Contents

Acknowledgments  ix

Introduction  1

PART I  ORIGIN STORIES AND POLITICAL ECONOMY, 1740–1870  13

1 History as abstraction  19
   Condillac’s philosophy of signs  19
   Rousseau’s revision  24
   Adam Smith on the origin of language  28
   Rousseau: writing and national character  33
   The abstraction of desire: Smith’s Theory of Moral Sentiments  36
   The abstraction of labor: the Wealth of Nations  42

2 Value as signification  50
   Value and character in Ricardo  52
   Kant and the philologists  58
   Longfield and Whately: value in Irish economic thought  61
   J. S. Mill’s political ethology  65
   Jevons’s perfected speech  69

PART II  PRODUCING THE CONSUMER  73

3 Market indicators: banking and housekeeping in Bleak House  77
   1847  80
   The bleakness of the house: the novel’s systems and metaphors  86
   Home of coin: Dickens in the Bank of England  95
   More market metaphysics  100
   The merits of the system  106
List of contents

4 Esoteric solutions: Ireland and the colonial critique
   of political economy
       Trevelyan's machine of history 112
       Esoteric solutions 119
       Potato money 127
       Asenath Nicholson's new domestic economy 134

5 Toward a social theory of wealth: three novels
   by Elizabeth Gaskell
       Household words: “homely and natural language” in Mary Barton 145
       “Cold lion”: history and rationality in Cranford 158
       Toleration and freedom in North and South 166

   Conclusion 182

Notes 184
Bibliography 212
Index 224