

# **DEPARTURE ACTS: ANONYMOUS AUTHORSHIP IN THE LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation explores mid to late twentieth century manifestations of anonymous authorship as both an aesthetic and material site that is co-existent with the textual issues of originality and ownership contained within their fiction. Working out of, among others, Michel Foucault's insights on the institutional function of authorship, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's notion of rhizomatic production and Pierre Bourdieu's understanding of the field of cultural production, I examine how self-reflexive anonymous authorship becomes a textual construction that must be read alongside the privatizing effects of copyright on textual production in the economic-juridical order of neoliberalism through a specific look at the relation between materiality and aesthetics in such figures as J.D. Salinger, Thomas Pynchon and Wu Ming. In so doing, I contend that the institutional function authorship reveals a provocative collusion of aesthetics, copyright and corporatization in the late twentieth century. Arguing that self-reflexive anonymous authorship—in its emphasis on its own mediated status and dissembling—acts as a dissident form of cultural production in the economic-juridical order of neoliberalism.

**Keywords:** Twentieth Century American Fiction; Theories of Authorship; J.D. Salinger; Thomas Pynchon; Wu Ming; Luther Blissett

## **DEDICATION**

**For *Heather, Brooklyn, & Ayven***

It's been a long time coming...I know

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## **INTRODUCTION:**

### **Toward a Material-Aesthetics of Authorship**

*It is not enough, however, to repeat the empty affirmation that the author has disappeared. For the same reason it is, not enough to keep repeating (after Nietzsche) that God and man have died a common death. Instead, we must locate the space left empty by the author's disappearance, follow the distribution of gaps and breaches, and watch for openings that this disappearance uncovers.*

**---Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?"**

*At the moment of speaking I would like to have perceived a nameless voice, long preceding me, leaving me merely to enmesh myself in it, taking up its cadence, and to lodge myself, when no one was looking, in its interstices as if it had paused an instant, in suspense, to beckon me.*

**---Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge***

The death of the author<sup>1</sup> has had a profound impact on both textual interpretation and the understanding of how authorship functions beyond a relation to an individual subject. The implications of the proclamation of the author's death have been both aesthetic and material. Needless to say, contemporary studies of authorship move well beyond biographical criticism, or even strict literary aesthetics, having established important links between larger cultural, socio-

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<sup>1</sup> The death of the author is an allusion to various strains of literary theory, emerging out of the late nineteen sixties and on through the nineteen eighties, whereby authors cease to be in control of the meanings that emanate from their texts. In particular, authors are understood to be caught up in the larger structures of language and the meaning of particular texts is dependent on the relationality of the language itself rather than the intention of the individual person writing. In other words, the author is not literally dead, but his/her texts exceed the immediate origin of the individual creator. The implications of this central idea are wide ranging, but most often they are associated with post-structuralism, postmodernism or reader response theories. For a succinct and seminal essay see Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author."

economic, political and legal formations and the function of the author. The major focus of authorial studies for the last forty years has been to determine, after Foucault, “how the author became individualized in a culture like ours” (“What Is an Author?,” 101). Largely, this work has engaged with authorship as a material site that determines the commodity status of the text. My dissertation seeks to expand this work, which ties authorship to copyright, by grounding a particular form of anonymous authorship in an economic-juridical order of neoliberalism and arguing that self-reflexive anonymity enacts a dissident textual practice. In this sense, authorship is not simply a site, but a practice inscribed within the production of a social site whose boundaries are beyond the control of authorial subjectivity. Robert Griffin argues “The author's name is another artifact, at a distance from the empirical writer, a signifier within the semiotics of the text that can be manipulated strategically” (10). In particular, I argue that the production of a self-reflexive anonymous authorship is co-existent with a postmodern literary aesthetic, to the extent that it deconstructs the material basis of originality and produces a form of textual production that strains towards a collective subjectivity that can never be grasped in its entirety, but which constructs an immediately material dissident site of production. What is central within this claim, however, is that my study is rooted in the particular forms and practices of what has variously been called globalization, postmodernity, late or transnational capitalism. In order, then, to understand how self-reflexive anonymity, as a particular form, functions as a dissident site, I have to map out the intertwining relations between specific practices of literary aesthetics, socio-economics, politics and juridical formations.

First, though, let me unpack my notion of a “self-reflexive anonymous” author. The self-reflexive anonymous author is foremost a name that is institutionally constructed and circulates through both the field of cultural production and the economic-juridical realm of copyright and the public domain. This name, however, is detached from any one person in particular through its anonymity. While the author's anonymity is a key component of this figure, on its own it is not enough to signify self-reflexivity. For example, the use of pseudonyms, which is a form of

anonymity, certainly conceals the identity of the writer, does not necessarily reflect back on the name's position or production within the field of literary production or the economic-juridical order within which it functions. Anonymity, in my use, refers to the use of pseudonyms and a deliberate withdrawal from public correspondence outside the works themselves. The self-reflexivity is in relation, not to biography, but to the deconstruction of identity, originality and authority within the works themselves. The self-reflexive anonymous author reiterates the textual aesthetic of the works themselves. The self-reflexive play invested in the anonymity of a writer like B. Traven or Fernando Pessoa<sup>2</sup>, whether intentional or not, gestures back to the way their names get caught up in a material structure of meaning and production. With the development of neoliberal capitalism and the emergence of an informational economy in the nineteen seventies, the link between the production of knowledge and the function of the author as a proprietor of an intellectual commodity becomes predominant, such that the practice of self-reflexive anonymity must be understood as more than a game. In fact, when I refer to self-reflexive anonymous authorship I am highlighting a practice whereby authors self-consciously create texts that are constructions at the same time as they connect the constructedness of their textual production to the constructedness of their own authorial identity. The constructedness of the name is immediately linked to the neoliberal institutional practice of creating open markets based on individual ownership of public domains. There are different forms that self-reflexive anonymous authorship could adopt and this dissertation will examine at least two in some detail. For example, Thomas Pynchon, who uses his own proper name while at the same time managing to release only select bits of information about himself which only reiterate the constructedness of

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<sup>2</sup> B. Traven is a pseudonym whose origin remains unknown. It is widely believed that he was a German who emigrated to Mexico in the nineteen twenties and wrote numerous novels and short stories under that name. Prior to his emigration, he was known as Ret Marut—another pseudonym—and was involved in the Bavarian Revolution. For more details see Karl Guthke's *B.Traven: The Life Behind the Legends* and Will Wyatt's *The Secret of the Sierra Madre: The Man Who was B. Traven*. Fernando Pessoa was an early twentieth century Portuguese poet who used what he referred to as “heteronyms.” He created a series of identities, names with specific histories and biographies who each wrote their own style of poetry.

his texts. The other primary example that will be explored in this dissertation is Luther Blissett/Wu Ming. Unlike Pynchon, this collective group of writers opt for a pseudonym and the use of this pseudonym is part of a desire to make explicit the collective nature of literary production. The self-reflexive aesthetic production of the anonymous name, then, operates as a site in the struggle to create open access to the public domain and resist the material enclosure of the intellectual commons.

Despite the reign of the individual author as a privileged cultural producer in our contemporary society<sup>3</sup>, anonymity has, historically, been as much if not a more extensive practice in textual production. Robert Griffin shows how anonymity is not simply an outgrowth of oral cultural and that it “continues for several centuries to be a dominant form, perhaps the norm, of print culture” (15). Due to the scope of anonymity's permeation of the field of literary production, however, it would be impossible to generalize a theory of anonymity. In fact, as Griffin points out anonymity does not have a homogenous function: “Anonymity was not always a form of ethical, or religious, or socially imposed self-effacement, but had commercial uses as well. It intersects with different social and cultural contexts across several centuries” (15). My exploration of anonymity is localized around particular practices of self-reflexive anonymity and its relation to a dominant form of neoliberal cultural production. In order to understand this practice, I want to shift the focus away from the absence that anonymity conceals towards the process of its construction. Griffin claims that anonymity itself bears a name—as in the use of pseudonyms—as a mask for the “legal” identity of the author, and that it should be understood “not as a lack or absence, but positively, as another mask. There is not, as the standard narrative suggests, an opposition between identity and anonymity (identity emerging out of anonymity with the arrival of modernity), but rather a play of subject positions, because even unnamed texts project a

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<sup>3</sup> See Michel Foucault, “What Is an Author?”; Martha Woodmansee “The Genius and the Copyright”; Carla Hesse “Enlightenment Epistemology”; Mark Rose *Authors and Owners* for the dominance of the “individual” author. In addition, Chapter One deals at length with the “expressive” author and its relation to the individual subject.

'presence'" (10). My study begins and ends with the appearance of a name that has no external signified beyond that which it constructs (and in which it is constructed) through discursive regimes. In this fashion I track anonymous authors whose texts problematize identity, authority and ownership to the extent that their own dissembled identities are inseparable from their textual production, as texts with no ultimate external referent. What is important for this dissertation is not what lies behind the name of the author, that is to say, not what the name represents, but the means by which self-reflexive anonymous authorial names, by their very appearance, challenge dominant assumptions about originality, individuality and the function of the public domain (or literary commons) when it comes to the field of literary production in a neoliberal political and economic regime.

Theories of authorship have historically developed along two separate and distinct lines: one aesthetic and one material.<sup>4</sup> The former, in general terms, is the romantic sense of the author as an individual genius who transcends the materiality of existence to produce a higher order of truth or reality. In many ways this conception aligns itself with a theory of the autonomous subject, as I demonstrate in Chapter One. The latter, again in a general sense, explores the institutional formation of the author-figure. Primarily, this institutional history focuses on the juridical mechanisms that create the modern author, or the inherent copyright owner of textual property. Taken together, these two lines, or streams, of thought constitute what Michel Foucault refers to as "the privileged moment of *individualization* in the history of ideas, knowledge,

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<sup>4</sup> I am not aware of any studies that make this explicit distinction; however, it is most forcibly seen in the varying approaches to authorship. See Seán Burke *Authorship* and Roland Barthes "The Death of the Author" for examples of aesthetic approaches, while print culture models such as Meredith McGill's *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting* and Grantland S. Rice's *The Transformation of Authorship in America* represent the material approach. There have been numerous attempts to blend the two. For example, see Woodmansee "The Genius and Copyright," Peter Jaszi "On the Author Effect," Rose *Authors and Owners*, and Alvin Kernan *Printing Technology, Letters and Samuel Johnson*. These attempts, however, are marred by a privileging of the aesthetic influence over the material. For more on this critique see David Saunders *Authorship and Copyright*.

literature, philosophy, and the sciences” (“What Is an Author?,” 101).<sup>5</sup> What unites them under the common heading of “modern author” is the way that the individual becomes an important figure in relation to the production and circulation of text. On the one hand, the author is the ultimate producer—the solitary worker/artisan—and on the other hand, s/he is the owner who controls the distribution and dissemination of texts, of ideas, of the constituent components of literary production. In both of these circumstances the name of the author and its clear association with the text is a mark of significance in modern authorship. In fact, the individual name of the author and its privileged aesthetic and legal status in the contemporary cultural moment is the characteristic feature of the practice of modern authorship.

To suggest, however, that a certain moment of individualization distinguishes modern authorship from some other period (pre-modern? early modern? medieval? primitive? pre-capitalist?) of authorship, assumes anonymity is a “natural,” or authentic, form of textual production. It suggests that the regime of modern authorship<sup>6</sup>, dominated as it is by the concept of the individual, enacts a take-over of this “natural” practice of anonymous writing. Of course, there are two ways of reading the individualization of authorship. The first is what David Saunders classifies as “subject-centred.” Individuality, in this sense, is the recovery in the person or personality of the author of a lost unity of self. Saunders writes with derision:

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<sup>5</sup> Even though McGill, Woodmansee and Jaszi document variations on collaborative authorship in the end the history they write is the emergence of the individual author as the dominant form of authorship.

<sup>6</sup> By “modern authorship” I am referring to the emergence of the professional writer and copyright law. Paul K. Saint-Amour explains “By granting creators limited property rights in their creations, copyright also helped emancipate writers from their dependence on aristocratic patrons, eventually giving them financial leverage in their relationship with publishers; in this respect, copyright was indispensable to the development of the ‘author’ as a propertied, professional, and financially self-sufficient figure. But copyright has done more than simply stabilize a legal and commercial environment hospitable to the modern author. By establishing the criteria that make a work eligible for protection, along with the nature and duration of the protection, copyright has shaped not only the field on which the figure of the author moves but the identity of that figure as well” (3). This period stretches from roughly 1710 to the present and shouldn’t be confused with aesthetic “modernism.”

The model promises 'man's' advance from the loss of an original unity, followed by division and alienation from nature, self and world; however, this presently divided state of being is but a stage in the advance towards a future healing of this division when the fundamental antagonisms [...] are dialectically reconciled. Thanks to our culture, in the Marxian sequel, labour, human subjectivity recovers from its objectification and the fullness of human subjectivity is ours again. (23)

In this sense, individualization is equated with the progressive development of the self within an aesthetic space as a ground for social order. The second way of reading the individualization of the author is as the establishment of a private realm out of what was essentially a social relation.

In this sense, individualization masks the actual social and material relations of literary production. It is this second perspective, indebted in ways to Marx and Engel's claim that "Consciousness is [...] from the very beginning a social product, and remains so as long as men exist at all" and developed through the postmodern deconstruction of the subject, which forms the basis of my own project (*The German Ideology*, 19). With this distinction between the two modes of reading individualization we can return to the question of the other, or prior, mode of authorship which was subsumed by the modern form of individualization. I do not mean, however, to assert the primacy of anonymous texts or even say that anonymity is a natural mode of cultural production which has been transformed or appropriated by a dominant mode of ownership in a capitalist regime. In fact, what needs to be thought through is the entire domain of cultural production and its relation to capitalism, both as it develops within contemporary neoliberalism as a competitive enterprise and in its past pretensions to a social or collective practice of common ownership. The starting point for this investigation is with the idea that there is no natural form of cultural production, that it is always intertwined with an institutional relation to what Michel Foucault calls an "economic-juridical order" (*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 163). The complicating factor in attempting to construct a textual practice that resists the internalization of neoliberalism in literary production is that there is no exterior space to appeal to as a stable ground of discourse. Rather the dissident space to which I referred earlier must be created through an economic-juridical order that co-opts any form of resistance as part of its own production. The

important point to understand with my analysis is that in seeking, through the self-reflexive anonymous author, to construct a dissident space I am building off the instability at the core of its production without renouncing its generative capacity. In fact, it is precisely the crux of my argument that it is the authorial name's capacity to skirt along the edges of the signifying systems to which it is attached that is characteristic of dissident textual space.

Before proceeding to examine the structure of the “economic-juridical order” of which the field of literary production finds itself a part, I want to explain my use of the term “neoliberalism.” Neoliberalism is, of course, a relatively recent term and while critics like Neil Smith associate its practice and ideology with a revved up form of classic liberalism’s faith in the “invisible hand” of the market, it is important to mark out how it constitutes something different.<sup>7</sup> In classic liberalism<sup>8</sup>, the market is a free space of trade that drives social production. Karl Polanyi explains that “Economic liberalism [...] evolved into a veritable faith in man’s secular salvation through a self-regulating market” (135).<sup>9</sup> While immediate market transactions are fueled by self-interest, the resulting production of wealth advances the collective welfare of the social body through an unimpeded, or natural, form of exchange whose effect is social equality.

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<sup>7</sup> Neil Smith claims that “neoliberalism deliberately harkened back to the classical tradition” (29). It should be noted that he understands classical liberalism as a nexus of Adam Smith’s unfettered market and Locke’s individual property rights. The state, as the legal institution, is the mechanism that ensures property rights and the existence of a market-economy that regulates itself. Jamie Peck and Adam Tickell also link classic liberalism and neoliberalism claiming “Neoliberalism in general has much in common with attempts to promote market mechanisms since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but nevertheless is a distinct phase in the struggle between market- and state-led capitalism” (3). What distinguishes the two, for Peck and Tickell, is that under neoliberalism there is less state intervention and a larger geographical span.

<sup>8</sup> By “classic liberalism” I mean a range of intellectual, political and economic texts set forth in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which played a decisive role in the development of capitalist society. It is guided by a narrative of “freedom” that suggests that individual freedom is tied to economic freedom, and that the lack of government intervention in the market sets the condition by which the market guarantees this freedom.

<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that Polanyi explains how the self-regulating market, in practice, is a destructive social force that calls into being state intervention. He writes: “in the critical case of trade union law and antitrust regulations extreme liberals themselves had to call for manifold interventions of the state, in order to secure against monopolistic compacts the preconditions for the working of a self-regulating market” (150). See *The Great Transformation*, Chapter 12, for a full treatment of this discussion. Richard Teichgraeber, however, argues that “a careful reading of [Wealth of Nations] shows that Smith never portrayed free trade as an unmixed blessing. It shows, too, that Smith thought the ideal of a completely free commercial market was something of a utopian dream” (5).

The market, in this sense, is not an amoral site; rather, it is a site where the internal maintenance of its integrity is the foundation of ethical action.<sup>10</sup> This is not to say that free transactions are carried out on an immediately equal footing. In fact, Giovanni Arrighi argues that Smith believes that within capitalism there is a “superiority of force” which is the largest contributing factor in the establishment of wealth, and ultimately, “the widening and deepening of exchanges in the world market economy would act as an unstoppable equalizer of relationships of force” (20). In other words, the expansion of trade as a means to produce wealth and security diminishes power inequalities and establishes a market in which everyone enters on an equal footing.<sup>11</sup> What is key for the distinction between liberalism and neoliberalism in my argument is that the market, in classic liberalism, appears as a natural site of free exchange, where the intervention of a third party—the state—would disrupt the balance created by the invisible hand and, hence, preclude its social function.

Neoliberal practice sets about a program of deregulation, of privatizing national industries in the name of the production of increased wealth and the upward movement of economic structures. Jamie Peck and Adam Tickell explain how “enlarging the scope of competitive forces necessitated the privatization of nationalized industries together with the deregulation of other sectors” (28). There are, however, two distinct features which distinguish neoliberalism that are important for contextualizing my study of anonymous authorship. First, the market is characterized, not by free exchange, as in classical liberalism, but by competition: “the most important thing about the market is not exchange, that kind of original and fictional

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<sup>10</sup> This notion of the market as “amoral” is synonymous with the notion of *laissez-faire* capitalism. However, it is also the source of what is known as the “Adam Smith Problem.” This problem refers to the fact that Smith published only two texts in his lifetime, both of which appear to occupy radically different points of the spectrum of thought: *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and *The Wealth of Nations*. Richard Teichgraeber sums up the problem: “How could a writer who had ascribed human conduct to the workings of ‘sympathy’ later reverse himself and coldly ascribe all human action to calculated self-interest?” (xiii).

<sup>11</sup> Arrighi bases this notion on the idea that, for Smith, “the expansion of trade and production is inseparable from a continual increase in competition among its agencies—an increase which raises real wages and rents and drives down the rate of profit” (222). For more on this discussion see *The Long Twentieth Century* pages 222-225.

situation imagined by eighteenth century liberal economists. The essential thing of the market is elsewhere; it is competition” (Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 118). The contradiction inherent in neoliberalism, the essential problem that Foucault maps out, is that if the economy is to act as the site of truth that sets itself as the model of relations of production, then it must be maintained by an institutional framework that allows the market to function without direct state intervention. Its locus is at once outside that which should be governed and upheld by an infrastructure of governance. Thus, for Foucault, it is not that neoliberalism has no intervention in the economy, but rather that its interventions occur at the level of creating the spatial conditions of possibility for an economy of competition. Competition, in this sense, is not a “natural” state of being; rather, it must be produced in order for the economy to function as a site of truth: “competition as an essential economic logic will only appear and produce its effects under certain conditions which have to be carefully and artificially constructed” (120). This conceptualization of an interplay between the framework and the infrastructure opens the door to the economic-juridical order.<sup>12</sup> In this order, it is no longer possible to

conceive of the juridical as being in a relation of pure and simple expression or instrumentality to the economy. The economy does not purely and simply determine a juridical order that would both serve it and be constrained by it. The juridical gives form to the economic, and the economic would not be what it is without the juridical. (162-163)

Therefore, there is an interrelation between the economic and the juridical which produces a particular mode of capitalist production.

A second feature of neoliberalism is linked to cultural imperialism whereby, as Jeff Derksen argues “culture is not pacified or merely rendered a commodity, but is embedded in a

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<sup>12</sup> As my discussion of modern authorship in Chapter One asserts, authorship is never outside of an economic-juridical order. What then is specific about neoliberalism as something different from eighteenth and nineteenth century liberalism? Is there a shift? With more space I would argue that what distinguishes the two is not so much a central tenant, but rather a practice. For example, while classic liberalists like Adam Smith believed the market would regulate social relations as a natural phenomena, neoliberals counter that the conditions for open competition need to be created, in other words, they are not natural.

process of commodification and recommodification within capitalist accumulation” (5). This process, however, happening within a decentralized control system is internalized, thereby making the sites of control removed from clear cut centers of control and invisible. Cultural production is dominated by transnational corporations both in terms of content and form, which means that even forms of cultural production that contest this dominance can only appear in relation to the supposed legitimacy of transnational corporate production. Because these mechanisms of control are precisely what establishes control, access to the information that maintains and produces them must be shored up through legislative and juridical practice. At the same time, struggles against this dominance, that is to say, sites of dissidence can only appear alongside this dominant regime. Neoliberal practice transfers the infrastructural burden of the state from a supplement to the social needs unrealized by the market, to the creation of a society that takes the economy as its truth. The intense juridical intervention required to maintain the market as truth leads to an “economic-juridical order” as the space in which neoliberalist practice takes place. The articulation of this order across different spatialities is intertwined with local histories, resistance and imaginaries in a way that suggests there is no monolithic neoliberalism.

Specifically, I address how the economic-juridical order cuts through the field of literary production both as a means to demonstrate how it affects the form and content of literary texts, but also how literary texts position themselves through a process of collective production as dissident sites in a material sense. Because my discussion spans the seventeenth century to the early twenty-first century, I need to be clear up front, that what I am arguing is that only in the late twentieth century, with cultural neoliberalization and the function of authorship within this framework does anonymous authorship emerge as a dissident practice within capitalist production. Within the field of literary studies there is a tension between materiality and representation. The literary object, as a representational object, occupies a strange status as both an object-in-itself, that is following its own internal aesthetic rules, and an object that represents

some other space—either imaginative or in relation to a given “reality” that precedes its representation. As a material commodity, however, the literary text stands in some relation to the book trade by virtue of the fact that the market is the space in which it is produced and circulates. The focus on inherent aesthetic production, on the forms and styles internal to the text, in isolation from any specific object outside its language, only engages with the text as an aesthetic object. Literature, in this sense, is either imagined as a reflection of, response to, or expression of a given “reality,” but never a material act in its own right.<sup>13</sup> In other words, critical interpretation remains embedded within a range of disciplinary ideas, rather than material practices, a “superstructural” realm, which either maintains or opposes the dominant form of material production only on an aesthetic level. Literary discourse's own relation to the materiality of its production occurs at some distance, in some exteriority, which makes it inarticulable within its own analysis. Frederic Jameson, for example, imagines “postmodern culture [as] the internal and superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination” (“Postmodernism,” 57). But it is precisely this idea that literary production is a superstructural activity, that it is simply an “expression” of an economic infrastructure, or force of production, that critics like Raymond Williams attempt to dismantle. Williams claims that the infrastructure and the superstructure must be thought as an intertwined whole whose ultimate roots remain material. He writes: “any ruling class, in variable ways though always materially, produces a social and political order. These are never superstructural activities” (93). Thinking literary production solely within the realm of superstructure (or aesthetics or ideology) minimizes its social function to either a reflection on, or a reflection of, the actual material processes of production. While he attempts to exit this particular box, Williams still suggests that there exists an autonomy particular to cultural production:

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<sup>13</sup> Through the concept of the signifier, some writers, such as Julia Kristeva (*Desire in Language*) and Rosalind Coward (*Language and Materialism*), attempt to deconstruct the material/representation tension.

all these active experiences and practices, which make up so much of the reality of a culture and its cultural production can be seen as they are, without reduction to other categories of content, and without the characteristic straining to fit them [...] to other and determining manifest economic and political relationships (111)

It is, however, this idea that cultural production, specifically literary production, can at some level exist as an autonomous field able to construct its own forms of both expression and content external to its position within the larger socio-economic and political fields that is untenable if the question of textual materiality and authorship's function as a practice is to be taken seriously.

Pierre Bourdieu offers a more nuanced version of how autonomy works within the field of cultural production. He suggests that analysis of a particular field involves three “connected moments”: (i) the position of the field in relation to the field of power; (ii) the relations between agents or institutions who compete for legitimacy within the field; and finally (iii) the *habitus*<sup>14</sup> of the agent within the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 104-105). Specifically, the field of cultural production, while being “contained within the field of power [economy, politics]...possess[es] a relative autonomy with respect to it” (“The Field of Cultural Production,” 37). Bourdieu’s positing of a “relative autonomy” is important in a number of aspects, most significantly the way he constructs the relation of the field to the field of power as one of an inverse relationship. He claims that the field of cultural production “is at all times the site of a struggle between the two principles of hierarchization: the heteronomous principle, favourable to those who dominate the field economically and politically (e.g. ‘bourgeois art’) and the autonomous principle (e.g. ‘art for art’s sake’)” (40). This notion of struggle is central to Bourdieu’s thought, but it locates itself as

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<sup>14</sup> Habitus is a complex concept that attempts to account for individual production within socially constructed logic. Bourdieu explains: “The structure constitutive of a particular type of environment (e.g. the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition) produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively ‘regulated’ and ‘regular’ without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor” (*Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 72).

internal to the field. For example, the desire to produce forms of literature that reflect back on other literary forms is, from Bourdieu's perspective, an attempt to legitimate a dominant form within the field of literary production. And it operates in relation to the field of power only to the extent that it achieves legitimacy within the field of literary production, that is to say, its effects on the field of power are mediated through its position in relation to the field of literary production. While this theoretical vantage point is useful in describing the internal positioning of the author in relation to other "competing" notions of authorship, it neglects the fact that authorship is a concept that is not merely, or primarily, an aesthetic form, but is located immediately within the economic-juridical order. Self-reflexive anonymity takes up a position that both attempts to attain legitimacy in the literary field and to produce itself as a dissident site in relation to its function as a means of trade regulation.

The economic-juridical order of neoliberalism has historically brought elements outside the traditional field of economics inside its domain by using the economy as a site of truth, as David Harvey writes: "Neoliberalization has meant, in short, the financialization of everything" (33),<sup>15</sup> and Foucault points out that "it is not economic theory but this place [the market] itself that from the eighteenth century became a site and a mechanism of the formation of truth" (30). In becoming a site of truth, the market began to form the basis for an analysis of all sectors of life. But the market, as Foucault further reveals in his analysis of twentieth century German ordoliberalism<sup>16</sup> and American neoliberalism, is not a natural site. It is one which is itself produced, or artificially maintained. Leitner, Peck and Sheppard make a similar qualification that neoliberalism "did not emerge spontaneously from innate human desires to truck, barter, and exchange; nor was it generated as an inevitable by-product of the regulatory needs of

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<sup>15</sup> This does not mean, as Peck and Tickell point out, that the process by which the market assumes a central importance, is everywhere the same. Rather, because it happens in different spatial sites, it adapts to the specific locale and articulates itself in different ways. See "Conceptualizing Neoliberalism, Thinking Thatcherism" in *Contesting Neoliberalism*.

<sup>16</sup> Ordoliberalism is the name given to the Friburg school of economic thought that emerged in Germany in the aftermath of Nazi Germany. It is named after the founding journal of the school, *Ordo: the Annual Review of Economics and Social Order*, founded by Walter Eucken.

financialized capitalism. It is, above all, a *constructed order*" (314). Henri Lefebvre notes that "Reproduction (of the relations of production, not just the means of production) is located not simply in *society as a whole* but in *space as a whole*. Space, occupied by neo-capitalism, sectioned, reduced to homogeneity yet fragmented, becomes the seat of power" (83). In other words, the relations of production are both produced within a given space and participate in that space's reproduction as a site. The site of social production, however, in the postmodern era,<sup>17</sup> appears as an absence. "The decentralization and global dispersal of productive processes and sites, which is characteristic of the postmodernization or informatization of the economy," write Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, "provokes a corresponding centralization of control over production" (297). Thus, production occurs, not through a hierarchical chain, but along a network, what Alexander Galloway calls a "distributed 'horizontal' meshwork" (24).<sup>18</sup> And what is being produced is not only the product (information, services), but the spatial site of the horizontal network: "At the pinnacle of contemporary production, information and communication are the very commodities produced; the network itself is the site of both production and circulation" (Hardt and Negri 298). What this means for my analysis of authorship is that authorship is produced as a site which reproduces the relations of production

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<sup>17</sup> Postmodern era refers to a rough historical paradigm of economic production that I use interchangeably with globalization, late capitalism, multinational capitalism, information age, post-industrial, but which refers at the end of the day to a "paradigm in which providing services and manipulating information are at the heart of economic production" (Hardt and Negri 280).

<sup>18</sup> Galloway distinguishes between decentralized and distributed, claiming that the distributed network has "no central hubs and no radial nodes" (33). Its distributive nature is what makes it dangerous: "A distributed architecture is precisely what makes protological/imperial control of the network so easy" (25).

and simultaneously produces a site through which dissent appears, not as an authenticity that is beyond such relations, but which must be constructed through them.<sup>19</sup>

Neoliberalism, then, is a governmental technique that produces its own spatial conditions of possibility; it produces an economic-juridical order within which we must situate cultural production, not as a mediated site, but as immediately connected to the social-spatial site of production. In other words, while it maintains some symbolic value, the field of cultural production is also immediately material. The field of cultural production—while it has, in its self-reflexivity (invested as it is with the ideas of truth, beauty, identity), attempted to distance itself from the market as an autonomous site—is continually produced as part of the economic-juridical order. It comes as no surprise that literature, as an element of the cultural field, has its modern roots in the market (though the relationship between literature and the market can best be characterized as love-hate). The institutionalization of book trade practices, through such legislative acts as copyright, intervenes within social relations to construct a framework of entrepreneurial competition. Through these practices literature exists within a field of commodity production, as private property which makes possible the emergence of the professional author. In creating and then protecting the literary product—the text—as a form of private property, the economic-juridical order institutes the necessary conditions for the creation of further cultural production of a particular form that both reflects and solidifies the interests of the individual over the collective. In order for competition to function unimpeded by state restrictions, private

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<sup>19</sup> Foucault argues that this word may be “exactly suited for these forms of resistance that concern, set their sights on, and have as their objective and adversary a power that assumes the task of conducting men in their life and daily existence” (*Security, Territory, Population*, 200). Ultimately, however, he settles on the use of the term “counter-conduct.” His primary reason for this shift is that he is not sure dissident or dissidence incorporates something like madness—which is not necessarily consciously political—but is a form of counter-conduct that opposes the dominant mode of behaviour. While I find his reasoning sound, I find it difficult to employ the term “counter-conduct” as an adjective that describes the forms of cultural production that we will engage with in this dissertation. As a result I retain the use of “dissident.”

property rights must be asserted and maintained through a juridical framework.<sup>20</sup> The author, as a figure with a direct relation to the text's status as property, is a central site in the commercial production and distribution of the text. This urge to juridical intervention as a means to consolidate the site of commercial interest is what I call the dominant form of literary production under neoliberalism.<sup>21</sup>

But literature also, as I intimated, turns against the dominant form of production. It locates itself outside of its market relations as an autonomous site. It holds itself up as an object of truth or beauty, and it turns to its aesthetic form as a means to establish its value outside of its economic exchange value. In this sense, literature defends the importance of the imagination, or art, as opposed to the economic infrastructure as the guiding principle in social development. For example, Romantics held up the intrinsic value of the individual as a locus of truth against the mass industrialization of literature. Modernism's complexity of language, its defamiliarization and formal experimentation, similarly, are employed to arrest the mindless and unreflective appetite with which the public consumes its artifacts. At its heart, the aesthetic reflection of literature, that is to say, the way literature theorizes itself, is an autonomous site with its own independent modes of production. Literature reflects back on its own being, but its being comes about by its relation to itself as art. Thus, literature is never the solitary production of a private individual, but the manifestation of a social relation. This social relation appears within the text as its conversation or dialogue with other cultural texts. The actual material processes of literary production more accurately reference, in opposition to the neoliberal conception, a form of

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<sup>20</sup> This framework, Hardt and Negri argue, is done at a global level, which they describe as the manifestation of Empire.

<sup>21</sup> While copyright law comes into being in the eighteenth century, the ways in which it has developed and changed up until the contemporary moment mark a shift away from the original conception of the laws. This point will be developed in the later chapters of the dissertation, but for now it should suffice to note that, under neoliberalist juridical policies, the private ownership of texts has asserted its dominance over the collective component of cultural production.

production whose products are the collective property of the culture<sup>22</sup> in which they are produced. It is a collaborative form of production whose function is the creation of a community of co-existence. There is no individual producer, only culturally shared products that are simultaneously material products of culture and the material with which culture produces itself.<sup>23</sup>

This collaborative form of production takes place, however, at the level of thought because literary products are always already caught up in the process of capitalist exchange and thus within the economic-juridical domain as products of capital and under the ownership of the capitalist. Literature is just one more commodity traded on the market no matter how it conceives its origins. Nevertheless, the appearance of what I am calling a “dissident” form of textual production, even if only apparent on the aesthetic level, is significant. It testifies to the fact that within the dominant mode of literary production, one which is itself tied to the economic-juridical order of neoliberalism, there is another practice, one which seeks to transform the social relations of production away from the dominance of economic value. But it is not enough to merely mark out a dissident form within the dominant. What I attempt, in this dissertation, is to establish a problematic that characterizes dissidence in a neoliberal regime, which incorporates an ever increasing diversity of forms into its field of production. For example, the open use name Luther Blissett, which refers within the economic-juridical order to an owner of a literary commodity, also problematizes this ownership through a disavowal of its singular identity at the heart of the name and an aesthetic practice of literary theft, thereby creating a form which functions within capitalism at the same time as it draws attention to the way that capitalist production shapes our understanding of literary production. If this dissident form of textual production is already embedded within a specific economic-juridical order, how is it possible to transform this order

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<sup>22</sup> Culture must be understood here as a form of multiplicity that has neither beginning nor end. It is defined more as a process of creation, than as a final product, so that there is no “authentic” culture, only that which is continually in the process of creation.

<sup>23</sup> More controversially, I might refer to this collaborative form of production as appropriation, plagiarism, piracy or theft. The speculative nature of these comments will be expanded in what follows and more strenuously argued in Chapter Three.

from its position on the inside? How does postmodern appropriation, plagiarism or theft operate within the economic-juridical order of neoliberal capitalism? The political stakes of my project revolve around the question of the transformative potential of dissident forms of textual production. To a certain extent, this dissidence emerges simultaneously with the dominant form and is itself invested in the liberal notion of “freedom.” Carla Hesse argues in her examination of authorship in the French revolution, that the Enlightenment thinker, Condorcet believed “there should be no individual claims upon knowledge as either property or privilege. He imagined an authorless world of free manipulation and circulation of information and ideas” (116). We can see how cultural production of a type that might be classified as collective or social depends, as does the liberal market, on its ability to freely circulate. It is also apparent that Condorcet thought of ideas as something beyond the material realm and thus distinguishes between ideas, or content, and their expression, or formal appearance. Given the contemporary context, where form is content, or to repeat McLuhan’s famous statement “the medium is the message,” this distinction seems antiquated. In a realm where language does not merely represent some signified but relates to the signifying system in which it is itself produced, that it to say, does not point to some object outside the form in which it creates the idea, it would hardly be possible to distinguish the idea from the form in which that idea appears.

And yet, copyright law sets itself up precisely on this distinction. It is not the ideas that are protected, but the expression, or the form, of the idea. Ronald Deazley explains that “Implicit [...] within the very concept of copyright, is the fact that the ideas expressed within any author's work are not copyright protected, and so fall within the public domain” and “in ensuring that ideas, generic plots, themes and so on, as well as certain unoriginal materials, remain outside the private domain, the public domain enables the very process of authorial creation itself” (112-113). My question, however, addresses how *forms* of textual production can be seen as elements of the public domain. It is through the appropriation of form that we can see the ways in which

postmodern aesthetics of plagiarism, appropriation or theft problematize the private property rights invested in copyright law. By blurring this distinction between form and idea, postmodern aesthetics pose the legal question of what elements constitute the form (thus the property of the individual) and draw out the ways in which the economic and the juridical fields institutionalize a particular form of literary production. Aesthetics of plagiarism, appropriation or piracy are not merely aesthetic practices because they undermine and exploit the tensions inherent in copyright and as a result the production of wealth and the modes of social control in a neoliberal regime.

In order to expedite what could be a long discussion, my exploration of the transformative potential of dissident forms of textual production focuses on the figure of the author, and in particular on the figure of the self-reflexive anonymous author. I attach importance to the notion of anonymity because it forces an engagement with the author as a construct, as itself always a fictional creation. Further, I address a specific form of anonymity, one that is defined not so much by its mode, that is whether recluse, pseudonym, or collaboration, as by its relation to the cultural product—the text. And in this sense, to even further refine the object of my study, I will explore “postmodern” texts that undermine their status as original products through deconstructive practice. I am not dealing with a general aesthetic of what might be termed postmodernism (whatever that might be), but rather a specific aesthetic practice that deconstructs the work's place within the larger field of material production and attempts to construct a new social space without the aesthetic/material dichotomy. The author, in this sense, is an extension of a textual aesthetic within the material product. In other words, the author is inseparable from the text, and is in fact itself a text to be read in relation to its “product.” For example, the name of the author is not incidental to the novel but bears a contextual relation to its aesthetic practice. Griffin points out that “in some books the theme of a lack of identity is pursued so consistently within the text that authorial anonymity needs to be seen as more than a convenient convention of disguise” and in this sense there are “self-reflexive dimensions of an anonymous text in which anonymity

(or pseudonymity) is simultaneously theme and allegory” (13). While I would hesitate to suggest that as a text the anonymous author is “theme and allegory” because this would position my analysis on an ideological or superstructural level, there is a certain sense in which the author should be thought of as part of the textual aesthetic.

At the same time this fictitious being, or this aesthetic production (the author), is linked to a system of private ownership that marks off the boundaries of the work that it produces. Foucault notes that the name of the author “has no legal status, nor is it located in the fiction of the work; rather, it is located in the break that founds a certain discursive construct and its very particular mode of being” (“What Is an Author?,” 107). What he attests to, without drawing out the full significance, is that authorship has one foot in the aesthetic realm and one foot in the juridical (material) realm without being entirely determined by either. It is this relation, the appearance of an aesthetic construct within the material realm of the economic-juridical order, that is to say, of a fictional entity operating at the level of the real, that gives force to anonymity as a dissident practice.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, what needs to be mapped out is the political dimension of the social space created by postmodern aesthetics. Contrary to the Marxist claim that postmodernism, in its parody or pastiche, empties out the political content of an avant-garde tradition,<sup>25</sup> I want to stress the importance of its political aspects as they relate to authorship. Certainly, there are elements of parody in postmodern aesthetic practice, but they are neither its defining features, nor those of central importance in my argument. For my purposes, it is best to engage with “postmodernism” as a certain flattening out of the tension between material and aesthetic. This flattening, this extension of the aesthetic field to elements beyond the immediacy of the book—for instance to the author—does not merely reflect upon literature, but institutes itself as a cultural

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<sup>24</sup> In this sense, my project doesn’t so much refute Foucault as explore this issue of authorial anonymity as it relates to its practice within a capitalist economy in the late twentieth century. I want to draw out the complexities involved in authorship that Foucault attests to by engaging with authors who produce their anonymity as a textual practice.

<sup>25</sup> See Terry Eagleton, “Modernism, Postmodernism, Capitalism.”

practice, that is, as a form of textual production that directly and immediately operates as part of the economic-juridical order. In particular, I am thinking about the way in which a text that emphasizes the collective component of its production reproduces this aesthetic within the figure of the author, and at the same time, performs a regulatory function that “is linked to the juridical and institutional system that encompasses, determines, and articulates the universe of discourses” (What Is an Author?,” 113). For example, Alberto Caeiro's *The Keeper of Sheep*, which deconstructs the unified subjectivity at its core at the same time as Fernando Pessoa's heteronymic project<sup>26</sup>, of which Caeiro is a part, reproduces this deconstruction in the figure of the author. The point is that the figure of the author has an immediately political dimension—and not only at the aesthetic level—but within the economic-juridical order by the way in which it enters the institutional framework of literary production as private property.

This extension of the aesthetic into the material must not be thought of as the aestheticization of the actual relations of production. Rather, this extension functions to deconstruct the binary relation, and make the dissident cultural practice, that is, the process of collaborative production, appear in its material relations. It should be thought as a politicization of aesthetics, a putting to work of an aesthetic in the material realm.<sup>27</sup> As a methodological point it is important to understand that my discussions of aesthetics do not confine them to a particular realm. Rather what I am attempting to describe is the appearance of texts—as material objects—through their networks of production, and in so doing I must take into account the inter-relations of diverse fields. In order to do so, however, each one must be laid out on its own, as though it were a separate field in order to see how it is constituted as an object in itself. This “in itself” is always qualified by the fact that “in itself” each field is part of another field. For example,

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<sup>26</sup> Alberto Caeiro is one of Fernando Pessoa's heteronyms, or one of his various persona under which he writes.

<sup>27</sup> For a discussion of the sort of anti-aesthetic I am attempting to map out see Peter Bürger's *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*. His discussion, while it deals specifically with what he terms the historical avant-garde, has important insights for understanding the relation between aesthetics and materiality in the postmodern era.

aesthetics operate within the field of cultural production which operates in the economic-juridical order which produces and is produced by forms of social relations. None of which are isolated, none of which are primary; instead, they exist simultaneously, and in order to understand the ways in which they are intertwined, in which they function to produce a given materiality, it is necessary to isolate them in order to see what they are “in themselves.” From a methodological standpoint, then, this “in itself” does not so much construct an autonomous site as breakdown a series of provisional sites in order to understand the intertwining relations of the whole. Again, even this notion of the “whole” must be qualified by the fact that in writing of a whole, I am actually writing about an open ended movement. Or rather I am speaking of a particular situation where I must confront my own relation to a process that is not yet complete. That is to say, the individual is always “between.” Jeffrey Nealon explains that postmodernism is characterized by “Living on in the between, in the undecided, at the limits, disrupting the will to sameness or truth (as mentioned, disrupting the metaphysical question ‘What is it?’)” (83). Thus, in mapping out this “whole” through the different (but related) fields of aesthetics, cultural production, economics, law and politics I am not tracing the question of what, at the end of the day, “it” is, but, on the contrary, attempting to account for how this open ended whole functions as a means to locate dissident sites.

In terms of the framework for my argument, that a particular self-reflexive form of anonymity acts as a dissident form of textual production in the economic-juridical order of neoliberalism, I will begin with the smallest possible unit of analysis, the literary object itself—the text. Again two points must be made. First, I am not talking about a general theory of text, that is to say, the substance of my discussion is not something that can be mapped onto any textual discourse to reveal a primary or originary or authentic mode through which text operates. Second, and arising in some sense from the first point, what I am looking at is a specific self-reflexive aesthetic form (what I have referred to as dissident cultural practice) that can be construed as an open text. It is open in two senses: 1) that it is decentralized, there is no

transcendental signified<sup>28</sup> and this “emptiness” or “absence” is explicitly thematized or theorized within the text; intertextuality, collaboration, piracy, plagiarism, appropriation or theft are its modes of production; and 2) that this “absence” necessarily locates the text in relation to other fields of production. From an analytical point of view, what this means is that my engagement with the text as an object is not at the level of what it means, but rather how it operates both in relation to its own internal mechanisms and its relation to these other fields which are both internal to the textual discourse and constituted as its external border. None of these fields, however, can be seen as the primary site, or originary ground, of the text and, as such, my analysis takes place at the level of the text's appearance, or its surface.

The text, then, opens out into “other” texts, that is, it extends itself beyond the borders of the “book.” Or rather, it is always already itself part of another sphere of production, that there is no original ground other than that which appears. In extending this aesthetic of the open work to the figure of the author I am deconstructing the relation of production traditionally seen between the author as producer and the work as product.<sup>29</sup> The author becomes part of the text (or another co-extensive text), but it is itself, like the text, not confined to itself; it also emerges in different sites of production, like the apparatuses of the literary field (reviews, editors, scholars, awards) and the commercial book trade practices, including copyright and marketed biographies. In order to analyze this relation, again like that of the work, it is necessary to investigate the modes of production internal to the figure of the author as well as the social relations of production in the field of literary production, most specifically within the economic-juridical order. The internal mechanisms, here, however, are themselves something which are subject to deconstruction from

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<sup>28</sup> The absence of a transcendental signified is a central component of post-structural theory. In particular, the notion stems from Jacques Derrida's work: “it was necessary to begin thinking that there was no center, that the center could not be thought in the form of a present-being, that the center had no natural site, that it was not a fixed locus but a function, a sort of nonlocus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play” (“Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences,” 80). In a practical sense, the language associated with the “open text” engages in the play of its signifiers without ever being identified completely with a single signified.

<sup>29</sup> Of course, this “tradition” has been severely eroded by post-structural accounts of authorship as an effect of discourse. See Seán Burke's *The Death and Return of the Author*.

the outset. For example, a writer like B. Traven produces numerous “authentic” biographical narratives which when taken together highlight the constructedness of the feigned authenticity. One of the features of anonymity that I explore is the way in which the author seldom speaks in its own voice precisely because it is the idea of the uniqueness or the originality of its “own” voice that comes into question through their aesthetic. Included then in the construction of the author are a whole series of what I call para-literary texts that seek either (if critical work) to determine the meaning or identity of the author-text, or (if autography<sup>30</sup>) to dissemble the very identity or meaning which is in question. Thus, my examination in this area refers to correspondence, judicial cases, media appearances, book introductions, biographies, impersonations, fictionalized portraits written by other writers, critical work by the authors themselves, or even the origins of the author's name itself. The picture of the anonymous author that emerges, while undoubtedly a construct, is not an aggregate that unifies a whole out of fragmented parts. It is, like the text itself, a whole which is defined more by its multiplicity, than by its unity. This authorial construct, this open-ended aesthetic that is part of the work itself, further extends into the field of literary production through its material relation with economic-juridical order by playing off the neoliberal function of the author as an original producer of a literary commodity.

I recognize the potential methodological danger in this particular conflation of the aesthetic and material forms of authorship. David Saunders warns of the great damage “done to descriptive history by this philosophical pressure to collapse the contingencies and complexities of the relation of legal and aesthetic personality into the unity of a necessary process or singular direction of cultural development” (212). In order to prevent this “collapsing” of the aesthetic, or

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<sup>30</sup> In using this term “autography” I am referring to H. Porter Abbott's claim that autography is a “larger field comprehending all self-writing and that autobiography is a subset of autography comprehending narrative self-writing and more specifically that most common narrative, the story of one's life” (2). I like this distinction because “autography” encompasses even those aspects of writing, so essential to constructing reclusive lives, that are not direct narratives about “one's life,” but which nevertheless help to create and shape the means by which that life is understood.

cultural, and the legal, Saunders engages with copyright as the object of “the regulation of printed books as traded commodities” (213). In a similar sense, and it should be obvious at this point, my engagement with aesthetics is less an attempt to denote an aesthetic personality, or even an aesthetic whole, that the law would recognize, than an attempt to theorize a new mode of understanding a relation of singularities to a plural whole.<sup>31</sup> Saunders is adamant that an accurate understanding of the relation between authorship and copyright cannot be a dialectical one between aesthetics and the law. And in this sense, I think he is right. What he misses in his analysis, however, is that the legal sphere is itself not an isolated sphere. Juridical decisions are themselves part of larger networks of production, but Saunders treats the law as though it were an autonomous realm. The law is simply, for Saunders, an economic regulator that upholds “the creative incentives the law serves to bolster” (Carlin qtd in Saunders 229). So while an aesthetic sphere must not simply be conflated with a juridical one, it is important to establish their interconnectedness in order to specifically mark out the forms of cultural production within a neoliberal regime.

However, because, as Saunders asserts and argues against, this form of an aesthetic personality, or a unified subjectivity, is, in fact, a dominant form in (neo)liberal thought, the status of the existence of the authorial name should be examined both in its aesthetic construction and the juridical implications of an independent subject. The question of authorship is conflated with the question of subjectivity as a formal unity of the individual, an aggregate personality determined by a series of texts. In its postmodern articulation, however, the subject, or the author, is not merely an aggregate but is, instead, a relation that is produced through the reading process. It is an unresolved contradiction whose appearance of unity masks the very multiplicity that is its

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<sup>31</sup> In this sense, I am implicitly operating with Jean-Luc Nancy's project to re-think collective social relations according to a model in which existence is co-existence. For a full discussion of this form of thinking community see *Being Singular Plural*. I should note that while my project has affinities with Nancy's book, his book's intense philosophical discourse and grounding is outside the realm of many of my own specific concerns. That being said, it operates below the radar, rather than as an explicit reference to my own work.

essence. In fact, the whole idea of the individual becomes a construction that suits a particular social process of production. Foucault writes in his lectures:

The individual is much more a particular way of dividing up the multiplicity for a discipline than the raw material from which it is constructed. Discipline is a mode of individualization of multiplicities rather than something that constructs an edifice of multiple elements on the basis of individuals who are worked on as, first of all, individuals. (*Security, Territory, Population*, 12)

The form of individualization which occurs in the West, Foucault says, is not so much determined by “status, birth or actions”, but rather by what he calls “Analytical identification, subjection and subjectivization” (184). That is to say, the individual becomes a mode of determining a set quantity of the population, of dividing up a social being into smaller, “individual,” components. In so doing, those individual (autonomous) components become the foundation of a social regime that regulates their material existence through both social production and reproduction and an ideological conceptualization of the appearance of the world in a global sense. In unravelling this construction of the individual as precisely that—a social construction—and further locating authorship as a site upon which this relation is grounded, self-reflexive anonymous authorship opens authorship up to itself, becomes no longer simply a regulatory function, but a site from which the production of dissident social space is possible. In so doing I hope to connect this idea of a dissident form of textual production back to the political content of particular texts by exploring how open access to cultural works is an essential component of the production of a social space defined by values other than competition and profit.

Chapter One describes the historical conditions under which the liberal-capitalist regime of cultural production begins to assert its dominance. It describes a dual movement in this formation: 1) the aesthetic emergence of the romantic author; and 2) the historical conditions of the establishment of copyright. The concept of the romantic author, arising as it does at the dawn of the industrial revolution, at the revving up of the “golden age” of British imperialism, can be seen in two ways. First, as an attempt to situate literature as a cultural product outside its status as

a commodity; in other words, to establish some form of value that exceeds the market value of the textual object. The second arises from the first and, in fact, is somewhat paradoxical to the first: in setting itself up against its commodification, literature reaches outside the economic sphere to an imaginative or transcendental space that sanctifies the individual creator above the process of creation, and at the same time masks the institutional function of authorship as a guarantor of private property. In its sanctification of the individual creator, however, the concept of the romantic author not only masks the institutional function, it also reproduces on an ideological level the idea of the independent subject which is a ground of the “possessive individual” (thus re-inscribing what it sought to escape: the ground of the market). What this chapter further explores is the means by which, despite its pretension to reach a space outside the material, romantic authorship is always already within an economic-juridical order. The second part of the chapter traces the history of the institutionalization of authorship within the economic-juridical sphere through copyright law and the implications of this institutionalization for cultural production. In so doing, I aim to show how the individual as a cultural producer comes to occupy a dominant position in western society. As I am not attempting to chronicle a temporal reading of history, the two parts of this chapter are set up to account for the ideological production of the author in romanticism and then demonstrate what this ideological production masks and reproduces at the material level.

Chapter Two uses the figure of J.D. Salinger to demonstrate how the romantic attempt to create an immaterial space in a transcendental realm in order to resist the commodification of literature is immediately taken up by the material forces of the economic-juridical order of neoliberalism. Salinger is a significant figure in that, as a reclusive figure of anonymity whose image is constructed in opposition to the commodification of literature, he makes a clear distinction between private and public. A closer inspection of this image and the means by which it functions in the economic-juridical order reveals that this image reproduces anonymity's

traditional function of protecting the author from civil society. What is significant, however, about this protection is the way that its very possibility is rooted in an institutional framework whose *raison d'être* is to facilitate entrepreneurial competition on an economic level. While the ultimate claim of the chapter mirrors that of the first chapter, that is, romantic authorship masks and reproduces the individual subject within the material sphere, what this more specific analysis concretizes is how the aesthetics of the literary product, extended to the author, function when they enter the material realm. If Chapter One is the context, then Chapter Two, focused as it is around a particular text, is the concrete application.

Chapter Three, the first chapter in Part Two, shifts the focus of my analysis from the dominant form of cultural production in neoliberalism, to the dissident. It does so by first contextualizing a postmodern aesthetic of appropriation in relation to the shift towards textual materiality in modernism. Modernism, like romanticism, can be understood as an attempt to evade or put at bay market forces, only unlike romanticism, it roots its opposition within the form of textual production itself. Thus, the prevalence of theories of impersonality that claim the concept of the author is not important for understanding how text operates. What these theories and even the modernist focus on the text negate, however, is precisely the author-figure. There is little attempt to grapple with the way in which the name of the author continues to function in a material sense, despite its textual repudiation. The postmodern conception of the work, or text, on the other hand, refuses to solidify its borders to the extent that it breaks down the boundaries that distinguish art from other forms of cultural or economic production. The postmodern work breaks down the distinction between aesthetics and materiality by taking as its object the problematics of the concept of materiality and its relation to representation. In deconstructing the notions of originality and authenticity, postmodern aesthetics take head-on their own embeddedness within other fields of production. But there is no singular aesthetic mode by which they attack the dominant form of literary production. Instead, postmodern aesthetics implicate their own

problematic production within larger structural narratives at the same time as they attempt to reveal this problematic as a central critique. Ultimately, this chapter lays out the theoretical context for my engagement with the author as a text, but not as a text that reveals its unity; rather, as a text that constructs itself in its “otherness,” that is constantly a collaborative practice between its self and its others. What needs to be explored are the means by which contemporary juridical accounts of textual property deal with appropriation, parody and plagiarism in order to minimize the political threat they pose to the domain of private property. At the same time this chapter explores the means by which self-reflexive anonymous authorship constructs the public domain as a material site of open access to literary works for the purpose of cultural creation.

The two final chapters return to “individual” authors as a means to explore how the self-reflexive anonymous author functions in practice as an extension of an aesthetic into the economic-juridical order. Chapter Four looks at Thomas Pynchon and in particular how his textual production lines up with the anonymous construction of his authorship. My analysis in this chapter begins with a reading of *Mason & Dixon*, a novel which confronts the relation between mapping unknown territories and the rational organization of American space around the time of the American revolution, that isolates its self-reflexive function at the level of narrative. I argue that the novel reflects on its own language use and its incorporation of other texts as the materials of its production in a way that mirrors the discourse about mapping in the content of the novel. By suggesting a level of complicity between the privatizing function of Mason and Dixon's mapping and the narrative's own writing, the novel enacts at the level of form, precisely the tension it describes at the level of content. But I take this notion a step further to explore the way this aesthetic tension operates within the anonymous construction of Thomas Pynchon's own name in both the field of literary production and the economic-juridical order. In short, my claim is that through his anonymity, Pynchon opens the possibility of creating other Pynchons and therefore reveals his own authorship to be less the manifestation of an individuality than a

construction that is not entirely controlled by the person Thomas Pynchon. The collective nature of this authorial construction has implications for the legal questions of copyright and the means by which literary production is envisioned through copyright and how copyright limits access to the public domain. My contention is that Pynchon's anonymity is a practice that presents itself as a dissidence at the economic-juridical order of capitalism. That being said, what is characteristic about Pynchon's relation with this capitalist order is that it appears not so much in Pynchon's explicit works, but rather as an effect of his anonymity. In this sense, my reading of Pynchon is not so much of an intention behind the construction, as it is an attempt to grapple with the effects of his anonymity beyond a merely aesthetic confrontation.

Chapter Five, on the other hand, while also dealing with an individual case of the anonymous author, is more explicitly theorized in terms of the way in which authorship functions in the construction of the public domain. By examining the Italian collective, Luther Blissett/Wu Ming, I am able to draw out some distinctions between the practice of anonymous authorship in the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries, which have to do with the very form of their engagement as opposed to that demonstrated in Chapter Four. Blissett's 1999 novel, *Q*, a novel which chronicles the struggle to create a social form of organization based on communal sharing of resources amidst the larger framework of the Protestant revolution in Germany, Belgium and Italy, is self-reflexive in the sense that it not only incorporates other texts into its own production, but it also takes as part of its content the production and distribution of printed materials through the emergent capitalist markets. In this way, the materiality of the book trade and the possibilities for different forms of engagement are part of the content, but this content cannot be thought outside *Q*'s own process of production in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. In particular, I articulate the way in which their anonymous authorship functions as a textual dimension of their work to problematize the notion that the novel is an individual product. While this may seem obvious in the fact that the name refers to a collective rather than an individual, this fact on its own does not prevent the

name from being taken up into the economic-juridical order as a single name that protects the work as a literary property. Wu Ming are vocal about their stance on cultural reproduction, viewing the work as part of a material for further expansion, and so I argue that their name, as more than merely the reference point to an owner, in its openness reproduces the open context that would allow for an open public domain along the lines of a cultural or intellectual commons. Again, though, like in the Pynchon example, it is only when the analysis goes beyond the limited field of aesthetics and examines how the textual aesthetics of the work operates through authorship and its function in the economic-juridical order that it becomes possible to see how a dissident form of literary production is already in practice and how it comes into conflict and contradiction with the dominant neoliberal trajectory of capitalist control of the print trade.

## PART 1: ROMANTICISM AND CAPITALISM

### Chapter 1: Writing in the Author

*Let each pursue his own in joyful confidence,  
in the most individual manner; for nowhere  
has the right of individuality more validity—  
provided individuality is what this word defines:  
indivisible unity and an inner and vital coherence—  
than here where the sublime is at issue. From  
this standpoint I would not hesitate to say  
that the true value, indeed the virtue of man is  
his originality.*

---Ludovico, *Dialogue on Poetry* by Friedrich Schlegel

To begin with the obvious, contemporary questions of authorship do not arise out of nowhere.

The author, as a figure, can be traced back through its various articulations in Plato, Aristotle,

biblical scholarship and the emergence of secular writers in the early modern period in Europe.<sup>1</sup>

With some notable exceptions, what characterizes thought about authorship from the Greeks to the late eighteenth century is that the author is not the source of the work. In what I will call traditional authorship Seán Burke explains, “The oldest conceptions of authorship view literature as either an imitative or an inspirational discourse” (5). What this means is that the author is understood to be a mimetic reproducer of a given world or a vehicle through which some other force moves to represent the world. In either case, the origin of the literary-object resides elsewhere, either in an objective world or the force of the divine, as in the writings of the prophets. I am not going to delve into the long and problematic history of this conception of authorship; instead, I mark it out in order to distinguish what has been characterized as a significant shift in thought about authorship that comes with the dawning of romanticism. Burke

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<sup>1</sup> Seán Burke explores the different manifestations of authorship all the way back to Plato's banning of the poets from his republic in *Authorship: From Plato to the Postmodern: A Reader*. In a more sustained argument starting from medieval authorship, A.J. Minnis explains that theological scholarship, taking as its subject Scriptural text, effectively bypassed the author as a component part of textual production. The author was understood as an instrument through which God works. The focus, at this time, of interpretation is allegorical. The personality of the writer has no bearing upon the text: “The historical context of a Biblical text, including information about the life and times of its writer, was believed to be of far less importance than the spiritual significance of the words on the page” (47). Minnis traces the development of the Latin term “*auctor*,” which he translates as writer with authority, in order to suggest that the shift towards a literal reading of text required a renewed conceptualization of authorship. While God continued to be recognized as the primary author, for medieval scholars “[d]ifferent levels of authorship had been identified: the efficient cause could be double, triple or quadruple, depending on the particular causal process” (84). By distinguishing between these levels the human writer began to occupy a position worthy of study. It is important to keep in mind, however, that these early scholars remained intent on maintaining the authority of biblical *auctores*. The focus on the life of the writer became an important component that allowed for the discussion of literary form and style. Scholars needed to account for the Bible as a whole text with a single divine message *and* as discontinuous text in terms of their formal and stylistic diversity. Hence, they articulated a theory of authorial intention. Human writers, in order to communicate the divine message adopted a “*modus agendi*” or a means of treating their given subject which best suited that subject. For example, Minnis summarizes Bonaventure's commentary on the Book of Ecclesiastes as a text with “a singular *modus agendi* among the works of Solomon because it proceeds in the manner of an orator propounding diverse *sententiae* [deep meaning], sometimes in the person of a wise man, sometimes in the person of a foolish man, so that in the mind of the reader a single truth may be gleaned from the divers sayings” (111). The intention of the author is realized by the form of the text. Minnis demonstrates that the development of literary form and authorship were intimately tied together. He also provides a reference point for the emergence of the conceptualization of the part played by the human author in medieval theory. What is perhaps most instructive about Minnis' study is the way in which he claims that later so-called pagan writers, as a result of the new focus on textual form in relation to the intentionality of the author, began adopting authorial roles as justification of their texts. All of which points to a continuity in theories of authorship.

argues that during this period there is a “power newly assigned [...] to individual consciousness in the creation of the world which it had hitherto been assumed to mirror or represent” (xix). When the romantics<sup>2</sup> examine the literary-object and its relation to a source, they look towards the individual producer as an active agent in the production process. The agency newly attributed to the author affects the nature of our perception of the world. Literature in a broad sense becomes the expression of an individual subject. The search for truth, or meaning, gets re-located from an objective world that exists outside the author-subject, to the interiority of that subject. The individual, in other words, is granted more power in the determination of the literary-object, and the extent to which this individual author can create powerful images, ideas, or works determines the extent to which s/he can affect change in the world. This is, of course, a well-known conception of the romantic author, or the genius who stands above the material world in order to connect with the infinite, and then give the word to the people through his/her own rendering.<sup>3</sup>

Following in the steps of critics such as Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton, what interests me is the emergence of this particular conception of the author at a time when the industrial revolution is in the process of transforming the social and material relations of production in Europe.

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<sup>2</sup> My use of the terms “romantic” and “romanticism” will alternate and distinguish between its aesthetic (lower case “r”) and historical (upper case “R”) denotations. The romantic conception of authorship that I am describing is a particular form that has become dominant as a result of literary scholarship. See Jerome McGann's *The Romantic Ideology* for more specifics on how this happens. During the historical period, a period roughly mapped out as 1760-1830, Romanticism was not marked by the privileged individual author. In fact, as James Raven shows “over 80 percent of all new novel titles published between 1750 and 1790 [in Britain and Ireland] were published anonymously. Only during the 1790s did admitted authorship increase, but even then the majority of writers (some 62 percent over the entire decade) hid behind an anodyne title-page mask, with many of the anonymous novels bearing a very general and unverifiable ascription” (143).

<sup>3</sup> Many writers contend that the romantic conception of authorship holds considerable sway in current legal, if not literary contexts. See for example Peter Jaszi, who writes that the decision in *Feist Publications, Inc. v. Rural Telephone Service* “wears its values on its sleeve from first to last, its rhetoric proceeds from unreconstructed faith in the gospel of Romantic ‘authorship’” (38). This must be qualified with David Saunders' assertion in which he quotes Whale and Phillips, “For a work to be original [in copyright law] it need not demonstrate novelty: ‘Originality is not to be equated with the creation of something which had not hitherto existed; it is the word used to describe the casual relationship between an author [...] and the material form in which a work is embodied’” (21).

Literature, in the industrial revolution, encounters market forces that construct its value based on its ability to accrue surplus value for those who control the means of production. Faced with its status as one commodity among other commodities, literature attempts to differentiate itself. In fact, we could say that the increased commodification of literature in the late eighteenth century sparks romantic authors to re-invest literature (and especially poetry) with a significance that transcends its commercial value. Raymond Williams points out that “the production of art was coming to be regarded as one of a number of specialized kinds of production, subject to much the same conditions as general production” (*Culture and Society*, 32). In order to distinguish itself, romanticism asserts not only art's, but the artist's (as an individual being) transcendence of market forces as its source of value. This textual strategy can be read as an attempt to resist the forces of commodification by setting the literary object and the writer outside its relation as a commodity. What Marx demonstrates, however, is that within a capitalist mode of production, use-value functions as a mirror of exchange value, that is to say it reflects “nothing apart from its own abstract quality of being human labor” and as such, cannot be situated as an independent value outside the process of capitalist production (150). This reaction, Williams makes clear, is not merely an attempt to create a type of niche market, but rather the expression of “the opposition on general human grounds to the kind of civilization that was being inaugurated” (36). This opposition, or resistance, to the industrial revolution and the social and political impacts of an intensified capitalist production, takes shape in the new figurations of the author as a transcendent subject. The romantic author-subject assumes a presence, that is, a totality of being that lies outside the systems of signification in which it is articulated. Certainly, this notion of a transcendent presence has been critiqued, most notably by Jacques Derrida, and it is not my concern to repeat those arguments. However, this attempt to locate a subject, in particular an author, outside of capitalist production must be understood in terms of its effects.

In this chapter, I argue that romantic theories of authorship, in their reversion to an imaginative space outside of emerging technologies of reproduction as the authentic space of literature, mask the material function of authorship as a regulator of text within an economic-juridical order, and further, they reproduce an ideological form of the independent individual required for capitalist exploitation of class interests. In particular, romantic discourse on subjectivity, interiority and originality locate a unified individual consciousness as the source of production. But it is precisely as the owner of a particular expression that the author is immediately entangled in the economic-juridical order that regulates the circulation of the text as a commodity. Romantic authorship, then, brings together aesthetic and material forms of authorship, but in projecting the image of the former, places the latter under erasure. Romantic authorship as an aesthetic relation to textual production, that is, as a source of the literary product, despite its pretensions to transcendence, is immediately caught up in a liberal-capitalist mode of production that legitimizes an ideology of individuality through its aesthetic practice. Romantic aesthetics contain an attempt to enact a dissident form of cultural production, but what I am accounting for is the ways in which this dissidence, in postulating an “outside” to the economic-juridical order, gets appropriated within a liberal regime as its originating ground. Theories of romantic authorship, then, are complicit with forming an ideological ground of liberal capitalist production because they withdraw to an imaginative space as the source of production. The purpose of this chapter is twofold. Looking at authorship as a site, or text, of economic, juridical, political and aesthetic convergence, I will 1) demonstrate how romantic authorship masks its material function *and* reproduces an ideological subjectivity conducive to liberal capitalist exchange; and 2) unearth the materiality of authorship that gets concealed in romantic theory.

### **The Romantic Author**

The romantic focus on the interiority of the subject as a means to transcend the external, material relations with the world stems, in part and paradoxically, from a philosophical search for an

objective foundation of knowledge which in turn gives rise to a subjective self-consciousness that acts as the origin of knowledge. David Hume's intense skepticism about the human capacity to know external objects in-and-of-themselves lays the groundwork for a philosophical attempt to find a suitable ground for knowledge:

As to those *impressions*, which arise from the *senses*, their ultimate cause is, in my opinion, perfectly inexplicable by human reason, and 'twill always be impossible to decide with certainty, whether they arise immediately from the object, or are produc'd by the creative power of the mind, or are deriv'd from the author of our being. (57)

Romantic thought attempts to synthesize these three bases of knowledge (object, mind, God) within the individual subject. In fact, Immanuel Kant's introduction of *a priori* intuitions that make the external world intelligible gives subjectivity a form of objectivity. His "Copernican Revolution" for philosophy reverses the primacy of the object in the creation of knowledge by claiming that humans know the world only through these *a priori* intuitions about the form of objects. These intuitions take place in the mind and are, as a result, subjectively constituted. He writes: "so soon as we abstract in thought our own subjective nature, the object represented, with the properties ascribed to it by sensuous intuitions, entirely disappears, because it was only this subjective nature that determined the form of the object as a phenomenon" (*The Critique of Pure Reason*, 37). Of objects, in-and-of-themselves, nothing is known. They are knowable to us only through representations in space and time as *a priori* intuitions. Gilles Deleuze points out that Kant's conception of "re-presentation implies an active taking up of that which is presented" and representation itself, as "the synthesis of that which is presented," is knowledge (8). That which is external to the self is no longer governed by the immediacy of its appearance. Rather, the mind itself plays an active role in determining the ways in which subjects represent the world. Through the subjective faculties, especially the understanding, "we are the true legislators of Nature" (16). In fact, representation itself loses its "pure" sense because the subject is an active agent in the production of representation. Representation is the product of a subject who creates.

Thought, in this conception, is not merely a passive, reflecting mechanism that sees and reports an external world in mimetic fashion. The world, in-and-of-itself, is not only the creation of an active mind, but also the representation of the interiority that creates. In other words, knowledge stems from the subject's capacity to sense and understand the external world. Any representation of a world outside the self, in fact, reveals more about the means by which these representations are created than about the actuality of the objects they seek to represent. This does not mean, however, that thought ceases to be mimetic or representational. What shifts, in romanticism, is the object: the subject becomes the object. The mind reflects back on itself as a dynamic process. The active process of the mind, the individuality of the author of knowledge, in romanticism, becomes the marker of a new ground for thought that distinguishes itself from past thought on both the understanding of the self and of its representation. The problem in determining a solid foundation for the creation of rational thought becomes that if all knowledge is subjectively constituted and the author of such knowledge is a dynamic power, then how can there be any "thing" that is purely objective? What prevents knowledge from descending into a state of total relativity where nothing has any more value than any other thing? The source, for Kant following Descartes' dictum "I think, therefore I am," is within a "unity of apperception" or "transcendental unity of self-consciousness" (*The Critique of Pure Reason*, 77).

Kant's concern, however, in his first Critique, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, is to establish the conditions of possibility for knowledge unconditioned by objects. In order to become cognizant of an object, he claims, there is a three stage process that happens simultaneously. First, there is a heterogeneous sensuous intuition, a sort of unorganized mass of sensuous intuitions, then "the synthesis of this diversity by means of the imagination," and finally it is the category of the understanding that provides the conceptions that make knowledge possible (61). The understanding functions as a "unity self-subsistent, self-sufficient, and not to be enlarged by any additions from without" (52-53). The category of the understanding, then, becomes the essential aspect that gives order and unity to the heterogeneity of sensuous intuitions. It is the power which

creates knowledge. What grounds the entirety of thought, for Kant, is that the synthetical process through which objects are understood must occur within a single consciousness:

Synthetical unity of the manifold in intuitions, as given *a priori*, is therefore the foundation of the identity of apperception itself, which antecedes *a priori* all determinate thought. But the conjunction of representations into a conception is not to be found in objects themselves, nor can it be, as it were borrowed from them and taken up into the understanding by perceptions, but it is on the contrary an operation of the understanding itself. (*The Critique of Pure Reason*, 78)

In effect, the ground of thought is self-consciousness, but self-consciousness itself arises as a result of the category of the understanding. And objects are knowable only through this self-consciousness. The self, as constituted by self-consciousness, is the being that makes possible all thought; without the unity of self, there is no power to organize sensuous experience. Andrew Bowie, however, asserts that the problem with this conception of the self is “that there is no explanation of what makes these representations *mine*” (21). In other words, thought and being are inseparable without any corollary conception of how representations exceed the creative subject. Nevertheless, it is this type of self-sustaining identity in self-consciousness that functions as the foundation for all thought and the production of thought. For Kant, this active mind that upholds the representation requires a unified consciousness that is both subject to *a priori* rules and subjects the phenomena to its understanding: “All phenomena exist in one nature, and must so exist, inasmuch as without this *a priori* unity, no unity of experience, and consequently no determination of objects in experience, is possible” (*The Critique of Pure Reason*, 141). The subject, as it were, is the originating ground of all thought. Without the subject there is no knowledge of the existence of external objects, they are formed as a result of the unity of apperception.

The Kantian “Copernican Revolution” sets the stage for a literary criticism and cultural production that distinguishes itself from the mimetic. In romantic thought, the literary-object becomes the expression of the individual's interiority. Kant's *The Critique of Judgement* helps to

usher in this shift through an explicit treatment of art. If I am going to recognize this shift towards the subjective, towards an expressive theory of literature, then it must be stated that it is not Kant's intention to establish the primacy of the subject at the expense of the object. As Gilles Deleuze points out, in Kant's analysis of art "mature classicism and nascent romanticism are in a complex equilibrium" (57). In *The Critique of Judgement*, however, Kant establishes a philosophy in which aesthetic judgment operates within the realm of artistic production. There are two ways, he writes, to see the art-object: 1) as a subjective entity whose form is considered "prior to any concept," or 2) as an objective entity that "is represented as the harmony of the form of the object with the possibility of the thing itself" (*The Critique of Judgement*, 33). The former requires an aesthetic judgment grounded in feeling while the latter refers to a determinate judgment that treats the object alongside its purported concept. For Kant, the aesthetic quality of an object is rooted in the subject: "That which is purely subjective in the representation of an Object, i.e. What constitutes its reference to the Subject, not to the object, is its aesthetic quality" (29). Aesthetic judgment, as one aspect of the larger faculty of judgment, has "the task of deciding the conformity of this product (in its form) to our cognitive faculties as a question of taste (a matter which the aesthetic judgement decides, not by any harmony with concepts, but by feeling)" (35). Art no longer represents in a mimetic sense, but expresses an interior emotion of the subject. For M.H. Abrams this shift from art as imitation to art as expression is what characterizes romantic theory: "the impulse within the poet of feelings and desires seeking expression, or the compulsion of the 'creative' imagination which, like God the creator, has its internal source of motion" (22). The work becomes an expression of the author's original individuality which is unique in-and-to-itself. The literary-object produces, or expresses, the rules that govern its own subjective individuality in an original form. Thus, aesthetic judgment is for Kant "a special faculty of estimating according to a rule, but not according to concepts" (*The Critique of Judgement*, 36). The rule itself might pre-exist the individual subject, but it is not visible or apprehended until it is brought out of its depth by the work of art. In aesthetic

judgment, the imagination and the understanding come together seamlessly without any hierarchical relation: “a representation, whereby an object is given, involves, in order that it may become a source of cognition at all, *imagination* for bringing together the manifold of intuition, and *understanding* for the unity of the concept uniting the representations” (58). Aesthetic reflection, which refers to a process of subjective cognition, reveals the depths of the interior processes of the mind beyond mere concepts.

While for Kant this process is not possible without both subject and object, those writers who were influenced by his work and have come to be associated with carving out the theoretical matrix of romanticism place a greater emphasis on the expressive power of the individual being as the source of art. For instance, Friedrich von Schiller equates the literary-object with the subject, but at the same time it becomes the expression of the poet, as an essential component of an individual interiority that is, in fact, inseparable from the figure of the author: “The object possesses him entirely, his heart does not lie like a tawdry alloy immediately beneath the surface, but like gold waits to be sought in the depths. Like divinity behind the world's structure he stands behind his work; *he* is the work, and the work is *he*” (Schiller 106). While Schiller begins this passage as though it is the literary-object that is of interest, he reverses the terms so that the object is, itself, nothing if not an expression of the author in the work. While Schiller equates the author with the work, the work remains an expression of the author's identity, of that interiority which is hidden from the world and must be revealed by genius. For an understanding of the future implications of copyright and the literary commodity, what is most important to remark about the ways in which Kant's theorization of aesthetic judgment functions beyond his own words is that the individual subject begins to permeate the work as the ultimate source of creation.

Literature, as the expression of an individual subjectivity, becomes an original manifestation of the emotional state of the individual without recourse to a known concept. Celia Lury, in tracing the commodification of cultural products, states that romantic “authorship was

accorded the cultural function of effecting aesthetic discrimination between works: that is, words came to be defined by the quality of the subjective imagination and vision displayed; more specifically they were ascribed originality to the extent to which they were marked by a distinctive individual stamp” (23). The literary-object's own presentation reveals the rules by which it is governed and sets the stage for its originality of vision. The originality of the work is attached to the originality of the author-subject who creates, but upon further inspection, this author-subject is connected to an infinite or imaginative or transcendental realm which acts as the source of that originality. Originality in romantic discourse reveals a depth of interiority in the subject, a relation with the infinite that produces originality in the work. In *The Critique of Judgement*, Kant turns towards a form of judgment that has no prior concept through which to understand it. He claims that a reflective judgment<sup>4</sup> cannot find a higher principle in empirical knowledge because if it did it would be bound to a concept and as a result not reflective. Rather, “the reflective judgement can only give as a law from and to itself” (*The Critique of Judgement*, 19). In effect, Kant delineates a realm beyond determinate concepts, a space where only an original personality can apprehend and communicate the originality of the vision beyond its material manifestation as a work of art.

One such reflective or aesthetic judgment occurs within the realm of the sublime. The sublime is that which threatens to overwhelm, which puts the consciousness face to face with the fact of its contingent existence. The sublime, according to Kant, through the sheer power of its presentation does not immediately produce a feeling of pleasure. In fact, its initial appearance is more akin to fear, but because it is a reflective judgment and only possible at a distance from the object itself, its apprehension occurs in a safe haven. However, this apprehension cannot understand the sublime as a totality only by means of the imagination. In fact, the sublime reveals the inadequacy of the imagination on its own and it is only with the application of reason that this

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<sup>4</sup> An aesthetic judgment would be a reflective judgment because, as opposed to a determinative judgment, it reflects back on the object that has been created rather than a conceptualization of the object.

inadequacy is overcome and the superiority of reason asserted. The imagination cannot keep up the infinite conception of the sublime, and so as a result, it cannot give the multiplicity of sensations a unified representation without the aid of reason. It does, however, function to quicken cognitive faculties without referring to a determinate concept, or form, as its ground of possibility. For Kant, the sublime is generally found in nature, but he does suggest that it can be found in art as well, provided that art is not purely mimetic. That is to say, it must be an art which follows no rules, but which creates its own rules that arise of themselves within the art-object and without regard to any prior concept or idea. While this would seem to be a form of originality of the art-object, Kant links it back to nature as something outside the subject, by suggesting art of the sublime type is in harmony, not with human faculties but with nature (the infinite or the absolute) itself as something that is beyond the particular subject. Thus, there is a transcendent link between the infinite and the individual who produces the sublime in art.

This individual takes shape in the figure of the genius. Genius works itself out in aesthetic ideas, as an indeterminate ground that produces the capacity for higher principles:

the aesthetic idea is a representation of the imagination, annexed to a given concept, with which, in the imagination, such a multiplicity of partial representations are bound up, that no expression indicating a definite concept can be found for it—one which on that account allows a concept to be supplemented in thought by much that is indefinable in words, and the feeling of which quickens the cognitive faculties and with language, as a mere thing of the letter, binds up the spirit (soul). (*The Critique of Judgement*, 179)

Genius, in this conception, is an individual who is in harmony with a larger principle, the infinite, and whose work, because of this relation, is original to itself. As a consequence it is the subjectivity of the figure of the genius that becomes the focus of analysis in romanticism because the art-object is a representation whose source is the mind. To represent the sublime, that totality which exceeds conceptualization or a particularized form, in a way that makes its power felt, requires the work of an independent and disinterested subject who can create a framework out of which the sublime becomes visible. Friedrich Schelling argues in *The Philosophy of Art* that it is

precisely this disinterestedness that produces a distance which allows the subject to see that “the relative grandeur outside him is the mirror in which he perceives the absolute grandeur within himself” (86). For Schelling, the sublime is characterized as the presence of the infinite within the finite. What this means is that the author-subject, the creator of sublime literature, carries the infinite within him or herself. Ultimately, the sublime, while it originates in nature, or in the infinite, becomes representable as a result of the particular subjectivity of the author. It becomes possible to understand, in this context, the development of the philosophical author, the genius, as intimately interwoven with the development of a transcendental form of subjectivity.

What is important, then, is that in romantic philosophy the work (the text, the literary-object) becomes an expression of the interiority of the author who has a direct connection to the infinite. Art is no longer conceived of as a mimetic activity, but as the active creation of an original work within the interiority of the individual subject. Creation comes about, not by any external stimulus, but through a presentation of the original subjectivity that exists within the author as a part of the infinite. In effect, this connection to the infinite taps into the essence of an authentic humanity at the closest proximity to its origins. This essential human experience becomes possible as an expression only within a world of ideas unrestrained by material limitations. This world of ideas has a universal quality that connects to the infinite, and the finite expression of the idea is created through the author-subject. English romanticism, in particular, places an emphasis on the interiority of the individual as an original expression of the absolute. In *The Prelude*, William Wordsworth claims that it is

Of genius, power,  
Creation and divinity itself  
I have been speaking, for my theme has been  
What passed within me. Not of outward things  
Done visibly for other minds, words, signs,  
Symbols or actions, but of my own heart  
Have I been speaking. (101)

The external, material reality of the world is seen as transitory and the truth of literary expression occurs deep within the subjective interiority. To discuss literary truth is to discuss inner

experience as something which frames the brute reality of material experience. The locus of this inner experience, of an authentic human experience outside its articulations within the social, political, cultural, legal or economic institutions in which it arises, is an intermingling of emotion, imagination, and idea.

In romanticism, the work is an expression of the deeper essence of the subject or the author. Wordsworth's famous statement that "poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" establishes the root of this interiority within the individual's emotions ("Preface to the Second Edition of *Lyrical Ballads*," 444). In fact, in distinguishing his own new form of poetry from classical poetic conceptions he claims that it is "the feeling therein developed [that] gives importance to the action and situation, and not the action and situation to the feeling" (439). The poet, according to Wordsworth, does not seek his/her object in the external image of things, but rather from within as a result of his/her emotional state: "the poet is chiefly distinguished from other men by a greater promptness to think and feel without immediate external excitement, and a greater power in expressing such thoughts and feeling as are produced in him in that manner" (443). While Wordsworth locates the origin of poetry in feelings, it remains ambiguous from where these feelings arise, unless we were to postulate a unified and complete consciousness of the subject itself. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, reading out of his German contemporaries, makes a claim that it is the faculty of the imagination that produces feelings. It should be stated that Coleridge does not rely as heavily on the emotions as the locus of all generative thought and so for him ideas and thoughts are equally important in producing feeling in the individual. Nevertheless the process of creating thoughts and ideas, of making objects visible outside the mind of the individual, occurs through the imagination. While Kant claims that the understanding is the legislative function of thought, Deleuze reminds us that what remains unclear in Kant is "Why does the understanding (and not the imagination) legislate?" (16). Clearly, Coleridge has taken precisely the route that Deleuze suggests Kant does not by situating the imagination as the ground in which all thought and feeling arises:

But in philosophy the INNER SENSE cannot have its direction determined by any outward object. To the original construction of the line I can be compelled by a line drawn before me on the slate or on sand. The stroke thus drawn is indeed not the line itself, but only the image or picture of the line. It is not from it, that we first learn to know the line; but, on the contrary, we bring this stroke to the original line generated by the act of the imagination. (172)

This deep interiority, as it appears in literature, is an authentic representation of the imagination. And while the imagination is at the essence of the individual subject, its essence is its connection to the infinite. This connection, then, transcends material realities and operates at a hidden depth only to be revealed through the imagination. Before I get too mired in Enlightenment and romantic theories of transcendental subjectivity, that on one level attempt to circumnavigate the emerging economic interests of a developing commercial book trade, it is vital to remember that the articulation of these theoretical claims construct an aesthetic, if not philosophical, basis for the author as an owner of a commodity and thus further embed authorship as a function of capitalist practice.

While it may seem, at this juncture, that the imagination acts on its own using the author as a type of medium through which it voices itself, it must be remembered that the imagination does not operate independent of the subject. In fact, it is the self-reflexive consciousness of this process of representation that makes awareness of the operation of the imagination possible. The imagination presents, not an objective reality, but a reality which the individual can perceive and represent in a way that is intelligible by others. For Coleridge the imagination is an active and a passive faculty that both resists and yields to the multiplicity of sensuous images in order to create the individual's original vision: "In philosophical language we must denominate this intermediate faculty in all its degrees and determinations, the IMAGINATION. But in common language, and especially on the subject of poetry, we appropriate the name to a superior degree of the faculty, joined to a superior voluntary controul [sic] over it" (86). This choosing subject, or subjective will, is associated, in Coleridge as with so many others of the time, with a connection

to the infinite. The independence of the individual, exercised through the imagination, is synonymous with the articulation of an autonomous subject who is able to produce an original literary work.

Thus far, I have traced the emergence of the romantic author/subject within a philosophical discourse. The discourse arises in reaction to the search for a philosophical objectivity, and paradoxically posits a concept of an autonomous subject as the ground for any production of knowledge. But as I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, this author-subject also arises within the context of the industrial revolution as a means to position literature as an elevated space above or beyond mere commodity production and exchange. This is an important context to keep in mind because the romantic author/subject articulates itself as a being that transcends the material realm in order to gain a greater or more unified perspective from which to understand the material aspects of contemporary reality. The consequences of this theoretical and practical shift ushered in by romanticism are twofold. First, it brings about an aestheticization of politics; and second it elides the material function of authorship, prioritizing instead an ideological struggle as a basis for material resistance to a dominant mode of capitalist production. Walter Benjamin argues that the aestheticization of politics is the “logical result of Fascism,” (407) and in so doing he associates artistic expression with the “cult value” of the work (391). In this sense, romanticism reverts back to the cult function of art, but locates its value in the figure of the author, rather than the work. David Harvey suggests that “The pursuit of aesthetic experience as an end in itself became, of course, the hallmark of the romantic movement (as exemplified by, say, Shelley and Byron)” (19). In privileging the individuality of aesthetic experience, Harvey further argues that “the romantics paved the ways for active aesthetic interventions in cultural and political life” (*The Condition of Postmodernity*, 19). In the context of German romanticism, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy make a similar claim when they show how “Philosophy must effectuate itself [...] as poetry” (36). What they argue is that in

turning philosophy into an aesthetic product, “this affirmation is immediately inflected towards ethics and pedagogy, or in other words, toward politics” (36). In fact, Lacoue-Labarthe, through a reading of Heidegger, argues that “the 'aestheticization of politics' was indeed, in its essence, the programme of National Socialism” (61). He claims that art, or aesthetics, become a means of presenting the self, or the communal self, to itself in order to reproduce that self in an objective form, thereby marking out its essence or immanence: “In Immanentism it is the community itself, the people or the nation, that is the work following the conception acknowledged by Romanticism of the work as subject and the subject as work: the 'living artwork'" (70). Romantic aesthetics form a ground for political formations in a distorted resistance to economic dominance. In terms of my mapping of romantic authorship, this aestheticization is important because it demonstrates that the romantic turn inwards is not apolitical, but rather attempts to displace the site of politics from the social and economic relations of production to aesthetic and ideological production as a source. It is precisely in this move, however, that romanticism reproduces the very ideology that it seeks to transcend. In locating its critique within the realm of the aesthetic, it leaves the material untouched. It is useful here to reflect on Marx and Engel's critique of Feuerbach. They write:

He does not see how the sensuous world around him is, not a thing given direct from all eternity, ever the same but the product of industry and of the state of society; and indeed, in the sense that it is an historical product, the result of the activity of a whole succession of generations, each standing on the shoulders of the preceding one, developing its industry and its intercourse, modifying its social organization according to the changed needs. Even the objects of the simplest “sensuous certainty” are only given him through social development, industry and commercial intercourse. (*The German Ideology*, 35)

What they explain is that the ideological and the material infrastructure can never be separated, that in fact, the ideological or mental production of society is intertwined with material production and thus political analysis cannot begin from ideological production alone.<sup>5</sup>

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Let me pause here to clarify both the direction in which I will proceed in this analysis and also its larger interest in terms of the overall argument I am constructing about authorship. First, in terms of the development of my argument it is significant that romantic authorship produces itself as something that transcends the material realm, as an alternative to capitalist production because it positions the literary work or text, against capitalism. At the same time, in refusing to acknowledge the materiality of textual production, romanticism neglects the way its own form, its own desire to escape, is immediately embedded within an economic-juridical order of liberal-capitalist production. I have demonstrated how the romantic author seeks to position this “outside” space as a means of resistance, but the question that needs to be kept in mind is, where is it possible for romantic authorship to resist the institutional function of authorship within the system of capitalist exchange? In fact, what this discussion moves towards is precisely how liberal-capitalist production appropriates dissidence as a legitimization of its own material practice, how it occupies that space opened up by romantic thought. The formulation of the transcendental subject gives a sort of theoretical credence to the bourgeois individual subject and this happens precisely because romantic subjectivity basing itself, as it does, on the concept of the self rather than its social relations of production, is co-terminous with the development of the

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<sup>5</sup> Raymond Williams suggests that the traditional, if misinterpreted, Marxist categories “base” (infrastructure in my rendering) and “superstructure” do not function as categories worthy of analysis if they are held to be relatively autonomous. On the contrary, he claims that what is required is an understanding of the “specific and indissoluble real processes, within which the decisive relationship [...] is that expressed by the complex idea of ‘determination’” (*Marxism and Literature*, 82). Determination, in this sense, refers not to fixed laws, but the limits of social processes.

autonomous individual subject. The philosophic production of the subject in romanticism reveals its ideological ground. My project, however, is not merely a critique of romantic failure. Nor is it a sustained explanation of failure. I am looking for the space within capitalist production where “dissidence” can make itself seen, where it can elude its appropriation by acting through the aesthetic and material fields. Romanticism interests me for its suggestion that any resistance to capitalist modes of production, of which the individualization of the subject is a corollary development, must construct an authentic, or original, space which can contest a dominant economic order from beyond its pervasive reach. Capitalism, however, appropriates its outside, it reduces everything to an economic transaction, so that a critique of the modes of production cannot simply begin from beyond the economic relation. On the contrary, dissidence needs to be created from within the tensions that structure and maintain capitalist dominance. I am not talking about a program of reform, but rather of revolution in the sense of a movement that transforms the foundations or origins of capitalist social production. It is not, as sought by the romantics, possible to create a self-presence of subjectivity that outflanks capitalist production, nor is it possible to proclaim the death of the subject because the subject remains a concept produced within capitalist discourse. The dissolution of the individual subject as the origin of production will not come about without attacking its material and institutional formations.

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The romantic author is a divided concept. On the one hand, it is a transcendent being unconnected to the socio-political realities of the day. On the other hand, this being's articulation, existing as it does in the literary-object, is immediately caught up in these external systems it professes to transcend. While the author's subjectivity, in romantic thought, operates at a deeper level than that of the work, it is, nevertheless, the expression of this subjectivity that takes form within the material aspects of the literary-object. However, the actual being of the author, that is to say, the

consciousness that surrounds the work remains beyond the social relations that constitute the material world. The individual consciousness, which exists independent of its material configurations, becomes self-reflexive. The author is a being who has access to a space that is outside transitory realities in order to reflect on itself and communicate itself as it exists in itself. In the philosophic conception of romantic authorship the material world is not the ground of reality; rather, it is a means to communicate an essential truth that is not immediately visible in the world, that is to say, a truth that remains for the author to create.

Romantic authorship/subjectivity presents itself as a heroic subject sheltered from the world in order to gain insight and produce a work that is an authentic expression of the self: the reclusive author. And it is in this presentation that the author-figure embodies its social role. The figure of the reclusive author is developed through both its representation in literary works and its idealization as a way of being for authors in order to create literary works. Among the most famous literary representations of this figure in the romantic period is William Wordsworth's unfinished poem, *The Recluse*. The poem, envisioned to be the main body of work for which *The Prelude* is an introduction, begins with the speaker's retreat into the natural world of Grasmere where it becomes possible for the speaker (Wordsworth's semi-autobiographical self-portrait) to see within himself. There is a sense in which the speaker, the recluse, describes an autonomous world, a pure world unaffected by material culture. There is, in Grasmere,

Something that makes this individual spot,  
This small abiding-place of many men,  
A termination, and a last retreat,  
A centre, come from wheresoe'er you will,  
A whole without dependence or defect,  
Made for itself, and happy in itself,  
Perfect contentment, Unity entire. (*The Recluse*, 224)

The autonomous Edenic garden of Grasmere, however, is not immune to suffering. The speaker symbolically identifies with two swans who inhabit the geographical space of Grasmere:

Not only for their beauty, and their still  
And placid way of life, and constant love  
Inseparable, not for these alone,

But that *their* state so much resembled ours,  
They having also chosen this abode;  
They strangers, and we strangers, they a pair,  
And we a solitary pair like them. (225)

The speaker's identification with the swans ushers the element of suffering into Grasmere when the swans eventually disappear. They are not simply two swans gone missing, but the speaker's reflection. The speaker wonders whether "The Dalesmen may have aimed the deadly tube, / And parted them; or haply both are gone / One death, and that were mercy given to both" and laments "the conjecture harsh / Of such inhospitable penalty / Inflicted upon confidence so pure" (225). This speculation reveals that at the heart of this perfectly autonomous world is what Kenneth R. Johnston calls, "poverty, death and evil" (Johnston 81). In order to account for this, the speaker understands the external world as intertwined with his own mind. In other words, it is not simply that the world has suffering, but that suffering exists first in the mind. The speaker claims:

The external World is fitted to the Mind;  
And the creation (by no lower name  
Can it be called) which they with blended might  
Accomplish. (*The Recluse*, 231).

He goes on to say that, if there are defects within this world, and self-reflexively within the poem or the vision that the poem creates, it is because the poem itself is the product of an individual, all of which becomes part of what the poem expresses: the personality of the author.

The poem, then, takes as its theme,

the Mind and Man  
Contemplating; and who, and what he was—  
The transitory Being that beheld  
This Vision;—when and where, and how he lived. (232).

The significance of Wordsworth's turn back towards the self is reflected in the failure to complete the long poem which had been in the works since 1797. In the 1814 publication of the "Preface to the Excursion," Wordsworth claims the new book is part of a "philosophical poem, containing views of Man, Nature, and Society" ("Preface to the Edition of 1814," 410). Wordsworth, however, was never able to complete the section on "society." Johnston argues that Wordsworth

could not “integrate a vision of [an] imaginatively redeemed society into *The Recluse*, because every time he reached out from the personal to the social he foresaw “powerful images of an implacably self-consuming—or even self-satisfying—appetite in man’s inhumanity to man” (85). Instead of completing the threefold mission of *The Recluse*, he turns back to the self and writes *The Prelude*. Wordsworth, unable to reach a harmony between the self and the social, falls back inside his own inner depth. This is the movement Derrida describes when he writes about the transcendental signified<sup>6</sup>, which for romantics would be the self, and its inability to reach anything outside the text as the origin of discourse. In this sense Wordsworth exemplifies the ineffectiveness of romantic aesthetics when it comes to instituting a social critique. In placing the individual prior to social relations they cannot account for the social relations of production. While romantic authorship presents itself as a transcendental figure it is always already consumed through its textual relations; its only presence is its appearance within the text, not as a language that represents some other, but which is constitutive of its self.

This idea that the figure of the recluse exiles himself from society in order to arrive at a state of purity is further connected to a prophetic tradition where the prophet enters the desert only to return with the word of God. Romantic authors, however, enact a shift so that it is an authentic and original consciousness that is the source which seeks expression; the literary work becomes the expression of this authentic and original consciousness whose existence is beyond social relations. Ultimately, though, using Wordsworth as an example, it is apparent that this mind, this consciousness is never free from the various manifestations of cultural or economic or political systems. The manufacturing of self as outside the actual relations of production is “merely the idealistic, spiritual expression, the conception apparently of the isolated individual,

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<sup>6</sup> See Derrida’s “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences” where he writes: “This [moment when the structurality of structure has to be thought] was the moment when language invaded the universal problematic, the moment when, in the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse—provided we can agree on this word—that is to say, a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely” (280).

the image of very empirical fetters and limitations, within which the mode of production of life, and the form of intercourse coupled with it move" (Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 21). In order to exist at all, in this alienated state, consciousness retreats to a nostalgic dream of purity that supposedly either existed once and has been lost, or, as for Shelley, has yet to arrive and can only come into being at the behest of the poets as the "unacknowledged legislators of the world" ("Defence of Poetry," 529). Romantic authors appear to have, especially in the wake of the reign of terror during the French Revolution, abandoned social and political struggles in literature in favour of a spiritual development that leaves the basic social and political institutions intact. With the increased focus on the power of the individual subject comes a revamped version of what social struggle means. This social and political transformation can occur only when individuals change from within, and in order to develop the self one must withdraw from the external forces in which it comes into being. Jerome McGann draws attention to the ideological function of this critical positioning in the literary works. Ideology, for him, operates at two distinct levels. First, within the author who reproduces as a means of escape the ideological belief that social change begins within the individual consciousness, and second, the literary works themselves which demonstrate the inability to materialize the individual consciousness's power to change social and political institutions. Increasingly, McGann argues, what the romantics display is not a complete disengagement from social and political struggles, but rather a displacement of literature into the arena of ideological production as opposed to direct social and political action. What the works reveal, says McGann, is "that there is no place of refuge, not in desire, not in the mind, not in imagination" (145). And if the flight to some other place of pure transcendence is already not possible at the beginning, if it is not realized in literature, then we must ask at what level are the literary works of romantic writers not expressions of personality or consciousness, and instead, material products that are given force because they come into being inside particular social and political institutions.

The literary work in general and the book in particular, within a capitalist system of exchange, takes shape as a commodity. While the act of writing the work may be a very personal process, its public manifestation takes shape only within a capitalist system of exchange. Within this system, where the literary-object is a commodity, the commodity requires an owner through whom it can circulate in the public sphere. And if the work is the expression of an individual consciousness, then it is the consciousness as a commodity that becomes a property that circulates in a capitalist exchange system. Jane M. Gaines points out that

The Romantic view of art as transcendent and of the artist as a superior being evolved as a means of rescuing the artist's work from the market and from the hostile public for whom mass production might make the work available as it had never been before but at the price of turning it into an industrial product. (59)

Again, since it is not merely the literary work which is at stake in romanticism, since it is, in fact, the consciousness of an individual (owner) that becomes the product through the work, then consciousness itself becomes a product that is reproducible and alienated from the being of the author as a result of capitalist production. For instance, the name of the author takes on a specific function of being the guardian of a particular set of works, of determining how the works are read, assembled, deployed in the public sphere.<sup>7</sup> The name itself, though, is also a commodity, produced by and for capitalist production. At least part of McGann's argument is that when reading romantic works their own self-definitions cannot act as the starting point of analysis because their moments of reflexivity are immersed in their own ideological production. And if this is the case, then even the most self-reflexive of romantic works produce a form of subjectivity that turns inwards with a dream of heroic social struggle while the external manifestation of that struggle (the work) is appropriated by a capitalist system as a means to

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<sup>7</sup> In "What Is an Author?", Michel Foucault writes that it is not enough to proclaim the death of the author since even with its disappearance there remains an authorial function which exists beyond any author's capacity to control the dissemination of works produced under that name. He writes that among other characteristics the author-function "is not defined by the spontaneous attribution of a discourse to its producer, but rather by a series of specific and complex operations" (113).

construct an ideology that functions to reproduce the relations of capitalist production as a natural form of cultural production. Aesthetics, from this perspective, are never outside the material relations of production and the possibility of producing a transformative aesthetic must have a co-existent challenge to the material conditions of production, rather than a relation of transcendence. While the romantic conception of the work, which grounds itself in an imaginative space, is completely at odds with the economic-juridical conception of the work as a commodity, cultural production in romanticism, as the production of works by individuals, conforms to a liberal regime that institutes private property rights in order to create an economic field of entrepreneurial competition.

### **The Materiality of Authorship**

Romantic, or expressive authorship is positioned as a moment of self-reflection, a moment where the individual looks into her/himself and attempts to unearth the original being of creation. In the inward turn towards consciousness as source, however, romanticism abstracts the author, as a figure, from its socio-political, cultural and economic contexts.<sup>8</sup> Authorship needs to be understood in the context of its material relations, by which I mean its function within the institutional practices of the book trade, in particular, and capitalist exchange, in general. Unlike a romantic-philosophical inquiry into authorship, a study of the material relations of authorship does not seek the “real” being behind the work. On the contrary, it focuses on how material forces—trade practices, legal decisions—create the conditions of possibility of the modern

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<sup>8</sup> It is important to note here that my presentation of “romanticism” has largely been constituted as an Anglo translation of European romanticism. As such I have left out its particularly “American” variants. This is neither because I don’t think they are important, nor does it stem from a desire to universalize romanticism. On the contrary, I have tried to isolate certain “key” elements of romanticism that cross national articulations and give a basis for a global use of the term without sacrificing its local manifestations. As a means to supplement my discussion, then, I will point out some of the distinguishing characteristics of American romanticism in the context of its relation to specific material struggles around literary property and the social function of writing.

author. Foucault's seminal essay "What Is an Author?" postulates that modern authorship "is linked to the juridical and institutional system that encompasses, determines, and articulates the universe of discourse" (113). In other words, the author-figure emerges as the owner of text when texts become explicitly identified as commodities. The history of the author's status as the owner of literary property can be traced to the seventeenth and the early eighteenth centuries in the emergence of copyright law. Copyright, while it establishes the author as an owner of a particular literary property, is at its origins a product of trade regulations (or their absence) and the circulation of text in a culture where traditional modes of social control were in the process of demonstrating their inability to keep pace with new forms of subjectivity ushered in by technological change. In other words, the author-owner status is the by-product of a material struggle in the book trade rather than an inherent drive towards the recovery of an original unity of the self. This origin is important because it makes visible how the revolutionary nature of text (that is, its ability to shift, transform, reach broad sectors of society and undermine the status quo) becomes stabilized through the creation of the author as owner. "The author allows," as Foucault postulates, "a limitation of the cancerous and dangerous proliferation of significations within a world where one is thrifty not only with one's resources and riches, but also with one's discourses and their significations" (118). Copyright establishes texts, or works, as commodities—it equates text with private property—and yet, at the same time, attempts to balance this conception of the work with the text as a cultural, and hence public, product. Carla Hesse, in her analysis of authorship during the French Revolution, revises Foucault's central tenet to claim that what the eighteenth century marks out is "a modern *tension* between [...] the author as the original creator and hence inviolable proprietor of his works and [...] the ideal author as the passive midwife to the disclosure of objective knowledge" (117). The name of the author operates as a brand that both sanctions the appearance of particular texts *and* serves as a regulative fiction, or construction, through which works, as commodities, circulate through the market. The inherent tension of copyright, which the author-figure straddles as a boundary, is the tension between art

as collective cultural product and art as an individual commodity whose primary function is the circulation of capital. In this sense it is important, as David Saunders argues, that early copyright legislation such as the *Statute of Anne* (1710), which first articulates in statute law the author's rights, "cannot be explained in terms of the movement of history towards its rendezvous with authorial consciousness" (55). Contrary to romantic conceptions of authorship, the history of authorship is not to be confused with the history of subjectivity; instead, its specific articulations must be contextualized within the social relations of its production in order to understand the function of modern authorship.

The author did not always perform a regulative function in the book trade. In England, prior to the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, texts were produced and circulated through the royally sanctioned Stationers' Company. The Stationers' Company, a corporation comprised of printers and booksellers, was given Royal Charter in 1557, in essence, authorizing it to police and maintain its own regulatory structure for both production and distribution in the book trade. Cyprian Blagden explains that the granting of Charter "laid down [...] that no one in the realm should exercise the art of printing, either himself or through an agent, unless he were a freeman of the Stationers' Company of London or unless he had royal permission" (21). This status was formalized by a series of Star Chamber decrees, culminating in the 1637 decree. This decree guaranteed the Company a monopoly over the book trade in exchange for instituting its own censorship of the press. Copies were licensed by the Company and this licensing both protected the Company members' right to print and guaranteed the content of the work:

he or they that shall allow the said Booke shall testifie vnder his or their hand or hands, that there is nothing in that Booke or Books contained, that is contrary to Christian Faith, and the Doctrine and Discipline of the Church of *England*, nor against the State or Gouernment, nor contrary to good life, or good manners, or otherwise, as the nature and subiect of the work shall require, which license or approbation shall be imprinted in the beginning of the same Booke, with the name, or names of him or them that shall authorize or license the same. (Arber 4:530)

In 1641 the Long Parliament abolished the Star Chamber because of its notorious abuses of power, effectively dismantling the traditional authority which sanctioned the Stationers' monopoly. The ensuing open markets inaugurated an instability that lead to the 1643 "Ordinance for the regulation of abuses in printing" which was later renewed and instituted as the 1662 Printing Act. The Company's reaction to its loss of power demonstrates the nexus of institutional forces at play in the book trade. Their discursive actions—mostly petitions to the government—not only call for the institution of a regulatory body, but an installation of the Company as the arbiter of this regulation. As such they demonstrate, as Ian Gadd claims, "a renegotiation of the Company's traditional relationship with authority, now Parliament rather than the Privy Council" (94). The ordinance itself, as a reflection of the Company's requests, re-establishes legal authority to the Company's position as both guardian and censor of the trade. The reproduction of this power dynamic illustrates the extent to which the emerging modern nation-state is intertwined with print.

Regulation at this point largely meant control over the content of print. The 1643 Ordinance set itself up to prevent "false, forged, scandalous, seditious, libellous, and unlicensed Papers, Pamphlets, and Books, to the great Defamation of Religion and Government" (McKenzie and Bell 89). As the ordinance expounds itself, however, it moves from direct State social interventions towards the economic concerns, claiming that in order to prevent such "abuses of printing" there needs to be a control mechanism against privatization. The "abuse" of printing is also the production of profits from materials that are not owned by the individuals who print them. These private enterprises "have taken the Liberty to print, vend, and publish, the most profitable vendible Copies of Books belonging to the said Company" (89). The Stationers' Company occupied the traditional guild role of trade protectionism, but they were also owners of literary property within the legal discourse that sets the terms of the book trade. Of course, in practice, nothing changed from the period prior to the instability ushered in by the eradication of

the Star Chamber to the establishment and renewal of the Printing Act. According to the Ordinance all books were to be registered with the Stationer's Company thus authorizing ownership of copies. The Stationers' members owned the right to produce copies that were registered with the Company. As Saunders explains, copyright, prior to the Statute of Anne, was "a device formed in and by the book trade for the express purpose of protecting individual stationers' ownership of the right to print copies of works whose titles had been registered with the Company" (48). The Stationers' pushed further, attempting to "consolidate its powers" by insisting on registration: "if others besides printers were going to invest in copies, control of such claims, through the licences granted by the Wardens, was essential" (Blagden 43). The Company's monopoly acted as a self-censoring mechanism that regulated not only the material production of texts, but their dissemination. The Stationers, after the abolishment of the Star Chamber, kept the threat of a freely circulating press<sup>9</sup> under control, and in the process safeguarded the interests of the State. While the State government ensured the Company's ownership and, as a result, profit, through its monopoly privileges, the two bodies were mutually re-enforcing, prescribing a system of ownership that worked to maintain its own legitimacy by means of the Company's censoring function. As the traditional forms of public order, that is, monarchical rule, deteriorated new forms needed to be found: an unregulated press had the potential to disseminate ideas that destabilized social order. The maintenance of social order required an industry regulated textual production that was supported by government initiative.

The Stationers', in making the link between themselves as copy-owners and guarantors of social order, however, argued that they did not merely maintain an old guard order, but rather held in place the conditions of possibility for the creation of a civil society. *The Humble Remonstrance of the Company of Stationer's, London* printed in 1643, just prior to the ordinance regulating the abuse of printing, sets out a clear argument for the Stationers' position as the

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<sup>9</sup> The phrase is meant to capture the rhetoric of the threat. Free press is a misnomer, for regardless of regulation, access to print technology was limited by class, gender, ethnicity, nationality, etc.

cultivator of the public domain. This vision of a civil society, however, holds in abeyance the tension between collective and individual interests because it is guaranteed through a system of private ownership:

The first and greatest end of order is the Presse, is the advancement of wholesome knowledge and this end is meerly publicke: But that second end which provides for the prosperity of Printing and Printers, is not meerly private, partly because the benefit of so considerable a Body is of concernment to the whole; and partly because the compassing of the second end does much to conduce to the accomplishing of the first. (Parker 585)

In fact, the *Remonstrance*<sup>10</sup> makes a specific and concerted claim for private individual ownership over collective ownership. The Company argued that the individual owners, governed by their own economic interests in the trade and their position within the Stationers' Company, were more equipped to preserve the sanctity of the trade as a producer of civil society. In this sense, their argument is part of a transformation of the public/private divide. The role of the public is to maintain the sanctity of a regime of private ownership, which in turn, so the theory goes, upholds the interests of civil society. Civil society, in this sense, is a “concept of governmental technology, or rather, it is the correlate of a technology of government the rational measure of which must be juridically pegged to an economy understood as process of production and exchange” (Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 296). As such, its role—while still functioning within a regulated economy in the seventeenth century—is that of an artificially created entity that institutes a free space of economic relations as a generator of social production. The Stationers' Company recognized a connection between a regulated trade and the production of social order: “A well regulated propriety<sup>11</sup> of Copies amongst Stationers, makes Printing flourish,

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<sup>10</sup> I attach some importance to the *Remonstrance* because of its proximity to the 1643 Ordinance that regulated the trade for most of the seventeenth century. The Ordinance passed parliament two months after the appearance of the *Remonstrance*.

<sup>11</sup> Arber, as the editor, inserts the term “individual ownership” as equivalent to propriety in a previous entry in the same text. See page 587.

and Books more plentiful and cheap; whereas Community<sup>12</sup> [...] brings in confusion, and among other disorders both to the damage of the State and the Company of Stationers" (Parker 587). In this articulation of the cultural value of a regulated press there is a rhetorical shift from the policing and disciplining function of State regulation towards the positive production of mental labour along a distribution network that grounds relations of power in an economic-legislative order. The booksellers and printers are not only in the business of selling books, but of constructing forms of subjectivity that harmonize individual identification with the State identification and create the conditions of possibility for economic growth and State power. In effect, the market and the institutional structures which condition its possibility to function unimpeded by governmental control, in turn, solidify the existence of the state as a body intertwined with forms of economic and cultural production. At the same time they develop their own intricate and expanded markets with new reading materials for new publics that are created through initial industrial production and distribution systems managed by the Stationers' Company. With the passing of the Ordinance and its subsequent renewals up until 1695, booksellers and printers, as an emerging merchant class, gained temporary control of the trade. In adopting a rhetoric of private ownership for the public good the Stationers' Company turned the discourse away from the labour involved in book production towards an elevation of their own importance as owners of text. It is as owners that they will attempt to forward their interests in the over half century of legal debates that follow the implementation of the Statute of Anne.

The 1643 Ordinance was renewed and given the force of a Parliamentary Act in 1662. This Act, known as the Printing Act, was renewed approximately every two years until 1695 when the House of Commons failed to renew it. The Printing Act, like the Order that preceded it, centered around two main issues, which were in fact one in the Act: "control of the press by licensing, and regulation and registration by copy-ownership" (Feather, "The Book Trade in

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<sup>12</sup> Ian Gadd explains that "Community" has legal connotations "meaning the holding of right in common" (95).

Politics" 21). The 1695 Bill attempted to circumvent Stationers' Company authority by disassociating licensing from ownership: the Bill called for licensing, but did not grant the Company copy-ownership. Feather argues that the failure to renew the Act is the result of an attempt to separate the two issues in the Act. Regardless of the reason behind the failure, England entered a period where the press was unregulated as a consequence of an inability to reconcile ownership with control of the public domain. Civil society was, in fact, taking on new dimensions<sup>13</sup> as new forms of print materials circulated along expanding trade routes. Febvre and Martin note that the late seventeenth century, in particular the 1640-1660 period "marks an important change in the history of publishing and even more in the history of the book trade" (243). What they attest to is an expansion of the reading public through new forms of literature: "scholarly works began increasingly to appear in the vernacular, imaginative and popular literature increased and the first newspapers were published" (243). Higher literacy rates coupled with a need to disseminate news across a broader territory meant the development of a bourgeois or merchant class whose emerging power resided in their ability to distribute text to a variety of newly produced markets.

This emerging class not only produced markets, but created forms of cultural production that fostered the development and expansion of their markets. Roger Chartier explains how publishers shaped the markets to augment profitability: "The vast labour of adaptation – shortening texts, simplifying them, cutting them up, providing illustrations – was commanded by how the bookseller-publishers who specialized in that market envisioned their customers' abilities and expectations" (13). But if there were increasing markets and the development of specialized (or we might say popular) texts whose profitability rose according to their ability to reach broader audiences, then control of these markets in England remained rooted in the ownership and

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<sup>13</sup> While Habermas suggests that the public sphere develops in England in the eighteenth century, I would argue, with Zaret, that he is talking about a specific form of public sphere, one which is governed by reason and debate, and that the public sphere is actually born out of a commercial interest which is inseparable from seventeenth century print culture. For more, see David Zaret, *The Origins of Democracy*.

licensing capacity of the Stationers' Company during the seventeenth century. What we see is a shift towards an economic power, a move towards a more extensively market driven economy that exceeds the state's ability to control cultural production. In this sense, David Zaret argues that cultural change was propelled less by identified class interests than the material technology of print to create new audiences and discursive spaces. Such spaces, however, were not outside the economic sphere: "Early-modern printing was a capitalist enterprise that sold its products to a market of readers and depended less than did manuscript production on patrons" (Zaret 135). The failure to pass legislation that regulated the press in 1695 ushered in a period of "piracy," where texts, once printed, became common property, subject to reprint by anyone with the capacity not only to publish, but to distribute the valuable commodity.<sup>14</sup> With an unregulated press, text moved quickly, but because book publication was a risky operation—not only did publishers require sufficient readers to pay costs, but they needed to ensure that no other publishers produced copies at a cheaper rate—there was an instability, a fleeting quality to the appearance of text, which meant that only those texts guaranteed to make a profit would be printed. In practice a free press meant the consolidation of a commodity form whose product was its efficiency at communicating content subject to public approval. The tension between the printed object as commodity and cultural product, between individual and collective ownership is what characterizes the instability of the unregulated press. It is this tension that the Statute of Anne, as the first copyright legislation, inscribes at its foundation.

The establishment of the Statute of Anne ended an intense period of instability in the English book trade by articulating clear terms about copyright of texts. The Statute granted previously published texts twenty-one years protection and texts published in the future fourteen years plus an additional fourteen years if the author is still alive at the end of the first term. What

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<sup>14</sup> Again, I want to note that this capacity to print indicates a significant investment of both physical and mental labour in terms of running a press machine and the knowledge required to operate press machinery as well as the transportation needs of distribution.

is significant about the Statute of Anne is that for the first time in a legal context authors gained possession of their texts:

the Author of any Book or Books already Printed, who hath not Transferred to any other the Copy or Copies of such Book or Books, Share or Shares thereof, or the Bookseller or Booksellers, Printer or Printers, Person or Persons, who hath or have Purchased or Acquired the Copy or Copies of any Book or Books, in order to Print or Reprint the same, shall have the sole Right and Liberty of Printing such Book or Books for the Term of One and twenty Years. (*An Act for the Encouragement of Learning*)

Provided the author has not sold, or otherwise transferred, copyright, ownership of the text remained with the author. The effect of the Statute is twofold: it clearly sets a fixed term on copyright and, as Mark Rose comments, for the first time “authors were legally recognized as possible proprietors of their works” (4). What David Saunders points out is that copyright is not formulated first and foremost as an articulation of the author's or the individual's rights, but rather it is “a matter of circumstances in which certain traditional forms of agency and institutions, dating from Tudor legislation and prerogative, were approaching the end of their effective life even as new forms of agency emerged” that forms the basis of copyright (40). In other words, the formulation of the modern author as an owner of a particular literary property comes into being not as a result of a new found belief in the sanctity of the individual's interiority as represented within text, but as a result of the institutional and material practices and struggles within the book trade.<sup>15</sup> While the Statute certainly marks off the first instance in the book trade practice where the author is set apart as an owner of literary property, it is equally evident that this enactment of the author-owner relation is a by-product of an inherent instability in a transformative period in British socio-political and cultural life.

The Statute of Anne, however, simultaneously set out in law a form of the public domain. The title, “An Act for the Encouragement of Learning,” itself recalls the new focus on a form of

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<sup>15</sup> It should be noted that many of the copyrights at the time were in the hands of London printers and the Act sets out that copyright is transferable, which, in a sense, does nothing to disrupt the status quo business practice.

regulation that benefits the creation and maintenance of civil society. Ronan Deazley points out that as “A purely statutory phenomenon copyright was fundamentally concerned with the reading public, with the encouragement and spread of education, and with the continued production of useful books” (23). In setting a time-line for the ownership of copies, Parliament recognized both the importance of authors as producers and hence as individuals who are entitled to remuneration for their labour, and the value of a cultural production that was not grounded in the individual product as an expression of individuality, but in collective cultural products as sources for further production. As such the literary object is not the perpetual property of individuals, but reverts back, as common property, to the culture from whence it emerges. Texts are, so to speak, shared products that can be appropriated at any point after the time limit by anyone for cultural production itself. In other words, their openness to being copied and re-worked is the foundation of cultural production. The Statute codifies the tension between the individual author as owner and collective cultural production as a central component of civil society. The Act, then, can be seen as an attempt to balance the emerging economic interests of capitalist ownership and new modes of cultural association which moved away from State-imposed forms of identity, towards individuals who shared common characteristics based on nationality, locality, gender, class or race, etc.<sup>16</sup> The Act presents a remarkable discursive shift away from the politics of nation-state formation towards the economic foundation of the state. It would be a mistake, in the methodological process of my analysis, however, to continue to exacerbate the gaps between economics, politics and cultural production as autonomous fields. Instead, what needs to be

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<sup>16</sup> I am not arguing here that such modes of cultural association were in fact in place at this time. But rather that the way capitalist production, by shifting power to an emerging economic elite who control the means of material production, begins to erode the power of the State and creates a space that decenters individuals from traditional modes of State power. For example, when Marx and Engels describe the capacity of capitalist production to erode traditional forms of social relations they expose at the same time the opening towards the possibility of new relations: “All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify” (“Manifesto of the Communist Party,” 10). This decentering is often thought of in terms of alienation, but what I would argue is that this decentering constructs the possibility of creating new forms of association and new forms of subjectivity.

investigated is their relations within civil society as part of an economic-juridical order of liberalism.

Jürgen Habermas postulates that the public sphere arises, particularly in the British context, when “private people come together as a public” with the political objective of changing State forms of domination (27). Habermas understands the development of the early public sphere (eighteenth century) as the creation of a space where reason and critical debate sought to hold the old forms of public authority to account. This space marks the convergence of civil society, that is, the realm of commercial exchange, with the forms of legality that make possible the free exchange of individuals. It is premised on the autonomy of the individual. Habermas notes that individuality in the bourgeois sense is not based on a human essence, but rather on the self-conception of the bourgeois class: “education was the one criterion for admission—property ownership the other. De facto both criteria demarcated largely the same circle of persons; for formal education at that time was more a consequence than a precondition of a social status, which in turn was primarily determined by one's title to property” (85). Individuality in this sense is universalized as an autonomous private person whose existence brings him or her into the public sphere. What is important to note about Habermas' conception of the public sphere is that it operates largely outside of market forces through a form of rational discourse. What David Zaret, in tracing the historical development of the public sphere in seventeenth century Britain, argues is that the public sphere arises simultaneously with the emergence of print culture. In this sense, the public sphere is never outside its commercial interests. So while the public sphere is seen as a space of rational discourse, this projection reflects back on a particular class interest that garbs itself in the idea of a universal individuality that is not bound by material (economic) interests. These economic interests, that is to say, the rising interest of the bourgeoisie as an emerging class, however, are not separate from its political interests. The question of individuality, or the robe of individuality that the discourse of the public sphere adopts, masks the

class interests at the heart of the emergence of the public sphere. When the author becomes a marker of property the figure is invested with the same autonomous individuality that bourgeois subjectivity promotes as a universal individuality. In so doing, the discourse of the public sphere divests itself of the multiplicity of the public sphere as a place where diverse discourses and interests take shape in the hopes of creating political transformation. The public sphere cannot be isolated into its constituent parts, its very spatial articulations both occur within and include the field of cultural production and the economic-juridical order.

In this sense Antonio Gramsci's theorization of cultural hegemony can be used as a guide. Hegemony operates, according to Gramsci, through a process of coercive and consensual control. As Paul Ransome notes, "In their purest form, coercion is exercised 'physically' through the repressive institutions of the State, most notably the army, police and penal system, while consent is exercised 'intellectually' through institutions of civil society such as the Church, the education system and the family" (150-151). This dichotomy suggests that there are two levels operating as distinct spheres of social control. What Ransome further argues is that "Gramsci recognizes that *all institutions* have both a material and ideational impact upon individuals, and that therefore, in reality, coercion and consent tend to combine" (151). Gramsci's construction of "civil society" is comparable to that of the public sphere that we have been outlining, but what is significant about this construction is that it is not a separate field. In fact, he argues that the civil society and the State's repressive apparatuses cannot be thought separately, that they are, in fact, part of an overall movement, one supporting the other. Cultural hegemony, in this sense, can be thought of as the intellectual construction of society, the series of institutional apparatuses that seem to exist outside politics, but which create the necessary intellectual conditions for the maintenance of order within a given political State. This does not mean, however, that hegemony occurs prior to the material and repressive State apparatus. The two, as process, interact in ways that are not always apparent from within the very structure that they dominate. Gramsci writes:

since in actual reality civil society and State are one and the same, it must be made clear that *laissez-faire* too is a form of State “regulation”, introduced and maintained by legislative and coercive means. It is a deliberate policy, conscious of its own ends, and not the spontaneous, automatic expression of economic facts. Consequently, *laissez-faire* liberalism is a political programme designed to change—in so far as it is victorious—a State's leading personnel, and to change the economic programme of the State itself—in other words the distribution of the national income. (160)

The extent to which the emerging British bourgeoisie in control of print technologies during the eighteenth century was conscious of a particular capitalist design is, of course, debatable. The point is that the material economic conditions made possible the intellectual construction of Statehood that supports the emerging economic order.

What is most useful in Gramsci's analysis, and for this discussion, is that civil society is not separate from State apparatuses such as the law. In separating copyright from censorship, the State only appears to have divested itself of economic interests. Instead, what happens is that these economic interests are taken over by a specific group, the emerging bourgeoisie, which controls the means of production and distribution, putting them in control, not so much of the content of works, but of their form. What is being produced is not merely the production of books, but the production of a social being, of the individual itself as consumer. Gramsci explains:

If every State tends to create and maintain a certain type of civilization and of citizen (and hence collective life and of individual relations), and to eliminate certain customs and attitudes and to disseminate others, then the Law will be its instrument for this purpose (together with the school system, and other institutions and activities). (246)

The concept of the public sphere cannot, then, be separated from the notion of social control because as individuals separate themselves, as communication and in particular print reaches and develops expanding publics or markets, centralized and traditional control breaks down. Economic control sets the parameters in which the public sphere exists, and the economy limits access to the means of production, that would create dissident forms of cultural production,

through a juridical regime of competition. The State, if it seems to be outside the realm of cultural production, if it seems to have downloaded authority to a self-regulating industry, it does so only to the extent that it now juridically forms itself on the basis of the economy as a site of truth formation. The eighteenth century battles over copyright in England should be contextualized by the fact that they take place at a time of social change, where economic interests, that is to say capitalist interests, were growing, and were in the process of developing their markets, their productive power, their capacity as a class to exert political power. From within this context of trade relations it becomes possible to understand how the figure of the author exists, not as an individual, but as a marker of property.

What have come to be known as the eighteenth century “book trade debates” demonstrate that the Statute of Anne didn't immediately resolve the question of textual ownership. On one side of the debate were the London booksellers who claimed that in recognizing the author's right, the Statute simultaneously recognized the right to purchase or otherwise obtain perpetual copyright from authors, which effectively happened upon publication. In other words, they argued the Statute established authorial right as their own: “In seeking to establish the author's property in his work the booksellers were of course equally seeking to establish their own claims” (Rose 57). In this formulation of literary property, booksellers—arguing for perpetual copyright—rooted their claims in Locke's notion of property. They claimed that authors maintained perpetual copyright because the work was an extension of personal property, that is to say, of an investment of labour. This form of immaterial property, premised on Locke's assertion that “every man has a property in his own person; this nobody has any right to but himself,” was indistinguishable from the property that a person owns when they, through labour, alter territory (111).<sup>17</sup> The notion of literary property, in the bookseller claim, is an abstract right disassociated from the material text

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<sup>17</sup> On the one hand, the work is a product of the author's labour and thus inseparable from his/her being. On the other hand, the inalienable right associated with individual labour enters the market as a commodity that carries with it perpetual rights. What this would mean is that the author's perpetual right becomes the object of sale.

and established by common law. On the other side of the debate, the Scottish book trade challenged the London booksellers' claims to perpetual copyright.<sup>18</sup> They did not deny authorial right, but argued, instead, that it was limited by the Statute. Their position was that once the product was in the market and the limited term imposed by the Statute had expired it became common property and subject to reprinting by those who had the means of production. This notion of literary property, in contradistinction to the London booksellers, claimed that literary property is only established by law, and that no such prior perpetual copyright existed.

The issue was finally resolved with *Donaldson v. Beckett* (1774). While there is a good deal of ambiguity to the case, and in particular the way in which it was reported, the final verdict held that the author did not have perpetual copyright and that copyright was established by Statute law. Literary property was subject to the terms of the Act. Saunders explains

If with the majority finding in *Millar v. Taylor* the common law had installed a natural law rationale for the protection of copyright as recognition of the author's right of possession through labour, then *Donaldson v. Becket* turns this earlier ruling on its head, defining copyright as a right of property deriving from the statutory process. (66)

The effect of this ruling was such that "there was a vast collectively owned *corpus* of 'rights' in the standard works which sustained the London trade, and which was now thrown onto the open market" (Feather, *Publishing, Piracy and Politics* 93). The Stationers' monopoly was effectively destroyed, opening the door to a new era of publishing, but also one which ushered in a term of relative stability.<sup>19</sup> While most of this history has been covered in more depth elsewhere, what remains seldom reported is that immediately after the *Donaldson v. Becket* decision both Oxford and Cambridge Universities petitioned Parliament to establish perpetual copyright for themselves.

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<sup>18</sup> This debate, however, was no "pure" debate of ideas. In fact, the struggle is at its heart political in that the Scots were arguing for market access in order to develop a sense of nationality, a struggle with similarities to that waged by Americans in the nineteenth century.

<sup>19</sup> Richard B. Sher contends that *Donaldson v. Becket* did not fundamentally transform the book trade. While eighteenth century book historians generally associate the decision with a growth in book production at the end of the century, Sher ponders "Why suppose that soaring book production at the end of the eighteenth century was the result of the Lords' ruling in 1774 when the same phenomenon is evident in places not affected by that decision, such as Dublin and Philadelphia?" (29).

The subsequent Universities Act (1775) created a statutory perpetual right in their name. As Deazely points out, in copyright debates “What mattered, to the House of Lords at least, was *who* had control over these perpetual privileges and *why*” (22). In other words, the court took perpetual copyright out of its direct place in the market thereby creating an institutional framework for a free market in the print trade.

While I have to this point largely described the coming into being of copyright from a British perspective, there are similar struggles in the American context that bear some brief commentary. On the one hand, the author is an inventor of useful knowledge that serves the public when it circulates freely. On the other hand, the author, as the producer of this knowledge, is also the owner to this intellectual property. What Grantland Rice argues is that the 1790 Federal Copyright Act “suspended two contradictory notions of authorial activity in its strenuous attempt to accommodate the political activity of public writing to an economic framework” (7). What he draws attention to is the way in which print operated as an inherently political vehicle of expression of the public sphere. The public space of print, for him, was incompatible with the articulation of individual rights because the right to access this “public” was essential to the republican ideology. The development of copyright, Rice argues, serves to shift the conception of writing as essentially a public activity to one that is oriented towards a private activity whose public component is best regulated by the market: “The development of the construction of ‘literary property’ over the eighteenth century in America signaled in terms of authorial activity a carving out of the political domain the separate and autonomous existence of economics” (79). Meredith McGill, however, argues, that the republican conception of the essential publicity of print in republican ideology allowed for a contestation of the form of economic development. In particular, she states “The strong half-life of the republican understanding of print as public property sustained the culture of reprinting and involved publishers in the era’s defining controversies over the nature and course of economic development” (14). In her reading, the

*Wheaton v. Peters (1834)* case shifts the locus of the British debate to one between labour involved in literary production and the commodity status of the work to the “materiality or immateriality of the text itself” (51). *Wheaton v. Peters*, which “establishes going-into-print as the moment when individual rights give way to the demands of the social and defines the private ownership of a printed texts as the temporary alienation of public property” sets the groundwork for a re-vitalized sense of the public domain through its economic articulation (45-46). Because the printed work is conceived as a public property, it is subject to endless copying, but rather than present this endless appropriation of an inviolable individual’s rights, republican publishers used reprinting as a means to establish a cultural identity. In fact, reprinting allowed for the re-articulation of ideas already in the public domain as a form of common cultural expression, which distinguished itself on a decentralized level from both the federal government and the more dominant British publishing industry. In marking out an antebellum reprint culture, McGill contends “that the decentralization of publishing was systematic, not simply the product of geographic and historical contingencies,” “that this publishing system was distinctive, explicitly defined and defended against other systems,” and finally that “Those who explicitly defended the culture of reprinting maintained that it operated as a hedge against the concentration of economic and political power” (4-5). McGill’s argument is important because it allows us to understand the ways in which the shift to a more economic determination of authorship and the means to regulate the book trade do not operate in an autonomous field of economic interactions, but that these economic interactions, supported by legal decisions, are also at their very core intertwined with social, political and cultural aspects which make the notion of autonomy unsustainable.

These debates are important because they articulate a legal conception of the literary work as it is understood through property rights, one which is very different from the romantic conception of the work. As a cultural product a literary work is created through a common medium—language. Locke’s argument runs that in investing language with individual labour, the individual becomes the owner of that property and what was common is privatized. While the

book trade does not originally turn around the question of the individual author, as we have seen the author is more an invention meant to regulate the means by which books circulate, the notion of originality comes to the fore as a means to ideologically determine the individual nature of the property in question. What this means is that in order to determine the difference between one work and another there has to be a measure of creative expression within the work to expose the difference between works. If this originality did not exist, then the work would be a copy. The notion of originality plays into all sorts of contexts including translation, abridgment, and use of printed materials, including parody and scholarship. It is this notion of originality stemming from individual labour that romantic aesthetics pick up on and codify as the sign of personal expression. While the commodities produced by authors are, in fact, cultural commodities, that is to say, themselves part of a larger context, the legal and political processes of investing them with a relation to capital production and exchange serve to commodify the production of culture. In short, works are alienated from the process of production and isolating them from this process establishes them as products that are complete in and of themselves. I am not arguing for a space that is outside capitalism, but how capitalist production, in masking the process of production, constructs an ideology of ownership that forms the groundwork for an understanding of cultural production reduced to the product on its own. Works are constantly created through this system of exchange and even the most revolutionary of products if, or perhaps because, they circulate through capitalism continue to construct a social field that supports a system of ownership based around the individual. The intense commodification of culture puts it in the market, makes it an object which can be controlled by those with the means of production, and those with the means of production are also those who have the ability to control the modes of production of discourse which shape the way we understand the nature of the world. Cultural commodification is a form of cultural hegemony.

The material function of authorship as regulation of commodity production and distribution comes about as a result of trade practices, but these practices become inscribed in

law. The law is this moment of inscription of ideology: it is a particular hegemonic force that shapes the parameters of thought and action within a society. “The law,” for Bernard Edelman, “presents the double *necessary function* of, on the one hand, rendering effective the relations of production and, on the other hand, concretely *reflecting* and *sanctioning* the ideas men form of their social relations” (22). Edelman further argues that the law, by taking the individual bourgeois subject as owner of private property, is the inscription of capitalist ideology that forces text to assume the form of an individual product as a result of its commodification. Authorship, in its material relation to property, is a means of regulating the appearance of text. It separates and divides texts into distinct entities apart from the collective process of its production. Property in law is based on ownership, and on having a particular subject, a single subject as the owner who controls the distribution and dissemination of text. Edelman writes “in its very structure the subject in law is constituted on the concept of free ownership of itself. It is that this form [...] presents the extraordinary characteristic of producing in itself, that is, in its very form, the relation of the person to itself, the relation of the subject which takes itself as object” (69). The law, then, operates as another text that circumscribes the field of authorship so that the subject, while constituted by a capitalist system of exchange, seems to emerge from a ground outside that system.

The point of this historical review of the intertwining nature of the book trade, the emergence of copyright and the modern author as an owner of literary property, is not so much to re-hash the wealth of research on the emergence of the materiality of the author as it is to illuminate the ways in which authorship is part of, and not separate from, the external institutions and broad socio-economic and political forces of its culture. It is possible to understand the ways in which authorship functions in these external fields not as the reference point to an identity as romantic aesthetic ideology would have it, but rather as the marker of a particular, if unstable, form of ownership that governs the cultural production and exchange of text. It is here, in

authorship as a site, where the two fields, the aesthetic and the material, converge. What is apparent is that the romantic vision of authorship, as stemming from the relation between an individual being and the infinite to produce the original work as the expression of a distinct personality, functions as an ideological product of a system of exchange that requires the author as a means to regulate the production and distribution of a particular kind of cultural product that maintains cultural hegemony as a means to control economic and social production. The materiality of authorship, by which I mean the ways in which institutional forces—trade networks and practices, political and legal determinations as well as discursive forces—collude to produce a specific figure of bourgeois individuality (both as owner and consumer) as the means to escape economic domination by equating authorship with (a complex form of) private ownership, reveals the depth to which the author is not only a being that produces, but is itself the product of its cultural context. Invested in the materiality of authorship are the signs of social struggle, the sites of cultural struggles over production, exchange and ultimately of hegemonic control over the social relations of production. Authors, as figures, are invested with all manner of institutional marks and are never outside the materiality of their socio-political, cultural and economic contexts.

In the larger framework of my argument, while this chapter sets the historical conditions through which the authorship develops, it also allows us to understand authorship, not as a passive or even immediately referential category, but on the contrary, as a site of struggle. This struggle is marked in the origins of modern authorship in terms of its role as either a facilitation site of a public domain, or the private producer of individual property. As a site over which the battle for a capitalist conception of the work or a more communal sense of the role of cultural production as a field that generates further production by access to a common pool of resources, authorship in its current articulation through copyright assumes a stance that sanctions the commodification of literature. Establishing authorship as a site of struggle between competing

notions of cultural production is essential for my later chapters because in them I argue that neither dissidence at the level content or form of the works is sufficient to counter the very material conditions of publication which transform the work into a commodity and regulate its circulation. If the tendency to isolate the literary commodity within a realm of private property is to be dismantled through the creation of a public domain that fosters collective production, then we need to re-conceptualize authorship and its function as a site in this struggle. It is not enough to think through this redefinition, rather it is only through dissident material practices of authorship, such as the self-reflexive anonymous author, that such re-conceptualizations can take place.

## **Chapter 2: Trespassing for any Purpose is Strictly Forbidden, Violators will be Prosecuted: The Aesthetics of Authorship in J.D. Salinger**

### *A Case Study in the Collusion of Romanticism and Neoliberalism*

*I'm permitted to sit on the poems, edit them, look after them, and eventually pick out a hard-cover publisher for them, but, on extremely personal grounds, I've been forbidden by the poet's widow, who legally owns them, to quote any portion of them here.*

—Buddy Glass in J.D. Salinger's  
“Seymour: An Introduction”

Few contemporary authors have acquired the type of iconic, if not mythical, status of J.D. Salinger. The very name conjures up visions of the heroic-alienated writer barricaded behind a concrete wall in his Thoreau-like enclave keeping the public mob, who would swarm and overwhelm his sense of self, at bay. With the 1951 publication of *The Catcher in the Rye*, Salinger rose to a fame that extends well beyond a strict literary milieu. The novel immediately caught the public imagination as an “authentic” testament to youthful dissatisfaction with social convention and Fordist consumption. It reached *The New York Times* bestseller list two weeks after publication where it remained, reaching as high as number four, for thirty weeks (Alexander 154). Since its publication the book has continued to be the subject of critical acclaim, numerous scholarly studies, censorship debates, as well as taking on a life outside of academic circles. The book was found in the possession of John Hinckley Jr., the would-be assassin of Ronald Reagan, and Mark David Chapman claimed to have murdered John Lennon because he was a “phony,” even going so far as to quote from the book during his sentence hearing (271). But Salinger’s fame, despite the high publicity of his only novel, does not rest solely on his textual production. In fact, it is as a reclusive author who tenaciously clings to his privacy that Salinger maintains an image of mystery and interest—precisely because the image itself refuses access to anything but

its surface. We could say that his anonymity, or withdrawal, from the public sphere, structures his image as an author-figure.

In the previous chapter I argued that romantic authorship, through a transcendental aesthetic, masks the institutional function of the author-figure as an economic regulator, and subsequently reproduces the social relations of production that perpetuate capitalist production. I further showed that this construction of the author, or this production of the author-image as a transcendental being that precedes the textual object, is a response to the industrialization and commodification of literature. In this chapter, I want to flesh out the ways in which romantic aesthetics operate within the economic-juridical order of neoliberalism by exploring the contemporary text of J.D. Salinger.<sup>1</sup> “The Salinger text” offers an exemplary situation for this analysis because his fictional texts are both reflections on the nature of romantic subjectivity and overt constructions of romantic subjectivity. But even more illustrative is the fact that the romantic aesthetic of his texts bleeds out beyond the fiction into the construction of Salinger's own biographical image as an “authentic” literary genius. Salinger's anonymity, his reclusive status, his desire to cultivate a private individuality, constructs the image of an essential and inviolable personality that transcends the economic-juridical regime in which the “Salinger text” takes shape. What most interests me here is that while the “Salinger text” invokes the privacy of the individual as a natural, or original, right of the individual in order to control the dissemination of his work, this “right” is grounded in an economic truth of the market. Copyright law comes to Salinger's rescue, not for a desire to protect the autonomy of his person, but rather to preserve an institutional framework of private property that is essential for neoliberalism. What is particularly interesting about Salinger is the fact that in order to assert the right to privacy, to control the means by which his image of self enters the public domain, he invests that “self” in the juridical-

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<sup>1</sup> My reference to “text” here includes not only the fictional texts for which the name Salinger appears as author, but also the biographical texts that, in the absence of Salinger's own voice, supply a narrative, or narratives of the Salinger self.

economic order of neoliberalism—litigation and relations with the publishing trade in general—to the extent that the very individuality he seeks to protect from public consumption is always already socially constructed. It is in this sense that the Salinger text provides a concrete example of how the personal expression associated with romantic authorship both masks its institutional function and reproduces an ideology of entrepreneurial competition as the ground upon which the economic-juridical order of neoliberalism is premised.

There are significant aesthetic reasons why I have chosen the “Salinger text” specifically for this analysis, but there are also equally important chronological reasons which may be more understated and require some explanation. By describing, in the first chapter, both the “origins” of aesthetic romanticism and copyright I have described a basic situation whereby text became legal property within a liberal capitalist economic order. The basic premise was that copyright balanced individual production with cultural or collective production by limiting the term by which cultural products (texts) were owned. The structure of this order remains in place in the late twentieth century; what changes, however, is that the length of time before the work falls back into the public realm has been consistently extended. This extension, flying under the wing of romantic subjectivity, has been made in the name of the author, but has increasingly been about the right to maintain control over cultural production by multinational or transnational corporations who, in fact, own the means of literary production. As such the discussion of Salinger, as a post-World War II author, provides my analysis with the opportunity to see how romanticism functions to unconsciously support a neoliberal order which I will explicate in more detail in Part Two of this dissertation. More than that, this chapter also shows how the roots of this neoliberal order are a mutation of a larger capitalist order, and so romanticism must be thought as a response which is contained within the forces of capitalist production. My specific concern, with Salinger, is how the anonymity of the author functions within neoliberalism.

A second function of the chapter is to gesture towards how to engage with authorship as a textual practice, or the inseparability of the figures of the author and the text. By enacting a romantic aesthetic, the Salinger text continues to hold in place the very distinctions that come unbound by self-reflexive anonymous authorship. In this sense, I use Salinger, not as the example, but the counterpoint. The romantic formation of Salinger's anonymity is an attempt to uphold the primacy of the individual person in the process of production, and thus, even in its self-reflexive moments, can be construed within a traditional form of anonymity that protects the individual from the mass of public critique or response. As a result, anonymity, here, serves to hold in place the distinction between the person and the work. In Part Two of this dissertation, I will argue that the author is not a reference point to a person, but to a textual construction and this textual construction is not meant to hide the person; instead, it *embeds* the author within its institutional framework, which, in turn, makes it possible for authorship to emerge as a dissident space within the economic-juridical order. This chapter on Salinger in many ways anticipates the argument of Part Two in order to demonstrate that it is not anonymity *per se*, but a particular deployment of anonymity as a discursive practice that I associate with a dissident form of literary production.

In order to explore the Salinger text—which includes both his fictional works and his autobiography—I will link up his public image as an author with his fictional aesthetic, in particular that which takes shape in the Glass series. This aesthetic becomes the theoretical lens that structures my reading of Salinger's own authorship. In other words, I will read this aesthetic as a structural component of both his fiction and his construction of authorship. However, and this is the detail that allows me to read how this construction of authorship masks its institutional function, the Salinger “biography” appears only in relation to its proprietary role. Thus, it is only within the “Salinger text” as a whole that we see how authorship functions in relation to the economic-juridical order. In attempting to protect its identity, the Salinger text lays bear its

reliance on an individual mode of cultural production. Despite deploying a romantic aesthetic within the fiction, Salinger resorts to the courts as a means to protect the privacy of his individuality from becoming a public commodity. The court decisions, especially *Salinger v. Random House*, articulate a range of concerns over the nature of the work and its relation to economic production rather than aesthetic construction.

### **Salinger and Anonymity**

Robert Griffin states that “‘Anonymous’ is generally understood as a text whose author is not identified on the title page” (1). I mark this definition at the outset of my investigation into Salinger because it should be obvious that I am using the notion of anonymity in a broader sense. The fact that I can do so says something about the nature of what anonymity comes to stand for in literary discussions. J.D. Salinger's name obviously appears on the works in which a person of that name is the author. What then is anonymous? The person named Salinger. Salinger's anonymity is associated, not with a lack of naming, but with an absent reference point to the name. Even this requires some qualification because the name Salinger itself through its continuity, in its movement through time, accrues a certain history that is attributable to the person “Salinger.” Salinger's anonymity is rooted, for my discussion, in the mysterious nature of the person behind the name, rather than the individual to whom Salinger refers. In short, the Salinger of this chapter is not the physical person—periodic photos of whom grace the pages of newspapers and magazines, landing lucky journalists with notoriety and a financial windfall—but rather a textual construction.

Salinger's disappearance is tied to his move to Cornish, New Hampshire in 1953. Of course, he had already, prior to this date, displayed behaviour that could be read retroactively as the original manifestations of a retreat into anonymity, but the move to Cornish is significant because it continued to be his place of residence until his death in 2010 and it puts him at a

physical remove from the urban publishing center and literary-cultural milieu of New York City that is the ground for his own career. The Cornish house—a surface that hides its depths—stands as a landmark in Salinger mythology, a representation of his own literary image. In early 1953 he purchased ninety acres of “beautiful wooded land with a view to the Connecticut River Valley” and a “gambrel-roofed cottage that [...] needed plumbing and a furnace” (Alexander 168). Salinger's vision of anonymity, however, is not confined to physical distance. In *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden Caulfield's dream of running away to the country is not just a matter of relocation:

I'd pretend I was one of those deaf-mutes. That way I wouldn't have to have any goddam stupid useless conversations with anybody. If anybody wanted to tell me something, they'd have to write it on a piece of paper and shove it over to me. They'd get bored as hell doing that after a while, and then I'd be through with having conversations for the rest of my life. (258)

The markings of Salinger's image as a reclusive author-figure, then, should also include his refusal to do in-person interviews, his refusal to allow photographs or biographical information on editions subsequent to the original Little, Brown and Company hardcover publication of *The Catcher in the Rye*, as well as the strict stipulations regarding cover design, advertising, and release of press galleys that he imposes on the paperback editions of his four books.<sup>2</sup> Although the Salinger name appears on the text and although there is a real person recognizable as J.D. Salinger, the extremity of his search for privacy marks him as an anonymous author. The name is visible, but it acts as an obstruction to the author's identity. If this is not enough to satisfy requirements for a reclusive form of anonymity, then Salinger's decision to stop publishing his work after the 1965 appearance of “Hapworth 16, 1924” in *The New Yorker* surely qualifies as an extreme act that marks out Salinger's unwillingness to be a public figure. When Lacey Fosburgh, in a rare phone interview, asked about his refusal to publish he responded “There is a marvelous

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<sup>2</sup> The scarcity of Salinger's book production should be noted with interest. For the most part Salinger made his career as a writer through magazine publication and the only work which eventually makes it into book form that wasn't first published in a magazine is *The Catcher in the Rye*.

peace in not publishing. It's peaceful. Still. Publishing is a terrible invasion of my privacy. I like to write. I love to write. But I write just for myself and my own pleasure" (Fosburgh 1). This notion of a privacy that has value in-and-of-itself displays a romantic aesthetic of writing as an expression of the individual self. The public exposure of Salinger's writing is represented as an invasion of self, and in this regard, the self and the written texts are indistinguishable.

### All By Himself

In order to analyze how Salinger's public withdrawal is co-extensive with his fictional aesthetic, I will begin with an explication of the fiction. Salinger's texts are permeated with a sense of alienation. From his earliest published stories, where it is accentuated by bourgeois norms, to the war stories where the war itself is its source, alienation is what drives the narratives. It is only, however, in the later stories, starting perhaps with "Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut" (as William Wiegand suggests), that "we have Salinger's first sign of awareness that this sense of loss ought to be overcome" ("Seventy-Eight Bananas," 128). In the Glass stories<sup>3</sup> this awareness blossoms into a preoccupation with mastering alienation through spiritual enlightenment. It is spirituality, by which I mean the relation between the self and the infinite, that becomes the central element which thematically connects the Glass stories. More specifically, it is the author-figure who is identified with spiritual wholeness and education.<sup>4</sup> Buddy Glass writes in "Seymour: An Introduction": "Isn't the true poet or painter a seer? Isn't he, actually, the only seer we have on earth?" (122). Buddy's assertion not only connects spirituality with the artist, but distinguishes between the "authentic" author (whose concerns are spiritual/aesthetic) and the "hack" author

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<sup>3</sup> The Glass series generally includes "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," "Franny," "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters," "Zooey," "Seymour: An Introduction" and "Hapworth 16, 1924." Glass family characters are also present in "Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut" and "Down at the Dinghy."

<sup>4</sup> The author-figure has already made its appearance in earlier Salinger texts like "The Varioni Brothers" and "The Inverted Forest." While the author is privileged as a type of cultural guide in these stories, what is missing at this early stage in the Salinger oeuvre is the explicit link between the author and spirituality.

(whose concerns are profit). Spirituality, in the Salinger text, involves an individual transcendence of material relations in order to reach a unified self whose ground is its connection with the infinite. Alienation, or a sense of incompleteness within individual subjectivity, in the Glass stories, has been internalized so that the focus of the central conflict—the spiritual being's relation to material forces of production—withdraws from its social context towards an imaginative (God, the divine, etc) consciousness as the source of truth. Spirituality, or interiority, establishes a sense of wholeness by filling up a void within the individual subject.

The Glass stories are an interconnected series whose principal characters are the Glass family. The first published Glass story, “A Perfect Day for Bananafish” (1948), which recounts Seymour's (the eldest Glass child) suicide while on vacation in Florida with his wife Muriel, sets up an essential distinction between cultural commodification and the spirituality of artistic consciousness. It is this distinction which puts Seymour, as the spiritual poet and outsider, at odds with his immediate social milieu.<sup>5</sup> Muriel's immersion in a world of cultural commodities is determined from the outset. She is in a hotel where “There were ninety-seven New York advertising men,” reading “an article in a women's pocket-size magazine, called 'Sex is Fun—or Hell’” while attending to her surface image by brushing her hair and doing her nails (3). Through a long distance phone conversation between Muriel and her mother, Seymour is objectified as a mentally unstable individual on the verge of “completely los[ing] control of himself” (9). The mother inquires repeatedly whether he has done anything “funny” (11). Their dialogue, revolving around Seymour's strangeness, is punctuated with fashion references in order to emphasize, in what teeters on caricature, their absorption within a particular form of culture production. Seymour goes so far as to call Muriel “Miss Spiritual Tramp of 1948” (7). It is this cultural commodification from which Seymour, as a spiritual artist, attempts to distance himself.

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<sup>5</sup> Seymour's position as an outsider is similar to Holden Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye*. The major difference is that Seymour has a developed sense of spirituality whereas Holden is searching for spiritual meaning.

Seymour emerges, in the second part of the story, isolated more than a quarter mile “out of the area reserved for guests of the hotel” (15). The physical distance at which Seymour initially appears from the hotel, as an edifice of a particular bourgeois leisure class, represents his attempted withdrawal from that social class. Seymour's spiritual dimension is emphasized through his attachment to art. Muriel frets that she has not read a book of German poems authored by what Seymour calls “the *only great poet of the century*”<sup>6</sup> (7-8). In the hotel lounge, he has also “played the piano both nights we've been here,” leaving Muriel to dabble at bingo and converse with a psychiatrist (10). On the beach Seymour interacts with Sybil, a primary school aged girl.<sup>7</sup> The anecdote he tells her about the imaginary bananafish has been read by many critics as a hinge for understanding the development of the Glass series. Seymour says:

they swim into a hole where there's a lot of bananas. They're very ordinary-looking fish when they swim *in*. But once they get in, they behave like pigs. Why, I've known some bananafish to swim into a banana hole and eat as many as seventy-eight bananas. [...] Naturally, after that they're so fat that they can't get out of the hole again. Can't fit through the door. (23)

Eventually, he explains, “They die” (23). The most common critical interpretation, exemplified by Warren French and William Wiegand, is to read the bananafish as a representation of Seymour. Wiegand claims “Seymour, a bananafish himself, has become so glutted with sensation that he cannot swim out into society again” (“Seventy Eight Bananas,” 125). French extends this idea, arguing that Seymour “is a man who is not trapped by an external situation beyond his control [...] but by an internal sickness” (84). He further claims that “Even in his pathetic tale about the bananafish, Seymour recognizes that he has been trapped by some impulse within himself and not by snares laid by others” (84). This analysis erases the original cultural/spiritual distinction, and reconfigures the conflict as Seymour's desire for material consumption. All of

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<sup>6</sup> Muriel and her mother find it absurd that he should give her a book of poetry in German and Muriel can't remember the author's name although it would seem to be an allusion to Rainer Maria Rilke, whose name appears as a marker of praise in other Salinger texts like “Franny” and “The Inverted Forest.”

<sup>7</sup> The young child, particularly female, is a reoccurring figure of innocence or epiphanic redemption in Salinger's oeuvre. See characters like Phoebe in *The Catcher in the Rye* and Esmé in “For Esmé—with Love and Squalor.”

which works fine if we consider this story in isolation from the rest of the Glass series. The problem, as James Lundquist articulates, is “How can Salinger expect us to accept Seymour’s eventual canonization if Seymour is himself trapped by what he denounces?” (81). In other words, Seymour in the later Glass stories becomes an idealized poet/saint whose essence transcends a post-World War II American culture devoid of spiritual depth.<sup>8</sup> Regardless of whether Seymour’s suicide is an escape or a resignation the structural critique of cultural production under a capitalist regime remains intact at the aesthetic level.

An alternative to the interpretation that Seymour is the bananafish is to understand the gluttonous behaviour of the bananafish as a representation of Muriel’s and her mother’s desire for commodity consumption. Eberhard Alsen notes that in the story title “the bananafish appear in the plural not in the singular” which means that it cannot refer to the singular Seymour (15). In this reading, the central conflict of the story—the tension between commodity and spirit—gets displaced from the external dimension to Seymour’s own interior consciousness where he attempts to reconcile these two worlds. This critical displacement constructs Seymour’s subjectivity as incomplete and his inability to function in society becomes a sign of his need to find that “other” which would complete him, and allow him to exist in harmony with the collective social body. But, the object which would complete his “self” is not to be found outside his “self” and therefore he turns inward in search of an essence that would give his “self” unity. In practical terms, Seymour’s decision to “fire a bullet through his right temple,” is not a positive solution to his conflict (“A Perfect Day for Bananafish,” 26). It is not the solution, but the construction of the conflict that interests me because it is the internalization of the spiritual/material conflict that structures the aesthetic of the entire Glass series.

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<sup>8</sup> The lack of spiritual depth in contemporary society is also reflected throughout the Salinger oeuvre by allusions to T.S. Eliot’s “The Waste Land.” In *The Inverted Forest*, the poet Raymond Ford’s line “Not wasteland, but a great inverted forest / with all foliage underground” speculates that while surface, or material, culture might be devoid of imagination/spirituality, within authentic artistic consciousness it continues to exist. In “A Perfect Day for Bananafish” another Eliot allusion alerts us to not only the emptiness of material culture, but its cruelty. Seymour tells Sybil “how that name [Sharon Lipschutz] comes up. Mixing memory and desire” (19).

### **Unification of Self**

In the later Glass stories the conflict remains internalized by the individual and the individual withdraws deeper into the self in order to connect with the infinite and experience a complete unity that substitutes for social relations. The processes of institutionalization, of normalization, and of cultural production, which produce the bourgeois individual, are impediments which must be transcended in order to achieve authentic self-realization. “Franny” (1955) tells the story of Franny Glass' spiritual breakdown and “Zooey” (1957), as its companion piece, reveals the epiphany that saves both her and her brother, Zooey. Franny (Seymour's youngest sister) arrives in an unidentified northeastern United States town to spend the weekend with her boyfriend, Lane Coutel, and watch the “Yale game,” only to find that she cannot overcome her sense of alienation (“Franny,” 3). Lane, once again a near caricature, is content with the image the pair make:

[he] sat back and briefly looked around the room with an almost palpable sense of well-being at finding himself (he must have been sure no one could dispute) in the right place with an unimpeachably right-looking girl—a girl who was not only extraordinarily pretty but, so much the better, not too categorically cashmere sweater and flannel skirt. (11)

In his concern with appearance Lane fails to register Franny's irritation. After questioning Lane on his assumed beliefs, specifically relating to poetry, she goes on to express the crux of her crisis: “All I know is I'm losing my mind [...] I'm just sick of ego, ego, ego. My own and everybody else's. I'm sick of everybody that wants to *get* somewhere, do something distinguished and all, be somebody interesting. It's disgusting” (29). Lane, far from being able to assist her, embodies exactly the things she has come to despise so that when he speaks he reminds her of precisely the world she seeks to escape. It must be stated, however, her disgust is not based on material objects, but rather on the self's commodity fetish.

The reunion turns disastrous when Franny explains how she has begun to explore her spirituality. Through a book entitled “The Way of the Pilgrim” she attempts to connect with the infinite as a means to restore her lost sense of a unified self. She continuously repeats what she calls the Jesus Prayer, “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me,” so that it becomes an unconscious repetition that puts her in a state of perpetual prayer. She claims that through the repetition

Something *happens* after a while. I don't know what, but something happens, and the words get synchronized with the person's heartbeats, and then you're actually praying without ceasing. Which has a really tremendous mystical effect on your whole outlook. I mean that's the whole *point* of it, more or less. I mean you do it to purify your whole outlook and get an absolutely new conception of what everything's about. (36-37)

While her description of this mystical experience seems to draw her out of her anger, Lane's response reminds her of the reality of her social milieu. He says ‘I mean what *is* the result that's supposed to follow? All this synchronization business and mumbo-jumbo. You get heart trouble?’ (39). He, at once, relates it back to the physical heart, while her understanding centers around the spiritual: ‘You get to see God. Something happens in some absolutely nonphysical part of the heart’ (39). At the moment she relates this Lane returns to the physicality of the scene, asking ‘You want some dessert, or coffee?’ (39). Franny, frustrated with her spiritual isolation, faints on her way to the toilet and the story ends with her lips ‘forming soundless words’ (43). Unable to function in the material world, Franny turns inward to a form of spirituality that seeks to transcend her social milieu and connect with her essential being. It is this desire to transcend, to get outside, the cultural reality of the commodified world that accentuates her sense of alienation and fosters a further retreat into an interiority whose essence resides in its connection to the infinite.

“Zooey,” the companion piece to “Franny,”<sup>9</sup> offers a critique and a refinement of Franny's withdrawal through a discourse of the artist-audience relation. Franny installs herself on

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<sup>9</sup> The two texts were published separately, “Franny” (1955) and “Zooey” (1957) in *The New Yorker*, but in 1961 were brought together in book form by Little, Brown and Company.

the couch of the Glass parents' New York apartment, refusing to eat or engage in social interaction. With all the other Glass children out of the immediate picture,<sup>10</sup> Zooey is the only one around to awaken Franny from her near paralytic state. Being the closest in age,<sup>11</sup> and more or less sharing the same childhood, Zooey identifies with Franny as a "freak" because of his excessive desire to live a spiritual life in the midst of a commodity culture (103). He offers some insight into their condition when he lays the burden of responsibility on his elder brothers:

The great teachers. The great emancipators. My God. I can't even sit down to lunch with a man any more and hold up my end of a decent conversation. I either get so bored or so goddam preachy that if the son of a bitch had any sense, he'd break his chair over my head. (103)

The ensuing attempt to rouse her turns into a conflict as Zooey lashes out at his sister for the type of spirituality she imagines. Franny reveals the source of her problem with more clarity when she states that "college was just one more *dopey, inane* place in the world dedicated to piling up treasure on earth and everything. I mean treasure is *treasure*, for heaven's sake. What's the difference whether the treasure is knowledge?" (145). Zooey uses her argument to question her actions when he replies

You talk about piling up treasure—money, property, culture, knowledge, and so on and so on. In going ahead with the Jesus Prayer—just let me finish, now, please—in going ahead with the Jesus Prayer, aren't you trying to lay up some kind of treasure? Something that's every goddam bit as negotiable as all those other, more material things? (147)

In expecting a return for her spiritual investment, Zooey claims that Franny engages in the same form of accumulation, albeit with a different object, that she claims as the source of her crisis.

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<sup>10</sup> Among the absent are the two most prominent Glass family spiritual thinkers: Seymour and Buddy. Seymour is, of course, dead and Buddy lives by himself in a cabin by the woods with "no phone, no anything" ("Zooey," 77).

<sup>11</sup> Zooey is five years older than Franny.

Zooey finally breaks through Franny's isolation when he uses the artist<sup>12</sup> as a figure through which to understand her position in the world. He claims: "An artist's only concern is to shoot for some kind of perfection, and *on his own terms*, not anyone else's" (198). Franny's attachment to her reception by the audience, which signifies a desire for a particular status within the industry, is fraught with failure because she finds herself dependent on those whom she finds inferior. What Zooey suggests is that she can't simply transcend the materiality of her relations with the industry, but must account for them in some way. Lundquist points out that in "Zooey," "while it is necessary to see through external reality, it is still there, still real, and must be dealt with before any transcendence can take place" (127-128). The manner in which Franny must deal with externality, Zooey claims, is to situate herself within it. In this sense, what connects her to the industry—and humanity as a whole—is the Faustian striving to realize herself as a being independent, and as a result master, of her external surroundings. Zooey calls it becoming part of the "Christ-Consciousness" ("Zooey," 170). He claims that understanding Christ involves understanding not so much the physicality of the person, but the consciousness, or the interiority, that guides the person's behaviour.

The production of this individual that thinks itself independent of its social, political, economic or cultural contexts, however, is an ideological reproduction of bourgeois subjectivity in a capitalist order of exchange. Stuart Hall explains that this order "could literally not be constituted at all without this thoroughly bourgeois category of 'possessive individual'" (337). Given Zooey's virulent attack on both material and immaterial forms of possession the statement seems contradictory. However, my claim is not that Zooey advocates for ownership, but rather that the form of subjectivity that he imagines reproduces the ideological discourse of bourgeois subjectivity as a being originally independent of its material relations. Hall further argues that capitalist order folds the multitude of individuals back into "an imaginary unity or coherence,"

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<sup>12</sup> Zooey is a professional television actor, and Franny is a budding thespian who has distanced herself from the stage because the acting profession is loaded with "mercenaries and butchers" (196).

such as “community,” “consensus” or “society” (337). The “Christ-Consciousness” functions along the same lines of instituting an ideological unity to the fragmentation of alienated individuals who are necessary for a capitalist order. Hall claims that far from being a harmless or even beneficial production of group consciousness, these imagined unities assume “forms which mask and displace the level of class relations and economic contradictions and *represents* them as non antagonistic totalities” (337-338). Franny, then, in acting “on her own terms” and becoming part of the “Christ-Consciousness” reproduces the order necessary for a capitalist system of exchange that she seeks to transcend.

Zooey accentuates his point with a concrete example from his own life, and this example is the catalyst that resolves both Franny's spiritual breakdown, as she falls into a “deep, dreamless sleep,” and his own crisis (201). Zooey's internal crisis can be traced back to its spiritual roots. We have seen how he lays the blame for his near-inability to engage in social interaction on his elder brothers. In educating him in an excessive spiritual doctrine which leads to his independence, he believes his brothers have isolated him in that independence. As a child, on the nationally syndicated television show “It's a Wise Child,”<sup>13</sup> Zooey complained that he didn't want to shine his shoes because “The studio audience were all morons, the announcer was a moron, the sponsors were morons, and I just damn well wasn't going to shine my shoes for them, I told Seymour. I said they couldn't see them *anyway*” (198-199). Seymour told him to “shine them for the Fat Lady” and this made all the difference (199). Zooey explains to Franny, who had received the same advice from her brother, that “There isn't anyone *anywhere* that isn't Seymour's Fat Lady” (200). The Fat Lady is no different from Franny or Zooey and so what she desires is exactly what they desire. At the start of “Zooey,” Zooey is reading a four year old letter from his brother Buddy that advises him to follow his heart and “Act, Zachary Martin Glass, when and where you want to, since you feel you must, but do it *with all your might*” (63). This advice

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<sup>13</sup> Every child of the Glass family appeared under a pseudonymous family name on this television show, and it subsequently paid for their university educations.

introduces a state of compulsion that drives the artist, but it remains consistent with the Fat Lady anecdote in that the autonomous self remains the central authority. In the articulation of the Fat Lady story, Zooey experiences his own epiphany through the congruence of his own experience and Seymour's and Buddy's advice. He realizes an essential unity in the Seymour-Buddy-Zooey relation and extends this unity to Franny as the audience whose interests/desires mirror their own. The internal unity is reflected in its external form. In essence, Seymour's advice is to administer to the self in its most perfect form, not because of an external audience, but because of an underlying unity, an essence that seeks its own reflection in its subject. The suggestion is that, turning inwards, the individual finds its essential autonomy in its unity. This autonomy, however, is an ideological construct and the expression of this “self” does not transcend its social conditions but rather reproduces them *tel quel*.

Franny and Zooey's story ends with their dual epiphany and the artistic products of their aesthetic discovery never appear. Two years, however, separate the publication of their stories and these two years mark an important departure point in terms of the formal construction of Salinger's texts. Between the two stories the publication of “Raise High the Roof Beams, Carpenters” (1955) introduces the rambling, digressive voice of Buddy Glass (the second eldest Glass child) as its narrator/author and protagonist. Buddy is not a new character within the fiction; in fact, in the self-reflexive “Seymour: An Introduction,” (1959) Buddy lays claim to having written a number of Salinger texts, including “the one novel I've published” (*The Catcher in the Rye*) (130) and “two short stories that were supposed to be directly about Seymour” (“A Perfect Day for Bananafish” and “Raise High the Roof Beams, Carpenters”<sup>14</sup>) (131). It is in “Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters” that he first acknowledges his presence as narrator.<sup>15</sup> Buddy's appearance as the author not only gives the texts a subjective source, but affects the

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<sup>14</sup> While Buddy is clearly the narrator of “Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters” and “Zooey” what he lays claim to in “Seymour” is being their author. This distinction elevates him to a level that allows him to discuss, within the texts, a consciousness of his aesthetic practice.

<sup>15</sup> From “Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters” on Buddy narrates/authors everyone of Salinger's published works.

overall form of the texts. While both “A Perfect Day for Bananafish” and “Franny” are contained short stories told from an objective viewpoint, “Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters” and “Zooey,” at double and nearly quadruple the length of “Franny,” strain at the conventions of the short story form. Buddy's emphasis on his own subjectivity within his texts reflects on how the short story form itself has become a barrier to his expression. He writes of “Zooey” that it “isn't really a short story at all but a sort of prose home movie” (“Zooey,” 47). In an introduction of sorts, Buddy begins “Zooey” by giving the context of his position as an author and then fades back into the objective voice as the story “proper” takes shape: “We will, however, leave this Buddy Glass in the third person from here on in. At least, I see no good reason to take him out of it” (50). One way of understanding this formal intervention, then, is to see it as an enactment of Zooey's advice to write “on his own terms” without thinking about conventions. Only this way will the essential Buddy place its metaphorical heart on the page. Buddy's self-reflexive narrative style becomes an overt element of the fiction, it becomes, in-and-of-itself, part of the content. Alsen argues “the Glass series can be read as a composite novel about an artist's coming to terms with his calling,” which means that the form of Buddy's narration or authorship is part of the content of the stories (2). Buddy, the narrative voice, or author, comes to be identified with the unified and independent individual subject who actively shapes the fiction. He is the individual subject who filters the external and re-organizes it according to his own perception.

The external reality that Buddy shapes, however, is not the larger social structures, but the interiority of his brother, Seymour. For Wiegand, in creating a portrait of Seymour, Buddy exposes a “suppressed wish to objectify (or deify) the essentially subjective (a human being)” (“Salinger and Kierkegaard,” 152). Seymour is a concrete example of the spiritual ideal. Even though he is dead, his spirit lurks throughout the texts; he is the presence of an absence. Buddy's active acknowledgment of his authorship reminds us, however, that the Seymour he creates is a construction, a supplement of Seymour's essence. And further, this construction saturates Buddy's work in its entirety: “I might conceivably admit that there's seldom been a time when I haven't

written about him” (“Seymour: An Introduction,” 130). In representing Seymour, Buddy primarily concerns himself, not only with locating his essential features—those authentic marks of his personality that give him the status of an autonomous individual—as a model of existence, but with replicating them at the level of textual aesthetics. In “Raise High the Roof Beams, Carpenters,” he complains that Seymour is misunderstood as diseased or mad, but what truly characterizes him is his status as a poet: “not one God-damn person, of all the patronizing, fourth-rate critics and column writers, had ever seen him for what he really was. A poet, for God’s sake. And I mean a *poet*. If he never wrote a line of poetry, he could still flash what he had at you with the back of his ear” (69). To be a poet, in this instance, is not entirely based on a relation to language. In fact, it has more to do with *a way of being* than the production of literary objects. The poet, or authentic author, does not produce art as a commodity, but as an expression of the infinite. While even Buddy has his doubts that he can re-construct Seymour’s essence—“his character lends itself to no legitimate sort of narrative compactness that *I* know of, and I can’t conceive of anyone, least of all myself, trying to write him off in one shot or in one fairly simple series of sittings”—he uses a variety of stories and techniques to communicate it (“Seymour: An Introduction,” 124). It is in this context of communicating the essence that lies outside language that Ihab Hassan argues that the later Glass stories are “seeking, beyond poetry, beyond all speech, the *act* which makes communion possible” (281). The irony, of course, is that this act beyond language appears in language. That is to say, it is immediately caught up within language as an ideological field. This act also appears as a material object, or commodity,—the published story itself—which signifies a particular relation not only with a literary-aesthetic field, but also with the publishing industry and an economic-juridical order.

### **Seymour, Essentially**

At the beginning of “Raise High the Roof Beams, Carpenters” Buddy makes a typical digression and narrates the following Taoist tale to unearth Seymour's essence. Duke Mu of Chin asks Po Lo if he knows a man who can find a good horse and Po Lo recommends his friend Chiu-fang Kao. When Kao returns he asserts that the horse is a “dun-colored mare,” but when the horse appears Duke Mu recognizes that it is a “coal-black stallion” (5). While the Duke complains that Kao can't even distinguish between race and gender, Po Lo is impressed by the same fact because it demonstrates “What Kao keeps in view is the spiritual mechanism. In making sure of the essential, he forgets the homely details; intent on the inward qualities, he loses sight of the external” (5). Buddy further explains “I haven't been able to think of anybody whom I'd care to send out to look for horses in [Seymour's] stead” (6). What gives Seymour this ability to look into the depths of material things is not only his relation to the infinite, which confers on him the status of an authentic author, but his own essence as an autonomous being.

Seymour's works have never been published and so, as readers, we have no access to them except through the medium of Buddy's representations. Seymour's own work (and this would include his life actions, like his suicide) attempts to bring out the divine essence in objects. In his life, he “look[ed] for God, and apparently with enormous success, in the queerest imaginable places—e.g., in radio announcements, in newspapers, in taxicabs with crooked meters, literally everywhere” (“Seymour: An Introduction,” 126). His poems, according to Buddy, “are intelligible utterances that please or enlighten or enlarge the invited eavesdropper to within an inch of his life” (138). For Seymour, then, art is about capturing the essence of the moment, and what is important is the spontaneity of the gesture, not the product. After Buddy has taken some writing classes and learned to develop the form of the neatly packaged short story for magazine consumption, Seymour's criticism is that he wants to know what interests Buddy. What is missing from Buddy's work at the early stage in his career, according to Seymour, is the

personality of the author and the feeling of interest on the part of the writer. The work is too tightly controlled to allow its essence to seep through its appearance. He tells Buddy to “ask yourself, as a reader, what piece of writing in all the world Buddy Glass would most want to read if he had his heart's choice. The next step is terrible, but so simple I can hardly believe it as I write it. You just sit down shamelessly and write the thing yourself” (187). Again, the aesthetics turn back towards the interior desire of the individual, which culminates in a unity of person and work. All of which relates back to Zooey's advice to Franny to act for the Fat Lady. Alsen explains: the aesthetic that guides both Seymour's and Buddy's artistic production is “performing for one's audience as though one were performing for God. And since God according to the Glass philosophy, is inherent in man, Seymour and Buddy believed that the artist must strive for perfection for the sake of his audience, for the Fat Lady” (109). The artist recognizes him or herself in the perfect art-object, s/he becomes the mirror, the glass of his or her own reflection.

Seymour, as Buddy's construction, is a literary object that represents the inviolable subjectivity of the author. Buddy admits that his many representations of his brother reflect his own inner being: “the 'Seymour,' who did the walking and talking in that early story, not to mention the shooting, was not Seymour at all but, oddly, someone with a striking resemblance to – alley oop, I'm afraid – myself” (131). Taking this even further, he claims

I've written and histrionically burned at least a dozen stories or sketches about him since 1948—some of them, and I says it what shouldn't, pretty snappy and readable. But they were not Seymour. Construct an understatement for Seymour and it turns, it *matures*, into a lie. An artistic lie, maybe, and sometimes, even, a delicious lie, but a lie. (212)

This admission produces two effects. The first is that the subject of the fiction begins to have less and less to do with any form of externality. Even Seymour, as a purported representation of an other who lies outside Buddy, translates through Buddy's authorship into a representation of self. And the second effect is that while Buddy presents Seymour as an interiority who opposes the commodification of literary objects and who claims that personal satisfaction with the object as a

reflection of his own interiority is the final destination of the artist, in publishing works whose subject is Seymour's identity or essence Buddy turns Seymour into a commodified object. To state this simply, Buddy creates Seymour as an ideal author whose ultimate function is the unification of the self in the literary work. As a literary object, however, Seymour simultaneously exists as a commodity.

If Salinger's Glass series is premised around Seymour's essence as a representation of the ideal author, then it must be recalled that it is precisely this essence which is constructed as an impossibility. From the outset he is dead and his suicide structures the series by virtue of his absent presence within the texts. Seymour is an illustration of the death of the author. The reproduction of Seymour in writing attempts to bridge this spatial gap between the essence and the appearance. The essence, however, is precisely what is missing and so the only access readers have to Seymour is in his appearance which is constantly mediated by the medium of language. Seymour himself, that internal essence, is the thing that remains out of reach. In effect, it does not exist. What exists are representations, traces, substitutes, anecdotes—in short, appearances of this essence, none of which in themselves encompasses the essence in its totality. In fact, not even the aggregate of appearances produces the essence itself. On the contrary, the essence appears as a series of disconnected parts that never amount to a unified totality. The experience of the essence exists through its appearance, and this experience becomes the reality of its existence. Seymour is a God-presence that cannot be tracked down, that appears in the narrative, but whose essence remains elusive. The most direct representation of his own words appears in "Hapworth 16, 1924." This story, however, is a letter from Seymour as a seven year old to his parents.<sup>16</sup> A pure, unmediated presentation of Seymour as an adult figure never appears, that is to say, he never occupies the position of the narrator. Nor do we get a sample of his work. Presumably, given the romantic assumptions about authorship under examination here, the work would provide insight

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<sup>16</sup> Buddy introduces Seymour's letter in "Hapworth 16, 1924" so that he acts as a frame around how Seymour can be understood, putting into question the "authenticity" of the appearance.

into the author's essence, but it is the work from which access is barred. Seymour's work, and hence his essential being, purportedly transcends its materiality through its absence only to appear as the object of Buddy's literary production. Buddy's representation of Seymour, as I've demonstrated, is, in fact, a part of his own being and so the unified and inviolable subjectivity that Seymour represents is Buddy's own as its creator. All of which means that Seymour's only appearance in the Glass series is as Buddy's construction.

By making his own essence the object of his fiction, Buddy, in effect, commodifies his own being. This relation might suggest that, following the aesthetic of anonymity, Seymour is Buddy idealized and stripped of his materiality, and Buddy, as Salinger's creation, fulfills a similar role. After all, isn't Buddy striving for the aesthetic purity that Seymour represents? He appropriates Seymour's advice to "shamelessly" write for himself as his own in order to transcend the materiality of the social relations in which his identity is constructed. The logic of such a position would run: if Buddy is Seymour's material manifestation in language, then Salinger is Buddy's material author. There is no need to rely on such slippery logic because the connections between Buddy and Salinger are concretized within the fiction. The jacket cover of *Franny and Zooey*, authored by Salinger, calls Buddy Glass his "alter-ego and collaborator" (qtd. in I. Hamilton 177). Buddy's own narratives suggest there are similarities between the two only if we know the autobiographical details of Salinger's image. For instance, Buddy explains he is a

writing man [...] I live alone (but catless, I'd like everybody to know) in a totally modest, not to say cringing, little house, set deep in the woods and on the more inaccessible side of a mountain. Not counting students, faculty, and middle-aged waitresses, I see very few people during the working week, or year. I belong, in short, to a species of literary shut-in. ("Seymour: An Introduction," 135)

In addition, Buddy and Salinger were both born in 1919 and are professional writers. Their celebrity as authors (particularly through the publication of *The Catcher in the Rye*) has made the subject of their reclusive existence a point of interest, so that Buddy claims "a good many English Department people already know where I live, hole up; I have their tire tracks in my rose beds to

prove it" (159). Similarly, Salinger, whose public withdrawal landed him on the cover of *Time* magazine, faced serious intrusions of his privacy. In her memoir *Dream Catchers*, his daughter Margaret Salinger recalls

My parents had begun to receive bizarre, anonymous notes, in graphic and sexually perverse language, threatening to kidnap the children and do horrible stuff to us. This coincided, most unfortunately, with the rapid rise in my father's fame as well as the mystique<sup>17</sup> of his reputation as a recluse. Occasionally we glimpsed reporters sneaking about, and at least once, one even climbed up a tree. (155-156)

The temptation here, to which many critics succumb,<sup>18</sup> is to conflate the two to say that Buddy is Salinger's voice, or that Salinger's true essence appears in the form of Buddy. The point that needs to be made is that Buddy, like Seymour, is a construct whose creator is Salinger the author. There is a progressive (or regressive?) sense that each author—from Seymour to Buddy to Salinger—has its own author as its source from which the fictional constructs proliferate. Salinger, as the last in line, would be the original consciousness or the independent subject at the core of the texts whose existence is marked by the relations of social production, but at the same time Seymour functions as a figure of Salinger's transcendence. Within Salinger's romantic aesthetic the author's transcendence is possible through the creation of the literary work. Authorship is about the creative process, not its relation to external (social, political, cultural, etc) functions. This transcendental ideal, however, reproduces on an ideological level a form of subjectivity that sanctions or legitimizes the very social relations of production that it seeks to oppose.

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<sup>17</sup> Salinger plays on this mystique by cultivating it within the texts. In "Seymour: An Introduction" for example Buddy writes that he has received "Get-Well-Soon notes from old readers of mine who have somewhere picked up the bogus information that I spend six months of the year in a Buddhist monastery and the other six in a mental institution" (153). He uses the rumours that persists in his absence to blur the lines between fact and fiction.

<sup>18</sup> Some notable examples include Hassan, "Buddy Glass [...] comes more and more to assume the persona of Salinger" (281); K. Hamilton, "Salinger has chosen to fuse his own personality with that of Buddy, whom he calls his alter-ego and collaborator, giving the impression that this most garrulous spokesman for a garrulous family has become a ventriloquist's doll reflecting the voice of his creator" (19); and Lundquist, "At the back of the consciousness of Salinger's Glass family is thus the consciousness of Salinger himself" (116).

### **Securing the Essence**

Significantly, Buddy wants to put Seymour's work (in this case one hundred and eighty four poems) on display as a means to unveil his authentic subjectivity. Unfortunately, he claims he does not own the work:

The normal and only rational thing to do at this point would be to plank down one, two, or all hundred and eighty-four of the poems for the reader to see for himself. I can't do it. I'm not even sure that I have a right to discuss the matter. I'm permitted to sit on the poems, edit them, look after them, and eventually pick out a hard-cover publisher for them, but, on extremely personal grounds, I've been forbidden by the poet's widow, who legally owns them, to quote any portion of them here. ("Seymour: An Introduction," 147)

Buddy is "not permitted" and so once again the essence is deferred leaving only its trace through Buddy's works. At the very moment when the essence—the unification of self and work—would manifest itself in a material form, Buddy invokes the law and a discourse of ownership to maintain the privacy and integrity of the work as an object outside the forces of commodification. Buddy has been granted access to the works by the owner, but does not have the right "on extremely personal grounds," which remain unexplained in the confines of the text. He does, however, have permission to edit and choose a publisher. In a sense, Seymour's works will never in themselves appear because they are mediated by Buddy's re-presentation of them. And his presentation is guided by an aesthetic sense of what they should be—the revelation of a unified and transcendent self. But this remains conjecture because not only has Muriel not provided public access and Buddy not found a publisher, Seymour himself chose not to publish. The works, as a result, exist outside the public domain and even outside the intellectual commons. Their existence is cordoned off as a private object whose value lies in its presentation of a complete unity that transcends the alienation of human existence. In connecting the works with an "authentic" subjectivity that is inaccessible, the Buddy-Seymour-Salinger nexus constructs an

identity that disavows its relation to the market and in so doing seems to revert to a pre-capitalist dream of the site in which literature appears. Seymour's refusal to publish stems from his belief that his poems insult the dominant culture that is the material ground for his existence:

they'd been written by an ingrate, of sorts, someone who was turning his back—in effect, at least—on his own environment and the people in it who were close to him. He said he ate his food out of our big refrigerators, drove our eight-cylinder American cars, unhesitatingly used our medicines when he was sick, and relied on the U.S. Army to protect his parents and sisters from Hitler's Germany, and nothing, not one single thing in all his poems, reflected these realities. (145)

Seymour's disappearance within the artistic realm of his work separates the material reality in which he lives from the work that he creates. While the absence of institutional realities within his work is a source of consternation for Seymour, it also allows him to construct a self that has no debt, no dependence on the economic market, no visible relation to the forces of production, as though his essence were outside these institutional forces. This absence reflects the essence of self as both a construction and the source of the construction. This self, the independent subject, is an ideological necessity for a capitalist order of exchange, but seen, in this instance, to stem from the individual author as the creator. It is in this sense that the construction of authorship in the Glass series is an ideological production.

In constructing the author as a representation of individual consciousness—the source of its own literary productions—Salinger masks the way in which the image of the author functions within the realm of literary property. Salinger is not the author of his own being, but rather a hegemonic construct. Stuart Hall points out that independent beings, because they are “decentered by the determinate conditions under which they live and produce [...] cannot, in any full and uncontradictory sense, be the collective *authors* of their actions” (320). The continued commodification of the author is, of course, what is at stake in the Glass series. While this series attempts to preclude the author from the text it is always the figure of the author, as a bourgeois individual, as the owner of a literary property, who returns as the source of the text. Ian Hamilton

argues that Buddy wants to protect Seymour's essence from the market: "Such is the purity of Seymour's gift that Buddy would not wish to have it knock around the literary marketplace as if it were just another contender for the worthless praise of second-rate reviewers. Art of this order needs to be protected" (163). Salinger likewise views his own privacy as a property to be guarded: "It is my rather subversive opinion that a writer's feelings of anonymity-obscenity are the second-most valuable property on loan to him during his working years" (qtd. in I. Hamilton 177). Salinger's public image as a recluse functions in line with this textual aesthetic of anonymity, making his own position as an author itself a construct within a cultural field. Significantly, as a public figure—that is to say, as a cultural commodity—he is not the source of his own image. Effectively, his absence serves to preserve his most intimate property (his work, his life) from theft or publication. In order to maintain this privacy he falls back on the very economic-juridical foundations of authorship in the form of copyright. His attempts to preserve his privacy through litigation becomes part of the Salinger text, so that authorship moves beyond any pure conception of aesthetics and takes on a material component, functioning alongside the aesthetic discourse of an idealized Seymour-poet. It is the contradiction between the ideal author and the author as individual owner of literary property that reveals the extent to which Salinger's authorship is embedded within the social relations of production that perpetuate capitalism. More significantly, it is in the image of the author that this tension appears.

Thus far, I have tried to map out an aesthetic of authorship that occurs within Salinger's fictional realm. This aesthetic, what I have called an aesthetic of anonymity, positions the author-subject as a figure who transcends social relations in order to access a higher order of reality. What I have shown, however, is that this drive towards transcendence constantly finds itself articulated within the realm of language as ideological commodity and compromises its claim to transcendence. My contention here is that the name J.D. Salinger structures a fictional aesthetic that, in its attempts to elude its own commodification, spills out of an ideological realm into the broader economic-juridical regime of neoliberal capitalism. I must re-iterate that my interest

remains not in a particular truth about Salinger's life, but in the appearance of the textuality of this "life" as part of a general aesthetic of anonymity. The effect of this theoretical move is that the Salinger construct cannot be thought outside the Salinger texts. Neither, however, can this image be understood as a "pure" interiority. In fact, it is the terms inside/outside that become obsolete in this analysis. I am concerned neither with what this Salinger image represents, nor its essence. On the contrary, what I want to unearth is how it appears by looking at the larger economic-juridical order that defines its contours. In this sense, the aesthetics of Salinger's fiction become indistinguishable from their position, as cultural products, within the material institutions of a capitalist system of ownership.

What is significant about Salinger's public withdrawal is that it is not total. It is punctuated by mysterious materializations, interviews and other media appearances that dissolve the establishment of a clear boundary between private and public. For instance, the book jacket for *Franny and Zooey* states: "My wife has asked me to add, in an explosion of candor, that I live in Westport with my dog" (qtd. in I. Hamilton 177). This ironic "explosion of candor" (at the time Salinger resided in Cornish) introduces the private life of the author as a public construction and it is this construction which invites scrutiny into the privacy that it attempts to obfuscate. Amidst his silence interviews appear in *The New York Times* (1974) and *The Partisan Review* (1980). Salinger's litigious attempts to stop publication of Ian Hamilton's biography and the circulation of the unauthorized *Complete Uncollected Short Stories of J.D. Salinger Vol. 1 and Vol. 2* also point out instances of Salinger's emergence (immersion?) into the legal institutions of the commodity

culture he attempts to escape. The most recent<sup>19</sup> escapade revolves around Salinger's attempt to publish "Hapworth 16, 1924" in book form through a small and relatively unknown press. When word broke over the internet about the publication, Salinger cancelled the project. While Salinger's own comments point to a desire for privacy, the extent and timing of Salinger's various appearances leave open the question of whether Salinger's expressed desire is genuine or part of an elaborate publicity stunt meant to keep Salinger and his work part of the public consciousness. It is this tension that drives the original concept for Ian Hamilton's Salinger biography. He hoped "that Salinger might perhaps be lured into the open" (7). Without attributing a conscious design to the play between the aesthetic and the material effects of Salinger's seclusion it is possible to see how, as Alexander claims, "Salinger has stayed in the public eye by *withdrawing* from it" (26).

### **Material Aspects of Romantic Authorship**

One of the effects of Salinger's withdrawal is that his life—the very thing which would seem to be beyond the commodity system—becomes a literary-object.<sup>20</sup> Salinger's earliest critics of the 1960s cannot fail to mention his disappearance. For them, the disappearance, however, is incidental to the primary concern with the literary object proper—the fiction. Warren French, in one of the first book length studies of Salinger's fiction, addresses Salinger's desire for privacy in

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<sup>19</sup> Since I first wrote this there has been another court "appearance" by Salinger. A Swiss author, Frederick Colting (using the pseudonym John David California) has been sued for copyright infringement because his novel *60 Years Later: Coming Through the Rye* borrows too much material from *Catcher in the Rye*. In fact, the novel was being marketed as a sequel. In his defense Colting claimed that the publication would be covered under fair use because it constituted parodic commentary upon the original. In July 2009 the 2<sup>nd</sup> District Court blocked the novel's publication in the United States due to "extensive similarities," finding no evidence of parody (Jeffrey and Kolker). Upon appeal in April 2010, however, the U.S. Appeals Court vacated the order and sent the case back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> District on the basis of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *eBay v. MercExchange LLC* (2006)—where the ruling states that "the plaintiff had to show the likelihood of irreparable harm to get an injunction, not just the probability of succeeding on the question of infringement" (Jeffrey and Kolker). The case promises to be interesting in that Salinger's lawyer, Marcia Beth Paul, has said "The damage that will be caused by publication of this unauthorized sequel cannot be made whole by money" (qtd in Jeffrey and Kolker).

<sup>20</sup> Salinger appears, for instance, as a character in W.P. Kinsella's *Shoeless Joe*. Don DeLillo claims that the "startling picture of an elderly man—he looked frightened and angry" on the cover of the *New York Post* in 1988 served as "his original inspiration" for *Mao II* (Moran 139).

a two-fold manner. He begins the book by explaining the withdrawal as a reaction to the public success of *The Catcher in the Rye* and his subsequent books. French speculates, however, that Salinger's "seclusion may actually result from an inability to make the social adjustments expected of mature members of society" (32-33). Despite this backhanded, out of nowhere disparagement, French goes on to draw a distinction between life and work by ultimately claiming, in Salinger's defense though not without a touch of condescension, that "he should—if interviews embarrass him—be left alone" (33). The work, however, is another question altogether. And here French does not share the same even guarded view of Salinger's privacy. Referring to Faulkner, another writer famous for his distance from readers, he states

Salinger's refusal since 1954 to grant anthologies the right to reprint unaltered specimens of his work, and his efforts actually to prevent the publication of his previous works or criticisms of it, is not defensible, for, as Faulkner also observed [...] when a writer submits his work for publication and accepts money for it, he "must accept whatever the public wished to say about [it] from praise to burning." (33)

While French addresses the withdrawal in his opening chapter it has no bearing on the work itself. The withdrawal becomes something to note and set aside. In fact, the distinction between the privacy of the author and the publicity of the work maintains the dichotomy that structures their relation.

More recently, biography has upstaged critical assessments of Salinger's work. Ian Hamilton, in attempting to unlock the mysteries of the author, sets up a distinction between professional magazines and academic journals in Salinger's publication history in order to assess the reasons for Salinger's withdrawal. The academic side of the equation which Hamilton describes as "protected, self-serving, college-boy milieu of the literary-critical careerists" becomes an object of derision in Salinger's work. Salinger, whose first works appeared in the "slicks," such as *Story*, *Collier's*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*, undoubtedly fits within the category of the professional writer. These magazines presented short story writers in particular

with a venue in which it was possible to create a career as a writer. They paid around two thousand dollars (a price comparable to “\$26,500 in today's dollars” as Margaret Salinger notes) for a short story (40). Hamilton includes as professional magazines, *Esquire* and *The New Yorker*, although these, unlike the “slicks” were of a more sophisticated variety that provided access to a more literary consumer. Hamilton describes *The New Yorker's* editorial stance as “relaxed, quizzical, dauntingly metropolitan” and *Esquire*, as the newbie on the market, “was even more explicit in its detachment from the political arena” (35). In other words, though they circulated as part of the publishing trade their commitment to artistic or literary works transcends the material realm of commodity culture. While Hamilton explains the decision to enter writing as a career through the professional side of the dichotomy as a choice that Salinger made, Margaret Salinger contextualizes Salinger's “choice” within a framework of his Jewish ancestry ultimately claiming that it was his only way in: “Jerome David Salinger, Regis Professor of Literature at Sarah Lawrence. We need only wonder. He could have changed his name, but there was still the little problem with the nose and that darkness” (39). In order to understand why Margaret Salinger takes such exception to Hamilton's characterization of her father's literary journey we need to understand the way Hamilton uses his distinction in his attempt to shed light on the Salinger mystery. Claiming that the 1930s in particular were an era of “the 'literary intellectual'” he says that “popular success would be likely to taint a work with the stigma of commercialism” (37). Thus, he locates a tension between Salinger's commercial writing and his drive for “literary” writing. According to Hamilton's dichotomy, Salinger is entangled in both worlds. Salinger's withdrawal, in this formation, emphasizes how his literary aspirations ultimately turn against his roots as a professional writer in order to construct the image of an authentic author beyond the political economy of the book trade.

Paul Alexander refines Hamilton's picture of Salinger as a writer concerned with the purity of his art by chronicling Salinger's publication history as a series of confrontations with

editors and publishers in a way that presents Salinger's enactment of authorship as that of an owner determined to have full control over his image. But his control is, from very early on, what was challenged by editors. In 1944, the *Saturday Evening Post* changed the title of a Salinger story that they had bought from "Wake Me When It Thunders" to "Both Parties Concerned" without consultation. Salinger "was also coming to see how an editor would presume ownership of a story, which was alarming to Salinger since an editor usually had nothing to do with the creation of the story in the first place" (Alexander 90). Earlier that same year, Salinger displayed his militancy when it came to claiming property rights when he submitted "Elaine" to *The New Yorker*. As part of his submission he wrote that it could be published only if "not a single word of the story be changed—not one. Reject it rather than edit it" (90). In 1946, Salinger again found difficulty with the publishing industry, only this time much closer to home. His friend, mentor and editor of *Story*, Whit Burnett, had helped him put together a collection of short stories titled *The Young Folks*. The pair devised the following plan: "Story Press would publish *The Young Folks*, establishing Salinger's name as a book author; after that, it would bring out his novel" (119-120). The problem they ran into was that Burnett didn't have the final say in the decision and when submitted to Lippincott (Story Press' imprint) they rejected it. Lippincott was to fund the publication and without their financial backing there was no book. Alexander explains that Salinger, who blamed his friend for the failure of the book to reach the public, "would ultimately conclude the actions Burnett and Lippincott took were representative of those that publishers and editors take every day" (120). Salinger's confrontations continued as he decided only to publish in *The New Yorker* after editors at *Cosmopolitan* re-titled another one of his stories without permission. This adversarial stance taken up by Salinger pits himself as an authentic literary author against the institutions through which the author emerges as a cultural figure.

In 1957 controversy propelled Salinger's name into the public domain when an advertisement for the publication of the Signet paperback editions of *The Catcher in the Rye* and

*Nine Stories* appeared around the same time as *The New Yorker* published “Zooey.” The advertisement for the paperback edition of his works compared them to “Zooey,” in an obvious attempt to increase sales by linking them with Salinger’s most recent work. Salinger was apparently incensed at the move and “shot off a telegram to Little, Brown proclaiming his outrage and anger” (199). The substance of his complaint was that the timing of the advertisement attempted to profit from his work. Salinger sold the original rights to the paperback editions to Little, Brown, who subsequently sold them to Signet. Salinger took exception to the fact that his works, which in their aesthetic component operate as an extension of his self, circulate beyond the author’s control. It is this tension between the public circulation of works and the author’s ability to control their movement that defines Salinger’s appearance as an author. This tension lays bare the inherent contradiction between a romantic discourse of authorship, based on a form of transcendental consciousness, and the embeddedness of this aesthetic within the very economic-juridical regime of ownership that it purports to transcend. It is in this sense that Salinger’s aesthetic reproduces without challenge the ideology of the bourgeois individual subject which marks the ground of capitalist production. Salinger’s decision to cease publishing some time after the publication of “Hapworth, 16, 1924” is not the act of an eccentric, but the culmination of a series of confrontations with the book trade industry. While his final publication was “Hapworth,” the decision to stop publishing occurred in 1970 when he repaid a seventy-five thousand dollar advance from Little, Brown thereby putting himself outside any financial obligation, in effect stepping outside the market.

### An Alternate Image of Salinger

The Salinger saga, however, does not come to its conclusion with the end of his publications. In 1974 his name surfaces again when a pirated collection of his works circulates in the United States. The edition, titled *The Complete Uncollected Stories of J.D. Salinger Vol. 1 and Vol. 2*

sold over twenty-five thousand copies before Salinger was made aware of their existence by a bookseller friend. The seller had been approached by "John Greenberg,"<sup>21</sup> who claimed to be the publisher of the copies. The copies were completely unauthorized and when Salinger found out about their existence he filed a Civil Suit in the San Francisco Federal District Court. The suit was filed against John Greenberg and seventeen bookstores for two hundred and fifty thousand dollars in punitive damages and an immediate injunction against the circulation of copies.

The example is illustrative because in it we see a convergence of interests at play in the book trade as well as competing conceptions of literary property and the role of authorship. The event first served to draw Salinger out of his seclusion when he telephoned *New York Times* reporter Lacie Fosburgh requesting an interview. It was the first interview that he'd given in twenty years. In the interview he complained that his property has been stolen, making an explicit comparison between the publication of the stories and the theft of a piece of personal property: "Somebody's appropriated them. It's an illicit act. It's unfair. Suppose you had a coat you liked and somebody went into your closet and stole it. That's how I feel" (qtd. in Fosburg 1, 69). The analogy between the stories and a material object, a coat, suggests that Salinger, by virtue of the theft, no longer has access, can no longer enjoy the stories. The analogy suggests that he has been robbed of his access to the use-value of the object. The stories, however, still maintain their use-value, that is to say, they can still be read. The nature of literary property is such that it is at once material and immaterial. Ownership is not a pre-condition of use when it comes to literary texts, so in this sense Salinger has not been robbed of anything. The stories were not after all stolen out of a locked trunk in the basement of his house, they were copied from published, and hence public, magazines. The theft of text does involve theft of a particular type of property, but what is at stake for Salinger is the juridical right to its exchange value. The

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<sup>21</sup> John Greenberg was apparently a pseudonym employed by numerous different people who approached book sellers at various locations across the United States, each offering the collection at a dollar fifty a book.

unauthorized copy is not of an unrecoverable essence of the story, but a diminishment of the potential exchange value.<sup>22</sup>

There is no question that Salinger holds the copyright to the stories, but this did not prevent “John Greenberg”—who allegedly did not see a problem with the act because “they could always negotiate with Salinger's lawyers and promise not to do it anymore”—from printing and distributing the works (Fosburgh 69). In terms of their appropriation the question that needs to be addressed is what exactly is the nature of this appropriation. The works are attributed to Salinger, there is no misrepresentation about their authorship in the pirated works. In fact, that they were authored by Salinger is a marketable feature, for it is this name recognition that makes them interesting to both booksellers and readers. Fosburg reports that a manager at Gotham Book Mart in New York City was told by Greenberg that they were publishing the copy because “he was a fan of Salinger's and thought these stories should be available to the public” (69). Salinger had no intent to re-publish the stories himself, he says, claiming “I wanted them to die a perfectly natural death” and further that they were written at a time when he was “intent on placing [his works] in magazines” (69). The tension lies around the issue of public right to access the works and the maintenance of the private interest of the individual. Around the issue of the pirated works Salinger's language implies that his injunction is as much about the maintenance of privacy in his life as it is about the circulation of his works: “I'm still trying to protect what privacy I have left [...] all I'm doing is trying to protect myself and my work” (69). This conflation of self and work

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<sup>22</sup> In Salinger's appeal to a “use-value” there is a fundamental misunderstanding of the literary text as a commodity. Marx explains that the concept of commodity-value contains a contradiction between its “use-value” as a value in which “abstract human labour is objectified” (129) and “exchange value” as “the mode of expression, the 'form of appearance', of a content distinguishable from it” (127). In the commodity, use-value appears as the content of its exchange value, but this content is not the object in-and-of-itself, rather it “conceals a social relation” (149). Within what Marx calls the general form of value—an extension of which is the money form where money acts as the universal equivalent—commodities are “brought into relation with each other as values, or permitted to appear to each other as exchange-values” (158). To speak of value, then, is to refer to exchange value, and thus Salinger's appeal to the loss of an independent “use-value” of which he is robbed, masks the text's function as a bearer of exchange value. Jean Baudrillard, goes so far as to suggest that use-value “is only the effect of the system of exchange value, a concept produced and developed by it,” which further testifies to the notion that there is no independent use-value within a capitalist mode of production (“The Mirror of Production,” 102).

points towards the distinction that Hamilton constructs in *In Search of J.D. Salinger* between the professional Salinger and the literary Salinger.

The earlier works, which constitute the bulk of *The Complete Uncollected Short Stories*, are those of a professional Salinger. They were written for the “slicks” for the purpose of allowing Salinger to live by his writing. As such they represent a Salinger whose artistic production is molded by its value as a commodity. It is this representation which undermines Salinger's image as an authentic artist in pursuit of the pure literary object, and in essence, that makes the property he wants protected from public consumption the image of a J.D. Salinger who opposes the system, whose principled stance against the commodification of literature is so fervent, so authentic that he takes himself completely out of the industry. Salinger's language cloaks itself in a concern with a personal privacy, but the material effects of this right to personal privacy are embedded within a system of ownership whose purpose is the circulation of capital. It is only as an owner of a commodity whose value is expressed in its ability to accrue profit that Salinger has recourse to the protection of his works. The publication of the hard to find stories, collected together in a single, affordable edition threatens the authenticity of the image that has been cultivated around Salinger. It is this image that I suggest is as much part of the works as the literary texts themselves. The economic value—that is to say, the exchange value—of the works which Salinger authorizes for publication is in a certain sense dependent on the maintenance of his image as an author who stands above the commodification of literature. Salinger's plea for privacy, though, is for a personal privacy and in this sense this construction of self must be understood as part of the works themselves. It is part of the larger aesthetic that I have described in the previous sections of this chapter. And in being indistinguishable from the works this aesthetic lays bare the effects of romantic authorship when it inevitably encounters the material institutions of the book trade as a node in the neoliberal system of capitalist exchange. That is to say, a transcendental aesthetic demonstrates that the romantic conception of authorship reverts to

a neoliberal logic where the State's only function (or main function) is to produce institutions that keep in place strong private property rights. Salinger's discourse suggests a concern with personal property, but his only recourse is to a system that upholds that property because it houses a potential exchange value. There is nothing personal in the system. It upholds, through copyright, Salinger's "right" over the text and its distribution merely as an economic necessity in the preservation of a system of free trade.

### **Salinger v. Random House**

In early 1986, after a decade of seclusion and relative silence, Salinger emerges once again. Ian Hamilton had completed work on a biography, titled *Salinger: A Writing Life*, that was going to press. Because Hamilton had quoted from Salinger's unpublished letters held at Harvard, Princeton and the University of Texas archives and was bound by contracts with those libraries to get permission from the copyright holder prior to publication, Salinger had the opportunity to read the galley proofs of the book. Salinger's response was swift: he required Hamilton to remove all quotations from the letters or he would take legal action. Hamilton made the necessary edits, paraphrasing the quotations to leave the ideas intact. This action was not enough for Salinger who sued Random House and Hamilton for copyright infringement. The crux of the case came down to four essential questions around the nature of Random House's fair use defense. The fair use clause of U.S. copyright law sets out to balance the use of works for cultural production and the author's right to retain profits from the works. The four principles whereby "fair use" is determined according the Copyright Act of 1976, U.S.C § 107 are: what is

1. The purpose and character of the use; including whether such use is of a commercial nature or is for non-profit educational purposes;
2. the nature of the copyrighted work;
3. the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole; and
4. the effect of the use on the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work

The first hearing of the case, which temporarily delayed publication, was heard by District Court Judge Leval. Judge Leval found in favour of Random House (Hamilton's publisher), claiming that fair use qualified on all four fronts.

Salinger appealed the decision and in 1987 the case went before Judge Newman and Judge Miner, US Court of Appeals, Second Circuit. They reversed the decision ultimately claiming that Hamilton's fair use defense could be qualified on only one front, the purpose of the use. Even this, in their judgment, was tempered with the caution that overt advertising of the fact that Salinger's unpublished letters were contained within the biography would make the venture an overtly commercial one: "Though no evidence has yet been presented on the advertising materials Random House plans to use, it is hard to believe that some emphasis will not be placed upon the fact that the book draws generously on Salinger's unpublished letters" (*Salinger v. Random House*). On the second question Newman and Miner claimed the letters did not qualify for fair use because they were unpublished. They cited precedent for their claim in *Harper & Row v. The Nation*, where the judgment affirmed fair use is pre-empted by right to first publication: "the author's right to control the first public appearance of his undisseminated expression will outweigh a claim of fair use" (*Harper Row v. Nation*). On the third question they found that substantial portions of the letters had been quoted, and if not quoted, paraphrased to maintain the expressive content. They argued that Hamilton could have reported the bare facts without a style that emulated the original Salinger letters. As Hamilton explains "There was never a great deal of factual content. The 'fact' I wanted to communicate was that he wrote letters in the way he did" (194). What Hamilton articulates is that the form of the letters, that is to say, the style or the aesthetic, was precisely the content that was being communicated.

It is the final question that synthesizes the other three and operates as the *modus operandi* of the judgment. The judges' decision in favour of the plaintiff rested, not on the actual financial value of the letters, but on whether there was a potential devaluation of the commodity because of

the fair use: “[Salinger] is entitled to protect his *opportunity* to sell his letters, an opportunity estimated by his literary agent to have a current value in excess of \$500,000” (*Salinger v. Random House*). While Salinger refuses to publish his works, they continue to accrue value on the basis of the fact that he might one day. In the juridical framework, the works exist not as an aesthetic mode, but simply as commodities, and it is as commodities that they have value, it is as commodities that they are granted protection under the law. In *Salinger v. Random House* Salinger wins the right to keep his work away from the public. Salinger's victory, in fact the entire case, is based on the premise that the works under question are commodities. It is precisely this premise that Salinger's aesthetic portrayal of authorship as a consciousness of the infinite attempts to counteract. What is characteristic of authorship in Salinger is that the romantic aesthetic becomes an ideological ground of bourgeois individualism the moment it enters the economic-juridical regime as a material product.

The *Salinger v. Random House* decision, which I am reading as part of a construct of Salinger's authorship, is significant for at least two reasons. In finding that unpublished letters are outside the scope of fair use, the law creates a line that divides the public from the private, that is to say, through copyright the law determines where one body (producer) starts and the other (product) stops. This distinction delineates a literary property (a text) as a finished product cut off from the process of production in which it is produced. The Salinger product, then, in being entirely his, negates the ways in which his own work is the product of having worked on or through other works and also the potential producer of other cultural works. The debate with regards to ownership, however, is rooted in the deeper question of who owns the specific property of the letters, the individual or the collective? Textual property, that is to say the market of ideas within capitalism, functions on the same premise as its more material commodity market. Copyright carves, out of the common property of ideas and language (the intellectual commons), a specific work that is the property of the individual. In stating that copyright remains with the author-owner the law negates the role of the collective, not only as the being towards which the

work is shaped, but as a co-producer of the work. Copyright, as I have shown in the first chapter, is, in fact, a juridical function that arises out of an economic need for regulation in order to maintain a “free” market in ideas. Thus, we have an example of the law as the extension of a set of market practices, and so recourse to this law in support of the rights of the individual is an ideology that masks the social function of cultural production in the economy as its own ground of truth. The work, in this system, arises as the original creation of the author from the single source of the individual. The actual product being produced within the economic-juridical regime of neoliberalism, I would argue, is a form of subjectivity that supports and even grounds the possibility of capitalist ownership. In this sense, neoliberal subjectivity goes even beyond ownership, understanding the self as “*a homo œconomicus* as entrepreneur of himself, being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of [his] earnings” (Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 226). Romantic authorship always, despite its attempts to construct itself as a transcendental aesthetic, finds itself within this neoliberal regime and in its withdrawal, sanctions the very system it attempts to transform with its aesthetic.

Salinger's right to protect his anonymous identity through copyright stems, not from an inherent right to privacy, but rather the right of the individual to control their own “private” property. In exerting this legally established right, however, Salinger's very identity becomes a construct whose articulation as such occurs within the economic-juridical order. Salinger's appearance within this order delineates a space of authorship as itself a textual construction beyond his self-assertion. What is clear is that authorship reveals itself as a function, as a means of regulating economic transactions, where the State intercedes only to guarantee the sanctity of the market and the law of competition. The author, in Salinger, is equated with the entrepreneurial individual. The ideological function of Salinger's authorship masks this material function within the neoliberal economic-juridical order, but it is precisely this institutional function that reveals itself when the individual form of cultural production that protects his anonymity comes under threat.

## **Conclusion**

The point I raise in this discussion of Salinger's authorship is that aesthetics are never confined to themselves. Aesthetic practice bleeds out beyond a “literary” space into a more broadly defined social context where political, economic and cultural factors converge, into what Foucault calls an “economic-juridical order.” Salinger's romantic authorship, as a product of both the fictional texts and the image of anonymity—as a material embodiment of a consciousness that purports to transcend materiality and connect with the infinite—must be thought as itself inside the very juridical and economic institutions that construct the world it seeks to escape. I am not arguing that Salinger is an *über* capitalist; instead, it is the attempt to position the author as a figure of transcendence that serves capitalist relations of production, in that at a material level no social change occurs. The authentic author continues to produce commodities which continue to circulate within a network of capitalist production and exchange without materially calling into question that system of production and exchange. In fact, in locating the authenticity of the author in an individual consciousness that is an original source, romantic aesthetics support the notion of the proprietary individual who functions as the ground of ownership in a capitalist system of exchange. Salinger's authorship reveals its ideological function as the ground of individuality. But this is not to lay everything at Salinger's feet, to single this text out as the problem of an individual, but rather as something symptomatic of a larger view that there is an outside, that there is an alternative or completely exterior space from which to begin a critique of neoliberal order. As such what I am proposing is that authorship must be examined not as a state of consciousness, or a reference to an individual identity, but as a text within a field of cultural production. In other words, authorship is a site of struggle, of contention—but one which remains open. This openness is important because it sets the stage for authors to question the function of the author-figure as an ideological ground of capitalist production and exchange from within the

very situation that produces the author-figure. In short, it leads me into the question, which I will take up in the following chapters, of how can authors dissemble their identities both within their work and in their production of their “author-ity” in ways that problematize the ideological assumption of individual unity as the source of production and the ground of distribution? But how, too, can this notion be taken further to put an aesthetic of anonymity to work within the economic-juridical framework of neoliberalism by creating a dissident form of cultural production that transforms the very framework and the infrastructure from which it emerges?

## PART 2: DISSENTING CONSTRUCTIONS

### Chapter 3: Anonymity and Dissent: Authorial Constructions

*The distinctive characteristic of the concept of creation is not that it posits a creator, but that, on the contrary, it renders the “creator” indistinct from its “creation.”*  
---Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*

*What is a work? What is this curious unity which we designate as a work?*  
---Michel Foucault, “**What Is an Author?**”

Up until this point I have focused my discussion around a romantic aesthetic of the literary work and authorship. This aesthetic revolves around a notion of an individual authorial personality who is seen to transcend the material conditions of publication within capitalism as a means to revalue the literary commodity as an aesthetic object. What I have demonstrated, both in the theoretical component and the particular example of J.D. Salinger, is that this aesthetic masks the institutional function of authorship and as a result reproduces a form of the social relations of production that maintain capitalism. Modernism, however, is a key turn in literary studies that shifts focus away from this notion of a transcendental author to a rigorous examination of the work as an autonomous literary object, as an object whose intrinsic artistic qualities are outside of material relations of production. As I will show in this chapter, the modernist turn towards the autonomous art object eludes the exterior conditions of possibility for the work and as a result fails to adequately account for the institutional function of authorship in an economic-juridical order of capitalism. A postmodern deconstruction of textual interiority and exteriority, however, renews the question of the relation between the author and the work. It does so with a re-

invigorated sense of authorship as a construction that is not an external limit to the work, but is, in fact, an aspect of the work which itself has no privileged interior space that could “rule” over its own position *vis-à-vis* the network of exteriority in which it appears.<sup>1</sup> Authorship, in a postmodern formulation, indicates neither an original source of text, nor an outside limit from which the work could be entirely separated, but it is certainly not “dead.” On the contrary, the constructed nature of authorship re-positions it as a political site that is immediately connected to a textual aesthetic *and* its institutional function within an economic-juridical order of neoliberalism.

What this current chapter explores is how a postmodern aesthetic of self-reflexive anonymous authorship breaks down the distinction between author and text, between producer and product, creator and creation, so that the author can be conceived as an aesthetic construct inseparable from the literary work as commodity. What this means is that authorship, like the work itself as a construction, has no ultimate signified that is not itself already a textual relation. What is important, however, is not the postmodern refrain “there is nothing outside the text,” but that the self-reflexive anonymous author enters, through its form as a name without a reference outside its own textuality, the material field of the economic-juridical order as a cultural product without an owner. If the author is part of the work, that is, if it is a construct whose source is not the individual owner, but the collective process of cultural production, then it draws attention to the way its own name functions in relation to the book trade. As such self-reflexive anonymous authorship embeds itself in the larger field of cultural production as a dissident form in the contemporary context of global neoliberal capitalism. Working out of the notion of the materiality of the “signifier,” I argue that self-reflexive anonymity extends a critique of ownership of language beyond the particular content of fictional works by locating authorship as itself a site in

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<sup>1</sup> My use of the terms “rule” and “network of exteriority” come from Jeffrey Nealon who has an insightful discussion about similarities between Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida’s engagement with the concept of an “exterior” context that would surround or explain a particular text. See *Double Reading*, in particular pages 55-58.

a global struggle between open and restricted access to cultural production. In this sense I suggest that the work is both an aesthetic product and a commodity, but that neither of these two fields is mutually exclusive, that, in fact, aesthetics relate as much to the commodity status of the work as the commodity status shapes the aesthetic form of the work. In other words, these two aspects of the text are inseparable and function dialectically.

I have already shown how romanticism's political drive against the industrialization and commodification of literature gets displaced from the material to an imaginative or ideological realm. For romantic authors, the imaginative realm is a higher order of reality, an original essence of life, and it is this essence that is reflected in the individual consciousness. Consciousness, in turn, creates the literary work as a representation of its own interiority. This interiority, for the romantic author, is the authentic space of literature. Raymond Williams points out the dual consequence of this conception of art:

The positive consequence of the idea of art as a superior reality was that it offered an immediate basis for an important criticism of industrialism. The negative consequence was that it tended, as both the situation and the opposition hardened, to isolate art, to specialize the imaginative faculty to this one kind of activity. (*Culture and Society*, 43)

The obvious problem with this construction of a politically engaged literature is that this artistic space, distanced as it is from the relations of material production, erases the way in which its own aesthetic production is inseparable from a capitalist infrastructure that it seeks to challenge. As a result of the emergence of the autonomous individual author in romanticism, literature develops in two directions. On the one hand, as I have already shown, the literary work is seen as a reflection of the subjective author who creates; it is supposed to be the manifestation of a subjective individuality. Literature, in this sense, is a secondary object, it is the evocation of a higher order of reality, a plenitude to which there is only fleeting access and which precedes the

literary work. Literature is, as Percy Shelley waxes, “a feeble shadow of the original conceptions of the poet” (527).<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, literature, as an autonomous field, supplants the individual as the source of creation. Literature acquires its own aesthetic mode of being that is not bound by the material conditions of its existence as printed text. It neither refers to individual consciousness, nor exclusively to its content. This shift, then, from the expressive author of romanticism to the impersonal author of modernism, has a simultaneous effect upon the notion of the work. The importance of the work is no longer what stands behind it or prior to it, that is to say, the individual personality, but rather the internal construction of the autonomous work as a literary object with its own rules and conventions. Prior to its commodification, Peter Bürger explains, literature exerted a social function through its integration in a religious or aristocratic system (Bürger 48). Its commodification severs this social tie and as a result of its dispossession literature becomes a depository for what is unrealizable in the material relations of capitalism. The objectification of literature turns on its perceived essence as an autonomous aesthetic product and orients artistic value as a means to hold at bay the economic impulses of market value to shape literary production. The language of literature ceases to be solely the sign of external objects; instead, it refers to its own internal construction. In distinguishing the space which modern literature occupies, Michel Foucault writes:

from the nineteenth century, literature began to bring language back to light once more in its own being: though not as it had still appeared at the end of the Renaissance. For now we no longer have that primary, that absolutely initial, word upon which the infinite movement of discourse was founded and by which it was limited. (*The Order of Things*, 44)

Rather than investing a work with value based on an authorial consciousness, it is the final form or the unity of the work itself that designates value. The focus on the work as a complete and

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<sup>2</sup> This line of critical work gives rise to the “man and his work” or biographical criticism, where either the work explains the depth of an individuality, or conversely the biography explains the work. All of which is supposed to unveil the authenticity of the being behind the work or the source of the literary work. This source, as it turns out, is the individual subject.

unified form ushers in a discursive shift whereby the text supplants the subject as the signified of literature. The work, in its own being, steps out from behind the shadow of the personality as an object worthy of consideration in itself. Literature refers to an aesthetic space beyond the individual. The inauguration of romantic self-reflexivity in literature provides a foundation for modern critical endeavours, only now, the work reflects on its own aesthetic construction rather than the individuality of the author.

In *Capital*, Marx explains that within a specifically capitalist mode of production “Labour has become bound up in its object: labour has been objectified, the object has been worked on. What on the side of the worker appeared in the form of unrest now appears, on the side of the product, in the form of being, as a fixed, immobile characteristic” (287). For literary studies, the work is a commodity, but its commodity status is only one aspect of its being. It also exists as a cultural product that is produced within an aesthetic field of production and operates according to formal rules and conventions that appear to exist separate from material relations of production. As an aesthetic product, literature signifies a relation with its own formal appearance. Roland Barthes picks up on this nascent shift in critical focus from the producer to the product when he remarks that in the mid-nineteenth century “Labour replaced genius as a value, so to speak; there is a kind of ostentation in claiming to labour long and lovingly over the form of one's work” (*Writing Degree Zero*, 63). Contrary to what Barthes' comments imply (which he famously develops in “The Death of the Author”), that genius no longer supplies a text with value,<sup>3</sup> the concept of genius in the Barthesian re-working is not so much disposed of as re-invested with meaning through the final formal unity of the work as a reflection of an extensive

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<sup>3</sup> But Barthes' comments also imply that the author was on its death bed in the nineteenth century. Seán Burke calls “this lineage palpably false. Of the examples [Barthes] cited, Proust, though he opposed conventional biographicist criticism, never declared anything remotely resembling the death of the author, Valéry as often as not militated in favour of authorial control over and against the romantic notion of inspiration, and Surrealism, whilst it may have persuaded a few writers to experiment with automatic writing, has never had a clear and unmediated impact upon critical theory” (8). Further, even the oft-celebrated Mallarmé “represents a tenebrous culmination of the romantic doctrine of inspiration” (10).

labour. The importance of this shift—in theoretical terms—lies in its emptying the work of its subjective content in favour of the objectification of its formal components. Peter Bürger writes:

Since the middle of the nineteenth century, that is, subsequent to the consolidation of political rule by the bourgeoisie, this development [of bourgeois art] has taken a particular turn: the form-content dialectic of artistic structures has increasingly shifted in favor of form. The content of the work of art, its “statement,” recedes ever more as compared with its formal aspect, which defines itself as the aesthetic in the narrower sense. (19)

The tendency of this dialectical turn towards form (or aesthetics) isolates the work from its relation to the social field and gives it the appearance of existing as an object in an autonomous field of literary production. This larger field is reflected in literature and is the hypostasis of modernism's social function. In other words, this tension between the social relations of production and its aesthetic re-inscription in the work continues to be, as in romanticism, a major structural feature of literature.

### **Modernism and Autonomy**

Modernism responds to the commodification of literature by retreating into the art world as the source of its value. In foregrounding formal experimentation the modernist work defers its own descent into the status of a mere commodity. Terry Eagleton writes: “the modernist work brackets off the referent or real historical world, thickens its textures and deranges its forms to forestall instant consumability, and draws its own language protectively around it to become a mysteriously autotelic object, free of all contaminating truck with the real” (368). What lies outside the work, what stands at its edge—politics, the market, law, etc—threatens the work and must remain excluded in order for the text's artistic value to shine. The formal structure of the work protects literature's essence from its appearance in the market by problematizing formal conventions such as linear narrative, plot and clear relations to its referents, among other things.

This apparent formal autonomy,<sup>4</sup> which displaces the material conditions of publication, sets itself—as a literary object—above those conditions in order to articulate a “pure” artistic vision.<sup>5</sup> In moving beyond the individual consciousness towards a larger formal incorporation of exteriority, modernist writing produces itself as an autonomous space from which late capitalism's fragmentation is on display. My discussion, here, elides a debate within Marxist critical interpretations of modernist form with regard to the political implications of formal experimentation. Critics like Georg Lukacs, followed later in the century by Eagleton and Jameson, indeed, have argued quite the opposite of the portrait I am painting of modernism. They claim that modernist form never successfully gets outside the relations of production, and that the writing itself is symptomatic of the alienation and ideological blindness produced by late capitalist production. Eagleton writes: “by removing itself from society into its own impermeable space, the modernist work paradoxically reproduces—indeed intensifies—the very illusion of aesthetic autonomy which marks the bourgeois humanist order it also protests against” (368). I take as my starting point that modernist form is socially and politically engaged because this critical space, the distance between the form as totality and the individuals within that totality

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<sup>4</sup> Even while the notion of a formal unity falls by the wayside and fragmentation, defamiliarization and discontinuity become the hallmarks of literary modernism, the work (while still autonomous) remains a reflection of a given exterior that finds its home in aesthetic inscription. As Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari point out, “Joyce's words, accurately described as having 'multiple roots,' shatter the linear unity of the word, even of language, only to posit a cyclic unity of the sentence, text, or knowledge [...] The world has become chaos, but the book remains the image of the world: radicle-chaosmos rather than root-cosmos. A strange mystification: a book all the more total for being fragmented” (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 6). Marianne DeKoven will use this notion of structural fragmentation as the distinguishing feature of modernism: “modernist writing offers, constructs, in fact defines itself as radically inconsistent—literally, self-contradictory—though not incoherent” (685).

<sup>5</sup> This subsumption of the relations of production into an essentially literary field necessarily devalues the extent to which those relations contribute to the appearance of the work itself at the same time as the subsumption elevates the literary as the primary force of social production. The extent to which art takes a prominent place in the modernist work can be understood by reference to the myth-making apparatus of overlaying ancient texts over contemporary situations, positing a continuity and a difference (or as Eliot might have it, a decline) that recuperates an autonomous literary space as a space beyond the material constraints of productive forces. Texts like Joyce's *Ulysses*, Pound's *Cantos*, or Eliot's *The Waste-Land* are obvious examples, but the significance of art as a grand narrative that establishes the works' value cannot be ignored in writers as diverse as Virginia Woolf, Thomas Mann, Herman Hesse, Zora Neale Hurston or F. Scott Fitzgerald. What draws the works together is an attempt not to find an individual center of consciousness from which to reproduce the world, but rather a suitable form that would contain the chaotic appearance of the early twentieth century in Europe and the United States with order.

emphasizes a clear distinction between the work and the author. I am not interested in staking a position in the debate, but on the contrary, I want to show that even if this were the case, even if the formal innovation refutes romantic personality, it concretizes the separation of the author and the work, which is vital to the maintenance of the literary product as a commodity: the author as an exterior limit guarantees the borders of the work. DeKoven, for example, reads Joseph Conrad's description of pencil-like smokestacks billowing volcanic explosions in *Lord Jim* as a moment when the powerful force of industrialization cannot be erased through its artistic representation. She explains:

we note the wonderful disparity, the impossibility of fragile pencils belching out smoke like volcanoes: the power of self-referential *modernist* writing to represent, through self-erasure, the irreducibility of a “reality” whose explosive force would be effaced, not revealed, by a *realist* use of language that has it masquerade as transparent. By itself that particular contradiction undercuts Jim’s rewriting of industrial reality as harmlessly lovely “artistic” impression. But beyond that, the connotations of barely contained, potentially monstrously destructive violence in the image of the volcano near eruption speak of the representation in Conrad, and, I would argue, in all modernist writing, of precisely the impossibility, the ludicrousness, and the danger of converting deadly history into harmless (or transcendent) art. (684)

In order to maintain this space, this critical distance created by the formal representation, however, DeKoven requires a separation between Jim's “*unself-critically* impressionist point of view” and Conrad's construction of Jim within the work (684). She points to Jameson's equation of Jim with Conrad in *The Political Unconscious* as an instance that fails to recognize the autonomous space in which the social relations of production enter into the work in order to draw attention to the inadequacy of a purely artistic representation of these relations. She argues:

Conrad is not Jim, any more than he is Marlow (note how Jameson, in equating Conrad with Jim “in this novelistic project” does away with precisely the distinction most important to modernist form), and yet it is from Jim's or Marlow's point of view that Conrad writes. It is modernist form that allows Conrad to refuse not history, not the “realities” of life under imperialist, misogynist late capitalism, but to refuse epistemological determinacy. It is from Jim's point of view that, to use Jameson's term again, “realities” become impressions. (683)

By virtue of its self-viewed autonomy, literature provides a fictional space that plays out the material contradictions out of which it arises, from a critical distance. “Aesthetic relations of production,” Theodor Adorno writes, “are sedimentations or imprintings of social relations of production. Art's double character as both autonomous and *fait social* is incessantly reproduced on the level of its autonomy” (5). The product of the modernist work is this autonomous space where social relations are inscribed in the work. The formal autonomy of the work becomes political because it presents itself as an outside, as an immaterial object, as unconstrained by the material conditions of publication and dissemination, thereby guaranteeing that the work's value resides in its autonomy. When the material conditions of publication—mass markets, the drive for surplus-value, alienation, property relations—enter the work they do so as representations and as a result can only be engaged with as aspects of formal intervention:

Social forces of production, as well as relations of production, return in artworks as mere forms divested of their facticity because artistic labor is social labor; moreover, they are always the product of this labor. In artworks, the forces of production are not in-themselves different from social productive forces except by their constitutive absenting from real society. (236)

The relations of production enter the work as an aesthetic reflection and refraction transforming them into representations, and therefore creating another space, a literary space, as something detached from the actual relations they attempt to describe.

### **Authorship in Modernism**

The problematics of authorship in modernism revolve around the conceptualization of the work. Rather than producing a theory of authorship, modern aesthetics seek to raise the literary object above a mere subjective production of the individual. In order to shift this focus away from the romantic subject, however, the modernist work brackets the author outside the work in an attempt to conceive of the work as an objective aesthetic product. The author's subjectivity is no longer

the primary referent of the work and as a result ceases to have significant impact on a critical evaluation of the work. The figure of the author has, in various ways and by various artistic movements of the twentieth century, been a figure under attack. From impersonality to New Criticism, from Formalism to structuralism, the author's personality is largely understood to be inconsequential to comprehending how the literary work operates. The work operates at a level beyond, or above, the individual. Osip Brik writes in 1923, "The social role of the poet cannot be understood by an analysis of his individual qualities and habits" (90). Similarly, New Critics like Wimsatt and Beardsley claim the meaning of a text cannot be delineated by reference to the author's intention. Only the work, as an object in itself, can produce its meaning. Seán Burke comments that in the anti-authorial stance of the early twentieth century, "The author was simply to be removed or sidelined" as a "strategy" to better understand the internal mechanisms of the work (14). The author is an impediment to understanding the actual aesthetic relations of the text.

The intrinsic value of the work as the object of literary studies is maintained by a separation of the producer and the product, the author and the text. T.S. Eliot postulates that the artist, in the development of an artistic consciousness, experiences "a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality" ("Tradition and the Individual Talent," 6-7). Similarly, Heidegger, in a more systematic problematization of the artist's relation to the work, claims "the artist remains inconsequential as compared with the work, almost like a passageway that destroys itself in the creative process for the work to emerge" (166). Both writers testify that the author subjects him/herself to a larger context of art in the process of creation. The larger artistic context, borne out in the autonomous literary object, displaces the writing subject as the center to which the work refers. The work, then, provides an aesthetic reflection of the complex textual relations that constitute its essence. The author, however, occupies a position outside the work itself; it is not bound by the aesthetic relation of the work. It is this exclusion that marks the modernist privileging of the aesthetic over the material conditions in which the

work appears as a printed text. The author, as a distinct being who gathers an external multiplicity into the text as an interior ordered whole, functions as a boundary that guarantees the unity of the text, so that no matter how fragmented the literary product, the author remains a sign of internal coherence. Eliot explains: "When the poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience" ("The Metaphysical Poets," 247). The author's absence, however, is not absolute. As a boundary it continues to exert a presence in relation to the work by saturating it from the outside. Stephen Dedalus, in Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, claims: "The artist, like the God of the creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails" (207). The individual artist, as a superior form of individual, as the author-God figure, elevates itself above the immediacy of the social relations inherent in the text in order to produce autonomous literary works whose value arises precisely because they appear to have no interest in any aspect of the work except its aesthetic formation. Maud Ellmann argues that in Eliot (and Pound as well) "The starting-point of poetry remains the poet's personality, however stringently he chooses to 'reduce' it. He wills his own invisibility" (7). The ability to construct one's self as obsolete and as intimately intertwined with the work restores a sense of power to the author. In its focus on aesthetic production within the work, impersonality neglects the institutional function of the name of the author as the "principle of a certain unity of writing" (Foucault, "What Is an Author?" 111). This conceptualization of the author is an aesthetic sublimation of its institutional function that positions the author as a stable exterior to the text. While, in modernism, authorship is largely conceived as being inconsequential to the process of creation, thus re-conceiving the romantic idea of the expressive nature of the work in its elevation of and construction of the work as an autonomous object, it nevertheless neglects the way the work—as a commodity—interacts with the economic, social and political aspects of print publication in capitalism, as though this "external" field or context has no impact on the form of the work. I set up this construction of the

author in modernist aesthetics in order to differentiate from a postmodern textualization of authorship.

### **Postmodernism and the Work**

If romanticism and modernism are characterized by their respective attempts to construct an autonomous space for literature that supercedes the social relations of material production either through the personality of the author, or the autonomy of literary work, then postmodernism ushers in a distinctive shift when it comes to spatial production. Working out of Philip Lacoue-Labarthe, Jeffrey Nealon argues that “Postmodern writing (postmodern literature, postmodern text) [...] becomes the place (the site, the space) where the logic of the *renvois* (the logic of a writing that cannot control its own destination) moves and shows itself—as *thinking/writing*, that ‘reflection of experience where reflection (and hence experience) constantly undoes itself’” (102). It is characterized, in other words, by a space where representation ceases to function as a transparent rendering of a material outside of text. Postmodern fiction, in particular, by reflecting on its own constructedness and by reflecting on its own language as a material, problematizes the notion of a pure, or authentic/original material source beyond textual relations. Christian Moraru points out that within postmodern discourse “the text as intertext and re-textualization, no longer refers back to an ultimate, univocal, unified source” (18). The “postmodern” work, then, has no clear boundaries that distinguish where one text begins and another ends. It is always part of another text, it is intertextual.<sup>6</sup> Deleuze and Guattari’s image of the rhizome provides a useful way of understanding the postmodern work as a network. They claim that the rhizome is a structure characterized by, among other things, “principles of connection and heterogeneity” (*A Thousand*

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<sup>6</sup> This is not to say that intertextuality is not an aspect of modernism. One need only look to the works of H.D., Joyce, Pound or Eliot to see that intertextuality is part of a modernist aesthetic. With postmodern aesthetics, however, intertextuality intensifies to the extent that it problematizes the status of the “original” as original. In other words, it exploits the collective nature of textual production in order to explore the various social constructions embedded in particular works.

*Plateaus*, 7). A rhizome cannot be conceived in its entirety because it is constantly in the process of transformation. They write:

The point is that a rhizome or multiplicity never allows itself to be overcoded, never has available a supplementary dimension over and above its number of lines, that is, over and above the multiplicity of numbers attached to those lines. All multiplicities are flat, in the sense that they fill or occupy all of their dimensions: we will therefore speak of a *plane of consistency* of multiplicities, even though the dimensions of this “plane” increase with the number of connections that are made on it. Multiplicities are defined by the outside: by the abstract line, the line of flight or deterritorialization according to which they change in nature and connect with other multiplicities. (9)

A postmodern text, then, exceeds its status as a representation and in so doing becomes part of a larger realm of mediation from which it is impossible to separate completely the economic, juridical, aesthetic or political fields.

The intertextual nature of postmodern works is not in-itself a sure-fire defense from its recuperation through a system of representation. As an example, Moraru writes “to represent 'real' things and situations, representation must work its way through, first engage with, literary and cultural texts, stylistic codes, and representation models—in brief other representations” (20). In terms of analysis, this methodological positioning would box us in an aesthetically oriented world with no clear link back to the material world. Indeed, we could conceivably argue that the material reality to which literary representations purportedly refer is, in effect, produced by its representations. There are two problems associated with this understanding of postmodernism as a reversal when it comes to its relation to material culture. The first (and most obvious one) is that it puts us at a remove from the actual objects. Representation, in this conception, referring as it does to other representations or texts, operates at an abstract level that assumes the primacy of representation over the thing represented. The second problem is that in assuming the primacy of

representation Moraru disregards the problematic nature of representation.<sup>7</sup> In suggesting that texts are objects to be worked through in order to reach “real things,” Moraru returns to a space that is made impossible by deconstruction. I absolutely agree that there is no direct access to material reality without operating through representation, but to confine critique to the level of representation is to keep in force the very distinction (aesthetic/material) that I believe postmodernism breaks down.<sup>8</sup>

While for Moraru the stakes of postmodern fiction revolve around representation, critics like Daniel Punday posit a more nuanced approach that positions the stakes between representation and its relation to materiality. Punday, in particular, attempts to characterize a post-deconstructive fiction that moves past the aporia associated with the Yale re-telling of post-structuralism.<sup>9</sup> He writes:

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<sup>7</sup> Moraru claims that postmodern writers adapt, or work through other texts and in so doing re-constitute an originality that assumes a certain control over the work's destination, that is, in turn, understood by those who would read it through its relation to other representations to ultimately arrive at a space where a representation lines up with its object over the course of its historical projection. Nealon, in a discussion about the overlaps and slippages between Heidegger and Derrida's reading of Heidegger, claims “The economies of (mis)reading between and among Heidegger, Derrida, and their readers can be *accounted for* by the very ‘theory’ under consideration here. This accounting for nonplenitude, nonarrival, and errancy in an other-than-negative way is part of the ‘project’ of thinking/writing the postmodern. These texts are in-scribed within the network(s) they de-scribe, and must submit to its play” (98). In fact, while Derrida is clear that navigation through a structure of representation is necessary, deconstruction “put[s] into practice a *reversal* of the classical opposition *and* a general *displacement* of the system. It is on that condition alone that deconstruction will provide the means of *intervening* in the field of oppositions it criticizes and that is also a field of nondiscursive forces” (“Signature Event Context,” 21).

<sup>8</sup> Moraru attempts to politicize textual appropriation as revisionary, as rewriting, but ultimately he returns without any real sense of the relations of material production (ie. conditions of textual property): “representation illustrates and activates the *normative* function of language, trades in and upon conventional, socially palatable, cliché-type descriptions, which are as many already negotiated mimetic agreements. Representation tends to enforce such agreements rather than question them. At the same time, it disputes them. As I contend, it frequently turns against them, their premises, and against its own shoring up (reprise) of these premises [...] postmodern literature often conveys [...] a novel sense of originality and authenticity, literary, cultural, as well as political” (17-18). In the long run, he's making a claim that the ground of postmodern representation is previous representation, which reveals the constructedness of artistic practice, which nevertheless seeks to recover in its impossibility the entirety of an object's representation through intertextuality. In the end, for Moraru this establishes a new form of “originality” or “authenticity” which would fit without any disruption to the existing legal framework of the literary text as commodity.

<sup>9</sup> Nealon point out that “for de Man deconstruction is a generalizable method applicable to any text; it will yield similarly indeterminate results in any (con)text” (34). Other critics in the Yale school include Geoffrey Hartman and J. Hillis Miller.

This fiction accepts deconstructive principles, embracing the idea that discourse is always incomplete, that subjectivity is at least partially illusory, and so on. But at the same time, this fiction obviously wants to go beyond these deconstructive assumptions to produce a new kind of writing that does more than merely restate textual paradoxes [...] postmodern writers do indeed develop a post-deconstructive narrative [...] by emphasizing the relation between the text and the outside world and by using the problematic materiality of textual elements as an emblem of that 'worldliness.' In particular these writers think about fiction as a mode of writing in which the author negotiates a position between the text and the real world. (Punday 50)

The postmodern text is a negotiation between an external referent and the language used to represent that referent. In other words, what lies "outside" language, or the text, is always itself intertwined with a textual construct. Punday's notion of a post-deconstructive narrative focuses on the reflexive nature of the writing, the turning back to the different spaces in which the "textual machine" operates. He highlights a specific deconstructive practice within American fiction of the 1980s, particularly that of Ronald Sukenick, who engages with the narrator-as-author trope in order to de-stabilize the authorial authority at the same time as the author becomes a site which "maintains" a "slippage between concrete and conceptual of basic concepts" (37). This authorial function maintains the slippage from an external site, making the instability of this "outside" an aspect of the text, making, in effect, the author as textual construct.<sup>10</sup> The author, in this sense, relates to the text's meaning and in its postmodern articulation it does not provide a stability that would arrest the possible play of meanings. In effect, this conception of the work as an object that continually mediates its own relation to its outsides, that is to say, to the relation between the representation and the object represented, removes the textual dimension from the material conditions of production. It is a meta-discourse about itself and its own representation, or rather about the problematics of representation itself. A postmodern work, then, marks the impossibility of accessing the material without a prior textualization of that material. If there is a moment of critique, that critique operates at the level of meaning, at the level of language itself because

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<sup>10</sup> Actually this is what Punday calls "post-deconstructive" because it attempts to account for the problematic relationship between the material and the aesthetic without sacrificing the material.

language relates intertextually to other language, and even further to other signifiers, rather than some authentic or unmediated objective material.

This does not mean that there are no objects, but rather that objects themselves, that is, the referential ground of language exists in relation to other objects, which appear as signs within a system of signification. In “Consumer Society,” Jean Baudrillard argues that “objects are no longer tied to a function or to a *defined* need. This is precisely because objects respond to something different, either to a social logic, or to a logic of desire where they serve as a fluid and unconscious field of signification” (41). Objects, he claims, are effectively signs that respond to a system of signification that abstracts them from their referential content. An object is inseparable from its function within a relational system. Baudrillard further claims that as an object of consumption

*the object must become sign*; that is, in some way it must become external to a relation that it now only signifies, a-signed *arbitrarily* and non-coherently to this concrete relation, yet obtaining its coherence, and consequently its meaning, from an abstract and systematic relation to all other object-signs. (“The System of Objects,” 25)

Deleuze and Guattari similarly describe a realm of signification where content is always already intertwined with its nature as a sign. “All signs are signs of signs,” they write,

The question is not yet what a given sign signifies but to which other signs it refers, or which signs add themselves to it to form a network without beginning or end that projects its shadow onto an amorphous atmospheric continuum. It is this amorphous continuum that for the moment plays the role of the “signified,” but it continually glides beneath the signifier, for which it serves only as a medium or wall: the specific forms of all contents dissolve in it. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 112)

The point is not that something external to language is inaccessible, but on the contrary, that this “outside” of text itself cannot be entirely extricated from a system of representation. In order to wade through the slippery terrain between the specificity of an object's relations to other objects and the conceptual apparatus by which these relations are known, postmodernism deconstructs

the aesthetic and the material, and constructs materiality as a site of mediation upon which the concept of materiality is constantly worked through.

Perhaps the most provocative and controversial claim for this mediated space is Jacques Derrida's famous phrase "*il n'y a pas de hors-texte*" (*Of Grammatology*, 158). This phrase has often been misunderstood as "there is nothing outside the text," as in there is no material ground for the text. On the contrary, what he calls "text" "implies all the structures called 'real,' 'economic,' 'historical,' socio-institutional, in short: all possible referents [...] it does mean that every referent, all reality has the structure of a differential trace" ("Afterword," 148). The work is never in-and-of-itself a complete object, but rather a site of multiple iterations each of which opens out into new sites. As Jeffrey Nealon notes:

general text is not the text, the book, but rather a realm of mediation, something of a phenomenological life-world, the "given" network or chain that makes discourse—in the broad sense of the word as a place where things are mediated—possible but at the same time makes it impossible for this discourse to arrive at any ontologically determinable destination, any merely singular telos. (82)

This idea that text is something more than print on the page, that it is rather an open and indeterminate space, a network, through which multiple lines of force pass and congregate, requires a reconceptualization of the interaction between materiality and representation. Derrida's notion of language as grapheme attests that language is more than a form of representation, that it is, beyond any referential value, a concrete material. Punday explains, "the system of language as pure difference depends on the move into the world, on stripping away motivation and treating signifieds as concrete individuals. It is because we can treat signifiers as concrete that their association with signifieds is abstract" (35-36). In this sense, postmodernism does not so much privilege the signifier over the signified as flatten out their relation, putting them on an equivalent plane.

Nealon, in fact, argues that postmodernity is best understood neither as a historical period nor as an aesthetic, but as a situation at the limits of representation, where it is impossible to leap

beyond representation and yet not possible to fall back into it completely. This situation is defined by “the hesitation or negotiation between text (in all its complex Derridean associations) and reading at the space of metaphysical closure, where both the possibility and the ends of reading and writing are radically unsure” (85). In other words, “there is no ‘place’ outside representation from which to speak about it or about whatever ‘postmodern’ literature might turn out to be” (86). And the material, as such, whether subject or object, cannot escape a certain complexity and cannot be reduced to a unified thing that precedes its textuality. Rather the material is a spatial production always already caught up in complex negotiations between subject and object. The material, in this sense, is never entirely outside representation, it is created as an object that exceeds its production and yet is never in-and-of-itself complete. Every sign participates with other signs not through a relation to its original, but through a system of differentiation of which there is neither origin, nor totality. As Nealon explains “There is [...] no extra-text, no term that can rule, organize, or regulate the system from without the system, precisely because the supposed master term must constitute itself *within* this network of referrals by referring always to something other than itself” (82-83). The work is never an individual product, but rather it is a collective cultural product marked by those textual elements embedded within larger systems of signification.

### **Postmodern Authorship**

If there is no stable outside to the postmodern work, that is to say, if the work is constantly producing its own materiality by problematizing the context of its own production as a representation, there can be no stable subject (as part of its material context) who stands outside the work and commands the textual relations of the work. The author is neither a unifying presence within the work, nor does it surround the work as a fixed boundary. On the contrary, the “postmodern” author is part of the textual relations of the work and does not exist outside the

material conditions of publication. As an “author,” however, the authorial name exists as both a relation to the work’s aesthetics and a relation to the work as a commodity. “Death of the author” theories suggest that there is no single stable identity behind the authorial name. On its own, however, this assertion does not trouble the function of the authorial name. Literary critiques of the author in the wake of Roland Barthes tend to revolve around the notion of the authorial voice and the narrative relation to the “author.” And while the modernist idea that the author and the narrator are separate, that the author could adopt multiple voices, none of which could be entirely attributable to the presence of his or her own voice, has its echoes in the death of the author, it does not go the full length of the postmodern critique of authorship. The death of the author argues that it is, in fact, absence (in this case, absence of the author, or the inability to account for the presence of the author) that structures discourse. In lacking that original unity of the author, discourse attempts to fill the gap by inserting other words, terms, signifiers to substitute for the missing source of itself. My examination of postmodern authorship takes these insights with regards to absence and shifts the direction in which they are put to use. Specifically, in looking at the self-reflexive anonymous author, as a name that circulates detached from any determinate signified outside that which is institutionally constructed through both the field of cultural production and the economic-juridical realm of copyright and the public domain, I argue that postmodern authorship is more about the social relations that construct a particular form of cultural production in a neoliberal capitalist system of production and exchange, than it is about the author’s relation to meaning. That is to say, its aesthetic content is a site in the struggle to create open access to the public domain and resist the material enclosure of the intellectual commons.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ronald Deazley makes a distinction between the intellectual commons and the public domain. For him, what separates the two constructed spaces is that the public domain is open to “use without permission” and includes aspects “of a copyright protected work that nevertheless do not require permission prior to such use” (111). The intellectual commons, by contrast, refers to the space of publication which has been made public, but which may remain restricted in terms of how we are able to make use of that work in

It is precisely the problematic of copyright's relation to cultural production that Derrida draws attention in "Limited Inc a b c . . ." He states: "the question of the 'copyright,' despite or because of its marginal or extra-textual place (but one which is never simply anywhere, since, were the © absolutely detached, it would lose all value), should no longer be evaded, in any of its aspects, be they legal, economic, political, ethical, phantasmatic, or libidinal, etc" (34). The insight that copyright should not be "evaded" is important because through it the author, or more specifically the name of the author, is not separate from the text. The name of the author is, in fact, an element of the work's textual existence, but it is one that connects the work to its location in any number of "external" fields. In effect, through the author-figure the work breaches any supposed aesthetic autonomy to firmly locate itself as a necessary function within the relations of production. The author-figure opens the work into the field of cultural production where its institutional function as the delineation of a literary property as well as its significance as a marker of a certain political position within the cultural field must be taken into account as a constitutive part of the text. That is to say, it localizes itself within a political, economic, juridical and/or cultural context that is from the outset shifting and is, in fact, what is at stake in the production of the work itself. It is only when the name of the author, as a "thing" tasked with "owning" the text, is put into question that the name breaches literary-aesthetic autonomy and connects into the material. What this means is that the author, as I have already shown, is also a figure created through a legal discourse that functions in tandem with the economy to produce a specific form of individual (or private) ownership; to ignore this aspect of authorship in relation to the content of the work to which the name is ascribed—especially when the name of the author is an explicit construction—is to leave a significant element of the textual relations unexplored.

Postmodern authorship calls into question its own status as a stable subjectivity, but it also questions its relation as a name to its institutional function. Copyright, in this sense, is inseparable

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that the rules of copyright will still operate to prevent us from freely copying, distributing, renting, performing, broadcasting or adapting the work" (109).

from the production and consumption of the “work” and the work (of which the author is a part) finds itself part of a copyright regime that regulates the circulation of text in an economic field.

It is very well possible, indeed likely, for a postmodern author to maintain a critique of the stable subject within the work and at the same time conform to the institutional role of authorship as a trade regulator by preserving the unity of the name, or the name as a representation of a “real” author as the originator of the work. I have already noted this tendency in both romanticism and modernism, so what needs to be clarified, in order to grasp the specificity of my claim about authorship, is that postmodern authorship is not inherently political in the sense that it provides an automatic challenge to the material condition of publication, and in particular to the way in which textual dissemination operates through the economic-juridical order. For instance authors like Kathy Acker, William S. Burroughs and Ronald Sukenick all establish the fictionality or the constructedness of the author in their fictional production, but as their authorial names themselves are attached to real people these names are able to recuperate this fictional construction as fiction, as part of the commodity itself. In reference to Don DeLillo, Moraru, for example, states

DeLillo suggests that meaning is relational, too, a matter of syntax, ties, collisions, and collusions: a posthermeneutic, intertextual value. This suspicion plays out in his characters' names, which boast no semantic 'transcendence.' All we can do is try to read them like texts alongside other texts. While pointing to both the limitations and mystery of naming, DeLillo resorts to the name as 'performative' representation, 'discursive construction' of the named self to work out a personal understanding of what recent critics have call 'posthumanist' subjectivity" (34-35).

Essentially, the critique never leaves its aesthetic dimension and gets swallowed up when we turn to the existence of the work as a commodity. In Moraru's analysis, DeLillo's own authorial name remains outside this intertextual economy despite the fact that postmodern “artists *play up*, systematically uncover [...] the fictionality, the 'constructedness' of creativity, authorship, and subjectivity” (Moraru 19). Without extending this constructedness to the authorial function of their own names, the “play” remains aesthetic. What I am drawing attention to, and what I believe

has not been dealt with in its political implications, is the fact that as long as the name of the author in its juridical-economic articulation stays intact, the crisis of representation at the level of authorship can be managed so that it doesn't spill out into the material conditions of publication.

What I referred to in the introduction of this dissertation as the self-reflexive anonymous author, however, shifts the focus from the aesthetic components internal to the work, to its existence as a material commodity that circulates within the relations of capitalist production. The self-reflexive anonymous author is an authorial construct that problematizes its own existence to the extent that any re-construction of this figure is a fiction. Anonymity, in this sense, refers broadly to both the use of pseudonyms and a deliberate withdrawal from public correspondence outside the works themselves. The self-reflexive nature of this figure refers back, not to the absence of biographical data, but to the deconstruction of identity, originality and authority within the works themselves. In other words, the self-reflexive anonymous author replicates within its own construction the aesthetic production within the texts. This gesture puts in motion a deconstruction of the aesthetic and the material to the extent that the author, or the authorial construction, is co-existent with the work. Their co-existent construction does not mean that the work creates the author, but rather that the authorial construction should be read in relation to the textual aesthetic that emphasizes intertextuality and collective cultural production without either the work or the author assuming a primary textual existence. As texts, they are inseparable. The self-reflexive anonymous author is not merely an absence that structures its textual relations. The point is not that there is an absence, or that there is no author. On the contrary, authorship exists as a construction, as a product of a process of production. Self-reflexive anonymous authorship constructs the author as a textual presence both within the work and in the fields "external" to it. The questions that I am looking to answer are not what does the name of the author symbolize, or represent, but rather how does it function as a construction, or as a part of a text that already problematizes notion of authority, originality and the relations between materiality and representation. The core of this exploration of the self-reflexive anonymous author is not what

lies behind its existence, but how its existence produces a material space of political dissidence by virtue of the aesthetic presence of a decentralized name within the network of material production.

This aesthetic intervention, however, is not confined to an aesthetic or philosophical/academic point. On the contrary, the self-reflexive anonymous author—that is the authorial name without a stable reference other than a body of texts which themselves delineate a mediated space of materiality—has real implications for the economic-juridical circulation of texts.<sup>12</sup> David Saunders argues that the aesthetic and the material (actually he calls it the legal realm and in so doing ignores the economic impetus of “positive law”) are entirely separate and that the aesthetic critique of copyright never breaches its own realm of what he labels “morality.” He takes particular exception to the notion that aesthetic plagiarism can be distinguished from legal plagiarism. He writes: “It is in the claim to confront the law with a higher 'morality' that an aesthetic advocacy of what has been termed 'appropriation' as authentic creative practice has posed its challenge to copyright norms” (225). His claim is that cultural critics ignore the practical concerns of the law. When postmodern creative practices of “appropriation” are taken up they “subordinate positive law to the direction of aesthetics” (227). Whereas the legal sphere “has differentiated appropriation of imagery whose purpose is commercial from imagery whose purpose is artistic,” the aesthetic, which according to Saunders is entirely independent of the legal “because it lacks the appropriate tools,” cannot distinguish the commercial from the artistic (229). My point is, however, that such a distinction is moot because in neoliberalism the artistic is always already produced within a commercial field. If plagiarism, or “the conscious manipulation of pre-existing elements in the creation of 'aesthetic' work” is, as Stewart Home states, “inherent in all 'artistic' activity, since both pictorial and literary 'arts' function with an

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<sup>12</sup> Some of examples of authors who could fit in this provisional category include, obviously Thomas Pynchon and Luther Blissett/Wu Ming who will be the subject of the next two chapters, but also B. Traven, Fernando Pessoa, Arthur Caravan, J.T. LeRoy, John Twelve Hawks, or collectives like the Invisible Committee. Many internet artists whose work operates at the border of property could also be included in this list.

inherited language,” then this “artistic production” requires the production of a political space that confronts the dominance of the commercial aspect of the work (“Plagiarism, 51). In asserting a difference between plagiarism and appropriation, Home attests to the collective nature of cultural production: “Plagiarism enriches human language. It is a collective undertaking far removed from the post-modern ‘theories’ of appropriation. Plagiarism implies a sense of history and leads to progressive social transformation. In contrast, the ‘appropriations’ of post-modern ideologists are individualistic and alienated” (51). Collaboration, then, is a process of creating the world, but by taking from what exists in the world and producing variations and new spatial constructions. My contention, here, however, is that the self-reflexive anonymous author enters the material relations of production (through the field of cultural production) and does not claim to expose copyright law as a constraint to “freedom” but rather demonstrates how copyright in its neoliberal formulations of expanded individual (or corporate) rights affects the very form of the cultural artifact—the work. It is this claim that somehow the artistic can be distinguished from the commercial that is deconstructed in the self-reflexive anonymous author as an aspect of the work.

### **Authorship and the Field of Cultural Production**

In saying that a text is both an aesthetic product and a commodity I am stating that these two aspects of the text are inseparable. Textual aesthetics cannot be thought outside their relations to the socio-economic processes of their production and exchange through the book trade and the larger economic field in which this trade operates. This does not mean that textual aesthetics can be reduced to a reflection or representation of a given economic system. Rather, fictional aesthetics respond to at the same time as they are constituted within an economic-juridical order that is itself in process, that is itself unstable. I have claimed that modernist writers attempted to transcend the dual existence of the work by having the literary object exist within an autonomous sphere. Peter Bürger claims literary autonomy is an ideological product of an art-institution that

“regulates the commerce with works of this kind [individual] in a given society or in a certain strata or classes of a society” (12). It is, he further states, “the productive and distributive apparatus and also [...] the ideas about art that prevail at a given time and that determine the reception of works” (22). If, as I argued earlier in this chapter, literary autonomy negates the material relations of production only to reproduce them as an aesthetic product, then this product performs an ideological function in that it both creates a space to fulfill real desires and in so doing masks the need for material change because of its realization at the aesthetic level. Bürger writes:

All those needs that cannot be satisfied in everyday life, because the principle of competition pervades all spheres, can find a home in art, because art is removed from the praxis of life. Values such as humanity, joy, truth, solidarity are extruded from life as it were, and preserved in art. In bourgeois society, art has a contradictory role: it projects the image of a better order and to that extent protests against the bad order that prevails. But by realizing the image of a better order in fiction, which is semblance only, it relieves the existing society of the pressure of those forces that make for change. (50)

The formal appearance of the work substitutes for the infrastructural relations of production external to the text and those relations find themselves re-appearing within the work as an aesthetic transformation. An exploration of textual materiality, which includes the conditions of publication and language, requires a rigorous understanding of the work's function within its “external” system such as the field of cultural production. Only then does the work's (and authorship's) complex relation with the economic-juridical order begin to appear as a constitutive element of a textual “postmodern” space.

The field of cultural production mediates between what I might call the artistic and commercial components of the cultural artifact. Bourdieu explains that the field of cultural production itself is structured by these two poles, what he calls

the *field of restricted production* as a system of producing cultural goods (and the instruments for appropriating these goods) objectively destined for a public of producers of cultural goods, and the *field of large-scale cultural production*, specifically organized with a view to the production of cultural goods destined

for non-producers of cultural goods, “the public at large.” (“The Market of Symbolic Goods,” 115)

If “large-scale production” is the pole most invested in the competitive practices that establish the economy as a site of truth, then “restricted production” is the inverse of the same structure, deriving value from its ability to construct cultural objects without regard for public consumption. The two are not distinct or isolated, but rather a single dialectical site of struggle. Within this field, power is not dispersed at an immediately economic level. Rather it realizes itself as the “power to consecrate, in which the value of works of art and belief in that value are continuously generated” (“The Production of Belief,” 78). Bourdieu claims

in the most perfectly autonomous sector of the field of cultural production, where the only audience aimed at is other producers (as with Symbolist poetry), the economy of practices is based, as in a generalized game of 'loser wins', on a systematic inversion of the fundamental principles of all ordinary economies. (“The Field of Cultural Production,” 39)

The art-institution promotes a literature whose legitimacy resides in its “artistic” qualities above a literature whose *modus operandi* is short term profit through broad readership and mass consumption. The social structure of the institution not only creates symbolic capital in the works, authors, and publishers, but produces an audience or consumer with the prerequisite cultural capital to identify themselves individually with the “significance” of formal innovations that legitimate the works, authors, or publishers themselves. The “product” of cultural production is equally the consumer as the producer. As Baudrillard argues, “The truth about consumption is that it is a *function of production* and not a function of pleasure, and therefore, like material production, is not an individual function but one that is *directly and totally collective*” (“Consumer Society,” 49). For the art-institution, the concept of literary autonomy is an attempt to control, not necessarily the immediate profit generating capacity of its artifacts, but to define the dominant “artistic” characteristics as well as to create a consumer capable of recognizing their

aesthetic value. As a result it creates a symbolic capital that converts into economic profit down the road.

For Bourdieu there are three fields (artistic, power, class) more or less immersed within each other. He explains: “the literary and artistic field is contained within the field of power, while possessing a relative autonomy with respect to it, especially as regards its economic and political principles of hierarchization” (“The Field of Cultural Production,” 37). The field is not defined solely by its “restricted production.” The artistic work which has no regard for its “public” consumption is only one part of the entire field. At its opposite end are the commercial aspects of the field: sales, production costs, markets, materials, tools, property rights, etc. Within the field, however, there is a constant struggle for legitimization. Bourdieu writes: “the field of cultural production is the site of struggles in which what is at stake is the power to impose the dominant definition of the writer and therefore to delimit the population of those entitled to take part in the struggle to define the writer” (42). This power does not arise as a result of increased profits or commercial success. On the contrary, there is an inverse relation between economic and cultural legitimacy:

alongside the pursuit of “economic” profits, which treats the cultural goods business as a business like any other, and not the most profitable, “economically” speaking [...] and merely adapts itself to the demand of an already converted clientele, there is also room for the *accumulation of symbolic capital*. “Symbolic capital” is to be understood as economic or political capital that is disavowed, misrecognized and thereby recognized, hence legitimate, a “credit” which, under certain conditions, and always in the long run, guarantees “economic” profits. (“The Production of Belief,” 75)

Writers, or works, that disavow any economic motive, who steadfastly refuse to conform to economic necessities (such as having a broad audience or accruing profits) achieve a form of cultural legitimization. This legitimization, which ensures both their dominance within the field and their ability to create and maintain the values that constitute the field by anointing others, is only one form of legitimization. This power is what Bourdieu refers to as “symbolic capital.” Its power “consists in making a name for oneself, a known, recognized name, a capital of consecration

implying a power to consecrate objects (with a trademark or signature) or persons (through publication, exhibition, etc.) and therefore to give value, and to appropriate the profits from this operation” (75). As it tends to legitimization, this power decreases the gap between the two poles and another “school” appears to contest the legitimacy of the original anti-commercial faction, which has, at this point, achieved a dominant symbolic position in the field. This symbolic power can only be achieved within the structure of the field itself. This process of cultural legitimization is significant for my discussion because any position is always already taken up within the field of cultural production and cannot circumvent the objective relation of this field with both the fields of power (economic-juridical order) and the field of class relations. In other words, there is no position outside the field of cultural production and at the same time this position articulates a political location with its contiguous fields. The emerging faction that resists the cultural hegemony of the dominant group—whether work or author—really takes a position in relation to the field, a position that gains legitimacy through struggles to resist the institutionalization or commercialization of literature and becomes part of a new dominant power within that field. The possibility of severing the role of the field of cultural production *en route* to a direct social function, one that abandons the mediation of the field, is precisely what is impossible within the field. The field is another “text” which must be read in order to understand the nature of the work. The work, isolated as an autonomous object, has no existence. The field is that which mediates the relation between the work and the economic-juridical order, but at the same time it is a spatial construct within which aesthetic and material conditions converge.

Art's autonomy, propagated by the art-institution, links aesthetic production to ideology, it sanctions and legitimizes dominant cultural production. The governing principle of the field, that is between its disinterestedness and its profit generating capacity, is the struggle to define and maintain an artistic taste that allows the individual consumer to access the manifestation of cultural references within the textual artifact. In this sense, at the far end of the field, that is to say, at its most autonomous, the work—as an object beyond its commodity form—is a “pure”

aesthetic product. Of course the point of Bourdieu's analysis is to reveal how this field operates by means of a different form of capital only now construed in terms of symbolic capital around aesthetic issues. What Bürger argues is that the art-institution mediates political struggle through its own norms of display and dissemination to the extent that unless the political struggle is the organizing principle of the work, then "the political and moral contents the author wishes to express are necessarily subordinated to the organicity of the whole" (89). In literary and aesthetic production content is subordinated to form which means that political dissidence at the level of content is minimized by formal interests of the institutionalized art field. The political content of a work is a secondary aspect of the work itself whose primary and important qualities are its formal components: how the parts fit together, the maintenance of a fragmented whole, deconstruction, etc. Content is largely irrelevant to the institution: "the affirmation of the primacy of form over function, of the mode of representation over the object of representation, is the most specific expression of the field's claim to produce and impose the principles of a properly cultural legitimacy regarding both the production and the reception of an art-work" (Bourdieu, "Market of Symbolic Goods," 117). The acquisition or ability to "read" a formally complex work signifies a certain social belonging or status. So form, or aesthetics, constitutes a dominant hegemony in the field of cultural production and this hegemony reinforces itself through a logic of powers that distinguishes "authentic" cultural production as that which does not recognize its "public" consumption as part of the production process.

While I think Bourdieu's analysis of the structure of the field of cultural production is a useful way into the aesthetic-material relation of authorship, there are a few of points that must be elaborated. First, Bourdieu's notion of a relative autonomy in the field of cultural production, created by a network of editors, writers, publisher, etc, is a construction that is inseparable from the very field he attempts to describe. That is to say, it is a construction that occupies a position within the field. His notion of autonomy is based on a network of cultural producers whose interests lie in the control and direction of an authentic or legitimate literature. Legitimation in

this field occurs as producers tend to disavow any economic motive for their work. On the contrary, “authentic” art, that is art whose object is its own formal construction, distances itself and surrounds itself in the production of symbolic capital as a means to protect itself not necessarily from economic profit, but from a particular mode of economic production that is based on mass production and quick turnaround for example, rather than a generational development of the object. That is to say, its alternative is not entirely autonomous and continues to function with the realm of capitalist exchange as though it were independent by virtue of its search for pure aesthetic values. Bourdieu reminds us that the institutionalization of art and in particular the cultivation of a sensibility that appreciates aesthetic values is not entirely autonomous: “whatever its degree of independence, it continues to be affected by the laws of the field which encompasses it, those of economic and political profit” (“The Field of Cultural Production,” 39). Its autonomy is based on formal or “literary” values that exist in opposition to commercial values. Rather than positioning itself as a formal alternative, the aesthetics of self-reflexive anonymous authorship produce a dissident political space within the economic-juridical order by drawing on and problematizing popular narratives. Bourdieu’s construction of the field is predicated on a distinction between producer and consumer with the art-institution mediating between the competing interests. What I’d like to suggest is that production is part of a process that includes both consumption and inscription without isolating them as distinct spheres.

At the beginning of *Anti-Oedipus* Deleuze and Guattari explain:

there is no such thing as relatively independent spheres or circuits: production is immediately consumption and a recording process, without any sort of mediation, and the recording process and consumption directly determine production, though they do so within the production process itself. Hence everything is production: production of productions, of actions and of passions; productions of recording processes, of distributions and of co-ordinates that serve as points of reference; productions of consumptions, of sensual pleasures, of anxieties, and of pain. Everything is production, since the recording processes are immediately consumed, immediately consummated, and these consumptions directly reproduced. [...] incorporating recording and consumption within production itself, thus making them the productions of one and the same process. (4)

This idea of a single process of production deconstructs Bourdieu's understanding of the relation between the field of cultural production and its corresponding fields of power and class relations. An investigation into a process of production, which includes consumption and inscription of the text within those fields, allows for the emergence of the work's textual appearance at the cross-section of economic, juridical, aesthetic and political spaces. Whereas Bourdieu claims that cultural production can only be understood by analysis of the autonomous structure of the field, the Deleuze and Guattari postulation suggests that the economic-juridical order (field of power, of class relations, in Bourdieu) is immediately present in the field of cultural production. Within the field of cultural production the individual writer is not the guarantor of his or her position within the field; rather, there is a whole collective framework of publishers, editors, schools, critics, fans, media, etc. who create writers in relation to specific political positions which have been cultivated as a result of the struggles for legitimacy in the field. None of these positions, neither the artists' or the interpreters,' are stable. They are constantly vying for the ability to be consecrated and preserved while those who have been consecrated are attempting to ward off the attacks of a younger or different generation or school. Bourdieu stresses the importance of the various poles within the publishing industry whose strategies vary and who must produce the "right" type of art product for the markets they have created. Ultimately the value of the author resides in this network of publishers and editors, etc, on the entire small trade creating symbolic capital.

Bourdieu writes:

The art trader is not just the agent who gives the work a commercial value by bringing it into a market; he is not just the representative, the impresario, who 'defends the authors he loves'. He is the person who can proclaim the value of the author he defends (cf. the fiction of the catalogue or blurb) and above all 'invests his prestige' in the author's cause, acting as a 'symbolic banker' who offers as security all the symbolic capital he has accumulated. ("The Production of Belief," 77)

Authorship within this field needs to be thought of as a site, a material text upon which the struggles for legitimacy converge. For the self-reflexive anonymous author, the aesthetic and

institutional relations of authorship, indeed of text, exert their powerful forces such that there is never the possibility of referring to the author as a person. In fact, authorship as a construction occupies a position within the frame of the field of cultural production that is immediately political in relation to the commercial pole of the field.<sup>13</sup> But its politics have as much to do with the content of the fiction produced under its name as its “artistic” qualities. When the constructed nature of the authorial name enters the foreground and is an extension of the politics of the fiction, then it cannot be construed as a passive element of the text. This move away from the author's individuality, or rather this incorporation of the author as a text that is part of the text “proper,” constructs the literary work as an object that, as a collective product, acts as a dissident form of cultural production when taken in the context of a neoliberal order of capitalism. Its dissidence, here, arises by becoming a textual property whose original source cannot be identified with a particular individual owner. The author is inseparable from this aesthetic that continually constructs itself as a product of the forces of capitalist production, and in the process of revealing authorship as a means of regulating text according to a logic of economic profit, constructs an alternative form of cultural production that emphasizes the importance of open access to an expanded public domain. By revealing the emptiness, or the fiction, of literary ownership, that is to say, copyright's increasing function as a generator of profit rather than cultural production, the self-reflexive anonymous author recollects the practice of collective cultural production where cultural products are never an end in themselves but the building blocks of other products in the creation of a collective undertaking. The play of the field of cultural production cannot immediately exceed the larger field of power but it continually creates the conditions of possibility which confront the imposed limitations of the larger field of power.

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<sup>13</sup> For example, the institutional rendering of an author such as Fernando Pessoa focuses on the artistic or aesthetic quality of the work as something that opposes the commercial context of its production through the reproduction of a formal autonomy.

### **Anonymous Authorship and Commercial Function**

What is being produced in the self-reflexive anonymous author is a space which makes possible the emergence of a dissidence within an economic-juridical order of neoliberal capitalism. Which sounds all fine and good, but this assumes a starting point where aesthetics somehow take precedence, or are the primary ground of legal and economic questions of ownership. Saunders, in particular, asserts that positive law must be distinguished from a conception of law as a block to an essential freedom. He argues instead that what is important is what the law makes possible and what its reference should be. He writes: “the English legal apparatus was not attempting to recognise the presence of the writer's subjectivity in the work but regulating a novel and unstable sphere of cultural, commercial and technical activity by delineating and attributing a right to trade in mechanical duplicates of the work” (12). And yet in doing so he fails to recognize that this convergence of economic practices and legal decisions creates the conditions of possibility of a particular form of individual cultural production. Copyright, he says, is simply a legal trade mechanism that stabilizes ownership in order to promote a form of a capitalist production. I have already shown how, at copyright's inception, it was as much about creating a space from which cultural products (texts) were part of a public domain to further a sense of collective cultural production, as it was protecting the individual owner's interests. It is my contention that the focus on the individual producer, or author, as both creator and owner of text, affects the form in which cultural production appears, a form which emphasizes the individual identity at the expense of the social relations of production that appear both thematically within text and within the production process.

Traditional accounts of the role of the law talk about the legitimacy of copyright as a form that makes cultural production possible by balancing the public right to access cultural products with the individual right to seek remuneration for work done. For example, Laurie Stearns writes: “Copyright law aims to encourage both creativity and the dissemination of the

results of the creative effort to the public” (8). Likewise, Michael Ryan claims “Copyrights arose to encourage the expression of ideas. Because artistic and information products are expensive to produce yet inexpensive to pirate, the state intervenes to provide incentives for the investment so as to promote the public welfare. The result is that more products are created adding to the public stock of expression and ideas” (47). Copyright restricts the public domain, purportedly in the interests of cultural creation. Without sufficient protection, its apologists claim, the value of cultural production would diminish and as a result there would be a lesser quality of such products in existence (or on the market). As I have shown, however, it is precisely access to the cultural products that serves as the ground for cultural production as a collective practice. So in protecting certain works from the public domain, copyright restricts access to certain owners, as though the cultural artifact is the product of individual creation. In other words, there is no recognition, in copyright, of the extent to which cultural production is collective, that it is constructed out of other cultural products. Of course, at least in the American context there is the “fair use” clause, which asserts that certain non-commercial uses can be made of the work without requiring permission of the copyright owner. The problem is that this line between the artistic and the commercial has receded, making the distinction ever harder to identify with precision. In saying this, however, I am not suggesting that rigidly defining the borders of the artistic and the commercial would be a solution to open access to an expanded public domain. On the contrary, as I have shown, the artistic, despite its pretensions, has been part of commercial practice since the emergence of modern authorship. By drawing attention to the way in which authorship is always already a construction, but further constructing its own figurations as a spatial presence to which there is no single origin, self-reflexive anonymous authorship exposes copyright as a neoliberal institutional intervention that functions to produce a certain kind of cultural product that masks the collective nature of textual production.

While it may be that cultural production is collective, that is to say, created out of other cultural products, this is not the aspect to which the copyright regime turns its mind. Copyright is

a legal and economic intervention that regulates trade in cultural products. To account for the actual process of creation is beyond its bounds, and is not something, so its apologists claim, that can be instituted in terms of its practical applicability. In other words, what would a system look like that guaranteed remuneration while at the same time made public access to the work as a material for cultural production? Saunders points out that any resolution to contradictions inherent in liberal cultural production must be sought within the law as a practical tool to create a system of just transactions. Critics tend to view a system of “free” appropriation as something that would put an end to cultural production itself because the conditions necessary for protection against entrepreneurial risk are destroyed.<sup>14</sup> What is at the heart of the attacks on copyright's function in the self-reflexive anonymity is neither the idea that works should circulate freely nor that authors should be paid; instead, it is the way that its marketability for profit has co-opted artistic or political content as the determinant of what gets produced. As Wu Ming point out, the idea that “authors” should be remunerated and widespread circulation of works are not incompatible:

The more the work circulates for free, the fewer copies you sell, the more money the author loses. A bizarre syllogism if you examine it closely. The most logical progression should be: the work circulates for free, its appreciation translates into word of mouth, the author's reputation and profile benefit as a result, and therefore their influence in the cultural industry (and not just there) grows. It's a beneficial cycle. A well respected author is increasingly called on to make presentations (expenses reimbursed) and to attend conferences (paid); they are interviewed by the media (unpaid but it furthers the cause); academic postings are offered (paid); consultancies (paid), creative writing courses (paid); the author has the possibility to dictate more advantageous conditions to their publisher. How can all this harm book sales? (“The two horns of the false dilemma”)

The problem is that the copyright regime, as a system of ownership, works to the benefit of corporate interests. Increasingly in the neoliberal era, copyright law has shifted from its original

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<sup>14</sup> The vast productivity of the internet, from blogs to social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter, seems to suggest the exact opposite, namely that cultural production is not reliant on private property protections. On the contrary, it would seem that cultural production operates even in the absence of profits.

basis as a creation of the public domain to a protection of private interests. Ronan Deazley argues that

the actual trajectory [of copyright history] lays bare an expanding process of proprietarianist enclosure of the public domain, both in terms of those abstract things which can be copyright works, as well as the heightened nature of the burden of non-interference *vis-à-vis* those abstract things being placed upon the public at large. Of late, as the rights of the copyright owner have increased, so the freedoms of the lawful copyright user have beaten a retreat. (150)

This process of increasing copyright protection for owners is part of a neoliberal practice in the economic-juridical order, which affects both the form and content of works available within this system. Bourdieu notes that “the hard-won independence of cultural production and circulation from the necessities of the economy is being threatened, in its very principle, by the intrusion of commercial logic at every stage of the production and circulation of cultural goods” (“Culture is in Danger,” 67). The publishing industry had for a large part been outside of the regular bounds of industrial production. Because of initial production costs, the industry was not seen as a great profit generator. As a result, relatively small publishers, who focused not so much on the bottom line as the production of quality works, were able to operate with a greater degree of autonomy from the market and its legal constructs. As Eva Hemmungs Wirtén argues, the relationship between publishers and the market was complex, but not dominated by purely economic motives: “If the publishing house was fortunate enough to secure a best-seller, then the substantial revenues that could be expected from that book would subsidize the losses incurred by less successful and perhaps even at times controversial books, books that nonetheless were judged important as part of the overall publishing program” (80). This is fundamentally the situation that Bourdieu describes as the field of cultural production, where publishers invest in the long term in the development of a work and an author, who would pay off in the long run, but not overwhelmingly. With the rise of neoliberalism the conditions of publication changed.

I want to locate the roots of this change in two intertwined areas, one the conglomeration of the publishing industry in cultural production and the increasing need on the part of capital to expand its markets to the “third” world. Conglomeration, as Hemmungs Wirtén points out, is “the apparently haphazard amalgamation of disparate corporate entities under the umbrella shelter of one huge corporation buying everything in its way” (76). The obvious result is a concentration of ownership whose interests lie in protecting those markets they already control as well as expansion in places where it has yet to exert its power. With this conglomeration has come the demise of the independent bookseller or publisher. Independent booksellers and publishers find it increasingly difficult to operate financially without being subsumed by larger transnational corporations. With their demise, the industry is governed by the creation of surplus value and the need to reproduce the social relations of production that make capitalism possible at the expense of works which problematize both the means by which capital is produced and the consciousness which feeds the social relations necessary for the maintenance of capitalism as a viable means of production and exchange. Schiffrin points out that “Belief in the market, faith in its ability to conquer everything, a willingness to surrender all other values to it—and even the belief that it represents a sort of consumer democracy—these things have become the hallmark of publishing” (6). Hemmungs Wirtén writes that “two simultaneous market movements further underwrote the drift towards increased emphasis on global protection; at home, domestic markets were in some cases nearing saturation; abroad, foreign markets represented the potential for substantial new revenues, but on the downside many of these provided inadequate intellectual property protection” (90). The shift towards expanding intellectual property right is particularly true in the American context, as transnational corporations (who are no longer simply publishing houses, but book publishers as part of a larger programme of cultural production which includes various forms of media) sought to extend the domain of English publishing to emerging markets outside of the United States. The problem they encountered was that other countries did not sufficiently protect copyrighted works when they entered a foreign territory. Thus, works produced in the

United States, for example, could be pirated and distributed for less cost thereby affecting the market value of the corporations' product. The International Intellectual Property Alliance (IIPA), an alliance of American media groups, suggested that in 1995, "piracy was responsible for more than \$14 billions in losses" including \$780 million in the book trade alone (Ryan 72). The focus on consolidating and increasing the time limits and the reach of copyright in terms of what is copyrightable is inseparable from the practice in the economic-juridical order of institutional intervention in order to facilitate a particular trade relation and reproduce the social relations necessary for the continuation of capitalism.

### **Conclusion**

What needs to be emphasized is that in the self-reflexivity of the anonymous author, there is an awareness of the context in which authorship is tied to a neoliberal regime of capitalist exploitation. Fictional works exist within this regime and there is no space outside of this regime in which to formulate a total opposition. This follows in part because capitalism is itself not a complete system, it is always in the process of articulating itself in new locations, in new spatial dimensions. The realm of the public domain is only one part of an expansion of its own dominion. My contention is that a work that deconstructs the separation of aesthetics from the material conditions of publication in order to produce a new political space for fiction as a commodity cannot be separated from its own existence in the economic-juridical order of neoliberalism. The public domain is, in fact, a spatial construct that is both produced within a propertied regime and produces a dissident form of cultural production from within. But more importantly, for the study of authorship, the author that reflects on itself as a fictional construct which cannot ignore its own positionality with regard to that order must be contextualized not only by the rule of capitalism but in relation to its own content. In other words, self-reflexive anonymous authorship, in turning back on itself both as a commodity within the social relations

of production that regulate trade *and* as an aesthetic relation to the work produced under its name, functions as a site of struggle. The result is that authorship is not a benign or neutral space, but a constructed and contested space in which political struggles to maintain open access to the public domain as a vital part of cultural production are fought. What self-reflexive anonymous authorship does is to re-emphasize the construction of a political space within an existing capitalist order that would serve to oppose that order from within. In other words, there can be no global dissidence that does not arise from within the very contradictions that structure a capitalist order. But even further, this global dissidence, that is this turn towards the collective production of a political space within capitalism, does not have a single homogenous appearance because it is based in the local expression of neoliberal practices in specific economic-juridical orders. To return to the self-reflexive anonymous author, this construction of authorship functions to reintegrate the political content of the works as an expression of its form. That is to say, the political content of the work is inseparable from its form and it is this form that requires analysis both at the level of the work and authorship in order to understand how the aesthetic/material tension breaks down as a means to create a collectively produced site of political dissidence.

## **Chapter 4: He Ain't all There: The Collective Construction of Thomas Pynchon**

*"Lo, Lamination abounding," contributes squire Haligast, momentarily visible, "its purposes how dark, yet have we ever sought to produce these thin Sheets innumerable, to spread a given Volume as close to pure Surface as possible, whilst on route discovering various new forms, the Leyden Pile, decks of Playing-Cards, Contrivances which, like the Lever or Pulley, quite multiply the apparent forces, often unto disproportionate results..."*

*"The printed Book," suggest the Rev<sup>d</sup>,— thin layers of pattern'd Ink, alternating with other thin layers of compress'd Paper, stack'd often by the Hundreds."*

*"Or an unbound Heap of Broadsides," adds Mr. Dimdown, "dispers'd one by one, and multiplying their effect as they go."*

---Thomas Pynchon, *Mason & Dixon*

*It took me till I was lying among the Rats and Vermin, upon the freezing edge of a Future invisible, to understand that my name had never been my own,— rather belonging, all this time, to the Authorities, who forbade me to change it, or withhold it, as 'twere a Ring upon the Collar of a Beast, ever waiting for the Lead to be fasten'd on.*

---Rev<sup>d</sup> Wick Cherrycoke, *Mason & Dixon*

*In "forgetting" the collective inquiry in which he is inscribed, in isolating the object of his discourse from its historical genesis, an "author" in effect denies his real situation. He creates the fiction of a place of his own.*

---Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*

In the previous chapter I showed how a certain postmodern aesthetic deconstructs the traditional distinction between the author and the work in literary studies so that the name of the author is inseparable from the textual form of the work. The text, I argued, is an aesthetic object but it is also a commodity and as a commodity it delineates a property in its economic dimensions. The type of postmodern aesthetic that I described, however, critiques the status of the work as a property by laying bare the ways in which its own material—its language—is invested in other linguistic and cultural-materials as its source. In short, the work is part of an intellectual

commons or public domain. The author, within its economic-juridical function, as Foucault argues<sup>15</sup>, acts as the guardian of the private property—the literary commodity. The postmodern challenge to this intense commercialization of the work and maintenance of a system of literary property through authorship, is to suggest that the author is not the original source, that, in fact, originality or authenticity is itself a kind of fictional construct whose function is to enable the privatization of the public domain. The implications of this challenge require a closer examination of authorship, not merely as a construction (that is to say, as an aesthetic object) but as a site of struggle over open access to the public domain. In this chapter I argue that Thomas Pynchon's self-reflexive anonymity is both an extension of a textual aesthetic at work in his novels, and a political attempt to undermine the privatization of cultural commodities and hold open the public domain.<sup>16</sup>

While the figures of J.D. Salinger and Thomas Pynchon are connected in the American popular imagination by the mythical point of their absence, there are obvious qualitative differences in their aesthetic practice.<sup>17</sup> Unlike Salinger, who—as I demonstrated in Chapter Two—attempts to reconstruct an authentic subjectivity as the source of literary production, Pynchon's works are saturated by a textual self-reflexivity that suggests any authentic or unmediated space—whether it be a material history or subjectivity—appears only as a fiction, as

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<sup>15</sup> Foucault's argument is not specific to the author, but more general in the inseparability of juridical from economic interests. Rather than seeing the juridical as a superstructure and the economic as a “base” he argues that they are part of the same order. See in particular pages 162-166 of *The Birth of Biopolitics*.

<sup>16</sup> Anonymity, in this sense, refers broadly to both the use of pseudonyms and a deliberate withdrawal from public correspondence outside the works themselves.

<sup>17</sup> The two names appear in literary journalism as “Greta Garbo” figures, or as the two most famous 20<sup>th</sup> century American reclusive authors. Peter Guttridge writes in *The Independent* that Salinger “vies with Greta Garbo and Howard Hughes for the title of world's most famous recluse.” CNN correspondent Charles Feldman reports: “Pynchon's oh-so-low profile has earned him the sobriquet as the Greta Garbo of American letters.” In 1976, John Calvin Batchelor went so far as to suggest in the *Soho Weekly News* that the two were one and the same. More recently, Alex Beam draws the two figures together because of their “reclusiveness” only to distinguish Pynchon as someone “who *really* wants to be left alone” (“J.D. Salinger, Failed Recluse”). Given that both Salinger and Pynchon make several public appearances it would be an interesting study to examine the critical reaction to Salinger's seriousness and Pynchon's playfulness. Ultimately, the two writers are associated with a desire to protect the personal privacy of the individual author.

part of the text's own production. Pynchon's works reflect on their own language in a way that foregrounds the manner in which meaning is negotiated through various forms of cultural representation. Language, in Pynchon's works, is not a transparent medium. On the contrary, his work self-reflexively delineates its own propensity, as narrative, to re-construct an origin that acts as its external source at the same time as this tendency is problematized through his narrative construction. For example, it would be easy to claim that the source of *Mason & Dixon* is the historical creation of the Mason-Dixon line. What the novel turns on, however, is the way this historical event is only known through multiple sites of mediation, each of which displaces the central narrative such that it appears as a series of intersecting, but never fully congealed, narrative lines. This decentralized aesthetic means that the source of the novel—that is to say, its historical ground—is always already part of some other text.

If the source to the work is textual, that is to say, if it is a product of the intellectual commons, then its relation as a commodity within this milieu must be foregrounded in the analysis of authorship's function in the material relations of publication. What I argue in this chapter is that Pynchon's anonymity extends this aesthetic beyond literary form into the economic-juridical function of authorship. Once again, it would not be a stretch to claim, as David Saunders does, that authorship in a legal sense references, not the aesthetic production but the commodity status of the work<sup>18</sup>. In other words, the text's meaning makes no difference in terms of the laws governing authorship<sup>19</sup>. Thomas Pynchon, as the copyright holder and author, owns a particular property which has been exempt from the public domain, that is to say, imposes a restriction on the intellectual commons. However, Pynchon's anonymity, I claim, subjects his name to the same deconstruction that occurs in his fiction, the effect of which is that the name

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<sup>18</sup> For Saunders separation of aesthetic and legal spheres see *Authorship and Copyright* particularly the chapter “Lessons for Literary Critics”. For my critique of his analysis see the introduction to this dissertation.

<sup>19</sup> This claim, of course, obfuscates obscenity laws and publication. But as that is a topic that would drag me far off course, I will leave it alone.

becomes a site that mediates multiple positions within the field of literary production. By foregrounding the role of authorship, this textual practice of anonymity intertwines the institutional forces—in particular, cultural, economic and legal—that give authority to the name along a single plane so that authorship becomes a site of struggle to maintain open access to the intellectual commons. Pynchon's anonymity is political in the sense that, in attempting to open up the public domain as a non-commodity space, it attempts to construct a social space that is not immediately consumed within capitalism. My argument is that in locating his own textual production in relation to other cultural texts, Pynchon's works simultaneously operate on another register—where texts are commodities—as a critique of the appropriation of collective production by individual owners. In this sense, Pynchon's anonymity must be understood, not as an attempt to hone a space for the individual subject, but as itself a textual construction that reveals the collective aspect of cultural production which has been subsumed by capitalist forms of ownership.

### Territorial Inscriptions

To confine this discussion within the spatial and temporal constraints of this dissertation, I will consider a single Pynchon novel, *Mason & Dixon*.<sup>20</sup> *Mason & Dixon*, in characteristic Pynchon

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<sup>20</sup> *Mason & Dixon* is somewhat of an arbitrary choice in that it is not to be thought as “representative” of the Pynchon *oeuvre*, but rather one iteration. *Mason & Dixon* is Pynchon’s only novel not set in the twentieth century and therefore seems like an odd choice as an exemplary text through which to ground a discussion of textual property and authorship in the twentieth century. While at the level of content the emergent capitalist practice depicted in the novel differs from contemporary iterations of capitalism to ignore its formal innovations at the level of narrative would be to reduce it to historical commentary. In other words, the novel reflects its own construction within the context of late twentieth century publication. However, the historical content of the novel remains significant because it traces the contours of what amounts to the privatization of an unmapped American territory through its inscription into a capitalist regime. This privatization is further associated in the novel with the enclosure of the commons in England through the perspective of both Mason and Dixon. The novel’s central event is the inscription of the Line across the territorial body of America, tracing the way open territory is mapped into a rationalized organization of space as property.

style, is an expansive text both in terms of sheer volume<sup>21</sup> and encyclopedic content, drawing together geometry, slavery, pulp fiction, a mechanical duck who craves affection, astronomy, frontier lifestyle, spirituality, various organized religions, conspiracy theory, *feng shui*, a backwoods Golem, pornography, aliens and surf music to name but a few of its disparate threads. I mark this out in advance because it must be understood that I do not claim to provide an exhaustive understanding of the multiplicity of the novel; rather, I focus on the discourse of property relations and the dual function of writing as the organization of a literary space as property and as a means to elude the economic-juridical confines of that spatial production. The convergence of property relations and writing has important spatial implications for the novel's own boundaries as a literary commodity and form of property within the material relations of publication.

*Mason & Dixon* is a layered text where the principle event, narrated by Rev<sup>d</sup> Wicks Cherrycoke, is Mason and Dixon's (1763-1768)<sup>22</sup> inscription of the property line that divides Maryland and Pennsylvania.<sup>23</sup> Their Line, while undertaken as a rational and objective endeavour of mapping a line by using geometry, also functions as a means to consolidate capitalist interests. Like V., *The Crying of Lot 49* and *Gravity's Rainbow* before it, the interests in *Mason & Dixon* who would benefit from the Line's inscription are somewhat nebulous and in some instances this question of in whose interest the work is done is part of the characters' pursuit. The text never states outright who benefits, but I believe this is deliberate in that *Mason & Dixon* is not about

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<sup>21</sup> Out of Pynchon's seven novels four are at least 500 pages and *Mason & Dixon* at 776 is no exception.

<sup>22</sup> Mason and Dixon's story actually starts with their first joint venture to record observations of the Transit of Venus in Cape Town, South Africa and ends with Mason's death, the reason for Cherrycoke's presence in Philadelphia—and it is the recollection of this event that sets off his 1786 narrative to his family in the back room of his brother-in-law Mr. Wade LeSpark's (an old gun merchant who made his fortune during the War of Independence) house which opens the novel.

<sup>23</sup> The line came into existence as part of a settlement to resolve a longstanding territorial dispute and the eruption of border violence over the original land grants awarded to William Penn and those given to the state of Maryland. The line, subsequently known as the Mason-Dixon line, didn't receive its name until 1820. The Mason-Dixon line is significant for numerous reasons, the most obvious being that it becomes, during the American Civil War, the dividing line between slave owning and non-slave owning states, which further connects to the issue of property relations when we consider slaves as commodities. In the novel, however, the line serves as the central narrative line, so that right from the outset the novel associates cartography with narrative.

setting the record straight or asserting as truth that there is a mystical source to the Line. On the contrary, the Line constantly returns to its material ground, that is to say, to the relations of production which engender the event of its construction. The novel is more concerned with the origins of a structure where open competition, trade and civil governance come to operate as a dominant social practice, than delineating—with historical accuracy—who is responsible for its adoption.<sup>24</sup>

This border line, however, explicitly shapes the political geography of the emerging American nation-state by transforming the landscape and inscribing a spatial site within an imaginative framework of capitalist production. In other words, the land is reconfigured within a system of individual property with the effect that those who inhabit this geographical space are forced to confront a new relation, not so much to the land itself, but to the forces of production that create the land as property. Property, in this sense, is the ground upon which commodity production and exchange is possible. In order to institute a capitalist regime the land must be taken from the commons and constructed within a system of individual ownership.<sup>25</sup> While the Line operates at the level of content as a historical inscription into an economy of capitalist

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<sup>24</sup> In fact, there are numerous suggestions about who might be responsible but no way to disentangle the parodic and the serious, truth and fantasy from within the novel's system of signification.

<sup>25</sup> This notion of the commons, however tenuous, is dependent on the expropriation of indigenously controlled territory. While indigenous lands operated as something of a communal basis, they were still owned by indigenous rights which are not oriented towards individual holdings. There were alliances and filiations among indigenous nations which first needed to be vanquished before establishing the “American” commons. To a large extent in the immediate vicinity in which the novel takes place this process is largely complete. That said, the further west the surveyors and their team move, the more indebted they are to indigenous protection and guides to navigate the territorial interests still functional in the “unknown” spaces. In fact, their end point—the Warrior Path—is another boundary which they are banned from moving beyond. The peace between Pontiac and the British Superintendent of Indian Affairs, William Johnson, provides a sense of security to northern nations along what would become the Canadian-American border. But with Pontiac's assassination in 1769, Johnson's death in 1774 and growing discontent of the colonialist with British governance, indigenous lands faced constant incursion from American settlers and squatters. The element of frontier space is reflected in *Mason & Dixon* through the various accounts of skirmishes between indigenous tribes and settlers. The point is, however, that the commons—whether indigenous or American—converted into private property. David Andrew Nichols reports: “In 1784-85, while federal commissioners dictated terms to the northern Indians, Congress drafted ordinances to govern the sale of the lands that the Iroquois, Delawares, and Wyandots had supposedly surrendered. Under the new laws the federal government would survey the ceded lands, give some sections to veterans, then sell the rest at auction” (37). Mason and Dixon's journey takes place during the struggle to maintain territorial control, but prior to its full incorporation into the law as property.

production, figuratively and self-reflexively, it operates as a line of text in a book. There are effectively two ways in which writing is put to work in the novel: first, as an imperial discursive regime that maps an unknown or forgotten space and organizes or manages this space by controlling its representation; and second, in contrast to this, as a flight from the capture of rationally organized discourse, related in the novel to the multiplicity of language, to its plays, puns, parodies, but more specifically—and more productively for my argument—to its own materiality.<sup>26</sup>

The first form of writing is associated in the novel with cartography. This form is an encoding of a symbolic meaning that purports to be an objective representation of an empirical world and its principle authors are Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon. It is Mason and Dixon who write the geometrically determined and abstract Line into the earth as a means to represent a property relation. The Line is explicitly constructed in the novel as writing on the open text of the earth's body. This line-text analogy is perpetuated, not so much by Mason and Dixon themselves, who appear to be somewhat its unwilling authors, as by those who interpret their work in the wilderness of America. In one of the frequently encountered backwoods taverns, Mason hears that America had already been abandoned by its original author—God—and

“This 'New World' was ever a secret Body of Knowledge,— meant to be studied with the same dedication as the Hebrew Kabbala would demand. Forms of Land, the flow of water, the occurrence of what us'd to be call'd Miracles, all are Text,—to be attended to, manipulated, read, remember'd.” “Hence as you may imagine, we take a lively interest in this Line of yours,” booms the Forge-keeper, “inasmuch as it may be read East to West, much as a Line of Text upon a Page of the sacred Torah.” (487)

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<sup>26</sup> Hovering behind this conceptualization lies Deleuze and Guattari's notion of lines of flight or deterritorialization. For them, the text is never simply composed of its central element. On the contrary they claim that there are a series of points which escape the coding of the text and these escape points are what are referred to as lines of flight. Lines of flight are an essential component of a rhizome, which is a key image in their understanding of textual production as inseparable from real production. They write in *A Thousand Plateaus*, “Every rhizome contains lines of segmentarity according to which it is stratified, territorialized, organized, signified, attributed, etc., as well as lines of deterritorialization down which it constantly flees. There is a rupture in the rhizome whenever segmentary lines explode into a line of flight, but the line of flight is part of the rhizome” (9).

While the Line becomes the focus of interest for numerous readers<sup>27</sup>, Mason and Dixon's experience of the world prior to its inscription takes on a dream-like quality, which defies their capacity for objective knowledge production. The narrator explains, "Some mornings they awake and can believe that they traverse an Eden, unbearably fair in the Dawn, squandering all its Beauty, day after day unseen, bearing them fruits, presenting them Game, bringing them a fugitive moment of Peace,— how for days at a time, can they not, dizzy with it, believe themselves pass'd permanently into Dream..." (476-477). This experience, however, is at odds with their encoding of the territory as a property through the creation of the Line. The Line, though it is produced by Mason and Dixon and their team of workers, takes on a life of its own,<sup>28</sup> ultimately working as a means to re-organize the spatial configuration of America, to control the unknown, or uncoded, presence—that which lies beyond the boundaries of the Western imagination—in a way that reproduces that space with symbolic meaning. Mattessich writes: "The analogy between writing and colonizing rests on an act of defection that, as it writes over the blank space, also articulates it as blank—it both detaches the space and detaches itself from it in a dual movement of projection and capture that catches up the 'West' in a specular autonomy" (232). In short, even the appearance of the unknown, these singular objects that defy the abstraction of representation, is already coded within a discursive order the moment it is narrated. By the end of their journey, however, Mason and Dixon come to agree with a number of commentators that the Line is "by its nature corrupt, of use at Trail's End only to those who would profit from the sale and division and resale of Lands. 'Guineas, Mason, Pistoles, and Spanish Dollars, splendidously Vomited from Pluto's own Gut! Without End! All generated from

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<sup>27</sup> By which I mean characters within the novel who attempt to read either the meaning or the function of the Line.

<sup>28</sup> As Mason and Dixon debate continuing out past the Warrior Path—the limit past which their indigenous guides won't pass—the Line is explicitly referred to as a creature unto itself. Dixon argues: "They want to know how to stop this great invisible Thing that comes crawling Straight on over their Lands, devouring all in its Path.' Well! of course it's a living creature, 'tis all of us, temporarily collected into an Entity, whose Labors none could do alone" (678).

thah' one Line" (701). In other words, Mason and Dixon's Line records the territory with quantitative measurements, allowing it to acquire value as property.

Mapping is not a politically neutral activity in *Mason & Dixon*. The inscription of the boundary line between Maryland and Pennsylvania, both into the body of the earth and the textual body of the map, sub-divides these territories based on a legal partition and subsequently organizes social relations according to this new division. Not only does the Mason and Dixon line designate an abstract legal division, but it is carried out through the principles of geometry, which as a rational science is the product of an Enlightenment that seeks to establish an objective knowledge through which social relations can be organized.<sup>29</sup> In Pynchon's formulation, this form of knowledge is itself subject to other interests that compromise Mason and Dixon's claim to represent the American territory from a position external to the discursive relations that they set in motion. Cartography, despite its pretensions to represent a material outside of its own discursive formation, actively shapes the appearance of American spatial relations within a Western cultural imagination. David Seed argues that in *Mason & Dixon*, Pynchon "demonstrates how surveying and mapmaking are implicated in vested commercial and political interests as well as in the processes of colonization" (84). In this sense, mapping is the first stage in the

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<sup>29</sup> There are several studies about the relations between the Enlightenment and *Mason & Dixon*. David J. Greiner writes: "Men of the Enlightenment, personifications of the Age of Reason, Mason and Dixon confidently set out in the belief that their mandate is to bring order to chaos" (78) and further "in the rush to establish Enlightenment order on pristine complexity, the new American Adams hacked out the fault lines of the future" (83). Other writers such as Victor Strandberg and Jeff Baker reproduce this idea that the Enlightenment is equated with order and that Pynchon's text writes against order, that is to say, attempts to re-capture a sense of the complex without imposing its own order. This type of analysis, though, and this is, in a sense, the type of criticism I am arguing against, is a product of exactly the forces that Pynchon notes in the novel. It is the distribution of the world into categorical ideas that contain the materiality through abstraction, whether this abstraction is read as chaos, complexity, multiplicity, etc. there is a measure of abstraction that drains the singularity of the material world.

appropriation of territory, which is in turn “the very basis of empire<sup>30</sup>” (84). In the novel, the Line concretizes an abstract relation and asserts territorial ownership by subjecting the land to a graphic representation. Brian Jarvis emphasizes how the American geographic imagination in particular “is shaped by the ideological climate within which specific cartographies are produced,” which in turn helps establish a national consciousness in relation to the unknown space of the west (2). He claims that the imagination has left its mark on the actual space: “from pre-Columbian concepts of the lands as sacred space, to the Puritan's dread of an unredeemed wilderness, from the commercial dreams of Virgin Territory ripe for conquest by capital, to the romantics' dream of a New Eden” discourses about the essence of America revolve around the vastness of spatial territories (6). In other words, he claims that cartographic representations have as much a cultural and political function as they do an objective one. More than merely being shaped by ideology, though, cartography inscribes a spatial re-organization that encodes and reproduces a form of representation that is itself the product of a dominant system of production.

Mapping, as an encoding of cultural representations as “reality,” is part of a process of producing a particular form of organized space, which, as a social relation, is inseparable from an infrastructure of production and exchange. Edward W. Soja explains how “Space itself may be primordially given, but the organization, and meaning of space is a product of social translation, transformation, and experience” (79-80). Jarvis further refines this idea of space to suggest “all spaces contain stories and must be recognized as the site of an ongoing struggle over meaning and value” (7). Pynchon's novel, transpiring as it does around the time of the American Revolution—that is to say, at a historical juncture where the boundaries between the thirteen colonies are not

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<sup>30</sup> It should be noted that Seed seems to make no distinction between forms of imperialism in the late eighteenth century and those of the late twentieth century, arguing that geographical territory is the basis for all imperial power. More sophisticated understandings of twentieth century imperialism, however, demonstrate the diffuse nature of power relations—including the intertwining nature of cultural, economic, political, legal and spatial relations. For more on twentieth century imperialism see: Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire*, Giovanni Arrighi's *The Long Twentieth Century*, Leo Panitch's “The New Imperial State,” Jeff Derksen's “Fixing Flows” or Manual De Landa's “Economics, Computers, and the War Machine.”

clearly demarcated—returns to a formative moment in the re-organization of American territorial sites. The intrusion of the abstract line changes the way the geographical text is read, but it also transforms the social relations to configure with the domain of burgeoning economic imperial centers of production.<sup>31</sup> The marking of the Mason-Dixon line operates as a territorial and imperial expansion in a dual sense. It asserts a continuation of British political and technological authority in colonial America<sup>32</sup> and this colonial relation—where the periphery feeds the center of production—is reproduced after Independence<sup>33</sup> with the American usurpation of indigenous

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<sup>31</sup> A comical variation of which occurs when the Line literally divides a house, forcing the married couple to either pay taxes to both States or move the house and abide by a new set of laws. When the Maryland side seems the most practical choice because it is downhill, Mrs. Price reminds her husband that in Maryland she is “no longer your Wife” (447). The inscription of the boundary then alters their status—and as a result relation to property.

<sup>32</sup> This happens in two ways. First, Britain is called upon as an authority to resolve the dispute between the colonies (Pennsylvania and Maryland) and; second, through their technological capacity to create the material line. American surveyors had previously attempted its construction, but they didn't have the tools with which to maintain Mason and Dixon's accuracy. Mason and Dixon, of course, use the equipment of the Royal Society of Astronomers. Dixon makes this explicit when he reacts to Mason's mocking comments about his “child-like” attachment to his own tools. Dixon responds: “Perhaps, if the Tools of thy Trade had ever belong'd to thee, instead of to the King, tha might at least once have felt this simple, sentimental Bond,— quite common among the People in fact” (472).

<sup>33</sup> This is not just speculation on my part, nor is it a reading by knowing the consequences after the fact. On the contrary, it is made an element of *Mason & Dixon* in two ways. The first is the different narrative moments, one being Mason and Dixon's journey (1763-1767) and the other being the time in which their story is told by Cherrycoke (1786). The second way in which the American relation to indigenous territories and cultures is made part of the text is through the account of the Conestoga Massacre and the Paxton Boys clear alignment with the American colony and against the British sovereign. So we get an example of the settlers enacting an imperial act of territorial conquest and expansion at the same time as they resist the political dominance of British colonialism.

territories.<sup>34</sup> What the Line delineates is a boundary dividing ownership of territorial properties, according to a legislative order. The important point is that the marking of property is a means to exert political control at a cultural and material level. Cartography, as a writing practice, encodes cultural representations that facilitate and reflect an emerging European capitalism.

Mapping, then, is a writing practice that organizes space and encodes imperial relations. In naming and marking territories, the imperial process asserts a sense of ownership and proprietary control, expelling that which lies beyond its ability to control<sup>35</sup> outside its own borders as a threat to the knowledge and order that mark Enlightenment governance. Simultaneously, this “threat” needs to be managed so that it doesn’t undo the modes of control encoded into the territorial regime. Working out of Henri Lefebvre, Soja explains that spatial organization is primarily a means to reproduce “the dominant system of social relations” (91). These relations, he maintains, are “reproduced in a concretized and created spatiality that has been progressively ‘occupied’ by an advancing capitalism, fragmented into parcels, homogenized

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<sup>34</sup> The imperial acquisition of indigenous territory is complicated by the fact that at the time period of the novel's content the United States federal government was not strong, and the states, whose settlers lived and worked in frontier lands, had very different ideas and strategies for the acquisition of indigenous territories. These differences are reflected in the differences that Mason and Dixon experience between their time on the East Coast urban centers (Philadelphia and New York City) and the more westward regions of their journey. Nevertheless, territorial acquisition post-Independence is rooted in an imperialism that is tied to mapping unknown regions. Territorial expansion in the post-Independence era is, however, not as cut and dry as it would appear. Indeed, the relations between the federal and state legislative and executive authorities reflected different interests. David Andrew Nichols notes “U.S. Indian policy, however, was never merely the product of a timeless American hunger for land or an eternal sense of European-American cultural superiority. It was instead subject to political and cultural influences specific to particular times and places” (10). Further, Nichols explains how emigrants from the 1780s and 90s “brought to the frontier a spirit of revolutionary insurgency grounded in the belief that natural laws were more important than statutory ones. Some, who argue that occupancy and improvement of land gave one a natural right to it, settled illegally on land claimed by Indians or absentee proprietors. Others invoked the right of self-government to form breakaway republics whose policies would be more agreeable than those of the eastern states. Eastern officials and Indian chiefs viewed these frontiersmen as squatters, rebels, and savages, but the settlers viewed themselves as respectable farmers seeking equality, dignity, and a competent living” (13). Out beyond the Alleghany mountains, in *Mason & Dixon* it is precisely this type of lawlessness, or more accurately this struggle for control of land and the means of subsistence that Mason and Dixon encounter without fully understanding its significance.

<sup>35</sup> Control in the eighteenth century and its representation in the novel is carried out by both economic and military means, but by and large it is asserted through the appropriation of territory which increases both economic and military power. It is a world where control must be analyzed through various techniques, writing being only one part in the machine, but are central to the representation and identification of society.

into discrete commodities, organized into locations of control, and extended to the global scale” (92). Lefebvre maintains that not only is space occupied by a set of spatial relations, but that occupation “also engenders and fashions that space” (77). The production of space is an exertion of control over social organization and hence production and exchange. Giovanni Arrighi, in fact, claims the restructuring of “the political geography of world commerce” came about through “the new synthesis of capitalism and territorialism brought into being by French and British mercantilism in the eighteenth century” (49). What is significant for the form of imperialism that *Mason & Dixon* dramatizes is that spatial production is not merely a territorial matter, but is a cultural construct.

The need to map unknown space, to confine it by delineating its dimensions and reproducing it in a manageable size through representation is a practice of abstraction that encodes territory within a quantitative dimension while erasing other possibilities which do not reflect the needs of a capitalist regime. The struggle to map, or encode, or organize the ungovernable is a central social struggle because unchecked its appearance threatens a form of knowledge production that grounds and maintains social order. Writing the unknown, drawing it within the bounds of a discursive regime, is to control or manage it. Colonel Bouquet, the military hero of Bushy Run, epitomizes the dream of a compartmentalized America:

His Scheme is to tessellate across the Plains a system of identical units, each containing five Squares in the shape of a Greek Cross, with each central square controlling the four radiating from it,— tho' as to their Size, no one is agreed, some saying a mile on a side, others ten, or an Hundred,— Ohio, and the western Prairie beyond, presenting such Enigma, that no one knows what scale to work at

“A Prison,” suggests Capt. Zhang. “Settlers moving West into instant Control.”

“Dozens of such Schemes each year,” shrugs Capt. Shelby, “and they all fail.”

“Bringing closer the day,” replies the Chinaman, as if receiving Instruction from Elsewhere, “when one of them succeeds.” (617)

While this management has its roots in a rationalized Enlightenment order, it is also part of capitalist production, as it reduces space to a commodity. Mason and Dixon's cartographic enterprise becomes a tool of imperial mapping, of dividing and creating spaces for commercial purposes. Significantly, Dixon equates his experience in America with his early years as a

surveyor in England. Shelby, a Welsh surveyor likewise working in America, recognizes the power of inscribing lines as the creation of new spatial constructs, but what he specifically finds fascinating about American space is that there are “no previous Lines, no fences, no streets to constrain polygony however extravagant” (586). Dixon immediately turns on Shelby's enthusiasm by reflecting on the political consequences of the scientific glee with re-organizing space:

His journeyman years coincided with the rage then sweeping Durham for Enclosure,— aye and alas, he had attended at that Altar. He had slic'd into Polygons the Common-Lands of his Forebears. He had drawn Lines of Ink that became Fences of Stone. He had broken up herds of Fell sheep, to be driven ragged and dingy off thro' the Rain, to Gates, and exile. He had turn'd the same covetous Angles as the Welshman,— tho'd perhaps never as many, for Shelby seem'd seiz'd with Goniolatry, or the Worship of Angles, defining tracts of virgin Land by as many of these exhilarating Instrumental Sweeps, as possible. (587)

The scientific endeavours of the duo are further contextualized according to the commercial interests which uphold their ability to perform their work. Just before they depart for their American job, Dixon wonders why their scientific observations always occur behind a fortified Company post. To which Mason replies: “Philosophick Work, to proceed at all smartly, wouldn't you agree, requires a controll'd working-space. Charter'd Companies are the ideal Agents to provide that, be the Shore Sumatran or Levantine, or wherever globally, what matter?— Control of the Company Perimeter is ever implicit” (252). Mason and Dixon's work embeds cultural production within the relations of material production. Their writing both operates within the material space of capitalist production and reproduces this space as a discursive relation that governs social interaction.

### Fictional Borders

The idea that writing encodes non-signifying elements within a rationally organized space, however, is only, as I mentioned previously, one aspect of its characterization in Pynchon's work. At another level the very space produced by *Mason & Dixon* is what the novel's language

attempts to elude. In other words, at a formal level the novel reproduces the struggle between coding and escape that it describes at the level of content. To understand how this interaction functions it is necessary to return to the way Pynchon's language flees the rationally organized space, as the second use to which writing is put in *Mason & Dixon*. Part of *Mason & Dixon*'s narrative complexity resides in the way it consumes its external limit and re-configures this exterior as an internal relation. The narrative logic follows what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri call a passage from "modern to postmodern and from imperialism to Empire" (187) in which "public spaces are increasingly becoming privatized"<sup>36</sup> (188). The collapse of public/private, outside/inside has several startling consequences, not the least of which is the expansion of sovereign power. "Sovereign power," they write, "will progressively expand its boundaries to envelope the entire globe as its proper domain" (189). There is, however, a contradiction that lies at the heart of the sovereign need for an outside that justifies its own existence. Hardt and Negri make the analogy with capitalist expansion, which at once requires an outside and consumes that outside as part of its Self: "capital's reliance on its outside, on the noncapitalist environment, which satisfies the need to realize surplus value, conflicts with the internalization of the noncapitalist environment, which satisfies the need to capitalize that realized surplus value" (227). This new virtual place, the "spectacle," or as Hardt and Negri put it a "non-place"<sup>37</sup> which is neither inside nor outside, and which renders the distinction obsolete, it should be noted, is the product of the social relations of material production (188). This virtual space is the material ground of *Mason & Dixon* and appears in the way unmapped, imaginary territories are encoded at the level of narrative only to be subject to its narrative deconstruction.

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<sup>36</sup> Public space, in their conception, is the outside of private space, and according to a liberal tradition "the place proper to politics" (188).

<sup>37</sup> Hardt and Negri have come under attack for the way their theorization of this "non-place" tends to de-spatialize social relations of globalization, and rightfully so. I want to shy away from the language of "non-place" because I think this virtual space should be re-conceived as a spatial production whose dimensions are determined by and within economic-juridical interventions to social order. Where Hardt and Negri are useful is in their recognition that, following Lenin, "critique had to be located not outside but within the crisis of modern sovereignty" (233).

The effect, within the novel, is that there is no original space, there is nothing outside of a series narrative interactions which themselves are in the process of eluding narrative closure. In short, this virtual space is a kind of fiction, but a fiction that is inseparable from the construction of reality. Here the distinctions between a writer like Salinger<sup>38</sup> and Pynchon take their sharpest focus. Salinger, it will be recalled, constructs an authenticity (whether this means a literary text or an authorial personality makes no difference) as a means to elude the debasement of the market and uphold the value of artistic autonomy. Pynchon, on the other hand, recognizes that the concept of authenticity, or originality, is an ideological effacement of the virtual space that imperialism produces. As a result, his works offer no refuge from their textual nature, no grounding outside narrative—their material is, in fact, text. Mattessich argues, however, that Mason and Dixon penetrate this non-place of narrative where “At stake is a kind of *duration* that refers ‘America’ to an anterior plane of undifferentiated ‘pictures’ or images on which perception becomes a function of pure transition, of a ‘lived present’ defined always in terms of its own disappearance” (238). The textual material, in this sense, has a propensity to write over the “non-place” which can never appear except as a spectre. This spectral nature, in Mattessich’s analysis, takes on the characteristic of an immaterial but nonetheless immanent interior which reflects its exteriorization.<sup>39</sup>

The most explicit delineation of this space occurs in a two-chapter digression from the Rev<sup>d</sup> Cherrycoke’s narration that appears to be neither central to the narrative progression, nor related to any of the characters. As Mason and Dixon spend the winter with the Harlands, the narrative shifts to the third person and introduces a story about a married woman who is captured

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<sup>38</sup> I should emphasize that Salinger does not demonstrate the slightest inclination towards an analysis of imperial control.

<sup>39</sup> Mattessich variously describes this non-place as an “invisible space” (234) or “immemorial space” (240). He further explains: “The America that Mason and Dixon encounter is no ordinary ‘place’ in the sense that this means delimited or enclosed, ordered according to principles of extension and causality—in a word Newtonian space. Pynchon proceeds not from a notion of coexistence (where each object, point or locus in space is externalized with respect to every other) but rather from ideas of palimpsests and Möbius strips, invisible Ley-lines and parallel universes” (235-236).

from “far inside the perimeter of peaceable life” by a group of indigenous men (512). They take her north across the seasons until they reach Quebec City, to a Jesuit College whose dimensions are difficult to gage: “Travelers have describ’d it as ascending three stories, with a Garret above, enclosing a broad central courtyard,— tho’ were she ask’d to confirm even this, she could swear to nothing. (Perhaps there are more Levels. Perhaps there is a courtyard-within-a-courtyard)” (514). The spatial imagery marks out the depths of the College at the same time as it reflects on the narrative space that this sequence occupies in the novel. In this College, which doubles as her prison, she is instructed in a denial of desire, forceably restrained, and destined to be turned into “a Widow of Christ” (518). The Wolf of Jesus, a Spanish-Jesuit philosopher, explains: “The Model [...] is Imprisonment. [...] If we may not have Love, we will accept Consent,— if we may not obtain Consent, we will build Walls” (522). While it is unclear who narrates the scene, there are no indications from the scene itself that would signal its difference from the previous scenes involving Mason and Dixon, or Cherrycoke’s family. For all visible purposes it appears as though the scene is a transcription of real events in the novel. In other words, from a narrative perspective they occupy a spatial register equivalent to Mason and Dixon’s actions.

The chapter which follows provides some context for the digression and this context allows the scene to be read, not as a digression or an anomaly, but as an explicit enactment of the uneven spatial distribution of the novel as a whole. The narrative voice shifts to the first person as the captured woman of the previous chapter speaks in her own voice, detailing a lesbian desire and the intimations that her role as a Widow of Christ is to sexually seduce Chinese men. As the woman fantasizes about an exotic portrait of Chinese men, the narrative cuts off and abruptly returns to the novel’s larger frame tale characters—Tenebrae and Ethelmer.<sup>40</sup> It turns out that the contents of the previous chapter and a half—the story just related above—are those of a published

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<sup>40</sup> The frame tale has been absent for 30 pages and so when the narrative moves—after a white space between text—to “Brae discovered the Sinister Volume in ‘Ethelmer’s Room’” it is abrupt not only in the sense of shifting tone and character, but also spatially because it is not apparent what space these characters occupy. In fact, the only place that we’ve previously encountered them to date is in the backroom of the LeSpark home, listening to Cherrycoke. Now, they are alone in Ethelmer’s room.

text. Tenebrae has been reading a book she found left open in her cousin Ethelmer's room. The book is one of *The Ghastly Fop* series which has earlier been referenced as the product of "Gothickal Scribblers," but one which Dixon declares "Worth a dozen of any *Tom Jones*" (117).<sup>41</sup> The series revolves around a legendary figure, the Ghastly Fop, who "To some, he seems quite conventionally alive, whilst others swear he is a Ghost" (527). He is engaged, Ethelmer explains to Tenebrae, "in the long, frustrating, too often unproductive Exercise of tracking down ev'ryone with whom he yet has unresolv'd financial dealings" (527). The series is widely popular and "runs to at least a Dozen Volumes by now, tho' no one is sure exactly how many,— forgeries have also found their way into the Market" (527). The content of the previous adventure is that of a fictional popular printed text that reflects issues of property in its content and in the materials of its publication. But as a text in the novel (a novel within a novel) it appears to occupy a distinct ground as fiction in the "reality" of *Mason & Dixon*. After his summary of the text and its history, Tenebrae agrees to hear the rest and so what follows in the narrative is Ethelmer reading out loud to her. In this section of the story, the captive woman, Eliza Fields, escapes the Jesuit prison with Captain Zhang, who had also been imprisoned at the College and was facing potential torture. The couple—both drawn to each other and wary of falling into fictional roles "Lascivious Chinaman" and "Debauch'd Heretick Maid"—flee through different territories, including a brief stint at William Johnson's estate in Six Nations territory before finally following the Mason-Dixon line until they encounter the duo and their team of workers (533).

At this point, the narrative takes a curious twist because the fictional characters Eliza and Zhang become characters in Cherrycoke's story about Mason and Dixon, which purports to be true. The narrative voice shifts again, because it is no longer Ethelmer reading out of *The Ghastly Fop* but Cherrycoke's story which isn't revealed until a few pages later when Uncle Lomax and

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<sup>41</sup> The narrator also describes it as "the choicest of limp, creas'd, and spatter'd books of erotick Pictures and Text" (478).

Uncle Ives question the truth of the story in parentheses which eventually leads Cherrycoke to respond in his own voice:

(“You’re making that one up,” Uncle Lomax now wagging a Finger he eventually hits himself in the Nose with.

“And did she seek your counsel?” inquires Ives.

“Oh, I got into the matter, after a bit,” recalls the Rev<sup>d</sup>. (537)

At the level of content, this section, this digression out of and then back into the main story, in fact, both into the frame and the story proper, dissolves the boundary line within the novel that would establish its “real” ground. A formal consequence is the dissolution of an external space from which to account for the text as a whole. Fiction is not outside the novel's reality; instead, it is intertwined with it as part of its production. This does not mean, however, that this mediated space usurps what would appear as an authentic or original space. On the contrary, in this mediated space fiction (representation) and history converge into a virtual space.

In this sense, the novel, rather than opposing Mason and Dixon's cartographic enterprise to fiction, flattens out the line that distinguishes the one from the other. Fiction, in *Mason & Dixon*, refers to a mode of textual engagement that scrambles the codes which structure a truth-fiction binary. It must be understood, however, that “truth” in this context refers to its construction within a structure of representation. This structure transforms the appearance of truth, that is to say, it modifies its actual nature to the extent that in its accessibility truth is always already a construction. The virtual space of this construction where truth and fiction converge, where the codes which would allow us to distinguish them are flattened into a network. The relation between truth and fiction is particularly difficult in *Mason & Dixon* because the novel retains the signifiers (“truth” and “fiction”) that it scrambles as the discursive means to work through the complexity of their relation as signifiers. In the midst of a discussion between Cherrycoke and his audience, Ethelmer, the university student, says:

Who claims Truth, Truth abandons. History is hir'd, or coerc'd, only in Interests that must ever prove base. She is too innocent, to be left within the reach of

anyone in Power,— who need but touch her, and all her Credit is in the instant vanish'd, as if it had never been. She needs rather to be tended lovingly and honorably by fabulists and counterfeiters, Ballad-Mongers and Cranks of ev'ry Radius, Masters of Disguise to provide her the Costume, Toilette, and Bearing, and Speech nimble enough to keep her beyond the Desires, or even the Curiosity, of Government. (350)

Ethelmer here, and backed later by Cherrycoke, appears to posit the existence of a truth that exceeds its discursive formation. In my reading, however, “Truth” refers to a singular event that is both in process and not entirely outside of discourse. The more this event becomes codified through a language that attempts to define and clearly articulate it in all its complexity, the less it approaches the movement of that truth by neglecting the interaction between form and content. Thus, truth is a construction worked in a virtual space that mediates between non-discursive and discursive regimes. This representation or construction—truth, in the Pynchon quote—in fact, mobilizes a seemingly unified discursive regime in the interests of what is referred to variously in *Mason & Dixon* as “Power” or “Government.” The point is not to simply expose the constructed nature of “truth” or representation in order to counter representation with authenticity. What the text addresses are the real effects, that is to say, the material implications of the way cultural artifacts circulate and have meaning in material lives. Fiction, in the novel, does not exceed a discursive form; instead; it mimics, counterfeits and undercuts the material form of truth—language—in order to expose its constructed nature. As a construction it is part of a “great disorderly Tangle of Lines, long and short, weak and strong, vanishing into the Mnemonick Deep, with only their Destination in common” (349). The struggle that the novel enacts is the ability to keep open the virtual space at the material level of its articulation within the economic-juridical institutions of capitalist production.

In the now iconic passage from *Mason & Dixon* this virtual space gets its clearest articulation in relation to the cartographic enterprise:

Does Britannia, when she sleeps, dream? Is America her dream?— in which all that cannot pass in the metropolitan Wakefulness is allow'd Expression away in

the restless Slumber of these Provinces, and on West-ward, wherever 'tis not yet mapp'd nor written down, nor ever, by the majority of Mankind, seen,— serving as a very Rubbish-Tip for subjunctive Hopes, for all that *may yet be true*,— Earthly Paradise, Fountain of Youth, Realms of Prester John, Christ's Kingdom, ever behind the sunset, safe till the next Territory to the West be seen and recorded, measur'd and tied in, back into the Net-Work of Points already known, that slowly triangulates its Way into the Continent, changing all from subjunctive to declarative, reducing Possibilities to Simplicities that serve the ends of Governments,— winning away from the realm of the Sacred, its Borderlands one by one, and assuming them unto the bare mortal World that is our home, and our Despair. (345)

This virtual space, or what is here referred to as a “subjunctive” space, I want to be clear, emerges in relation to recorded and measured space, but is not confined to its quantitative dimensions. It appears at its edges, ever vulnerable to its translation within the “Net-Work of Points already known” but in-and-of-itself it can never appear as a totality. America, at the beginning of the passage, already appears as the dream of Britain, as a space of free expression that is unconstrained by either moral order or rational organization, that occupies an amorphous position as something incomplete, open, or in process. The openness of this space is presented as the way out of the very organization that dreams it into existence and the stakes of the novel revolve around preventing the institutional organization from closing down access to the productive capacity of this virtual space by plugging into its inherent multiplicity.

### **Textual Foldings**

*Mason & Dixon* turns back on its own form, folds in on itself as it were, as a means to implicate itself in the larger textual networks in which it is situated. The central narrative—Mason and Dixon's journey—is framed through Rev<sup>d</sup> Wicks Cherrycoke's narration and further by an omniscient anonymous narrator who mediates Cherrycoke's own position in the novel. There operates, then, a type of infinite regress where Mason and Dixon map the uncharted territories of America, Cherrycoke inscribes them in the story, Cherrycoke himself is brought into the

discursive regime by the omniscient narrator and we might say that this narrator, as the product of Thomas Pynchon, is not even the limit proper of the novel. Taking it even further, Thomas Pynchon the author is himself inscribed within the field of literary production and the economic-juridical order. That is to say, he too is a text that needs to be read alongside the narrative of *Mason & Dixon*. This exponentially framed structure establishes two things: (i) that there is no “event” that lies outside a discursive regime and (ii) that the spatial site of the novel transverses several temporal moments simultaneously. The latter observation leads back to the fact that the novel incorporates textual mediation as a process of continual negotiation between multiple contexts, none of which are outside the novel itself.

Of course, there is nothing remarkable in asserting that Pynchon's works are self-reflexive. Michael Bérubé, in fact, argues that the textuality of Pynchon's work<sup>42</sup> dominates the Pynchon critical industry to the exclusion of political readings. In Pynchon criticism Bérubé identifies a practice of cordoning off of the literary text from its cultural conditions of production. He writes that there is a “significant strain of Pynchon criticism which has so depoliticized *Gravity's Rainbow* as to have made it an exercise in narrative technique” and he further describes this “depoliticization as a kind of displacement of Pynchon's politics onto the politics of literary form, whereby Pynchon is celebrated as a subversive writer because his work demands an active, pattern-making reader” (267). While Pynchon's narratives root themselves in particular historical moments, they do so through other narratives—or what Bérubé refers to as “the sociopolitical transmission of cultural artifacts”—thereby transforming those narratives into part of his own (234).

Most important, however, in my analysis of the novel is the way the narrative form enacts this process within its own narrative articulation (for example, the way the historical Mason and

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<sup>42</sup> Bérubé's own case is made exclusively with *Gravity's Rainbow*, but it is possible to extrapolate from this reading.

Dixon get re-formulated within the dual function of writing as capture and flight), thus self-reflexively implicating itself in a moment of spatial inscription that shapes the aesthetic of the novel. For Stefan Mattessich, this doubling highlights the complexity of the novel: "Mason and Dixon's work (and the work of *Mason & Dixon*) symptomatically reiterates the project of conquest that modernity engenders, and this project appears in its double status not simply as a repression of the 'Space that cannot be seen' but as its avatar, the institution of a virtual order that one will henceforth have to accept as real" (235). The novel, in other words, enacts at the level of form the process it describes at the level of content so that its own critique of a process of social control cannot stand outside the mechanisms of that control.

Although Cherrycoke acts as the frame around Mason and Dixon's story, he is not the textual limit in terms of the perception that shapes the narrative. As noted above there is a further anonymous omniscient narrator whose character does not appear in the story itself. Each frame reflects on the story it tells through a twofold process of interjecting itself within the event it tells such that it foregrounds the fictional sleights of hands used to represent the event, and at the same time withdrawing into a larger structural context of the relations of production that shape and limit the event's appearance within discourse. For example, Cherrycoke's story is interrupted at numerous junctures by his audience who call into question its veracity at the same time as Mason and Dixon—in that story—grapple with the difficulty of inscribing America<sup>43</sup> within an Enlightenment discourse of truth and reason, ultimately subjecting it to measures of control. At one point, as Cherrycoke purports to relate the contents of an unsent letter from Mason to Dixon, his cousins intercede in the narrative: "'Just a moment,' Pitt says. 'You saw the document?'" inquires Pliny. 'Good lads!' cries Uncle Ives, blessing each with a Pistole" (146). Mason and Dixon repeatedly question the purpose of their assignment as though there is an ulterior motive

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<sup>43</sup> Stefan Mattessich suggests that "America" in the novel is more than the nation-state, that it is something that lies deeper, precedes the colonial and imperial invasion. It is, he claims, "time deeper than memory and thus an immemorial space" (240).

for their work of which they are unaware. After bearing witness to the site of the Paxton Boys' massacre of the Conestoga Indians in Lancaster, Dixon says "Whom are we working for, Mason?" to which Mason replies "I rather thought, one day, you would be the one to tell me" (347). In other words, *Mason & Dixon* is a narrative that turns back on its self and reads the ways in which its "authors" are not the ultimate authority on their own writing, that they, too, are inscribed within a network of signifying production to the extent that even if the omniscient external narrator were named "Thomas Pynchon," that name is similarly implicated in the broader social relations of its own material production.<sup>44</sup> For instance, not only is the line between truth and fiction no longer possible to distinguish, the signposts that signal the intent behind his work are obliterated in a collage of textual voices. The narrative voices, from the anonymous omniscient narrator to Cherrycoke, assume a parodic stance that is invested at least partially in some other voice. The narrative style is adopted from 18<sup>th</sup> century literature through what Brian McHale calls a "plausible pastiche of eighteenth century diction, syntax, and typographical conventions" (47). Claire Colebrook, focusing on the opening passage of the novel, takes this a step further to suggest that "the voice of the novel emerges from a collection of found objects, objects that already impersonate or interpret another style" and "as the novel proceeds the language pulverises into a chaotic overlay of impersonal, unfamiliar and near-surreal ways of writing (rather than ways of speaking or ways of seeing)" (103-104). In order to wade through this complexity, however, I will distinguish each of the narrative perspectives<sup>45</sup>, showing both how they stand on their own, how they come together without forming a completely unified

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<sup>44</sup> Stefan Mattessich details how Pynchon's work does not merely represent a contradiction it sees in the world, but makes this contradiction an element of its own writing. That is to say, he demonstrates how Pynchon's work is self-reflexive and at the heart of *Mason & Dixon* lies a struggle to free itself from the very mechanism of which it is a part. Pynchon, he claims, doesn't merely narrate an event because that would be a retrenchment of the very problem he associates with writing as a mechanism that colonizes a dynamic relation. Instead, Pynchon uses the medium against itself in order to reveal Pynchon's "commitment to the polyvalences of language" (240). The production of Thomas Pynchon's name, I claim, undergoes a similar process.

<sup>45</sup> To the extent that it is possible. None of them exists entirely as an autonomous form of agency and so my endeavours to hold them apart for the purposes of clarifying how they function together should be understood more as an attempt to identify their inter-relatedness than as a testimony to their independence.

object, and how they embed themselves in larger structural contexts in such a way that exposes the intertextual basis of their production.

### An Authentic Narrative Voice?

Perhaps the question of literary property within the text could be cleared up with a strong narrative voice, or authorial presence. This aspect of *Mason & Dixon*, however, is precisely what is absent. Or to refine this further, it is not so much absent as it is a constructed absence. On a formal level, there is a first hand account of Mason and Dixon's journey. There are, however, at least two layers that separate their experience from our hearing the story sometime after its publication in 1997. The first is obviously the overt narrator Rev<sup>d</sup> Wicks Cherrycoke. Cherrycoke, however, is introduced by another anonymous omniscient author whose status in the novel, while somewhat absent, recurs throughout in obscure ways so that it becomes impossible to know whose voice is speaking, nor which voice is the text's authentic one. It is not merely the unreliability of the different narrative voices that makes locating the text's authenticity problematic, the various characters in the novel themselves read the narrator's comments and contradictions, posit alternatives or undercut the very premises that structure the authority of individual voices to speak on behalf of the text as a whole. Again, there is such a considerable amount of complexity packed into each narrative that it would not be possible in the spatial constraints of a dissertation to detail them all, but I would like to provide some examples and in order to do so I must create some arbitrary distinctions.

While the narrative follows Mason and Dixon's journey from England to South Africa, to St. Helena to England to America and back again, their experience is mediated in two ways. First, through Cherrycoke's telling. Cherrycoke sets himself up from the start as an unreliable narrator: "I beach'd upon these Republican Shores,— stoven, dismasted, imbécile with age,— an untrustworthy Rememberancer for whom the few events yet rattling within a broken memory

must provide the only comfort now remaining to him" (8). This unreliability is sustained throughout the novel as his audience continually interjects to question how he knows details and speculates on how his own subjective view point shapes the narrative he tells in subtle ways. The situation is further complicated by the fact that the subjects of his story are themselves prone to discursive flights of fancy. In communicating one of Mason's most intimate moments (his first encounter with his late wife Rebekah) Cherrycoke explains: "Here is what Mason tells Dixon of how Rebekah and he first met. Not yet understanding the narrative lengths Mason will go to, to avoid betraying her, Dixon believes ev'ry word" (167). At the same time as we are told the story is fiction, we are also not told any other version, and so it stands as the story. Mason fabricates stories, which proves to be problematic given that at least in part Cherrycoke's narrative is supplemented by Mason's journal.

At this juncture in my argument I am expanding the frame of reference by focusing in on the way Cherrycoke as an author/narrator who putatively sits outside Mason and Dixon's story as a source is intertwined with the novel's textualization of his character. This is an important expansion because it goes to the heart of my claim that authorship cannot be thought outside its textual relations, that is to say, that it is bound up with other texts at the same time as it relates to an aesthetic internal to its own product. As a source, however, authorship in the form of the individual name masks the collective nature of literary production. Through the authorial character, Cherrycoke, Pynchon undermines his original production in a way that reflects back on Pynchon's own authorial construction in the field of literary production. While Cherrycoke does travel with Mason and Dixon as they cut the Line and participates in their experience, he is not privy to either character's internal monologue, and thus relies on text. He is even a character that they distrust to some extent because he writes everything down in his own journal. Thus, though Cherrycoke's own memories are not reliable, it is clear that his re-telling of Mason and Dixon's story is born of his own written account. In response to a request from his nephews to hear a "Tale about America" (7), he responds "It begins with a hanging" and the anonymous narrator

clarifies “The Rev<sup>d</sup>, producing a scarr'd old Note-book, cover'd in cheap Leather, begins to read” (8). Cherrycoke's story, however, doesn't begin with Mason and Dixon. In the few moments when we learn something about his own history he explains to his estranged family audience how he met the surveyors on board the *Seahorse* as they were on their way to record the Transit of Venus—their initial encounter—and he was in the process of being exiled from England. His exile, though little commented upon is, in fact, intriguing in and of itself. It turns out that he was imprisoned for “one of the least tolerable of Offenses in that era [...] the Crime they styl'd 'Anonymity.' That is, I left messages posted publicly, but did not sign them” (9). His messages, are political messages, they bear witness “to certain Crimes I had observ'd, committed by the Stronger against the Weaker,— enclosures, evictions, Assize verdicts, Activities of the Military,— giving the Names of as many of the Perpetrators as I was sure of, yet keeping back what I foolishly imagin'd my own” (9). There are a few interesting points to unpack in this passage. Cherrycoke clearly takes sides on the issue of enclosure, which is a theme that returns throughout the text via Dixon who participated in the surveying that made possible the act of enclosure, or rather that was an essential component of the act of enclosure. Cherrycoke calls enclosure a “crime” which is important if we think of the contemporary context of the novel and the increased expansion of copyright as a doubling of the enclosure movement within the intellectual commons of cultural production. The space of Cherrycoke's authorship, then, is political, it emerges in a public discourse and it is the moment of publication that threatens his freedom when his name gets attached to the works. After being imprisoned Cherrycoke comes to a realization: “It took me till I was lying among the Rats and Vermin, upon the freezing edge of a Future invisible, to understand that my name had never been my own,— rather belonging, all this time, to the Authorities, who forbade me to change it or withhold it, as 'twere a Ring upon a the Collar of a Beast, ever waiting for the Lead to be fasten'd on” (10). His name, then, becomes synonymous with his self, but a self which is externally marked by the name and therefore

outside his own control. The recognition leaves him marked as insane which leads to his forced exile.

Cherrycoke's presence in the novel occupies a strange site as it appears as the external frame (or the creator) to the central story. His own character appears as someone who both produces and is produced within other narratives. After a bizarre hallucination, Mason wonders "Should I seek the counsel, God help me, of the cherubick Pest, Cherrycoke? He will take down ev'ry Word he can remember. (Might it prove of use, in any future Claims for Compensation, to be recorded, at what's sure to be impressive Length)" (434). Here Mason testifies to his own existence within another narrative written by Cherrycoke. But if Mason (and Dixon) appears as Cherrycoke's creation, then Cherrycoke himself does not operate outside this economy, for he, too, is the creation of the anonymous narrator. The discussion between Mason and James Boswell<sup>46</sup> about recording other's lives plays back into this context because Mason asks Boswell if he wonders whether someone records the recorder:

"I had my Boswell, once," Mason tells Boswell, "Dixon and I. We had a joint Boswell. Preacher nam'd Cherrycoke. Scribbling ev'rything down, just like you, Sir. Have you," twirling his Hand in Ellipses,— "you know, ever...had one yourself? If I'm not prying."

"Had one what?"

"Hum...a Boswell, Sir,— I mean, of your own. Well you couldn't very well call him that, being one yourself,— say, a sort of Shadow ever in the Room who has haunted you, preserving your ev'ry spoken remark,—" (747)

Boswell, in turn, speculates about the myriad of voices that go unrecorded and what they would sound like should they be brought into a discursive regime:

"Which else would have been lost forever to the great Wind of Oblivion,— think," armsweep south, "as all civiliz'd Britain gathers at this hour, how much shapely Expression, from the titl'd Gambler, the Barmaid's Suitor, the offended Fopling, the gratified Toss-Pot, is simply fading away upon the Air, out under the Door, into the Evening and the Silence beyond. All those voices. Why not pluck a few words from the multitudes rushing toward the Void of forgetfulness?" (747)

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<sup>46</sup> This conversation is also another example of the virtual space that characterizes *Mason & Dixon* in that it appears to detail a dialogue that didn't actually happen and which is narrated by Cherrycoke.

Almost counter-intuitively the closer we move towards “Cherrycoke” as a source, the more he becomes a construct whose dimensions expand out into the larger framework of the cultural, economic and political contexts of the appearance of his name as an author.

### **The Journal**

Most important for my argument, however, is the incorporation of other texts as the basis of Cherrycoke's “own” work. I have more than just “intertextuality” in mind and I am drawing attention to more than the obvious fact that historical fiction is required to use other texts as the basis for a “reality” which its author could not have experienced. Quite specific to *Mason & Dixon*, I am also talking about textual appropriation, or theft or plagiarism. David Foreman notes Pynchon's use of *The Journal of Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon* as a source text. In fact, he goes so far as to note the accuracy, even the direct lifting of passages from this source text. The relationship between this text and Pynchon's narrative, however, requires a bit of discussion in order to understand the legal implications buried in its use. It should be pointed out, as well, that Foreman, while providing an analysis of the function of historical sources in *Mason & Dixon*, makes no mention of the legal questions of plagiarism.<sup>47</sup>

*The Journal*'s own publication history is important to understanding its appearance in *Mason & Dixon* and is an aspect of the text that does not appear within its pages explicitly. *The Journal* is an account<sup>48</sup> of the cutting of the Mason-Dixon line and written during the period of its construction. As a published document, however, it didn't exist until Hughlett Mason's 1969 transcription published by the American Philosophical Society. In fact, for nearly a hundred years

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<sup>47</sup> This omission might be attributed to the low percentage of actual use in comparison to the whole in which the legal question seems moot. While Mason's handwritten version appears in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the reproduced transcript is only published in 1969 and copyrighted by the American Philosophical Society and therefore not in the public domain.

<sup>48</sup> While it is written in the name of both Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon, A. Hughlett Mason—who transcribed *The Journal*—points out that among other things “The journal is in a single hand throughout and is signed at the end 'C.Mason'" which means that Mason is its primary author (1).

the manuscript was missing and it is only in 1877, when the department of State purchased it for five hundred dollars in gold, that it re-appeared. “Later,” as Corner points out, “it was transferred to the National Archives” (“Preface”). This original version is the one that Pynchon quotes directly from in *Mason & Dixon*. However, it is not the only copy in existence. In fact, Mason prepared at least two others, called the fair copies and distributed to “the proprietors of Maryland and Pennsylvania upon completion of the survey” (Foreman 146). Although I have not seen either of these versions of *The Journal*, Hubertis M. Cummings reports that at least one of them is “cleared of all his personal meditations” (qtd in Foreman 146).

While Pynchon incorporates the source texts in several ways, including the use of people named in *The Journal* as characters in the novel, or sticking to the time lines it chronicles, what I want to focus on is the quoted material. There are three major quotes that Pynchon cites in the novel. All three are set off from the main body of the text as quotes. They are referred to by the narrator as quotes from *The Journal* and to this extent they are acknowledged as appearing previously in the other text. That being said, the book makes no acknowledgment that permission was granted for the use of copyrighted material.<sup>49</sup> There is no question within the novel that the words are quoted from Mason's journal. The question that the novel raises, however, in its deconstruction of the notion of authorial voice, is whether the journal that they are taken from is a real object with an existence outside of the novel. Of course, the answer to this is simple to find out, if the history of *The Journal* is known. However, Pynchon complicates its use by reference to the “fair copy” of *The Journal*. For instance, Cherrycoke “produces and makes available to the Company his Facsimile of Pennsylvania's Fair Copy of the Field-Journals of Mason and Dixon” (554). Its appearance complicates the status of the quoted material in that the quoted material appears in the original and not the fair copies, and yet it is the fair copy that appears as Cherrycoke's source text. In addition, we must ask what to make of the fair copy which has been

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<sup>49</sup> In a legal sense, perhaps because the amount of quoted material is under five hundred words, which means under fair use, this is a non-issue.

“copied without the touch of human hands, by an ingenious Jesuit device” (554). While the reference cites its source as the fair copy, the text from which the quoted material appears is the original, but even the fair copy appears as a fictional element of the novel because it is reproduced by either a photocopier or a fax machine in the eighteenth century. This false reference short circuits the codes by which the two texts—the original Journal and Pynchon's novel—are distinguishable. This is not merely a matter of Pynchon fictionalizing a “real” text because the original text appears as it exists outside Pynchon's novel; only the attribution is false, which gives its appearance in the novel a nebulous status.

The complexity of the Journal's status in *Mason & Dixon* is deepened by the introduction of two other versions which have no external co-relative. Cherrycoke reads from his “fair” copy, chronicling an episode where Mason, outside New York on his own, falls off his horse after it gets spooked by “some boys [...] come out of a Quaker Meeting House as if the De—I had been with them” (408). In the fair copy, the narrator relates, Mason calls this “fine sport for the boys,” but immediately afterwards adds “In the Foul Copy, he writes, 'for ye D——l and the Boys,' though this does not appear in the Fair Copies the Proprietors will see” (408). While this “Foul Copy” would seem to line up with the original Journal, the quote itself appears, not in the proprietors' copies, but in *The Journal*. In distinguishing a further copy, an “original” to the “original” *Mason & Dixon* constructs this first original, *The Journal*, as both a source for the proprietors' copies and at the same time as a text that mediates another prior text—the Foul Copy. If this weren't enough, the narrator reveals a further version, one that Mason “gets to so seldom it should be styl'd a 'Monthly'" (433). Like Cherrycoke's own problematic status, the plurality of texts which constitute Cherrycoke/Pynchon's source (including those with no historical basis) problematizes the notion of a single stable reality which would act as the source of an “original” text. There is, to put it simply, no way back to a pure non-discursive space that functions as *Mason & Dixon*'s origin. The point that needs to be stressed is that while the novel clearly sets out

its textual source it also draws out the complicated status of that text and the way it has its own non-discursive traces enter into the discursive regime.

*Mason & Dixon*, however, does not merely implicate itself in an aesthetic or philosophical structure of textuality. In using direct quotes from another text without clear identification of this fact, the novel reflects on its own practice of using textual property as the textual material of its own product. In other words, at the level of form, not only does the novel dissemble the originality or authenticity of the source text, but it also deconstructs the notion of the text as private property. This dual position as both aesthetic product and commodity means that the novel also turns back on its own sources as texts that are not individual products, but collective products whose ownership is only established by the force of a statutory law that intervenes in the economic order as a way to keep open competition as the dominant form of exchange. Pynchon's text, however, does not merely look back at the past. In setting its own production up as an element of its aesthetic and then incorporating other textual sources directly without attribution, the novel explicitly presents itself as a collective product. This collective product, however, upon publication becomes a property of "Thomas Pynchon." The aesthetic deconstruction within the novel does not in-itself suffice to challenge the legal hold of the author as copyright holder. It is only when the author, "Thomas Pynchon," whose anonymity extends the multiplicity encountered in both Cherrycoke and *The Journal* as sources within the novel, is tagged onto the text that the deconstruction extends beyond the aesthetic into the material realm. Therefore, "Pynchon"—who as a text that occupies a space within the economic-juridical order as the owner of a textual property—unfolds a practice of collective literary production beyond the confines of its own aesthetic production.

## What is Thomas Pynchon?

If my own methodology stopped with a textual analysis, then the text would still remain the product of one Thomas Pynchon, the owner of a literary property, titled *Mason & Dixon*. The name “Thomas Pynchon” remains an exterior limit, or horizon, to the text. It is precisely this figure, however, that needs to be re-thought as a limit. In this sense, Pynchon's authorial anonymity, or his absence, must be explored as a textual construct. In terms of this anonymity, I want to trace the concrete utterances of the name as a practice which has no existence outside the discursive regime of its articulation. While Pynchon is renowned for his anonymity or unwillingness to discuss either his biography or his own texts, there are certain pointed remarks that scholars point to as texts that offer insight into the complexity of the ideas within his texts. In particular, the introduction to *Slow Learner*, as a rare appearance of Pynchon writing in his “own voice,” has been generally understood as the authentic voice of the author that underlies the fiction.<sup>50</sup> What I contend, however, is that there is no authentic voice, that even his autographical interventions are marked by a dissembling of the authorial voice that marks its iteration as a tissue of different voices which never amount to the unified totality of a singular voice. The textual construction of the name and its refusal to posit a stable single and original source turns any analysis back on the relations of production in which the name comes to assume various meanings, ultimately reflecting on the institutional structures through which the name is

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<sup>50</sup> In a 2000 anthology of *Mason & Dixon* criticism, both Victor Standberg (“Dimming the Enlightenment”) and Jeff Baker (“Plucking the American Albatross”) begin their arguments in relation to statements made in the introduction to *Slow Learner*. See *Pynchon and Mason & Dixon* eds. Brooke Horvath and Irving Malin. Richard Poirier, who argues that Pynchon is not an astute reader of his own work, retains a sense of an authentic Pynchon voice that would misread the fiction (“Human”). Another text, significantly published around the same time (1983), that adopts a similar authorial voice and plays up its authentic feel is Pynchon's introduction to Richard Fariña's *Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up to Me*. He goes so far as to write that Fariña had a “radically different voice” (v), only to undercut this claim with repeated references “public character” that “I never did see all the way through” and their own mimicking of other literary voices in their own speech (viii). In his introduction to *Pynchon Notes* 14, an issue devoted to *Gravity's Rainbow* and deconstruction, Bernard Duyhuizen “almost has to conclude [Pynchon] must be putting us on again.” He continues “I am hesitant to draw this conclusion exclusively because [...] I want to believe that Pynchon has finally dropped his guard here and given us a glimpse at the man behind the text” (6). While drawing attention to the potential ironic stance of the introduction's author, Duyhuizen nevertheless opts to side with its authenticity.

produced. The insight that authorship is tied to a “juridical and institutional system” is, in fact, central to Foucault's conceptualization of the authorial construct (“What Is an Author?”, 113). The author function, which stems the proliferation of meaning by regulating engagement with textual property, carries in the authorial text the institutional traces that are part of its construction. Consequently, answering the question “what is the name Pynchon” requires an engagement with the material iterations of its fictional “authenticity” as opposed to its purported absence.

Thomas Pynchon is renowned for this silence—a silence that has been breached neither by the literary establishment, nor the publishing industry, nor more generally the mass media. There is scant biographical information about Pynchon, and certainly not enough material for a book length biography.<sup>51</sup> There is much speculation about the reasons for his silence, ranging from an intense desire for privacy to a paranoid fear of the Authorities (Jules Siegel records in his memoir a conversation he had with Pynchon, “You think that it is what you have written that they will want to get you for” (174)), to a modernist impersonality where the text explains everything about the person that we are required to know, in other words he disappears into his fictions: “[reclusive authors] create solitary characters and personae and then disappear into their fictions. [...] Or maybe it's the other way round. Maybe the characters swallow up the author. You know move in and take over. With both White and Pynchon, you get a sense in the later novels of *invasion*” ( Turner Hospital 54).<sup>52</sup> I do not care to advance any thesis on the intent behind his absence, on the contrary, my argument is concerned merely with the effects of his absence on the circulation of his texts. In order to understand these effects, I need not probe its depths, but rather,

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<sup>51</sup> For some short studies see Matthew Winston “The Quest for Thomas Pynchon”; Siegel “Who is Thomas Pynchon . . . and Why Did he Take Off with my Wife?”; and David Gale “The Quest for Thomas Pynchon.” His ancestors have been traced by to William Pynchon, a Salem witch trial judge whose dissenting book *Meritorious Price of Mans Redemption* was burned for sedition. William Pynchon was also fictionalized by Nathaniel Hawthorne in *The House of Seven Gables*.

<sup>52</sup> This quote comes from a Turner Hospital short story “For Mr. Voss or Occupant” one of whose characters is writing a dissertation on reclusive authors and specifically mentions Patrick White, Emily Dickinson, J.D. Salinger and Thomas Pynchon.

trace the articulation of the name's dissembling such that its various threads can't be woven together in a single narrative that would "explain" Pynchon as a person. As such, I want to make clear that my "Pynchon" is not an individual person; instead, it is a textual construction that emerges as a series of textual strategies that operate in relation to the author's inscription with a field of literary production. The removal of the line that separates "work" from "author" effectively extends the aesthetic critique of the "work" as an individual property such that the stakes of that critique are repeated in both domains. In other words, there is a Pynchon narrative, there is a story about Pynchon and what that name represents, and it is against this narrative that his name needs to be read.

Characteristic of Pynchon's lack of engagement with the public aside from his novels, short stories, essays and introductions is a refusal to be photographed, do interviews or otherwise perform publicity for his books. In response to a CNN query about his reclusiveness he reportedly says "my belief is that recluse is a code word generated by journalists . . . meaning 'doesn't like to talk to reporters'" (Feldman). In fact, the depths of his absence has, as in the case of Salinger, sent journalists in search of him, but this search has not been fruitful, partially derailed by Pynchon's transiency, moving between New York, Seattle, different parts of California and Mexico. There are details that trace his early movements at Cornell, through the Navy back to Cornell and then to New York City which he left in order to work in Seattle for Boeing in the sixties. Before the publication of *V.*, however, he left Boeing, lived briefly in California, as documented by Siegel, and then Mexico where he continued to elude attempts to identify him.<sup>53</sup> From this point he essentially drops out of sight as a person, and becomes a presence only in terms of his published

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<sup>53</sup> See Jule Siegel's "Who is Thomas Pynchon . . . and Why Did he Take Off with my Wife."

material. In fact for the period between 1963 and 1997 his whereabouts are virtually unknown.

This absence forms a backdrop out of which the “Pynchon text” is written.<sup>54</sup>

In 1984, out of a literary silence in the wake of *Gravity's Rainbow*'s publication, a collection of Pynchon's short stories, *Slow Learner*, written between 1958 and 1964 appears. What is of most interest, for me, about this publication is the “Introduction” written and signed (on the cover) by Thomas Pynchon. This “Introduction,” a retrospective analysis of his early stories, marks the first and only appearance of both Pynchon's literary assessment of his own work and an autobiographical endeavour. It can be understood as one of the only public instances of the author speaking in his own voice about himself and his work with an authenticity that, as I've argued, is problematic in his fiction.<sup>55</sup> On the surface the text does two things. It serves as a warning to emerging writers: the stories are “of use [...] as illustrative of typical problems in entry-level fiction, and cautionary about some practices which younger writers might prefer to avoid” (4). In short, they warn against what Pynchon perceives as literary mistakes. At the same time, the “Introduction” provides a context within which to understand the generation of these stories. Alec McHoul and David Wills, in their semiotic interpretation of the text, claim that it “wants to head off the alterity of contexts, to 'justify' and excuse the early Pynchon stories by an authentic recapture of an originary context” (139). They draw attention to the way the present tense “I” voice (the real Pynchon of 1984) distances itself from the former self as expressed in the stories. At the start of the “Introduction” Pynchon writes that after re-reading the early stories he finally comes to

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<sup>54</sup> The absence in many ways leads to all sorts of wild speculations about his life. These speculations range from chance encounters to flights out of Mexico City buildings to John Calvin Batchelor's 1976 claims in the *Soho Weekly Review* that Pynchon is a pseudonym created by Salinger in order to escape media scrutiny. Pynchon apparently made a public denial of this claim, but I have been unable to track it down.

<sup>55</sup> In a 2000 anthology of *Mason & Dixon* criticism, both Victor Standberg (“Dimming the Enlightenment”) and Jeff Baker (“Plucking the American Albatross”) begin their arguments in relation to statements made in the introduction to *Slow Learner*. See *Pynchon and Mason & Dixon* eds. Brooke Horvath and Irving Malin. Richard Poirier, who argues that Pynchon is not an astute reader of his own work, retains a sense of an authentic Pynchon voice that would misread the fiction (“Human” *London Review of Books* 7.1 (1985): 18-20).

one of those episodes of middle-aged tranquility, in which I now pretend to have reached a level of clarity about the young writer I was back then. I mean I can't very well just 86 this guy from my life. On the other hand, if through some as yet undeveloped technology I were to run into him today, how comfortable would I feel about lending him money, or for that matter even stepping down the street to have a beer and talk over old times? (3)

What McHoul and Wills point to is that while the present Pynchon disavows the past Pynchon, the name functions to connect the writing and so the only way present Pynchon can free himself from this past is to institute a difference, “a historical mediation which guarantees their difference,” and which creates a division within the writing self (145). This distinction, however, does not operate at the level of the present Pynchon, which is taken to be an immediate presence, the writing and the self as the same with no mediation between them. To hold with this reading would be to present Pynchon as a writer similar to Salinger, except that in adopting a confessional mode, in confessing to past literary (and moral) sins, the present Pynchon can cleanse itself and attain a pure status. McHoul and Wills point out: “This is very likely the anxiety of the ‘Introduction’ where Pynchon-present (especially as an author not of the stories but of the novels) wants to become identical with some mythically pure Pynchon, created in the imagination of the reader. Thereby, the old Pynchon has to be seen to take the weight of the negativities upon him” (149).

In order to establish this firm break, however, the present Pynchon, the one writing the “Introduction,” must have ceased his past indiscretions. Would it not be possible that Pynchon fakes, counterfeits or reproduces a role, a representation of what autobiography is supposed to do? McHoul and Wills point out that such is a possibility, given the content of the “Introduction” which “tells us that, whatever Pynchon is, he, she or it is a phoney by his, her or its own standards” (134). Indeed, Pynchon's assertion that in the present he “pretend[s] to have reached a level of clarity” suggests that he is not above or beyond his previous strategies which he marks as mistakes (3).

The real question of what transpires in the “Introduction” turns on the issue of literary theft, appropriation, or derivation and its relation to autobiography. Pynchon brings the topic up in relation to “Under the Rose” where he used “all the details of a time and place I have never been to” from Karl Baedeker’s guidebook as the “major ‘source’ for the story” (17). He writes: “Fascinating topic, literary theft. As in the penal code, there are degrees. These range from plagiarism down to only being derivative, but all are forms of wrong procedure. If, on the other hand, you believe that nothing is original and that all writers ‘borrow’ from ‘sources,’ there still remains the question of credit lines or acknowledgements” (17). He later calls this, in his own practice, “a strategy of transfer” where he displaces “my personal experience off into other environments” (21). But if the present Pynchon, here, appears to advocate theft as a form of literary practice, he does so only to suggest it is a poor basis for creating narratives. He writes as a warning to aspiring authors: “Lest others become as enchanted as I was and have continued to be with this technique, let me point out that it is a lousy way to go about writing a story” (17). Further he suggests that his own development, his ability to split from past-Pynchon relies on “beginning to shut up and listen to the American voices around me, even to shift my eyes away from printed sources and take a look at American nonverbal reality” (22). While Pynchon seems to draw a distinction between print as verbal and experience as non-verbal, going so far as to leave the impression that his own works after “The Secret Integration” are concerned with what lies outside print<sup>56</sup>, what cannot be mistaken is the concern in his works for how an external reality appears within print as a representation. In the “Introduction,” as McHoul and Wills point out, “one’s life is always already a fictional construct regardless of how it is written [...] It is in

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<sup>56</sup> This idea, reminiscent of precisely the type of plenitude that post-structuralism denies is made more explicit when Pynchon argues “the fiction both published and unpublished that moved and pleased me then as now was precisely that which had been made luminous, undeniably authentic by having been found and taken up, always at a cost, from deeper, more shared levels of the life we all really live” (21). The problem with relying on the maintenance of the constructed/authentic division, however, is made apparent by the context of *Slow Learner*’s publication. At exactly the moment when Pynchon criticism aligns his works with poststructuralist theory, Pynchon appears to shift directions, tying his own identity into a textual practice whose external referents are always already in a signifying system. See the *Pynchon Notes* 14 (1984).

this light that we can understand what has been glossed as Pynchon's silence about himself, and perhaps why that silence is fabulous. For in one sense, there has been no silence. Pynchon only ever wrote autobiography" (157). The focus of McHoul and Wills' post-structural analysis is the development of theories of meaning from the textual strategies and this, to some extent remains bound to an aesthetic conception of the work.<sup>57</sup>

The "Introduction" functions on at least two other levels: against the image of his autobiographical silence and with a legal framework of literary property. If Pynchon appears to hedge on an explicit call for anti-copyright (after all he holds copyright on all his works and has a copyright lawyer, Jeremy Nussbaum) the question of ownership is never far from the surface; in fact, it is made all the more pressing by offering up an aesthetically divided "author" whose source is other texts. Pynchon does, however, return to the theme of literary property when he writes in defense of Ian McEwan. McEwan's novel *Atonement* faced accusations of having plagiarized portions of Lucille Andrews' autobiography *No Time for Romance* when at the behest of his editor a group of well-known writers wrote in support of McEwan's literary practice.<sup>58</sup> Pynchon—breaking his public silence—penned a letter where he claims:

Unless [novelists] were actually there, we must turn to people who were, or to letters, contemporary reporting, the encyclopedia, the Internet, until, with luck, at some point, we can begin to make a few things of our own up. To discover in the course of research some engaging detail we know can be put into a story where it will do some good can hardly be classed as a felonious act—it is simply what we do. (Pynchon, "Letter to Agent")

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<sup>57</sup> Consider the frame through which they explicate the Foucault/Barthes debate around authorship as a question of meaning: "the Foucault paper, for all its analytic interests, does not exactly *support* authorialist readings: though it does suggest that we make that function our topic rather than our unexplicated resource in literary studies. He is pointing to a new topic, to the discursive practice of the 'author function', rather than to 'author' as creative fountainhead. But his political alignment to that topic is not as openly on display as Barthes" (136). And further: "Unlike Foucault's critical practice which effectively leaves the critic parasitic upon traditional categories and uses of 'author', Barthes has at least suggested means of intervention into the dominant authorial discourse and possible form of alternative practice" (136). For a full discussion see pages 135-137 in *Writing Pynchon*.

<sup>58</sup> Nigel Reynolds reports in *The Telegraph* a short list of writers who supported McEwan: John Updike, Martin Amis, Thomas Keneally, Zadie Smith and Margaret Atwood ("The Borrowers: 'Why McEwan is No Plagiarist'").

Pynchon dwells on the creative practice of “borrowing” as one that is inherently based in other textual sources whether that practice stems from “some obligation to accuracy” or not (“Letter to Agent”). An economic argument about the right to restrict the use of textual material should not be the basis for determining access to material in terms of literary production. He does, however, recognize the need to credit sources, claiming “For Mr. McEwan to have put details from one of them [a witness to the Blitz] to further creative use, acknowledging this openly and often, and then explaining it clearly and honorably, surely merits not our scolding, but our gratitude” (“Letter to Agent”). Clearly, he positions himself within the cultural field as in support of using other textual sources despite the proprietary claims to ownership of literary material. That being said, the contradictions opened up with the “Introduction” about the “true” Pynchon turn this question back towards authorship itself. We must ask, if the Pynchon name appropriates other texts in its own production, and this name has no direct reference to a unified individuality, to what extent does anyone writing under that name have the right to claim the exclusive right to produce works under that name's authenticity?

### **Pynchon Beyond Himself**

The Pynchon voice, or rather the textual nature of the Pynchon name, is itself a product that is not entirely under the control of an individual named “Thomas Pynchon.” Pynchon's anonymity might dissemble his identity or ownership of certain literary works, but his name nevertheless functions as a site in the field of literary production over which struggles to determine the symbolic value of his name are waged. The symbolic value of the name, however, accrues symbolic capital as a social relation between competing interests that struggle over its appropriation. Pynchon's absence, or rather the textuality of his anonymity, functions to heighten the tensions between the commercial and artistic poles of the field of literary production, such that his name becomes a site of social, cultural and political struggle. The question at this level of

my own analysis of the circulation and production of the Pynchon name within this field reveals not so much what Pynchon himself says about the field, but the effects his anonymity provokes within field. By destabilizing the authenticity of the name, or rather, by mobilizing other voices under the name of Pynchon to speak as though they were Pynchon, the name “Thomas Pynchon” functions to draw into the open the tensions inscribed in authorship.

As Pynchon's *absence* becomes a marker or a signifying feature of his authorship it comes to play a larger part in his *appearance*. In 1974, *Gravity's Rainbow* was awarded—in conjunction with Isaac Bashevis Singer's *A Crown of Feathers and Other Stories*—the National Book Award. The National Book Award began in 1950 and was sponsored at the time by The American Book Publishers Council, The Book Manufacturer's Institute and The American Booksellers' Association and so its interests are immediately economic. Next to the Pulitzer it was (and continues to be) the most esteemed and culturally valuable literary award in the United States. Currently, the National Book Foundation manages the distribution of the award. The mandate of the National Book Foundation is to “celebrate the best of American literature, to expand its audience, and to enhance the cultural value of good writing in America” (“About Us: History of the National Book Foundation”). Included on its twenty member board of directors are representatives from the Perseus Book Group, Grove/Atlantic, the New York Public Library, Google and Penguin Group USA. This list brings together the book publishing industry under the guise of promoting culture. As the mandate emphasizes, though, the National Book Award seeks to “enhance cultural value” which has a corollary impact on the financial value and profitability of book publishers and can be achieved through an expansion of the audience or consumers of books. Not only does the National Book Award function to consecrate authors, but it creates a national elite whose value appears in this format as something beyond the market. The award recognizes “good writing.” But the mission is more far reaching. In addition, the National Book Award compensates winning authors with \$10,000 and so has a very real financial value for individual authors associated with its outcome. While Thomas Pynchon's disappearance can be

seen as a means to elude the market forces of the publishing industry (and its commercial interests), in that interviews, book readings, photos and biographical statements are associated with the publicity required for commercial sales, this very same disappearance also works to increase his value as a literary author because of the disavowal of his marketability. His name signifies a disinterest in the commercial interests of the book trade and in turn establishes a symbolic value because the works produced under his name assume a purely aesthetic value. As Bourdieu points out, however, this disinterestedness is also the creation of the field of institutional practices into which the author enters. The position that the author occupies within the field of literary production, therefore, is subject to the various struggles to capitalize on his/her symbolic value. The circumstances around Pynchon's National Book Award allocation demonstrates both the extent to which his name is a site of struggle and the extent to which he participates in that struggle from a distance.

Given Pynchon's penchant for public aversion his appearance at the National Book Award ceremony and presentation in the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts seemed highly unlikely. Betting on these odds Pynchon's Viking Press publisher, Tom Guinzburg, arranged for the comedian Irwin Corey to perform Pynchon's acceptance. The substitution, however, was not previously announced and when Corey graced the stage the event had all the makings of a literary *coup*. Not only would Pynchon's presence at the awards ceremony bolster his own symbolic value, it would operate in the other direction as well by conferring legitimacy on the National Book Award—as the main organ of the literary establishment—by one who was largely held to operate outside its practices.<sup>59</sup> Pynchon's refusal to circulate photos of himself fostered the

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<sup>59</sup> The extent to which Thomas Pynchon actually exists outside the institutional practices of the publishing industry and even the academy in post-secondary institutions is precisely part of the fiction constructed around his absence. For a great reading of how the Pynchon critical industry frames Pynchon as an outsider, as a writer who abhors all forms of structure, of bureaucratic institutions, and how this construction threatens to erase Pynchon's political engagement with these issues see Michael Bérubé's *Marginal Forces*. Bérubé in his book focuses on the academy and Pynchon's status as a canonical American writer. I extend this out to how some of the similar struggles occur within a more directly economic context. Thomas Pynchon is and always has been part of the institutional practices of the field of literary production.

credibility that the person standing before the elite crowd could very well be Thomas Pynchon. In stepping out on to the stage and accepting the National Book Award in the name of Thomas Pynchon, Corey adds to the shaping of the Pynchon name in the field of literary production. Corey explains that he never had contact with Pynchon and assumed that Tom Guinzburg got the okay for the stunt from Pynchon: “I understand from the article I read that [Guinzburg] asked Pynchon if it would be okay. And Pynchon didn't know me, I didn't know Pynchon, so since we didn't know each other there could be no responsibility as to the identity of the guy accepting the award because [the audience] didn't know Pynchon, I didn't know Pynchon, Pynchon (I wonder if he knows himself)” (“Interview”). But Pynchon (surprise, surprise) never discussed the event one way or another in any public forum. Corey's performance is sanctioned in the name of Pynchon, although this speaking-in-the-name-of does not occur with a direct stamp of approval from Pynchon. Rather it is Pynchon's silence that aligns the two figures as one. It is in this sense of bringing multiple people together—Pynchon (writer), Guinzburg (publisher) and Corey (performer)—each with different interests and positions within the literary field that I argue Pynchon's name circulates as a construction whose collectivity is made possible by his anonymity.

It is not merely the fact that Corey appeared as Pynchon that is significant, but the various textual issues that arise out of Corey's acceptance speech mirror those in Pynchon's fiction. From the outset the substitution set the stage for a series of slippages that undermine any claim to authenticity and participate in the construction of the image of Pynchon the author. Ralph Ellison, himself a cultural icon, introduced Corey as Pynchon thereby sounding the legitimacy of the conferral of the prize. Corey himself retrospectively relates: “Everybody thought I was Pynchon there” (“Interview”). The speech does not, however, merely turn on the mis-identification of the performer. In-itself, it begins with deliberate linguistic misfires. For example, he begins “[I] accept this financial stipulation – ah – stipend in behalf of, uh, Richard Python” (Corey, “Acceptance Speech”). Not only does the speech begin with slippages, but it

identifies the award as a “financial stipulation,” as connected to the commercial aspect of publication that is at the core of the Award, as though acceptance means obligation. There is no main thrust to the speech, it rambles, digresses and touches only tangentially on the award as an honour. It draws attention to its own incoherency at various points without answering its own questions: “Today we must all be aware that protocol takes precedence over procedure. However you say - WHAT THE - what does this mean?” (“Acceptance Speech”). Later it even questions its own authorship: “We speak of the organ...of the orgasm...Who the hell wrote this?” (“Acceptance Speech”). The speech quotes liberally, but the accuracy and the attribution of the quotes are suspect given that “Groucho Marx, once said that religion is the opiate of the people” (“Acceptance Speech”). For the slippages and plays on language there are two aspects of the acceptance speech that relate not only to Pynchon's position within the field of literary production, but to the function of the National Book Award as a legitimization tool. First, Corey blurs the line between the world of fiction which the award celebrates and the actions perpetuated by the American government.<sup>60</sup> He says: “we must once again realize that the great fiction story is now being rehearsed before our very eyes, in the Nixon administration” (“Acceptance Speech”). Here, he admonishes the audience for its commitment to fiction in the face of an administration bent on a colonial mission. In other words, in turning inwards and focusing on the development of a literary value, the industry and its cultural supporters allows for the perpetuation of war. But Corey draws the reins of his critique tighter, suggesting “I do want to thank the bureau...I mean the committee, the organization for the \$10,000 they've given out...tonight they made over \$400,000” (“Acceptance Speech”). The insight the text offers is the disjuncture between the capitalist nature of the industry that sponsors the award and perpetuates a form of individual production even at the moment when an author's anonymity attempts to step outside the cultural context of the work as an autonomous commodity with a distinctly aesthetic value.

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<sup>60</sup> Although the Vietnam War is not mentioned directly, the year being 1974, a year before the American withdrawal, it lingers on the edge of each reference to Nixon or Kissinger.

Corey's voice becomes a stand-in for an authentic Pynchon, who criticizes the literary establishment.<sup>61</sup> In other words, Corey's performance in the name of Pynchon positions Pynchon against the consecration apparatus of the literary field that presents itself as artistic and therefore outside any direct relation with larger social and political struggles. In its broader context in relation to the Pynchon name, however, Corey's performance stretches even further to Pynchon's refusal to accept the William Dean Howells Medal for *Gravity's Rainbow*. The William Dean Howells Medal, similar to the National Book Award, functions as a means to consecrate "great" works of fiction. It is awarded by the American Academy of Arts and Letters every five years to an author in recognition of a novel published during that period. The Academy, a virtual who's who of the literary world, both academics and artistic writers, was originally incorporated through an act of Congress as the National Institute of Arts and Letters. Its founding purpose, as stated on their website is "to foster and sustain an interest in Literature, Music and the Fine Arts by identifying and encouraging individual artists." What is interesting about the Academy, as opposed to the National Book Foundation, is the autonomous relation to the book trade. The Academy, starting as an act of Congress, for all intents and purposes is constructed in order to develop a sustainable literary field that is not entirely reliant on the market. If Pynchon's name were to become synonymous with a "pure" literary world, that is to say, with an interest in literature that exceeds its relation to the market, then this would surely be the governing body that would consecrate it. While it is possible to see Corey's mockery of the National Book Award as an award that bolsters the book trade in "literature" as opposed to popular works, thus aligning Pynchon with a form of literary autonomy, his reaction to the William Dean Howells Medal problematizes this alignment. In response to winning the award, Pynchon writes a letter to the Academy stating "The Howells Medal is a great honor, and, being gold, probably a good hedge against inflation, too. But I don't want it. Please don't impose on me something I don't want. It makes the Academy look arbitrary and me look rude. . . . I know I should behave with more class,

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<sup>61</sup> It should be noted that Irwin Corey wrote the speech.

but there appears to be only one way to say no, and that's no" (Pynchon qtd in "The Straight Dope"). His refusal signifies a more direct approach that remains completely in line with Corey's mockery of the National Book Award presentation. This time, however, the statement surfaces as an authentic Pynchon declining the award in his "own" voice. This later Pynchon retrospectively adds to the authority of Corey's performance as a critique on the establishment's position in relation to the forces of production, that is to say, its separation from the contemporary political and economic conditions and the book trade's embeddedness in those conditions. In other words, the letter situates the attribution of individual awards as commensurate with the production of elite authors, of a national culture, of a cult of individuals rather than recognizing the collective construction of texts within a discursive regime.

This refusal to accept, or the willingness to mock the forces of institutionalized literary production, has further implications that bring to the surface the fault lines within the literary establishment. While the judges of the 1974 Pulitzer prize unanimously awarded Pynchon the prize, the board of directors refused to acknowledge their selection.<sup>62</sup> In defense of their decision the board attacked the literary quality of Pynchon's writing calling it "unreadable," "turgid," "overwritten," and "obscene" (Kihss 38). The debate comes down, in one sense, to style and can be framed within the postmodern literary wars that haunt the 1980s. Doing so, though, remains confined to the "literary" as an autonomous space. The fact that board of directors attacks the novel for its aesthetic value can be viewed as an attempt to discredit it on purely literary values. On another level, though, there is something deeper that escalates the denial to a form of retribution against someone who dared to mock the establishment. The split between the jury and the board is, in fact, symptomatic of a larger struggle for control over what is deemed "literary" and hence culturally significant within the autonomy of the field. On the one hand, the jurors represent the attempt to bring the outsider in, to establish Pynchon as a culturally significant

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<sup>62</sup> Under the terms of the prize they have the authority to accept or deny the final adjudication.

author, at least partially on the basis of his refusal to engage with both the literary elite and the commercial aspect of publishing. His name, in other words, stands-in for the autonomy of literature over and above his “own” attempts to stand outside this positioning. On the other hand, the board, in refusing to confer Pynchon with the Pulitzer attempts to deny him the legitimacy associated with the prize because they recognize his mockery of their insularity and links to book sales. Where Pynchon the individual stands on the matter is not only inaccessible, it is largely irrelevant. The point is that Pynchon's name is not the product of his own creation, that it becomes a flashpoint or a site of struggle for different forces within the field of literary production. His anonymity, in this context, cannot be situated outside these struggles.<sup>63</sup>

### **Ok, but Legally . . .**

I have largely confined my analysis in the previous section to how the Pynchon name is constructed as a value based on its autonomy. While I do suggest that the struggles to attribute a signifying value to the name are concurrent with the creation of an economic value, I didn't follow up on how the name functions in relation to the juridical institutions that frame the system of literary property through which both the name and the texts associated with the Pynchon name circulate. What I want to investigate specifically in this section is how the anonymity of the

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<sup>63</sup> While the implications of this controversy calm over time, especially given Pynchon's silence between *Gravity's Rainbow* and *Slow Learner*, the action is not forgotten within the institutional forces of the American literary field. With the publication of *Mason & Dixon* in 1997 the controversy once again rears its head, again from a context outside of any immediate action by “Pynchon.” That year the president of Henry Holt Books, Michael Naumann (who incidentally served as the German Secretary of Culture between 1998 and 2001) refused to attend the National Book Awards because the book was not considered as a finalist. He saw the refusal as a retribution against Corey's performance, claiming: “The institutional memory is very long” (qtd in McGee). Neil Baldwin, executive director of the National Book Foundation at the time, makes an alternate claim for the role of the National Book Award in literary production. He claims, on a more conciliatory note that articulates the very tensions bound up in the award, “even though this is a very competitive industry and the ferocity of it is great, especially now, we're a community [...] we're trying to create a philanthropic mission out of a commercial nexus, and maybe it's the nature of the culture that we end up in situations where the very people we're trying to promote don't get it” (qtd in McGee). The point is that Pynchon's absence exposes the struggles within literary production as an essential part of the forces of publication, so that his own texts and his own authorial absence must be contextualized within these forces.

Pynchon name—which as I have shown opens itself out to a collective production through which many textual voices flow—interacts with an economic-juridical order to reduce texts to a commodity status and therefore as a product which stems from an individual source or owner. The authorial name becomes a signifier of a certain economic value through its circulation as a marker of symbolic value precisely because it marks itself (or is marked) as being anti-commercial. The ability to accrue economic value, however, is not merely accomplished through that field. In fact, as Foucault points out, open competition as a practice does not sustain itself, but is created by juridical interventions:

Government must not form a counterpoint or a screen, as it were, between society and economic processes. It has to intervene on society as such, in its fabric and depth. Basically, it has to intervene on society so that competitive mechanisms can play a regulatory role at every moment and every point in society and by intervening in this way its objective will become possible, that is to say, a general regulation of society by the market. (*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 145)

One such intervention in literature is the figure of the author as an owner of a textual property, as an appropriation of the public domain. In other words, no matter what aesthetic strategies operate within the text to undermine the individual producer, or the authenticity of the individual producer, no matter how s/he distances the self from the relations of production that authorize her or his name as a cultural signifier, the name functions as the owner of a literary commodity which is comprised of the specific words in the novel. It is at this point that the Pynchon name and the aesthetic that I associate with that name, cuts across its merely fictional or cultural field into the legal institution of copyright. Not only does a text like *Mason & Dixon* incorporate other texts (for instance Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon's *Journal*) without citation—thus engaging in a form of plagiarism—he also allows his own name and works associated with that name (for example, the Corey performance) to circulate without recourse to juridical mechanisms that would prevent their circulation throughout the field. It is, I argue, Pynchon's anonymity that authorizes the pirated circulation of his name and so his name needs to be read against the legal

function of the name as “one which impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition of fiction” (Foucault, “What Is an Author?”, 119). This lack of intervention, however, should not be thought as a general precept his name is not completely open for appropriation. By looking at three specific examples of Pynchon's interaction (or lack of interaction) with the juridical aspect of the commodity status of his texts I will show how his name functions to authorize, not a total cultural appropriation, but a collective form of literary production that both undermines and is not accounted for within the legal confines of copyright. The three examples are: (i) the appearance of private letters to this former agent in the public realm; (ii) the claim that Pynchon authored the *Letters of Wanda Tinasky*; and (iii) the circulation of pirated versions of his early short stories and essays.

Unlike Salinger, there are no legal texts of Pynchon's literary property.<sup>64</sup> The closest Pynchon has come to the court room is the Pierpont Morgan Library purchase of 120 of his letters to his former agent, Candida Donadio. The story goes back to 1984, when Donadio sold her collection of the letters to the art collector Carter Burden for \$45,000 (Gussow, “Pynchon's Letters Nudge His Mask”). The deal was brokered through agent Ralph Sipper of Joseph the Provider Books in Santa Barbara. At \$45,000, the letters were reportedly the most expensive in Burden's substantial collection, which also included letters from Salinger. When Burden died in 1998, his family donated the collection of letters to the Pierpont Morgan Library, which was prepared to open them to public access. Mel Gussow reported in March of 1998 that “By fall, those letters should be available to scholars” (Gussow, “Pynchon's Letters Nudge His Mask”). In

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<sup>64</sup> The deal was brokered through agent Ralph Sipper of Joseph the Provider Books in Santa Barbara. Steven Weisenberger relates how he approached Melanie Jackson about publishing a letter of Thomas Pynchon's that he found in a 1959 grant application: “Melanie Jackson, on behalf of TRP, absolutely ruled that out. Next, working with the folks at *American Literature*, including law professors at Duke, we finally worked out with her (and TRP) a detailed compromise, according to which I be able to summarize the letter and even to quote some of it, but only within the fair use provisions” (Weisenberger).

fact, Gussow provides quotes from the letters in the *New York Times*.<sup>65</sup> Just over two weeks later, however, representatives from Pierpont Morgan reverse their position and claim that the letters would remain outside the public domain. Through his copyright lawyer, Jeremy Nussbaum, Pynchon claims to have an “acute concern that Ms. Donadio sold the letters” (Gussow, “The Morgan Curtails Access to a Trove of Pynchon Letters”). The two parties (the library and Pynchon) brokered a deal whereby the letters would not be open to the public during Pynchon’s lifetime. This deal was apparently partially in league with the Burden family request that because of Pynchon’s concerns for his privacy the correspondence not be made public, and Pierpont agreed. The situation returns to earlier debates over access to documents and who owns them.<sup>66</sup> The decision to keep them outside the public domain, to restrict even viewing access, seems, at a first glance, out of line with the arguments I’ve made in regard to the way a Pynchon textual aesthetic functions. I say at first glance because what clearly enters the debate at this point is the public domain as one that includes published texts. The private correspondence, while it might be interesting and even valuable in re-constructing and setting the individual context of a work, is marked in this instance by the Pynchon apparatus as private. What remains significant in the dispute over whether or not, in contradistinction to Salinger, non-printed Pynchon materials constitute part of the public domain is how Pynchon manages to exert a cultural influence over his image in order to keep the letters out of the public—and not in perpetuity or even to the exhaustion of his hold over copyright, but limited to his lifetime—rather than resort to legal arguments about their commercial value.<sup>67</sup> The parties, in their resolution address the importance

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<sup>65</sup> Among the quoted material are the following: upon hearing of a *Playboy* article in which H. Allen Smith humourously suggests that he is both Salinger and Pynchon, Pynchon responds “What no one knows is that Smith is actually Pierre Salinger, and I am H. Allen Smith”; in response to a yet to be published article in Book World, it “will be riddled with the same lies, calumnies and all-around knavish disregard for my privacy”; “As for spilling my life story, I try to do that all the time. Nobody ever wants to listen, for some strange reason” (all quotes appears in Gussow, “Pynchon’s Letters Nudge His Mask”).

<sup>66</sup> The debate stretches back to *Pope v. Cull* (1741), but has more contemporary articulations in *Harper v. the Nation* and *Salinger v. Random House* as I’ve shown in Chapter Two.

<sup>67</sup> The correspondence, which spans the early part of Pynchon’s career (1963-1982), is estimated to be worth between \$8 and \$10 million (Gussow, “The Morgan Curtails Access”).

of the letters as “source material” for future scholars (Gussow, “The Morgan Curtails Access”). In this sense, the materials are not permanently out of the public domain and the recognition of their value stems from the fact that they function as material for further production rather than individually owned property.

Another example of the way Pynchon's name brushes up against the juridical apparatus centers around the published claim that he is the actual author of a series of letters signed “Wanda Tinasky.”<sup>68</sup> Between 1983 and 1988 a steady stream of letters to the editor appeared in a small independent newspaper out of Mendocino County in Northern California, called *Anderson Valley Advertiser*. They were signed by a “Wanda Tinasky,” a woman who “claimed to be a Mendocino bag lady” (TR Factor, “Wanda’s Story,” 6). Through a strange, (dare I say Pynchonesque?) coincidence the editor of the paper, Bruce Anderson began to circulate the idea that Wanda Tinasky was a pseudonym for Thomas Pynchon. At the time, the two names were being connected as one and the same because of a similarity in style, politics, and because Pynchon had reputedly lived in the Northern California area in the lead up to his writing of *Vineland*. *Vineland*, published in 1990, has as its major setting a small logging town in the 1980s where ex-hippies take refuge, a replica of the Mendocino area. In addition, the letters stop appearing in the late eighties, leading Anderson, among others to speculate “that Pynchon dashed off the Tinasky letters as a warm-up exercise for a day's work on *Vineland* [...] or as a letting-off-of-steam at the end of a good day's work” (Anderson xiv). In 1995, Fred Gardner, doing some research and looking into the possibility of publishing a “best of APA” encounters the Tinasky letters as something of an anomaly and resurrects the Pynchon-Tinasky idea, eventually settling on the idea of publishing the letters separate as though they were Pynchon's. After conducting numerous interviews, Gardner contacted Pynchon's agent (and also wife), Melanie Jackson, about the

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<sup>68</sup> While this is perhaps the most public claim of Pynchon's authorship, or rather the appropriation of his name, it is neither singular event, nor the only form of its appropriation. The Italian author Marco Colapietro writes under the pseudonym Tommaso Pincio—a variation on Thomas Pynchon. The association is made more explicit when Pincio publishes his first novel *M* as a mirror of the title of Pynchon's first published novel *V*.

impending publication. She responded by letter that the Tinasky letters were “definitely not [Pynchon’s] work. Please be advised that you cannot use his name in association with your project, or circulate, publish, or distribute it in connection with his name. There is no mystery—he did not write a word of it” (qtd. in McLemee).<sup>69</sup>

This denial causes Gardner to step away from the project, but it continued its life through the collaborative work of Bruce Anderson and TR Factor (a pseudonym for Diane Kearney) and eventually led to the publication of *The Letters of Wanda Tinasky*. This book, however, is more than merely a publication in book form of Tinasky’s letters. The foreward, introduction, and preface of the book are entirely geared towards establishing the link between Pynchon and Tinasky within the legal limits of asserting a truth that Pynchon (through his representatives) denies. The book never provides definitive proof, and suggests at best “Whether or not Wanda Tinasky is writer Thomas Pynchon, and it would spoil the game to know, I hope Tom Pynchon, the reader, enjoys this book” (TR Factor, “Preface,” xviii). In addition, the references on the back cover point to the possibility which is given credence by the authority of a Pynchon scholar and senior editor (credentials included) Steven Moore who claims “if it ain’t Pynchon, it’s someone who has him down cold: his inimitable literary style, his deep but lightly worn erudition, his countercultural roots, his leftist/populist politics, his brand of wit and humor, his encyclopedic range of reference, his street smarts and raffish charm, his immersion in pop culture and sports, and his hatred of all agents of repression” (Moore ix). Moore’s assertion that if the letters are not authored by Pynchon, then someone has done a masterful job of impersonating him (without using his name) is interesting in that it suggests that the Pynchon voice—or the authentic style associated with Pynchon—is not even an aspect of the work’s property, as it could be used in an entirely different context and could be appropriated by anyone using another name. Pynchon’s

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<sup>69</sup> The back cover, however, covers its legal ass with the statement “Mr. Pynchon isn’t talking and his agent/wife says he wasn’t Wanda” (*The Letters of Wanda Tinasky*). The denial becomes part of the book’s marketing, the controversy being its main selling feature. But further it uses Jackson’s denial of Pynchon’s authorship as a means to insinuate a rift between the real Pynchon (perhaps on display in *The Letters*) and the institutional apparatus that guards and shapes his authorial image.

attempt to distance himself, or his name, from the work again has the opposite effect of drawing his name and his anonymity into the public realm. In so doing it exposes the way his anonymity opens itself out towards its collective construction against other narratives of his identity.

The appropriation of Pynchon's name and of his unpublished letters are not the only form of theft made possible by Pynchon's anonymity. Indeed, most of the stories compiled in *Slow Learner* are produced as unauthorized chapbooks in the late 70s and early 80s. More interesting than the mere fact of his work being pirated, however, is the function of these publications and Pynchon's reaction. Starting in 1976 a series of Pynchon short stories were reprinted in the United Kingdom as separate chapbooks. They are alleged to be unauthorized, or pirated editions, copies that were first published in small American journals in the 50s and 60s mostly before Pynchon gained notoriety as a writer/author.<sup>70</sup> Every one of the new publications acknowledges the author and the original publication. *Mortality and Mercy in Vienna*, *Low-Lands*, *The Secret Integration*, and *The Small Rain* were all published by Aloes Books and the 1983 publication of *Journey into the Mind of Watts* was published by Mouldwarp. I have not been able to uncover anything about the nature of Mouldwarp in terms of their publishing, but Aloes Books can be read in the larger context of the British small press and avant-garde conceptual art. In fact, Allen Fisher states that the press was conceived as a project "to use offset-litho to publish known authors, the sales of which would be a subsidy for unknown authors" (Fisher 7). In addition to Pynchon stories, they also used Burroughs and Acker collections.<sup>71</sup> Fisher, along with Dick Miller and Jim Pennington, who together comprised Aloes Books, sought to shift away from a view of the book or small magazine as an object, seeing it instead as part of a process. They wanted to experiment with the book form and raise "a conceptually important issue, which has to do with understanding the best state or condition in which to experience some written work" (Fisher 8). There is a corollary issue

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<sup>70</sup> There are, to my knowledge, no published accounts of these pirated editions, but an inquiry to the Pynchon-l discussion board drew a consensus that they were pirated. The claim is somewhat problematic as I will show.

<sup>71</sup> This choice of authors to re-print is significant in that they all engage in forms of plagiarism as an aesthetic practice.

of literary property that Fisher, in his retrospect, doesn't address, but which goes to the heart of the movements that emerge in their further work.<sup>72</sup> For instance, the *Mortality and Mercy in Vienna* front cover has a picture of a man walking on the street with a newspaper deliberately covering his face as though someone were in the midst of photographing him and he did not want his picture taken. The cover photo, which appears directly under the name "thomas pynchon," insinuates that the photo is that of the reclusive author. The interior cover, or what would normally be the title page, is a torn and copied version of the title page for a separate text. The name of that text is blocked from view by the superimposition of the new title, *mortality and mercy in vienna* and the name "thomas pynchon." All the publication details, including the title of the story and Pynchon's name are covered by what appears to be black felt pen, suggesting that these too are not proper to the text.<sup>73</sup> The cover page, then, is a palimpsest that allows just a bit of the other work to appear from underneath the Pynchon attribution. The inside text, that is to say, the story reproduces that which was first published in *Epoch* and subsequently in the book collection *Stories from Epoch* edited by Baxter Hathaway. The Aloes' reprint acknowledges its original publication on the final page where it states "First published by EPOCH in Spring 1959 Vol IX No. 4." The Aloes version, however, makes no mention of permission to reprint. In contrast, the Hathaway edition thanks "Russell and Volkening, Inc, for permission to reprint [...] 'Mortality and Mercy in Vienna' by Thomas Pynchon" (Hathaway viii). Russell and Volkening, Inc. was the agency that Candida Donadio—Pynchon's literary agent at the time—worked for. Significantly, Pynchon does not include this story in the *Slow Learner* collection. In part this omission appears to be because he did not own the copyright. The Aloes version has no such scruples and disseminates the text regardless.

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<sup>72</sup> Fisher follows up his work with Aloes Books by creating Spanner which begins to take on a Fluxus agenda. Stewart Home, explains that Fluxus as an artistic movement linked to Lettrisme in that it was "launched as an assault on all the separate categories of art, with the intention of fusing them into a single practice" (Home, *The Assault on Culture*, 56).

<sup>73</sup> The only readable bit besides the title and author are the words "connect" and in quotation marks "griff."

The *Low-Lands* edition states that it is reprinted by permission of Candido Donadio & Associates, Inc., and reproduces Thomas Pynchon's copyright, suggesting that there is shared control or ownership in the literary property. The *Journey into the Mind of Watts* edition contains, on the final page, a "justification," which suggests a justification of the pirated edition. This is clearly not the case, in fact, the "justification" doesn't even seem to be a justification of anything. Beginning from an apparent etymology of "pynchon" it descends through some suggestive language "Ecilop tales of Nipmetight remembered by the honest pirate," but with no narrative thread, it is hard to think of it as either entirely coded or gibberish. The point is that each of these editions, while acknowledging their original source, is apparently a pirated edition and thus should have provoked some reaction from Pynchon. Nothing. No statement from the lawyer, the agent, or Pynchon himself. And it is this absence that allows the (pirated) works themselves to stand in for the author as an authorization of their reprinting. In 1984, however, Pynchon publishes *Slow Learner*, a collection of all the pirated stories in addition to the Introduction and "Entropy" and excluding "Mortality and Mercy in Vienna." The back cover of my 1998 reprinting of *Slow Learner* proclaims "The one and *only* collection of short fiction by the author of the bestselling *Mason & Dixon*." The "*only*" is italicized in the original. The contention here would be that rather than embroil himself in a legal battle about the ability of Aloes Books to reprint Pynchon's works, Pynchon puts the market to work by collecting all the stories and providing that first all important authentic voice as a way to detract from sales of the smaller publisher. This would be to attribute a sort of vindictive nature to Pynchon, suggesting that he can't stand even the slightest infraction of his "rights" as an author. On the contrary, I want to suggest that Pynchon's publication strives for a different market altogether and so it shouldn't be thought of as competition for the Aloes reprints. In other words, here we have a portrait of an authorial Pynchon that, far from the anti-commercial one which is championed by factions within the literary establishment (particularly its academic wing), is intimately engaged with the nuances

of market forces and development, but not to the exclusion of allowing for his works to circulate as materials for further artistic and literary production.

## Conclusion

Ultimately, my claim about Pynchon's authorship roots itself in the idea that the self-reflexivity of Pynchon's aesthetic cannot be read outside the material relations of publication. This does not mean, however, that the relations of publication function as a structure that contains the iteration of Pynchon's text. Nor am I saying that the specificity, the concrete material of Pynchon's aesthetic (his narratives) confronts and transforms the capitalist structure that governs the relations of production as a totality or a grand narrative. On the contrary, his authorial anonymity opens itself, as a site, to various appropriations, but the absence of any authentic Pynchon prevents any of these appropriations from becoming dominant. It is, however, this openness that resonates as a dissidence when taken as a practice of authorship within an economic-juridical order that maintains the dominance of the individual owner of literary property. Not only do Pynchon's novels incorporate other texts as a formal aspect of their own construction, but, I argue, this collective form of literary production extends to the way his own name is a source of contestation by both artistic and commercial factions of the literary field. The self-reflexive anonymity with which the Pynchon name constructs itself, however, refuses to position itself, and it is this refusal that makes it a site of struggle to appropriate or create meaning from the work. While "Pynchon" is active in this struggle, his activism extends only to dissembling the ability to give a stamp of authority to any appropriations. That being said, what is most characteristic, then, about Pynchon's authorship is not this or that intent behind the production of his anonymity, but the actual practice of anonymity in its self-reflexive vein, as a practice that produces dissident effects far beyond the range of the individual author.

## **Chapter 5: All Things are Common: Wu Ming and the Construction of a Public Sphere**

*LB is not a group or a movement but a collective pop star.  
All the activists have the same name.*  
---**Luther Blissett, “The XYZ of Net Activism”**

Darko Maver was a Serbian artist whose gruesome displays of bloody, distorted and war-torn cadavers were exhibited in abandoned buildings and hotel rooms throughout the former Yugoslavia in 1998 and 1999 before entering Italian and Serbian art galleries from 1998 to 2000. He was locked in a Kosovo prison for disseminating anti-patriotic propaganda and a “Free Art Campaign” of hundreds of Italian artists petitioned for his release. When he died during a NATO bombing, the art community addressed the loss by including in the 48<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennal “a comprehensive retrospective [...] mounted by Rome's Forte Prenestino, complete with biographical films and theatrical tributes” (Veen). In February 2000 Eva and Franco Mattes aka 0100101110101101.org revealed that they, as part of the Luther Blissett Project, had, in fact, created Maver as a hoax. There was no person “Darko Maver,” his works were “images downloaded from the Internet” and published on a series of websites dedicated to Maver (Quaranta 16). There was neither person nor work, and yet Maver had both an identity and an archive of works. His “existence” was very real in the sense that Darko Maver *was* the work, and even further, this work functioned as the basis for a narrative of dissent within a dominant artistic practice.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to the citations in my text my brief summary of the Darko Maver story is cobbled together from the following sources: Antonio Caronia's “Darko Maver Doesn't Exist: Prank of Art, Art of Prank”; “Darko Maver: Art, Death and Mythmaking” by Joline Blais and Jon Ippolito.

In 1994, the Luther Blissett Project was conceived as a multi-source name by a group of mainly Italian artists, activists and pranksters as a five year experiment “to author a variety of public interventions” (Deseriis 130). The name Luther Blissett was adopted as a moniker, or open source name through which to “author” several actions meant to expose the media's indebtedness to narrative fictions in their representations of authenticity.<sup>2</sup> The openness of the name is an aspect of the textual practice that winds its way through the multiple works associated with that name.<sup>3</sup> At the end of the five year project, the group's initiators performed a ritual seppuku and moved on to other projects.<sup>4</sup> Among these follow up projects are the Darko Maver revelation and the unveiling of Eva and Franco Mattes aka 0100101110101101.org and, more importantly for

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<sup>2</sup> One of the first media pranks that Luther Blissett set in motion was the disappearance of Harry Kipper, “a non-existent British conceptual artist allegedly touring Europe on a bike and linking several cities through an imaginary line, tracing the word 'Art'” (Deseriis 130). Blissett brought Kipper's disappearance to the attention of an Italian television program dedicated to finding missing persons, *Chi l'ha visto?*, where the show's producers followed the trail to Britain. In Britain they were put in conversation with, among others, Stewart Home who posed as a close friend. Eventually Luther Blissett revealed the hoax, but the point that I want to make is that it was not simply Blissett that perpetrated the situation, but that the situation gained a life of its own.

<sup>3</sup> While the artistic use of the name gives it its openness, the name itself has a ground in a real person. Luther Blissett is a Jamaican Brit who played several seasons in the British premier football league, including a stint with England in the World Cup where he famously scored a hat trick in his first game. He spent a disappointing season with A.C. Milan before being sold back to Watford. The reason behind adopting this particular name remains unknown. Blissett's works, in this sense, move beyond the traditional domain of literature. In fact, Blissett is most associated with media pranks which expose the discursive circulation of stories that have no grounding in fact. The adoption of the name “Luther Blissett” is an extension of this practice.

<sup>4</sup> This suicide, however, has not been the end of Luther Blissett. Just prior to the much anticipated publication of the final Harry Potter novel, a group using the name “Luther Blissett” claimed to have hacked through the British publisher and sent out spoilers. The story was repeated in major media such as CNN, NBC, and BBC but was entirely a fabrication. The subsequent revelation of the distribution of false information was not widely reported. For the text of the revelation and its accompanying statement see Luther Blissett “Full Disclosure.” Domenico Quaranta reports that Eva and Franco's new identity 0100101110101101.org “was taking life from a rib of Luther Blissett” (15).

this chapter, the establishment of Wu Ming, who emerged from the most widely disseminated Luther Blissett act—the 1999 publication of the novel *Q*.<sup>5</sup>

Wu Ming's use of anonymity is distinguishable from writers like Thomas Pynchon both because the name is a pseudonym and because they openly acknowledge this fact. Ultimately, however, their anonymity performs a similar function when it comes to the role of authorship in an information economy. Another obvious difference is their admitted collectivity. As a basic starting point, their texts are the product of a social activity that cannot be reduced to the individual creation of a solitary individual, thus preventing their authorial construction from being wrapped in a romantic garb. Yet another notable difference is that their anonymity is invoked not so much within a discourse of personal privacy, but rather, a means to foreground the constructedness of authorship and its relation to the productive forces of capitalism. Even though they do not go on television and do not circulate photographic images of themselves, they travel, promote their work (including discussions about their work, their intentions, aesthetics and politics) and engage with the public in a way that makes this engagement an extension of their work. In particular, it is this extension, this gesture towards what lies beyond the work that prevents it from being enclosed in its own insularity. Their use of anonymity is less a “death of the author” than a *textualization of the author* that implicates both their own authorship and texts

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<sup>5</sup> *Q* was written collaboratively by four authors, and in 2000 they added another member and became Wu Ming. Not only do the writers grouped under the name “Wu Ming” use this name, but they produce separate texts using a generic variation of the “Wu Ming” name. The line-up is: Roberto Bui aka Wu Ming 1, Giovanni Cattabriga aka Wu Ming 2, Luca Di Meo aka Wu Ming 3, Federico Guglielmi aka Wu Ming 4, and Riccardo Pedrini aka Wu Ming 5. Together they have produced three novels (*54, Manituana* and *Atlai*), the first two of which have been translated into English and the third spent significant time on the bestseller list in Italy in the Fall of 2009. In addition they have written numerous short stories, essays, collaborative works and individual novels. The Wu Ming collective, or “band” as they refer to themselves, is more narrowly focused on narrative than its Luther Blissett predecessor, but they display an equal determination to construct myths while articulating a dissident politics (Wu Ming, “Stories are Not All Equal,” 251). I will use the names Luther Blissett and Wu Ming somewhat interchangeably because there is a certain point when I am referring to the writers of *Q* and the writers of the Wu Ming texts. I will endeavour to make it clear when my use of the name is specific to either one or the other. This distinction is, of course, important because there are palpable differences between the appearance of the names. Wu Ming is not an open source name. There is a defined group of people who employ this authorial name, while Luther Blissett was adopted by multiple individuals. The differing effects of their appearance will be further elucidated later in this chapter when I focus more specifically on the construction of authorship.

as commodities in a capitalist economic-juridical order. I argue in this chapter that the works created under the name Luther Blissett/Wu Ming are collective products—not only because they are produced by several individuals collectively—but because they root their material (language, narrative) in other texts and this intertextuality is reflected in the construction of an anonymity that refers to multiple people, texts, and social movements simultaneously so that, like the texts they produce, the name is an open text, a node in a network from which a new beginning (an alternate spatial construction) arises. Luther Blissett/Wu Ming's practice of self-reflexive anonymity enacts a form of dissident cultural production at the economic-juridical level as a means to wage guerilla warfare against the forces of capitalist production in a post-industrial economy.

### **A Novel Ending**

In order to engage in this network of production, this work which extends beyond the boundaries of the book, I need to make some almost arbitrary decisions to limit the scope of this chapter. It should be understood that these limitations will not so much present a complete object related to the name Luther Blissett/Wu Ming (because after all their “work” can only be conceived as something “in process”) so much as to capture the way their production, in its institutionalized formations, appears only to elude those formations. The first of these decisions is to confine myself to the novel *Q* as an example of the textual aesthetic at play within their fiction. I do this most specifically because the latter half of the novel uses the circulation of material texts as a part of its content and within this context addresses questions of anonymity, counterfeit and trade.

*Q* is the story of a social struggle, spanning a nearly forty year period in sixteenth century Europe, to create an autonomous space where resources would be held in common and re-

distributed on an equal basis.<sup>6</sup> The story is told by a narrator who adopts multiple names throughout the course of his adventures and battles.<sup>7</sup> Disillusioned by Martin Luther's affiliation with Frederick the Great, the narrator turns to Thomas Müntzer as an uncompromising revolutionary "who inflamed the people and started riots with the mere force of his words" (Blissett, *Q*, 49). He follows Müntzer throughout Germany, organizing cities and peasants alike under the slogan: "*Omnia sunt communia*"<sup>8</sup> (13). Part One—"The Coiner"—opens with Müntzer's capture at Frankenhausen in the Peasant War and winds its way back through the narrator's memories in hiding during the time period from 1519-1525, returning to the destructive plains of Frankenhausen during the Peasant War.<sup>9</sup> The narrator survives the subsequent persecution, in part by hiding and in part by adopting different names along the way, and continues the struggle by joining ranks with the anabaptist prophets who occupied the city of

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<sup>6</sup> The historical setting of the novel begins in Germany with the dawn of the Protestant Revolution and moves more specifically into an account of the Peasant Revolt in Germany and its suppression. It further chronicles various Anabaptist uprisings, including the takeover of Münster, and the violence with which they were countered.

<sup>7</sup> The narrator remains nameless for the first part of the novel. Although he has adopted the name Gustav Metzger in 1525, this is not mentioned in the novel until part two. Throughout the course of the novel the narrator has no less than ten names: Gustav Metzger, Lucas Niemanson, Thomas Puel, Lienhard Jost, Gerrit Boekbinder or Gert from the Well, Lot, Hans Grüeb, Ludwig Schaliedecker, Titian and at the end of the narrative he is referred to as Ishmael-the-Traveller-of-the-World. Many of these names are adopted from real people in the novel including Niemanson, Jost, Boekbinder and Schaliedecker. Then, of course, there is Ishmael, taken from *Moby Dick* and Metzger who is an avant-garde artist and political activist involved in the Art Strike movements and auto-destructive art movements of the 1960s. As a coincidental aside, Metzger is also the name of the lawyer who helps Oedipa Maas execute Pierce Inverarity's will and with whom she has an affair in Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*.

<sup>8</sup> This phrase is taken from the historical Münster's confession after his capture at Frankenhausen, thus illustrating a variation of the way scattered "other" texts make their way into the Blissett text.

<sup>9</sup> Interspersed through the narration are a series of letters from the Roman Catholic spy known as Q to his boss Gianpietro Carafa. Carafa only appears in the novel through the one way letters from Q. He is, like many of the figures in the novel, a historical character known primarily for his strengthening and reorganization of the Inquisition as well as a brief stint as Pope John Paul IV. The novel ends before he becomes Pope and thus he is largely associated with the Inquisition and the preservation of Papal powers.

Münster for eighteen months between 1534 and 1535 before the occupation imploded in their own fantasies.<sup>10</sup>

While the new print technologies of the sixteenth century make an appearance early in the novel as a means to organize the peasants and as a means to disseminate the Protestant preachings, it isn't until Part Three that the larger function of print text and its relation to capital and dissidence takes a prominent place in the novel. Early on, the narrator, working alongside Thomas Müntzer in preparation for the Peasant Revolt, distributes pamphlets across the countryside. The pamphlets are simplified versions of biblical passages, meant to spread ideas across a largely illiterate population as a means of political education. The narrator explains:

We would be able to distribute them freely as we traveled through the countryside, through villages and the outside of towns [...] We decided to call them *Flugblätter*, 'fly-sheets' or 'flyers,' just because they were small simple sheets that could pass easily from hand to hand, adapted to humble people, in a simple language that many of the peasants understand either by reading them themselves, or by having them read to them out loud. (86)

Print facilitates the transmission of ideas, of information, from which to counter the dominant assertion of the church/state alliance. The work in-itself, however, is a derivation from the "original" biblical text, one which makes its language accessible and is more conducive to understanding a given content. While the endgame of the work is the clear transmission of a content, what the new print technology enables is a formal production that suits its intended audience. And while the content is the endgame, the novel itself focuses on the materiality of their production. The flyers are not objects of beauty, they are not art-works of inherent beauty, but rather tools for the development of a class consciousness. This development is made possible by a shift in the material conditions of textual production. The narrator describes the print shop during the production process:

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<sup>10</sup> This implosion, however, like Müntzer's betrayal earlier, was speeded along by the informer Q. That said the entire portrayal of the anabaptist prophets depicts them as individuals taking on roles, playing the part of prophets and when the roles overtook them, they became power mad and instituted themselves as the ultimate arbiters of authority.

For some time I've been staring at a basket full of strips of paper of various dimensions. I point it out to Hut: "What's that for?"

"Nothing. That's the discards: this press prints four pages on each big sheet. When you cut them, there's always a bit left over."

"Couldn't you cram the character closer together and make the margin small?"

"Yes, but why bother? Isn't all this wasted paper enough for you?"

"Maybe it's a stupid thing to say, but I thought that apart from the Magister's writing, you could get some surplus sheets from each print run, then print our message on them in a few effective and memorable lines, and you could distribute them by hand, travelling around the countryside. We could circulate them via brethren scattered all over the place, we could read everyone." (84)

While the difference between sixteen century print technology and twenty-first century electronic communications technology are certainly large and cannot be effaced, the obvious relations between the possibilities inherent in either media for new textual forms to reach broad audiences are undeniable. The material textual product, the flyers, are discards from the larger more contained works of Münzter, which means that their formal reproduction is a result of the material conditions of publication, both in the sense of maximizing the use of materials and connecting with a mass audience, rather than an aesthetic innovation whose roots are artistic. What is significant about the use of printed texts as a formal innovation for information sharing is that although the techniques are developed through a capitalist market and they adopt capitalist tactics of maximizing efficiency and mass distribution, the works themselves are not for profit and they advocate for a collective ownership of resources.

The disastrous defeat at Frankenhausen leads the narrator to two conclusions: (i) the military force of the feudal lords cannot be underestimated, and (ii) information is a major component in developing strategy. While the new print technology plays a role in the Peasant Revolt, I should be clear that Münzter (and the narrator) are never concerned with a purely intellectual or theoretical revolution. The narrator, in fact, abandons Wittenburg because he saw both a lack of material practice and the alignment of the theoretical leaders of the Protestant revolution with the feudal lords, particularly Frederick the Great, as a threat to creation of a

communal society.<sup>11</sup> Müntzer points out that the force behind authority is not words, but military capacity. When the narrator informs him of Karlstadt's expulsion from Wittenburg he replies: "Who did he think he was dealing with? Behind Brother Martin you've got Frederick [...] He thought he was going to carry out his reformation in the Elector's house! By the leave of Friar Untruth himself. In a menagerie of aldermen and little scholars who think the fates of men depend on their little inkpots. . . Their pens won't write the reforms we're waiting for" (53-54). What the novel develops at this point is a clear distinction between theory and practice, with Müntzer and his allies landing squarely on the practice side of the equation. While downplayed in favour of the material conditions of his organizing efforts, Müntzer's delusional belief that the peasants are a chosen people shouldn't be overlooked.<sup>12</sup> Müntzer's demise is attributable to his faith that the revolutionary practice will prevail. In other words, his "practice" lacks a reflexivity that would provide a theoretical understanding of both the weaknesses of his own position and the tactical use of dissimulation that is used against him. Stewart Home argues, in fact, that this idea is central to the novel. The novel replicates, he claims, the dialectical move of its content through

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<sup>11</sup> This alignment reveals the material and political interests at the core of what tends to get transcribed historically as a war of spiritual ideas. Frederic gravitates to Luther as an intellectual force because he recognizes that his own power and territorial domain increases by weakening the ideological underpinning of the Pope's regime. At the same time, Luther benefits from the alignment because Frederick's military and economic power offers him protection from papal authorities. In accepting this protection, however, Luther weds himself to Frederick's authority. Dismayed that since his return from a faked kidnapping, Luther has changed his tone, the narrator says to a fellow student: "Have you heard what that wretch Luther has been saying since he got back?" He nods, lowering his eyes, but I go on. 'He argues that it's the duty of the Christian to give blind obedience to authority, without ever lifting his head'" (51). The link between Luther and Frederick is connected by Carafa's spy, Q, when he writes prior to Luther's return: "I am sure that this Hercules [Luther] will bring down his club upon Karlstadt and on anyone who threatens to obscure his fame, as long as the Elector allows him to do so. Frederick, for his part, knows very well that Luther alone is capable of guiding reforms in the direction most useful to him; they need each other just as the navigator and the oarsman need one another to steer a boat" (46).

<sup>12</sup> On the eve of the battle at Frankenhausen, Müntzer, upon hearing that two teenagers want to join the peasants, claims: "It's all happening as the Scriptures said: Christ is turning the son against his father and telling us to become as little children" (114). He further imparts this divine destiny in his speech at Mühlhausen: "So listen, people of Mühlhausen: the Lord has chosen his own, the elect; if anyone's heart is not filled with the courage of faith, let him not obstruct the way of the plans of God: let him go, now, towards his wretched fate" (115). Müntzer's spiritual beliefs are offset by the material grounding of his comrades, particularly the narrator, Elias, and Ottolie. When confronted about the suicidal nature of their departure for Frankenhausen, the narrator responds: "Madness or not, do you think it's wise to abandon the peasants to their fate? If the cities don't take to the field, it's going to look like betrayal in the eyes of the peasants. And who's to say they're wrong? It'll be the end of the alliance that we've taken so much trouble to build up. If we're defeated, Heinrich, you lot'll be next" (112).

the three part formal structure—rebellion (in Part One), recuperation (in Part Two)—and an “autocritique that leads to further and more effective rebellion” in Part Three (“The Return of Proletarian Post-Modernism”). Home goes so far as to claim that the real content of the novel is “the injunction that proletarian post-modernists must continually reforge the passage between the theory and practice of revolutionary activity” (“The Return of Proletarian Post-Modernism”).

This theoretical link to practice does, however, exist in “The Coiner” section through the figure of Qoèlet. It isn't until almost two years after the Peasant Revolt massacre that the narrator (now operating under the name Gustav Metzger) puts together the link between Müntzer's decision to support the peasants and the reception of a series of three well-informed letters signed by Qoèlet. In Augsburg, two years later, Metzger (now Niemanson) encounters Johanne Denck, a comrade of the Müntzer campaign who is in the process of organizing a synod of Anabaptist leaders, and explains: “Magister Thomas didn't lead us to Frankenhausen to have us massacred: the information he had was incorrect.' I look Denck in the eyes, to make him feel the full weight of my words. 'Someone, someone the Magister trusted, sent him a letter full of false information” (173). What is particularly interesting is that, although a dichotomy is being set up between “true” and “false,” the novel blurs the importance of this distinction as Niemanson rebels against Denck's suggestion that the war of the future will be fought in the field of knowledge or information production at the university. Denck puts a positive spin on the potential for rebellion in Augsburg: “There are enough of us to infiltrate the universities and undermine the friends of Luther and the princes, because it's in the universities, in the towns that minds are trained and ideas are spread” (170). What is striking with this line of thought is its affinities with the contemporary information society, viewing the university as a space of knowledge production and, as a result, a space of resistance. Manuel Castells, in his analysis of what he calls “the network society,” claims that the contemporary economy is an information based one where

informationalism is oriented towards technological development, that is toward the accumulation of knowledge and towards higher levels of complexity in

information processing. While higher levels of knowledge may normally result in higher levels of output per unit of input, it is the pursuit of knowledge and information that characterizes the technological production function under informationalism. (17)

While Castells does not name the university as a site of struggle, it is clear, that as a site of knowledge and information production the university plays a key role in the information economy. Indeed, AlainTouraine, in his early study of “post-industrial society” posits that “information, education, and consumption are more closely bound than ever before to the realm of production” (19). But he is even more specific in his assertion that “the university today is becoming the privileged center of opposition to technocracy and the forces associated with it” (12). Niemanson, however, expresses a (proto) Marxist materialism when he suggests that the production of knowledge, or the circulation of information, cannot be isolated from the social relations of production. He says, instead, “I left Wittenburg because I was fed up with theological disputes and doctors explaining what I was reading to me, while outside Germany was in flames. After all that's happened, I think it's still that way. Your theologians won't be the ones to stop the repression” (Blissett, *Q*, 170). The obvious distinction that Niemanson's refutation draws on is the theory/practice divide and it is precisely along this divide that his future actions should be thought through. Art, in this sense, must be incorporated into a practice, must have a political dimension beyond its representative function. Aesthetics, in order to exceed the bounds of the autonomous work, must connect to the material practices that construct the work and become part of the

political and organizing work that disrupts the material conditions of production under capitalism.<sup>13</sup>

The narrator (at this point named Lot) only becomes involved in counterfeiting with his introduction to Eloi Pruytinck and the ex-Fugger<sup>14</sup> agent Lazarus Tucher and after recounting the story of his involvement in Munster and flight from the anabaptist prophet Jan Mathys' fate. The counterfeiting enterprise relates to writing in two ways. First, the objects of the counterfeit are letters of credit and their ability to reproduce the "original" signature is what authorizes the new product as "authentic." Thus the same technique is involved in reproducing printed works and the symbols of capital. The second point of significance for the relation between counterfeiting and printed texts is that the object of the counterfeit is to attack the source of production, in this case the bankers so that they cannot disseminate capital in a way that finances military acts. What we have is the embryo of a dual pronged strategy of subversion that will find its full articulation in Part Three. Eloi and Tucher recruit Lot to run a counterfeit scheme against the Fuggers that would have them earn up to "three hundred thousand florins in five years" (365). The scheme is based on the notion that the Fuggers make their money by issuing credit in order to keep money circulation, to invest other people's money without getting a run on their own stores, which at any given moment are dispersed throughout the world, backing exploration, trade, war or dynastic enterprises and all the while earning a profit for the Fuggers. The credit system through which the Fuggers profit is based, at its heart, on trust and that trust is guaranteed by a signature and a seal

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<sup>13</sup> There is a sizable portion of the novel that I am glossing over in the interests of time and space. The narrator moves more militantly towards the "practice" side of the equation during the siege and occupation of Münster, but this occupation, ending in a sort of internal implosion (helped along by the Machiavellian machinations of Qoëlet), affords him no more comfort than his battles alongside Müntzer. The whole Münster occupation, though, is filled with people impersonating other characters, taking on roles (pimps becoming prophets) that elevate them, that propel them into positions of power. It is in this sense that by adopting an aesthetic of impersonation in "real" life that aesthetics bleed out beyond the autonomy of the work. It isn't until almost eleven years after his encounter with Denck and three years after the fall of Münster that the narrator is drawn into a new scheme to disrupt the flows and concentration of power, that the dissident politics of the novel emerge.

<sup>14</sup> The Fuggers were prominent European bankers who were part of the patriciate of Augsburg and was a major force behind the Holy Roman Empire, having helped elect Charles V as the Emperor. Anton Fugger with his two brothers directed the company interests and was responsible for expanding trade to South America and setting the future direction of the family fortune.

on their letters of credit. A breach of trust means a rush from investors to get their actual money out of the Fugger coffers, which means a cessation to the Fuggers' profit and a powerful attack on the financing of war and exploitation. The trio develop a plan whereby they insure two ships laden with goods, one of which is "captured" by pirates and for which they claim the insurance money. This money is issued as a Fugger letter of credit, which Lot takes as a fixed sum deposit with its value increasing over a longer period of time so that their actions won't immediately register as an anomaly in the company records. At the same time, Lot (now named Grüeb) continues to trade on the peripheral markets so as to stay out of the main view of the Fuggers. He simultaneously introduces forged letters of credit which they use to buy goods and exchange those goods for money so that they've essentially exchanged paper for money through the replication of a signature and seal that establishes the authority of the Fuggers. When the narrator first sees the forgery he realizes: "The writing is identical, the same words, the same hand. The stamps are the same, even the signature of Anton Fugger is in the same position, the same faint smears of ink on the consonants, where the hand has pressed down more heavily" (364). In this way, provided they keep ahead of the Fugger agents they will be able to perpetrate their theft almost undetected by replicating the Fuggers' signs of value. The theft occurs because of the reproduction of an originality, which calls into question the whole notion of originality.

The scheme, though, is more than a profit making venture. Given the political nature of the narrator's activities and his ignorance about the production and exchange of capital, the adoption of the role of merchant seems odd. The troublesome part is that the line that distinguishes the narrator from a "real" merchant, as opposed to his simulation of a merchant, is obscured. After all, he does own goods, he does sell them and exchange them for other items. He does go through all the motions of transportation and has his name entered into the Fugger record books. What distinguishes him from proto-capitalists like the Fuggers? Eloi draws out the political component and responds to the narrator's unspoken question: "It isn't just a swindle on a magisterial scale" (368). Because the money the Fuggers keep in circulation spreads itself into

every profit making venture, because it fuels war and territorial takeovers, the ability to disrupt the flow of capital means a disruption to the lines of power that form around capital. Eloi further explains:

“[Tucher's] interested in money. And so am I. But if we really do manage to put Fugger's credit in jeopardy, he could be ruined within a few years.

My heart beat hard at the pit of my stomach, my guts turn to jelly: Ferdinand, Charles V, the Pope, the German princes. All tied to the purse strings of Anton the Sly.

I murmur it quietly, as though a vision were revealing itself to me: “And along with them the courts of half of Europe.” (368)

The previous examples at Frankenhausen and Münster are enough to convince the narrator. It is only by using the signs of value within an emerging capitalist economy that a subversion of that power can occur.

The intertwining of economic and political interests is further consolidated by the way in which the Inquisition comes down on the counterfeiters. Rather than be exposed to its investors as unreliable, that is to say, as no longer being able to guarantee the money deposited in the Fugger coffers, the Fuggers set the Inquisition on Eloi and burn him at the stake. Anton Fugger, writing to Carafa, explains why they need the Inquisition to indict Eloi on heresy charges rather than fraud:

It would cause a terrible crisis of trust where we were concerned and in a short time we would risk seeing the creditors withdrawing their money from our coffers. I might add that this would have dreadful consequences for many people, and not only for the Fuggers: the company's interests are closely linked with those of many courts not least that of the Holy See. (389)

Later, in Venice, the narrator (now going by the name Schaliedecker) tells João Miquez: “[the counterfeit] worked until the Inquisition swooped on us. The irony is that we were waiting for the cops and the priests turned up instead” (452). The collusion of capital and the sovereign is what guarantees the system: the state knowing it is financed by capital uses its force to destroy the counterfeiters as a threat to capital and guarantees that their “word” remains trustworthy.

This notion of counterfeiting, however, takes an explicit textual turn in the novel's final part.<sup>15</sup> This third part of the novel, set largely in Venice—a print capital in the sixteenth century European book trade—, revolves around the printing and distribution of an anonymous text—*The Benefit of Christ Crucified*. This text is a historical document originally believed to have been authored by Aonio Paleario in 1544, but later—based mostly on the documents of the Inquisition who banned and then burned the book—attributed to Benedetto Fontanini. In *Q*, the text circulates as an anonymous text whose “unofficial” author is Benedetto, but it is widely reputed to be the work of Reginald Pole—an English cardinal in exile and active member of the *spirituali* faction of Italian priests who wanted to move closer to Protestant ideas—and Marco Antonio Faminio, an Italian poet. Authorship of the book is disseminated across several people so that the effect is its collective construction. The name of the author, at the end of the day, is incidental and serves as a passageway that connects the content of the work with its outsides.<sup>16</sup> The main importance of the book is not its inherent value, but its appearance within a larger power struggle that extends across the European continent and extends into battles between the Turks and the Christians.<sup>17</sup> In fact, what is most striking about the appearance of the book as a printed commodity, in the novel, is that its content is secondary to its ability to circulate within certain populations at certain times. Its mode of circulation through the very routes opened up by capitalist production and the need to reach new markets takes advantage of the capitalist system, rather than attempting to re-create a total system that acts as its counter. In this sense, from a

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<sup>15</sup> There is a link between the reproduction of the signature, letters of credit and capital that connects counterfeiting to print, but up until the prevalence of the book trade in the novel, it remains tenuous.

<sup>16</sup> The multiple names of the narrator function in a similar manner in that each new name taken on by the narrator breeds a new role that the narrator adopts. The personality of the narrator, however, does not succumb to the role constructed by the name rather adapts the name to its new context, such that his own identity is always mixed with the roles he adopts. There is no narrator outside the roles, and at the same time there is no totality that would unify the roles into a single identity without erasing the contradictions between them.

<sup>17</sup> This continental power struggle between the various regimes, the German princes, the Emperor Charles V, the Pope and Suleyman who vie for dominance and control of the European territories is the larger backdrop in which both the novel *Q* and the appearance of *The Benefit of Christ Crucified* within the novel get played out.

theoretical perspective, the practice that the narrator adopts is similar to that advocated by Deleuze and Guattari, when they call for an “acceleration” of capitalism:

which is the revolutionary path? [...] To go still further, that is, in the movement of the market, of decoding and deterritorialization? For perhaps the flows are not yet deterritorialized enough, not decoded enough, from the viewpoint of a theory and a practice of a highly schizophrenic character. Not to withdraw from the process, but to go further, to “accelerate the process,” as Nietzsche put it: in this matter, the truth is that we haven’t seen anything yet. (*Anti-Oedipus*, 239-240)

In this scenario the context gives meaning to the work because it is the capitalist context that opens the distribution networks by which the work circulates and infiltrates the dominant system of exploitation. The work, then, is not an object that stands alone, that in-and-of-itself has a specific value. Its value lies in its extension beyond its boundaries.<sup>18</sup>

*The Benefit of Christ Crucified* is composed of “almost literal translations from Calvin’s *Institutes*” and as such is a derivative work (383). The bookseller Pietro Perna, with whom Schaliedecker does business, further claims the book is “mediocre [...] a watered-down and synthesized version of Calvin’s *Institutes*” (408). Its monetary value, however, exceeds other more scholarly or original or artistic works. Perna tries to make the Balse printers understand its value and take it on as a text to publish. Perna’s argument for its mass scale publication is not solely tied to its potential economic profit, but he does make its capacity to create money a central feature of its value. At the same time, he reads the book as a political tool against the authority of the Inquisition. He urges a mass scale printing that Schaliedecker eventually participates in as an investor and distributor. Perna locates the book politically as a commodity whose market lies at

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<sup>18</sup> By incorporating not so much the reading of a book, but the circulation of the book as an explicit element in their plot, Wu Ming can here be further distinguished from Thomas Pynchon. While Pynchon maps out a collective fiction product, it happens more at the level of meaning by way of formal innovation. In other words, Pynchon deconstructs the “originality” of the very narratives that are incorporated into its own stories to the extent that we must question his “own” originality and thereby move towards an intertextual understanding of aesthetic production. This is, however, an effect of Pynchon’s formal work, and never explicit. Arriving at the material consequences, requires a significant amount of interpretive work. With Wu Ming, the case is different. They by-pass the “meaning” enroute to laying bare the actual material systems through which cultural artifacts circulate in a capitalist system of production and distribution in order to contextualize how the material forces of production—markets, transportation networks, capital—impact the shape of the work and ultimately its meaning.

the crux of the crisis in the Catholic faith, in the struggle between the *spirituali*—cardinals receptive to reformation ideas—and the hardcore Catholics who've been waging war against the Protestants in Germany. *The Benefit of Christ Crucified*, as a repetition of another text and its specific focus on a reformist Italian-Catholic audience, has the power to split the Papal forces and, according to Perna, shift the balance of power to allow for a considerable amount of freedom in terms of the circulation of ideas: “it's better for books to go on circulating freely, without the courts of the Inquisition getting in the way” (411). *The Benefit of Christ Crucified* is quickly communicated by the Holy See which leads to its increased market and value. Perna's plan—backed by Schaliedecker and eventually by the rich, persecuted Jewish merchant, João Miquez—is to print and distribute the book as both a means to earn a living and spread ideas along a wider network in order to counteract increasing papal control. Eventually, they increase their print run and with it expand their distribution and in so doing appropriate the publication of the work, thus taking it out of the hands of its original printers and creators and using it to different purposes.<sup>19</sup> In other words, they appropriate the work as a political tool at the same time as they retain the authority and the rumours of the book's authorship as an element of its value. Schaliedecker has misgivings about disseminating Protestant ideas because he's been at odds with them since his days at Wittenburg University. He says, “I've been fighting Luther and the priests all my life, and now you want me to work for cardinals who are in love with Luther?” to which Perna responds “I'm not asking you to marry the authors of this book, just to help them to make our lives easier, maybe even to save our lives” (411).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> I will argue later that their appropriation and the way they put it to use is an instance of *détournement*.

<sup>20</sup> At this point I should note an important fact which I will take up later in the chapter: the absence of any laws governing the re-printing and circulation of print materials. There is no such thing as copyright or author's rights. The legality of *The Benefit of Christ Crucified* is a censorship issue, which ties into the control of dissenting voices and their inability to reach a public sphere. Bindoni (one of the printers of *The Benefit of Christ Crucified*) and Perna testify to the role the censors play in printing:

“we have to be more cautious now. Since last year the Magistratura degli Esecutori has stopped merely supervising games of chance and blasphemy, and turned its attention to violation of the printing laws.”

Perna is careful to tell me in German, “They're the Venetian censors.” Then, vexed, he looks at Bindoni and takes a sip of wine. “But we've always printed everything here in Venice.”

The text that appears in *Q* is immediately tied into an economic exchange where it accrues value as a commodity. At the same time, this commodity is not an autonomous object, but has roots in other texts. The commodity status of the printed texts in the novel is immediately deterritorialized by their commodification and their appearance functions as an act of *détournement*. Rather than arresting the deterritorialization by establishing an owner of the literary property, this *détournement* pushes the text further, makes it exceed its “original” context and function in ways that are, in fact antithetical to those origins. For example, if Pole and his followers print *The Benefit* for the purpose of undermining and then consolidating a resistance to the Pope, then there is a dual appropriation of this work that is made possible through the networks of capitalist distribution. Perna and Miquez appropriate the book for the creation of capital, but the more crucial appropriation occurs through the narrator's Titian role in which he interprets the book as an articulation of Anabaptist teachings. The narrator, in an attempt to flush out Q, adopts the identity of Titian an Anabaptist preacher who wanders the country extolling the virtues of adult baptism. He hopes the word will cycle back to Q, the master spy, who will recognize the teachings as a threat and seek him out. The point is that while the book circulates as a commodity, this commodity never rests within the hands of a single owner and thus remains part of a public domain. The *détournement* occurs as a result of an acceleration of the capitalist process where, according to Marx and Engels' famous formulation, “All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions

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Bindoni says, “Yes, but now the Council of Ten are more cunning than they were. Before they're printed, all books have to receive the authorisation of the Executors. I have serious doubts that they'd give it to *The Benefit of Christ Crucified*.”

Perna looks up at me to check that I've caught all that, then turns to his two partners. “Is there a problem with printing it clandestinely?”

Bindoni: “No, but we'll need a cover title. If I request authorisation for nine works, there's a good chance that the tenth won't be noticed.” (436)

of life and his relation with his kind" (Marx and Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," 10). The figures within the novel do not shy away from the market, but rather exploit its networks, gaps and fissures in order to reach a broader audience, open new doors and expand the public domain.

*The Benefit of Christ Crucified* is not only of interest to the narrator and his business comrades. Q reports to Carafa in 1545 "The printing and the distribution of *The Benefit of Christ Crucified* are now being revealed in their true light: as part of a well-planned strategy" (413). The strategy to which he refers is that of Reginald Pole's attempt to create a public sympathetic to the reception of Protestant ideas.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, Q recognizes the counter-strategy that is made available by the materiality of the text. In his journal he writes:

It would be better to make a net into which all the cardinals who look favourably upon the reformers will fall, one after another. A book passing from hand to hand, from library to library and contaminating everyone who touches it. And when you haul in the net, you get all the big fish all in one go. It's important to let it go on circulating, even if the council excommunicates it, to allow Pole's friends to read it and to be fascinated by it, just as they are fascinated by that fine English intellect [Reginald Pole]. Meanwhile Carafa works aways, slowly building the machine that will enable him to get them all at a stroke. Yes, that's how My Lord's mind is working. But such a game could get out of hand; it could grow too big even for his ubiquitous mind. (416)

The text "contaminates" by virtue of its circulation like a disease it will mark each of its consumers by its material presence and this mark will enable Carafa's Inquisition to excise the "infection" as an act of healing the social body. There are two strategic operations at work and both of them require a wide ranging circulation of a material commodity.

The emphasis on the material conditions of *The Benefit of Christ Crucified*'s production and circulation, however, is not entirely divorced from its content. If the ideas contained within the book did not resonate with the *spirituali* as consumers, then the whole operation would fail. As a commodity, though, it occupies a space for the struggle between Carafa and the

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<sup>21</sup> Q does not, at this stage, recognize the way that strategy will be appropriated by the narrator, Perna and Miquez so that the book circulates beyond their control and for different purposes.

narrator/Perna/Miquez. This struggle, while it has very real material effects, and is effective or not based on the material conditions of production, simultaneously operates on another level and that is the mediated site of the text. I make this point because as diverse reviewers as Home and David Liss have remarked, the novel is almost an attack on artistic forms. Liss, for example, writes, “*Q* gives the reader the distinct impression of purposefully exposing the clichéd conventions of the historical novel and also throwing them in the reader's face” (“Among the Believers”). He goes on to claim that “*Q*'s postmodern nose-thumbing has nothing terribly original in it. It exposes nothing about the conventions of the novel and storytelling that Laurence Sterne didn't point out when he wrote *Tristam Shandy* in the 1760s, when the English novel as an art form was only a few decades old” (“Among the Believers”). In part the condescending tone is attributable to a dislike of postmodernism, but Liss's characterization misses the point. *Q* tells us nothing about novelistic conventions, that is to say, its self-reflexivity is not internal to its own formal construction—which is not an aspect of the novel's plot in any overt sense. On the contrary, the novel's self-reflexivity is aimed at its position as a commodity within the field of literary production. Home, on the other hand and with a more nuanced appreciation, contextualizes the appearance of the book in the book's relation to art's social function. Despite having described *Q* as an “anti-novel” and as having an “anti-aesthetic architecture” Home hedges on calling the novel an all out critique of fiction: “At first glance it would appear that, like the situationists, Luther Blissett stands within the ranks of those who believe 'art is dead', but there is a radical ambiguity at work here” (“The Return of Proletarian Post-Modernism”). Home does not elaborate on this “ambiguity” and so I want to flesh it out a bit because it bears some importance on the question of the “text” in relation to social relations and deployment of text as a counter-measure against social control. The novel is not “anti-art,” on the contrary, it advocates an artistic deployment of text. In distinguishing himself from writers and printers, Perna says

“I propagate ideas. Mine is the riskiest job in the world, you know? I'm responsible for the distribution of ideas, maybe the most awkward ideas in

existence.” He points toward Opironus’s house. “They write and print, I distribute. They believe that a book has its own value per se, they believe in the beauty of ideas as such” [...] “An idea only has value if it’s spread at the right place and time, my friend.” (Blissett, *Q*, 408)

The artistry or creativity typically (and legally) associated with the “author” as a source is thrown on its head as the distributors take an active role in shaping and creating a market for *The Benefit of Christ Crucified*. In an interview with Robert Baird, Wu Ming claims “some critics narrate that Wu Ming ‘is not art,’ ‘is not even literature’ [...] Whether the stories that Wu Ming sets in motion are or are not Art is not something that influences either the daily work of the collective or the moods of the individual members” (253-254). What is at stake, then, in terms of text in the novel is not the value (whether economic or symbolic), but its deployment throughout the social field. In order to put the text to work, the anonymous characters in the background, the ones responsible for its printing and distribution and to some extent interpretation, do not need to create original works. It is more effective to take what is already part of a cultural field and use it to create new contexts which challenge the current world order.

### **Locating Wu Ming in the Text**

As with much writing, *Q* is not simply a book “about” this content, its content reflects its form in a reciprocal relation. Not only is the novel cobbled together with the trace of other texts, but it deploys those texts in new directions.<sup>22</sup> Its historical setting is written with an eye to verisimilitude, but one which exploits the gaps, the empty spaces of the textual overlay. In and of itself there is nothing “new” about this self-reflexive strategy, it is a core element of Guy DeBord’s notion of detournement and also, as we’ve seen, an integral part of postmodernism.

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<sup>22</sup> Not only is the text necessarily constructed from historical sources because the authors couldn’t possibly have experienced the narrated events, we have the appearance of “real” historical texts like *The Benefit of Christ Crucified* and Müntzer’s character emerges from the substance of his historical speeches. In addition, Home notes traces of situationist texts, Marx and other popular fiction. Wu Ming themselves attribute a structural debt to James Ellroy’s *American Tabloid* (“Interview with Jake Purbright and Randolph Carter”)

What differs is largely the context and the implications of this strategy in the twenty-first century. Home argues that an essential aspect of an entire range of utopian currents after World War II in Europe “aimed at the integration of all human activities” (*Assault on Culture*, 4). In this sense he takes us back to what Bürger refers to as the historical avant-garde which sought to smash the institutional autonomy of art and put it back in the streets, to make art living rather than a museum of objects of passive contemplation cordoned off from the material relations of its production as art. This call is taken up by a variety of post-War groups, perhaps most famously by the Lettristes and the Situationists (in which DeBord played a major role). What happens, though, is a development in two different directions: one towards the abolition of art, and the other towards a focus on art as irreparably reflective of bourgeois society because of its indebtedness to capitalist production and exchange. With Blissett, the situation is slightly different. Without giving up on art or literature as a constructed space of dissidence, they operate within the given terms and forces of capitalist production while attempting to activate collective forms of production. In maintaining the traces of previous avant-garde movements within their own construction, they recognize both the importance of the field of publication and the need to turn it against the commodifying forces of neoliberalism. *Q* is a commodity, and at the end of the day it does not matter whether it is art or literature or a commodity; what matters is that it circulates through the social field, and in order to do this it adopts several almost formulaic approaches to its own construction—the spy novel, the mystery, religious warfare, etc. as plot drivers, as connection points with a mass audience. In other words, the novel exploits capitalist networks of distribution by garbing itself in familiar discourses only to turn on the material condition of their publication. The novel is not an “anti-novel” in the sense that it doesn’t attempt to destroy the novel as a genre; instead, it uses the techniques of Lettristes and Situationists, particularly the reuse of other texts (and discourses) in order to create a new context, something that is relevant to its own historical space and time, a new mode of social interaction. The novel’s self-reflexivity, rather than demystifying capitalist ideology through reversal or irony or even

parody (although these devices are at play), uses narrative as a means to construct a public sphere which acknowledges and invites the participation of a multitude of voices without ever being consumed by single identity. The work is a node in a network, never an end in-itself, but a material, a substance for the creation of other works, for connection and collective production.

The mediated space of the work, not as an autonomous entity, but part of a larger public domain, operates as a site of struggle. This struggle, however, is not confined to the work; it requires an analysis of the material relations of publication and, in particular for Wu Ming, the role that authorship plays in the system of literary property relations. The public domain, then, is not something that exists naturally rather it is constructed, created and its borders must be maintained and defended in order for collective production to expand. Wu Ming's novel deconstructs the relations between its internal aesthetics, which both dissemble the notion of an individual identity and the notion of an autonomous literary work, and the material relations of publication in which those aesthetics find their articulation in order to expand the range of aesthetic practice. In other words, they refuse the distinction between "authentic" and "constructed," viewing, instead, all social relations as constructed. Rather than relegating literary works to a representational plane, their work suggests that representation plays a part in the construction of social and material relations and can be mobilized to construct a dissident space within a neoliberal dominated global field. The space of dissident practice moves beyond the work, which is only valuable when it is deployed as an aesthetic practice rather than a representation. I am not suggesting that Wu Ming are anti-representational; on the contrary, for them, representation should be integrated into life, only not in the form of a consumer product, but as an active practice whose effects operate outside the narrow confines of the work. The space in which their work moves can be equated to a mediated space, one where its textual components are on par with its materiality, thus blurring the distinction. In other words, they operate within

the spectacle. Wu Ming 4 says in relation to DeBord's famous conceptualization of the spectacle<sup>23</sup> that his insight amounts to nothing:

Social relations between humans have been mediated by images since the first *Homo Sapiens* painted hunting scenes on cave walls so that someone else could “read” and tell these stories. And this has not prevented over the course of centuries, people from living their lives with intensity, with love, with hatred, from reproducing, rebelling, engendering ideas, conceptions of the world, philosophies. (Wu Ming 4)<sup>24</sup>

The spectacle, in and of itself is not the problem. The distinction has to do with production and consumption. What Debord points to is a passive consumption, while Wu Ming claims that active intervention, appropriating in order to create new myths within the spectacle, transforms lived life. And here there is a breakdown in the producer/consumer relation so that it is not merely a one-way channel. Deleuze and Guattari write:

everything is production: production of productions, of actions and of passions; productions of recording processes, of distributions and of co-ordinates that serve as point of reference; productions of consumptions, of sensual pleasures, of anxieties, and of pain. Everything is production, since the recording processes are immediately consumed, immediately consummated, and these consumptions directly reproduced. (*Anti-Oedipus* 4)

Wu Ming’s literary production, then, is an opening to a further production, so that its consumption is active in the production process. The openness of their production, however, cycles back against their own production, both of their texts and their authorship as an open source which can be appropriated for further use and in this way enters into the economic-juridical order as a dissident production. Their name, while it appears as a singular entity, in fact, by having multiple entryways, connects not only to the work, but to its positioning within the larger structural dimensions of the book trade and the publishing industry in general.

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<sup>23</sup> Debord's conception is from *Society of the Spectacle*: “The spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images” (4).

<sup>24</sup> This is my translation from the French.

### **On the Front Lines of the Information Society**

The possibility of collapsing art into a field of general or everyday human activity at a material level means that stories are available as part of a collective cultural production. This form of production, based on principles of sharing and even appropriation signifies a dissidence within the economic-juridical order of capitalist production that marks texts as property and authors as owners or regulators of intellectual property. This link between the regime of property and the production and circulation of texts is part of the context into which the Luther Blissett/Wu Ming authorial construction must register, not as something external to the texts produced under this name, but as a constitutive part of this textual production.

Wu Ming point to their anti-romantic stance in an interview with 3:AM magazine where they claim their name “is also a reference to the fact that we refuse the idea of the ‘Author’ as a ‘genius’ or a ‘star’ whom the public contemplates in a passive way” (“Interview with Jake Purbright and Randolph Carter”). The anonymous form of the name cannot be appropriated within the framework of the literary genius and this is a political stance especially in light of the way that Salinger or even Pynchon’s absence gets translated as a mark of a reclusive genius. Unlike the more reclusive authors that I have previously examined, Wu Ming do conduct interviews, write essays on a range of topics, maintain a blog, are on Twitter, and have hosted a website since 2000. In addition, they are open about their political commitments, their aesthetic debts, their intellectual relations and the reasons for the construction of the Wu Ming name. Collaboration is central to the Wu Ming aesthetic, both in terms of their works and their authorship. In this section I will trace the appearance and the function of the authorial names Luther Blissett and Wu Ming as they travel through the different facets of the field of cultural production.

The name Luther Blissett is already more than the author of a work.<sup>25</sup> As an open and multiple name, or as a form of anonymity, it erases any possible reference to a single identity. It is, as proclaimed by the Luther Blissett Manifesto, “a multitude as well as a 'decentralized subject,' a project aimed to what Karl Marx called 'Gemeinwesen'<sup>26</sup> (K. Eliot). Luther Blissett is not merely a creator or the name of multiple creators, but is itself a practice of authorship inseparable from the textual and social engagement of their works. Michel de Certeau points out that underneath the dominant technologies of power there exist “innumerable other practices that remain 'minor,' always there but not organizing discourses and preserving the beginnings or remains of different (institutional, scientific) hypotheses for that society or for others” (48). I should be clear, then, that Luther Blissett is not only an expression of dissidence, but as a practice it critiques the proprietary value of the author and gives rise to an authorial construction which seeks to expand an openness where “works” become shared or collaborative projects. The anonymity of the name and its self-reflexive construction set out to construct this public sphere not by doing away with authorship, but by emptying it of its association with individuality and property.

The practice of open source or multiple names is not original to Luther Blissett. It has its origins in the avant-garde movements of the early twentieth century, but it isn't until the 1970s

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<sup>25</sup> The Luther Blissett Project was not confined to works in the traditional sense of a closed commodity; in fact, relatively few of the actions associated with the name are “works” in the traditional sense. More often they are situational interventions, or outright events that break down the line between art and reality in the sense advocated by the Situationists: “the concrete construction of momentary ambiances of life and their transformation into a superior passionnal quality” ( DeBord, “Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency's Conditions of Organization and Action”).

<sup>26</sup> Gemeinwesen is a term that is frequently deployed by Karl Marx, particularly in the *Grundrisse*. Wu Ming notes that it means “community,” “common essence,” “communal being” (“The Mu particle in ‘Communism’”).

and 1980s that it becomes a conscious practice.<sup>27</sup> Their use in the 1970s and 1980s is explicitly theorized by Home, who claims in specific relation to the multiple name “Karen Eliot”: “Karen Eliot was not born, s/he was materialised from social forces, constructed as a means of entering the shifting terrain that circumscribes the 'individual' and society. The name Karen Eliot can be strategically adopted for a series of actions, interventions, exhibitions, texts, etc.” (“Karen Eliot,” 11). There is no one form to multiple names, but Home states they are “commonly 'invented personal names' which, their proponents claim, anyone can take on as a 'context' or 'identity'” (“Multiple Names,” 52). The notion that multiple names are commonly an invented name introduces a subtle distinction with the actual form of Luther Blissett in that this open source name derives from an actual person, someone who continues to live and in whose name actions, texts, events are created. This difference is significant because not only does the adoption of a pseudonym draw attention to the textual construction of authorship, but it also extends the practice of appropriation. Unlike “Karen Eliot” or even Fernando Pessoa's multiple names which are all, in some sense, “original” in that they have no textual precursors, both Luther Blissett and Wu Ming are taken from textual sources and thus not original to the authorship of certain texts produced under those names. Home's suggestion that the “name” be adopted as a “context” is instructive. As a context the name Luther Blissett is open, it has no fixed boundaries. In this sense, the context (the author) is inseparably linked to the work because it is a textual component

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<sup>27</sup> Marcel Duchamp invented the pseudonym Rrose Sélavy in 1921 as part of a collaboration with Man Ray. The character also appeared in Robert Desnos' writings around the same time. Sélavy is, of course, not a multiple name in the sense of authorship, but the practice of inventing and collaborating around this fictional name is genealogically related to open source names. Fernando Pessoa's heteronyms, where he created numerous personas, each with distinct names, histories and styles, is a modernist example of breaking apart the authority of the single name. I could go back even further to the Peasant Uprisings in Germany where a number of activists used the name Poor Konrad as a collective name in the battle against 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century landowners, as related by Frederick Engels in *The Peasant War in Germany*, see pages 82-93. Again, this practice is not related to art in the strict sense, although the argument could be made that it is a moment when art intervenes in reality. Wu Ming, in fact, make this explicit connection when they write in the lead up to the 2001 G8 Summit at Genoa: “We are Poor Konrad, the peasant of Suabia” (“The Multitudes of Europe Rising Up Against Empire and Marching on Genoa”). Other examples include: “Klaus Oldanburg,” “Monty Cantsin,” “No Cantsin,” “Karen Eliot,” and “Bob Jones.” These examples arise out of artists associated with the Mail Art movement and Neoism. See Stewart Home's “Multiple Names” for more information.

of the work. It does not operate completely outside the work as a source, but is coterminous with its production. It is open in the sense that it is incomplete and always susceptible to re-inscription within other contexts. In short, it functions as a presence.

I know the mere mention of “presence” sends nervous chills through the academy after Derrida, and so I want to explain the subtle variation of my understanding of this concept. Derrida had made it clear that there can be no “pure” presence as a reference to something that exists outside of textual mediation.<sup>28</sup> With this I am in full agreement; where I differ is that we need to abandon the notion of a mediated presence as presence *par excellence*, one which includes multiple contextual interactions without drawing them together as a unified essence. Jean-Luc Nancy argues that presence in and of itself is impossible, that by its nature there can only be co-presence: “[Being] is also always an instance of 'with': singulars singularly together, where the togetherness is neither the sum, nor the incorporation, nor the 'society,' nor the 'community' (where these words only give rise to problems). The togetherness of singulars is singularity 'itself.' It 'assembles' them insofar as it spaces them; they are 'linked' insofar as they are not unified” (33). The point I am making is that the context is inseparable from the work, but that it is not a closed context: the work is transformed by its constant re-inscription, its constant re-working, and re-integration with other texts. The use of an already in-use name highlights the collaborative nature of cultural production by inviting others to use the name, to use the context/text as part of the production process even though it already has someone who is its

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<sup>28</sup> This idea is of course a hallmark of post-structuralism. Suffice it to say that Derrida has coined a number of textual operations to account for mediation and describe textual play in the absence of a transcendental signifier. Terms like supplement and *differance* account for the way in which presence in its “purity” remains out of reach, always covered up/over by an endless chain of signifiers. For the basic thrust of this argument see “Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences.”

“proper” owner, emphasizing an aesthetic that depends less on the myth of originality than on copying, quoting or pirating.<sup>29</sup>

The open access policy, however, is mitigated by the potential for commercial exploitation.<sup>30</sup> Anna Nimus points out that “As a declaration of ‘no rights reserved’ anticopyright was a perfect slogan launched in an imperfect world. The assumption was that others would be using the information in the same spirit of generosity. But corporations learned to exploit the lack of copyright and redistribute works for a profit” (“Copyright, Copyleft and the Creative Anti-Commons”). In 1996, in order to counteract a potential corporate takeover Luther Blissett went on the offensive in order to expose the privatizing function of copyright. They were “speculating upon future corporate endeavours to recuperate Luther Blissett” and “expected greedy business wo/men to impose copyrights and make a lot of money” (“The Nasty Trick”). They pawned off a “fake” text, titled *Net.generation* as an “authentic” Luther Blissett work. The text “whose content was mainly Internet hype and a further banalisation of any old postmodernist bullshit”

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<sup>29</sup> The “real” Luther Blissett appeared on the British television show “Fantasy Footballer” in 2004, shortly after the publication of *Q*. When he proclaimed that his greatest achievement was not only scoring the first goal by a black player for England, but adding two more to complete a hat trick, one of the hosts responds “I don’t know about that” and proceeds to read from *Q*. Blissett clarifies that he is not the author, that “Luther Blissett is an international neo-political movement of anarcho-syndicalists whose whole purpose is the deconstruction of the individual identity as it says in their manifesto...” from which he quotes in Italian “Anyone can be Luther Blissett simply by adopting the name” (“Luther Blissett Fantasy Footballer”). While Blissett’s reading of Luther Blissett (an obviously scripted aspect of the show—embedding the performance within another social network) does not reach the full extent of their “purpose,” it does demonstrate the way in which one enters the Luther Blissett text as a shifting context, as an open space that constructs a public sphere.

<sup>30</sup> George Caffentzis points out that a notion of the commons isn’t necessarily incompatible with capitalist production and that while the destruction of the commons is the moment of Marx’s primitive accumulation which sets the conditions for the exploitation of the working class, more recent analysis has presented a way of incorporating a management of the commons into capitalist production. While, he claims, neoliberal policies are anti-commons, others (he describes the International Association for the Study of Common Property as an exemplary case) attempt to account for a commons which retains a productive relation with capitalism. My analysis of Luther Blissett sets them openly in a position where they “see the struggle for a commons as an important part of a larger rejection of neoliberal globalizing capitalism since it is the commons in the indigenous areas, in the global sense, and in the area of collective intellectual production that is now threatened with enclosure by a capitalism bent on commodifying the planet, its elements, its past and future” (Caffentzis). For more see “A Tale of Two Conferences: Globalization, the Crisis of Neoliberalism and Question of the Commons.”

was picked up by Giuseppe Genna as an editor for Mondadori Editore<sup>31</sup> (“The Nasty Trick”). Just prior to its publication, Luther Blissett sent out a communique decrying the text as one with “paltry contents” that attempted to capitalize on the growing fame of the multiple identity and further as an attempt to copyright Luther Blissett material: “I detest it for the dreary attempt to copyright the name of Luther Blissett, which on the contrary is free, fluctuating, adoptable, adaptable by anybody (even by Genna, but without copyright!) (“Nasty Trick”). The release concludes “Would the book be decent enough I'd advise everybody to photocopy or scan it, to put it on BBSs, to put it in the infoshops as a cheap pirate edition...Unfortunately the book is all crap, it isn't worth bothering with [...] I declare the sacred war against the copyright dogs!” (“Nasty Trick”). The alignment of the multiple name, free circulation and its curtailment by copyright politicizes the name with regard to its economic-juridical function. But the acceptance of the work is also a matter of its acceptance within the field of cultural production and critics picked up on and even quoted from the Blissett communique in a series of negative reviews which even went so far as to mock the publisher. While Luther Blissett concedes “Nobody can calculate how much money our psychic attack cost Mondadori in lost business,” the effect would have been both the material cost of publication and the reputational cost in a market (avant-garde/underground) they were trying to capitalize on (“Nasty Trick”).

The move, however, from media pranks to authorship presents a number of problems which ultimately reveal a shift in tactics. To maintain an open policy towards their works means that Luther Blissett would fall prey to a pirating of their works for commercial purposes. In order to avoid this they institute “an *adaptation* of the copyleft philosophy” (Wu Ming 1). Under the copyright inscription on the Arrow Books translation of *Q* by Shaun Whiteside the text reads: “Partial or total reproduction of this book, in electronic form or otherwise, is consented to for non-commercial purpose, provided that the original copyright notice and this notice are included

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<sup>31</sup> Mondadori is owned by Fininvest, Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's holding company. The chairperson is Marina Berlusconi, Silvio's oldest daughter. In 2008, Mondadori generated revenues totaling €865.1 million and a profit of €66.2 million, making it the largest publishing house in Italy.

and the publisher and source are clearly acknowledged” (*Q*). Copyleft, according to Richard Stallman, “uses copyright law, but flips it over to serve the opposite of its usual purpose: instead of a means for restricting a program, it becomes a means for keeping the program free” (“The GNU Project,”). The sense with which Stallman deploys “freedom,” however, is related to the free circulation of information by whatever means and so any restrictions would be an impediment to that freedom. Anna Nimus points out that in this circumstance “To be free means to be open to commercial appropriation, since freedom is defined as the nonrestrictive circulation of information rather than as freedom from exploitation” (“Copyright, Copyleft and the Creative Anti-Commons”). Wu Ming 1 justifies this variation of the copyleft principles by politicizing authorship: “This protection is absolutely necessary to prohibit any exploitation or parasitic use of our work. The struggle against exploitation, the fight for a fair remuneration of labour, is the cornerstone of the history of the Left, the trade unions and social emancipation” (Wu Ming 1). The distinction between commercial and non-commercial purposes is a difficult one to make. Given that virtually all cultural production occurs within an economic order of capitalism, then how would it be possible to delineate between a productive use of their works that had commercial value and that which is cultural? After all, if all texts are made from other texts, then why should Wu Ming stake a claim to the particularity of their own text? When asked: “If, let's say, Dan Brown's hot new book contained vast chunks of your latest novel, *Manituana*, that would be okay?” Wu Ming is able to elaborate on the guiding ethic of the practice. They claim

If that happened, we'd sue Brown's ass off, and give a good chunk of the money to good causes around the world [...] If you wanna make money off our work, you have to get in touch with us and negotiate the thing so we have a share of the revenues. In that way, a film producer is not allowed to make a film out of one of our books without paying us. In that way, no-one can lock them up, no-one can turn our output into their property, they can't put a copyright on the book [...] Our output is free for the people, free for those who don't have money to buy the books, and costly for the cultural industry or anyone who's in bad faith. (“The Art of Prank”)

The distinction between copyleft and copyright turns on the relation between producers and consumers. Whereas copyright is established in the interests of producers protecting their works as property, copyleft seeks to incorporate an interplay between consumers and producers as partners in the production process. Nimus points out:

The public domain, anticopyright and copyleft are all attempts to create a commons, a shared space of non-ownership that is free for everyone to use [...] Creative Commons is really an anti-commons that peddles a capitalist logic of privatization under a deliberately misleading name. Its purpose is to help the owners of intellectual property catch up with the fast pace of information exchange, not by freeing information, but by providing more sophisticated definitions for various shades of ownership and producer-control. (“Copyright, Copyleft and the Creative Anti-Commons”)

Luther Blisset and subsequently Wu Ming's shift to literature ushers in a new mode of cultural production that seeks to protect itself from exploitation, but which continues to function as an open access public space.

The transformation to the name Wu Ming also enacts a shift to a more concentrated focus on narrative. Wu Ming 5 relates in an interview:

Wu Ming's field of interests, its “social reason,” has to do with narration in a broad sense, in a socio-anthropological sense, if you like. The writers who work within the collective perform the function of constructing stories, indicating ways of escape, underlining sensitive nodes and eminent points. Literature is the privileged form that the collective has chosen to disseminate stories with the infosphere, but it is certainly not the only one. (“Stories are Not All Equal” 252)

What can't be separated is Wu Ming's focus on narration and the construction of their authorial name. Stewart Home argues that “More than any other art form [...] the novel is tied to the rise of the bourgeois subject” (“The Return of the Proletarian Postmodernism”). Wu Ming purports to see in narration the founding of new myths, of a mythopoesis from which our own generation can begin to tell itself stories of the future, to deal with the immensity of the past and not get bogged down, but to face the future with authority. It is impossible to do this from a position of individuality, and so from the outset their program is social and this social element, this collaboration begins at the level of the author. I believe, however, that their anonymity also plays

another function, to actively draw attention to the way the author closes off a common property.

The name itself assumes a political dimension by virtue of the fact that it refuses to posit an identity, a personality standing behind it as an authority. The name “Wu Ming” draws attention to its own multiplicity as a practice. The authors explain in an interview with Robert Baird:

Our name means “Anonymous” in Chinese, although we are not anonymous ourselves. Our names aren't secret, indeed, “Wu Ming” may also mean “Five names” if you alter the way the first syllable is pronounced. [...] The name of the band is meant both as a tribute to dissidents (“Wu Ming” is a common byline among Chinese citizens demanding democracy and freedom of speech) and as a refusal of the celebrity-making, glamorizing machine that turns authors into stars. “Wu Ming” is also a reference to the third sentence in the Tao Te Ching: “Wu ming tian di zhi shi,” “Nameless is Heaven's and Earth's Origin.” (“Stories are Not All Equal,” 250)

This practice of anonymity, in conjunction with the textual *détournement* of their fiction, makes the material function of authorship, that is to say, its position as a figure through which commodities are controlled and owned by private individual interests, or rather kept from the public sphere, a political component of its construction. In other words, you can't think this construction outside its relation to the legal figure of the author. And in this sense their anonymity needs to be read, not in its aesthetic field but as a vehicle for the creation of another form of cultural production, one that expands the bounds of the commons, that recognizes, that values the way texts work to inform, to create other texts. This is a whole other way of understanding cultural production and while some claim that it is the “natural” way of cultural production, I think we need to remain focused on the fact that any construction is, in fact, construction and arises because the material conditions of possibility create the space that would allow for this form of production. I am linking, as does Blissett in *Q*, common ownership of resources with common ownership of cultural products.

An example of this expansive project is the text *The Ballad of Corazza*. The text arose out of a call to “write a story in ten parts that would refer to a series of frescos in [Trent's] Torre Aquile” (Laddaga 459). Following an open-source model, Wu Ming 2 explains “The idea was to

write a story, make it available on a site, ask anybody to read it and suggest comments, possible rewritings, different endings, changes in dialogues. Anyone could create her own version of the story and send it to us somehow. Our job would be to collect all the proposals, contribute more convincing changes, and produce our 'official' version of the story" (qtd in Laddaga 458). The project goes further in that it ended up on a Wiki site "enabling it to be changed unpredictably by visitors" (459). The effect is a collective creation of a text that has its own life, that is not only a story, but a story that anyone can pick up alter, re-create, use as the basis for their own stories.

### **Conclusion**

*Q* addresses, both at the level of its content and form, the way in which literary production is always already a collective product, that is to say, how it incorporates other texts as the materials of its own text. The novel makes this link more explicit than the Pynchon text by involving the circulation of text as an element of its own content. But what is more interesting is that it does not do so by placing itself outside the context of capitalist production. On the contrary, it is only from within this very practice that its dissidence becomes visible. The exploitation of the figures of the author and the networks of distribution within the novel point to the ways that dissident texts continued to be captured within capitalist production as commodities, and at the same time, as they point to the way out of this system. There is no pure way out, no authentic reproduction that undermines the complex relation between textual production and the material relations of publication under capitalism. In this sense, while their works appear anti-representational it is only in the sense that they function as material interventions in the economic-juridical order. In other words, the function of their works is not confined to an aesthetic, it is precisely the aesthetic of the work that emerges as a material practice. This practice takes its most explicit shape in their own figuration of the self-reflexive anonymous author which extends the aesthetic of their works into the actual relations of their authorial name in the economic order. And while we saw with

Thomas Pynchon that the collective production of the name was largely an effect of his anonymity, that it wasn't so much an intent, but something that arose as a result of his own textual construction of authorship, with Wu Ming the situation is more explicit. In fact, for them print, narrative and cultural production are not ends in themselves, but only pieces, means towards the creation of a public domain from which cultural production can reach its most participatory forms by providing a space for people to connect with other people and thus expand the common resources through which we can articulate a transformative vision of society and put that vision into practice. My contention, then, is that their authorial construction, in conjunction with the textual aesthetic of their works, breaks down the distinction between theory and practice and helps to re-conceptualize the public domain in a way counters capitalist production.

## **CONCLUSION: CREATING THE COMMONS**

At the core of this dissertation lies the complex question of the relationship between textual aesthetics and politics in literary works. While the simplest way to understand the politics of a literary work is at the level of its content, or its ideas, this does not sufficiently define, for literary critics, the domain of the literary (or more broadly, artistic) element of the work. In fact, to engage with a literary work simply through its ideas neglects the formal elements that give rise to the very distinction “literary” and subsumes the entire discipline within another discipline, say philosophy, history or political science, which operate within very different terms and discourses. The work’s politics, in this sense, must be understood as an aspect, but not the core of the work itself. For instance, a novel can be put in dialogue with a philosophical text or an economic text or a sociological text in terms of its ideas. If we were to do so the line of inquiry that would emerge would relate to whether the given novel, say John Dos Passos’ *42<sup>nd</sup> Parallel*, is similar or different to ideas within a given philosophical or economic text, say Marx’s *Capital*. What such an analysis omits are the specifically literary qualities of the novel. What is it that makes such a text literary? Without getting into the specifics of genre theory, we can say briefly that the text’s form, or mode expression of its ideas or content, is what sustains a difference among texts. It is, in fact, towards form or aesthetic theory that literary studies gravitates particularly starting in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

This shift away from content of a particular literary work, towards its formal construction or from its meaning towards its organizational structure, inauguates a specifically literary analysis. In the process, however, the object of literary studies—the work—appears as an autonomous entity abstracted from its position within the public sphere of ideas. In other words the work—as a unified object characterized by its formal structure—can be viewed through its

own internal mechanisms outside of any relation to the social relations of material production. It is this isolation that Peter Bürger argues is the situation which gives rise to the historical avant-garde of the early twentieth century. Aesthetics becomes institutionalized by the bourgeois art world as an attempt to account for formal beauty as the central determinant of the value of a literary work.

Various critical, literary and aesthetic theories have attempted to counteract the tendency towards isolation and autonomy of the literary work. From Adorno's claims that the relations of production are reflected and refracted in the formal construction of the work so that the aesthetic relations of production function as a site of resistance, to the postmodern or post-structuralist claims that the work itself is the material through which struggle is waged, the common thread is the attempt to make the work relevant to the material and social conditions of its appearance as text. In short, how does the immateriality of the work—its ideas—operate in a transformative rather than representative fashion? Postmodernists in particular come to view the work as more than a mere reflection of social relations. They claim that the work also performs a linguistic act, that it is constitutive. And while this methodological shift ushers in an engagement with the work's position within a discursive economy, it never reaches beyond discourse to address the material relations of production in which discourse itself appears. The assumption that lies at the heart of such thinking is that dominant or ideological discourses can be reversed, transformed or challenged through the construction of a counter-discourse. In short, it neglects the relations of material production in which its own discourse is formed. It retains, I argue implicitly in this dissertation, a relationality, but only with other texts. There is nothing that crosses the barrier between aesthetics and materiality.

While this isolation or autonomy is certainly true of modernism, in particular the New Criticism, Formalism and even Structuralism, it is no less true of postmodern attempts to highlight the intertextuality of the work as a means to undermine dominant discourse—largely seen as the political wing of postmodern literary production. While prior strains of modernist

thought (new criticism, formalism, and structuralism) attempted to isolate the work, define its own internal functioning as a literary work and then demonstrate how this form reflects larger social concerns, the relationship between aesthetics and materiality remains reflective. The work can have no direct intervention in the material relations of production except through the production of ideas which operate on a representational plane. The intervention takes place at a discursive level, which means that if the aesthetic dimension of the work intercedes within the realm of ideas, then ideas have a sort of power over the material relations of production.

What I've attempted to demonstrate is that literary works are immediately part of an economic system of production and exchange through the material relations of publication. Publication, as the industry that regulates the exchange or the market of ideas, impacts the production, circulation and appearance of texts. While there is certainly nothing extravagant or even new in this claim, its centrality in a neoliberal information economy requires a closer examination of the relations between aesthetics, politics and the economic-juridical order. While the book trade, since the early copyright debates in both Britain and the United States, has become more or less stabilized, since the nineteen seventies a shift towards the expansion of individual property rights over intellectual products has transformed the nature of the trade. This shift, or transformation, which sees both an expansion of time limits under which works are protected by copyright and an expansion in terms of the nature of what can be copyrighted, coincides with a shift towards neoliberal economic practices. In order to address the simultaneous nature of this shift, the book trade needs to be thought through the practices of publication and the various ways in which this trade has been transformed, both by the forces of production (new technologies) and the new social relations (intense privatizing of the public domain). In short, we are in the midst of what James Boyle, among others, calls a "second

enclosure movement.<sup>32</sup> While historically ideas are understood as immaterial, print culture history reveals the way in which the manifestation of those ideas is entirely wrapped up in their materiality. And that materiality largely operates through the practices of the book trade, which, since its rise in the early eighteenth century to the contemporary moment is inseparable from capitalist production.

There is a vast scholarship about the historical emergence of copyright as a legislative tool to control the flow of printed texts. This scholarship suggests that both the intertwining of the new market forces of capitalism and the construction of the public sphere are essential elements that give rise to the need for copyright protection. The foundational struggles and responses to the crisis in textual circulation from the late sixteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century in the United States suggest that copyright is a compromise between two distinct conceptions of “public” and “private.” On the one hand, texts as the labour of individual authors appear as the property of individual owners. On the other hand, printed texts as the medium through which ideas circulate are also an integral part of the public sphere. If texts are property like any other property, then their private and individual ownership necessarily limits public access and thus acts against the public good. At the same time, without some guarantee to profit, at the very least on a subsistence basis, authors’ ability to create texts would be severely impinged. Thus the first copyright laws seek to combine both of these values through a compromise. While recognizing the publicity of print, British jurors assert that printed texts are the property of individual owners for a delineated amount of time (14 years plus an option to extend another 14 if the author is still living), but after that point the work returns to the common stock of cultural production from which it originates. In the United States, the debate operates a little differently in that jurors in the *Wheaton v. Peters* decision determine that the author forfeits their proprietary right at the moment

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<sup>32</sup> For more on the “second enclosure” see James Boyle “The Second Enclosure Movement and the Construction of the Public Domain”; Hannibal Travis “Pirates of the Information Infrastructure”; and Jeremy Rifkin *The Age of Access*.

of print because they equate print with the public sphere. What was at stake, and what continues to set the conditions under which copyright is operationalized are competing conceptions of who controls or manages the public sphere.

While in Chapter One I set out some of the context of these historical debates, this work has been expounded by others and better than I am able in the context of this dissertation. It is important, however, for my work for two reasons: it asserts the role of material relations of publication in constructing the figure of the author and it provides a backdrop for understanding the current moment where the introduction of new publication technologies facilitates unprecedented public access to textual materials. In other words, as we move forward in the twenty-first century, the line between the consumer and producer of texts fails to maintain its strict divisions. Consumers' consumption is also part of the production process. They are able to put texts to work in their own productions. This deconstruction, which re-conceptualizes the notion of the public sphere and makes access to the public domain a central question in knowledge production, questions the conditions under which copyright functions. Essentially, the underlying reasons for the emergence of copyright have not gone away, but what differs are the social conditions in which it operates.

If the material conditions of publication have given rise to the very notion of the author as a property owner, then this has been accompanied within literary studies by a corollary understanding of the author as a single inviolable source of production. Largely this account of the author originates from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century but persists into the twenty-first century (at least in the popular mind, if not from an academic and legal standpoint). What I accounted for in Chapter One is the way that this conception of the "expressive" or "romantic" author arises at the very moment when the author becomes the owner of the work in an economic-juridical order of market capitalism which began to take on a dominant role in social production. Even though romantic authorship was initially formulated as a way to elude the

encroachment of the market on literary works, it ends up replicating a capitalist discourse in order to protect its financial viability in the face of cheap copies, distortion, and theft. Literary theft was pitched as a theft of identity because works were seen as the material manifestation of an original source, the individual. The identification of the author as a sovereign individual, an autonomous agent out of which the work arises, develops in conjunction with the material understanding of the author's relation to the work as a property. The "author" as a figure, however, in the twentieth century comes under attack through a number of aesthetic turns including modernism, formalism and perhaps most ardently post-structuralism and postmodernism. Aesthetic accounts of authorship do not address the material conditions of publication that entrench the notion of the author as an owner of literary property and implicate authorship with a form of capitalist production that effaces a dissident practice of collective cultural production. In other words, regardless of whether or not textual aesthetics foreground their intertextuality or diminish originality central to the romantic conception of the work and the author, the author continues to operate within the economic-juridical order of capitalism as the owner of literary property and regulator of the trade.

While it is true that the development of copyright is simultaneous with competing conceptions of the public sphere and the dominance of a market economy for printed materials, the conditions of capitalism in the contemporary world are not the same as they were during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. At the core of this dissertation is a competing notion of the commons. My attempt has been to address how "authors" address the problematic conception of the privatizing function of copyright both in their own aesthetic production and then by turning these aesthetics back on their own authorship. We have further focused our attention on what I've termed a "self-reflexive anonymous author" because this figure, in refusing to posit itself as a single individual, becomes a textualization of the author in the sense that it recognizes and privileges its own construction within a larger field of literary production. In other words, the

aesthetics embedded in both the works and the construction of authorship are immediately political by addressing the economic relations of production for literary works. At the same time, this textual engagement of economic production is part of an active practice that politicizes the collective nature of its own production thereby opening the door to an understanding of copyright as a tool of enclosure.

In other words, I am attempting to address, through the narrow focus on literary (and mostly print) authorship how competing practices of cultural production find their way, not only into the market, but into the structure of neoliberal practice. The turn to the prevalence of an information economy, has witnessed the intensification of copyright restrictions since they are the guarantee of property. The notion of the public is precisely what is at stake in the increased copyright protections. Major struggles over the public domain are fought at the level of corporate control over stories, textbooks, new products that fall under the guise of intellectual properties. But by looking specifically at literary production we can see how other competing discourses around public property, public access to information and printed materials can be shaped rather than reverting to the market (and the legal interventions that hold open a specific kind of “open” market of competition) as the sole guarantor of the public domain. In fact, the public domain is under attack and with the limitation of the public domain comes a limited capacity for people to come together collectively and create their own material conditions.

At the same time, we are witnessing, indeed, we are participating in a re-booted conception of a market economy where structures that traditionally operate outside market forces are being eroded through the reallocation public resources in private hands. The expansion of copyright perpetuates this form of production at the level of cultural production, which means that increasingly cultural production reflects the dominant neoliberal ideology. The practice of self-reflexive anonymous authorship is an attempt to counteract this tendency at the level of cultural production, but its implications move beyond a mere aesthetic perspective of the work.

What I've tried to identify is not another grand narrative that accounts for a different form of cultural production, but rather how this collective form of cultural production, one that views texts as a source of further production, operates within the conditions of neoliberalism. How it operates already and how it is potentially coopted by the productive forces of capitalism. The central, if buried, tension of this dissertation resides between a "commons" and the appropriation of the commons by private capital. But in my argument, the commons is not a prior stock from which to draw, it is not a limited resource which dwindles with every use. On the contrary, I see it as a source which is replenished with each use so that each use of cultural commodities goes back into the stock, it is a re-investment of the cultural capital in order to create a further and expanding sense of the commons from which all may draw in order to expand and create a greater sense of participatory structures. My immediate argument is limited in this sense to cultural and more specifically literary production, but in its fuller articulation it would expand out to a collectivity from which participation is the cornerstone of production. Barring access either by restricting the means of production, or access to the commodities which make that participation possible is precisely what neoliberalism perpetuates. And thus, at the heart of this dissertation I attempt, through specific readings of literary texts and the construction of their authorship, to show how this commons is already on the map, and how it is the conception of production, both at a literary/cultural level and a material level that needs to be re-thought and re-articulated in practice in order to develop a more participatory economy.

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