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chapter three

Sentimental Science: Harriet Martineau’s *Illustrations of Political Economy*

During 1832, the same year that the first Reform Bill was passed, Harriet Martineau began to write her series of novellas titled *Illustrations of Political Economy*. Through this series, her first major literary production, Martineau simultaneously established herself as an author and affirmed the emerging science of political economy as a new providential system of natural laws and inevitable consequences. Although political economy already had such prominent spokespersons and advocates as David Ricardo, J. R. McCulloch, James Mill, John Stuart Mill, and Nassau Senior, Martineau’s narrative project turned that “science” into a complex series of natural injunctions that could be used to regulate almost all elements of human behavior and to ameliorate almost all aspects of human experience. In addition, Martineau’s overwhelmingly successful literary debut extended the audience for classical economic theory by rearticulating its principles within an economically and intellectually accessible form, published independently of any explicit political or social allegiances. In this chapter, I explore how the form and the content of Martineau’s *Illustrations* were the basis of one of the most important extensions and expansions of scientific economic theory in the early nineteenth century. I also argue, however, that Martineau’s popularizing project was riddled with tensions and contradictions that ultimately compromised its didactic message. More specifically, the very fictional forms that Martineau so successfully used to win an audience for political economy were also the source of the tensions that deformed her project.

During the nineteenth century, Martineau’s popularizing project was most often compared not to that of J. R. McCulloch, the “professional economist,” but to that of Jane Marceť’s *Conversations on Political Economy* (1816). Marceť’s text, the first edition of which actually predated Ricardo’s *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*, is interesting and important as a point of comparison and contrast with Martineau’s later narrative project. First, there are several significant similarities between Marceť’s and Martineau’s writings.
on political economy. Both authors are women contributing to a traditionally masculine discursive field. Similarly, both are nonspecialists who self-consciously attempt to domesticate the “foreign” or “alien” subject of political economy for other nonspecialist readers by rewriting “expert knowledge” in more familiar and accessible generic forms. Finally, both writers see the promulgation and teaching of economic knowledge as having an explicitly moral element.

There are, then, important similarities between the two popularizing projects. The differences are equally striking and, ultimately, more significant for my purposes. First, there is the difference in timing. Marcet’s work was published before McCulloch had begun to profess Ricardian economics as the teleological endpoint of political economy’s scientific development, before the brief period in the 1820s when political economy was considered a fashionable rage, and before the discourse of political economy began to have a significant impact on national legislation and policy. Martineau’s novellas, in contrast, were written at a time when the idea of political economy as a fashionable discourse had passed but during which political economy was self-consciously deployed in national debates about the Poor Laws, the Corn Laws, banking, the Irish question, slavery, and colonial policies.

The intended audience for each text was also different. Marcet’s Conversations were aimed at the children and young adults of the landed and governing elite, while Martineau’s Illustrations were aimed at adults of all classes of British society. This difference relates to a crucial difference in authorial intentions. Jane Marcet’s text was one in a series of “conversations,” most of which actually focused on the natural sciences, that she wrote to instruct young people in the sciences. Martineau undertook her authorial project because she identified political economy as the privileged master discourse of social, economic, and political life. For Martineau, political economy was not simply one science among others that should be taught to privileged children; it was the scientific discourse within which was embedded a complex template for individual moral behavior and national social progress.

This difference is reflected in the two projects’ differing treatment of moral questions. In Marcet’s Conversations, the well-intentioned but uninformed Caroline consistently articulates traditional moral principles that seem to be at odds with the principles of political economy voiced by her tutor, Mrs. B. However, through the course of the conversations, Mrs. B explains to Caroline how the two systems—that of morality and that of political economy—are not at odds. Instead, Mrs. B teaches Caroline, the principles of political economy “tend to promote the happiness of nations and the purest of morality.” Martineau would not disagree with this statement, but
her notion of “the purest of morality” differs decidedly from that of Marcet. As the whole dialogic structure of Conversations stresses, Marcet’s emphasis is on the reconciliation of traditional conceptions of morality with the apparently amoral—or even immoral—injunctions of political economy. For Martineau, in contrast, the injunctions of political economy themselves constitute the groundwork of a new moral system. The principles of political economy constitute the providential framework on which the individual novellas work out and illustrate this new moral system. Individual moral choice, within this system, has an inevitable effect upon the well-being of the nation as a whole, one that is worked out time and time again through the course of Martineau’s tales. This effect is one of the reasons that it is important for Martineau to reach an audience of all classes. Morality, for her, is not primarily a private or personal matter but instead is fundamentally linked to the affairs of the nation. Via what Martineau perceives as the scientific and naturally determining “laws” of political economy, individual economic actions inevitably react upon the welfare of the community as a whole. Because of her belief in this connection, narrative becomes an ideal format for Martineau’s popularizing work. At the same time that she adopts the genre of fictional narrative for her project, Martineau firmly believes that “science” is what authorizes the project. Her goal in Illustrations of Political Economy was to maintain political economy’s claims to scientific validity while at the same time making the “science” more attractive and accessible. Published between 1832 and 1834, Illustrations included twenty-five novellas, each focusing on one economic principle or set of principles. Martineau selected these principles to follow the systematic unfolding of the “science,” thus beginning with the basic principles of capital and labor in the first volume, Life in the Wilds, and ending with the principles of government taxation in the volume The Farrers of Budge-Row.

Martineau explains the goals of her project in the twenty-five-page Preface to the first volume. Adopting a complex rhetoric of “science,” she attempts simultaneously to authorize a body of knowledge that many of her contemporaries dismissed as abstract and inhumane and to legitimate her own narrative contribution. Martineau opens the Preface with a brief survey of the wide array of “sciences” pursued “in an enlightened nation” such as her own, including theology and philology as well as astronomy and the new science of political economy. She then places these sciences in competition with each other for the status of “the most important of the world,” which sets the stage for her argument that political economy, the least studied of all the sciences, is actually the most important. She asks: “Can anything more nearly concern all the members of any society than the way in which the necessaries and comforts of life may be best procured and enjoyed by all?” Because political
economy is so important and so understudied, education in the new science becomes a moral imperative: “Is it not [the people’s] . . . duty, should it not be their pleasure, to listen to those who have observed and compared and come to a certain knowledge of a few grand principles, which, if generally understood, would gradually remove all the obstructions, and remedy the distresses, and equalize the lot of the population? Such ought to be the disposition of the people” (Preface ix). For Martineau, then, learning the principles of a “better economy” is a positive duty for the people and one that “ought to be [their] disposition” (Preface ix). The reason “the people” have a duty to learn the “few grand principles” to which Martineau alludes is inherent in the providential scheme of social amelioration outlined in the latter portion of the passage. Knowledge will allow people to obey the natural laws that govern their world, and it is only through such obedience and conformity of human law and behavior to natural law that the material and moral well-being “of the greatest number” will be attained (MMF 144). Thus, in effect, these laws were providence for Martineau.³ According to Martineau, individual moral principles are derived from the economic system rather than influencing the shape that system “should” take; the system of natural economic laws gives those principles authority and dispenses rewards and punishments for conformity and nonconformity.⁴

In order to instill in people a sense of their duty to learn and live by economic law, Martineau needed to get people to read about political economy, which meant that she had to establish both the importance and the attractiveness of classical economic theory. This situation points to the central tension that underlies Martineau’s project. She must make economic theory accessible and interesting to a nonspecialist public in order to create for herself and for it a readership. At the same time, much of the basis of her appeal to this public was the claim of scientific truth made through Ricardo’s abstract systematization of economic theory. Once the precision and certitude of his theoretical model were recontextualized in terms of “common” or “familiar” issues, the scientific authority and coherence of economic theory were endangered.

Martineau is aware of this tension within her projected narratives, and in another turn of her scientific rhetoric she attempts to manage the tension with a developmental model of the sciences that accommodates both scientific abstraction and the popularization or “illustration” of such abstractions. Repeating the phrases “it is natural” or “it is perfectly natural” five times in two pages, Martineau defensively rationalizes and naturalizes as a developmental process a number of radically different moments, or “stages,” within the emergence of a science. Martineau’s recitation of what is “natural” and “perfectly natural” even attempts to rationalize the threateningly irrational
aspects of that process, such as differences, “disputes,” “contradictions,” and “perplexities.” Next, her developmental narrative naturalizes and authorizes “cold dry form” as equivalent with the attainment of certainty and regularity within a science. This attainment would seem to be the privileged moment of truth within the development of a science, but for Martineau the stability of certainty and regularity is not the end point of such development. Rather, this is a moment when one still looks forward with “hope” and expectation, for the final stage in Martineau’s narrative is not simply “truth” but the “beauty” of that truth. According to Martineau, the way to “discover and display” this beauty is through the “familiar, practical form” of “pictures,” “illustrations,” or “applications”—precisely the form to which her narrative project aspires.

Through the historical teleology she has created, Martineau points directly to her own illustrative project and explicitly attempts to justify her use of fictional narrative to teach the science of political economy. First, Martineau anticipates and meets the objection of hidden didacticism, writing: “We trust we shall not be supposed to countenance the practice of making use of narrative as a trap to catch idle readers, and make them learn something they are afraid of. We detest the practice and feel ourselves insulted whenever a book of the trap kind is put into our hands” (emphasis in original, Preface xiii). What characterizes this “trap” type of narrative for Martineau, and what separates it from her own literary project, is that these works just “pretend to be stories” (Preface xiii). In other words, narrative is not the natural form of the knowledge promulgated in works of “the trap kind” but rather an unconvincing veneer over otherwise unpalatable truths. In contrast, Martineau chooses narrative form because, in her own words, she “really think[s] it the best in which Political Economy can be taught” (Preface xiii). Martineau believes that narrative, at this time, is “the most faithful and most complete” method of teaching this new “moral science.” The current stage of political economy, when the “beauty” of the science is to be discovered and displayed, is implicitly privileged by Martineau as the best, or at least the most important, stage of that development.

It must be acknowledged, of course, that some of Martineau’s rhetorical celebration of narrative is probably a compensatory gesture. Instead of being the “best” or “most important” form through which to promulgate political economy, fictional narrative may have been almost the only form through which Martineau could approach the topic and science of political economy—or at least the only form through which she, as a woman, could do so relatively safely and successfully. As it was, her harshest critics and reviewers focused on the “unfeminine” quality of her subject matter, and even her more favorable reviewers tended to emphasize the beauty of her fictions rather than
the truths those fictions conveyed. However, the historically determined quality of Martineau’s literary “choice” ought not to render invisible the impact of the form she chose for the popularizing project she envisioned.

Martineau’s fictional narratives enabled her to humanize the theory and abstraction many saw as not only uncongenial but also un-English. In addition, by constructing images of economic principles at work among the working classes, the narrative form helped Martineau argue against the accusation that political economy represented only middle-class interests, at the expense of the laboring classes. Less contentiously, she was able to entice her readers with exotic settings and picturesque descriptions of such places as Africa, the West Indies, and Ceylon. Such far-flung settings also enabled her to imaginatively extend the rule of political economy beyond Europe and its colonies to virtually all known locations on the globe. Most importantly for Martineau, her narratives enabled her to assert or, she would say, demonstrate the significance of political economic theory for all, not only extending it with a broad geographical sweep but also penetrating all spheres and aspects of social existence. In conjunction with her materialist psychology, Martineau’s political economy is shown to legislate individual morality, social order, personal psychology, character, and civility, to name just a few of the “economic” effects the novellas explore.

By 1834, Martineau’s publisher, Charles Fox, was selling 10,000 copies of each monthly volume, with the whole series reaching an estimated 144,000 readers. (Compare these numbers to John Stuart Mill’s *Principles of Political Economy*, which, while popular and authoritative, sold only 3,000 copies over the course of four years.) In his patronizing but generally favorable article on the *Illustrations* in the *Edinburgh Review*, William Empson declared that since their publication, “We have heard more political economy . . . than we believe was ever before heard outside the Political Economy Club.” Even the unfavorable reviews testify to the importance of Martineau’s work, simply because of the number of reviewers who felt compelled to respond to it.

Martineau’s popularizing project, then, seems to have been largely successful. But precisely because Martineau developed such an accessible form through which to promulgate economic ideas, her narrative project invited attacks from all quarters. Moreover, her economic novellas not only suffered from the external critiques of conservative reviewers throughout the British Isles but were also plagued by internal contradictions produced by her combination of abstract, “scientific” theory with fictional narrative forms. Despite the careful, justificatory logic of her Preface, Martineau’s literary project is riddled with a series of contradictions generated by her attempt to synthesize such divergent modes of discourse. Although many of these tensions overlap with one another, for the sake of clarity, I have grouped them into three sets of dis-
junctive effects. The first set of tensions might be described as the problems that develop when an abstract theoretical system such as Ricardian economic theory is practically deployed in a “real-world” situation with its own preexisting economic systems in place. Of course the scenarios described in Martineau’s novellas are not the real world but rather narrative representations that deploy conventions of history, realism, geography, and travel narrative. As I shall demonstrate, however, even these realistically rendered—albeit fictive—contexts put a strain on the capitalist theoretical principles that Martineau attempts to embroider onto their background. The second set of tensions is closely related to the first—the product of differences between the dynamics or logic of a specific abstract theoretical system and the dynamics of the specific narrative forms used to “illustrate” that system. The final set of tensions concerns contradictions within the logic of the abstract theory itself. In other words, Martineau’s narrative form at times exposes logical flaws within the economic theory she intends to promote, making visible disjunctions hidden by Ricardian abstraction.

Each of these tensions is important because they dramatically demonstrate the extent to which the dominant form of nineteenth-century economic thought—classical political economy—was at once made possible and undermined by the linguistic modes through which it was developed and articulated. In addition and more generally, the contradictions that open up within Martineau’s novellas reveal the power of literary and other discursive forms to shape and deform the supposedly static content that they “express.” For Martineau’s project, the very narrative forms that enabled her to construct a much broader audience for political economic theory also changed important aspects of that theory as it had been developed by men such as Smith, Ricardo, and James Mill. Thus, the very fact of the wide circulation and readership of Illustrations makes it important to examine more closely the relationship between the narrative form of Martineau’s project and the economic doctrine it intended to popularize.

The first set of tensions that challenges Martineau’s narrative project is the gap between an abstract theoretical system, such as Ricardian economics, and the deployment of that system within an apparently referential representation of a specific and recognizable historical and geographical situation. Martineau does seem aware of potential conflicts in the application of a new theoretical system to a historical (rather than hypothetical) social situation. Though not in these terms, Martineau’s narratives regularly foreground the gap between precapitalist or noncapitalist economic models and contemporary models of nineteenth-century industrial and commercial capitalism. In one of her most
striking stagings of such a gap, for example, Martineau’s *A Manchester Strike* represents an alternative economic consciousness that understands but rejects marketplace logic. The characterizations of the novella’s protagonist, Mr. Allen, and his wife point to the powerful presence of alternative economic models existing alongside and competing with industrial capitalism.

Importantly, it is not the striking workers in Martineau’s tale who most vividly represent these competing economic modes. Although the workers’ strike is doomed to fail, the rationale that drives their strike is largely marketplace logic: they want to withhold their labor now, to increase demand for it, and thus, they hope, to increase their wages. The progress of the plot proves the mistakenness of their economic rationale and thus “educates” them in the “correct” principles of wages and the wage fund. From an early point in the narrative, the workers’ rationale is resisted not only, as expected, by the masters but also very emphatically by the workers’ wives. In their first discussion about the possibility of a strike, one of the workers accuses those resistant to the idea of a turnout as being “afraid of their wives” and declares “that they might wait long for a strike if it was necessary to refrain till the women voted for it, since there was never a woman yet who did not hate a turn-out as she would the plague” (*MS* 23–24). The reason the women hate a turnout is, among other things, that it brings immediate hardship to the household economy and creates potentially long-term uncertainty about future household income. The strike leader, Allen, must meet and quiet his wife’s resistance to his acceptance of that public role, even though he is doing it for the good of the larger community. Likewise, when economic hardship begins to pinch the strikers, Allen’s wife, Mary, begs him—on the basis of his family’s welfare—to leave the strike and accept work from the masters. Women in *A Manchester Strike*, it seems, have a very nearsighted, family-based view of community and economic good. Thus, when the children who had continued to labor despite the strike are locked out by the masters, the strike committee “shook their heads over this weighty additional item of weekly charge,” but the children’s mothers “stroked their . . . heads and smiled when they wished them joy of their holiday, and bade them sleep on in the mornings without thinking of the factory bell” (*MS* 110). The response of these mothers to their children’s unemployment suggests that the domestic unit in *A Manchester Strike* is never solely an economic unit but also, importantly, an affective one. As an affective or sentimental unit, the domestic sphere of the novella is shown not as a complement to the marketplace logic of the workers’ and masters’ public sphere but rather as having a symbolic economic logic of its own, in conflict with the more abstract reckonings of husbands and strike committees."
Although it is mothers and wives who represent and speak for a kind of sentimental economics within most of *A Manchester Strike*, there are several narrative moments in which the reader is implicated in resisting the supply-and-demand logic of the striking workers, the masters, and Martineau’s didactic narrative itself. In terms of the reader’s sympathetic identification, the sentimental heroine of this novella is not Allen’s wife but his daughter, Martha. Early in the story, in a scene that is incidental to the plot of the striking workers, the reader follows Martha to work one night in the factory.

Through this extended scene of sentimental hardship and intimacy, the narrative binds the reader to this young character:

The little girl repaired to the factory, sighing at the thought of the long hours that must pass before she could sit down or breathe the fresh air again. She had been as willing a child at her work as could be till lately: but since she had grown sickly, a sense of hardship had come over her, and she was seldom happy. She was very industrious, and disposed to be silent at her occupation; so that she was liked by her employers, and had nothing more to complain of than the necessary fatigue and disagreeableness of the work. She would not have minded it for a few hours a day; but to be shut up all day, or else all night, without any time to nurse the baby or play with her companions, was too much for a little girl of eight years old. (MS 64)

From its opening sentence, this passage offers numerous details to facilitate the reader’s sympathetic identification with Martha, including the understated assertion that she had “nothing more to complain of than the necessary fatigue and disagreeableness of the work,” which suggests the child’s own exhausted and anything-but-youthful acceptance of her situation. It is the final sentence, however, that cinches the knot of the reader’s sympathies—the phrases “all day,” “all night,” “without any time to nurse the baby or play with her companions,” and, finally, “a little girl of eight years old” are piled one on top of the other, constructing an increasingly accelerated pitch of sentiment.

While the reader’s sympathy for the child laborer creates some dissonance from the main plot of the strike, it does not directly contest the logic of that plot. The workers are striking for increases in their own pay rather than against child labor, and the narrative constructs the children themselves as willing laborers—injured not by the fact of labor but by its conditions. During a later series of scenes, however, the sympathetic identification the narrative has forged between Martha and her readers works as an indictment of the marketplace logic of both men and masters. Martha’s one possession, regular
companion, and joy throughout the story is her pet bird, Billy. As the economic hardship from the strike becomes extreme, Martha's father approaches her as she plays with her bird:

“Martha, do you think you could bear to stay at home without Billy?”
Martha's countenance fell.
“You see, my dear child, we have sold almost everything we have; and when we can scarcely get food for ourselves, it does not seem to me right to keep animals to feed. This was why I sold the dog so many weeks ago.” (MS 116)

Trying to keep up with her father's economic logic, Martha responds:

“But, father, it is only just a halfpenny now and then. Mother has always found me a halfpenny now and then for Billy.” (MS 116)

Martha's reasoned response is met by another turn of the economic screw:

“A halfpenny is to us as much now, child, as a guinea is to some people; besides we could get money by Billy. Ah! I knew it would make you cry to say so.”

And he left her and walked about the room in the way which it always frightened Martha to see. She sobbed out a few words,—

“I can’t—I can’t help crying, father, but I don’t mean—I wish you would take Billy and sell him.” (emphasis mine, MS 116)

In this scene, we see the reverse of the process Gillian Brown describes as structuring Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in which alienated market commodities are affectively transformed into sentimental possessions. Rather than commodities being recuperated as sentimental possessions, Martineau shows us a sentimental possession being transmogrified into a commodity. Equally significant is the fact that this process is performed not by the villain of the story but by its hero. Nor does it seem as if little Martha has been rationally won over to her father's commodified view of her pet; rather, her “reconsideration” seems to be based on the sentimental blackmail that makes Martha want to stop her father's frightening pacing. Martha even accompanies her father to the bird fancier's, appealing to her father that “nobody could make Billy sing all his songs so well as herself”—and thus, implicitly, no one could sell him for so much (MS 117). Thus, Martha helps her father sell her bird, though as long as the bird remains in the shop, she lingers longingly by its door. When one day she repairs to the shop to find
Billy gone, sold to a “country customer,” she returns melancholically to her house and ceases her daily watching.

This is the last that Martha or the reader hears of her pet bird. And to the extent that this scene is intended to register the futility of the strike, it seems to have served its purpose. However, to the extent that the scene has sympathetically implicated the reader in a domestic or affective economy, Martha and her bird linger beyond their didactic economic role to create an emotional indictment of the economic system and logic that have separated them. In other words, when the narrative invokes an alternative, domestic economy through its sympathetic imbrication of the reader in Martha’s plight, then Allen’s exchange of his daughter’s pet for a small sum of money—or any sum of money, for that matter—seems a very unequal exchange, a very bad deal. Allen’s rhetoric and logic of economic need, tested against little Martha’s sentimentalized plight rather than against a hypothetical scenario, comes out seeming violent and perverse to the very readers it was intended to impress.

The reader’s sympathies are even further confused by the narrative’s representation of yet another alternative economy within the narrative of *A Manchester Strike*. In this case, the reader is positioned to sympathize with Allen against the pleadings of his wife. In honor and gratitude for his leadership, the strike committee has given Allen the gift of a new suit of clothes. But when the people turn against his leadership, Allen returns the clothes to the committee with a sense of high honor. As hardship pinches the community and recourse to the pawnbrokers becomes a regular mode of subsistence, Allen’s wife requests that out of love for and duty toward his family, Allen retrieve and sell this suit of clothes. When he fails to accede to her request, she goes secretly to the committee, asks for the clothes in her husband’s name, and sells them to the pawnbroker on the way home. Allen discovers this transaction during an embarrassing scene in front of the strike committee when the people accuse him of having openly rejected, but secretly accepted, the suit of clothes. Allen is finally enlightened that his wife is, in his own words, “the dishonest person [who] has used [his] name to obtain possession of the clothes,” and when he returns home he tells his wife “his unalterable will that not an article should be purchased by her beyond a bare supply of daily food till the clothes were brought back again and restored to the Committee” (*MS* 124, 126).

Most of the lingering sympathy the reader may have felt for Mary’s desire to get money for her family’s maintenance is cut off by the ways the narrative stages Allen’s public embarrassment and discovery. The reader is left free to sympathize unreservedly with Allen’s noble intentions and disgrace. Thus, when Allen receives unexpected money from his friend Bray for caring for Bray’s daughter, the reader celebrates with him that he now has the opportunity to buy back the suit of clothing. The narrative closes this subject with the
following statement: “[The clothes] proved a dear bargain; but that was a secondary consideration, poor as Allen was. He went to rest that night, satisfied that his honour was redeemed, and that his wife would scarcely venture to put it in pawn again” (emphasis mine, MS 132). What is striking about this subplot is the extent to which Martineau’s narrative seems to support Allen’s rejection of a primarily monetary understanding of the suit of clothes. In this set of transactions, the mother’s domestic economy is positioned as much closer to a standard market economy than Allen’s and the union’s gift economy. Allen is rewarded for his allegiance to this older, precapitalist gift economy by yet another gift, which allows him to redeem the suit of clothes, and with it his honor.

This narrative turn is striking in a story that is explicitly intended to illustrate the omnipresent and omnipotent principles of political economy. It is even more striking when placed alongside the narrative’s refusal to grant a similar reprieve for the sentimental, domestic economy of Martha’s pet bird. However, there is yet another important factor involved in the story’s “clothes plot”: the fact that Allen’s friend Bray—the one whose gift allows him to redeem his honor—is a proscribed worker who now earns his money as a strolling player. Thus, Martineau’s narrative not only sympathizes with and approves of Allen and his noneconomic aspirations toward honor but is, in fact, so committed to the fulfillment of those aspirations that it resorts to the pockets of a strolling player—the character perhaps furthest from the capitalist economy that dominates the story’s main plot—in order to secure the fulfillment of those aspirations.

Through this subplot, Martineau’s story of labor laws and strike futility is deformed from its stated didactic purpose. It is as if Martineau has tried to write that story of free labor and market economics on top of a world dominated by the alternative economic systems of sentimental possessions and gifts. In the first instance, Martha’s bird, the novel’s plot remains committed to market economics even as readers may wish for the alternative system in which Martha’s bird could never be reduced to, and disposed of for, shillings and pence. But in the second instance, the gift economy operating between Allen and the strikers is so compelling that the novel’s plot—and its sympathies—makes a swerve away from the mandate of capitalist economics that underwrites the entire project of the Illustrations to allow Allen to redeem his precious honor. This redemption is somewhat mitigated by Martineau’s return to the cold, hard facts of capitalist economics at the story’s conclusion, where the reader finds that Allen has himself become a proscribed worker who can earn money only by hauling a water cart about Manchester. The subplot of Allen’s honor and his clothes may, indeed, be Martineau’s consolation prize to Allen and the reader for this harsh narrative conclusion. At the same time,
it seems that this narrative concession ends up undermining, rather than reinforcing, the fictional message it was meant to support.

The second set of tensions that riddles Martineau’s didactic narrative project appears similar to the first but is different in significant ways. Rather than the contradictions that arise from the confrontation of an abstract theoretical model with a resistant, if fictively rendered, reality, this second set is related to the clash between two explicitly discursive systems. The contradictions that emerge are more specific to the historical cultures in which those discursive systems were developed. Already, in the narrative of Martha and her pet bird, we have seen one such conflict. As we have seen, part of the narrative dissonance caused by Martha’s story is related to the imposition of abstract economic theories onto the sentimental economics of the home. The narrative is also disrupted by tensions between the logic of a specific theoretical system—classical political economy—and the logic of a particular narrative form—sentimentalism. Because of Martineau’s use of a series of sentimental conventions in her representation of Allen’s daughter, the reader sympathizes with Martha and desires to see her difficulties relieved through the resolution of the story. When instead the reader is forced to accept the “facts” not only of the sale of Martha’s bird but also of her return (followed by all of her younger siblings) to factory labor after the strike, the reader is prone to be dissatisfied.

Martineau herself conceptualizes one of the problematics of her tales as a potential tension between readers’ sentimental expectations and what she considers to be the “truths” of economic and social law. In the Preface to Demerara, one of her earliest economic tales doubling as an antislavery story, Martineau explicitly invokes sentimentalism as a potential liability in the “correct” reception of her narrative. Rather than rejecting sentimentalism, however, Martineau attempts to revise sentimental conventions so that they can accommodate the various imperatives of political economy. She begins by rejecting the idea that her slave characters would command more sympathy and interest if they were uniformly innocent and virtuous; instead, Martineau writes:

That [slaves] command our sympathies by their injuries alone, that they claim our compassion by their vices yet more than by their sufferings, is a statement the force of which their adversaries cannot gainsay. . . . If I had believed, as many do, that strong feeling impairs the soundness of reasoning I should assuredly have avoided the subject of the following tale, since SLAVERY is a topic which cannot be approached without emotion. But, convinced as I am that the reason and the sensibilities are made for cooperation, and perceiving, as I do, that the most stirring eloquence issues from the calmest logic, I have
not hesitated to bring calculations and reasonings to bear on a subject which
awakens the drowsiest and fires the coldest. (DM v–vi)

This statement is a manifesto for the revision of sentimentalism to accommodate reason and its mandates, including, as the story shows, the mandates of an economic law that judges the institution of slave labor impractical, inefficient, and doomed to self-destruct. Rather than being antithetical faculties, Martineau argues, true sympathy and reason should work together and reinforce each other. Martineau wants to reinvent sentimenality through her story so that she can harness its emotional power without sacrificing the reasoned logic of economic law.

Perhaps the most dramatic example of Martineau’s attempt to revise the sentimental rhetoric of traditional abolitionist literature is her characterization of a young slave girl, Hester, and her slave guardians, Robert and Sukey. Ten-year-old Hester is in most ways a typical sentimental child. She is constantly misunderstood, underfed and underclothed, beaten, and neglected. Rather than representing Hester as persecuted by her white slave masters, however, Martineau makes Hester’s most immediate tyrants her slave guardians. It is through them, Martineau insists, that a little slave girl like Hester is liable to experience the worst tyranny of slavery, rather than through the blows or persecutions of her owners. Martineau writes of Hester’s guardians: “If Robert had to lead a horse . . . anywhere, he was sure to beat and torment the animal to the utmost by the way. If his wife found a reptile in her dwelling, she killed it as slowly as she dared, and as cruelly as she could. It would have been well if their power had not been extended beyond beasts, birds, and reptiles; but it was not only shown, by their example, that slavery is the school of tyranny, but, in the instance of the poor little sufferer [Hester] who lived with them, that the most dreadful lot on earth is to be the slave of slaves” (DM 46). In the case of Robert and Sukey, since Martineau draws them as largely unsympathetic anyway, there is no apparent tension between the reader’s sympathy for Hester and her feelings toward her guardians. Through them Martineau makes her rather lugubrious argument that sentiment must be combined with reason: there is no point in blaming the most immediate villains, Robert and Sukey, for their behavior because they themselves are the victims of a system that corrupts all whom it touches.

In contrast to the lengthy characterization of their tyranny, Martineau constructs one brief scene between Hester and her slave hero, Cassius. Passing by Cassius’s provision ground just as he discovers he has been robbed, Hester approaches him to find out what has happened and to offer comfort. But Cassius turns on her violently, shaking her, accusing her, and threatening
beating her if she doesn't tell him who robbed him (information she does not have). Although Cassius soon controls himself and retracts his accusations and threats, his brief outburst presents the reader with a more challenging lesson in sentiment. Through Hester, the reader is forced to see even the heroic, “good” Cassius as so deeply tainted by the system of slavery that he will victimize the young neighbor whom he normally protects and befriends. Thus, Martineau reinforces her point that our sentimental heroine, Hester, is tyrannized not by bad, immoral individuals but by a bad, immoral system. To right the wrongs done to poor Hester, the reader must understand and attack the entire system under which she lives; the characters of Robert and Sukey are simply the most prominent and unambiguous narrative scapegoats through which this lesson is taught.

Martineau makes a series of similar revisionary gestures toward sentimentalism in her novella *Weal and Woe in Garveloch*. The first involves Ella of Garveloch—one of the provident heroines of the tale— instructing her eldest son that he must no longer give away the shells he gathers to the hungry children who besiege him at the shore. This scene is immediately followed by one in which Kenneth goes down to the shore to gather shells and has to turn away the children who have come to rely on his sympathetic generosity. Kenneth’s new resolve to keep his own shells is represented as a form of self-denial rather than a selfish gesture. Because of the demand for food at home, Kenneth as an individual can no longer afford the luxury of sentimental generosity outside the home. Kenneth is not unsympathetic to the children, and he continues to help them protect their own shells from raids and thievery, but Kenneth’s sympathy is now guided by the reasonings of his mother that instruct him to protect the welfare of his immediate family first.

At a later point in *Weal and Woe*, the sentiment of maternal anxiety for their children is said to have rendered Ella and her friend Katie “peculiarly qualified for seeing the truth when placed before them . . . and there remained not a doubt, after calculating numbers and resources, that there must be some check to the increase of the people” (*WW* 104). According to Martineau, then, analytical reasoning and mathematical calculation are actually products of maternal sentiment rather than being anathema to such sentiment. This passage becomes even more striking when it is placed in the context of a long conversation on Malthusian principles of population growth that takes place at the sickbed of Ella’s soon-to-die youngest child. Through this scene and the two mothers’ conversation, the reader, like Kenneth, is instructed in a rationally informed sentimentality—one that will highlight and reinforce, rather than subvert, the “true” principles of political economy.

Although Martineau repeatedly attempts to harness and control the effects of sentimentality, there are many points throughout at which the traditions of
sentimental narrative come into direct conflict with the economic theory that functions as providential determinism in her novellas. The sale of Martha Allen’s pet bird and her return to grueling factory labor are two such instances of narrative dissonance in *A Manchester Strike*. Another significant moment of conflict between theory and sentiment deforms *Weal and Woe*. Near the beginning of that story, the narrative sets up a romance plot between Ronald, Ella’s brother, and the widow Katie, whom Ronald has loved since well before she was married. For the first portion of the narrative, Ronald postpones his declaration of love and his marriage proposal out of deference to Katie’s recent widowhood, and by the end of the narrative, Ronald renounces his romantic love for Katie because of the shortage of food in Garveloch. Out of respect for the population principle, he will remain single and be to her as a brother, and to her children as an uncle. While Katie and Ronald appear to be content with this outcome, readers schooled in the sentimental tradition of romantic love are liable to rebel against this narrative dictum and its denial of their sympathetic desires for romantic fulfillment.

Such a standoff between the reader’s sentimental desires and the courses determined by economic law recurs throughout the *Illustrations*. By evoking the narrative desire and expectations inherent in sentimental conventions and then refusing to meet them, Martineau subjects the reader’s own sentimental impulses to a kind of narrative violence. Because she does so in the name of inevitable economic laws, those laws themselves appear to be the source and instrument of that violence. The result of these sets of dense discursive contradictions between economic law and sympathetic identification is a deformation of Martineau’s narrative project.11

In *A Manchester Strike* and *Weal and Woe*, it seems to be Martineau’s sentimental narrative that suffers most from the conflict between literary conventions and the logic of political economy, but there are other moments where Martineau’s use of sentimental conventions results in the distortion of the abstract theory she wants to profess. The reader’s sense in *A Manchester Strike* and *Weal and Woe* that economic law has become a kind of negative providence is a general example of such an effect. But there are other points in the *Illustrations* where political economy seems to be more immediately and specifically distorted by its encounter with sentimental conventions. In part 2 of Martineau’s two-part novella *Berkeley the Banker*, for instance, the narrative’s villain combines the language of political economy with the language of sentiment in order to manipulate and take advantage of his innocent young wife.

Edgar Morton marries Hester Pardon early in part 1 and then whisks her away to London. All her village friends think she has made a wonderful match, but when she reappears in part 2, the reader discovers that the oppo-
site is the case—in fact, Hester is the sentimental heroine victimized by her own husband. The purity of the reader's sentimental identification with Hester is soon tarnished, however. When her selfish husband suddenly does an about-face, hands her a stack of large-denomination bank notes, and hurries her off to Haleham for two weeks, the reader is immediately suspicious of Edgar's intentions and begins to guess that the bank notes are forgeries that he intends for her to pass unwittingly. Hester, however, is completely taken in and overwhelmed with gratitude. Even after she returns to London and becomes aware of her husband's motives, she remains so devoted to him that she becomes his willing pawn in passing forged notes through the London shops. Hester's own sentimental reading of her marriage, then, results in her complicity in the forgery project that leads her husband and his male companions to the gallows.

While Hester's excessive sentimental susceptibility forces the reader to distance herself from full sympathetic identification with the heroine, it is Edgar's own use of sentimental rhetoric, in tandem with the rational logic of political economy, that results in the mutual contamination of both discursive systems. When Hester discovers that Edgar is a forger, she confronts him and begs for his confidence. In response, Edgar justifies his actions by using a perverted version of economic rationale to justify his occupation. According to Edgar, he is providing much-needed currency in a suddenly contracted economy, and thus actually aiding the people of Haleham by passing his notes to them. Later, Edgar also begins to use sentimental language in order to disguise his coldhearted exploitation of his wife. As Hester begins to collapse emotionally and physically under the strain of her occupation, Edgar repeatedly prods and manipulates her back to her employment through a feigned concern for her welfare: “She had often asked whether she could give assistance upstairs [on the forgery presses], instead of passing notes: but Edgar always put her off with speeches about staining her pretty fingers with printing ink or hurting them with the rollers” (BB2:90–91). The effect of Edgar's easy manipulation of the language of sentiment is to cast a shadow of distrust over the reliability of such language. When the reader sees Edgar using the language of political economy in precisely the same ways that he has misused the language of sentiment, the reader's wariness is liable to be turned against that language as well. Of course, Martineau intends for the reader to see through Edgar's misuse of both rhetorics—even as Hester herself sees through it at times—but the very fact that the reader must approach such language with caution weakens the strength of Martineau's sentimental and economic claims. While Martineau seems quite conscious that she is exposing the literary language of sentiment to distrust, her parallel disclosure of the weakness of the rhetoric of economic theory seems
beyond her intended narrative effect. If figures such as Edgar Morton and Mr. Cavendish, whom we meet earlier in the story, can manipulate the language of economics in the same way that Edgar manipulates the language of sentiment, then how is the reader to trust any economic account as straightforward and authoritative?

Martineau’s use of sentimental conventions contaminates her narrative project in *Berkeley the Banker* in yet another way. Early in the story, the narrative promises a romance between Melea Berkeley and the curator, Henry Craig. Because of the currency crisis and the crash of the Haleham and D—banks, the courtship is suspended at the end of part 1. Unlike the lovers of *Weal and Woe*, who are forced to totally renounce their romantic love at the end of that volume, Henry Craig’s words of hope close part 1 of *Berkeley the Banker*. While the reader is busy following the sentimental trials of Hester in part 2, the currency cycle turns its course so that Melea and Henry are again economically acceptable candidates for marriage, and part 2 concludes with the very happy ending of a double wedding between this young couple and the older Mrs. Pardon and Mr. Pye. In some ways, the whole melodramatic plot of forgery and abuse that emerges around the figures of Edgar and Hester seems like a narrative distraction or stalling tactic to allow enough economic time to have passed for these two marriages to be economically provident as well as sentimentally fulfilling. While the reader of just *Berkeley the Banker* might be satisfied with this narrative sleight of hand, the reader of the whole *Illustrations* series cannot help but compare the middle-class fates of Melea and Henry to the working-class or peasant fates of Ronald and Katie in *Weal and Woe*. Where the one couple is narratively rewarded for their economic providence, the other couple is, in effect, narratively punished. Furthermore, because the main difference between the two couples is class, the economic theory Martineau has hoped to defend from accusations of class bias actually seems to reinforce those accusations. If a character is a member of the working class, he or she must trust to “future generations” to realize a happy ending. On the other hand, if she is a member of the middle class, Martineau’s narrative will carry her through the currency cycle and leave her at the point of economic stability that can result in immediate marriage and happiness. Likewise, where Martineau seems bound to an extremely rigid and literal interpretation of the population principle in the story of Katie and Ronald, her tale of currency and banking economic laws seems altogether more malleable: Mr. Cavendish can enrich himself by playing the system and banking irresponsibly, Edgar Morton can use economic logic to convince himself that his forgeries benefit society, and the narrator can mold a sentimental narrative of male persecutor and female victim into an “economic” story of forgery so that it will carry the reader forward through time until Henry and Melea, the
hero and heroine of part 1, can be married. In other words, it seems as if Martineau allows her own and her projected reader’s sentimental desires for the conventional resolution of a middle-class marriage plot to distort the didactic project so that economic theory, rather than being universal and immutable, seems at least in this case to be in the service of middle-class sympathies and desires.

Whether we read such deformations of Martineau’s theoretical model as local textual effects of that model’s encounter with sentimental conventions or whether we read those apparent distortions as an accurate manifestation of the deeper logic of classical economic theory depends on our own critical and theoretical model. Both the linguistic instability of Edgar’s economic rhetoric and the class bias of Berkeley the Banker’s narrative resolution can be read as either unintended textual effect or inevitable theoretical contradiction and slippage. The third and final set of narrative effects that I want to trace seems to fall more decidedly within the latter category of literary repercussions. In these instances, contradictions within political economy itself are exposed by Martineau’s contextualization of economic theory within narrative form. Just as Edgar’s simultaneous manipulation of sentimental and economic rhetoric can be seen as revealing the linguistic instability of all discursive forms, so other and even more dramatic aspects of Martineau’s Illustrations function to disclose the gaps, inconsistencies, and contradictions of the supposedly authoritative science.

One of the more didactically damaging instances of this kind of narrative exposure of the fallibility of classical economic theory emerges as an all-too-visible backdrop to Berkeley the Banker’s story of economic stability restored, marriages consummated, and justice served (for Edgar is, in the end, executed, thus violently liberating Hester from his tyranny). The Mr. Berkeley of the title is a provident and responsible country banker who is pulled down along with the unprincipled and irresponsible Mr. Cavendish in the currency crash of part 1. In this way, the plot of the novella seems parallel to that of Weal and Woe, where all—provident and improvident—suffer the downturn of the economic cycle together. However, there are significant differences between the way the narratives treat the “good” and “bad” characters. First, Mr. Cavendish and his wife actually seem to suffer little for their immoral and felonious financial management. The reader watches the Berkeleys shift quarters from their luxurious mansion to a small garden cottage and watches the two Berkeley daughters depart to become governesses, whereas Mr. Cavendish simply closes the doors of his bank and slips away from his chaotic household when the crash comes. It is not until the end of part 2 that Berkeley pays back
all he owes—and even then, that payment is a reflection of the spirit rather than the letter of England’s bankruptcy laws, for his creditors accept that he has paid back the “real value” of his debts rather than the face value of the inflated currency he originally borrowed. Cavendish, on the other hand, reemerges as one of the thriving forgers of part 2. Only with the noneconomic intervention of justice in the form of a kind of secret but omniscient police is Cavendish finally, the reader presumes, punished alongside his coconspirator, Edgar. For the first portion of the novella, then, the ill-principled banker, Cavendish, actually seems to fare better than the wholly responsible Berkeley. In part 2, Cavendish is punished, but he seems to meet his fate not through the working out of inevitable economic laws but rather through a kind of special dispensation of narrative providence. Berkeley, while restored to solvency, is never rewarded for his correct economic principles and dealings by a return to his former wealth.

The reason for this unevenness in the narrative’s treatment of the two bankers lies in the slipperiness of the very economic principles Martineau wants to illustrate. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, economic theorists debated and attempted to rationalize the principles of money, circulation, and banking. The ostensible message of Martineau’s story about these issues is that Ricardian economics and a gold-based currency hold the key to the stabilization of the country’s currency system, but this message is repeatedly contradicted by the speeches and plot developments of her novella. After the D— bank crash in part 1, for example, Melea’s reflections reveal that she has lived her entire “happy” middle-class childhood in the shadow of her father’s financial ruin: “For Horace [her brother] she felt most; for Fanny [her sister] and herself least: for Fanny, because she was another self in her views of life, in capacity for exertion, and preparation for that reverse of fortune with which they had occasionally been threatened from the days of their childhood” (emphasis mine, BB1 144). Soon after the crash, Mr. Berkeley pessimistically warns his daughter and Henry Craig against marrying at all because marriage simply means incurring economic responsibilities that one will not ultimately be able to fulfill. Similarly, toward the end of part 2, Mr. Berkeley turns to his young nephew, Lewis, and says: “‘Poor Lewis must be taken better care of now. . . . We must look about us to see how he is to be settled in life. What shall we do with you. Lewis? Choose anything but to be in a bank, my boy. Choose anything else, and we will see what we can do for you’” (emphasis mine, BB2 140). Each of these passages professes a different kind of currency law than that purported in Martineau’s “Summary of Principles” at the end of the narrative. They tell of inevitable economic instability via the system of credit, currency, and banking on which capitalism depends—an instability that is inevitable despite political economy’s “correct” currency prin-
Martineau's narrative blames the crash of Berkeley's bank and the emergence of bubble banks such as Cavendish's on the government’s faulty currency policy, but it makes no such excusing linkage in the case of the inevitability of the future crises it predicts. What results is a significant narrative irresolution at precisely the point where the narrative was intended to provide the reader with saving, solid principles.

Classical economic theory's account of scientific principles of money and banking, when articulated in the form of Martineau's realistic and sentimental narrative conventions, is exposed as fundamentally inadequate. It cannot account for the dramatic cycles of inflation and deflation that plague Britain's currency cycle no matter what currency policy the government adapts, yet Martineau's narrative seems obliged to represent the extremes and the persistence of those cycles. This obligation, in turn, seems to stem both from the representational demands of the emerging social realist narrative tradition and from the sentimental conventions that dictate that the nuances, as well as the broad outlines, of narrative situations must be registered through the affective responses of characters and readers. The result of these narrative imperatives is that one half of Martineau's didactic project—its engaging and accessible narrative form—comes into direct conflict with the second half—the persuasive diffusion of correct economic doctrine to a wide, general readership. Furthermore, the explanatory power of Martineau's economic theory is rendered less than adequate, and what seems to render it inadequate is not simply the individual sympathies of the reader but rather its ability to order “reality.”

*Berkeley the Banker* unintentionally makes visible an important theoretical slippage or failure within scientific political economy. This failure, the inability of mathematical certainty to account for and quantify the irrational, “human” elements of trust and desire at the center of the capitalist system of money or “circulating credit,” weakens the authority of the Ricardian economic model as an explanatory and prescriptive social and economic tool. The claims of classical political economy are problematized at an even more fundamental level in Martineau's story *The Hill and the Valley*. In this novella about definitions of capital and labor, Martineau opposes old Mr. Armstrong, a hoarder, with the young capitalist factory owner, Mr. Wallace, in order to argue for the wisdom of transforming wealth into productive capital. In addition to these extreme models of the management of individual wealth, is a third, even more exaggerated character model—the figure of Paul the miser. Through the characterization of Paul, Mr. Wallace is actually opposed to the extremes of both “hoarder” and “miser” as a happy and healthy, if unsuccessful, medium. Where Armstrong refuses to turn any of his wealth into productive capital, choosing instead to keep it safe but unproductive as a bag of gold, and Mr. Wallace represents an almost ideal
balance between the relatively unproductive enjoyment of his wealth (especially via his overindulgence of his wife) and its investment in the form of capital, Paul is a character who cannot even enjoy his wealth in the form of the necessities of food and clothing but must rather translate all his earnings into new forms of productive capital.

When he is first introduced, Paul is repeatedly mistaken for a beggar because of his ragged clothes. When he begins to speak, however, his self-assurance and education prove him to be something very different. He asks for and accepts work at Mr. Wallace's mill and predicts that he will be among Wallace's hardest laborers, despite his enigmatic background. The next narrative report of Paul comes through his landlady, who tells Mr. Wallace of Paul's habits. With his earnings from the mill, Paul has started three separate independent businesses. He has learned cobbling, and by four o'clock in the morning he is up doing cobbling work for his neighbors. Then, after a full day of hard labor for Mr. Wallace at the mill, Paul returns to his lodgings to cut out corks for a local druggist by the light of a single weak tallow candle. On the weekend, Paul goes to the fair to trade in cattle and sheep as yet another source of income. Keeping back only enough physical energy, time, and money for the absolute barest of physiological necessity, Paul transforms the entire remainder of his physical and economic capital into new means for producing wealth.

Because of his exclusive dedication to the acquisition and production of wealth, Paul would seem to be the precisely the kind of ideal economic man projected by scientific theories of political economy. He seems to be the model of the figure described in J. S. Mill's essay “On the Definition of Political Economy”: “[Political economy] is concerned with [man] solely as a being who desires to possess wealth. . . . It makes entire abstraction of every other human passion or motive” (321). Like Mill's economic man, Paul seems to have no other human passion or motive than the desire for wealth. Because of this, he embodies the highest moral virtues derived from political economy: industriousness, thrift, and self-denial, all combined with, as well as motivated by, an intense, insatiable desire for wealth as an object in and of itself. With such characters as Paul's, Ricardian economic theory predicts, humankind will reach its greatest material productivity and development; with such characters as Paul's, Martineau's illustrated version of Ricardian theory would seem to predict, humankind will attain its highest happiness and virtue as well as material well-being.

In sharp contradiction to such a narrative extrapolation, however, Paul is represented as the saddest and most futile character in The Hill and the Valley, precisely because his desire for wealth has obliterated every other “human passion or motive.” Paul describes the “misery” of his lot to his friends Arm-
strong and Wallace: “Sleepless nights, when I lie cold and hungry and weary, fancying all the mischances that may happen to my earnings: incessant self-reproach when I think I have lost an opportunity of making profit; teasing [sic] thoughts of pounds, shillings, and pence, when I would now and then think of other things;—all these are evils are they not? I cannot listen to a running stream, or sit watching the fieldfares in a clear winter day, or follow the sheep-track amongst the heath on a summer’s evening, with the light heart I once had; for I always have the feeling that I am wasting my time, since these things can bring me no gold” (emphasis mine, HV 82–83). The desire to produce and possess wealth has become so strong in Paul that he has become incapable of enjoying, or even indulging, any other set of needs or desires. Although Paul recognizes the unhappiness and futility of his situation and pursuits, he remains, in his own words, enslaved to his way of life. Paul may closely resemble Mill’s scientific definition of economic man, but he certainly doesn’t resemble Martineau’s prefatory and narrative definition of a happy and healthy “economic” man elsewhere in Illustrations. Rather, he is, again in his own words, a “warning.” He is one of Martineau’s negative exemplars rather than a positive model or ideal such as Mr. Wallace or Ella of Garveloch.

Martineau’s narrative even suggests that Paul’s example involves a warning about morality and virtue as well as individual happiness and well-being. When the factory owners and their wives pay their visit to Paul’s lodgings, Mrs. Sydney asks of Mrs. Jones, with whom Paul lodges, “whether he was a pleasant inmate and a kind neigbour.” Mrs. Jones’s reply is telling. She says: “So far as he was sober and regular . . . he was a valuable lodger; but he did not often speak or smile at the children; which would . . . have been the best way of gaining her” (HV 68). Mrs. Jones readily acknowledges that Paul is an economically valuable lodger, but the emphasis of her assessment lies on his disregard for her children. It is not that Paul is unkind to them; rather, she implies, he simply takes no notice of them, so focused and intent is he upon his projects for making money. Mrs. Jones’s response splits precisely along the line of her double identity as landlady (economic) and mother (sentimental). At the same time, her reserve—almost confusion—in responding to Mrs. Sydney’s question seems to be a product of a significant area of overlap between these two spheres of identity—an overlap that might be described as the social, the psychological, or even the moral. In Mrs. Sydney’s words, Paul’s miserliness prevents him from being not only “pleasant” but also “kind.”

Because Mrs. Jones’s reservations about Paul are represented as primarily maternal, they are implicitly coded as sentimental and thus, by extension, fairly individualized and internal. Paul may not please this mother, but he might still be a basically good man by other, more broadly based standards of morality and virtue (compare the treatment of Allen and his wife, Mary).
possibility seems to be borne out by his noble, self-sacrificing behavior during the workers’ rioting and arson, but the closing pages of the novella return the reader to a darker vision of Paul’s overly provident character—and this time that vision is explicitly marked as threateningly antisocial as well as sentimentally hard-hearted. Paul reveals to Armstrong and Mr. and Mrs. Wallace that his financial goal is to earn enough money to buy back the paternal estate he lost through his youthful gambling and indulgences. Mr. Wallace questions this goal by asking Paul: “Do you think you should be able to enjoy your property if you got it back again? . . . Or, perhaps, there is some family connexion to whom you wish to restore it by will?” Paul’s response again reveals that self-knowledge cannot free him from his money-centered plight: “Neither the one nor the other. . . . I have not a relation in the world; and I see as clearly as you can do, that I shall be by that time too confirmed in my love of money to enjoy the pleasures of a fine estate. I shall screw my tenants, and grudge my venison, and sell all the furniture of the house but that of two rooms” (HV 135). In this statement, Paul makes a direct connection between his love of money (the Millian desire for wealth) and a character that is misanthropically selfish, hard-hearted, and antisocial. His desire for money will contaminate all his social relations and, implicitly, cause him to despise many of his social obligations. Ironically, it is his very love of money, fostered under the guise of his “provident” virtues of industriousness, thrift, and self-denial, that renders Paul such a socially and sentimentally negative character. Insofar as Paul seems to be an ideal representative of scientific political economy’s “economic man,” then, “economic man” seems to be incapable of also being a moral man, at least according to Martineau’s schema of morality. Similarly, as a logical, even natural, production of capitalist economics, the character of Paul proves a very problematic basis for a capitalist society. Even in economic terms, Paul is a problematic character, for his very productiveness depends upon other people indulging the needs and desires he so abstemiously denies himself.

In the end, then, Mr. Wallace seems to be a much more socially and economically viable model of capitalism’s and political economy’s “economic man.” Yet the qualities that make Wallace a more viable economic agent are precisely the sentimentalized, noneconomic qualities that characterize his indulgent relationship with his wife. Just as political economy’s conception of money and banking stumbles over the nonquantifiable features of trust and desire in Berkeley the Banker, so in The Hill and the Valley political economy’s basic element—economic man—ends up requiring the noneconomic, nonquantifiable, and nonrational elements of sentiment and passion. In both of these novellas, Martineau’s narratives end up unwittingly exposing the logical or “scientific” gaps within political economy’s own theoretical system as well
as the more sentimental gaps created by the theoretical system’s incorporation into fictional representational forms. Furthermore, it is highly significant that in both cases, it seems to have been political economists’ determination to render economic theory precise, quantifiable, and calculable that resulted in the system’s logical flaws.

The early-nineteenth-century narrative forms that Martineau utilized in *Illustrations* were apparently able to embody certain kinds of “truth” that escaped the scientific calculations of Ricardian economics. In other words, through her fictional narratives, certain important cultural values were effectively represented as naturally or self-evidently true in ways that had the capacity to strengthen the scientific authority of classical economic theory. The central irony of Martineau’s popularizing project was that the very conventions that she so effectively mobilized to “humanize” political economy also contained the affective, moral, and even rational logics that could undermine the truth claims of the science. It is impossible to gauge to what extent Martineau’s readers registered the unintentional effects of her economic narratives, but those narratives constitute a compelling testimony to the complicated course through which classical political economy attained its powerful political, economic, social, and cultural authority in early- and mid-Victorian England.

One of the novellas, *A Manchester Strike*, begins with the following prefatory claim that seems to encapsulate the theoretical difficulties of Martineau’s narrative project: “Notice: The author hopes that as she has no acquaintance with any one firm, master, or workman in Manchester, she will be spared the imputation of personality. Her personages are all abstractions.” While it is obvious that Martineau’s disclaimer is intended to protect her and her narrative from the imputation of any particular *historical* personality in her story of the strike, her disclaimer also signals the impossibility of any simple success for her fictional popularizing project. Decidedly *not* mathematical or scientific abstractions, the fictional personages and events of Martineau’s *Illustrations* cannot be determined solely by the economic logic of political economic theory. Rather, the narrative conventions that she uses to construct those personages and events show themselves to have the power to determine and disrupt the economic ideas they were meant to merely “enliven” or serve.