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### Interpretation, 1980 And 1880

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# Interpretation, 1980 and 1880

RACHEL SAGNER BUURMA AND LAURA HEFFERNAN

## Nineteenthcentricity

The nineteenth century has played a starring role in the melodrama of methodological innovation that literary critics have staged throughout the last decade. From new formalism and thing theory to surface reading and the broader post-critical turn, recent work on Victorian literature calls forth distinctively new reading practices. Witness, for example, Franco Moretti's "distant reading" of nineteenth-century detective fiction, Sharon Marcus's "just reading" of Victorian romance plots, Eve Sedgwick's "reparative reading" and her accompanying course on Victorian textures, Elaine Freedgood's metonymic reading of the "things" of Victorian realism, and Jacques Rancière's realignment of the politics of aesthetics after years of archival work on nineteenth-century workers' writings.<sup>1</sup>

But these critics are not simply bringing new methodologies back to their comfortable Victorianist homes in order to go on with the business as usual of making new readings of old texts for a field-specific audience. Rather, these new methodologies—of great interest to the discipline of English literature as a whole—borrow from the nineteenth

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ABSTRACT: This article reviews recent methodological interventions in the field of literary study, many of which take nineteenth-century critics, readers, or writers as models for their less interpretive reading practices. In seeking out nineteenth-century models for twenty-first-century critical practice, these critics imagine a world in which English literature never became a discipline. Some see these new methods as formalist, yet we argue that they actually emerge from historicist self-critique. Specifically, these contemporary critics view the historicist projects of the 1980s as overly influenced by disciplinary models of textual interpretation—models that first arose, we show through our reading of the Jolly Bargemen scene in Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1860–61), in the second half of the nineteenth century. In closing, we look more closely at the work of a few recent critics who sound out the metonymic, adjacent, and referential relations between readers, texts, and historical worlds in order sustain historicism's power to restore eroded meanings rather than reveal latent ones.

century itself. No longer just another object of study, the nineteenth century has come to seem like a bottomless resource for new models of turning, more literally than literarily, to literary texts. Thus Mary Poovey seeks a return to Victorian readers' powers of referential novel reading; Nicholas Dames admires the way that Victorian reviewers refrain from interpreting excerpts from novels; Andrew H. Miller imitates the performative abilities of Victorian perfectionists; and Leah Price tracks all that Victorians did with books when they weren't reading them. Even Bruno Latour, whose actor-network theories have recently inspired many literary critics, has become an honorary Victorianist, taking nineteenth-century criminologist and social commentator Gabriel Tarde as his model for tirelessly tracing impermanent social attachments rather than revealing an objectified "social" (14-16). These critics return to the long-abandoned theaters, laboratories, and libraries of the nineteenth century, picking up the dusty tools of Victorian readers and writers in order to reinvent disciplinary methodology.

Some commentators, attempting an account of all such new reading practices, have united them under the flag of formalism. Those who label these new methods formalist understand their arrival as a swing of the disciplinary pendulum back to the text after decades of hegemonic historicism and its supposedly strongest expression, ideology critique.<sup>2</sup> They necessarily wonder what this new emphasis on innocent reading and deference to the text augurs for the field of Victorian studies, which was after all quite energized—some might even say defined—in the 1980s by Foucauldian archaeologies, New Historicism, and Jameson-style historical materialism. But do these new methodologies really signal the beginning of the end of literary-critical historicism?

Certainly, if we look at any of these critics individually, their formalism, with its newly careful attention to how meaning and sociality emerge through the act of reading (Dames's protocols, Moretti's graphs, Poovey's historical description), may stand out. But taken in the aggregate, these methodological innovators seem most notable in their nineteenthcentricity. Their willingness to reconsider their own reading practices alongside those of Victorian readers, reviewers, ethicists, and playgoers, we argue, is historicist in two ways. First, their interest in Victorian reading and readers yields new historical knowledge. Marcus's wide-ranging archives, Moretti's big data, Freedgood's periodical research, Dames's reviews, and Poovey's writing about

finance increase our knowledge of the “period qua period,” as John Kucich puts it (60). Second, and more importantly, they are historicist in that their love affair with the nineteenth century sustains an awareness of their own contingent position at the end of a long century of disciplinarity. Thinking about the nineteenth century as a time of uneven disciplinary formation, these critics sound alternative futures for the discipline as it exists today. In what follows, we draw out this central claim: that such recent work should actually be seen as an effort toward rewriting our disciplinary history rather than abandoning disciplinarity. While this might seem to substitute an onanistic history for the attractively expansive discursive fields opened by the interdisciplinarity of the 1980s, we argue that this momentary contraction may yet yield a more durable expansion of the things we can know and the ways we can know them.

### 1980/1880

One of the crucial characteristics of this new nineteenth-century-centric work is its relationship to 1980s criticism, especially criticism characteristic of what Kucich calls the decade’s “‘deep reading’ projects: epistemologies of the closet, Foucauldian paranoia about discipline, depth psychology, quests to uncover repressed sexuality” (65). We have come to view this relationship as one of displacement or antagonism, influenced perhaps by Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus’s introduction to *The Way We Read Now* (a special issue of *Representations*). Best and Marcus reject 1980s historicism as defined by the figure of Fredric Jameson and the year 1981, when the publication of his *The Political Unconscious* popularized Louis Althusser’s “symptomatic reading” in the academy (Best and Marcus 5). Yet most of the critics we have mentioned are engaged in a more intimate reworking of the promises and failures of deep reading projects, including in many cases their own groundbreaking early work. Thus, in *Touching Feeling*, Sedgwick revisits various Foucauldian literary critical projects that rely on the repressive hypothesis, including her own *Epistemology of the Closet*; for her, the reparable mistake of 1980s Foucauldian literary critical readings was a tendency to assume—incorrectly—that “even beyond the repressive hypothesis, some form of prohibition is still the most important thing to understand” (11). In both *Signs Taken for Wonders* and his more recent *Graphs, Maps, Trees*, Moretti transforms the canon into culture; the latter work, however,

approaches its much-multiplied objects of study with “distance” rather than the sociological skepticism characteristic of the former (*Graphs* 1). Likewise, D. A. Miller rewrites *The Novel and the Police*’s virtuosic post-structuralist deep reading in *Jane Austen and the Secret of Style*; in the former, narrative omniscience’s panoptic distance from the world of the novel serves to shore up its covert power, while in the latter, omniscience becomes a more vexed and tenuous attempt to discard the shaming particularities of personhood.

In looking back on their earlier work, these critics are not regretting the historicism of their ambitions; rather, they are more likely to see these earlier works as unduly hampered by inherited or rote interpretive practices. These critics (along with others who have no earlier projects to revisit) attempt to move beyond a historicism that they now see as limited by its use of formalist models of language and literariness—a historicism that leans heavily on our discipline’s twentieth-century modes of interpretation.<sup>3</sup> While historicisms of the past few decades extended the reach of our disciplinary reading practices by revealing the literary, generic, or mythological qualities of seemingly realist, referential, or descriptive language (as Edward Said does for Orientalist knowledge, Roland Barthes for the realist novel, and Michel Foucault for medical discourse), critics today are more likely to dial back the discursive turn. As Price points out, “reading” was the dominant metaphor for interpretation in the 1980s and 1990s, adopted from the field of literary studies by all kinds of disciplines (*How* 20–22). In the last ten years, however, this once-ubiquitous gerund all but disappeared from article titles and conference panels, while critics like Sedgwick began to express a “disinclination to . . . subsume nonverbal aspects of reality firmly under the aegis of the linguistic” (6). As Bill Brown explains in the introduction to *A Sense of Things*, “However much I shared the new historicist ‘desire to make contact with the “real,”’ I wanted the end result to read like a grittier, materialist phenomenology of everyday life, a result that might somehow arrest language’s wish, as described by Michel Serres, that the ‘whole world . . . derive from language’” (3). If methods that read the world as a text once held out the possibility of coming closer to the textures and feelings and meanings of the past, they have lately begun to seem formalist and static, a suspension of history rather than a privileged pathway to it. Far from seeking to replace earlier historicisms with new-wrought formalisms, these critics attempt to free 1980s historicism from the constraints of discipline-specific interpretive gestures and protocols.<sup>4</sup>

In other words, as the 1980s become the past, their historicist projects come to seem continuous with the long arc of disciplinary history rather than a radical departure from it. Nineteen-eighties historicism's methods of suspicious surface and depth reading, its reliance on the drama of secrecy and revelation, and its focus on prohibitive models of power—these now seem to find their origin in our earliest methods for deepening our object of study, for making literature opaque, as Michael Warner puts it. Returning to the 1880s moment when English literature took its present shape (institutionalized in the MLA's 1883 formation), Warner relates an anecdote about Radcliffe students who “stop idly at a hard passage in the text” and ask their philologist professor, “What does that mean, sir?” His response—“Mean! It means what it says!”—indicates that he is a dying breed, for English will soon devote itself to exactly the interpretive question of what a text means (5-6). Critics today often imagine that such discipline-founding moments generated an entire twentieth century's worth of literary-critical interpretive practices that culminated, finally, in 1980s historicisms. No longer viewed as a time of rupture but one of covert continuity, the 1980s now harken back to this 1880s moment of formalism, professionalism, and disciplinarity. Thus Poovey presents 1886 (the year in which Edward Dowden theorized “a specifically Literary kind of reading” in his *Contemporary Review* essay “The Interpretation of Literature” [qtd. in Poovey 315]) as the founding moment of the insistence that “the writer's meaning is a *secret*.” And that insistence, she claims, is crucial for a model of interpretive reading that has defined nearly all historicisms of the past decades (316). Departing from Poovey's specific 1880s periodization but sharing her main insight, Dames suggests that the early twentieth-century rise of professional literary criticism substituted “the virtuosic gesture” (25) of an interpretive reading for the “unspoken consensus” (15) of collective reading fostered by the Victorian review's “protocol of the long extract” (22). And for Elaine Freedgood it is also in the early twentieth century that the widespread adoption of the practice of “reflexive, thematic reading” came to foreclose the metonymic connections between the objects in Victorian novels and their material existence in the world (7).<sup>5</sup>

In revisiting disciplinary history, then, these critics also reach for something outside, before, or beside the discipline, something they discover in the nineteenth century before the moment of disciplinary formation.<sup>6</sup> Seeing 1980s historicism as overinvested in figures, metaphorical readings, semiotics, and language's construction of the world,

they seek the pre-professional nineteenth century in Hyde Park, in the Grassmarket, and in Covent Garden, or on shipboard, in the book-stalls of Calcutta, and in the watchboxes of the Australian outback. Among the casual, occasional socializing of these places, they find the *unmetaphorical* past of figures (the book, calico curtains, the theater) and the referential links forged by not-yet-literary genres like the novel. As we have become disenchanted with professional modes of reading that seem to have drained the energy from the promising 1980s (which seemed at the time to provide both a new energy to the profession and a new justification for our work to the world at large), the nineteenth century—with its amateurisms, its sincerities, and its realisms—holds a new attraction.

### In the Three Jolly Bargemen

This account of the critical turn to the Victorian could make it seem naive or nostalgic, as though by giving up the twentieth century we could simply cast off alienation in all its forms, returning to a cozy Victorian version of Georg Lukács's classical epic reader (Lukács 29–32) or Foucault's premodern historian (Foucault 130–31). And some critics certainly fall prey to this temptation. But imagining the Victorian era's reading practices as very different from, yet adjacent to, our own holds out a more realistic possibility. It lets us imagine a counterfactual history—or a submerged tradition—of interpretation uncoupled from the alienations specific to formalist critical modes.<sup>7</sup> It allows the social to reenter the room where previously the interpreter and her text (literary or historical) sat alone, regarding one another with jealousy and suspicion. We might think through the implications of these alternative ways recent critics have approached the nineteenth century by turning to a Victorian example of how professional interpretation interrupts the cozy social scene. In chapter 18 of *Great Expectations* (1860–61), a “strange gentleman” intrudes on the village public house, the Three Jolly Bargemen. The gentleman is the lawyer Jaggery, an urban professional whose mastery of suspicious interpretation will dismantle the “cozy state of mind” shared by Pip and his fellow villagers as they listen to Mr. Wopsle read the newspaper's account of a recent murder:

It was in the fourth year of my apprenticeship to Joe, and it was a Saturday night. There was a group assembled round the fire at the Three Jolly Bargemen, attentive to Mr. Wopsle as he read the newspaper aloud. Of that group I was one.



A highly popular murder had been committed, and Mr. Wopsle was imbrued in blood to the eyebrows. He gloated over every abhorrent adjective in the description, and identified himself with every witness at the Inquest. He faintly moaned, "I am done for," as the victim, and he barbarously bellowed, "I'll serve you out," as the murderer. He gave the medical testimony, in pointed imitation of our local practitioner; and he piped and shook, as the aged turnpike-keeper who had heard blows, to an extent so very paralytic as to suggest a doubt regarding the mental competency of that witness. The coroner, in Mr. Wopsle's hands, became Timon of Athens; the beadle, Coriolanus. He enjoyed himself thoroughly, and we all enjoyed ourselves, and were delightfully comfortable. In this cozy state of mind we came to the verdict Wilful Murder. (133)

Wopsle's performance is more than performative: "imbrued in blood to the eyebrows" by the act of reading about the popular murder, he seamlessly becomes each character in turn for a sympathetic audience (in contrast with his later difficulties convincingly impersonating a single character, Hamlet, in a second-rate urban theater for a decidedly hostile audience). Wopsle's reading makes the unknown familiar just as Jagers, moments later, will make the familiar strange. The expert medical witness of the newspaper murder becomes the familiar local practitioner, while the coroner becomes Timon of Athens; everyone enjoys themselves thoroughly and all are "delightfully comfortable" together. In transforming a "highly popular" newspaper trial transcript into a one-man play—one that recalls Dickens's own public readings of his novels—Wopsle's performance connects the trial to other generically similar works (*Timon of Athens*, *Coriolanus*) rather than imagining it as a text that refers to the world.

This scene of comfort and coziness is disrupted when Pip becomes "aware of a strange gentleman leaning on the back of the settle opposite me, looking on" with an "expression of contempt on his face" as though to suggest that Wopsle has been (by performing a newspaper's account of a murder trial) posing as an expert. "'Well!' said the stranger to Mr. Wopsle, when the reading was done, 'you have settled it all to your own satisfaction, I have no doubt?'" (133-34). At first, the group unites behind Wopsle with a "confirmatory murmur" as Wopsle pronounces the verdict at which they have collectively arrived: "Guilty" (134). Yet as Jagers begins to cross-examine Wopsle himself ("Do you know that none of these witnesses have yet been cross-examined? . . . Now, turn to that paper, and tell me whether it distinctly states that the prisoner expressly said that his legal advisers instructed him altogether to reserve his defence?"), the rest of the

group begins to distrust Wopsle (“We all began to think Mr. Wopsle full of subterfuge”), viewing him with suspicion (“We all began to suspect that Mr. Wopsle was not the man we had thought him, and that he was beginning to be found out”) (134–35). Finally, like an easily led jury, the group turns against him, condemning what they now suddenly understand to be his long-plotted and nefarious projects: “We were all deeply persuaded that the unfortunate Wopsle had gone too far, and had better stop in his reckless career while there was yet time” (136).

Jaggers’s questioning replaces Wopsle’s unalienated reading of the newspaper with a routinized professional technique of interrogation that is designed not to bring light, but to cast doubt. In the shade of Jaggers’s professionalized reading practice, the familiar Wopsle looks like an insincere and furtive character with a potentially heterodox past (“You may read the Lord’s Prayer backwards, if you like—and, perhaps, have done it before to-day”). Just as Jaggers transforms Wopsle into a man with a surface and a depth through the mere suggestion that there is a difference between them, so too does he transform the newspaper story into an opaque, interpretable account (“Look at that paper you hold in your hand. What is it?”) requiring close attention (“Turn to the paper. No, no, no my friend; not to the top of the column; you know better than that; to the bottom, to the bottom”) and exegesis (“Now, follow that passage with your eye, and tell me whether it distinctly states that the prisoner expressly said that he was instructed by his legal advisers wholly to reserve his defence? Come! Do you make that of it?”) (135). Jaggers’s urban, professionalized interpretation fractures the social bonds in the Jolly Bargemen in this first of many scenes depicting what Dickens labels Jaggers’s “invisible agency” (213). Jaggers disperses the comfortable and cozy “group assembled” that the Three Jolly Bargemen’s own name brings to mind, peeling Joe and Pip away from the gathering. When Pip says that “we three walked out of the Jolly Bargemen, and in a wondering silence walked home,” we have the sense that the presiding Bargemen, no longer quite so jolly, have left the building (137).

Like Dickens, contemporary critics have a critique of Jaggers and his ilk. For if Jaggers can stand as an emblem for the worst sorts of interrogative reading, in a sense these contemporary critics attempt to return to the Jolly Bargemen of the moment before Jaggers appears over the settle. This isn’t to suggest that contemporary critics attempt a return to an unalienated world of consensus and community. They aren’t

interested, that is, in reconstituting the liberal public sphere in order to recapture a Victorian world modeled on Jürgen Habermas's eighteenth-century coffeehouses; not for them the Age of Equipoise's world of shared values and cultural consensus reflected in a steadily but slowly increasing sense of democracy. (Nor do they rely on the less idealized but equally totalizing models of the Panopticon or an emerging consumer mass culture.) After all, even Dickens doesn't idealize the comfortable and cozy group, whose enjoyment of a "highly popular" metropolitan murder—one served up in mass-printed newspaper form—ensures that we can hardly read the Jolly Bargemen scene as conventional pastoral. Yet contemporary critics are newly interested, as perhaps Dickens was as well, in constructing a relationship between persons, texts, and world not predicated on a particular type of professionalized interpretation. For both Dickens and these more recent critics, professional interpretive practice works by opening a gap between sign and referent, signifier and signified, into which the professional insinuates herself, only to suggest that she alone can close it.<sup>8</sup>

### Historicism Now

The critics who interest us, by contrast, hold literary and social things together without first pulling them apart, using one to explain the other, or taking one as a figure for the other. Their work shuns homologies between literary text and referential world, instead searching out metonymic, adjacent, and referential relations between the two. Yet these critics do something further: in reimagining the relation between the world (present or past) and the literary text, and in refusing to define literature in formalist terms, they seek out a new—and admittedly more contingent—model of literariness. Reimagining literariness as a quality that is built socially by different groups of people—literary critics, newspaper readers, college students, sailors, former slaves, Jolly Bargees—these critics reject formalism's shadowy territory between sign and referent in favor of a more local and historicized understanding of how literary meaning, however ephemeral, comes to be. Turning briefly to work by three very different critics—Elaine Freedgood, David Kurnick, and Leah Price—will show the different ways critics are revisiting the Victorian gathering places where lost references and referents are found.

For Freedgood, metonymic reading serves as an alternative to a reading practice inhabiting the gap between signifier and signified

that Karl Marx's model of the commodity fetish opens for the literary text. Because we have imagined the mid-Victorian era as "fully in the grip" of commodity fetishism, she suggests, we tend to read the objects in realist novels as dematerialized ciphers for symbolic relations (7). But for the earliest readers of Victorian novels, Freedgood argues, the oppressive social relations involved in the production of things like tobacco, curtains, and mahogany furniture aren't so much hidden as they are unevenly attended to or under-noticed. Following metonymic chains of meaning thus allows us to trace "as yet unseen connections between historical knowledge and fictional form" (29). This metonymic understanding, unlike the commodity fetish, promises a less fixed, potentially changeable (though certainly not utopian) connection between the things of the literary text and the contingency of the social world.

Price considers books not merely as repositories of representations and ideas, but as objects whose circulations trace relationships between "masters and servants, men and women, stepparents and orphans" (*How* 261). Price builds this opposition between the text (virtual, transcendent, covertly middle-class, bildungsroman-identified) and the book (material, local, distinction-making, novel of manners-identified) in order to reinvest literary studies with a new literalness. By following the book instead of the text—or the life cycle of a copy of a newspaper "from rich readers to poor readers, and finally from readers to the grocery, the kitchen, and the privy"—she reveals that even the field of book history has internalized Victorian realism's privileging of textuality over materiality (261). Price reduces Victorian realism from its current "overrepresentation" in book historical scholarship to its proper corner of the Victorian world even as she places the tome of textual interpretation on the wider shelf of book history.

In similar fashion, Kurnick sets aside readings of theatricality in the novel that see representations of the stage as metaphors for the novel's performative powers of making worlds out of language. Instead, he examines how the material traces of the Victorian theater and its embodied, collective audiences persist within the pages of novels. In so doing, he replaces a metaphorical critical model that opens and relies upon the crucial gap between signifier and signified with something more literal. In "Theater Demetaphorized," the first section of the introduction to *Empty Houses: Theatrical Failure and the Novel*, Kurnick provisionally rejects the metaphorical readings of dramatic concepts

like “vanity fair,” “inward drama,” “scenic principle,” and “epiphany” in the work of William Makepeace Thackeray, George Eliot, Henry James, and James Joyce, seeking instead “to revive a sense of the lost social referent of such figures” (6). The worldly referent, with its social specificity and particularity, rather than the formalist space between or within the figure, is the object of Kurnick’s study; rather than dwell on the second, he lingers chatting with the first.<sup>9</sup>

All of these critics sustain historicism’s longstanding power to restore eroded meanings rather than reveal latent ones. Their search for lost meanings does not simply reproduce past historical moments, but allows us to see literacies and practices of meaning-making that were undervalued and under-noticed even in their own time. These critics neither replicate the historical record nor try to convert its gaps and absences into meaningful presence. Their special mission—one designed not to replace or displace other existing critical modes, but to work “beside” them, to use Sedgwick’s carefully chosen word (Introduction 8)—returns to us a sense of our disciplinary modes of interpretation as man-made, contingent, and weaker than they sometimes seem. Like Dickens’s *Great Expectations*, this critical work—perhaps just now coming into focus—draws energy from its attention to a range of literacies. If modernist formalism, like William Empson’s “ambiguity,” seeks to sublimate “alternative reactions to the same piece of language” as the defining characteristic of the literary itself (1), these critics take indeterminacy as the ground from which to begin writing.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>See Moretti, *Graphs* 67-94; Marcus 1-22; Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading” and “Victorian Textures”; Freedgood 1-29; and Rancière, *Politics* 12-46.

<sup>2</sup>As the call for papers for this special issue noted, a return to formalism, variously described, has characterized work in and discussions about Victorianist literary criticism over the past decade, as John Kucich points out in his defense and redescription of Victorianist historicism, “The Unfinished Historicist Project: In Praise of Suspicion.” For other studies of nineteenth-century literature that engage with the idea of a recent return to formalism, see Loesberg 1-13, Levine, and Rooney. More ephemeral but no less telling have been recent graduate student conferences, including Columbia University’s 2011 graduate student conference (with Caroline Levine as keynote speaker) on “The Politics of Form,” the yearlong theme and graduate conference on

“Politics, Ethics, and the New Formalisms” hosted by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign’s British Modernities Group in 2010 (featuring a keynote address by Marjorie Levinson), and the yearlong “Formalisms” seminar at the Rutgers University Center for Cultural Analysis (2012–13).

<sup>3</sup>Thus, for example, Heather Love argues that the “depth” of “depth interpretation” refers not only to “the hidden structures or causes that suspicious critics reveal” but to an older marriage of close reading and humanism, in which critics seek to produce “life, richness, warmth, and voice” through their interpretations of texts (388). Likewise, Price sees twenty-first century book history as limited not by models of critique or suspicion, but by older models of literary canonicity: “Even when book historians choose objects that stand outside of the literary, the language in which they describe their own scholarly practices remains parasitic on a literary canon in which reading gets tirelessly thematized” (37).

<sup>4</sup>Even as English seeks to free its historicist work from discipline-specific methods of close reading and interpretation, historians have begun to set aside the tools of textual interpretation that they once borrowed from literary critics. Thus Lynn Hunt urges historians to “get away from the discursive focus” which has “certainly dominated [her own] work” and consider that the “world is not just discursively constructed. It is also built through embodiment, gesture, facial expression, and feelings, that is, through nonlinguistic modes of communication that have their own logics” (674).

<sup>5</sup>Cannon Schmitt’s “Tidal Conrad (Literally),” published after we wrote this article, offers a slight twist on this formulation. Where others have corrected for our disciplinary emphasis on the figurative by turning to the literal, Schmitt aims to reconcile the two. He shows, through a “denotative” reading of *Heart of Darkness* (1899), how tracing the referentiality of Conrad’s nautical details leads to a deeper reading of that novel’s self-reflexivity (7). Like other nineteenth-century-centric critics, Schmitt situates himself—via Conrad—just before modernism pursues “higher verisimilitude” and “self-reflexiveness” as distinct goals requiring separate techniques (26).

<sup>6</sup>Such reorientations are not specific to literary study and, indeed, the late nineteenth century saw the formation of multiple disciplines; literature became opaque, but so too did pipes, top hats, homosexuality, and scientific facts for sociologists, psychoanalysts, and other professional interpreters. Perhaps the first and best example of seeking the nineteenth-century origins of late twentieth-century forms of suspicious reading is Paul Ricoeur’s tracing of Althusser’s “hermeneutics of suspicion” to Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche in *Freud and Philosophy* (30–37). In sociology, Latour has alighted on 1903 as the crucial year in which Gabriel Tarde loses his debate with Émile Durkheim at the École des Hautes Études Sociales, thus opening the door for Durkheim to found the discipline of sociology on a concept of the social as a substance that sociologists discover underlying the phenomenal world—a discipline-specific interpretive gesture from which Latour seeks to free sociology. For a discussion of this debate, see Latour 13–15. For a reenactment of the debate itself, see <<http://www.bruno-latour.fr/node/354>>.

<sup>7</sup>Freedgood argues that late nineteenth-century forms of realism and the reading practices they foster represent an extension of Marx’s concept of alienation, particularly in the ways that both literary interpretation and commodity fetishism bypass materiality in order to “get to . . . meaning or import or value.”

<sup>8</sup>As Rancière might put it, Wopsle's storytelling presumes an "equality of intelligence" (*Ignorant* 50) where Jagger's explication posits an "inequality of knowledge" (47).

<sup>9</sup>It is worth noting that in another section of his introduction, "Theater Dethe-matized: Spatializations of the Novel," Kurnick suggests a more formalist counter-weight to the referential powers of the theater.

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