, the problem was not Lopez’s ability to secure Emily Wharton’s hand without providing “a particle of information as to” his “fortune” and “respectability.” Rather, the problem was that it was so “difficult to know whether one ought to sympathise with [Lopez], or not” (“Mr. Trollope’s” 826). To sympathize or not to sympathize? The same provoking question repelled many readers of Madame Bovary. As Auerbach put it, Flaubert’s “existential realism” was the peculiar effect of Emma’s prosaic stature which, in lacking ennobling features, elicited conflicting emotions of “tragic pity” and “critical disdain” (“Serious” 432–3). The same kind of dilemma has spawned a sea of Mad Men commentary debating whether Don Draper’s lack of a virtuous center makes him (merely) a reprehensible cad, or a cad who is also a resounding anti-hero for our times.

Naturalistic characters provoke this discomfort while dramatizing the terrible piths of their otherness. “Mr. Lopez’s wish to turn out to be ‘his whole fortune,’” The Examiner wrote, and in the end he must avail himself of “the last resort of all adventurers” (826). His suicide, according to The Times, is a kind of redemption: the man who begins his story as a “showy upstart adventurer” who must enter “society on sufferance” ends it by killing himself with “better taste than might have been expected” (“Recent” 4). Such remarks anticipated an enduring fascination with Lopez who is a more compelling figure of Judaised exile and Sartrrean bad faith than the cartoonish Emilus or the opaque Melmonette—one whose saga David Skilton has likened to the ordeal of one of Trollope’s most beloved characters, Josiah Crawley in The Last Chronicle of Barset (1866–7) (“Introduction” ix). Like comparable debates over Madame Bovary and Mad Men, the commentary on Lopez demonstrates how serialized realism of this existential bent incites passionate engagement. If these audiences do not necessarily qualify as oppositional “counterpublics” in Michael Warner’s sense (Publics 63), neither are they reducible to passive consumers. Indeed, one is tempted to borrow a phrase from Netflix to speculate that when Trollope injected this naturalistic turn into his Palliser series, his most devoted readers, like the water-cooler publics of today, “figur[ed] out how to talk about it.”

**SOCIETY AND THE “ONTOLOGICAL TURN”**

I have proffered this discussion of seriality then and now in part to show how readily historicism crosses, not only between synchronic and diachronic time frames, but also between (on the one hand) hermeneutic practices like the geopolitical aesthetic which theorize the interrelaton of human experience, aesthetic poiesis, and material history, and (on the other hand) alternatives like material culture and sociology of the book which seek to decenter the human by, for example, “wrest[ing] attention away from the fraction of any book’s life cycle spent in the hands of readers” (Price, “From” 120). Indeed, my example of Trollope and Mad Men, may suggest that these methodological standpoints are more mutually reinforcing—perhaps even inseparable—than some strong proponents of an anti-humanist and anti-hermeneutical turn toward objects assume. The claim that Lopez is the world’s first Mad Man so to speak, and the evidence necessary to support it, is no more or less positive, descriptive, interpretive or deep, than practices that draw from social sciences such as book history.

In his introduction to *New Sociologies of Literature* (2010), a special issue he co-edited with Felski, James English evokes a “multifaceted enterprise” (“Everywhere” vii). The new sociologies so called encompass the history and
sociology of the book; media studies; the study of canon and field formation; the new economic criticism; and, of course, "distant" and "descriptive" reading. Nevertheless, behind this rosy ecumenicism is English's awareness of the potential thrust of the positions most influenced by Latour.

Here it will be useful to return to my allusion to a Methodensrbeit in the social sciences. This often strident debate originated in differences between Latour and Bourdieu, France's leading sociologist during most of the postwar period. As Willem Schinkel explains, the sociological theories of Bourdieu and Latour have, since the 1990s, been engaged in a "clash" that has continued despite Bourdieu's death in 2002. Latour seeks "a complete redefinition" of the epistemological and ontological principles Bourdieu laid down for a critical sociology over several decades (Schinkel 707). For Latour, Bourdieu's quasi-Marxist sociology relies on overawing abstractions such as "the social" which enable sociologists to profess to know more than social actors themselves. In contrast, Latour's methodology advances the assumption that "neither society nor the social exists" (Reassembling 36). As the anthropologist Hylton White has argued, Latour's actor network theory (ANT) attempts to show "how various non-human actors ... participate in creating the links or assemblages that organize pathways of action" (668). This deliberate leveling of human and non-human is offered in contrast to a critical theory that, according to Latour, is vitiated by Marx's understanding of the object as commodity. Thus, whereas Bourdieu inveighs against neoliberalism in books such as Acts of Resistance Against the Tyranny of the Market (1999), Latour mocks the "paternal and arrogant attitude" of the social scientist who "sees things as they really are, who sees it as his duty to speak on behalf of all the ignorant souls" (Schinkel 711). Moreover, since Bourdieu's materialism calls on the critic to defamiliarize "things as they appear to the naked eye" (712), Latour's critique of Bourdieu parallels Best and Marcus's critique of "symptomatic" reading.

Describing Tony Bennett's essay in the New Sociology of Literature special issue, English writes that Latour's ANT has helped to discredit "the explanatory power of the social" which underwrites the "now exhausted program of critique" (xv-xvi). Yet, Bennett himself is more circumspect. Although he embraces the same flat ontology one finds in Latour's actor-networks, he does so through the mediation of Jacques Rancière. According to Bennett, Rancière shares Latour's "dissent from the depth/surface model of traditional forms of sociological explanation," but "far from sharing Latour's perception that critique has run out of steam," Rancière "seeks to refound it" on a more equalitarian basis (271). Whatever one's position on the turn to ontology, Bennett's preference for a version of that project which does not advertise itself as a death knell for critique should give pause. If it partly signals a wish to stand back from a strident Methodensrbeit, it also shows that the desire to rein in "intellectual mastery" (Bennett 271) can be acted on without denigrating "the political urge that reaches so many critical sociologists" (Latour, Reassembling 42).

To be sure, not all ANT-influenced thinkers adopt Latour's acerbity. Love avoids this tone even while expressing a familiar Latourian concern regarding the "ethical heroism of the critic" (381). Her essay observes a surprising humanist residue: although Marxism and poststructuralism focus on material or linguistic structures, "humanist values" survive in practices such as close reading (371-2). Against this contradiction, Love recommends sociological approaches such as history of the book and data mining which "turn away from the singularity and richness of individual texts" and, thus, (presumably) curb the critic's "ethical charisma" (373-4). The style of reading she urges—"close but not deep"—uses "descriptive" methods to advance the anti-hermeneutic agenda on the hermeneut's terrain (375). Drawing on the methods of Erving Goffman, Latour, and Louis Queéré, descriptive reading eschews "imponderables like human experience" in favor of "the real variety that is already there" (377). Her example is a reading of the murder scene in Morrison's Beloved which sets aside Sethe's perspective as "witness" to focus on the "flattening, dehumanizing, exterior perspective" of a prior "documentary" account that, like an actor-network, emphasizes the association between human and non-human objects (385-6).

Love's account of descriptive reading may impress even those who do not share her determination to extinguish humanist "imponderables" or critical "charisma." Whereas Felski's embrace of Latour contradicts her desire to revive humanist pedagogy, Love clearly specifies the goals of a Latourian critical practice. She writes: "I play out the possibilities for a method of textual analysis that would take its cue from observation-based social sciences... These fields have developed practices of close attention, but, because they rely on description rather than interpretation, they do not engage the metaphysical and humanist concerns of hermeneutics" (375). For many readers, the surprise here will be the opposition of social-scientific neutrality and humanist "metaphysics." Given that she seeks to extend—not repudiate—the anti-essentialist project of poststructuralism, one wonders: Where is the "long baking process of history" in this assertion of social-scientific truth (qtd. in Foucault, Nietzsche) 144)? What are the relations of power at stake in affirming "observation-based" disciplinary knowledge?

Love anticipates these questions when she upholds Latour's post-humanist ontology: "In place of the sociology of the social," she writes, "Latour argues that we need to develop a 'sociology of associations' that 'traces a network.' This focus on 'what the real world is really like' is not a 'naive empiricism,' because 'Latour insists that empiricism is inadequate as a means of accounting for the world' (Latour, Reassembling 128, 117 qtd. in Love 377). In Latour's words, the 'poverty' of empiricism 'is not overcome by moving away from material experience, for instance to the 'rich human subjectivity,' but closer to the much variagated lives materials have to offer. It's not true that one should fight reductionism by adding some human, symbolic, subjective, or social 'aspect' to the description since reductionism... does not render justice to objective facts' (Reassembling 111-12).

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26 Felski's arguments against suspicion seek to recuperate humanist focal points; for example, enabling students to consider "why literary texts matter" (After 30). Felski thus embraces Latour's flat ontology in the interest of a greater appreciation of the object of study; Love in the interest of a more depersonalized approach. Felski also stands out in criticizing Foucaultians such as Miller rather than Marxists (Suspicious).
images will only go so far in concretizing such processes, what helps to render them in thought are the conceptual entities Latour indicts—"society," "empire," "world economy," "structure," et al.—and against which he asserts his positive criteria ("I want to be convinced that those connections exist, I want to touch the conduits, to check their solidity, to test their realism" [187]).

With no considered mechanism for theorizing the history of the assemblages it documents, ANT externalizes a temporality of the short-term event (l'histoire événementielle). In doing so, it reproduces the "structural amnesia" of a television news world fixated on decontextualized accounts of the visible, synchronic, and "new." Although ANT may possibly take an interest in systems, it has no means of exploring systemicity. Of course, Latour's shift from a far-reaching "pyramid of power" to a small world of visible "associations" achieves a certain liberating effect ("The social landscape begins to change rather quickly"). Yet, from a historicist perspective, ANT's flat ontology does not so much warrant equality of opportunity (as in Rancière's hope) as produce homogeneity of effects: a reduction of knowledge to the given. Hence, while ANT offers a potentially powerful tool for synchronic exploration, as a wholesale alternative to the "social" or "global," it reproduces the problems of chronic presentism and political disenchantment.

Love's essay is all the more commendable, therefore, in recognizing that descriptive reading is, ultimately, a merely partial methodology for literary analysis. That is, in the case of Beloved, description does not "decenter the human" in the manner of ANT for the simple reason that Morrison's depersonalized documentation and subjective witness are mutually reliant: "The flat description of the murder scene stands out in contrast to other deeper and richer moments in the novel; the blank gaze of the observer in this scene is meaningful in part because of the ethical and political commitments of the novel as a whole" (387). Thus, the documentary impulse is (to use vocabulary much disliking by Latour) embedded in a larger whole.

Like Morrison's Beloved, serialized narratives of capitalist globalization confute the Latourian imperative to "respect...what is in plain view" (Felski, "After" 31). A merely descriptive reading of Mad Men might be dazzled by the show's acclaimed aestheticism, proffering the postmodern truism of a glamorous simulacrum beyond which nothing exists. As Don himself says, "I'm living life like there's no tomorrow, because there isn't one." A longue durée perspective combats this illusion of a life outside history, connecting Don's masquerade to Trollope's "secret Jew." Like Lopez and Emma, Don inhabits what Sedgwick called the "regime of the open secret." Sedgwick's essay on paranoid reading did not recant such ambitious abstractions. It was, rather, a brilliant analysis of the limited rewards of repeating critical dicoles that just happen to be true. Like the elevator in Inception, moreover, Mad Men's core trope of the carousel as "time machine"—its backward and forward motion taking serial viewers "around and around, and

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27 On Bourdieu's habitus, which concerns the individual's development of mental and physical dispositions, see Language 51 and pasim.

28 On the limitations of l'histoire évenementielle, a "deceptive" temporality that is "locally lacking in time density," see Braudel 14–15.
CONCLUSION

In “Context Stinks!” (2011), Felski applauds Latour for “blast[ing] away the cobwebs of critique and shak[ing] up a ubiquitous academic ethos of detachment, negativity, and doubt” (575). As the most humanistic of the scholars to take up Latour, she writes: “We cannot close our eyes to the historicity of artworks, and yet we sorely need alternatives to seeing them as transcendentally timeless on the one hand, and imprisoned in their moment of origin on the other” (575). Felski thus polemicizes against a synchronic historicism; if “context stinks!” (a quotation from Latour), that is because, in her view, it has been used to make “a box” out of history (576). Although I share Felski’s pull toward diachronic history, I see little evidence that “a ubiquitous academic ethos” of negativity is undermining it. Thus, while Felski regards Latour as an ally in the battle to curb suspicion, it is by no means clear how his pronounced presentism, positivism, and anti-hermeneutics will nurture the historicity she craves. The insights of theorizing the art object as a “nonhuman actor” (“Context” 576) may well be vitalizing; but one might easily follow Rancière’s example, which neither misrepresents Marx’s pivotal analysis of the commodity nor enjoinso a reenactment of Marxian theory. As Bill Brown observes, “human interaction with the nonhuman world of objects” is “mediated by,” but not “reducible to,” the “advance of consumer culture” since things “oppress, use, and engage us as something other than mere surfaces” (12–13). For all of these reasons, I am doubtful that Latour’s “realist attitude” justifies his wholesale assault on critique (“Why” 232).

Looking back at Sedgwick’s essay on “paranoid reading,” I am struck anew by its puissant call for “a fresh, denaturalized sense of accountability to the real” pursued through “diverse” paths of inquiry (2). Now, as then, what we need is a committed resistance to routinization, not a new set of routines. Nineteenth-century studies strikes me as brimming with such open-ended critical enterprises: inside and outside new fields such as book history. Long temporalities have come to the fore in the work of Wai Chee Dimock whose notion of “deep time” underwrites a transhistorical comparativism: of Franco Moretti, whose qualitative experiments explore massive archives across long swathes of time (Grapho); of Rob Nixon, who seeks to visualize the time scale of climate change; and, in a different way, of Helen Small, who proposes a kind of “longue durée” for a single life span.

To consider the “longue durée” on multiple scales is to know whether “subtle, nuanced change” or responsibility to otherness. As Susan Watkins writes in

an important critique of presentism, “capitalist accumulation” since Marx’s day has “driven the mode of production through successive phases, punctuated by wars, crises and depressions; monopoly capitalism, the second industrial revolution and the emergence of Fordism; the welfare-state capitalism of the Cold War, and the developmentalisms... of the periphery; the era of finance capital, neoliberal globalization and the rise of China as workshop of the world; and the next stage, to which we are now unmistakably in the process of transition. No uniform ethos, habitus or particular way of being human is discernible across this varied landscape” (84–5). Watkins thus renders capitalist accumulation as a continuing history while simultaneously recognizing a range of heterogeneous temporalities “at work within the same chronologies” (101). Such a world is “irresistibly pluralist: not one totality but many” (101)—akin to the many variations on the mid-Victorian-era geopolitical aesthetic I have documented in this book. From such a view, critics of the long nineteenth century—so far from having run out of steam—have, in fact, a great deal of work to do.

I appreciate Felski’s call for scholarship that respects “what is in plain view” before or in concert with the mobilizing of the critical apparatus. Describing an “embrace” of “surface” as an “ethical stance,” Best and Marcus speak of the importance of “deferring to” texts “instead of mastering” them, and refusing “a deep model of truth, which dismisses surfaces as inessential and deceptive” (10). But another path to the same point might note that a self-styled mastery that misses the insights that deference would yield is merely partial and, thus, no “mastery” at all; likewise a “depth model of truth” which reflexively dismisses surface is neither deep nor true.

Rather than pit a surface-focused ethics of reading against a depth-focused politics of reading, can we not simply historicize this formulation as the expression of a certain 1980s temperment? Would it not make sense to revisit the debates between Marxism and New Historicism in light of what we have learned since that time about the need to calibrate the responsibility to otherness and the responsibility to act? This is a task that the diverse experiments of realist, Modernist, and postmodern aesthetics can surely help us to explore.

To be sure, the call to a dialectics of long and short-term history which simultaneously negotiates the disparate ethical demands of the responsibility to otherness and the responsibility to act, is no simple charge. But the task is no less urgent in the current epoch of rampant inequality and environmental hazard to name just two world-scale problems that neoliberalism only professes to solve. As respects of the object, let us not forget our obligations to the objects of the future—that temporal beyond that no network theory can find in plain sight and no digital analysis can quantify. As for historicizing: no matter how much we may inadvertently confuse this ongoing project with some particular historicist excess, historicism cannot but be part of our critical practice. For it is that aspect of the critical enterprise which strives to illuminate the concrete conditions from which our aspirations spring and in which they either take root or fail.