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The Making and the Unmaking of the Modern Subject
in British Literature of the Long Eighteenth Century

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Comparative Literature

by

Spencer David Jackson

2012

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Making and the Unmaking of the Modern Subject
in British Literature of the Long Eighteenth Century

by

Spencer David Jackson

Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature

University of California, Los Angeles, 2012

Professor Eleanor K. Kaufman, Co-Chair

Professor Helen E. Deutsch, Co-Chair

The individual who first emerges in eighteenth-century England is new, but the subjectivity he or she bears is not. My dissertation returns to the work of John Dryden, Eliza Haywood, Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, and Maria Edgeworth in order to recover the royal prehistory of a model of individuality that has progressed from its origins in eighteenth-century England to become a central element of global commercial life in the twenty-first century. I celebrate the progression of this consumer society as the means through which the divine sovereignty of kings has become a popular right of humanity. I criticize consumer society and its subjects only for failing to affirm the sovereign potential that lies at their foundation. As I demonstrate in my readings of

poetry and novels from the long eighteenth century, British literature simultaneously helped to democratize this royal form of being and to construct the ideologies of domesticity that continue to encourage modern individuals to pretend that that they were never made sovereign, that is severed from the stable selves and communities of mere things.

My first chapter reads Dryden's "To My Honour'd Kinsman" (1700) alongside "Astraea Redux" (1660) and "To His Sacred Majesty" (1661) in order to argue that Dryden models his late figure of the "patriot" after his earlier image of the king as an at once mortal and immortal entity. While Dryden develops the patriot in the hopes of achieving social unity, my second chapter argues that the heroines of Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) and Haywood's *Fantomina* (1725) demonstrate the subversive potential of bodies endowed with the wholly unnecessary and abstract aura of a sovereign individual. In my central third chapter on *Clarissa* (1747-8), I hail the struggle of Richardson's heroine to masochistically dissolve her modern self and withdraw from society as a Protestant-inspired campaign to achieve the truly sovereign feat of self-dissolution. Though my project ultimately affirms modernity, my final chapter celebrates the pre-modern multitude's interruption of the culminating moment of Edgeworth's *The Absentee* (1812) as an expression of the inevitable opposition that modernization will meet as it continues to subsume the globe.

The dissertation of Spencer David Jackson is approved.

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2012

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Introduction

A Didactic History of the Present

The Editor hopes, that the Letters which compose this Part, will be found equally written to NATURE, avoiding all romantick Flights, improbable Surprises, and irrational Machinery; and that the Passions are touched, where requisite, and Rules, equally *New* and *Practicable*, inculcated throughout the Whole, for the *General Conduct of Life*.

Samuel Richardson, Preface to *Pamela II*¹

Middle-class life is full of magic. People everywhere use computers, phones, and pads to gaze upon a virtual world of objects over which they stand sovereign. With the same tools, these people also write texts, emails, and tweets forming an instantaneous and global network of communication. The commodity culture that first emerged in eighteenth-century England has spread throughout the globe and wherever it has traveled we have seen the rise of these middle-class individuals. While not always politically empowered, they are as a rule transformed by the magical forces of the commodity form. They stand above their mortal bodies and subsist in the once princely domain of the subject. Looking upon the world as its consuming master, they will trample each other in pursuit of holiday electronics sales. And they will, in the midst of the carnage, be reporting it all in texts, tweets, blogs, and facebook updates. Sovereign consumers and consummate letter writers, they are our modern day kings.

Writing as a member of this class, I study the literature of commerce's origins with the Richardsonian aim of providing my middle-class brethren with new rules for the "*General Conduct of Life*." "We" and "our" and "they" will appear frequently in this dissertation and they

¹ Richardson, Samuel. *Pamela (Vol. II)*. Teddington: Echo Library, 2007: 3.

are always in reference to middle-class consumers, a group whose continued global ascendance has prompted the philosopher Giorgio Agamben to make the following proclamation:

If we had once again to conceive of the fortunes of humanity in terms of class, then today we would have to say there are no longer social classes, but just a single planetary petty bourgeoisie, in which all the old social classes are dissolved: The petty bourgeoisie has inherited the world and is the form in which humanity has survived its nihilism.²

While simply ignored by some academics as beneath the concerns of a scholar, the rise of the “planetary petty bourgeoisie” and the consumer society it heralds has been equally neglected by the politically charged critics who claim to talk about it. Endless calls for demystification have emerged from the academic Left over the past half-century and they have all left the magic of middle-class consumer life understudied and misunderstood. We younger scholars have been trained to approach the phenomenon of the commodity culture in one of two ways- dismissal or critique.

The critical method has importantly exposed the horrors that have accompanied the birth of consumer society such as slavery, heightened levels of exploitation, and gross hypocrisy, to name only a few. I will, nevertheless, be charting a different course, one that generally affirms the development of commodity culture in the hopes of illuminating the oft-forgotten magic of its present reality as well the alternative futures that lie within it. A historically minded study that explicates the theological underpinnings of this society and the individuals it has produced, my dissertation also has the didactic aim of uncovering the higher forms of life that middle-class individuals could but have not yet achieved. Though now synonymous with the pedestrian hypocrisy of ‘free’ individuals who all behave alike, it is a central contention of my project that

² Agamben, Giorgio. *The Coming Community*. Trans. Michael Hardt. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993: 62. Cited parenthetically as CC.

the subjectivity of the middle-class consumer is modeled after the medieval king who stood before his subjects as a living example of humanity's capacity to incarnate the transcendent powers of otherworldly dimensions.

The king, in other words, was magical. His magic, however, like that of his successors, has a history. The historian Ernst Kantorowicz, in a pivotal work for my project *The King's Two Bodies* (1957), illuminates the movement throughout Europe, from roughly the tenth through seventeenth century, to infuse the mortal bodies of monarchs with the divine authority that had been the exclusive dominion of the Church. The king emerged from this process as a sacralized creature, tied to this world by a mortal body that carried with it the collective and divinely grounded identity of the nation. The didactic lessons of my dissertation all have their foundation in the contention that the birth of the middle-class individual and the commodity culture to which he or she belongs marked the democratization of the king's doubled being. The modern individual stands capable of looking upon the world from the position of a subject because he or she has inherited the sovereign subjectivity of kings. In this dissertation, I celebrate sovereignty and its democratization in our modern era, a stance that is entirely indebted to the third volume of George Bataille's *The Accursed Share* (1976). For Bataille, sovereignty names the miraculous moment in which a body transcends the purely utilitarian realm of things. The great but not unredeemable tragedy of modernity for Bataille as well as the dissertation that follows is that the modern individual has assumed a subjectivity once reserved for kings alone, but has yet to embrace the sovereign life that such a position makes possible.

As a study of the way eighteenth-century literature helped to construct the contemporary figure of the modern individual, my project is also indebted both in terms of tone and content to Joseph Roach's work. Roach has long exemplified a mode of scholarship that seeks out rather

than avoids opportunities to make connections between the global commercialism of our present and the long eighteenth-century English context in which commercial life first appeared as a new and disorienting way of being in the world. In his particularly relevant *It* (2007), Roach explains the uncanny aura of Restoration-era theatrical stars and modern day celebrities alike in terms of the theological pageantry that mystically transformed the king into a collective icon of the nation. Drawing from a wide array of literary and first-hand historical accounts, ranging from the neo-classical tragedies of John Dryden to the scandalous tidbits of Samuel Pepys's diary, Roach's *It* unearths the fundamental continuity of the "secular magic" that lifted King Charles II and the stars of the Restoration stage above their mortal frames.³ Roach does more, however, than merely clarify our understanding of the past. He makes an equally diverse array of allusions to the films and culture of twentieth-century Hollywood in order to make a compelling case for the provenance of the modern day celebrity phenomenon in the era of the English Restoration since it was then that the subjectivity of kings began to resemble that of mere commoners. Actors figure prominently in Roach's account because they were in the late seventeenth century, just as they are in our present one, privileged symbols for the dangers and delights of life as a commercialized individual. Roach discovers a "thin but bright...strand" connecting "the Stuart Restoration and the theatre it launched ... to Hollywood" and the ruling icons with which it has become synonymous such as Clara Bow and Johnny Depp (3). Familiar to all and friend to none, the celebrities who reign over contemporary commercial life with increasing intensity indeed exemplify a way of simultaneously participating in and transcending the world of mortal bodies. Inspired by Roach's idea that the "deep eighteenth century is the one that isn't over yet," my dissertation departs from Roach's case for the contemporary relevance of Restoration celebrities

³ Roach, Joseph. *It*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007: 43. Cited parenthetically as I.

only by arguing that it does not go far enough (13). While Roach notes that the ineffable aura of the celebrity “partakes of the character...of the commodity fetish,” he refrains from drawing what I see as the logical conclusion: the kingly subjectivity of the celebrity is available to every commodified body (43).

In the work that follows, I frame the portrait of the commodity that Karl Marx constructs in Part 1 of *Capital* (1867) as an at once theological and economic event. By transforming the bodies of human and inhuman things alike into the bearers of abstract value, the process of commodification concealed the “sensuous characteristics” of things that were now defined by the “phantom-like” second bodies they bore.⁴ While eighteenth-century political innovations indeed created a model of the citizen as a mortal body bearing abstract rights, a central assertion of my work is that commodification was and continues to be the primary engine behind the democratization of the abstract in consumer societies. I use the disparities between the rates of political and economic change in the eighteenth century to support this claim. In an era in which voting and serving in Parliament remained the purview of religiously conformist men of property, commodification was endowing men, women, and children throughout England with the doubled being of celebrities and kings.

Shortly after announcing the global ascendancy of the “petty bourgeoisie,” Agamben provides an apt portrayal of their failure to affirm the disorienting yet nevertheless magical life they have had thrust upon them:

The petty bourgeois nullify all that exists with the same gesture in which they seem obstinately to adhere to it.... That which constituted the truth and falsity of the peoples and generations that have followed one another on the earth...has lost any

⁴ Marx, Karl. *Capital: Volume 1*. Trans. Ben Fowkes. New York: Penguin Books, 1990: 128.

meaning for them.... Nothing resembles the life of this new humanity more than advertising footage from which every trace of the advertised product has been wiped out. The contradiction of the petty bourgeois, however, is that they still search the footage for the product they were cheated of.... (CC 62-63)

At once ‘nullifying’ and ennobling, the process of commodification liquidates customs by endowing its subjects with abstract second bodies. Long the avant-garde of this process, the petty bourgeoisie reinforce the conversion of the world’s many objects into representatives of a single domain of abstract value. They see the things of this world in terms of the abstract, whether it be in the form of prices, identities, or lifestyles. As a purely physical entity, the advertised product means nothing. Its worldly significance lies elsewhere, in its role as a performer. The vanished product mimes identities and personas for a world that has become the theater of the abstract. For the petty bourgeoisie above all others, humans and things co-exist upon the same simulated stage of commodity exchange and, yet, the individuals that constitute this exemplary class continue to ‘obstinately’ claim access to traditional meaning and identities. It is the purpose of this dissertation to show what these individuals could do instead.

In reading eighteenth-century literature with the aim of drawing lessons on how to live today, my project will certainly inspire accusations of presentism, that is of having read the past in terms of the present. Having borrowed the phrase “history of the present” from Michel Foucault’s introduction to *Discipline and Punish* (1975), I do indeed believe that I write in the spirit of Foucault’s answer to the question of why he studies the past:

Why? Simply because I am interested in the past? No, if one means by that writing a history of the past in terms of the present. Yes, if one means writing the history of the present.⁵

The demand that one avoid writing about the past as if it were the present has in the past ten years inspired one of the more provocative and noticeable trends in eighteenth-century studies. Led by critics such as Helen Thompson, Jonathan Kramnick, and Sandra Macpherson, this movement has leveled the charge of presentism against the conventional reading of the eighteenth-century individual as an increasingly abstract and self-conscious entity. By identifying the individual that appears in eighteenth-century fiction with terms such as a “pre-Cartesian person” or simply “object,” these critics have sought to demonstrate that the eighteenth-century model of identity was not only thoroughly embodied, but also free of later inventions like self-consciousness.⁶ The tradition of associating the development of eighteenth-century literature with the construction of an individual who is familiar to twentieth- and twenty-first century readers has been dismissed as anachronistic. The materialist, empirical, and anti-humanist turn in eighteenth-century studies has succeeded in making the past so unfamiliar that it no longer appears to be ours.

In depicting the individual that emerges in eighteenth-century literature as synonymous with the middle-class consumer of today, I take the side of the purportedly presentist tradition that begins with Ian Watt’s *The Rise of the Novel* (1957) and extends into the more recent work

⁵ Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1995: 31.

⁶ Thompson, Helen. *Ingenuous Subjection: Compliance and Power in the Eighteenth Century Domestic Novel*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005: 204.

Macpherson, Sandra. *Harm’s Way: Tragic Responsibility and the Novel Form*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010: 23.

See also: Kramnick, Jonathan. *Actions and Objects from Hobbes to Richardson*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010.

of critics such as Nancy Armstrong, Michael McKeon, and Catherine Gallagher. While I certainly take issue with these critics on a number of points, I share their general commitment to Roach's declaration that "the eighteenth-century...isn't over yet" (I 44). For all this, I believe that I have nevertheless avoided looking upon the past as if it were a mere mirror of the present. I have scoured the literary representations of a previous era in the hopes of uncovering the concrete possibilities that persist within the present as the promise of alternative futures to come. My history of the present is didactic because it affirms the excessiveness of everyday consumer life that we modern individuals have yet to accomplish. I believe that the "planetary petty bourgeoisie" have inherited the miraculous double being of the medieval king, but I also believe that they have yet to ascend to the sovereign heights that remain within them as the destiny of their being. Middle-class individuals are in fact so far from realizing this destiny that they seek out every opportunity to act as if they were never ennobled by the disorienting powers of the abstract. Successful middle-class individuals are the ones who pretend that they are still a mere body unconsciously driven by the reassuring dictates of custom. Within such a world, imploring these individuals to realize the sovereign potential of their being is in essence a call for them to fail.

For my project and the sovereign form of individuality that it recovers, success and failure exist in a chiasmatic relationship. They overlap one another forming an ascendant spiral of counter-intuitive reversals animated by the fact that modernity is a movement in excess of the modern societies that bear its name. The excessive individuals that I celebrate in the work of Eliza Haywood, Daniel Defoe, and Samuel Richardson fail in terms of the hypocritical values governing eighteenth-century England's consumer society. In a paradox that we still live with today, the norms of this commercial society maintained social unity and complacency only by

betraying the theological excessiveness that remains within every consumer society as its obscured but nevertheless present essence. I have concluded this introduction with a series of lessons on taking flight because ascending beyond the world of bodies and the utilitarian logic of self-preservation is the as-yet unfulfilled destiny of this essence. The spiraling chiasmus of success and failure reaches its apex in this call to take flight from a culture that has been fleeing from itself for centuries. To stand above the world of things as a sovereign subject is simultaneously to succeed in fulfilling modernity's promise and to fail in conforming to the society that has been unwilling to affirm the magic that lies at its foundation.

The King Was a Hypocrite, but At Least He Was a Subject

By the late thirteenth century, at the close of the high Middle Ages, the struggle to transfer the supreme authority of the Church to the king's mortal body had reached a point where in England as well as France royal heirs no longer needed Church rituals to assume the divinity of the throne. Medieval political theology succeeded, in the words of Kantorowicz, in creating a "royal species of man" that infused the legacy of Christ into the bloodline of ruling families.⁷ Dynastic kings were thus simply born with it. And in keeping with the audacity of this political theological program, the monarchs of this era not only aggressively proclaimed their capacity to transcend the world of mere objects, in stark contrast to their middle-class successors today, but also attempted to create the illusion that their powers emanated directly from the immutable divinity of royal blood. While my project celebrates the regicides that shook England in 1649

⁷ Kantorowicz, Ernst. *The King's Two Bodies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997: 331. Cited parenthetically hereafter as KB.

and France in 1793 as, both figuratively and literally, decisive events in the emergence of modernity, it also argues that these executions are in a sense only half completed.

These early modern regicides reinforced the lesson that the Reformation had sought to disseminate: namely, that the divine lives in the blood of every believer. In the wake of these events, every body becomes theoretically capable of assuming the at once mortal and immortal being of a high-church official or monarch. The magic of the divine becomes hypostatically united with the flesh of the masses, prompting declarations such as Martin Luther's announcement that "we Christians are Kings and Priests wherein also we be Lords over all."⁸ The Reformation and regicides in effect laid the groundwork for commodification to make the sacred subjectivity of kings and priests available on a mass level. In the particular case of England, the 1649 execution of Charles I was, as Christopher Hill asserts, "the most important political event of the century" because it not only conclusively exposed the hypocrisy of the king, but also heralded the economic revolution of the coming centuries that would see the borrowed majesty of Christ transformed into the common right of every middle-class consumer.⁹

Writing in the midst of a conflict that would leave him beheaded, Charles gives voice to the triumphant sovereignty of a subjectivity that we have yet to properly inherit:

With my own power my majesty they wound

In the King's name the king himself uncrowned.

⁸ Luther, Martin. *A treatise touching the libertie of a Christian* [A Treatise on Christian Liberty]. Trans. James Bell. London: Printed by Thomas Harper for William Sheares, and to be sold at his shop in Britaines Burse 1636: 837. See also Luther's affirmation, in the same work, of Christ's declaration, as reported by Paul, "I live in the flesh, I live in the faith of the sonne of God" (889). Human flesh can indeed be made holy for Luther, but it cannot be limited to kings.

⁹ Hill, Christopher. *The Century of Revolution: 1603-1714*. London: Routledge Classics, 2001: 224.

So does the dust destroy the diamond.¹⁰

Although essentially wrong in that the dust can in fact become the diamond, Charles's verse is right on the level of practice since the dust has largely busied itself with looking for new ways to flee from the majesty it has inherited. The tragic shortcoming of modernity is that middle-class individuals have democratized the excessive sovereignty of the king without assuming it. As commodified bodies and heirs to a regicidal legacy, they inhabit the subjective framework of a God incarnate. But they have forgotten that sovereignty, in the words of Georges Bataille, is precisely what lies "beyond utility" and the "servile" world of work, savings, and all the other rational acts of self-preservation.¹¹ Everything we associate with the good capitalist individual of today is in fact a betrayal of modernity's true promise. The values of hard work, frugality, and temperance are the ways in which the "planetary bourgeoisie" have fled from the sovereignty that subsumes them. Luther and other early Protestants fought to make the middle-class king and it is this rather than the moralism that has been thrust upon them that we must today recover.

Writing Letters, Buying Things, Being Modern

It is no coincidence that the emblematic devices of twenty-first-century consumerism are used first and foremost as tools for writing letters and buying things. To write any sort of letter is to enshroud one's self in the discursive identity of an author. It is to enter the alternative world of language and to thus assume the doubled life of a body and a name. When writing a letter for the public, however, whether it be an eighteenth-century verse epistle, facebook update, or tweet,

¹⁰ Stuart, Charles. "Majesty in Misery." *Eikon Basilike*. London, 1649. I should note that Charles's authorship is far from certain. Quoted in KB 41.

¹¹ Bataille, Georges. *Accursed Share*. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Zone Books, 1976: 198, 199.

one takes the situation a step further. As William Dowling elucidates in *The Epistolary Moment* (1991), the writer of a public letter brings an entire community into the implied solitude of his or her authorial position.¹² By managing to simultaneously remain withdrawn from the world and engage in it, writers of public letters construct for themselves a subjectivity that mirrors the doubled being of the king and his middle-class successors. These letter-writers stand in the kingly position of the consumer, both within the world and above it.

Figurative correlates, the writer of public letters and the modern individual fittingly appear together in the first chapter of my project. This opening chapter contends that John Dryden's epistolary ode to his cousin, "To My Honour'd Kinsman" (1700), employs the rhetorical structure of the public letter as a means of extending the doubled subjectivity of the king to individual members of the English body politic. I argue that Dryden, a veteran royalist of the seventeenth century, decides to develop the figure of the "patriot" in this late poem in an effort to democratize the divine model of the royal self that he had helped develop in earlier works such as such as "Astraea Redux" (1660) and "To His Sacred Majesty" (1661). Dryden represents the starting point for my project because his turn to democratizing the king's doubled being illuminates both the historical emergence of the middle-class individual and, even more importantly, its royal origins.

Although Dryden's patriot signifies the appearance of the individual upon the scene of history, his status as a gentlemanly Member of Parliament ties him to the highly restricted domain of the political sphere. My second chapter argues that the heroines of Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) and Eliza Haywood's *Fantomina* (1725) dramatize the way in which the doubled being of the patriot only becomes truly popular, that is available on a mass level,

¹² Dowling, William. *The Epistolary Moment*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991: 31.

through the process of commodification. Whereas Dryden's patriot, like every good citizen, forsakes his sovereignty for the good of the nation, the heroines of *Moll Flanders* and *Fantomina* demonstrate the possibility of using the royal subjectivity of the modern individual as an opportunity for wholly unnecessary and hence excessive acts of play. Rather than falling into the trap of their descendents- the "planetary bourgeoisie" who still search for bygone meaning- these heroines seize upon the abstract nature of their lives as a chance to engage in a series of dazzling identity transformations. From prostitute to lady to gentleman, these heroines continually endow themselves with new identities as they move through their novels and the world at large as inspirational icons of excess.

Although the subject of my third chapter, Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1747-48), features a heroine who strives to render her abstract second body immutably static, she nonetheless belongs alongside Moll and 'Fantomina' as an exemplar of excessiveness. According to the conventional narrative of the domestic novel, a young virtuous heroine struggling to navigate the modernizing landscape of the eighteenth century would discover in marriage and the modern conjugal family the means of escaping the disorientation of modernity. Though the eponymous heroine of *Clarissa* faces this conventional dilemma, she obstinately refuses the conjugal dénouement that provided eighteenth-century readers with the illusion that they could escape commodification through the sentimentality of their domestic relations. Rather than fleeing from her abstract second self, like a conventional literary heroine or middle-class individual for that matter, Clarissa decides to make it an object of worship.

While other critics, most notably Margaret Doody, have discussed the religious significance of Clarissa's withdrawal from the world and her ensuing fixation upon death, my argument is unique in framing this final monastic period in the worldly terms of political

theology.¹³ By retreating to an apartment above a glove shop in a commercially thriving part of London, Clarissa provides us with a lesson not on how to die, but on how to live as truly sacred subjects. Clarissa's monastic period, during which she devotes herself to writing, prayer, and contemplations of death, should not be understood as a preparation for some extra-textual afterlife. Looking at Richardson's text from our twenty-first-century perspective, we should instead see *Clarissa* and the final days of its heroine as a demonstration of our capacity as modern subjects to approach the ecstatic and annihilating limit of self-dissolution within this life. Clarissa is the modern shopper and letter writer who refuses to descend. She reaches the apex of modern subjectivity, becoming an object before the now-fully restored face of God.

It is not the modern individual, but the multitude that stands as the exemplary figure of excessiveness in my final chapter on Maria Edgeworth's novel *The Absentee* (1812).¹⁴ Although it is chronologically last, both in the terms of history and this dissertation, my chapter on Edgeworth should ideally be read first since it effectively celebrates the failure of the individuating process that the rest of my project takes as a given. Standing alongside work by authors such as Francis Burney and Jane Austen, Edgeworth's *The Absentee* belongs to a moment in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century when the British novel provided the modern individuals that constituted its reading public with the fantasy that married life would allow them to escape the disorienting effects of commodification and the individuation it imposed upon its subjects. Unlike other domestic novels, however, *The Absentee* culminates with an unambiguous portrait of the limits of modernization. The Irish multitude that interrupts the

¹³ See Doody's "Holy and Unholy Dying: The Deathbed Theme in *Clarissa*." *Natural Passion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974.

¹⁴ I derive the idea of the "multitude" from the work of Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt. For their most well known formulation of it to date, see *Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001.

culminating moment of Edgeworth's novel represents a critical limit to the project of converting the world's bodies into individualized bearers of abstract value.

While my dissertation ultimately affirms modernity and the magic it everywhere makes possible, it was important to me to include a work that both reflects the hypocritical ideology of domesticity that continues to dominate contemporary consumer societies and that engages with the possibility of these societies meeting under-individualized opponents. As commercialization continues to intensify its hold over greater segments of the globe, particularly in South and East Asia, we will see the rise of ideological antidotes along the lines of domesticity as well as the emergence of anti-modern multitudes fighting for the preservation of previous modes of order. Whereas in my previous two chapters I demonstrate domesticity's inability to save modern subjects from themselves, my final chapter focuses on domesticity's failure to rescue modernity from the intransigence of those new bodies it seeks to subsume. I ultimately privilege a more complicated and affirmative model of failure, one that is intrinsic to commercial society, because I believe that commercialism and the individuation it brings represent the likely fate of the world. I include, however, an example of a different form of failure in this final chapter because the path to this global commercial future will be littered with violent confrontations. I also believe, as my final lesson on flight articulates, that, though destined for defeat, the struggle of the under-individuated multitude is, for its constituents, well worth affirming.

Writing in the aftermath of the 1798 Irish Rebellion and the subsequent union of England and Ireland in 1801, Edgeworth stages the possibility that the protagonist of *The Absentee*, the Protestant Lord Colambre, could symbolically redeem the English colonial project through restoring his family to their Irish estate. Although Colambre succeeds in returning his family to Ireland, Edgeworth decides to interrupt the culminating moment of their return with a threatening

portrayal of the Irish Catholic peasantry who respond to the arrival of their Protestant masters by engaging in unruly and illicit performances of native Irish rituals and songs. With the disruptive appearance of this Irish Catholic multitude, Edgeworth suggests that the colonization of Ireland will remain incomplete so long as its people retain a collective identity determined by language, custom, and history. The peasants “shouting and dancing like mad” at the conclusion of *The Absentee* are clearly acting excessively, but they are not permanently living with the excessive second body that only individuation can bring.¹⁵

The combined effects of religious reformation, regicide, and commodification have left middle-class individuals permanently severed from the immediate and affective bonds of this Catholic mob. Middle-class individuals did not merely kill the king or the priest; they consumed and incorporated them and they thus now stand alienated from all that was once familiar. Rather than bemoaning this loss or worse pretending it never occurred, my project follows Agamben in arguing that the planetary bourgeoisie must give up the “search for a proper identity” and instead affirm “impropriety as such” as the essence of their being (CC 64). Without homes, we approach the world as a spectacle and it is high time we learn how to savor it.

Lessons on Flight: The Message of Each Chapter

1. You were born from kings who were made from God and you thus reside in this world while remaining beyond it. You have a community, a language, and a gender but they are not yours.

You are an angel.

¹⁵ Maria Edgeworth, *The Absentee*, in *The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth*, vol. V. London: Pickering and Chatto, 1999: 200.

2. You are no longer a mere body. You have been made abstract. The world is not a home to you; it is a theatre. Go on stage and let the forces of the abstract move you. Assume different genders, class-positions, and social types. They are all roles to be played.

3. You are divine and you can live in the sacred wake of your own divinity. Clarissa will show you how.

4. If you are presented with a multitude and an authentic self rather than an iPad and an aura, then join the multitude and have fun.

Chapter One

Dryden's Political Theology and the Making of the Modern Subject

Introduction: Why Dryden is Modern

The association of John Dryden with the construction of the modern subject may appear odd given the image that literary critics have constructed of Dryden as the father of the English Augustans and their classically-inspired opposition to modern life. Following a brief period in which he worked in the secretary of state's office under Oliver Cromwell, Dryden spent the majority of his career writing poems and plays that sought to perfect the unity of king and country, a unity which the execution of Charles I in 1648 had fundamentally shaken. In pursuit of achieving what was essentially a high medieval aim of infusing the profane body of the king with the transcendent authority of Christ and the Church, Dryden used verse to depict Charles II and then his brother James as men endowed with the immortal and collective identity of the English body politic. The ascent of James's daughter Mary and her husband William to the throne in 1688 puts an end, however, to Dryden's days of political influence, depriving him of his Poet Laureate and Historiographer Royal positions and, more abstractly, challenging his now seemingly outdated theory of divine right. Withdrawn from public life and compelled to veil his politics in translations, fables, and odes, the displaced Dryden of the 1690s appeared to his nostalgic successors as a tragic symbol of the loss of traditional English society. William Dowling exemplifies the tendency of contemporary literary critics to support this nostalgic narrative with the assertion that "the Augustan situation in English poetry may be regarded as coming into existence at the precise moment of Dryden's withdrawal from the public gaze when ... his poems begin to address an audience of private individuals rather than the nation as a

whole.”¹⁶ While I hope to undermine this image of Dryden as a predecessor to the anti-modernism of the Augustans, I am nevertheless indebted to Dowling for his insistence that Dryden’s turn to putting his poetry in the form of letters was not, as major critics such as Steven Zwicker argue, a departure from the political impetus of his earlier verse. By continuing and complicating Dowling’s exploration of the politics of Dryden’s withdrawal, I hope to construct a new image of the late Dryden as an aging poet who embraced the modernization of English society in the late seventeenth century as an opportunity to reformulate and perfect the political theology he had spent his career developing.

The monarchist Dryden rather than the republican John Milton serves as the key figure for my investigation of the modern subject because I believe this subject is in fact a successor to the divinely sanctioned monarch of medieval Europe. Far from representing a distinct break with the past, the rights bearing individual of political modernity stands as the logical endpoint of the middle ages campaign to endow secular governance with the transcendent aura and authority of the church. Whereas Milton’s revolutionary insistence on the separation of secular and spiritual authority prefigures the way twenty-first-century Western democratic states like to present themselves, it is Dryden’s opposing affirmation of the spiritual basis of political authority that anticipates the way these governments truly function.¹⁷ Although Dryden was as much a playwright as a poet, I will be focusing on the latter because it is in his poetic works that Dryden constructs a cohesive and optimistic political theology centered at first on the king and later on the twin figures of the king and patriot. As the critic Laura Brown has noted, Dryden reserved his

¹⁶ Dowling, William. *The Epistolary Moment*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991: 61. Cited parenthetically hereafter as EM.

¹⁷ Nigel Smith succinctly describes Milton’s politics as “monarchist in heaven, republican on earth” (263). See “*Paradise Lost* from Civil War to Restoration.” *The Cambridge Companion to Writing of the English Revolution*. Ed. N. H. Keeble. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

plays for his more pessimistic meditations on the potential failure of his political theology to subdue the body politic's tendency to violently separate the king's mortal body from the higher, mystical body of the nation.¹⁸ Dryden's plays, in other words, remain consistently fearful of the democratization of his medieval political theology; his poetry, however, eventually comes to affirm this modernizing process as an innovative solution to the much older problem of political unity. My analysis of Dryden's poetry will begin with an examination of the king-centered model of political theology that he constructs in two of his early panegyrics on the restoration of Charles II, "Astraea Redux" (1660) and "To His Sacred Majesty" (1661), and end with a late work memorializing his cousin, "To My Honour'd Kinsman, John Driden, of Chesterton in the County of Huntingdon, Esquire" (1700), since it is in this later poem that Dryden uses the subjectivity of king as a model for constructing the distinctly modern figure of the patriot.¹⁹

While preserving the exceptional, extra-judicial power of the king, Dryden's "To My Honour'd Kinsman" develops the counter balancing figure of the patriot, whose political importance stems from his seemingly mundane capacity to settle disputes amongst neighbors, regulate his sexual appetite, offer sound medical advice, and rationally manage his desire for recreation. Through regulating his primarily biological existence in the private realm of the English countryside, Dryden's cousin is miraculously able to internalize the collective sovereignty of the nation, an act that simultaneously creates the modern subject and secures the transcendental authority of the king. I am reading this late work of Dryden's alongside his early

¹⁸ Brown, Laura. "Dryden and the Imperial Imagination." *The Cambridge Companion to Dryden*. Ed. Steven Zwicker. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004: 73. Cited parenthetically hereafter as DI.

¹⁹ "Astraea Redux" and "To His Sacred Majesty." *The Works of John Dryden*. Ed. Edward N. Hooker and H. T. Swedenberg. Vol. I. Poems 1649-1680. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1956.
"To My Honour'd Kinsman." *The Works of John Dryden*. Ed. Vincent Dearing. Vol. VII. Poems 1697-1700. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000.

panegyrics in an effort to emphasize that the new figure of the patriot extends rather than opposes the model of the king's two bodies- one mortal and the other immortal- into the once undistinguished domain of the English body politic. As a mortal body invested with the immortal and corporate sovereignty of an entire body politic, the dynastic king of medieval Europe represents the exemplary predecessor of an individual whose basic functions of life come to exemplify the collective identity of the nation. Rather than signaling Dryden's retreat from politics, the complicated but clearly in some sense epistolary form of his late poem embodies the counter-intuitive nature of Dryden's political theology as a whole. The patriot, like the king, justifies his right to rule the political sphere by performatively articulating his distance from it.

Although both an ode and an epistle, the political significance that rural living assumes in "To My Honour'd Kinsman" has the effect of emphasizing the epistolary dimensions of the poem because it articulates in content what the letter says in form: namely, that withdrawal can act as a purifying condition for human connection and political commitments. Dryden uses the isolation and distance inherent in both rural spaces and the epistolary form to construct a subject whose claim to divine sovereignty is grounded in the fact that he ultimately does not belong to either the private or public domains of English life. The dual allusion in the poem's opening couplet to the first Psalm and Horace's second epode establishes a balance between divine authority and rural retreat that structures the withdrawn politics of the work as a whole: "How Bless'd is He, who leads a Country Life, / Unvex'd with anxious Cares, and void of Strife!"²⁰ Beyond the explicit Biblical and Horatian allusions, the themes of rural retreat and moral

²⁰ Dryden's 1685 translation of Horace's second epode opens: "How happy in his low degree/ How rich in humble poverty, is he / Who leads a quiet country life; / Discharg'd of business, void of strife, / And from the griping scrivener free!" With the verb "bless'd," Dryden alludes to Psalm 1: "Blessed is he who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers."

contentment in this couplet echoes Dryden's earlier translations of fragments from Lucretius's *De rerum natura* and Virgil's *Georgics*, both of which appeared alongside his Horatian translations in the collection *Sylvae* (1685). While "To My Honour'd Kinsman" clearly continues Dryden's long-standing interest in classical celebrations of rural life, it lends further credence to the critic Paul Hammond's argument that "it is not primarily the rural life as such which attracts Dryden... rather it is the mode of life which the countryside makes possible, the life of freedom from care and disturbance."²¹ Dryden effectively dematerializes the rural by transforming it into a symbol of the Epicurean and Lucretian notion of *ataraxia*, or the unperturbed state beyond pleasure and pain, that acts as the basis for his politics of engaged withdrawal.

By conferring a state of blessedness on this condition of withdrawn contentment, the opening couplet of "To My Honour'd Kinsman" grounds the pagan ideal of *ataraxia* in the Judeo-Christian realm of the divine. In doing so, it infuses rural life with the supreme sovereignty of a monotheistic God. While Hammond helpfully elucidates the way Dryden turns to ancient Roman writers in order to conceive of an "alternative present," as opposed to simply attempting to revive the past, his interpretation of Dryden's neo-classicism fails to account for the divine foundation that Dryden gives this politically essential space of withdrawal (DT 40). Dryden uses the remoteness of the ancients, like the geography of the rural and the form of the private letter, to develop a strategy for simultaneously transcending and engaging in the rapidly urbanizing present of late seventeenth-century England. Although this paradoxically withdrawn form of engagement in the time and space of the present indeed undermines, as Hammond notes, "illusions of presence," the formal operation of *différance* and the ensuing disruption of unified notions of identity that Hammond highlights represent mere incidental effects of a strategy that

²¹ Hammond, Paul. *Dryden and the Traces of Classical Rome*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999: 171. Cited parenthetically hereafter as DT.

above all else seeks to ground the moral and political authority of the body politic in the transcendent and hence absolutely withdrawn space of the divine (DT 19). Dryden culminates his poem by hailing his cousin as a “true Descendent of a Patriot Line” in order to organize the new and hence unsettled identity of the patriot into the secular theology of the dynastic king whose politically essential state of withdrawal established a model for simultaneously transcending and engaging in a newly modern world (l.195).

Part One: Dryden’s Biopolitics and the Myth of the Uniquely Modern

Working against the image of Dryden as unambiguously opposed to the modernizing transformation of England in the late seventeenth century, I will be arguing that Dryden’s “To My Honour’d Kinsman” in fact contributes to the expansion of the state into previously under-regulated domains of life, a process which reached a point of noticeable acceleration in the 1690s. With the improvement of roads, the development of a postal service, the increasing importance of a London-based Parliament, and the creation of the Bank of England, to name only a few examples, the 1690s was a decisive period for the unification, urbanization, and financialization of English life.²² While Dryden’s “To My Honour’d Kinsman” clearly contains criticism of contemporary political events, particularly of King William’s aggressive foreign policy on the Continent, its development of the figure of the patriot is in line with a decade that explored new techniques for ensuring the mystical unity of the English body politic. By reading the high poetics of Dryden’s neo-classical poem as a reflection of the popular and distinctly

²² For an exciting revision of the hitherto subdued appreciation of the 1688 revolution and the ensuing changes to English society, see Steven Pincus’s *1688: The First Modern Revolution*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009. Cited parenthetically as FM.

modern work of the Societies for the Reformation of Manners (SRM), I will seek to highlight the surprisingly modern turn that Dryden's essentially medieval political theology takes in one of his final original works. Dryden's poetic sacralization and politicization of the English body politic neatly mirrors the grassroots activism of the SRM who organized a network of divinely inspired informants in the 1690s to ensure the enforcement of secular law in urban areas. The SRM sought to show that, as one their enthusiasts put it, "Divine Service is not Confined to Consecrated Places" because they operated under the very modern assumption that God's sovereignty remains indistinguishable from the secular authority and laws of the developing nation-state.²³ Though they obviously address different spectrums of the social body, one gentlemanly and the other impoverished, both Dryden and the SRM transform once undifferentiated elements of the body politic into individuals whose responsibility for the collective fate of the nation marks the democratization of the immortal sovereignty of the king. Rather than marking the decline of the divine basis of sovereignty, as many historians and critics contend, the politically essential individual who emerges from these efforts to politicize the life of the body politic is a subject only insofar as he or she has internalized the same divinely-sanctioned authority that had endowed the dynastic king with an immortal second body.

Through insisting on the essential continuity between Dryden's king- and patriot-centered political systems, I hope to correct the tendency in English literary studies as well as contemporary continental philosophy to isolate the emerging forms of modernity from the pre-modern world that gave rise to them.²⁴ While my discussion of the extension of sovereignty into

²³ Woodhouse, John. *A sermon preach'd at Salters-Hall to the Societies for Reformation of Manners, May 31, 1697*. V. Cited parenthetically hereafter as JW.

²⁴ The much-needed effort, led by critics such as Richard Kroll, Michael McKeon, and Elliott Visconsi, to uncover Dryden's political modernism has for the most part conformed to this

the biological functions of the late seventeenth-century individual draws from Michel Foucault's seminal notion of biopolitics, I will resist Foucault's tendency to represent biopolitics as a distinct historical period with its own unique epistemology. Foucault first articulates his idea of biopolitics in the final chapter of *The History of Sexuality: Volume I* (1976) as a kind of completion of the early modern shift from a form of power that functioned through a process of "deduction," which culminated in the right to legally kill, to a "generative" form of authority that aims to "administer, optimize, and multiply" the life of its subjects.²⁵ According to the narrative that Foucault sketches in *The History of Sexuality*, biopolitics begins with the emergence of disciplinary techniques and institutions in the seventeenth century. In treating every "body as a machine" capable of "optimization," disciplinary techniques demonstrated the potential for political control to be applied in detail and en masse, rendering each individual body of the larger body politic a subject of political calculation (139). Moving well past the symbolic displays of authority that epitomized the classical approach to ensuring political unity, power in the disciplinary era transformed the bodies of its once insignificant dependents into modern individuals. Biopolitics emerges in the eighteenth through nineteenth centuries as a means of once again viewing the now individualized bodies of the nation as a part of larger collective. Understood as a "species body" rather than a body politic, the totality of the nation is seen from the biopolitical perspective as a "population," a pre-political biological entity that must nevertheless be cultivated and regulated by political interventions (139). Though Foucault presents disciplinary and biopolitical strategies as operating in tandem, he clearly identifies biopolitics as the ascendant mode of political subjection.

tendency by portraying Dryden's politics as a distinct break from the medieval ideology of the dynastic monarch.

²⁵ Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality*. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage Books, 1990: 136, 137.

Although many late seventeenth-century English developments, most notably the growing popularity in the 1690s of political arithmetic and demographic studies, indicate that biopolitics indeed rises to prominence as a strategy at the turn of the century in England, I would like to follow Giorgio Agamben's lead in conceiving of the transformation of the biological life of a given population into the essential subject of politics as an intensification of the primordial "inclusion of bare life in the political realm" that structures every regime of sovereignty, whether it be ancient or modern.²⁶ Foucault himself in the first of his 1978 lectures at the Collège de France cautions those that take his successive modes of power as distinct historical periods: "there is not a series of successive elements, the appearance of the new causing the earlier ones to disappear," but rather "what...changes is the dominant characteristic, or more exactly, the system of correlation between juridico-legal mechanisms, disciplinary mechanisms, and mechanisms of security [the biopolitical mode]."²⁷ The irony in this warning is that Foucault reaffirms the very 'stagist' model that he criticizes by continuing to associate in this same lecture each of these three modes of governance with a specific stage or period in the development of modernity.

To appreciate the pre-modern and theological basis of the modern, biopolitical self that I believe Dryden formulates in "To My Honour'd Kinsman," one must abandon the effort to map the emergence of the modern subject according to a series of distinct historical periods each with

²⁶ For a summary of the vogue for political arithmetic in the 1690s, see Hoppit, Julian. *Land of Liberty?: England 1689-1727*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000: 190-191. Cited parenthetically hereafter as LL. Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer*. Trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998: 6. Cited parenthetically hereafter as HS.

²⁷ Foucault. *Security, Territory, Population*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007: 8. Cited parenthetically hereafter as STP.

its corresponding *episteme*.²⁸ While magisterial in the scope and depth of its historical analysis, Dror Wahrman's *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (2004) exemplifies the pitfalls of organizing the early stages of modern English history with a series of epistemological breaks. Wahrman, like Foucault, constructs a tripartite system to trace the successive stages of selfhood from the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries.

According to this model, the constitution of the properly autonomous subject of modernity in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is preceded by both the mutable, "other-oriented," and "socially turned" conscience of the early eighteenth century, and the "solipsistic" and "God-driven Protestant" conscience of the seventeenth century.²⁹ Wahrman most clearly demonstrates the inadequacy of this approach to understanding the emergence of the modern subject when he contrasts the American revolution, which produced an "unnatural confusion of fundamental identity categories," to the English civil war in which "God's will...endowed them [each side] with a self-explanatory axiomatic identity distinct from that of their adversaries" (223, 231). The fiction of the epistemological break and the myth of the secular age that it authorizes prevent Wahrman from recognizing the way God functioned in the Interregnum as a site for fundamental debates over the meaning of the self rather than as a source for stable, pre-determined categories of existence. When Dryden writes in his exclusionist crisis tract "Absalom and Achitophel" (1681), "Religion and redress of grievances, / Two names that always cheat and always please," he underlines the danger of the exclusionist movement by associating it with the destabilizing political theologies of the civil war era such as the constitutionalism of the Levellers, the agrarian

²⁸ Jacques Derrida's critique of the epistemological "construction of Foucault's project" in *Madness and Civilization* (1961) as potentially "totalitarian" is relevant to this discussion. See *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980: 57.

²⁹ Wahrman, Dror. *The Making of the Modern Self*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004: 308-309.

communism of the Diggers, and the anti-humanist pantheism of the Ranters.³⁰ The disruptive function of God reaches an apotheosis in the latter group's philosophical system in which the presumed return of Christ acts as a kind of universal dissolvent that reduces every category of existence, including of course the human, to a single plane of being populated by undifferentiated things animated by the all-encompassing force of the divine.³¹

Beginning with the premise that history cannot be organized by a series of epistemological breaks, I hope to open up the possibility of viewing the surprisingly modern subject that Dryden envisions at the turn of the eighteenth century as a new direction in the centuries-old effort to transform the transcendent space of the divine into a guarantee of earthly sovereignty. Dryden's "To My Honour'd Kinsman" represents an important marker of the transformation in biopolitics at the turn of the century because it imagines the extension of biopolitical control, which had previously been reserved for the king and high church officials, to a newly enfranchised individual. Far from representing a break with religion and monarchical rule, the proto-liberal individual in Dryden's poem to his cousin emerges as a delayed effect of the late medieval transition from ecclesiastical coronation to dynastic succession, which Ernst Kantorowicz traces in *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (1957). By shifting the seat of the Holy Spirit from the rituals of anointment and the voting of electors to the "royal blood itself," legal theorists from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries developed a "royal species of man" that rooted the king's second, supernatural body in life itself.³² No longer dependent upon the sacred rituals of coronation, the dynastic king finds the justification of his

³⁰ "Absalom and Achitophel." *The Works of John Dryden*. Ed. H. T. Swedenberg. Vol. II. Poems 1681-1684. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972: ll. 747-748.

³¹ For an example of this, see Francis Freeman's pamphlet *Light Vanquishing Darkness* (1650) in which he locates God in table-boards and candlesticks amongst other things.

³² Kantorowicz, Ernst. *The King's Two Bodies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997: 331. Cited parenthetically hereafter as KB.

rule in the relationship of his royal “species body,” as Foucault terms it, to the divine power that subjects and thereby ennobles it. The immortal aura of sovereignty separates from church rituals as it becomes invested in the biology of an innately sacred royal line. Agamben’s insight that “the novelty of modern biopolitics lies in the fact that the biological given is as such immediately political” suggests that the dynastic monarch of medieval Europe is in a sense the first modern, biopolitical subject (HS 148). From this perspective, Agamben’s emphasis on the centrality of the state of exception to biopolitical modernity appears to simply reflect the provenance of biopolitics in this dynastic king of the later middle ages who, in the words of Kantorowicz, is “the very Idea of Justice which itself is bound to Law and yet above the Law because it is the end of all Law” (96). With the wane of the church’s influence over the contours of kingly authority, jurisprudence “felt invited to create its own secular spirituality” that transformed the king into a *typus Christi* (K 97). The fully empowered and biopolitical king comes to quite literally embody not only the doubleness of Christ, but also the paradox of his authority: namely, that he derives his sovereignty over the law from the fact that he stands as an exception to it.

While Agamben’s truly novel emphasis on the structural link between this sovereign right of exception and the constitution of the biopolitical subject will be decisive for my reading of Dryden, Agamben’s unequivocally negative portrayal of the internalization of the state of exception overlooks the capacity of this internalized and ultimately theological domain to both make and unmake the modern, biopolitical subject. In an extension of Carl Schmitt’s thesis in *Political Theology* (1922) that “sovereign is he who decides on the exception,” a point that Schmitt undoubtedly inherits from medieval jurisprudence, Agamben argues that “sovereignty...is the originary structure in which law refers to life and includes it in itself by

suspending it” (HS 27).³³ The exception that binds the body natural of a given heir to the collective, immortal body of the nation forms a template for the constitution of a subject who becomes properly biopolitical once his or her excepted body natural is privileged as the “new subject of politics” (HS 124). To critique a biopolitical subject grounded in a relation of exception between the immortal body of sovereignty and the mortal body of life itself, Agamben claims that it will be necessary to “put the very form of relation into question, and to ask if the political fact is not perhaps thinkable beyond the relation...”(HS 29). Agamben’s call for a politics beyond the relation echoes Foucault’s loaded observation that the great religious wars of the medieval and early modern periods failed to ever put pastoral power, or the right to govern others, into question (STP 149).

These cryptic suggestions of a concept of the political beyond both sovereignty and the relation reflect the failure on the part of Agamben and Foucault to appreciate that the internalization of the exceptional relation of sovereignty marks an essential and glorious fault line in the modern subject, which places the possibility of dissolution at the heart of the modern self. The subsumption of life by politics engenders an opposition between the human community and the inhuman others that Agamben, Foucault, and many others mistakenly see as the primary problem with modern governance. In representing the extension of sovereignty into the life of individuals as synonymous with increasing levels of political subjection, these ethically-minded critics in fact reinforce the dogma of the very liberal democratic states they oppose. To take the internalization of sovereignty as a purely political phenomenon is to forget that it historically and conceptually emanates from the theological domain. Rather than continuing to affirm the legitimacy of modern governance by depicting the authority it wields as wholly its own, I will to

³³ Schmitt, Carl. *Political Theology*. Trans. George Schwab. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006: 5.

seek to expose the biopolitical expansion of sovereignty as an opportunity for individuals to recover the divinity that now lies within.

Foucault and Agamben helpfully elucidate this historical process, but they each overlook the fact that the possibility of an alternative lies within the process itself. Despite criticizing Foucault for imagining a “different economy of bodies and pleasure” as the basis for an alternative to modern power, Agamben’s own vision of a “form of life that is wholly exhausted in bare life and a *bios* [life of the group or individual] that is only its own *zoe* [bare life shared with animals and gods]” runs into a similar dilemma in that it too seeks an alternative to modern power through the intensification of the very indistinction between *bios* and *zoe* that defines the biopolitical era (HS 187). Rather than locating a body that precedes power or a form of life indistinguishable from the physical substratum of existence, I would like to suggest that an alternative to biopolitics can be grounded only upon the re-subordination of bare life to the internalized, immortal, and ultimately theological realm of sovereignty. Far from rescuing the subject from its plight into animality, as Hannah Arendt might have it, the re-submission of the bio-political subject to this older, theological domain of sovereignty transforms the subject into an object of an authority that reduces everything to a single plane of being that it alone exceeds. The divine provenance of the biopolitical subject that I will highlight in this first chapter will form the basis for the strategy of self-dissolution pursued by the heroine of my third chapter, the eponymous protagonist of Samuel Richardson’s *Clarissa* (1748). While the basic functions of life may represent the vital object of politics in the biopolitical era, *Clarissa* demonstrates that a higher, incorporeal form of sovereignty persists within the modern subject as a guarantee of both its possibility of existence and disappearance. By the end of these first three chapters, I will hope

to have demonstrated that a critique of the modern biopolitical subject must seek to perfect rather than escape the internalized relation of the sovereign exception.

Part Two: The Cosmopolitan King and the Political Theology of Young Dryden

The fundamental continuity of the late Dryden's image of the individual with his earlier depictions of the king is important for my study because it illuminates the theological alternative hidden within the sovereign heart of the modern subject. Steven Zwicker's contention in *Dryden's Political Poetry: The Typology of King and Nation* (1972) that "Dryden's career as political poet can be read as a series of attempts to forge a sacred history of the English nation" is an essential starting point for my effort to uncover the ultimately cohesive political theology that animates Dryden's work.³⁴ Zwicker's insight, however, will also provide the basis for a critique of his own division of Dryden's poetry into three distinct phases. In the first phase immediately following the Restoration of the Stuarts to the throne, Dryden writes panegyrics that employ the biblical method of typological exegesis to depict Charles's struggle to reconcile a divided people as a correlate to God's effort to redeem the wavering and long suffering nation of Israel. The bitterness in fiercely partisan works such as "Absalom and Achitophel" (1681) and "The Medall" (1682) characterizes the declining optimism of Dryden's second phase in which the elect people of England come to resemble the Israelites through their stubborn refusal of God's grace. After losing hope in the redemptive potential of the political sphere and converting to Catholicism in 1685, Dryden, according to Zwicker, begins to meditate upon the inscrutable power of the Church and the corresponding "possibility of individual grace" in fables and letters such as *The*

³⁴ Zwicker, Steven. *Dryden's Political Poetry*. Providence: Brown University Press, 1972: X. Cited parenthetically hereafter as PP.

Hind and the Panther (1685) and “To My Honour’d Kinsman” (PP 120). While Zwicker’s model captures Dryden’s escalating frustration with the continual deferral of “political redemption,” it obscures the way Dryden’s later fascination with “individual grace” extends rather than opposes his lifelong effort to ground the unity of the English nation in the idea that its monarch stands as God’s one true agent (PP 120).

Dryden develops his vision of the English king as the planet’s sole divine mediator and the English people as God’s elect in Restoration panegyrics such as “Astraea Redux” and “To His Sacred Majesty.” In these two works, Dryden exemplifies his commitment to completing the transition from ecclesiastical- to dynastic-based authority in national terms. Since Dryden composes the first of these works in celebration of the return of the unanointed heir and the second to commemorate his official coronation ceremony, the equally divine image of the king in both underlines Dryden’s allegiance to a dynastic model of sovereignty that is ostensibly independent of the church. Dryden represents the king as the typological correlate or the antitype of a multiplicity of characters- God, Christ, Noah, Moses, Aeneas- in the hopes of giving a transcendental basis to the union of Charles’s body natural with the collective body of the nation. Dryden begins “Astraea Redux” with an epigraph that enshrouds the poem in an anxious sense of expectation for such a union. Taken from Virgil’s *Eclogues* 6.6, the epigraph, “*Iam Redit and Virgo, Redeunt Saturnia Regna*” or “Now returns the Virgin, Saturn’s reign returns,” announces the arrival of Astraea the Roman goddess of Justice who fled Earth during the Iron Age and was to return only with the start of a new Golden one. The deferral of this idyllic present through the first section of the poem lends dramatic tension to Dryden’s narrative of the Interregnum and its resolution in the final two stanzas’ depiction of the king’s fated return. With the movement from the isolation of this dark age, when England was a “world divided from the rest,” to the

triumphant globalism of the poem's final line, "the world a monarch, and that monarch you," Dryden articulates the potential unity of a planet subjected to the transcendent authority of a single divinely sanctioned monarch (l. 2, l. 323).

Written just weeks after his return from exile, "Astraea Redux" portrays Charles's restoration as a sign of the divine redemption promised in the Virgilian epigraph. Dryden's prophetic imagery reaches its height near the end of his poem with the exclamation:

How Shall I speak of that triumphant Day
When you renew'd the expiring pomp of *May!*
(A month that owns an Interest in your Name:
You and the Flow'rs are its peculiar Claim.)
That Star at your birth shone out so bright
It stain'd the duller Suns Meridian light,
Did once again its potent Fires renew
Guiding our eyes to find and worship you. (ll. 284-291)

The metrically discordant "You" that punctuates this passage in the fourth line draws attention to the singularity of a king who stands apart from both audience and audience just like the Christ-figure with whom he is typologically related in the ensuing depiction of his birth. Given that a contemporary historian of the court reports that "it is observed, that at [Charles II's] Nativity at London, [there] was seen a Star about Noon-time," it seems that Dryden's allusion to the star of Bethlehem represents something more than a mere allegorical gesture.³⁵ Dryden's association of the king with Christ instead exemplifies his characteristic predilection for profaning the biblical method of typology by putting it to political use. Unlike allegory, where one term acts as an illuminating symbol for a privileged term, biblical typology, as Zwicker explains, establishes a relationship between two terms in which both are not only "literal," but also "historically true"

³⁵ Hooker, Edward N. and Swedenberg, H.T. "Commentary." *The Works of John Dryden*. Vol. I. Poems 1649-1680. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1956: 232. Cited parenthetically as C.

(PP 24-25). Dryden's explicit equation of Charles with Christ in his re-telling of the king's nativity tale so disturbed Samuel Johnson that he could only obliquely refer to it in his *Life of Dryden* (1779-1781) as the instant in which Dryden "mentions one of the most awful passages of Sacred History" (C 218). In a half-hearted attempt to save Dryden from the charge of blasphemy, Edward Hooker and H. T. Swedenberg argue that his nativity tale "indulg[es] in hyperbolic flattery and toy[s] with sacrilege" only as a means of expressing his "exuberant joy" and "breathless excitement" at the king's return (C 219). Rather than merely "toying with sacrilege," Dryden pursues a calculated campaign of sacrilege in which he uses a specifically biblical rhetorical method to equate the son of God with the unanointed ruler of a single nation. Dryden effectively redeploys the authority and rhetorical devices of one religion to create another: namely, that of the king's second body.

To make matters worse for the faint of heart, Dryden's re-interpretation of Matthew's tale of the star of Bethlehem equates the innocent babe of a virgin mother with the object of mass sexual attraction that was the libertine-leaning Charles following his exile in such erotically charged locales as the French court. The image of Charles's nativity star re-awakening the love of his subjects represents the culmination of Dryden's effort in "Astraea Redux" to translate Christian and pagan resurrection narratives into the language of politics. Dryden establishes the romantic conceit of Christ/Charles as an absent lover whose prophesized return is eagerly awaited by his followers early in the poem when he depicts the English body politic as jealous of the recently betrothed Infanta Maria Theresa: "While our cross stars denied us Charles's bed, / Whom our first flames and virgin love did wed. / For his long absence church and state did groan; / Madness the pulpit, faction seized the throne" (ll. 19-22). With the repetition of the first person plural 'our' in the opening couplet, Dryden interpellates his reader as a part of a collective

that he equates in the following two lines with both the Church and State. By personifying these institutions as Charles's heartsick bride, Dryden employs a well-established strategy of secularizing the marriage of bishops to the *corpus mysticum* of the Church in an effort to bind the carefully constructed corporate body signaled by the pronoun 'our' with the natural body of the king. Kantorowicz traces the idea of the Church incarnating the mystical body of Christ to the twelfth century when the transubstantiation debates of the eleventh century prompted canonists to shift the idea of *corpus mysticum* from the Eucharist to the Church and the concept of Christ's physical body, *corpus Christi*, from the Church to the Eucharist (KB 196). As the bearer of Christ's mystical as opposed to literal body, the Church became capable of entering into figurative marriages with its mortal representatives, a rhetorical maneuver that allowed the Church to continue to represent itself as synonymous with a divine realm that it no longer literally embodied. The Church discovered a means of maintaining its sacred identity following the relocation of Christ's body to the ritual of the Eucharist, but in doing so it developed a rhetorical strategy that later artisans of profanity use to sacralize the political union of king and nation. In Dryden's re-deployment of this motif in the seventeenth century, the national collective rather than the Church bears Christ's mystical body and it is the king as opposed to a bishop whom this mystical entity comes to figuratively wed.

Through his figurative marriage to the body politic, the king becomes endowed with a secularized and nationalized version of Christ's *corpus mysticum*. This is merely the starting point, however, for Dryden. His typological equation of Christ and Charles in "Astraea Redux" has the ultimate effect of infusing the literal body of Christ into the dynastic bloodline of a now innately sacralized monarch. Dryden's narration of the king's nativity scene culminates with Charles being posited as an object whose beauty inspires the kind of transcendental worship that

brings disparate bodies into a single sacred whole: “Did once again its potent Fires renew / Guiding our eyes to find and worship you” (ll. 290-1).³⁶ By isolating the second person pronoun “you” at the end of this couplet and stanza, Dryden dramatizes his departure from the third person pronoun, “him,” used both earlier in the poem and, perhaps even more importantly, in Matthew’s nativity tale.³⁷ The familiar ‘you’ punctuates the poem because it narrows its addressee to a single man-God figure and aligns the corporate body signified by the frequent use of the plural first person pronoun ‘our’ with the perspective of the author. While this configuration of a corporate body fixated on a single object of worship is in part merely a representation of the scene at Charles’s landing at Dover at which an “infinite crowd” greeted the king with “shouting and joy,” it is also and more importantly an attempt to constitute the English nation as the inseparable second body of the king (C 232). As the critics James Winn and Elliott Visconsi have noted, Dryden followed William Davenant in conceiving of the poet as a mythopoetic actor who uses the creative power of fiction to “cultivate the souls of a divided and traumatized nation.”³⁸ Rather than seeking, however, to poetically constitute an idea and feeling of national identity for the sake of “equitable judgment” or “systematic public enlightenment,” as

³⁶ Dryden’s eroticized re-telling of the star of Bethlehem narrative expresses the corporeal power of the king to inspire obedience in his subjects, an uncanny ability that contemporary authors such as Aphra Behn and Thomas Hobbes also ascribed to the monarch. See Helen Thompson’s discussion of Behn’s *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister* (1684) for an astute analysis of this Tory theory of physiology: “Hobbesian Obligation and the Durability of Romance in Aphra Behn’s *Love-Letters*.” *Women’s Writing in Britain, 1660-1830*. Eds. J. Batchelor and C. Kaplan. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

³⁷ See the refrain “pay him [the Christ-child] homage”: Matthew 2. 2, 8, 11. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

³⁸ Visconsi, Elliott. *Lines of Equity: Literature and the Origins of Law in Later Stuart England*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008: 37. Cited parenthetically hereafter as LE. In Winn’s biography of Dryden, he notes that Dryden and Davenant shared “a vision of the poet as the herald of fame, . . . as the laureate of heaven, whose ‘Art toward God’ would place him in the line of sacred poets descended from King David. . . .” *John Dryden and His World*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987: 76. Cited parenthetically hereafter as JD.

Visconti would have it, Dryden's poetics of Restoration political theology attempts to unify the English people around the immortal sovereignty that is inscribed into the very blood of the king (23, 74). Dryden, in other words, pursues a hegemonic strategy of enlightenment that endows the English body politic with the capacity to accept a king whose right to rule is given to him in advance. As the literal embodiment of Christ's persistence on earth, the king stands for Dryden as the predestined husband of the nation and the mystical body it bears.

Writing less than fifteen years after the king was killed in the name of saving the king, Dryden's effort to cultivate a national soul that is bound to the blood of the king clearly represents a response to the English people's recently demonstrated capacity to divide the corporate sovereignty of the king's higher, immortal body from his merely natural one. The 1649 execution of Charles I was indeed, as Christopher Hill asserts, "the most important political event of the century" because it dramatized the potential dissolution of any marriage between the mystical body of the nation and the mortal frame of the king.³⁹ Despite the providential portrayal of Charles II's return in "Astraea Redux," it was in fact the Convention Parliament of 1660 that summoned the king from Holland in an effort to suppress the revival of the radical pamphlets, agitation, and general social disorder that followed the death of Oliver Cromwell in 1658.⁴⁰ The propertied Presbyterians who had struggled to maintain control of the Interregnum since crushing the Levellers and other army radicals at Burford in 1649 decided to "sacrifice religion to social order" in 1660 because they again faced a potential alliance between the army and the radicals who challenged, among other rights, hereditary privilege and private property (CR 143).

Dryden's own infamous shift from republicanism to royalism appears from a broader historical

³⁹ Hill, Christopher. *The Century of Revolution: 1603-1714*. London: Routledge Classics, 2001: 224. Cited parenthetically hereafter as CR.

⁴⁰ See Hill, Christopher. *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution*. New York: Penguins Books, 1991: 279-280. Cited parenthetically hereafter as WT.

perspective to be simply another example of the widespread, cross-denominational panic that struck the English upper-class in the years following Cromwell's death. While Dryden indeed shared the fear of "enthusiasm" that this panic inspired, his writing was not, as the critic Elliott Visconsi has recently contended, intended to merely cultivate a more skeptical approach to one's political commitments.⁴¹ Dryden may have mocked the religious zealotry and pre-critical absolutism of many low-church radicals, but he did so only as a means of bolstering his own triumphantly enthusiastic claim that the English king stood as God's one true representative. Running from one form of absolutism while embracing another, Dryden wielded literature as a political weapon in the war against the "bloody Anabaptists" and "giddy, hot-headed, bloody multitude" that threatened to use the army to "pull down all worldly constitutions."⁴²

Although ostensibly written to commemorate Charles's coronation in April of 1661, Dryden's "To His Sacred Majesty" in truth works to undermine the significance of this event since it portrays the king's power as rooted in the divine biology of his dynastic line rather than in the borrowed majesty of the church. In a similar movement to "Astraea Redux," Dryden's coronation panegyric begins in the dark ages of the Interregnum and ends with a broader vision of a globe unified by its subjection to a single king. The later poem expands this vision even further by ending with a depiction of Charles's future heirs, or the "souls of kings unborn," an image that only reinforces this coronation poem's discordant fixation with rooting sovereignty in life rather than ritual (l. 120). After typologically representing Charles as a Noah-figure who saved the elect nation from a "Deluge" of sin, Dryden effectively portrays the act of anointment

⁴¹ Visconsi argues that Dryden uses the "messiness of representation" to demonstrate the "ethical ambiguities" that accompany any act of judgment, which Visconsi defines, following Kant, as the attempt to apply universal ideas to particular instances (LE 34).

⁴² Quoted by Hill in WT 280. The first quote is from the autobiography of the Presbyterian preacher Henry Newcome and second is from the anonymously published pamphlet *The Armies Vindication of This Last Change* (1659).

as an empty ritual: “Next, to the sacred Temple you are led, / Where waits a Crown for your more sacred Head: / How justly from the Church that Crown is due, / Preserv’d from ruine and restored by you!” (ll. 45-48). With the isolated, emphatic interpellation of the king, Dryden again configures the poet as the mythopoetic representative of a nation that addresses the king as the only legitimate *character angelicus* or mediator between the human and divine realms. Dryden’s explicit subordination of the church to the “more sacred Head” of the monarch signifies his effort to transfer the “set apart” and hence sacred realm of the divine to the physical body of the king (OED 3a). According to this dynastic model of kingship, the crown is indebted or “due” to Charles from the church not as a justifiable reward for his actions, such as the restoration of the established church in 1661, but rather because the crown as the embodiment of the English body politic is intertwined with his very existence.

Dryden’s depiction of the crown as “due” to Charles touches upon the tension in the relationship of the crown and the dynastic monarch since it suggests that the latter, despite being mystically intertwined with the blood of the dynastic line, can indeed be separated from it and lent out to competing institutions of authority. In an earlier reference to the crown in “Astraea Redux,” Dryden portrays the dynastic heir as an antitype of both Christ and Aeneas because all three had to manage the triangulated existence of a mortal being distinguished from all others by a divine fate and a related but still distinct responsibility for the collective body of the people (ll. 49-54). The symbol of an impersonal and corporate crown moves from church oaths and rituals to become in the high and late middle ages, as Kantorowicz explains, “the embodiment of all sovereign rights...of the whole body politic” that despite “descend[ing] on the king by right hereditary” remained nevertheless superior to him as well as its other “individual members” (381). In depicting the king as either marrying the body politic or simply using his awe-inspiring

eroticism to inspire its devotion, Dryden experiments with two different medieval rhetorical strategies for ameliorating the potentially explosive paradox of a king whose mortal body can become the victim of the very corporate entity it exemplifies.⁴³

Once rooted within the problems and debates of medieval political theology that in many ways reached their height in seventeenth-century England, Dryden's frequent allusions in "Astraea Redux" and "To His Sacred Majesty" to the king's forgiveness and extrajudicial mercy can be read not only as a political endorsement of enlightened benevolence, but also and more importantly as an effort to express and affirm the twinned nature of the king's being. While Dryden clearly supported Charles's policy of tolerance for crimes committed during the civil war and Interregnum, his praise for the king's willingness to exceed the law should be understood primarily as an affirmation of his exceptional and divine nature. Whether his authority is grounded in the transcendent basis of Christ, Justice, or God himself, the king exists throughout the medieval and early modern period as the exemplar of human life precisely because he exceeds it. The king exemplifies the body politic because he is the physical incarnation of its mystical foundation. In transgressing the laws and regulations of this body politic, he therefore merely affirms the estrangement that grounds his claim to rule.

The ontological doubleness of the king perhaps finds its clearest moment of expression in the prophetic writings of a twelfth-century pamphleteer known now as the "Norman Anonymous" who, in the words of Kantorowicz, "visualizes in his king two different forms of 'being': one natural or individual, and the other consecrated or (as the author calls it) deified and apotheosized" (59). In this royalist Heideggerian formulation, the king's being is privileged

⁴³ Late medievalists used the pagan and Christian myth of the self-begotten and triumphantly individual Phoenix that would burn itself and its nest in order to produce an offspring as a symbol for the paradoxical nature of the dynastic king. After the execution of Charles in 1649, royalists minted a medallion that displayed a phoenix rising from its burning nest (KB 413).

with sole access to the immutable and absolute Being of the divine.⁴⁴ Dryden offers his own expression of the exceptional nature of the king's being in the following oft-quoted passage from "Astraea Redux:"

Not ty'd to rules of Policy, you find
Revenge less sweet than a forgiving mind.
Thus when the' Almighty would to *Moses* give
A sight of all he could behold and live:
A voice before his entry did proclaim
Long-Suff'ring, Goodness, Mercy in his Name.
Your Pow'r to Justice doth submit your Cause,
Your Goodness only is above the Laws;
Whose rigid letter while pronounc'd by you
is softer made.... (ll. 266-269)

The symmetry in the first half of the lines that make up one of the conceptually denser couplets of the poem, "Your Pow'r to Justice" and "Your Goodness only," works to subtly equate Charles's authority with a moral rather than a legal quality of virtue that, particularly in the seventeenth century, was ascribed to the divine.⁴⁵ Like the earlier reference to the medieval conception of the king as "very Idea of Justice," the "Cause" or legitimacy of Charles's power derives from a transcendent notion of "Justice" that simultaneously grounds and exceeds the legal order it establishes (KB 96). The metrical organization of this couplet, "Your Pow'r to Justice // doth submit your Cause / Your Goodness only // is above the Laws," in effect opposes the divine jurisprudence in the first five syllables of each line to the legal framework articulated

⁴⁴ In this sense, Heidegger democratizes the relation of being-in-the-world to being itself, which he defines in *Being and Time* as "*the transcendens* pure and simple" that nevertheless "pertains to every being" (33). It might be more precise however to say that Heidegger establishes a system of meritocratic elitism since only those who embrace death as their "*ownmost* and extreme potentiality-of-being" can come to terms with this immanent yet purely transcendent realm of being (242). See Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Trans. Joan Stambaugh. Albany: SUNY Press, 1996.

⁴⁵ See the O.E.D. entry for "goodness" and in particular the example listed under the second definition from the 1662 Book of Common Prayer: "Pr. for all Conditions of Men, We commend to thy fatherly goodness all those who are any ways afflicted."

in the latter five. The tension that structures each line mirrors the more straightforward opposition between the message of legal conformity in the first line and of divine transgression in the second. With its form and content, Dryden's couplet expresses the capacity of the couplet that J. Paul Hunter notes in the essay, "Binarism and the Anglophone Couplet," to "suspend opposing viewpoints...without choosing between them."⁴⁶ Rather than resolving the tension between divine and secular law, Dryden uses the formal capacities of the couplet to portray the lawlessness of the former as the originary violence that allows the latter to exist as a stable system of order. As the figure for both, the king stands as a reminder that the law's highest form of expression is paradoxically its own transgression. Charles's preference for a policy of oblivion thus becomes a broader sign in Dryden's poem for the exceptional lawlessness that persists within the law as its contradictory yet nevertheless essential guarantee. In *Lines of Equity*, Visconsi highlights the often-overlooked disjunction between the merciful image of Charles in these lines from "To His Sacred Majesty" and his actual role in overseeing the period of "violent retribution" that followed the restoration of monarchy (LE 19). Despite this apparent discordance between Charles's much-publicized mercy and his actual, widespread use of extrajudicial violence, I would like to suggest that Charles's unrestrained mercy and violence both conform to the same structural necessity that the king personify the law by exceeding it. Zwicker provides an alternative interpretation of these lines as expressing a model of kingship constituted by both Old Testament "authority" and New Testament "mercy" (PP 70). Although Zwicker's reading works on some level, it is ultimately an overly narrow and Christian-centered framework for a political theology that conceives of the king more broadly as an exceptional figure that is separated from the body politic he exemplifies by either divine justice or pagan fate.

⁴⁶ Hunter, Paul J. "Binarism and the Anglophone Couplet." *Modern Language Quarterly*. 61.1 (2000): 136. Cited parenthetically hereafter as BAC.

While placing characteristic emphasis on the union of king and nation in “To My Sacred Majesty,” Dryden also represents these two as potentially divided with his image of the body politic as a savage multitude in need of the king’s colonizing influence. The king’s separation from the body politic assumes a racialized form in Dryden’s depiction of his singular capacity for mercy:

You for their Umpire and their Synod take,
And their appeal alone to *Caesar* make.
Kind Heav’n so rare a temper did provide
That guilt repenting might in it confide.
Among our crimes oblivion may be set,
But ‘tis our King’s perfection to forget.
Virtues unknown to these rough Northern climes
From milder heav’ns you bring, without their crimes.... (ll. 83-90)

With the third couplet’s parallel first person possessive formations, “our crimes” and “our King’s,” Dryden establishes a familiar sense of political unity only to shatter it with the following couplet. In associating the king’s heaven endowed mercy with milder climates, which in the contemporary imagination could only mean imperial Rome, Dryden portrays the restoration as a process of re-colonization of a people who, according to a widely read contemporary book on climate theory, were “like Beasts, They are strong in their Passions, and Weak in those Faculties, that should controul, and keep them in” (C 239).⁴⁷

Rather than acting as a mere metaphor for the restoration of order, Dryden’s typological correlation of the return of Charles to the throne with the Roman colonization of ancient Briton represents a pivotal step in portraying the divinely sanctioned English monarch as the only legitimate source of authority on the planet. Dryden’s correlation of Charles with Caesar in the lines quoted above marks an attempt to use the singularity of the king’s exceptional status to

⁴⁷ From Pierre Charron’s *Of Wisdom*. Trans. George Stanhope. London: Printed for M. Gillyflower et al. 1697. Originally published in 1601.

establish an otherwise impossible line of descent from the consul of first century B.C. Rome and the monarch of seventeenth-century England.⁴⁸ In opposition to critics such as Laura Brown who read Dryden's invocations of Rome as a simple ideological effort to reinforce the legitimacy of a burgeoning English Empire, Paul Hammond argues in *Dryden and the Traces of Classical Rome* (1999) that the shift between present and past in Dryden is a movement of "deconstructive solicitation" that represents "a poetic rethinking of the language of the present by means of a turn towards those very foundations which contemporary culture had claimed for itself" (DT 30).⁴⁹ Although Dryden's career-long engagement with the image of Rome is indeed more complicated than a mere ideological confirmation of empire, Hammond's attempt to distinguish the "reciprocal estranging" of modern and ancient in Dryden's work from the political significance of the name Rome in the dawning stages of the English Empire reflects a more fundamental problem with the way Jacques Derrida's notion of *différance* has been interpreted in the Anglophone world (DT 30).

In imagining the "collocation" of ancient and modern in Dryden's work as somehow independent of the construction of a conceptual structure conducive to empire, Hammond mistakenly reads Derrida's critique of metaphysics as an inherently political project. While Derrida indeed uses the language of revolt to introduce *différance*, a rhetorical strategy quite fitting for one writing in the politically tumultuous environment of 1968 Paris, his insistence on the originary state of difference cannot be so easily applied to concrete political questions such

⁴⁸ For further discussion of the popular myth in the seventeenth century that England descends from Troy, see LE 62.

⁴⁹ Brown, Laura. "Dryden and the Imperial Imagination." *Cambridge Companion to Dryden*. Ed. Steven Zwicker. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004: 73. Cited parenthetically hereafter as DI.

as empire.⁵⁰ By simultaneously disrupting and deferring the metaphysical effort to locate a moment of full presence at the origin of being, Derrida challenges a “kingdom” of presence that has certainly inspired rhetoric on either side of the colonial question (60).⁵¹ With his portrait of a king that is both within and beyond a society that is itself at once ancient and modern, Dryden in fact demonstrates the possibility of putting the logic of difference to work for the colonialist cause. Rather than deriving his authority from a presupposition of presence, the king in “To My Sacred Majesty” instead stands sovereign over the collective life of the English people precisely because he is not one of them.

In grounding the hopefulness of his early restoration poems in a racialized disjunction between a sacred, Roman-derived King and the unruly natives that he must colonize, Dryden not only employs a logic of difference, but also prepares the way for his later depiction of the English body politic as an unredeemable force that can be contained only by the Hobbesian assertion of the sovereign’s unconditional right to authority. While many critics have noted that by the 1680s Dryden had begun to lose faith in the political theology of his early work, fewer have noted the conceptual continuity that underlies the optimism of his early poems and the biting pessimism of his later satires. Dryden’s comparison early in “Astraea Redux” of civil war rebels to pre-Roman British tribes exemplifies how his effort to constitute a cohesive body

⁵⁰ Derrida, Jacques. “La différance.” *Théorie d’Ensemble*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1968. With clearly political overtones, Derrida explains “it is the dominance of being that différance comes to solicit” (60). Derrida elaborates that the forces of différance “foment the subversion of every kingdom,” which make them “obviously menacing and infallibly dreaded by everything in us that desires a kingdom [royaume]. . .” (60).

⁵¹ The neologism *différance* derives from *différer*, a verb that signifies both an economic sense of deferral and an anti-economic sense of alterity. Derrida posits *différance* at the origin in order to both disrupt the possibility of an origin and hold open the possibility of its fulfillment in a time to come (41-44).

politic with the king at its head begins with an assertion of the essential difference between these two entities:

The Rabble now such Freedom did enjoy,
As Winds at Sea that use it to destroy:
Blind as the *Cyclops*, and as wild as he,
They own'd a lawless savage Libertie,
Like that our painted Ancestours so priz'd
Ere Empires Arts their Breasts had Civiliz'd. (43-48)

Through correlating the “rabble” of England’s revolutionary period with the savage man of seventeenth-century state of nature theories, Dryden makes the English body politic the equivalent of the foreign and unruly people that the nation confronted in its expanding colonial ventures. Given that Dryden frequently uses the sea as a metaphor for Britain’s rise to a position of global dominance, most notably in “Annus Mirabilis” (1667), his metaphorical association of civil war rebels’ struggle for freedom with the “Winds at Sea that use it [freedom] to destroy” only reinforces the global scope of these domestic dissenters.⁵² The sea becomes the basis for the world sovereignty that Dryden imagines in the final line of this restoration-era poem, “The World a Monarch, and that Monarch *You*,” only through the transformation of this worldly “rabble” into indissociable elements of a global body politic anchored in the exceptional and divine status of the king (l. 323).

By equating the English civil war with contemporary revolts in the colonies, such as the Native-American campaign against English settlers in 1675-6, Dryden undermines the assumptions of the now commonplace argument that Europe’s supposedly stable categories of self only become unsettled after the Continent’s early modern confrontation with colonial

⁵² Dryden’s association of rebels with the turbulent sea also alludes to Virgil’s analogy of the raging sea with the “rabble” in Book One of the *Aeneid*, a scene that Dryden later translated for his 1697 collection *The Works of Virgil*.

others.⁵³ Dror Wahrman reflects this critical consensus in affirming, “It was in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century colonial context, as the shock effect of early encounters was superseded by sustained interaction and closer long-term familiarity” that the colonists lost confidence in the “identity categorizations that they had brought with them from the mother country” (213). As Dryden’s frequent depictions of the English “rabble” as primitive savages demonstrate, the problem with this now canonical model of colonial and post-colonial scholarship is that it presupposes that a stable English or European identity preceded the disorienting encounters with the colonized. Rather than conceiving of the world in terms of the familiar metropole and the unfamiliar colonies, Dryden develops a cosmopolitan political theology that identifies anyone who opposes the divinely sanctioned mission of the one true authority as savage and thus in need of colonizing redemption.

Far from representing an anomaly, Dryden’s primitivist portrait of the domestic rebels who “own’d a lawless savage Libertie” in England’s revolutionary period reflects popular opinion amongst the increasingly reform-minded English upper-classes who began, in the words of one contemporary, to view the “commoners and cottagers” associated with the fringe groups of the civil war period as “generally Savage and Paganish.”⁵⁴ Dryden’s representations of the English “rabble” as foreign and pre-modern should, therefore, not be read as merely rhetorical flourishes, but rather as a sign that the English sense of self was plagued by the proximity of others long before it sought to conquer the world. While one may venture to state that Wahrman’s image of an essentially stable, pre-contact self is ontologically impossible, as I would, one may also more modestly assert that it is historically insufficient given the widespread

⁵³ For a description of this revolt see Carla Pestana’s *Protestant Empire: Religion and the Making of the British Atlantic*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009:132.

⁵⁴ Quoted by Julian Hoppit in LL 352.

‘othering’ of the native commoners and cottagers who resisted the colonization of the English countryside by refusing to relinquish their tradition-based claims to land held in common.⁵⁵ Viewed from the perspective of Dryden’s political theology, the English colonial project represents an effort to constitute a pacified global body politic upon the basis of the English king’s unique claim to a divinely sanctioned position of sovereignty. The global reach of the one Christian God becomes the basis in this political theology for the equally global reach of the one true king. Although it is for Dryden a specifically English dynastic line that occupies this position of world sovereignty, the English king represents a kind of worldless force that descends from a foreign, transcendental domain to redeem a country that remains as capable of pre-modern savagery as any of its colonies. England becomes in Dryden’s poetic imagination an elect nation with an infinite capacity for expansion since it remains capable of incorporating an endless number of people into its sacred collective.

With its unsettled notion of English identity and emphasis on the sacred foundations of political power, Dryden’s political theology may appear to twenty-first critics as simply a relic of pre-modern nationalist discourse. To dismiss the contemporary relevance of Dryden’s politics would be, however, to miss the role they played in inspiring not only England’s early forays into colonization abroad, but also its domestic campaign to simultaneously colonize and modernize its own native savages. By helping to usher England into the age of modernity, Dryden’s seemingly anachronistic political poetry demonstrates the inadequacy of the nineteenth-century narrative of modern development to the case of England itself. In the past forty years, critics have challenged the universal applicability of this idea that becoming modern means embracing

⁵⁵ The philosopher Gilles Deleuze articulates a possible basis for this ontological refusal with his assertion that Being is “said of difference itself.” See *Difference and Repetition*. Trans. Paul Patton. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994: 36.

the triangulated forces of secularism, republicanism, and capitalism.⁵⁶ What the study of Dryden's politics adds to this conversation is the suggestion that the exemplary nation of European modernity, namely England, became modern through the forces of God and king.

Writing with a fervor that is as messianic as it is modern, Dryden concludes the resurrection narrative of "Astraea Redux" with an image of Charles as radically singular and totalizing as time itself:

Abroad your Empire shall no Limits know,
But like the Sea in boundless Circles flow.
Your much lov'd Fleet shall with a wide Command
Besiege the petty Monarchs of the Land:
And as Old Time his Off-spring swallow'd down
Our Ocean in its depths all Seas shall drown. (ll. 298-303)

The movement from the second person possessive pronouns to the triumphant first person plural possessive that begins the final line, "Our Ocean," provides a global image for the unification of the English body politic and the king. In portraying this unified English body politic as the presumptive seat of global authority, Dryden establishes the contradiction that Laura Brown describes in her reading of "Annus Mirabilis" as the "image of a metropolis in which all the material desires of an expansionist culture are met *in situ*, without the need for travel or movement" (DI 67). The typological association of "Our Ocean" with the Renaissance figure of Father Time, itself an amalgam of the Greek Gods Cronus and Chronos, explains this contradiction because it grounds the English claim to global sovereignty in its dynastic monarch's unique connection to the perpetuity of time itself. With the allusion to Cronus, a

⁵⁶ To name one major example of such criticism, Dipesh Chakrabarty draws attention to the experience of twentieth-century India where "peasants" rather than proletarians called on "the agency of gods, spirits, and other supernatural beings" to help them institute what was a nevertheless modern political sphere. See *Provincializing Europe*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000: 12-13.

primeval Titan famous for swallowing his children, Dryden underlines the redemptive promise of his poem as a whole since Cronus was the precursor to the Roman's Saturn, whose return Dryden imagines in the messianic epigraph to his work. The reference to the Chronos, the God of time, is even more important because it marks the extreme limit of the king's estrangement from the dynamics of collective life. Always doubled, the king moves through life as the expression of a space beyond it. He acts above all else as the representative of this space where continual change coheres into the totality of time itself. Dryden's portrait of an inert yet expansionist metropolis is thus something much more profound than a mere act of obfuscation, as Brown suggests. It is instead a fitting image for a nation whose totalizing claim over the movements of the world is rooted in its king's singular connection to the worldless immobility of eternity.

Part Three: Democratizing the Divine and Making the Patriot

While Dryden's faith in the capacity of the unique status of the king to found a cohesive body politic certainly diminishes in the late 1670s and 1680s, I would like to argue that the figure of the patriot that he develops in "To My Honour'd Kinsman" represents a solution to the central problem of Dryden's thought in this period: namely, the unruly mob's refusal to be incorporated into a cohesive whole grounded in the exceptional status of the king. The fear that is already present in Dryden's depiction of the civil war "rabble" in "Astraea Redux" becomes an insurmountable obstacle to Dryden's early vision of the English elect embracing the paternal care of their sacred leader. William Dowling's assertion that the figure of the mob in "Absalom and Achitophel" is "a moral rather than a social category" demonstrates the tendency of critics to

oversimplify Dryden's complicated mid-career shift in political thinking (80).⁵⁷ Though the portrait in "Absalom and Achitophel" of the English as "God's pampered people" indeed signals a real moral crisis, it also undeniably reflects the social and political upheavals of the "exclusion crisis" that shook England from 1678 to 1681, and Dryden in a very personal way in 1679 (l. 47). With Parliament attempting to interrupt the dynastic process of succession to ensure that Charles's Catholic brother James did not assume power, England in the late 1670s was on the brink of another civil war. In one of his more provocative interventions in this volatile political moment, Dryden wrote a preface to Nahum Tate's *The Loyal General* (1679) in which he compared exclusionist petitioners such as the Earl of Shaftsbury to the regicidal rebels of the 1640s. As retaliation, Dryden was, according to the account provided by his biographer James Winn, attacked by "three thugs with cudgels" who beat the "diminutive poet...senseless" and left him with a "painful crippling of [the] limbs" that he was to suffer from for the rest of his life (JD 325).⁵⁸ Dryden's autobiographical encounter with the violence of this period only underscores the need to read the decline of his early restoration-era optimism as at least in part a response to the real political dilemma posed by the brute force of the mob that continually interrupted the effort to unify the body politic upon the basis of the king's transcendent second body.

In "Absalom and Achitophel" as well his other major exclusion crisis tract "The Medal," Dryden portrays the campaign to impose Charles's devoutly Protestant yet illegitimate son upon the throne as a sacrilegious struggle to use the brute force of the English mob to destroy the civilizing divinity of kingship. The movement to block the ascent of Charles's rightful heir

⁵⁷ A related but equally incomplete interpretation is Steven Zwicker's argument that the decline of Dryden's commitment to sacred history is a reflection of the new arbitrary status of language in the late seventeenth-century. See *Politics and Language in Dryden's Poetry*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984: 33. Cited parenthetically as PL.

⁵⁸ It was rumored but never confirmed that Lord Rochester orchestrated this attack.

becomes in Dryden's imagination the typological equivalent of Israel rejecting God's promise of a merciful new covenant. By pitting the savage power of the people against the redemptive force of dynastic continuity, exclusionist leaders were willfully obstructing an elect nation from achieving its prophesized salvation. In the following lines from "Absalom and Achitophel," Dryden envisions the triumph of the less than modern, under-colonized English mob as a rejection of God's gift of grace:

What standard is there in a fickle rout,
Which, flowing to the mark, runs faster out?
Nor only crowds, but Sanhedrins may be
Infected with this public lunacy
And share the madness of rebellious times
To murder monarchs for imagined crimes.
If they may give and take whene'er they please,
Not kings alone (the Godhead's images),
But government itself at length must fall
To nature's state, where all have right to all. (ll. 786-794)

Dryden names the anti-Papal crowds and Whiggish Parliament members who opposed the will of the king as modern-day Sanhedrins in order to represent the political refusal of the king's claim to incarnate the divine as a re-enactment of this Jewish Council's decision to persecute rather than embrace the similar assertions of Jesus. In privileging political fidelity over the sectarian concerns of post-Reformation Christians, Dryden further underlines the sovereignty of the monarchy as the central element of his thoroughly politicized model of theology. The rejection of dynastic succession is thus for him a simultaneously political and theological act of heresy that squanders the grace embodied by the more than human figure of the king.

The "fickle rout" that infects Parliament and "murder[s] monarchs" threatens to return the elect people of England to "nature's state" because it challenges the exceptional, extrajudicial

space of grace that gives the law its mystical foundation and the monarch his second body.⁵⁹ Dryden concludes the even more scathing satire “The Medal” with an image of the permanent state of unrest that would result from the evaporation of the law’s paradoxically lawless foundation: “Thus inborn broils the factions would engage, / Or wars of exiled heirs, or foreign rage, / Till halting vengeance overtook our age, / And our wild labours, wearied into rest, / Reclined us on a rightful monarch’s breast” (ll. 318-322). The consonance in the phrase “inborn broils” accentuates the singsongy ease with which the English body politic descends into its native or “inborn” state of violence. Its redemption lies only in the inevitable embrace of the foreign yet somehow still native king. Dryden maintains his faith in redemptive promise of this figure; he will, though, come to imagine in “To My Honour’d Kinsman” the possibility of democratizing the at once sacred and mortal being of the king.

The tumult of the seventeenth century convinces the elder Dryden that the exceptional subjectivity of the king must become the norm of England’s every citizen. In a shift that is in truth merely an extension of his early political theology, Dryden expands the collective second body of the king into the unruly sphere of the English body politic, constructing the novel figure of the patriot in the process. As a new locus for the divine and corporate sovereignty of the king, the patriot emerges in part as a reaction to the breakdown in the process of dynastic succession in 1688, but more specifically as a means of finally perfecting the colonization of the mob that continually threatened to splinter the collective body of the nation. With his recent and much needed revisionist claim that the often under-appreciated Glorious Revolution “was, like all other revolutions, violent, popular, and divisive,” the historian Steven Pincus has recovered the important role the mob played in a revolution that had long been dismissed by historians as either

⁵⁹ Johnson defines “rout” as a “A clamorous multitude; a rabble; a tumultuous crowd.” *A Dictionary of the English Language*. Vol. II. 1756: 15.

a “Dutch invasion” or as a largely bloodless “restoration of power to the traditional ruling class” (FM 8).⁶⁰ Instead of representing a mere “restoration” of traditional forms of order to a country wracked by the unrest of the exclusionist movement and the Duke of Monmouth’s rebellion, the revolutionary movement against James II involved, as Pincus explains, “extensive mob violence,” which “terrified local populations” and caused significant “damage to property and individuals...” (FM 223). The 1689 convention assembly to offer the crown jointly to Charles’s daughter Mary and her Dutch husband William of Orange while the dynastic king James II remained in exile in France appears in new light following Pincus’s intervention. Rather than simply marking a shift in its political calculations, this decision on part of Parliament was in fact a capitulation to the “inborn” savagery of the English body politic.

Although the process of dynastic succession that had been the basis for Dryden’s early political theology fell apart in the final two decades of the century, with parliament effectively controlling the process of succession in 1689 and 1701, Dryden remained faithful to his overall project of grounding the redemption of England in the politicized force of the divine. Following the 1688 Revolution, Dryden loses the public posts of Poet Laureate and Historiographer Royal, faces double taxes as a Catholic, and is generally deprived of his once prominent role in English society. His decision therefore to modify his political theology and find a way to affirm many of the changes transforming English society should be read as a remarkable testament to his faith in a redemption as personal as it was political (JD 435-6). In a certain sense, Dryden uses his own alienated position as a Catholic in the fiercely anti-Catholic climate of 1690s as the basis for the

⁶⁰ Julian Hoppit describes the revolution as a “Dutch invasion,” while Christopher Hill depicts it as a “restoration of power to the traditional ruling class, the shire gentry, and town merchants...” (LL 3, CR 275).

new figure of the patriot whose claim to sovereignty is rooted paradoxically in his withdrawal from the public domain of power.

The improvement of roads, river navigation, the postal service, as well as the development of the Bank of England in the final decade of the century established the historical conditions for imagining the extension of political power into such reclusive figures as the patriot since these changes both materially and financially unified the country (LL 329, 333, 127). The increasing political significance and legislative activity of parliament along with the related rise to prominence of London only further solidified the cohesion of the various localities of England into a national whole, albeit one largely centered in the capital (LL 26). By reading the figure of the patriot that emerges from these historical changes as a sign of the intensification rather than the diminution of the theologization of the political sphere, I will be challenging the canonical interpretation of the fate of political theology in this period, which the historian Julian Hoppit nicely summarizes with the assertion that “the breaking of hereditary succession in 1689 and 1701 killed once and for all the belief that monarchs were descended transcendentally from God” (LL 41). While such statements are in some sense true, they nevertheless obscure the way that the unconditional sovereignty that binds the king to the timeless sphere of the divine becomes the basis for the construction of the new biopolitical figure of the patriot. Rather than marking a break with political theology, the subsumption of the body politic by the mystical and corporate sovereignty of the nation, once reserved solely for the king, supports Pincus’s assertion that “the issue in the later seventeenth century was not that religion came to mean less to English men and women but that it came to mean something different” (FM 479). With the new figure of the patriot, Dryden demonstrates that the changes to English society at the end of the seventeenth

century acted as the basis for extending the immortal sovereignty of the nation into the previously profane domain of the English body politic.

Addressed to Dryden's cousin John Driden, "To My Honour'd Kinsman" represents the withdrawn yet politically engaged life of this country gentleman as a metaphor for the new model of the sacralized individual. Shortly before "To My Honour'd Kinsman" was published as part of the larger collection *Fables Ancient and Modern* (1700), Dryden explained in a letter to the Lord Treasurer Charles Montague that he hoped to "have not only drawn the features of [his] worthy kinsman" in this late epistle, but to "have also given [his] Own opinion, of what an Englishman in Parliament ought to be."⁶¹ Although written to a member of William's government and thus clearly with a political purpose, Dryden's letter provides an essential insight into the poem by highlighting the way he applies the typological strategy that is so crucial to his early restoration works to a distinctly non-royal individual. By correlating his cousin's bare or basic life of rural retreat with the collective sovereignty embodied by the archetype of the "Englishman in Parliament," Dryden's poem re-deploys the typological method in order to endow its addressee with the kind of doubled subjectivity once reserved only for the king. Both person and patriot, Dryden's cousin comes to join the king in bearing the collective sovereignty of the nation. This democratizing gesture is Dryden's solution to the problem of the mob, the subjective form assumed by the under-sacralized body politic in times of crisis. Rather than continuing to wait for the king to accomplish the spiritual regeneration of this unruly collective, Dryden develops a strategy for transforming this fleshy multitude into a collection of individuals whose mortal bodies become the king-like conduits for the immortal sovereignty of the nation. No

⁶¹ "Commentary." *The Works of John Dryden*. Ed. Vincent Dearing. Vol. VII. Poems 1697-1700. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000: 658. Cited parenthetically as CMM.

longer an undistinguishable member of a savage collective, the individual follows the king in standing apart from and above the corporeal he is tasked with representing. In the same way in which medieval legal theorists created a “royal species of man” by endowing “royal blood itself” with the corporate sovereignty of the nation, Dryden develops a biopolitical subject by rooting the divine aura of the collective in the basic, biological functions of non-dynastic bodies (KB 331).

Having once opposed the promise of political theology, the now individuated populace of England comes to act as the living guarantee of the sovereignty that first entered the political through the king’s second body. Like their royal predecessor, these newly formed individuals are ennobled by the estrangement of exemplarity. They stand in relation to their king not as an anonymous mob, but as fellow strangers. As exemplars of a community they now stand apart from, these individuals dramatize the paradox of exemplarity that Agamben describes in *Homo Sacer* as arising from the fact that “the example steps out of its class in the very moment in which it exhibits and delimits it” (22). The arenas of private life that Dryden portrays in the first half of “To My Honour’d Kinsman” assume an exemplary status in that they stand out from the realm of mortal life in order to anticipate and signify the transcendent fate of the nation that occupies Dryden’s attention in the second half of the poem.

Though “To My Honour’d Kinsman” remains suspended between the form of an ode and an epistle, its epistolary dimension has particular significance for the new individual it helps construct since it embodies the paradoxical doubleness of this exemplary figure. As at least in part a private letter composed in highly organized verse, Dryden’s “To My Honour’d Kinsman” belongs to a tradition of eighteenth-century verse epistles that contain what William Dowling terms a “double register” in that their form implies a community beyond the “epistolary

exchange between letter-writer and addressee” (EM 12). Authors of verse epistles, as Dowling explains, responded to the modernization of English society “by writing not merely epistles but verse epistles, poems in which the isolation symbolized by epistolary solitude is then opposed and redeemed by verse as an institutionalized mode of public utterance” (11). Writing letters in verse becomes a way for these authors to simultaneously bemoan and affirm the alienating effects of individuation. Dryden’s “To My Honour’d Kinsman” helps inaugurate this tradition by articulating what is framed as a private letter to a family member in the paradigmatic form of his broader English community, the heroic couplet. Rather than simply opposing English modernity and the individualized life it heralds, Dryden, like the verse epistle authors that follow him, relied on a particular rhetorical form to express the ambivalence of a solitude that at once isolates and ennobles. Dryden’s turn to the verse epistle may in fact represent the crystallization of his lifelong effort to articulate a political faith that sees the private existence of the mortal body as the uncanny conduit for the public, political life of the nation. As a private letter that incarnates the collective identity of a community, “To My Honour’d Kinsman” manages to invest the implied solitude of the author as well as the country gentleman he celebrates with the supremely public and sovereign status of the example.

According to the logic of Dryden’s poem, his cousin represents an exemplar of the collective and immortal sovereignty of the nation precisely because he pursues a calculated withdrawal from the very domains in which sovereignty is typically thought to reside. The portrait of Dryden’s private life in the first half of the poem expresses an attitude that the contemporary Italian philosopher Paolo Virno perhaps articulates best in his proposal for an

“engaged withdrawal” from the political sphere.⁶² Beyond simply acting as an allegory for the political programme envisioned in the second half of the poem, Dryden’s depiction of his cousin’s withdrawn relationship to the marital, judicial, medical, economic, and recreational domains of life expresses the doubleness of an existence that is at once mortal and divine. In the first reference to Dryden’s crucial typological relationship to a prelapsarian Adam, Dryden suggests that his cousin’s withdrawal from the marital state allows him to remain in the paradise of God’s eternal garden:

Promoting Concord, and composing Strife,
Lord of your self, uncumber’d with a Wife;
Where, for a Year, a Month, perhaps a Night,
Long Penitence succeeds a short Delight:
Minds are so hardly match’d, that ev’n the first,
Though pair’d by Heav’n, in Paradise, were curs’d. (ll. 17-22)

The isolation of “Lord of your self” in the second line emphasizes that Dryden achieves the reconciliation described in the first line only by refusing to assume the dynastic position of authority signified by the two secular definitions of “Lord” as the head of the state or household. To solidify his separation from the dynastic lineage that dominates the state and the home, Dryden correlates his cousin in the following section of the poem with the feminized and insurrectionary second son of Issac in the Old Testament: “But you, like *Jacob*, are *Rebecca*’s Heir” (l. 43). As a bachelor and second son who inherited property from his mother, John Dryden lent himself to Dryden’s efforts to expand the dynastic sovereignty of the nation into the

⁶² Virno, Paolo. “Virtuosity and Revolution: The Political Theory of Exodus.” *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*. Trans. Ed Emory. Ed. Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006: 197. Although I am connecting the idea of an engaged withdrawal to the very foundation of the modern state, I would support Virno’s faith in the capacity of an engaged withdrawal to achieve a “taking leave of State judicature” and a constitution of a new “Republic” precisely because the withdrawal at the heart of the modern state and citizen leaves both formations vulnerable to movements that push this exodus in antithetical directions (197).

feminized and withdrawn domain of biological life.⁶³ While my interpretation of this poem owes much to Michael McKeon's essay "The Politics of Pastoral Retreat," I cannot endorse its assertion that the "displacement" of Dryden's cousin from "the paternal line" allows him to experience the "freedom entailed in the lineage of liberty."⁶⁴ McKeon's assertion represents a crucial misreading of the poem because it overlooks the way the phrase "Lord of your self" maintains the unconditional sovereignty of the paternal line only in a new, biopolitical form. In democratizing divine sovereignty and immersing it in the private, biological recesses of everyday life, Dryden begins to sketch a political horizon in which all bodies are ideally sovereign subjects, free from all paternal authority except the divine one, that supreme kernel of pre-modern transcendence that endows every enfranchised body with its sovereign essence.

By typologically casting his cousin as the antitype of prelapsarian man, Dryden helps to inaugurate a modernity that is far from the unambiguous break with paternal sovereignty that McKeon's reading would suggest. Whereas the unity, innocence, and immortality of Eden emanate in Dryden's early poems solely from the divine figure of the king, they originate in "To My Honour'd Kinsman" from the king as well as the newly enfranchised and equally divine figure of the patriot. Dryden's correlation of his cousin's charity with God's gift of manna in *Exodus*, "So free to Many, to Relations most, / You feed with Manna your own *Israel*-Host," recalls the earlier image from "To His Sacred Majesty" of Charles's generosity: "As Heav'n of

⁶³ Winn suggests that Dryden's celebration of the second son of his uncle is also in part an expression of his hostility to his first born, Sir Robert Driden (JD 504).

⁶⁴ McKeon, Michael. "The Politics of Pastoral Retreat: Dryden's Poem to His Cousin." *Enchanted Ground: Reimagining John Dryden*. Ed. Jayne Lewis and Maximillian Novak. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004: 103, 104. Cited parenthetically hereafter as PPR.

old dispenc'd Caelestial dew, / You give us Manna and still give us new" (ll. 48-49, ll. 23-24).⁶⁵

The shift from the restored king to the withdrawn country gentleman as the source of God's grace undoubtedly marks a new direction in Dryden's thought. The performance of the non-dynastic individual in his everyday life becomes kingly once it too must work to ensure that a potentially global English body politic cohere into a single divinely grounded collective.

The private individual is capable of being a new source of manna for the nation because his withdrawn relationship to the different domains of private life allows him to reside simultaneously in the paradise of Eden and in the fallen world of late seventeenth-century English society. After his both Pagan- and Biblically-inspired panegyric on the "country life" in the first stanza of the poem, Dryden begins his depiction of his cousin's engaged withdrawal in the second stanza with a portrayal of Driden's role as a justice of peace in Huntingdonshire that ironically enough emphasizes his renunciation of the legal system.⁶⁶ Just as the king exemplifies the law by exceeding it with transgressive acts of grace, cousin Driden stands as a paragon of justice by settling disputes without recourse to the "Expence of long Litigious Laws" (l. 11). Dryden's celebration of his cousin's charity and domestic tranquility in the following two sections of the poem follow the same logic in that his withdrawal from the paternal roles of father, husband, and first-born is precisely what allows him to perfect his paternal function as a divinely sanctioned leader of the body politic. While lauding his cousin's exercise of the central Christian and specifically Catholic value of charity, Dryden establishes the essential, causal link

⁶⁵ Winn notes on a more practical level that Dryden had received "a turkey hen with Eggs, and a good young Goose, besides a very kind letter" from his cousin in the spring of 1699, the period in which he started writing this epistle (JD 503).

⁶⁶ This is particularly striking given that, as Hoppit explains, "the hard work of country government had for some decades increasingly been borne by Justices of the Peace, who also provided a vital link between the county on one side and the parish and the borough on the other" (LL 466).

between his cousin's distance from patriarchal positions of authority and his proximity to the timeless space of the divine. Through his isolation from the paternal lines of the home and court, the second son moves closer to both the divine and the mystical identity of the nation that it houses. The conjunction of this feminized second son's maternal inheritance and God's plan in the couplet, "Heav'n, who foresaw the Will, the Means has wrought, / And to the Second Son, a Blessing brought," clarifies the religious significance of the restrained relationship to hunting and health that Dryden represents in the final two sections of the first half of the poem (l. 41-42).

By referring back to his transgressive perfection of the legal and domestic spheres, Dryden's depiction of his cousin's restrained yet active relationship to hunting and modern medicine unify the first half of the poem in preparation for its culminating image of eternal, Edenic life. While the frequent hunting of his youth works as a metaphor for his passion for justice and "the common good," the "restrain'd" hunting of Dryden's later years represents his fidelity to the habits of the "long-liv'd Fathers" of the Old Testament (l. 53, 59, 88). Mirroring his relationship to the law, Dryden perfects modern medicine by rendering it unnecessary: "Better to hunt in Fields, for Health unbought, / Than fee the Doctor for a nauseous Draught" (ll. 92-93). In exercising Epicurean restraint and not seeking "Pleasure thro' Necessity," Dryden maintains an exceptional relationship to the expanding industries of recreation and health, both further signs of England's transformation in the late seventeenth century (l. 68). This exceptional relationship, which Dryden seems to cultivate with all the modernizing spheres of English life, endows him with a subjectivity whose doubleness renders it capable of existing both within and beyond the mortal realm of time. The culmination of the first half of the poem in the lost yet nevertheless present space of Eden functions as a transition to an explicit articulation of Dryden's expanded notion of sovereignty because this image of eternity touches on the timeless

domain of the divine that underpins the collective sovereignty of both the king's and patriot's second bodies.

The exemplary cousin Driden's reliance on temperate exercise rather than the corrupt and sacrilegious knowledge of modern medicine encapsulates the paradox that structures his at once private and public life: namely, he fulfills and exemplifies the different domains of seventeenth-century economic life through transgressive acts of withdrawal.⁶⁷ Although Dryden's epistle draws heavily from Horace's *Epode* II, particularly in the opening stanza, its transformation of the withdrawn space of rural paradise into an essential element of Dryden's new political theology represents a significant departure from Horace's tale of an urban moneylender's failed attempt to adopt a country life. The central Edenic imagery of Dryden's poem translates the pastoral scenes of Horace's *Epode* into the timeless space of the divine:

The Tree of Knowledge, once in *Eden* plac'd,
Was easie found, but was forbid the Taste:
O, had our Grandsire walk'd without his Wife,
He first had sought the better Plant of Life! (ll. 96-99)

In withdrawing from the sensual domain of taste and the patriarchal realm of marriage, and thus avoiding the plight of Adam, the patriot Driden manages to gain access to the "Plant of Life" or the immortal realm of sovereignty that had once been reserved solely for the dynastic king.

The failure of Horace's moneylender to remain within the proverbial Epicurean garden becomes the means in Dryden's poem for blurring the boundary between rural innocence and urban vice. By using this failure to infuse the private, economic life of the English body politic

⁶⁷ By "economic," I have in mind Hannah Arendt's discussion of the derivation of "economy" from the Greek words *oikos*, or the house, and *nomos*, or laws. As Arendt explains in *The Human Condition*, "it was a matter of course" for thinkers like Aristotle "that the mastering of the necessities of life in the household was the condition for the freedom" of the properly political and human realm of the *polis*. See *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998: 31.

with the supremely public force of sovereignty, Dryden helps constitute the biopolitical horizon of modernity, which, as Giorgio Agamben argues, centers above all else on making indistinguishable “the classical distinctions between *zoe* and *bios*, between private life and political existence, between man as a simple living being at home in the house and man’s political existence in the city” (HS 187). Given that both law and medicine were associated in the late seventeenth century with England’s burgeoning urban culture, Dryden’s particular emphasis on his cousin’s simultaneous perfection and transgression of these specifically urban professions suggests that the withdrawn yet engaged life of the first half of the poem perfects in advance the urban, political life of the poem’s second half.⁶⁸

Dryden accomplishes the transition between the two halves of the poem, as Alan Roper remarks in *Dryden’s Poetic Kingdoms* (1965), by playfully reiterating the “ancient analogy between human and political bodies.”⁶⁹ The separation of his cousin’s individual body from the broader body politic serves in the following lines to legitimate his status as an exemplary member of that very body:

You hoard not Health, for your own private Use;
But on the Publick spend the rich Produce:
When, often urg’d, unwilling to be great,
Your Country calls you from your lov’d Retreat,
And sends to Senates, charg’d with Common Care,
Which none more shuns; and none can better bear. (ll. 117-122)

With the crucial verb “shuns,” Dryden alludes to his earlier celebration of his cousin’s decision to “shun the Married State” and thereby underscores the importance of his cousin’s withdrawal from a domestic sphere that functioned in this period as an allegory, most prominently in the

⁶⁸ Hoppit notes “the increasing significance of the professions in towns- especially doctors and lawyers, but also of bankers, surveyors, clerics, and military men” (LL 423).

⁶⁹ Roper, Alan. *Dryden’s Poetic Kingdoms*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965: 125.

writings of the royalist Robert Filmer, for the unconditional and divine authority of the king (l.34). Dryden's insistence that "none more shuns" the burden of sovereignty only further emphasizes his cousin's exceptional relationship to the English body politic. Through withdrawing from a position of paternal authority as well as the distinctly modern professions of law and medicine, Driden achieves a level of separation from late seventeenth-century society that rivals that of the dynastic king and places him in the same ontologically double state. By gaining access to the "lov'd Retreat" of prelapsarian paradise, Driden's individual body is, like the medieval king that Kantorowicz uncovers, raised to the "angelic heights" of the "Immutable within Time" (KB 9, 8). The individual body of the withdrawn patriot achieves the status of exemplarity and joins the dynastic king as an at once singular and collective being. The repetition of consonants in the final couplet of the lines above, "And sends to Senates, charg'd with Common Care, / Which *none* more shuns; and *none* can better bear," expresses the cohesiveness and fluidity of a nation sustained by a collectivity of exemplary individuals.

The arcadia Dryden imagines in the latter half of "To My Honour'd Kinsman" springs from the divine grace of both king and patriot. The Edenic imagery of Dryden's poem culminates only when the patriot completes the process of transforming the unruly elect into a cohesive whole:

A Patriot, both the King and Country serves;
Prerogative, and Privilege preserves:
Of Each, our Laws the certain Limit show;
One must not ebb, nor t'other overflow:
Betwixt the Prince and Parliament we stand;
The Barriers of the State on either Hand:
May neither overflow, for then they drown the Land.
When both are full, they feed our bless'd Abode;
Like those, that water'd once, the Paradise of God. (ll. 171-179)

While Michael McKeon is certainly right to observe that Dryden is “defining the terms of an emergent system of parliamentary democracy” in stanzas such as the one above, his assertion that parliament becomes “hard...to distinguish” from the “*national* collective” misses the real foundation of Dryden’s call for sacred unity (PPR 108, 107). The first-person plural pronouns that, as McKeon notes, “proliferate” in this stanza construct a cohesive national collective upon the exceptional and sacred space of the patriot’s second body rather than upon the mediating space of parliament (PPR 107). With the indefinite article in the isolated phrase that begins these lines, “a Patriot,” Dryden portrays this exemplary figure as at once singular and capable of limitless reproduction on a global scale. In balancing royal prerogative and parliamentary privilege, the patriot constructs “an emergent system of parliamentary democracy” that reinforces rather than undermines the global reach of the pre-modern and divine sovereignty that had long elevated bodies to the angelic position of individuals.

By using agricultural imagery of a running river to express his new political vision, Dryden carefully recalls and rewrites the darker pastoral scene that the poet John Denham sketches in “Cooper’s Hill” (1642) during the early stages of the English civil war. Although the classical notion of *concordia discors*, or the harmonization of opposing natural forces, animates a yearning for political reconciliation in both poems, Denham chooses to undermine this utopian impulse by culminating “Cooper Hill’s” with its “calm River” becoming a “Torrent” and then a “Deluge” (l. 349, l. 356). Yearning for a harmonization that it ultimately portrays as impossible, “Cooper’s Hill” exhibits a skepticism fitting for a work published just days before a bloody civil war commenced. In reproducing Denham’s imagery of a river that threatens to “o’reflows th’adjoining Plains,” Dryden returns to the tumultuous 1640s not in order to relive them, but to instead redeem them (l. 350). To fulfill the utopian narrative that Denham leaves in a depressing

state of incompleteness, Dryden adds the new figure of the “patriot” to a political landscape that had included only a king and his subjects. As he does on behalf of the king in “Astraea Redux” and “To His Sacred Majesty,” Dryden uses the couplet’s capacity to “suspend opposing viewpoints” as the means of constructing a mediating figure who, in this case, reconciles the opposing forces of the people and the king (BAC 136). While both Denham’s and Dryden’s models of political harmony rely on the ability of couplets to hold competing concepts in metrical unity, only Dryden exploits this formal capacity as an instrument for political innovation. Having solidified and perfected the pre-established figure of the king in Dryden’s early work, the couplet becomes the means in Dryden’s later poems for constructing an entirely new political character.⁷⁰ The patriot celebrated in the stanza quoted above fulfills Denham’s vision of political moderation by incarnating the fraught doubleness of the couplet form itself.

By joining the king as a fellow exemplar of the couplet form, the patriot stabilizes the unification of the sacred domain of divine sovereignty and the profane realm of the body politic. As a figure of the couplet form engaged in a struggle to sacralize the nation, the patriot stands on both sides of the opposition that critics such as Christopher Hill draw between the metaphysical poetry of the early seventeenth century and the rhymed couplet of the century’s final decades.⁷¹ Although the rhymed couplet indeed seems, as Hill notes, to avoid the “enthusiasm” that springs from the internalized locus of truth in the metaphysical poetry and sectarian religious writings of the first half of the century, the patriot’s proximity to the absolute space of the divine suggests that the late century couplet remains closer than it may at first appear to the pre-skeptical

⁷⁰ For a wonderful discussion of the formal possibilities of the couplet, see J. Paul Hunter’s “Binarism and the Anglophone Couplet.” *Modern Language Quarterly*. 61.1 (2000): 136.

⁷¹ Hill argues in *Century of Revolution*: “Dryden and Waller perfected the rhymed couplet, whose studied antitheses and balanced rhetoric reflected the greater stability towards which society was moving.... Their flowing numbers contrast markedly, both in form and content, with the earlier ‘metaphysical’ lyric of internal conflict” (252).

epistemology of the civil war period. In Dryden's particular recovery of Denham's pastoral allegory of political moderation, the couplet indeed fulfills the possibility for harmonized discord embodied by its metrical form. It achieves this feat, however, only through expanding the forces of enthusiasm and absolute truth that had long functioned as the enemy of political mediation and balance. The moderate politics of the couplet, in other words, remains haunted by the pre-critical absolutism of the very figure, the patriot, who appears to represent its crowning moment of substantiation.

In the final couplet of the stanza quoted above, "When both are full, they feed our bless'd Abode; / Like those, that water'd once, the Paradise of God," the patriot perfects a seemingly modern system of political mediation by extending rather than abandoning the pre-modern struggle to turn a collection of profane bodies into a sacred and unified whole. The essential function of the exemplary individual in accomplishing the sacralization of the national collective provides the clearest possible refutation of Steven Zwicker's attempt to oppose "national election" to "individual grace" (PP 120). Rather than marking the decline of Dryden's "faith in the nation as a covenanted people," as Zwicker claims, Dryden's use of biblical typology to transform his cousin into an exemplary individual is precisely what allows him to re-articulate his vision of a harmonious body politic upon modified yet equally sacred grounds (PP 102). With the phrase "our bless'd Abode," Dryden underlines the new importance of the withdrawn and 'pre-political' life of the home to this modified but still sacred national unity. The verb "feed" in the first line of this final couplet continues the agricultural imagery of the stanza, but also accentuates the foundation of the nation's sacred identity, its "bless'd Abode," in the bare life of its individual members. Although it is "Prince and Parliament" that "feed" this "bless'd Abode," it is the engaged withdrawal of the patriot that blesses or consecrates this collective home as a

sacred object capable of participating in a new political Eden. The patriot transforms the ominous river in “Cooper’s Hill” that “knows no bound” into a symbol of the simultaneously technical and sacred management of the English body politic (l. 358).

Despite the appearance of opposition, the exemplary life and liberty of the patriot stands in the final three stanzas of “To My Honour’d Kinsman” as the ultimate guarantee of the king’s right to suspend the law. Dryden’s preservation of the king’s exceptional powers in periods of emergency undermines McKeon’s assertion that Dryden helps construct a political system that avoids “the danger of direct contention between ... absolute monarchy and [a] headstrong people ... by conceiving of it as a conflict within a unified and rule-bound arena of conflict resolution” (PPR 108). The preservation of the king’s exceptional second body in the following lines demands that one reconsider the apparent opposition between the exemplary figures of the patriot and king:

Some Overpoise of Sway, by Turns they share;
In Peace the People, and the Prince in War:
Consuls of mod’rate Pow’r in Calms were made;
When the *Gauls* came, one sole Dictator sway’d. (ll. 180-184)

Although it overlooks the king’s right to act as the “one sole Dictator” in states of emergency, McKeon’s interpretation points to the difficulty in reconciling this image of the king with the rights and liberty that Dryden grants the patriot in the poem’s final two stanzas. In contrast to the centrality of the king in the conclusions of “Astraea Redux” and “To His Sacred Majesty,” the final two stanzas of “To My Honour’d Kinsman” celebrate the “Patriot Line” of the Drydens who have over the course of several generations protected the “Birthright Liberty,” laws, and “Common Cause” of the English people (ll. 195, 193, 190). Rather than representing a mere logical contradiction, this tension between the innate liberty of the exemplary individuals who

come to constitute the modern English body politic and the continuing right of the king to exercise the ultimate sovereignty of the exception reflects the development in late seventeenth-century England of a form of sovereignty that incorporates rather than opposes the liberty of its individual subjects.

With his vision of a body politic composed of free individuals that remain nevertheless subject to the ultimate sovereignty of a single person in moments of crises, Dryden sketches the terms of a new strategy of governance that takes the social body not as something that must be constructed, but as an already given, natural entity that must rather be managed. In conceiving of the “Birthright Liberty” of the patriot as a part of the harmonization of the English body politic, Dryden outlines one of the key characteristics that Michel Foucault ascribes to the “mechanisms of security” that emerge in eighteenth-century Europe as a new way to manage the burdens of governance (STP 8).⁷² Rather than approaching the national collective as something that must be constructed through state intervention, as the constitutionalists of the English civil war period would have, the partisans of security insist on viewing the body politic as a civil society, which Foucault defines as a “specific field of naturalness peculiar to man” (STP 349). The conjunction of individual liberty and greater social cohesion in Dryden’s poem gives credence to Foucault’s insight that, in spite of the appearance of opposition, civil society “emerges as the vis-à-vis of the state,” a counterpart whose management marks the defining task of modern governance (STP 349, 350). For this new mode of political management, “failing to respect freedom” and the “right of individuals legitimately opposed to power” becomes “not only an abuse of rights with

⁷² The new mode of security seems to appear earlier in England than in France, which is perhaps in part due to the 1688 revolutionaries’ rejection, in the words of Steven Pincus, of the “modern, bureaucratic absolutist state model developed by Louis XIV” (FM 8). The alternative and modern state that these revolutionaries helped create tended to focus on managing the flows of commerce and life rather than attempting to more directly govern them through a centralized, bureaucratic state.

regard to the law,” but also, and most importantly, a demonstration of “ignorance of how to govern properly” (STP 353). Although Foucault will characterize the development of this modern state as a move away from theological notions of sovereignty, Dryden’s vision of a new political Eden rooted in the ‘pre-political’ life of its populace demonstrates quite clearly that politicizing the bodies of a population is a theological process (STP 247).

Part Four: Making the Individual, Saving the Nation, and Fearing the Prostitute

While the relationship of “To My Honour’d Kinsman” to the transformation of the art of governance in late seventeenth-century England could be approached from many directions, I would like to briefly touch on its connection to the Societies for the Reformation of Manners in an effort to correct the tendency to miss the theological underpinnings of the gradual secularization of sovereignty in the early modern period. As evangelical groups that sought to impose juridical rather than ecclesiastical mechanisms of justice upon specifically urban vice, the SRM represent the vanguard of modern political theology. Active from 1690 to 1738, the SRM used a network of informants to encourage the prosecution of vice associated with a rising urban population, particularly in London.⁷³ The SRM reflected, according to the sociologist and legal theorist Alan Hunt, a “theological trend” of focusing on the “responsibilisation of the laity.”⁷⁴

With their grassroots network of legal informants, the SRM sought to ensure that the members of

⁷³ Hoppit explains that the “dramatic urbanization of English society in the seventeenth century rested fairly and squarely on the explosive growth of London,” which went from a population of about 200,000 to around 490,000 over the course of the century (LL 420).

⁷⁴ Hunt, Alan. *Governing Morals: A Social History in Moral Regulation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999: 30. Cited parenthetically hereafter as GM.

the elect nation were obeying the intertwined spheres of national law and God's covenant. Responding to the same theological and political dilemma that animated Dryden's late turn to the figure of the patriot, the SRM sought to transform the mobile and often unruly urban poor into individuals that exemplified 'manners,' which in this period connoted "not only the rules of moral conduct, but [also] the dispositions, attitudes, and practices that marked civilized conduct and theological conformity" (GM 30). As records from the over 100,000 prosecutions that the SRM pursued during their active years indicate, they targeted their campaign to purify urban England on the specific sins of prostitution, drunkenness, profanity, and gambling (GM 28). Given that the majority of these prosecutions "in every year for which records exist" targeted "lewd and disorderly practices," an offense that most likely refers to female street prostitution, it appears that the SRM regarded prostitution as the single greatest threat to England's nation salvation (GM 45).

As their printed handbooks and sermons attest, the SRM unified a diverse group of members, including dissenters as well as Anglicans, around a shared commitment to seeing secular and religious law as indistinguishable. Published as a pocket-sized book in 1698, the prominent Anglican divine Josiah Woodward's *An Account of the Rise and Progress of the Religious Societies in the City of London* exemplifies the way SRM preachers saw human law as synonymous with God's order: "And where the Informer, or the Magistrate, fails in their respective Duty, Justice is obstructed, the Efficacy of the Law null'd, Iniquity cherished, and the Wrath of God provoked."⁷⁵ The universality of God's authority not only transforms the enforcement of civil laws into a religious duty, but also effaces the distinction between public officials and private citizens, who become, magistrates and informers alike, equally subject to the

⁷⁵ Woodward, Josiah. *An Account of the Rise and Progress of the Religious Societies in the City of London*. London: Printed by J.D: 67-68. Cited parenthetically as AR.

totalizing authority of the divine. Through grounding the laws of the state in the sovereignty of God, Woodward and other SRM affiliated preachers construct a distinctly modern political theology that emphasizes the importance of an individual's behavior in the private sphere to the cohesion and salvation of the nation as a whole. While High Church members of the SRM such as John Mapletoft, godson of the revered Nicholas Ferrar of Little Gidding, will continue to insist that "God is more properly... honoured by ... our Common and united rather than by our Private Addresses," the SRM's actual activities display an unambiguous preoccupation with individuals' private conduct.⁷⁶ By subsuming both private and political life in the totalizing scope of God's authority, the SRM, as Hunt astutely puts it, "engaged in the regulation of 'social before the social'" (GM 29).

In conceiving of England as a potentially global population bound together by the universal sovereignty of the divine, the sermons of the SRM invest the individual members of this body politic with the task of achieving the doubled existence of an exemplary individual who both resides in and exceeds the private domains of economic life. Although John Mapletoft holds to the canonical insistence on the necessity of public devotion, he locates the basis of this public devotion in the very much private act of internalizing the power of the divine. In the same sermon in which he privileges "Common" forms of worship over private ones, Mapletoft asserts: "We do then honour God, when all the inward Affections and Dispositions of our Souls are centered upon God, ...when we live under a constant, awful Regard to his All-seeing Eye, ... When we esteem and love him as the Sovereign Good" (JM 7). Through internalizing the "All-seeing Eye" of God, a previously undifferentiated member of the body politic becomes an

⁷⁶ Mapletoft, John. *A Sermon Preach'd at the Church of St. Mary le Bow, to the Societies for Reformation of Manners, January the 1st. 1700*. London: B. Aylmer: 12. Cited parenthetically as JM.

exemplary individual endowed with the doubled existence of an at once mortal and immortal being. Mapletoft underlines the exemplary function of the true believer with his emphasis later in the sermon that “We do honour God most signally, when we make that Regard we have for him...evident to others” who then “may be brought over to the Obedience of the Faith” (JM 9, 10). By encouraging his followers to become public exemplars of an internalized faith, Mapletoft, a staunch Anglican, demonstrates the stubborn persistence of enthusiasm within even the most polite forms of Protestant thought. Once living under the “constant...All-seeing Eye” of God, the English layperson achieves the elevated and enthusiastic existence of one in direct contact with absolute truth. Despite attempting to combat the potentially destabilizing effects of religious enthusiasm, the SRM, like other Protestant groups, cannot resist calling on its members to act as the unmediated representatives of divine truth.

While Mapletoft clearly perceived the exemplary individual his sermons helped constitute as a political and theological necessity, it was left to lower church SRM ministers such as John Woodhouse to more clearly enunciate the stakes of creating this new entity. At the conclusion of a sermon that begins with the blunt assertion that the “exemplary piety” of SRM members shows the “World that Divine Service is not confined to Consecrated Places,” Woodhouse articulates the essential political function of the modern individual within a truly harmonized English body politic: “If you will not up to your Work, for God’s sake, for your Neighbor’s sake, for your Nation’s sake, for Posterity’s sake, do it for the King’s sake: For if we still do wickedly, *Both we, and our King shall perish.*”⁷⁷ Woodhouse’s sweeping sermon sketches the providential economy of a modern era in which the “immaterial labor” of subjectivity, as the Italian philosopher Maurizio Lazzarato terms it, becomes responsible for

⁷⁷ Woodhouse, John. *A sermon preach’d at Salters-Hall to the Societies for Reformation of Manners, May 31, 1697*. London: Printed for John Lawrence: V, 50. Cited parenthetically as JW.

preserving the collective sovereignty of the nation.⁷⁸ By constituting themselves as individuals subjected to the authority of God, the previously undifferentiated members of the English laity transform the political theology of the nation into the sovereign principle of their being.

Although dedicated in theory to converting every English body into an exemplary Christian subject, the SRM exhibited grossly disproportionate attention in practice on the single figure of the female street prostitute. In dedicating his account of the SRM to the citizens of London, Josiah Woodward asks them to view their city's sex workers as the greatest threat to national salvation: "How long shall those worse than *Midianitish Women* be a Plague and Reproach to your City? How long shall they be tolerated to spread their Nets in the very Streets, yea, before the Sun; and to bring their Rottenness into the very Bones of so many Persons and Families?" (AR vi). While the potential for prostitutes to spread syphilis and other diseases into the "very Bones" of good English families warrants some concern for a moral reformer like Woodward, it is their significance to political theology that truly captures the attention of the SRM. By encouraging the elect nation of Israel to begin worshipping multiple, foreign gods, the Midianite women of the Old Testament threatened its singular covenant with God.⁷⁹ Woodward equates the prostitute with these pagan seductresses because the spectacle of the prostitute posed a similar threat to the divinely-sanctioned unity of the nation.

⁷⁸ Lazzarato, Maurizio. "Immaterial Labor." *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*. Trans. Paul Colilli and Ed Emory. Ed. Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006. Lazzarato reworks Marx's notion of the "general intellect" to formulate his idea of "immaterial labor" as "the labor that produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity" (133). Lazzarato specifies its "raw material" as "subjectivity" which "ceases to be only an instrument of social control...and becomes directly productive" as our tastes, souls, sexualities, and networks of communication are put to work in the service of producing surplus value (142). I am suggesting that the exemplary SRM activist and patriot represents the divine foundation of the characteristically modern "consumer/communicator" of immaterial labor (142).

⁷⁹ See *Numbers 25: 1-13*. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. Cited parenthetically as N.

As roving symbols for the infusion of the English body politic with abstract value, the prostitute existed as a figure for England's economic as well as theological modernity. Writing in regards to the former, the critic Laura Rosenthal argues that prostitutes provided eighteenth-century onlookers with "both an assuring alterity and anxious potential for self-recognition."⁸⁰ Prostitutes occupied an ambivalent position within the eighteenth-century imagination, as Rosenthal demonstrates, because they overtly perform what the majority of country was silently experiencing. In measuring bodies and things according to abstract economic value rather than custom, commercialism transformed the prostitute from a figure of moral licentiousness to one of business-minded cunning (IC 2). Prostitutes functioned as excessive metaphors of economic change because they brought the commodifying logic of commercialism to its limit. They also, however, materialized a much deeper crisis since they publicly performed the potential for political theology to inspire anti-social acts of withdrawal rather than greater social cohesion. The historian Thomas Laqueur touches on the intersection of commodification and political theology with his assertion that prostitution in the eighteenth century "becomes, like usury, a metaphor for the unnatural multiplication not of things but of signs without referent."⁸¹ While Rosenthal, Laqueur, and many other critics have noted the way prostitutes symbolized some of the more disturbing and widespread effects of commercialism, they have overlooked the theological underpinnings of this economic movement. The democratization of sovereignty made the ultimately divine realm of the abstract the internal principle of every body. Or, in other words, political theology makes commodification possible.

⁸⁰ Rosenthal, Laura. *Infamous Commerce*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006: 7. Cited parenthetically as IC.

⁸¹ Laqueur, Thomas. *Making Sex*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990: 232. Cited parenthetically as MS.

By functioning as metaphors for the potential separation of “signs from their referents,” prostitutes were therefore first and foremost signifiers of the capacity for the newly democratized subjectivity of the exemplary individual to splinter the nation into a multiplicity of non-conforming bodies. As the paradigmatic symbol of abstract value, the prostitute also functioned within eighteenth-century society as a sign of the potential for political theology and commodification to fragment rather than unify the English body politic. Elevated by abstract value, the prostitute was nevertheless socially isolated and abandoned. The Midianite women of the Old Testament threatened the cohesiveness of the Israeli nation because they asked its members to abandon the God that maintained their collective identity. As a result of having “sexual relations” with Midianite women, the once monotheistic “people of the elect,” according to the narrative provided in *Numbers*, began to not only attend the polytheistic “sacrifices” of the Moab clan, but to also eat with them and “bow down to their gods” (*Numbers* 25: 1-3). Inflamed by this betrayal and commanded by God to seek vengeance, Moses leads a campaign against the neighboring Moab kingdom that would see its towns burned and people killed (*Numbers* 31: 7-17). The seductive power of the Midianite women thus represents the immediate cause of one of the more vicious and controversial moments in the Israelite’s struggle for social order. The prostitute of turn of the century England posed a similarly serious social threat; only she encouraged the elect to see the internalized domain of divine value as potentially incommensurate with the secular institutions of their nation. Though neglecting its theological dimension, Lacqueur is correct to interpret prostitution along with masturbation as “social pathologies” defined by the “essentially quantitative” problem of “doing it alone and doing it with lots of people rather doing it in pairs” (MS 232-233).

It is no mere accident that Dryden's figure of the withdrawn bachelor comes to be superseded in the eighteenth century by the soon-to-be-married heroine as the exemplary figure for modern selfhood. Before however arriving at this mid to late eighteenth-century point, England witnessed the irruption in the early eighteenth-century of literary heroines who celebrated rather than managed the excessiveness that lies within Dryden's model of the patriot. In tracing the amorous adventures of Moll Flanders and Fantomina, the following chapter will be unearthing the way the early novel explored the perverse and heretical darkness lurking within the ennobled individual. With the sovereignty of God at his or her foundation, this sacred body need not decide to join the nation. Like a king gone mad, these subjects can forsake the cause of the community in favor of the sovereign pleasures of the self.

Conclusion: The Effigy of the Modern Self

Daniel Defoe's *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders* (1722) and Eliza Haywood's *Fantomina; or Love in a Maze* (1725) celebrate heroines who use their status as commodified bodies to pursue their own anti-social agendas. These heroines accomplish a series of miraculous and perverse acts of self-transformation that elucidate the unruly potential of the sacred model of self that Dryden works to disseminate on a potentially global level. Before moving to these mutable and socially disruptive heroines, I would like return to the final stanza of "To My Honour'd Kinsman" in order to clarify the way the patriot stands as their surprising forefather. In the final stanza of his poem, Dryden represents the higher second body of the patriot as a kind of living effigy to the immortality of the nation.

This stanza begins with the interpellation of the exemplary Driden as a “true Descendent of a Patriot Line” and concludes with a triplet that portrays his immortal soul as a constructed work of artifice on par with the pomp and majesty of the king’s second body:

For ev’n when Death dissolves our Humane Frame,
The Soul returns to Heav’n, from whence it came;
Earth keeps the Body, Verse preserves the Fame. (ll. 206-209)

The opposition of corporeal mortality and ethereal transcendence in the first two lines establishes the expectation that the evenly balanced final line will neatly summarize the duality of body and soul. By establishing this expectation, Dryden highlights the incongruity of his final phrase, “Verse preserves the Fame,” which opposes the mortality of the body to the constructed immortality of “Fame” rather than to the purely transcendent immortality of the heavens. Dryden in effect moves from repeating Ecclesiastes’s statement against vanity “All go to one place” in the first line of the triplet to echoing Horace’s distinctively pagan assertion of fame as a monument “more enduring than bronze” in the final line.⁸² In suggesting that verse preserves the immortality of fame, Dryden portrays his poem and writing in general as a means to perpetuate the immortality of the patriot’s at once immanent and transcendent second body.

Dryden thus infuses writing with the same “secular magic” that the literary critic Joseph Roach ascribes to the rituals and regalia that endow the monarch with “two bodies, the body which decays and dies, and the body cinematic, which does neither.”⁸³ Dryden concludes “To My Honour’d Kinsman” with a fitting expression of the paradoxical doubleness of a soul that exists both beyond the world as a marker of the divine and within the world in the form of secular monuments to its own immortality. The withdrawn self of the patriot that remains forever

⁸² Ecclesiastes 3. 20. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. Horace. *The Odes*. Trans. John Hollander. Ed. J.D. McClatchy. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002: III xxx1.

⁸³ Roach, Joseph. *It*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007: 3, 36.

in the prelapsarian garden assumes responsibility for the national collective by adorning his or her mortal body with the regalia of modern individuality. It is Dryden the poet who provides such sacred garb in “To My Honour’d Kinsman.” He offers the monument of a poem to anybody willing to incarnate the doubled being of its language.

Although Dryden clearly touches on the ambiguity of a divine immortality embodied in mere things, the “secular magic” of the king and the modern subject remains in the end dependent upon the transcendent domain of the divine. From his early restoration poems to this late work to his cousin, Dryden pursues different rhetorical strategies for securing the unity of the English body politic on transcendental grounds not in order to demystify the sovereignty of God, but to rather give it a new world in which to play.

Chapter Two

How the Gentleman Became a Woman: *Moll Flanders*, *Fantomina*, and the Rise of the Commodity Heroine

Part One

The Epistolary Subject of the Early Novel

In an era in which emails and text messages are not only the dominant forms of written communication but are publicly circulated with ease, it seems more important than ever for literary critics to explore the relationship between the culture of modernity and the form of the letter. Written in solitude yet with a potential for instantaneous dissemination on a global scale, the email and the text message stage the same conjunction of the private and the public that the critic William Dowling has so masterfully located in the Augustan verse epistle. Having uncovered in the previous chapter the surprisingly modern model of selfhood developed by the founder of this tradition, John Dryden, I will in this chapter trace the migration of the epistolary subjectivity of the verse epistle into the early novels of Daniel Defoe and Eliza Haywood. By examining the heroines of Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) and Haywood's *Fantomina* (1725) in light of Dryden's "To My Honour'd Kinsman," I intend to reveal the underappreciated function of the verse epistle in constituting the distinctly modern subject of the eighteenth-century novel.

It is time to broaden our view of the letter-form and its rise to prominence as a major literary genre in the first decades of the eighteenth century. As a private letter written in the stately form of rhyming couplets and published alongside a miscellaneous collection of other works, Dryden's "To My Honour'd Kinsman" exemplifies the emergence of an oppositional literary practice, which will later be categorized as the Augustan verse epistle, that centers on the

public celebration of an author's alienation from an increasingly modern political arena. By using a burgeoning print culture to broadcast their alienation and solitude, the authors of early eighteenth-century verse epistles, as Dowling notes in *The Epistolary Moment* (1990), manage to incorporate the very public they disdain into their supposedly anti-modern states of pastoral withdrawal. The neo-classical and anti-modern pretensions of Dryden and his heirs, most notably Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope, has led Dowling as well as many other critics to miss the role that their verse epistles played in constructing the abstract space of interiority that will come to define the new individual of the eighteenth-century novel. Rather than miraculously surfacing from the depths of being itself, the disembodied space of subjectivity that comes to define this new individual emerges as the historical product of practices such as the Augustan verse epistle. Despite the appearance of opposition, letters in verse and the novel develop alongside one another in the early eighteenth century because both help their readers see themselves as singular bodies defined by immaterial selves. As this chapter will demonstrate, the difference between these two forms lies primarily in the precariousness of the novelistic individual's place within the collective identity of the nation. While the patriot of Dryden's "To My Honour'd Kinsman" clearly puts his newly constituted subjectivity to work on behalf of the nation, the heroines of *Moll Flanders* and *Fantomina* appear to take an excessive interest in their kingly selves. The democratization of the kingly model of the self and the ensuing development of the individual indeed spurred the development of an increasingly cohesive and abstract national identity extending well beyond London-based centers of social and political power. As figurations of the individuality at the foundation of this process, however, the heroines of early novels dramatize the potential for England's new patriots to place the sovereignty of the self above the concerns of the nation.

Whereas the previous chapter focused primarily on the way Dryden transforms his cousin into an exemplar of modern citizenship, it is the implicit position of Dryden the author within “To My Honour’d Kinsman” that will be central to this chapter’s discussion of Defoe’s and Haywood’s heroines. Given Dryden’s politically and economically alienated position within post 1688-England, his emphasis on the extra-political basis of his cousin’s claim to national sovereignty can be read as an implicit effort to recast his own withdrawal from the political arena as the potential means of achieving a higher form of self. Since Dryden’s cousin John Driden represented Huntingdonshire twice in Parliament, his position as a representative of the collective identity of the nation could be rooted in an institution from which Dryden as a Catholic was barred.⁸⁴ Like his Catholic successor in the tradition of the verse epistle, Alexander Pope, Dryden uses the form of the letter in “To My Honour’d Kinsman” to construct a model of selfhood that will become associated with the female protagonists of the eighteenth-century novel. This chapter will begin by examining the struggle of novelistic heroines to exercise a degree of agency from the politically alienated position of women in early eighteenth-century English society, a struggle that is analogous to the efforts of Dryden and Pope to endow their own isolated social positions with political significance. By using the verse epistle to demonstrate the relevance of their feminized social positions to the political identity of the modern English nation, Dryden and Pope develop the epistolary domain of interiority in which both the first-person and omniscient narrators of the novel will tell their distinctively modern tales of an individual’s progress through the world. What the heroines of the early eighteenth century add to this narrative is the capacity for this realm of interiority to inspire sovereign acts

⁸⁴ John Driden served in Parliament from 1690-1695 and again from 1699-1708. “Commentary,” *The Works of John Dryden*. Ed. Vincent Dearing. Vol. VII. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000: 658.

of selfhood that exceed the overarching principle of political theology to preserve the collective unity of the nation. The excessive an-economic activity of these heroines provides middle-class readers, whether they be in the eighteenth or twenty-first century, with a model for using their kingly selves to be something more than bourgeois.

Part Two

The Naughty Aristocratic at the Heart of the Bourgeois Consumer, or, The Lesson of Moll and 'Fantomina'

When the eponymous heroine of *Moll Flanders* decides to transform herself into a wealthy widow in the hopes of attracting the “offer of a good [ie. wealthy] husband” or the nameless heroine of *Fantomina* remakes herself into a modest widow by adopting the dress and demeanor of one, they explicitly dramatize what appears only obliquely in later novels: namely, the performative foundation of the self in commercial society.⁸⁵ By approaching the identity of a wealthy wife as nothing more than a calculated display of particular consumer items, these heroines underline the interpenetration of women’s two major roles within the eighteenth-century popular imagination. As commodified wives and consuming subjects, women acted within England’s symbolic economy as the exemplars of the wide-ranging and ambivalent experience of commodification. Though later domestic novels such as *Evelina* (1778), *Cecilia* (1782), and *Mansfield Park* (1814) certainly show marriage and the conjugal family to be immersed in commercial concerns, their plots remain, aside from a few exceptional moments of

⁸⁵ Defoe, Daniel. *Moll Flanders*. New York: Penguin Books, 1989: 122. Cited parenthetically as M. Haywood, Eliza. *Fantomina and Other Works*. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2004: 53-54. Cited parenthetically as F.

crisis, confined to the world of England's comfortable classes. They may feature heroines with unknown parentage who, like *Evelina*, are momentarily abandoned to the dangerous streets of London. Such crises are, however, the exception within narratives that focus primarily on their heroine's efforts to negotiate an upper-class marriage market and become, like *Evelina* indeed does, the happy wives of well-bred men.

Rather than beginning life from the socially precarious but ultimately privileged position of these later heroines, the protagonists of earlier novels such as *Moll Flanders*, *Roxana* (1724), and *Fanny Hill* (1748) start out destitute and ascend only by engaging in commercial activity with the full spectrum of English society, from impoverished pickpockets to bountiful Lords. While the heroine of *Fantomina* is, as the opening line of the novel specifies, a "Lady of distinguished Birth," she nonetheless moves through the commercial thoroughfares of London and its environs with a degree of anonymity and independence that would be unthinkable for the ladies of domestic novels (40). Since a central purpose of this chapter is to rediscover the forgotten possibilities that lie within consumer cultures of the present, it will be focusing on two novels from a period in which literary heroines tended to navigate a newly commercial world with something more than marriage in mind.

As many historians and literary critics have shown, perhaps none more persuasively than Dror Wahrman, the greater accessibility of the iconography of polite life in the early eighteenth century fundamentally unsettled a pre-modern social order founded in part on a visible hierarchy of appearance. While this transformation, as Wahrman and others have noted, converted the homes of working and upper-class families into theatres of consumption, I will be focusing on the way it turned the bodies of commoners and aristocrats alike into ongoing spectacles of contemporary fashion. By elucidating the way the heroines of *Moll Flanders* and *Fantomina* use

fashion to manipulate the immaterial domain of their social identities, I hope to show that the early eighteenth-century witnessed the irruption of a capacity for an-economic excessiveness that persists to this day as the sovereign and innermost secret of every bourgeois subject. From the king, to the patriot, to the mutable lady of the night, the dynastic model of selfhood spreads as political theology attempts to unify the mortal bodies of the nation around the divine sovereignty that imbues each individual body with a space of immaterial interiority.

Although never quite as visible as it was at this early juncture, the transformative performances of these heroines demonstrate the potential for the patriot, the representative of every good bourgeois subject, to use the spectacle of consumption as a means for aristocratic dissipation rather than restrained enjoyment. Having inherited the same royal subjectivity of Dryden's patriot, these heroines stand as the outcast subjects of political theology because they transgress the utilitarian logic of the good middle-class citizen and, in the process, frustrate political theology's overarching goal of political unity. Refusing to bear sovereignty merely for the unifying and preserving the national collective, these heroines instead attempt narcissistically to make themselves the agents and higher purpose of the divine's incarnation. They pursue this mad path when they take the products of consumer society not as the means for economically rational acts of preservation and self-aggrandizement, but rather for unnecessary and hence excessive acts of self-transformation. The world is aesthetic for them, as it can be for the middle-class consumers of today, because they view it as merely the means for playing with the disembodied realm of subjectivity that they, like kings, embody. These heroines refuse to stabilize their identities for the sake of social order and, like kings gone mad, seize the doubled being of their ennobled existence as an opportunity for play.

By arguing that the lessons of *Moll Flanders* and *Fantomina* extend all the way to our present moment, I will be, as in the first chapter, calling into question the epistemological approach that allows historians such as Wahrman to neatly distinguish between the mutability of identity in the early eighteenth century and the essentialist notion of the self that develops in the century's latter half.⁸⁶ Rather than marking a decisive break, the idea that one possesses an essential and hence immutable self represents the mere ossification of the transcendent self that began to descend upon common bodies in the early eighteenth century. The ability of England's early consumers to remake themselves through altering their physical appearance in the world was structured by the same play between the material and the immaterial that characterized the pre-modern king's theatrical performances of divinity. In restricting the self to a single supposedly innate identity, the essentialist model of subjectivity obscures the connection between the immaterial domain of identity and the material world of bodies and things in which it continues to nevertheless find its foundation. I will be uncovering the mechanics of self-transformation in *Moll Flanders* and *Fantomina* in the hopes of demonstrating that the transient and mutable interiority of the early eighteenth-century self marks a kernel of potential excessiveness within the static interiority of the essentialist and properly modern self that follows it.

Although the constitution of two ontologically distinct sexes fixes the identities of both men and women in the eighteenth century, the popular press of the period shows a disproportionate interest in containing women within the home because it is women that came to

⁸⁶ Wahrman uses the metaphor of the "cultural sandbox" to represent the underlying *epistemes* that allow him to distinguish between what he terms the "*ancien régime*" of identity and the properly modern, late eighteenth-century understanding of the self as an innate and immutable property. Wahrman, Dror. *The Making of the Modern Self*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004: xvi. Cited parenthetically as MS.

symbolize the king-like possibility for miraculous performances in the first part of the century.⁸⁷ In returning to works like *Moll Flanders* and *Fantomina*, we confront a subject whose transcendent identity has yet to be reduced to either the public domain of the political or the private realm of the home. The truly sovereign, that is royal and hence divine, foundation of subjective interiority remains on display in these novels. Alienated from the political sphere and not yet ensconced in the private, the heroines of these two works exemplify a royal capacity for self-constitution that lies buried beneath the ideology of the domestic and political spheres. By looking upon the world as a collection of objects that exist only to serve their sovereign whims, these two heroines mark the new accessibility of sovereignty in the consumer age. The democratization of this kingly form of subjectivity inspired the *British Magazine* in 1763 to articulate a possibility that we modern subjects have yet to fulfill:

The present rage of imitating the manners of high life hath spread itself so far among the gentlefolks of lower life, that in a few years we shall probably have no common folk at all.⁸⁸

Middle-class subjects of consumer societies throughout the globe have remained common because they have largely followed Dryden's patriot in dutifully subordinating their divine auras to the cause of political unity. Returning to the heroines of *Moll Flanders* and *Fantomina* is important because in them bourgeois subjects of today can rediscover the perverse aristocrat that

⁸⁷ Thomas Laqueur summarizes, in *Making Sex* (1990), the eighteenth-century transition from a one-sex model in which one's gender and sex was determined by cultural factors to a two-sex system of identity that grounded one's sexual identity in the biological realm of human anatomy. "Sex before the seventeenth century," as Laqueur explains, "was still a sociological and not an ontological category." Laqueur, Thomas. *Making Sex*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990: 8. Cited parenthetically as MSX. We went, in other words, from conceiving of men and women as different versions of the same material to seeing them as distinct modes of being in the world.

⁸⁸ *British Magazine*. IV (1763): 417. Quoted in BC 25.

lurks beneath their rational exteriors. These heroines are able to choose the excessive pleasures of play over society not because they have freed themselves from economic exploitation. Quite to the contrary, Moll and 'Fantomina' show us middle-class citizens of today that economic exploitation is in fact the starting point for any struggle to master and not merely bear the divinity of sovereignty.

Part Three

We Are Shoppers Before We Are Voters: How Women Came to Represent the Modern Individual

While affirming Nancy Armstrong's seminal argument in *Desire and Domestic Fiction* (1987) that the "modern individual was first and foremost a woman," I would also like to take this observation in a new direction.⁸⁹ Politically isolated yet increasingly economically empowered as the key consumers of a newly commercial society, women in the eighteenth century were exemplary figures for the paradoxical combination of political dispossession and economic empowerment that continues to define modern subjecthood. Although the immortal sovereignty of the king's second body indeed imbues the mortal frames of male Parliamentarians such as the addressee of Dryden's "To My Honoured Kinsman," it is only through the distribution of this kingly subjectivity in the economic sphere that individuality becomes a mass phenomenon. In subsuming much of the English body politic in the eighteenth century, commodification intensified the exploitation of bodies while simultaneously endowing them with the immaterial aura of kings. I will be turning to two English novels from the early eighteenth

⁸⁹ Armstrong, Nancy. *Desire and Domestic Fiction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987: 8. Cited parenthetically as DD.

century because it is this period of English history that the economic sphere began to emerge as a theater for the common people to exercise their newly acquired powers of individuality. In the blossoming commercialism of this period, politically disenfranchised subjects became capable of looking upon the world as a collection of objects that existed solely for them. They too could now see the world as the means of adorning themselves and their surroundings in new ways. Just as the king used artful performances to elevate and remake his mortal body, the paradigmatically female subject of early commercial society begins to stage her own identity performances, altering her physical appearance and transcendent self in the process. Rather than continuing to seek liberation in a political sphere that promises only to take the sovereignty we bear out of our hands, the experience of these heroines suggests that we should look upon the extra-political domain of consumer society as the means of pursuing the useless and hence excessive pleasures of play. Despite the significant expansion of political enfranchisement since the time of Defoe and Haywood, we middle-class subjects of consumer societies stand today, as we did in the eighteenth century, shoppers well before we are voters.

By representing the heroines of *Moll Flanders* and *Fantomina* as exemplary figures of modern selfhood, I will be arguing that the modern sense of England as a national and political whole develops primarily as a result of the incorporation of ever-greater numbers of bodies into the extra-political domain of the market. While the political enfranchisement of women, non-property owners, and people of color in the past three centuries has certainly helped solidify the collective identity of the English nation, it is ultimately of less significance than the much earlier assimilation of these groups into the newly commodified culture of the early eighteenth century. This claim notwithstanding, the representative branch of the English political system, Parliament, undoubtedly rose to prominence in the decades following the Glorious Revolution. The assertion

of Parliamentary control over the ascension of William and Mary in 1689 and of Anne in 1701 marked the emergence of Parliament as the de facto seat of authority in the eighteenth century. In dictating the terms of legislation and the act of succession itself, the resurgent Parliament of the 1690s signaled the failure of the Stuarts' late seventeenth-century struggle to, in the words of the historian Steven Pincus, "ensure that the monarch would have a monopoly of political power not only in theory, but also in practice."⁹⁰ This newly emboldened Parliament met more regularly and for longer periods, passed a far greater number of statutes than ever before, and overtook common law as the supreme arbiter of non-monarchical authority.⁹¹ The professionalization of Parliament meant its members were spending up to half the year in London, strengthening the connection between the regions they represented and the increasingly important epicenter of London. The unification of the country around Parliament and London gave concrete form to an idea that had previously only existed in theory: namely, that England was a cohesive political body rather than a collection of culturally distinct territories. All of this said, however, Parliament remained the purview of male, propertied, religiously conformist members of the metropole at a time when the market was transforming men, women, and children throughout the colonial world into the modern subjects of a new economic order.

As an abstract category that unifies the newly valorized landscape of early eighteenth-century England, the 'market' supplants the king's second body as the key term of English political theology and its longstanding effort to perfect the unity of the nation. The historian

⁹⁰ Pincus, Steven. *1688*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009: 480. Cited parenthetically as SP. A telling indicator of the wane of monarchical power is the fact that that Queen Anne's veto of the Scottish Militia Bill in 1708 was the last time a monarch blocked a piece of Parliamentary legislation. See Blank, Jeremy. *Parliament and Foreign Policy in the Eighteenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004: 21.

⁹¹ For further discussion, see: Hoppit, Julian. *Land of Liberty?: England 1689-1727*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000: 26. Cited parenthetically as LL.

Joyce Appleby notes that economic writers with particularly modernist sensibilities began in the 1690s to use “the word ‘markets’” to refer to “the more elusive concept of expandable spending” rather than an actual “point of sales.”⁹² A term once used only for the particular location of purchases assumes a secondary definition reflecting the tenor of a newly dominant economic system that views consumption as an abstract and limitless category. The eighteenth-century revolution in consumption effectively transformed the once aristocratic and kingly privilege of seeing the world aesthetically, that is as a collection of objects designed for the satisfaction of endlessly refinable tastes, into the common right of humanity. While the tenets of commercialism had circulated throughout the seventeenth century, they come to the fore at the close of the century due to the conjunction of a number of factors that I will sketch in the admittedly simplistic summary that follows.

The development of English manufacturing in the period combined with increasing social and legislative support for enclosures to bring greater segments of the population into London and other manufacturing towns. Once in these growing commercial centers, former agricultural workers faced a new labor environment in which the traditional means of regulating wages were being replaced by the law of supply and demand.⁹³ The assimilation of these migrants into the manufacturing sector steadily transformed the dominant model of the home from a site of small-

⁹² Joyce Appleby. “Ideology and Theory: The Tension Between Political and Economic Liberalism in Seventeenth Century England.” *The American Historical Review*. 81.3. 1976: 532. Quoted in Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, J.H. Plumb. *The Birth of Consumer Society*. London: Europa Publications: 14. Cited parenthetically as BC.

⁹³ In regard to London, the increasingly dominant center of commerce, Hoppit explains: “For good and ill the decline of the regulatory efficiency of the guilds, not least because of the growth of London outside the old City, left an increasing proportion of workers open to the unimpeded forces of the market mechanism” (LL 428).

scale production into a strictly demarcated space of consumption, leisure, and rest.⁹⁴ Displaced from an agricultural way of life in which they kept gardens for private use and made many of life's basic necessities by hand, these new town dwellers came to depend upon wages for their livelihood. The pressure to not only earn enough to live but to also purchase newly affordable luxury items brought women and children into the workplace, a shift that is in part responsible for the steady increase in household income throughout the century.⁹⁵ An entire population of rural dwellers who had for centuries lived according to the traditional customs and hierarchies of the English countryside were, as a result of these changes, transformed into both the objects and subjects of a newly commercial culture. From the perspective of the manufacturing sector, these rural migrants represented objects or mere bodies whose value was increasingly determined by abstract economic calculations rather than custom. In their role, however, as inhabitants of England's early commercial centers, these workers acted as subjects who looked upon a new world of things with the gaze of an aristocrat, consuming growing quantities of domestically made products, such as beer, pottery, furniture, and dresses, as well as imported items, such as tea, sugar, tobacco, and fabric.⁹⁶

The democratization of the aristocratic position of the consuming subject in the eighteenth century was made possible by the expansion of England's imperial trade and domestic manufacturing, both of which helped make former icons of the leisure classes available en

⁹⁴ See McKeon, Michael. "Historicizing Patriarchy: The Emergence of Gender Difference in England, 1660-1770." *Eighteenth-Century Studies*. 28.3 (1995).

⁹⁵ Neil McKendrick notes: "Where whole families were employed for long hours at rising wage rates in the rapid growth sectors of the economy, the increased take-home earnings could increase dramatically- easily carrying working class families into the class of consumers willing and able to afford not just the necessities but the decencies of life" (BC 23). Not only did wage rates increase throughout the century, rising most rapidly between 1760 and 1780, but the value of money itself appeared to increase as the result of falling food prices (BC 23).

⁹⁶ In the 1690s, according to one historical account, the "taste for cheap, colourful fabrics imported by the East India Company reached 'epidemic proportions'" (BC 14).

masse.⁹⁷ England's colonial trade grew from representing 39 percent of total imports and 18 percent of total exports at the beginning of the century to by the 1720s holding a 48 and 24 percent respective share in an import and export business that had itself grown by over 20 percent (LL 263). The sugar trade with the Caribbean colonies became the most profitable of England's colonial ventures, fueling Britain's rise as the key player in the eighteenth-century slave trade and driving a domestic craze for sugar with per capita consumption increasing from 2 pounds annually in the 1660s to 13 pounds in the later 1720s (LL 266). Severed from tradition-based communities in West Africa and transformed into the bearers and producers of abstract value, the trajectory of the eighteenth-century slave in some ways paralleled the modernizing process that brought hordes of desperate peasants into England's mercantilist urban centers.⁹⁸ For my analysis, the crucial difference between these analogous narratives is that it was only in the metropole that a mass consumer market developed. Whereas the English worker had the opportunity to play the role of a subject in the new economy of the abstract, the slave remained an object whose life was nearly entirely subsumed by the process of producing abstract value.

While the ascent of the British Empire was clearly a significant economic development, and of particular importance to the British economy in the nineteenth century, it was the domestic consumer market that represented the primary engine of economic growth in the eighteenth century. The dramatic expansion of domestic consumption, from £10 million at the start of the century to £30 in 1770 and £90 million at the century's close, lends credence to the pamphleteer Charles King's assertion in 1721 that "The first and best Market of *England* are the

⁹⁷ From 1700 to 1725, Hoppit estimates that the industrial and agricultural economies grew by about 15 percent while overseas trade expanded by about 30 percent (LL 315).

⁹⁸ The Jamaican sugar colony provides a dramatic example of the English Empire's increasing dependence on slave trade; the ratio between free white and African slaves grew from 1:1 in 1675 to 1:11 in 1722 (LL 267).

Natives and Inhabitants of *England*.”⁹⁹ At a time when the political sphere restricted the abstract sovereignty of the nation to a small elite, the English body politic, from the landlord to the laborer, was nevertheless unified on an unprecedented level through the abstract medium of economic value. Historians and literary critics alike frequently use the development of a national network of credit in the eighteenth century to illustrate this process. The prominence of credit and debt in these accounts derives not only from the essential role this network played in the formation of commercial society, but also from the way the extension of credit and debt into the English populace functions as a synecdoche for the broader eighteenth-century transformation of labor, land, and things into bearers of abstract value. As the historian John Brewer explains, the explosive growth in the use of promissory notes, bills of exchange, and mortgages in this period made credit and debt an “almost universal” phenomenon, one which brought “producers, distributors, and consumers” from every region of Britain into a “highly elaborate (and extremely delicate) web of credit” (BC 205).

In the symbolic economy of the period, credit finds its human counterpart in the figure of the young, socially isolated woman who becomes the preferred means for representing the early eighteenth-century individual’s confrontation with a newly abstract society. The literary critic Catherine Gallagher’s insight in *Nobody’s Story* (1994) that eighteenth-century female authors in particular “portrayed themselves as dispossessed, in debt, and on the brink of disembodiment” touches on the singular intimacy of women and abstract value in England’s modernizing economy.¹⁰⁰ The socially isolated young heroine overtakes Dryden’s turn of the century country gentleman as the exemplary figure of modernity because she is not only alienated, like her

⁹⁹ King, C. *The British Merchant*. London: Printed by John Darby, 1721: 165. Quoted in LL 314.

¹⁰⁰ Gallagher, Catherine. *Nobody’s Story*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994: XX.

bachelor predecessor, from the traditional bonds of the family, but also separated from Parliamentary sphere of representational politics. Early heroines such as Moll and ‘Fantomina’ are animated by a play between submission and agency that reflects women’s dual roles within the eighteenth-century imagination as the paradigmatic objects and subjects of consumer society.

While a market for brides had long been in existence, the modernization of the English countryside in the eighteenth century and the related centralization of agricultural wealth made economics, as Ruth Perry demonstrates in *Novel Relations* (2004), an even more important factor in the marriage decisions of landowning classes.¹⁰¹ Struggling to maintain their social standing in the competitive atmosphere of economic centralization, landowning families began to consolidate their estates in the figure of the eldest son and abandon the once common practice of distributing wealth amongst a wide network of kin (NR 40). Since the marriage of these first-born sons represented an opportunity to further solidify a family’s position, the choice of a bride became increasingly determined by economic as opposed to social considerations. The “mercenary” eighteenth-century marriage market thus brought the daughters of England’s rural and urban elite into close contact with the distinctly modern phenomenon of commodification (NR 221). Though restricted to a small number, the experience of these upper-class brides was transformed by the period’s rapidly expanding press into a metaphor for the widespread

¹⁰¹ Perry provides a series of statistics testifying to the centralization of agriculture in the period: “In England as a whole, there was a marked decrease in farms under 100 acres and an increase in those over 300 acres. Between 1740 and 1788, over 40,000 separate small farms disappeared. Studying specific locales, historians have noted as much as a 25 percent to 33 percent decline in the number of small owners and tenant farmers in the course of the century. Even G.E. Mingay...concedes that, whereas a third of the cultivated land of England was worked by owner-occupiers in the late seventeenth century,...only 12 percent of the land was in the hands of owner-occupiers by the end of the eighteenth century.” Perry, Ruth. *Novel Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004: 294-295. Cited parenthetically as NR.

subsumption of English bodies by the abstract logic of accumulation.¹⁰² Such attention made the female sex synonymous with the particularly modern and increasingly common position of being the object of abstract economic calculations.

Women were not, however, merely symbols for modern woes and were instead exemplars of the pitfalls as well as the possibilities of commercial living. In novels such as *Moll Flanders* and *Fantomina*, female protagonists use their status as objects of the abstract to achieve the mastery of subjects. This ambiguity stems in part from the growing importance, both literally and figuratively, of women's traditional position of authority over household spending.¹⁰³

Beyond simply reflecting the duality of women's roles as paradigmatic objects and subjects, the tendency for authors to explore modern life through the female form ultimately stems from the conceptual possibilities opened up by their political alienation. Unable to exercise their rights in the Parliament, the female sex was the best means of investigating and representing the capacity for mastery that objectification itself makes possible. Their position as the key subjects of consumer culture is itself symbolic of the potential for sovereign excess that becomes accessible to commodified bodies only after they have forsaken the cause of political unity.

Part Three

Naked but Capable of Dress, or, Why Both *Moll Flanders* and *Fantomina* Are Modern

¹⁰² Nancy Armstrong notes in *Desire and Domestic Fiction* that conduct books and educational treatises for women “exploded” after 1695 and that by the mid eighteenth century “the number of books specifying the qualities of a new kind of woman had well outstripped the number of those devoted to describing the aristocratic male” (62). The explosion of this conduct literature, along with the slightly later but equally female-centered domestic novel, importantly “coincided with the rise of the popular press” (62).

¹⁰³ Julian Hoppit affirms that women, “at least in families living in some comfort,” stood out from men in terms of consumption because they maintained “control over household expenditure” (LL 435) For further discussion, see BC 23.

As narratives of young, isolated heroines navigating the urban landscape of England's commercial capital, *Moll Flanders* and *Fantomina* are hardly unique. John Cleland's mid century novel *Fanny Hill* (1749) and its tale of a young woman driven from the country into the rapidly modernizing space of London stands out as particularly relevant to the following analysis. One crucial difference, however, separates Cleland's novel, along with many others, from *Moll Flanders* and *Fantomina*; its heroine begins her characteristically modern adventure with a name. Written as a single letter to a female friend, *Fanny Hill* begins with the declaration:

My maiden name was Frances Hill. I was born at a small village near
Liverpool in Lancashire, of parents extremely poor, and, I piously believe,
extremely honest.¹⁰⁴

Defoe's *Roxana* (1724) and Haywood's *Love in Excess* (1719-20) also feature orphaned female characters who nevertheless receive a name and are thus tied, albeit very obliquely in the former, to a particular place within human society. While many eighteenth-century heroines are literally or metaphorically orphaned, the heroines of *Moll Flanders* and *Fantomina* embark on their urban adventures in the absence even of names, which would at least provide a discursive connection to the families they had lost. Orphaned and unnamed, the heroines of *Moll Flanders* and *Fantomina* are two particularly extreme representations of the process of commodification that transformed people and things into exchangeable objects of abstract value.¹⁰⁵ By moving through the newly valorized landscape of the early eighteenth century under the cover of pseudonyms alone, the

¹⁰⁴ Cleland, John. *Fanny Hill*. New York: Penguin Books, 1985: 39.

¹⁰⁵ Although the heroine of *Fantomina* falls under the metaphorically orphaned category, she is effectively without a family throughout much of Haywood's narrative.

heroines of *Moll Flanders* and *Fantomina* stand out as exceptional representatives of commodified life.

Despite being both classifiable under the umbrella term ‘early novels,’ *Moll Flanders* and *Fantomina* approach the phenomenon of commodification from two distinct literary traditions. Haywood’s *Fantomina* is a work of romance rooted within a tradition of epistolary works, such as *The Portuguese Letters* (1669) and *Love-Letters From a Nobleman to His Sister* (1685-7), that center on the plight of heroines abandoned by their libertine lovers. While indebted in part to this same tradition, Defoe’s *Moll Flanders* can best be described as a picaresque crime narrative overlaid with the penitent impulse of spiritual autobiographies. The tales of vice that structured picaresque novels, such as *Gil Blas* (1715), and widely read biographies of criminals are the major touchstones for Defoe’s tale. As a “private history” narrated from the first-person perspective of its redeemed heroine, *Moll Flanders* more clearly exhibits the attention to “individual experience” that Ian Watt christened as the primary attribute of the novel form (37).¹⁰⁶ Drawn from a tradition with its roots in classical tales of ill-fated love and narrated in a limited third-person voice that lacks the intimacy of Defoe’s confessional narrative, *Fantomina* belongs from the perspective of its generic makeup to a pre-modern era that looked to traditional tales rather than the contemporary experience of individuals for its fictional material.

And, yet, at the same time *Fantomina* belongs alongside *Moll Flanders* because both works bring pre-modern narratives of vice, aristocratic and criminal, into the modern commercial age. The objectified and powerless’ struggle to exercise agency through theatrical cunning, a driving force of criminal biographies as well as epistolary romances, assumes new meaning when it is transposed to the commodified landscape of the eighteenth century. Unlike their

¹⁰⁶ Watt, Ian. *The Rise of the Novel*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1957: 13. Cited parenthetically as RN.

equally theatrical but largely rural predecessors, Moll and ‘Fantomina’ are primarily urban creatures who rely on a new array of consumer items and public spectacles to achieve a degree of excessiveness not possible in earlier eras. These two heroines stand out as distinctly modern not because their struggle is new, but rather because its pace and scope is. By incarnating the agency of the commodity form, they become capable of engaging in a series of transformative performances and, in the process, bearing a seemingly limitless succession of second bodies.

By remaining faithful to the pre-modern trope of a politically isolated woman attempting to achieve power over her libertine lover, *Fantomina* ironically distinguishes itself as more properly modern than Haywood’s other major romantic novella *Love in Excess*. With the supremely attractive male protagonist Count D’elmont at its center, the narrative of *Love in Excess* is driven by the question of how his female admirers can overcome the “custom which forbids women to make a declaration of their thoughts.”¹⁰⁷ The inequality that permits men to actively respond to the kingly aura of Count D’elmont while banning women from articulating themselves as his subject represents the central dilemma of a plot that remains within the classical world of political theory.¹⁰⁸ Beginning with the premise that women are objects, *Fantomina*, in contrast, belongs to the distinctly modern terrain in which subjecthood exists not

¹⁰⁷ Haywood, Eliza. *Love in Excess*. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2000: 37. Cited parenthetically as LE.

¹⁰⁸ The allegorical association of D’elmont with the king, most likely Charles II, culminates at the end of the novel when he returns to Paris and silences his critics who are “awed by his presence and in time won by his virtues” (LE 266). By representing the central object of desire in these political terms, Haywood’s *Love in Excess* resembles Mary Astell’s *Reflections upon Marriage* (1700) since both works use the relationship between the sexes to develop theories of empowered obedience. D’elmont’s female admirers must gain some semblance of agency in order to express themselves as his willing servants. For Astell, women must receive a “good Education” if they are to learn why and how they ought to submit to their husband’s authority. Astell, Mary. *Political Writings*. Ed. Patricia Springborg. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996: 62.

as a choice but rather as an effect of the vast network of credit, debt, and commodification subsuming English society.

Through introducing their heroines as at once naked and capable of dress, Defoe and Haywood use the figure of the politically alienated woman to express the often-overlooked ambivalence of the both alienating and liberating process of commodification. In the opening pages of *Moll Flanders*, Defoe introduces his heroine as “a poor desolate girl without Friends, without Cloaths, without Help or Helper in the World...” (44). With the seemingly arbitrary but important addition of the phrase “without Cloaths,” Defoe foreshadows the significance of clothing and in particular linen to his heroine’s life as a mutable commodity on the global stage of the English market. By constructing a heroine who is constantly attentive to the significance of her dress and a specialist in stealing the clothes and linen of others, Defoe establishes a clear association between his heroine and the bifurcated commodity that Karl Marx will later use as his primary example in the first part of *Capital* (1867). Separated from its place within traditional England and transformed into a bearer of abstract value, linen stands before the coat it constitutes as the “sheep-like...Christian” does before “the lamb of God.”¹⁰⁹ Moll embodies this relationship of equivalency and difference in that she first appears in Defoe’s narrative as a figuratively naked entity that pales in comparison to the dazzling appearances she nevertheless comes to accomplish. While Marx will cite human labor as the cause of this separation, Defoe’s narrative identifies the capacity of its commodity heroine to always “make a new Appearance” in the world as the source of her doubled existence (122).

Haywood begins *Fantomina* along similar lines by first presenting her nameless heroine at a playhouse, a setting that both emphasizes and foreshadows the importance of performance

¹⁰⁹ Marx, Karl. *Capital: Volume 1*. Trans. Ben Fowkes. New York: Penguin Books, 1990: 143. Cited parenthetically as C.

and dress to her future transformations. Although her rural, upper-class background distinguishes her from the urban poverty of Moll Flanders's origins, the heroine of *Fantomina* resembles Moll insofar as she also enters the commercial space of London metaphorically naked, with "no body in town, at that time, to whom she was obliged to be accountable for her actions," save a rather clueless aunt (41). The figurative nudity of these two heroines in part reflects Ruth Perry's observation that eighteenth-century literature largely centers on the predicament of daughters who "had no place in their families of origin but had to seek new homes elsewhere" (NR 50). Since women in this period suffered from the growing emphasis on the inheritance of first-born sons and the steady elimination of traditional sources of female employment, the orphaned status of many eighteenth-century heroines indeed seems to register the increasingly marginal position of women. To stop the analysis here, however, would be a mistake. Beyond communicating the plight of a particular sex, Defoe and Haywood use the experience of women in this period to represent the broader and much less uniformly negative phenomenon of commodification.

As socially isolated women who re-create themselves through artful performances, the heroines of *Moll Flanders* and *Fantomina* exemplify the democratization of kingly fashion in commercial society. The expansion of imperial trade and the continued development of the manufacturing system introduced an array of new luxury items to English consumers and made existing products of conspicuous consumption available to a much larger portion of the population. Since dress had been a crucial means of constituting and perpetuating class and gender positions in pre-modern England, the wider availability of clothing had a particularly profound impact on early eighteenth-century English society. Dror Wahrman explains that the unique porousness of identity in the early eighteenth century was the result of "this particular conjuncture, in which clothes were still taken to have constitutive power but the authorities that

had previously shaped and controlled them did not..." (MS 178). The Swiss visitor César de Saussure notes the consequences of such a conjuncture in his travel memoir of England under the reign of George I and II: "The term gentleman is usually given to any well-dressed person wearing a sword."¹¹⁰ What Saussure rather calmly observes inspired widespread anxiety amongst English moralists over the new instability of class, gender, and racial categories.¹¹¹ In depicting the status of a gentleman as accessible to "any well-dressed person," Saussure captures a moment in which a person of "any" sex, class, or race could literally become a new social type so long as he or she had the necessary resources as well as the capacity for an artful performance. Within this uniquely unstable conjuncture, people, as Wahrman convincingly argues, "locate[d] the semblance of an anchor to personal identity" in clothing, a commodity whose greater accessibility brought the theological drama of the king's ritualized performances into the comparatively less regulated domain of the middle-class English household (MS 177).

Wahrman's portrait of an early eighteenth-century moment in which the "very wearing of breeches constituted the transformation of gender identity" suggests that this particular period allowed the mutability of the commodity to appear in exaggerated form (MS 177). By emphasizing the conceptual continuity of a female-authored work of amatory fiction and a contemporary male-authored work long ensconced in the novel tradition, I hope to extend critical efforts to represent the amatory genre as an important contributor to the early novel rather than an anomalous instance of feminine immorality. An important part of this process will be to advance interpretations of the predominance of female protagonists in the fiction of this period

¹¹⁰ Saussure, César de. *A Foreign View of England in the Reigns of George I and George II*. London, 1902: 212. Quoted in Paul Langford's *A Polite and Commercial People*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989: 66. Cited parenthetically as PC.

¹¹¹ There were campaigns for the re-enforcement of earlier laws that imposed rank-based restrictions on consumption though they were unable to overcome the newly dominant principle of free trade. See LL 317.

that avoid anachronistic models of identity that take femininity as rooted in the sexed, female body. Ruth Perry's reluctance to read the significance of the early novel's orphaned heroines as extending beyond the female sex seems to stem from an unstated modern bias that the performance of womanhood is limited in all times and places to bodies marked by their biological makeup as essentially female. The implicit meaning of Perry's hesitation assumes a more overt form in the explicit statements of gender essentialism that appear in such seminal and theoretically sophisticated works as Nancy Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction*.

In an opaque moment in this text, Armstrong states that she "will have reified the themes whose reifying behavior it is [her] purpose to examine" through treating the history of gender formation as inseparable from the history of the novel (25). Rather than undermining the "metaphysics of sexuality," Armstrong believes that tracing the construction of gender only further substantiates the abstract category of sexuality in the physicality of the sexed body (25). Although her work draws heavily from Michel Foucault's studies of the subject, Armstrong criticizes "the Olympian perspective on culture" that allows Foucault's analysis to overlook the question of gender (25). Armstrong's self-identified lapse into gender essentialism, I believe, derives from a failure to fully appreciate her own insistence that novelistic heroines were the exemplary representatives of the modern individual. Far from opposing Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1975) and *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1* (1976), gender-sensitive studies such as Armstrong in fact confirm Foucault's overarching argument that modern domination is chiefly exercised in what are supposedly apolitical spaces. Though alienated from the political sphere, women nonetheless function in the early novel as exemplars of modern subjecthood, thereby reaffirming the idea that such subjecthood primarily develops in apolitical arenas such as the household, marketplace, school, and prison. Armstrong's self-criticism is thus unjustified since

her assertion of the primacy of the female sex to the development of the modern individual is really another way of saying that this individual emerges primarily through the extra-political institutions and practices of England's private and public sphere. Though ultimately a misinterpretation of her own work, Armstrong's self-criticism does exhibit a tendency to see something essential as opposed to metaphorical in the role women played as the central characters of the eighteenth-century novel.

The subtle essentialism evident in Armstrong's comments on gender becomes even more prominent in her unambiguously secular interpretation of Foucault's studies of the subject. In accounting for the way the eighteenth-century novel displaces desire from the realm of the body to the abstract domain of language, Armstrong frequently alludes to *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1* but tellingly avoids Foucault's concept of the "soul" and instead focuses entirely on his notion of "discourse" (DD 23). Foucault identifies the "soul as the prison of the body" [*l'âme, prison du corps*] in the introduction to *Discipline and Punish* because it is the "technology of the soul" [*la technologie de l'âme*] first and foremost that invests the pre-modern body with a modern identity.¹¹² By reducing the broader and more prominent notion of the soul (*l'âme*) to one of its means, namely discourse, Armstrong produces a deceptively secular interpretation of Foucault's notion of the subject. The coincidence of gender and secular essentialism in Armstrong's work points to the underlying codependency of these two notions that together perpetuate the ideological image of the modern subject as a necessarily gendered and secular entity. Through insisting on the polyvalent residue of the pre-modern in this supposedly whole subject, Foucault exposes the internal difference and fragility of a subject constituted in part by the ungendered and transcendent domain of the divine.

¹¹² Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1995: 30.

In the introduction of *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault cites Ernst Kantorowicz's *The King's Two Bodies* (1955) in order to place the emergence of the modern subject against the backdrop of the elaborate rituals and performances that transformed the medieval body of the king into a transcendent icon of the nation as a whole (28). As discussed in the previous chapter, the king's capacity to embody the incorporeal identity of the nation ironically depended upon his ability to separate himself from his natural body and the body politic to which it belonged. The king possessed, in the words of Kantorowicz, "two different forms of 'being': one natural or individual, and the other consecrated or... deified and apotheosized."¹¹³ As representatives of the commodity form, the heroines of *Moll Flanders* and *Fantomina* exemplify the democratization of the king's bifurcated being in the commercial age. Like the king's natural body and Marx's linen, these heroines exist as naked objects imbued with an immanent potential to make dazzling and miraculous appearances in the world. These heroines are, in other words, both the linen and the coat, the natural body and its incorporeal exception. Transposed to the democratized landscape of consumer society, however, the doubled being of the king assumes new meaning since it is no longer entirely centered on securing the political unity of the nation. Thrown into the bifurcated position of the king by the historical process of commodification, these heroines discover that their performances need not center on the constitution of a single incorporeal identity. They can, instead, choose to exploit the possibility for transformative repetitions that the royal subjectivity of the commodified body makes possible. These two early eighteenth-century works of fiction belong to the modern era because they put the mediaeval political theology of the king to work in a newly commercial empirical universe.

¹¹³ Kantorowicz, Ernst. *The King's Two Bodies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997: 96.

Part Three

The Miraculous Agency of the Commodified Thing

The “unnumbered” things that magically come to life in order to beautify the heroine of Pope’s “Rape of the Lock” (1714) as she stands before her toilette give dramatic form to the supernatural experience of commodification in the eighteenth century.¹¹⁴ Despite its mock tone, Pope’s image of a new world of things endowed with animate powers touches on the magical nature of the commodity-form that Marx will brand a fetish in the mid nineteenth century. Writing what could be notes for a macabre version of “The Rape of the Lock,” Marx describes how a table, once it “emerges as a commodity,” leaves behind the wood of which it is made in order to become a “thing which transcends sensuousness” and that “evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than if it were to begin dancing on its own free will” (C 163-4). The table, like the “puffs, powders, patches, bibles, and billet-doux” of Pope’s poem, is endowed with a transcendent second body when it comes to function not simply as a physical thing, but also as the bearer of abstract value (138).

While studies such as Catherine Gallagher’s *Nobody’s Story* have demonstrated the consistent fascination with commodification throughout eighteenth-century fiction, they have tended to overlook the way it appears within even the most anti-modern literary works from the first half of the century as a profoundly ambivalent phenomenon. The more uniformly negative portrayal of the abstract nature of English life in domestic novels of the century’s latter half should not obscure its more complicated presence within the work of early eighteenth-century writers as disparate as Pope, Swift, Defoe, and Haywood. Rather than representing mere

¹¹⁴ Pope, Alexander. *Major Works*. Ed. Pat Rogers. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006: Canto 1, line 129, 82.

rhetorical flourishes, the magical quality of Belinda's toilette and of Marx's dancing table expresses the excitement, as well as the disorientation, that greeted the democratization of abstract life in this period. The transformation of material objects into abstract things was an economic development and a politico-theological event because it brought the king's privileged relationship with the incorporeal realm he embodied into the everyday life of eighteenth-century men and women. Through their miraculous transformations, the heroines of *Moll Flanders* and *Fantomina* give human form to the dancing tables and breathing boxes of the early eighteenth century. Severed like the king from the body politic of pre-modern England, these nameless heroines possess the transient and mutable interiority of the commodity-form. Far from inventing the immaterial identity of the modern self, the sentimental project of the domestic novel seeks to merely manage and domesticate the newly abstract nature of eighteenth-century life by making it the foundation for a supposedly essential and immutable self. What the heroines of *Moll Flanders* and *Fantomina* demonstrate is that the transcendent second body of the commodity is neither innate nor necessarily limited to a single identity.

Beginning now with *Moll Flanders*, I would like to use these two novels as an opportunity to recover the deeper significance of the second life that people and things assume in a commodity culture. Arriving in the world as the embodiment of John Locke's idea of the blank slate, the heroine of *Moll Flanders* dramatizes the exciting possibility for continual self-transformation made possible by the democratization of the abstract in the early eighteenth century. Born to an unknown mother in Newgate prison and taken in by a poor but respectable older woman in the Essex town of Colchester, Defoe's heroine quickly becomes an object of potential consumption and adornment for the leading ladies of the town. With control of household spending, women of the middle and upper classes were, as has already been

discussed, key figures in the expanding world of commercial consumption in this period. The attention of these leading ladies to Defoe's heroine therefore reinforces the sense that she begins life as an exemplary early modern object awaiting the transformative effects of the market. The town Mayoress eventually overcomes her rivals and claims her "right" to possess this "mannerly" and "very pretty" girl (55, 51). Once living with the Mayor, his wife, and their two daughters, this impressionable object learns how to perform the role of a social superior as "if [she] had been as much a Gentlewomen as they were with whom [she] liv'd..." (56). The capacity of Defoe's heroine to fulfill her seemingly comical aspiration to a higher status underlines the possibilities opened up for objects thrown into the mutable position of the commodity.

While Defoe's narration lacks the theatrical imagery that Haywood uses to depict her heroine's miraculous transformations, it nevertheless relies on the theatrical quality of early modern identities as its primary narrative force. After her second husband, a linens merchant, escapes to France, Defoe's heroine decides to "go quite out of my Knowledge, and go by another Name: This I did effectually, for I went into the *Mint* too, took lodgings in a very private Place, drest me up in the Habit of a Widow, and call'd myself Mrs. *Flanders*" (108). Since the Flemish had long been known in England for their skill in both cloth making and prostitution, the critic David Blewett is right to note that the "double connotation" of Moll's surname "precisely defines her career as a whore and thief."¹¹⁵ More broadly though, the Flemish allusion in Moll's new identity connects her to the Dutch Stadtholder William of Orange who came to rule England along with his wife Mary II after the deposition of her father James II in 1688. Despite the recent effort of Steven Pincus to emphasize the domestic basis of the Glorious Revolution, it was

¹¹⁵ Blewett, David. "Introduction," *Moll Flanders*. New York: Penguin Books, 1989: 3.

understood in the popular press and imagination of the eighteenth century as a foreign invasion that brought the commercial values of Amsterdam, the capital of seventeenth-century finance, to the once innocent shores of England.¹¹⁶ As the human embodiment of commodification, Moll financially regenerates herself with an identity that discursively links her to a region that had become synonymous with the rapid modernization and financialization of the English economy in the decades following the 1688 Revolution.

Although she had already assumed several identities and had been through two marriages by the time of her transformation into Moll Flanders, it is fitting that Moll's adventures take a pointedly global turn only after she assumes her Dutch pseudonym. While living in the Mint, Moll befriends a widow of a Crusoesque captain of a merchant ship who had lost his fortune traveling back from the West Indies. Through the help of this widow, who is able to quickly restore her own fortune, Moll enters the particularly mercenary world of the maritime marriage market under the guise of being the widow of a prosperous captain. Moll manages to appear as a woman of fortune to the merchants in her new neighborhood despite listing her actual possessions in the Mint as some "Hollands" or Dutch linens, "a parcel of fine Muslins" or Indian fabric, and "some Plate," in addition to 500 *l.* in currency (108). Born to a mother who was imprisoned for stealing "fine Holland," Defoe's heroine is shrouded in Dutch allusions (44). Taken together, these allusions emphasize the function of Moll's commodified body, as well as the sexual favors it promises, as a blank slate for abstract values and identities that she learns to manipulate through strategically crafting her appearance in the world (44). On equal footing with the linens she both wears and specializes in stealing, Defoe's nameless heroine miraculously inhabits the identity of widows, beggars, men, and penitent wives as she navigates a newly

¹¹⁶ A major argument in Pincus's *1688* is that the Glorious Revolution was a popular uprising that involved "the spectrum of English society" (483).

global consumer market. Her miraculous capacity to remake herself exemplifies the uncanny powers that descend upon a human body placed in the occult position of Marx's dancing chair and Pope's animate boxes and gems.

Three years after *Moll Flanders*, Defoe reiterates the synecdochal relationship of the Dutch with modern trade in *Roxana*, whose eponymous heroine avoids returning to her native England "Naked," that is impoverished, by profitable trips to Rotterdam and Amsterdam.¹¹⁷ Not coincidentally, it is a Dutch merchant who secures the uneasy redemption that allows Roxana to return to England as a married, titled woman. In summarizing her life on the open seas of the free market, Roxana contextualizes Moll's financially necessary assumption of a Dutch pseudonym within a global network of abstract value:

I was like a Passenger coming back from the *Indies*, who having, after many Years Fatigues and Hurry in Business, gotten a good Estate, with innumerable Difficulties and Hazards, is arriv'd safe at *London*. (243)

Like the "glowing gems" that open the casket of treasures for Pope's heroine, Roxana returns to England as a global commodity that has achieved a stable but still mutable position within a London home (133). Moll, likewise, endures the "Fatigues" and "Miseries" of her life as an object of international trade and returns to England in the relatively secure position of a married gentlewoman (427).

Moll's function as a commodified thing, like Marx's table and Pope's box, exhibits an uncanny excess that cannot be understood within the traditional conception of economics as the coordination of useful things with physical needs. While it at first appears that an inability to secure financial stability through marriage drives Moll's work as a full-time thief on the streets

¹¹⁷ Defoe, Daniel. *Roxana*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996: 121.

of London, it soon becomes clear that something more mysterious than necessity is animating Moll. At several occasions in her life's story, Moll contemplates the strange disjunction between her many adventures and the rational world of economic self-interest:

I have often wondered even at my own hardiness another way, that when all my Companions were surpriz'd, and fell so suddenly into the Hands of Justice, and that I so narrowly escap'd, yet I could not all that while enter into one serious Resolution to leave of this Trade; and especially considering that I was now very far from being poor...for I had near 500 *l.* by me in ready Money, on which I might have liv'd very well...but *I say*, I had not so much as the least inclination to leave off...as I had before when I had but 200 *l.* before-hand...From hence 'tis Evident...that once we are harden'd in Crime, no Fear can affect us....(288)

Moll feels the same necessity to develop new personas and stratagems for financial gain whether she has 200 *l.* or 500 *l.* in assets because she is animated by the abstract form of the commodity rather than the limited needs of a physical body. The ease with which Moll applies the talent for transformation that she learned early in life on the marriage market to her new career as a thief dramatizes the mutable and commercial basis of eighteenth-century marriage that will prompt later domestic novels to depict the family as an ahistorical oasis from the throes of modern life.

Rather than acting as a rational economic agent, a fiction created by later economists such as Adam Smith, Moll exemplifies the occult life of an objectified body whose movements are driven by external forces emanating from an inscrutable and transcendent domain.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ Smith famously reminds us that, "it is not from the benevolence of the butcher, brewer, or baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest." Smith, Adam. *The Wealth of Nations*. New York: Penguin Books, 1986: 119. Smith conceives of the consumer interaction as an encounter between two rational agents each pursuing a naturally rooted regard

Whereas Moll had previously adopted an identity for years or months in the hopes of attracting a husband, she begins as a thief to keep “several Shapes” on hand and frequently maintains an identity for only a few hours (308). The capacity of Moll to assume even the male persona of one “*Gabriel Spencer*” suggests that Defoe relies on a “one-sex model” of gender that, as Thomas Laqueur demonstrates in *Making Sex* (1990), used cultural factors such as dress and demeanor rather than selectively chosen biological facts to make gender determinations (M 285, MSX 8). Moll possesses a mutable, not entirely modern self whose transformations are animated by a newly democratized capacity for self-constituting performances. Like a king making a futile attempt to rationally explain the source of the immortality he embodies, Moll explains her inability to stop circulating with the religious truism that “Temptation” becomes habit once one succumbs to it (288). According to the providential logic of Moll’s narration, she must continue stealing until she has “degenerated into Stone” and hence low enough to accept the task of penitence and rebirth (354). While one may hastily ascribe Moll’s explanation to mere ideology, it in fact touches on the pre-modern and ultimately theological dimension of the occult desire that animates her many transformations. The multiple immaterial identities that Moll assumes in her struggle for accumulation and continual circulation demonstrates how the pre-modern king’s capacity for sovereign performances was made accessible to commoners through the development of a commodity culture rather than political reform.

Given her ascending taste for theatrical transformations and further accumulation, Moll’s final and supposedly authentic identity of penitent wife possesses a certain irony.¹¹⁹ At the conclusion of her tale, Moll’s hitherto insatiable desire for circulation is miraculously satisfied

for his or her own self-interest, a model that immediately raises the question of why consumers in a market society consistently act in direct opposition to their own interest.

¹¹⁹ See Novak, Maximilian. “Conscious Irony in *Moll Flanders*”. *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Moll Flanders*. Ed. Robert Elliott. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1970.

by the money she acquires from her American plantations. In making the dénouement of his novel dependent upon colonial profits, Defoe alludes to the tenuous arrangement that England had developed to ensure a similarly happy ending for its new commodity culture. The burgeoning consumption of the early eighteenth-century was supported by a rising debt that was in turn buoyed by the for-profit companies that oversaw England's colonial adventures. The East India Company in the 1690s and the South Sea Company in the 1710s acted as major players in managing the national debt by competing with the Bank of England to lend a cash-strapped and growing State money at lower interest rates.¹²⁰ Since Defoe, however, publishes *Moll Flanders* shortly after the collapse of the South Sea Company in 1720, his choice of the colonies as the key to his heroine's salvation only reiterates the uncanny and ironic shadow that hangs over the conclusion of his novel. The sincerity of the penitent, epistolary voice that organizes the story *Moll Flanders* into a tale of redemption rests on precisely the kind of commercial adventure that created the widespread panic and chaos of 1720. With this ironic promise of salvation, Defoe suggests that his commodified heroine and the broader culture of consumption she represents are ultimately impervious to the redemptive powers of economic expansion. The commodified body is by definition excessive because the same abstract domain that had ennobled its kingly predecessor places it above the corporeal realm to which it nevertheless belongs.

By giving their novels equally ambiguous dénouements, Defoe and Haywood suggest that their commodity heroines exist as the objects and subjects of a process that remains in the end beyond their control. While Defoe depicts this process in the overtly realist terms of economic expansion through colonization, Haywood relies on the pre-modern trope of a libertine

¹²⁰ See LL 273 and 335.

in search of novelty and the heroine capable of deceit for her reformulation of the subject and object relationship in a commodity culture. Like other amatory novelists, Haywood reanimates the static position of women in classical tales of ruined love by constructing a heroine unwilling to accept the solitary fate of legendary figures such as Dido and Héloïse. Rather than destroying herself or attempting to surmount the loss of her lover in letters, Haywood's heroine attempts to gain possession of her wayward libertine through assuming a series of different personas. Despite being drawn from the fantastical world of romance, the story of *Fantomina* nevertheless offers a realist portrayal of the consumer experience in the early eighteenth century. The animate object of libertine desire becomes in Haywood's novel the exemplary figure for the modern subject since she pursues her desire for consumption from the position of a politically alienated and commodified thing. In the failure of this heroine to achieve what is still the classical aim of possessing the single object of her affection, Haywood synecdochally represents the impossibility of using conjugal love and the family as the means of escaping commodification. The libertine craving novelty and the heroine seeking fidelity ultimately come to resemble one another in Haywood's novel because both are driven by forces emanating from the endlessly abstract realm of the commodity form.

In the opening scene of *Fantomina*, Haywood infuses her story with a modernist impulse that distinguishes it from earlier amatory work such as Aphra Behn's *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister*. After arriving in London and before developing her more classical fixation on a single man, Haywood's rural upper-class heroine is transformed by the modernizing experience of witnessing a moment of erotic consumption. This transformative act of spectatorship in fact prefigures a pivotal scene in the later novel *Fanny Hill* whose heroine loses her "native innocence" and becomes truly modern only after she has witnessed a sexual

encounter from the privacy of her landlady's "dark closet" (61). From a private compartment in a London playhouse, Haywood's heroine witnesses a paradigmatic moment of commodity exchange as "several Gentleman extremely pleased themselves with entertaining a Woman" whom our heroine easily identifies as a prostitute (41).¹²¹ Haywood's syntax in this crucial moment establishes the central dilemma of the story that follows since it begs the question of whether this commodified woman is in fact 'entertained' or whether she remains passive in this exchange. The uncertainty "excited a Curiosity" in Haywood's heroine "to know in what Manner these Creatures were address'd" (41). The "Wonder" and "Curiosity" that this paradigmatic figure of commodification inspires in this socially isolated heroine already begins the task of clarifying the excessive pleasures and perverse forms of agency available to any commodified body.¹²²

The romantic attachment that Haywood's heroine comes to develop for her first consumer, the aptly named Beauplaisir, indeed stems from the ancient and classical tales of impossible love. Haywood's decision, however, to begin *Fantomina* with her heroine looking upon a prostitute in a theatre has the effect of situating this heroine's pre-modern love within the distinctly novel world of London's thriving commodity culture. With the detached, third person narration of Beauplaisir's repeated betrayals of her heroine, Haywood seems to encourage the reader to interpret his infidelity as a generically-determined given rather than a heartbreaking act of treachery. The categorical infidelity of Beauplaisir who "varied not so much from his sex as to

¹²¹ It should be noted that in these scenes of erotic commerce the heroines of *Fanny Hill* and *Fantomina* occupy relatively private positions that are analogous to the solitary position of contemporary consumers of pornography and other forms of entertainment like novels.

¹²² The figure of the prostitute will be discussed at length in the following chapter. As Thomas Lacqueur, Ruth Perry, Catherine Gallagher, and many other critics have demonstrated, the prostitute became a symbol for the subsumption of the material world, bodies and things alike, by the abstract and seemingly "sterile" domain of money (MSX 232).

be able to prolong Desire, to any great Length after Possession” compels Haywood’s heroine to exercise her magical power of self-transformation in an effort satisfy her own desire for his continued attention (50). By not allowing even her heroine to indulge in thoughts of *Beauplaisir* acting otherwise, Haywood shifts the focus of her story from the moral failings of man to the more pertinent early eighteenth-century question of how an object of the emerging market can act like a subject.

Haywood complicates the seemingly asymmetrical relationship of the consumer and the commodity through highlighting not only the presence of desire within the latter, but also its capacity to exercise agency in the pursuit of this desire. In response to *Beauplaisir*’s first betrayal, Haywood’s heroine refuses to employ the “Complaints, Tears, Swoonings... which Women make use of in such Cases” and instead insists on developing a “Stratagem” for enjoying the objectified position that first excited her curiosity (51). That she aims to experience once again the “Height of Transport [that] she enjoyed when the agreeable *Beauplaisir* kneel’d at her Feet, imploring her first Favours” suggests that Haywood’s heroine derives as much pleasure as her purportedly dominant ravisher from the miraculous repetition of their first time (51). By seeking to remain an object and yet act like a subject, Haywood’s distinguishes herself as the truly modern consumer in this saga of romantic exchange. Playing with romantic literary conventions as well as economic realities, Haywood emphasizes the insufficiency of constancy alone and the ensuing need for innovation as she sketches the possibilities allotted to the displaced and commodified bodies of England’s newly commercial society. With its heroine estranged from her rural home and captivated by urban consumerism, *Fantomina* represents rapid economic changes, such as the displacement and impoverishment of large segments of England’s agricultural population, in the classical figure of the abandoned heroine.

Although obviously not a victim of the privatization or enclosure of the English countryside, the gender of Haywood's protagonist marks her in a certain sense as already expropriated since, under the laws of coverture and primogeniture, women were largely barred from owning property.¹²³ Haywood, like almost every other early novelist, chooses a woman as her protagonist in part because women's legal status makes them the ideal form for imagining the expropriation and commodification of English society in the early eighteenth century. In the era of *Fantomina*, the upper classes were becoming increasingly supportive of enclosures, a rhetorical shift that was reflected in a series of laws affirming the right to expropriate once common agricultural land.¹²⁴ This period of growing support for enclosures laid the groundwork for the last half of the century in which "more than a fifth of all arable land in England" was privatized (NR 10). Given that such changes "created a large population" of "landless workers," the struggle of Haywood's protagonist to respond to the powerlessness of being a displaced object on the modern market is rich in metaphorical significance (NR 10).¹²⁵ Using the admittedly privileged figure of a well-born heroine, Haywood develops a tale with a message that applies to England's upper-class daughters as well as the landless workers who succeed in becoming a part of the growing population of working- and middle-class consumers. Haywood's message is in fact a strategy that centers on soliciting and in the process enjoying one's commodification.

¹²³ See Amy Louise Erickson's *Women and Property in Early Modern England*. New York: Routledge, 1993.

¹²⁴ Julian Hoppit explains that this practice "went from generally being condemned in the sixteenth century" to be hailed by landowners at the beginning of the eighteenth century as "the central means by which agriculture might be improved" (LL 358).

¹²⁵ Ruth Perry also notes that enclosures "changed the proportion of landless workers from 25 per cent of the population at the beginning of the century to something more like 60 per cent by the end of the century" (NR 10).

In contrast to the relatively fixed identity of an object appropriated solely for its utility, a commodified object is naked in that it has been stripped of its immediate, physical qualities by a domain of abstract value that provides only the certainty of constant change. The possibility of participating in the constant refashioning of one's commodified self represents the great discovery of Haywood's heroine who chooses to embrace the flux of value-producing fashion as an opportunity for self-directed and hence empowering debasement. To satisfy her lover and paradigmatic consumer's appetite for novelty, Haywood's heroine decides to transform herself from Fantomina, a sophisticated woman of the night, into Celia, a "rude" yet "still extremely pretty" country servant (52). By directing the adornment of her displaced and metaphorically naked body with the clothing, dialect, and demeanor of a servant, Haywood's heroine manages to participate in the consumer-driven conversion of herself into the bearer of a new abstract image. Haywood uses the language of consumption to represent the romantic encounter that follows as emblematic of a new consumer society:

He compelled her to sit in his lap; and gazing on her blushing Beauties, which, if possible, receiv'd Addition from her plain and rural dress, he soon lost the power of containing himself....He devou'rd her lips, her breasts with greedy kisses, held to his burning bosom her half-yielding, half-reluctant body, nor suffer'd her to get loose, till he had ravaged all, and glutted each rapacious sense with the sweet beauties of the pretty Celia, for that was the name she bore in this second expedition. (53)

With verbs such as "compelled," "devour'd," and "glutted," Haywood creates the appearance that Beauplaisir exercises absolute agency in an act of consumption that is in fact driven by the conscious performance of the object. Through imagining a heroine who solicits the repeated consumption of her "first Favours," Haywood reverses the structure of this at once romantic and

commercial encounter (51). The far from hapless heroine enters this amorous scene with the desire to “once more...be compelled, to be sweetly forc’d to what she wished with equal Ardour” (51). She in other words initiates this romance with the intention of converting Beauplaisir’s patriarchal agency into the instrument of her own desire. In the process, she transforms the magical animation of the commodity form, which defines her body as well as the things that adorn it, into the means of expressing her own subjective desire.

The vulnerability of the self-styled consumer Beauplaisir to the underground agency of the object stems not, as one trained in the classical tradition may expect, from his slavish attention to the sensual realm, but rather from his distinctly modern fixation on the domain of abstract images. Read from the perspective of a philosophical tradition that dates back to Plato, the insatiability of Beauplaisir’s appetite reiterates the impossibility of achieving true satisfaction in the physical realm. Haywood departs from this moral tradition, however, by exposing the real object of Beauplaisir’s endless passion as the images produced by the strategic manipulation of his sensory experience. Beauplaisir “glutted each rapacious sense” in pursuit of an abstract identity that, like the second body of the medieval king, transcends the material realm from which it nevertheless arises. The continuity of the body that underlies the various objects of his appetite suggests that it is the abstract realm of the commodity form that inspires a truly insatiable desire in Beauplaisir.

By depicting concrete physical needs as largely irrelevant to these moments of abstraction-driven consumption, Haywood anticipates Karl Marx’s portrait of the commodity in Part 1 of *Capital* (1867) as the “phantom-like objectivity” that liquidates the “sensuous characteristics” of “useful things” in order to transform them into the mere vehicles of abstract value (128). Haywood, however, avoids the nostalgia that animates Marx’s effort to “track down

the value that lies hidden” within the strange and foreign appearance of commodity (139). Marx’s insistence on reducing the dazzling value of the commodity to “labour-time” represents a humanist act of demystification that Haywood’s novel importantly eschews (188). Rather than struggling to reclaim a stable, physical self from a hallucinatory world of appearances, Haywood pursues the unambiguously modernist course of elucidating the emancipatory possibilities that the process of commodification opens up for the object.

In emphasizing the importance of the abstract category of the commodity to the object performances of Haywood’s heroine, I hope to complicate rather than unequivocally reject the materialist epistemology that critics such as Dror Wahrman and Helen Thompson locate in the early eighteenth century. While Thompson cogently explains the capacity of Haywood’s heroine to become entirely new persons in terms of the neo-Epicurean, materialist revival in early modern England, the very clarity of her argument attests to the limitations of epistemological analyses.¹²⁶ Thompson situates Haywood's heroine squarely within “an epistemological space whose coordinates are not psychological but Epicurean,” a space that allows her to “become for him [Beauplaisir] a succession of different objects” (200-201). Without recourse to an anterior self or any other space outside of this materialist episteme, Haywood’s heroine literally becomes a new body each time she adorns herself with a different set of attributes. The persuasiveness of this argument illustrates the tempting clarity of the epistemological mode of interpretation that reads cultural phenomena as the expression of a single, presupposed foundation. As opposed to reflecting a single underlying philosophical framework, Haywood’s heroine demonstrates the confluence of material and immaterial epistemologies in a period when the monarch’s unique capacity to incarnate the abstract became a privilege available to any middle-class consumer. In

¹²⁶ Thompson, Helen. “Plotting Materialism: W. Charleton's *The Ephesian Matron*, E. Haywood's *Fantomina*, and Feminine Consistency.” *Eighteenth-Century Studies*. 35.2 (2002).

an irony rendered invisible by an epistemological approach, a single phenomenon of social dislocation produces a new understanding of the universe as a collection of material bodies animated by an occult domain of abstraction.

Part Four

When the Concrete Met the Abstract, or, The Place of Empiricism in a Commodity Age

Although he would not even consider *Fantomina* a part of the novel tradition, Ian Watt's correlation between the realist novel and the critical tradition of Descartes and Locke offers a way of understanding the complex status of 'Fantomina,' as well as Moll, as at once material and abstract body. According to the admittedly sweeping and overly schematic narrative of Watt's *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), a new literary form emerges in the early eighteenth century as an effect of the roughly contemporaneous birth of the "modern assumption whereby the pursuit of truth is conceived as a wholly individual matter, logically independent of the tradition of past thought, and indeed as more likely to be arrived at by a departure from it" (RN 13). Breaking with earlier modes of writing that had culled their content and form from the annals of literary history, the novel strives to instead represent the everyday experience of contemporary individuals. For Watt, the novel stands out as "the form of literature which most fully reflects [the] individualist and innovating reorientation" of a new and distinctly modern way of thinking (RN 13). Watt's association of the novel with this new mode of thought builds into an at once illuminating and misleading image of social transformation:

Both the philosophical and the literary innovations must be seen as parallel manifestations of a larger change- that vast transformation of Western civilization since

the Renaissance which has replaced the unified world picture of the Middle Ages with another very different one-one which presents us, essentially, with a developing but unplanned aggregated of particular individuals having particular experiences at particular times and at particular places. (RN 31)

Placed alongside the preceding discussion of two early eighteenth-century test cases, *Moll Flanders* and *Fantomina*, Watt's image of empirical particularity neatly replacing the transcendent universality of the Middle Ages appears as a gross oversimplification. These two early novels articulate a lesson that later works will suppress but never escape: the modern particular remains tied to the pre-modern transcendent.

Rather than demonstrating the unambiguously empirical and secular outlook of an age focused on individual experience, Defoe's and Haywood's works dramatize the persistence of the transcendent in the critical age. The "unified world picture of the Middle Ages" harmonized the concrete political body of the nation with the universal space of the divine through the doubled figure of the king. Far from disappearing with the rise of modernity, this harmonization is instead distributed on an increasingly global scale to newly particularized people and things. The opening up of a new empirical universe coincides with the infusion of objects by an abstract value once reserved for the king alone. Through incarnating "phantom-like" value, these ennobled objects, like their royal predecessor, come to embody the transcendent domain from which the category of the abstract ultimately derives.

The simultaneously material and abstract nature of *Moll* and 'Fantomina' thus reflects the peculiarity of a moment in which a new material world of things becomes both more familiar and increasingly estranged. In an attempt to break from a philosophical tradition still dominated by Plato and Aristotle, the neo-Epicurean and empiricist philosophy of the late seventeenth and

early eighteenth centuries reframes knowledge as a contingent matter of sensual experience. By identifying empirical objects as the foundation of knowledge, the materialist philosophy of this period dramatically expanded the horizon of thought. At the same time, however, that it demonstrates the centrality of external objects to human consciousness, this new philosophical movement uncovers the potential non-correspondence between the human mind and the material realm that constitutes it. It in a sense exports the radical doubt that haunted the interiority of the Cartesian subject to the external realm of things. The empiricist philosopher John Locke's distinction between the primary qualities of a thing-in-itself and the secondary impressions produced by this thing in the mind represents a re-articulation of Cartesian doubt within a material universe. Rather than beginning with the abstract ontological agony of the Cartesian subject, Locke and his fellow materialists start with a concrete foundation and end with the angsty, maddening recognition of this foundation's ultimate inaccessibility to the mind it creates. Following the lead of Watt while complicating some of his conclusions, I would like to turn to the dizzying conjunction of the concrete and the abstract in the empirical model of the mind that Locke develops in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689). By placing Locke's *Essay* alongside *Moll Flanders* and *Fantomina*, I hope to clarify the way the heroines of these novels exemplify the generally uncanny status of things in a newly material age.

Read in light of Locke's empirical philosophy, the sexual encounter between Beauplaisir and the servant girl Celia that I earlier framed as a paradigmatic moment of consumer consumption appears as equally emblematic of materialist models of understanding. In depicting this doubly symbolic moment of eros, Haywood effectively provides an amorous re-staging of the movement of knowledge from sensory impressions to abstract recognition that Locke charts in his *Essay*. Opposing classical notions of learning as remembering innate forms, Locke

famously asserts the unlearned mind to be the equivalent of an “empty cabinet” awaiting the sensory impressions of objects:

The senses at first let in *particular* ideas, and furnish the yet empty cabinet, and the mind by degrees growing familiar with some of them, they are lodged in the memory and names got to them. Afterwards, the mind proceeding further, abstracts them, and by degrees learns the use of general names.¹²⁷

Lending dramatic form to this process, Beauplaisir progresses from registering the particular, physical attributes of a servant girl to the organization of these external sensations under the name “Celia”:

Gazing on her blushing Beauties, which, if possible, receiv’d Addition from her plain and rural dress, he soon lost the power of containing himself....He devou’rd her lips, her breasts with greedy kisses, ... nor suffer’d her to get loose, till he had...glutted each rapacious sense with the sweet beauties of the pretty Celia, for that was the name she bore in this second expedition.-Generous as liberality itself to all who gave him joy this way, he gave her a handsome sum of gold, which she durst not now refuse.... (53)

By proceeding from an abstract name to a sum of gold, Beauplaisir demonstrates the coincidence of human identity and the commodity form in *Fantomina*. The association of the abstract name with gold reiterates the relevance of Locke’s theory of knowledge to the economic process of commodification. Haywood’s decision to posit gold rather than money at the culmination of Beauplaisir’s movement from the sensual to the abstract also places Locke-like emphasis on the material basis of the latter category. With a marginally greater connection than money to the lost world of use-value, gold possesses only enough qualitative presence to remind any observer of

¹²⁷ Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. New York: Penguin Books, 2004: 65. Cited parenthetically as E.

the insignificance of its sensual form to its primary function as the pure manifestation of abstract value.¹²⁸

Despite attempting to give knowledge a more solid foundation in the material world, Locke nonetheless acknowledges that the underlying substance of things will forever escape the purview of the human consciousness. By failing to recognize the single body that bears the various personas he consumes, Beauplaisir dramatizes Locke's warning that we have no distinct idea of that "which we give the general name substance," which is "nothing but the unknown support of those qualities" that we confront in the sensual realm (E 268-9). Locke clarifies the ensuing mixture of the concrete and the abstract with the explanation that the "idea of corporeal *substance* in matter, is as remote from our conceptions, and apprehensions, as that of spiritual *substance*, or *spirit*..." (E 270). As a result of this critical limit to knowledge, the newly discovered world of material things become as capable of abstraction as the transcendent forms, such as the "spirit," which dominated the Scholastic modes of thought that Locke was seeking to escape. The "secret and abstract" nature of empiricism's concrete foundation is visible in *Moll Flanders* and *Fantomina* only however from the perspective of their heroines whose desire runs through the various identities they assume as a unifying thread (E 270). In reading the identities of Haywood's heroine as a series of distinct bodies, Helen Thompson develops an interpretation that overlooks the heroine's perspective and the consistency of her desire. Since it is only Beauplaisir's "Solicitations [that] could give her pleasure," Haywood's heroine possesses a perverse form of "*Constancy*" that animates her many transformations (F 51). The forlorn desire

¹²⁸ See Marx's *Capital* 162 for a discussion of how the "universal equivalent form" becomes "by social custom...entwined with the particular natural form of the commodity gold." Gold, in other words, exemplifies the capacity of any object to be a purely abstract marker of abstract value.

of the abandoned woman achieves her goal of fidelity through exploiting the capacity of things to incarnate the limitless domain of the abstract.

Although the conclusion of *Fantomina* appears to reassert the primacy of an unambiguously material realm, it in fact only further clarifies writing's privileged position as the emblematic symbol of the interpenetration of the material and immaterial in this period. In a moment of redemption whose irony resembles the duplicitous dénouement of Defoe's novel, the family emerges at the end of *Fantomina* to offer the promise of escape while really only reiterating the heroine's entanglement in the abstract universe of the commodity. The only difference in the equally ironic conclusions to *Moll Flanders* and *Fantomina* is that the former constructs its misleading moment of salvation with the modern, conjugal model of the family whereas the latter uses the family in its pre-modern form. The transformation of the family in the eighteenth century from a broader network of blood-based relations to the narrower domain of conjugal affiliation provided Defoe and Haywood with two options for representing the family (NR 10). Though they chose differently, both authors clearly undermine any effort to portray the family as a means of escaping the volatile phenomenon of abstraction that characterized eighteenth-century English life.

As befits her more classically attuned novel, Haywood concludes *Fantomina* with the nostalgic suggestion that the pre-modern family may be able to rescue its wayward members from their plights into urban modernity. The heroine of *Fantomina* receives the prospect of stability not from a husband, but rather from a "severely virtuous mother" who travels to London from her home in the English countryside (68). After discovering her daughter's pregnancy, this icon of a previous era sends her modernized child to a "Monastery in *France*," a seemingly redemptive act that in fact only endows her daughter with yet another erotically charged and

highly commodified persona (71). As the critics Margaret Croskery and Anna Patchias note in their introduction to *Fantomina*, Haywood's conclusion draws from a tradition of "titillating stories about nuns" that represented a consistent subgenre of England's rapidly expanding print culture.¹²⁹ With neo-epicurean epistemology as her foundation, Thompson, however, interprets the "irrepressible and reflexive muscular spasm" of pregnancy as the physical limit to the transformative performances of 'Fantomina' (207). While acknowledging that it is "one of the least melancholy of Haywood's endings," the critic Ros Ballaster also sees the pregnancy of Haywood's heroine as the end-point of her effort to escape the inevitable "female defeat" in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century amatory fiction.¹³⁰

The tendency of critics such as Thompson and Ballaster to read the pregnancy of Haywood's heroine in literal terms testifies to the difficulty of interpreting works that use the conjunction of the concrete and the abstract as an opportunity for seemingly endless play. Like the conclusion of *Moll Flanders*, the end of *Fantomina* offers the tempting appearance of a return to a stable material realm while moving in precisely the opposite direction. Rather than restoring Haywood's heroine to a stable position within a knowable material world, the birth that interrupts her appearance at a court ball reiterates the conflation of the concrete and the abstract that animates Haywood's novel. The emergence of this soon-to-be orphaned girl in the midst of one of London's public spectacles makes her the mirror image of her mother who first appears in the box of a playhouse as a "Stranger to the World" (41). As a daughter displaced from a stable lineage, this child resembles the typical heroine of the eighteenth-century novel who, in the words of Ruth Perry, "had no place in their families of origin but had to seek new homes

¹²⁹ Margaret Croskery, and Anna Patchias. "Introduction," *Fantomina and Other Works*. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2004: 24.

¹³⁰ Ballaster, Ros. *Seductive Forms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998: 192.

elsewhere” (50). The brief effort to situate the unwanted newborn in a home fails when her maternal grandmother and father decide to abandon her to her mother’s legacy of social dislocation:

The Blame [the grandmother explains] is wholly her’s, and I have nothing to request further of you [*Beauplaisir*], than that you will not divulge the distracted Folly she has been guilty of. He answered in Terms perfectly polite; but made no Offer of that which, perhaps, she expected, though could not, now inform’d of her Daughter’s Proceedings, demand. He assured her, however, that if she would commit the new-born Lady to his Care, he would discharge it faithfully. But neither of them would consent to that.... (71)

In culminating with the production of an orphan, Haywood supplements the symbol of the prostitute with the related figure of the abandoned child. The dislocation of this child from an identity rooted in the home and name of an established family transforms her from a symbol of reassuring materiality into one of disorienting abstraction. Separated perhaps permanently from her family of her origin, this orphaned girl embodies, to an even greater degree than her mother, the transformation of early eighteenth-century English society.

The objectified heroine and illegitimate child of *Fantomina* represent archetypal figures whose anxious place within the popular imagination of the early eighteenth century contributed to landmark developments such as the establishment of the Foundling Hospital for orphans in 1742 and the Magdalen House for prostitutes in 1758. Although the absence of reliable statistics leaves the actual increase in the number of orphans and prostitutes in the period difficult to determine, it is beyond a doubt that these two social types were privileged forms for representing the social effects of the modernization of the English countryside and the development of an

early market economy.¹³¹ As both an orphan and occasional prostitute, Moll Flanders embodies the anxiety as well as the excitement of these newly prominent social types. The apparent stabilization of this heroine at the end novel in the modern conjugal unit reiterates what will become a dominant ideological model of redemption from the chaotic and abstract universe of early mercantilist society. Against the backdrop of the breakdown of the traditional consanguinal family unit, Defoe hails colonial labor and conjugal love as the salvation to the potentially abyssal groundlessness of a heroine thrown into the world without “Help or Helper” (44). While the conclusion of *Moll Flanders* appears to safely ensconce its heroine in conjugal family supported by plantation proceeds, it in truth undermines the appearance of stability that the idea of the conjugal family develops in eighteenth-century literature. Rather than rescuing its heroine from the threat of perpetual abstraction, the conjugal family emerges at the conclusion of Defoe’s novel as a deceptively concrete entity resting upon a developing empire of abstract wealth.

Organized around the retrospective and repentant first person of its eponymous narrator, *Moll Flanders* attempts to contain the multiple identities of its heroine within a redemptive narrative that anticipates the familial arc of later eighteenth-century novels. After accumulating a stable fortune from plantations in the Virginia and Maryland colonies, Moll returns with her Lancashire husband to England where, as she states in the final line of the novel, they “resolve to spend the Remainder of our Years in sincere Penitence, for the wicked Lives we have lived” (427). The final phrase of *Moll Flanders* embodies the tension of Defoe’s redemptive effort since it endeavors to morally restrain the very amatory adventures that animate the plot of his novel. In

¹³¹ The historian Paul Langford argues, “the ventures of this age which most completely caught the contemporary imagination were the Magdalen House and the Foundling Hospital” (PC 142).

characterizing her performative transformations as “wicked,” Moll strives to give the appearance of finality to the final persona of a penitent wife. The problem, though, for Moll is that the life she regrets constitutes the substance of a story in which any identity, even the most seemingly pious, exists as a mere effect of an artful arrangement of things.

While the conclusion of *Moll Flanders* reiterates Haywood’s insistence on the inescapability of abstraction, its use of the modern domestic unit places it in closer proximity to the narrative form of the later domestic novel. It departs, however, from the portrayal of the modern family in later novels, such as Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park* (1814), by explicitly representing the colonial empire of abstraction that makes the happy domestic spheres of England’s comfortable classes possible. Rather than rescuing her from the uncanny life of things in an empirical universe, Moll’s entrance into respectability at the conclusion of Defoe’s novel only further immerses her into early modern England’s expanding empire of concrete things and abstract value. After circulating as a commodity on the streets of the metropole, Moll is forced by a deportation order to enter the triangular flow of goods that constituted the early eighteenth-century Atlantic economy.¹³² After acquiring her plantations, Moll relies on African slave labor to produce the capital necessary for her to assume the socially stable identity of a penitent wife.¹³³

¹³² Moll’s deportation to the colonies reflects the increasing use of deportation as a sub-capital punishment in the period as well as the broader demographic trend of emigration to the American colonies. A law in 1718 codified deportation as law, a shift which, as the historian Hoppit notes, marked its rise as the primary alternative to capital punishment (LL 475). Deportation though was only one of many factors driving emigration to the colonies. From 1700 to 1730, it is estimated that the white population of the Americas rose from 223,000 to 538,000 (LL 269).

¹³³ The appearance of slaves at the end of Defoe’s novel registers the increasing dependence of the American and Caribbean colonial ventures on slave labor. As one contemporary remarked, the “*Labour of Negroes is the principal Foundation of our Riches the Plantations*” (quoted in LL 267).

In contrast with the tendency of later novelistic heroines to take their domestic identities as a given, Moll remains acutely aware of her new status's dependence on the performative dimension of commodified things. Upon her return to England, Moll makes a point of explaining that she now possesses a "supply of all sorts of Cloaths," including "two good long Wigs, two silver hilted Swords, three or four fine Fowling pieces, a fine Saddle with Holsters and Pistoles very handsome, with a Scarlet Cloak... a good Quantity of Household-Stuff... with Linnen of all sorts for us both..." (424). The moral state of Moll's domestic life in England, where she lives with her husband in "the greatest Kindness and Comfort imaginable," exists within the context of Defoe's novel as a commodified persona engendered by the performance of things infused with abstract value (427). Like the tobacco her plantations produce, Moll returns to England as a commodity, a literary product with a narrative sure to satisfy the appetite of contemporary consumers.

Although later eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels generally maintain a realist attention to the details of individual experience, a focus that Watt famously celebrates, they tend to exhibit an anti-realist aversion to representing their central characters as members of a burgeoning empire of commodified bodies. In representing the spiritual awakening of his heroine as a persona constructed by an artful display of things, Defoe roots the essentialism and moral depth of later sentimental novels in the empirical epistemology of the early eighteenth century. Viewed from the perspective of the performative model of identity in Defoe's novel, Moll's final, supposedly stable persona appears as simply another manifestation of the mutable relationship between the concrete and the abstract that characterizes the early modern period. The debate amongst critics over the sincerity of this final narrative persona essentially centers on a false question since the both material and mutable basis of Moll's conversion represents a

moral failing only within a later sentimental framework.¹³⁴ While the post-sentimental self is posited as an *a priori* truth of being, novels such as *Moll Flanders* and *Fantomina* belong to an era in which this transcendent self was represented as an effect of a mutable world of performances. The efforts of critics to either defend or deny the authenticity of Moll's conversion proceeds from an anachronistic perspective that reveals more about the continuing power of the sentimental conception of the self than anything in Defoe's early eighteenth-century novel.

The mutable world of the abstract that disrupts the conclusions of both *Moll Flanders* and *Fantomina* distinguishes them from later sentimental and domestic works that tend to culminate with less ironic representations of their heroines' redemptive entrance into marriage. These early novels, however, are necessary to understanding their literary followers because they bring to the surface the complex interaction between the concrete and the abstract that persists as a crucial but suppressed element within these later works. Whereas later novels will seek to escape the condition of abstraction that drives their stories forward, these two early novels culminate with their heroines assuming new personas ripe for the animation of a new piece of literature. They thus accept the condition of abstraction that endows early eighteenth-century individuals with the higher second bodies that render them for the first time worthy of literary representation. With their equally ironic conclusions, Haywood and Defoe suggest what Pope alludes to when he lists the bible alongside the "puffs, powders, [and] patches" on his heroine's toilette: namely, that the process of commodification converts even the most haloed of pre-modern objects and

¹³⁴ G.A. Starr's and Maximilian Novak's respective, competing readings of *Moll Flanders* as either a work of "spiritual autobiography" or a picaresque novel represent benchmarks in this long running debate. See: Starr, G.A. *Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965 and Novak, Maximilian. *Realism, Myth, and History in Defoe's Fiction*. Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1983.

institutions, from the bible to the orphan, into abstract objects ripe for pleasurable acts of consumption (l. 138).

Like the babies, bibles, and beauty creams of eighteenth-century consumer society, the commodity heroines of *Moll Flanders* and *Fantomina* exhibit the transient and mutable interiority of a commodified body that, unlike the king's, uses its relationship to the transcendent to change rather than preserve. Although both are ultimately bound to the divine, the primarily economic democratization of the once kingly right to incarnate the abstract results in the transformation of this transcendent realm from a source of stability to one of mutability. Medieval political theology endowed the king with a higher self in the hopes of preserving the unity of the body politic; the market, on the other hand, indiscriminately bestows the abstract upon people and things to encourage transformative acts of exchange. The power of sentimentalism, which emerges in the mid eighteenth century and persists with even greater ferocity to this day, stems not from its truth, but rather from the comfort of its promise to root this now dizzying space of abstraction into the immutable depths of our being. It vows to arrest and project inward what our commodity heroines seek to accelerate and project outwards. While indeed comforting, the ideology of sentimentalism takes from us the opportunity of using the empirical universe of things to construct new and miraculous forms of subjecthood. Once freed of sentimental dogma, we can shed the illusion that we stand as the possessive masters of an *a priori* self. We can instead begin to fashion ourselves before the sovereign space of the transcendent as a composite of human and inhuman objects. We can be new kings who solicit the attention of the transcendent realm, inviting it to possess us and make our bodies the bearers of its divinity.

Part Five

Reading Foucault, Deleuze, and Bataille through Moll and ‘Fantomina,’ or, Why the New Subject is So Divine

These heroines, and in particular Moll, reflect not only the new contours of early modern life, but also the way this newly modern existence becomes the vehicle for distributing the pre-modern value of the divine. In contrast with Nancy Armstrong’s secular interpretation of Foucault’s model of subjectivization, which was discussed earlier, Gilles Deleuze privileges the theological dimension of Foucault’s subject who maintains an often concealed but always present connection to the ultimately theological domain of the absolute outside. Deleuze unearths the complexity of a subject frequently taken to be a simple product of power by tracing the four primary folds that constitute the modern self in Foucault’s thought:

The most general formula of the relation to oneself is the affect of self by self, or folded force. Subjectivation is created by folding... The first [fold] concerns the material part of ourselves which is to be surrounded and enfolded: for the Greeks this was the body and its pleasures...but for the Christians this will be the flesh and its desires.... The second, properly speaking, is the fold of the relation between forces [power].... The third is the fold of knowledge, or the fold of truth.... The fourth is the fold of the outside itself, the ultimate fold: it is this that constitutes what Blanchot calls an ‘interiority of expectation’ from which the subject, in different ways, hopes for immortality, salvation, freedom or death or detachment.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ Deleuze, Gilles. *Foucault*. Trans. Seán Hand. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992: 104. Cited parenthetically as F.

Deleuze privileges the fold of the outside because it binds the subject to a domain of inexhaustible force that constitutes the various formations of power and knowledge. Since “forces always come from the outside,” this space of radical exteriority assumes a temporal significance as the site that produced the past and holds in a certain way the future to come (122). The ontological fold of the outside instills an interiority within the subject that touches on the ultimate exteriority of a theological realm of pure being. It is for this reason that the outside endows the subject with the expectation of freedom from the particular regime of power and knowledge to which he or she is subjected.

By underlining the theological prehistory of the subject that Dryden constructs at the end of the seventeenth century and that Defoe and Haywood put into motion at the beginning of the following century, I hope to have demonstrated the role literature played in producing a subject bound to the outside at the very core of its being. I also hope to have made explicit the historical process through which the occult domain of the outside becomes accessible to previously undifferentiated people and things. Despite all their critiques of our modern age, Deleuze, Foucault, and their predecessor Georges Bataille represent unacknowledged modernist militants who celebrate the mass distribution of a form of subjectivity previously limited to the king. By clarifying the historical process through which the theological domain moved from the church to the king and finally to the subject, I hope to combat the temptation to read the modern subject’s relationship to the outside as an *a priori* truth of being itself.

Moving well beyond Deleuze in terms of historical specificity, Georges Bataille indeed identifies the metaphorical and at times real execution of the king as the decisive historical event for the founding of the modern subject. In his study of sovereignty in the third volume of *The Accursed Share* (1976), Bataille celebrates the potential distribution of the divine sovereignty of

the king and at the same time mourns the failure of modernity and its adherents to recognize the necessity of embracing this transcendent domain.¹³⁶ Since the king exceeds the realm of things and embodies the excessive nothingness of sovereignty, the execution of his mere mortal body represents “the greatest affirmation of sovereignty” (AS 223). Refusing to remain a mere object before the sole subject of the monarch, the modern rebel “liquidated that royal subjectivity that imposed itself on him” (AS 254). Yet, this same dissenter tragically fails “to regain for his own part that of which the king’s glory had deprived him” (AS 254). Although the execution of the king’s mortal body opens the possibility for the subject to “assume in himself...the full truth of the subject,” modernity witnesses the disappearance of sovereignty from the scene of history (AS 252).

The nostalgia for pre-modern monarchic rule evident in the work of Bataille, as well as in Deleuze and Foucault, stems from the failure of republican society to affirm the absolute sovereignty that had figured so prominently in the divine figure of the king. Bataille explains how this failure transforms the exciting possibilities of regicide into a loss: “As far monarchic society was concerned, he [the rebel subject] was only an object, but nothing was changed in republican society, except that in front of him there was no longer a *subject* whose sovereign character seemed to be the sole cause of his limitation” (AS 254). In spite of their gloomy assessments of our modern age, these mid to late twentieth-century critics of the subject are not, as Jürgen Habermas famously states, “young conservatives” engaged in a peculiar form of “anti-modernism.”¹³⁷ Deleuze’s insistence that the outside remains within the subject as his or her “central chamber” testifies to a profound faith in this subject’s capacity to exceed any given

¹³⁶ Bataille, Georges. *Accursed Share*. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Zone Books, 1976: 197,199. Cited parenthetically as AS.

¹³⁷ Habermas, Jürgen. “Modernity versus Post-Modernity.” *New German Critique*. No. 22. Winter 1981: 13.

historical moment (F 123). Along similar but even more enthusiastically modernist lines, Bataille affirms that it is only after the death of the king that the “inner truth” of sovereignty becomes accessible to the subjective experience of a now potentially god-like subject (AS 246, 233).

Since eighteenth-century English literature played a pivotal role in the development of this subject, the decision to read it alongside more contemporary philosophical discussions of the subject should not be taken as an arbitrary act of critical curiosity or modishness. Without endorsing her brief lapse into gender essentialism, it is of vital importance to affirm and extend Nancy Armstrong’s insight that the eighteenth-century novel demonstrates the overlooked importance of gender to the formation of the modern subject. The tendency for eighteenth-century authors of both genders to use the politically isolated yet commercially pertinent figure of the woman as the privileged means for representing modernity reveals something very important about this new subject. Armstrong’s assertion that “the novel exercised tremendous power” by “subordinating all social differences to those based on gender” is correct but in need of elaboration (DD 4, 253). The fixation on gender, and particularly with its female form, in literature of this period may indeed have provided a convenient means of displacing contemporary political anxieties. Yet, its significance cannot be understood in terms of political strategy alone. As exemplars of consumer power and political dispossession, women’s function as the ideological exemplars of modern subjectivity underlines the vexing truth that the importance of the modern subject lies outside the realm of the political.

The novelty of the present study consists in its embrace of this alienation from the political sphere as the modern subject’s greatest source of hope. This counter-intuitive approach directly opposes efforts to redeem the modern subject by seeking to perfect his or her enfranchisement within the political realm. In her tract on the loss of the human capacity for

action or “the one miracle-working faculty of man,” Hannah Arendt provides a moving articulation of the kind of political thinking that I hope to take in a new direction.¹³⁸ The uniquely human capacity to “distinguish” one’s self through acting and speaking in a public domain of equals disappears, according to Arendt’s narrative, in an era in which “we look and live in this society as though we were as far removed from our human existence as we are from the infinitely small and the immensely large” (HC 176, 323). Although the absence of opportunities for engagement in a public, political realm leaves modern subjects alienated from their potentially human existence, Arendt maintains her faith in the recovery of the ancient Greek idea of the *polis*, which remains etymologically alive so long as “we use the word ‘politics’” (HC 49). Arendt’s image of a modern humanity alienated from its properly political essence underlines the political dispossession embodied by the typically female subject of eighteenth-century writing. Her landmark study *The Human Condition* (1958) lays out with unequalled clarity a state of alienation that the present study would like to affirm as the condition for achieving an truly excessive state of existence beyond the purview of the political domain of human action. Arendt conceives of human action and speech as “miraculous” because they allow an otherwise animalistic body to interrupt the “automatic course of daily life” (HC 246). Along strikingly similar lines, Bataille identifies the uniquely human capacity to achieve a sovereign life as “miraculous” since it allows a mere thing or body to transcend this servile domain of means and ends (AC 199). The “Nothing” of sovereignty fundamentally differs from Arendt’s model however in locating a uniquely human and supremely political domain of value firmly outside of the secular world of grand political action and the “sovereignty of states” it perpetuates (HC 197). A merely thing-like body achieves a heightened state of being in

¹³⁸ Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958: 246. Cited parenthetically as HC.

Bataille's model through accessing an inhuman domain of static transcendence that paradoxically represents the unique privilege of humanity. Although he sometimes acknowledges the tension between this purely transcendent domain of sovereignty and the bodies come to express it, Bataille also repeatedly states, in *The Accursed Share* (1976), that "sovereignty is NOTHING" (256). The problem of course is that the "NOTHING" of sovereignty must "evinced" itself in the "regalia" and "splendour" of things, both human and otherwise. The transcendent domain of sovereignty is not the mere tool of humanity; it is rather a space of absolute exteriority that becomes incarnated when bodies of every variety are called upon to bear its value. In embodying the abstract, these anonymous bodies, as the heroines of *Moll Flanders* and *Fantomina* demonstrate so well, gain access to a domain of sovereign excess that promises the anti-utilitarian deliverance of play.

The following chapter will read the undoing of the modern subject in Richardson's *Clarissa* (1747-8) in terms of Bataille's notion of sovereignty in order to raise the possibility that the locus of emancipatory politics lies outside the secular domain of political action. The transformative performances of Moll and 'Fantomina' dramatize the persistence of an abstract and ultimately theological domain whose political implications are highlighted by Clarissa's withdrawal from the secular institutions of eighteenth-century English society. The pre-modern consanguinal family, the modern conjugal unit, as well as the masculinized model of the enfranchised self make competing claims to authority in Richardson's novel. All fail however to surmount Clarissa's stubborn insistence on the supremacy of the sovereignty that resides at the very heart of her self. Heir to the Protestant struggle to bring the divine inward, Clarissa locates supreme political authority in an internalized domain of transcendence that is at once resolutely foreign and familiar. Rather than coming to constitute the immaterial domain of femininity, the

internalized space of the abstract regresses into its pre-modern, theological state. In enacting this reversal, Clarissa comes to demonstrate how the Reformation's internalization of the divine establishes the conditions for the development as well as the dissolution of the modern, gendered subject.

Chapter Three

Clarissa's Alternative Modernity: God, Death, and Writing

Part One

Critics and their *Clarissa* Problem

Critics generally know what to do with *Pamela* (1740). Its tale of a young servant girl who tactfully manages to convert the libertine lust of her gentlemanly master into a respectable desire for matrimony indeed appears to neatly mark the transition from the not-yet modern narratives of early eighteenth-century fiction to the more orderly and properly modern world of the domestic novel. Rather than circulating through the global landscape of England's newly commercial society, like the heroines of *Roxana* (1724) *Moll Flanders* (1721), Pamela remains confined within the rural, upper-class home of her employer as a kind of captive commodity. Pamela uses her status as a commodified object of desire to transform her first customer into a husband and in so doing exhibits a new model for managing the mutability of both heroes and heroines in a market-driven society. Severed from her consanguinal family of origin, Pamela begins Richardson's novel in a state of disorientation that she overcomes by finding the possibility for a figurative and literal home in the conjugal union that stands at the center of the modern family. With a heroine who relies on the bourgeois arts of contracts, delayed gratification, and lawful negotiations to escape the excitement and danger of commercial society, Richardson's first novel participates in the ideology of domesticity that to this day tells us we can alleviate the inhumanity of commodification with the sentimentality of our domestic relations.

Pamela, in other words, fits in with the present and future state of eighteenth-century England's nascent modernity. It articulates both the contours of a new bourgeois subject and the

fantasy realm that allows this subject to mask its true home in the global market of commodified people and things. When critics want to use Richardson's writing to explore the origins of the key institutions and concepts of modern life, they therefore tend to focus their analyses on *Pamela*. In Michael McKeon's sweeping investigation of the development of the private sphere and the related domain of domesticity, he exemplifies a revealing tendency for far-ranging studies of modernity to ignore Richardson's more troublesome second novel in favor of his first. According to McKeon, *Pamela* participates in the many "categorical separation[s]" that mark the transition to modernity by separating out a domestic space of conjugal love from the itself recently established category of the private sphere.¹³⁹ *Pamela* occupies a similarly prominent position in Nancy Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction* (1987) and her co-authored work *The Imaginary Puritan* (1992), both of which represent *Pamela* as a decisive moment in the reformulation of England as a modern nation.

While Armstrong's first study looks to Puritan conduct literature to understand *Pamela*, her second work draws on late seventeenth-century narratives of women abducted by natives in the New World, such as Mary Rowlandson's *Sovereignty and the Goodness of God* (1682). The figure of the "exemplary captive," as Armstrong and her co-author Leonard Tennenhouse argue, "existed for the early eighteenth-century reader as a kind of epistolary heroine whose ability to

¹³⁹ McKeon, Michael. *The Secret History of Domesticity*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005: 657. Moving beyond "the separation of the private and the public," *Pamela* secures the "separation, within the realm of the private, of two sorts of marriage and domesticity" (657). Marriage for love defines a new category within the domestic that despite its promise of "liberation" remains dependent upon an inherently unequal and patriarchal marriage contract (658). *Pamela*'s writing-closet, as McKeon persuasively argues, symbolizes the paradoxes of this new category and of the private sphere more generally because it functions both as a "prison" and "interior space of private possession and self-expression" (657,656).

read and write, more than anything else distinguished her from her Indian captors.”¹⁴⁰ Just as Mary Rowlandson turned to God and writing to maintain her English identity in savage lands abroad, Richardson’s heroine uses religious faith and writing to protect her “cultural identity” from the equally pre-modern threats at home (208). By using writing to defend themselves from Indian captors and English libertines, the heroines of both historical and fictional captivity tales became the exemplars of a newly discursive definition of the self. According to the convention of these narratives, they would return to their husbands and original communities as the symbols of a new and soon to be dominant way of being in the world. Disseminated on both sides of the Atlantic by a growing transnational print culture, captivity tales were instrumental, as Armstrong and Tennenhouse argue, in transforming the nebulous pre-modern body politic into a “nation made up of families that are in turn made up of literate individuals” (213). To support this persuasive new reading of the domestic novel, Armstrong and Tennenhouse tellingly limit their Richardson citations to *Pamela*, and yet, at the same time, they imply throughout the *Imaginary Puritan* that the eponymous heroine of *Clarissa* (1747-8) stands alongside Pamela and Mary Rowlandson as a model for the new English individual.¹⁴¹

The modernizing effect of the captive heroine and the broader argument of *The Imaginary Puritan* depend upon this heroine being, as Armstrong and Tennenhouse acknowledge, “reincorporated into the culture from which she has been separated” (211). Any reader familiar with *Clarissa* will immediately recognize its incompatibility with this model

¹⁴⁰ Armstrong, Nancy and Leonard Tennenhouse, *The Imaginary Puritan*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992: 204. Cited hereafter as IP.

¹⁴¹ In a moment that is symptomatic of the way Armstrong and Tennenhouse simultaneously include and exclude *Clarissa* from the analysis, they explain the power of writing in Richardson’s work in the following terms: “Writing does not allow Pamela and *Clarissa* to enter into a contract with the state; but it does allow them to refuse and (in Pamela’s case at least) renegotiate a relationship with a man of superior station to themselves” (193).

since it is precisely its heroine's refusal to return to her original community that distinguishes her as a moral exemplar. Richardson's first heroine manages to transform her pre-modern captor into the "best and fondest of Husbands" who, "after her example, became remarkable for Piety, Virtue, and all the Social Duties of a Man and a Christian."¹⁴² Her letters come to a close when her parents or, in other words, her pre-modern consanguinal family of origin, become literally and figuratively united with a conjugal family headed by a morally reformed and modernized husband. The heroine that Richardson creates seven years later, on the other hand, leaves her family of origin in a humiliated state of remorse and her captor and potential source of modern, conjugal bliss in an ultimately lethal condition of despair. Rather than ending her story by embracing "the arms of the best of men," like the heroine of *Evelina* (1776) and almost every other heroine of the long eighteenth-century domestic novel, Clarissa chooses to enter a state of monastic withdrawal above a London glove maker's shop.¹⁴³ Like Pamela, Clarissa asserts herself as a newly empowered bourgeois subject during her period of captivity, but unlike Pamela, she forgoes embarking on the kind of sentimental campaign that would convert her savage captor into the "best of Husbands."

Part Two

Anna Howe's Opening Challenge and Clarissa's All Too Perfect Answer

Clarissa's path to becoming a different kind of modern subject begins with her as the exemplary daughter of a wealthy yet untitled rural family governed by the ambitions of its only son and primary heir James Harlowe. In the first letter of the novel, written from Anna Howe to

¹⁴² Richardson, Samuel. *Pamela*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001: 499. Cited hereafter as P.

¹⁴³ Burney, Francis. *Evelina*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1998: 337. Cited parenthetically as E.

Clarissa, Richardson establishes his heroine within the morally exemplary and essentially epistolary position of the captive heroine. While Clarissa's resonance with narratives of women abducted by natives in the New World will certainly become clearer later in the novel when she starts identifying herself as a "slave," she already appears in this opening letter as a beacon of discursive civility in a sea of corporeal savagery.¹⁴⁴ Clarissa exists at the beginning of her eponymous tale as an estranged and suspected member of a family that resents her recent inheritance of her grandfather's estate and blames her for an even more recent duel between her headstrong brother and libertine suitor. Since it is this conflict between two men fighting for control of one exemplary English woman that prompts Anna to write and initiate the narrative of Richardson's infamously long novel, the beginning of *Clarissa* clearly lends support to Armstrong and Tennenhouse's argument that the novel mimics the narrative arc of seventeenth-century captivity tales in that it charts the transformation of its heroine from a "wordless object" of warring male powers into a "bodiless subject of writing" (IP 25).

According to the form of the captivity narrative, however, Clarissa's final transformation into a discursive subject should coincide with her becoming the female member of the conjugal unit that stands at the center of the new model of the family developing in the eighteenth century. Although Armstrong and Tennenhouse largely leave the question of the family aside, the captivity narrative, especially as it is absorbed by the eighteenth-century novel, has a transformative effect upon not only pre-modern conceptions of the self, but also of the family. Having cultivated a heroic individuality in her fight for survival, the captive heroine typically finds salvation in a conjugal family that is in fact more a product of her narrative than a timeless

¹⁴⁴ Richardson, Samuel. *Clarissa*. New York: Penguin Books, 1985: 111, 930. Cited hereafter as C.

element of her place of origin. Beyond simply rooting the individual within a family and nation, the captivity narrative more specifically works to reinforce the dramatic changes that were turning families such as the Harlowes into crass engines for self-interested accumulation. By finding redemption in discursive subjecthood and conjugal kin, the prototypical heroine of the captivity tale makes the modern model of self and family that her narrative helps to create appear as the ahistorical origin of all human life. By framing the conclusion of their tales as the fulfillment of their heroine's desire to "stop writing" and "return to a preindividuated speech community," these narratives manage to bestow an aura of originality upon the very reformulation of the English self, nation, and family that they accomplish (IP 213). While they clearly overlook the specifically modern form the family tends to assume in these narratives, Armstrong and Tennenhouse persuasively demonstrate how the structure of the captivity tale itself – with its successive periods of capture, bondage, and freedom- possesses an uncanny capacity to make literary products look like the pre-discursive state of being.

Pamela exemplifies this rhetorical feat of the captivity narrative by representing the product of its heroine's letters, her marriage and dramatic class ascent, as beyond the purview of language. Richardson will indeed undermine the ironic conclusion of his first novel by writing a sequel, *Pamela II* (1741), that tells the infamously dull story of his heroine's married life. The fact remains, however, that in *Pamela* Richardson strives to conceal the textual basis of the novel's dénouement, which is particularly striking given the prominent role his heroine's letters play in the development of the work's plot. Functioning within the story as basically a character in themselves, Pamela's letters are what finally persuade not only Mr. B to accept his former servant as his new wife, but even his status-conscious sister to forgive this scandalous act of condescension (250, 456). Given the impact of Richardson's epistolary story upon its own

development, a self-reflexivity only made more apparent by his characters' frequent allusions to the "pretty Novel" they are enacting, *Pamela* can be read until the point of its dénouement as a metatextual meditation upon the constitutive power of discourse (232).

All of this, nevertheless, comes to an end with the emergence of the editor at the novel's conclusion:

Here end the Letters of the incomparable PAMELA to her Father and Mother. For, as they arriv'd at their Daughter's House on *Tuesday* Evening in the following Week, she had no Occasion to continue her journal longer. (498)

With the union of Pamela's new conjugal family and the family of origin from whom she had been forcefully kept, Richardson typifies the way the eighteenth-century novel strategically reinterprets the narrative structure of seventeenth-century captivity tales. Rather than returning to her homeland, Pamela effectively civilizes the New World of the pre-modern gentleman, thereby rendering his estate amenable to the virtuous family she left behind. In synthesizing old and new, civilized and uncivilized, *Pamela* and other eighteenth-century novels provided readers with the means of reconciling a new and hence threatening model of the family with the pre-modern one it was supplanting.¹⁴⁵ With an epistolary narrator capable of exemplifying civilization when held captive by its savage other, the captivity narrative provided the eighteenth-century novel with a structure for blurring the line between the civilized and the uncivilized. These novels in turn gave their contemporaries a way to imagine the familiar and thus civilized model of the pre-modern family peacefully co-existing within the burgeoning image of the family as a married couple. As

¹⁴⁵ In the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there was, as Ruth Perry explains, "a change in the definition of what constituted the primary kin group...[that] involved a movement from an axis of kinship based on consanguinal ties or blood lineage to an axis based on conjugal and affinal ties of the married couple." See *Novel Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004: 2. Cited parenthetically as NR.

the editor of *Pamela* demonstrates, these novels also created the impression that the epistolary activity of the captive heroine was no longer necessary once this civilizing process of reconciliation had been accomplished.

By making the conjugal family appear as natural and civilized as the consanguinal one, the conclusion of *Pamela* suggests that its heroine can return from her discursive position as a “bodiless subject of writing” to her supposedly originary community whose appearance of naturalness marks it as prior to representation. Letter-writing functions in *Pamela*, as Derrida says of the trace in *Of Grammatology*, as “the origin of the origin.”¹⁴⁶ It constructs an innovative new family structure and then attempts to pass it off as so natural that it has “no Occasion” for further acts of epistolary construction and reinforcement. The problem for Richardson is that his story up to this point centers on celebrating the capacity for epistolary production to make his heroine a highly influential, even contagious model for a new way of being. For the sake, however, of pacifying contemporary social anxiety over the transformation of traditional English family life, Richardson crafts a dénouement that betrays his commitment to the constitutive power of letters. By effacing the heroic, epistolary voice of his heroine in order to ensure that his novel can serve the needs of society, Richardson exhibits a willingness for compromise that opened *Pamela* to satires, such as Henry Fielding’s *Shamela* (1741), that mocked the convenient coincidence of worldly and ethereal interests in Richardson’s work. Richardson responds to such skepticism by writing a captivity tale that places his commitment to the power of letter-writing and God above the more immediate concern of advancing the public good. Although he assigns a higher social purpose to his second novel, Richardson’s decision to celebrate a heroine who

¹⁴⁶ Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Trans. Gayatri Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997: 61. Cited parenthetically as G.

insists on remaining in her elevated and exemplary state of subjecthood is ultimately a repudiation of eighteenth-century bourgeois society.

When comparing the two novels in a letter to his friend Aaron Hill, Richardson argues that *Pamela* was more readily enjoyed by the middle-class reading public because it culminated with a “prosperous and *rewarded Virtue*” as opposed to the “Tragical” yet “Triumphant” fate of virtue in *Clarissa*.¹⁴⁷ Rather than making the redemption of this truly heroic second heroine dependent upon the capacity of her letters to accomplish an “uncertain Reformation ... of a vile Libertine,” Richardson locates her salvation in a death that allows her to “triumph...over not only him, but over all her Oppressors, and the World beside” (SR 218). While *Clarissa* indeed relies on the idea that death brings one closer to the supreme sovereignty of God, her relationship to death is very much a matter of life in this world. In orienting his heroine towards death rather than a husband, Richardson stumbles upon a means of maintaining her exemplary status, a heroic feat whose significance Richardson himself fails to comprehend. Throughout his personal correspondence, Richardson defends the “Tragical tho’...Triumphant Catastrophe” of his novel by focusing on the “reward” his heroine will receive in the extra-textual afterlife (SR 211, C 1498).

Richardson essentially looks upon *Clarissa* through the eyes of *Pamela* and thus establishes the basis for critics such as Brian Downs and more recently Vivasvan Soni to see *Clarissa* as unusual only in that it defers the conventional dénouement of the eighteenth-century novel. What Richardson and these later critics miss is that the heroine of *Clarissa* triumphs not because she dies, but rather because she lives in the wake of death. *Clarissa* far exceeds other

¹⁴⁷ Quoted in T.C. Eaves and Ben Kimpel. *Samuel Richardson: A Biography*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971: 281. Cited parenthetically as SR.

eighteenth-century novels in length for the simple reason that its heroine lives well beyond the conventional death of the epistolary narrator in the hands of a husband. Although critics such as Margaret Doody have importantly drawn attention to the significance of death to Clarissa's life on earth, they have nonetheless tended to conceive of this relationship in oppositional terms. In one of Doody's most provocative interpretations of the novel, she proposes reading Clarissa as a "Gnostic Lady of Light" capable of illuminating the "abodes of death and darkness" that threaten her.¹⁴⁸ Clarissa thus approaches the afterlife not as the ascent to a heavenly beyond, but as "a *return* to the Primal Light" that has animated her saintly journey through the world (GC 59). While Doody helpfully underlines the continuity of the afterlife with Clarissa's mortal existence, she does so at the cost of further distancing Richardson's heroine from the death that she in fact embodies. The art of dying in *Clarissa* is neither a matter of preparing for a heavenly reward nor of opposing the darkness of death altogether; it is, instead, a strategy for making the divine sovereignty that lies within death the basis for a heightened form of life. By incarnating the divinity of death, Clarissa, as this chapter will hope to demonstrate, uncovers a very canonical possibility within high Protestant thought.

Clarissa achieves a singular status within the novel tradition not by indulging in formal and theological heresies, but rather by remaining militantly faithful to both the developing structure of the novel and the foundational tenets of the Reformation. In terms of its form, *Clarissa* in truth merely perfects the fictional captivity narrative, that is to say the novel, by refusing to collapse its exemplary heroine and epistolary narrator into an extra-textual beyond that would undermine the constitutive role that such narratives assign to writing. Heroically defending her identity from the opening letter of the novel, Clarissa is unusual only in that she

¹⁴⁸ Doody, Margaret. "The Gnostic *Clarissa*." *Eighteenth-Century Studies*. 11.1 (1998). Cited parenthetically as GC.

brings the figure of the exemplary writer of letters to its extreme limit of perfection. In a revealing point of contrast with *Pamela*, Richardson begins *Clarissa* not with its heroine proclaiming herself a figure of suffering and virtue, but rather with the community calling upon her to perform the role of an exemplary individual.¹⁴⁹ Writing as a representative of England's burgeoning community of literate individuals, Anna interpellates Clarissa in the ambivalent position of an exemplar who stands above all others and for this very reason remains subject to their authority:

You see what you draw upon yourself by excelling all your sex. Every individual of it [the recent duel] who knows you, or has heard of you, seems to think you answerable to *her* for your conduct in points so very delicate and concerning.

Every eye, in short, is upon you with the expectation of an example. (40)

At once glorified and debased, Clarissa stands, according to Anna's opening portrait, in the uneasy position of a medieval king or current-day celebrity, estranged from her community through the very act of embodying it. The homophone "every eye" in the ominous final phrase of Anna's interpellation underlines the irony of Clarissa's celebrity-esque place within her public: she is an aesthetic object that functions as a model subject for the individuals who gaze upon her in "expectation of an example."

What Anna states as a declaration of fact is in truth a challenge. The tragic arc of Richardson's narrative truly begins when Clarissa responds positively to Anna's demand that she put the "whole of [her] story" into letters (40). With the acceptance of this task, Clarissa initiates a story that centers on the fate of an individual burdened with assuming the doubled being of exemplar. As a mortal body tasked with incarnating the disembodied ideal of Christian virtue,

¹⁴⁹ The heroine of *Pamela* opens the novel with a letter to her parents that begins: "I Have great Trouble, and some Comfort, to acquaint you with" (11).

Clarissa experiences the “irony of the exemplary self” that the critic Helen Deutsch elucidates in her essay on Alexander Pope’s “Epistle to Bolingbroke” (1738).¹⁵⁰ In tracing the figure of the moral exemplar from antiquity to Pope’s eighteenth-century satires, Deutsch explains the consistent dilemma of moral exemplarity in terms of the two simultaneous and contradictory demands it imposes upon its chosen representatives: to be at once a “historical fitful individual” and a “fixed” and hence timeless “example” of a transcendent moral truth (157). The condition of moral exemplarity, as Deutsch demonstrates, in fact only intensifies the paradox of every example since the mortal body that steps forth as the representative of a transcendent ideal not only remains trapped in the logical quandary of a thing coming to represent a group only by separating itself from it as an example, but also carries the additional burden of being an inevitable imposter. The impossibility of a flawed mortal body incarnating the perfection of the ideal inspires a certain playfulness in Pope’s “Epistle to Bolingbroke,” which, in the words of Deutsch, “verges on despair and ends in laughter” (155). By illuminating the way Pope’s tense couplets, “with their deep affinity for the joke and their deceptive and corrective laughter at the most serious of matters,” maintain and even relish in the contradictory doubleness of moral exemplarity, Deutsch provides Richardson scholars with a means of appreciating the uniqueness of Clarissa’s efforts to use epistolary verse as the basis for resolving rather than playfully accepting the dichotomy of matter and truth (157).

Whereas Pope’s couplets formally iterate a restless resistance to collapsing the two sides of exemplarity, Clarissa’s epistolary practice pursues precisely this kind of dogmatic closure. The comedic irony that Deutsch, as well as her fellow Pope scholar James Noggle, discovers in

¹⁵⁰ Deutsch, Helen. “Bolingbroke’s Laugh: Alexander Pope’s Epistle to Bolingbroke and the Rhetoric of Embodied Exemplarity.” *Studies in the Literary Imagination*. 38.1 (1995): 157.

Pope's moral satires stands in stark contrast to the unequivocally tragic tone of *Clarissa*.¹⁵¹ Rather than taking the dialectical irony of exemplarity as an absolute limit that comically frustrates every attempt at absolutism in this flawed and mortal world, Clarissa views it as a challenge that she seeks to surmount by masochistically submitting her mortal self to the written medium that houses transcendent truths within this material world. Clarissa's spiritual struggle through the novel is, in other words, simultaneously a formal one since it involves her coming as close as possible to being the exemplary, epistolary self that her community imposes upon her. By pursuing a purely discursive existence, Clarissa offers an extreme answer to Anna's initial demand that she provide the individuals in her community with a written model for how to best conduct themselves.

Tasked with being at once a body and a written ideal, Clarissa develops an absolutist strategy for collapsing the former into the latter. At the end of the novel, Clarissa stands as the purely aesthetic object that her adoring public demanded. Only in becoming what her fans wanted, a pure spectacle, Clarissa loses the elevation that paradoxically allowed this public to judge her. She ultimately looks upon her community from the supremely sovereign position of the exemplary subject who has forsaken her claim to subjecthood in order to become the submissive object of language and the divine sovereignty it incarnates. At once canonical and disruptive, Clarissa perfects the model of the exemplary individual, and in the process, detaches it from the society it was to help fortify.

¹⁵¹ Noggle argues that Pope and his fellow Augustan satirists react to the dogmatism of the civil war period by refusing "the individual any access to absolute authority, to certainty, to irrefragable reason, to the ultimate truth, or to any other sublime object discovered either intellectually or sensitively" (29). Rather than rejecting the sublime object altogether however, these satirists turn it into object of ironic comedy. "Through ironic identification," as Noggle puts it, they simultaneously articulate absolute truth and the impossibility of making precisely these sorts of articulations (39). See Noggle, James. *The Skeptical Sublime*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Part Three

The Exemplary Object and the Epistolary Subject

The doubled self of the moral exemplar is not supposed to leave society. In the eighteenth-century novel, this exemplary figure is typically female and she is conventionally plagued by the threatening sense of “disembodiment” that the critic Catherine Gallagher *Nobody’s Story* (1995) locates in fiction throughout the century.¹⁵² This young lady of distress struggles in a disoriented and exemplary state of captivity until she finds redemption in the modern conjugal family, a dénouement that makes marriage and domesticity appear as ahistorical safe havens from the vicissitudes of social change. Beyond missing *Clarissa’s* departure from this model, Armstrong and Tennenhouse’s *The Imaginary Puritan* could go much further in elucidating exactly how the epistolary form, as opposed to simply “discourse,” transforms the captive woman into an exemplary subject (5). I believe that uncovering the epistolary foundation of this heroine is a necessary step in illuminating the often-overlooked ambivalence of her status as an objectified figure of modern subjecthood.

Like every captive heroine, *Clarissa* must write letters in order to maintain, in the words of Armstrong and Tennenhouse, “her own identity among the heathens” (210). What Armstrong and Tennenhouse miss, however, and what Anna’s opening letter articulates quite clearly is that the captive heroine must write letters in order to justify herself before a community that uses a heightened and objectifying method of allocating accountability. Sandra Macpherson’s *Harm’s Way* (2010) clarifies the seemingly merciless moral standard apparent in the very first letter of

¹⁵² Gallagher, Catherine. *Nobody’s Story*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994: xx. Cited parenthetically as NS.

Clarissa as further proof that the realist novel shares the same “‘tragic’ law of responsibility” at work in the contemporaneous movement to establish laws that imposed a strict understanding of liability.¹⁵³ In holding persons liable for accidentally causing injury, these so-called strict liability laws reiterated the novel’s effort to reconceptualize causality and the responsibility it entails as independent of human consciousness or intention. Although *Clarissa* certainly did not intend to cause the recent duel between her brother, James Harlowe, and her suitor, Robert Lovelace, her community, as Anna makes clear, will hold her nevertheless responsible. To be an exemplary subject, *Clarissa* must paradoxically accept that she stands in relationship to events she unwillingly causes as a culpable object.

Anna depicts letter writing as the best means through which her friend can handle the scrutiny of a public that looks upon her as both an exemplary subject and guilty object:

Write to me therefore, my dear, the whole of your story from the time that Mr. Lovelace was first introduced into your family; and particularly an account of all that passed between him and your sister, about which there are different reports; some people supposing that the younger sister (at least by her uncommon merit) has stolen a lover from the elder. And pray write in so full a manner as may gratify those who know not so much of your affairs as I do. If anything unhappy should fall out from the violence of such spirits as you have had to deal with, your account of all things previous to it will be your justification. (40)

The language of accountability in this passage frames *Clarissa*’s emergence as an epistolary subject in the legal terms of liability. In representing her friend as accountable for her “conduct” in the aftermath of the recent duel, Anna treats her as if she were responsible or liable for her role

¹⁵³ Macpherson, Sandra. *Harm’s Way*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010: 4. Cited parenthetically as HW.

as the unwilling cause of a dispute that left her brother significantly injured. Writing “the whole of her story...in so full a manner as may gratify” unknown spectators gives Clarissa an opportunity to rise to the challenge of becoming, as Anna later puts it, “answerable” to the individuals that look upon her (40). The first definition of “answerable” in the OED is “responsible” in the sense of a “legal or moral obligation” that renders one “liable to be called to account” or “to answer to a charge” (I, I.1). With the use of this particular adjective, as well as the related terms of accountability throughout his novel’s opening letter, Richardson introduces his heroine as doubly subordinate in that she is not only accountable to the authority of any individual in her community, but also “liable to be called to account” for the unintended effects of her actions or mere existence. By urging her friend to accept responsibility for the violence of the men fighting to possess her, Anna initiates the narrative arc of *Clarissa* by challenging its heroine to accept the moral framework of a world in which subjects exist as the objects of harm. Within such a world, harm, or the damage one does to others, would be, as Macpherson puts it, “a method of rather than an obstacle to affiliation” (HW 21).

While Macpherson’s reinterpretation of Clarissa as a tragic object illuminates a genuinely new dimension of her character, her attempt to universalize Clarissa’s position has the very different effect of obscuring the distinctly heroic and exemplary role she plays in Richardson’s novel. In opposition to a history of reading *Clarissa* and the broader novel tradition as responsible for the development of the supposedly self-conscious individual of the modern era, Macpherson contends that “the novel form... treats human subjects (victims and wrongdoers alike) as that most alien of others, the object” (23). *Clarissa* exemplifies this tradition in taking heroine and villain alike not as subjects that err to a greater or lesser extent, but as objects that

cause harm irrespective of their knowledge or intent. Richardson's heroine stands out from other characters because she openly accepts the unlimited and tragic ethic of responsibility that governs a world in which every character and creature exists as objects of harm. Written to her mother during her period of monastic withdrawal, Clarissa's statement of self-incrimination represents the culmination of her militant affirmation of Anna's initial challenge that she accept the heroic burden of exemplarity. In reading this confession as an articulation of the overarching logic of Richardson's novel and even more expansively of the condition of being itself, Macpherson takes the crowning achievement of Clarissa's theological practice as an ontological given.

Like other object-oriented theorists such as Bill Brown, Jonathan Kramnick, and Quentin Meillassoux, Macpherson dismisses the idea of a self-conscious individual as if it were a mere philosophical misunderstanding entirely divorced from the historical experience of modernity. Rather than emerging from and existing within an ahistorical vacuum, the ideological image of the liberal individual is produced by the historical transformation of early modern Europe. While critics have debated whether changes in the economic, political, or private spheres were most responsible for the emergence of this idea, it is worth recalling Louis Althusser's summation of Blaise Pascal's instructions on faith: "kneel down, move your lips in prayer, and you will believe."¹⁵⁴ If we follow Macpherson in seeing Clarissa's object existence at the conclusion of Richardson's novel as merely a self-conscious iteration of "each of the characters...who populate the novel," then we lose track of the deceptively simple truth that Clarissa is fundamentally not like everyone else.

¹⁵⁴ Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses." *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Trans. Ben Brewster. New York: New Left Books, 1970: 168.

Unwillingly singled out in the opening of Richardson's novel, Clarissa devotes herself to a masochistic and narcissistic campaign to bring her exemplary position to the very limit of where the transcendent meets the material. By portraying this truly singular struggle as an articulation of the common condition of every character, Macpherson misses the way in which *Clarissa* operates as a handbook for de-subjectification. Macpherson's assertion "subjects might be objects in all their mute and forceful simplicity" is correct only insofar as the novel depicts this de-subjectified state as an immanent possibility that can be realized by subjects willing to approach the annihilating limit of exemplarity.

Part Four

Clarissa's Modern Monasticism

While Clarissa's Puritan-inspired withdrawal from the world may appear to contemporary readers as largely irrelevant to their twenty-first-century lives, her struggle realizes a potential for de-subjectification that has only been made all the more available by the past two and half centuries of commercial development. As the following section will demonstrate, Clarissa manages to surmount the disorienting effects of modernity not by escaping it, but rather by affirming it. Richardson situates Clarissa's monastic period within the iconically modern space of eighteenth-century London because it is only through the forces of commercialism that Clarissa is able to achieve a sacred and de-subjectified existence. After fleeing the London brothel in which the violent libertine Lovelace had kept her captive, Richardson's heroine seeks refuge in the quintessentially modern quarters of "Mr. Smith's, a glove shop, in King Street, Covent Garden" (C 974). Clarissa chooses, in other words, to pursue her pious withdrawal

from the modern world in a commercial venue located in a part of London that had become synonymous with its eighteenth-century transformation into the financial and trade capital of Europe. Once the property of the abbey of St. Peter who used its open fields for pasture, Covent Garden by the mid eighteenth century was home to a thriving “fruit and vegetable market” in addition to the more recent arrival of “taverns, coffee-houses, gambling-dens, and brothels.”¹⁵⁵ The magistrate and half-brother of Henry Fielding, Sir John Fielding, remarked at the time, “one would imagine that all the prostitutes in the kingdom had picked upon the rendezvous” of Covent Garden’s central square, which was designed by Inigo Jones on grounds adjacent to St. Paul’s church (Quoted in L, 6). When the heroine of the notoriously erotic novel *Fanny Hill* (1748-9) first enters London, her new employer brings her to a shop in this very piazza, “where she bought a pair of gloves” for the latest addition to her nearby brothel.¹⁵⁶

That Clarissa decides to embark upon “a life of severe penitence” and prepare for her death in the very sort of shop that an eighteenth-century reader might expect a hardened prostitute to frequent underlines the peculiarly modern dimension of her theological practice (901). The proximity of Clarissa’s monastic independence with urban commerce reflects the analogous role that commercialism and Protestantism play in transforming once undistinguished bodies into the bearers of abstract value. Rather than simply opposing the disorientating experience of abstraction that she endures along with most other eighteenth-century heroines, Clarissa instead affirms it as an economic phenomenon that ultimately derives from a theological domain.¹⁵⁷ Richardson uncovers the foundation of commercial society in the Protestant

¹⁵⁵ Porter, Roy. *London: A Social History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995: 6. Cited parenthetically as L.

¹⁵⁶ Cleland, John. *Fanny Hill*. New York: Penguin Books, 1985: 45. Cited hereafter as F.

¹⁵⁷ Catherine Gallagher’s *Nobody’s Story* demonstrates the way female authors throughout the eighteenth century depict themselves and their heroines as “on the brink of disembodiment” (xx).

internalization of divine sovereignty, a discovery that illuminates the enduring potential for individuals bound to this society to reconceive of themselves as theological rather than economic subjects.

Clarissa both corresponds to and undoes Armstrong and Tennenhouse's model of the captivity narrative because she uses the individuating experience of captivity not to introduce her original community to a new model of the individual, but rather that to pursue a militantly Protestant and unapologetically narcissistic campaign of emancipatory self-dissolution. By returning home, less problematic heroines such as Evelina and Pamela compel their original communities to reconceive of their constituents as individuals whose epistolary, and hence discursive, identities are capable of existing beyond their geographic limits. Despite Armstrong and Tennenhouse's failure to explain the at once modern and anti-modern direction of Clarissa's emancipation from captivity, I chose to begin my discussion of Richardson's novel with their model of the captivity narrative because it underlines the vexed relationship between *Clarissa* and the novel tradition.

As the exemplar of novelistic virtue, the heroine of *Clarissa* represents the crowning achievement of domestic fiction, the height of its moral redemption of modernity, and yet, Clarissa is ultimately incompatible with the historical trajectory of both the novel and modern English society. Richardson's resolutely sympathetic biographers T.C. Eaves and Ben Kimpel

While placing special emphasis on female authors, Gallagher acknowledges that authors of both genders from a variety of political and social positions shared this preoccupation. Women's writing was distinct only in "exaggerating and sexualizing this common theme" (xxi). Such a distinction works, but only if one abandons the essentialist framework of Gallagher's analysis. Disabled, politically dispossessed, and barred from owning property, Alexander Pope stands out as a fitting example for the possibility of men assuming feminized social positions in the eighteenth century. This possibility, thankfully, persists to this day as a necessary caveat to any generalizations about the two sexes.

allow themselves to express a rare moment of criticism regarding *Clarissa*'s perplexing conclusion:

In *Clarissa*... [the tragic] effect is marred by the fact that Richardson drags out the ending. During *Clarissa*'s funeral we do want to do something- we want to get it over and close the book.¹⁵⁸

What Eaves and Kimpel express in formal terms *Clarissa*'s many early readers tended to put in the language of sentimental outrage as they inundated Richardson with pleas for a happy ending.¹⁵⁹ Although changes in literary theory have made such sentimental and formal critiques less common, the opposition articulated by Richardson's contemporary readers and later biographers brings to the surface what remains implicit in recent, more conceptually nuanced interpretations of Richardson's novel.

While my analysis certainly draws from similar trends in twentieth- and twenty-first-century continental philosophy, it departs from the vast majority of recent work on *Clarissa* in taking its heroine's theologically-inspired and death-centered struggle to withdraw as a strategy for living rather than dying. From deconstructionist, Marxist, Foucaultian, psychoanalytic to less easily classifiable recent studies by authors such as Vivasvan Soni and Laura Rosenthal, interpretations of *Clarissa* have tended to obscure rather than explicate the significance of its heroine's decision to devote herself to death, God, and writing. In Terry Eagleton's *The Rape of Clarissa* (1982) and Vivasvan Soni's *The Mourning of Happiness* (2010), *Clarissa*'s monastic

¹⁵⁸ T.C. Eaves and Ben Kimpel. *Samuel Richardson: A Biography*. 281. Cited parenthetically as SR.

¹⁵⁹ Lady Bradshaigh, one of the many ladies to whom Richardson distributed early drafts of the novel, warns her friend, "if you disappoint me, attend to my curse:-May the hatred of all the young, beautiful, and virtuous, for ever be your portion!...may you meet with applause only from envious old maids, surly bachelors, and tyrannical parents! may you be doomed to the company of such! And, after death, may their ugly souls haunt you!-Now make Lovelace and *Clarissa* unhappy if you dare." October 10, 1747. Quoted in SR 221.

withdrawal has respectively been dismissed as a refusal that demonstrates the injustice of women's exclusion from political society or a period of suffering that she must endure in order to receive her heavenly rewards.¹⁶⁰ Though Soni's reading is at least substantiated by the novel itself, which indeed repeatedly asserts the relevance of the transcendent to its narrative, it ultimately coincides with Eagleton's much less imaginative interpretation in seeing Clarissa's final days as anticipating something beyond the text. Other critics influenced by deconstructive and post-structuralist philosophy, such as William Warner and Terry Castle, take the centrality of writing in Clarissa's final days more seriously; they in fact take it so seriously that they effectively dismiss the theological significance of Clarissa's demise in order to frame it as a largely linguistic event.¹⁶¹

Very different in approach, Laura Rosenthal's *Infamous Commerce* (2006) nevertheless resembles these language-oriented critics in that it too portrays Clarissa's death as the result of her unwillingness or inability to accept the unstable, arbitrary, and commodified reality of modern life. While Warner and Castle see Clarissa as self-destructively committed to discovering transcendent and stable meaning in a world "where the only available meanings are human, temporary, and artificial," Rosenthal views her as a "quixotic" hero of anti-commodification whose death demonstrates that "those who refuse contracts" and the inevitable

¹⁶⁰ Eagleton, Terry. *The Rape of Clarissa*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1982. Eagleton affirms Clarissa's death as a subversive refusal of political society that looks to God for support, but then proceeds to argue that this divinely rooted refusal is made unnecessary by the later emergence of the women's movement (76, 94).

Soni, Vivasvan. *Mourning Happiness*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010. Following Richardson's own assurances that Clarissa is destined for heaven, Soni reads *Pamela* and *Clarissa* as "both tales of 'Virtue Rewarded'" (246).

¹⁶¹ Castle, Terry. *Clarissa's Ciphers*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982. Mixing the psychoanalytic and the deconstructive, Castle argues that Clarissa "becomes conscious of the instability of signifying codes" through the trauma of rape, an experience that causes her to flee the "realm of human interpretation" for a "silence" that is synonymous with death (118, 26).

alienation of a market economy are essentially choosing death over the compromise of life (CC 118).¹⁶² The lesson of Richardson's ending, in other words, is that readers can avoid replicating such tedious, "dragged out" affairs if they accept England's eighteenth-century transition into linguistic and economic modernity. From the pain of trudging through the minutiae of Clarissa's final days, we can learn how to avoid creating similar narratives in our everyday lives.

By framing Clarissa's period of withdrawal as either a cautionary tale for readers grappling with modernization or as an anticipation of some extra-linguistic event, whether it be God or a feminist democracy, the critical discussion of *Clarissa* has for the most part remained faithful to Ian Watt's moralistic, mid twentieth-century diagnosis of its heroine.¹⁶³ According to Watt's sweeping and it must be stated compelling interpretation, the tragedy of Richardson's novel stems from the fact that both Clarissa and Lovelace hold to a dichotomy between "the flesh and the spirit" that is at odds with the critical turn in seventeenth-century European thought.¹⁶⁴ Watt identifies critical philosophy and the eighteenth-century novel as "parallel manifestations of...that vast transformation of Western civilization since the Renaissance which has replaced the unified world picture of the Middle Ages with...one which presents us, essentially, with a developing but unplanned aggregate of particular individuals having particular experiences at particular times and at particular places" (31). From the perspective of this great transformation,

¹⁶² Rosenthal, Laura. *Infamous Commerce*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006: 153. Cited parenthetically as IC.

¹⁶³ Margaret Doody's work, including the aforementioned essay "The Gnostic *Clarissa*," stands as a notable exception to this trend. See also Doody's "Holy and Unholy Dying: The Deathbed Theme in *Clarissa*." *Natural Passion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974. Though certainly a departure from Watt's interpretation, Doody's image of Clarissa as an exemplary figure for the Puritan art of dying misses the way death functions within the novel as the basis for achieving a different kind of life. The Puritan art of dying is, in other words, also an art of living.

¹⁶⁴ Watt, Ian. *The Rise of the Novel*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1957: 237. Watt defines the novel as "the form of literature which most fully reflects this individualist and innovating reorientation" of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century critical philosophy (15). Cited parenthetically as RN.

Clarissa and Lovelace represent transitional figures whose commitments to the theological universals of an earlier era cause them to interpret sexual desire as a moral failing. A militant believer on the one hand and a skeptical libertine on the other, Clarissa and Lovelace darkly mirror one another in that they each deny the possibility of spiritual purity co-existing with fleshly reality, a refusal that Richardson portrays, knowingly or not, as tragically anachronistic.

Watt's diagnosis of Clarissa as a narcissistic masochist with an overly active death drive establishes the tendency in Richardson criticism to explain away rather than closely interpret the activities that fill up Clarissa's final days. For Watt, Clarissa's allegiance to outmoded religious beliefs obstructs her transformation into a normal modern subject, leaving her in an under-developed psychosexual state:

Clarissa's tragedy reflects the combined effects of Puritanism's spiritual inwardness and its fear of the flesh, effects which tend to prevent the development of the sexual impulse beyond the autistic and masochistic stages. (234)

Historically and psychologically stunted, Clarissa's libidinal energy becomes directed towards death, from which she, according to Watt, derives a "narcissistic" and "self-consuming" sense of pleasure (RN 234). While Clarissa undoubtedly exemplifies, as Watt states, a Puritan commitment to "spiritual inwardness," Watt's assertion that she also exhibits a theologically inspired "fear of the flesh" represents an oversimplification that misses the essential union of the spirit and the flesh that accompanies the Protestant internalization of religious authority in the sixteenth century. Rather than perpetuating a pre-modern dichotomy between the spirit and the flesh, Martin Luther asked his followers to look upon the hypostatic union of the divine and the earthly in Christ as the basis for a very modern reformulation of society, laypersons and clergy alike, as imbued with spiritual forces.

Clarissa retires at the conclusion of Richardson's novel to a small apartment in an area bustling with commerce in order to construct an alternative modernity, one that uses the internalization of divine authority to withdraw from rather than perfect the commercial life of eighteenth-century England. Luther's injunction to his followers to remember Christ's profession, "I live in the flesh, I live in the faith of the sonne of God," underlines the centrality of the transcendent realm not to Clarissa's extra-textual afterlife, but to the mortal life she leads while monastically withdrawn.¹⁶⁵ Richardson registers the importance of death and writing to the sacred final weeks of his heroine with the coffin that she purchases in anticipation of her final demise. Although Clarissa characterizes this coffin as simply a part of her morbid "preparation[s]," the very active role this coffin plays during her final period as a writing table and surface for inscriptions metonymically represents the centrality of death to the life that Clarissa leads in her final weeks (1304). Clarissa dates her own death on this coffin as "the fatal day of her leaving her father's house," a decision that immediately draws attention to the liminal nature of the existence she achieves once free of her consanguinal and presumptive conjugal masters (1306). It is the contention of the following analysis that this period of Clarissa's life represents the most significant section of Richardson's work; it is the prolonged conclusion that makes *Clarissa* a singular and disruptive part of the novel tradition.

Before her expected union with God in the next world and after her escape from the patriarchal authorities in this one, Clarissa carves out an alternative way in which to be in the world as a modern individual. At the conclusion of *Clarissa*, Richardson places increasing emphasis on both the purity of his heroine's faith and the various objects that connect her state of

¹⁶⁵ Luther, Martin. *A treatise touching the libertie of a Christian* [A Treatise on Christian Liberty]. Trans. James Bell. London: Printed by Thomas Harper for William Sheares, and to be sold at his shop in Brittaines Burse 1636: 889. Cited parenthetically as CL. Luther is here quoting from Paul's *Epistle to the Galatians* (2:19).

monastic withdrawal to the commercial activity flourishing everywhere around her.¹⁶⁶ In one highly symbolic moment from this period, the reformed libertine Mr. Belford describes the conjunction of modern commerce and Protestant theology in his friend's purchase of a coffin:

She discharged the undertaker's bill after I was gone, with as much cheerfulness as she could ever have paid for the clothes she sold to purchase this her *palace* [the coffin]: for such she called it; reflecting upon herself for the expensiveness of it.... (1306)

Clarissa acquires the capital necessary to purchase the central object of her monastic practice by selling some of the most ostentatiously visible and commented upon signs of England's newly commercial society (1306). While Clarissa indeed, as Rosenthal claims, engages in a struggle to infuse commodified objects with "sentimental rather than market value," her campaign should not be understood in the anti-modernist terms that Rosenthal and others assign to it (IC 152).

By representing the sale that allows Clarissa to purchase her coffin, Richardson identifies the crowning symbol of his heroine's faith, the object that reminds her "that there is such a vast superiority of weight and importance in the thoughts of death," as a commodity and hence the potential equivalent of modernity's most profane objects (1306). At the time of *Clarissa's* publication, England was witnessing the emergence of a mass fashion market that would reach such heights by the century's end that gentlemen, as the fashion historians C.W. and P. Cunnington explain, "began to adopt the styles of dress and actual garments of the working man" and look for other, subtler ways of distinguishing themselves.¹⁶⁷ Far from opposing this

¹⁶⁶ Rosenthal makes the important observation that "for a narrative so ostensibly concerned with the next world, we get a lot of material details about this one" (IC 151).

¹⁶⁷ C.W. and P. Cunnington. *A Dictionary of English Costume: 900-1900*. London: Faber and Faber, 1960: 14. Quoted in: McKendrick, Neil, John Brewer, and J.H. Plumb. *The Birth of Consumer Society*. London: Europa Publications, 1982: 55. Cited parenthetically as BC. The historian Neil McKendrick notes, "most authorities place the turning point in the reign of George

movement, Clarissa participates in it but with the aim of redirecting its dizzying powers towards the theological domain, where she finds the possibility of simultaneously exemplifying and undoing the values of England's newly commercial society.

Part Five

To Be So Modern You're Sacred: *Clarissa* Against Weber

At once binding her to and detaching her from early market society, the militant Protestantism of Richardson's heroine anticipates as well as complicates Max Weber's classic argument that the secular individual of modern capitalist societies develops from the early modern worldview of Protestant reformers. Published from 1747 to 1748, Richardson's novel possesses a uniquely complicated relationship to the emergence of this individual from the social disarray of the early eighteenth century, a period in which a new consumer market and a growing middle class dissolved the visible hierarchy of pre-modern English social order. The sudden impossibility of using physical appearance to determine class status provoked endless condemnation from the organs of England's expanding print culture, such as *The World*, which in 1755 reported, "we have not such thing as common people among us...Attorneys' clerks and city prentices dress like cornets of dragoons...every commoner...treads hard on the heels of quality in dress" (Quoted in BC, 54). The birth of a mass fashion market was a scandal because clothing in the early eighteenth century, as the historian Dror Wahrman explains, was "still taken to have constitutive power but the authorities that had previously shaped and controlled [it] did

I [1714-1727] and see the culmination of fashion frenzy early in the reign of George II [1727-1760]" (BC 54).

not.”¹⁶⁸ In exchanging her clothes for a coffin, Clarissa signals the rise of a new strategy for managing England’s social order, one that rooted difference in the immaterial domain of sensibility rather than the now democratized world of sartorial appearance.

However distant this transition may appear from religious issues, Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905) provides the crucial reminder that it was Protestantism that brought this immaterial domain into the internal life of the early modern individual. In their struggle to democratize the transcendent authority of the church, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century religious reformers endowed individual bodies with the once highly centralized responsibility of regulating their behavior according to the disembodied moral code of the Christian faith. By carrying “asceticism...out of monastic cells” and “into everyday life,” Protestants created a new model of identity that privileged the immaterial domain of faith and reason over the material world of good works and appearances.¹⁶⁹ Weber asks his readers to consider the possibility that “other-worldliness asceticism...and participation in capitalistic accumulation...might actually turn out to be [in] an intimate relationship [*innere Verwandtschaft*]” since both demand that individuals view their actions, and in particular their labor, as driven by abstract ideals rather than physical needs (42). While Weber’s sociological study focuses on uncovering the underlying continuity between the Protestant and the capitalist, the following analysis will argue that the largely literary figure of the sentimental protagonist should be added to this list of analogous social types. Whether it is assurance of salvation, money, or the prestige of cultivated sensibilities, all three of these figures-the Protestant, the capitalist, and the sentimental protagonist- signify a new way of viewing one’s activity in the

¹⁶⁸ Wahrman, Dror. *The Making of the Modern Self*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004: 178.

¹⁶⁹ Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Trans. Talcott Parsons. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1976: 181. Cited parenthetically as PE.

world as an end in itself. These three seemingly disparate types turn out to be close kinsmen [*innere Verwandt*] because they subject their everyday lives to the internalized rule of abstract principles.

With her exquisite sensibility, bourgeois concern for frugal accumulation, and heroic piety, Clarissa represents a near perfect embodiment of these three major figures of immaterial life in the eighteenth century. The animating question of *Clarissa* is whether this exemplary figure of the eighteenth century's three major valences of abstract life- religious, economic, and sentimental- can be converted into an ideological subject of modernity. Richardson's novel follows the narrative structure that *Pamela* helped establish by beginning with its heroine in a disoriented state of captivity from which she would, according to generic convention, be redeemed by marriage. In becoming a wife, Clarissa would, like Pamela and so many other domestic heroines, exemplify the immaterial power of modern subjecthood from the private sphere, a space that the eighteenth-century novel helped cement in the collective imagination of the period as a sentimental refuge from an increasingly urban and profit-driven society. The novelty of Richardson's novel stems largely from the fact that its heroine fails to become a wife and properly modern feminine subject not by opposing the values this position embodies but rather by exemplifying them too well.

Richardson's narrative, consciously or not, uncovers a paradoxical capacity to dissolve the modern structure of selfhood by perfecting one's fidelity to its immaterial principles. Clarissa's heroic virtue is tragic because it is too modern for modernity. She refuses a series of opportunities to marry and effectively surmount her transitional state of selfhood because these opportunities fall short of the sentimental perfection she exemplifies. Her exquisite sentiments, as well as her piety, demand, for example, that she oppose the husband her family has chosen for

her since his physically repulsive body and crass mind render him a sentimentally and religiously unfit partner. This Mr. Solmes, as Clarissa explains, has “but a very ordinary share of understanding, is very illiterate, knows nothing but the value of estates and how to improve them, and what belongs to landjobbing, and husbandry” (62). The same commitment to maintaining her faith in all three of modernity’s abstract registers- the sentimental, religious, and economic- inspires Clarissa to resist the suggestion of her family’s reverend, Dr. Brand, to “go in some *creditable* manner to some of the foreign colonies” in order to save “her *own credit* and *reputation*” as well as her family’s (1294).

As a heroine characteristically trapped by the forces of modernity, Clarissa looks upon Mr. Solmes as a crude symbol of those very forces rather than a potential source of salvation. The heroine of Francis Burney’s *Evelina*, by contrast, encounters a properly sentimental figure of a husband in Lord Orville, whose attractive “person” and “gentle, attentive, and infinitely engaging...manners” provide at least the illusion of escape from the crass commercialism this heroine confronts in London (E 24). In Clarissa’s struggle to negotiate this same urban world of commerce, the possibility of renewing her “credit” in the colonies is little better than the prospect of marrying the decidedly un-sentimental Solmes since it too makes her position within the market even more explicit. To pursue her moral and financial renewal in the colonies would in fact place Clarissa in the transparently pre-sentimental position of earlier heroines such as Moll Flanders or Roxana who achieve happy conjugal lives by embracing the global market of exchange. The final and most promising option for converting Clarissa into a properly sentimental heroine would be a marriage with the libertine suitor Lovelace, a union that her piety opposes. While this opposition indeed, as Rosenthal argues, reflects Clarissa’s refusal to commodify her sexual relations, the crucial element of Clarissa as a character, and the underlying

motivation for this refusal, is her commitment to affirming rather than opposing modernity's most treasured values (IC 130).

Clarissa is a perversely modern rather than anti-modern figure because she achieves her withdrawal from modern society by affirming the democratization of divine authority that made the emergence of this very society possible. In using the internalized sovereignty of God to pursue a life beyond the domain of secular authorities, Clarissa not only suggests that the divine remains accessible to modern subjects, but also that it can act as the basis for emancipatory acts of withdrawal and self-dissolution. Though Richardson develops the character of Clarissa in the early stages of modern selfhood, his heroine represents an anticipatory rejoinder to Weber's pessimistic announcement that capitalism in the early twentieth century no longer has any need for the Protestant theology that helped bring it into existence. Weber explains that "today the spirit of religious asceticism...has escaped from its cage...but victorious capitalism, since it rests on mechanical foundations, needs its support no longer" (PE 181-182). According to Weber's narrative, modern men and women practice what were originally Protestant values-such as the belief in a single calling, the moral obligation of self-denial, and the abstract and hence insatiable necessity of hard work- out of a secularized and mechanistic sense of compulsion. Industrial capitalism appears at the end of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* as a totalizing structure that determines the lives of "all individuals who are born into...[its] mechanism...with irresistible force" (181). From the perspective of Richardson's *Clarissa*, Weber's portrayal of the process of subjectivation, or the transformation of bodies into subjects, as totalizing, and thus inescapable, stems from the false idea that this process can ever be divorced from its theological origins.

Part Six

‘We Christians Are Kings’: Clarissa as a Figure for the Antinomian Luther

Through the struggle of his heroine to achieve an alternative form of modernity, Richardson represents the Protestant origins of capitalism as always accessible through death. Although death may appear to be thoroughly ahistorical, it in fact assumes new meaning, as the rest of this chapter will seek to demonstrate, following the early modern democratization of divine authority. For medieval kings, high church officials, and select aristocrats, death existed within life as a reminder of the fact that these figures already lived apart from mortal life. When medieval and Renaissance crowds gathered at royal burials to cry “The king is dead! Long live the king!” they were proclaiming, as the historian Ernst Kantorowicz explains, the “perpetuity of a kingship” whose inner truth becomes apparent only in death.¹⁷⁰ Kantorowicz’s depiction in *The King’s Two Bodies* (1957) of the transition from ecclesiastical coronation to dynastic succession in late medieval Europe helps elucidate the intimacy of Clarissa’s relationship with the divine. With dynastic succession, the immortal aura of rule shifted from secular rituals and authorities to the “royal blood itself,” thereby transforming the king into a “*typus Christi*” that synthesizes the profane and the divine in a hypostatic union modeled after Christ (KB 331, 97). In announcing to her friends that she has come to “enjoy...the thoughts of death” since contemplating death “annihilates all other considerations and concerns,” Clarissa positions herself as the heir to the doubled being of the medieval king who also looked upon death as the sovereign principle of being (1306). Beneath the ‘mechanism’ that entraps individuals in the political-theological structures of modernity, Richardson discovers a privileged mode of being that is democratized by

¹⁷⁰ Kantorowicz, Ernst. *The King’s Two Bodies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997: 412. Cited parenthetically as KB.

the twin forces of the Reformation and commercialism. Once seen by the vast majority of the population as simply beyond the grasp of mortal life, death becomes available to the members of the English body politic as the means through which they can achieve a sovereign existence in this life. Clarissa contemplates death with the assurance of a king.

The development of the modern self hinges on the conversion of this kingly mode of being into the gendered subject of commercial society. Whereas in *Pamela* Richardson represents the successful transformation of an exemplar of Protestant virtue into an icon of sentimental of femininity, he chooses in *Clarissa* to imagine the potential detachment of this post-Reformation self from the secularizing structures of modern subjecthood. Pamela becomes at the end of Richardson's novel the "Example" that inspires her husband and former master's transformation into a man "remarkable for Piety, Virtue, and all the Social Duties of a Man and A Christian" (499). She puts the heroic virtue she displayed in refusing to make an "Exchange of [her] Honesty for all the riches of the *Indies*" to work on behalf of modern secular society, which comes to rely on the sentimental model of the family to both inspire more purchases and make this new system of commerce palatable to a sometimes shocked public (191). Richardson makes even more of an effort to represent his second heroine as a morally exemplary figure, distinguishing her in the first letter of the novel as someone whom all look to with the "expectation of an example" since she specializes in "excelling all [her] sex" (40). This second heroine, however, becomes the great rejoinder to Weber's classical argument on the fundamental continuity of Protestantism and capitalism by using her kingly post-Reformation aura to become an angel rather than a wife.

Clarissa assumes the angelic and kingly role of divine mediator, yet distinguishes herself from her medieval predecessors by withholding her immortal second body from the secular

cause of political unity, leaving her in the doubly liminal position of a failed or detached mediator. Richardson develops the character of Clarissa, as he explains in the postscript as well as in his private correspondence, in order to provide a society he perceived as increasingly sinful with a model of Christian virtue so nearly perfect that “HEAVEN *only* could reward [it]” (C 1498).¹⁷¹ The dramatic force of Richardson’s fictional narrative, however, exceeds these presumably good Anglican intentions and culminates with his heroine becoming an exemplary figure for the antinomian possibilities that lie within Martin Luther’s early sixteenth-century proclamation that all believers could through faith alone (*sola fide*) assume the shape and sovereignty of God. Luther demanded that his followers see something more in Christ than the momentary miracle of the divine taking mortal form; rather, he asks them to believe in Christ as a very present mode of being.

In his critique of historicist preachers, Luther portrays Christ as a synecdochal representative of the doubled being assumed by any person of faith:

But Christ ought to be preached to this end, ... that it is not enough that there is a Christ, but that he may be Christ (which is a Savior) unto thee and unto me: And that he does worke the same in us, which is mentioned of him, and is agreeable to the name whereby he is named: which faith springeth, flourisheth, and is preserved by this.... And this cometh to pass, where Christian libertie...is truly taught: and by what means we Christians are Kings and Priests wherein also we be Lords over all.... (CL 837)

Those satisfied by the pure actuality of the statement, “there is a Christ,” fail to understand that Christ represents not one miraculous occurrence or event amongst others, but instead marks the

¹⁷¹ In a letter to Lady Bradshaigh, Richardson cites the plight of religion as a defense of his novel’s severe ending: “Religion never was at so low an Ebb as at the present: And if my Work must be supposed of the Novel kind, I was willing to try if a Religious Novel would do good” (Oct. 26, 1750, Quoted in SR 222).

very possibility of the historical event itself. Christ, in other words, is for Luther the ur-event that first demonstrates the possibility of the transcendent incorporating itself into the material world. Luther insists on the phrase “he may be Christ unto thee and unto me” because it captures the conjunction of the potential and the actual that occurs when the perfected being of the divine endows the potentiality of the mortal believer, signified by the modal verb “may,” with the aura of full actuality. The lay believer thereby assumes the *character angelicus* once reserved only for the pre-modern ruler of church or state whose perfected second body of divine actuality ensured, in the words of Kantorowicz, that the sovereign “never dies; that he is free from the imbecility of infancy and the defects of old age; that he cannot sin or do wrong” (KB 495). The medieval guarantors of social order grounded their right to rule in an antinomian or lawless space of transcendence to which they alone had access. It was, in other words, a space beyond all law that gave the law its foundation. What Luther above all else seeks to demonstrate is that the Christ-event names the capacity for every mortal body to be raised to this lawless source of all law.

The sovereign privilege of lawlessness becomes in Luther’s theological system the common condition of every Christian believer:

Christian liberty...is spirituall, and true, making our hearts free from all sinnes, from all laws, and commandments (as *Paul* witnesseth in his first Epistle to *Timothy*, the first Chapter, *The law was not made for the just man*).... (CL 850)

Inheriting the doubled being of Christ, popes, and kings, the once undistinguished member of the Christian polity becomes a sovereign individual whose access to the transcendent source of all law renders sacred whatever he or she may choose to do in this no longer profane world.

Although Luther invents “antinomian” as a pejorative term for his contemporary Johanna Agricola’s outright rejection of the law, Luther’s struggle to endow each individual believer with

an angelic subjectivity was a decisive influence for contemporary as well as later antinomian heretics. When Luther states, “Good works do not make a good man, but a good man doth make the works to be good,” he elucidates the socially disruptive element of a theological system that will inspire later followers to assert that Christ’s presence within their souls frees them from the fallen state of guilt, sin, and law (CL 842).

Despite the horror with which he would greet this association, Luther stands alongside John Calvin as a forefather of the many heretical sects that sprang from the chaos of the English civil war, a period that witnessed the rise of groups such as the Ranters who staged ritualistic orgies of swearing and sex in an effort to demonstrate the irrelevance of law to a world that has already been saved. While the substance of the particularly notorious Ranter Abiezer Coppe’s declaration that “Sin and Transgression is finished and ended” certainly strays from Luther’s model, his justification for this assertion is in fact a mere reiteration of Luther’s insistence that Christ remains present within the souls of his followers: “That excellent Majesty, which dwels in the Writer of this Roule, hath reconciled ALL THINGS to himselfe.”¹⁷² Luther attempts in advance to avoid inspiring such heresies by counterbalancing his antinomian principle of liberty with the supposedly coequal principle that drives the heightened believer into his community in order to “minister to the necessity of thy neighbor” (CL 850). Since the individual believer comes to resemble Christ after being “raised by faith up above himself,” it seems logical to Luther that he would also follow Christ in freely and lovingly giving himself to society and its norms (CL 862). While Luther can assert that “out of Faith floweth” a concern for the fate of secular society, the fact remains that within his theological system this specific moral demand comes both chronologically and essentially second to the emancipatory condition of faith.

¹⁷² Coppe, Abiezer. “A Fiery Flying Roll.” *A Collection of Ranter Writings from the 17th Century*. Ed. Nigel Smith. London: Junction Books, 1983: 81, 86.

By grounding her withdrawal from society in the “the light of [her] own judgment,” Richardson’s heroine powerfully demonstrates the capacity for the internalization of divine authority to inspire anti-social acts of detachment (C 853). As a paragon of orthodox Anglican virtue, however, Clarissa’s perverse withdrawal suggests that heretical Christian separatism has its roots within the most canonical texts of the Protestant tradition. The historian Christopher Hill, in *The World Turned Upside Down* (1972), proposes that there were two revolutions during the English civil war, one that actually occurred and that hastened the rise of a mercantilist society, and “another revolution that never happened, though from time to time it threatened” to embark on the separatist path of “reject[ing] the protestant ethic” and constructing a society founded on the principle of “communal property.”¹⁷³ Hill himself complicates the idea that these revolutions can be so easily separated in an earlier essay, “Clarissa Harlowe and Her Times” (1955), in which he celebrates the paradoxical struggle of Richardson’s heroine to “break through the social conventions of her time by pressing to its ultimate implications the religious orthodoxy of her society.”¹⁷⁴ Clarissa exemplifies the religious values of the period and yet can find approval only in heaven, a tragic plight that demonstrates, in the words of Hill, “the breakdown of the noblest aspirations of Puritanism in the face of the realities of bourgeois society” (338).

As the exemplar of a faith that is supposedly supplanted by the economic system it gives rise to, Clarissa stands for Hill as a powerful symbol of the ultimate incompatibility of mainstream Protestant theology and commercial society. Although she belongs to an unfulfilled promise of a Puritan society, Clarissa nevertheless represents, according to Hill, a key forbearer for “the romanticism of the French revolutionary epoch,” which inherits the model of the

¹⁷³ Hill, Christopher. *The World Turned Upside Down*. New York: Penguin Books, 1984: 15.

¹⁷⁴ Hill, Christopher. “Clarissa Harlowe and her Times.” *Essays in Criticism*. 4 (1955): 337.

Protestant individual, only it more aggressively posits this “individual *against* society” rather than as “merely separated from it” (329). While Hill’s truly illuminating interpretation of *Clarissa* captures the way it undermines efforts to neatly oppose the moderate and extreme elements of the English civil war, it seems to suggest that the polyvalent function of Protestant theology ends with the ascent of commercial modernity. Despite going further than most to appreciate the significance of Clarissa’s revolt, Hill ultimately joins the rest of Richardson’s critics in viewing it as a failure that symbolizes the end of the era.

As important as Puritan theology is to Clarissa’s struggle, she is not simply the saintly embodiment of values supplanted by modernity. Like the heroines of *Moll Flanders* and *Fantomina* discussed in the previous chapter, Clarissa is a commodity heroine, only she is the commodity heroine gone awry. In the previous chapter, I implore the middle-class consumers of modern society to unequivocally embrace the sovereignty that lies within their kingly subjectivities and to finally look without reservation upon the world as a collection of objects that exist in order to satisfy their unnecessary and excessive appetites. My second chapter is an apologia for capitalism insofar as it calls for celebrating the way the modern market brings the once highly restricted domain of sovereignty and anti-utilitarian excess into the homes of the middle class. This chapter calls on these consuming subjects to relish their opportunity to purchase, consume, and adorn themselves with fashions since it is within the whirlwind of consumption that they will come to exercise the occult and excessive power of sovereignty. These middle-class consumers have yet to fully appreciate the sovereign privileges allotted to them by modernity; they are, however, even further from recognizing the possibilities that Clarissa Harlowe uncovers in the very heart of modernity.

Hill is right to separate Clarissa's militant Protestantism from the French revolutionaries that it nevertheless inspires. He errs, though, in representing the theological vision of an "individual...separated" from rather than opposed to society as a bygone possibility. Whereas the revolutionaries that spearheaded late eighteenth-century revolts in France, America, Haiti, and Ireland ultimately struggled to bring a more properly bourgeois society into existence, Clarissa fights to withdraw from it. Far from embodying a bygone era, Clarissa demonstrates how commodified subjects of middle-class society can achieve emancipatory states of detachment by submitting themselves to the divine sovereignty that lies at the foundation of the abstract, commercial value that gives their life meaning. In the previous chapter, I mean to encourage these commodified individuals to embrace the sovereign pleasure of approaching the world as its consuming master; I intend in this current chapter to celebrate the even higher pleasure of making sovereignty itself one's master. While Clarissa begins her journey in the position of the commodified individual, she ends it in the de-individualized state of a sign shrouded in the aura of death and the divinity it touches. Clarissa becomes an exemplar for the perversity of orthodox modernity because her narcissistic, masochistic, and ecstatic dissolution into language follows the antinomian path that Luther sketches in his struggle to democratize the authority of God.

Part Seven

Displacing Domination: Clarissa's Enjoyable Subjection to Writing, God, and Death

In an ultimately fruitless attempt to manage the antinomian possibilities of his doctrine, Luther begins his most well known work, “A Treatise on Christian Liberty,” by joining the divine aura of the believer with a normative compulsion to serve:

1. A Christian man is a most free Lord of all, subject to none.
2. A Christian man is a most dutifull servant of all, subject to all. (821)

Luther uses identical syntax to reinforce the supposedly unbreakable bond between the status of the believer as a truly sovereign and emancipated subject and, at the same time, dutifull “servant” to the secular authorities that govern his or her community. Tying together transcendent liberty and earthly submission, Luther articulates the internal tension that the contemporary philosopher Etienne Balibar has discovered in his philological analysis of the word “subject.” As Balibar explains, the French and English form of subject “retains in the equivocal unity of a single noun” the distinct Latin terms *subjectum* and *subjectus*; the former signifying that which underlies and bears an attribute and the latter an entity subjected to some higher authority.¹⁷⁵ In portraying political obedience as an effect of the transcendent freedom one bears in a post-Reformation world, Luther seeks to reconcile these competing forms of subjecthood in a pact that Richardson’s unruly heroine ultimately undoes.

By devoting herself absolutely to the word and to death, Clarissa manages to transform the political relationship implied by the normative second clause of Luther’s prescription for subjecthood (*subjectus*) into an interiorized and masochistic relationship with the divine sovereignty that she bears as a post-Reformation subject (*subjectum*). Richardson imagines a subject, in other words, who refuses to allow the relationship of obedience implied by the possession of a divine attribute to flow into the social realm of one’s community. His heroine

¹⁷⁵ Balibar, Etienne. “Citizen Subject.” *Who Comes After the Subject?* Eds. Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, and Jean-Luc Nancy. New York: Routledge: 1991: 38.

escapes the secular and modernizing authority of her brother, James Harlowe, and potential husband, Robert Lovelace, in the hopes not of rejecting sovereignty and submission altogether, but rather of making them a purely internal and transcendent affair. In their depictions of Clarissa's monastic period, Richardson's epistolary narrators emphasize her "angelic" nature and her masochistic insistence on "sacrificing her health" to writing and religious devotions (1103, 1100). Clarissa achieves the transcendent position of an angel, both within and beyond this world, and thereby fulfills Luther's promise that we may through faith alone allow God "to write his law in our hearts" (CL 463). She accomplishes this transformation, however, by narcissistically withdrawing into herself in order to intensify and perfect her submission to the interiorized authority of God and his word. Far from rejecting hierarchy and the necessity of submission, Clarissa simply displaces them from the secular context of a modernizing England to the theological context of her psyche and its relationship to the word.

While Nancy Armstrong has convincingly demonstrated how *Pamela* helps develop the modern model of the individual by shifting desire from the body to the disembodied realm of discourse, Richardson uncovers in *Clarissa* the possibility of using one's submission to the word as a means of escaping the very disciplinary society that makes this capitulation a necessity.¹⁷⁶ Just as Luther assured his followers, Clarissa comes to "dwell in God" by transforming herself into a subject of language, only she refuses to comply with the accompanying demand to be "throwne down beneath [her]self, toward [her] neighbor by love" (CL 850). As she explains to the few friends remaining during her final period, Clarissa instead directs her libidinal energy and love upon death:

¹⁷⁶ Armstrong, Nancy. *Desire and Domestic Fiction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987. Armstrong interprets the scene in which Mr. B strips Pamela in search of her letters as a demonstration of Richardson's strategy of "deflecting eroticism away from the material body and onto writing" (120).

I must say I dwell on, I indulge (and, strictly speaking I enjoy) the thoughts of death. For believe me...that there is a vast superiority of weight and importance in the thought of death, and its hoped-for happy consequences, that it in a manner annihilates all other considerations and concerns. (1306)

Clarissa privileges the “thought of death” as the essence of her religious practice; she realizes this practice, however, through writing. Masochistically committed to writing and the thought it makes possible, Clarissa embodies Luther’s convictions that “the sacred word of God...only and alone” is necessary to attain “life, righteousness, and Christian liberty” (CL 823, 822). Her devotion to the word coincides with a fixation upon death because it is death and only death that allows the word to travel from the transcendent domain of God to the interiority of Clarissa’s mortal life. As the possibility of material life assuming the immaterial form of not being, death joins the transcendent and the earthly into a living relationship that language incarnates.

The deconstructive moment in *Clarissa* criticism in the late 1970s and early 1980s never quite captured the significance of language to Richardson’s text because it insisted on portraying the determinative function that Jacques Derrida assigns to language in a secular light. Given Derrida’s highly influential turn to political theology later in his career, most notably in *Specters of Marx* (1994), it is certainly time to move past the old opposition between Lovelace as the deconstructive hero of linguistic determinism and Clarissa as the anachronistic saint of pre-linguistic meaning. By entering the coffin that she has used as a writing table and as a surface for inscriptions, Clarissa becomes, as the critic Terry Castle puts it, “like a letter in an envelope” who returns to her family’s home alongside the many letters she leaves behind in advance of her death, stimulating what Castle terms an “orgy of reading” (139). As the lifeless interior of her coffin’s text, Clarissa comes to personify, according to Castle, the chasm that separates language

and writing from any “‘natural’ point of origin” in the intention of a living author; she, in other words, gives dramatic form to the “hermeneutic situation” that prompts critics as wide ranging as Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Louis Althusser to proclaim the death of the author in the late 1960s (145). For Castle and other deconstructive critics, Clarissa’s death figuratively represents the ascent of a properly modern understanding of language as a secular space in which signifiers create meaning independently of God, man, or a pre-discursive world of things. The problem with such a reading is that it obscures the originary place of theology within the ascendant domain of language that subsumes Richardson’s heroine. Rather than signaling a new direction in her relationship to language, Clarissa’s transformation into the lifeless substance of text marks the culmination of her perversely modern struggle to become a pure object of God’s word.

As is the case for both Luther and Derrida, language in Richardson’s novel can never be entirely self-contained because it remains forever bound to the transcendent. In order to place “the thought of death” at the center of her life, Clarissa spends her final weeks using writing to dwell within the nothingness she will become. Clarissa’s final confidante and executor reports that she “was always writing” during her final weeks and in the letters she leaves behind Clarissa explicitly positions herself in the transcendent position of death (1368). While Clarissa sometimes expresses merely “hope” in attaining eternal life, she confides to her beloved nanny Mrs. Norton that she in fact “*knows[s]...all will be at last happy*” (1368, 1168). Given her distinctly Protestant assurance in her own salvation, Clarissa’s masochistic dedication in her final weeks to writing from the perspective of the dead represents an effort bring the anticipated aura of eternity into her mortal life. In the will she leaves for her estranged family, Clarissa writes from the perspective of one who can no longer write.

So much written about what deserves not the least consideration and about
what will be nothing when this writing comes to be opened and read.... (1413)

The triumphant irony of Clarissa's statement lies in the fact that it is precisely the "nothing" or not-being of death that allows her to be endowed with the sovereign authority of the divine. Clarissa discovers "a vast superiority...in the thought of death" because it is through contemplating the possibility of not-being that she becomes "exalted" or raised beyond herself by the power of the divine (1306, 853). In failing to see the centrality of death to Clarissa's life as an angelic subject, critics have not only obfuscated the significance of Richardson's novel for mid eighteenth-century England, but have also, and more importantly, obscured its relevance to our twenty-first-century moment.

Part Eight

The Entertainment Subject Can Be Made Holy and *Clarissa* Shows Us How

Clarissa is the heroic subject of an entertainment culture that has spread from its origins in early eighteenth-century England to become a global force determining the lives and subjectivities of ever greater numbers throughout the industrialized world. Withdrawn from the world and dedicated to her pen, Clarissa anticipates the paradigmatic scene of contemporary entertainment culture in which an individual sits over a computer in the privacy of the domestic sphere as the simultaneous master and slave of an entire world of representation. When Martin Heidegger states, in his essay "The Age of the World Picture" (1938), that "the fundamental event of the modern age is the conquest of the world as picture," he is naming this process through which the world becomes a collection of objects put on display for (*Vor-stellen*) a newly

sovereign human subject.¹⁷⁷ Writing in the early stages of this transformation, Richardson develops a novel way of responding to the captive position of the subject within the “world as picture” entertainment culture emerging in the eighteenth century. He imagines a heroine who manages to overcome the captivity of this position while remaining firmly ensconced within the entertainment culture of her era, namely, consumer society. Although entertainment culture now assumes many different mediums, it remains fundamentally textual insofar as it relies on the play of signifiers to create meaning. The written text also retains its symbolic importance as a kind of ur-commodity since, as Catherine Gallagher notes, it exemplified the “wavering immaterial materiality” of the commodity form long before the consumer age (NS xxiii). Richardson’s emphasis on Clarissa’s “natural talent” for writing letters, which threatens her familial as well as amorous captors, distinguishes her as a paragon of an eighteenth-century culture centered to a hitherto unimaginable extent on textual spectacles created for the entertainment of a growing middle class (C 1368). Clarissa’s masochistic commitment to and talent for writing makes her, in other words, an exemplar of both urban entertainment culture and Protestant theology, a dual role reflecting writing’s function as the emblematic means of incarnating abstract value in both its economic and divine forms.

Exceeding the role of exemplar, Clarissa stands as the hero of the commodified culture of entertainment that emerges in her period and flourishes in ours because she manages simultaneously to exemplify and to escape it. Clarissa escapes subjection to economic value and the broader world of representation by insisting on the necessity of devoting the entirety of herself to the God she posits at the foundation of these later spectacles. She comes to live in her final weeks on the ecstatic brink of self-dissolution through imploring this God to supplant her.

¹⁷⁷ Heidegger, Martin. “The Age of the World Picture.” *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. Trans. William Lovitt. New York Harper Torchbooks, 1982: 133, 131.

Clarissa continues to write letters and operate in the modern commercial world, but she does so while remaining fixated upon the possibility of dying and hence becoming one with the transcendent realm of not-being. The divine shadow of death enshrouds Clarissa and transforms her into an angel, both within and beyond this world.

In missing the essential role death plays in endowing Clarissa with a heroic form of life, critics have suppressed the way twentieth-century deconstructionism and sixteenth-century Protestantism overlap in the undoing of Clarissa's discursive self. The "trace" of representation that Derrida posits at the origin of language in *Of Grammatology* replaces the idea of a pre-discursive origin with an originary moment of "différance," a neologism that bestows both the alterity of inscription and the promise of redemption at the origin of language and the world (14). The notion of a pure origin is thus made, according to Derrida, "reciprocally by a nonorigin, the trace, which thus becomes the origin of the origin" (G 61). As the impossible moment in which the abstract assumes material form, Derrida's idea of originary *différance* represents a kind of re-articulation of Luther's model of Christ. Although certainly not intended, Luther's fixation on Christ establishes the possibility that the extra-discursive realm of the divine paradoxically begins only after it assumes human form and enters the world of signification. Just as the trace allows one to retrospectively constitute the idea of a pure origin, the Christ-event creates the possibility of retrospectively imagining a purely immaterial antecedent. The believer, as Luther asserts in his "Treatise on Christian Liberty," becomes committed to the pure origin of God through coming to dwell in Christ, "the shape of God," who establishes the possibility that the impossible origin will finally be realized in a future to come (848). Richardson's novel dramatizes the coincidence of these two models; its heroine becomes subject to the annihilating promise of pure transcendence embodied by the analogous figures of Christ and *différance*.

The truly great discovery of Richardson's novel, however, lies in the means through which its heroine becomes subject to the trace of Christ and the annihilating limit of pure transcendence. During her almost entirely discursive final weeks, Clarissa achieves a heroically annihilated existence by making death the central event of her life. As an immanent mark of transcendence, death exists within language, the world it creates, and the individuals it holds captive as an originary interruption that instills within all three the promise of an extra-discursive beyond. The central lesson of Clarissa's struggle is that those subject to modern society must seek their redemption not in fleeing it, but rather in masochistically and narcissistically embracing it. These militant lovers of modernity embrace modern society with the strategic aim of becoming wholly subject to the divinity that lies buried beneath the many centuries of its development. They will come, like her, to "indulge, and strictly speaking, ... enjoy the thoughts of death" since these thoughts, which they too will pen on coffins in clandestine quarters, possess a "superiority" so supreme that it "annihilates all other considerations and concerns" (1306). Clarissa tells the individuals captivated by the spectacle of modern life that passes before them on their entertainment devices to remain fixated, but to perfect their subjection by focusing it on the trace of the divine that lies at the foundation of these representations.

The middle-class subjects of entertainment culture have supplanted God as the foundation of the world and if they ever want to escape it, then they must offer to give it back. Far from marking a simple return to a pre-modern era of blind faith, this act of renunciation marks modernity's highest possible form. Narcissistically fixated on the divinity at the foundation of their modern selves, these empowered subjects of modernity will discover the supreme superiority that lies in renouncing their sovereign place as the underlying basis (*subjectum*) of the world. Democratized from a once highly restricted world of kings and popes,

God will enter their psyches as their sadist master and they will follow Clarissa in learning to savor the unspoken supremacy of the masochist. Refusing the secular residue that history has piled upon the promise of the originary *différance* of the Christ-event, these Clarissans will become exemplary masochists, devoted to the annihilation that lies within them as the innermost secret of their modern selves. They will find an emancipated existence in its wake, the heroic life of the nearly absolutely static.

Chapter Four

Never Getting Home: The Unfulfilled Promise of Maria Edgeworth's *The Absentee*

In her four early nineteenth-century Irish tales, Maria Edgeworth appears to show the rational and ethical necessity of England and Ireland forming a cosmopolitan union in accordance with the Enlightenment values of tolerance and rational self-interest.¹⁷⁸ Published eleven years after the Union of 1801, *The Absentee* seems to envision the redemption of the Irish peasantry and the English colonial project through the restoration of the Clonbrony family to their proper home or place among their Irish tenants. Yet the culmination of *The Absentee*, like Edgeworth's other Irish tales, ultimately exemplifies the logic of the uncanny, which Freud articulates in his seminal essay "The 'Uncanny,'" in that the final, seemingly most reassuring moment of the novel, harbors a dangerous secret behind its homely or *heimlich* appearance.¹⁷⁹ Through the failed culmination of *The Absentee*'s redemptive promise, Edgeworth not only demonstrates the impossibility of the cosmopolitan ideal but also the hidden nationalism that grounds Immanuel Kant's original vision of the cosmopolitan end of history. By locating the fulfillment of Ireland's tumultuous past within a final cosmopolitan union, Edgeworth seeks to exorcise the ghostly presence of rebellion from early nineteenth-century Irish society. To conduct this exorcism, Edgeworth employs the strategy of conjuration that, as Derrida has noted in *Specters of Marx*, always fails since it invokes or conjures up the very specter that it seeks to

¹⁷⁸ These include *Castle Rackrent* in 1800, *Ennui* in 1809, *The Absentee* in 1812, and *Ormond* in 1817. Although not a tale, *Irish Bulls*, the essay that she composed with her father in 1805, could be added to this list.

¹⁷⁹ Sigmund Freud, "The 'Uncanny,'" in *Writings on Art and Literature*, trans. under the general editorship of James Strachey, in collaboration with Anna Freud, assisted by Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

conjure away.¹⁸⁰ The subtle references to rebellion and cultural difference that fracture the culminating moment of *The Absentee* mark the impossibility of the West's secular crusade to reach the end of history by transforming the global multitude into obedient citizens of a single, permanent state. This vision of a perpetual present safe from the conflicts of the past as well as the future is at the heart of Edgeworth's national tale; it is, however, a heart that is haunted by everything it claims to have overcome.

Despite her more explicit engagement with intellectual figures closer to home, such as Edmund Burke and Adam Smith, Edgeworth's vision of a mutually beneficial union of Ireland and England reflects the political and moral tenets of Kant with whose work she was at least familiar.¹⁸¹ As Marilyn Butler emphasizes in her literary biography, Edgeworth bears the "intellectual stamp of a generation, or half a generation, earlier than that of her own early adulthood" and "belongs, intellectually as well as aesthetically, with the generation which matured before the French Revolution."¹⁸² Since Butler provides evidence that Edgeworth's younger step-brother Francis Beaufort knew Kant's work well, it is probable that the Edgeworth family library included his major works (470). While Edgeworth's relationship to the work of Kant may still appear distant, her more overt engagement with the work of Adam Smith points to

¹⁸⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge Classics, 2006): see pages 50-58 for a discussion of the paradoxical double movement involved in every act of conjuration.

¹⁸¹ For an insightful analysis of *The Absentee*'s relation to Burke's philosophy, see Mary Jean Corbett, "Public Affections and Familial Politics: Burke, Edgeworth, and the 'Common Naturalization' of Great Britain," *English Literary History* 61.4 (1994). The following essay offers an account of Edgeworth's relationship to Smith: Fraser Easton, "Cosmopolitical Economy: Exchangeable Value and National Development in Adam Smith and Maria Edgeworth," *Studies in Romanticism* 42.1 (2003). Although both very helpful, neither of these essays recognize that Edgeworth's novels often fail to represent the theoretical models that she claims to advocate.

¹⁸² Marilyn Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972) 66, 391.

the correspondence between his concepts of sympathy and the free market and Kant's ideas of the moral imperative and the cosmopolitan end of history. The protagonists in both of Edgeworth's Irish tales *Ennui* and *Ormond* must learn to sympathize not upon the basis of "good feeling," but rather upon "principle" since only this can guarantee any "security for the future."¹⁸³ Edgeworth's lesson in rational sympathy draws upon both Smith's reformulation of sympathy as an intellectual exercise in which the spectator imagines himself within the position of the person principally concerned and Kant's demand for the individual to envision the universal application of the moral laws he develops for himself through the free exercise of his capacity for reason.¹⁸⁴ Within both of these formulations, an intellectual abstraction mediates an individual's interaction with his environment in order to ensure that his actions stem not from involuntary corporeal sensations but rather from rational judgments. The subjection of the physical relations between bodies to the dictates of reason guarantees the security of the utopian future that Edgeworth attempts to imagine in *The Absentee*.

The resurgence of interest in cosmopolitanism in the past twenty years has led to a number of attempts to develop theories that retain the term cosmopolitanism while avoiding the Eurocentric universalism implicit in its Enlightenment form. In an effort to affirm a "positive" notion of cosmopolitanism, thinkers such as Bruce Robbins have given the concept more flexible open-ended definitions like "a density of overlapping allegiances" or "an impulse to knowledge

¹⁸³ Maria Edgeworth, *Ormond*, in *The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth*, vol. VIII, ed. Claire Connolly (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1999) 54.

¹⁸⁴ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D.D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976) 9.

Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 15.

that is shared with others.”¹⁸⁵ While Robbins’s reformulation accomplishes his objective of legitimating the new worldliness of intellectual activity, it marks a turn away from examining exactly how the Enlightenment concept of cosmopolitanism manifests itself in our current historical conjuncture. By focusing on how cosmopolitanism actually functions in the present, Pheng Cheah is able to make the observation that “the forms of transnational activity we are witnessing today are not new cosmopolitanisms but are instead aporetic cases of nationalism as given culture in a cosmopolitical force field.”¹⁸⁶ Rather than representing a departure from the forgotten ideal of enlightened cosmopolitanism, the nationalism inherent in the economic and political process of globalization has a precursor in the evangelical nationalism which grounds Kant’s early formulations of cosmopolitanism.

Kant formulated his vision of man’s cosmopolitan future in the late eighteenth-century political tracts, “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose” (1784) and “Perpetual Peace: a Philosophical Sketch” (1795).¹⁸⁷ In these sweeping philosophical sketches, Kant posits the ethical necessity and rational possibility of a global federation of states founded upon the rights of man. Kant grounds the right of men to freely exercise their reasoning capacity in a teleological conception of Nature that authorizes precisely the type of imperial domination that Kant’s argument sought to eliminate. Since world affairs appear driven by “childish malice and destructiveness,” Kant theorizes that the philosopher must “attempt to discover a *purpose in nature*...and decide whether it is after all possible to formulate in terms of a definite plan of

¹⁸⁵ Bruce Robbins, “Comparative Cosmopolitanism,” in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, ed. Bruce Robbins and Pheng Cheah (University of Minnesota Press, 1998) 250, 259.

¹⁸⁶ Pheng Cheah, “Given Culture: Rethinking Cosmopolitical Freedom in Transnationalism,” *boundary 2* 24.2 (1997) 160.

¹⁸⁷ Immanuel Kant, “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose” and “Perpetual Peace: a Philosophical Sketch,” in *Kant’s Political Writings*, trans. H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970). Cited parenthetically hereafter as ICP and PP.

nature a history of creatures who act without a plan of their own” (ICP 42). Kant begins his investigation of man with the observation that “nature gave man reason, and freedom of will based upon reason, and this in itself was a clear indication of nature’s intention as regards his endowments” (ICP 43). The gift of reason enables Kant to understand the totality of human existence as the history of Nature’s struggle to realize its purpose through the self-interested actions of men.¹⁸⁸ Once grounded in a universal concept of Nature, Kant’s philosophy can explain the meaningless violence and chaos of human affairs in terms of a disembodied, moral plan.

Upon the basis of “the definite plan of nature,” Kant develops a dialectical notion of the origin of human communities which implies the eventual transformation of these plural communities into a global *polis*. The opposing impulses to “*live in society*” and “*live as an individual*” constitute for Kant man’s essential “*unsocial sociability*” (ICP 44). The desire to distinguish himself as an individual through the accumulation of “honor, power, or property” binds man to a community that consists of relations of mutual hostility (ICP 44).¹⁸⁹ Through this foundational antagonism, Nature encourages man to develop the distinctive capacity for reasoning that allows him to exercise power over his competitors. For Kant, the antisocial antagonisms of men guarantee the unity of society and the necessity of the state. In this dialectical progression of history, “a *pathologically* enforced social union is transformed into a *moral whole*” as men participate in the continual process of enlightenment (ICP 45). The state

¹⁸⁸ Kant’s progressive conception of human history can be read as a philosophical elaboration of the Scottish Enlightenment’s theory of stadialism.

¹⁸⁹ Kant’s explanation for the development of society is structurally analogous to Smith’s claim in *The Wealth of Nations* that the division of labor emerges not from “human wisdom,” but rather from the “propensity in human nature...to truck, barter and exchange one thing for another” (117). For Smith, one pursues these economic relations in order to satisfy one’s self-interest, which, as in Kant, works as the hidden engine of a disembodied, inherently moral plan. See Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (London: Penguin Classics, 1986).

requires a “perfectly just civil constitution” and “irresistible force” in order to protect the freedom of each citizen within a “moral whole” constituted by antagonistic forces (ICP 46). Although only explicitly a theory of origin, Kant’s vision of the dialectical origin of human society already poses the necessity of its fulfillment in a cosmopolitan future since the constitutive antagonisms of individual states will also determine their interactions with other states.

Kant identifies the history of violence between states as the condition of possibility for an international federation of republics that will transform their domestic rights into “a universal right of humanity” (PP 108). The same opposing impulses that compel individuals to join states demand that these states establish “a federation of peoples...within which the rights of each [nation] could be secured” (PP 102). Although these individual states may fail to realize the ethical necessity of forming an international federation of peace, their self-interested desire to avoid wars will eventually compel them to submit to a cosmopolitan constitution. Nature therefore uses the very desire of states to conquer one another as the means to secure a perpetual peace insured by a voluntary organization of states. According to this teleological model, humans unknowingly realize the moral plan of Nature to guarantee the freedom of every individual. From the perspective of Kant, “the worst (or from the point of view of moral judgments, the best) thing” about the history of slavery and colonization “is that the commercial states do not even benefit by their violence, for all their trading companies are on the point of collapse” (PP 107). Since the violent oppression of other nations fails to contribute to the self-interest of the oppressor states, colonization is not only ethically wrong but also profoundly irrational. The ignorant malice of commercial societies in the late eighteenth-century confirms Kant’s faith in the cosmopolitan future to which humans unknowingly contribute. Kant’s

eschatological conception of history justifies his assertion that this cosmopolitan future will ultimately redeem the horrors of colonization, slavery, and war. Rooted in the “original providence” that has predetermined “the objective goal of the human race,” Kant’s moral system perceives the worst aspects of imperial expansion as Nature’s most expedient means of realizing its moral end (PP 108).

Although Kant identifies the cosmopolitan federation of states as a voluntary contract between equal parties, the expansiveness of his concept of Nature as the ultimate agent of the human race’s “objective goal” represents a form of evangelical nationalism in itself.¹⁹⁰ In a revealing discussion of the difficulty of perceiving “the hidden mechanisms of nature’s scheme,” Kant reminds his enlightened readers that human actions can only be understood within a “*system*” (ICP 52). Kant betrays the cultural and geographic singularity of this supposedly universal system when he offers the following exposition of nature’s scheme:

For if we start out from *Greek* history as that which all other earlier or contemporary histories are preserved or at least authenticated, if we next trace the influence of the Greeks upon the shaping and mis-shaping of the body politic of *Rome*, which engulfed the Greek state, and follow down to our times the influence of Rome upon the *Barbarians* who in turn destroyed it, and if we finally add the political history of other peoples

¹⁹⁰ The mid twentieth-century French philosopher of science, Georges Canguilhem, has beautifully expressed this paradox of Enlightenment values: “The relativism and tolerance of the eighteenth century were inseparable from the essentially normative idea of progress. But progress was not conceived in terms of a relation of values; it was identified with the final value in a series, the one that transcended the others and in terms of which they were judged. That is why tolerance was the value in the name of which one became intolerant, and relativity the value in the name of which one became absolute” (365). I have used the phrase “evangelical nationalism” to describe this eschatological final term which marks the end of history and the position from which one can organize history into a hierarchy of progressive stages. See Georges Canguilhem, *A Vital Rationalist: Selected Writings*, ed. Francois Delaporte, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Zone Books, 2000).

episodically, in so far as knowledge of them has gradually come down to us through these enlightened nations, we shall discover a regular process of improvement in the political constitutions of our continent (which will probably legislate eventually for all continents). (ICP 52)

With each conditional phrase, Kant marks another step in the process of organizing the imagined lineage of modern European culture into a system with a purposive function. If it were not for the final parenthetical statement, his explanation would leave open the possibility that other cultures could have developed according to the same teleological model. The speculation however that “our continent” will “legislate eventually for all continents” implies that Nature has chosen the European continent as the vehicle through which it will fulfill the destiny of the human race (ICP 52).¹⁹¹

The European nationalism within Kant’s vision of the cosmopolitan end of history is already contained in the totalizing concept of Nature with which he begins his analysis. Perhaps in spite of himself, Kant privileges “enlightened” or European nations within his model of a cosmopolitan universe governed by the republican values of freedom, independence, and equality. In the critical debates surrounding *The Absentee*, there has been a tendency to suppress the nationalism that grounds the Enlightenment theory of cosmopolitanism in order to neatly oppose it to Burkean nationalism. Upon the basis of this opposition, many critics have identified Edgeworth as a mediating figure between these two extremes. In the words of Esther Wohlgenut, Edgeworth’s writing “cuts across the ideological shift from eighteenth-century cosmopolitanisms to nineteenth-century nationalisms, refusing binary opposition and positing

¹⁹¹ Cheah’s assertion that Kant’s philosophical cosmopolitanism is a “secular religion” or a “humanist ontotheology” is particularly relevant here since Kant’s humanist and ontological presuppositions of man’s inherent nature enable him to articulate an end of history with clearly religious overtones (Cheah 177).

what might be called a rooted cosmopolitan judgment.”¹⁹² Following a similar line of interpretation, Mitzi Myers argues that Edgeworth develops an “Enlightened meliorism” that promises “to unite warring camps and reactivate the affections that heal clashing families-and nations” through “the arts of accommodation and embodied rationality.”¹⁹³ Wohlgenut and Myers both develop mediating concepts that ironically presuppose the very opposition between nationalism and cosmopolitanism that they seek to overcome. By revealing the European nationalism that grounds the Enlightenment notion of cosmopolitanism, Edgeworth insists on the fundamental interpenetration of these two terms. Edgeworth’s novel *The Absentee* represents Kant’s universal community of “civilized peoples” as the unity of European imperial powers (PP 103).

With the friendship of Sir James Brooke, a military officer associated with the Protestant Ascendancy, and Count O’Halloran, a veteran of the Austrian service and a figure of the suppressed Catholic nobility, *The Absentee* displays the capacity of cosmopolitan values to resolve the national and religious conflicts within the European community. When the Anglo-Irish protagonist Lord Colambre returns to Ireland, Edgeworth establishes the redemptive promise of *The Absentee* through the education that he receives from Sir James Brooke and Count O’Halloran in the moral exercise of imperial authority. Since they bestow their values of tolerance and rational judgment upon a representative of the post-Union generation of landowning Irishmen, these cosmopolitan mentors help create the expectation that *The Absentee* will imaginatively accomplish Ireland’s salvation. Edgeworth grounds the symbolic union of Count O’Halloran and Sir James Brooke in the identical method that they advocate for rationally

¹⁹² Esther Wohlgenut, “Maria Edgeworth and the Question of National Identity,” *Studies in English Literature* 39.4 (1999) 656.

¹⁹³ Mitzi Myers, “War Correspondence: Maria Edgeworth and the En-gendering of Revolution, Rebellion, and Union,” *Eighteenth-Century Life* 22.3 (1998) 83, 79.

evaluating both women and the colonized Irish masses. When Lord Colambre arrives in Ireland, he finds himself “surrounded and attacked by a swarm of beggars and harpies, with strange figures and stranger tones.”¹⁹⁴ The unruly crowd makes Lord Colambre’s native land appear strange and unfamiliar. To maintain the redemptive promise of her hero’s return to Ireland, Edgeworth quickly introduces him to Sir James whom Lord Colambre finds discussing “the beauties and defects of the city of Dublin” with other Irish and Scottish officers in a coffee house near the port (A 65).¹⁹⁵ From his military experience in Ireland, presumably in the English campaign to quell the 1798 Rebellion and the intermittent agrarian revolts in the first decade of the nineteenth century, Sir James has gained knowledge of the particular “habits” and “characteristics” of the people in each county of Ireland (A 65).¹⁹⁶ The narrator portrays Sir James, with his knowledge of Ireland and his capacity for moral judgment, as Colambre’s ideal mentor as he struggles to make an initially strange country familiar and comprehensible. In addition to recommending a number of books, he saves “our young observer...from the common error of travelers-the deducing [of] general conclusions from a few particular cases...”(A 65). As a liberal military figure in the mold of General Cornwallis, Sir James encourages Colambre to adopt the perspective of a benevolent imperialist who believes that the “swarm of beggars and harpies” can be transformed into orderly and dutiful servants.

¹⁹⁴ Maria Edgeworth, *The Absentee*, in *The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth*, vol. V, ed. Heidi Van de Veire, Kim Walker, and Marilyn Butler (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1999) 64. Cited parenthetically hereafter as A.

¹⁹⁵ This cosmopolitan scene clearly resembles the coach ride in the *Irish Bulls* (1805) in which an Irishman, Scotsman, and Englishman discuss the prevalence of “bulls” or linguistic blunders in every language and culture.

¹⁹⁶ See S.J. Connolly, “Aftermath and Adjustment,” in *A New History of Ireland: Volume V, Ireland Under the Union 1801-1870*, ed. W.E. Vaughan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) 17. Cited hereafter as *A New History of Ireland: Volume V*. Set during the early years of the Napoleonic wars (1803-1815), *The Absentee* occurs during the tumultuous decade following the 1798 Rebellion.

Edgeworth interrupts Lord Colambre and Sir James's developing friendship with "orders for his [James's] regiment to march to quarters in a distant part of Ireland" to presumably subdue one of the many peasant revolts that shook post-Union Ireland (A 78). In her only explicit acknowledgement of these persistent conflicts, Edgeworth registers the political unrest that continues to plague Ireland and interrupt any narrative of its redemption. With the adjective "distant," Edgeworth emphasizes the geographic and moral remoteness of this military operation conducted literally beyond the pale of Dublin. In a "distant" part of Ireland Sir James will march without the discriminating gaze of the omniscient narrator who will continue to tell the redemptive story that these military operations make possible. The reminder of Sir James's military function in Ireland complicates the earlier impression that he employs his knowledge of Irish society only to defend it from English prejudice and promote a balanced understanding of its character. Rather than contemplating the "beauties and defects" of Ireland, his head is "now fully of arms, and ammunition, and knapsacks, and billets, and routes..." (A 78). Through her depiction of Sir James's capacity for moral judgment and military conquest, Edgeworth offers a more complete vision of the Kantian project of constituting a global federation of republics. She literalizes her metaphorical depiction of the crowd who "surrounded and attacked" Colambre upon his arrival in Ireland with a reference to the political unrest that must remain external to her imaginative struggle for social harmony. Sir James exits the liberal narrative of reconciliation to subdue the "lawless freedom of savages" who threaten to subvert the novel's vision of perpetual peace founded upon contractual rights (PP 102).

Through his friendship with Count O'Halloran, a figure of national and religious difference, Lord Colambre reinforces his commitment to bestowing his affection according to virtue rather than national and religious affiliations. In his "fine old" castle, "part of it in ruins,"

Count O'Halloran appears in the novel as a respectable relic of an earlier imperial moment (A 89). During Count O'Halloran's first encounter with Lord Colambre, he offers warm praise for the Union and expresses his confidence that as the English and Irish "discover more of each other's good qualities, and interchange little good offices in common life, their esteem and affection for each other [will] increase, and rest upon the firm basis of mutual utility" (A 91). Given his affiliation with a Catholic empire and a suppressed Catholic nobility, it is surprising and, from the narrator's perspective, commendable that Count O'Halloran supports a Union that did not institute Catholic rights in Ireland.¹⁹⁷ In the words Thomas Pakenham, a historian of the 1798 Rebellion, the Union was "merely a union with the Protestant party in Ireland," a party which represented roughly 10 percent of the population (406). As a cultivated gentleman of "honorable conduct and generous character," the Count has the capacity to examine the Union according to the universal dictates of reason (A 99). The Count further demonstrates his miraculous support for political causes in opposition to his own interest through his friendship with the Oranmores, a family whose name links them to the Protestant extremist group known as the "Orangemen."¹⁹⁸ Not without some irony, O'Halloran promises Colambre that the politically privileged Oranmores possess the "best manner of living of the Irish nobility" (A 100). Edgeworth nevertheless portrays Colambre's visit to the Oranmores as an important lesson in

¹⁹⁷ See Thomas Pakenham, *The Year of Liberty: The Story of the Great Irish Rebellion of 1798* (London: Granada Publishing, 1972) 404.

¹⁹⁸ After a battle with the Catholic agrarian society "the Defenders," a group of militant Protestants established the "Orange Society" in 1795. By the 1798 Rebellion, the group, whom the government disliked but tolerated in the name of political expediency, had built up its membership to nearly 100,000. The "Orangemen," as they were called, were a valuable asset in suppressing the rebellion through various strong-arm tactics such as flogging and 'pitch-cap' (a 'cap' of pitch was mixed with gunpowder and then ignited upon the head of a suspected rebel). For further reference see Pakenham, 165-167 and *A New History of Ireland: Volume IV, Eighteenth-Century Ireland 1691-1800*, ed. T.W. Moody and W.E. Vaughan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) 347. Cited hereafter as *A New History of Ireland: Volume IV*.

enlightenment values since it is in their company that he learns that “well informed” and “well-bred” people are the result of a sound education rather than their religious or national identity (A 100). Within the redemptive arc of the novel, the Oranmores represent another addition to Colambre’s cosmopolitan network of rational affection that teaches him to make moral judgments in the absence of political, religious, or national considerations.

The code of names that Edgeworth inserts into her narrative, however, silently undermines her Kantian utopia of a cosmopolitan Irish community that has transcended its history of conflict. By choosing the name Count O’Halloran, Edgeworth associates her figure of enlightened tolerance not only with a recently hostile foreign military but also with the well-known Catholic historian of medieval Ireland and anti-Union campaigner Sylvester O’Halloran. In the essay *Irish Bulls*, Edgeworth criticizes the historian O’Halloran’s nationalist sentiments since they prevent him from acknowledging the real progress of Irish society under English rule.¹⁹⁹ The miraculous and even fantastical transformation of this patriot historian into a government loyalist bestows a sense of uncertainty upon the sincerity of Count O’Halloran’s avowed political sentiments. In addition to the historian Sylvester O’Halloran, Edgeworth appears to also receive inspiration for the character of Count O’Halloran from “Edgeworth family lore concerning their eccentric, unaccommodated neighbor” and politically active Catholic peer, Robert Barnewall, who like the Count collected animal skeletons and exotic pets.²⁰⁰ Since the Barnewall family was closely intermarried with the Nugents, the association of Count O’Halloran with Robert Barnewall reiterates his special relationship to *The Absentee*’s

¹⁹⁹ Maria Edgeworth, *Irish Bulls*, in *The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth*, vol. I, ed. Jane Desmarais, Tim McLoughlin, and Marilyn Butler (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1999) 152-153.

²⁰⁰ W.J. McCormack and Kim Walker, introduction to *The Absentee*, by Maria Edgeworth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) xxv.

heroine Grace Nugent. The title of Count itself subtly echoes the Nugent family since their many Catholic branches in Longford and Westmeath had a number of sons receive such titles from Catholic monarchs on the Continent.²⁰¹

During Colambre's first visit to the O'Halloran castle, he discovers a book with a chapter on "the burial place of the Nugents" and receives a gift of a Nugent family urn from the generous Count (A 94). The gift to Colambre of an urn containing the ashes of a Nugent family member represents another interruption of the novel's rhetoric of reconciliation since it marks the redeemed nationalist and antiquarian's reassertion of the antagonisms buried in Ireland's past. With the transmission of these ashes to her young protagonist, Edgeworth foreshadows the tension inherent in Colambre's marriage to a woman associated with the radicalized memory of the Catholic nobility. His inheritance of the Nugent family urn from his enlightened mentor anticipates the novel's ambivalent dénouement in which it is unclear whether Colambre has perfected a cosmopolitan union or achieved the restoration of the dispossessed Catholic ruling class. By subtly disrupting her vision of cosmopolitan unity with relics of the past, Edgeworth characteristically inscribes the paradox of conjuration within her novel. In the character of Count O'Halloran, Edgeworth exemplifies the double bind of conjuration since she simultaneously eliminates and resurrects the memory of political and religious conflict among the Irish gentry.

Despite the undercurrent of tension, Count O'Halloran introduces Colambre to the responsibility of the enlightened landowner to employ his superior education and reasoning capacity for the improvement of his tenants. Edgeworth's depiction of the total dissolution of social order on the Clonbrony estate seems to reference the chaos that dominated Ireland during the 1798 Rebellion in order to both frighten and reassure her absentee readers. After highlighting

²⁰¹ Heidi Van de Veire, Kim Walker, and Marilyn Butler, "Introductory Note," *The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth*, vol. V (London, Pickering and Chatto, 1999) xxiii.

the miraculous power of a “great proprietor” during Colambre’s visit to the Oranmores, Edgeworth uses the Clonbrony estate to demonstrate the dreadful consequences that ensue when this god-like responsibility is neglected (A 101). The two towns on the Clonbrony estate, Nugent’s town and Clonbrony, provide a lesson to Colambre on the barbarism to which unregulated tenants will succumb if abandoned by their masters. When Colambre attempts to visit the Clonbrony church, he finds a locked and broken gate, “a calf, two pigs, and an ass, in the churchyard; and several boys (with more of skin apparent than clothes) playing at pitch and toss upon a tombstone, which, upon nearer observation, he saw was the monument to his own family” (A 122). The presence of grazing animals in the space in which the town should have paid its respect to the highest power indicates a total confusion in the hierarchy of being. The half-naked boys playing alongside the animals complete this portrait of the “lawless freedom” of savages who live according to the base appetites that they share with animals (PP 102). In this state of anarchy, the space once devoted to the higher authority of the church and the ruling family becomes simply another place to eat and play.

Without their masters, Edgeworth suggests that these Irish peasants will inevitably devolve into a less than human existence, which assumed a political form in the violent mobs that descended upon towns in the 1798 Rebellion. Thomas Pakenham has put together the following account of one such mob that marched on the southern town of New Ross in early June:

It was a whole Countryside in motion, an army of Country people complete with village women, all swept by the same convulsion. A few priests marched along with their parishioners, some armed with pikes, others with crucifixes, women carried the bedding and the cooking pots; there were quantities of beer and mutton, whiskey by the barrel.

When the procession halted, it was like a Country fair; when it marched, it was like a terrifying sort of pilgrimage. (221)

Although the United Irish leaders, typically educated followers of revolutionary Enlightenment philosophy, attempted to organize Irish peasants into a well-disciplined army, their movement was overrun by the chaotic desire of sectarian mobs in the overwhelmingly Catholic southern provinces. The republican ideals of the United Irish leaders dissolved in the midst of these southern revolts when their army, consisting primarily of poor Catholic peasants, began to violently persecute Protestants.²⁰² The leader of the army marching on New Ross, the Protestant landlord and United Irish general Bagenal Harvey, was “sickened by the turn of events” but unable to restrain his raging army of nearly eight thousand people (Pakenham 220). The image of “a whole Countryside in motion” haunts the narrator’s description of the social disorganization and decay that Colambre discovers in his family’s towns. The animals that graze upon the Clonbrony churchyard while neglected children play nearby registers the particular anxiety produced by the disruption of gender roles during the 1798 Rebellion which seemed to mark the dissolution of the traditional family and, by extension, the stable society that it had guaranteed.

As a result of the lack of discipline and organization within the United Irish army, which one historian has described as an “armed crowd,” the Rebellion witnessed flagrant violations of the gender norms that ideally anchored both the traditional family and the state (*A New History of Ireland: Volume IV* 353). When a victorious rebel force of fifteen thousand marched through the southern town of Wexford, respectable classes of every denomination confronted the terror of

²⁰² Both sides of the rebellion executed civilians. In one ghastly incident in the Wexford Republic, the notorious Captain Dixon led a mob drunk on whiskey in the execution of ninety-seven supposedly pro-government prisoners (Pakenham 291).

an armed mob that rejected the foundations of economic and familial order. One Wexford loyalist's testimony captures the sense of shock inspired by such a spectacle:

They made a most fantastic appearance, many having decorated themselves with parts of the apparel of ladies, found in the houses they had plundered. Some wore ladies' hats and feathers, others, caps, bonnets and tippets.²⁰³

With the image of peasants adorned in ladies' apparel marching triumphantly through town, this loyalist expresses the inversion of social order through the language of gender confusion. Since the word 'plunder' signifies a disregard for the rights of private property, it contextualizes the transgression of gender norms within the broader threat of a complete dissolution of social order. As Mitzi Myers has noted, "the cross-dressing that turns up in many witness' records...epitomizes the more general blurring of boundaries that civil war entails..." (76).

Although it has become commonplace to view the rebellion in Wexford as "a sectarian war" that lacked the radical "economic or social programme" espoused by rebels in the north, the image of peasants in fine ladies' accessories actually indicates the presence of a radical political sensibility among the Wexford rebels (*A New History of Ireland: Volume IV* 357). Particularly in the month of May, the rebel's choice of accessories-hats, bonnets, scarves, and feathers-articulates the absurdity of the superfluous wealth possessed by the Irish elite. With catechisms such as "Our miserable and confined commerce is calculated rather to injure the poor...our exports are necessaries of life taken from them who labor, and our imports luxuries to pamper the idle," the Wexford rebels possessed a decidedly revolutionary doctrine of class revolt.²⁰⁴ Rather than

²⁰³ Quoted by Pakenham, 205. Taken from Charles Jackson, *A narrative of the sufferings and escapes of Charles Jackson late resident at Wexford in Ireland, including an account by way of journal of several barbarous atrocities committed in June 1798 by the Irish rebels...to the greater part of which he was eye-witness* (London: James Bateson, 1799).

²⁰⁴ Quoted by Pakenham, 286. Taken from the *Richard Musgrave Depositions*, Trinity College.

impinging upon their political consciousness, the mob-like quality of the Wexford uprising actually contributed towards the development of a radical egalitarianism founded not upon reason but upon the insatiable and immediate desires of the multitude. In response to the spectacle of women brandishing swords, men dressing as women, and priests using crucifixes as weapons, Edgeworth offers a conjuration that transcribes the threat of complete disorder as an entirely self-destructive process.

In her description of the Clonbrony tenants, Edgeworth translates the threat of rebellion into a thoughtless process of degradation put into motion by absentee landlords. While traveling incognito to the Clonbrony estate with the postillion Larry Brady, Colambre encounters “four-and-twenty men and boys, sitting astride on four-and-twenty heaps of broken stones...all armed with hammers” (A 109). Given the widespread use of tools as weapons in agrarian revolts, Edgeworth’s choice of the verb “armed” underlines the danger posed by unsupervised groups of workers. Through Larry’s explanation that “it’s only bad just hereabouts...on account of there being no jantleman resident in it,” Edgeworth displaces the threat of this potential mob by assigning responsibility for it to the absence of an effective ruler (A 108). During his visit, Colambre also learns of the illegal distillery trade flourishing on his family’s estate.²⁰⁵ After helping a local distiller escape a gauger, Larry explains that the locals refer to illegal whiskey as *pot-sheen* “because it’s...made in the private still or pot; and *sheen*, because it’s a fond word for whatsoever we’d like, and for what we have little of, and would make much of...”(A 113). Larry’s expansive definition of the Anglo-Gaelic word *potsheen* reveals the symbolic function of whiskey as a marker of the threatening desire and difference of peasants tied to a native Gaelic

²⁰⁵ Late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century social reformers were “very concerned to try to shift alcohol consumption among the poor from whiskey to beer,” but “unfortunately, whiskey was the most easily manufactured illicitly” (*A New History of Ireland: Volume IV* 673). Whiskey houses were also often used by rebels as meeting places (Pakenham 83).

culture. By rendering the object of their desire as whiskey, Edgeworth tactfully eliminates the political threat from the unsatisfied needs of these exploited and disenfranchised peasants.

When Colambre and Larry witness a father leaving his family of five to look for work in England, Larry launches into an invective against Lord Clonbrony for not employing this father who was “a good and willing *slave* in his day” (A 114). Following the pattern of their journey, Larry translates this dreadful scene for Colambre and then laments the absence of the Lord whose “neglect is the bottom of the nuisance...” (A 112). Rather than depicting Larry, the armed workers, the emigrant father, or the illegal distiller as at least partially in control of their actions, Edgeworth portrays them as neglected children whose every action can be attributed to the absence of their parent. Since the heir to this estate witnesses all of this while incognito, Edgeworth creates the expectation that the re-appearance of her enlightened protagonist will redeem the degraded state of his dependents. Larry’s description of the emigrant father as “a good and willing *slave* in his day” is not, as one might expect, a criticism of his previous employer, but an invocation for this noble protagonist to return him to his former days of slavery. Since earlier in *The Absentee* Edgeworth compares absentee landlords to West Indian planters, her italicized use of “*slave*” in describing this unemployed peasant suggests that the problem with absentee landlords is simply that they are inefficient and unethical slave managers.

Edgeworth’s reduction of Larry Brady’s subjectivity to a mere mirror of his master’s implies that only enlightened landowners possess the capacity to exercise their reasoning ability in order to ethically govern themselves. Her condescending portrait of Irish peasants seems to reiterate the geography of Kant’s parenthetical remark that Europe “will probably legislate eventually for all other continents” in class terms (ICP 52). Edgeworth re-contextualizes Kant’s vision of the world within Irish society by substituting a multicultural class of landowners for the

enlightened nations of Europe. Colambre accordingly perceives the “squalid” and “melancholy” life of his family’s tenants as “the picture of that to which an Irish estate and Irish tenantry may be degraded in the absence of those whose duty and interest it is to reside in Ireland, to uphold justice by example and authority...” (A 113,125). In this decisive moment in *The Absentee*’s wavering narrative of reconciliation, Colambre demonstrates the capacity to redeem his colonized dependents through the art of enlightened rule advocated by his imperial mentors, Sir James Brooke and Count O’Halloran. Before racing back to England to rescue his father and save his neglected tenants, Colambre begins the process of redemption by imposing a vow of sobriety upon Larry Brady. He gently chastises, “my good fellow, keep away from the sign of the Horseshoe—a man of your sense to drink and make an idiot and a brute of yourself!” (A 137). Larry responds with a pathetic warning to Colambre that if he fails to return within the next year, he “don’t swear but [he’ll] take to the whiskey, for comfort, all the rest of my days” (A 137). Since whiskey functions as a synecdoche for the cultural difference and transgressive desires of the Irish peasantry, Colambre’s contract with Larry symbolically completes the Union of 1801. Through Larry’s childish submission to Colambre, Edgeworth forcefully articulates the asymmetrical power relations between the partners of this Union. Once he recognizes his duty to Ireland, Edgeworth suggests that her noble Anglo-Irish protagonist can enact a process of reconciliation by simply imposing contracts upon the agentless laborers and women of his estate.

Colambre’s union to Larry foreshadows and in many ways mirrors the marriage he imposes upon Grace Nugent, his adopted sister born from a Catholic mother. The central presence of the romantic narrative of Colambre and Grace within the novel’s broader narrative of redemption marks Edgeworth’s awareness that the realization of perpetual peace in Ireland will require absolute harmony within both the public and private spheres. When he discovers a stain

of licentiousness in Grace's maternal lineage, Colambre returns to London in order to redeem both his family's estate and the dignity of Grace's feminine ancestry. Although Colambre accepts the national and religious difference of Grace's heritage, he refuses to accept that her mother satisfied her desire outside the confines of marriage. Her failure to contain her desire within the limits of the patriarchal marriage contract synecdochically represents the threat of an unruly domestic sphere. Grace's "illegitimacy" functions as an "invincible obstacle" to the "union" of her and Colambre in the same manner in which Larry's unlawful consumption of whiskey threatens the restoration of social order on the Clonbrony estate (A 164). On a literal level, the satisfaction of desire outside the boundaries of marriage undermines the certainty of the patriarchal system of inheritance.²⁰⁶ The lack of chastity in Grace's primary educator poses an "invincible obstacle" to the affection that Colambre must subordinate to the moral necessity of imperial order.

Colambre's military advisors on moral judgment, Count O'Halloran and Sir James Brooke, re-emerge in London in order to contribute to his genealogical investigation of Grace's maternal ancestry. After convincing his parents to return to their land and duties in Ireland, Colambre receives a visit from the Count who has entered the "gay world" of London to deliver "some maps, and plans, and charts" to a relative in the Ministry who is planning "an expedition," presumably, against Napoleon's forces (A 168-169). During their discussion of Sir James's marriage to one of the "chaste" Oranmore daughters, Count O'Halloran advises Colambre to "look sharp at the mother; ay, and back to the grandmother too, and along the whole female line of ancestry" when evaluating a potential bride (A 170). Given that the Count has entered London to consult his "young relation" on an upcoming military campaign, his lesson to his young friend

²⁰⁶ See Corbett's essay "Public Affections and Familial Politics: Burke, Edgeworth, and the 'Common Naturalization' of Great Britain" for further discussion of this.

Colambre on the art of judging a woman's sexuality has clear military overtones. While a victorious expedition against Napoleon protects the interests of the Empire abroad, a successful marriage guarantees the acquisition of a "fit medium for inheritance" which secures the stability of the empire at home (Corbett 885). The Count's inadvertent confirmation of the chastity of Grace's mother in the midst of his description of military life only reinforces the interpenetration of Edgeworth's political and romantic narratives. Colambre discovers that the certificate of her parents' marriage was mishandled by the English ambassador to Vienna and now lies within papers bequeathed to Sir James. The re-emergence of Colambre's cosmopolitan network in his struggle to redeem Grace's sexual heritage accentuates the political importance of a wife's chastity to the construction of a state of perpetual peace.

With the legitimation of Grace's maternal ancestry, Edgeworth appears to guarantee the fulfillment of her novel's promise to reconcile a fractured early nineteenth-century Irish society. Mary Jean Corbett interprets the union between the Protestant Lord Colambre and the Catholic Grace Nugent as "an imperial union" that "embodies the stable fixation of... sexual and affective desires" and naturalizes the English Empire (886,891). From Corbett's perspective, Edgeworth succeeds in exorcising the ghost of the 1798 Rebellion through the restoration of the Clonbrony family to their home, a concept that bears the "dual weight of family and nation" (894). While such readings reflect a redemptive promise within *The Absentee*, they overlook the dissonant echoes of religious, national, and class differences that continually interrupt this promise of reconciliation. In the figure of Grace Nugent, Edgeworth depicts a seemingly ideal wife whose very silence marks the history of conflict and resistance signified by her name. Edgeworth seems to acknowledge the politically problematic nature of her heroine through the cuts she makes to her character in the second edition of the novel, published in 1832. In the "pruning" of her

character, “self-assertion in Grace is constantly restrained; in a smaller revision (p.211) even a gesture of affection (‘taking his [Colambre’s] hand between both of hers’) is deleted.”²⁰⁷ Walker and McCormack read these excisions as a refusal to provide “the ammunition that Richardson’s Pamela” gave to cynical critics (270). Edgeworth’s effort to authenticate the sincerity of her heroine’s virtue through reducing her to a central absence within the text reflects her awareness of the subversive undertones of Grace’s character. After the widespread rural unrest and the burgeoning Catholic emancipation movement of the 1820s, Edgeworth sought to eliminate even the simplest “gestures of affection” from a character whose name associated her with both the United Irish and the vanquished Jacobean nobility.²⁰⁸

When Colambre and Grace return to their home at the end of the novel, Edgeworth undermines the appearance of reconciliation with the representation of a blind harper who celebrates the moment by playing the song ‘Gracey Nugent’ (A 202). A Gaelic song written by the blind early eighteenth-century bard, Turlough Ó Carolan, “A Song for Gracey Nugent” mythologized the life of Grace Nugent, an early eighteenth-century Irishwoman who spent her childhood in Edgeworth’s neighborhood.²⁰⁹ Following the model of a Jacobite genre of sentimental odes, the song tells the allegorical tale of a “bereft woman, who mourns for an absent lover symbolizing, explicitly or by implication, the absent Stuart king.”²¹⁰ As the descendent of a well-known ‘Old English’ Catholic family displaced by King William following the late

²⁰⁷ W.J. McCormack and Kim Walker, Appendix I to *The Absentee*, by Maria Edgeworth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) 270. Page cited by them (211) corresponds to page 162 in the Pickering Edition.

²⁰⁸ For an overview of the growing unrest in the 1820’s, see *A New History of Ireland: Volume V* 74.

²⁰⁹ See Heidi Van de Veire, Kim Walker, and Marilyn Butler, “Introductory Note,” *The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth*, vol. V (London, Pickering and Chatto, 1999) xxiv, xxv.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.* xxiv.

seventeenth-century Jacobite wars, Grace Nugent served as a figure for the Catholic nobility's steady loss of wealth and status during the reign of the Protestant Ascendancy. Ó Carolan transforms the daughter of this once powerful family whose name became "synonymous with latter-day recusancy" into a symbol for the oppressed Irish Catholic peasantry.²¹¹ With the uncrowned harp as its emblem, the United Irish incorporated the Gaelic songs of Ó Carolan into their political ceremonies in an effort to "hybridize" their enlightened political rhetoric with native Irish culture.²¹² Through the disenfranchisement of the 'Old English' Catholic nobility, the Protestant Ascendancy ironically transformed their colonial predecessors into heroic figures of Irish resistance. As Murray Pittock has argued, the political context of Grace's name suggests that a contemporary reader of *The Absentee* with some "local knowledge" would have interpreted the blind harpist's celebration of the heroine's return with the song "Gracey Nugent" as an indication that Colambre has perhaps inadvertently achieved the restoration of an exiled, now radicalized, Jacobite family (180).

The emergence of an 'Irish reading' of *The Absentee* in the past ten years has restored the counter-narrative which prompted the publisher Richard Sheridan to decide in 1811 that the initial play version of the novel was too pro-Irish to be performed on stage (Pittock 177). According to the novel's redemptive narrative, the enlightened protagonist fulfills the imperial aim of establishing a secure and pacified Irish society upon the principles of cosmopolitanism. By choosing "Colambre" as the name for her protagonist, however, Edgeworth identifies him with one of the estates of the Nugent family whose name signifies the very unrest that her hero

²¹¹ Maria Edgeworth, *The Absentee*, in *The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth*, vol. V, ed. Heidi Van de Veire, Kim Walker, and Marilyn Butler (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1999) 6n8.

²¹² Murray Pittock, "Strumming and Being Hanged: The Irish Bard and History Regained," in *Scottish and Irish Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 108.

promises to resolve. In addition to Nugent castle, only four miles north of the Edgeworth family home, the divided Nugent estate included an older manor at Coolamber after which Edgeworth names her protagonist.²¹³ Clonbrony, the name of the home in which the redemptive narrative of the novel culminates, is also the name of the site where Lord Cornwallis ended the 1798 Rebellion by defeating the belated French forces of General Humbert.²¹⁴ With her complicated network of placenames, Edgeworth writes a counter-narrative that plots the return of Ireland's history of national, religious, and class conflict within the very places that appear to signify the resolution of those antagonisms. The triumphant restoration of an absentee Protestant family to a placename that invokes the memory of England's victory over the rebels of 1798 suggests that this restoration represents the redemption of Ireland as a whole. While Colambre's marriage to Grace appears to allegorically bind his aristocratic family to their culturally distinct tenants, it may instead signify the restoration of a once powerful, dispossessed Jacobite family to their former estate. Since the name 'Clonbrony' acts as a synecdoche for England's hold over its Irish colony, the re-unification of this Catholic family within the Clonbrony estate seems to metaphorically represent the return of the Catholic ruling class to their previous position of dominance in Ireland.

Although the conclusion of *The Absentee* seems to imply the restoration of the Catholic ruling class, it also undermines the notion that these previously dominant colonizers could simply replace their Protestant followers as the new minority rulers of the Irish peasantry. In a characteristic reversal of Edgeworth's uncanny novel, the discovery of Grace's legitimate maiden name, Reynolds, appears to distance her from the forces of disorder in Ireland, but in fact

²¹³ Heidi Van de Veire, Kim Walker, and Marilyn Butler, "Introductory Note," *The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth*, vol. V (London, Pickering and Chatto, 1999) xxvi.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.* xxvii.

only reiterates her dual connection to both the dispossessed Jacobite nobility and the revolutionary peasantry. During his genealogical campaign, Colambre discovers that Grace is the legitimate daughter of “a young English officer who had been with [Count O’Halloran] in the Austrian service” and “a very young English lady... educated at a convent in Vienna” (A 173). The enlightened Colambre appears therefore to convert Grace into a more palatable English Catholic woman and heiress to “a considerable property” (A 173). Yet with the name Reynolds, Edgeworth references the late eighteenth-century poet George Nugent Reynolds whose “United Irish poem, ‘The Exiled Irishman’s Lamentation,’ first published in 1796, brought the phrase ‘Erin gú brath’ (‘Ireland for ever’) into the republican lexicon...” (Pittock 179). As a descendent of the Catholic landowning class whose name became associated with the United Irish, George Nugent Reynolds’s personal history mirrors that of the real-life Grace Nugent who was also transformed into a figure for a native Irish identity.

Rather than heralding the return of the dispossessed Catholic elites, the invocation of the folk heroes Grace Nugent and George Nugent Reynolds at the conclusion of *The Absentee* reinforces the danger posed by the peasants whom these figures came to represent. After the omniscient narrator reassures the reader that the Irish peasants are “peculiarly subject to the influence and example of a great resident Irish proprietor,” Edgeworth shifts to the first-person testimony of the postillion Larry conceivably in order to affirm the validity of this Burkean principle of social order (A 199).²¹⁵ In his letter to a brother living in England, Larry exceeds this expectation by not only expressing the “great gladness” of the Clonbrony tenantry at the return of their Lord but also by depicting the persistence of an alternative, frighteningly physical

²¹⁵ By articulating this expectation as a fact, Fraser Easton seems to stray from the content of Larry’s letter. His argument that Edgeworth “portrays the successful diffusion of the Smithian agenda in Ireland as occurring through a Burkean mechanism of affective example” contrasts sharply with Larry’s depiction of the riotous mob that dances and shouts like mad (Easton 121).

phenomenon of sympathy among the Irish peasantry (A 200). Larry explains in his Hibernian English how the Clonbrony peasants subvert the command of the ideal agent Mr. Burke and burn an effigy of their corrupt former agents known as ‘Old Nick’ and ‘St. Dennis’:

He (that is, old Nick and St Dennis) would have been burnt that night- I *mane*, in *effigy*, through the town of Clonbrony, but that the new man, Mr. Burke, came down that day too soon to stop it, and said, “it was not becoming to trample on the fallen,” or something that way, that put an end to it; and though it was a great disappointment to many, and to me in particular, I could not but like the jantleman the better for it any how.... Well, when I was disappointed of the *effigy*, I comforted myself by making a bonfire of old Nick’s big rick of duty turf, which, by great luck, was out in the road.... And such another blaze! I wished you’d seed it- and all the men, women, and children, in the town and country, far and near, gathered round it shouting and dancing like mad!-and it was light as day quite across the bog.... And I heard after, they seen it from all parts of the three counties.... (A 200)

Since the well-known late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century historian Francis Plowden cites the practice of customary fires and the burning of effigies as evidence of the Phoenician heritage of Irish culture, Burke’s prohibition of precisely such a celebration represents an attempt to reform Irish culture according to the values of enlightened morality.²¹⁶ In pretending to respect Burke’s order while actually transgressing it, Larry exemplifies the uncanny presence of disorder within Edgeworth’s novel. Larry’s claim to “like the jantleman [Burke] the better” for an order that he disobeys suggests that his language has a double meaning that exceeds the comprehension of educated ears. Through subtly violating the expected sincerity of the

²¹⁶ Heidi Van de Veire, Kim Walker, and Marilyn Butler, “Introductory Note,” *The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth*, vol. V (London, Pickering and Chatto, 1999) xx.

epistolary voice with Larry's unstated yet evident disobedience, Edgeworth estranges her reader from the potentially reassuring first person narrator.

Larry's decision to subvert Burke's prohibition by transforming the aesthetic form of the effigy demonstrates the innovative capacities of the revolutionary peasantry who approach traditional Irish practices not as ends in themselves but rather as means to satisfy their own shifting needs. In choosing to signify their former agents with a "big rick" or stack of duty turf, these peasants identify Old Nick and St. Dennis with the exploitation they forced upon them. Although the novel portrays the practice of compelling tenants to perform "duty work" in order to pay exorbitantly high rents as an unnecessary residue of feudalism, the peasants' reduction of their former agents to an exploitative process of production articulates a much broader opposition to labor that benefits their masters more than themselves.²¹⁷ The sense of expansiveness in Larry's description of "all the men, women, and children, in the town and country, far and near" echoes the portrait of the rebel army as "a whole countryside in motion" (Pakenham 221). Larry's image of this seemingly endless crowd "gathered round it [the effigy] shouting and dancing like mad" challenges the rational notion of sympathy that grounds the novel's promise of a cosmopolitan dénouement with the involuntary and infectious phenomenon of corporeal sympathy. Rather than submitting their actions to the rational standards of either Smithian sympathy or Kantian morality, the Clonbrony peasants instinctively join a dancing and shouting crowd magnetized by the sheer power of its collective force. With the additional information that peasants from the three surrounding counties saw the blaze, Larry conveys the dangerous capacity of this irrational crowd to spread throughout the Irish countryside.

²¹⁷ See the note in the glossary of *Castle Rackrent* on the "feudal custom" of duty work. Maria Edgeworth, *Castle Rackrent*, in *The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth*, vol. I, ed. Jane Desmarais, Tim McLoughlin, and Marilyn Butler (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1999) 59.

Edgeworth's depiction of this unruly mob combines with the estrangement of her educated reader from Larry's epistolary voice to cast an uncanny shadow upon the culmination of her novel's redemptive promise in the restoration of the Clonbrony family to their proper estate. While the omniscient narrator reassures the reader that "our hero" returns to his "native country" to increase "his attachment to his warm-hearted countrymen," Larry's narration reveals the presence of an infectious form of "attachment" which the noble hero could experience only as a threat (A 199). After instigating this joyous act of collective disobedience, Larry's sentimental representation of the triumphant return of the Clonbrony family and the expected union of Grace and Colambre appears suspicious, as if its effusive language conceals a dangerous secret. Larry affirms his obedience to Colambre's order not to drink whiskey and describes the "great gladness" of the now loyal crowd who "drew' em [the Clonbrony family] with blessings" (A 201). According to Larry, the return of the ruling family miraculously transforms the unruly crowd of "shouting and dancing" peasants into a grateful assembly of servants (A 201). Following the traditional practice of the King and the Pope, the restored family walks "straight out to the *tirrass*, to satisfy the eyes and hearts that followed them" (A 201). With the nobles overlooking their eager subjects, the geography of this final scene attempts to affirm an already fractured vision of perpetual peace. Rather than offering an image of a redeemed imperial project grounded in renewed domestic stability, as Mary Jean Corbett argues, the conclusion of *The Absentee* portrays the imperial dream of a perpetual state of cosmopolitan peace as a sentimental veil for the insurmountable history of antagonism that interrupts every effort to declare the end of history and thereby preserves the possibility of the future.

The protagonist of *The Absentee* ultimately fails to perfect his home in Ireland because the agents of this redemptive effort, including himself, bear the names and traditions of a past

that his unruly tenants will never allow the present to forget. This vision of the redeemed home of the aristocratic family has both a spatial and temporal function as the imagined center of a state of absolute harmony whose reconciliation of every antagonistic relationship allows it to become a perpetual present. While the emergence of a new 'Irish reading' has revealed the instability within Colambre's redemptive struggle, it has too often identified the ghosts of the Catholic ruling class rather than the collective force of the Irish peasantry as the agent of its disruption. As Murray Pittock states in an otherwise strong interpretation of Edgeworth's work, "*The Absentee*... exhibits the fact that native Catholic Ireland is not just a zone of peasant subjection: it has its own ruling class, and they are dispossessed" (Pittock 180). Edgeworth's decision to challenge the culminating moment of *The Absentee* with a representation of the Clonbrony tenants' radicalized performance of a native Irish ritual clearly identifies the impoverished peasantry as the subject who maintains the difference of the past only in order to destabilize the present. With the blind harper's recitation of the song "Gracey Nugent," Edgeworth reaffirms that both her heroine and male protagonist belong to a tradition that has been wholly appropriated by a revolutionary Irish peasantry. Through a silent code of names and the representation of the collective force that makes them a threat, Edgeworth conjures forth the memory of difference and the agents of disorder that render the present perpetually vulnerable to the strange and unpredictable future.

Conclusion

To Fail Post-Critically: Sovereignty and the Future of the Modern Subject

What kind of rewards can failure offer us? Perhaps most obviously, failure allows us to escape the punishing norms that discipline behavior and manage human development with the goal of delivering us from unruly childhoods to orderly and predictable adulthoods.

Judith Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*²¹⁸

The magic of middle-class life continues to spread but with it so does failure. For the past five years, we have witnessed an economic crisis that has brought commercial societies throughout the globe to the brink of collapse. States, banks, and the people they govern have seen the security of “orderly and predictable adulthoods” disappear on a scale and pace that would have been unthinkable to eighteenth-century observers. Commodification in the past three centuries has lifted ever greater numbers of bodies above their mortal frames, endowing them with the miraculous aura of kings, but in doing so, it has subjected these newly made individuals to the vicissitudes of a market that trades in abstractions. It has been an ambivalent experience and it has occurred upon the theological foundation of the Protestant Reformation. By declaring that all “Christians are Kings and Priests,” Martin Luther and the broader movement he spearheaded demonstrated the possibility of democratizing the once highly restricted privilege of individuality.²¹⁹ To act as a corporeal representative of something beyond, whether it is a nation or church, has always been to embark upon a life that is both capable of failure and worthy of

²¹⁸ Halberstam, Judith. *The Queer Art of Failure*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011: 3. Cited parenthetically as Q.

²¹⁹ Luther, Martin. *A treatise touching the libertie of a Christian* [A Treatise on Christian Liberty]. Trans. James Bell. London: Printed by Thomas Harper for William Sheares, and to be sold at his shop in Brittaines Burse 1636.

fiction. What changes with modernity is that failure becomes the norm for individuals like the heroines of *Moll Flanders* (1722), *Fantomina* (1725), and *Clarissa* (1747-8) whose higher purpose is to simply persevere in their status as icons to the unnecessary and excessive.

While kings, priests, and other pre-modern heroes were the first modern individuals, their modernity was restrained by the concerns of the collectives they represented. Charged with the task of mystically unifying their communities, these proto-modern individuals were estranged from the transcendent and otherworldly nature of their higher second bodies. Always one step beyond a world to which they nevertheless remained subject, these individuals were angels in purgatory, condemned to perpetuating the illusion that their auras were intrinsically entwined with the collectives they superseded. Bound to a market that looks to the accumulation of abstraction as its inner rational, the middle-class individual has no such problem. In contrast to what Judith Halberstam asserts and what we all have become accustomed to believing, the democratization of individuality has never truly been about producing “orderly and predictable” adults. The modern individual is enshrouded in an aura that is tasked with nothing more than the preservation of its otherworldly excessiveness. Only with modernity is subjectivity finally free to look upon the sovereignty that has always grounded it as its ultimate purpose in the world. Sovereignty, the source of all subjective divinity, has been set loose from every secular commitment but the incarnation of itself in consuming bodies. These ennobled bodies have been given the chance to leave the “orderly and predictable” world of things behind and to live in the supremely alienated position of a sovereign subject. This is all to say that the triumphant magic of middle-class individuals lies in their inevitable failure to live within the “orderly and predictable” world of mere bodies.

The opening epigraph to this conclusion, taken from Halberstam's *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011), poses a question that has been with consumer societies and their subjects from the very beginning: namely, what "rewards" are there for those who cannot assimilate into societies governed by the logic of means and ends. My contribution to the conversation that Halberstam has helped re-start has been to insist that failure is not an exceptional moment for the modern individual, but is instead intertwined with the sovereign excessiveness that has always been the inner purpose or *telos* of the sacred as it navigates a profane world of things. I have departed from Halberstam and the critical tradition to which she belongs by taking the "punishing norms that discipline behavior" and produce individuals as a source of rather than an obstacle to failure and perversion. To be normative in the sense of exemplifying the central tenets of commercial society is to follow in the footsteps of the excessive heroines that populate the novels of *Moll Flanders*, *Fantomina*, and *Clarissa*. While Halberstam's critical vision of "subjugated" or "disqualified" knowledges rising to the surface certainly works with the model of failure in my final chapter, it cannot account for the triumphant excessiveness of those heroines I celebrate in my second and third chapters (Q 11). The protagonists of *Moll Flanders*, *Fantomina*, and *Clarissa* dramatize the anti-utilitarian excess and perversion that lies within the subjectivity of the normative middle-class individual. For too long, scholars in search of subversion have seen criticism rather than affirmation, limits rather than transcendence, as the sole means of escaping the complacency and conformity of middle-class life. Such scholars have been operating on the false assumption that the dominant structures of economic and theological modernity promise only the recurrence of "orderly and predictable adulthoods." The real problem, however, is not modernity; it is, rather, that we have yet to accomplish it.

Halberstam's distinction between "orderly and predictable adulthoods" and "unruly childhoods" is essentially a reiteration of the psychoanalytic opposition between well-adjusted drives for self-preservation and those darker, anti-social impulses to pervert, repeat, and destroy. Psychoanalysis, in the words of Sigmund Freud, adopts an "economic point of view" that assumes "mental events" to be "automatically regulated by the pleasure principle," that fundamental drive to avoid pain and find pleasure.²²⁰ This overarching approach to understanding modern individuals and societies is complicated by all those other, 'an-economic' desires that continually drive us to risk everything in the pursuit of the unnecessary and the destructive. While always aware of this underground psychic economy, Freud gives it a uniquely prominent position in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) in which he entertains the possibility that destruction rather than conservation stands as the dominant principle of being. Although even here Freud maintains his belief in the supremacy of the pleasure principle, he nevertheless raises the possibility that the "instincts of self-preservation" may exist only to "serve the one end of bringing about death" (BP 51). It is not coincidental that Freud's major work on the mysterious drive for pain and death seeks confirmation in the behavior of train crash victims and playing children. The same hunger for the unpleasant, as Freud argues, animates the repetitive motions of children and those traumatized by "severe mechanical concussions" such as "railway accidents" (BP 10). In using these two examples, Freud, knowingly or not, touches on the way in which economic modernity transforms the "unruly" and often irrational activity of children into the driving purpose of the fully developed. Understood in the broadest possible terms, the death drive names a desire not for the biological event of death, but rather for a life dedicated to

²²⁰ Freud, Sigmund. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Trans. James Strachey. New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1950: 3. Cited parenthetically as BP.

something beyond self-preservation. While such a desire may have always been in existence, my project has sought to demonstrate the means through which it became accessible to a greater proportion of the population. The desire for the destructive, excessive, and perverse emanates from the sovereign privilege of exceeding the corporeal and existing within the angelic space of the individual. It is thus only when the subjectivity of sovereignty becomes popular that the an-economic emerges as the everyday practice of adults and children alike.

Whenever I have used the word sovereignty in this book, I have had the third volume of George Bataille's *The Accursed Share* (1976) in mind. Opposed to "the servile and the subordinate," sovereignty for Bataille names the miraculous moment in which a body escapes the utilitarian logic that manages the life of mere things.²²¹ Whether it is through art, kink, booze, or religion- to name only a few of Bataille's favorites-we can experience moments in which consumption separates from the domain of needs and becomes enmeshed in the ecstatic transcendence of the purely unnecessary. While middle-class individuals are indeed compelled to work and thus cannot permanently reside in the position of a "sovereign individual [who] consumes but doesn't labor," they nevertheless belong to a consumer society that has made the possibility of experiencing sovereign moments more available than ever before (AS 198). Having inherited the doubled subjectivity of medieval kings, the modern subject is born precisely when its body is elevated above the corporeal realm of means and ends. Like the king, the modern individual stands before his or her corporeal community as an exemplary stranger. Severed from the immediacy of a community and a given identity, this kingly individual has the opportunity to look upon the world from the supremely estranged position of a subject. Without the same mandate to embody the unity of a political collective, this individual has the potential to

²²¹ Bataille, Georges. *Accursed Share*. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Zone Books, 1976: 197,199. Cited parenthetically as AS.

exceed the king in his or her triumphant estrangement from the world. As mentioned throughout my project, however, the middle-class individual has by and large chosen to flee from the sovereign possibility of being a social misfit and failure. In a betrayal of the subjectivities they bear, middle-class individuals have come to see success as a matter of pretending they still belong to the “orderly and predictable” world of things. What critics typically take as normatively modern- the individual bound by custom to a particular place and way of life- is in fact merely the ruse through which the modern subject has fled from the freakish divinity that he or she carries within.

The great tragedy of modernity for Bataille as well as myself lies in the fact that the middle-class individual has done everything he or she can to evade the God-like possibilities that lie within a subjectivity and culture dedicated to consumption. The regicidal impulse of the early modern rebels that killed kings and made God the purview of every believer created a world in which commodification could make the sovereign moment a part of everyday popular life. As Bataille states in the following passage, the sacrifice of these rebels has thus far been in vain:

The rebel... liquidated that royal subjectivity that imposed itself upon him and deprived him of his own subjectivity, but he was not able to regain for his own part that of which the king's glory had deprived him. As far as monarchic society is concerned, he was only an object, but nothing was changed in republican society, except that in front of him there was no longer a *subject* whose sovereign character seemed to be the sole cause of his limitation. In a society that has done away with institutional sovereignty, personal sovereignty is not given, for all that. Even the man who fought to abolish that which oppressed him, which reduced him to the level of things, must still by some stroke or other recapture that of which oppression had deprived him. What is more, he has lost

what the monarchic society at least had, a rather complete representation of the human being, such that this being could not allow himself to be confused with things, reduced to objectivity. (AS 254-5)

The individual that emerges in the first chapter of this project is constituted by the excessive second body of the king. While John Dryden may have imagined this individual perfecting the unity of the English body politic, my second and third chapters are dedicated to demonstrating the fundamental incompatibility of the modern subject and the cause of social unity. My final chapter, on Maria Edgeworth's *The Absentee* (1812), engages more directly with the future that will inspire such disappointment in thinkers like Bataille.

Edgeworth's *The Absentee* belongs to a moment in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century when the British novel provided the modern individuals that constituted its reading public with the fantasy that married life would allow them to remain within the comforting world of things. Immanuel Kant's vision of a cosmopolitan end of history and Adam Smith's model of the free market represent correlates to the redemptive and ultimately reactionary narrative of the domestic novel. All three are attempts to imagine that the political and economic structures of modernity will make "orderly and predictable" adults of us all. These eighteenth-century fantasies of escape are indeed what have come to characterize the hypocritical life of twentieth- and twenty-first commercial societies. Bataille's portrait of republican societies founded upon the democratization of a sovereign possibility that they everywhere seek to deny expresses the ambivalent legacy of a modernity whose greatest potential has long been treated as an existential threat. Since affirming this potential has been a central aim of my project, I would like to conclude this discussion of failure by reiterating my effort to privilege the importance of the argument in my second and third chapters to our contemporary moment of global

commercialism. The native Irish multitude that interrupts the dénouement of Edgeworth's novel marks the susceptibility of modernity to its external limits. It represents a critical threat. The excessive heroines in *Moll Flanders*, *Fantomina*, and *Clarissa*, on the other hand, exemplify a threat that arises from within modern societies. The possibility of inhabiting the sovereign position of a subject is in fact the threat that promises to separate the destiny of modernity from the insufficient cultures that currently bear its name. In refusing to act as the "orderly and predictable" adults of every utilitarian ideology, the heroines of *Moll Flanders*, *Fantomina*, and *Clarissa* dramatize a post-critical form of failure that looks within rather than without modern society for the possibility of its supersession. The great paradox of modernity is that its fulfillment will result in a dramatic transformation of the modern societies whose creation it inspired.

The global occupy movement that has arisen in the past year need not be critical. Its constituents are the "planetary petty bourgeoisie" that the philosopher Giorgio Agamben has aptly named as the increasingly universal subjective form of commercial modernity.²²² I believe that if this movement is to succeed then it must resist the temptation to quixotically seek out the pre-modern concrete. There is nothing more violent or dangerous than the struggle to regain the homes we have lost. Far from acting as an obstacle, the impossibility of such a recovery only further inflames those bent on re-assimilating the sacred being of the individuated into the utilitarian order of things. To engage in the futile pursuit of the concrete is for the modern individual to turn upon itself and to begin seeing every representative of the beyond as a foreign threat in need of eradication. And the very impossibility of such a struggle is what guarantees that its violence will be without end. For an alternative, modern middle-class individuals must

²²² Agamben, Giorgio. *The Coming Community*. Trans. Michael Hardt. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993: 64. Cited parenthetically as CC

instead, as Agamben urges in *The Coming Community* (2009), look to “impropriety as such” as the foundation of any authentic way of being in the world (64). In opposing the brutality of an abstract financial economy, the occupy movement must not pretend that it can escape the abstraction that has permanently severed its members from the immediacy of concrete selves and societies. The absence of a proper home or self is an ambivalent destiny, but it is one that we must affirm. If we are to occupy spaces collectively in the name of alternative lives and modes of being, then we must do so as fellow strangers, bound together by the profound alienation of those made sovereign.

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