"A Christmas Carol" renders visible the connections between sympathetic identification and the consuming subject, showing how both are consolidated in an identification with representation. Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Man with the Twisted Lip" (1891) provides a late-century unravelling of that same structure: confusing and confounding the identities of gentleman, beggar, and capitalist, the text literalizes the metaphor of sympathetic identification as an investment of self in other by aligning that identification with, and identifying it as, economic exchange. In Conan Doyle's narrative of mistaken identity, in which the discovery is made that the beggar really is a gentleman, the attenuation of self required by social sympathy reproduces the structure of exchange that both defines and dismembers identity under capitalism.

In "The Man with the Twisted Lip," Sherlock Holmes is enigmatically baffled by the disappearance of Mr. Neville St. Clair, a well-to-do gentleman who, for years, while working in the City and ostensibly busy in London, has been disguising himself as a beggar named Hugh Boone, having found begging to be less arduous and more profitable than other professions available to him. Holmes, seemingly relying on his expectation that the case will yield the usual murder victim, advances the idea that St. Clair is...
dead—just as Mrs. St. Clair produces a letter she claims was recently written by her husband. Whitshed’s missive is uninterpretable—appearing, almost, to desire the death he has decreed—until the detective attempts to explain away the clues that suggest St. Clair is still living. St. Clair’s ring, included with the letter, “proves nothing,” as “it may have been taken from him”; the letter itself may “just have been written on Monday and only posted to-day.” The case, with which Holmes detaches the signs of St. Clair’s identity from St. Clair, and the fact that it is his job to reattach them, point toward the problematic of identity the story unearths: Inspector Bradstreet’s solemn insistence, at the end of the case, that there be “no more of Hugh Boone” reflects a determination to eliminate precisely the kind of instability Holmes here acknowledges. For the possibility that identity can be dissociated from its signs undermines, even as it provokes desire for, the stable categories of identity both detective fiction and Henry Mayhew’s studies of the urban poor seek to construct.

Holmes is called to investigate after Mrs. St. Clair, returning from an excursion into the City, looks up to see in the window of an opium den (where St. Clair puts on and off his disguise) what appears to be an assault upon her husband, but is actually his manifestations of suprise at seeing her. The story describes not a crime but a disturbance in the social field, a confusion of social identity which it becomes Holmes’s task to resolve. That such a disturbance should appear as a crime makes sense given the fantasy of knowledge and social control detective fiction represents; St. Clair’s indeterminacy—the mobility that allows him to occupy two social spheres at once—distorts the possibility of fixing social identity on which detective fiction, and Holmes’s cases, rest. And that indeterminacy is expressed both in St. Clair’s ability to transform himself and in the figures between which he oscillates—the gentleman and the beggar—who were, for the Victorians, ambiguous and sometimes interchangeable entities.

The scenario wherein a beggar is revealed to be a gentleman or nobleman in disguise is a familiar one: behind “The Man with the Twisted Lip,” as—

1 All quotations from “The Man with the Twisted Lip” and other stories have been taken from Arthur Conan Doyle, The Complete Sherlock Holmes (New York: Signet, 1957). Titles will be noted parenthetically in the text.

2 The definitive work on the topic is D. A. Miller, The Novel and the Police (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).
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According to Donald A. Redmond, in Victor Hugo’s *Homo ou rie* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1982), 55, which tells of a misfit’s roles as a child and disfigured, so he won’t be recognized with a scar across the mouth that makes him appear to be smil- 
ing or laughing. In the late nineteenth century, the oppositions and similarities mobilized by a pairing of these figures were particularly charged in the context of changing ideas about gentlemanliness, for instance, popular ideology had it that a beggar might very well be a gentleman, at the same time an increase in financial speculation and unexpected, devastating, crashes made it appear likely, at least from the gentleman’s perspective, that a gentleman might someday have to beg. But rather than simply place a familiar tale in a new context, Conan Doyle’s story demonstrates that the new context suggestsively expands the problematic of identity implicit in the tale: for even as it does away with Hugh Boone, restoring St. Clair to his proper identity, “The Man with the Twisted Lip” demonstrates detective fiction’s fantasy of social control, establishing social identity only to disclose, simultaneously, the absence of the identities it seeks to impose.

The figure of the finance capitalist confounds the attempt—central to both Mayhew’s project and Conan Doyle’s—to define identity in relation to work. The person of the finance capitalist remains detached from the system of production in which he participates, whereas the laborer might suffer “in his existence,” Elaine Scarry writes, the capitalist suffers only “in his money.” The legalizing of joint-stock companies in 1844 and the institution of limited liability soon after increasingly separated businesses from those who invested in them, enabling capital, effectively, to carry on by itself, with “not so much as a sign of the Capitalist to be seen.”


2 Holmes characteristically identifies individuals by their professions: “By a man’s finger-nails, by his coat-sleeve, by his boots, by his trouser-knees, by the callousities of his forefinger and thumb, by his expression, by his shirt-cuffs—by each of these things a man’s calling is plainly revealed” (A Study in Scarlet).


because of the detachment of "his own embodied psyche, will, and consciousness" from the manner in which he produces his income, as Scarry puts it, the capitalist might well be called an "exempted person$: "it is that absence of self, that liberating relation, that attribute of nonparticipation," which "is summarized by the word 'capitalist.' ")

Such an exempted person is Charles Dickens's Alfred Lammle, who, in place of the usual markers of identity and gentlemanliness, has "Shares":

The mature young gentleman is a person of property. He invests his property. He goes, in a condescending amateurish way, into the City, attends meetings of directors, and has to do with traffic in Shares. As is well known to the wise in their generation, traffic in Shares is the one thing to have to do with in this world. Have no antecedents, no established character, no education, no idea, no manners, have Shares. Have Shares enough to be on Boards of Directors in capital letters, oscillate on mysterious business between London and Paris, and be great. Where does he come from? Shares. Where is he going to? Shares. What are his tastes? Shares. What are his principles? Shares. What separates him into Parliament? Shares. Perhaps he never of himself achieved success in anything, never originated anything, never produced anything? Sufficient answer to all; Shares.8

"Shares" substitute for cultivation, manners, principles, and productions, replacing what had appeared to be substantive with what doesn't appear at all. In Our Mutual Friend, the sinister implications of such absence are manifest in Lammle's deceitfulness, as well as in the novel's paradigmatic image of the bodies Gaffer Hawes pulls from the river, devoid of any distinguishing characteristics but for their clothing and the money he retrieves from it. And it is in the atmosphere created by the novel's intertwining of finance and identity that Boffin engineers his "pious fraud"; in such a context, Dickens seems to say, not even well-intentioned businessmen need adhere to any notion of consistency or legibility.

7 Scarry, Body in Pain, 265.
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The identity of the “man who does something in the City,” then, seemed as ungrounded as the City’s prosperity itself did to many nineteenth-century observers—a perception no doubt enhanced by the frequency with which, in the second half of the century, prominent businessmen were revealed to have built their empires on foundations of nonexistent capital.10 (Of the seemingly unbounded proliferation and circulation of wealth in the City, one contemporary observer wrote, “We find many thousands who live by supplying one another’s wants; and the question arises, whence comes the original means by which such a state is rendered possible? What, in fact, is the primary fund of which these persons manage to secure a share?11 In his passivity and detachment, in the disinterested relation he bears to his interests, the “man who does something in the City” exemplifies the kind of fungible identity that, his contemporaries feared, inhabited a realm of exchange divorced from production.11

The middle classes in the nineteenth century regarded the unproductive gentleman in a dubious light. Since neither he nor the beggar put in what they regarded as an honest day’s labor, both were subject to general suspicion—the suspicion, in particular, of attempting to deceive those who did. A section of Mayhew’s London Labour and the London Poor, included under the rubric “Those Who Will Not Work” and written by Andrew Halliday, discusses those “beggars and cheats” who, although physically sound enough to perform “honest” labor, choose instead to make their livings by deceiving the charitable. This “false beggar,” as Mayhew represents him, is a kind of actor, taking on specific costumes and mannerisms for the performance of his role. Of one type of “street campaigner,” for example, Halliday writes: “He is inattentive, and in his time plays many parts... He bears his head most military; he keeps his neck straight, his chin

9 See Weiss, Hell of the English, chap. 7.
...he is as stiff as an embalmed preparation, for which, but for the motion of his eyes, you might mistake him. 12 And in order to see through this deceptive surface, the man on the street requires Holmesian powers of detection. In one instance Halliday, in the company of a friend who had once been a sailor, comes across what appears to him to be "a brother sailor in distress." "Of course you will give him something," he says to his friend, to which remark the friend responds negatively: "Did you see him spit? ...A real sailor never spits to windward. Why, he couldn't." (415). Unmasking the "false beggar" involves knowing the "true" version of the character he attempts to impersonate, and it is the purpose of Mayhew's work to codify these types, granting the public the ability to distinguish "true" identity from "false."

Halliday is particularly offended by the figure whose pose conflates the beggar and the gentleman. The begging-letter writer, who "is the connecting link between mendicity and external respectability," affects white cravats, soft hands, and filthy nails. He rubs his face, combs his beard, and wears a patent-slip-on collar. The light of other days of gentility and comfort casts a halo of "deportment" over his well-brushed, white-seamed coat, his carefully darned black-cloth gloves, and pudgy gaiters.... Among the many varieties of mendicant beggars, there is none so deniable as this hypocritical scoundrel, who, with an ostentatiously-submissive air, and false pretense of faded fortunes, tells his plausible tale of undeserved suffering, and extracts from the pockets of the superficially good-hearted their sympathy and coin. (403)

For Halliday, the link between mendicity and mendacity is more than merely linguistic. But why should the begging-letter writer offend more than other beggars who, through various schemes, deprive the charitable of their sympathy and coin? Halliday's dislike of this character arises related to his pretense to respectability: the "intuitive knowledge" of the "nobility and landed gentry" that aids him in his deceptive practice. The begging-letter writer implies by his behavior that gentility is...
merely a matter of surfaces, disturbingly suggesting, in his capacity for imitation, the gentleman's own instability.

Such a possibility had already been explored in Lord Chesterfield's Letters to his Son (1774), in which the author with his usual how "is" the gentleman? "When you go into good company... observe carefully their turn, their manner, their address, and conform your own to them. But this is not all, neither; go deeper still, observe their character, and pry as far as you can, into both their hearts and their heads. Seek for their particular merit, their predominant passion, or their prevailing weakness, and you will then know what to bait your hook with to catch them." As the general dislike with which Chesterfield's work was received in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries demonstrates, the notion that the gentleman was imitable touched a particularly sensitive nerve. Robin Gilmour points out that the influence Chesterfield recommended was in fact reinforce the social advancement in eighteenth-century society. But by recommending particular forms of behavior rather than the cultivation of moral qualities, Chesterfield showed "how easily civilised behaviour could be reduced to the lowest common denominator," and revealed "how weak the links between manners and morals" might be. Chesterfield advises about "catching" members of "good company" closely resembled Mayhew's account of the begging-letter writer's scheme: both the gentleman, as Chesterfield's view, and the "false beggar," as Mayhew's, use knowledge of a group in class to mimic it and to advance themselves by means of that imitation. Both figures lose their social status and are driven to "living off the toil of others."15

Potentially productive individuals not engaged in productive labor—regarded, as Mayhew's "will not work" implies, as refusing work—not only

14 Chesterfield is quoting Sheldon Rothblatt, Tradition and Change in English Liberal Education (London: Faber, 1976), 31; Gilmour, Idea of the Gentleman, 19.
15 How Mayhew articulates this for the beggar is described below. Ruskin wrote that "Gentlemen have to learn that it is no part of their duty to indulge in lives on other people's work." Modern Painters, op. cit., 149.
offended the age’s emphasis on energy and productivity, but they also presented the Victorians with a constant threat of social unrest. Describing the Poor Law’s inability to meet the needs of those in want, Halliday cites a letter to the Times that expresses this anxiety: “It is an admitted and notorious fact, that after a fortnight’s time the police courts were besieged by thousands who professed to be starving...” It was the saturnalia if not of mendicancy, at least of destitution. The police stood aside while beggars possessed the thoroughfares. “We had thought that the race of sturdy vagrants and valiant beggars was extinct, or at least that they dared no longer show themselves. But here they were in open day like the wretches which are said to emerge out of darkness on the day of a revolution” (398).

The New Poor Law of 1834 had as one of its main objectives the separation of the able-bodied beggar from others who could not raise themselves out of poverty. Mayhew’s system of identification, separating those who “cannot work” from those who “will not work,” fulfilled the state’s need to bring into the light of “open day” figures who represent a threat before they themselves choose to emerge. And it is the function of Mayhew’s labor and of Sherlock Holmes’s, in this story, to put both the gentleman and the able-bodied beggar to work.

But the anxiety about “false” begging is also an anxiety about the theatricality of the social world: about the potential falseness of social surfaces, the susceptibility to manipulation of social identity. The “true beggar,” who has no means of livelihood, Halliday writes, “has invariably commanded the respect and excited the compassion of his fellow men.” But “the beggar whose poverty is not real, but assumed, is no longer a beggar in the true sense of the word, but a cheat and an impostor, and as such he is naturally regarded, not as an object for compassion, but as an enemy of the state” (393). What, however, is a beggar “in the true sense of the word”? What, indeed, is a “false” beggar? For Mayhew, the “false beggar” is not just a corrupter of images but a corrupter of language: the desire for a “true sense of the word” is the desire for a “true” beggar, a wish for an absolute correspondence between sign and referent. A “false beggar” is, more practically, a professional one who knows the code of beggary and seeks to manipulate it, to sell a salable identity. Both “true” and “false” beggars deal in images, exchanging identity for coin. The term “false” is important, however, because it maintains the possibility of locating “true” identity not subject to the vicissitudes of representation.
As part of the apparatus of the Poor Law, the concern with "true" and "false" beggars reflects a desire to locate the truth of identity in the body by means of the separation of productive from unproductive bodies. (The comment made by Halliday's friend—"Did you see him spit"—defines identity in terms of the body's adaptation to labor.) Mayhew locates the truth of the beggar's identity in the presence or absence of the potential for production; the "true beggar" is one who cannot, for reasons of physical disability or illness, work. And if the unproductive body is true, it follows for Mayhew that the productive body is at least potentially false; the capacity for productive labor without any sign of a product suggests that the impulse toward productivity is directed toward the body itself. On the one hand, a choice of profession may be regarded as a choice of identity. But, on the other, the very idea of choice opens up the possibility of multiple identities—an instability that the idea of an identity divided between work and home attempts to resolve, as I will discuss later. Productivity poses the threat of multiple identities for Mayhew: the "false beggar" epitomizes this problem by making the production of identity a profession in itself.16

But the "false beggar" also disturbs because, in his capacity for producing representations, he endangers the identities of those who encounter him. As David Marshall has argued, sympathy—defined as the imagined reproduction of another's feeling within an observer's mind—is inherently bound up with representation and theatricality.17 The beggar may be the focus of such intense concern about the possibility of separating "true" identity from "false"—for as well as for the Victorians—because his confrontation with the potential charity-giver presents an exemplary moment of theatricality in social life: a moment in which, as Marshall puts it, individuals "face each other as actors and spectators" (136). And that confrontation involves an exchange not only of money but also of identity—identity already implicated in a system of representation and exchange. Halliday's linking of sympathy and coin implicitly connects identity with exchange: the offer of money acts as a sign that the observer has to...
volved his own identity—including his belief in his own ability to tell "true" from "false"—in an exchange with the beggar's. Sympathy and coin, themselves within the realm of representation, are presented as guar-
antees of authenticity in the transaction between charity-giver and beg-
gar, offering evidence of the charity-giver's belief in the truth of the beg-
gar's image, as well as in his ability to read those truths. (Hugh Boone is
supported by the public, and tolerated by the police, because they know
him to be a "professional"; less important than the truth or falsity of
the beggar's identity is the comfort they receive from being reassured of
their ability to tell the difference.) What happens, then, when the observer dis-
covers that he has unwittingly identified with a representation? The cate-
gory of "false beggar" not only reveals the observer's failure to read iden-
tity correctly, but also reveals sympathy, coin, and identity to be mere
currency: no single one of these, offered in exchange, can guarantee the
authenticity of the other. The "false beggar" makes visible a system of ex-
change wherein sympathy, coin, and identity can circulate endlessly, never
drawing upon any fund of truth.

But the "false beggar" also takes advantage of the exchange between
himself and the potential charity-giver as exchange. Adam Smith argues
that while sympathy requires the observer's projection of himself into
the sufferer's situation, it also requires the sufferer who desires sympathy
to imagine how he would appear to a spectator: "As they are constantly
considering what they themselves would feel, if they actually were the
sufferers, so he is as constantly led to imagine in what manner he would
be affected if he was only one of the spectators of his own situation."18
Both figures in the "scene of sympathy," Marshall writes, "play the roles
of spectator and spectacle" (173). The potential charity-giver's power in-
bears both in his ability to give money and in his imaginative projection:
the former, in fact, depends upon the vividness and perceived truth of
the latter. But that power is undermined by the charity-giver's suscepti-
bility to representation: his imaginative re-creation of the sufferer's situ-
ation is matched by the sufferer's need to imagine what will provoke his
sympathy. And it is this reciprocity that underlies the anxiety about false

18 Smith, The Theory of Moral Sentiments, 22; quoted in David Marshall, The Figure of
Theater: Shaftesbury Defoe, Adam Smith, and George Eliot (New York: Columbia University
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beggary: the "false beggar" endangers the charity-giver's identity by encouraging him to identify with a mere representation. The fiction of the "true beggar" is consolatory, therefore, in its construction of a figure who not only will not, but cannot, project a figure seen as nothing more than a vessel for the charity-giver's projection. The "false beggar" and the finance capitalist, then, prove to be not only exchangeable figures, but also figures for exchange—figures whose identities seem to inhere only in representation. And while Mayhew's project would protect the observer's identity by establishing the beggar's, his work finally undermines the safety of both. Similarly, Conan Doyle, in a story not only destined for the popular market but to be sold in railway stations to businessmen commuting between home and City, simultaneously assures his readers that false identities can be done away with and implicates those readers, and himself, in the processes of exchange that bring such identities into being.

Just as Mayhew's work pits the beggar and the journalist against each other, so too does Conan Doyle's story associate Holmes and St. Clair through their use of disguise. In its opening section, Watson and his wife receive a visit from Kate Whitney, whose husband has disappeared for two days, and who is known by his wife to be in an opium den in the City. Visiting the den to seek him out, Watson there encounters Holmes, disguised as a regular customer. "He sat now as absorbed as ever, very thin, very wrinkled, bent with age, an opium pipe dangling from his fingers. ... It took all my self-control to prevent me from breaking out into a cry of astonishment. He had turned his back so that none could see him but I. His form had filled out, his wrinkles were gone, the dull eyes had regained their fire, and there, sitting by the fire and grinning at my surprise, was none other than Sherlock Holmes." Like St. Clair, whose beggar's disguise originally served him when he was a reporter writing a series of articles on begging, Holmes's disguise helps him penetrate the opium den unnoticed. Both Holmes and St. Clair employ disguise in their professions; for both disguise becomes a metaphor for profession. The transformation undergone in the opium den has its correlative, in Victorian life, in the imagined transformation of the husband and father who disappears mysteriously into "the City" in the morning and returns at night to a family...
which has no firsthand knowledge of what he does. And the idea of opium, like that of disguise, allows for a literalization of and play upon the idea of transformation where Whittaker emotes the dina "sleazy" man and emerges "pale, haggard, and unkempt." St. Clair finds that he "could every morning emerge as a spurious beggar and in the evening transform [himself] into a well-dressed man about town." As Holmes describes him, even though St. Clair "had no occupation," his regular departure and return from the City every day substitutes for one, confirming his good character: he "was interested in several companies and were it not known as a rule every morning, returning by the 5:14 from Cannon Street every night." And, indeed, St. Clair gets along very nicely without any evidence of a profession, as he describes his situation: it was possible to continue this activity for years without anyone actually knowing what he did during the day. "As I grew richer I grew more ambitious, took a house in the country, and eventually married, without anyone having a suspicion as to my real occupation. My wife knew that I had business in the City. The bit little knew what." 19

In moving back and forth between the City, the opium den, and the St. Clair home, the story plays St. Clair's various identities against one another: the figure who plies his trade as a beggar in the City every day, through the use of disguise—a painted face, a scar, a shock of red hair—and skillful acting; "a facility in repartee, which improved by practice, and

19 It is useful here to think of Florence Dombey's adventure in the City: having lost, or having been lost by Susan Nipper, Florence leaves the sheepfold and finds herself alone, knowing only that she could look for "her father's offices," and that Dombey and Son was "a great house on the City." It is here that she encounters Good Mrs. Brown. Dickens registers the strangeness and bewilderment the City arouses in those who never go there. In the following passage, Florence in her anguish is suspected of "false beggary": "Tired of walking, repulsed and pushed about, anxious for her brother and the nurses, terrified by what she had undergone, and the prospect of encountering her angry father in such an altered state; perplexed and frightened alike by what had passed, and what was passing, and what was yet before her; Florence went upon her weary way with tearful eyes, and once or twice could not help stopping to ease her bursting heart by crying bitterly. But few people noticed her at those times, in the garb she wore: or if they did, believed that she was tutored to excite compassion, and passed on." Charles Dickens, *Dombey and Son* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1981), 132. Though "altered state" clearly refers to Florence, it also suggests that Florence might find Dombey "altered" in the City.
made me quite a recognized character in the City," versus the domestic St. Clair, whose concern about "exposure" manifested itself in concern for his appearance in his children's eyes: "God help me, I would not have them ashamed of their father." The alignment of disguise with travel into the City recalls the Victorian commonplace that the husband's and/or father's true self could be found only at home; that profession was a mask, a false self put on during the day but gladly relinquished "on the stroke of seven," when the husband and father became "himself" again.20 (When we come home, we lay aside our mask and drop our tools, and are no longer lawyers, schoolmasters, clergymen, but only men.)21 But while St. Clair's disguise resembles this notion of profession as mask, the story also implies that his true self may be located in his City life—a possibility enhanced by his desire to keep that life secret, as well as by the use of his talents begging alone.

But if St. Clair's true identity is located in the City, in what does that identity consist? The City appears here not as a place where the Victorian husband goes to take on a social role, but rather as a place where he goes to lose one—where, in the anonymity of the financial world or the opium den, he can find privacy, freedom from the constraints of social and familial roles. Mrs. St. Clair's discovery of her husband alone in what looks like an actual crime—assault on St. Clair—but it also appears as her violation of his privacy; she sees him while walking in the City, where he doesn't expect her to be.22 (Earlier, another wife acts as spy: Kate Whitney had "the surest information" that her husband had "made use of an opium den in the farthest part of the City." The City and the opium den resemble each other as places where the usual constructions of identity can be abandoned, together mediating and dismantling the opposition between City and home; first, by providing a place where identity consists of freedom from identity itself, as representation—and,  

second, implying that places serve not as loci of true or false identity, but rather as switching points along a path of multiple identities. (When Mrs. St. Clair recognizes her husband's writing, what she recognizes is "His hand when he wrote hurriedly. It is very unlike his usual writing, and yet I know it well." Identifying this writing as St. Clair's because it is uncharacteristic, she points toward the same fluidity of identity literalized in her husband's changing of places.) The den resembles the City as a place where identity is replaced by habit, moreover, of consumption associated with the loss of identity. We have already seen that Holmes, lacking an occupation with which to identify St. Clair, defines him by his habits and his finances: St. Clair is "a man of temperate habits," whose "whole debts...amount to £1,000, while he has £220 standing to his credit in the Capital and Counties Bank." It makes sense, then, that when the police search the opium den for his body they find only a coat filled with coins—a coat more substantial, its pockets weighted with pennies, than the body which had inhabited it.

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Sympathy and the Spirit of Capitalism

A former actor, St. Clair uses his skill with makeup to devise the beggar's disguise as Hugh Boone; he thus resembles one of Mayhew's "false beggars." But his journalistic background—which leads him to put on the beggar's disguise in the first place—connects him with Mayhew as well. Disguised as Hugh Boone, St. Clair expresses his culture's ambivalence about the activity of "the man who does something in the City." But his transformation also reveals what underlies the social scientist/journalist's project: the sympathy and identification responsible for Mayhew's success in collecting and transcribing the stories of those he interviews in London's slums also account for St. Clair's success as "false beggar," and both amount to a dealing in representation, a selling of the beggar's identity. Indeed, by making Hugh Boone the beggar and Neville St. Clair the (former) investigative reporter one and the same, Conan Doyle erases the distinction between identification and exploitation: to "know" the beggar is to trade in his identity, and to trade in his identity is to sell—both Mayhew and St. Clair do—the words. (There is a difference, however: St. Clair finds reporting to be "arduous labor" but has no difficulty with the labor involved in creating Hugh Boone. In fact, he takes pleasure in the
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role. "Arduousness," here, would seem to stand for the visibility of labor, which can be perceived as difficult only after having been perceived in the first place. Since labor is only what a culture recognizes as labor, the refusal to see that begging involves labor keeps society from having to acknowledge its complicity in the creation of begging as an activity. The ease with which St. Clair takes on the identity of Hugh Boone, and his pleasure in doing so, represent an effacement of labor that makes it all the more necessary to put the "false beggar" to work.

And yet while unmasking the exploitative nature of Mayhew's project, Conan Doyle's story performs the same function as Mayhew's social science: in detecting the beggar, and making the "false beggar" confess the "truth" of his identity, it purports to distinguish true identity from false. And, maintaining the opposition between "true" and "false" in the figure of the beggar, both works appear to support the possibility of doing away with the world of representation the "false beggar" implies. It is this possibility, however, that they also finally undermine, since both Mayhew's structure and Holmes's reproduce the system of representation they find so troublesome.

In his section on beggary, Halliday describes an encounter with a one-armed beggar claiming to be a soldier wounded in battle. Quizzing the man, Halliday catches him in a factual error and, after accusing him of lying, proceeds to offer him a shilling—and his freedom—in exchange for his true story (418). In initiating and reproducing the business of the "false beggar"—the trading of identity, as narrative, for coin—Halliday exposes the ideology underlying Mayhew's project: not the desire to undo the system of exchange wherein identity is offered for money but rather the desire to maintain it, reinstating the hierarchy the beggar's imposture has upset by reaffirming the social scientist's position as arbiter of social identity. The end of Conan Doyle's story similarly has St. Clair telling his tale to Holmes and the police in exchange for a guarantee of confidentiality—a guarantee that will enable him, in spite of adjurations to the contrary, to keep "Hugh Boone" secret from his wife.

The conclusion of Doyle's story revolves around the question of whether or not a crime has been committed. What St. Clair most fears—"exposure"—is exactly what the case requires, for Holmes discovers the solution to the crime in one of the most private of bourgeois spaces. In
the bathroom." St. Clair’s violation of bourgeois values is represented as dirt; what is needed to remove him—to make him come clean—is a sponge and water.

The man’s face peeled off under the sponge like the bark from a tree. Gone was the coarse brown tint! Gone, too, was the horrid scar which had seamed it across, and the twisted lip which had given the repulsive sneer to his face! A twitch brought away the tangled red hair, and there, sitting up in his bed, was a pale, sad-faced, smooth-skinned, black-haired and refined-looking man rubbing his eyes and staring about him with sleepily bewildered eyes. Then suddenly realising the exposure, he broke into a scream and threw himself down with his face to the pillow.

Holmes’s washing reveals what might well be taken, for all its lack of specificity and interest, as a description of no one in particular; the passage’s fascination lies with what it repeatedly invokes as “gone” rather than with what remains. As in the description of Holmes in the opium den, the narrative lingers over the moment of transformation, the moment at which identity is revealed to have been—and to be—mistaken. Indeed, these moments suggest that the pleasures of identity (and, for the story’s reader as for St. Clair, of identification) lie not in one position or the other but in the detachment from both and the possibility of movement between; when Boone’s face (not mask) peels off, it reveals a man whose identity possesses little interest when he isn’t being someone else.

The suspected crime—murder—is found not to have taken place; what did occur was rather what Holmes calls an “error.” And that error seems to have been a crime against the family: “You would have done better to have trusted your wife,” advises Holmes. But what does Holmes mean here—that, if St. Clair had confided in his wife, the beggar’s disguise would have been acceptable? That Mrs. St. Clair, apprised of her husband’s plans, would have acted as the police, and prevented the situation from occurring? The actual crime of begging is regarded very lightly—“What was a fine to me?” More serious, in this St. Clair’s violation of the rules of bourgeois family life to hide his false identity to his wife.

But the story only seems to resolve the problem of St. Clair’s identity by entrusting it to his wife; in fact, while returning her husband to her, Holmes and the police keep their knowledge of his activity to themselves,

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("If the police are to hush this thing up," says Inspector Bradstreet, "there must be no more of Hugh Boone.") "The Man with the Twisted Lip," like the Poor Law, seems to resolve the problem of the indeterminacy of social identity by locating identity in the body: a cut on the hand assures us that Boone and St. Clair are the same. But it goes a step further, requiring the subject to tell his story, to constitute his identity as (and as) narrative. And, sealing the confidentiality St. Clair desires for the story the police and the detective protect the system they accuse St. Clair of having perpetrated, reassuring their power to control an exchange that will remain, necessarily, in the terms of representation. For, having divested himself of his multiple identities at the police station, St. Clair will have to invent another before he gets home, thus beginning life again on a foundation of representation. Rather than determining the truth or falsity of any particular identity, these texts perpetuate a system wherein a subject is free to inhabit the identity designated as acceptable for him or her by the authorities. (Hence the unresolvable tension between fluidity and hierarchy in all these examples: Middlesex's authority for instance, lies not in his ability to diversify the mode of the beggar's second story but in his ability to have the beggar tell it. Only the storyteller knows whether the narrative he tells is true, but that knowledge is not accompanied by power. The tale told by the beggar, like St. Clair's writing—and like the hand that identifies Hugh Boone as St. Clair (or vice versa)—may well be merely "one of his hands.") Truth matters less than the production and maintenance of the proper fiction, or rather truth lies not in the story but in the system of exchange that requires the storyteller to tell it; a system which announces that man, and that requires bias to unravel himself before the police, the detective, the social scientist, the journalist. What is understood as stable identity in these works is constituted within and produced by the very system of exchange Mayhew and Conan Doyle condemn.23 And it is that system of exchange which links the "false beggar" to his detractors—Mayhew, Conan Doyle, Holmes, and finally St. Clair himself—as versions of the writer, not unlike the begging-letter writer whose

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23 This support a definition of truth offered by Michel Foucault: "Truth is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, circulation and operation of statements." Power/Knowledge, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 133.
profession is to trade stories of poverty and decline for cash, providing the public with an opportunity to winnow “false” identities from “true” ones by means of narrative. Since Mayhew (actually Halliday, who, appropriately enough, allowed his professional identity to be subsumed within Mayhew’s) included himself as a character in his own story, he too is implicated in the exchange with his “false beggar.” He constructs himself as social scientist at the same moment that he constructs the identities of his subjects. It is more characteristic of the writer, however, to hide that implication, and no writer is more famously effaced behind his narrative than Conan Doyle—who, as a world of Sherlockiana attests, seems to have created an actual person rather than a fictional character. And as fictional characters, Holmes is also famous for self-effacement: the skill with which he projects himself into “the criminal mind” while at the same time remaining aloof from it, as if his identity inhered, like the writer’s, in non-identity: in the ability to project himself into the identities of others. Mayhew, Conan Doyle, St. Clair, and Holmes are all, literally or figuratively, writers, and the figure of the “false beggar” is a figure for the writer, involved in a sympathetic taking on of identity that is also an act of self-effacement, placing its instigator in an ambivalent relationship not only with the other into whose identity he projects himself but with identity itself, so easily slipped on and off.

Both Mayhew and Conan Doyle began to write out of financial need. Mayhew, in particular, may be said to have deliberately differentiated himself from his subjects precisely through the act of writing about them: the sympathy and identification that enabled his work kept away the possibility that he would actually occupy the beggar’s place. And Conan Doyle describes his decision to write as words that parallel St. Clair’s decision to beg: “It was in third year [1879] that I first learned that shillings might be earned in other ways than by filling phials.”24 St. Clair says, “You can imagine how hard it was to settle down to arduous work at £2 a week when I knew that I could earn as much in a day by smearing my face with a little paint, laying my cap on the ground, and sitting still.” Upon discovering that he could make more money selling stories than as a medical inv-

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Stephen Knight maintains that "The Man with the Twisted Lip" expresses Conan Doyle’s shameful feelings about writing "vulgar potboilers" rather than the "literary novel by means of which he hoped to establish himself as a respectable author. Publishing in the Strand—a magazine sold, appropriately enough, in railway stations—to catch the commuting white-collar reader"—Conan Doyle felt (according to Knight) that he was taking "profits made in the street from City workers." Knight’s reading depends upon a number of elements—Hugh Boone as "degraded," mystery-story writing as an "accidental discovery" which suddenly supplies Conan Doyle with large sums of money—that the story, and the biography, do not necessarily support. But the connection he emphasizes between writing and beggary may be drawn out in a number of ways: in terms, for example, of the need to appeal to an audience’s characteristic of both, or in terms of the movement from "filling phials" to "sitting still" that describes Conan Doyle’s progression as well as St. Clair’s—a movement that is, more to less visible labor. If Conan Doyle identified with his subject, as Mayhew apparently has identified with his, both suggestively passed that identification to account. An identification with illegitimate production is legitimated in a form of production—writing—that allows for recognition, for both imaginative participation and professional "discovery.

On the one hand, Knight suggests the achievement of gentlemanly respectability; on the other, he evokes the degradation and loss of identity associated with the opium den. The identity Holmes and the police desire for St. Clair, in contrast, seems to depend upon incessant movement. And yet even as it seems to create such identity, this movement also dismembers it—and as he transforms contemporary readers of "The Man with the Twisted Lip," commuting between home and City, into a microcosm for his story, Conan Doyle challenges the polarity between true and false identities the story seeks to establish. For what is the identity of the man on the train, reading? Conan Doyle’s story may indeed express an opposition between "true" and "false" when he fashions himself to be living a "street" in which the true, respectable self finds it necessary to trade on a false

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identity in order to survive. And yet if Holmes’s creator maintained, along with many of his contemporaries, a notion of a true self that could be supported only at the expense of participation in the false identities of the marketplace, this passage between high and low culture has the same implications as St. Clair’s changes of identity: a characteristic Victorian movement between the poles of responsibility and irresponsibility, the subject must continue to strive for the former because he is always kept from complete adherence to it by participation in the latter. The question the story poses is this: What is identity? But rather, Where, at any moment, does identity exist? As Holmes perhaps best of all the way the idea of responsibility keeps identity in motion: the way the social self circulates endlessly as it imagines itself nearing the image of a desired, culturally valued self that will finally (and paradoxically) be still.

The irresistible continuity between “filling phials” and “sitting still” recalls the opium den, which evokes the same images of passivity and loss of identity that the figure of the City man does—and that also surround Holmes. The story displays anxiety about labor that appears not to be labor, often mentioning the fact that, when working, Holmes appears to be doing nothing. Both Holmes and St. Clair live by their wits; neither is perceived to be working when he is actually hardest at work. Thus Holmes, at work on the case:

took off his coat and waistcoat, put on a large blue dressing-gown, and then wandered about the room collecting pillows from his bed and cushions from the sofa and armchairs. With these he constructed a sort of Eastern divan, upon which he propped himself cross-legged, with an ounce of shag tobacco and a box of matches laid out in front of him. In the dim light of the lamp I saw him sitting there, an old briar pipe between his lips, his eyes fixed vacantly upon the corner of the ceiling, the blue smoke curling up from him, silent, motionless, with the light shining upon his strong-set aquiline features.

Indeed, Holmes at work manifests nothing so much as the habit of an opium den. Producing the solution to the case in a scenario which highlights the absurdity of visible labor, Holmes resembles the “man who does nothing in the City,” as well as the professional whose productivity the Victorian could not easily locate.
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The beggar, the finance capitalist, and the detective are unproductive in the same sense in which Adam Smith found many entertainers and professionals to be, since they produce no “vendible commodity... for which an equal quantity of labour could afterwards be procured.” The figure who produces rather than produces—whose speech, writing, or self is his commodity—blurs the easily readable relationship between producer and product, laborer and commodity, the professional and his services, whose merit, at least to some extent, the client has to take on faith. Having, as Harold Perkin writes, “a professional interest in disinterest,” the professional also assumed suspicion for his “Protestant” ability to “assume the guise of any other class at will.” It is therefore appropriate that it is in the figure of the professional as well as by means of professionals—the detective and the writer—that, in this story, the beggar and the gentleman meet and become indistinguishable from one another.

When Watson first meets Holmes, in A Study in Scarlet, he has difficulty figuring out his future colleague’s profession, given what Holmes seems to know. It’s not clear what’s wiser for Watson actually to draw up a chart, listing such terms as “Knowledge of Literature—Nil... Knowledge of Chemistry—Profound,” and, when finished, throws it into the fire in despair: “If I can only find out what the fellow is driving at by reconciling all these accomplishments, and discovering a calling which needs them all... I may as well give up the attempt at once.” What’s baffling about St. Clair, similarly, is his failure to fit into any obvious profession. But Holmes’s profession, of course, depends upon exactly the kind of indeterminacy he finds inappropriate for St. Clair. Holmes, it has often been pointed out, is a model of the “gentlemanly amateur,” “relaxed and disinterested.” His lack of specialization is his chief asset, since his work requires a collection of arcane bits of knowledge that would not appeal necessarily to a member of any other profession. Yet Holmes does not simply accumulate random

27 Perkin, The Origins of Modern English Society, 1778–1880 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), 260, 253. Perkin is referring here to the new professional class, in the process of differentiating itself from the older professional class—represented here by Whitney and Watson—and from the capitalist middle class, more directly vulnerable to market fluctuations.
information: indeed, by his own account his methods are supremely practical. His theory of the mind is based on an analogy with material labor: "I consider that a man's mind is a little like an empty attic, and you have to stock it with such furniture as you choose. A fool takes in all the lumber of every sort that he comes across, so that the knowledge that might be useful to him gets crowded out. . . . Now the skilful workman is very careful indeed as to what he takes into his brain-attic. He will have nothing but the tools which may help him in doing his work." (A Study in Scarlet.) In fact, Holmes's apparently scattered knowledge signals his professionalism. When Watson meets him, for instance, he has invented a process for determining bloodstains; he also reveals that he "dabbles with poisons a good deal." The one element that signals "gentlemally amateur" is in apparent lack of professional value in Holmes's violin playing. Yet even that, as Watson describes it, is a part of the ordinary productivity of music as a means of relaxation, but rather toward cogitation: "If left to himself... he would seldom produce any music or attempt any recognizing air. Leaning back in his armchair of an evening, he would close his eyes and screech carelessly at the fiddle which was thrown across his knee... Whether the music aided his thoughts, or whether the playing was simply the result of whim or fancy, was more than I could determine."

Despite his practicality, however, Holmes maintains an attitude of gentlemanly disinterest; while asserting that "the theories... which appear to you to be so chimerical, are... so practical that I depend upon them for my bread and cheese," he also claims that he may get nothing out of a case but a laugh at the expense of the inspectors who fail to solve it. Asserting his economic interest in his work almost at the same time that he discloses his capital, Holmes suggests, is partly intellectual, his work a function of desire and a source of pleasure rather than a necessity. It makes sense, then, that in "The Man with the Twisted Lip" Holmes confesses to a fascination with that other profession who manifestly enjoys his work: "I have watched the fellow more than once," he says of Boone, "before I ever thought of making his professional acquaintance, and have been surprised at the harvest which he has reaped in a short time." Inspired by Boone's apparently
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effortless production of income, Holmes boasts, at the end of the story, that he solved the case merely “by sitting upon five pillows and consuming an ounce of shag.”

From the nonprofessional’s perspective, such effortlessness is only a step away from doing nothing, and professionals are found in the opium den, in this novel, because both professionals and opium feats Victorian anxieties about unproductivity. The opium den was a fantasy about unproductivity, explicitly citing this threat, the anti-opium movement in the nineteenth century encouraged the idea that opium represented a particular danger for the working classes and raised anxiety about its spread to the middle classes. Opium, warned one physician in 1843, made the individual who indulges himself “a worse than useless member of society.”29 The lascar, similarly, was a figure of “surplus” populations associated with unproductivity: considered, paradoxically, to be “indolent” themselves—that is, likely to be a “false beggar” (for Mayhew, Asian beggars were figures of “extraordinary mendacity”)30—and associated anxiety for his potential to take the place of English or Irish laborers, thereby producing unemployment (and “false beggars”) in the native population. In his fictional role as proprietor of the opium den, the lascar is an entrepreneur of unproductivity, his appellation encoding the kind of information—about “race,” profession, and social position—such labels are meant to supply.

The opium den undermines the possibility that St. Clair’s “true” identity can be located either at home or at work; situated between the two, the den provides a place for transformation, for the constitution of identity in, or as, exchange. But the den also suggestively associates opium addiction with professional identity. Like disguise, which functions throughout the

29 Anxiety about opium use in the late nineteenth century was associated with theories of the degeneracy of the middle class; the anti-opium movement helped spread the belief that “opium smoking was somehow threatening to its implications for the indigenous population.” See Virginia Berridge and Griffith Edwards, Opium and the People: Opium Use in Nineteenth-Century England (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982) 175-198.

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story as a metaphor for profession, opium transforms appearance. Yet is
does so more profoundly than disguise: opium makes Whitney into “a
drunk in the drug...with yellow, puffy face, drooping lids, and pinpoint
pupils.” Where disguise points to the existence of the authentic identity
underlying it, evoking an easy movement between true and false,
Whitney’s disfigurement implies an inability to move back and forth—a
fracture and loss of identity implied, while the story invites us to imagine
disguise, profession, writing, and, here, reading (Whitney begins his opium
addiction in deliberate imitation of DeQuincey) as analogous movements
in and out of identity, the idea of opium addiction deconstructs that
movement, suggesting that the individual in motion may become stuck,
ot in one identity or another but in that very detachment from identity
figured here both in the addict’s stillness and the City man’s incessant
movement. Although the professional, or the City man, fantasizes himself
moving freely between identities, his very movement registers his enslavement.
Whitney’s addiction—the presence of which disturbs the story’s
regular movement between suburb and City—thus represents the other
side of the coin on whose face St. Clair and, preeminently, Holmes enact
the pleasures of disguise. And in fact, when the police require
St. Clair to remain, visibly, in circulation, they insist upon exactly the kind
of detachment from self that makes St. Clair into the entrepreneur of
identities they accuse him of being. The professional, Whitney’s addiction
implies, is addicted not to one identity or another but rather to the de-
tachment from self both opium, and profession, imply.

But the story establishes a difference between Whitney and St. Clair, on
the one hand, and Holmes on the other. Holmes famously has no private
life, only a bohemianism that dramatizes the absence of one: the uncovering
of his “true” identity in the opium den requires no scrubbing but only,
apparently, an act of will, a change of mood—possibly, on Watson’s part,
a slight change of perception. “His form had filled out, his wrinkles were
gone, the dull eyes had regained their fire.” Holmes “is” his professional
identity to him, entitlement to profession is disguised as the discovery of
identity through it. (When, in the same scene, he remarks, “I suppose,
Watson... that you imagine that I have added opium smoking to cocaine
injections,” Holmes emphasizes the bohemianism that seems to draw him
away from his profession but in fact registers the absence, in his life, of any
thing else.) Dedicated to a profession he himself has invented, and of
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which he is the only member ("I suppose I am the only one in the world. I'm a consulting detective"; A Study in Scarlet), Holmes is a fantasy of professionalism as unalienated labor: of the highly specialized professional as a figure for whom above cannot be an issue because his work so completely satisfies his nature, because his work is the complete expression of his nature. (Just as writing provides Conan Doyle with an alternative to medicine as no is Holmes' professionalism compared here with the declaring of Whitney and Watson.) His work, in fact, is no work at all, but rather—as the nightlong smoking sessions suggests—habit: "From long habit the train of thoughts ran so swiftly through my mind that I arrived at the conclusion without being conscious of intermediate steps" (A Study in Scarlet).

In the figure of Holmes, addiction is the same as fulfillment; for him, losing the self in one's work is the same as finding the self in it. Yet this fantasy of professional identity exists alongside, and depends upon the production of, everyone else's divided self: it is purchased at the expense of those who, imagining that they can wear one identity in public and preserve another, secretly, for themselves, provide their culture with the reassurance about identity it desires (Wilde's Picture of Dorian Gray articulates another version of this fantasy). Both Whitney and St. Clair become objects of official scrutiny, it is important to recall, not when they begin leading double lives but when they cease to do so; the police and Holmes require them not to abandon their double lives but to lead them in plain sight—and, above all, to keep moving. For Whitney's and St. Clair's cessations of movement reveal that the double life functions for them, and for Victorian culture, in the same way that disguise does for Holmes: it preserves the fiction of an authentic self. And that may be what Holmes—and Boone—are smiling about.

Having revealed this secret, however, the story must conceal it once again, if only to provoke Holmes with something to do. For the detective's business is to find the strange in the commonplace; he, he claims, "is infinitely stronger than anything the mind of man could invent" ("A Case of Identity"). In "The Man with the Twisted Lip" he is momentarily baffled by what has proven to be not so commonplace: St. Clair's choice of profession. The point of the case is therefore to return St. Clair the beggar—and St. Clair the gentleman—to the ordinary, middle-class world of work and family; the world where things still while Holmes moves about, and that provides the identities into which he will, temporarily, disappear.
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Thus assured that the ordinary world’s lack of ordinariness will remain secret—until, that is, he discovers it once again—Holmes produces the commonplace world on which he depends for his labor, and clears the way for his own practice.

There, sitting by the fire and grinning at my surprise, was none other than Sherlock Holmes.

The twisted lip is suggestively not quite a smile. As scar or deformity, it elicits sympathy even as it mocks those who are persuaded by it; both subservient smile and menacing grimace, it takes away with one half what it offers with the other.31 As scar, the lip may be said to refer not only to the disability that would make physical labor impossible but to the body of the worker altered by such labor: Boone may be said to return to the arena of commerce the figure of the producer that has disappeared from it.32 But what is returned is simulacra and spectacle: no longer seen in its productive capacity, no longer associated with objects produced, the worker’s body, as Boone metaphorically represents it, appears only as something immediately transformed into money.

And yet as wound or deformity the wound or deformity would not have prohibited the performance of physical labor. The lip is not a disability but rather the sign of one, eliding not so much to physical injury as to a knowledge of the codes that represent it. It is, above all, a knowing smile, providing another link between Holmes and Boone: Holmes, we have seen, will take on a case requiring as payment only a laugh at those who have failed to solve it. Glenn W. Most has interpreted the detective’s smile as an acknowledgment of power: “This is the smile of wisdom, complacent in the superiority of its own power and tolerant of the weakness of mere human beings.”33

[Notes]


32 Elaine Scarry describes the relation between worker and capitalist as a confrontation between embodied and disembodied figures and suggests that, vampiristically, the capitalist’s absence depends on the worker’s physicality.

33 Glenn W. Most has interpreted the detective’s smile as an acknowledgment of power: “This is the smile of wisdom, complacent in the superiority of its own power and tolerant of the weakness of mere human beings.”
If the smiling detective understands something no one else does, what does the man with the twisted lip understand? Giving St. Clair the detective's freedom of disguise and fluidity of identity, Conan Doyle makes the beggar's smile detachable, preserving that realm of nonidentity for his detective by enabling Holmes to remove it from—by wiping it off—St. Clair's face.
