University of Tennessee, Knoxville
TRACE: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange

Doctoral Dissertations | Graduate School

12-1998

Where the rule perscribes not' : duty and narrative mediation in the eighteenth-century British novel

Kenneth Michael Brothers

Follow this and additional works at: https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_graddiss

Recommended Citation

Brothers, Kenneth Michael, "Where the rule perscribes not' : duty and narrative mediation in the eighteenth-century British novel. " PhD diss., University of Tennessee, 1998.
https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_graddiss/9214

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at TRACE: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized administrator of TRACE: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. For more information, please contact trace@utk.edu.

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Kenneth Michael Brothers entitled "Where the rule perscribes not' : duty and narrative mediation in the eighteenth-century British novel." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in English.

John Zomchick, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Nancy Goslee, Allen Dunn, Kathy Bohstedt

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Michael Brothers entitled "'Where the Rule Prescribes Not': Duty and Narrative Mediation in the Eighteenth-Century Novel." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English.

John Zomchick, Director

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:

Associate Vice Chancellor and Dean of the Graduate School

"WHERE THE RULE PRESCRIBES NOT" DUTY AND NARRATIVE MEDIATION IN THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH NOVEL

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Kenneth Michael Brothers
December 1998

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents

Mrs. Nancy M. Henderson

and

Mr. Kenneth A. Brothers

who have encouraged and supported me in my educational goals.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to offer my deepest and sincerest thanks to the members of my committee: John Zomchick, Nancy Goslee, Allen Dunn, and Kathy Bohstedt. Their help and guidance were indispensible to the completion of this project. I am grateful as well to the University of Tennessee, the Graduate School, and to the English Department for the financial support which has made it possible for me to receive the Doctor of Philosophy degree.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the role played by select eighteenth-century novels in mediating between competing ideals of duty or moral obligation. In this respect it follows upon many recent narrative theories which argue that narrative discourse performs important cultural mediations of many kinds. This dissertation borrows the dialectical model of aesthetic mediation imagined by Friedrech von Schiller in his Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man (1795), and argues that each of the novels studied enacts a dialectical compromise between an ideology of duty based on serving self-interest on the one hand, and an ideology of duty based on creating social welfare on the other. The resolution of this cultural dualism occupies a great deal of eighteenth-century thought and literature. This study suggests that the novel, a relatively new genre, was one of the most important forums wherein this cultural impasse was worked out in symbolic form. Such mediations are created by narrative endings which eliminate the tensions or conflicts between these two ideologies of duty. Each of the novels examined here narrates, in its own way, a necessary identity between self-interest and social welfare, promising that each can be served simultaneously. The ideological nature of this imaginary identity is examined in each case.

PREFACE

This dissertation treats the eighteenth-century novel as a problem-solving genre. Specifically, this dissertation asserts that the novel and narrative discourse solve problems by enacting a symbolic mediation between the law and desire. Using recent theories of narrative which describe fictional narrative discourse as an interplay between delay and progression, between the postponement and granting of satisfaction, this study suggests that the aesthetics of narrative discourse can be usefully considered from the perspective of an "aesthetics of the beautiful." Novels represent the world in its particularity and contingency, but attempt to organize that contingency into meaningful patterns and recognizable forms. Novels solve problems by making the contingent and the accidental appear necessary and related.

To say that the novel participates in an "aesthetics of the beautiful" requires some explanation. An aesthetics of the beautiful, as opposed to an aesthetics of the sublime, is an aesthetics of form, of organized boundaries. The aesthetic status of the novel depends on narrative closure, for it is only after encountering the end that narrative seems organized into a meaningful, patterned whole. Aesthetic wholeness in the novel, however, is not achieved without doing some violence to the reality it purports to convey. D. A. Miller describes the work of narrative closure very well in this regard:

> The work of closure, then, would seem to consist in an ideologically inspired <u>passage</u> between two orders of discourse, two separable textual styles. One of them (polyvalent, flirtatious, quintessentially poetic) keeps meaning and desire in a state of suspense; the other (univocal, earnest, basically cognitive) fixes

> meaning and lodges desire in a safe haven; and the passage from one to the other involves a voiding, a strategic omission--so to speak, a good riddance. (76)

Narrative commits the violence of "strategic omission," the creation or acceptance of aporia. Miller points out the fact that novels are always partial representations of experience. Narrative--consciously or unconsciously--will always allow some moments of experience to go unrepresented, but at the same time narrative makes claims to wholeness through contrived endings that promise to tie up all the loose ends of the plot.

By using terms like "aesthetic" and "play" this dissertation does not mean that narrative offers the kind of liberation from social and cultural norms promised by the "play" of unlimited or unrestrained imagination. "Aesthetics" here will refer to the kind of aesthetic mediation described by Friedrich von Schiller in his Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man (1795). In that work Schiller posits a world divided between reason and sense, form and desire, and suggests that this world can only be reunited again through play. But "play" implies a kind of discipline in Schiller, for it is meant to describe the mutual restraint of these two divided and impulsive forces. It will be shown in chapter one that narrative is constituted of two discourses, a discourse of form and a discourse of desire, and that narrative plots seek to resolve the tension between them by bringing form and desire into a relation of identity at the narrative's end. Like Schiller's play, it will be argued, narratives construct an aestheticized harmony between form and desire. This harmony, however, is a fiction because, as Miller points out, it is achieved through a "voiding" or "omission." No matter how much a given narrative may claim to

tell the truth and the whole truth, it always promotes its own version of reality at the expense of others.

The differences among the narratives this dissertation discusses are important to consider as well as their similarities. Each shows a distinct way that both desire and countervailing notions of duty were symbolic constructs, open to negotiation and refinement in discourse. Each novel shows how some version of desire was taken for granted as being vital to social intercourse, but maintains that that desire needs limits set to it to keep it from becoming destructive of social good. The novels discussed here represent a version of desire that could be called "liberal." The idea of liberal desire used by this dissertation comes from Locke's narrative of the individual's development from family member to political subject presented in the second of his Two Treatises of Government.[1] This desire is set loose at the beginning of each narrative by an originating breach of duty, a failed obligation which liberates or dislodges desire and so begins the narrative's march toward closure. Each novel investigated here manages this desire and creates closure in a different way. In Robinson Crusoe this closure comes in the form of a contract, a signed document sealing the terms of duty among its participants; in Tristram Shandy, conversely, a marriage contract between Walter Shandy and Elizabeth inaugurates rather than ends the narrative. In Evelina desire appears as the "moral sense" and is subject to abuses and excesses from which it is saved through the formal convention of marriage. Two of the narratives--Robinson Crusoe and Evelina–end in very formalized ways, lodging desire in a "safe haven." The other, Tristram Shandy, does

---

[1] This narrative is discussed in detail in chapter three of the dissertation.

not recover the desire set loose by the novel's originating breach of duty, but makes this desire productive of new forms of knowledge.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER PAGE

I. Narrative and Living Form.....1

II. Creating "Good Company": The Symbolic Mediation of Social Experience in Eighteenth-Century England.....30

III. "...And that this should be put in Writing": The Social Contract as Narrative Living Form.....56

IV. "With so much earnest desire": Narrative and the Limits of Duty in Tristram Shandy.....92

V. "My feelings are all at war with my duties": Restraining the Moral Sense in Evelina.....134

VI. Conclusion.....162

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....167

VITA.....173

CHAPTER ONE

Narrative and "Living Form"

I

The eighteenth-century English novel mediated between competing conceptions of duty, one premised on self-interest or desire and the other yielding to the dictates of a transcendent form or law. The idea of the novel as a genre which functions to mediate conflict, ideological contradictions, or even between desire and the law is nothing new. Several contemporary critics have taken this approach to the novel and their work is discussed in relation to this dissertation below. This chapter attempts to synthesize a variety of such approaches to the novel, arguing that a more general framework for understanding the novel as a mediating and reintegrative genre is to be found in the aesthetic philosophy of Friedrich von Schiller. Schiller's aesthetic philosophy, presented in his Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man (1795), posits a modern world divided antagonistically between the faculties of reason and sense, or form and desire. At one time organically united, these faculties have been set at odds by the social, economic, and cultural forces of modernity, particularly rationalization and secularization, and their separation has prohibited humankind from grasping experience as a meaningful totality. Schiller, however, holds out the promise of reuniting these faculties, making experience of the world once again whole and meaningful, through the operation of an aesthetic mediation which he calls "play."

This study uses Schiller's philosophy as a dialectical model of interpretation, as a

kind of "allegory" for reading one of the novel's cultural functions: making sense of the eighteenth century's ideologies of duty or moral obligation. The eighteenth century represented the problem of duty to itself within a binary dimension analogous to Schiller's splitting of the world into "reason" and "sense," or absolute authority and individual inclination.[2] On the one hand were "absolutist" discourses of obligation that would correspond to Schiller's idea of all-encompassing "reason." The discourses of patriarchy like those inherited by the eighteenth-century from Sir Robert Filmer, for example, posited a law that was always superordinate to the individual's inclination. On the other were discourses like John Locke's version of liberalism which constructed a space of individual autonomy that was free from the rule of an all-encompassing law, a space in which choice and decision-making rather than assumed obedience were required by the subject. It is argued here that the novel enacts a mediation--in Schiller's terms, "play"--between these competing and otherwise irreconcilable discourses, producing an ideology of moral obligation in which desire and the law cohabitate. A further discussion of eighteenth-century ideologies of duty and their place in this study will be taken up in chapter two. Chapter one will argue that the novel's place in eighteenth-century culture was indeed to mediate the kind of divisive concerns just named. It will be helpful to begin with a brief history of recent critical approaches to the novel which see it as a

---

[2] Several binary dimensions can and at times will be offered as analogs for Schiller's reason/sense opposition: necessity/freedom, form/matter, patriarchy/contract theory, etc. That each of these oppositions can be subordinated to a more general opposition between absolute, external moral authority (reason) on the one hand and internal, situational, individual desire (sense) on the other makes Schiller's model of the drives appropriate for the application planned here.

mediating genre.

II

According to Robert Scholes the novel performs a variety of mediating functions. It mediates, for example, between two worlds of meaning: that of the writer and that of the reader. Scholes's writer and reader are often separated by a difference in familiarity with historical periods or cultural norms, and he suggests that it is the reader's responsibility to make up this difference. "To understand a literary work," he says, "we must first attempt to bring our own view of reality into as close an alignment as possible with the prevailing view in the time of the work's composition" (Nature 83). The reader achieves this "alignment" through "historical scholarship," or "learning," and this learning, says Scholes, "should be used imaginatively, in order to bring the world of the reader and the author into as close an alignment as possible before confronting that ultimate mediator between them--the literary work itself" (83). The text presents the reader with a conduit to an "alien milieu" of meaning, that of the author, and, provided the reader has the requisite "learning," these worlds may meet through the mediation of the text (83).

The mediating function which most comprehensively defines the novel for Scholes, however, is the mediation the novel performs between "fact and fiction" (58). Scholes sees the novel arriving historically after the dissolution of the epic and its aesthetic tradition which "did not distinguish between myth and history" (57). Between the dissolution of the epic narrative aesthetic and the rise of the novel, the distinction

between myth and history--or fiction and fact[3]–has been firmly established, and the distinction has consequences for the historical development of narrative art. "The distinction between fact and fiction, once it is clearly established," writes Scholes,

> forces storytelling to choose the rubric under which it will function: truth or beauty. The result is a separation of narrative streams into factual and fictional, producing forms we have learned to call history and romance. In Western culture the two streams both spring from the fountainhead of Homeric epic and go their separate ways until they reunite in the novel. The novel's combination of factual and fictional elements is not naive and instinctive but sophisticated and deliberate, made possible by the development of a concept called realism, which provides a rationale for a marriage that rationalism had seemed to forbid. (58)

Where rationalism and its attendant discourses--science, history, journalism--would force a distinction, novelistic narrative produces a compromise, or exhibits an indifference to the gulf between "fact" and "fiction."[4] It is the novel's stylistic reliance on realism, its

---

[3] Scholes uses the two binaries interchangeably, as equivalents.

[4] Lennard Davis, in Factual Fictions (1983), also uses the fact/fiction terminology characteristic of Scholes's early work. Davis, however, claims that the fact/fiction dilemma is solved for novels by a "splitting" of a prior discourse, the "news/novels" discourse, into a journalistic narrative discourse and the fictional narrative discourse of novels. Davis has less to say about the novel's role in the cultural mediation of fact and fiction than Scholes does because he argues that the dilemma was answered in large part through legal restrictions on printing, particularly the revised Stamp Act of 1724. The problem of fact and fiction for Davis thus has its resolution largely external to the novel, where as for Scholes (and this study as well) fact and fiction are mediated from within the novel.

role as purveyor of what Frye has called the "low mimetic" (in Scholes Approaches to the Novel, 85), which mediates between the two historic "streams" of fact and fiction, history and myth, bringing the two together in a "sophisticated and deliberate" fashion into the single discourse of novelistic narrative.

The novel for Scholes, then, is a kind of halfway house between once historically distinct narrative protocols. Paraphrasing Auerbach'sMimesis Scholes claims the novel's realism reaches its fullest force when the gap between the particular and the universal, the part and the whole has been bridged, and this occurs when novelistic realism successfully negotiates a path between tragedy and comedy. "Great realistic narratives," he writes,

> combine the tragic concern for the individual with the comic concern for society to produce a representation of reality which is a just reflection of actual conditions and at the same time displays a tragic and problematic concern for the individual, regardless of his place in the social hierarchy. (Nature 229)

If realism was the stylistic answer to the historical dilemma of the separated streams of history and myth, realism itself--at least in the novel--results from a mediation between tragic character and comic incident, from a simultaneous interest in individual particularity and generally or "typically" recognizable social conditions. "What are Julien Sorel, Raskolnikov, Emma Bovary, and Anna Karenina," asks Scholes, "but individuals in a mimetic world acting out their mythic destinies" (Nature 237)?

This last formulation, the ordinary become myth, anticipates Leo Damrosch's conception of novelistic mediation in God's Plot and Man's Stories for Damrosch agrees

that the novel employs a realistic style, seeking to imitate everyday life and common characters, but says it also confers a more exalted significance on this reality. This is especially so, says Damrosch, of novels with genetic affiliations to early Puritan autobiographical narrative. Rather than performing a mediation between the historically separate narrative types of romance and history as Scholes claims, Damrosch describes the early novel as mediating between "allegory and mimesis" (10).

The early novel, according to Damrosch, embodies the paradoxes of early Christianity, particularly as those paradoxes were experienced by the Puritans. "Christianity...has always sought to mediate powerful tensions" (6) such as the paradoxical coexistence of human and divine attributes in the figure of Christ. The early Puritan ethos positioned the individual in an ambivalent way, as both in the world and not of it, and Puritan narratives reflect this ambivalence through the use of a mimetic, realistic style, but manipulate the style to suggest the presence of divine intent within ordinary happenings. The Puritans "tended to see life emblematically, as a series of nodal points that emerge from the flux of time," and which reflect God's "plot" for the individual, whereas a non-Puritan like Fielding represented life as a structure of temporal causes and effects (277). Puritan narratives like Defoe's<u>Robinson Crusoe</u> attempted to do two things: first, they sought to produce a detailed, realistic portrayal of both an internal and external life; second, they sought to show how the apparent flux of that life was in fact subject to providential design. A providential or necessary order is imposed on otherwise meaningless events by investing certain of those events with an allegorical significance (through strategies of repetition, for example). According to Damrosch such

narratives imply the order of providence by mediating between allegory and mimesis, or what he calls the mythic and literal levels of the text's meaning (10).

Damrosch says allegory and mimesis, the eternal-significant and the temporal-mundane, are the discourses available to the Puritan writer and the early novelist who was influenced by Puritan tradition. The novel is at once a mimetic representation of daily social life and manners, and an allegory in which the "emblematic" events of that life "could be accepted as spiritual truth."[5] Simply put, the Puritan narrative mediates between the secular and the divine. In Damrosch's view mediating between the secular and the divine through simultaneously mimetic and allegoric fictions was the great problem but also the great achievement of the eighteenth-century novelist. "It is pecisely the rifting or disturbance of belief which gives rise to great literature," says Damrosch (8). "The great writer," he claims, "follows out the imaginative logic of his invented fiction, which includes the suspended dilemmas that it expresses and tries to mediate" (9).

In Desire and Truth, Patricia Myer Spacks also discusses the mediating function of eighteenth-century novels by equating the novel's cultural work with Michael McKeon's description of the work of ideology. "'The purpose of ideology,'" she quotes McKeon, "'is to mediate apparently intractable human problems so as to make them not

---

[5] Damrosch 69. Ian Watt says something similar to Damrosch regarding the relation between "allegory" and "mimesis": "Defoe's representation of Robinson Crusoe as the 'universal representative' is intimately connected with the egalitarian tendency of Puritanism...For not only did this tendency make the way the individual faced every problem of everyday life a matter of deep and continuing spiritual concern; it also encouraged a literary outlook which was suited to describing such problems with the most detailed fidelity" (Rise of the Novel 78).

simple but intelligible, to provide an explanation of reality whose plausibility will depend on the degree to which it appears to do justice to the reality it explains'" (in Spacks Desire, 53). In Origins of the English Novel, McKeon further says that a novel like Defoe's Robinson Crusoe "is dedicated to the instrumental disclosure...of a complex of contradictions that it is simultaneously dedicated to mediating and rendering intelligible" (332). Spacks develops McKeon's point about the novel and ideology saying that "to think of early novels as providing not a rendition but an explanation of reality helps to elucidate their contemporary power" (Desire 53). In other words, the novel is not merely a representation of "everyday life," but can and does effect structures of feeling about that life: the novel "makes things happen in life, partly by altering perceptions" (Desire 3).

The mediation of "apparently intractable human problems" and the "explanation" of social reality is what novels do for readers according to Spacks. For her, the most intractable problem facing eighteenth-century culture was making "intelligible" the contradictions experienced between desire and truth. The vehicle which communicates both truth and desire in the novel, she maintains, is plot. Borrowing from Peter Brooks, as will this study, Spacks says that "plot engages our desire and controls our comprehension" (Desire 2); it is through plots of novels that desire and truth take their shapes. Through plot we also apprehend the relation between desire and truth as somehow interdependent and necessary. Spacks goes on to say that

> To think about the old-fashioned question of truth and the more modish notion of desire in relation to eighteenth-century plots helps one to see how plot both shapes and conveys meaning. I shall argue that eighteenth-

> century fiction is both profoundly realistic--that is, its plots speak the realities of the culture from which they emerge--and consistently daring in its exploration of formal, psychological, and social possibilities. (7)

The novel is potentially both imitative and disruptive of social reality. Its truth derives in part from its social realism, while it speaks desire through raising possibilities that might threaten the social order it imitates.

But truth and desire for Spacks mean more than just imitation on the one hand and imaginative possibility on the other, for, in the eighteenth-century novel, there appears the desire for truth as well as the truth of desire. Comparing Tom Jones to Tristram Shandy, for example, Spacks claims that novelists like Fielding "define truth as external to their own psyches and as operating by immutable laws, cosmic rather than social, although the fundamental principle they uphold may be that of social obligation" (54). Fielding's "truth" serves the social order even while--or perhaps because--it originates from outside it. "At the other extreme," says Spacks, "is the kind of writer represented by Tristram Shandy, whose truth is personal, idiosyncratic, and closely linked to desire" (54). In contrast to Fielding, a writer like Tristram "denies social meaning," and "the possibility of coherent order in experience or narrative" (54). The novel, then, will mediate that most intractable of "human problems" facing the eighteenth century: the gap between "external," "immutable," and "cosmic" truth on the one hand and "personal" and "idiosyncratic" desire on the other. "The 'truth' of transcendent moral doctrine and that of individual sensibility rarely coincide," says Spacks, "although a novel may make its plot out of both."

III

Each critic just mentioned constructs a binary opposition, a "suspended dilemma" in Damrosch's terms, upon which novelistic narrative performs its work of mediation. The terms of each of these binary oppositions can be construed as equivalents or at least as analogs of each other: Scholes's "myth," Damrosch's "allegory," and Spacks' "truth" all suggest a transcendent dimension to narrative, its power to speak to eternal and immutable laws through its form, while the categories of "fiction," "mimesis," and "desire" speak to the novel's representation of the particular and the transitory expressed through its realistic content. Like the critical stances just summarized, this dissertation proposes a dialectical approach to the study of the novel. Scholes, Damrosch, and Spacks each analyze the novel's work of cultural mediation between categories that can be construed along the dimension of the immutable versus the transitory, or the universal versus the particular. This dissertation will study the eighteenth-century English novel in a similar way, describing how selected novels enact a symbolic resolution between a discourse of form on the one hand, and a discourse of desire on the other. The eighteenth-century consciousness of duty or moral obligation is typically represented in the novel as split between just this kind of opposition. On the one side are the patriarchal versions of obligation which assert that duty is pre-ordained, a priori to the individual subject. On the other side are the newly emerging liberal versions of moral obligation which imply that duty is situational and negotiable. This study demonstrates how individual novels perform the kind of mediation just described, but also argues more generally that the novel as a literary form is particularly well suited to answering the kinds of questions and

resolving the kinds of conflicts--at least at the symbolic level--that arose from the competing versions of duty in the eighteenth century. In other words, just as Michael McKeon argues that the early novel was preoccupied "with questions of virtue" (22), this study suggests that it was also preoccupied with resolving the tensions between rival ideologies of duty or obligation.

McKeon, like Scholes, Damrosch, and Spacks, assigns the novel a mediating function in early modern culture. "In its preoccupation with questions of virtue," says McKeon, the novel "internalizes the emergence of the middle class and the concerns that it exists to mediate" (22). McKeon, like Watt before him, thus ties the rise of the English novel to the rise of the English middle class. But McKeon departs from Watt when he says that the "most striking dimension" of the correlation between the novel's rise and the rise of the middle class, "lies not outside the novel, between literary and social formations, but within it" (22). From McKeon's perspective the interesting thing about the concomitant "rise" of the middle class and the novel lies not in what Watt sees as the class demand for literary qualities like "abstract realism," but in the way the novel as a genre internalizes or naturalizes the middle-class's interests, concerns, and world view. For McKeon the novel "internalizes" issues of "truth" and "virtue," two "concerns" which, for the middle classes, raised the kind of "intractable" questions to which Spacks refers, and which, therefore, were in need of the mediating "explanations" which the novel provided.

One way of understanding McKeon's concept of internalization is to say that the novel participates in the middle-class's cultural project of promoting itself to universal

human subjecthood. The novel accomplishes this in part by providing a realistic imitation of middle-class life, its quotidian concerns and conflicts, and by projecting those concerns and conflicts, as Damrosch would claim, onto the imaginative screen of transcendent allegorical meaning: in the novel the mundane experience of the individual subject is endowed with universal significance. The novel dialectically internalizes the dilemma facing the middle classes between competing ideals of duty, by symbolically presenting the individual's inclination or self-interest as sanctioned or ratified by an a priori moral law. In chapter three, for example, it will be shown how Defoe's Robinson Crusoe legitimates the individual's lust for property by representing such desire as productive of general social welfare. In Robinson Crusoe the symbol of this magical mediation is the contract, a form which transforms the isolated individual's desire into a constitutive component of community. This dissertation suggests that a dialectical model which can usefully describe this kind of symbolic mediation between discourses of law and desire exists in Friedrich von Schiller's dialectic of formal and sensual drives presented in his Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man. All the critics just discussed, and this study as well, see the novel as a genre which mediates between some version of the abstract and the particular, the universal and the individual. Schiller's dialectic of drives will provide this study with a useful way of describing the early English novel's cultural function of making a social reality intelligible to its readers by mediating between the particular and the universal.

Schiller names his two primary drives "Formtrieb" and "Stofftrieb," the formal or abstract and the material or sensuous drives respectively, and claims that these two drives

are, in modern experience, divorced from and antagonistically opposed to one another. Schiller posits these drives as poles representative of a division in the subject brought about by the rise of the modern state, modern science, and the tendency of bourgeois culture generally to rationalize and compartmentalize experience and knowledge. He says

> Once the increase of empirical knowledge, and more exact modes of thought made sharper divisions between the sciences inevitable, and once the increasingly complex machinery of State necessitated a more rigorous separation of ranks and occupations, then the inner unity of human nature was severed too, and a disastrous conflict set its harmonious powers at variance. (39)

As Juliet Sychrava comments on Schiller's myth of a fallen because divided modernity, "modern society...is severed from the physical world, and instead of the organic harmony of the two that once existed we are left with two extremes: brute nature and over-abstracted and arid culture" (24).

In a move characteristic of his age, Schiller represents the breakdown of the "inner unity of human nature" into the extremes of Nature and Culture as a historical process, and refers to Greek antiquity as the original, organic ideal of imaginary fullness. He says, "at that first fair awakening of the powers of the mind, sense [Stofftrieb] and intellect [Formtrieb] did not as yet rule over separate domains" (38). That is, sensation and reason, "brute nature" and "arid culture" were not yet divided by the forces of rationalization. Modernity, however, has brought on a state of division between the

faculties of sense and reason. Schiller describes the process and its consequences this way:

> That polypoid character of the Greek states...now made way for an ingenious clockwork, in which, out of the piecing together of innumerable but lifeless parts, a mechanical collective ensued. State and Church, laws and customs, were now torn asunder; enjoyment was divorced from labor, the means from the end, the effort from the reward. Everlastingly chained to a single fragment of the whole, man himself develops into a fragment... (40)

Opposed to such "mechanical" fragmentation and longing for the imaginary "polypoid" unity of which modernity has robbed us, Schiller asks how that unity might be recuperated. His answer is through the mediation of divided reason and sense by a third drive, "Spieltrieb," or "play." Schiller's concept of play is quite specialized and needs to be distinguished from other uses of "play" which have been applied to cultural study. First, Schiller's use of "play" must be understood as representing a process of aesthetic mediation between his abstract and sensuous drives. As a concept which describes a mediation and vital reunification of divided forces, Schiller's notion of play differs from other, perhaps more familiar conceptions which assign to play the status of a degraded form of experience.[6]

Johann Huizinga, Roger Caillois, and Emile Benveniste, for example, have all

---

[6] For a more complete overview of the different concepts of play that have been applied to the study of literature, see R. Rawdon Wilson, In Palamede's Shadow. Wilson's second chapter provides a broad and comprehensive survey of the history of the concept as it has been used in literary and cultural studies.

formulated conceptions of play which are influential in cultural and literary studies, and which, in different ways, emphasize play as a realm of experience outside of or set apart from a more authentic kind of experience. In his book Homo Ludens, Huizinga represents play as "a free activity standing quite outside 'ordinary' life, as being 'not serious'" (13). Caillois's version of play, developed inMan Play and Games, asserts that play is is always "separate...unproductive...and make-believe,"[7] that it "consists...in providing limited gratification removed from everyday life" (103-4). Because it is unproductive play "creates neither goods nor wealth, no new elements of any kind"; it always "results with a situation identical to that with which it began" (217). Benveniste describes play as a state resulting from the separation of ritual from myth. For Benveniste, play

> originates in the sacred, of which it offers an inverted and broken image. If the sacred can be defined as the consubstantial unity of myth and rite, we can say there is play when only one-half the sacred operation is carried out--when the myth alone is translated into words or the rite alone into acts...Play understood in this way will have two forms: jocique, when the myth is reduced to its own content and separated from its rites; ludique, when the rite is practiced for itself and separated from its myth. (Qtd. In Erhmann 36-7)

Schiller's "play," however, is not a realm outside of "ordinary" or "serious" experience, nor is it a counterfeit of an originally whole or organic cultural existence.

---

[7] See R. Rawdon Wilson, In Palamede's Shadow, p.252, note 8.

Rather, "play," in Schiller's theory of drives, performs a symbolic reunification of a world divided between two modes of representation and desire: the rational or abstract on the one hand, and the sensuous or particular on the other. Schiller says that both the rational and sensuous "need to have limits set to them and, inasmuch as they can be thought of as energies, need to be relaxed; the sense drive so that it does not encroach upon the domain of the law, the formal drive so that it does not encroach on that of feeling" (72).

For thinkers like Huizinga and Caillois, "play" gives license to the imagination, freeing it (temporarily) from the restraints of real necessity. For Schiller, however, play represents disciplined resistance to the overdetermination of experience by either the legislative reason or the appetitive senses, neither of which alone can fully represent experience. "Play" is the faculty which sets the limits to both the formal and sense drives, leading them eventually into a relationship of harmony and identity. "How can we speak of mere play," says Schiller, "when we know that it is precisely through play and play alone which of all of man's states and conditions is the one which makes him whole and unfolds both sides of his nature at once" (79). Schillerian play at once implies a freedom from constraint and a disciplined hedge against the animal instincts; one finds one's way to freedom in Schiller by accepting these limits as inevitable and beneficial, by happily internalizing rather than resisting the shapes that culture offers to put on our desires.

The aesthetic faculty represented by Schiller's "play" is thus given pride of place in Schiller's philosophy. For a philosopher like Kant, in contrast, the aesthetic faculty is a diminished one since its "reflective judgment" short circuits the referal of particular sense

impressions to the generalizing, law-giving, determinate judgments of reason.[8] According to Juliet Sychrava, Schiller's "play" is a deliberate reworking of the Kantian aesthetic faculty and produces "the lived union of sense and reason, the harmonious experience in which man gained insight into moral truth" (10). For Schiller the formal drive (Kant's "reason") alone cannot show the way to moral truth any more than can the material drive alone. For Schiller truth and freedom could only be reached through the aesthetic mediation of both these impulses--in other words, through "play."

The forces which, for Schiller, cause the division between reason and sense in the modern world are the same forces which critics for some time have insisted were the "cause" of the novel. Schiller, remember, principally blames the modern impulse to secularization, "the increase in empirical knowledge, and more exact modes of thought," the "sharper divisions between the sciences," for the modern fall into division. Watt, for example, claims that the early novel generally "embodied...the tendency to secularization which was rooted in material progress."[9] Georg Lukacs's position, that the novel

---

[8] Juliet Sychrava says, "when Schiller puts forward the idea of aesthetic unity as the locus of the reconciliation of necessity and freedom, he takes Kant's separate and irreconcilable faculties of understanding and reason and locates them in a formal harmony" which effaces Kant's distinction between "determinate" and "reflective" judgments (p. 190). That is, Schiller loses "Kant's careful dual perspective whereby we can always consider any object either 'objectively' or 'subjectively,' either 'autonomously' or 'relatively'."

[9] Watt, Ian, Rise of the Novel, 83. Elsewhere Watt writes that, in the early modern period, "in the literary, the philosophical and the social spheres alike the classical focus on the ideal, the universal and the corporate has shifted completely, and the modern field of vision is mainly occupied by the discrete particular, the directly apprehended sensum, and the autonomous individual" (p. 62). Watt attributes partial causality of the novel's rise to modernity's de-emphasis of the formal and pre-occupation with the particular. Such an imbalance between form and sense is just the condition for which Schiller

responds to the modern condition of "transcendental homelessness," is rooted in the split between meaning and action, soul and deed, which he sees as a fundamental characteristic of rationalized modernity.[10] Significantly, the function Lukacs attributes to the novel in the modern world recalls the role of "play" in Schiller's theory of the drives. "The composition of the novel," Lukacs says, "is the paradoxical fusion of heterogenous and discrete components into an organic whole" (84). Furthermore, the modern division between reason and sense and their reconciliation through play as postulated by Schiller would seem to anticipate critics like Damrosch and Spacks, the oppositions they construct between "allegory and mimesis," "desire and truth," and which they claim the novel makes "intelligible" to its readers. The ambivalent stance taken by the eighteenth-century novel toward "truth" and "desire" noted by Spacks (remember she says that a novel may make its plot "out of both"), for example, suggests that the categories "Formtrieb" and "Stofftrieb" can describe the very materials of which novelistic plots are fashioned. That the early novel becomes popular within and functions to represent a world divided along some dimension appears to be a current critical commonplace. As a mediating concept, Schiller's "play" provides a metaphor for conceptualizingthe novel's generic function within a divided cultural milieu as a reintegrative one.

---

proposes "play" as a corrective.

[10] Georg Lukacs, Theory of the Novel Lukacs first mentions "transcendental homelessness" on p. 41. For Lukacs the world which the novel inhabits, like the world Schiller describes in the Letters, is "incomplete" (34). Lukacs says this world places "an unbridgeable chasm between cognition and action, between soul and created structure, between self and world...that is why our essence had to become a postulate for ourselves, and create a still deeper, more menacing abyss between us and ourselves" (34).

IV

Play reintegrates Schiller's divided world by producing what he calls "living form," the name Schiller gives to that condition of aesthetic harmony in which the forces of form and desire have been "relaxed," and brought into harmonious identity with each other. Refering once again to the Greek ideal, Schiller says this identity of form and sense is best represented in the "brow of the blessed gods" of ancient statuary (78). In Greek statuary Schiller says there "is no force to contend with force, no frailty where temporality might break in" (78). In the placid and content visages of Greek statuary Schiller perceives a simultaneous repose and energy that perfectly embodies his idea of living form. He writes

> Both the material constraint of natural laws and the spiritual constraint of moral laws were resolved in their [the Greeks] higher concept of necessity, which embraced both worlds at once; and it was only out of the perfect union of those two necessities that for them true freedom could proceed. (80)

Greek art manifests a "living form" because the tensions between Formtrieb and Stofftrieb, equated here with "necessity" and "freedom," are resolved; the two forces have entered a relation of identity, have coalesced into "perfect union."

In Schiller's philosophy "living form" carries the connotation of a metaphysical coupling of otherwise irreconcilible abstract forces: nowhere in the Letters does Schiller categorically instruct his reader as to how such form is to be created; he says only that it results from "setting limits" to and "relaxing" the potential overdetermination of experience by either of his primary drives. Yet, the idea has, potentially, very concrete

uses for describing the dynamics of narrative. Schiller's aesthetics is essentially an aesthetics of the beautiful, and Juliet Sychrava explains that "living form is Schiller's most explicit definition of beauty: the beautiful object [Greek statuary, for example] is one in which form and content seem freely to determine one another, so that freedom and necessity are one and the same and the object seems to spring naturally from its own inner rationale."[11]

This dissertation uses the idea of "living form" to describe the promise of reconciliation between the discourses of form and desire in narrative. In Reading for the Plot, Peter Brooks posits just such a relationship between form and content in narrative. A novel's subject matter or "fabula," he says, routinely presents "an explicit statement within the novel of the principle of its movement" (45). The "arabesque" in Tristram Shandy would be one example of this kind of statement. The form of the novel, then, seems to be guided by, even predicated on, its content which in turn is dependent on its

---

[11] Sychrava 27. It is worth noting that while for a contemporary like Burke, beauty represents passive imitation, a kind of conformity in lassitude, for Schiller it is an active, energetic principle, the result of intervention between the wayward forces of the dissociated sensibility he posits in his Letters. Also, Schiller's related concept of "freedom in appearance," says Sychrava, "implies an art object much more definitely than Kant's aesthetic ever could" (27). "Freedom in appearance" was part of Schiller's challenge to Kantian aesthetics and, in his philosophy, helped to liberate the work of art from the categorical fetters of Kant's "dependent beauty," making the beautiful object an authentic representation of moral truth. J. M. Bernstein, in his analysis of Kant's Third Critique, remarks, "if representing is a purpose of a work, then its success in achieving that end will be the criterion for evaluation of it (as beautiful)"(33). It does not follow in Kant's Third Critique, he continues, "that representational works cannot be the objects of pure judgments of taste, for Kant does nothing to demonstrate that a consideration of a work's success in satisfying its representational end must be deployed in a judgment of taste.(33). It is the implied dynamism and the attention it calls to the art object (a novel in the case of this study) as a site of moral truth which makes "living form" an appropriate analytic concept for studying narrative in the way this study plans to do.

form. The idea of "living form" in Schiller's philosophy would seem to have much the same function that the concept of "plot" has for Peter Brooks's narratology, for both "living form" and "plot" imply a mediatory negotiation between the universal and the particular.

Though formulated through a psychoanalytic discourse, through the categories of "death drive" and "pleasure principle," "condensation" and "displacement," the perspective taken by Peter Brooks toward the novel in Reading for the Plot, like the perspectives on the novel discussed earlier, regards the novel as an interplay of representational forces.[12] Brooks will be useful to this study because his theory of novelistic plot supports one of its fundamental assumptions: that the eighteenth-century English novel's cultural function can be understood as a mediation between two forms of desire and representation, the metaphoric and the metonymic. For Brooks, "plot" is the mediating principle that would correspond most closely to Schiller's production of "living form" through play. Similarly, Brooks's binary of "metaphor" and "metonymy" corresponds closely with Schiller's conceptions of "Formtrieb" and "Stofftrieb."

Schiller's sense drive, for example, can be understood as a manifestation of desire in a metonymic mode, analogous to Freud's concept of "displacement," since it seeks and represents its objects piecemeal, one after the other. It corresponds to the representation of temporal events, usually in a cause-effect sequence, in narrative. The sense drive does not seek to comprehend the free particulars of experience in greater wholes. Living too

---

[12] Spacks also takes Brooks's model of plot as one of her fundamental assumptions about how the novel fulfills its cultural mission.

closely to the sensuous drive limits human development says Schiller because it "furnishes only cases" (22); it seeks instances, not general rules. The formal drive, on the other hand, can be allied with metaphor, or Freudian "condensation," as representation and desire. Where the sense drive "furnishes only cases," the formal drive "gives laws" (23). Through the influence of the formal drive the subject makes the cognitive leap from sensing particulars to formulating general rules, from apprehending concrete objects to conceiving of symbols. Instead of being bound to the moment-by-moment existence of successive sense impressions, the subject may, under sway of the formal drive, "perceive one moment of its life as if it were eternity" (23). Rather than living as the "pure unit of quantity to which the poverty of the senses has reduced him," says Schiller, through the law-giving power of the formal drive, "man has raised himself to a unity of ideas embracing the whole realm of phenomena" (23). Like Freud's "death drive," therefore, the formal drive seeks to subsume particulars into "ever greater unities." But living too closely to the law is as limiting in its way as an existence bound to the senses, for the formal drive resists change, is unreceptive to and inflexible against the relentless tide of sense impressions, and may lead the subject off into unrestrainable and dangerous flights of abstraction. In Schiller the play drive mediates between the overdetermination of either drive, setting limits to each and bringing them into harmony. Through this kind of narrative play readers escape both the reifying effects of pure symbolization and the monotony of mere passing time; they come to sense plots.

This dynamic of mediation between metonymy and metaphor is just the dynamic that Peter Brooks claims is responsible for giving readers of novels a sense of plot.

"Narrative," says Brooks, is the "acting out of the implications of metaphor," an "acting out" which is a process of "unpacking" a metaphor "as a metonymy" (26). Brooks goes on to say that "one could no doubt analyze the opening paragraphs of most novels and emerge in each case with an image of a desire taking shape" (38). These "beginnings," he says, present the reader with a "collapsed metaphor" (26) of desire, one which requires the reach and scope of metonymic "unpacking" to become fully realized or "reactivated" (28). One could similarly analyze the beginnings of the novels discussed in this dissertation and recognize the "image of a desire taking shape." More accurately, each novel discussed here begins with the admission of a breach of duty, a collapsed metaphor of obligation, by one party against another, and in each of these novels it is the breach of duty which sets a desire in motion: a desire to mend the rift in the social fabric created by the breach of duty. These mendings, or "reconciliation plots," as this study would label them, are enacted, as Brooks suggests, through a mediation between metonymic and metaphoric narrative discourses,[13] through the metonymic "unpacking" of the first metaphor leading to the construction of a second, more complete metaphor of duty. The metonymic and metaphoric aspects of desire in these novels can be understood, as Schiller's paradigm of drives would suggest, as desire invested in individual inclination on the one hand, and as desire curbed (or perhaps legitimated) by an abstract moral law on the other. The eighteenth century could represent the concept of duty to itself in both

---

[13] I purposely underplay Brooks's theory of "textual erotics," not because the idea of Eros is unimportant for understanding the "plots" of the novels examined here, but rather to foreground the dynamics of mediation as discussed by Brooks, and as this concept will be used in the dissertation.

ways, as metonymy and metaphor, as individual inclination and abstract law. Yet, it was well aware of the potential excesses of both inclination and the law, and so was reluctant to accept either extreme as the absolute arbiter of moral obligation. The novel, this study argues, functioned in part to supply ideological mediations between these extremes by constructing a relation of identity between them. Just as, for Schiller, neither the formal drive nor the sensuous drive alone can lead to awareness of moral truth, neither metaphor nor metonymy alone can produce an "intelligible" narrative. Novelistic plot performs the necessary mediation between these two modes of desire and representation to produce meaning, or, as Spacks would say, to provide "plausible explanations" of their social reality.

Since Schiller and Brooks have been so closely identified here, one might ask why Schiller, and not Brooks, serves as the study's interpretive model. Brooks psychoanalytic paradigm is, first of all, ahistorical whereas Schiller's paradigm participates in the very kind of conceptual binary that was familiar to the eighteenth century. This is not to say that eighteenth-century English novelists consciously adopted the ontological myth of an eighteenth-century German philosopher as the model for their plots. This would have been impossible anyway, since Schiller's Letters post-date the novels examined here. But the antagonism between absolute moral authority and individual inclination--respective interpretations of "Formtrieb" and "Stofftrieb"--was a familiar preoccupation within the English spiritual, social, and political discursive milieus. Hobbes's moral and political philosophy, particularly his justification of monarchy, would be one case in point. "The capacity to identify with the power of the

state," writes Carol Kay, "rather than a desire to seek limitless personal power, was essential to Hobbes's psychology of civil society" (53-4). At the the other end of the century Blake's mystical vision of fallen human nature, divided as it is between the domains of the senses and abstract reason, echoes Schiller's vision as well as Hobbes anticipates it.

Terry Eagleton supports the relevance of the Schillerian paradigm, claiming that the allusion to eighteenth-century political preoccupations is "apposite," with regard to Schiller, "since...the 'sense' drive for Schiller evokes appetitive individualism," and "is also the proletariat, with its 'crude, lawless instincts, unleashed with the loosening of the bonds of civil order, and hastening with ungovernable fury to their animal satisfactions'" (105). On the other hand, abstract reason, or "Kantian duty," is a "paranoid absolutist monarch," a "churlishly suspicious despot" (105). As the term of resolution in Schiller's dialectic, "Spieltrieb" can be used to describe how narrative plot mediates between these otherwise mutually exclusive historical conceptual forces. In other words, Schiller's concept of "play" describes how the novel participates in the kind of "aesthetic hegemony" discussed by Eagleton, bringing the senses, the proxy for appetitive individual instincts, into agreement with the abstract law, not through fear or force of terror, but because such agreement appears as what the individual has wanted all along. Either way, through play, the appetitive senses will see that reason's dictates are less censorious than they at first appear; reason too will be "relaxed," showing "greater respect for Nature through a nobler confidence in her willingness to obey" its precepts. In the early English novel, "duty" will be shown to "engage more closely with inclination"

(105). To describe narrative in Shillerian terms would be to say that the novel offers a symbolic space which suspends the contingencies and limitations of both law and inclination as postulated by Schiller and as understood by the eighteenth-century subject, offering a stage upon which the "lived union of sense and reason" (82), the identification of abstract morality with individual inclination, may be imagined and dramatized. In both Schiller and the novels presented here, we are always glad to find limits to both our desires and our power over others.

Schiller's dialectic, then, has at least three points to recommend it for a study of the novel. First, the roles of "Formtreib" and "Stofftreib" in his dialectical philosophy are structurally analogous to the narrative discourses of form and desire that so many recent critics have identified and studied. Schiller provides a framework for discussing the functions of these discourses, the one which moves plot forward through time, the other which creates pattern and meaning in plot. Second, the idea of "play" elaborated in Schiller's dialectic implies a dynamic and dependent relationship between the discourses of form and desire, and so encourages an accounting of that relationship rather than an emphasis on either form or content. Third, the idea of "living form" describes an aesthetic shaping, and so makes the critic aware of the ideological quality of narrative closure.

V

As the survey of criticism with which this chapter began demonstrates, many of the current assumptions about the novel's place in history and culture are easily assimilated to the interpretive framework adopted by this study. In fact it is safe to say

that the dialectical model of Formtrieb and Stofftrieb resolving through Spieltrieb includes these other similar perspectives within its scope of generality. This inclusiveness is easy to identify in studies like those of Scholes, Damrosch, Spacks, and McKeon which explicitly deal with the novel's cultural function of mediation. It is also apparent in studies like those already discussed which only imply that function. In Political Constructions, for example, Carol Kay is only partially concerned with mediation. Kay's work details the influence of Hobbes's moral and political philosophy on the eighteenth-century English novel. She says that "one major goal of the authors of this period is to create a scene of dispute that would not result in Hobbes's choice of plots, either total war or else submission to absolute authority" (44). In other words, Hobbes's alternative concepts of the "war of all against all" (the chaos of appetite) which characterizes his imaginary "state of nature," and the willing submission to absolute authority which characterizes his state of civil society are both considered extreme and therefore unacceptable as conclusions for the early novel. Hobbes's influence on the novel, therefore, is negative, and the novel exists in part according to Kay to produce compromises to his unacceptable extremes.

The absolutism of either desire or the law was a choice between unacceptable extremes, and the novel is one place were some third alternative to either of these absolutes might be represented. This dissertation demonstrates how that third alternative is a result of the novel's aesthetic mediation of extremes. As will be seen, different novels will approach the problem in different ways. Before proceeding to the analyses of individual narratives, however, it will be useful to discuss just how the eighteenth-century

came to construct issues of duty as a duality of extremes, and to examine some of the measures it took to resolve this duality at the symbolic level. It will also be necessary to further evaluate the rival ideologies of duty mentioned in this chapter to show how the discourses of political and moral theory became material for novelistic narrative. Both of these discussions will be taken up in chapter two.

CHAPTER TWO

Creating "Good Company": The Symbolic Mediation of Social Experience in Eighteenth-Century English Culture

...frantic tumults only lead to that
terrible corrective, Arbitrary Power,
--which cowards call out for as
protection, and knaves are so ready
to grant.

Horace Walpole
Letter to Horace Mann
May 12, 1768

I

In The Politics and Poetics of Transgression, Peter Stallybrass and Allon White have chronicled the disintegration in the eighteenth century of what has been called the "carnival" ethic. By "carnival," they mean the popular social and cultural practices inherited from the Medieval and Renaissance periods, which periodically and temporarily turned the world and its authority structures "upside down" as a way of mediating the conflicts and tensions between rulers and ruled, between the official "high" culture of the court and nobility and the "low" marketplace culture of the peasantry and countryside. Carnival's distinction between the high and the low, say Stallybrass and White, is gradually replaced in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century by a new set of social practices which grew up in the more modern bourgeois public space of the coffee houses and in the imaginary spaces of literature. It will be argued here that this new ethic and the practices it encouraged (as well as those it discouraged) can be understood as a "play" ethic. "Play" here refers to Schiller's conception of that term, a conception

outlined in chapter one of this dissertation. It will be argued here that in the eighteenth century the social, political, and economic ambitions of the ascendant "bourgeoisie"--or "middle class"--included strategies to distinguish themselves from other interest groups, particularly the aristocracy, but also the "lower orders." These strategies also exerted pressure on the traditional order of English society, calling for new representational modes that could structure relations of authority and obligation in ways that supported the economic goals of the rising middle ranks of English society.

These strategies can be likened to a Schillerian "play" ethic because, as will be shown, the construction of this ethic in imaginative and other kinds of literature produced an image of the social order which was no longer exclusively hierarchical, opposed between the high and the low. The axis of high culture/low culture is gradually replaced by images of extremes or excesses of arbitrary power on one side and blind passion or physicality on the other. This new representation of society, where conflict was represented "horizontally" rather than "vertically," served the interests of the new classes, for it allowed them to represent themselves and their interests in a legitimate way.

II

Mikhail Bakhtin, in Rabelais and his World, has studied the phenomenon of carnival during the Medieval and early Renaissance periods. His idea of carnival describes a group of practices which relate the "high"--the aristocratic and exclusive--and the "low,"--the peasant and popular--elements of the rigidly hierarchical societies of the European Middle Ages and Renaissance. These two domains represented the discontinuous relationship between an "official" or high culture centered in the courts of

pre-modern Europe, and an "unofficial" or low cultural domain which found expression in the popular marketplace of the countryside. Each of these domains, therefore, had its own territory, the court and the market, and as well its own set of social and discursive practices. Of traditional European market culture and its relationship to high court culture, for example, Bakhtin writes

> the unofficial folk culture of the Middle Ages and of the Renaissance had its own territory and its own particular time, the time of fairs and feasts. This territory is a peculiar second world within the official medieval order and was ruled by a special type of relationship, a free, familiar marketplace relationship. (139)

The low is thus set apart from the "official" high culture by spatial and temporal territories, and by "free, familiar" social relations that are the antithesis of courtly practices of distinction and protocol. The high and the low, the court and the country, existed in an exclusive relationship of domination and subordination to one another except during specially designated times when this official relationship is upset by the license of carnival. Carnival interrupts the dominance of high over low culture by temporarily inverting their usual relationship. During specially marked times--religious feasts, holidays--the "free" and "familiar" popular practices of low culture rule over the exclusive and repressive customs of high culture.

Carnival, therefore, provided regular periods of freedom from the repressive structures of a hierarchically organized society, a freedom which was prescribed yet cathartic, often riotously so, but which was not, according to many critics, lastingly

transformative of social structures. Bakhtinian carnival represents, according to Stallybrass and White, a "symbolic inversion" which is "at once utopian and counter-hegemonic," but which does not "do away with the official dominant culture" (18-19). On the contrary, these authors believe, carnival rather helps to support the dominant culture, is part of a "licensed complicity" with the status quo (18). Carnival practices functioned as a kind of safety valve for discontent which was periodically released in outbursts of playful or even violent cultural catharsis, and so could never become organized sufficiently to pose a threat to the ruling order. The periodic, licensed carnival rule of the "folk" actually maintained the repressive structure it so heartily mocked.

Carnival symbolization, for example, expressed conflict and its resolution through images of the body according to Bakhtin and Stallybrass and White. The representations of the high and the low were figured in images of the "classical" and "grotesque" bodies respectively. Bakhtin explains that the low was figured in the collective social body of the folk, and that this body's symbolic representations were best exemplified in the "grotesque realism" and the "grotesque bodies" of Rabelais (Stallybrass and White 19). The symbolization of the high, on the other hand, was figured in the antithesis of the low-grotesque, the "classical body" (19). Stallybrass and White describe the oppositional bodily symbolization this way:

> The grotesque body is emphasized as a mobile, split, multiple self, a subject of pleasure in processes of exchange; and it is never closed off from either its social ecosystemic context. The classical body on the other hand keeps its distance. In a sense it is disembodied, for it appears indifferent to a body

which is "beautiful," but which is taken for granted. (22)

The classical body was officially valued over the grotesque and kept its distance from it; but, the carnival practice of periodic inversion defiled the classical and exalted the grotesque. Because of the social and economic changes occurring throughout the eighteenth century, this structure of symbolic inversion was becoming obsolete as a way of representing and preserving an orderly society.

Over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Stallybrass and White detect what they call a "recoding of high/low relations across the social structure" (19) which rendered the practice of carnival obsolete as a means of mediating conflict between rulers and ruled. This chapter will examine in a general way what this "recoding" might have meant relative to the rising middle or trading classes in England in the eighteenth century, how it helped them consolidate the new bases of power and prestige they were promoting, and how the novel might have played a role in representing these new interests. The newly forming economic classes inherited the discourses of classical and grotesque symbolization from an older traditional culture which were not lastingly transformative of social structures and which, therefore, did not meet their project of lasting social change. This chapter takes Stallybrass's and White's term "recoding" to mean that the new groups emerging to take power of English society (re)invented discourses and systems of symbolization which did away with the old antinomy "high/low," or else displaced its function onto other categories. These new discourses,

unlike the earlier carnival ethos, were lastingly transformative of social structures.[1]

III

While the existence of a clearly defined "middle-class," or English "bourgeoisie," in the eighteenth century is still debated, scholars generally agree on the fact that major changes were taking place in the way power was defined, exercised, and legitimated during the period. The most significant transformation in both politics and economics was that the older traditional status society, whose power relations were organized around birth and its associated time-honored privileges, was being replaced by a social order which legitimated power on other grounds, and which assigned a more limited role to the monarch. First and foremost, the new order, like the old, wished to protect private property. The new guard, however, thought that property was best protected by a government which was ratified by the consent of its people, and not the arbitrary will of a

---

[1] Before proceeding, it needs to be mentioned that critics and historians disagree about whether or not an English middle-class existed in the eighteenth century. But, Terry Eagleton and Nancy Armstrong provide a way of talking about the kinds of class interests that are meaningful to this study by arguing that even if they did not yet exist in hard fact as a self-conscious class, a set of interests which we today can identify as "middle-class" did exist as a discursive force and as an ideological opposition to entrenched aristocratic power. See Terry Eagleton, The Function of Criticism (London: Verso, 1984), chapter one, and Nancy Armstrong, Desire and Domestic Fiction (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). Eagleton says, for example, that the eighteenth-century English "ruling bloc" was an amalgam of cross-class interests (11), and that these disparate interests were consolidated in a powerful way through the periodical press (10-11). Armstrong says that "Conduct books imply the presence of a unified middle class at a time when other representations of the social world suggest that no such class yet existed" (63). While "most authors...did not...perceive what common interests might have united all those at the same social level" into something like an homogenous class of interests, the eighteenth-century conduct books "presupposed horizontal affiliations among the literate public where no such affiliations would exist...for another sixty to a hundred years" (65).

divine right monarch.[2] While such a democratic impulse sounds progressive and unproblematic to modern ears, it was at the time considered a dangerous idea, even by those who promoted it. Mobilizing consent meant the possible liberation of violent passions and the rule of the mob, a condition which could be just as much a threat to property and order as an arbitrary monarch.[3] One crucial requirement of the middle-class's rise to power was finding a way to represent itself which separated its interests from association with the twin tyrannies of arbitrary power on the one hand and the popular passions of the mob on the other.

Given these changes in attitudes about the legitimacy of authority and the conflicts the new attitudes generated, the inherited traditions of carnival symbolization were no longer meaningful ways to represent and resolve conflict. For better or worse, political and economic power in the eighteenth century was being transferred from a tradition-minded to a transformative class of people, and this rising power bloc would have to create a more dynamic system of symbolization than carnival inversion provided

---

[2] See H.T. Dickinson, Liberty and Property (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), 63-66. "Consent" here means the consent of men of sufficient property. Dickinson, like many historians, avoids the use of the term "middle-class," prefering instead to discuss the political party divisions among "whig" and "tory" interests. Dickinson's discussion is useful because it reminds readers that, as Eagleton says (Function 11) the English "middle-class" was made up of many status groups who were coming to share similar political and economic interests and goals. "Whig" for Dickinson generally means "progressive," or liberal, while "Tory" generally means conservative.

[3] Dickinson says that both conservative and liberal elements wanted to maintain, to some extent, a traditional society "in which private property was secure from the depredations of an arbitrary monarch and a licentious mob" (93).

in order to represent their interests. A wholesale rejection of carnival imagery would not occur however. This chapter will show how the classical and grotesque bodies of carnival symbolization were "hybridized" as a means of representing the new "bourgeois body" which was at once universal and concrete.

Michael McKeon comments on a relevant aspect of this class's transformative role, calling them an "assimilationist" and a "supercessionist" class (174-5). "The assimilationist and supercessionist strains of middle-class ideology," McKeon says, define its very nature" (174). This ideology was not itself necessarily "embodied within a delimited social class," but "suffused different segments of the reigning status groups and gained its first expression through a network of beliefs that were themselves in the process of a critical mutation" (174-5). McKeon here identifies what might be the middle class's most significant effect on the social transformation of the early modern period: the ability to include different status groups within its transformative project, and the creation of ideologies and symbolic systems which represented on-going social transformation as the norm.

When McKeon uses the word "assimilationist" and explains that middle-class ideology "suffused different segments of the reigning status groups," he means that middle-class ideology did not spring up full-grown from new ground: it was pieced together over time by borrowing and revising components from pre-existing value systems. In The Civilisation of the Crowd, Golby and Purdue affirm McKeon's assimilationist thesis. "The effect of the middle ranks of society" they say, "was to accelerate the process of cultural transmission, to modify or adapt aspects of high culture"

to their own purposes and to promote those adaptations by commercializing "culture into a marketable commodity" (30). Golby and Purdue are suggesting that the commodity form and its attendant rationalization of production and distribution became the means by which the middle-class modified the high or aristocratic cultural forms which the commodity and its culture eventually superceded. The rationalization through commodification of symbolic systems was both a cause and an effect of the middle-class's rise to power. The volume capable of being produced and the creation of more efficient means of its consumption overwhelmed the more traditional systems of cultural production and transmission. But the very conditions of its success at such modification and adaptation required a new strategy on the part of the middle-classes to validate or naturalize the power accruing to themselves, for if the middle-classes could and did successfully adopt the symbolizations of an already established "classical" culture, the very energy with which they did so allied them, potentially, with the older forms of the grotesque.

Stallybrass and White show that the middle-class transformed the symbolic practices of a "high" culture, especially its self-representations in the classical body, and did so to distance itself from the grotesque. The "protocols of the classical body," say Stallybrass and White, "came to mark out the identity of progressive rationalism," came to "embody and assure the maintenance of classical bourgeois reason" (22). Co-opting and modifying the traditional meanings constellated around the classical body, the middle-class

structured, from the inside as it were, the characteristically "high" discourses

> of philosophy, statecraft, theology and law, as well as literature, as they emerged from the Renaissance. In the classical discursive body were encoded those regulated systems which were closed, homogenous, monumental, centered and symmetrical. [The middle-class] began to make "parsimony" of explanation and "economy" of utterance the measure of rationality. (22)

The middle-class trained itself to talk and write about the areas of culture which had been, as recently as the Renaissance, the exclusive discursive territory of the well-born. Like the culture it was supplanting, it constructed origins "centered" in a "closed," "monumental," and mythic past. In political philosophy, for example, the aristocratic myth of an unbroken succession of rulers from divine origins was replaced by a myth that legitimated authority through the original consent of individuals who had succeeded into civil society from a prior "state of nature."

The classical body gave the middle-class a symbolic structure which it adapted to fashion itself as cultured and sophisticated, and which helped it to represent and promote its interests. Yet, they were left with the other horn of the dilemma which, in Terry Eagleton's words, anticipated Schiller's divided world and his call for the symbolic mediation of the "play-drive" (Ideology 105). Eagleton says, "the emergent middle-class, in an historic development, is newly defining itself as a universal subject. But the abstraction this process entails is a source of anxiety for a class wedded in its robust individualism to the concrete and particular" (Ideology 25). On the one hand, the middle-class sought legitimacy through association with the "high" classical body and its associated discourses; on the other, they were anxiously aware that their own social body,

its "robust" character and proximity to the worldly concerns of business, could easily be associated with the "low." The emergent middle-class, in other words, becomes anxious over its position relative to those extremes Schiller will describe later in the century in the Letters: the seemingly irreconcilible gap between the abstractions which elevated human nature above the rest of creation, and the physical energies required of a class engaged in an economic and social revolution.

Constructing itself through the inherited symbolization of classical and grotesque bodies, therefore, created contradictions for a class whose aspirations claimed to be representative of universal human subjecthood. At the same time the middle-class was trying to assimilate itself to a high culture whose structures of feeling were refined, it could not assimilate itself too closely to that culture's arbitrary and elitist exclusivity. And while the middle-class was trying to separate its interests from those of a low culture which now implied the unpredictable passions of the mob, it wanted to maintain the energetic and vital intercourse of the marketplace which was a part of this culture. Terry Eagleton sees the appearance of aesthetic discourse in the eighteenth century as a general solution to this dilemma. Aesthetic discourse, according to Eagleton, performed an important ideological function for the middle-class: it provided a satisfactory way to symbolize the union of the abstract with the physical, the transcendent with day-to-day concerns. In addition, the subject who could represent itself through an aesthetic discourse was represented as liberated from both the repression of the arbitrary law and the disorder of unguided passions. The most important function of aesthetic discourse, says Eagleton, is that it encouraged the subject to accept "restraint...as the very basis of

emancipation" by representing that restraint as volition rather than submission (35).

This idea of voluntary restraint, or self-regulation, is useful for describing the quality of subjectivity sought by the emerging middle-class, and one of its most important manifestations was witnessed in acts of individual judgments of taste which linked the individual to a community of others whose judgments were grounded in similar assumptions about what was true, good, and beautiful. While the middle-class's economic ambitions were not attainable under the repressive regime of the waning status culture, it nevertheless required codes of order and conformity both to ensure class solidarity and to regulate its liberal enterprises. Aesthetic discourse and its exercise in concrete judgments of taste produced a realm of activity wherein the individual was technically "free" to do as he wished. But, the practice of such judgment was embedded in a social context where "doing as one wished" increasingly meant--as Eagleton points out--doing what was expected of one by others whose economic and political interests were similar to one's own. The exercise of acceptable taste, in fact, became an indicator of one's right to belong to this social context and to serve its interests.

This social context is exemplified in the appearance of a new kind of social space in the eighteenth century, the coffee house. In The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, Jurgen Habermas demonstrates how the discursive practices of the aristocratic "salon" were taken up by the middle-class in the newly forming public spaces of the coffee houses, and how one of the purposes of this new public space was the formation of a distinctly bourgeois regimen of taste. In the practice of critical discussion, for example, this kind of taste has already been described adroitly by Stallybrass and

White: the "economy of utterance" and "parsimony of explanation" adapted from the classical body, and not that body's arbitrary precedents of birth and rank, were the qualities which indicated one's degree of class assimilation. According to Habermas the discourse practiced in the coffee houses answered to the middle-class aim of cultural legitimation by maintaining association with high cultural practices like the discussion of arts and letters, yet did away with the exclusiveness of rank as a sole criteria of inclusion. McKeon refers to this same process as the "transvaluation of honor," the splitting of "honor" within "progressive," middle-class ideology into "virtue on the one hand and rank on the other" (155). The middle-class found itself in need of virtue, but wished to dispose of rank. It did so by relegating honor's signifiers to internal states and qualities, and disavowing the old aristocratic external signifiers of honor (McKeon 155). This change required the invention of new ways to represent and exercise the authority that was to be attached to internal virtue.

Internal signifiers found one space for expression in the social context of the coffee house. Habermas says this new public space abolished the arbitrary rule of birth--at least in theory--supplanting it with the rule of the better argument (36). The coffee house "preserved a kind of social intercourse that, far from presupposing the equality of status, disregarded status altogether," replacing "the celebration of rank with a tact befitting equals" (36). This "tact" was manifest in the practice of "polite" conversation on a variety of subjects, a conversation whose rhetorical mode was critical argumentation grounded in a presumably universal reason. Discursive practice supplanted hereditary privilege as the criteria for inclusion in the group; and, since reason was presumed

universal, the coffee house--again, at least in theory--precluded discrimination. Habermas says, "the parity on whose basis alone the authority of the better argument could assert itself against that of social hierarchy and in the end carry the day meant, in the thought of the day, the parity of 'common humanity'" (36). The men of the middle ranks of English society who met in the eighteenth-century coffee houses perceived themselves to be doing what men of all times and places might do if they had the opportunity and inclination.

The coffee house was not, of course, absolutely democratic, as a description of its class-specific mediating function makes clear. Terry Eagleton makes this point when he writes

> The public sphere thereby constructed is at once universal and class-specific: all may in principle participate in it, but only because the class-determined criteria of what counts as significant participation are always unlodgeably in place. The currency of this realm is neither title nor property but rationality--a rationality in fact articulable only by those with the social interests which property conveys. (Function 26)

It is only because "that rationality is not the possession of a single class...because it is the product of an intensive conversation between those dominant classes," that "it becomes possible to view it as universal" (26). The importance of a public space so constituted, say Stallybrass and White, "was that it provided a radically new kind of social space, at once free from the 'grotesque bodies' of the alehouse and yet...democratically accessible to all kinds of men" (95). Conversation on letters and politics carried on in the coffee

houses imitated the prestige and sophistication of the aristocratic salon, while the operative assumption of rationality specific to a narrow class-interest drew a line against the intrusion of a grotesque social body which might be confused, from a more strictly aristocratic perspective, with that of the middle-class itself.

If the coffee house was the premiere social space for exhibiting "taste," "restraint," and "tact," those personal qualities whose possession or lack signified one's degree of assimilation into the new classes of English society, then much of the period's literature and the novel in particular was its symbolic compliment. Before examining the novel's relationship to this cultural movement in the chapter's final section, two well known examples from other kinds of writing of the period--the letter and the essay--will illustrate more concretely how the ideas of taste, restraint, and tact were represented as part of the middle-class's emerging ethic of cultural mediation. These writings will show how that class was (re)writing its identity and class consciousness in relation to the traditional but obsolete carnivalesque high/low binary by representing class conflict and social transformation as occurring along a horizontal rather than a vertical dimension.

IV

The transvaluation of honor described by McKeon meant that the privilege and prestige that once automatically accompanied high birth could now be acquired and proven by individual merit. The middle-class's qualified egalitarian ethos implied that anyone, whether of "high" or "low" birth, could prove himself "noble" by developing and exhibiting certain "internal" characteristics. Lord Chesterfield's letters to his son provide advice on practicing the kind of tact, restraint, and taste that were integral to developing

class awareness. The letters advise how to present one's own character to best advantage in mixed society, and how to recognize true merit in the company one keeps. "Depend upon it," says Chesterfield to his son, "you will sink or rise to the level of the company which you commonly keep: people will judge you, and not unreasonably, by that" (1241). Personal value in these letters is no longer determined at birth; it is situational[4] and--above all--it is improvable. Advising his son on ways to enhance his value and achieve social success, Chesterfield encourages him to always "seek good company," and to "imitate...with discernment and judgment, the real perfections of the good company which you may get into" (1243). "Good company," for Chesterfield, includes but is not limited to "people of considerable birth, rank and character"; it also includes people who are "distinguished by any particular merit, or eminency in any liberal art or science" (1239).

Chesterfield's notion of "good company" is distinguished from the company of aristocratic high culture because it does not depend solely on hereditary rank as the criteria for inclusion or exclusion; it depends as well on merit. He even warns his son not to confuse real merit with the mere appearance of worthiness, saying that some who frequent good company do not always deserve to be there: "Some," he says, "intrude into it by their own forwardness," or "slide into it" undeservedly "by the protection of some

---

[4] Chesterfield says, "There is good sense in that Spanish saying, 'Tell me whom you live with and I'll tell you who you are.' Make it therefore your business, wherever you are, to get into that company which everybody of the place allows to be the best company, next to their own, which is the best definition I can give you of good company" (1241). This community of "good company" was loosely defined and peculiar to times and places.

great person" (1239). It is also possible that "people of the very first quality can be as silly, as ill-bred, and as worthless, as people of the meanest degree" (1240). According to the ideology of merit, it may even have been that the lower orders could outshine their betters by acquiring the right social skills, and Chesterfield was not only one to voice this possibility. Edward Young says in "The Love of Fame," for example, "Let high Birth triumph! What could be more great? / Nothing, but Merit in a low estate" (lines 139-40). Writers like Young and Chesterfield celebrate and plan to exploit the growing awareness of internal virtue. External signs, Chesterfield is telling his son, can no longer be trusted as an absolute indicator of a person's social value; nobility recognized as internal capacities and not external signs levels the status of all comers to the social scene, and only experience and a discerning judgment can tell the worthy from the unworthy, "there being no legal tribunal to ascertain either" (1240). In the absence of authoritative external signifiers, the subject is thrown back on its own judgment which becomes the means of evaluating another's merit and of continually adjusting one's own position relative to the desirable and the undesirable. One sinks or swims in this new milieu with the cumulative effects of these kinds of judgments.

If the development of personal judgment was viewed by Chesterfield as necessary for individual advancement, Oliver Goldsmith argues that it is also necessary for overall cultural improvement. In An Inquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe, Goldsmith argues for the development of an individual taste and judgment that will mediate between the excesses of temperament which he feels have degraded the quality of English culture: the excesses of the "scholar" and the "man of the world" (46). There

exists, says Goldsmith, a "mutual contempt between the scholar and the man of the world," a contempt arising from both the distinct styles of learning practiced by each, and different kinds of cultural goods each produces (46). The scholar's work is "too minute or too speculative to instruct or amuse" readers on the one hand, while "the man of the world" is merely a "compiler" of data, capitalizing on the need for the "speedy conveyance" of practical information (46). Goldsmith's character sketches of the scholar and the man of the world are familiar enough in the critical discourse of the eighteenth century. In Johnson's Rasselas, for example, the scholarly astronomer is so absorbed in the "minute" and "speculative" study of nature that he foolishly confuses knowing the laws of abstract nature with controlling the behavior of physical nature. Swift's satire of the modern vogue for compiling indexes in A Tale of a Tub is a graphic condemnation of the temperament associated with Goldsmith's man of the world.

Goldsmith claims that it is "the man of taste" who "stands neutral in this controversy" between scholarly and worldly excesses. The man of taste "seems placed in a middle station, between the world and the cell, between learning and common sense. He teaches the vulgar on what part of a character to lay the emphasis of praise, and the scholar where to point his application so as to deserve it" (46). His plea for the mediating exercise of taste is especially important when one considers that Goldsmith's Enquiry is a plea for new forms of artistic patronage in an era when the older, traditional forms of patronage have disappeared. Goldsmith's is concerned that vanishing aristocratic patronage for producers of culture and the replacement of this traditional patronage by the liberal market will allow the baser talents to crowd out true genius. "When the link

between patronage and learning was entire," he writes, "then all who deserved fame were in a capacity of attaining it. When the great Somers was at the helm, patronage was fashionable among our nobility. The middle ranks of mankind, who generally imitate the Great, then followed their example; and applauded from fashion if not from feeling" (51). The example of men like Somers--the patron of Newton, Locke, and Swift--set an authoritative standard of taste for the "middle ranks" who followed it at least from a desire to be associated with the fashionable current of the times if not from sincere affection.

Goldsmith believed, however, that the nobility had abdicated or had been forced from their position as underwriters of cultural standards, creating conditions in which writers without sponsorship had to appeal to the lowest common denominator of taste in order to survive. Goldsmith says

> The author, when unpatronized by the great, has naturally recourse to the bookseller. There cannot perhaps be imaginable a combination more prejudicial to taste than this...the man who, under the protection of the great, might have done honor to humanity, when only patronized by the bookseller, becomes a thing little superior to the fellow who works at the press. (57)

Events like the lapsing of the Licensing Act in 1695 and the trend toward instruction in more "modern" and practical as opposed to classical learning, especially in the proliferating dissenting schools, increased the populations of both writers and readers in the eighteenth century, and helped swell the market for ephemeral journalism, social and

political commentary, and didactic or instructional books and pamphlets (Holmes 33). Historian Geoffrey Holmes explains that while "there remained a market for good literature" in the early eighteenth century,

> what most obviously distinguished the Augustan reading public from its predecessors was its hunger for news and commentary on news, for polemic and popular satire. This is why a large majority of the "penmen" of the age engaged for much of their time, if not all of it, on the production of appetizing ephemera. (33)

The production of "appetizing ephemera" and the pandering to popular tastes would soon overwhelm "true genius," thought Goldsmith.[5] If true genius was no longer supported by the patronage of the great like Lord Somers, then the market must develop a mechanism for discouraging "stupidity" (49) and rewarding genius. That mechanism was the individual taste cultivated through a program of polite learning. Elaborating on the mediating role of "taste" in his conclusion, Goldsmith says it "may be considered as the link between science and common-sense, the medium through which learning should ever be seen by society" (77). "Taste," he goes on

> will, therefore, often be a proper standard, when others fail, to judge of a nation's improvement or degeneracy in morals. We have often no permanent characteristics by which to compare the virtues or the vices of our

---

[5] In the Enquiry Goldsmith refers to the "tedious compilations and periodical magazines" (57) that proliferate in the literary marketplace when writers are forced from the patronage that secures them "subsistence and respect" (50) and into league with the profit-seeking "bookseller" (57).

> ancestors with our own...but in taste we have a standing evidence; we can with precision compare the literary performances of our fathers with our own, and from their excellence or defects determine the moral, as well as the literary, merits of either. (77-8)

For both Chesterfield and Goldsmith, the rigid categories of high and low are discarded and a new binary constructed, one which might be described as "horizontal" rather than "vertical."[6] Goldsmith's "scholar" and "man of the world" do not match up directly or inversely with the older high culture/low culture distinction; both extremes are to be discouraged. "Good company," for Chesterfield, was likely to be mixed, composed of the well-born and the not-so-well-born; what mattered most was a person's internal worth, a value independent of status, measured as individual merit.

V

Besides being related to the appearance of aesthetic discourse and the creation of new kinds of public space, the problems posed by and within this horizontal binary of extremes may be one reason for the rise of the novel in the eighteenth century. The anxiety-producing dilemma experienced by the rising class of monied and trading interests discussed earlier in this chapter is expressed and soothed in part through the novel's presentation of the "realistic-as-allegory," its ascription of transcendent meaning

---

[6] See Eagleton, The Function of Criticism, pp. 12-13: "The classical public sphere involves a discursive reorganization of social power, redrawing the boundaries between social classes as divisions between those who engage in rational argument, and those who do not. The sphere of cultural discourse and the realm of social power are closely related but not homologous: the former cuts across and suspends the distinctions of the latter, deconstructing and reconstituting it in a new form, temporarily transposing its 'vertical' gradations into a 'horizontal' plane."

to the quotidian concerns of daily life discussed by Leo Damrosch in God's Plot and Man's Stories (see chapter one of the dissertation). Also, as mentioned at the end of section one of this dissertation, Carol Kay sees the novel as a response to a version of this dilemma as it is presented to the eighteenth century by Hobbes's political philosophy. The novel, in Kay's view tried to represent a world which would neither inevitably be reduced to Hobbes's war of all against all nor to his scenario of abject submission to a strong, possibly tyrannical, ruler (44).

This dilemma was familiar to the eighteenth century in other forms as well. This dissertation argues that the English novel came of age as a means of expressing and mediating conflicts between a discourse of law or absolute authority and a discourse of desire or individual inclination. One way this conflict would have been familiar to the readers of the century's novels is through the competing ideologies of patriarchy and liberalism respectively. The novel came of age in a period when traditional patriarchal ideologies of order had been eclipsed by liberal ideology. Where patriarchal ideology had been suspicious of human motives and prescribed them within the rule of arbitrary law, liberal ideology posited and then validated the virtue of limiting authority and liberating desire.

Patriarchal political theorists like Sir Rober Filmer, for example, advocated a kind of authority which precluded personal choice. In Patriarcha, Filmer locates the origins of this authority in God's vesting Adam with absolute dominion over the earth and its creatures. The proper relationship between authority and obedience, says Filmer, is unambiguous: individual inclination should be subordinated to external authority;

government exists to subdue the passions of men, to remind them of their duties, and to ensure they perform them. "As long as men continued in the state of innocency," writes Filmer, "they might not need the direction of Adam in those things which were necessarily and morally to be done; yet things indifferent, that depended merely on their free will, might be directed by the power of Adam's command" (Anarchy 289-90). Liberal arguments which promoted desire and free will, on the other hand, had their most recognizable source in John Locke. Locke is as unequivocal about the license to be given desire as Filmer is about its circumscription. Locke says,

> But Freedom of Men under Government, is, to have a standing Rule to live by, common to everyone of that society, and made by the Legislative Power erected in it; A Liberty to follow my own Will in all things where the Rule prescribes not; and not to be subject to the inconstant, uncertain, unknown, Arbitrary Will of another man. (302)

The relations between authority and obedience are nearly reversed. Filmer declares men in a "state of innocency" (a "state of nature") are under natural necessity to be mindful of their moral obligations, but require "Adam's command" after "free will" has been introduced by the fall from innocent grace into competitive civil society. Locke, however, says that civil society must provide only enough rules to protect one man's property from the "inconstant, uncertain, unknown, Arbitrary Will" of another; above and beyond that, "where the rule prescribes not," men are entitled--even obligated--to use their own best judgment.

Absolute, arbitrary authority makes economic development and social

transformation impossible because it leaves the maintenance and continuance of property insecure. But self-interested inclination is equally untenable in the extreme because it threatens even the minimum of social order needed to protect property. As late as 1783, Locke's tenets were still disturbing to some. Josiah Tucker wrote satirically, for example, that "In the second part of his treatise of government," Locke provides radicals with precedents to "call for thousands and thousands of alterations in the forms and modes, management and administration of every government on earth, and to unsettle everything...to shift and change, to vary and alter without end" (qtd. in Dickinson 307). "The rising generation," he adds,

> are not bound (according to Mr. Locke's system) to acknowledge the validity of the acts of their fathers, grandfathers, &c., they must of course have a new set of unalienable rights of their own; for they are perfectly their own masters, absolutely free, and independent of that very government, under which they were born...and if they are not gratified therein, have a right to stir up new commotions, and to bring about another and another revolution, &c. What could the most enthusiastic republican wish for more? (Dickinson 307)

The two extremes find their common ground in the pages of many of the eighteenth century's most popular narratives. The novels presented here present a world more like Locke's than Filmer's or Hobbes's: they uniformly situate a protagonist endowed with a liberal version of desire and alienated from authority in an imaginative space "where the rule prescribes not." This dissertation suggests that this space is not, as might at first be assumed, one of freedom for the protagonists involved, but one of anxiety and

uncertainty. The novels presented here narrate the way through this uncertainty to freedom by dramatizing the exercise of individual judgment within their plots. The validity of individual desire is treated as given in this world, but the instability envisioned by Tucker, in the end, doesn't materialize; the criteria for right moral action comes from somewhere other than an arbitrary, absolute law, but the plots of these novels also avoid the dangers of absolutely assuaging individual inclination.

It might be said that the rule for moral action in this world comes from the "good company" of which Chesterfield writes, the community of self-interested individuals who define themselves by internal rather than external criteria of virtue. Membership in this community is neither arbitrary nor is it completely democratic and egalitarian. Since this community and membership in it was, as Chesterfield's advice to his son implies, an experiential process of assimilating individuals with like judgments rather than a institutionalized privilege guaranteed by birth, the processes of storytelling in narrative and the novel would have been instrumental in codifying the means by which such a community was constituted and the ways its moral authority over individuals was produced.

CHAPTER THREE

"...And that this should be put in Writing": The Social Contract as Narrative "Living Form."

Oh teach us, Bathurst! Yet unspoiled by wealth!
That secret rare between the extremes to move
Of mad good nature and of mean self-love."
Alexander Pope, "Epistle to Bathurst" (1732)

I

This chapter will describe how Defoe's Robinson Crusoe plots the transformation of an initial, failed metaphor of duty--the paternal household--reconstituting it into a presumably more satisfying metaphor of duty--the contract--at the novel's conclusion. The body of interpretation spawned by this familiar plot has tended to fall into two exclusive camps, each of which reads the novel as a distinct type of allegory, either economic or spiritual. Each of the allegorical readings of the novel is limited because each privileges one agency of narrative plot, either desire or the law, over the other, overlooking the meaning produced by the dialectical dynamic between the two. This essay hopes to supplement the limitations of both types of readings by giving a richer account of the novel's plot, demonstrating that neither the economic nor spiritual allegory sufficiently discloses the potential meanings produced by Robinson Crusoe.

Critics who read Robinson Crusoe as a type of economic allegory tend to privilege desire over the law as the narrative's organizing principle. Reading Robinson's incessant and eventually successful striving to overcome the deprivations of nature as the manifestation of heroic desire, these readings see Crusoe as the embodiment of the new

"economic man," as allegorizing the liberation of the individual creative will from the law of natural necessity. Maximillian Novak, for example, claims Crusoe's "triumph over the island is mostly an economic conquest," and sees Robinson's material progress as a recapitulation of the very economic heritage which he forsook to pursue a life of "adventure" (45). Crusoe's aim, Novak says, "is to recreate upon the microcosm of his island the standard of existence of western civilization in his day--to duplicate in the existence in one man all the useful products which are required by the human race for comfort and convenience" (476). In Ian Watt's famous The Rise of the Novel, he writes that the representation of "economic individualism explains much of Crusoe's character" (74). From Watt's perspective, even Crusoe's appeals to so powerful an agency as Providence are merely "unconvincing and periodical tributes to the transcendental at times when a respite from real action and practical intellectual effort is allowed or enforced" (84).

Alternatively, critics like J. Paul Hunter and G. A. Starr have read Robinson Crusoe as devaluing individual desire and promoting "the transcendental," particularly the transcendental law represented by the agency of "Providence." After Crusoe submits his desire to the law of Providence, for example, Hunter says his "new religious devotion regularizes his daily routine and imposes an order in his life which had been lacking before his conversion" (172). "Earlier," says Hunter, "his movement from place to place had been haphazard and purposeless...and Crusoe had lacked any sense of teleology."[1]

---

[1] Hunter, p. 172. In other words, before his "conversion," Crusoe's life is guided by a force comparable to Schiller's "Stofftreib," the moment-by-moment existence of the senses. Afterward, his life of desire becomes meaningful, ordered by the formal

Starr has said that Crusoe's self-reliance and industry have "no intrinsic merit," becoming "valuable only when coupled with an acknowledgment of God's power to further or thwart" them (192-3). "Independence and self-reliance," continues Starr, "far from being redeeming features, are at the very core of [Crusoe's] iniquity, since they involve a denial of God's sovereignty" (193).

These two approaches had until recently shaped and perhaps exhausted the modern criticism of Robinson Crusoe. But Michael McKeon has lately offered an alternative approach, one which, like this essay, reads the novel as a mediating and problem-solving genre.[2] Avoiding the temptation to allegorize, McKeon tries not to privilege either desire or the law, but reads the novel's plot dialectically, and sees it promoting an identity between the two forces; the "divine" law, he says, abandons "the posture of a moderating and limiting authority over and against human desire," and "boldly joins forces with it" (330). Compared to Watt, who sees Crusoe's relationship with "divine law" representing "unconvincing periodical tributes to the transcendental," or Starr who sees Crusoe's desire as "the core of his iniquity," McKeon's interpretation resists diminishing either formalizing metaphor or formless desire to a subordinate status. The real virtue of McKeon's reading is that it demonstrates that narrative desire and formalizing metaphor are, at least eventually, dialectically inscribed one within the other.

Like this dissertation, McKeon sees the plot of Robinson Crusoe originating with

---

abstraction "Providence," which allows him to attribute a pattern to his desire. "A sense of teleology" is just what "Formtreib" provides, according to Schiller.

[2] See chapter one of this dissertation, or McKeon, Origins of the English Novel, p. 332.

a failed metaphor of duty which must be transformed into a more enduring one. Crusoe, according to McKeon, at first unable to explain his desire for a seafaring life or to comprehend the dangers into which it leads him, "soon finds a...satisfactory explanation for his unsettledness...in the idea of a 'duty' that has been breached" (320). The "duty" McKeon refers to is that owed to the father as representative of the law; living according to one's duty, then, means subjugating one's will to the authority of an external, universally apprehendable, and abstract principle like the "middle station" of life into which Crusoe has been born, and which his father represents. Analyzing the ambiguities associated with knowing and performing one's duty, McKeon says, "duty is dictated by calling...But how do you tell your calling if you have no clear intuition of it...? Paternal authority is one guide. Another is the tokens and signs of divine will that can be read in experience."[3] "Paternal authority" and "divine will," then, represent the two salient formalizing metaphors for McKeon, and this is an assumption he shares with the "Providential school" of Crusoe criticism described above.[4] Under this shared and

---

[3] McKeon, p. 321. McKeon here draws on the Puritan belief (or hope) that all earthly experience, no matter how trivial or mundane, is emblematic of transcendent truths if it can be contemplated as part of God's divine and all-encompassing plan for his creation. This idea is very much like that found in Damrosch, God's Plot, Man's Stories Damrosch, the reader will remember, argues that the early English novel creates meaning through its mediation of "allegory" and "mimesis."

[4] Hunter believes, in fact, that metaphor pervades the story of Crusoe, drawing, like McKeon, on the Puritan mindset which wished to see even the most trivial events as "emblematic" of divine presence. "Seventeenth-century Puritans," he writes, "committed to a metaphorical way of thinking about their world, also expressed themselves metaphorically" (Reluctant Pilgrim 102), and Defoe the Puritan is no exception. Thus, Hunter defends his "anagogical" reading of Crusoe, seeing the novel's aim as revealing the hidden, divine necessity behind seemingly contingent events. Hunter is using "metaphor" in its rhetorical sense, as trope, while this essay applies the term as meaning a

mistaken assumption, Providence alone picks up where paternal authority leaves off as that form of law which best will continue to order desire and make one's duty known. The events prior to Crusoe's "conversion," for example, represent for McKeon (as well they might for Hunter) the hero's "chronic incapacity to rationalize worldly activity by the sanctions of a perceived moral duty" (322); sanctions which, if not entirely clear and binding under the metaphor of "paternal authority," apparently become so under the formalizing authority of "divine will."

While McKeon's dialectically generated interpretation at first sounds like the kind of reading this essay has in mind, the limiting assumption he shares with Providential critics keeps it from being so. This essay will argue, in contrast to McKeon, that the novel's plot does more than merely dramatize a growing identity between economic adventurism and the Puritan ideal of Providential necessity. Desire and the law are dialectically dependent from the start of Robinson Crusoe; narrative desire separates from one version of the law, however, and circulates among many formalizing metaphors before being reunited for good with another version of the law at the novel's conclusion. Besides Providence, narrative desire in Robinson Crusoe is subjected to the formalizing authority of several other abstractions such as "property" and--most significantly--the "contract," each of which has something to say about how best to "rationalize worldly activity by the sanctions of a perceived moral duty."

"formalizing agency," that component of narrative plot which organizes contingent events into repeating, meaningful patterns. This essay neither assumes that "Providence" is the only such formalizing agency available to Defoe to construct his narrative, nor that Defoe was committed exclusively to the "metaphorical way of thinking" Hunter describes. See Hunter, chapter five.

II

In Bolingbroke and his Circle, Isaac Kramnick reads Robinson Crusoe as an allegory of Hobbes's political philosophy. Kramnick sees the novel's plot initiated by the break with paternal authority which in turn leads to Crusoe's solitary exile, a condition which for Kramnick allegorizes the Hobbesian "state of nature" (188). The novel concludes, according to Kramnick, with the establishment of a contractually ordered "civil society" in which "the anarchy of the state of nature is ended" (190). Defoe's narrative eventually does, as Kramnick believes, reconstruct the original image of the law, represented in the paternal household which Robinson forsakes, in the form of a contractually legitimated "civil society." Near the novel's conclusion, for example, Crusoe allows the Spaniard who has helped him and Friday defeat the cannibals to return to the mainland to retrieve his comrades, but only after a contract has been negotiated between the two parties. Crusoe gives the Spaniard

> a strict charge in Writing, Not to bring any Man with him, who would not first swear in the Presence of himself and of the old Savage, that he would no way injure, fight with, or attack the Person he should find in the Island who was so kind to send for them in order to their Deliverance, but that they would stand by and defend him against all such Attempts, and where-ever they went, would be entirely under and subjected to his Commands; and that this should be put in Writing, and signed with their Hands...[5]

---

[5] Defoe 248. The passage illustrates the two significant moral actions of subjects which create civil society in Natural Law Discourse: the willing alienation of men's right to all things in the state of nature, and consent to transfer administration of those rights to

The Spaniard agrees, saying he will bring "a Contract from them under their Hands" for the purposes stated by Robinson (245).

Kramnick's reading, then, is warranted; the law of the paternal household gives way to the "social contract," which seems to fulfill all the conditions for bringing the narrative to a close. But his allegorical approach, like those summarized earlier, perhaps conceals as much as it reveals about the meaning of the substitution of one metaphor of duty for another. Kramnick's allegory assumes that Defoe's narrative and the natural law discourses from which it borrows are merely superimposed one over the other, the former a restatement in symbolic form of the latter. The plot of Robinson Crusoe and its potential meanings are more complex than this straightforward allegorical reading can acknowledge, however, because narrative discourse rewrites those discourses from which it borrows through its play of metonymy and metaphor. Other critics like Carol Kay have persuasively traced the natural law themes in Robinson Crusoe to Hobbes's influence,[6] but John Locke's liberal theory of authority and obedience in The Two Treatises of Government may be a better place than Hobbes's conservative Leviathan to begin describing how narrative discourse can rewrite the other discourses absorbed by it. Hobbes's sovereign is closer to the absolute monarch of patriarchal theories of authority and obedience (Hobbes admits his sovereign may even be a tyrant) than to the paternal father with which Defoe begins his novel. It is Locke and not Hobbes who can best help

---

an agreed upon sovereign.

[6] Carol Kay, Political Constructions. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988. See especially pages 75-92.

support the claim made earlier, that, in Robinson Crusoe, desire and the law do not merge into a gradual identity as McKeon argues, but are dialectically inscribed one within the other from the beginning of the novel. Locke's version of civil society depends upon the kind of desire Crusoe evokes early in the novel: the desire that forces him from the paternal household and eventually into the world of the social contract.

Robinson Crusoe begins with Robinson's present and future securely provided for within his father's household. "Nature," the elder Crusoe assures his son, has happily placed him in the "middle station" of life, a condition "of life which all other people envied" (3). The guarantees and conciliations of Crusoe's "middle station" of life, however, are not enough to keep Robinson at home and under his father's promised guidance. After telling his father of his wish to travel abroad, Robinson reports

> ...he press'd me earnestly, and in the most affectionate manner, not to play the young Man, not to precipitate my self into Miseries which Nature and the Station of Life I was born in, seem'd to have provided against; that I was under no Necessity of earning my Bread; that he would do very well for me, and endeavor to enter me fairly into the Station of Life which he had been just recommending to me; and that if I was not very easy and happy in the World, it must be my mere Fate of Fault that must hinder it, and that he should have nothing to answer for, having thus discharg'd his Duty in warning me against which he knew would be to my Hurt... (5)

But Robinson will not be satisfied with the fortune that "nature" and his "station of life" promise, and decides to embark on a voyage without the blessing of his parents. Of his

surreptitious leave-taking he says, "I consulted neither Father nor Mother any more, nor so much as sent them Word of it; but leaving them to hear of it as they might, without asking God's blessing, or my Father's without Consideration of Circumstances or Consequences, and in an ill Hour, God knows" (9). The choice later appears to have had a prophetic meaning; he says of the consequences of his first near fatal voyage, "I began now seriously to reflect on what I had done, and how justly I was overtaken by the Judgment of Heaven for my wicked leaving my Father's House, and abandoning my Duty" (8).

Crusoe's rendition of his father's advice suggests that Defoe intentionally represented the Crusoe household as paternally rather than patriarchally organized, and this distinction is significant enough to examine in some depth. First, it will be helpful to establish what this distinction entails for representing relationships between desire and the law in narrative. Patriarchal ideology pits the law-of-the-father antagonistically against desire as a force to be contained, while paternal ideology--at least in its Lockean version--represents the law-of-the-father as already inscribed with a desire, a desire whose liberation is required before the political authority of liberal civil society can exist. Second, the liberal ideology of authority and obedience recognizes more than one form of the law, whereas patriarchal ideology insists that all forms of authority are cut from the same cloth: the absolute authority of a father over his children.

Patriarchal ideology argued that all relations of authority and duty--private or public, moral or political--are based on and legitimated by the absolute relations between

father and child,[7] and subjective desire is always a threatening force either to be contained or extinguished, but certainly never encouraged. In Patriarcha, Robert Filmer makes the first point unequivocally clear.

> If we compare the natural duties of a Father with those of King, we find them to be all one, without any difference at all but only in the latitude and extent of them. As the Father over one family, so the King, as Father over many families, extends his care to preserve, feed, clothe, instruct and defend the the whole commonwealth...so that all the duties of a King are summed up in an universal fatherly care of his people.[8]

Biblical precedent supplied the original of all earthly Fatherly/Kingly authority for Filmer: the authority over creation bestowed on Adam by God in Genesis, and this authority was absolute.

Such absolute authority over subordinates was logical given Filmer's assumption of an all too easily distracted human nature. In contrast to the liberalism of Natural Law theorists like Locke, who allow for individual discretionary choice in instances "where the rule prescribes not," Filmer insists on a rule for all cases, especially in civil society.

---

[7] Filmer included wives and servants among the governed as well.

[8] Filmer, Robert. Patriarcha, in Patriarcha and other Political Works, P. Laslett (ed.), Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1949, p. 63. Notice that the Father/King is granted absolute authority--including the authority of life and death--in exchange for clearly named responsibilities--preserving, feeding, clothing. The assumption of such natural benevolence was part of the justification and legitimation of patriarchal absolutism, meant to abridge the potential political and social abuses such absolute power might encourage. While, due to the patriarchal doctrine of passive non-resistance, subjects could do nothing about tyranny but endure it, tyranny was not expected nor--theoretically, at least--approved.

Recall, for example, from chapter two, Filmer's belief that "as long as men continued in the state of innocency they might not need the direction of Adam in those things which are necessarily and morally to be done; yet things indifferent, that depended merely on their free will, might be directed by the power of Adam" (Anarchy 289-90). In her book Private and Public, Daniela Gobetti comments on Filmer's restrictions on desire, saying, "According to Filmer, human beings cannot be left on their own, and must be told what to do even when their actions are inconsequential from a moral point of view...Individuals cannot enjoy any degree of autonomy, and no decision can be entrusted to their will" (50).

Paternal ideology, however, at least as envisioned by Locke, constructs a quite different relationship between the law and desire, granting a value to desire which patriarchal ideology does not, and posits more than one model of authority and obedience. The consequences of these differences for narrative production will become clearer after turning to Locke. For example, in the second of The Two Treatises of Government, Locke distinguishes among "paternal," "political," and "despotical" forms of authority. He says

> Nature gives the first of these, viz., Paternal Power to Parents for the Benefit of their Children during their Minority, to supply their want of Ability, and Understanding how to manage their Property. (By Property I must be understood here, as in other places, to mean that Property which Men have in their Persons as well as Goods.) Voluntary Agreement gives the second, viz., Political Power to Governours for the Benefit of their Subjects, to

> Secure them in the Possession and Use of their Properties. And Forfeiture gives the third, Despotical Power to Lords for their own Benefit, over those who are stripp'd of all Property.[9]

Explaining the reach of "paternal power," Locke emphasizes its limited scope over for whom it defines a sense of duty. Especially relevant to this discussion is Locke's claiming that no reason can exist

> why this Paternal Power should keep the Child, when grown to a Man, in subjection to the Will of his Parents any farther, than the having received Life and Education from his Parents, obliges him to Respect, Honour, Gratitude, Assistance, and Support all his Life to both Father and Mother. And thus 'tis true, the Paternal is a natural Government, but not at all extending it self to the Ends, and Jurisdictions of that which is Political. The Power of the Father doth not reach at all to the Property of the Child, which is only in his own disposing. (339)

The opening scene of Robinson Crusoe seems consciously designed from Locke's version of "paternal power": Crusoe describes his father as "earnest" and "affectionate," for example. More convincing though is that Locke's paternal household, like the Crusoe's, is ordered around an exchange of duties between governor and governed; parents are obliged to provide "Life and Education" to their children, which obliges

---

[9] Locke, John. Two Treatises of Government. P. Laslett (ed.), Cambridge Press, 1960, pp. 401-2. All subsequent references to Locke are from this edition. Notice that Locke links all forms of authority to "property." The role of liberal ideas of property in the plot of Crusoe will be discussed shortly.

children in turn to give "Respect, Honour, Gratitude, Assistance, and Support" to parents. Robinson has reported, remember, that his father, in paternal fashion, had "discharg'd his Duty in warning me against Measures which would be to my Hurt." But this exchange stops where the child's property is concerned, and Locke's definition of property is a liberal one, including property "in persons as well as goods." Crusoe's father sternly warns him not to leave behind his middle-class future for a life of uncertain adventuring, but stops short of absolutely forbidding it, or forcefully preventing Robinson from going. Crusoe of course leaves, determined to "dispose" of that "Property which Men have in their Persons" according to his own will.

Locke calls such paternal arrangements a "natural government," meaning they are present in the primitive "state of nature." They carry over to civil society, but with an important qualification: paternal power does not extend "it self to the Ends, and Jurisdictions of that which is Political." In other words, in civil society paternal power must give way to political authority, and it must give way at that point where the desire of the child to dispose of the property he holds in himself arises; the limits of paternal authority liberate a desire which makes the political power of civil society necessary as a sanction for that desire. Locke's philosophy thus implies a narrative of development in which one form of authority--paternal power--produces a desire which is to be taken up, or "sanctioned," by a higher authority--political power. This implied narrative is repeated and expanded by Defoe, creating the plot of Robinson Crusoe.[10]

---

[10] By contrast, a conflict between patriarchal law and subjective desire is familiar to readers of Richardson's Clarissa. Clarissa's desire does not emanate from the patriarchal law, but is rather a force opposed to it. Crusoe's desire can be seen seen as the necessary

III

Defoe's plotting is more complex than earlier critics have been able to acknowledge. When evaluating this plot, most of the spiritual allegorists, including Starr and Hunter, do see a transferral of desire from one formalizing agency to another: Crusoe's desire, arising at the limits of paternal authority, is transferred to the law of Providence once he is cast away and experiences "conversion." The economic allegorists--Kramnick and Novak, for example--likewise see such a transferal of desire, but a transferal from the paternal authority which opens the narrative to the sanctions of the contractual political authority established by Crusoe at the novel's conclusion. Both interpretations have merit but are limited by blind spots which now can be illuminated. For one thing, the allegorical choice between "Providence or the social contract" is a false dilemma because these two are not the only formal agencies available in the narrative to sanction moral duty. Also, Crusoe's pact with the Spaniard is not the first occasion he has for submitting his desire to the sanctions of contract, a point which the readers of economic allegory have not addressed.

---

end product of paternal law, having its origin at the limits of the paternal law's constructed scope. Clarissa's desire, it can be said, in contrast to Crusoe's, and the law which seeks to contain it, are the products of distinct discourses which cannot be reconciled by transferring desire to another form of the law (no other legitimate forms exist in patriarchal ideology). Clarissa's plot, therefore, develops by multiplying strategies of deceit and containment between the conflicting agencies; Crusoe's plot develops, as will be demonstrated, by multiplying formal metaphors, each of which has some legitimate claim to sanction desire. These two plots represent the two dominant versions of a "living form" for the early novel: in the one, plot resolves into death (whether the death of desire or the law is often the point of debate), and in the other, plot is resolved through a contract, the marriage contract being the most ubiquitous of these forms (see chapter three on Burney's Evelina for discussion of duty and the marriage-as-contract).

Defoe's novel begins with the formal metaphor of the paternal household, a formalizing metaphor which, as just shown, is limited in its claims to dictate duty. Beyond these limits, paternal authority liberates a desire which circulates throughout the remainder of the novel, searching for a new image of the law which must do two things: one, make one's duty known; and, two, sanction the desire born of the paternal household without extinguishing it so that that desire can continue to circulate and reunite with the law in the contract. Unless these conditions are met, the plot of Robinson Crusoe and the liberal image of desire as well are threatened with termination. The narrative will petrify into what Schiller calls either the tyranny of "the moment by moment existence of the senses," a content without form, or a "flight into abstraction," a form without recognizable content.[11] On the one hand, in other words, narrative desire is threatened by its own disorganization and inherent meaninglessness; on the other, the abstractions of law threaten to shut down desire, freezing the plot into formal stasis. Thus, the liberal image of desire generated from the paternal law, and the production of narrative plot are closely connected from the start of Robinson Crusoe; the challenge to both narrative and liberal political theory is inventing ways to keep desire alive yet organized. Defoe's narrative, like Locke's liberal theory, meets this challenge by inscribing the law with desire, liberating that desire to seek its difference from the law, and reuniting the law and desire in the written contract.

This analysis of the novel's plot will argue that the desire of the other, and not

---

[11] Schiller, Letter XII. Brooks would call this condition "repetition without variation," a condition which would make "the forward movement of plot impossible" (Reading for the Plot 119).

"Providence" or the "capitalist-individualist spirit," has motivated the story all along. As good an example of individual Puritan contrition or bourgeois economic success as Crusoe may be, the novel's plot tells us that neither possibility can be fully developed until the desire of the other intrudes on his solitude, and, significantly, until the other intrudes under certain conditions: to bring the narrative to closure, the desire of the other must be produced by the liberal abstraction "property," and, at the same time, "property" and the appropriate duties associated with it must be sanctioned by the desire of the other. The intrusion of the other on Crusoe's solitude will bring about a significant transvaluation whereby the desire produced by the law of property is accepted as the law itself, allowing, even necessitating, that the law and desire settle into the living form of the social contract.

Readers of both the economic and spiritual allegories assume that during Crusoe's solitary life in exile, all the novel's essential conflicts are raised and resolved. Critics like Hunter, Starr, and Damrosch argue that Crusoe must undergo his forced solitude and the opportunity for reflection it affords, and then accept the Providence he discovers through that reflection before he can be delivered from the island and his own wickedness. The familiar economic readings of the novel explain that Crusoe must master various economies--baking bread, fortifying his estate, making pottery, etc.--before his deliverance and his identity as a man of property can be secured. But these qualifications have mostly been met before Crusoe reaches his island, during the earlier episodes in Sallee and Brazil. Crusoe comments on the solitary life he experienced in Brazil, for example: "I had nobody to converse with but now and then this Neighbor...I lived just

like a Man cast away upon some desolate Island, that had nobody there but himself."[12] Crusoe had also created a prosperous plantation during his tenure in Brazil, as he says, "by the labor of my own hands," increasing his initial investment fourfold (35).

Many critics ignore the significance of the Sallee and Brazil episodes, but G.A. Starr does treat them in an interesting and useful if limited way. He observes of them: "Considered simply as narrative...this phase of the book deserves some scrutiny, for from one point of view it is curiously brief, from another it is oddly extended. Why does Defoe have so little to say about Sallee and Brazil, yet detain Crusoe so long from reaching the island" (83). Reading the story as spiritual autobiography, Starr predictably concludes that by "detaining" his hero as he does, Defoe "only deepens the guilt of [Crusoe's] original mischoice...Rather than indicating the power of choice on Crusoe's part, these 'decisions' thus mark the further enslavement of his will" (87-8). Starr, then, reads these episodes as character development which "marks the worsening predicament of unregenerate man" (85), and as prelude to the relief, in the form of Providence, awaiting the unregenerate hero.

But these scenes can be read in another way. In Sallee, the desire born of the liberal paternal household expands the narrative by representing forms of duty which

---

[12] Defoe 35. The Providential readings may be more persuasive here than the economic readings, for, it could be argued, Crusoe has not accepted the law of Providence while in Brazil. Critics like Hunter and Damrosch spend little time with the Sallee and Brazil episodes; Starr's interpretation of them will be discussed below. This essay argues that it is not Providence alone, the mastery of economies, or merely the presence of the other that brings about the successful substitution of contractual for paternal law. The desire of the other must be present, but must also be produced by the liberal abstraction, "property." The production of this desire is discussed below.

illegitimately organize desire and/or retard the progress of desire toward its union with the law in the social contract. While Crusoe is a prisoner in Sallee, narrative desire is reminiscent of picaresque desire, the uncomplicated, unmediated, instinctual desire for survival against overwhelmingly oppressive forces. During his imprisonment, Crusoe's desire is under the formalizing authority of Locke's "despotical power," a power gained through "forfeiture" of property and accruing to "despotical Lords for their own benefit."[13] As a propertyless slave, the narrative implies, Crusoe's desire (initially born of liberalism's paternal household and destined for the sanctions of liberal political authority) is incapable of complex political action; his only moral responses to this condition are acquiescence or flight. To say, then, that despotical power makes liberal desire resemble the simple desire of the picaro is to say that such a power corrupts liberal desire, degrades it; it will be the project of the island episodes to rehabilitate that desire, making it once again fit for the sanction of political power.

Political power in Robinson Crusoe, the readers of economic allegory generally agree, means the power of the social contract to sanction desire, and the contract they most write about is the one already described in this essay between Crusoe and the Spaniard which concludes the novel. They overlook the fact that Crusoe enters into a contract long before the novel's conclusion. As a prosperous planter in Brazil, the same desire for adventure which led Crusoe away from his parents surfaces again, urging him

---

[13] This power of course refers to Filmer's patriarchal authority. It is not that Robinson willingly discards his property--including that property he holds in his person--it is rather that under despotical power, no private property can be said to exist. Despotical power is illegitimate because it cannot produce the kind of desire required of liberal political power--the desire to dispose of one's property according to one's own will.

to embark on a slaving voyage to Africa. When his fellow planters give him the opportunity to join the voyage under advantageous circumstances, Crusoe answers, "I told them I would go with all my Heart, if they would undertake to look after my Plantation in my Absence, and would dispose of it to such as I should direct if I miscarry'd. This they all engaged to do, and entered into Writings or Covenants to do so" (40). Long before the novel concludes, then, Crusoe is familiar with the authority of the contract and its sanction over moral duty. His early faith in the contract is, coincidentally, handsomely rewarded. Upon winning his deliverance from the island, Crusoe embarks immediately for Lisbon to find the Portugese sea captain who had once saved his life and whom Crusoe had made legal executor of the Brazil estate. Once in Lisbon, the captain informs Crusoe that the value of the plantation has been increasing yearly, making Robinson a very rich man.[14] The details of Crusoe's expanding plantation, however, are withheld from the reader until the novel's end, but finally reported with an accountant's accuracy by the aged sea captain. Instead of this potential plot of steadily increasing wealth--itself a strong advertisement for the virtue of the contract--the plot of island exile and economic striving takes over the bulk of the narrative. Why is the one plot, whose outcome is so desirable, repressed, and the other substituted for it?

The answer concerns both the novel's narrative form and its content borrowed from liberal ideology. As for the novel's form, the plot of uninterrupted increasing wealth, as motivating an endorsement of contractual relations as it is, constitutes what

---

[14] By his final accounting, Crusoe reports, "I was now Master, all on a sudden, of above 5000 l. Sterling in Money, and had an Estate, as I might well call it, in the Brasils, of above a thousand Pounds a Year..." (Defoe 285).

Peter Brooks calls "repetition without variation, pure reproduction, a collapsed metonymy where cause and effect have become identical"[15] (Crusoe's wealth increases, for example, because Crusoe is wealthy). Narrative desire seeks difference, and the monotony of such a plot, Brooks would say, requires that it "must be repressed, forced into other plots" (119) where difference can be asserted. To "account" too exactly for Crusoe's accumulation of wealth would be to "bankrupt" the plot's desire of narrative force by denying it difference. As for the novel's content, wealth was a blessing, of course, but also a problem for eighteenth-century proponents of a more liberal market economy.[16] Vast accumulations of wealth, especially wealth which seemed, like Crusoe's, to come out of thin air, without effort, needed to be vindicated. Defoe himself was witness to the vast and sudden fortunes accumulated during the South Sea Bubble financial crisis,

---

[15] Brooks 119. Brooks's narratology builds upon Todorov's concept of "narrative transformation," "where start and finish stand in the relation...of 'the same but different'" (Brooks 27). The role of metonymy-desire in creating this relation is to "unpack" an initial "collapsed" metaphor and reconstitute it into a "more fully semiotic metaphor" (27). This dissertation takes Brooks to mean something like the following: the narratives examined here begin with the statement of a problem of control, an insufficiency in relations of authority an obligation between two parties which sets loose an unstructured desire. The ensuing narrative "unpacks" the consequences of this insufficiency and the desire it liberates, aiming all along to resettle this desire with a more sufficient model of authority at the narrative's conclusion.

[16] In the eighteenth century, the problem of "wealth" began to be separated from the more traditional and related problem of "luxury." Seventeenth-century sumptuary laws, designed to enforce class distinction and reduce the enervating effects of "high living" gave way before writers like Dudley North and Bernard Mandeville who celebrated conspicuous consumption as the impetus to increased national prosperity. Wealth-as-money rather than as land threatened, from the perspective of Bolingbroke and Swift, the stability of England's social and political landscape. The problem was that anyone--even someone like Robinson Crusoe--was capable of getting money and, hence, political power. From a conservative point of view, wealth-as-money made it difficult to regulate who entered and exited the gates of political power.

wealth which vanished as suddenly as it appeared because created over a foundationless, irrational speculation. The plot of exile, then, can be read as the legitimation, or foundation, for the repressed plot of magically accumulating wealth;[17] the plot of exile will provide narrative desire the difference which the plot of accumulation cannot.

IV

The novel rehabilitates desire and vindicates wealth by replacing unearned accumulation with hard work. During the island episodes, too, the narrative shows how individual desire can serve positive social ends, and how wealth (whether in money or land) cannot expand beyond certain "natural" limits before it, too, is diverted into socially constructive uses. The plot of Robinson Crusoe makes individual desire the effective cause of community. The narrative ultimately accomplishes all this by introducing the desire of the other into Crusoe's solitude. Before this happens, however, Crusoe's desire is subjected to the formalizing agencies of Providence and property. Both of these abstractions function to delay the narrative's progress by providing the difference which the plot of accumulation lacks, extending the plot of exile and rehabilitating a now degraded desire back into its more politically sophisticated liberal image.

Soon after Crusoe has been cast away, he experiences a dream and undergoes his "conversion" to the rule of Providence. The readers of spiritual allegory consider this moment to be the most significant turn of events in the novel. Usually overlooking the

---

[17] While Crusoe's Brazil plantation is increasing in value, for example, he labors intensively on the island. "It might truly be said, that now I worked for my Bread," he proudly reports (Defoe 118). The site of Crusoe's labor and the site of his growing monetary wealth, while geographically distant from each other, are nonetheless morally closely connected.

possible significance of the intervening Sallee and Brazil episodes, such critics as Hunter see the transmission of desire from the sanction of the paternal household to the sanction of Providence as the beginning and end of plotted conflict, and it is true that Providence functions as a powerful formalizing agency in the narrative. But Providence seems to have another function; as a version of the law, it stands in the relation of "the same but different" (27) to paternal and despotic powers. At the same time that it rationalizes desire, it threatens to block narrative progress, and requires that desire, somehow, be "born again" in a new chain of metonymic discourse. The same can be said about the abstraction "property," for it too stands in the relation of "same but different" to earlier formal abstractions, threatening to block the narrative's progress, until a new source of desire once again revives the plot. This time, however, it will be the desire of the other which appears, both enabling the narrative to resume, and laying the political foundation for the social contract.

Critics like Hunter, Damrosch, and McKeon are correct to claim that after his dream and conversion Crusoe finds a pattern to his life revealed in the principle of Providence. At this point in the novel the events of his life begin to appear pre-ordained and necessary rather than haphazard and contingent. Reflecting on the events leading to his being cast away, Crusoe says, "...thro' all the Variety of Miseries that had to this day befallen me, I never had so much as one Thought of it being the Hand of God, or that it was a just Punishment for my Sin."[18] Before this revelation he admits that, "I was merely

---

[18] Defoe 88. By "sin" Crusoe means leaving home against his parents wishes. Providence may lead Crusoe (and the reader) to interpret his leave-taking as "sinful," but, if so, it is a necessary and fortunate fall for the narrative. His desire, remember, can be

thoughtless of a God, or a Providence; and acted like a mere Brute from the principles of Nature, and by the dictates of common Sense only, and indeed hardly that."[19] Interestingly, he reports his change of perception through a digression from the narrative proper in what he calls his "journal." In other words, after his dream and conversion reveal the principle of Providence to him, his life begins to look more like a narrative of events that can be plotted. After leaving home but before the revelation of Providence, Crusoe has no way of interpreting his experience. Reflecting on the earthquake, for instance, he says,

> Even the Earthquake, tho' nothing could be more terrible in its Nature, or more immediately directing to the invisible Power which alone directs such Things, yet no sooner was the first Fright over, but the impression it had made went off also. I had no more Sense of a God or his Judgments, much less the present Affliction of my circumstances being from his Hand, than if I had been in the most prosperous Condition of life. (90)

Before accepting the sanction of Providence, then, Crusoe's life is in such disarray that he cannot rightly judge affliction from prosperity. So the Puritan idea of a fore-ordaining Providence allows him to organize his life into a narrative-within-a-narrative, the written record he calls his journal. But Providence seems to have sanctioned Crusoe's desire

---

interpreted as the legitimate end-product of the liberal paternal household. His "real" sin, perhaps, is that he does not choose to transfer that desire immediately to legitimate political authority.

[19] Defoe 88. By "common sense" Defoe intends the meaning of physical sense or appetite, the same meaning Schiller attaches to "Stofftreib."

mostly in retrospect. As his supply of ink dwindles, Robinson notes the fact with some anxiety. "My ink," he says,

> Had been gone some time, all but very little, which I eeked out with Water a little and a little, till it was so pale it scarce left any Appearance of black upon the Paper: As long as it lasted, I made use of it to minute down the Days of the Month on which any remarkable Thing happen'd to me, and first by casting up Times past... (133)

This entry in the journal convinces the reader how desperate Crusoe is to represent his past in a narratable discourse, as does the fact that his dwindling ink supply seems a more serious matter to him than his diminishing stores of bread or his deteriorating clothes.[20] All requitals to his desperate situation being equal, Crusoe achieves primary comfort at this point in the novel by "casting up times past," and particularly from the power of narrative composition to order his past as a series of significantly similar, and therefore meaningful, repetitions.[21] He writes, for example

> First I had observed, that the same Day that I broke away from my Father and my Friends, and run away to Hull, in order to go to Sea; the same Day afterwards I was taken by the Sallee Man of War and made a Slave.
>
> The same Day of the Year that I escaped out of the Wreck of that Ship in

---

[20] Defoe 133. Robinson's inventory of supplies begins with concern over his ink. "The next Thing to my Ink being wasted," he says, "was that of my Bread." Third on his list of concerns is the condition of his clothes.

[21] See Brooks, chapter four, for an explanation of the role of repetition in narrative. This entry in the journal demonstrates what "Providence" as a formalizing metaphor does to desire--it organizes contingent events into meaningful patterns.

Yarmouth Rodes, that same Day-Year afterwards I made my escape from Sallee in the Boat.

> The same Day of the Year I was born on (viz.) the 30th of September, that same Day, I had my Life so miraculously saved 26 Year after, when I was cast on shore on this Island, so that my Wicked Life, and my solitary Life begun both on a day. (133)

Leopold Damrosch and others who read Robinson Crusoe as Puritan allegory see Crusoe's acceptance of Providence as the whole point of the novel; all other events are somehow related to or explained through reference to Crusoe's spiritual coming of age. In this view, once Crusoe has accepted the guiding law of Providence the stage is set for the narrative of intense introspection characteristic of Puritan autobiography. Damrosch claims, for example, "that nearly all of the essential issues cluster around the crucial issue of solitude. Defoe clearly gives it a positive valuation, and suggests more than once that Crusoe could have lived happily by himself forever if no other human beings had intruded" (191). Whether or not Crusoe, or someone like him, could in fact have lived "happily" in his island solitude guided and consoled only by the law of Providence, such a condition will not sustain further narrative plotting, for Defoe's version of Providence, as just mentioned, only organizes desire retrospectively. As a formalizing agency in narrative, its omnipotent and pre-destining authority leaves no cause for the expansion of desire; future metonymy would only be a repetition of past metonymy.[22] To imagine

---

[22] Providence, as the journal entry just quoted suggests, will produce the future in the same terms as it has reproduced the past--as a series of encounters with and delivery from "evil" or "sin." This kind of predictability may be comforting to the Puritan soul, but,

Robinson Crusoe as a narrative which merely recounts Crusoe's solitary life guided by the rule of Providence would be to imagine a narrative which reduces sense or desire to inconsequential status. While the formalizing power of Providence alone could produce a meditative lyric or ode,[23] narrative is not possible without the ongoing plotted tension between sensual detail and formalizing metaphor. Defoe the Puritan is also Defoe the writer of narrative; no matter how much he wishes to promote the value of solitude, he must at times abandon the Puritan values of solitude and inwardness for the sake of narrative progression. "Providence," therefore, must be supplemented with an agency which allows the expansion of desire (or the multiplication of desires).[24]

Such expansion is crucial to the plot of exile since that plot substitutes for the

---

Defoe seems to understand, is not a useful way to organize desire in narrative discourse.

[23] See, for example, John Donne's "Hymn to God the Father," for a meditation on the "future-as-past":

"Wilt thou forgive that sinne where I begunne,
Which was my sin, though it were done before?
Wilt thou forgive that sinne; through which I runne,
And do run still: though still I do deplore?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more.

[24] In this view, Defoe's version of Providential law means to the narrative what Providence in the Puritan theology of grace meant to the Puritan psyche: "...it affirmed boldly the role of human responsibility and the element of contingency in the divine-human relationship...on the other hand...it saw ultimate human destiny as divinely and unconditionally determined by God's eternal decree (John von Rohr, The Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought. Scholars Press: Atlanta, 1986, p. 1). Such a contradiction may explain Watt's comment that Crusoe's appeals to Providence are "unconvincing." Defoe the Puritan may value Providence above all other forms of the moral law, and that is why he liberally scatters Crusoe's appeals to Providence throughout the latter two thirds of the novel. But, because Providence rationalizes the past and guarantees the future, while simultaneously affirming "responsibility" and "contingency," its role as a narrative formalizing agency is ambiguous.

repressed plot of expanding wealth. Expansion in the plot of exile, however, cannot be driven by hidden causes; it must be necessary, a function of duty. This is why the plot of exile relies so heavily on the metaphor of "property" to further the plot. "Property," as will be demonstrated, directs Crusoe's desire into the future without fore-ordaining its course, and so propels the plot forward. What's more, property--at least the liberal version of property found in Locke--legitimates its own expansion by promising to serve social, not merely individual ends. It does this in Robinson Crusoe by introducing the desire of the other.

It is shortly after a Providential power is revealed to Crusoe, shaping his recent past into a coherent narrative of events, that he receives a second insight whose significance is, as Brooks would say, similar but different. While on a walk of discovery through the island one day, Crusoe reports

> I descended a little on the Side of that delicious Vale, surveying it with a secret kind of Pleasure, (though mixed with my other afflicting Thoughts) to think it was all my own, that I was King and Lord of all this Country indefeasibly, and had a Right of Possession; and if I could convey it, I might have it in Inheritance, as completely as any Lord of a Mannor in England. (100)

"Providence," which has functioned to organize Crusoe's past but which makes further narrative production difficult, is quickly supplemented with the abstraction "property" whose formalizing authority extends both his desire and the plot into the future through

the associated concept of an "Inheritance."[25]

But the liberal idea of "property," like the liberal idea of "paternal power," has ideological limits, and at the edge of these limits awaits a new source of desire. Locke's writing on property in The Two Treatises of Government describes both the origins and limits of natural property rights. For Locke, an individual's claim to property is secured through that individual's labor applied to cultivating and/or collecting the produce of the land. Before the institution of civil society, says Locke,"God gave the world to men in Common; but since he gave it to them for their benefit, and greatest Conveniences of Life they were capable to draw from it, it cannot be supposed he meant it should always remain common and uncultivated" (309). He says God's intention, "was rather for appropriating" the earth, held in common in the state of nature, as private property under civil society (310).

> God, when he gave the World in common to all Mankind, commanded Man also to labour, and the penury of his Condition required it of him.
>
> God and his Reason commanded him to subdue the Earth, i.e. improve it

---

[25] Paula R. Backsheider has commented relevantly on the passage just quoted, supporting the claim that the legal abstraction "property" carries an overwhelming power to formalize desire. She says, "The beauty and order of the scene remind Crusoe of England, and he feels again his exile but, more strongly, his ownership. His words, 'King...indefeasibly,' call to mind the political controversies of his age. For three generations Englishmen had quarreled over what constituted an 'indefeasible'...right to rule, and here Crusoe finds it" (Daniel Defoe 221).

Crusoe's use of "indefeasible" could be considered troubling to the thesis of this essay, since it recalls patriarchal, not liberal discourse. McKeon says, though, that Crusoe's fantasies of ownership "incorporate notions of value that are associated not only with capitalist laboring industry but also with aristocratic ideology" and that, "this syncretism can be found in the assimilationist posture of progressive ideology itself" (Origins 326).

> for the benefit of Life, and therein lay out something upon it that was his own, his labor. He that in Obedience to this Command of God, subdued, tilled and sowed any part of it, thereby annexed to it something that was his Property, which another had no Title to, nor could without force take from him. (309)

The "penury" of Crusoe's condition and the labor intensive "improvements" he makes to the island provide the basis of the familiar economic readings of the novel; his fantasy of landed security is made real through his labor.

But what, according to Locke, is to keep one man from appropriating all, or too much, to the detriment of his fellows? Of this dilemma Locke says, "The same Law of Nature, that does by this means [labor] give us Property, does also bound that Property too" (308). He adds that only "as much Land as a Man Tills, Plants, Improves, Cultivates, and can use the Product of, so much is his Property" (308). Further defining the limits of acquisitiveness, Locke says that only "As much as any one can make use of to any advantage of life before it spoils; so much he may by his labour fix a Property in. Whatever is beyond this, is more than his share, and belongs to others. Nothing was made by God for Man to spoil or destroy" (308). The limits to property, then, are set on the one side by use-value, and on the other side by the desire of the other; to appropriate beyond one's valid use is to deprive the other of his right to property. When it comes to property, the desire of the other is also a law or "natural" boundary, reminding each man of a moral obligation not to take "more than his share," not to "spoil or destroy" what God has freely given to all.

Like the other formalizing abstractions in Robinson Crusoe, the immediate effect of "Providence" and "property" is to objectify desire into meaningful patterns--the journal narrative, the island "estate." But "property" in its liberal sense has the additional function of prolonging the plot by introducing the desire of the other. Just before Robinson discovers the foot print which informs him of the other's presence, the narrative reaches another crucial point. Robinson begins to reflect on his success as a developer of his "possessions," and comes to the uncannily Lockeian conclusion, "That all the good Things of this World, are no farther good to us, than they are for our Use" (129). He has been so successful an appropriator that he can claim to possess "infinitely more than I knew what to do with. I had no room for Desire, except it was of Things which I had not, and they were but Trifles" (129). At first, Crusoe's claim to have "no room for Desire," would seem to signal an end to narrative production by affirming the self-sufficient solitude of which Damrosch has written. It also indicates, once again, that narrative desire has reached the condition of "repetition without variation" which Brooks describes; narrative metonymy has apparently collapsed for lack of a difference against which it can assert itself. This is why the appearance of the desire of the other is so significant at this point in the novel; having reached the limits of appropriation and his own desire, a new source of narrative desire can now be introduced. Narrative desire, which so far has been identical to Crusoe's desire, is now split, and Defoe's narrative metonymy which has repeatedly threatened to slip into the death of identity, now has its absolute and irrevocable difference in the desire of the other with which it must negotiate.

The narrative's desire, originally born from the limits of paternal law, has now

encountered despotical and Providential law, the one rendering it politically impotent, and the other leaving it no reason to expand. Under the formalizing power of "property," however, this desire is now firmly motivated to submit itself to the liberal political power of the contract, completing the liberal narrative implied in Locke. Crusoe's rationale for insisting on a consensual, contractual agreement with the Spaniards, however, sounds more like a Hobbesian one than a Lockean one; he insists on the contract because he has learned (though just where and how during his solitude we are not sure) that, "Gratitude was no inherent Virtue in the Nature of Man; nor did Men always square their Dealings by the Obligations they had receiv'd, so much as they did by the Advantages they expected" (244). Liberal civil society exists to both create and protect private property, and property is a manifestation of the God-given desire to appropriate. But acquisitiveness has limits set upon it by the "law of Nature," or use-value and the desire of the other. The written contract, like the written narrative, underwrites a consensual understanding and agreement to the crucial distinction between "Obligations"--a relation of necessity regarding the other--and "Advantage"--individual subjective desire.

V

The plot of exile, then, can be seen as the legitimation for the absent plot of expanding wealth, a re-telling of that plot in fact, which assures that wealth--even fantastic wealth--will not expand beyond some "natural" limit and that such wealth is earned. As an emblem of Schiller's "living form," the contract organizes Robinson Crusoe's discourses of desire and the law so that the one serves the other. Desire in Robinson Crusoe was born from the limits of the law vested in paternal power, and from

the beginning of the novel, desire has been asserting its difference from that law; at the novel's conclusion the two are reunited in the same harmony Schiller finds in "the brow of the blessed Gods."

But this apparently untroubled reunion is recognizable as ideology. It is as if the plot of exile and its resolution through the social contract anticipates Pope's plea to Bathurst in the epigraph which heads this chapter. The plot of expanding wealth initiated by the novel's first contract represents pure advantage, an uninterrupted, ever-ascending graph of Crusoe's accounts, and is therefore a non-narrative discourse. Now, the property that Crusoe creates on his island is certainly to his advantage--it provides protection and comfort, and, most importantly, validates his claim to "indefeasible" sovereignty over it. Yet this property is curiously responsive to the needs of others, and Crusoe is depicted as regulating its produce according to the laws of use-value and the other's desire. As Crusoe shows the Spaniard his island and his stores of goods, he becomes concerned because, while his produce is enough to feed the current population of the island, if the Spaniard's countrymen were to join them as planned, there would not be enough food to go round. "But much less would it be sufficient," says Crusoe of his stores of grain, "if his Country-men, who were, as he said, fourteen still alive, should come over" (246). In response to impending dearth, Crusoe, the Spaniard, Friday, and Friday's father simply expand the island's productive base: "...we fell to digging all four of us,...and in about Month's time, by the End of which was Seed time, we had gotten as much Land cur'd and trim'd up, as we sowed 22 Bushels of Barley on, and 16 Jarrs of Rice" (247). The extra planting produces, "Store enough for our Food to the next harvest, tho' all the 16

Spaniards had been on Shore with me" (247). The plot of exile constructs a fantasy in which liberal private property bestows advantage--Pope's "mean self-love"--but is also immediately and unproblematically responsive to moral obligations--the feeding of dependents.[26]

As discussed in chapter two, Liberalism had to create new cultural models for mediating the kinds of personal and interpersonal conflicts its ethic produced, and the novel of duty provided one such model. A novel like Robinson Crusoe, in fact, may have more to do with spreading the ideology of Liberalism than critics have so far discussed. For, besides the themes of individualism and entrepreneurialism, the novel's plot shows how liberal desire can be made a positive, productive social force. A challenge common to both a liberal social order and a narrative like Robinson Crusoe is keeping desire organized without extinguishing it. Some of the very early liberal economic thinkers recognized, for example, that a liberated individual subjective desire was essential to creating trade and profit. In 1690, for example, Nicholas Barbon had written that

> The Wants of the Mind are infinite, Man naturally Aspires, and as his Mind is elevated, his Senses grow more refined, and more capable of Delight; his Desires are inlarged, and his Wants increase with his Wishes, which is for everything rare, that can gratifie his Senses, adorn his Body, and promote

---

[26] This is of course a familiar eighteenth-century fantasy and illustrates McKeon's point that Robinson Crusoe ambivalently incorporates both capitalist and aristocratic notions of value (Origins 326). When Crusoe's land fortuitously gives forth seed just in time to be planted in the newly cured ground, we are reminded of the images of brim-ful, generous, almost sentient landscapes which were the stock-in-trade of the seventeenth-century country-house poem. Yet, this image in Crusoe legitimates a purely capitalist kind of wealth, the wealth of colonial expansion and financial speculation.

> Ease, Pleasure, and Pomp of Life.[27]

Dudley North also writes of the perceived necessary connection between desire and expanding production.

> The main spur to Trade, or rather to Industry and Ingenuity, is the exorbitant Appetites of Men, which they will take pains to gratifie, and so be disposed to work, when nothing else will incline them to it; for did Men content themselves with bare Necessaries, we should have a poor World.[28]

These thoughts are early formulations of Pope's later statement that "self-love and social are the same." As socially beneficial as desire could be represented to be, regulatory limits to acquisitiveness were still morally and politically demanded. Robinson Crusoe shows those limits to be established at the moral borderline between use-value and the other's desire, and--just in case men are still reluctant to "square their dealings" according to this obligation--desire's limits are formally underwritten by the contract.

---

[27] Barbon, Nicholas. A Discourse of Trade. London, 1690, quoted from Joyce Appleby, "Ideology and Theory: The Tension between Political and Economic Liberalism in Seventeenth-Century England."

[28] North, Dudley. Discourses Upon Trade. London, 1691, quoted from Appleby.

CHAPTER FOUR

"With so much earnest desire": Narrative and the Limits of Duty in Tristram Shandy

If the world be promiscuously described, I cannot see of what use it can be to read the account; or why it may not be as safe to turn the eye immediately upon mankind as upon a mirror which shows all that presents itself without discrimination.

Samuel Johnson
Rambler 4
March 31, 1750

I

Richard Lanham has already evaluated Laurence Sterne's Tristram Shandy as illustrative of the "play" impulse in narrative. In The Games of Pleasure, Lanham's argues that Tristram borrows self-consciously from other writers in various genres ranging from Thucydidean history to eighteenth-century travel literature, and that such borrowing is done in the spirit of "play." Tristram's virtuosity at collating rhetorically distinct genres is "playful," says Lanham, because Sterne "used the [rhetorical] techniques that, until Rabelais, had set forth the public world [in order] to set forth a radically private one" (29). In other words, Tristram's rhetorical borrowing flouts an incommensurate relationship between "high" rhetorical manner of representation and the "low" private matter being represented, a relationship that had been taken for granted, according to Lanham, at least until the Renaissance. Taken from their original contexts, the discourses Tristram appropriates to represent his life and opinions are the components of a literary "game" (95). Doubting whether Sterne's text can properly be called a novel at all, Lanham asks if we might rather call Tristram Shandy a collation of classical

narrative types, rhetorical and non-mimetic, applied to the description of private life, used for pleasure" (29).

Lanham is using "play" in its broad, conventional sense, as meaning an activity set aside from "real life," as being "non-serious," and believes that the gratifications of such play in Tristram Shandy are exclusively personal. But this dissertation uses "play" in a more specialized way, and, in contrast to Lanham, asserts that Tristram Shandy gratifies a social or public need. Schiller's idea of play, it will be recalled from chapter one, is a way of describing the artwork's reconciliation of the divided forcesFormtrieb and Stofftrieb, or form and sense, producing what Schiller calls a "living form." Using this idea of play to describe narrative, this dissertation explores the ways in which narrative plots reconcile the tension between a discourse representing a dynamic desire which moves narrative forward in time, and a discourse representing the interests of abstract form which seeks to halt the forward march of desire and bring the narrative to closure. The novel can be said to represent a "living form" because it contrives a symbolic space in which the interests of these contradictory discourses are brought to serve a common end. The idea of "play" used here, then, facilitates an examination of the dialectical relationship between form and desire in narrative. Furthermore, since Schiller's dialectical idea of play as "living form" is an aesthetic construct, this dissertation asks how narrative aesthetics are responsible for producing the ideological meanings that helped to shape eighteenth-century society, meanings which neither the novel's discourse of desire nor its discourse of form alone could produce.

Besides critical interest in Tristram Shandy as a form of conventional "play" there

has been an interest in the novel's use--or abuse--of formal conventions and the novel's relationship to desire. The critical responses to these issues usually assume one of two points of view. On the one hand are the readings of Tristram Shandy which find its "playful" disregard of convention symptomatic of a lack or an inadequacy in the narrative and/or its narrator; on the other are readings which validate the novel's version of desire as a powerful force for social change. Patricia Spacks gives credence to both of these points of view in two different critical works. She says in Imagining a Self, for example, that because Tristram's narrative is conspicuously shapeless, it "raises profound questions about the nature of form" in narrative art, that the very absence of form in Tristram Shandy "shows the inevitability and the power of form" in narrative (153). The absence of form, in other words, speaks loudly on behalf of its value. Seeing its formlessness as symptomatic of lack, Tristram Shandy, she says, "imitates the action of impotence" (134). For Spacks, in Imagining a Self, therefore, Tristram Shandy's open-endedness is an objective correlative of sorts; the novel's incompleteness is a structural corollary to the novel's thematic content of impotent, presumed impotent, or possibly impotent men. In the later Desire and Truth, however, Spacks says Tristram's narrative strategy "effectively denies social meaning," but that, rather than reading this denial as a dramatization of impotence, we should understand that it actively "challenges established political orders" (85).

Spacks shows that formlessness suggests impotence. But, she also admits that a narrative dedicated to desire can be read as a powerful force for social transformation and renewal, and many crtics before and since Spacks's Desire and Truth have emphasized the

latter view. In Model as Motif in Tristram Shandy, for example, Fritz Gysin says that Tristram patterns his representations on several models which are available to him such as his father and uncle (the use of such models is further addressed by this chapter below) and that such modeling both "represents and transforms reality," that it "allows experiments and encourages demonstration...and above all it tends to call itself into question" (153). Tristram's text is intelligently reflexive,[1] and exists in a dialectical relationship of influence with the world it represents. More directly relevant to this study is the view that both Tristram's reflexive style and his experimentation with convention reveal the way that form falsifies reality. One of the earliest such readings of Sterne is by the Russian Formalist A. A. Mendilow, who sees Sterne trying to "flout the conventions of plotting, with its special and arbitrary requirements of beginning, middle, and end," conventions "which involved rigid selection and economy of incident in the interests of an artificial patterning of the action" (160).

Lanham dismisses the social or public nature of Tristram Shandy, saying, "one is continually tempted by the great suggestiveness of...Tristram Shandy to force from it statements about the public life. It makes none" (165). This dissertation disagrees with Lanham's pleasure thesis; it argues that Tristram Shandy is about the limits of duty. Laurence Sterne has created a narrator who obligates himself single-mindedly to fulfilling

---

[1] For a useful placement of Tristram Shandy within the historical development of narrative reflexivity, see Linda Hutcheon's Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox (New York and London: Methuen) 1984. Very generally, Hutcheon argues that, "The origin of that self-reflecting structure that governs many modern novels might well lie in the parodic intent basic in the genre as it began with Don Quixote, an intent to unmask dead conventions by challenging, by mirroring," and that the "traces" of this intent can be seen from Tristram Shandy through Pirandello's Serafino Gubbio..." (18).

his duty to the reader of his text. However, the duty he assumes is an impossible one: Tristram sincerely vows to give a full accounting of his life to the reader; he vows, in a literal way, to "tell all." Tristram's sincerity creates problems, for the more he tries to write a narrative that looks like a dedicated, comprehensive account of a life, the more his narrative evokes the undisciplined, wayward quality of Schillerian desire. By attempting to fulfill his duty as a writer, he calls the very concept of duty into question.

II

Like Robinson Crusoe, Tristram Shandy begins with a breach of duty in the paternal household. "I wish either my father or my mother," Tristram begins, "or indeed both of them, as they were in duty both equally bound to it, had minded what they were about when they begot me."[2] If they had, Tristram says, he "should have made a quite different figure in the world, from that, in which the reader is likely to see me" (1). The rest of Tristram's story can be read as a frustrated effort to undo the damage and disorder created by this originating breach, to (like Robinson Crusoe) substitute a new metaphor of duty for the failed paternal power, and to explain the circumstances which have contributed to shaping this "figure." Unlike Crusoe's tale, Tristram's defies the pattern typical of eighteenth-century narrative that Patricia Spacks calls "a providential structure" and which she says leads to "the neat working out of all problems" invented during the narration (Desire 9).

The reader should recall that the "providential structure" of Robinson Crusoe

---

[2] From The Florida Edition of the Works of Laurence Sterne, Melvin New and Joan New, eds.; (U of Florida Press, 1978) 1. All subsequent references to Tristram Shandy are cited by page number in the text and are taken from the Florida edition.

included, among others, the agency of Providence as a shaper of the plot's design. Defoe's problem as author of this design was that, regardless of its spiritual appeal for him, Providence as an agency of form could not alone produce a plot that signified the "same but different," as Peter Brooks puts it (27). In other words, submitting Crusoe's desire to the rule of Providence guarantees that Crusoe's (and his narrative's) future will be the same as his immediate past; the guarantees of Providence vanquish the threats and conflicts--like attack by savages or starvation--that sustains narrative plotting. The narrative problems in Robinson Crusoe are finally worked out by lodging desire with the authority of a contract. This new authority redefines the terms of obligation among its consenting adherents, and mediates the plotted conflict between abstract duty and individual desire, between social and self-interest.

Tristram's authorial problems, in contrast, might be better understood as problems of imitation. His father Walter and uncle Toby are the two most immediate models of text-making available to him, and each in his own way creates only partial imitations of the world. Walter and Toby have usually been appreciated as representing the poles of abstract reason and "pre-romantic" sentiment respectively, as structuring a conflict familiar to eighteenth-century readers between antithetical ways of understanding and representing the world.[3] But there is another way to appreciate these characters. Both

---

[3] The most instructive examination of Tristram Shandy's eighteenth-century reception as a novel of sentiment is probably chapter four of John Mullan's Sentiment and Sociability (1988). Michael Bell (The Sentiment of Reality, 1983) says our understanding of Toby's character comes from his being "affectionately caricatured by Tristram as much as by Sterne; from his being seen almost exclusively in the light of his lovable eccentricities" (45). See also the nineteenth-century criticism on Sterne--especially Coleridge and Hazlitt--in Alan B. Howes (ed.), Sterne: The Critical Heritage

Walter and Toby, for example, are avid text-makers, each a potential model for Tristram-the-text-maker. But, each man is so devoted to and in turn dominated by his ruling passion, or "hobby horse" that their respective texts are unreliable, producing partial truths and incomplete representations of the world.

Walter's passion is for abstract philosophizing, and he seeks to subdue the world with his textual representations of it. Tristram explains to his reader the effects of Walter's speculative habits, and illustrates the obsessional, totalizing nature of the hobby-horse in general when he says, "It is the nature of an hypothesis, when once a man has conceived it, that it assimilates everything to itself, as proper nourishment; and, from the first moment of your begetting it, it generally grows the stronger by every thing you see, hear, read, or understand" (177). Walter's texts, whatever else they do, "assimilate" Tristram's life to themselves. Tristram tells us that his father was so obsessed with his pet ideas about names, that "two years before I was born, he was at the pains of writing an express DISSERTATION simply upon the word Tristram,--shewing the world, with great candor and modesty, the grounds of his great abhorrence of the name" (42). The reader is led to wonder, in fact, whether the Tristrapaedia, Walter's textual oeuvre, merely anticipated or actually caused Tristram's accidental circumcision by the sash-window, and whether Walter or Tristram is the proper author of the text. When Obadiah tells Walter about the accident, for example, he responds without surprise, saying only "I thought as much" (458). Walter's disinterested response leads Tristram to consider that his "father before that time, had actually wrote that remarkable chapter in the Tristrapaedia,...the

---

(London/Boston Mass.: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974).

chapter on sash-windows" (458). After speculating as to why this can not be, Tristram admits "--That, in order to render the Tristrapaedia complete,--I wrote the chapter myself" (459). Tristram, whether he is acted upon by or re-enacts the text, is the unhappy fulfillment of his father's text-making.

Toby's hobby-horse is the re-enactment of mock sieges upon the model towns and fortifications he builds on his bowling green. Wounded in the groin during the battle of Namur while serving in the War of the League of Augsburg, the over-modest Toby sought a decorous way to answer questions about the nature of his wounding. At first he uses one-dimensional maps of the battle site as a way of telling "where" he was wounded, displacing the wound on the unmentionable part of his body onto a representation of the geographical location where the wounding blow was struck. Tristram says that Toby's use of maps "not only freed him from a world of sad explanations, but...it prov'd the happy means...of procuring my uncle Toby his Hobby-Horse" (96). Finding this simple mapping and displacement effective and pleasurable,[4] Toby soon seeks greater pleasure by enlarging his interests in representations of battle: he begins building scale model towns on his bowling green upon which he and Trim, following the weekly journalistic accounts in The Gazette, enact the ongoing battles of the War of the Spanish Succession. These models are Toby's texts.[5] Even though he comes by his hobby-horse originally as a

---

[4] Tristram reports that his Uncle's hobby-horse provided him "ease" (64) and even helps to heal the wound.

[5] Jonathan Lamb says that "Toby's bowling green is analogous to the infant Tristram in so far as they are both used to realize texts upon" ("Sterne's System of Imitation," Modern Language Review, 1981 Oct., 76:4 798). Lamb is referring to the fact that Toby and Trim conduct their "sieges" by following published news reports from the European

means to communicate a delicate subject in a decorous way, his passion, no less than Walter's, soon dominates the man and devours the reality it was meant to imitate, doing irreparable violence of its own. Tristram's accidental circumcision, for example, is the indirect result of his uncle's hobby horse: Corporal Trim had removed a counterweight from the very window which maims Tristram to use as a prop in one of the bowling green "sieges."

If each man's hobby-horse allows him the illusion of mastery over his world, it does so at Tristram's expense; Walter's and Toby's styles of text-making are unsuitable to Tristram because of the violence they do to the world in general and to Tristram in particular. To grant Toby's texts validity over Walter's because they represent the "sentimental" side of human nature is a mistake.[6] As Gysin says, "the reader...cannot choose between them without missing an important aspect of the novel; he must accept

---

front, and that the "infant Tristram" is subjected to his father's philosophical texts. For Richard Lanham, Toby's bowling green models represent the ultimate example of text-as-game in Tristram Shandy, (see "Pastoral Warfare in Tristram Shandy," in Modern Essays in Eighteenth-Century Literature Leo Damrosch, ed. 323-35) and so are linked to Tristram's text in yet another way. The argument being developed here borrows from both these ideas, adding that Toby's bowling green text is not just an analog to Tristram's, but that Toby's text violently disrupts Tristram's world, causing him to seek after other models for text-making.

[6] Everett Zimmerman takes the same point of view toward the "sentimental" aspects of Toby's character when he says that, "Tristram celebrates the humane feelings of characters like Toby and Trim, but his representations of them emphasize their imprisonment in their private worlds" (135). See also, for example, Hazlitt's remarks in Alan B. Howes (ed.), Sterne: The Critical Heritage (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974) 359-63. He says, "My uncle Toby is one of the finest compliments ever paid to human nature." The spontaneous expression of sentiments, or feelings, were considered more natural, and therefore given privelege over reason, because they were thought to be unmediated by calculation of self-interest.

them both for what they are: approximations to a multiple and paradoxical reality that refuses to be explained by any given system" (149). Violence and maiming are side-effects of both reason and sentiment when these impulses are not tempered by any countervailing force.

The text which initiates the narrative's series of maimings, however, is the marriage contract between Walter and Elizabeth, a text which both Walter and Toby have a hand in creating. Just as in Robinson Crusoe contractual relations figure in Tristram Shandy as a way to establish the boundaries between rights and obligations. The Shandy's marriage contract, which guarantees Elizabeth lying-in privileges in London during pregnancy, however, performs a different symbolic function than the contract in Robinson Crusoe: rather than successfully mediating between the narrative's discourses of form and desire, guaranteeing the "neat working out of all problems" as Crusoe's contract does, the Shandean contract helps create them; rather than renewing and invigorating over-formalized conceptions of duty and constructively directing desire, the Shandean contract is equated with mechanisms and devices that maim. Tristram's problems with contracts begin when Toby notices a possible loophole in the original document, and, as a counter-measure to any abuse on Elizabeth's part, suggests that Walter add a clause to the contract which, should his wife put him "to the trouble and expence of a London journey upon false cries and tokens" (46), requires her to "forfeit" the right to return upon her next pregnancy. Since Elizabeth does experience a false pregnancy, this provision in the contract becomes active, and she must give birth to Tristram at home without the kind of comfort and support she would wish. This voiding

of her contractual privileges sets in motion the chain of events to which Tristram attributes all his later misfortunes: Elizabeth's choice of a midwife is replaced by Walter's preference, Dr. Slop, whose forceps crush Tristram's nose; in all the confusion between the upstairs and downstairs parties, the maid Susannah relays the wrong name--Tristram, rather than Walter's choice, Trismegistus--during the christening. Tristram reports of his father's and uncle's foresight to amend the contract that, "this, by the way, was no more than what was reasonable;--and yet, as reasonable as it was, I have ever thought it hard that the whole weight of the article should have fallen entirely, as it did, upon myself" (46). Before having his nose crushed by Dr. Slop's forceps, before being mutilated by the "weight" of a window sash, Tristram is subjected to the textual violence of a contract.

The methods for representing and mastering the world used by the others closest to him--the rigid, all-encompassing, and all-consuming forms like the hobby-horse and the contract--have ill effects on Tristram, and so as text-maker he chooses to make his own rules. Tristram decides to strike out on his own, to plot a singular path: "...in writing what I have set about," says Tristram, he will not follow "any man's rules that ever lived" (5). In other words, Tristram vows to live by his own law because the law of the others does not suit him. Yet, it seems more accurate to say that Tristram misreads the established rules rather than making up his own. He swerves from the spirit to the letter of the rules' intent by literalizing them, by taking them too seriously. Sterne has his narrator misquote Horace's rule to begin a narration <u>in medias res</u>, as an injunction to begin "ab Ovo" (5), for instance. And so he does: Tristram begins his life's story not

with his birth or some character-shaping event afterward as Horace would have it, but with his conception, with the meeting of his father's sperm and his mother's egg. Himself the accidental product of contractual oversight and paternal forgetfulness, Tristram is, from the "beginning," wary of excluding any detail that might be relevant to rendering his life and opinions. The more he tries to live by this law, however, the more frequently his text turns back on him as desire; Tristram's strict adherence to his writer's duty only reproduces the world in its all its messy contingency.

This condition is a more intractable problem than the poor models he has to follow: once he commits to his own obligations to the reader, the reader soon finds that Tristram does not exercise the selective judgment that one expects from storytelling. Tristram's text is not aesthetically pleasing in a conventional way--it is digressive, uncomfortably self-regarding, and avoids satisfying closure. It will be argued that such a narrative results not from Tristram's deficit of skill, but from his surplus of good intentions. Tristram begins before the conventional beginning, with his conception, not out of ignorance, but because he assumes a duty to the reader to make a complete accounting of himself. Tristram's "imitative sincerity"[7] will, he discovers early, make his job an interminable one. Noting the tasks awaiting a writer who takes his duty as seriously as he takes his, Tristram tells us in volume I, chapter xiv that,

---

[7] Lamb, "Sterne's System of Imitation," Modern Language Review 76:4 (1981) 807. Lamb argues that Montaigne and Burton are the models that Tristram imitates because these writers give him an example of total self-revelation. Reporting Montaigne's and Burton's self-avowed purposes for writing, Lanham writes, "'I expose myself entire', Montaigne confesses, and Burton says, 'I have laid myself open (I know it) in this treatise, turned mine inside outward.'"

He will have views and prospects to himself perpetually soliciting his eye, which he can no more help standing still to look at than he can fly; he will

moreover have various

Accounts to reconcile:

Anecdotes to pick up:

Inscriptions to make out:

Stories to weave in:

Traditions to sift:

Personages to call upon:

Panegyrics to paste up at his door... (41)

He continues: "To sum up all; there are archives at every stage to be look'd into, and rolls, records, documents, and endless geneologies, which justice ever and anon calls him back to stay the reading of:--In short, there is no end of it" (42). Having suffered physical and symbolic disfigurement from the partial texts his father and uncle create, Tristram will, as compensation, resist excluding anything from his own text.[8]

This argument reads Tristram Shandy as a compensation for the partial representation Tristram has received in others' texts. The rigor with which Tristram goes about performing his duty, however, will paradoxically create a text which looks like pure desire. Focused as he is on doing his duty, Tristram is unaware of the paradox: he

---

[8] For the sake of completeness, for example, he often includes these other "documents" in their entirety--the text of the marriage settlement, the sermon, Slawkenbergius's tale. The spirit of the marriage settlement, for example, "is so much more fully express'd in the deed itself, than ever I can pretend to do it" (42).

is Sterne's parodic version of absolute commitment to duty, and this parody will function to deconstruct contemporary assumptions about what makes a good and a moral story. In the early chapters of his novel, Sterne shows the partiality of the contract (and the early-modern bourgeois sensibility that championed its social relations[9]), how it cannot respond adequately to the "third term"--Tristram. In the following volumes, Sterne will present a narrative desire which defies the century's prevailing strategies of narrative design. This desire will, however, be productive of a kind of knowledge which is concealed by the ratonalist-empiricist ethic of the contract and the other "hobby horses" Tristram Shandy critiques. The revelation of such knowledge is the socially useful end of Tristram Shandy.

III

Sterne's mission in having his fictional narrator assume such a duty is to break down barriers between oppositions like "author-reader" and "text-world," and, ultimately, "law-desire." In the process he shows that conventional texts are structured around the unquestioned acceptance of these oppositions and that such a conventional, uncritical stance is deadly. By "conventional" this argument means two related things. First,

---

[9] The contract in Robinson Crusoe downplays the competitive, potentially anti-social impulses which contractual agreements are meant to contain, and emphasizes the contract's cooperative ethos. John M. Stedmond (The Comic Art of Laurence Sterne) says of the Shandy's union, however, "This is a marriage evidently built on mutual suspicion rather than on mutual trust; it is a legal contract, a business transaction. And the result of all this laborious legal machination is, of course, one more discomfiting pre-natal blow at [Tristram]" (52). The Shandean contract and the relations it supports are instrumental and destructive, and the point is all the more clear because the Shandy's contract applies to marriage, a "transaction" which was supposed to be organized around mutual affection. Sterne's text begins by acknowledging social and individual forces that Defoe's finally would like to deny.

conventional texts follow the "providential structure" defined above by Spacks. Second, this structure is premised on and in turn supports the uncritical acceptance of the basic rationalist-empiricist binary separation of the "knower" from the "known." Sterne creates a narrator like Tristram to dramatize the interpenetration of subject and object, desire and law in the creation of knowledge.

In Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox, Linda Hutcheon says that "Sterne's problem in aesthetic terms seems to have been the difficulty of reconciling the planned novel form and its conventions with a content which was concerned with the process of writing and living--that is, with contingency" (52). It may be, though, that Sterne found the distance between a conventional representational form and a contingent reality--between text and world--less an aesthetic problem to solve than a condition to be exploited for a critical effect. He places his narrator in the dilemma that Michael Bell describes as endemic to all mimetic narrative; it seems Tristram knows that a narrative like his "is designed to affect the reader's moral sensibility yet should be a truthful, unmanipulative representation of reality" (1). Victimized as he has been by the partiality of others' texts, Tristram devotes himself to the belief that a "truthful and unmanipulative representation of reality" can only be a complete representation of reality, an exact mirroring rather than an artful shaping of reality. Imitations which force a contingent reality into a planned form augment the distance between writer and reader, the text and the world, and are for Tristram, therefore, a falling off from his duty.[10]

---

[10] Tristram's assumed duty, therefore, seems to be a way of making up for his parents' lapse in attention to their spousal duties. His father, one of the "most regular men in everything he did" (I, iv), is disrupted during intercourse by Mrs. Shandy's spontaneous

Sterne's parody of absolute commitment raises questions about the moral purposes of both neo-classical and more modern codes of imitation suggesting that each, in its way, leaves something out. Neoclassical codes of imitation, promoted by writers like Samuel Johnson, represented only the regularities of nature, those aspects of experience which were thought to be identifiable and true for all men in all times. Uniformitarian codes of imitation shunned the accidental and the idiosyncratic, relegating them in consequence to the "unreal," or non-existent. In his preface to The Plays of William Shakespeare, Samuel Johnson makes this point clear; he says

> Nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general nature. Particular manners can be known to few, and therefore few only can judge how nearly they are copied. The irregular combinations of fanciful invention may delight awhile, by that novelty of which the common satiety of of life sends us all in quest; but the pleasures of sudden wonder are soon exhausted, and the mind can only repose on the stability of truth.[11]

"Particular manners," the singular, the fetishistic--all were anathema to neo-classical codes of imitating "general nature." Johnson values the universal and the uniform; he urges writers to represent those features of the world which all men possessed of reason

---

question, "have you not forgot to wind up the clock" (I,i). Tristram's desire is, like Crusoe's, an effect of a breach of duty, and like Crusoe's reflects the character of the original break.

[11] Samuel Johnson, "Preface" to The Plays of William Shakespeare in the Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson, W. J. Bate and Albrecht B. Strauss eds. (Yale U. Press, 1969), vol. VII, 61-2. All subsequent references to Johnson are from the Yale edition.

can presumably perceive and about which hold discourse in common. Tristram Shandy," says Richard Lanham in contrast, "presents itself as incredibly, indeed ludicrously, zealous for detailed information" (23). "Tristram's life and times," Lanham adds, "are to be presented with microscopic fidelity," not with the broad brush approved by the presenter of "general nature" (23).

Nor were the more "modern" codes of imitation, those favored by the century's novelists, uncritically accepted by Tristram. Henry Fielding and Samuel Richardson, for example, represent two styles of novelistic representation which while distinct in themselves, are alike unacceptable to Tristram's brand of "imitative sincerity." Although to an extent attached to uniformitarian codes of imitation, Fielding nevertheless questioned some of the assumptions underlying the belief in a universal human nature, arguing that human nature was not so uniform as the strict neo-classicist would wish. In Tom Jones Fielding's narrator compares an author's duty to that of "one who keeps a public ordinary" (1) implying that the writer who wishes to convey a true picture of human nature is obligated to represent variety. "The provision, then, which we have here made is no other than human nature," explains Fielding's narrator, adding that, "though here collected under one general name, is [contained] such prodigious variety, that a cook will have sooner gone through all the several species of animal and vegetable food in the world, than an author will be able to exhaust so extensive a subject" (2).

If variety of incident and character was expected from novelistic prose fiction, incident and character should also be familiar. Clara Reeve, for example describes the novelist's representational duty this way: novels, she says, should provide a "familiar

relation of such things, as pass every day before our eyes, such as may happen to our friend, or to ourselves" (qtd. in Spacks, Desire 44). Though its readers were supposed to recognize what transpired in a novel, familiarity was not the same thing as uniformity. The English novel, says Ian Watt, comes of age during an epistemological and philosophical revolution, and reflects a new interest in the individual and his world. In contrast to previous kinds of narrative, the novel is characterized by "the rejection of universals and the emphasis on particulars" (15) and its representational aim was always "the production of what purports to be an authentic account of the actual experiences of individuals" (27). Novelistic imitation--what Watt calls "formal realism"--presented its readers not with the universal and uniform, but with the daily particulars of individual lives. Watt says,

> The novel's mode of imitating reality may therefore be equally well summarised in terms of the procedures of another group of specialists in epistemology, the jury in a court of law. Their expectations, and those of the novel reader coincide in many ways: both want to know 'all of the particulars' of a given case...the jury, in fact, takes the 'circumstantial view of life', which...[is]...found to be the characteristic outlook of the novel. (31)

Tristram devotes himself to representing this circumstantial reality, to revealing, just as Watt says, "all the particulars of a given case." Tristram writes, "the circumstances with which everything in this world is begirt, give every thing in this world its size and shape;--and by tightening it, or relaxing it, this way or that, make the thing to be, what it is--great--little--good--bad--indifferent or not indifferent, just as the case happens" (187).

Tristram evokes the modern sensitivity to the contingency of objects and situations that Watt finds in the early English novel.

Tristram is also aware, at least at an unconscious level, of the Humean epistemological relationship between subject and object, of the subject's inability to know the "thing in itself" through mere observation; he tells us, "we live amongst riddles and mysteries--the most obvious things, which come in our way, have dark sides, which the quickest sight cannot penetrate into; and even the clearest and most exalted understandings amongst us find ourselves puzzled and at a loss in almost every cranny of nature's works" (350). Tristram is, in effect, uncompromisingly dedicated to a Humean view of the world, and the shapelessness, doubling, and misdirection which characterize Tristram Shandy can be partly explained by reading Tristram's self-avowed duty to the reader in the context of Hume's doctrine of "contrary causes." Hume, for example, sounds like Tristram when he writes, in An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding (1748), that

> ...philosophers, observing that almost in every part of nature there is contained a vast variety of springs and principles which are hid by reason of their minuteness and remoteness, find that it is at least possible the contrariety of events may not proceed from any contingency in the cause, but from the secret operation of contrary causes. (in Chappell 343-4)

Such a world is too complex and convoluted to admit the lights of Neo-classical Reason into all its recesses; Tristram shows that lived experience will always exceed or defy the efforts of both the keenest reasoning and the most sincerely rendered formal imitations to

contain it.

So the modern codes of imitation are likewise unsuitable to the serious-minded Tristram, for even the novel, as much as it sought to represent the particular, the contingent, and the familiar, required a shaping of experience that Tristram cannot accept. Commenting on the success of Clarissa, for example, Samuel Richardson attributes some of that novel's effect to its careful design. In a 1747 postscript to the novel he describes it as "a story in which so many persons were concerned, either principally or collaterally, and of characters and dispositions so various, carried on with tolerable connection and perspicuity...without the aid of digressions and episodes foreign to the principal design" (Vol. IX: 325-6) But, as Tristram goes about representing a world of contingent relations between things and circumstances, as he goes about uncovering the "secret operation of contrary causes," he finds that he cannot do so without the "aid of digressions"; "tolerable connection and perspicuity" are less important than a full accounting.[12] According to William Holtz, although the novel "form offered him conventions for shaping his narrative, to shape meant to sacrifice, to select, and especially to leave some things behind as he followed a given line of progress; and Tristram is loathe to omit anything" (107).

Contrary to Richardson, Tristram subordinates "design" to inclusiveness. He obligates himself to represent the contingent and the particular as well as the seemingly

---

[12] Hazlitt had compared Sterne with Richardson in this way, noting that both writers participate in the century's "sentimental" tradition. Hazlitt says that Richardson's fictions "are made out by continuity, and patient repetition of touches," while Sterne's proceed by "glancing transitions and graceful appositions" (Tristram Shandy, Max Byrd, ed. (London: George, Allen & Unwin, 1985) 142.

trivial detail, situation, or anecdote. Tristram is one of those writers who, according to Johnson's thoughts on biography in Rambler 60, "seem very little acquainted with the Nature of their Task, or very negligent about the Performance" (III, 322). Johnson's negligent writer, like Tristram, cannot judiciously choose what to include and what to leave out. Johnson goes on to say of such writers that

> If now and then they condescend to inform the World of particular Facts, they are not always so happy as to select the most important. I know not well what Advantage Posterity can receive from the only Circumstance by which Tickell has distinguished Addison from the rest of Mankind, the Irregularity of his Pulse; nor can I think myself overpaid for the Time spent in reading the life of Malherb, by being enabled to relate, after the learned Biographer, that Malherb had two predominant Opinions; one, that the Looseness of a single Woman might destroy all her boast of ancient Descent; the other that the French Beggars made use very improperly and barbarously of the Phrase noble Gentleman, either Word included in the Sense of both. (III, 322)

Tristram routinely includes details that Johnson would find irrelevant to the rendering of general nature. Tristram, in fact, tells the reader that the seemingly trivial detail, that which normally falls beyond the representation of general nature, is often of the highest significance: "Matters of no more seeming consequence in themselves than, 'Whether my father should have taken off his wig with his right hand or with his left,'--have divided the greatest kingdoms, and made the crowns of the monarchs who governed them to totter upon their heads" (Sterne 187).

Tristram, then, finds conventional codes of imitation insufficient to represent a reality in which people and things can only be known through extensive reference to the circumstances which precede and surround them. In order to fulfill his duty in a world of "contrary causes," Tristram obligates himself to a storytelling strategy of digression and misdirection. Tristram's discussion of Momus's glass and the introduction of Yorick in the novel's first volume explain why he chooses such a strategy.

Sterne illustrates the way complex experience resists formal representations through Tristram's discussion of Momus' glass. Momus, a character from one of Lucian's satirical dialogues, had complained that Hephaestus' model of man should have included a window in his chest through which desires and motives could be exactly discerned.[13] Tristram notes that such a direct view into the natures of men and things would be a boon to writers; it would allow one to take "pen and ink and set down nothing but what you had seen, and could have sworn to" (83). Momus's window seems to be the fantasy implied by both the Neoclassical and novelistic codes of imitation: Augustans like Johnson aim to represent a "general nature," uniform and eternal, which reason can recognize in appropriately formalized imitations; novelists, for their part, imagined a transparent identity between the content of everyday life--as varied as it is--and its meaning. But since Momus's glass "is an advantage not to be had by the biographer on this planet," Tristram must admit, "we must go some other way to work" (83); that way is the indirect route through digression and indirection. Ignoring the obligation to "go some other way to work" is fatal, a fact established early, when Tristram describes Yorick's

---

[13] See the Riverside critical edition (1965), Ian Watt ed., p. 55 note 1.

naive directness. According to Tristram, Yorick's "indiscretion" was his directness; he "had no impression but one, and that was what arose from the nature of the deed spoken of; which impression he would usually translate into plain English without any periphrasis" (29). The report of Yorick's fate which follows these remarks establishes the consequences of taking the direct route: a broken hearted death.[14]

Tristram's awareness both of the Humean etiological complexities already described and of the consequences for not divulging them cause his story to look the way it does. Tristram explains these effects by contrasting stories which proceeds directly, in a "straight line," with his own.

> Could a historiographer drive on his history, as a muleteer drives on his mule,--straight forward;--for instance, from Rome all the way to Loretto, without ever once turning his head aside either to the right hand or the left,--he might venture to foretell you to an hour when he should get to his journey's end;--but the thing is, morally speaking, impossible: For, if he is a man of the least spirit, he will have fifty deviations from a straight line to make with this or that party as he goes along, which he can no ways avoid. (41)

"Morally speaking," then, directness is "impossible." Given Tristram's Humean assumptions, the only dutiful way to conduct a story like his is through digression and misdirection and not design. As Spacks says of Tristram's narrative, "to falsify experience by the impostion of rules and logic violates the storyteller's central obligation

---

[14] See p. 33: "...he died, nevertheless, as was generally thought, quite broken hearted."

of truth" (Desire 42). Tristram uses several figures to describe what such a narrative will look like, the most helpful being the image of the "planetary system" in which both a forward and a retrograde movement is apparent (80). By patterning his narrative after such a complex system, "two contrary movements are introduced into it, and reconciled, which were thought to be at variance with each other" (81). "In a word," says Tristram, "my work is digressive, and it is progressive too, and at the same time" (81). Imitating a world of contrary causes requires nothing less than a narrative of "contrary movements" which Tristram labors to create and orchestrate.

IV

As argued in chapter three of this dissertation, any plot which pursues its end too directly in the way Momus's glass would allow--the plot of Crusoe's accumulating wealth, for example--must be repressed and forced into other plots which can and do signify through difference. Narrative difference is created in the play between particular details and general rules, between some source of desire and a law which shapes it and gives it meaning. Robinson Crusoe shuns the straight line of capital accumulation by sublimating that plot under the metaphor and metonymy of another. Tristram Shandy, in contrast, through its swelling explanatory digressions, desublimates its plot matter, bringing to the surface all the conditions which determine the object of representation. The plot of Tristram's birth, for instance, cannot move forward except with the digressive introduction of other plots which surround and infiltrate it. Likewise with that part of his life and opinions which Tristram claims he looks most forward to relating, the amours of his uncle Toby. Like his birth, the meaning of Toby's amours cannot be successfully

conveyed directly; the story of Toby's amours must be supplemented with intervening, digressive episodes which will come to bear meaning on them. Tristram says of this necessary and frustrating condition

> The thing I lament is, that things have crowded in so thick upon me, that I have not been able to get into that part of my work, towards which, I have all the way, looked forwards, with so much earnest desire; and that is the campaigns, but especially the amours of my uncle Toby, the events of which are of so singular a cast, that if I can so manage it, as to convey but the same impressions to every other brain, which the occurrences themselves excite in my own--I will answer for it the book shall make its way in the world, much better than its master has done before it. (400)

His desire to write his uncle's amours is augmented with an earnestness, a seriousness and urgency which so compels him to get it right that it delays him from getting it out at all for eight full volumes. Just as his uncle and Trim experience "the torture of the happy" while awaiting news from the front which will allow them to proceed exactly and completely with their imitative work, Tristram takes satisfaction in feeling he has left nothing out.

Tristram revels in the narrative dialectic of advance and delay; he boasts that even though his "digressions...fly off from what I am about...yet I constantly order affairs so that my main business does not stand still in my absence" (80). Rather than omitting and suppressing, as Defoe does in Robinson Crusoe, Tristram's desire "emphasizes presence and presentness" (Zimmerman 130), and the fulness of Tristram's text is produced by its

digressions. He says of his habits of imitation,

> Digressions, incontestably, are the sunshine;--they are the life, the soul of reading;--take them out of this book for instance,--you might as well take the whole book along with them;--one cold eternal winter would reign in every page of it; restore them to the writer;--he steps forth like a bridegroom,--bids All hail; brings in variety, and forbids the appetite to fail. (81)

Tristram's justifications for digression and the textual fulness they provide raise interesting questions about the relationship between aesthetic form and the moral function of art in the eighteenth century. Succinctly put, postponement and delay are not for Tristram, as they would be for an Augustan formalist like Johnson, a means to a moral end, but a moral end in themselves. Tristram is imitating a world that is experienced without clear demarcations between beginnings and endings; to imitate that world faithfully and in good conscience, Tristram is careful about artificially and arbitrarily instituting beginnings and endings in his writing. Through Tristram, Sterne performs a transvaluation of the Augustan opposition "form-formlessness," and so participates in the eighteenth-century aesthetic debate over the moral value of art.

Sterne's transvaluation of the opposition form-formlessness reverses the Augustan equation of moral art with form and immoral art with caprice. The unexpected digression, meandering journeys into dead-ends and back, the trivial or marginal detail: these become the signs of moral duty in a narrative economy which disregards the efficiency and the method of form in favor of the messy, often wasteful-seeming

complexity of presence. The Augustan view is expressed by Johnson in his preface to The Plays of William Shakespeare, where explains his beliefs about the moral lessons literary art should deliver. He laments that Shakespeare "seems to write without any moral purpose," that

> his precepts and axioms drop casually from him; he makes no just distribution of good or evil, nor is always careful to shew in the virtuous a disapprobation of the wicked; he carries his persons indifferently through right and wrong, and at the close dismisses them without further care, and leaves their examples to operate by chance. (VII, 63)

Shakespeare's immorality, according to Johnson, follows from his cavalier attitude toward rewarding virtue and punishing vice, and from Johnson's perception that moral consequences in Shakespeare's plays are distributed by chance.

Voicing similar concerns about the trends in fictional prose narrative of his day, Johnson says in Rambler 4, "in narratives...I cannot discover why there should not be exhibited the most perfect idea of virtue" (III, 23). This "perfect idea of virtue" means an image of a virtuous character not tainted with any vice: it is a serious moral error, believes Johnson, that, like Shakespeare,

> Many writers [of narrative] for the sake of following nature, so mingle good and bad qualities in their principal personages, that they are both equally conspicuous; and as we accompany them through their adventures with delight, and are led by degrees to interest ourselves in their favour, we lose the abhorrence of their faults, because they do not hinder our pleasure, or,

> perhaps, regard them with some kindness, for being united with so much merit. (III, 23)

Johnson preferred the kind of fictions which Spacks describes in Desire and Truth, fictions which assume and seek to represent the "moral structure of a God-dominated universe: a structure formed on principles of justice, providing an orderly system of rewards and punishments in this life or the next" (Desire 118). Tristram's world is closer to Shakespeare's, according to Henri Fluchere, than to the orderly world of its immediate fictional predecessors which Johnson preferred and which Spacks describes. Fluchere calls Tristram's life a "series of unfortunate accidents...a description of singularities involving disappointment, irritation, and regret" (136). "The essential thing" in Tristram Shandy says Fluchere, "is this vision of a world where everything goes wrong, where the best intentions are thwarted by the event, where the most learned and subtle constructions of the mind are shown to be ridiculous when set against facts" (136). Tristram's narrative is immoral not because people do bad things, but because there is no apparent and reliable pattern to the distributed consequences of good and evil. His maiming at the window is a case in point; the unforseen outcome of the Shandy's marriage contract is another. Both show that too many things happen by chance and accident in Tristram's world for it to be a moral or a just one. This capriciousness sneaks into Tristram Shandy because Tristram is steadfastly focused on imitating without "discrimination"--as Johnson says in the epigraph to this chapter--rather than on artfully shaping raw experience into an aesthetic pattern, and instructing readers about the moral necessity which ordered the cosmos.

Fluchere adds that, from the beginning, Tristram "confesses to a keen

consciousness of the writer's duty to take every aspect of his enterprise into account" (136), and Tristram's strict adherence to this perceived duty explains why his life and opinions look the way they do. If Tristram has taken on the writerly duty described by Holtz and Fluchere, to aim for presence and completeness in his imitations, if he is, as Holtz has said, "loathe to omit anything," it is because he and, more interestingly Sterne through him, want to challenge neo-classical assumptions about the relationship between imitative conventions and "truth." Spacks, for example, sees Sterne's novel "explicitly declaring the falsity of form" (Imagining 153). In contrast to Tristram's inclusive habits of imitation, Johnson's preference for artful shaping is, like Walter's systems, exclusive; it does violence to the nature it purports to imitate. Narratives founded on principles of convention and artifice "cut the knot"--to use Walter Shandy's expression--rather than untie it (332). That is, they unfairly censor moments of the reality they purport to represent, hastily skirting around these moments for the sake of a neat and "instructive" conclusion.

An illustrative statement of the censorship that conventional narrative artifice entails can be found in Jane Austen's Northanger Abbey. In the concluding pages of that novel, Austen addresses her readers directly, just as Tristram often addresses his and for the same reason: to remind them that they are reading a novel, an imitation of life. But, whereas Tristram's interruptions are often to beg the reader's patience, and to excuse an impending explanatory digression, Austen's interruption works quite differently. In Northanger Abbey, Austen's narrator cheerfully acknowledges the ramifications of narrative artifice. While the anticipated marriage between Catherine Morland and Henry

Tilney is as yet unconsummated due to General Tilney's objections to Catherine's lack of name and fortune, Austen's narrator eases the reader's mind, reminding them that

> the anxiety, which in this state of their attachment must be the portion of Henry and Catherine, and of all who loved either, as to its final event, can hardly extend, I fear, to the bosom of my readers, who will see in the tell-tale compression of the pages before them that we are all hastening together to perfect felicity. (209)

Reading a conventional narrative is pleasurable, this passage reveals, because the reader knows more than the characters know about what he or she is reading: there is a surplus of knowledge on the reader's side. Tristram declares once, in contrast (and with some pride), that "my reader has never yet been able to guess at anything" (89).

The addressee of the passage quoted from Northanger Abbey is the same kind of reader Tristram has in mind, though for a very different reason, when he says, "I know there are readers in the world...who find themselves ill-at-ease, unless they are let into the whole secret from first to last of everything which concerns you" (4-5). These are readers who prefer to "cut the knot" rather than "untie" it. One part of Tristram's self-imposed duty is "to convey but the same impressions to every other brain, which the occurrences themselves excite in [his] own" (400); the reader, therefore, must not be able to "guess at anything," for Tristram would have him or her come to understanding alongside, not ahead of, himself.[15] The kind of knowledge foreshadowed by the "tell-tale compression"

---

[15] This explains why Tristram feels warranted to give his readers the kind of commands like the following which appears in Volume IX, Chapter xxv: "When we have got to the end of this chapter (but not before) we must all turn back to the two blank

of a novel's pages is knowledge gleaned from the expectation of endings which promise "perfect felicity," expectations aroused through omission ("compression") and, though they routinely satisfy the need to know, do so at the expense of presence.

The reader of this dissertation should recall Richard Lanham's classification of Tristram Shandy as a "non-novel," his calling it a "collation of classical narrative types, rhetorical and non-mimetic, applied to the description of private life, used for pleasure."[16] An alternative to this might be to describe it as a text which insists on completeness but which--and because of its own insistence, its narrator's earnest desire--never reaches completion. John Mullan assesses the purposes of such open-endedness, saying that Tristram Shandy

> parodies debates about how to read a narrative morally. It also enacts that avoidance of completion or fulfillment whose larger patterns run through the novel (from mis-conception to misconception). The novel that tried to be utterly, exhaustively moral (Clarissa is the model) was always striving for completion. Its ideal was that of the achievement of instructive intent, the reader who had been taught to read properly. (188)

As Holtz says--and as almost any reading of Tristram Shandy will confirm--"there is little to suggest a shaped sequence of events moving toward a necessary conclusion" (54), while Spacks says that Tristram's "history of himself deliberately imitates chaos"

---

chapters, on the account of which my honour has lain bleeding this half hour..." The emphasis is added.

[16] Lanham, 29. See section I of this chapter.

(Imagining 128).

But, as part of Sterne's transvaluative effort, Tristram promises us again and again that, "morally speaking," he has no alternative but to imitate as he does. Tristram is aware of the cost of "cutting the knot," of "hastening toward felicity"; formally trained readers who prefer to see the end rather than celebrate delay, who gain their pleasure from their position as knowers, sacrifice the truth: "When the precipitancy of a man's wishes," says Tristram, "hurries on his ideas ninety times faster than the vehicle he rides in--woe be to truth" (586). If, looking back from Tristram Shandy to Clarissa and forward from it to Austen's work we can say that the earlier and later narratives are "exhaustively moral," narratives which reproduce society through aesthetic conventions, then we might say that Tristram Shandy rescues moments of experience heretofore considered unrepresentable or non-narratable from representational neglect and exclusion. D. A. Miller makes distinctions useful in this regard among the "unnarrated," the "narratable," and the "non-narratable" elements in prose fiction. "Every discourse," says Miller, "is uttered against a background of all those things that it chooses, for one reason or another, not to say" (4); this "background" is the unnarrated. The narratable is a "disequilibrium, suspense, a general insufficiency from which a given narrative appears to arise" (ix). The non-narratable is "the state of quiescence assumed by a novel before its beginning and supposedly recovered by it at the end" (4). Tristram, to a large extent, refuses to relegate anything to the "background." The relationship between narratable and non-narratable is complex in Tristram Shandy. Like Robinson Crusoe, Tristram Shandy begins with a breach of duty, a "disequilibrium" that propels the ensuing narrative forward to seek

resolution and "quiescence" once again. The breach in Tristram Shandy, however, is actually preceded (in "real" time) by a prior "insufficiency": the lack or oversight in Walter's and Elizabeth's marriage contract which prevents it from protecting the interests of the unconceived Tristram. Since contracts (like the one in Crusoe) are meant to establish and guarantee a kind of "quiescence," Tristram's narrative reaches backward past the conventionally narratable into the non-narratable past to blur the distinction between the two. In aiming for presence, Tristram's narrative breaks down the distinctions among these moments which more conventional narratives would rigorously keep intact.

Roy Porter has also noticed this facet of Tristram Shandy, the way its narrator's desire and the narrative strategy which follows from it revive experience by bringing the unrepresentable into representation. He suggests that "Sterne's strategy...is to mine the covered ways, the nervous pathways between mind and body, thought and action, intention, execution and interpretation of words and things" (in Myer, ed. 87). His reality--that which he imitates--is, as Porter suggests, located in the flux of experience, the hidden, "covered ways" that connect the more formally representable--or readily narratable--aspects of experience. In one of his addresses to "madam," for example, Tristram insists that, "attitudes are nothing, madam,--'tis the transition from one attitude to another--like the preparation and resolution of the discord into harmony, which is all in all" (331). Tristram's allusion to music, the settling of "discord into harmony," calls to mind Schiller's meditation on the "brow of the blessed Gods," where there is "no force to contend with force." Jonathan Lamb has also given this aspect of Sterne's novel a name,

calling its representational desire a "transformational technique," explaining that the plotting of Tristram Shandy "appears as the conversion of accident to advantage, where the unexpected or inconvenient thing...turns out to be a peculiar felicity" (Double Principle 29).

But this resurrection of the non-narratable, the "conversion of accident to advantage," only makes sense given that Tristram represents a symbolic maiming; he is born the hapless third party to a set of contractual relations which are formally only binary and, therefore, exclusive of the desire (Tristram's) that hovers at its fringes. He himself is the "non-narratable," the non-discursive, the unrepresentable[17]--that is, until he misreads the rules which exclude him, and earnestly assumes a duty to a reader whose desire is at odds with his. As Tristram says, there is more than one way to "get at the very thing we wish" (51), and Tristram vows to explore as many ways as he can. Conventional narratives which work toward closure in predictable ways, however, which "hasten" their readers "toward felicity," are, like the Shandean contract, discriminatory and so unsuited to his project of restoration.

V

Peter Brooks equates narrative closure with the "death drive," and the narrative dialectic of delay and advance, form and desire with the "pleasure principle" (96-112). Tristram himself, in volume VII flees from death across Europe and to do so must "seize

---

[17] J. Paul Hunter has presented the argument that Tristram is a bastard, that he is, literally, an "accident." See, "Clocks, Calendars, and Names: The troubles of Tristram and the Aesthetics of Uncertainty," in Rhetorics of Order/Ordering Rhetorics in English Neoclassical Literature, Canfield and Hunter, eds.; University of Delaware Press: 1989, 173-199.

every handle, of what size or shape soever, that chance held out" (648) to him. Tristram's tour through Europe is, therefore, in many ways the textual correlative in miniature of his larger narrative aspirations. Just as his narrative as a whole blurs distinctions between the narratable and non-narratable, his tour narrative collapses--at least symbolically--the difference between representation and lived experience; he says, for example:

> I have brought myself into such a situation, as no traveller ever stood before me; for I am this moment walking across the marketplace of Auxerre with my father and uncle Toby, in our way back to dinner--and I am this moment also entering Lyons with my postchaise broke into a thousand pieces--and I am moreover this moment in a handsome pavillion built by Pringello, upon the banks of the Garonne, which Mons. Sligniac has lent me, and where I now sit rhapsodizing all these affairs. (621-22)

The tour narrative dramatizes Sterne's "transformational technique," his interest in narrating that which was presumed to be non-narratable. Most travel writers, for example, says Tristram, are at a loss when in between the towns and cities whose busy experience provides the imagination with variety and difference: "They have then a large plain upon their hands, which they know not what to do with--and which is of little or no use to them but to carry them to some town" (646). But Tristram's method of "seizing every handle of what size or shape soever," allows him the luxury, he says, of turning the "plain into a city" (648). The non-narratable is recovered, given a place in discourse. Tristram's narrative habits, if not pleasing in a conventionally aesthetic way, allow Sterne to rehabilitate that which was previously counted as "of little or no use" in the economy

of narrative

So what is to be said about Tristram Shandy's relationship to the more conventionally aestheticized narratives of its day? To unite, in Schillerian style, mutually exclusive discourses into an aesthetic union is comforting; it may also, in Sterne's view, be a cheat. Through Tristram, Sterne shows that such a move produces ideology, biased representations which serve self-interest by expressing partial truths. The contract in Robinson Crusoe mediates between social and self-interest; it is presented as a living form which unproblematically unites that narrative's discourses of form and desire. But, through Tristram, Sterne shows us the uncanny way that undesirable effects are always leaking out from around the edges of such a formal agreement as the contract, and how the richness of experience is always abridged by conventional narrative aesthetics.[18] Tristram is repeatedly frustrated by his self-imposed duty; intent on living by his own law, his uncompromising attitude continually dissolves that law into a narrative more resembling desire. But by creating a persona which tenaciously seeks after presence, Sterne reveals how narratives which eschew presence for form produce ideology.

Consider the Strassburgers in Slawkenbergius's tale, for example. Tristram includes Slawkenbergius's tale in his narrative ostensibly as a way of representing his father's character: the tale is representative of Walter's hobby-horse, his penchant for obscure learning, and helps explain how Walter comes to place so much importance on

---

[18] Spacks, Desire and Truth, 47. Tristram's narrative too, make no mistake, produces ideology--his is only one mind after all, and no matter how much he tries for presence and completeness his view is shaped, as Spacks points out, by the contours of an individual imagination in a particular time and place.

noses as indicative of social status and prestige. But the tale's inclusion in the narrative has, like the contract, some side-effects worth noting. The Strassburgers are taken with a stranger possessed of an unusually large nose, so taken in fact that they can think of little else. Ever since the stranger's visit, the tale concludes, the Strassburgers' "trade and manufactures have decayed and gradually grown down...but not from any cause which commercial heads have assigned; for it is owing to this only, that Noses have ever so run in their heads, that the Strassburgers could not follow their business." "Noses," in Tristram Shandy, are of course associated through innuendo with the male sex organ, and so the Strassburgers' fascination with the stranger's nose can be read as a displacement of mass sexual curiosity. This displacement of interest notwithstanding, the conclusion of Slawkenbergius's tale serves to critique the concealing function of the century's newly emerging discourses like "political economy." To "commercial heads," mere "curiosity" (Sterne 203), sexual or otherwise, can make no sense as a "cause" of the "decay of trade and manufactures"; only causes which can be empirically validated as "economic"--i.e. labor problems, inflation, shortage of specie--are representable in the discourse of political economy. "Curiosity," however, is an example of Hume's "contrary causes," one of those etiological mysteries hidden by nature from the empiricist. The paradox is that the more singular and peculiar Tristram's imitations, the more they purport to represent his self-imposed duty ("I will follow no man's rules that ever lived"), the more his imitative ethic turns to desire, opening up the world of experience to pluralistic interpretation, showing the meaning of experience and its objects to be a fluid social process with multiple determinants.

This world of polyvalent meaning is both good news and bad, for it could be argued that Tristram cuts a poor figure in the world as much for his failings as an imitator as for the litany of accidents and misfortunes he offers as reasons. Recall, for example, Chesterfield's advice to his son, cited in chapter two of this dissertation, to "imitate...with discernment and judgment, the real perfections of the good company which you may get into" (1241). Imitation was a skill for achieving success in polite society. The imitative social climber, like the imitative writer, however, had to be discerning and, as already discussed, Tristram is unwilling to show much "discernment," or aesthetic sense, in creating his narrative imitations. He shows himself to be deficient in that most valued of bourgeois social qualities--taste. Along with inclusiveness, "duty," to Tristram, means as well the received tenet that "the reader's passions and the writer's will duplicate one another's in response to textual evocations."[19] But Tristram puts himself and his readers at cross purposes immediately, for his own "earnest desire" confounds the desire which Peter Brooks says characteristically dominates readers, the desire to get to the end, the desire for resolution. There is, apparently, "desire," and then there is Tristram's earnest desire, a desire so tenacious and uncompromising that it makes following any abstract code of duty (imitative conventions) impossible. In one sense, Tristram Shandy only does what D. A. Miller says "traditional narrative" should do: it is "an expansion of what will be condensed, or a distortion of what will be made straight" (4). Except, in Tristram Shandy, the expansion and distortion do not end; there is no definitive moment of closure

---

[19] Spacks, Desire and Truth, 47. Recall Tristram says that he wishes to "convey but the same impressions to every other brain, which the occurrences themselves excite in my own" (400).

which will, as Miller describes, "incorporate" the preceding narrative "into its grand pattern" (139). Perhaps, then, the major irony of all ironies presented by the novel is that because Tristram is so uncompromisingly committed to doing his duty, he will never be able to set anything "straight"; to be in earnest is to be without a discerning taste and is, therefore, to be a failure in the eyes of the larger world.

Insofar as Tristram aims for a radically inclusive rendering of his life and opinions, his life's story can never be completed. He recognizes the limits of his duty in this paradox when he reports

> I am this month one whole year older than I was this time twelve-month, and having got, as you perceive, almost into the middle of my fourth volume--and no farther than to my first day's life--'tis demonstrative that I have three hundred and sixty-four days more life to write just now, than when I first set out; so that instead of advancing, as a common writer, in my work with what I have been doing at it--on the contrary, I am thrown so many volumes back. (341)

In one important sense, then, Tristram's imitative effort is undone by his own earnestness: he can never be finished with his narrative. W. Austin Flanders has said that "the threatening possibility that language and style could overwhelm the essential truth one is seeking to discover is one of Tristram's/Sterne's obsessions" (71), and that, in<u>Tristram Shandy</u>, the very "process of writing interfere[s] with the prosecution of the work to its end" (72). Everett Zimmerman has pointed out that Sterne's "novel often shows the process of representation taking on a life of its own, alienated from what it is intended to

convey" (136), and the quote from Tristram seems to confirm Zimmerman's viewpoint.

A neo-classicist like Johnson, who preferred the providential structure in narrative, would no doubt find fault with Tristram's "earnest desire" to imitate inclusively, to represent without discrimination. In the epigraph which heads this chapter, Johnson asks of what use such imitations can be. The mirroring of reality only reproduces a ll the contingency and uncertainty of that reality in Johnson's view; what is needed from representation, he believes, is a deliberate shaping of this reality through which readers can clearly apprehend the difference between good and evil and in which just rewards and punishments are distributed to each respectively. Such fictions would necessarily subordinate narrative desire to considerations of narrative form, like Richardson suggests. But in Tristram Shandy Sterne has demonstrated how desire can produce its own rewards. Tristram has promised his reader the very thing about which the neoclassicist like Johnson complained: a fiction which is as idiosyncratic as the individual life it purports to imitate. Tristram, you will remember, says he will follow "no man's rules that ever lived," and so from the beginning the reader understands that his life and opinions will not adhere to the prescriptions of representing "general nature." But if Tristram's meandering narrative does not convey the "Truth" of general nature, it does produce truths that more conventional fictions do not examine. Tristram has promised us an account of an individual life; but, the more singular he tries to make his tale the more radically plural it becomes, and Slawkenbergius's tale, with its unexpected chain of cause and effect, demonstrates well how this happens.

CHAPTER FIVE

"My feelings are all at war with my duties": Restraining the Moral Sense in Evelina

...natural sense unassisted may run
into a false track, and serve only to
punish him justly, who would not allow
it to be useful to himself or others.
If man's authority be justly established,
the more sense a woman has, the more
reason she will find to submit to it.
Mary Astell
Some Reflections on Marriage, 1700

I

Most critics read Frances Burney's Evelina as kind of female bildungsroman. Susan Fraiman, Judith Newton, Julia Epstein, and Margaret Doody all see the novel as the story of a young, inexperienced woman's education in the opportunities for happiness her culture offers her and the obstacles that this culture has placed in her way. These critics, however, have not been unanimous about what the ending of Evelina, her marriage to an aristocratic man, means for its heroine. Judith Newton sees Evelina "growing in independence" throughout the novel, but argues that "the end of Evelina...is marked by a decline in Evelina's autonomy" (49). Similarly, Susan Fraiman sees a "narrative in which Evelina does appear to grow wiser and more gratified" (35), but says the novel's conclusion "leaves Evelina back where she began" (36). Julia Epstein, however, says the novel should be read "as a feminist novel of education," adding that "it is a story...of private sovereignty and self-determination" (95). Judith Newton says Evelina may, in the end, endorse patriarchy, but that it also "entertains a fantasy of female

power which is in some tension with novel's endorsement and idealization of landed male control" (42-43).

Whether they see the novel's plot as supportive or subversive of eighteenth-century patriarchy, critics routinely argue that the absence of John Belmont, Evelina's father, is the major cause of her social disadvantages. Having no father, she has no name to mark her position in the patriarchal order, and, consequently, no legitimate connection to power to which she can appeal when in difficult straits. Castigating Belmont (and other males in Evelina) is the common thread in all Burney criticism. Fraiman, for example, even describes the idealized and romantic Orville as a usurper of female innocence (47). But Burney's novel never questions the eighteenth-century assumption that males deserve to appropriate and direct female desire; she only questions the means by which male power is practiced.

Therefore, this chapter looks at the father's role differently than have previous studies, arguing that the plot of female bildungsroman so many critics have found in Evelina could not exist without the absence of the rakish father, John Belmont. Rather than focusing on the ways Belmont's absence handicaps Evelina in her social adventures (and it certainly does), this argument focuses on the way his absence enables narrative by leaving feminine desire free to circulate. The father's absence is prerequisite to the plot of female education and development because with the father present, female desire would have no license to be loose in the world. Evelina, remember, is an heiress, though she is "unowned" by her aristocratic father for most of the novel. Belmont's absence sets the stage for the intrigue of the novel's marriage plot; with the patriarchal father present, for

instance, a young woman like Evelina would likely have been settled into an arranged marriage, the kind of conditions that produce plots of rebellion like that of Clarissa. If his absence inaugurates narrative, then Belmont's eventual return will be integral to creating the ideological message at the conclusion of the novel's plot, because his return, coupled with Evelina's marriage to Orville, attaches the strong but, it turns out, just restraint of aristocratic law to Evelina's natural and undisciplined moral sense.

II

Abandoned by her father, her mother dead, Evelina has been consigned to the care of the Reverend Arthur Villars. As Evelina's guardian, Villars plays the role of a substitute father. His role in the narrative is more significant than just this substitution however: Villars represents the eighteenth-century ideal of an affective parent. Thus, from the very beginning of the novel, aristocratic values and the values of the modern affective family are at least implicitly being compared. Initially, the values of the latter come out looking the better, but this privileging will be reversed by the novel's end. The tension between the two, therefore, is complex and deserves unpacking; what is important for now, however, is Villars' role as an educator of Evelina, and his willingness to relinquish his direct control over her for a time, allowing her desire to circulate on the fashionable English marriage market.

Villars's position in the narrative is similar to that of Crusoe's father. Both men are representations of Locke's "paternal power," that power which respects limits to its authority over the right of children to dispose of property in themselves as they see fit. The conflation of "affective" parenting with Locke's liberal institution of "paternal

power" seems warranted when the attitudes and purposes appropriate to each are considered. Lawrence Stone, for example, shows that the eighteenth century was aware of the "incompatibility of domestic patriarchy[1] with the political theory of contractual obligation" which articulated the need for more egalitarian structures and institutions in society at large (The Family 240). Stone's affective family, like Locke's family organized around paternal power, is not an absolutist institution;[2] each family member, including the father, had duties to balance their privileges (Stone 240). Most importantly, the affective parent, like the paternal power, exercises authority but respects limits to his control over his children's rights to dispose of property in themselves. Burney creates Villars as just this kind of "parent": Villars acknowledges the limits of his authority and Evelina's obligations to him when he writes to her soon after she arrives in London, "I aim not at an authority which deprives you of liberty" (Burney 25).

As discussed in chapter three, the liberal desire imagined by Locke arises spontaneously, naturally as it were, at the acknowledged limits of parental authority over

---

[1] "Patriarchy" is here distinguished from "paternal power" to mean a hierarchical institution which assigns absolute power over others to one individual based on arbitrary qualities like sex or birth. Locke's idea of "paternal power" is a more egalitarian institution and should not be confused with the idea of "paternalism," an idea related to patriarchy, which it is meant to supplant.

[2] Stone opposes the affective family of the eighteenth century to the patriarchally organized family of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Stone says the more modern affective family was characterized by "greater freedom for children" especially in choice of marriage partners, and "a rather more equal partnership between spouses" (221) than the patriarchal family. This "greater freedom for children" is the sine qua non of liberal desire; upon attaining an age of reason, the child's desire is transferred from the domain of familial to political authority.

the child's property in themselves. At these limits the child enters a community of other free agents whose desires will henceforth be contained by the contracts they enter into with one another. Villars permits Evelina to leave the domain of his authority on her own terms, of her own free will; she is not "escaping," for example, as is Clarissa from the law of a dominating father. This condition allows Evelina to circulate freely, on a fairly egalitarian basis, among the various classes of people whom she meets. She is, in other words, inhabiting that liberal political and moral space constructed by Locke "where the rule prescribes not."

Several critics agree about Villars' affective role even if they see him as an oppressive father figure, as one whose kindness is actually debilitating to Evelina.[3] This argument sees Villars not as oppressive, but as a character whose affective power cannot place responsible limits on Evelina's desire; as Evelina's moral guide, Villars is flawed because his sense of benevolence is not accompanied with any reasonable discretion. The eighteenth-century's new power of affection, says Janet Todd, was characterized in literature by the "kindly parent" and the "community firmly linked by sentiment and familial structures" (16). From this perspective it can be argued that Villars' affective role is exaggerated by Burney for effect. Villars' affective persona is represented by the kind

---

[3] See for example Susan Fraiman, Unbecoming Women (New York: Columbia U Press, 1993). She says, "At first glance this affectionate father [Villars] appears irreproachable" (41); but, she adds, she views "Evelina's guardian as in some sense her jailer" (41). Kindness like Villars', Fraiman says, even though it is well intended, "holds [Evelina] to a debilitating innocence" (37). In Familiar Violence (New York: U of Delaware Press, 1997), Barbara Zonitch identifies Villars as Evelina's "adoptive affective father," but believes he has "dubious motives for purposely hindering attempts to reconcile Evelina with Belmont" (37).

of language he uses to describe his relationship to his ward, and his rhetoric is infused with sentiment, even to the point of being sentimental. He writes to Lady Howard

> This letter will be delivered to you by my child,--the child of my adoption--my affection!...I send her to you, innocent as an angel, and artless as purity itself: and I send you with her the heart of your friend, the only hope he has on earth, the subject of his tenderest thoughts, and the object of his latest cares. She is one, Madam, for whom alone I have lately wished to live; and she is one whom to serve I would with transport die. (20)

Such extreme feeling is the stock-in-trade of the sentimental novel: Villars' sympathetic ties to Evelina are so strong that he would, he says, die in sublime "transport" for the privilege of serving her.[4] This chapter argues that because Villars' role as affective parent is tainted with this kind of exaggerated sentimentalism, he cannot offer the kind of reasonable power which Evelina's desire needs to be socially useful. This is why the novel brings back Belmont, and why the novel ends in the fortuitous marriage to Lord Orville.

III

While Villars does not create Evelina's desire as Robinson's father creates his through prohibition, Villars is responsible for Evelina's moral education, and it is Evelina's moral sense that is the hallmark of her desire. Evelina represents the eighteenth

---

[4] See Janet Todd, Sensibility (London & New York: Methuen), 1986. On p. 5 Todd says that, in the novel of sentiment, "The words in which emotion is described and prescribed are themselves prescribed. Terms such as 'benevolence', 'virtue', 'esteem', 'delicacy', and 'transport' indicate sentimental doctrine and expect a sentimental understanding."

century's ideal of feminine desire: she desires to do good and to please. Her own reports to Villars and others' assessments of her character confirm her ideal femininity in important ways. Lady Howard, for example, reassures Villars that Evelina's "natural desire of obliging" will serve her well in place of that "politeness which is acquired by an acquaintenance with high life" (Burney 21). From such remarks which oppose the natural with the acquired,[5] it is made clear that the effect of Villars' educational program on Evelina has been to develop or enhance her "natural tendencies" to goodness.[6] Besides being a representation of ideal femininity, therefore, Evelina is also a representation of the Shaftesburian "moral sense" in action; her desire to do good is innate and independent of her own self-interest.[7]

From the novel's early pages she evokes a disinterest in her personal aggrandizement. She is, rather, concerned that her acquaintances are at ease, and that

---

[5] See as well Lord Orville's speech on "natural" versus "artificial" beauty. Refering to Evelina he says, "...the difference of natural and of artificial colour, seems to me very easily discerned; that of Nature is mottled, and varying; that of art, set, and too smooth; it wants that animation, that glow, that indescribable something which, even now that I see it, wholly surpasses all my powers of expression" (Burney 80). His remarks underscore the contrast between the deadness of conventional beauty and the vivacity of spontaneous, authentic beauty.

[6] Judith Newton comments that "in the myth of Evelina's childhood, she has grown up 'naturally' at Berry Hill, and has been nurtured in this complete rural isolation by a foster father who is a clergyman and an isolate, a man totally uncorrupted by the privileges of sex and rank" (43). Newton thus associates Evelina with the eighteenth-century literary tradtion that places moral superiority in the countryside, in a life of rural retirement aloof from the corrupting influences of the city.

[7] Shaftesbury described the moral sense as "of a kind which relates not in the least to any private interest of the creature, nor has for its object any self-good or advantage of the private system" (Characteristics I: 296). Evelina acts without regard for her "private interest," especially in relation to Macartney.

social forms are observed even when she must suffer. This aspect of her desire generates narrative by often prolonging Evelina's discomfort, by giving her something to write about to Villars. For example, When she first meets the cantankerous Madame Duval and discovers their relation, her "only hope, is to get safe to Berry Hill" where she "shall have nothing else to fear" (54) and nothing else to write as well. Narrative is prolonged because of Evelina's sense of propriety, the sense that she owes the other the respect of basic social protocol: "...but what could be done," she writes, "it would have been indecent for me to have quitted town the very instant I discovered that Madame Duval was in it" (54). The same impulse toward propriety prolongs an important episode with Sir Clement Willoughby as well. When her carriage breaks down after a visit to Ranelagh, leaving Evelina and her party stranded in the rain, Willoughby plays the role of her protector. Uncomfortable with his attentions, wishing as well that he would offer service to the others, she "was very mad that he would not go"; but, she says, "my acquaintance with him was so very slight, I did not think proper to urge him contrary to his inclination" (64). The wished for return to Berry Hill in the episode with Duval would be the end of narrative; her desire to do the right thing keeps her distanced from Villars and keeps her writing.

Chapter one of this dissertation argued that narrative consists of two kinds of discourse, a discourse of desire or metonymy and discourse of law or form, which from the beginning until the end are in tension with one another. The former moves the plot forward through time by representing change, variety, difference; the latter creates a sense of pattern or necessity through repetition of the same or similar. The tension between the

discourses of desire and the law in Evelina is best illustrated by Evelina's ongoing and surreptitious encounters with the exploitive aristocrat, Sir Clement Willoughby. The locations and occasions of their meetings vary, for example: a ridotto, Ranelagh, the opera, Marybone. The language used to describe them, however, is always the same: he treats her with "uncommon freedom" (201); he "obtrudes" (330) upon her; she is "stopped" (340) and "interrupted by" (342) him. Willoughby assumes exclusive rights to her when they are in company: Evelina says, "he takes great care to prevent my being spoken to by anybody but himself" (330). The settings of their meetings are usually public, egalitarian spaces, but the language that describes Willoughby's attitude and actions depicts an assumption of control or possession. After the carriage breaks down at Ranelagh, for example, Evelina reports that "he begged permission to assist me, but did not wait to have it granted, but carried me in his arms back to Ranelagh" (63). Through their relationship Burney starkly presents the conflict which the narrative must mediate, that between an inclination to do good and to please on the one hand, and an unwarranted fantasy of control or possession over that desire on the other.

The same unwarranted assumption of proprietorship over Evelina displayed by Willoughby can be seen in the other characters' relationships with her as well. Madame Duval is a source of anxiety for Evelina because she is rude and pretentious. She also, however, has designs for appropriating Evelina's value as marriageable property for her own purposes. Duval has access to the legal discourse which recognizes Evelina as belonging to her rather than to Villars. Duval, in fact, appeals to the machinery of jurisprudence twice in the novel: once when she threatens legal action against Captain

Mirvan and Willoughby for ambushing her carriage, and again when she plans to execute a lawsuit against against Belmont that would force him to claim Evelina as his child. This latter plan is formed in the name of pure self-interest. Duval knows well the value of a beautiful young woman endowed with fortune on the marriage market; to her Evelina is property and she sees herself as proprietor. When Duval reveals her plan to her grand-daughter, Evelina reports to Villars that her grandmother's "intention was to prove my birthright, and to claim by law, the inheritance of my real family" (121). Duval will then remove Evelina from Villars' care and broker the girl and her fortune on the marriage market. Evelina writes: "She then expatiated very warmly upon the advantages I should reap from her plan; talked in a high style of my future grandeur; assured me how heartily I should despise almost everybody and everything I had hitherto seen," and "predicted my marrying into some family of the first rank of the kingdom" (121). Duval, like Belmont and Willoughby whom she detests, is attuned to and ready to exploit Evelina for her own advantage.

The Branghtons, the novel's only representation of the English "bourgeoisie," are also a manifestation of the narrative's fantasy of control or possession over the moral impulses exemplified by Evelina. This family is portrayed as irredeemably crude and insufferably vulgar. This vulgarity is evoked in large part by Mr. Branghton's stereotypically bourgeois fetishization of money. When his daughters are embarrassed at his ignorance of admission prices for the opera, he responds to them, "The price of stocks is enough for me to see after" (90). This kind of instrumental practicality extends to the Branghton's relationships with other people, especially Evelina. Young Branghton, for

example, uses Evelina's name as a kind of currency to avail the family of Lord Orville's carriage (247-8). Finally, they are suspected of being in league with Duval to procure a part of Evelina's fortune: "The views of the Branghtons," writes Villars to Lady Howard, "in suggesting this scheme, are obviously interested; they hope to settle her own upon themselves" (129).

The narrative proceeds, then, by repeatedly interrupting the progress of Evelina's natural tendency toward virtue with formal agencies that would overwhelm her desire. Evelina is not, of course, completely and consistently "disinterested"; she is afterall a round, not a flat character. She acts on several occasions from an interested rather than a disinterested motive. At Marybone, for example, she finds herself accidently fallen into the company of prostitutes. To avoid being seen and judged in such company by Lord Orville, she actively seeks the protection of Madame Duval, a strategy she normally would not pursue. But, her moral sense takes on a more consistent quality after she meets and rescues Mr. Macartney. It is also after this encounter that her desire to do the right thing begins to conflict most sharply with what is clearly in her own self-interest.

IV

The scene in which Evelina finds Macartney with the pistols, apparently, from her perspective, about to commit suicide, is the novel's most powerful example of this moral sense in action because it emphasizes how its motives are spontaneous and disinterested rather than calculating and self-interested. The scene is an example of a moral act which

is "less chosen than caused naturally."[8] In true affective and sentimental style, Evelina is attracted to Macartney's down and out condition when she first meets him: "Surely this young man must be involved in misfortunes of no common nature," she writes to Villars after reading one of Macartney's poems. Later, she comes upon him in the Branghton's shop where he is brandishing a pair of pistols. Evelina assumes the put-upon MacCartney is about to commit suicide (actually, he is planning a robbery), and Evelina's description of what happens next is suggestive of the irresistible and perhaps uncontrollable power of a disinterested moral virtue. "Wild with fright," she says, "and scarce knowing what I did, I caught, almost involuntarily, hold of both his arms, and exclaimed, 'O Sir! Have mercy on yourself'" (182). She then "seized the pistols" and removed them from the room (183). Her actions are further shown to be disinterested if not completely involuntary in this episode when she leaves behind her purse for Macartney before departing (215).

Her entire course of action is enthusiastically condoned by Villars who tells her, "my Evelina!--you have but done your duty" (216). Villars' own sense of benevolence, in

---

[8] See Scott Paul Gordon, The Power of Passivity: Constructing Disinterestedness in Eighteenth-Century Discourse, unpublished doctoral dissertation
The quote is from Gordon's abstract. In his dissertation he explains that

> eighteenth-century writers founded a strategy to oppose the threat that "virtue" is an instrumental term, used merely to achieve a selfish end. They deployed a strategy of passivity that constructed crucial "springs of action" as unwilled, immediate, or necessary. Individuals respond passively to impressions that prompt them to act socially. Because this operation bypasses thought altogether, it could hardly involve calculation of one's interest. (136)

The analysis of the scene between Evelina and Macartney exemplifies the "strategy of passivity" that Gordon describes. Evelina's reaction to Macartney is "unwilled" and "immediate" despite the danger to herself.

fact, seems to get caught up in ecstatic sympathy with Evelina's:

> O my child, were my fortune equal to my confidence in thy benevolence, with what transport should I, through thy means, devote it to the relief of indigent virtue! yet let us not repine at the limitation of our power, for, while our bounty is proportioned to our ability, the difference of the greater or less donation, can weigh but little in the scale of justice. (216)

Although he says "the pistol scene made me shudder," though he was "terrified" to hear about her rescue of Macartney (216), he continues his encouragement of disinterested virtue, saying, "Be ever thus, my dearest Evelina, dauntless in the cause of distress! let no weak fears, no timid doubts, deter you from the exertion of your duty, according to the full sense of it that Nature has implanted in your mind" (217). Such duty, then, should not be impeded, not even by concerns of personal safety. In other words, Villars' sentiment knows no bounds, even those of prudent self-protection. Accepting Villars' uncritical enthusiasm for and faith in disinterested virtue will lead Evelina to a risky level of self-effacement. After the pistol episode Evelina's deferral of self-interest continues, for example, when she puts off Orville's growing interest in her in the name of other obligations: Orville wishes to know the nature of her attachment to Macartney, but Evelina refuses to indulge this information since she has promised the latter man she will keep their meetings confidential, and thus risks offending Orville and ending his advances. In doing so she risks a settled future.

More significant in this regard is Evelina's decision to put off answering Orville's proposal of marriage until she has met her father. When Orville asks her hand in

marriage, she is also just about to meet her father, Belmont, for the first time. Everything, really, is dependant on Evelina's ability to make the right decision at this juncture: marriage to Orville and thus her future security are guaranteed if she agrees to his proposal; her future is also secure should Belmont acknowledge her; should he not, however, then Evelina would lose the rights and status conferred by Belmont's name and fortune, and, possibly, the further solicitations of Orville. Uncertain as to how Belmont will receive her, she denies Orville a definite answer: "it would be highly improper," she tells him, "I should dispose of myself forever, so very near the time which must finally decide by whose authority I ought to be guided" (370). Evelina is aware of some autonomy in making this statement; like Crusoe she realizes the Lockeian desire to "dispose" of oneself as one sees fit. Yet this autonomy is quickly foreclosed by her sense of propriety, especially the unwritten rules governing women on the marriage market. It would not be absolutely improper for her to dispose of her self, as her conditional voice implies: she deems it improper only because social custom deems it improper; she subordinates her interest to the "prevailing wisdom" that a woman "cannot marry until a lawful patriarch gives her away" (Zonitch 37).[9]

Evelina's desire, once it leaves the confines of the affective household at Berry

---

[9] It is possible to read Evelina's deferral of Orville's proposal in another way, which supports the argument being made. Because Evelina says she cannot marry Orville until she has learned "by whose authority I ought to be guided," she can be seen as capitulating her interests (in marriage) to the duty Locke assigns to children of a "paternal power," the duty to give "Respect, Honour, Gratitude, Assistance, and Support" (339) to parents all their lives. Evelina, in other words, wishes to fulfill her obligations in the "family contract" before entering into new contractual arrangements in marriage--the proper thing to do in the Lockeian narrative of development from familial to political subject.

Hill, is--like the desire in Robinson Crusoe--in search of a new form or law to organize it; but, the ultimate form for organizing female desire in both Evelina and in eighteenth-century culture in general is marriage, and so the male and female plots of liberal desire will finally be very different. Elizabeth Brophy sums up the meaning of this reality as well as the plot structure of most novels that incorporate liberal desire as a component of their plots when she writes, "all children were supposed to bow to the better judgment of their elders and the authority of their parents, but men would eventually themselves assume authority while women would exchange the authority of parents for that of a husband" (42). Judith Newton reinforces the necessity of the novel's conclusion: "Evelina must marry. Ideologically, in literature as in life, there is no other 'happy ending'" (49). Marriage, says Brophy, was "not only the natural destiny of every eighteenth-century daughter, but also the single most important determinant of her future happiness" (95).

When she declines Orville's offer in the name of custom, therefore, disinterested virtue begins to look like folly. The reader of Evelina knows, for instance, that she is the victim of two generations of disastrous marriages. Villars had been guardian not only to Evelina but to her mother and grandfather as well, and we learn through him of the consequences of imprudent marriage matches. Evelina's grandfather entered into an "unhappy marriage...contrary to the advice and entreaties of all his friends" to Madame Duval who was at the time "a waiting girl at a tavern" (13-14). Evelina's mother, Caroline Evelyn, in order to escape a marriage to a cousin arranged by Madame Duval, "rashly" eloped with Belmont in a desperate act of self-assertion. When Belmont is

denied the fortune he expected from the match, he disavows the marriage; Caroline dies as a result soon after giving birth to Evelina. If family history is not enough, Mrs. Selwyn admonishes Evelina to realize self-interest, to accept Orville's offer as it stands, without the consent of her father: "I advise you," she says, "by all means to marry him directly; nothing can be more precarious than our success with Sir John; and the young men of this age are not to be trusted with too much time for deliberation, where their interests are concerned" (369).

The subsequent events of the novel, however, make it clear that such selfless decision-making, at least by women, will be rewarded: Evelina is reunited with her father and with his fortune, and she gets to marry an aristocrat. The examples of Evelina's mother and grandfather suggest that marriages which mix the classes or which go against the wishes of parents (even tyrannical ones like Madame Duval apparently) are doomed. A marriage to Orville in which she does not first pass through the father carries the curse of both these conditions. A marriage with Belmont's consent, however, guarantees that both Evelina and Orville are pedigreed aristocrats and that all parties concerned have condoned the match.

Orville on the other hand, as romantic an ideal as he is, had planned all along to protect his own interest by inquiring into Evelina's background (389). The novel seems to support such self-interest, at least as practiced by the male aristocracy. Julia Epstein notes, for instance, that there exists a "conjunction in Evelina between propriety and property" that "informs much of the plot" (116), and this conjunction creates one significant dimension to the reunion scene. By marrying him to a woman with a name,

Burney ensures that Orville--and the aristocratic order in general--is receiving a known quantity. It was a cultural assumption (and expectation) that the woman who was passed directly from father to husband was chaste, for example.[10] Women were not only considered a kind of property, but their sexual desire, if not contained, was feared to be a threat to the integrity of real property in a society where estate and wealth were transferred by patrilineal custom. Ruth Perry explains that "women's sexuality must be exercised in the services of family property rights...because a man's illegal offspring cannot inherit whereas a woman's can. Therefore the possible injury a wife can do her husband is much greater than the injury he can do her, if one values property and the lines of its transmission" (50). From this perspective, where the maintenance and transfer of property is considered, Evelina's selfless moral sense supports arbitrary aristocratic law.

Her desire also functions, however, as a counter-hegemonic discourse, contrasting with and supplanting aristocratic law. In Desire and Domestic Fiction, Nancy Armstrong argues that sometime during the late seventeenth and eighteenth century "sexual differences appear to have become much more important than economic differences in defining an individual's place in the world" (74). In addition to and to an extent replacing the "social contract," there was emerging at this time what Armstrong calls the "sexual contract." Where the old culture had made distinction among several economically and politically distinct ranks of hierarchical status, Armstrong finds "a culture divided into the respective domains of domestic woman and economic man" (60). Under the terms of the

---

[10] See Ruth Perry, Women, Letters, and the Novel (New York: AMS Press), 1980; 48-50 for a discussion of women's chastity and its relation to patrilineal property transfer.

sexual contract, one's gendered status as either domestic woman or economic man counted for more socially and politically than affiliation in any status or class group.

The sexual contract implied a division of labor between these two types of people which followed from the complementary types of desire accorded to each. Men's desire was "acquisitive," says Armstrong, while woman's was "altruistic" (89). The two forms of desire were to coexist in mutual support of one another in the modern middle-class household. Male acquisitive desire would be responsible for reproducing the material basis of existence by competing in the public sphere; woman's altruistic desire was responsible for reproducing the moral order of existence. Women, in other words, were responsible for domesticating "economic man": their desire would "transform man's acquisitive instincts to serve the general good" (89). The sexual contract was to be the new basis for a social order centered in the home; it was a willing exchange within the home of tendencies believed to be naturally characteristic of each of the sexes, an exchange that was going to be productive of general social good.[11]

---

[11] Armstrong says that "the gendering of human identity provided the metaphysical girders of modern culture," and that "the popular concepts of subjectivity and sensibility" defined in the sexual contract "resembled Locke's theory that human understanding developed through an exchange between the individual mind and the world of objects, an exchange that was mediated by language. But instead of 'soul'--Locke's word for what exists before the process of self-development begins--the essential self was commonly understood in terms of gender" (14). Gender was understood as essential or natural because it was easily constructed as prior to all other constituent categories of subjectivity.

On the relationship between the household and the larger society, Armstrong claims that "the sexual contract had so thoroughly reorganized sexual relations by the beginning of the nineteenth century that the principle of domestic duty could be extended, then, beyond the middle-class household to form the basis of general social policy" (90).

Armstrong claims that in the conduct books she studies, female altruistic desire was constructed as the antithesis to "what were supposed to be seen as the excesses of a decadent aristocracy" (73). This part of her thesis is most relevant to Evelina, for, while Evelina's desire does support conservative property relations, it also functions in important ways as an oppositional discourse in relation to abuses of the aristocratic symbolic order presented in the novel. Her disinterested moral virtue, for instance, contrasts sharply with Willoughby's self-interested pursuit of Evelina as sexual prey. Evelina, however, will stop short of unconditionally condoning the kind of altruistic desire of which Armstrong writes. The novel certainly genders such desire as appropriately feminine, but leaves it independent of physical sexual difference--males as well as females possess altruistic impulses in Evelina. Lord Orville is prized, for instance, for his feminine delicacy (261), and Villars, too, is feminized in this way. Through the character of Villars and his relation to Evelina, in fact, Burney's novel shows how such desire can itself turn as "self-indulgent," and as socially disruptive as the acquisitive instincts. Evelina offers a corrective to this problem by uniting Evelina's altruistic instincts with Lord Orville's. The pair are exemplars of benevolence; but, the trace of aristocratic discretion represented in Orville will temper the natural moral sense that Evelina developed at Berry Hill, making it less enthusiastic and therefore more socially useful than Villars'.

V

Peter Brooks says that narrative closure must provide a metaphor that is the "same but different" in relation to its beginning (27). Evelina does this. Her marriage to Lord

Orville has been characterized by Susan Fraiman as merely a transfer of her desire from one kindly but oppressive male to another;[12] but, there is more to it than that. Marriage in Evelina serves the ideological function of placing limits on the spontaneity of the innate moral sense represented in the novel's heroine; these limits will keep it from lapsing into mere self-indulgent pity or moral hypocrisy. Lord Orville, the embodiment of these limits, is an idealized version of the mid-eighteenth-century aristocratic male, and his idealized character is given a specific historical and ideological identity by Mrs. Selwyn. "There must have been some mistake in the birth of that young man," she observes, "he was, undoubtedly, designed for the last age; for, if you observed, he is really polite" (283). Barbara Zonitch notes that Burney's construction of Orville's character constitutes--as Selwyn's remarks imply--a nostalgic fantasy. "Orville," says Zonitch, "embodies those values that Burney deems necessary to counter the ubiquitous cruelty of modern life" (54). As a throwback to "the last age" he is certainly to be associated with "the benevolent gentleman landowner, surrounded by his contented tenants" who was "the moral locus of this ideal community" (Zonitch 18). This image of the aristocracy, popularized in the seventeenth-century country house poem, was no less a fantasy than Burney's Lord Orville; it is, however, where Burney locates the "justly established" (Astell 136) power which Mary Astell believes makes women's submission to men reasonable. The nostalgic fantasy of landed patriarchal benevolence will harness the

---

[12] Fraiman finds little difference between Villars and Orville, and sees the plot ending in the same circumstances with which it began. She says that Evelina circulates between "Villars and (his surrogate) Orville, so that even in this largest movement of her life, she is passed from one spurious redeemer to another" (42).

modern woman's moral sense in Evelina; marriage brings together the past with the present, the impulse to do good with the just and gentle restraint of both power and responsible benevolence.

But this benevolence could be mistaken for the same kind of sentimental excess associated with Villars' character. Orville, it must be acknowledged, is compared so closely to Villars that this charge seems reasonable. This is perhaps why Burney leaves intact as well a trace in Orville of the arbitrary habits of aristocratic law; the law in Evelina must be benevolent, but must also make distinctions to keep affective desire within useful limits. One way that Burney leaves a trace of aristocratic patriarchy's arbitrary power is by leaving Orville neutral in attitude toward the violence perpetrated on the two old women who are forced into a footrace by Merton and Coverley. His inclination to allow the abuse suggests that the restraint he brings to Evelina's moral sense has the power of personal discretion attached to it; in other words, it is to an extent arbitrary.

It can be argued as well that Belmont evokes the same kind of excessive sentimentalism; when he is reunited with Evelina he swoons, falls to his knees, and embraces her, for example. In this scene, too, Burney has left a trace of arbitrary privilege which counters the sentimental posturing. Before Evelina has ever seen her father she hears his voice, "The voice of a father--Oh dear and revered name!--which then, for the first time, struck my ears, affected me in a manner I cannot describe, though it was only employed to give orders to a servant" (371). In this "primal scene" Evelina's first experience of the father is his ordering of the servants, and so she and the reader are

reminded of patriarchal power before they are allowed to glimpse reformed patriarchal benevolence. The absence of this power for most of the narrative has made it possible for Evelina's moral sense to develop unfettered by pressure from arbitrary rule; its return will ensure that that same moral sense will be restrained from the self-indulgent excess that Villars represents.

The moral sense needs limits placed on it because, like its counterpart, material self-interest, it tends toward excess if left unchecked, and becomes destructive rather than productive of social good.[13] Willoughby's tenacious pursuit of Evelina is the novel's exemplar of blind acquisitiveness. His exclusion to the margins of the novel's final scene makes clear that such extremism has no place in Burney's ideal society. Villars, on the other hand, is the novel's voice of uncritical, sentimental benevolence. The novel seems to say that this kind of subjectivity is less offensive than acquisitiveness, but that it needs the accompaniment of a restraining law. Villars has, after all, failed as guardian to Evelina's mother and grandfather, suggesting that the sentimental subjectivity he evokes is impotent in the face of some social forces. Villars world view, too, is less resilient than the aristocratic morality it so prejudicially judges. Villars casts Belmont in the role of a gothic monster, justifying his own doting care of Evelina to Lady Howard by demonizing

---

[13] See section IV and the discussion of Nancy Armstrong's Desire and Domestic Fiction. Feminine altruism was to tame or "domesticate" the acquisitive instincts; Burney's novel shows the need for placing realistic limits on altruistic impulses as well. But this kind of desire was subject to its own brand of self-indulgence. John Andrew Bernstein writes that "the moral feeling...was by no means without a corrupting power of its own. The sweetness of benevolence, when unduly stressed, could easily lead to the enjoyment of mere solitary feeling remote from concrete obligation and even from society. If pure thought can be separated from action, so can moral emotion" (54-55).

Belmont:

> ...when I saw that her guileless and innocent soul fancied all the world to be pure and disinterested as herself...then did I flatter myself, that to follow my own inclination, and to secure her welfare, was the same thing; since to expose her to the snares and dangers inevitably encircling a house of which the master is dissipated and unprincipled, without the guidance of a mother, or any prudent and sensible female, seemed to me no less than suffering her to stumble into some dreadful pit, when the sun was in its meridian. (126)

When we meet Belmont, however, he has been all along a reformed man, caring diligently for a young woman he earnestly believes to be his daughter. Villars, of course, does not know what Belmont has been doing in the years since he abandoned Caroline, but Villars' over-sympathetic identification with his ward has made this change in Belmont's temperament impossible to imagine, suggesting a blindspot in the sentimental world view. What's more, Villars's blindness blocks the formation of community and natural family, for he would forbid the reunion between father and daughter. In contrast, Belmont's surprise reformation confirms the resilience of aristocratic morality, especially its ability to be moved by the ties of family. Should Evelina return to Villars without Lord Orville and the traces of rank and discretionary power he maintains, her desire is in danger of falling into error as has her guardian's. The contemporary criticisms of sentimental literature apply well to Villars. Janet Todd writes that critics of sentimentalism found no redeeming virtue in the "outpouring of sympathy" (140) encouraged by such characters (the reader should recall the quote from Villars, above, in

which he preaches unconditional benevolence). As England came to be perceived "more as the large stratified nation than as the small familial fellowship of Humean sentimentalism," the socially and politically concerned began to believe that "real virtue must consist in the disinterested concern for the welfare of society" (Todd 140). Later in the century, criticism of sentimentality by a reformer like Godwin "emphasizes duty that will be discovered not through feeling but through reason" (Todd 140). There is evidence in the text of Evelina that Burney believes the sentimental qualities of sympathy and benevolence may not be as powerful a way to bind together society's various strata as a more impersonal and abstract notion of duty. Mrs. Selwyn's relationship to Mrs. Beaumont is one example of the way duty is more powerful than feeling. Their relationship only exists because Mrs. Beaumont, an upper class socialite, owes Mrs. Selwyn a debt for once finding her an apartment. This debt unites different classes as would a formal contract. Selwyn admits that she is "not much flattered" by Beaumont's "civilities, as I owe them neither to attachment or gratitude, but solely to a desire of cancelling an obligation which she cannot brook being under, to one whose name is no where to be found on the Court Calendar" (284). But Selwyn admits finding some gratification in attending Mrs. Beaumont's (293), and so this relationship is, at least marginally, mutually beneficial. Despite the status disparity and insincerity that characterize their relationship, it cannot be dissolved until Mrs. Beaumont can "have a discharge in full of her debt to" Mrs. Selwyn (293).

Barbara Zonitch also says that "Burney envisions a new society that depends less on the sole criteria of prescribed status and more on the example of feminized and

modernized aristocrats and a set of codes--manners--that, if successfully practiced might mark one as a member of a 'new aristocracy'" (52-3). While undeniably true in part, there are two possible objections to a wholesale acceptance of this evaluation.

The one is that Burney herself once satirized in her journal the extremes to which persons could go in insisting on manners and propriety in daily relationships. An examination of this journal entry will tend to confirm that Burney wishes to place limits on the power of affect expressed through manners to bind people together. In the journal, dated Sept. 1774, Burney jests with company that she will "write a Treatise Upon Politeness for their edification" (283). This proposal became a "standard joke" among the Burney family (238), and Frances was called upon on occasions to discuss its contents as a way of amusing them. The journal shows that Burney's satire of such conduct manuals was aimed in part at a distinction she made between politeness and refinement. As she discusses what behaviors will and will not be allowed in her book of manners (she includes laughing, coughing, and perhaps even breathing), she satirizes the genre, saying "that whatever is natural, plain, or easy, is entirely banished from polite circles" (285). When the family friend Mr. Crisp asks, "And all is sentiment and delicacy, eh, Fannikin?" (285), she replies

> No sir, not so; sentiments and sensations were the last fashion; they are now done with; they were laughed out of use, just before laughing was abolished. the present ton is refinement; nothing is to be, that has been; all things are to new polished and highly finished. I shall explain this fully in my book. (285)

The satire suggests that Burney prefers "natural" manners--socially useful conduct--not slide into "refinement," and therefore become useless, even laughable. Following "fashion" is the culprit in this unfortunate progression, and so Burney's satire is perhaps aimed at those who practice an uncritical display of manners in public life.

A journal some eight years later (January 4, 1783) takes up this same theme, and discusses how what some perceive as politeness may actually be insulting to the object of the behavior. This entry praises the behavior of George Owen Cambridge, a man for whom Burney held a long romantic interest: "Who, indeed, of all my new acquaintances, has so well understood me," she asks, as Mr. Cambridge (299). While "the rest all talk of Evelina and Cecilia, and turn every other word into some compliment," Cambridge "is above affecting a ridiculous deference to which he feels I have no claim" (299). "If I met with more folks," she writes, "who would talk to me upon such rational terms...with how infinitely more ease and pleasure should I make one in those conversations" (299). In both journal entries Burney intuits a line across which manners become mannerisms, simple human respect becomes "ridiculous deference" and so hinders rather than facilitates the creation of human relationships.

This last journal entry suggests, too, that Burney was, in her personal life anyway, just as concerned about the use of manners to control women as she was concerned about the level of violence perpetrated against women in early modern society.[14] Manners can be hollow forms, as Lovel demonstrates in Evelina, and these forms can be used to

---

[14] See Barbara Zonitch, Familiar Violence. Zonitch believes that Burney constructs a society of manners as a symbolic gesture to stave off the encroaching violence of modernity, a violence which was especially aimed at women. See Zonitch's introduction.

exploit the innocent. It might now be argued that one reason for Captain Mirvan's continued presence in the novel, despite his boorishness and despite the marginalizing of other boorish characters like Willoughby and Duval, may be his lack of pretense: Mirvan is always exactly what he presents himself to be; he is not cultured but natural. A society of manners may be a good thing; it may make society less violent or at least more refined in its modes of aggression, but it carries the cost of a general admittance to what Chesterfield called "good company" (see chapter two), and this is the second reason that Zonitch's thesis may have its limitations. Since manners--and mannerisms--are easily feigned, this kind of egalitarianism runs the risk, as Chesterfield points out, of allowing the unworthy to mix with the worthy, making the need for acute individual judgment all the more important. Villars' unbridled enthusiasm for benevolence can be a dangerous thing in such a world, for it may aid and benefit those who do not deserve to belong. The natural impulse to goodness needs a firmer expression of control than adherence to manners provides; the feminized Lord Orville and the reformed Belmont retain the kind of arbitrary, discretionary power that will express this control.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study has been to examine the mediating function that so many recent critics say defines part of the novel's place in culture. The motivating assumption of this study has been that the eighteenth century experienced a crisis or at least a confusion about how to represent and how to manage a social world in which promoting both self-interest and social welfare was a primary goal. England's development from a feudal to a mercantile to a capitalist economy required the validation of an energetic, subjective desire that would overturn conservative structures of thought, feeling, and action, and consecrate in their place the liberal, progressive agenda of social transformation. Yet, this very power which was so necessary to social and economic development threatened the social order by creating new kinds of economic crises, and, most of all, new sites of social unrest. Alongside the rising individual entrepreneur who benefitted from the new rules of economic engagement comes the mob who demands economic justice. The novels examined here function to mediate between these two competing ideals of moral obligation in the eighteenth century, the one premised on the self-interested desire required for growth and the other on the need for maintaining social control. Each of the novels in this dissertation narrates a way through the contradictions created by a society trying to serve both these interests.

The desire that accompanied any notion of self-interest and the selfless moral imperatives which were required to produce wider social good find their common ground

in the pages of the novels presented in this dissertation. Defoe's Robinson Crusoe, for example, brings together desire and the moral law within the contract. The contract in Robinson Crusoe guarantees that an individual's almost unlimited opportunities and lust for appropriation can be harnessed to serve social needs. Sterne's Tristram Shandy narrates a process whereby the unwavering commitment to fulfilling a moral imperative unexpectedly liberates a powerful and socially useful source of desire. Burney's Evelina shows that the altruistic desire associated with the "moral sense" (one of the century's favorite fictions for encouraging continued social and moral solidarity in an increasingly self-interested world) could be made more useful if tempered with the right kind of arbitrary power.

These narrative mediations, however, are recognizable to us as ideological solutions to impossible contradictions. The mediations these novels perform are, in other words, fictions in a profound sense. It is hoped that the methodology chosen to investigate these novels has helped to disclose this condition. When critically applied, as this study has tried to do, Schiller's dialectic expresses a mediation between indespensible but contradictory cultural forces that represent the desire associated with self-interest and the law associated with the moral imperatives of social welfare. The kind of mediation expressed by Schiller's idea of "play" allows the critic to be sensitive to the aesthetic choices made to resolve conflict and produce narrative closure. Since making and enacting aesthetic choices implies a shaping of the narrative's raw material (the "reality" it imitates) into an artificial or arbitrary form, the kind of aesthetic mediations investigated here are intended to disclose what each narrative cannot include (or must

exclude) in order to appear "whole" or "finished."

As mentioned in the preface to this dissertation, narrative closure always comes at the expense of an "omission" (Miller 76): "Every discourse," says D. A. Miller, "is uttered against a background of all those things that it chooses, for one reason or another, not to say" (4). Robinson Crusoe, for example, urges the reader to accept contractual relations as the best and most enduring form of social solidarity, as a form of the law that optimizes both personal aggrandizement and the fulfillment of social responsibility. It excludes, or "chooses, for one reason or another," not to raise the spectre of the damaging effects of competition and alienation that follow from contractual relations. The narrative tensions raised by these potentially narratable yet un-narrated conflicts are either repressed into an absent plot, or are shunted off onto the scenes of antagonism between Crusoe's island community and the pre-political, faceless mass of "savages."

Tristram Shandy, as this dissertation reads it, promises to leave nothing out, to reduce the omissions required of aesthetic mediation to a zero degree. But the moral imperative assumed by Tristram, his promise to tell everything, unexpectedly leads to a transvaluation of the law into desire. The appearance in the text of an irrepressible desire, unintended though it is by its narrator, turns out to have a significant social and political consequence: it breaks through the rigid boundaries of rationalist-empiricist thought, and liberates new and surprising sources of knowledge. This text, which Tristram promises us will be so singular in its intent, is in fact radically plural. The text, however, cannot or does not tell us how its transvaluation of law into desire works; Tristram cannot say (because he does not know) how his absolute commitment to duty turns itself inside-out

and shows itself as desire. The mechanism of this transvaluation is, apparently, un-narratable and can only be experienced as a by-product of the narration itself.

Burney's Evelina narrates the development and eventual containment of an altruistic desire. The text "argues," in effect, that the impulse to do social good, like the impulse to aggrandize material self-interest, needs limits set to it to be most useful. Burney fashions these limits from a nostalgic image of feudal, aristocratic culture whose arbitrary but gentle restraint will prevent the moral sense from lapsing into self-indulgent sentimentalism. Her narrative, however, is incapable of acknowledging the gendered basis of its own position: it may be socially useful to restrain the moral sense, but since Evelina equates the moral sense with feminine desire and its restraint with the male law, it is also arguing for the subjection of feminine desire to patriarchal control.

It is hoped, then, that this study has been useful in several ways. First, this study has intended to reinforce and expand the understanding of the novel as a mediating genre. Second, this study sought to expose this mediating function as an aesthetically (as opposed, for example, to a rationally) organized activity. Finally, then, the goal of the dissertation has been to disclose how the novel produces ideology by representing a world of contingency and incompleteness as a necessary and finished aestheticized product. In doing these things it is hoped that the dissertation has revealed what must have been some of the eighteenth century's preoccupations (whether conscious or unconscious) with the problems of promoting social development and at the same time maintaining social order.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Appleby, Joyce. "Ideology and Theory: The Tension Between Political and Economic Liberalism in Seventeenth-Century England," in American Historical Review 1976 81(3): 499-515.

Armstrong, Nancy. Desire and Domestic Fiction. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Austen, Jane. Northanger Abbey. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1956.

Backshieder, Paula R. Daniel Defoe. Lexington, Ky.: University of Kentucky Press, 1986.

Bate, W. J. and Albrecht Strauss (eds.) The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson. New Haven: Yale University Press; 1969.

Bell, Michael. The Sentiment of Reality: Truth of Feeling in the European Novel. London: George Allen & Unwin; 1983.

Bernstein, John Andrew. Shaftesbury, Rousseau, and Kant. Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1980.

Boheemen, Christine van. The Novel as Family Romance. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987.

Brown, Laura. The Ends of Empire: Women and Ideology in Eighteenth-Century Literature. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993.

Brooks, Peter. Reading for the Plot. Harvard University Press; 1984.

Brophy, Elizabeth. Women's Lives and the Eighteenth-Century Novel Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1991.

Burney, Frances. Evelina. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Chappell, V. C. (ed). The Philosophy of David Hume. New York: Random House; 1963.

Cutting-Gray, Joanne. "Writing Innocence: Fanny Burney's Evelina, in Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature 1990 Spring, 9:1 43-57.

Damrosch, Leo. God's Plot, Man's Stories University of Chicago Press, 1985.

----- (ed.) Modern Essays on Eighteenth-Century Literature. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Davis, Lennard. Factual Fictions.

Defoe, Daniel. Robinson Crusoe. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983.

Dobree, Bonamy (ed). The Letters of Phillip Dormer Stanhope, Fourth Earl of Chesterfield. New York: Viking Press, 1932.

Doody, Margaret. Frances Burney: The Life in the Works. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988.

Eagleton, Terry. The Ideology of the Aesthetic. Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1990.

Epstein, Julia. The Iron Pen. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989.

Ehrmann, Jacques. "Homo Ludens Revisited," in Yale French Studies, 1968, 41 31-57.

Fielding, Henry. Tom Jones. New York: Washington Square Press, 1964.

Filmer, Robert. Anarchy of a Limited or Mixed Monarchy in Patriarcha and other Writings, P. Laslett ed. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1949.

----- Patriarcha in Patriarcha and other Writings, P. Laslett ed. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1949.

Flanders, Austin W. Structures of Experience. University of South Carolina Press; 1984.

Fluchere, Henri. Laurence Sterne. London: Oxford Press; 1961.

Fraiman, Susan. Unbecoming Women. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

Gobetti, Daniela. Private and Public. London: Routledge, 1992.

Golby, J. M. and A. W. Purdue. The Civilisation of the Crowd. London: Batsford, 1984.

Gordon, Scott Paul. The Power of Passivity. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation,

Gysin, Fritz. Model as Motif in Tristram Shandy. Bern, Switzerland: Franke-Verlag-Berne; 1983.

Holmes, Geoffrey. Augustan England. London: George, Allen, and Unwin, 1982.

Holtz, William V. Image and Immortality. Providence: Brown University Press; 1970.

Howes, Alan B. Sterne: The Critical Heritage. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974.

Huizinga, Johan. Homo Ludens. New York: J & J Harper Editions, 1970.

Hunter, Paul. Reluctant Pilgrim. Baltimore: Johns-Hopkins Press, 1966.

---- "Clocks, Calendars, and Names: The Troubles of Tristram and the Aesthetics of Uncertainty" in Rhetorics of Order/Ordering Rhetorics in English Neoclassical Literature. Douglas Canfield, ed. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1989.

Hutcheon, Linda. Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox. New York and London: Methuen; 1984.

Kay, Carol. Political Constructions. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988.

Kowaleski-Wallace, Beth. "A Night at the Opera: Body, Class, and Art in Evelina and Frances Burney's Early Diaries, in History, Gender, and Eighteenth-Century Literature, Beth Fowkes-Tobin ed. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994. 141-59.

Kramnick, Isaac. Bolingbroke and his Circle. Cambridge Press, 1968.

Lamb, Jonathan. Sterne's Fiction and the Double Principle. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

----- "Sterne's System of Imitation." Modern Language Review 76:4 (1981) 794- 810.

Lanham, Richard. The Games of Pleasure. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973.

Lukacs, Georg. Theory of the Novel. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1971.

McKeon, Michael. The Origins of the English Novel. Baltimore: Johns-Hopkins University Press, 1987.

Mendilow, A. A. Time and the Novel. London: Peter Neville; 1952.

Miller, D. A. Narrative and Its Discontents. Princeton University Press; 1981.

Mullan, John. Sentiment and Sociability. Oxford: Clarendon Press; 1988.

Newton, Judith Lowder. Women, Power, and Subversion. Athens: U. of Georgia Press, 1981.

Novak, Maximillian. "Robinson Crusoe and Economic Utopia." Kenyon Review 25(1963): 476-89.

Perry, Ruth. Women, Letters, and the Novel. New York: AMS Press, 1980.

Richardson, Samuel. Clarissa. London: Chapman and Hall, 1902.

Scheuermann, Mona. Social Protest in the Eighteenth-Century Novel. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1985.

Schiller, Friedrich. Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man, trans. Reginald Snell. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954.

Scholes, Robert. Approaches to the Novel. San Francisco: Chandler Publishing, 1961.

----- The Nature of Narrative. New York: Oxford University Press, 1966.

Spacks, Patricia. Desire and Truth. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; 1990.

----- Imagining a Self: Autobiography and Narrative in Eighteenth-Century England. Harvard Press, 1976.

Starr, G. A. Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography. Princeton University Press, 1965.

Stedmond, John M. The Comic Art of Laurence Sterne. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967.

Sterne, Laurence. Tristram Shandy in The Folrida Edition of the Works of Laurence Sterne, Melvin and Joan New, eds. Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1978.

Stone, Lawrence. Family, Sex, and Marriage in England 1500-1800. New York: Harper and Row.1977.

Straub, Kristina. Divided Fictions: Fanny Burney and Feminine Strategy. Lexington, University of Kentucky Press. 1987.

Sychrava, Juliet. From Schiller to Derrida. Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Watt, Ian. Rise of the Novel. Berkeley: University of California Press; 1957.

Wilson, R. Rawdon. In Palamede's Shadow. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1990.

Zonitch, Barbara. Familiar Violence: Gender and Social Upheavel in the Novels of Frances Burney. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997.

VITA

Kenneth Michael Brothers was born in Louisville, Kentucky on August 2, 1959. He attended St. Lawrence Elementary School, graduating in 1973, and Bishop David High School, graduating in 1977. He entered the University of Kentucky in 1979 where he graduated with honors, earning a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Communications in 1984. From 1984 to 1987 he worked as a television production assistant for Telecable of Lexington Local Origination Studios. He began work on his Master of Arts Degree in English at the University of Louisville in 1988, and completed that degree in 1992. The title of his master's thesis was Poetry and the Commodification of Discourse in the Age of Sensibility. While at the University of Louisville he held a teaching assistantship, teaching freshmen composition and sophomore level writing courses. In August of 1992 he was awarded a graduate teaching associateship at the University of Tennessee, and entered the doctoral program in English there. While at the University of Tennessee he taught a variety of courses including freshman composition, British Literature I, American Literature I and II, and Introduction to Poetry. The title of his doctoral dissertation is "Where the Rule Prescribes Not": Duty and Narrative Mediation in the Eighteenth-Century British Novel. The doctoral degree was received in December, 1998. He is presently an instructor at the University of Tennessee.