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# LEWIS HYDE'S DOUBLE ECONOMY

Since its original publication in 1983, LEWIS HYDE'S *The Gift* has accumulated some impressive blurbs.<sup>1</sup> On the cover of the 2007 edition, DAVID FOSTER WALLACE avers, "No one who is invested in any kind of art . . . can read *The Gift* and remain unchanged." JONATHAN LETHEM agrees: "Few books are such life-changers as *The Gift*: epiphany, in sculpted prose." ZADIE SMITH regards Hyde's life-changing, epiphany-dealing book as "[a] manifesto of sorts for anyone who makes art [and] cares for it." And MARGARET ATWOOD regards *The Gift* as "[t]he best book I know of for talented but unacknowledged creators." It is nothing less than "[a] masterpiece." It's easy to discount these endorsements. Book jackets are so frequently little more than heaps of breathless exaltation that one might regard such praise with understandable skepticism. Yet Hyde's blurbs invite closer consideration for two reasons. First, the caliber of the writers who endorse the book is surprising. The cover of *The Gift* is almost heavy with

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symbolic capital, featuring fulsome recommendations from many major Anglophone authors. At the very least, studying these endorsements might teach us something about contemporary literature as a social field, illuminating networks of artistic affinity, helping us deduce

*how Hyde's argument that art is a gift affects the self-understanding of fiction writers and poets.*

Moreover, our suspicion that every blurb conceals a hidden motive or serves some transactional purpose might itself be taken as a manifestation of the condition that Hyde's book opposes, since the book addresses itself to the problem of whether it is possible to freely give gifts under unrestrained capitalism. *The Gift* argues for the ongoing possibility of gift-giving, which supposedly also shows that art is still possible (since what distinguishes art from non-art is that art is a gift). To dismiss *The Gift's* cover endorsements would be, in some sense, to preemptively reject the book's argument. It is not hard to imagine that for a writer such as Wallace, who argued that clichés might be true (but in being clichés might be impossible to accept) and who sought to overcome the aporias he thought hobbled postmodern writers, a blurb promising that *The Gift* would change the reader's life could serve as a moral litmus test of readers themselves.

In other words, the problem of the sincerity of the blurb (the question of whether giving a sincere blurb is possible) can be taken to be a manifestation of the more general problem of the gift. As Jacques Derrida famously argues in *Given Time*, the gift is impossible, or rather the gift is a figure for "the impossible." Appealing to "our common language and logic," Derrida begins with the "simplest" definition of the gift: "For there to be a gift, there must be no reciprocity, return, exchange, countergift, or debt."<sup>2</sup> Given this definition, Derrida tries to demonstrate that "*the gift as gift ought not appear as gift: either to the donee or to the donor*. It cannot be gift as gift except by not being present as gift."<sup>3</sup> This impossibility is not a consequence of protocol, decorum, or psychology. Every specific gift, every idea of the gift, withdraws into an exchange relationship as soon as it is conceived of or recognized or treated as a gift. The gift can only ever appear—if it can appear—as an impossibility. This is why a gift would have to be "that which does not obey the principle of reason" or even "practical reason."<sup>4</sup> It is a "stranger to morality, to the will, perhaps to freedom" and "*should surpass duty itself*."<sup>5</sup> As Martin Hägglund clarifies, "a pure gift is not impossible because it is contaminated by our selfish intentions or by the constraints of economic exchange; it is impossible because a gift *must* be contaminated in order to be a gift."<sup>6</sup> Indeed, "the very desire for a gift is a desire for contamination."<sup>7</sup> Derrida isn't saying that the gift is located only *outside* exchange relations but that the

concept of the gift can never be separated from circulation and exchange. The conditions of the gift's possibility (or impossibility), as Derrida outlines it, would therefore exceed any particular political economic, anthropological, historical, or philosophical circumstance.

Derrida's demonstration, as Hägglund puts it, that "the gift *even in its ideal purity* must be contaminated" is, for this reason, not a particularly satisfying analysis of empirical gift economies.<sup>8</sup> Derrida's account evinces what Pierre Bourdieu has described as the "intellectualist error" of treating "two agents involved in the gift as calculators who assign themselves the subjective project of doing what they are objectively doing."<sup>9</sup> Like structuralist anthropologists before him, Derrida would allegedly be hypostatizing the scientific discourses developed to account for lived practices. That is, one can only call the gift impossible—or claim that Marcel Mauss's *The Gift* "speaks of everything but the gift"—by the light of an economic standard, a prior stringent division between gift and exchange, that Derrida makes rigorous (and thereby deconstructs).<sup>10</sup> Derrida's "intellectualist error" allegedly thereby evades the historical actuality of the "generous disposition" that Bourdieu outlines (where *generous* names the institutionally conditioned *habitus* of specific economies). What Bourdieu does not quite say, though he implies it, is that Derrida's argument makes use of the very "calculating disposition" that characterizes modern "equivalent-exchange" economies.<sup>11</sup> Whether or not we find this claim convincing, I have rehearsed Bourdieu's critique not to dismiss Derrida's account as mere scholasticism, as Bourdieu does, but to contrast deconstruction's account of the gift with Hyde's. The present essay subsumes both Hyde and Derrida into a larger, sociologically informed literary history of recent gift discourses.

In pursuit of this project, we might consider what it would mean to say, as Jeffrey T. Nealon does in his recent discussion of "post-postmodernism," that deconstruction is not a "method" but rather a "situation."<sup>12</sup> One thing it might mean, I would argue, is that the impossibility of the gift, the gift's necessary contamination, would be what "is the case" only under specific historical political economic and conceptual conditions.<sup>13</sup> Derrida's faithful "destruction of the gift by the gift," his commitment to "give economy its chance," isn't merely one among many views but, for some aspiring post-postmodern writers, a view whose aporetic *habitus* actively forestalls the possibility of the gift.<sup>14</sup> Derrida's investigation would therefore both participate in and become the subject of a

general cultural debate (undertaken by artists, critics, and theorists alike) that seeks to analyze the gift in the waning days of the Cold War, after capitalism's apparent global triumph. In light of this triumph, the question of deciding whether the gift (and thereby art) is necessarily contaminated by exchange takes on a sharp political valence.

We can observe the core difference between Derrida's and Hyde's approaches to the gift in a footnote in *Given Time* where Derrida directly discusses *The Gift*. Derrida observes an apparent contradiction in Hyde's book. The gift is supposed to be "unconditional," Hyde is said to claim, but Hyde's account is also "explicitly limited to gifts among close friends, relatives, and most often close relatives" and so what Hyde calls a gift is "not what it is or claims to be: unconditional."<sup>15</sup> But Hyde's gift is only not what it claims to be if one stipulates that the gift's claim to unconditionality is absolute: the gift is in fact precisely (often explicitly) constituted through the demarcation of different economic zones dominated by different practices, protocols, and norms. The "unconditional" would not therefore name Hyde's requirement for the gift to be a gift but rather would be a name for dominant economic practices within the magic circle of the gift.<sup>16</sup> The difference is subtle but important: where Derrida says that the gift is necessarily contaminated by the non-gift, Hyde hopes to show that although the gift's unconditionality is necessarily circumscribed, the gift can nonetheless be distinguished from the commodity. That is, Hyde wants to disclose the conditions of possibility of the gift's relative unconditionality.

In developing his account of how commodified art can nonetheless remain a gift (and thereby be distinguished from non-art), Hyde engages the rich tradition of writing about the gift that followed Marcel Mauss's *The Gift* (1924), but he uses Mauss's essay to his own ends. The magic circle of Hyde's gift gets drawn not between social groups or geographic territories but, as I will show, within the individual person. Mauss's essay arguably lends itself to such appropriation (or misappropriation), because the gift economy can seem, at different moments in Mauss's study, to be one (or all) of three things: an historical origin of all human economy (a "total system" whose totality capitalism tears apart); a system that endures, albeit in a constrained form, under capitalism; and a set of alternative political economic institutions we might build in some more generous future. For his part, Hyde does not offer a political economic vision for a future gift economy; he instead seeks to articulate the conditions of compatibility of capi-

talism and the gift economy for the individual artist. He defends the claim that the gift might endure—even thrive—despite the ubiquity of the calculating disposition that dominates contemporary life. Indeed, Hyde figures his own book on the gift *as a gift*, as “an embodiment of the problem it addresses,” a living proof of the possibility that gifts might exist in the present (xi).

The stakes of Hyde’s demonstration that art is possible—and the stakes of the contemporary discourse of the gift in general—have two dimensions I will explore here. The first concerns working artists and writers. If you are a literary writer who has been told that the gift is necessarily contaminated by exchange relations (and, correspondingly, that pure literature is impossible), but you also suspect that such an argument could become an alibi for the spread of cynical reason, you might be tremendously interested in Hyde’s self-referential solution. Indeed, Hyde’s analysis of the gift might be especially appealing if you were worried about what David Foster Wallace described as “Analysis Paralysis” or what (in her essay “David Foster Wallace’s Difficult Gifts”) Zadie Smith calls the “four interlocking revolutions” that promulgate “too much awareness—particularly self-awareness.”<sup>17</sup> These four revolutions are, by Smith’s account, “the ubiquity of television, the voraciousness of late capitalism, the triumph of therapeutic discourse, and philosophy’s demotion to a branch of linguistics.”<sup>18</sup> For Smith, the rise of theory, no less than late capitalism itself, conditions a cynical disposition of postmodern self-awareness that undermines the possibility of genuine art (where art is understood as a gift). It should now be clearer why Hyde has found an enthusiastic audience among contemporary authors who have hoped to overcome what they see as the debilitating legacy of postmodernism. Hyde seems to offer a literary resolution of Derrida’s aporia—or, more specifically, a literary means of arresting the calculating disposition associated with postmodern thought. *The Gift* promises a way forward for the contemporary author who, crippled by “too much awareness,” fears that commodification might now be an inescapable condition.

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For Hyde and his post-postmodern confederates, the question of whether art is a commodity or a gift turns out to be intimately linked to the conditions under which writers work. The second set of stakes therefore concerns “creative class” workers more generally.<sup>19</sup> I would argue that Hyde’s account of the gift participates in the idealizing discourses of the “artist-author” whose recent history Sarah Brouillette has compellingly described in *Literature and the Creative Economy*.<sup>20</sup> The artist-author, by her account, has become the “profitable, pervasive, regulated symbol of autonomy from routine, standardized mechanized production.”<sup>21</sup> Both neoliberal thought-leaders such as Richard Florida and Autonomist post-Marxists, she argues, have constructed an ahistorical, solipsistic model of the artist-author as self-satisfied, creative, intrinsically motivated worker. This figure, stripped of history, becomes either an idealized general model of the liberated creative worker in the neoliberal present or a figural preview of some future autonomous, enlightened worker. However, though they valorize human creativity, the entwined traditions Brouillette analyzes can be vague about the specific characteristics of the artist-author’s (and by extension the general creative worker’s) powers. Hyde’s book creates a vivid portrait of the artist that is specific and that invites generalization: he tells us, on the one hand, *what* creative work is supposed to be in the present and, on the other hand, *how* the creative worker might thrive without compromising her creativity. Hyde’s account of creativity, I will show, offers a palliative for the contemporary author or creative worker, an imaginative renegotiation of her relationship to the actual conditions of her labor.

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Whether or not his account is plausible, the fantasy Hyde constructs has real consequences for how artistic and creative work more generally is undertaken today. I will illustrate these consequences by showing how Zadie Smith engages

with Hyde's ideas in her understudied novel *The Autograph Man* (2002). Smith develops Hyde's ideas, suggesting that if the gift can also be a commodity, then art's gift might thrive within what is commonly taken to be the most commercialized, vapid zone of our cultural life: celebrity culture. Moreover, the artist in Smith's novel becomes not only a model for the liberated creative class worker but is herself changed in return, taking on the characteristics of a personified capitalist firm charged with rationally managing her gifts (that is, her human capital). This is the model of the contemporary artist, I will show, that informs the practices of the Creative Capital Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization Hyde helped found in 1999, whose gift-economy rhetoric resembles the gift rhetoric of the nonprofit sphere more generally.

## I

Lewis Hyde wrote *The Gift* as a way of attempting to account for his experience of poetry. As a young man, he had translated Vicente Aleixandre's poems into English and studied under John Berryman as an undergraduate at the University of Minnesota. Before the publication of *The Gift*, Hyde was best known for a 1975 essay, first published in *The American Poetry Review*, called "John Berryman and the Booze Talking," an essay that attempted to understand the relationship between alcohol addiction and creativity. In this essay, Hyde sets up an opposition that will be important in *The Gift*, a contrast between the *spiritus* of art and technological modernity, suggesting that in "a technological civilization one is deprived of authentic expressions of creative energy."<sup>22</sup> As he does in *The Gift*, he looks to non-western societies that he imagines were "rich in spiritual life and healing power" to derive his definition of true creativity.<sup>23</sup> Modernity obliterates creativity, though organizations such as Alcoholics Anonymous offer a solution to this spiritual crisis, by helping the alcoholic confront his powerlessness: "The paradox is that the admission of powerlessness does not lead to slavery or obliteration, but the opposite. It leads to reevaluation of personal power which is human, bounded and authentic."<sup>24</sup> In writing *The Gift*, Hyde continued exploring the possibilities for creative flourishing within "technological civilization," hoping to account for "the disconnect between art and the common forms of earning a living."<sup>25</sup> In the preface to the 2007 edition, Hyde makes the stakes of his analysis explicit. With the end of the Cold War, "market triumphalism" and the "conversion into private property of the art and ideas that earlier generations thought belonged to their cultural commons" have



threatened to eradicate art's survival "beyond the reach of the market."<sup>26</sup> Hyde means to oppose this triumphalism.

Hyde's project is both descriptive and prescriptive. On the one hand, he argues for the historical reality of art's status as a gift, drawing on a tradition of anthropological writing on gift economies by Mauss, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Marshall Sahlins, Franz Boas, and Bronislaw Malinowski, among others. On the other hand, Hyde defends art's status as a gift against competing normative accounts of the status of the work of art. The dual force of Hyde's argument is apparent in statements such as this:

It is the assumption of this book that a work of art is a gift, not a commodity. Or, to state the modern case with more precision, that works of art exist simultaneously in two "economies," a market economy and a gift economy. Only one of these is essential, however: a work of art can survive without the market, but where there is no gift there is no art.<sup>27</sup>

In the transition from his first to second sentence, in Hyde's self-correction, there is an unexplained reconciliation between art and the market, an elided step in his reasoning. Art and the market are ultimately, Hyde promises, compatible. Because it makes this promise of compatibility, we might consider Hyde's work to be an example of what Rachel Greenwald Smith has called "compromise aesthetics," a critical tendency that celebrates art that "forages compromises between strategies traditionally associated with the mainstream on the one hand and those associated with experimental departures from the mainstream on the other."<sup>28</sup> Such compromises are about much more than which form the working artist should adopt or be celebrated for adopting: they also signal the artist's and the critic's orientation toward art's circulation on the market. The rise of compromise aesthetics should therefore, Smith argues, be understood as "symptomatic of the cultural entrenchment of neoliberalism."<sup>29</sup> Though Hyde later claims that his argument might help oppose end-of-history triumphalism, his compromise might instead be taken as something like a final settlement between the gift and the commodity, between artistic value and market value.

Hyde's terms of settlement have two dimensions: one governing the gift-art-work's "inner life," another governing its "outer life."<sup>30</sup> In the first place, Hyde declares the gift to be a special kind of object, one that contains "the spirit of the artist's gift."<sup>31</sup> To clarify the nature of true art, and invoking gendered distinc-

tions familiar from the history of modernism's (and bohemia's) troubled claim to autonomy, Hyde offers an image of the non-gift, the negative figure of "romantic novels written according to a formula developed through market research," organized by an "advertising agency" that "polled a group of women readers."<sup>32</sup> Thus the art-gift must take forms and contents chosen by art's producer, not by its consumers or merchants. In addition, Hyde links the producer's independence to a sort of formlessness of the work itself. Hyde's own book, which is "hard to summarize" in the "ten-second description" that "[b]ook salesmen ply," is meant to be an example of the textual form of the gift.<sup>33</sup> Against the predictable preferences of "women readers," *The Gift's* content is difficult to categorize; working against book-sellers' easy descriptions and thereby difficult to market, it takes on a formless form. Hyde's gift-book, we might say, escapes the market by resisting both form and content, undermining the "ten-second sell" and thereby being "more useful in the long run."<sup>34</sup>

*The Gift* suggests that whereas commodities have "value," gifts have "worth." Hyde defines worth negatively, as that dimension of the work that cannot be given a market price. The artwork's lack of "value" is connected to the conditions of its production in another way as well. Art, it turns out, is never the product of "work" but only ever the product of "labor."<sup>35</sup> Whereas "[w]ork is what we do by the hour"—routine activities such as "washing dishes, computing taxes"—labor "sets its own pace."<sup>36</sup> Expanding on the analysis in his essay on Berryman, Hyde argues that "[w]ork is an intended activity that is accomplished through the will. A labor can be intended but only to the extent of doing the groundwork, or of not doing things that would clearly prevent the labor. Beyond that, labor has its own schedule." There is therefore "no technology, no time-saving device that can alter the rhythms of creative labor."<sup>37</sup> Like its content and form, the "use" or "worth" of a textual gift-artwork arises in relation to its protean capacity to evade automation, in relation to its ability to avoid having value, and in relation to the unpredictable rhythm of the labor that makes it.

The inner life of Hyde's concept of art superficially resembles longstanding accounts of art's autonomy from the market, which gained dominance in the nineteenth century in opposition to the hegemony of bourgeois society. It is therefore an example of what Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello have called the "artistic critique of capitalism," the celebration of "autonomy, spontaneity, authenticity, self-fulfillment, creativity, life."<sup>38</sup> But Hyde's idealized view of

art's status as a non-commodity does not only reproduce longstanding fictions of autonomy; it also repeats more recent creative-economy efforts that, since the 1970s, have argued that every worker should aspire to attain the autonomy and freedom of the artist.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, such neoliberal rhetoric celebrates personal creativity as an essential component of capitalist flourishing. Moreover, as Boltanski and Chiapello show in *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, the artistic critique informed various management theorists and policy planners, becoming part of a regime of justification that celebrates the networked "projective city." The (autonomous, spontaneous, authentic, self-fulfilled, life-loving) laborer (rather than the mere worker) has become the ideological hero of a world that encourages us to Do What We Love, which is often just a barely veiled way of commanding us to act as if we Love What We Do—to treat all work as a species of artistic labor (on the theory that artists are in some obvious way intrinsically motivated to do what they do).<sup>40</sup> Hyde would seem to offer little more than a repetition of long-established fictions of autonomy or a neoliberal update to the perennial "tension between the heroic self-image of the creative person and the impersonal commercialization of the market."<sup>41</sup>

However, though he upholds certain dimensions of the artistic critique, Hyde defines art's status differently than do bohemians (who attempted to distinguish true art from the marketplace and bourgeois standards) and modernists or avant-gardes (who attempted "to distinguish the intelligent from the stupid").<sup>42</sup> Hyde's invocation of anthropological writing on the gift allows him to define art's difference from the commodity without relying on straightforward ideas of autonomy. In this tradition, the gift is never a thing but rather a relation between people, a briefly embodied material conduit of the community's spirit, and is therefore thought (as Hélène Cixous once suggested) to threaten the idea of the individual, autonomous person that is the foundation of masculine restricted/exchange-based economies.<sup>43</sup>

Hyde hopes to show that a work of art "can still be sold in the market and still emerge a work of art" but warns that "it may be possible to destroy a work of art by converting it into a pure commodity."<sup>44</sup> The artwork's status as art is therefore contingent not only on the properties of the work itself but also on how it circulates. Good circulation will allow the gift-artwork to smuggle its worth from artist to audience; bad circulation, meanwhile, endangers the work, threatening to transform art from gift into "pure commodity" (non-art). Drawing extensively

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on Mauss's gift essay, Hyde avers that the gift-artwork must always be in motion, cannot rest or be possessed for long, and must not generate interest. Indeed, “a gift that cannot be given away ceases to be a gift.”<sup>45</sup> Gift economies obligate participants to give gifts, to accept gifts, and to reciprocate (to give counter-gifts). Gift economies aim to be a system of “total economic services.” They are “total,” Mauss writes, in that “all kinds of institutions are given expression at one and the same time—religious, juridical, and moral, which relate to both politics and the family; likewise economic ones, which suppose special forms of production and consumption, or rather, of performing total services and of distribution.”<sup>46</sup> Gift-economy participants are motivated by a sense of reciprocal obligation, by a desire for prestige, and by a sense of duty. Like Hyde's book, Mauss's essay had both a descriptive and normative purpose. Mauss's theoretical construction of historical gift economics was part of a contemporary fight waged by French sociologists against utilitarianism and methodological individualism. Part of Mauss's point, again like Hyde's, is that gift exchange never really disappeared. It still “function[s] in our own societies, in unchanging fashion and, so to speak, hidden, below the surface” and remains “the human foundations on which our societies are built.”<sup>47</sup> In the famous conclusion of his essay, “Moral Conclusions,” Mauss proposes a political economy meant to negotiate between an unbridled calculating capitalism and an overgenerous communism, recommending instead a “good but moderate blend of reality and the ideal.”<sup>48</sup>

However, unlike Mauss or other participants in the tradition he inaugurated, Hyde offers few prescriptions for how capitalist societies might reformulate themselves. Within the terms he sets out in his book, Hyde spiritualizes Mauss's claim that gift economies are universal and foundational; art can maintain its status as art as long as its mode of circulation does not murder its spirit,

but this mode of circulation is, at core, dispositional, not institutional or linked to political economy. We might, Hyde reluctantly allows, “pay poets as we do bankers,” but “where we do so *we shall have to recognize* that the pay they receive has not been ‘made’ the way fortunes are made in the market, that [the poet’s pay] is a gift bestowed by the group.” If the marketplace’s “analytic or reflective powers” threaten to drain the gift’s “esemplastic” energies, we might preserve art by changing how we “recognize” payment for artistic labor; we will need to resist “analytic cognition,” “self-consciousness,” and “logic.”<sup>49</sup> Hyde’s *dispositional* Third Way (stripped of Bourdieu’s sense of the social determination of disposition or *habitus*) promotes an ethos, an ethic of generosity, meant to neutralize the calculating disposition. There may be “a constant tension between the gift sphere to which his work pertains and the market sphere which is his context,” but “there is little to be gained by a wholesale attack on the market.”<sup>50</sup> The artist must always mentally balance the *logos* of the market with the *eros* of the gift, negotiating “this double economy,” perhaps finding a literary agent who can “work[] the market”—act as a mediator or buffer—while the artist “labors with his gift.”<sup>51</sup> Calculate, Hyde seems to say, but not too much. Get paid if you can, but don’t labor (or *don’t only labor*) for the money. Make your art in the gift-sphere, but when entering the marketplace, you had better find a good agent.

## II

Zadie Smith’s *The Autograph Man* (2002) addresses itself to (and imagines itself to participate in) Hyde’s double economy, and in doing so constructs a metafictional fantasy of the good literary agent.<sup>52</sup> The novel tells the story of Alex-Li Tandem, a Chinese-Jewish British man who works as a philographer (an autograph collector). After a prologue depicting Alex at the age of twelve, in which his father Li-Jin dies suddenly after attending a professional wrestling match, Smith shows Alex as an adult living in Mountjoy, a fictional London suburb. A narcissistic man-boy, stuck in a state of arrested development, Alex is, like the protagonists of several prominent contemporary novels, a sensitive or savant of the marketplace, what Lauren Berlant has called an “intuitive,” a contemporary literary character type who must engage in a process of “dynamic sensual data-gathering” as part of an affective effort to make “reliable sense of life.”<sup>53</sup> Recalling characters such as Lila Mae Watson in Colson Whitehead’s *The Intuitionist* (1999) or Cayce Pollard in William Gibson’s *Pattern Recognition*

(2003), both of whom Berlant analyzes in these terms, Alex has developed a dispositional knack for sussing out valuable celebrity signatures, embodying a television-formed habitus well-tuned to the simulacral landscape of post-modernity. He “deals in a shorthand of experience. The TV version. He is one of this generation who watch themselves.”<sup>54</sup> Much of the plot of Smith’s novel turns on Alex’s adventure (which is also a lucrative economic venture) in a lightly magic-realist version of New York City. In New York, he attends the “Autographicana Fair” while his long-term girlfriend Esther is having routine surgery to implant a pacemaker back in London. Alex has had a life-long obsession with Kitty Alexander, a Hollywood film star, whose celebrity signature he has never been able to obtain. Throughout his life, he has been writing affecting, longing, personal letters to his favorite star. In the novel’s first part, Kitty has inexplicably mailed Alex two autographs after years of silence. She has done so, we eventually learn, only after discovering a hoard of Alex’s old letters; the president of her fan club, Max Krausner, a man who has “acted basically as her agent,” hid these letters from her out of an obsessive desire to protect her.<sup>55</sup> After arriving in New York, Alex locates Kitty, who lives alone in a brownstone in Roebling Heights, a fictional Brooklyn neighborhood; reveals her current agent’s mendacity to her; and convinces her that she should return to London with him, allowing Alex to serve as her new agent, where she will make a small fortune selling signatures to eager fans. When Kitty leaves with Alex, Max vengefully tells the media that she has died, and Alex takes advantage of the interest that reports of Kitty’s death have aroused, choosing not to correct the record, making a killing at auction selling her old letters. Kitty ultimately embraces Alex’s deception, explaining that, like him, she is a “realist”: “You kill me, but then you resurrect me. And so you are forgiven.”<sup>56</sup> After his lucrative adventure, Alex is prepared to say Kaddish over the grave of his father.

Smith’s novel has been frequently interpreted as creating a firm opposition between the banalities of celebrity culture and the genuine spiritual values Alex comes to recognize only after taking a “tour around the hollow things of modernity: celebrity, cinema, and the ugly triumph of symbol over experience.”<sup>57</sup> Much of the criticism of the novel has therefore turned on the question of whether Alex’s transformation is believable or earned. James Wood, for one, was not convinced. Alex’s journey from a “man who trades in false signs” to someone who is “rescued” by the seriousness of Jewish observance goes haywire because Smith’s protagonist is “simply an absence” and Smith herself

“seems unsure how to dispose of her own sincerity and irony.”<sup>58</sup> Contra Wood, Philip Tew has argued that Alex does believably transform, “albeit obliquely and ironically.”<sup>59</sup> Given this critical stasis, we might assume that *The Autograph Man* easily distinguishes between Hyde’s two economies. On one side of the ledger: modernity, celebrity, and late capitalism. On the other: the gift, religious observance, love, and friendship. The novel succeeds if it ironizes the first set of terms and then sincerely commits to the second.

However, this interpretive consensus obscures important dimensions of Smith’s novel. *The Autograph Man* is, in fact, surprisingly devoted to detailing Alex’s business venture. Smith insists that Alex’s work (or should we say his labor?) as an autograph man is, for all its apparent triviality, grounded in the gift-sphere. Though Smith frequently underscores that Alex’s professional choices harm his non-work relationships, especially with his girlfriend Esther, his quest for authenticity and personal fulfillment remain indissociable from his work. He is a model of a contemporary freelance worker, a self-employed man whose entrepreneurial verve will, as the neoliberal fantasy has it, help him become a self-branding, flexible, spontaneous culture worker, someone who lives to work (rather than works to live). Alex may ultimately profit from Kitty’s autograph, but we are led to understand that her autograph is itself a gift. We are alerted to the possibility that the products of our culture industries might be something other than a mere or pure commodity when Kitty’s signature first arrives. Recovering from a drug trip, Alex initially does not remember the provenance of this signature and comes to believe that he might himself have forged it, but instinctively insists that “[i]t’s *my* autograph, all right, it was sent to *me* . . . I have it. It’s real. It’s in my hands. It was sent to me.”<sup>60</sup> Alex himself is, he claims, “not in this business for the money. I’m a *fan*. This is coming from my *heart*. These things really *mean* something to me.”<sup>61</sup> The italicized words may lead us to suspect Alex’s sincerity (or sanity), but the balance of Smith’s novel underwrites his devotion, validating it and even insisting on it in a way that seems to have dismayed some critics.

Smith’s narrator later informs us that another autograph man, Jason Lovelear (whom Smith describes as “conspiracy-crazy”) does not “understand an object’s status as a ‘gift’” and “did not believe, for example, that a film is any more than its publicity, a painting any more than an abstruse way to make a buck. He did not believe that songs or books were in any way substantially dif-

ferent from sandwiches or tires. Product is product. And he did not believe in free lunches.” Lovelear is skeptical about the sudden arrival of Kitty’s signature: why would she “turn around and do this thing that she’s refused to do for *anyone* for twenty years, without a reason?”<sup>62</sup> Lovelear’s suspicions are, to some degree, justified. Kitty contacts Alex when she does because her *de facto* agent had isolated her from outside communications. Yet Alex’s initial understanding that Kitty’s signature has been “sent” to him is ultimately redeemed, both as a literal description of the origin of the signature and as a description of the spiritual importance of his communication with her. Kitty explains that when she finally read Alex’s letters, she found them “beautiful” because “[t]hey are nothing of movies. Nothing about that. They are just a woman, walking in the world.”<sup>63</sup> Eventually, Alex convinces Kitty to put her celebrity signature on the market, assuring her “[t]here’s nothing dodgy about it. I’ll take a percentage, like any agent.” Though he will act as an agent for Kitty’s marketable aura, Alex assures her that his motivations are pure: “It’s a gift, back to you, for what you’ve given me.”<sup>64</sup> As if to underscore the point, Smith’s third-person narrator explicates Alex’s motivation at some length:

It was not the money that excited him. Not entirely the money. He told himself it was the joy of giving a gift, a gift back to Kitty, for what she had given him. But this was not quite right. It was the *perfection of vision*. An Autograph Man’s life is spent in the pursuit of fame, of its aura, and all value comes from the degree of closeness to it one can achieve. But now he had the aura. He had it in a bottle. He possessed it. It was part of him, almost.<sup>65</sup>

This passage dramatizes Alex’s effort to reimagine his commercial investments as a portfolio of sincerity and love, although Alex also quickly modifies his initial declaration. It isn’t “entirely” the money that drives him. This passage is a vacillating sequence of self-correction (the same that we find in Hyde’s description of the gift). Not the money . . . not *entirely* the money. The joy of giving a gift . . . no, the perfection of vision. It was part of him . . . well, *almost* part of him. We might take this vacillation as evidence of authorial irony, but I would argue that Smith is evasive in this passage, ambivalent in exactly the same way that Alex is. Smith’s ambivalence is evident in the two senses of the word “possessed.” That is, Alex seems to *possess* Kitty’s celebrity signature (he has it “in a bottle”), but it is evident that he is, has always been, *possessed by* it (to the degree that it becomes “part of him”).



In figuring the celebrity signature this way, *The Autograph Man* stages an allegory of the creative professional's relationship to her own work. Smith hopes to find within "the hollow things of modernity," in "celebrity, cinema, and the ugly triumph of symbol over experience," grounded experience, the possibility of the gift. And in redeeming the figure of the celebrity signature, in showing that the ugliest monuments of the society of the spectacle can secretly host the gift, Smith hopes to redeem not only her own art but also authorship under the regime of global corporate publishing. As Michael Szalay has noted, numerous authors have recently come to worry about the corporate context of their own artistic production. One imaginative solution to this problem, he suggests, is an authorial form of self-branding, a reimagining of the novelist as brand manager or HBO-style showrunner.<sup>66</sup>

Another strategy, I would argue, is a complex reimagining of the status of the work of art, an effort to define the conditions under which art can be regarded as a gift (thereby reimagining of the nature of the artist's labor). The autograph becomes a figure for the work of art under neoliberalism; the celebrity becomes a figure for the novelist; and the autograph man becomes a figure for the literary agent whose intuitive mastery of the marketplace (but genuine adoration for the celebrity) allows him to help the hapless celebrity-author's gifts find a grateful readership. Alex's labor as an autograph man, as we have seen, is made to resemble the mediation of the literary agent who genuinely loves the author (whose gift must circulate on the market). The celebrity, meanwhile, negotiates the same aporia that the neoliberal author does, trying to foreclose the fear that she might not be a gift-dealing artist but something more akin to an "Autopen," a machine that mass-produces signatures, flooding the market.<sup>67</sup> Art can therefore preserve itself through a strategic division of the creative act between the figure of the creator and the agent. This does not require the existence of two empirical persons: the author might split herself into two functionally different figures, an artist who labors and an agent who works. The work of art might, likewise, split, encoding two distinct layers, wrapping art's gift in a deceptively marketable style, testing the reader's openness to receiving the gift of art.

In light of Smith's allegory, we can now make sense of *The Autograph Man's* baroque book design (it was designed by Barbara M. Bachman). The novel frequently shifts fonts: Book One includes obscure chapter summaries, and Book Two includes quirky illustrations of Alex and accumulates epigraphs. One page

of epigraphs, embodying the visual and verbal tone of the novel, juxtaposes the wisdom of “popular singer Madonna Ciccone” and “popular wise guy Walter Benjamin.”<sup>68</sup> The novel attempts to create a sense of hand (a sense that it is hand-made), which anticipates the ethos that has characterized Chip Kidd’s tenure as editor at Pantheon, the quirky design of McSweeney’s Publishing’s various products, and design-intensive books by Mark Z. Danielewski, Jonathan Safran Foer, and J. J. Abrams and Doug Dorst (i.e., what has been called the multimodal novel). Indeed, in a review of *The Autograph Man* that appeared in *The New Republic*, Ruth Franklin asked, “Is Zadie Smith a pseudonym for Dave Eggers?”<sup>69</sup> Smith’s novel is, Franklin worries, “a full-blown McSweeney’s production in all but name.” Smith has become dangerously “McSweenified.” Franklin’s review seems to think that McSweeney’s embraces an aesthetic of literary irony. However, McSweeney’s better exemplifies what I would call “postirony” or what Adam Kelly has described as New Sincerity, a post-post-modern mode that bears a complex relationship to its predecessors.<sup>70</sup>

Nonetheless, Franklin is right: like many writers who have worked with McSweeney’s, Smith attempts to reconstruct the non-ironic possibility of the (hand-made) gift as Hyde describes it from within postmodern forms of irony and within the ubiquitous market. *The Autograph Man*’s postironic solution to the problem of neoliberal authorship is specifically an example of what I have elsewhere called “credulous metafiction,” the use of metafictional techniques toward non-ironic ends. Smith’s curious novel therefore depends on but also intensifies Hyde’s account of the gift. Near the end of *The Autograph Man*, after he has completed his lucrative adventure and (of course) has given away his earnings to a dying colleague, Alex places a portrait of his dead father, Li-Jin, on a Sephirot, next to images of “the popular philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein and the popular writer Virginia Woolf.”<sup>71</sup> If we read the formulation “popular philosopher” or “popular writer” or (for Benjamin) “popular wise guy” as forms of corrosive irony, or as an unfortunate affectation in Smith’s prose style (as Wood does)—that is, if we read Alex’s final juxtaposition of his dead father with celebrities, novelists, philosophers, and athletes as a grotesque moral failing—this might say less about Smith than about our willingness to receive the celebrity signature as a true gift. But if we remain unconvinced, we would, according to the logic of Smith’s allegory, correspondingly have to abandon the idea that art can remain anything resembling a gift in the present. This is the final twist of Smith’s textual aporia, the challenge that her McSweenified style

poses to us: either Kitty Alexander's celebrity signature can be a true gift, or the author can never create true art under capitalism. As a working novelist, we can understand why Smith makes the choice that she does. Our own judgment might be different.

### III

In the decades that have passed since the first publication of *The Gift*, the questions that motivated Hyde to write his important book have become increasingly urgent. Hyde's original, dispositional solution to the problem of the market's dominance seems less persuasive than it once might have, even to Hyde himself. As he notes in the twenty-fifth anniversary edition of *The Gift*, after the end of the Cold War, the U.S. decimated its already halfhearted public support of the arts.<sup>72</sup> As a result, artists who might wish to mitigate the instability of the open market have increasingly been forced to seek new patrons. Chief among them, as Mark McGurl has shown, is the university (which, to be sure, offers limited protections to only a few writers). But artists have also turned to other patrons, many of them grant-giving nonprofits.<sup>73</sup> Hyde has himself helped found one such nonprofit, the Creative Capital Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization created after a major NEA budget cut in 1996. Though it mostly supports the visual arts, Creative Capital has given grants to notable writers such as Paul Beatty, Christian Hawkey, Ben Marcus, Rebecca Solnit, and Deb Olin Unferth. As a non-profit, Creative Capital invites donors to give tax-deductible financial gifts to "help artists develop imaginative projects, engage diverse audiences, and steer their career paths." The organization runs conferences, retreats, and professional development workshops, and describes itself as having been "inspired by the venture capital principles of building a long-term relationship with a project, providing funding at strategic moments, and surrounding the project with critical resources, counsel and advisory services."<sup>74</sup> Those who receive Creative Capital grants, Hyde enthusiastically writes in the afterword to the 2007 edition of *The Gift*, "agree to share a small percentage of any net profits generated by their projects with Creative Capital, which then applies those funds toward new grants" (383). Gift-receiving artists must give back.

Hoping to make itself similarly eligible for such charitable giving, Dave Eggers's McSweeney's Publishing has recently announced that it is converting from a for-profit to a nonprofit publisher.<sup>75</sup> In the interim, the organization has

launched a wildly successful Kickstarter campaign to fund itself.<sup>76</sup> Generous donors to McSweeney's Kickstarter campaign are promised what are called "gifts." The more you donate, the more precious the corresponding gift. The gifts you receive promise to be more than ordinary commodities. Someone who donates \$2,500, for example, will receive an "animal portrait" drawn by McSweeney's founder Dave Eggers: "they pick the animal, he picks some words to go along."<sup>77</sup> Such gift-funded—and gift-giving—organizations invoke a fascinating hybrid discourse: they simultaneously describe themselves as a bulwark protecting artists from the market and also enthusiastically invoke a language of venture capital. Kickstarter itself (a for-profit corporation) may be a perfect contemporary emblem of this hybridity. As Ian Bogost writes, Kickstarter might be better understood as a form of entertainment media than as a true financing or credit platform.<sup>78</sup> Part of what Kickstarter users pay for is the singular experience of watching a Kickstarter project attain its funding, fail to fund itself, or far exceed its official funding goals. McSweeney's well-funded Kickstarter would thus promise a form of speculative wonder that calls itself a gift but (like Smith's canny autographs) might just as easily be considered a form of quirky, re-enchanted venture capital (a luxury commodity drawn in Eggers's very own auratic hand no less!).

I describe these entrepreneurial nonprofits as forms of venture capital not to condemn them, but rather to illustrate the institutional form Hyde's gift-sphere currently takes. Such fundraising schemes often pursue worthy goals and nurture the careers of many serious artists. The success of such worthy projects is reason for celebration. But they also institutionalize all of the well-documented problems of the neoliberal nonprofit sphere, which, far from creating anything like a cultural commons, privatizes support for the arts.<sup>79</sup> More specifically, today's gift-sphere might most accurately be taken as another example of what Suzanne Mettler has called the "subsumed state."<sup>80</sup> Tax-exempt gifts provide quiet public subsidies to projects that private individuals choose, without subjecting that indirect public spending to political or democratic accountability. And for all the material good they do, organizations such as Creative Capital do not differ in principle from imprints within large conglomerate publishing firms. As John B. Thompson notes in *Merchants of Culture*, it is a "myth" to think that marketing departments rule the neoliberal publishing field. "[E]ven in avowedly commercial houses," he argues, "it is the editors and publishers [of semi-autonomous imprints] who drive the acquisitions process."<sup>81</sup> To a large

degree, “judgment and personal taste” still rule significant segments of the industry.<sup>82</sup> And though they are willing to take risks large houses will not, non-profits and small publishers often dialectically supplement corporate publishing, acting as talent scouts, breaking in risky authors, and building experimental new brands. At our most skeptical, we might also note that the supply-side conservative pundit George Gilder has also, perversely enough, cited Marcel Mauss as a fount of capitalist wisdom in his bestselling *Wealth and Poverty* (1981). Capitalism itself, Gilder avers, is founded upon the spirit of the gift. “The essence of giving is not the absence of all expectation of return,” he explains, “but the lack of a predetermined return. Like gifts, capitalist investments are made without a predetermined return.”<sup>83</sup>

We may rightly scoff at Gilder’s celebration of venture capitalists’ gift-loving magnanimity, but we must also admit that it is hard to distinguish Creative Capital’s nonprofit model of giving from the exuberant for-profit rhetoric of Kickstarter’s myriad zany ventures. My point is that this ambiguity is the direct consequence of Hyde’s original displacement of the question of the gift economy’s institutional basis with the question of the gift economy’s possibility as a moral, dispositional, or spiritual ideal. Hyde constructs an argument that allows contemporary writers to create art, and promises to change the life of the reader of *The Gift*, without doing the hard work of abolishing or radically constraining the market economy that allegedly drains art of its powers. This error arises, I will finally suggest, from a more fundamental error. In describing the dispositional conditions of compatibility of the gift and the commodity, Hyde had hoped to find the gift as inhering in those zones of the art-object untouched by the calculating disposition of the market. But capitalist modernity is not merely an engine of calculation; its core problems do not arise from the demotion of an ethic of generosity. Indeed, neoliberal ideologues roundly celebrate the nonprofit sphere, holding it up as the proper model of charitable giving. Hyde’s ultimate mistake is to investigate the conditions under which art might be thought to become a “pure commodity” in the first place. This is the wrong problem to investigate. And understanding why this is the wrong problem can also illuminate the problem with Nicholas Brown’s recent claim that “[a]esthetic autonomy today is . . . locked in a life or death struggle with the market.”<sup>84</sup> Brown’s celebration of “the work of art” and denigration of the “art commodity” surprisingly reproduce Hyde’s gift rhetoric and resembles *The Autograph Man*’s capacity to discover the gift in the cursive loops of the celeb-

rity signature. Opposing what he calls art's real subsumption under capitalism, Brown discovers a salubrious autonomy even within the seemingly heteronomous zones of culture (in Brazilian Tropicália or genre fiction). We might be skeptical first at the use of the term "real subsumption," which originally referred not to a particular characteristic or feature of commodities but rather to the capitalist reorganization of previously non-capitalist labor processes.<sup>85</sup> But even if we remain focused on commodification as such (rather than the specific commodification of labor power), we should also be skeptical of the relation between use-value and exchange-value that Brown's account relies on. In Brown's analysis, the difference between art and objecthood gets mapped onto the difference between *use* and *indifference to use*. Because "use-value is only a vanishing moment in the valorization of capital," it supposedly follows that capitalist exchange transforms what might once have been art into an object that merely "seeks to provoke interest in its beholder—or perhaps all kinds of different interest from different beholders." Walter Benn Michaels distinguishes between art and the object in similar terms in *The Beauty of a Social Problem*, where (in dialogue with Brown) he describes art's claim to autonomy as aesthetically anti-neoliberal. In the neoliberal era, autonomous art has become "an emblem of the relation between classes . . . and also of the escape from that relation, of the possibility of a world without class."<sup>86</sup> This is said to be the case because the "distinguishing feature of the commodity is that there's no right way or wrong way to use it."<sup>87</sup> Art's pursuit of autonomy can become an aesthetic emblem of opposition to the commodity (and neoliberalism) because "the only thing about the work of art that is not determined by its buyers" is "its meaning."<sup>88</sup> The art work's steadfast insistence on norms stands athwart the market's disinterest in norms.

These accounts are not wholly convincing because they reduce commodities to their exchange-value. Use-value may indeed become a "vanishing moment in the valorization of capital," and all commodities are produced for exchange, but use-value never wholly vanishes. All commodities (whether or not in capitalist economies) have some salable use-value as a necessary condition for market circulation. The fact that the merchant does not care how commodities might be used does not foreclose the possibility (or probability) that commodities will be produced for certain uses and then used as intended (that ordinary commodities might be, to use Michaels's phrase, "suffused with normativity").<sup>89</sup> Moreover, the merchant's indifference to use-value isn't merely a question of not caring

how purchasers use specific commodities; it's also crucially an indifference to *which* use-values (which intentions, which norms) are put on the market. Market societies do not make available commodities featuring all imaginable or desirable use-values, of course. But as long as one of art's use-values is the furnishing of an occasion for the art-consumer's interpretative consumption of the artist-author's proffered meaning, we should not expect all art commodities to conform to Hyde's dystopian (and arguably sexist) vision of a world of female focus-group-created romantic novels. We should also expect the art world to occasionally support (even celebrate) the individual, self-motivated creative artist (which is in fact the case today). If what you want is form, autonomy, meaning, authorial intent, norms, and so on, there is no theoretical barrier preventing you from purchasing them as commodities on the market. And in an age of widespread corporate authorship and highly sophisticated culture industries, the artwork's authentic aura becomes more important (not less) precisely to the degree that it becomes scarcer. This is why, as Zadie Smith astutely notes in her

essay on David Foster Wallace, the "erotic logic of capital" does not, as is widely assumed, destroy the aura of the work of art but rather strengthens it.<sup>90</sup>

Under such circumstances, we should not be at all surprised when organizations such as Kickstarter do their best to assail our calculating cynicism, to create a for-profit platform that allows us to give and receive genuinely delightful gifts, to lovingly manufacture the singular experiences, products, auras, and affects some of us say we want.

How we might respond to this art world will depend, finally, on our political goals. If we are exclusively concerned for the autonomy of the art-

ist (the artist's capacity to pursue her own preferred projects, her capacity to market her work to an appreciative audience), building additional well-meaning, privately managed 501(c)(3) organizations (whose funding relies on a surreptitious public subsidy offered by those with the means to give generously) might well suffice to incrementally increase support for a handful of artists. If we would prefer that submerged state subsidies for the arts emerge again into public view, that we bring public funding of the arts into the sphere of democratic accountability and open public management, ensuring that working artists

“

***If what you want is form, autonomy, meaning, authorial intent, norms, and so on, there is no theoretical barrier preventing you from purchasing it as a commodity on the market.***

”

receive something like a living wage, we will instead be required to engage in a large-scale reconstruction of the institutions and infrastructures within which literary (or any other) art gets produced.<sup>91</sup> If our goal is more ambitious still—if what we care about is abolishing class, wholly dissolving the distinction between public and private, returning art to our life in common—the question of what art might be an emblem of (and whether or not it is a gift) dissolves into a more comprehensive political economic project (a project that contemporary artists and writers might serve in a variety of ways). In none of these cases, however, will we need to change our attitude toward art (to regard art as a gift rather than as a commodity or to seek allegorical emblems of art's autonomy). If writers and critics wish art to be more than a commodity, they will need to address the defining political and economic institutions within which the commoditized arts of the present get made.

—————/ **Notes** /—————

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Andrew Goldstone and the participants in the 2015 New England Americanist Collective workshop for reading an early draft of this essay. Their revision suggestions, along with insightful comments from two anonymous reviewers, helped me substantially improve this essay.

*The Gift* was originally published with the title *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*. It was republished in 2007 with a new subtitle as *The Gift: Creativity and the Artist in the Modern World* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 11, 12.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Martin Hägglund, *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 37.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, “Marginalia — Some Additional Notes on the Gift,” trans. Richard Nice, in *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an Ethic of Generosity*, ed. Alan D. Schrift (New York: Routledge, 1997), 234.

<sup>10</sup> Derrida, *Given Time*, 24.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 235.

<sup>12</sup> Jeffrey T. Nealon, *Post-Postmodernism: Or, The Cultural Logic of Just-in-Time Capitalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 116.



<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Derrida, *Given Time*, 30.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 17-18.

<sup>16</sup> Johan Huizinga explicitly references ethnographic studies of the potlatch when discussing the “magic circle of play.” See *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (New York: Beacon, 1971).

<sup>17</sup> David Foster Wallace, *Infinite Jest* (New York: Little, Brown, 1996), 203. Zadie Smith, “David Foster Wallace’s Difficult Gifts,” in *Changing My Mind: Occasional Essays* (New York: Penguin, 2009), 266.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> I draw the term “creative class” from Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class—Revisited: Revised and Expanded*: (New York: Basic Books, 2014).

<sup>20</sup> Sarah Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 54.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Lewis Hyde, *Alcohol and Poetry: John Berryman and the Booze Talking* (Dallas, TX: Dallas Institute, 1986), 8.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., xii.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., xii.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., xvi.

<sup>28</sup> Rachel Greenwald Smith, “Six Propositions on Compromise Aesthetics,” *The Account*, no. 3 (Fall 2014), <http://theaccountmagazine.com/?article=six-propositions-on-compromise-aesthetics> (accessed May 31, 2015). Smith means to apply her term to *critics* rather than *artists*, hoping to reserve the more neutral term “hybrid aesthetics” for artists whom critics have celebrated as examples of compromise, but as Smith herself shows in *Affect and American Literature in the Age of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) many artists have self-consciously embraced something like compromise aesthetics as their practice. In any case, as a writer of what is called “creative nonfiction,” Hyde stands in an interesting hybrid zone within Smith’s argument.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Hyde, “Alcohol and Poetry,” xvi, xvii.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., xvii.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., xv. Such polls ask women what age the protagonist should be; when in the story the hero and heroine are allowed to sleep together; and how long each novel should be (192 pages).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., xi.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., xi.

<sup>35</sup> Hyde here roughly reconstructs (without citing) Hannah Arendt’s distinction

between work and labor in *The Human Condition*, although he inverts her definitions of these two terms.

<sup>36</sup> Hyde, *The Gift*, 63-4.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>38</sup> Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Gregory Elliott (New York: Verso, 2007), 504.

<sup>39</sup> I draw the phrase “fictions of autonomy” from Andrew Goldstone, *Fictions of Autonomy: Modernism from Wilde to de Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>40</sup> See Miya Tokumitsu, “In the Name of Love,” *Jacobin*, January 2014, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/01/in-the-name-of-love/> (accessed May 31, 2015). There is a vast social psychology literature on the concept of “intrinsic motivation.” For one influential discussion of the concept, see Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci, “Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-Being,” *American Psychologist* 55, no. 1 (2000): 68-78.

<sup>41</sup> César Graña, *Modernity and Its Discontents: French Society and the French Man of Letters in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Harper, 1967), 57.

<sup>42</sup> Mark McGurl, *The Novel Art: Elevations of American Fiction after Henry James* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 75.

<sup>43</sup> Hélène Cixous, “Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Way Out/Forays,” in *The Logic of the Gift*, 148-173.

<sup>44</sup> Hyde, *Alcohol and Poetry*, xvii-xviii.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, xix.

<sup>46</sup> Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W. D. Halls, foreword Mary Douglas (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990), 3.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>49</sup> Hyde, *The Gift*, 139 (my emphasis); 200; 201.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 357.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 360.

<sup>52</sup> Zadie Smith, *The Autograph Man* (New York: Random House, 2002). This association has been noted only briefly in the existing scholarship on the novel. See, for example, Philip Tew, “Celebrity, Suburban Identity and Transatlantic Epiphanies: Reconsidering Zadie Smith’s *The Autograph Man*,” in *Reading Zadie Smith: The First Decade and Beyond*, ed. Philip Tew (London: Bloomsbury Academic), 65.

<sup>53</sup> Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 52.

<sup>54</sup> Smith, *The Autograph Man*, 3.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 330.

<sup>57</sup> This language comes from the book’s cover description. Zadie Smith, *The Autograph Man* (New York: Random House, 2002), inside flap.

<sup>58</sup> James Wood, "Fundamentally Goyish," *London Review of Books*, October 3, 2002, <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v24/n19/james-wood/fundamentally-goyish> (accessed May 28, 2015).

<sup>59</sup> Tew, "Celebrity, Suburban Identity and Transatlantic Epiphanies," 55.

<sup>60</sup> Smith, *The Autograph Man*, 71.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 265.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 289.

<sup>66</sup> Michael Szalay, "The Incorporation Artists," *Los Angeles Review of Books*, July 10, 2012, <http://lareviewofbooks.org/review/the-incorporation-artist> (accessed May 28, 2015).

<sup>67</sup> Smith, *The Autograph Man*, 145.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>69</sup> Ruth Franklin, "The Box of Tricks," *New Republic*, October 14, 2002, <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/the-box-tricks> (accessed May 29, 2015).

<sup>70</sup> On postirony, see Lee Konstantinou, "No Bull: David Foster Wallace and Postironic Belief," in *The Legacy of David Foster Wallace*, ed. Samuel Cohen and Lee Konstantinou (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2012), 83–112. On the New Sincerity, see Adam Kelly, "The New Sincerity," in *Postmodern/Postwar—And After*, ed. Jason Gladstone, Andrew Hoberek, and Daniel Worden (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, forthcoming in 2015).

<sup>71</sup> Smith, *The Autograph Man*, 342.

<sup>72</sup> For a recent critical account of the National Endowment of the Arts, see Hannah Doherty, "State-Funded Fiction: Minimalism, National Memory, and the Return to Realism in the Post-Postmodern Age," *American Literary History* 27, no. 1 (2015): 79–101.

<sup>73</sup> Mark McGurl, *The Program Era: Postwar Fiction and the Rise of Creative Writing* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

<sup>74</sup> "Our Story," Creative Capital, <http://www.creative-capital.org/aboutus/whatwedo> (accessed May 31, 2015).

<sup>75</sup> "An Exciting Note on the Future of McSweeney's," *Timothy McSweeney's Internet Tendency*, October 15, 2014, <http://www.mcsweeneys.net/pages/an-exciting-note-on-the-future-of-mcsweeneys> (accessed May 31, 2015).

<sup>76</sup> McSweeney's Publishing, "McSweeney's: New Books, New Magazines, and a Whole Lot More," Kickstarter, <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/mcsweeneys/mcsweeneys-new-books-new-magazines-and-a-whole-lot> (accessed May 31, 2015).

<sup>77</sup> Carolyn Kellogg, "McSweeney's raises half its \$150,000 Kickstarter goal in 5 days," *Los Angeles Times*, May 8, 2015, <http://www.latimes.com/books/jacketcopy/la-et-jc-mcsweeneys-kickstarter-20150504-story.html> (accessed May 31, 2015).

<sup>78</sup> Ian Bogost, “Kickstarter: Crowdfunding Platform Or Reality Show?” *Ian Bogost*, July 18, 2012, [http://bogost.com/writing/kickstarter\\_crowdfunding\\_platf/](http://bogost.com/writing/kickstarter_crowdfunding_platf/) (accessed May 31, 2015).

<sup>79</sup> See INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex* (Boston: South End Press, 2009). Patricia Mooney Nickel and Angela M. Eikenberry, “A Critique of the Discourse of Marketized Philanthropy,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 52, no. 7 (2009): 974-989.

<sup>80</sup> Suzanne Mettler, *The Submerged State: How Invisible Government Policies Undermine American Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

<sup>81</sup> John B. Thompson, *Merchants of Culture: The Publishing Business in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Polity, 2010), 144.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>83</sup> George Gilder, *Wealth and Poverty* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 25.

<sup>84</sup> Nicholas Brown, “The Work of Art in the Age of its Real Subsumption under Capital,” *Nonsite.org*, March 13, 2012, <http://nonsite.org/editorial/the-work-of-art-in-the-age-of-its-real-subsumption-under-capital> (accessed May 31, 2015).

<sup>85</sup> For an analysis of the ambiguous deployment of the concept of “real subsumption” to account for the changing status of art under capitalism (and an analysis of Antonio Negri’s related claim that society itself has been subsumed by capital), see Dave Beech, *Art and Value: Art’s Economic Exceptionalism in Classical, Neoclassical and Marxist Economics* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishing, 2015). Beech convincingly argues, “As soon as we posit subsumption in general rather than the subsumption of labour by capital . . . the mechanism by which capital takes hold of society is lost” (17).

<sup>86</sup> Walter Benn Michaels, *The Beauty of a Social Problem: Photography, Autonomy, Economy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), xii.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 102-3.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>90</sup> Zadie Smith, “David Foster Wallace’s Difficult Gifts,” 293.

<sup>91</sup> For a comparative account of public support for the arts in the U.S. and Norway, see Wendy Griswold, *Regionalism and the Reading Class* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007). I discuss Griswold’s book in Lee Konstantinou, “Another Publishing Field is Possible,” *Arcade*, September 12, 2012, <http://arcade.stanford.edu/blogs/another-publishing-field-possible> (accessed August 5, 2015).