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“This new species of affliction”:
Self-Destruction and the Eighteenth-Century Ethic of Self-Improvement

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in English

by

John Nieman

Dissertation Committee:
Professor Jayne Lewis, Chair
Professor Emeritus Robert Folkenflik
Professor Ann Van Sant

2015

DEDICATION

To

my family and friends

in recognition of their worth

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CURRICULUM VITAE

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

“This new species of affliction”:

Self-Destruction and the Eighteenth-Century Ethic of Self-Improvement

By

John Nieman

Doctor of Philosophy in English Literature

University of California, Irvine, 2015

Professor Jayne Lewis, Chair

This dissertation tests the eighteenth century’s narrative of individual agency as the source of modern personal autonomy, and argues that there is a subtle but problematic conflation between agency and autonomy; rather than assume increased personal agency guarantees a corresponding surge in the experience of autonomy, I suggest that autonomy is ultimately eroded by the modern self’s dependence on social identities that must be continuously maintained, objectified, and circulated as forms of social currency. My approach is founded upon an extensive examination of nonfiction (puritan autobiographies, science writing, essays, etc.) married to close readings of eighteenth-century fictional texts by Defoe, Lennox, Johnson, and others. This nonfictional foundation provides a historical record of the individuated enterprise of self-production, the true genesis of the self-help industry, and the fiction serves as the experimental testing ground that reveals the limits and hazards of this quintessentially modern enterprise. The primary insight of this dissertation is the counter-intuitive revelation that modern selfhood is needful of comic perception to transform exertions of agency squandered within

social institutions into exercises of improvisation that buoy the individual rather than burden it. My first chapter focuses on recovering the neglected comic subtext of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, and by including analysis of Puritan autobiographies, I demonstrate that this form which is produced in the novel can be re-read through its comic elements to reveal the limiting nature of the process of self-production inaugurated by Puritan nonfiction. Lennox's *The Female Quixote* and Johnson's *Rasselas* anchor the next two chapters, and I chose two fictions not usually associated with discourse on the 'self' because of their unique capacity to complement the first chapter by showing first how any model of 'self' is inherently social and subsequently what destructive political consequences are catalyzed by western models of self-formation and self-improvement. Together these three fictions form a demonstration of how the eighteenth-century didactic impulse is transformed via the novel from a textual operation meant to produce discrete moral and social imperatives that would tend to produce uniform social self products into a more idiosyncratic cultural program that has persisted into the twenty-first century.

INTRODUCTION

“This new species of affliction”:

Self-Destruction and the Eighteenth-Century Ethic of Self-Improvement

I know not what to call this, nor will I urge but that it is a secret over-ruling decree that hurries us on to be the instruments of our own destruction, even tho’ it be before us, and that we rush upon it with our eyes open.

~ Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)

Why so, Sir, replied *Arabella*, since it is not an indiscreet Curiosity which prompts me to a Desire of hearing the Histories Mr. *Tinsel* has promis’d to entertain me with; but rather a Hope of hearing something which may at once improve and delight me; something which may excite my Admiration, engage my Esteem, or influence my Practice.

~Charlotte Lennox, *The Female Quixote* (1752)

How then, when examining eighteenth-century fictional worlds and the coterminous cultural shifts they report on, can we unravel the knot that entangles agency and autonomy? In the context of *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia* (1759), “this new species of affliction” is a phrase used to describe the malaise of the Prince as he attempts to articulate his misery and distill its cause to an old instructor who is anxious to understand his predicament and remedy it. This instructor pursues the Prince into his self-imposed isolation, hoping to lighten his mental burdens, but the Prince is adamant that his misery will not be alleviated by company or insight. His own formulations of his unfortunate state are hardly insightful; clumsy, redundant, and tautological phrases capture the futility of both the condition and any attempts to alter it. The Prince “[flies] from pleasure because pleasure has ceased to please,” and surmises

that he is “lonely because [he is] miserable” (Johnson 12). The conspicuous failure of language here suggests quite a predicament indeed, one that not only resists active interventions, here led by the elder instructor who tries to gently herd the Prince back into the social fold of the Happy Valley, but also the intervention of language itself as a medium for this literary figure to effectively articulate a defining facet of eighteenth-century experience that is of course a timeless dilemma: the hapless and hopeless search for happiness. The didactic bent of the fiction and nonfiction of this period reflects a dominant feature of a print culture that presupposes the ability of individuals to effectively engage in self-improvement, and through such improvement capture for the individual what had become a collective fixation: happiness.

Pushing haplessness and hopelessness aside, the following dissertation presents an account of how the contradictory constitution of the modern self was made through fiction and how, despite the oft repeated eighteenth-century refrain for gracious readers to learn and improve, a repressed cultural force of self-destruction resists such improvement and ultimately creates a space of autonomy outside the crowded realm of material self-interest. The methodological approach of this project is historical, formal, and theoretical; I first examine a record of para-literary Puritan nonfiction that, despite the heterogeneity of the Puritan program, serves as a material artifact of nonfictional yet literary self-production that migrates into the upstart form of the novel. In “an age which ordered consciousness and its every representation along narrative lines,” this flexible and mutable genre fractures these narrative lines such that, even in the presence of ostensibly complete stories being told about the spiritual and social rehabilitation of the self, other stories emerge that undermine hegemonic accounts of self, ultimately revealing what we call the self as its own social fiction (Bender 6).

Using Mikhail Bakhtin to first establish how the novel form enables the dismantling of closed readings of the self as fully formed and impenetrable, I subsequently track psychological and even biological mechanisms that govern the social collision amongst competing accounts of legitimate selfhood. Michael Graziano has pioneered a theory of social consciousness based on a neuro-scientific model of consciousness that befits the elastic form of the novel genre, one that not only elevates the “I” in the eighteenth century, but demonstrates how that entity is determined by the social world from without and from within by a brain that houses a world and not just a self. Mapping shame as the central psychological experience of the self in the midst of the social friction caused by the collision of competing cultural communities, I finally turn outward with a Freudian reading of private wishes for happiness as precursors to political destruction. The psychoanalytic vocabulary is revelatory for a project that tracks a material model of self-production from a historical Puritan record into fictional spaces that both recreate and dismantle this model using secular language. Harvard theologian Krister Stendahl argues that Augustine’s *Confessions* (398) created a western introspective plague that enshrines the self at the center of modern western experience, and he suggests that the institution of the self, created within a religious context, remains unchanged and reaches its secular zenith in Freud’s work. Using Freud to theorize the final movement of the self into the political sphere crucially links the initial formulation of self drawn from the Puritan record to later secular incarnations of the same model.

I have chosen *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), *The Female Quixote* (1752), and Johnson’s *Rasselas* (1759) as the fictions that will anchor the following chapters because together they form a demonstration of how the eighteenth-century didactic impulse is ultimately transformed via the novel from a textual operation meant to produce discrete moral and social imperatives

that would tend to produce uniform social self products into a more idiosyncratic cultural program. This modernized program masquerades as proto-self-help and is loosed from institutionally determined models. In this space, however narrow or expansive, between traditional inelastic didacticism and burgeoning proto-self-help that can mimic and undermine this tradition, self-destruction unmakes the self at the very site of its making. My intervention in the following pages situates this process of unmaking as one that subverts social imperatives and tends to produce an autonomy that is made impossible in the midst of the making of the modern self.

“The self” has functioned for some time in eighteenth-century criticism as a preoccupation that foregrounds tension between self-definition and submission to social forms of authority. In *The Autobiographical Subject*, Felicity Nussbaum charts and follows such tension through the century, writing that “the self is an ideological construct that is recruited into place within specific historical formations rather than always present as an eternal truth”; not only then is the self container for ideology and formed by the historical moment, but Nussbaum points out the power of the individual to contest the authority of both through writing the self, suggesting that “public and private self writing, for men and for women, is part of the conquest over meaning and the contest over the power to name the real” (Nussbaum xxi). David Marshall has also explored how the genre of autobiography is one that projects the self and so can serve as a form that ultimately creates and protects it. My intervention, which combines nonfictional autobiographical acts with acts of fiction that cooperate with and antagonize contemporary conventions for writing the self, charts the loss of autonomy that inevitably attends the conquest over meaning as the power to name the real remains a textual act predicated on definition and limitation. This intervention enshrines doubt rather than faith in the process of self writing as a

project that protects and empowers the self, and demonstrates how such doubt illuminates eighteenth-century literary mechanisms that dismantle the textual self and expose it as its own fiction. Nussbaum's provocative formulation of autobiography as a "technology of the middle-class self" implies faith in the agency of the individual to manipulate this genre as a productive tool for self-construction; this project suggests the self may also be manipulated by self writing back into a manufactured social object rather than an autonomous social subject.

In order to more clearly elucidate this tension constituted by the tendency for the subject to slip back into the world of objects while asserting and defining itself via textual autobiographical acts, I have intentionally avoided a myopic focus on the genre of autobiography and novels that produce the 'personal history' with self as an uncontested center of gravity. Rather than include a novel like *The History of Tom Jones* which rehearses the legitimation of the masculine identity in the social sphere as Tom's biological ties are revealed, I have opted for the inclusion of the violence against the feminine self that takes place in *The Female Quixote* as Arabella is subsumed into mainstream social convention and separated from the self she had constructed and identified with throughout. While Michael Mascuch and others have tied the emergence of the individual subject with autobiographical acts that tend to prop up the self as a positive and visible projection, I take particular interest in the confrontation between this projection and its doppelgänger which is projected by the social community surrounding it. Mascuch argues that "the agency of the self as author determines the agency of the self as character. By acting as author, the individualist self becomes its own telos: it constitutes a beginning and an end in itself" (Mascuch 22). Including a novel like *The Female Quixote* fruitfully challenges the notion of self as a christly alpha and omega force that possesses the agency to define and protect itself while embedded in a social sphere very much invested in the

conformity of that individual narrative to collectively sanctioned narratives of self. Thus this dissertation necessarily pivots away from autobiography and novels that predominately stage sustained autobiographical acts to more effectively track how a model of selfhood functions in social environs invested in and dependent on collective forms of self-definition.

The formal boundaries of the novel in the eighteenth century contain not only contradictory and competing ideological subtexts but also myriad methodological means for enacting and challenging them. The three novels in this study can hardly be exclusively categorized as either upholding or subverting mainstream ideology; nevertheless, when taking the formation and maintenance of self as a starting point in each, we find that each does some labor to clarify the possibilities and limits of the agency of self as author, and particularly they serve to rein in arguments that favor the positive force of the authorial self which can constitute its own beginning and end, as Mascuch suggests. The structural circularity that I highlight in *Crusoe* undermines the critical conviction in the theorization of this positive force. The social violence that Arabella must undergo to participate meaningfully in her immediate social world undermines the theorization of this positive force. The futility of Rasselas' also circular journey and the juxtaposition of his political power with a personal experience of powerlessness to secure a psychological state befitting his political estate undermines the theorization of this positive force. Others have positioned the novel as a literary form that enables the emergence of cultural institutions, both the idea of them and subsequently a tangible manifestation of them, as does John Bender in his account of the emergence of the 'penitentiary idea' and subsequently the penitentiary itself. While there is no single institution foregrounded in this project, the self is posited as its own peculiar eighteenth century institution, and the novel form is positioned as a protean species that aids its emergence and simultaneously hastens its destruction in this

historical moment. Homer Brown's work in *Institutions of the English Novel* has served to disrupt the sometimes too settled discourse on the rise of the novel in the period, and his criticism of Michael McKeon's claim that the novel genre had already reached an authoritative form by midcentury helps open the door to my own claims concerning the simultaneity of the self's making and unmaking, improvement and destruction. Overconfident claims concerning the emergence of the novel tend to produce concomitant confidence in the self as its center of gravity which stabilizes its formal shape, but I find that careful attention to how the novel deploys the self as a mechanism to aid narrative continuity also reveals the destruction of the integrity of that self which becomes its own social fiction through this genre's development.

One of the most important critical cornerstones that takes the self as a central object of inquiry in the eighteenth century is Dror Wahrman's account of the "Ancien Regime of Identity," which is defined in contrast to the modern inwardly oriented self and is marked by a mutable nature that depends upon contemporary social contexts that enabled the understanding of the self as protean. Wahrman classifies his own work as 'historical epistemology,' in contrast to Charles Taylor's which he labels 'historical philosophy,' and this dissertation might properly be situated as historical psychology, as I am primarily concerned with textual configurations of forms of perception and their capacity to challenge or uphold the social institutions that limit them. In at least one novel, comic perception enables separation through experimentation with a flexible identity that transforms continuously through Crusoe's linguistic experiments. One of Wahrman's key argumentative premises, that the eighteenth-century notion of mutable selfhood leads to an easy acceptance of the possibility of "literal transformation" by which an individual might experience the "transmigrating of identities" within their own person, is explored here through the psychological experience of shame in *The Female Quixote* (Wahrman 176). In no

way contesting Wahrman's conception of this mutability or the possibility of the transmigration of identity, I take such concepts as a given and argue that the mutable self changes in response to shame as the primary kinetic force behind the transmigration of identities. I also take account of this mutability and the political consequences that must attend it. Wahrman, like Deidre Lynch and Carol Kay, emphasizes not inward depth of self, but deferral to performance directed outward that tends to produce types rather than idiosyncratic individuals. Thus *Rasselas* takes on a psychological valence precisely because such types are explored (poet, hermit, scholar, etc.) by individuals interested in them as conduits to political power and not merely benign personal satisfaction. The primary preoccupation of this project then is not establishing eighteenth-century notions of selfhood- that has been thoroughly accomplished by Wahrman, Lynch, Kay, and others- but tracking the motion of mutable selfhood in action via self-directed self-testing, social rehabilitation that depends upon the reconstitution of a socially 'sick' self into a healthy form of self, and the social conquest that becomes a privatized goal when writing the self becomes a social contest for power to name the real.

I. Happiness: A Defining Cultural Context of the Eighteenth Century

In the context of this dissertation, "this new species of affliction" is a phrase I find most apt for capturing how eighteenth-century literary figures straddle an emerging and expanding fissure between the agency of the personal self and the autonomy supposedly made available by shifting social and political landscapes that furnish new opportunities for the individual to exercise the limits of the self in the social world. In the case of *Rasselas*, it is nearly impossible to forget that the ostensible focus is 'happiness' and that it recedes with the horizon as Rasselas and his band travel further and wider seeking a 'choice of life' that might lead to personal

satisfaction. It is easier to forget, however, that ‘happiness’ is also central to *The Strange and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* and *The Female Quixote*.

In all three, happiness is not a singular idea, but rather an epistemological project that creates considerable tension between the individual and social imperatives that bind happiness to practical conduct and individual material interests rather than the common good. Vivasvan Soni’s *Mourning Happiness* tracks how “the eighteenth century’s obsession with happiness” differed markedly from the happiness of antiquity which was more explicitly concerned with a politics of happiness and the public good, and argues that modern disenchantment begins in the eighteenth century even before the Victorian backlash against the increasingly privatized business of happiness that Soni identifies as leading to mental impoverishment (Soni 3). I will not be focused on differentiating eighteenth-century happiness from what preceded and followed it under the same name; as Soni points out, this word has masqueraded through time as a single thing but has in fact transformed continually. But this dissertation does help supply further explanation for why the eighteenth-century epistemological project of happiness was doomed to fail. Such a failure is caused by the tenuous psychological state created by new eighteenth-century spaces of social mobility that invite exertions of individual agency which ultimately compromise personal autonomy. As “it is not possible to be free, only to act freely,” the prevailing social imperative to manage material conditions in the service of self-interests reverses this formulation, as action becomes increasingly constricted with the hope it might lead to a static state of being (Soni 387). Crusoe’s father communicates very clear economic imperatives for reaching such a state in his extended disquisition on the search for happiness which analyzes various social conditions and their relationship to personal satisfaction. The station of life from which Crusoe flees is “what might be called the upper Station of Low Life,

which [his father] had found by long Experience was the best State in the World, the most suited to human Happiness” (Defoe 6). This knowledge, gained by the empirical patriarch who filters experience and examines social states and their relative utility for leading to that commodious state which might accommodate personal happiness, is violently discarded by Crusoe.

Such knowledge in *Crusoe* is typically reframed and recontextualized as it pertains to the productive management of material interests, and another vexed patriarch in *The Female Quixote* tries to redirect a child’s agency and herd them into a state of life conducive to achieving personal happiness. The Marquis conflates personal happiness with successfully managing the “Business of...Life,” reprimanding Arabella and reigning in her supposedly wayward agency which seems destined to compromise her interests: “since you seem to be so little acquainted with what will most conduce to your own Happiness, you must not think it strange, if I insist upon directing your Choice in the most important Business of your Life” (Lennox 42). The immediate business referred to here is Arabella’s marriage match, which of course concerns material interests that include both strictly economic and less tangible but still materially determined benefits. This latter category includes metrics such as reputation and family name which would be connected to explicitly economic potential and the intangible worth associated with becoming a socially valuable self through the marriage match. The antithesis of such worldly concerns lies in Arabella’s reliance on romances that contain an imagined social community which has contrary metrics for measuring established values. Her attachment (and even dependency which I explore in Chapter 2) to these values are framed as the source and font of her emotional life; it is her “romantic turn” that, by establishing “pictures of life” which dictate “all her notions and expectations,” ultimately “[causes] all the Happiness and Miseries of her Life” (Lennox 7). In much the same way that Crusoe plays “the fool to [his] own interest”

by spurning the business of life laid out for him by familial and social ties, so does Arabella reject socially acceptable means for securing personal value by adhering to social referents which mark her alternately as silly, absurd, and even mad (Defoe 36).

This “new species of affliction” I imagine is neatly conceptualized by the tension between the mutually exclusive categories represented here by the ‘business of life,’ which connotes a social market of resources and meaning on the one hand, and the subjective and autonomous sense of personal satisfaction represented by ‘happiness’ on the other. In the following chapters, ‘happiness’ itself is not investigated directly as an object of argumentative interest per se, but as a prefatory gesture it is crucial to bear in mind the significance this enduring trope of personal satisfaction plays in catalyzing Crusoe’s departure from ‘the world,’ Rasselas’ entrance into the world, and the friction that Arabella creates within her world as the values of her imagined community conflict with those belonging to the social actors in her immediate environment. ‘Happiness’ is then a central context of how this project accounts for eighteenth-century fictional and nonfictional texts concerned with representations of self that might embody the highest potential of the individual in the modern world. But the species of affliction I refer to should not be conceived of as unhappiness. Rather, this species is the tenuous psychological state created by new eighteenth-century spaces of social mobility that invite exertions of individual agency which ultimately compromise personal autonomy. I will leave aside direct questions of happiness in favor of more fruitful inquiries into the fictional spaces that test models of self configuration. These are teamed with nonfictional writing that establishes baseline historical precedents for how eighteenth-century selves connected textual production with self formation. Arabella’s sheer panic at the Marquis’ threat to burn her books is not the hysteria of a romantically deluded individual who confuses pages with people; it is a rich textual

moment that expresses a profound cultural sensitivity to the connection between print and the social person.

II. The Para-literary Foundation of Puritan Nonfiction: The Novel Form and Self Formation

In the first chapter, I examine how *Crusoe* serves as a fictional challenge that tests the precedents established in a record of nonfictional Puritan narratives that constitute a foundation for how the social self in the eighteenth-century is connected to textual narratives and the operations designed to stabilize those narratives. John Richetti pitches the power of the individual against that tradition of "spiritual autobiography out of which Defoe fashions his narratives" and which serves as an "institution[n] that work[s] to defuse the potentially disturbing individuality of his narrators" (Richetti 56). While Richetti locates such disturbing potential in the individual's ability to exert "strategic and tactical manipulations" that bend the social world in service of the self's interests, alternately this dissertation examines precisely how such manipulations serve to limit self-autonomy and accidentally (re)produce the self as an object in a social marketplace of meaning and identity (Richetti 71). I argue that the self's participation in social networks of resources and meaning is a process by which the self abdicates autonomy and reinforces a particular process of material self-production. This process originates in the Puritan record which establishes both habits of writing and habits of mind, as Hunter calls them in *The Reluctant Pilgrim*. These habits produce the textual self as a product to be circulated in a social market that verifies the self as either counterfeit or consumable, and they circumscribe autonomy in a way that agency cannot escape.

The second chapter examines precisely how shame governs the circulation of the self in the social market, and situates the conversion that Arabella undergoes in the context of a theory of social consciousness. This novel context illuminates the particular social mechanism that uses shame to criminalize her liminal romantic self and subsume it into the mainstream market represented by her contemporaries. More importantly, I do not merely extrapolate this mechanism from the conversion episode, but find it in the novel's relationship to a body of historical science writing that establishes vision as a social process; this relationship clarifies the role of shame as the core psychological force behind a process that universally subjects eighteenth-century subjects to the same criminalizing gaze that leverages instinctual fear rather than reason or awareness to 'rehabilitate' the self.

The final interrogation of *Rasselas* concerns the political implications of the self-testing of Chapter One and the social control exercised over the self in Chapter Two; Arabella's 'conversion,' in the context of the trajectory of this dissertation, can be read as a preceding example of the kind of partially sublimated Freudian aggression I argue drives the search for a 'choice of life' in *Rasselas* which may also be understood as a choice of self. Arabella is criminalized by the Divine sent to cure her mind, and just as she expects he will "exert the Authority of [his] function" and so forcefully restore her to the social fold she has remained separate from, so her 'cure' anticipates the role of authority and power exercised in a political sphere which masquerades as a purely private quest for happiness (Lennox 370). Thus the political stakes that are implicit in *The Female Quixote* are made explicit in *Rasselas* as we shift from the covert violence inherent in 'rehabilitating' the subversive feminine to the overt violence enabled by the masculine force that shapes the social world for its own satisfaction. While such violence is not a part of the superficial plot of Johnson's work, his critique of western identity

clarifies how the private self-affirmative mode of seeking satisfaction is the precursor to the political violence of the western colonial enterprise.

The narrative of burgeoning personal agency that has a nearly hegemonic hold on eighteenth-century critical frameworks is one that is variously articulated, endlessly qualified, and doubted despite its ubiquitous presence. In many of the significant critical threads of interest in the period ranging from female sexuality to the function of the eyes to passion and imagination itself, individual agency is a central and abiding concern. Later Romantic formulations such as Keats's ode to bards of passion and mirth that celebrate and bask in passion find a comic counterpoint in Johnson's definition of passion: "1. any effect caused by external agency. 2. violent commotion of the mind." (Johnson 105). These two meanings of passion clearly position it as a threat to the individual's autonomy; passion is something pressed upon the individual from the outside which makes passion itself alien, and the secondary internal account of it leaves aside any affect or pleasure for the sense of violent disorder that would result from such an external invasion. Even Robinson Crusoe, that master of every mechanic art and emblem of Puritan industry, has a story whose "protagonist's moral life as the interpreter (thus molder) of his own experience commences with the fear he feels the first time a 'Wind beg[ins] to blow' his ship off course" (Lewis 95). This fear, here triggered by an external force as physical as the wind, is a fear continually stimulated in the modern self by physical and psychological influences that contest the ability of an individual to navigate both consciousness and material environs. This knot, between the force of being able to mold and determine one's own experience and the fear that external and more powerful forces will negate operations exerted by the individual, is tied tight indeed in the eighteenth century and beyond. The three textual selves I examine serve as constructs that offer much more than the mere possibility of

imitation; the eighteenth-century craving for the didactic lesson produced models that also undermined the moral of the cultural stories being told, and the novels I examine already report on the limitation of didactic impulses that spurred real selves toward an embrace of an ethic of self-improvement. The didactic impulse produces an object for social consumption, and the fictional spaces I examine remove the reader from the process of production so that it might be observed and witnessed. *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Female Quixote*, and *Rasselas* collectively serve as a testing ground for the complex merit of self-improvement and point to the nascent realization that the produced self is a mute object designed to increase access to forms of self-improvement inherently limited by a social world that verifies and defines such improvement.

In *Crusoe*, the record of Puritan nonfiction serves as the baseline for a prevailing model of self-production that I call spiritual materialism. Here the individual manufactures a textual self fit for social consumption. Such consumption depends upon uniformity, and Puritan nonfiction frequently refers to this widespread production as producing uniform objects; relying on the metaphor of text as looking glass, Puritan authors suggest that the reader could see themselves in their pages just as their looking glass reflects their own face. *Crusoe* disrupts this process and undermines this model of self-production, departing from it with a comic dismemberment which exposes the produced self and precludes the production of another. In other words, the novel's sustained challenge to this model of self-production does not itself suggest another self product, and significantly refuses engagement in this process of production. *The Female Quixote* does not examine how an individual self might challenge any such mode, but instead examines how the immediate social world serves to preserve or destroy this self-product. Arabella's conversion is precisely an example of self-destruction whereby her romantic self product is dismembered but immediately replaced with a mainstream self product that would

no longer cause the kind of social friction that amuses and enrages the social actors surrounding Lady Bella. *Rasselas* charts how a privileged individual shops for a self product to adopt in service of inherently political interests that are socially destructive.

The operation of shame I track in *The Female Quixote* and the role of vision I examine within the context of social exchange receives considerable support from a theory of social consciousness currently being pioneered by neuroscientist Michael Graziano, and this consciousness theory suggests a key limit to the kind of self-testing performed by the textual self represented by the improvisational Crusoe. If the mechanism of consciousness itself houses an inescapable awareness of the social audience, as Graziano's findings suggest, any self-testing performed by the individual is at least partially performed by the audience that surrounds the inevitably social self. Chapter 2 presents a necessary complement to the self-testing constituted by Crusoe's comic dismemberment in Chapter 1; rather than focus on the process of self-production, my analysis of Lennox's work focuses on the self product in circulation. The political implications I track in Chapter Three demonstrate how this particular mode of self-production (the materialist mode that originates in the spiritual materialism of the Puritan process of self-production) is a particularly western mode of self-production that Johnson invites the reader to see as inherently political and destructive. The private wishes for happiness in *Rasselas* would be more accurately labeled as aspirations for power in a social order that might furnish the self's ego with a ready source of affirmation that Freud and Edward Said identify as both private and political, respectively. Thus the self-destruction I refer to in the title of this dissertation is not a matter of affective states or behavior suffered through or by the individual, but a site of collision between cultural imperatives to improve and progress and the political limits and consequences of such 'improvement.' Arabella's insistence that she wants to "improve" herself

and use available 'histories' as a source to "influence her practice" speaks to how the didactic impulse of the eighteenth-century is ultimately a social process that reframes the final lesson of a textual history as the beginning for imposing the agency of the self in the social sphere.

This dissertation's contribution to ever evolving literary and cultural accounts of individual agency and modern personal autonomy is most precisely located in the attempt to separate the two; within its pages, I challenge the subtle assumption that increased agency is positively correlated with the psychological experience of increased autonomy. My own account is not predicated on the demarcation of the limits and boundaries of the modern self's enterprise which might constrict the victories of individual industry; this account reframes the entire enterprise as form of constriction. The growing cultural ethic of self-improvement can in part be tracked by the publication trends of the eighteenth century that show precisely how interested eighteenth century individuals were in consuming writing that could enhance public participation via textual consumption of narratives focused on the personal project of self formation. Despite the perennial focus on the rise of the novel in the period, the fact remains that "at least a score of didactic texts outdistanced all 'literary texts' by wide margins" throughout the century (Hunter 235). Discretion, however, must be exercised and caution taken when using market trends as indications of shifts in cultural habits or social developments. Instead of dwelling on a separation between eighteenth-century fiction and nonfiction, it is even more instructive to consider that the didacticism of both "involves not just a raised status for the individual self but an intensified consciousness, individual by individual, of what selfhood means" (Hunter 24). Key then to the argument of this dissertation is that this raised status of selfhood is a particularly personal project, which Hunter emphasizes with the phrase "individual by individual," that is

primarily about self practice and self-improvement rather than about the self as a starting point for contemplation or a term to ground ‘awareness.’

III. Salvation Supplanted by the Rise of the Therapeutic Cultural Context

Charles Taylor argues that “being a self is inseparable from existing in a space of moral issues, to do with identity and how one ought to be,” and the eighteenth century certainly is a cultural space in which how one ought to be was deeply concerned with the business of improving the self (Taylor 112). This kind of ‘ought’ space to which Taylor refers was manifested immediately before the turn of the century with truly novel publication innovations such as John Dunton’s *The Athenian Mercury* (1691-1697). This coffee-house periodical featured an anonymous question and answer column that solicited any question from the readership except those regarding state matters so as to avoid the wrath of censors. On the title page, *The Athenian Mercury* promises to “resolv[e] all the most nice and curious questions proposed by the ingenious of either sex” (Dunton). The questions submitted to *The Athenian Mercury* ranged from topics of taste, health, the characteristics of the natural and unnatural world, religion, and even private matters of personal consequence only. In one issue, readers ask: “what is the cause of the flux and reflux of the sea?”; “how [does] the blood circulat[e] in a body whose legs are cut off?”; “whether Japan be an island or no?”; “how big are spirits, since tis said that our Savior cast out a legion of em out of a man?” (Dunton). Such questions constitute inquiries that seem to satisfy personal curiosity and serve as starting points for debate or discussion, many of which would be carried through various issues as readers responded to answers the periodical provided with further requests for clarification. As Urmi Bhowmik writes, *The Athenian Mercury* is a cultural artifact of marked significance as it shows the

migration of Enlightenment knowledge into a popular context in which the readership could physicalize itself in print. Bhowmik's analysis is primarily concerned with forms of knowledge and how various forms are combined in the pages of this particular periodical which "positioned public dis-course as a medium through which law rehearsed its legitimacy in the eyes of the public" (Bhowmik 347).

And yet many of the questions submitted lack any connection to inquiries concerning the topics explored in the above questions that range from matters of geography to the supernatural, and certainly fall outside the arena of law and its interpretation. Questions submitted were frequently of a quotidian variety, as when one gentleman asks about his home improvement project and why "I can with a four ounce hammer drive a double ten into a thick plank, but if I take four tun weight, and poising it exactly, put it upon the same nail in the same plank, it will not force it up to the head; what may be the reason of this difference?" (Dunton). Such questions that seem divorced from social and political consequences and even lack any apparent gravitas with respect to the inquisitor's life nevertheless mark an important moment of the constitutive social subject taking interest and ownership over its own agency. The question of practical construction and activity is rich in the symbolism of self as directing agent; the pool of public knowledge is not being tapped merely for matters of curiosity and discourse, but in service of a personal project that lacks immediate social consequence of any kind while the social consequences over the long term would be quite substantial given such a shift in the dynamic between self and society. Hunter even builds a bridge from this birth of the questioning self in the pages of *The Athenian Mercury* to very recent popular figures of the modern self-help industry, writing that "the questions were of all sorts, but there was a strong bent toward casuistical questions that inquired into the ethics of unusual situations-forerunners of those

addressed by the likes of Dear Abbey and Dr. Ruth” (Hunter 12). The coexistence of the variety of such questions in print also establishes the written word and its public circulation as a space occupied by private individuals who were increasingly aware not only of what selfhood “means,” as Hunter suggests, but also how selfhood is itself a space of praxis that necessitates the exercising of agency whether through writing an autobiography, hammering a nail, or submitting a personal question to a public periodical for comment.

Within the context of this dissertation, agency and the processes through which eighteenth-century literary figures exercise the notional self and test its possibilities can be divided into therapeutic and non-therapeutic forms of intervention. The forms of self-production rehearsed in the fiction are in many ways an extension of the self-production I locate in a Puritan body of nonfiction that provides a crucial background for the analysis of the latter two chapters as well. For example, my assertion that Arabella’s conversion is essentially a lateral move between two social worlds that are equally “true” while only the culturally sanctioned world can masquerade as ‘real’ depends upon the context of self-production that is designed to manufacture a self fit for social consumption. Arabella’s liminal romantic self is at first a product that cannot be consumed by the mainstream collective, and the reproduction that makes it consumable facilitates the observation of the parallel operations of two apparently different worlds. Rather than accept the narrative that Arabella is needful of the interventions of patriarchal figures who supposedly employ reason to reform her, through the lens of a model of material self-production such rehabilitation takes on the appearance of aggressive social control. The cure in this case, then, is an expression of a form of social sickness, and at this complex rhetorical nexus of cure and sickness, therapy and disease, the analysis of agency I execute takes on clearer shape.

In much the same way that Hunter draws a parallel from the cultural moment that produced an innovative periodical to the modern self-help industry, I also hope to productively introduce the therapeutic framework into critical analysis of eighteenth-century fiction and culture. Through such an effort, we can discover a particular understanding of personal agency in the social sphere that dovetails with our contemporary embrace of the therapeutic in popular discourse. Other critics have applied the therapeutic framework to both the activity of textual production itself as well as to the psychological process of self formation that frequently attends narratives of this period which have ‘elevated the self,’ as Hunter says. Leopold Damrosch and Hunter both employ the notion of therapeutic activity to Johnson and Defoe respectively, arguing that they themselves as individuals sought the activity of authorship as a form of therapeutic intervention. Damrosch also connects eighteenth-century didacticism to the personal therapeutic enterprise, writing that “texts that claim to teach as well as report” do both in service of the health of the self because “very likely they originate in self-therapy, using writing as a form of self-substantiation” (Damrosch 31). Hunter goes so far as to suggest that Defoe’s first novel was an attempt to “[order] his mind by writing a therapeutic somewhat “allegorical” account of his own life” (Hunter 49). Perhaps the impulse here to connect the authorial self with the textual self is itself indicative of the eighteenth-century intimacy between textual production and self-production and of the ways in which writing was not only a process to explore and record personal narrative, but, as I argue in the first chapter, was fast becoming a process designed to manufacture a self product as the body of written work came to stand in for the social body of the individual. Thus Arabella’s terror that burning books was almost like burning the bodies of those romantic figures she knew so well. Damrosch generalizes that diary writing and keeping busy with such autobiographical acts was not “just the record of a life, but an essential therapy in

that life” (Damrosch 49). As previously noted and quoted, Damrosch ties therapeutic effect to self-substantiation, and it is here where my own position diverges with the possibility that any therapeutic effect might indeed be lost as self-substantiation becomes an automatic process of self-production. This process functions according to a market of collective consumption that ultimately erodes personal autonomy and destroys movement toward self-direction.

Each of the three novels and the concomitant nonfictional bodies of writing I have teamed them with presents a model of disease and health. My approach to this socially determined dichotomy is focused particularly on the highly unstable nature of it in the eighteenth century, and is indebted to Roy Porter’s *Madness: A Brief History*, a work that has done much to heighten the sensitivity with which we all must handle claims that concern the categories of health and disease. Roger French’s work that examines medicine in its Enlightenment context helps document the unraveling entanglement between the health of soul with the health of body; I also, but with attention on the self and methods of its figuration, track how these three novels stage this unraveling. Crusoe and Arabella undergo different forms of conversion which are both elucidated through the discourse of disease and cure, and finally Rasselas finds no cure but suffers through a “new species of affliction” from which he and his band can find no relief. The concerns of agency and autonomy, then, are already couched in this discourse of health which classifies the destructive or therapeutic according to socially determined definitions of disease. In Crusoe’s case, his physical and spiritual health are completely conflated as he is stricken with a fever and famously reaches for the Bible as cure of both body and soul. John Bender, writing on the moment of Crusoe’s illness and the state of involuntary incarceration he has endured on the island, argues that “prison, now equated with solitary reflection, is first viewed as negative, random, punitive, vengeful; but it slides into another thing entirely- something salubrious,

beneficent, reformatory, and productive of wealth and social integration” (Bender 55). In the context of Bender’s larger argument on the penitentiary and social forms of control, this therapeutic renewal that Crusoe supposedly experiences through his conversion is read as a “prospective allegory of the move from old, fever-ridden jails to the clean, healthy, contemplative solitude of the penitentiaries” (Bender 55). But it is not merely the tangible structures of control but the social ones as well that concern Bender and all eighteenth-century readers, as it is these social structures in Defoe’s work that continually reappear like apparitions on the island via Crusoe’s consciousness that struggles with constructing narratives of self and narratives of health while living without an immediate social context to verify either.

The question, then, becomes why narratives of self and health are so closely entwined to the point that the self-substantiation to which Damrosch refers is made synonymous with a therapeutic endeavor that implies health. Bender makes a very similar conceptual move, writing that “Crusoe equates having a self with being able to account for his crime, and his story literally enacts a quest for some narrative equivalent to personality” (Bender 55). The accounting for crime is of course handled by conversion within the narrative form of spiritual autobiography meant to secure the saved self through narrative consistency, but Bender replaces salvation with the secular “personality” which would only be recognizable in narrative through a pattern which would reveal the self as a stable, consistent, and discrete textual product. It is precisely this form of self that Crusoe avoids; hardly enacting a personality, at the close of the narrative Crusoe plainly states with reference to the process of writing itself: “I scarce knew how to understand, or how to compose my self” (Defoe 242). Such a declaration within the context of spiritual autobiography constitutes the abject admission that the narrative has failed. Without a stable self

composed, no cure can be documented, no conversion can be said to have taken place, and thus no therapeutic intervention has been executed.

The spiritual cure staged in *Crusoe* migrates into a secular and social form in *The Female Quixote* as Arabella is visited by the reasonable Divine who supposedly employs reason to separate her from her romantic notions and align her habits with socially accepted forms of thought and conduct. The binary of health and disease persists in *Rasselas*, though it loses its clinical and medical context in favor of Rasselas' psychological dis-ease that precipitates political consequences; Rasselas' old instructor tries to help him by listening to him and "[making] himself acquainted with his disease of mind" and subsequently hopes to "[cure] it by counsel" (Johnson 12). In addition to the merely interesting parallel here between Rasselas' instructor and the modern talk therapist, these three novels together chart the emergence of the modern emphasis on self-help as an operation meant to produce an experience of self-satisfaction now measured only by the constitutive subject. *Rasselas'* emphasis on and use of the term "happiness" to replace the focus on medical/spiritual health in *Crusoe* and social well-being in *The Female Quixote* tracks closely to the changing use of the word 'therapy' itself.

'Therapy' was initially used in the medical context of disease and cure and only later accommodated the use of the psychiatric community to describe interventions concerned with the mind. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, 'therapy' derives from the Greek *θεραπεύειν*, which means "to attend medically." In the entry for the adjective form 'therapeutic,' the OED settles for the denotation "of or pertaining to the healing of disease," which does not specify or demarcate the medical from the psychological. The examples provided, however, do track this migration from the specialized medical use of the word to its general psychological application. The 1678 use of the word provided is from Phillips' *New World of Words* which

refers to “The Therapeutick part of Medicine, is that which treats of the healing or curing of diseases;” a medical journal is subsequently quoted for its use in 1800, and finally the 1972 index uses *The Daily Telegraph* as a source: “She doesn't get bad-tempered; she merely picks up the piece of patchwork she is working on. ‘It is so peaceful and relaxing, quite therapeutic.’” Just as the term initially used to refer strictly to the treatment of medical ailments grew to include the management of the mind, so in the eighteenth century is there a motion from being treated by an external agent (medical, spiritual, etc.) to self-treatment. The difference in publications used to track the meaning of ‘therapeutic’ is even instructive here, as it shows a shift from the specialized use of ‘therapeutic’ as the property of the medical discipline to a popular context represented by a modern newspaper that demonstrates its use by referring to a non-medical process used to improve an affective state. Referring to ‘self-improvement’ in the eighteenth century does not necessitate assent to the notion that the modern self-help industry is rooted directly in this period, but that crucial changes happening in this temporal window ultimately enable the eventual commercialization of cultural tropes of self, therapy, and self-improvement.

The title of this dissertation, “This new species of affliction”: Self-Destruction and the Eighteenth-Century Ethic of Self-Improvement,” separates the notions of self-destruction and self-improvement and does not comment on the therapeutic value of either; here I would like to clarify and complicate the relationship between these two ideas as they concern this project. I argue that Crusoe’s formulation that he was “born to be my own destroyer” is in fact a therapeutic formulation that rejects contemporary imperatives to engage the self in the business of material improvement. Within the context of a materialist model of selfhood, such destruction can be seen as tending to produce autonomy that is otherwise restricted by “the business of life” that both Crusoe and Arabella reject. Alternately formulated, ‘self-improvement’ within a social

context that diminishes autonomy can be viewed as inimical, which I argue with respect to the conclusion of *The Female Quixote*. My reading of the supposedly therapeutic conversion of Arabella is that this operation may even be a tragic one that reveals the extent to which social subjects employ shame to reduce the constitutive subject to an object that can be easily recognized by social actors invested in that reduction.

The therapeutic lens, then, serves to problematize how I treat the very notions of destruction and improvement in the following chapters and how these fictions account for agency and autonomy in shifting cultural contexts that tend to evacuate such terms of meaning. The titular improvement I refer to then is hardly just material. Such improvement would not be a part of the ‘rising consciousness’ that is expressed by the rise of the novel genre, and just as such a ‘rise’ has been disputed I would also dispute the appraisal of the concomitant swell of productive agency that supposedly accompanied it. Or rather if it is material as it certainly is in the context of the recommendations of the authoritative patriarchs, the fictions that represent such improvement expose it as a process which imposes on the self rather than merely improves the self. This dissertation then looks with suspicion on the binary of destruction and improvement itself, treating each as possibly indicative of the other depending upon the context of the representation. A doubtful position that no longer takes the supposed triumphs of modern individual agency as a given creates the necessary space in which agency and autonomy can be separated and sufficiently examined through eighteenth-century literary representations that seem to practically invite such suspicion. The spirit of inconclusiveness and of process that Bakhtin says animates the novel genre transforms individual triumphs of agency that are predicated on closed readings of ‘heroic’ characters into fictions that become observable.

IV. Agency's Futility: The Social Space of Quixotism

Perhaps one of the clearest fictional eighteenth-century depictions of autonomy lost at the expense of agency is drawn by Defoe in *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders* (1722), which unveils a form of female agency that threatens, disorders, gains, and certainly loses both material spoils and psychic boons alike. The latter would be the dignity which Moll herself bemoans the loss of, but a more important and fundamental loss is that of the personal autonomy that buoys the dignity to which she refers. Consider the following passage in which Moll describes her spiral into compulsion which leaves her helpless in the fight against her own desires and pathological behaviors:

At length yielding to the Importunities of my Crime, I cast off all Remorse and Repentance; and all the Reflections on that Head, turn'd to no more than this, that I might perhaps come to have one Booty more that might compleat my Desires; but tho' I certainly had that one Booty, yet every hit look'd towards another, and was so encouraging to me to go on with the Trade, that I had no Gust to the Thought of laying it down. (*Moll Flanders*, 164)

The trade of stealing that Moll is mired in here might be replaced, quite fruitfully for comparison, with any substance or activity that precipitates addictive models of behavior in modern society. Moll's account is strangely prescient, with lexical flourishes that anticipate much later psychologized accounts of pathological behavior and their fundamental elements; one hit after another enflames desire and spurs agency to secure the material sought all while autonomy is lost as the individual flounders in a sea of false 'encouragement' from each hit secured. Whether impersonating a gentlewoman while adorned in finery meant to secure a social presentation that will aid her trade, or intentionally tarnished in the guise of a homeless

vagabond, Moll's experience of her variously illegal and unseemly behavior is an experience tantamount to addiction.

More important than any unusually modern lexical flourishes ('hit,' for example) that anticipate cultural shifts which make addiction, pathology, and their concomitant lexical paraphernalia cornerstones of casual discourse about the self in society is the model this passage implies. Moll's loss of autonomy implies a model of selfhood in which the constitutive subject comes to depend upon material objects not just for fleeting satisfaction or pleasure, but more importantly to sustain personal narrative and a social identity that befits it. Moll must "go on with the trade," implying a rich social exchange in which her object dependence has indeed been classified as a profession here, and one which is embedded a social milieu that validates or criminalizes it. Carol Kay underscores this inherent flexibility, arguing that "the character traits that make Moll a success in crime can be converted, under the right political arrangement, to respectability" (Kay 457). This plasticity is precisely the kind I previously referred to with respect to the alternating possible meanings of destruction and improvement that tend to evacuate such terms of stable meaning. The inherently plastic nature of the social interpretation of Moll's pathological compulsion is one I explore throughout this dissertation; Crusoe is savvy profiteer, puritan pilgrim, and unconscionable colonizer, while Arabella is alternately mad and insightful depending on the social referents to which she is help accountable, and in *Rasselas* it is this social feedback that validates the various 'trades' that represent discrete choices of self that might constitute the "choice of life." In this dissertation I have not pursued the full political implications of this model of dependence between the constitutive subject and its various objects of dependence, but within its limits have nevertheless maintained a necessary connection to the political dimension. This connection comes to the fore in the last chapter in which I claim that

the object of Johnson's interrogation is finally not human nature or a universalized version of personal happiness, but rather the western frameworks that outline this nature and create the expectations that would then lead to the disillusionment that *Rasselas* predicts in its opening sentence. My readings of *Crusoe* and *The Female Quixote* necessarily fall within the same western cultural framework, thus the three together represent a sustained interest in and critique of western development that has positioned the modern self in problematic relation to material and immaterial social objects that are used to prop up a sustained narrative of self.

In the previous case of Moll Flanders, the material nature of the booty she seeks for sustenance is a fitting starting place to transition to other objects that may be less material but are no less real. I suggested a model of dependence from this reading of Moll's predicament that is supported throughout the pages that follow, and a noteworthy nonfictional manifestation of this model that predates Moll's infamy is the following passage from Richard Baxter's 1696 *Reliquiae Baxterianae: Or, Mr. Richard Baxter's Narrative of the Most Memorable Passages of His Life and Times*. In this spiritual autobiography Baxter already employs a model of dependence we see manifested later in the fiction, and he even pushes it explicitly toward a model of addiction that would then be the most pathological incarnation of it, writing that

I was much addicted to the excessive gluttonous eating of Apples and Pears; which I think laid the foundation of that Imbecility and Flatulency of my Stomach, which caused the Bodily Calamities of my life [and] I was extremely bewitched with a Love of Romances, Fables, and old Tales, which corrupted my Affections and lost my Time. (Baxter 2)

Just as Baxter posits his 'addiction' as the veritable foundation of his bodily dysfunction, this dissertation posits the aforementioned model of selfhood defined by dependency as the

foundation of modern psychic dysfunction. Baxter pivots seamlessly from the material objects of dependency, pears and apples, to the material objects of romances, fables, and tales. I am primarily concerned with the latter though not to the exclusion of the former, and crucial to this interrogation of these material objects of dependency is the understanding that consumption of them is not the beginning or end of the relationship between the modern self and these material objects. Baxter does reference the consumption of narrative but does so *while* he creates one that is designed to prop up a notion of self through time. Baxter's formulation of the consumption of narrative, which directly anticipates Arabella's romantic dependence, also anticipates the kind of market individuals sought participation in by making their contribution to this particular genre of spiritual autobiography.

The ethic of self-production I theorize, delimit, and ultimately call spiritual materialism in the first chapter is a process by which individuals narrate and edit personal experience using culturally hegemonic binaries in order to produce a 'self' that can be readily incorporated into a collective identity. This final produced self-product resists future experience and social feedback that cannot be contained within its limits, and most importantly it is used as a filter through which to read and interpret future experience that must fit the narrative constructed from a fictionalized version of past experience. In my own reading, Crusoe's continued wandering as well as his lexical manipulations that continually resist binaries of self and of possibilities offered by social environs (the island is at once everything and nothing to him) serve as a test of the spiritual materialism rehearsed in the nonfiction. Crusoe then tests this model in isolation in his paradise or prison, a world alternately called so depending upon the direction of the mood of the day.

In *The Female Quixote*, the trajectory shifts from self-testing in solitude to local environments that cause distinct friction between the social referents that are meaningful to Arabella and her implied romantic community and those around her who refuse to validate those referents. I will argue that her conversion through which she is criminalized and must renounce her former self is a lateral move between a marginal and mainstream community. Rather than track how a single self might test the limits of existing social models without interference, in Chapter Two I confront this interference directly. The kinetic force behind this interference is shame; it is impossible to read Arabella's adventures and not sense the import of the refrain of shame repeated throughout its pages, with virtually all characters frequently uttering that they could die from shame because of events that have transpired in view of the social audience. It is this local audience implicated in a form of social consciousness I map through current theories of vision and the aforementioned theory of consciousness pioneered by Michael Graziano. The trajectory of the dissertation resolves with a final pivot to how a supposedly personal quest for happiness driven by private wishes is an activity of world building which implies global environments. It is important that this final interpretive move serve as one that is not separate or considered a final application of previous material. I would here insist that the argument I make concerning Johnson's sustained critique of western values serve as a prefatory gesture as well that frames the arguments of the first two chapters as an implicit critique of western values that finally becomes explicit in the third chapter.

By contrast, quixotism provides a theoretical lens quite central for seeing and understanding how these three chapters treat agency and autonomy and models of selfhood that cultivate and compromise them is the lens of quixotism. Aside from Lennox's work of course, the bodies of work I examine, both fictional and nonfictional, are not usually associated with

studies of quixotism, but a productive understanding of the relationships among them can be supported by using quixotism to analyze particularly how these fictional protagonists relate to their social worlds. Both Crusoe and Arabella can be properly understood as quixotic representations, and Rasselas can be framed as an anti-quixote who embodies the inversion of those qualities normally associated with quixotism. Aaron Hanlon, in an attempt to stabilize these quixotic qualities and differentiate them from similar literary figures such as the picaresque, writes that

idealism serves as a buffer between the quixote's self-image and his or her "marginal" position with respect to the societal mainstream. 'The margin' is often conceptualized as a space of paradoxical doubleness, as the realm of the subaltern and the realm of unlikely political potential. Quixotes occupy a similarly liminal position as ridiculed and relegated figures who nonetheless fail to internalize the way others view them. Thus, quixotes proceed in their own minds not as marginal figures, but as shining exceptions within societies marred by change, iniquity, and disunity. (Hanlon 153)

Both Crusoe and Arabella clearly occupy socially liminal spaces, and in the former's case it is hardly just his far flung physical location that marks him as outside the mainstream, but quite particularly a unique process for establishing and improvising self-image in isolation. While I will forgo a discursive defense of calling Crusoe quixotic in this introduction, Chapter 1 will establish the grounds for doing so and even conclude with the wink that Defoe himself who apparently approved of such an interpretation. Arabella, her marginal space, and her attendant self-image and its difference from the 'mainstream' perception of her are most obviously quixotic when compared to the other two fictional protagonists analyzed in the context of this

project, but it is precisely how this quixote is unfortunately reformed that sets the stage for the most explicitly political analysis of Rasselas as an anti-quixote. Arabella's movement from the marginal romantic space she occupies to the socially determined and sanctioned mainstream space is catalyzed by a social process driven by shame and a criminalization of her romantic 'self' that must abdicate any meaningful connection to her beloved world peopled with heroes and heroines.

Rasselas, however, never occupies a marginal space even while physically isolated like Crusoe, though he is isolated along with a social community. As a prince with riches, power, authority, and the ability to travel like a tourist and shop for a 'choice of life' that might fill the void of his past experience, Rasselas is a mainstream figure who, while apparently benevolent, represents a literary figure that threatens marginal and liminal spaces with a mindset driven by the need for self-affirmation. In chapter 3, his character serves to represent western habits of identification that Johnsons calls into question and critiques as a stepping stone to the violent dehumanization of colonialism. As Hanlon notes, "though 'quixotic narratives' have proliferated in so many directions as to render 'quixotic' an unwieldy genre descriptor, quixotes themselves bear an important set of unifying characteristics, culminating in a quixotic mode of exceptionalism," and it is precisely this mode of exceptionalism that is missing from Rasselas' narrative of travel which I have paired with Johnsons nonfictional critique of travel narratives (Hanlon 153). Rasselas' founding fantasy of power, as I call it, is the antithesis of exceptionalism as it tends to place his self not in any marginal space that contests and challenges the political power inherent in the mainstream's perception of the quixote, but actually enshrines his self as the political head of the mainstream that dispenses justice and so maintains the social status quo. Situating these works squarely within quixotic discourse also helps clarify the central

dilemma this project investigates. Doing so shows how ‘successfully’ exerting agency in the mainstream social sphere necessitates the internalization of how that audience views the self, which as Hanlon points out, is something the quixotic character never does. The quixotic habit of remaining outside of, rather than agitating to get on top of, social networks of resources and meaning might serve as one possible exit route from the destructive path of compulsively exerting agency in a manner that erodes autonomy.

Perhaps Freud most clearly articulated this modern cultural dilemma that would plague even a prince, and that would be the utter lack of correlation and causation between the successful deployment of agency in the social sphere and subjective experience of personal autonomy and satisfaction. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud writes that

Long ago [man] formed an ideal conception of omnipotence and omniscience which he embodied in his gods. To these gods he attributed everything that seemed unattainable to his wishes, or that was forbidden to him. One may say, therefore, these that these gods were cultural ideals. To-day he has come very close to the attainment of this ideal, he has almost become a god himself...But in the interests of our investigations, we will not forget that present-day man does not feel happy in his Godlike character. (Freud 738)

I would hesitate to endorse a conception of the modern self as godlike in character, but this passage does illuminate the inverse relationships between power and happiness and agency and autonomy. I would not hesitate to argue that eighteenth-century fictions were already capable of representing and exploring the substance of this inversion, and even implying productive and therapeutic resolutions to a cultural imperative to strive closer and closer toward the omnipotence to which Freud refers. The mad astronomer in *Rasselas* who conceives of himself

as a kind of god on earth, directing the seasons and manipulating the welfare of the entire world, is one pitiful representation of impotency that has confused itself with omnipotence. This figure serves as a potent admonition to the modern self that must confront this peculiarly modern confusion between power and freedom, agency and autonomy, and status and happiness.

With the 1859 publication of Samuel Smiles' *Self-Help*, a cultural impulse that had been forming and forging its expression in print since the birth of *The Athenian Mercury* in 1691 found a title that imprinted a moniker capable of expressing, containing, and commercializing this impulse. Smiles' work is peppered with that brand of platitudinous 'advice' we might expect; he begins *Self-Help* with the aphorism "heaven helps those who help themselves," calling it a "well-tried maxim" that "[embodies] in a small compass the results of vast human experience" (Smiles 15). But this text does transcend the trite and Smiles himself frames his work as a kind of capitulation to effete social institutions that have yet to adequately support and reform the social self according to its highest virtues. Rather than impose an artificial separation between institutional influence and personal agency, Smiles envisions an institutional ideal that fosters individual autonomy. Accepting that "even the best institutions can give a man no active aid," he suggests that "perhaps the utmost they can do is, to leave him free to develop himself and improve his individual condition" (Smiles 15). This dissertation does do some work to expose any such possibility of personal freedom as illusory and rather characterizes the constriction of the "business of life" experienced by Crusoe, Arabella, and Rasselas as the peculiar property of human experience. Indeed Rasselas explicitly contrasts his own experience with that of the animal world, venting to the animals in the Happy Valley that he "[has] many distresses from which ye are free" (Johnson 11).

This project treats eighteenth century fiction as its own fascinating project that reframes any such personal distress into a primary condition of modern selfhood that has unprecedented access to personal agency which continually frustrates itself. In what I would consider a comic turn, the author who finally commercializes self-help spoke out against the novel as an ineffectual genre that could no more than distract the individual from the labor of improvement at hand: “The novel is the most favorite refuge of the fruitless and the idle” (Smiles 166). Smiles denigration of this form of fiction takes on a shape nearly identical to the criticism Arabella faces for her obsession with her romances. Just as Arabella’s folly is tied to the failure of “supposing Romances were real Pictures of Life,” so does Smiles exhort his audience to limit contact with this genre because those who “occupy the greater portion of their leisure hours in studying the preposterous pictures of human life” are not only guilty of idleness, but are engaging in an activity that is “worse than a waste of time- it is positively pernicious” (Smiles 342). That Smiles would label the novel as a malevolent force does inadvertently gesture to the powerful influence of this genre on its readers; literary spaces that raise selfhood itself as an object for examination do more than interrogate the limits of the self or the social institutions that may inhibit or encourage personal autonomy. The process of reading such entertaining interrogations is not a temporally bound experience contained by the first and the last page. When the book goes back on the shelf, its questions do not. This dissertation maps how these questions take shape in eighteenth-century fiction and how such fiction reshapes these questions for an eighteenth century reading public eager for lessons and lustful for improvement. Such a map requires considerations of the personal, the social, and the political, and the trajectory of the following three chapters loosely follows this formulation with the understanding that any such division amongst these spheres is imprudent at best. And so this practically useful conceptual

structure will itself be revealed as a kind of fiction, in much the same way that these fictions unravel modern conceptions of the self and recommend the alternating necessity of self-destruction and self-improvement, both which exist in strange and equal measure in eighteenth-century novels and in the eighteenth century minds they represent and re-present to a reading public anxious to put figurative models to the test.

Chapter 1

"I could not but smile":

The Comic Crusoe and the Subversion of Puritan Self-Production

It is precisely laughter that destroys the epic, and in general destroys any hierarchical (distancing and valorized) distance. As a distanced image a subject cannot be comical; to be made comical, it must be brought close... Laughter demolishes fear and piety before an object, before a world, making of it an object of familiar contact and thus clearing the ground for an absolutely free investigation of it. Laughter is a vital factor in laying down that prerequisite for fearlessness without which it would be impossible to approach the world realistically.

~M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981)

But had anyone in England been to meet such a man as I was, it must have either frightened them, or raised a great deal of laughter; and as I frequently stood still to look at myself, I could not but smile at the notion of my travelling through Yorkshire with such an equipage, and in such a dress: be pleased to take a sketch of my figure as follows.

~Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)

It is with these words, "I could not but smile," that the fictional Crusoe destroys the fictional hierarchies that define the world he has left behind. The lexicon he uses on his island is a familiar one, unlike the figure he cuts in his strange equipage. The titles, names, spaces, and relationships he describes and imagines can easily be traced to the social fabric that "anyone in England" would immediately recognize. Yet, the comic method that attends Crusoe's employment of common cultural and social tropes is decidedly less familiar, and is a definite departure from the prevailing means of being and building a self in the western world. Crusoe's

smile here is the immediate precursor to the demolishing laughter that Bakhtin imagines, and the construction that Crusoe dismantles is an operation of self construction rooted in religious tradition but not bound by that tradition. The puritan pilgrim is indeed not the only casualty of Defoe's comedy, but so is the savvy profiteer, the self-conscious modern self, and the social sovereign, all portraits drawn to capture Crusoe's existence on the island, and all drawn using the very same method of self-figuration that cannot withstand the free investigation that Bakhtin links to laughter. The rhetorical impact of the language that forms this smile for readers is vital; Crusoe's phrase, "I could not but," illuminates the smile via negativa (i.e. the negative way), leaving by the assertion of individual agency in favor of the acknowledgement that what is left to do was the only thing to be done.

Critical accounts of the dynamic relationship between the individual and social institutions in the eighteenth century have coalesced around a narrative that posits unprecedented agency for the self in a shifting economic, political, and spiritual landscape. The myriad critical approaches to *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, regardless of their particular commitments, largely reinforce this narrative rather than test it. One primary component of this narrative of flourishing agency is the concomitant decay of religious institutions, and many engaged with *Crusoe* identify this religious influence on the novel as residual and in a state of enervation. I will challenge this assumption by suggesting not only continuity but causality between the private religious practice of 'writing the self' via autobiography and the individual's social construction of self, especially expressions of individual agency associated with economic means and social mobility. By identifying a mode of Puritan self-production as the antecedent of eighteenth century expressions of identity via economic means, I am ultimately confronting a subtle but potent assumption that undergirds this

account of burgeoning individual agency, namely that increased agency is positively correlated with increased autonomy. While *Crusoe* has become a symbolic locus of individual agency that can seek and find the material and psychological boons marked as the fruits of the modern individual's modern labor, ample evidence suggests that he is less enamored with such rewards than those interpreting his infinite toil, as he often calls it. *Crusoe's* model of selfhood, I argue, is instead predicated on a form of autonomy not guaranteed and possibly even compromised by individual agency exerted within institutional networks of 'progress' and 'gain.' The primary catalyst for his extrication from such networks is a form of comic perception that subverts Puritan self-production and all of its secular analogues that arise throughout the eighteenth century and beyond.

In Maximillian Novak's most recent article on *Crusoe*, he writes that "in his isolation, his silence, his prayers, and his (forced) renunciation of the luxuries of civilization, the image that *Crusoe* offered his illustrators only too easily fitted into the pattern of the saintly hermit" (Novak 451). And yet with some attention to *Crusoe's* less than righteous inclinations, that saintly image can be transformed from a portrait of faithful piety into a parodic picture. When *Crusoe* sees that his hermitage is violated by visitors, he fantasizes about lining the ground with many pounds of gun powder so as to "blow up all that was near it," including and especially those "monsters" that unknowingly trespass upon his holy land (Defoe 142). Swearing off that explosive intervention, *Crusoe* enslaves Friday instead. Unexpectedly, *Crusoe* develops a strong familial affection for Friday that is notably and strangely absent from his relations with parents, wife, and children. But despite "[living] there together perfectly and completely happy," *Crusoe* suffers attacks of paranoia that nearly lead him to execute his "grateful friend" (Defoe 189). Novak suggests that readers and illustrators of the novel experienced no difficulty "in viewing the hero

of the work as Saint Robinson,” and yet such an unofficial canonization only serves to highlight his homicidal tendencies (Novak 450).

My design here surpasses the drawing of contradiction between the profession of conversion and the persistence of irreligion. Defoe stages Crusoe’s central conversion experience without irony, but the persistence of Crusoe’s “murdering humour” that occasionally eclipses his divine devotion is one example of a pivot toward parody that calls more into question than whether or not Crusoe is a faithful convert (Defoe 155). It is instead the Puritan model of self-figuration designed to produce a faithful convert that becomes the object of interrogation in Defoe’s first foray into fiction. This model depends upon a linear progression from disobedience to deliverance, and arguably one of the most significant spiritual practices for eighteenth century Puritans was the writing of a spiritual autobiography designed to establish discrete categories of self on either side of the margin of conversion (Hunter 19). Spiritual autobiography is an attempt to secure the saved self through a textual record of introspection that documents and stabilizes identity, not unlike the endeavor of Crusoe’s illustrators who attempted to ‘capture’ the self in a defining image. Crusoe evades such capture, and Defoe’s novel presents a comic model of selfhood that defies resolution and is focused primarily on present experience rather than an introspective habit continually devoted to molding past and future into weight-bearing props designed to support a durable narrative of self. David Marshall writes that Crusoe’s introspective project of recording autobiographical acts both “projects and protects the self”; protection be damned, I argue that Crusoe’s proclamation that he was “born to be my own destroyer” is a far more apposite description of what happens to the notional Puritan self in the wake of the comic intrusion (Marshall 917, Defoe 35).

In this chapter, I will redress two critical problems. I will first recover *Crusoe's* neglected comic subtext that has yet to be accounted for in the discussion of this novel, even while it has not gone unnoticed. Secondly, I will challenge the prevailing assumption that the Puritan spiritual tradition that informed the development of the early novel was connected to the construction of interior and autonomous subjects. I will instead claim that Puritan tradition, especially as it was expressed through spiritual autobiography, inaugurated a process of self-production in which the fabrication of a notional self is reduced to a product durable through time and fit for social consumption. Initially catalyzed by religious commitment, this process of self-production ultimately migrates into the 'rise of the secular,' ensconcing the project of selfhood at the center of modern Western experience and unexpectedly at the expense of individual autonomy. I will read Crusoe's self and the process of its making (and unmaking) through Marcel Gutwirth's theory of comic perception, which suggests that the cornerstone of "the comic mindset" is the "invention of impossible juxtaposition," and it is this mindset in particular that stands in opposition to the Puritan habit of using over-determined binaries to shape identity into a self that can be readily incorporated into a collective identity (Gutwirth 96).

Before turning to the body of Puritan nonfiction, I would first like to note the frequency with which critics have noticed a comic Crusoe and subsequently jettisoned the notion on the path toward other arguments. Christopher Flint describes Crusoe's analysis of his island 'subjects' as a "comic disquisition" that "is especially revealing because of the conflation of family and imperial rule," thus establishing Crusoe's method of assessing his surroundings as a comic one (Flint 391). In a related assessment of both character and narrative structure, Ian Bell argues that the novel has what can be considered a "[broad] comic ending," and he links this comic ending to an intrinsic quality in the character of Crusoe himself as well as a feature of the

narrative that Crusoe creates, thus asserting that several primary aspects of the novel are meaningfully comic (Bell 158). Even more fascinating than the critical precedent of a comic Crusoe is the frequent hedging that materializes around observations of the comic elements of this novel and its titular character. Writing on rulership and identity in *Crusoe*, Frank Donoghue opens his argument with the observation that Crusoe's political pretensions are "half-joking fantasies," though which half of him is joking is never made quite clear (Donoghue 1). Novak also acknowledges the possibility of a comic Crusoe in two separate articles, once making the litotic assertion that Crusoe "is not unaware of the humor inherent in his pretensions to being the 'emperor' of a small Caribbean island," and more recently making the bold statement that Crusoe alters his condition in his imagination "from what is in many ways a grim story of survival into a variety of other possible narratives, all of which embody partly comic images of grandiose power" (Novak 338, Novak 463).

The equivocal claim that all of Crusoe's narratives might be imbued with a comic quality that would still somehow remain only 'partly comic' or 'half-joking' speaks to the difficulty that the intrusion of the comic presents to a variety of readings of *Crusoe*. Sociologist Peter Berger describes the comic as a potentially dangerous and subversive force, especially because it "sees through facades of ideational and social order, and discloses other realities lurking behind the superficial ones" (Berger 34). Many readings that champion Crusoe's individuality inevitably collapse back into claims about how he adeptly navigates social order and utilizes social systems in service of the self; his individualism is defined by the ability to stand on top of, not outside of, institutional networks of resources and meaning. The power to subvert and disrupt is often wedded to Crusoe's individualism and the agency associated with it, as when John Richetti writes that the tradition of "spiritual autobiography out of which Defoe fashions his narratives are

institutions that work to defuse the potentially disturbing individuality of his narrators” (Richetti 56). In *Crusoe's* case, such individuality is supposedly expressed by "strategic and tactical manipulations" that express the agency of the self as it shapes the social world (Richetti 71). Berger's argument about the comic is a reminder that any individual and strategic exertion, even that which results in the 'success' that places the self at the proverbial top of any social hierarchy, can easily be toppled by comic qualification. This, I believe, is why the comic in *Crusoe* studies has been repeatedly recognized and then clumsily compartmentalized. If *all* of *Crusoe's* personal narratives are possibly comic as Novak suggests, then the common conviction in his individualism that supports many of his critical characterizations must become an object of doubt rather than an article of faith. If we reassess the triumphalism associated with *Crusoe* as an allegory of modern individualism- and such an assessment creates a surge of questions- Defoe proffers one answer in the comic autonomy that can thrive despite the fluctuating successes and failures of agency and its social consequences.

I. "Now the market is open, [and] thou hast opportunity for the buying": The Para-Literary Puritan Tradition as a Record of Spiritual Materialism

In his work on the origins of the novel, J. Paul Hunter notes that the “para-literary materials from which novels take many of their crucial cues” must be considered in any argument on the novel that is to be adequately historicized, and in *Crusoe's* case, the particular subset of para-literary materials that demands engagement is the historical body of spiritual biographies and autobiographies (Hunter 226). In addition to three widely read contributions to this genre that record the lives of Philip Henry, John Janeway, and Thomas Haliburton, I will also consider one substantial treatise on conversion that elucidates the imperatives of this genre

to an audience anxious to add to it, as the discursive directives for constructing an appropriate spiritual record of one's life are in some cases as illuminating as the records themselves.

Thematic similarity and precise structural likeness are two fundamental connections between *Crusoe* and contemporary Puritan autobiography that have fostered spiritual readings of the novel. Starr and Hunter's critical countermand boldly recovered an attention to the significant inheritance Defoe's novel owes to this nonfiction genre of writing, and this recovery provided a crucial step in estimating an influence that had often been forgotten in favor of economic interpretations of *Crusoe*. Indeed, Novak summarizes the first half of twentieth century *Crusoe* criticism with the observation that "it has become commonplace to suggest that the real key to Defoe lies in an understanding of capitalism and economic individualism" (Novak 19). Starr and Hunter contrarily emphasize the confluence between the novel and its nonfiction counterpart to the extent that the fiction is seen as an 'authentic example' of the pattern of spiritual autobiography, and *Crusoe* an appropriate exemplum of the pilgrim who progresses from disobedience to deliverance.

Unlike this approach, I aim to demonstrate that *Crusoe* subverts the primary tenets of the nonfiction genre, especially the ethic of identity production that was established through a writing practice that created a narrativized self which was subsequently expressed in secular adaptations that critical narratives have identified as departing from religious influence. This narrativized self is created according to three primary principles of production that I will subsequently examine, namely sustainability, uniformity, and quantifiable value calculated through social consumption. In other words, the narrativized self must uphold and sustain the idealized figure of the saved self, this saved self must conform and uniformly match the countless other representations of the saved Christian, and this representation must be

materialized in print to earn the social reward from injecting this self into the believing community as a form of currency. I would argue that *Crusoe* is neither the embodiment of the faithful pilgrim nor the profiteer unaffected by religion, but rather is engaged in a confrontation with the psychological foundations of both characterizations.

While many *Crusoe* critics do acknowledge the influence of this tradition on the novel even if their interpretative commitments lie elsewhere, most do so with a revealing emphasis on taste and habit that first recognizes and then minimizes the significance of the spiritual dimension of the text. When John Richetti argues that *Crusoe* is “an allegory of modern individualism,” he contains and limits the spiritual dimension of the novel within a supposedly attenuated tradition, writing that “the diluted [traditions] of picaresque and spiritual autobiography out of which Defoe fashions his narratives are institutions that work to defuse the potentially disturbing individuality of his narrators” (Richetti 56). By identifying the genre of spiritual autobiography as a “diluted tradition,” and as one that is weakly inhibitive as it defuses the future-oriented potential of the individual, Richetti articulates a common critical antithesis that sets the agency of the individual against this tradition of religious writing which is characterized as approaching impotency. James Foster echoes this sentiment, writing that “Defoe’s retrospective narrators affirm the moral and religious purposes of their stories, but these imposed and improvised meanings are contradicted by emergent secular concerns (e.g. achieving economic security)” (180). Foster tempers his claim slightly by claiming “contradiction” between the spiritual purpose suggested by religious tradition and emerging secular concerns, but I think it would be more accurate to say that Foster, Richetti, and others are intimating that the latter (secular interest) supplants the former (religious meaning). For Foster, the religious purpose is a hollow one, imposed at the end after the narrative has tended

to create a meaning that cannot finally be supported by the narrator's habitual affirmation of the religious lesson.

Richetti's position, couched broadly in terms of cultural institutions, and Foster's position, an illustration of how the individual engages available meanings generated by these institutions, represent what I believe is a critical tendency to locate, limit, and dismiss the influence of religious tradition on *Robinson Crusoe*. G.A. Starr points out that critics of Defoe have been apt to label the Puritan beliefs present in his novels as "traits of his residual Puritan enthusiasm" (Starr 90). Here there is an assumption that the beliefs characteristic of the 'diluted' tradition are even part of some left over and less important facet of Defoe himself. Critics have addressed the convention of authorial disavowal that was a necessary eighteenth century habit for authors who were vulnerable to charges of immorality for writing fictions that distorted 'reality.' I think it is fair to suggest that there is a comparable tendency to liken the presence of the structures of spiritual autobiography in *Crusoe* to a similar conventional habit that was morally imperative for authors, and that this supposedly obligatory quality of the habit makes the manifestation of these structures inconsequential. When I refer to the general 'structures of spiritual autobiography,' I am referring to the temporally distinct periods of disobedience, punishment, repentance, and deliverance that were conventionally cast as necessary phases which combine to create the common 'progression' of the faithful individual (Hunter 19).

The dismissal of the structures of this narrative pattern, however, is consequential in that it also disregards the cognitive habits that catalyze the materialization of this thinking in the production of this pattern in both private and published writing. J. Paul Hunter's *Crusoe* study, *The Reluctant Pilgrim*, demonstrates powerfully how the novel engages various subgenres of

religious writing, including the providence tradition, the guide tradition, and spiritual autobiography, but perhaps more importantly, Hunter illuminates the significance of the “Puritan thought patterns” that are captured and recorded in this “rich subliterate context” (Hunter xi). To dismiss this pattern as an automatic structure of habit, taste, and tradition that was slowly dying to “emergent secular concerns” is to neglect “the emotional associations of ideas [that] helped to shape the thinking process itself” (Hunter 113). The three elements of Puritan thought that will be crucial to this study are the perception of material reality as inherently referential, binary categories as the basis for the interpretation of this referential material world, and the resolution of such binaries into a unitary conception of selfhood. The dismissal of Puritan narrative structure and these concomitant cognitive operations not only creates a fundamental misunderstanding of *Crusoe*’s engagement with religious tradition, but also obscures how the eighteenth century individual’s relationship to religious tradition conditioned beliefs about self and world that would ultimately persist past the social decline of Puritan habits that both reflected and created them.

The first burden my argument must bear concerns the status of identity within the genre of spiritual nonfiction, and how this status transmigrates into a form of identity production that transcends the rhetoric of application employed by both Puritan writers and those interpreting them. The ostensible purpose of recording one’s own life and the lives of others in Puritan nonfiction is simple: instruction. The eminently familiar didactic impulse of the eighteenth century constitutes a baseline standard for the professed purpose of fiction and nonfiction alike. That didactic writing was by far the most published, purchased, and read writing throughout the century is indisputable; “at least a score of didactic texts outdistanced all ‘literary texts’ by wide margins” throughout the century (Hunter 235). What remains debatable is precisely why

readers devoured such texts often derided by modern sensibilities, and what motivation propelled so many to author their own indefatigable imitations of a genre dedicated to reiterating basic formulae for religious living. In the preface to *The Life and Death of Mr. Phillip Henry* (1712), one spiritual biography reincarnated in several editions throughout the eighteenth century, the reader is advised that the purpose of the biography "is not so much to embalm the memory of this good man (though it is also blessed), as to exhibit to the world a pattern of that primitive Christianity, which all that knew him well observed to be exemplified in him while he lived" (Henry viii). The fact that the spiritual practice of Phillip Henry can be deemed "primitive" is laudable, and the simplicity associated with it is of course cloaked in the common rhetoric of exemplum. Even in the case of autobiography, Starr insists that the purpose is autodidactic, and with reference to *Crusoe* he suggests that the novel retains this "utilitarian" quality and function, even the more complex socially situated dialogues like those between Crusoe and Friday (Starr 122).

My own position is that such primitive patterns hardly needed elucidation to be widely understood, and that the pervasive production and consumption of this writing constitutes participation in a market of material artifacts of identity meant to manifest a durable self. Joseph Alleine's lengthy treatise on conversion published in 1703, "An Alarm to Unconverted Sinners," recommends autobiography as a crucial practice of religious life, and his recommendation powerfully transgresses the utilitarian limits often ascribed to the genre. Alleine admonishes his readers to not only make "this covenant" with God "in heart, but in word; not only in word, but in writing; and that you would with all possible reverence spread the writing before the Lord, as if you would present it to him as your Act and Deed" (Alleine 139). Here we find an equation between the metaphoric seat of the soul (the heart) and the

writing one ought to produce, and the purpose of such writing far surpasses mere instruction. The assertion that the body of writing is tantamount to the behavior of the convert and carries within it the heart of the believer suggests that the end sought here is not just learning by either knowledge or example. Rather, the means of writing becomes the end as it moves toward a Christian identity and finally becomes it. The reality of this widespread cultural preoccupation with and production of didactic nonfiction was, I believe, rooted in a powerful practice of self creation that adheres to rules so formulaic that the selves produced would be readily recognizable as cut from the same pattern.

The conventions of Puritan nonfiction and the resulting pattern manifested in the writing has been widely acknowledged as rigid to the point of calcification. Robert Bell suggests that "there was even a recipe for spiritual autobiography" and jests that one might easily substitute various plot points and details from one autobiography into another as the form had become so predictable as to make different iterations interchangeable (Bell 108). Hunter acknowledges that "*all* spiritual biographies share one pattern: the tracing of a rebellion-punishment-repentance-deliverance sequence described from the earliest moment of Christendom as characteristic of fallen men who are accorded God's grace" (Hunter 89). The above quote from the preface to Philip Henry's biography uses this same lexicon, insisting that the whole point of the publication of his life is to show "the pattern" to the world. Given this pattern's ubiquity since the earliest moment of Christendom, by the eighteenth century it would have been common knowledge and practice learned easily and early, and countless examples of the pattern embodied by particular people abounded. Learning and instruction are the ostensible foci of this genre; behind these twin goals, however, remains the profound reality that this writing inaugurated a process of identity production through which individuals could manufacture a self, both stable and valuable

in the social world. In the dedication to Philip Henry's biography, one William Bates writes that the subject at the center of this life possesses greater "eminence in [his spiritual] endowments," hinting at the contradiction between professed primitivism and a desire to memorialize a figure of spiritual wealth (Henry A2). Bates elaborates that it is simply not enough to consider the actions of such a figure (which would satisfy the goal of instruction), but the reader should glimpse the "affections" within him that are likened to "the mines of precious metals contained" in the earth (Henry iv). Here Bates' language indicates a conflict between with the supposedly primitive goal of utilitarian instruction and a self-interested process of excavating the priceless spiritual foundation of Philip Henry's life. Rather than supporting the modest rhetoric of exemplum, Bates' desire for the "precious metals" of another's 'spiritual' life suggests precisely how Puritan nonfiction can be understood as a material record of individuals manufacturing the spiritual self into a fabricated form of social currency.

Consider the following argument that George Bataille makes in his *Theory of Religion*:

One achieves one's salvation in the same way that one spins wool; that is, one acts, not according to the intimate order, from violent impulses and putting calculations aside, but according to the principles of the world of production, with a view to a future result, which matters more than the satisfaction of desire in the moment. (87)

Reframing the individual's struggle to achieve salvation in terms of the world of production reveals an unexpected kinship between spiritual and economic spheres, a kinship that itself exposes a covert materialism that calculates salvation as if it were a corporate bottom line. In Alleine's treatise, one of his many admonitions to readers concerning the urgency of the matter at hand starkly draws this kinship between the spiritual and the economic. He urges that "now

Christ is waiting to be gracious to thee, and the spirit of God is striving with thee: now ministers are calling; now conscience is stirring; now the market is open, and oil may be had, thou hast opportunity for the buying" (140). The personal covenant with Christ, here tantamount to a market purchase framed explicitly in terms of social benefit and advantage, is an "opportunity" that is not to be missed. As if responding to readers' doubts concerning the value of such a purchase, Alleine's tone becomes increasingly hyperbolic and strangely reminiscent of a spiritual car salesman who insists that "now Christ is to be had for the taking, oh! Strike in with offers of grace: oh! Now, or never" (Alleine 140). Here Alleine stresses the temporal necessity of the spiritual bargain, but his insistence on the ease of striking such a deal belies the subsequent behavior necessary to guarantee the agreement, and I am thinking particularly of the act of writing an extensive record of one's life that represents a carefully calculated narrativized version of identity that manifests the saved self. The body of para-literary Puritan material serves as a historical record of this process of salvation production that is calculated to produce a future result which is, namely, a future self, and I am calling this ethic of production 'spiritual materialism.' While this particular term is not in heavy critical circulation, it has been used by Kathryn Bond Stockton, who uses the very same term to argue provocative and convincing points about Victorian feminist identity in *God Between Their Lips: Desire Between Women in Irigaray, Bronte, and Eliot*. Our usage of the term remains distinct despite the exact reiteration of the phrase, but situating the connections and disparities in our usage would constitute a lengthy digression here.

Crusoe's initial rebellion is typically cast as a pivot away from spiritual obedience toward a personal drive for profit, but the spiritual framework that Crusoe definitely transgresses is one already founded upon spiritual materialism. His initial rejection of the spiritual antecedent is

followed by an equally defiant turn against the economic system that enables individual agency and supposedly affords his freedom. The accepted critical narrative that Crusoe rebels against family structure and spiritual imperatives in favor of modern independence and mobility rooted in economic opportunities is one dramatically undermined by Crusoe's own language. It has long been commonplace to suggest and accept that Crusoe "leaves [home] for the classic reason of homo economicus- that it is necessary to better his economic condition" (Watt 65). To suggest an economic motive with any credibility becomes difficult to do after examining Crusoe's metaphors for the trappings of economic improvement readily available at home. With respect to clerking for an attorney or becoming an apprentice to a trade, he avers that "he was sure that if [he] did, [he] should never serve out [his] time, and [he] should certainly run away from [his] master before [his] time was out" (Defoe 8). By invoking the institutions of slavery (master) and the penitentiary (serving time), Crusoe conflates opportunities to improve himself economically with powerlessness and confinement.

One might insist that it is the servile position that Crusoe rejects, and that he only wishes to earn his riches under his own management. But the considerable wealth he amasses by the end of the novel comes from many sources and is all earned by his own industry, and yet he spurns this wealth as well. After discovering that he is a moneyed man upon his return to England, Crusoe observes that "indeed [he] had more care upon [his] head now, than [he] had in [his] silent state of life in the island, where [he] wanted nothing but what [he] had, and had nothing but what [he] wanted" (Defoe 240). The material progress he has made is a troublesome "care" that he conceives of as above him; his riches are a burden weighing down upon his head, a disdained diadem, and the trajectory of improvement associated with economic

individualism is finally a regression into a encumbered state that he ran away from so long ago when he refused to serve a sentence for a master in the world of capital.

Crusoe's final choice to ramble once again becomes a repetition of his 'original sin,' and through this mutinous cycle he rejects both the implicit Puritan imperative to settle and prosper *and* the economic materialism usually associated with his autonomy. This rejection is hardly consonant with the critical narrative of Crusoe's freedom through economic mobility, expressed variously, boldly, and sometimes in terms of absolute exclusivity: "profit is his only vocation, and the whole world is his territory" (Watt 67). Such expressions are, however, astonishingly similar to directives to profit in Puritan nonfiction even while they remain alien to Crusoe himself. In the spiritual biography of John Janeway, which was reproduced in many editions throughout the century, the "things of God" are described as "matters of the highest consequence, reality, and substance, the greatest profit, and sweetest pleasure" (Janeway 7). The means to secure such profit always returns to the self-written word; Janeway's biographer notes that his subject kept a diary in which he wrote every night, and in doing so "he took notice [of] what incomes and profit he received in his spiritual traffic" (Janeway 52). It is not enough to observe the consistent figuration of the spiritual life through the language of economics, assuming the influence of the latter upon the former. Rather, these records suggest that religious life and belief were conceived according to principles of production, with a primary focus on incentives, results, and manufacturing selves as social currency. As Bataille argues, the world of materialistic religion is one that "creates and preserves" for "the benefit of a lasting reality," and these excerpts from Janeway's biography concretize this impulse to preserve for the sake of temporally resistant spiritual profit (Bataille 49).

While this discussion seeks to collapse the superficially imposed distance between the spiritual and economic in *Crusoe* studies, it is important to acknowledge that the body of *Crusoe* criticism can be usefully anatomized using three broad categories constituted by the economic, spiritual, and political readings of the novel. Typically employed as discrete frameworks for interpretation, I contend that there is a fundamental relationship among them. This connection is precisely the dependence of each framework on affirmations of value that rely on incentives (profit, power, heaven) which ultimately resolve into a form of identity meant to guarantee them. Quite unlike its criticism, *Crusoe* is consistently anti-affirmative both in terms of narrative structure as well as the cognitive operations of the protagonist; thus the frequent charge that the novel is only residually Puritan. But imposing one affirmation in place of another, usually the economic for the spiritual, suppresses Crusoe's own refusal to rely on social incentives and manufacture a self befitting them. In his assessment of politics and identity in *Crusoe*, Frank Donoghue argues that an "assortment of modernizing forces" was eroding "the boundaries of an older social and political order" during the eighteenth century, and as a result, Crusoe must provide "more complex answers to questions about his political identity than would have been required of an Englishman in an earlier age" (Donoghue 9). Donoghue concludes that "Crusoe's attempts to define himself thus can be seen as a series of experiments," and he adds parenthetically that "none of them are completely successful" (Donoghue 9). My own position calls for a fundamental shift in vision that sees these 'failed' experiments as a successful challenge to spiritual materialism and its materialist ethic that depends on an apparently resolved identity whose definition is determined by singular incentive.

In his diary eventually collected and published in "An Extract of the Life and Death of Mr. Thomas Haliburton," Thomas Haliburton boldly expresses the spiritual materialism and the

three primary principles of production I have identified as the foundational pillars of nonfiction Puritan writing that deceptively insists on simple instruction as an end. He first declares that he needs to materialize his spiritual identity and "represent this work in its order," emphasizing a premium on rigid temporality as providing the sustaining order befitting a saved self (Haliburton 10). He then recognizes the profitable payoff, stating that if the written representation upholds the pattern, it will be "of great use to my own establishment" as the self is solidified and made impervious to the complexity of consciousness (Haliburton 10). Haliburton finally concludes that this self will indeed be a universal product that bears a perfect resemblance to all other saved selves which are "the same and uniform" (Haliburton 10). He speculates that even though he is primarily concerned with the establishment of this self, other Christians may find the record useful as an affirmation that they too have succeeded, for in examining his writing, they shall find that "as face answers face in a glass," so will the self produced in his writing bear an exact resemblance to their own (Haliburton 10). And so he explicitly addresses his concordance with the three principles of production I have stipulated: sustainability, uniformity, and quantifiable value calculated through social consumption. Haliburton's introductory disquisition serves as significant evidence for my hypothesis that the purpose of this genre is not about mere instruction, but rather primarily about creating a sustained narrative of self that adheres to these principles in an effort to generate psychological profit for the self.

Two noteworthy characteristics of Crusoe's interpretation of his environment that serve as dramatic departures from standard Puritan interpretive habits are the role of pleasure in process and the acceptance (and recording) of experience that breaks the formulae for neatly constructed personal narratives. After finding himself shipwrecked, Crusoe strives to fulfill his "hope of furnishing [himself] with necessaries" on the island, and at one point he stops to build himself a

table in order to more fully “enjoy the few comforts [he] had in the world” (Defoe 59). The two primary comforts he identifies in this passage are writing and eating, which he says he could not “do with so much pleasure without a table” (Defoe 59). In this passage, Crusoe equates writing with eating, categorizing them as two activities that provide a similar sustenance, but their necessity is not limited to mere nourishment as it moves toward enjoyment. Such enjoyment, itself a mark of distinction in how Crusoe practices his ‘accounting,’ is precluded from spiritual materialism as superfluity outside the domain of production.

Writing on the identity of the self enmeshed in a world of production, Bataille claims that “the farmer is not a man: he is the plow of the one who eats the bread” (Bataille 42). Analogously, just as the farmer becomes an inanimate functionary within a system of social demand, the eighteenth century Puritan self had become the plow, a tool that tilled a composition until its supposed unity made it fit for social consumption. This consumption proved necessary for a Puritan community that would need a profusion of concurrent narratives to validate a standard that would then guide the individuals' attempts to participate in that community which determined worth and value. As previously mentioned, the structure of spiritual autobiography was not merely designed to elucidate idiosyncratic patterns in the individual's experience; these patterns were designed to be ultimately subsumed into the archetypal Puritan pattern in order for the self to exploit a collective identity which could then be incorporated as personal value. Crusoe defies this tendency to exploit a performed pattern, as he incorporates folly, contradiction, and nonlinear meaning into his record. When Crusoe attempts to make his own plow, he struggles as he often does, and asserts that he had to learn to “bear with the badness of the performance” (Defoe 101). Meaning here transcends the patience required for inefficient farming practices. The badness of Crusoe's performance, in terms of his

failure to produce a neatly bifurcated self readily subsumed into a preordained pattern, signals a transition from the fictionalized narratives of meticulously constructed Puritan selves to the zone of crude and familiar contact that Bakhtin identified as the province of the realistic novel. I will now shift the focus of this investigation to the mechanism that creates the precise resemblance (the perfect performance) that Haliburton refers to; this uniformity is rooted primarily in the binary operation of conversion that relies on a vast network of dichotomous characterizations in addition to the fundamental identity transformation from the disobedient to the delivered Christian pilgrim.

II. "Sincerely Opposite": The Mechanism of Conversion as the Foundation of Spiritual Materialism and the Basis of Modern Self Formation

The spiritual materialism of Puritan nonfiction was the preeminent spiritual practice at the turn of the eighteenth century, and it is a practice that relies on the exercise of binary thinking that is designed to manufacture a self that conforms to the ideal of the saved self. To address binary thinking in an argument about Puritan spiritual practice seems an almost mundane endeavor, yet it must be done. As Hunter points out in a list of the primary characteristics of eighteenth century religious didactic nonfiction, “a powerful sense of good and evil” is the cornerstone of the genre which produces “plain, binary, and dogmatic distinctions and choices” (Hunter 228). The function of these binaries is to manufacture distance between two notions of self that cannot be traversed; even when the saved self sins, these acts are re-interpreted as momentary lapses rather than markers of an identity which has been determined and preserved by the conversion mechanism. These binaries are, conceptually, simple enough, but the purpose of their employment is a far more complex operation without

which the project of spiritual materialism could never manufacture its product, a sustainable, uniform, and profitable self.

While the moral binary of good and evil is perhaps most conspicuous, and even though it generated innumerable subsidiary binaries, they are all ultimately subsumed under the ultimate expression of opposition, the binary between life and death. Richard Baxter, a Puritan church leader who became an influential nonconformist and wrote prolifically at the end of the seventeenth century and so made many contributions to the record I have circumscribed, continually returns to the life and death binary in *A Christian Directory*. Using a numbered list to outline the plentiful “instances of the misery of an unregenerate, graceless state,” these ostensibly discrete instances converge on the horizon of the binary between life and death. Baxter writes that “while you are unsanctified, you are impotent and dead,” and that “till you are sanctified, you are the heirs of death and of hell” (Baxter 40). In 1701, Reverend Dewell Pead preached a sermon in Clerkenwell on conversion, and the structure of the sermon relies on this same life and death binary: the sinner is as “dumb as dead,” and the new life of the penitent can only be identified by terms that constitute a negation of the former condition, terms that continually evoke that very condition which has been supposedly transformed (Pead 8). In that incomparable example of the spiritual autobiography genre, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, Bunyan also employs the life and death binary early on in the account to anchor his misery in the context of this vital opposition. Quoting Mark 5:2-5, he insists that he “is the man that hath ‘his dwelling among the tombs’ with the dead.”

Even while it may seem almost quotidian to address the role of binary thinking in an analysis of Puritan practices and identity, still unacknowledged is the corollary that networks of Puritan binaries combine to form powerful but less obvious confluences that molded the Puritan

concept of self into a conflicted knot even while that self was defined by a simple unity founded on imposed difference. Put another way, the apparent and severe simplicity of Puritan binary distinction belies the complexity of associations among elements on either side of the margin of conversion. Three other common binaries employed in Puritan writing are the freedom/slavery, misery/joy, and play/work binaries (the significance of this last binary can be partially illustrated by Bunyan who first heard God's corrective voice thunder into his consciousness while he was playing an unforgivable game of tip-cat). Combined with those two binaries referenced above (i.e. death/life and evil/good), the saved living self can be characterized as a joyful slave who achieves goodness through work. Perhaps contrary to expectation, the life longed for and produced textually through spiritual autobiography is a life defined by liberty's antithesis. Baxter writes that it is for "thy everlasting happiness" that one ought to turn and "be alive to God," and "if thou be a believer," then "it will then be thy work to obey and please him, as a servant his master" (Baxter 47).

Setting aside the praxis apropos of this non-dead and so ostensibly alive identity founded on an abdication of autonomy which sets the self's agency in direct opposition to its own independence, it is clear the explicit value of passive obedience that attends the formulaic production of this saved identity is the vanishing point toward which Puritan nonfiction writing is supposed to converge. The frequently invoked alliterative binary between disobedience and deliverance neatly draws this path from the sinful assertion of will to a term which evacuates assertion of any kind as God becomes the subject that delivers the self, now reduced to a holy direct object. The great contradiction, however, is that the individual that performs this production of deliverance is mired in the strange spiritual exercise of mastering the self in the name of a final submission. The habit of introspection central to Puritan identity is one of

composition; the individual produces the saved self through textual intervention that places the individual in the role of the author, creator, and director of the self's spiritual life.

Ian Watt argues that this practice of religious self scrutiny is a process by which the Church as institution is replaced "by the individual who is entrusted with the primary responsibility for his own spiritual direction" (Watt 74). In tandem with the ascent of the role of the individual as the author of self through the exercise of introspection recorded through diary and autobiography, the ethic of mastery was also turned outward in the expression of the Puritans relationship to labor which was characterized by a rigorous perfectionism. Historically speaking, the early eighteenth century is a time when "the gospel of work had a similar effect in giving the individual's daily economic task almost as much importance as his daily spiritual self-examination" (Watt 76). *Crusoe*, then, seems to be 'fictitiously' faithful to these twin dictums of historically Puritan practices: his journaling, recording, and general "obsession with finding an account of his mental life," as well as his rigorous application which makes him a "master of every mechanic art," seem to make him a model Puritan (Bender 53, Defoe 59).

Crusoe breaks with this model fundamentally because, while he practices the introspection and application that were both informed by an ethic of control and mastery, he refuses to embrace these practices as leading to the production of identity. Spiritual materialism, that ethic of self-production that pervades the introspection of Puritan nonfiction writing, is an ethic that found external expression in the 'gospel of work,' but both of these expressions, one internally oriented and the other turned outward, are meant to resolve in the affirmation of identity, and it is precisely this affirmation that *Crusoe* refuses. Thus, the religious affirmation the text makes is not convincing (and has led many to disregard the

influence of the tradition that shapes the affirmation), though Crusoe as protagonist does follow through on the gesture of spiritual autobiography.

It will not do, however, to substitute other affirmations in place of the lackluster spiritual one, because the fundamental and radical departure that the text makes is away from not only spiritual, but economic and political affirmations that are also ultimately denied in *Crusoe*. I claimed above that I would establish a perspective that suggests fundamental relationships among these spiritual, economic, and political frameworks; this connection is that, with respect to the context of identity, all of these critical approaches reproduce identity affirmative modes that create many 'versions' of Crusoe that correspond to the various incentives that resolve into identity: pilgrim (spiritual), profiteer (economic), and king (political). The mode of the novel is instead anti-affirmative, and even as Crusoe participates in each of these realms of identity through language and behavior, I contend that he finally does not allow any of them to become a sustainable and durable identity in the social world. It is telling that those interpreting *Crusoe* can adeptly create so many various and contradictory portraits; what this reveals is the extent to which his practice of identity fluidly engages a myriad of social institutions and their respective points of reference.

The fact that Crusoe wanders once again at the end of the novel and confesses nearly identical logic for doing so results in the same desertion of the social institutions he abandons at the beginning, and this continuity creates a semantic similitude that is difficult to reconcile with the demand for difference that defines conversion. Many do attempt this reconciliation, but without much success; James Egan, without textual support, concludes that “Crusoe’s restlessness is elevated to holy restlessness,” and that at the close of the novel his return to wandering is now animated by “evangelical zeal” (Egan 460). Crusoe never professes such zeal,

and restlessness itself was considered a significant spiritual infraction that violated the institution of the family and transgressed the Puritan's appropriate position in a community of dutiful believers. Crusoe himself frames his transgressive wandering typologically by comparing himself to the Prodigal son, but he clearly breaks this typology with the repetition of his sin rather than simply going home and staying there. Starr argues that "*Robinson Crusoe* presents the *same story* of rebellion and punishment, repentance and salvation, which is common to Puritan spiritual histories," and that his "determination not to follow the approved course" transforms into Puritan resolve to follow the appropriate pilgrim path (Starr 201). These claims by Egan and Starr reveal a subtle circularity that must attend any argument for Crusoe as convert; his wandering is no longer wandering because he is saved, and while this 'holy restlessness' closely resembles disobedient restlessness, it is transfigured as it is read through his supposedly transformed spiritual self.

Crusoe does not tell the 'same story' common to Puritan spiritual histories, but instead mounts a sustained challenge against the application of individual agency in service of creating a textualized self that must conform to delivered identity as the denouement. The subtle but limiting assumption that similitude of 'plot' generates comparable meaning has continually hindered spiritual readings of *Crusoe* that cannot accommodate Crusoe's defiance. His insubordination is not merely an attack on the implicit values (i.e. passivity, obedience, order) that fortify the "same story" told in all Puritan histories, but on the process of self-production itself. Crusoe defies this process with an implicit model of selfhood that is open-ended and focused primarily on present experience rather than an introspective habit continually devoted to molding past and future into weight-bearing props designed to support a durable narrative of self, whether pilgrim, profiteer, or king.

One of the few available objections against this reading of Crusoe's defiance of identity affirmation and the resulting model of selfhood that I hypothesize is the basic contention that Defoe's desire for a sequel requires continued wandering and refusal of settled identity. I think the most persuasive evidence against such an objection comes from the sequel itself, *The Farther Adventures*, which frames Crusoe's penchant for motion and agitation that thwarts the resolution of identity as a feature of his character rather than as an accident or necessity of narrative structure. At one point in *The Farther Adventures*, Crusoe simply confesses that "sitting still" is "the unhappiest part of life" (Defoe 141). Spiritual, economic, and political readings depend on trajectories which make little allowance for Crusoe's final refusal of profit, power, and penitent obedience as he once again follows his "inclination to go abroad," thus abandoning the various incentives of his supposed motivations (Defoe 250). Crusoe actually seems more predisposed "to go" than to own, to spend, to govern, or to be delivered and so abdicate his agency in surrender to God. This predisposition is not determined by narrative structure or limited to the characterization of a single fictional self, but rather gestures toward a modern and radical model of selfhood that spurns incentives which demand a narrativized self to capture and sustain them; what remains in the wake of this spurning is the possibility for personal autonomy compromised by these incentives and the narratives that lurch toward them.

In *Theory of Religion*, Bataille posits the true purpose of religion as a search for lost intimacy with the present moment and with the self's own identity which he calls "a vague intimacy" that is eradicated by clear consciousness and the "domains of duration" that constitute a world of utility and production, whether economic or 'spiritual.' In Bataille's analysis, for the self to move toward that which it has lost, "what is important is to leave a world of real things whose reality derives from a long term operation and never resides in the moment- a world that

creates and preserves (that creates for the benefit of a lasting reality)” (Bataille 49). I previously identified Crusoe’s predilection for peregrination as a defining element of his character that ultimately helps sustain his challenge to spiritual materialism, and while it is impossible to claim that Crusoe has finally left the ‘world of things’ that Bataille conceives of, it is clear that through his fondness for motion, he is moving toward such an egress. If Bataille’s world of things is one that creates and preserves, it is telling that Crusoe proclaims he was “born to be my own destroyer;” he does not merely destroy his economic interests or salvation security (both of which he refers to in the context of this utterance), but also that ethic inherent in spiritual materialism which is the foundation of the ‘modern’ individual’s relationship to selfhood. In his argument on Crusoe as the embodiment of the ‘modern economic man,’ Watt quotes philosopher Ernst Troeltsch who argues that “the really permanent attainment of individualism was due to a religious, and not a secular movement, to the Reformation and not the Renaissance” (Watt 74). While I contest Troeltsch’s suggestion that individualism is ‘permanently attained’ as a possessed state of autonomy, this claim about the religious root of modern individualism is one that must be recognized in order to grasp the modern predicament of identity that, when stripped from its original spiritual context, cannot be properly understood.

Before I proceed further, I must delimit my own use of the term ‘modern,’ as it is too frequently invoked, sometimes without much qualification, to describe *Crusoe*, the novel species, the eighteenth century self, and the nebulous “assortment of modernizing forces” that was supposedly eroding “the boundaries of an older social and political order” during the eighteenth century (Donoghue 9). I use the term ‘modern’ with respect to three common axes on which it usually rotates in academic discourse: increased personal agency, non-essential identity, and introspection. With respect to agency, the streamlined eighteenth century narrative is that an

emerging mercantilist ideology begins to weaken traditional social and political order such that a vacuum is created in which a 'modern' individual emerges and has access to increased mobility and social power through the manipulation of capital. As a result, social institutions like the church and the family lose their ability to meaningfully bind a community and a self's identity as a particular part in that community. Ian Watt argues that Crusoe is a representative of the modern self unfettered from these social institutions, suggesting that "Crusoe is not a mere footloose adventurer, and his travels, like his freedom from social ties, are merely somewhat extreme cases of tendencies that are normal in modern society as a whole" (Watt 67). So, there is a 'normalized' perception that the now modern eighteenth century individual possesses unprecedented agency with respect to social mobility and self-definition. I certainly do not dispute the premise, only the optimistic slant that sees institutions as moribund and the new modern self as "possessing freedom from social ties." Even Watt's use of the term 'freedom' raises a distinction between agency and autonomy that I want to make and carry through the rest of this study; in particular, I want to emphasize the subtle assumption that increased agency is positively correlated with a psychological experience of increased autonomy that results in a psychological experience of "freedom."

Closely related to the claim that the modern individual is newly loosed from constricting social ties are two tangential claims that the identity of the modern individual is nonessential and protean, and that the movement associated with this protean nature can be organized through introspection which is considered a primary habit of the modern self. With respect to the sea change from an essential to a nonessential identity, in *The Making of the Modern Self*, Dror Wahrman writes that during the eighteenth century "what made such views about the doubling, splitting, or transmigrating of identities possible, and to some even plausible, was a non essential

notion of identity that was not anchored in a deeply seated self” (Wahrman 176). While this particular formulation of nonessential identity is still tied to bifurcation, it does make space for binaries outside of the spiritual categories that had heretofore precluded secular dichotomies. And for the modern individual, the evaluation of any such categories, secular or religious, takes place through introspection which becomes the primary tool used to organize and create the notional self. Charles Taylor succinctly describes this modern migration inward, writing that “for the modern disengaged subject, thought and valuation are in the mind in a new and stronger sense, because minds are now the exclusive locus of such realities, which can therefore now be called ‘psychic’ in a new sense” (Taylor 187).

Considering the body of nonfiction Puritan writing and *Crusoe* with respect to these three claims about the modern self, Crusoe is indeed modern insofar that his introspection is actively engaged as a resolve against essential binary categories that created the Puritan self. When he first lands on the island, Crusoe reflects on his condition and does so with a literally figured list of “good and evil,” but rather than uphold these designations, he bends this polar axis so that which is ‘evil’ can circle around toward becoming a commodious ‘good’ in order “to make things as easy” as possible on the island and in his mind (Defoe 58). All too often, Crusoe’s rhetoric of accounting obfuscates how Crusoe introspects which actually turns debits *into* credits; for all of the attention paid to his fetish for order in terms of the effects in his cave, his calendar on the wooden post, and his conversion in his journal, not enough has been said of the inherently disordering operation through which his thought often functions. “Consciousness for Robinson is circular and oscillatory, never linear,” and it is precisely this linearity that defines the Puritan journey from destruction to deliverance (Kavanagh 420). Crusoe's accounting, then, defies this linearity in a counterintuitive fashion, and serves to evacuate the meaning of the extreme poles of

binary categories. In *A Christian Directory*, Richard Baxter defines “the true penitent” as one whose will is “sincerely opposite,” and through this opposition the individual supposedly finds a discrete self (45). The oscillatory accounting Crusoe practices serves to undermine the formation of a discrete self meant to defy temporality in its endurance for the sake of spiritual or economic 'gains' ultimately linked to the agency and supposed autonomy of the modern self.

The inherited tradition of spiritual autobiography that Crusoe uses to organize his story distorts reality in that story and demonstrates how such traditions constitute external frames of interpretation that do not simply organize experience but actually create fictitious experiences. As the moment approaches when Crusoe reaches for his Bible and finds the “cure for both body and soul,” he becomes increasingly hyperbolic in his self reproach and rails that he is most “wicked and profane to the last degree” (Defoe 80). He recalls when the Portuguese Captain rescued him, and berates himself that even though he was “dealt justly and honorably with, as well as charitably, I had not the least thankfulness on my thoughts” (Defoe 76). This self portrait of profanity, littered with superlatives, is completely fictitious. When Crusoe was rescued, he was indeed so overwhelmed with gratitude that he “immediately offered *all* I had to the Captain of the ship” (Defoe 30). Crusoe’s conversion, a self-generated narrative invention, is one that conforms to tradition at the expense of reality, especially in terms of binary categories meant to stabilize a narrative of self. The fictitiously manufactured heathen provides a background that helps bring the penitent into focus in the mind of the binary thinker. The hyperbole present here in his assessment of his wicked character can, and should, be seen as a product of convention. One might consider only the title of Bunyan’s *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* as another example of hyperbolic assessment of one’s depravity. Or Pead’s assertion that the sinner

cannot “speak *one* good word” and instead can only incessantly and continuously “lye, curse, and swear” (Pead 8).

This habit of narrative linearity that depends on binary thinking and ultimately resolves into selfhood is the foundation of spiritual materialism, and the previous illustration serves as evidence of Crusoe's participation not only in a written narrative tradition, but in a socially normalized cognitive function that fuels the binary engine of conversion. The community of authors and readers creating, crafting, and sharing manufactured conversion narratives led to a quintessentially modern form of groupthink that ultimately erodes individual autonomy. The comic consciousness previously introduced is the conceptual antipode to this spiritual materialism founded on binary cognitions, and I contend that it remains the cornerstone of Crusoe's introspection and behavior even while his record bears the characteristic cultural marks one would expect. In his *Essay on the Comic*, Gutwirth identifies the mindset of the comic character as a “mindset that invents impossible juxtaposition (this cardboard is my castle) and is all set to rejoice at an unanticipated conflation that on some fragile ground of logic manages for an instant to seem to hold water, taking the mind in by an artful though improbable fiction” (96). Without reference to *Crusoe*, Gutwirth uses the image of the invented castle as a token example of a comic mindset at work; this image bears a precise congruence to Crusoe's oft repeated reference to going “home to my castle,” and he improvises countless other impossible juxtapositions throughout his island sojourn that I will soon examine (Defoe 140). Crusoe exercises the comic mindset to which Gutwirth refers, and he uses the solitude of his island to invent impossible juxtapositions that challenge the limits of the world he has left behind. The invention of impossible juxtaposition is a process that challenges the essentialism inherent in the binaries of Puritan thought that were meant to produce essential identities, and in this way

Crusoe subverts religious tradition and the model of selfhood it created. It is not precise to say that *Crusoe* breaks with tradition, or that in the wake of tradition's enervation Crusoe asserts the increased agency of the modern self. Crusoe proclaims that "the power and presence of God was everywhere," and it is through a bold confrontation with ubiquitous cultural beliefs about selfhood determined by collective spiritual practice that *Crusoe* denounces a model of self-production that transcends the spiritual language used to construct it (Defoe 150). One key to the relevance of my argument lies in uncovering the tenacious nature of this particular model of selfhood which, while catalyzed by spiritual materialism, persists past the social decline of religious habit. Even as the collective culture put down their quills and abandoned the crafting of meticulous spiritual autobiographies, the core cognitive binary habit of mind has persisted in the minds of modern selves as they fashion and preserve a 'sense of self.'

In his groundbreaking article, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," Harvard theologian Krister Stendahl argues the following:

The introspective conscience is a western development and a western plague. Once the introspective conscience came into the theological bloodstream of the western culture, it tended to dominate the scene far beyond its original function. It reached its theological climax and explosion in the Reformation, and its secular climax and explosion in Sigmund Freud. (17)

Stendahl identifies Augustine's *Confessions* as the catalyst of the injection of the introspective conscience into the theological blood stream of western culture, and that it is here with the prototype of spiritual autobiography that "man turned in on himself" and became preoccupied with "introspective achievements" (16). Stendahl's perspective of radical continuity that tracks a path from Augustine to Freud is crucial to my argument about Crusoe's challenge to spiritual

materialism that is not merely value based or defined by irreligion. Rather, Crusoe's model of selfhood rooted in comic perception also stands in opposition to secular interpretations of the novel that emphasize the same materialist ethic that undergirds spiritual materialism and masquerades in secular forms as a supposed departure from religiously inflected selfhood.

In addition to the spiritual, economic, and political, another important strain of *Crusoe* criticism can be identified as the "individual" framework for its emphasis on the qualities, achievements, and shortcomings of Crusoe as a 'modern' individual. Those employing this framework frequently follow this path of continuity suggested by Stendhal and, as a result, emphasize Crusoe's supposed introspective achievements that rely on the same values of coherence, narrative linearity, and progression that characterize spiritual autobiography. John Bender writes that

Defoe employs the model of spiritual autobiography and decisively breaks with it, for self-consciousness here replaces the ascent from hell to heaven, thought replaces salvation, and private awareness rather than emblematic public expression defines meaning. (46)

Bender's rhetoric of substitution here is, in one sense, deeply incisive in that it tracks the same continuity that Stendhal posits, but he frames this continuity as a break that relies on the obvious migration into the secular as self-evident difference. Just as Stendhal asserts that with Augustine the west became preoccupied with introspective 'achievements' that he conceives of as insubstantial, so does Kavanagh, writing in the same framework as Bender, reproduce this language exactly, writing that Crusoe "achieves an awareness of self denied him during his time among men" (416). To read Crusoe's story as the 'progression' from ignorance to awareness in which thought is substituted for salvation is to interpret *Crusoe* as a replication of the same

story told in Puritan nonfiction only with secular language. The margin of distinction between whether Crusoe “progresses toward ultimate deliverance” or represents “progression toward a sense of self” becomes imperceptible (Starr 184, Kavanagh 418). The qualities of coherence and progression that resolves into a unitary self are ever-present and constitute a model of selfhood built upon the linguistic operation of introspection organized by binary cognitions. It is telling that before he leaves society one again at the end of the novel, Crusoe says that he “was in a condition which I scarce knew how to understand, or how to compose my self”; hardly attaining awareness, Crusoe cannot incorporate present experience into a trajectory that culminates with self-definition (Defoe 240). Crusoe’s final pronouncement that he scarcely knows how to ‘compose his self’ undermines both the conversion model that established closed self-definition through composition and this model’s secular analogue which replaces salvation with secular awareness.

These two models are more accurately conceived of as one only, and one that translates ideals of spiritual order and coherence into secular language that the individual employs in the production of a purely notional self that must remain permanently alienated from the intractable sphere of experience. Crusoe’s ‘failed’ experiments of self-definition present a portrait of the modern self that maintains intimacy with experience rather than imposing distance through narrated definition by which the self becomes an object of production rather than the subject of creation. Bakhtin theorizes the novel as the unique genre in which the subject is “made comical” as it is “brought close” through the destruction of “valorizing distance,” and I contend that *Crusoe*’s destruction of this distance is what defines this seminal novel as an “absolutely free investigation” of the modern subject (Bakhtin 23). For Bakhtin what takes place is “the comical operation of dismemberment” that strips the subject naked and “turns the hero into a

jester,” and Crusoe is precisely this comic hero rather than the heroic pilgrim suggested by Starr and Hunter or the hero of modern individualism suggested by Bender, Richetti, and others. Crusoe is Bakhtin’s hero of “free improvisation and not tradition,” and as such defies the order impressed upon the self by spiritual materialism and its secular incarnations that require the individual to impose produced selfhood on the future as a conceptual sieve that must strain out discrepant meaning that threatens the destruction of the produced self (Bakhtin 36).

It has been said that “*Robinson Crusoe* is emblematic of those characteristics identified with the modern novel,” especially with respect to “the centering of the story in character” which catalyzes “the emergence of the novelistic persona as a realistic psychological presence” (Kavanagh 416). Rather than misread this realistic presence as the fulfillment of a model of selfhood bound to the world of production through spiritual materialism, I contend that Crusoe is a portrait of the modern subject apropos of the novel species which abandons authority, completeness, and the absolute in favor of “open-endedness, indecision, and indeterminacy” (Bakhtin 16). If the novel is the species wherein the modern subject confronts “an intensified consciousness, individual by individual, of what selfhood means,” it is especially prophetic how Bakhtin argues that “the novel is plasticity itself” given recent advances in neuroscience which have proven that the brain that houses consciousness is itself a plastic thing (Hunter 24). Both Crusoe's constant motion of behavioral change as well as his continual exercise of impossible cognitive juxtapositions (to be examined in the next section) reflect the plasticity of the novel genre and the plasticity of the modern self conceived of by a biologically plastic brain.

The Puritan para-literary materials (spiritual autobiography, sermons, essays, etc.) that I have identified constitute a record of spiritual materialism, an ethic of self-production that uses spiritual binaries to construct a discrete and enclosed identity ultimately divorced from

experience. This model, which persists into the ‘rise of secularism,’ demands mastery through both introspective achievement and environmental domination that culminate in rigidly defined selfhood, and *Crusoe* exercises a sustained challenge to this paradigm of selfhood predicated on the practice of improvisation in the realms of introspection and experience. In response to the grief island life causes him, Crusoe says that “he began to exercise my self with new thoughts;” here we find emphasis on exercise as present-focused activity, and the reflexive pronoun “myself” is abandoned for a textual figuration (my self) that injects space into the knowing subject that can release itself from the product of that knowledge, the manufactured and durable narrative of self (Defoe 97). The comic perspective that Crusoe adopts is a practical application of the notion of modern nonessential identity, and the manifestation of this practice is the internal conceptual exercise that collapses Puritan binary categories and external behavior that violates the produced self which was formerly authored as the illusory denouement. The Puritan model of selfhood is in two senses already modern in that both introspection and increased agency characterize the spiritual materialism inherent in the model. *Crusoe* is not modern in its mere disregard for religious tradition, but modern in its creation of a form of praxis that embodies the oft theorized concept of modern non essential selfhood, and so offers a modern answer to an already modern problem. Bataille’s theory of religion and Bakhtin’s theory of the novel both emphasize a radical turn to intimacy with present experience. The former frames religious tradition as founded on a materialist production of salvation that finally reduces the subject to the status of an object defined by coherence, and the latter posits the novel species as defiant of all tradition as it clears “the ground for free investigation” of the self that is the ultimate prerequisite “to approach the world realistically” (Bakhtin 23). To say that *Crusoe* breaks with tradition or simply embodies an alternative model of selfhood is less precise

than situating this model within history as concurrently and fundamentally opposed to the concept of self-generated by religious habits of thought that offered salvation on the condition of mastery. Bakhtin's concept of hero as jester is a rejection of the illusion of autonomy that mastery presents the modern self; this master is merely a jester who refuses to look in the mirror.

III. "It would have made a Stoick smile:" Locating Crusoe's Subversive Comedy

While Thomas Haliburton emphasizes that all Christians could look into his autobiography and see an exact likeness of themselves, Crusoe often ponders his reflection and concludes that no one in England could recognize any familiarity, much less precise similitude. Without the aid of a looking glass, Crusoe regularly stops to literally look at himself and ponder his imagined position within the world he has left behind. He observes that

had anyone in England been to meet such a man as I was, it must have either frightened them, or raised a great deal of laughter; and as I frequently stood still to look at myself, I could not but smile at the notion of my travelling through Yorkshire with such an equipage, and in such a dress: be pleased to take a sketch of my figure as follows. (126)

This image of a smiling Crusoe who entertains an imagined encounter of his island self with an Englishman who would either run or chuckle at such a meeting is one usually forgotten in favor of the fearful Crusoe anxiously toiling at his infinite labor or the confident Crusoe extolling God's providence for yet another gracious deliverance. Yet there has been significance attributed to signals of Crusoe's levity, as when John Richetti identifies one of Crusoe's other

smiles as the visible sign of a psychic shift from the anxious introspection of his early days on the island to a later more self-assured “mode of being in the world that is rhetorical and calculated for its effect on others” (Richetti 71). In his reading of the scene in which Crusoe convenes with the Captain to address the danger posed by the mutineers, Richetti alleges that Crusoe responds to the Captain’s apprehension with “the confidence of his first smile” (71). Crusoe does, however, smile many times before this moment; he smiles at the sight of useless money, exchanges several smiles with Friday, and, as noted above, he *frequently* stands still and smiles at his own aberrant appearance (50, 172, 180, 126). This incidental forgetting of Crusoe's smile is symptomatic of a larger critical oversight that has made the notion of a comic Crusoe seem as strange as his island equipage.

Peter Berger argues that the simplicity inherent in the outward signal of the smile, usually interpreted as a perceptible sign of internal amusement and pleasure, belies a “cognitive component” that accompanies “the experience of the comic as the perception of something objectively *out there* in the world, and not simply (though it is also that) a subjective experience determined by the relativities of history and sociology” (Berger 34). With respect to Crusoe beaming at his bizarre physical appearance, the external foci of Crusoe’s perception are the cultural institutions (i.e. political, spiritual, and economic) implicitly recognized by “anyone in England,” and in particular he perceives fear and derision as the likely consequences of his violation of institutional values. The smile indicates that Crusoe is indeed having that internal and subjective comic experience of amusement, which seems discordant with the condemnation he attributes to denizens who exist locally and psychically within the social order that is ‘out there.’ As previously noted, Berger argues that “the comic experience provides a distinctive diagnosis of the world” as “it sees through the facades of ideational and social order, and

discloses other realities lurking behind the superficial ones” (34). Thus it is not only Crusoe’s perception of institutional order and its condemnation that matters here, but also his appraisal of the nature of this order that makes it possible for him to transcend its censure through comic experience which is signaled by a smile.

This particular smile becomes even more material when weighed against a parallel passage from the beginning of the novel. After his initial departure, Crusoe reflects that “as to going home, shame opposed the best motions that offered to [his] thoughts; and it immediately occurred to [him] how [he] should be laughed at among the neighbors, and should be ashamed to see, not [his] father and mother only, but even everybody else” (Defoe 15). Here, the imagined laughter of family and society does not resolve into a comic experience for Crusoe, but rather shame and ignominy that results from being “a fool to [his] own interest,” which can be glossed as his economic, spiritual, and social benefits (Defoe 36). Obviously Crusoe is quite separate from society in his subsequent physical isolation, but we can also see that his smile on the island indicates that he has accomplished a cognitive escape and extricated himself from the snare of the common values of his culture. Conceivably, these values could have precluded his comic experience and doomed his physical separation to the psychological tragedy of alienation and denunciation with the social order wielding its condemning power in absentia via Crusoe’s own consciousness. What must be recognized here is a clear transformation from shame-based cognitions that drive Crusoe’s peregrinations to a pleasurable amusement derived from the same social stimulus of reproving laughter. The vehicle of this transformation is the advent of comic perception in Crusoe’s consciousness.

I have not forgotten the frequency and force with which Crusoe rails against his island life, but I am suggesting that the comic as a form of perception is present in the text and is not

dependent on sustained levity. Crusoe's amusement at having escaped from the hierarchical values of his culture is less about mere pleasure and more about a shift in schematic meaning. As I argued at the outset of this discussion, many readings of *Crusoe* emphasize a brand of individualism that manipulates and stands atop social networks of resources and meaning rather than outside them, and here we see Crusoe simultaneously perceiving his outsider status, seeing through traditional social order, and responding with amusement to these perceptions and revelations. His amusement is not passive, however. The comic mindset that makes such a response possible is one he actively creates through linguistic intervention that undermines the principles of production by destroying sustainability and making calculation useless.

The mode of self-figuration created via nonfiction Puritan writing uses economic language not merely to reflect but to create and project a self that is a product with calculable and stable value. The spiritual materialism endemic to the genre of Puritan nonfiction is a practice of identity creation rather than moral instruction, and it is a practice characterized by three principles of production: sustainability, uniformity, and quantifiable value calculated through social consumption. These three principles actively shape the aforementioned primary texts by Henry, Janeway, and Haliburton; the writing itself becomes behavior and finally a durable record of self, this self is an exact reflection of the archetypal saved self, and this reflection is designed for absorption into a collective identity that infuses the self with value in the market of salvation.

In this section, I have suggested that the significance of Crusoe's smiles lies in their presence as a tangible signal of the comic, and I will subsequently demonstrate how Crusoe extricates himself from such a market by cultivating a comic perception expressed by two primary characteristics of the language he uses to create and recreate his self and world. Using both chiasmic constructions and an aural rhetoric supplemented by alliterative pairs that

undermine traditional binaries, Crusoe subverts the spiritual materialism that had become a core habit of religious practice. This use of language as a tool to subvert spiritual materialism directly reflects a comic mindset that continually recreates the self and world through what Gutwirth calls "impossible juxtapositions." Gutwirth uses the phrase "this cardboard is my castle" as an example of one such impossible juxtaposition, which of course directly mirrors Crusoe's infamous metaphor of cave as castle that collapses the semantic distance between two deeply disparate descriptions of 'reality' (96). Crusoe exercises the comic mindset to which Gutwirth refers, and he uses the solitude of his island to invent impossible juxtapositions that erode the significance of the binaries used to construct the social order in a world he no longer lives in but must still confront as the source of his perceptual foundation. The record of the confrontation Crusoe mounts against ubiquitous cultural beliefs about selfhood can be traced back to his use of language, namely chiasmic constructions and an aural rhetoric supplemented by alliterative pairs that undermine the very fabric of hierarchical social organization.

The chiasmic habit that Crusoe practices is one expression of the comic impossible juxtaposition delineated by Gutwirth, and this expression in particular creates a space of psychic autonomy outside circumstance. Following Taylor's description of the modern subject's reality as a psychic one which exists primarily in the mind, the role of language becomes one of primary importance in determining the experience of an individual. I previously examined Crusoe's disdain for the riches that await him back in England at the close of the novel, but perhaps even more important than Crusoe's belief that those riches are a burden weighing down from above him is how he describes them. With respect to his island life, Crusoe calls it a land "where [he] wanted nothing but what [he] had, and had nothing but what [he] wanted" (Defoe 240). In this final chiasmic pronouncement on the relationships among desire (want), the self (I),

and material (nothing), we have more than a challenge to the conflation of self improvement with economic improvement and the values that quietly attend it. Crusoe destroys the assumption that desire can be assuaged with material or accounted for in any material way, and so implies the inescapable remainder, that Lockean unease, which must always plague every path paved with materialism and oriented toward the satiation of desire. Crusoe stages another particularly illustrative chiasmic intervention while ruminating on the nature of the self, God, and world, asking “what am I, and all other creatures, wild and tame, humane and brutal, whence are we?” (Defoe 79). His delighted smile at his wild appearance suggests pleasure in his participation in a life outside the bounds of humane civility, and here Crusoe uses a particular rhetorical structure to blur the boundary between these antipodal states. More importantly than altering experience through such linguistic intervention, Crusoe loses the formation of self from the habit of rigorously accounting for experiences in a premeditated way so as to generate a self justified by experience.

It is important to note that this conceptual operation of collapsing semantic distance between opposing concepts is not confined to the uses of chiasmus throughout the novel. We can find another non-chiasmic example of such thinking that constitutes the foundation of the comic mindset in Crusoe's play with his prison metaphor. At one point he insists that not only is “the island certainly a prison to [him],” but that it is so “in the worst sense of the word” (Defoe 83). However, Crusoe says that he eventually “learned to take [the word] in a different sense,” and indeed not only a different one, but his adjustment transforms that which had been the worst sort of prison into nothing, and so something ultimately significant (83). After “learning” to understand the different senses of the word, Crusoe says that “as for [his] solitary life it was nothing,” and he “did not so much pray to be delivered from it,” or even “think of it” (83). Just

as Crusoe uses the chiasmic formulation to negate the values of the economic world and in so doing collapses the distance between everything and nothing (I want nothing | nothing I want), here Crusoe practices that same thinking in which the worst kind of prison vanishes into “nothing” such that the island might become everything to him (including castle, country seat, Leadenhall Market, and all else).

In addition to the chiasmic and more general examples of Crusoe using language to destabilize circumstance and free the self defined by circumstance, he also regularly employs alliteration toward this same end and introduces an aural rhetoric that directly undermines the ethic of recording that drove the production of nonfiction Puritan writing. Crusoe uses a complex strategy of recollecting his past and categorizes "days as fatal or fortunate;" he argues that fatal days anticipate fortune, as when his day of birth, the 30th of September and the beginning of his "wicked life," becomes a day of fortune when he is saved from death and begins life on the island on the very same day (Defoe 113). In a more direct challenge to the calcified pattern of spiritual autobiography, Crusoe blasphemes at the close of the novel that people can be "brought to their deliverance by the means by which they seem to be brought to their destruction" (Defoe 212). Being delivered by destruction is an impossibility in the linear manufacturing inherent in Puritan nonfiction that struggled to construct and uphold the barrier of conversion.

Lest this chiasmic and alliterative strategy be labeled a rhetorical flourish, it is crucial to note the concomitant aural rhetoric that rings throughout the novel as Crusoe insists on the significance of sound as a vehicle of destabilizing subjectivity. When retrospectively charting his convoluted spiritual course, Crusoe recounts reading Bible verses about deliverance that were "very apt to [his] case" yet did not catalyze conversion because "as for being delivered, the

word had no sound, *as I may say*, to me" (Defoe 154). From even the first page of his recollections, Crusoe emphasizes the subjectivity inherent in the process of naming, calling, and recording, and he does so by demonstrating the disparity between "how things are called" and what they are with a resulting destabilization that creates a new space of autonomy for the self (Defoe 5). He dwells on the sound of what the Dutch call the sea (38), muses on calling himself king and Lord of the Manor (109), and even analyzes the disparity of how different cultures classify topography and call a particular type of land a "savannah" (124). An account of the proliferation of this aural rhetoric might needlessly carry on indefinitely as the incidence of its use abounds throughout the text.

The net effect of this employment of chiasmus and alliteration within an explicitly aural context stands as a rebellion against the Puritan self-production that relied so heavily on the record of self as a material artifact produced to be a sustainable commodity with a calculable value. These rhetorical strategies are not employed accidentally and without design, as the most significant semantic categories supporting economic and spiritual materialism are evacuated of meaning; Crusoe's island is place where he has everything and nothing in terms of material wealth, and he is ultimately delivered by his own seeming destruction and even repeats his "original sin" with an insubordinate awareness. The design behind this rhetorical strategy serves as a powerful and practical manifestation of Berger's account of the comic as a form of perception that sees through the social order held together by these material extremes, and the impossible juxtapositions that Gutwirth claims are the cornerstone of the comic mindset are the foundation for Crusoe's aural rhetoric that makes fatal and fortunate circumstances interchangeable.

Crusoe's attempts to harness social power and social agency have been well documented, including and especially his vast network of improvised titles, whether king, lord, master, governor, or generalissimo. Although there are notable exceptions such as Robert Folkenflik's "*Robinson Crusoe and the Semiotic Crisis of the Eighteenth Century*," less has been made of his toggling between existing as king and captive, being disobedient and delivered, and living days that are fatal and fortunate. I have suggested that the durable narratives of self produced in Puritan nonfiction are ultimately an attempt to capitalize on the self as social currency, and by undermining the very categories meant to organize these narratives, Crusoe forfeits the material payoff. Crusoe does, however, stand to gain an autonomy that remains outside the markets of salvation and mercantilism. Perhaps not surprisingly, in addition to his preoccupation with the kinship between the spheres of spirituality and economics, Bataille also wrote extensively on sovereignty and laughter. In his analysis, the kings of the world are at best a "pale reflection" of true sovereignty which he describes as a condition of "insubordination" that may just as well belong to the beggar as the king (and more likely to the beggar) (Borch-Jacobsen 745). For Bataille, the king stands atop social organization, but is nevertheless utterly dependent on it, which marks social sovereignty as a state of subjection. The smiling Crusoe cultivates this insubordination that undermines all readings of his individualism as positive proof of the force of personal agency. It is this very condition that Crusoe creates through comic perception that not only "sees through" social order, but actively dismantles it through linguistic operations that inaugurate impossible juxtaposition as the antidote to Puritan self-production that is dependent on social order and the principles of production.

It is telling that Giorgio Agamben's analysis of sovereignty returns to "Pindar's knot," which he gracefully expresses using the same chiasmic strategy that Crusoe uses writing that "the

sovereign is the point of indistinction between violence and law, the threshold on which violence passes over into law and law passes over into violence" (Agamben 32). Crusoe's chiasmic musing on the nature of tame and brutal creatures is closely akin to Agamben's definition of the sovereign, and both use the rhetorical placement of words to embody their thinking. Hardly defining, the threshold of indistinction threatens all attempts to delimit the self and the social role, and by using language to recreate this threshold Crusoe creates a space for a comic orientation toward the world of social constructions that depend upon production, definition, and use. For Bataille and for Crusoe, that which is "sovereignly good" is so "because it is good for nothing;" the Puritan self-production I have identified is the font from which materialist values have sprung in the modern construction of selves that are not only designed to be good for something, but actually become some thing commodified for the sake of a calculated payoff that paradoxically reduces the possibility of autonomy for a self wedded to what agency can produce (Borch-Jacobsen 745).

In the spirit of preserving possibilities, I would like to conclude with noteworthy evidence that Defoe himself was aware of and not censorious of the possibilities of comic interpretations of *Crusoe*. In his preface to the *Serious Reflections During the Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, Defoe takes a brief moment to answer a charge from his contemporary Charles Gildon who, "in the abundance of his gall, spoke of the Quixotism of *R. Crusoe*, as he called it, and showed evidently, that he knew nothing of what he said" (Defoe 265). But Defoe refers to Gildon and his gall not for the mere comparison between *Quixote* and *Crusoe*, but because he intends the comparison to be derisive; Defoe would have it quite the opposite way, anticipating that Gildon "will be a little startled when I shall tell him, that what he meant for a satire, was the greatest of panegyrics" (Defoe 266).

When Bakhtin set out to define how the novel genre departs from tradition, he argued that the novel stages “the comical operation of dismemberment” that strips the subject naked and “turns the hero into a jester” (Bakhtin 25). I have suggested that Crusoe is this comic hero rather than the heroic Puritan pilgrim suggested by Starr and Hunter, the hero of modern individualism suggested by Bender and Richetti, or the hero of economic individualism, a characterization that has at times eclipsed nearly every other interpretation of Crusoe. Bakhtin’s concept of hero as jester is a rejection of the illusion of autonomy that mastery presents the modern self; this master is merely a jester who refuses to look in the mirror, and Defoe offers *Crusoe* to the modern self as a looking glass.

Making space for the comic Crusoe will alter the substance and appearance of his island and self, and examining the text with a comic lens will lead to new discoveries. Borch-Jacobsen, in his analysis of Bataille’s theory of laughter, introduces his argument with a brief analysis of Woody Allen’s *Hannah and Her Sisters*, suggesting that perhaps the funniest moment of the film is when “we see Woody Allen livid, thrown for a loop by anguish, gesticulating hysterically at the approach of his death” (Borch-Jacobsen 739). It is strange that this moment of comedy is hardly unlike Robinson landing on the island, “thrown into agonies of mind,” and “[running] about like a madman” because he “cannot see any prospect before [him], but that of perishing” (Defoe 41). Crusoe is thrown for a loop, indeed. In his reflections on laughter, Etienne Souriau asserts that art must ultimately tame laughter, and that the comic “exercises the demon of laughter...yanking out its viper’s fangs, teaching it to dance at the end of a stick” (Gutwirth 151). It is surprising how Defoe’s tale modeled on Puritan conversion concludes with episodes like Friday teaching a bear to dance at the end of a stick to entertain his audience and “make you good laugh” (Defoe 247). It is strange also to grasp the similarities between Crusoe and Friday,

a 'master' and 'slave' who profess open love for one another despite abuse and who have convoluted dialogues about God while waiting for deliverance, to the comic absurdity of Pozzo and Lucky in *Waiting for Godot* who are not dissimilar to these two. *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* portrays the fictional life of one individual who spurns the product-obsessed nature of modern self creation in favor of a comic position that depends upon a plot-less process; just like Crusoe's declaration that there is simply nothing left for him to do but smile, this portrayal suggests that, for the modern self, the smiling left to do is the only thing to be done.

Chapter 2

“A very sensible Mortification”:

Mapping Shame and Social Consciousness in *The Female Quixote*

What do we hold against the drug addict? [...] that he cuts himself off from the world, in exile from reality, far from objective reality and the real life of the city and the community; that he escapes into a world of simulacrum and fiction.

~Jacques Derrida, *The Rhetoric of Drugs* (1990)

It is certainly an error to assume that the author ‘mugged up’ the French romances, as it were, for the purpose only of ridicule. Rather this must be the work of an author already well-versed in the sources that the central character finds so addictive.

~Margaret Anne Doody, Introduction to *The Female Quixote* (1988)

The bravest Man that ever lived, would not have presumed to fight with so great a number of enemies. What could you expect, but to be cut in Pieces? Pooh! pooh! don't think any body will credit such a ridiculous Tale: I never knew you was so addicted to-

~Charlotte Lennox, *The Female Quixote* (1752)

The charge of Sir Charles, that Arabella is addicted to her romances, is one also levied by Margaret Doody some two hundred and thirty-nine years later. It is noteworthy that Sir Charles' response is truncated by the dash and so he never quite says exactly what Arabella is addicted to, but perhaps it is implied that the reader ought to simply assume he means her romances. But does that assumption clear up issues regarding her state of mind and the nature of this addiction,

though? How might Arabella be addicted to a tale, story, or fiction? One might assume pleasure would be the cornerstone of such an assessment, and that it is merely an equivalent expression of implying excessive enjoyment and delight in the reading of such tales. But Lennox accomplishes quite a bit more with her heroine than charting her immoderate enjoyment of tales that others do not understand; while Arabella does not ingest them at the physical and chemical level, her attachment to these tales constitutes a process addiction, where any pleasure she feels leads to behavior that becomes central to her social identity and carries with it complex social consequences. As Derrida observes, one of the defining characteristics of an addict that definitely applies to Arabella is the separation from community and escape into a fiction that other social peers cannot understand and do not take part in with the ‘addict.’ But while there is one community that the addict is separate from, a community that constitutes the conforming majority and creates the sense of convention, there is almost always another that will share and understand the nature of what this individual depends upon for either enjoyment or sustenance. Given the lacuna in Sir Charles’ diagnosis of Arabella’s state of mind as being one defined by addiction, I would argue that it is not the romances themselves in any unique sense that constitute an addicted or dependent condition in the body and psyche of Lennox’s heroine.

I find that the romances are the material manifestation of one object of such dependence, but that they serve a common rather than particular function in this text that frequently invites dialogue concerning the status of the tales themselves as a genre either relevant to burgeoning forms of fiction or increasingly separate from contemporary literary endeavor. My focus here will not be on the status of genre, but on how this particular romance genre functions as an imagined social community whose primary representative depends upon and is hopelessly devoted to it in a fashion that models how modern social selves also depend upon the

communities that confirm their identity. The mechanics of Arabella's addiction that Lennox exposes are the very same mechanics that drive the relationship between all selves and social communities, and the primary pistons that drive such dependency that I will be examining include shame, social belonging, and how social actors signal and transfer shame through the social gaze. I will later argue that the gaze is the practical tool used by individuals to employ shame as an operative social device in communities, and that the purpose of this gaze is to first create, then organize, and finally monitor the different 'worlds' that automatically disperse social selves into mainstream and sanctioned social roles while others will occupy the role of outlying addicts, though the dependence of both is identical. I find that this parallel dependence is rooted in the similitude of the social mechanisms that catalyze dependence, regardless of the particular nature of the material object of dependence. My analysis of Arabella's final conversion as a simple but ultimately unfortunate lateral move from one community to another, rather than as a hopeful step toward normalcy or hopeless abdication of personal power, will support the notion that her initial devotions are in no way exceptional. As Doody points out, it seems highly unlikely that Lennox wanted to simply ridicule romance or even Arabella's slavish devotion. Rather, Lennox shifts our focus to ridicule itself and its primary function in the standoff between Arabella's romantic world and the world of her actual social peers. If "it is only in the 'Cure' of Arabella's uncured mind that the world of empty social forms, of fictions, can actually be inspected," then this cure might also be construed as an actual social operation that reveals the extent to which every social self has escaped into world of fiction variously validated by others in that community (Lewis 187). In other words, Arabella migrates from one social fiction to another, and Lennox's cure reveals a portrait of universal dependence through habituated

perception that serves as the common denominator for the multifarious worlds of empty social forms.

And so it with these three complementary insights from Derrida, Doody, and Lennox herself that I first move to speak of addiction and dependence in *The Female Quixote* without anachronistically misapplying a term, model of mind, and constellation of behaviors to a historical moment where such a model has no place. On the contrary, I believe that this novel marks a crucial shift in the development of the social self that reveals the extent to which this self is, quite literally, dependent on the perceptual schemas made available by the social actors that surround the individual. The incessant charge against Arabella, that she is living in an isolated fiction that is variously comic, tiresome, and sometimes infuriating to those around her, is a charge that is not merely about the romances that serve as the door to Arabella's departure from her contemporary world. Rather, Lennox's focus on how that charge is levied, how Arabella responds to such allegations, and the incessant dance between competing visions of the world exposes the universality of the social science behind all commitments to certain portraits of the world that are no different than Arabella's commitment which leads her to "[suppose] Romances were real Pictures of Life" (Lennox 7). Arabella's devotion to her romantic model is the blueprint, not the absurd exception, for how the self positions itself in the social world. The context of the eighteenth century as a historical moment ripe for the revelation that being an individual is defined by a peculiar form of habituated social learning is of course aptly captured by Alexander Pope in *An Essay on Criticism*. Therein he muses that "A little learning is a dang'rous thing;/ Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring:/ There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,/ And drinking largely sobers us again." Such learning is peculiar precisely because it both clarifies and confuses, blurring lines of understanding and boundaries of identity such that

the ideal of learned knowledge as material and dependable is washed thoroughly away. Pope's equation of learning as an operation of intoxication at the start of the century is an equation that Lennox takes up and develops in her novel, arguing for the liquid subjectivity of all social learning as when she characterizes Lady Bella's romantic bent with the same lexicon employed by Pope: "Heroism, romantick Heroism, was deeply rooted in her Heart; it was her Habit of thinking, a Principle imbib'd from Education" (Lennox 329). Crucially then, the habit of thinking is a collective one rather than individual, and the learning itself is an operation of intoxication that undermines the possibility of sober and objective accounts or 'pictures' life. Lennox's prescient account of Arabella possessing a *collective* habit of mind she cannot kick lays the foundation for understanding how this novel dissolves the barrier between the individual and the social world such that the social audience becomes central to the individual's self-conception and habits of thinking that can hardly be conceived of as personal.

In *The Transmission of Affect*, a compelling work that challenges the notion of psychologically discrete and contained individuals, Teresa Brennan investigates the various phenomena by which the affective life is literally shared via transmission amongst individuals in company. Electrical entrainment, olfactory transmission, and other mechanisms serve as conduits to the sharing and receiving of various affective states, but even more central and fundamental to both her work and the labor of this discussion is the foundation of how the self first comes to perceive itself in the social world. Brennan refers to the "quasi-geometric positioning of human perception that occurs as humans come to see the world from their own standpoint" (Brennan 107). And yet that standpoint is hardly one's own in any substantial way, but rather a point that is shared with a community and created by belonging to that community, a point that is mapped by and through relationships in community, a point that is continually

refigured by the force and authority of the actors within that community. Brennan articulates the nature of this process of positioning as removed from the individual per se, writing that

The key to this geometry of positions resides in reformulating the birth of the psychical apparatus and understanding delay and spatial causality as its nucleus. Positioning is observational. It sees the other and the self from its own standpoint. (108)

Brennan's focus is on the birth of the psychical apparatus as one which happens in a space not associated with the individual, nor is in any sense idiosyncratic to a particular social self. It is instead the social community that creates a spatial separation that is injected into self-conception, so that there is an ever-present distance which ensures that self-awareness and self-conception are always qualified by what that self already knows its social audience perceives. Affect then, even the most private feelings, are always dependent on the social audience and very much mapped by the self's relative position to this audience. Thus the necessity of the metaphor of the map in my own title which reflects Lennox's sensitivity to the observational position from which all individuals process self-understanding and comprehension of the social environment.

Arabella's relative social position as an outsider is clear from the beginning, both because of her physical banishment and the subsequent values and perceptions she learns in this social vacuum with the Marquis. Just as Crusoe plays the fool to his own interests, so does Arabella such that their outsider status can be defined by not only a conflict of values or priorities, but by an outright spurning of the trajectory associated with 'normal' life. The language used by the Marquis when he upbraids Arabella in the beginning of the novel echoes the concerns voiced by those who lambaste Crusoe; practical interests are conflated with personal happiness, and both titular characters are called "foolish and ridiculous" for lacking the prevailing cultural insight

that believes taking the road well-traveled is supposedly well rewarded (Lennox 42). The Marquis also tries to usurp Arabella's agency to remedy this lack for her, explaining that "since you seem to be so little acquainted with what will most conduce to your own Happiness, you must not think it strange, if I insist upon directing your Choice in the most important Business of your Life" (Lennox 42). Discounting the gendered discrepancy between Crusoe's business of employment and Arabella's marriage match, both represent a comparable refusal to perform expected social scripts or seek the credit and value counted by the behaviors that support such scripts in social life. While I have argued that Crusoe, in his isolation, cultivates comic perception as a tool to extricate himself from the hegemony of social scripts and so create a new space for personal autonomy, Lennox maps the profoundly social foundation of both affect and consciousness itself which Crusoe occasionally transcends. The trajectory of Arabella's transformation and supposed rehabilitation that Lennox tracks materializes and manifests the "no less delusional conditions of representation" that plague every community; the commonality of delusion implies universal dependence and addiction when measured by Derrida's concept of the addict as delusional and divorced from the 'real' in favor of being enveloped by the 'fictional' (Lewis 186). The delusion is a collective one, and as such "*The Female Quixote* offers social critique, even social science, insofar as these conditions apply to the social presentation of persons as much as they do the representations of literary romance" (Lewis 187). Thus my own focus pivots away from genre concerns toward the social science of how Arabella relates to the imagined figures of her genre as social actors who in no way differ operationally from the more immediate social audience of her actual environment. In addition to its many contributions to criticism as an object of genre study, this novel is also a testing ground that ultimately examines the nature of identity as a social phenomenon, with the primary result revealing the self's modern

dependence on, even addiction to, affirmations from the social audience in order to avoid shame and so preserve belonging and identity.

Arabella's devotion to her canon and the scripts therein is not delimited by enjoyment but evolves into a social necessity that serves as a universal model for modern dependence on and addiction to processes of cognition that are embedded in the observational position occupied by the social audience. While it might at first seem absurdly anachronistic to speak of addiction with respect to *The Female Quixote*, in addition to the surprising congruence among the word choice of Derrida, Doody, and Lennox, we have etymological significance that ought to be explicated. I think it is important to note that the original meaning of addiction, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is "the state or condition of being dedicated or devoted to a thing, esp. an activity." This seminal definition and its focus on the quality of dedication that governs the self's relationship to a thing, rather than on specific things that would signal addiction, clearly applies to Arabella's devotion to reading and more importantly her manner of filtering present experience through that reading which creates her 'reality.' The use of the word addiction to describe such devotion alludes to the inherent instability and fundamentally fictitious nature of other devotions and allegiances, especially those ideological in nature.

To speak of addiction and Arabella is not to use the word synonymously with excessive liking, but to move closer toward extreme and unnecessary attachment that tends toward a mental dependence which evacuates the individual of agency. In the first edition of his *A Dictionary of the English Language*, Johnson defines addiction as the "act of devoting, or giving up," which replicates the OED's modern effort but crucially supplements the idea that such devotion involves a kind of loss, surrender, or forced submission as is the case with many forms of dependence. Arabella's erroneous and alienating devotion to her texts and the models therein

is typically framed in terms of absolute mimesis that simply refer back to an antiquated model. The problem is not a poor reference point, however, but the nature of her relationship to that point, and here Lennox invites the reader to perceive the parallels between Arabella's dependence on her reference point and the modern individual's dependence on a variety of reference points that, while various, have the same deleterious effect on the autonomy and will of the individual that is given up through such devotion. This variety of reference points necessarily includes 'normal' and so social ones that have been conditioned as normal by the collective process of vetting and sanctioning certain reference points. But it is not enough to point the theoretical finger at the existence of this social audience as positive proof that its very presence has a deleterious effect on individual autonomy, as I have suggested. And so I will posit shame and its transmission via the social gaze as the primary link between the self and this audience that leverages shame as an instinctually powerful mechanism to control both individual behavior and how the individual interprets that behavior as constituting a discernible self.

In the first section, I will first examine the nature of the social audience and how shame serves as the primary tissue of connection between the self and the social body; I will subsequently investigate vision and the social gaze as the practical tool used within the bounds of social exchange to transmit shame and maintain social dependence through habitual perception. In this second section, I will supplement readings of *The Female Quixote* with some of the most recent findings in the field of neuroscience that help clarify the relationship between vision and consciousness. As a crucial complement to such findings in this section, I will also develop a supporting commentary on medical and science writing from the mid eighteenth century, focusing primarily on documents written about the nature of vision which demonstrate how *Quixote's* historical moment was saturated with the awareness that the process of seeing is a

social process. Finally, I will analyze the nature of Arabella's conversion within the context of shame and social consciousness established in the first two sections.

I. "She should die with Shame": The Presence and Purpose of the Social Audience

Arabella's devotion to the romance model is frequently explicated as a personal dependence on the conventions of that genre as prescriptions for behavior, but rather than tie that dependence to a private failure of reason, it should be seen as a model of social 'success' that only fails miserably because of the fluctuating context of imagined and real company. Frequent and fast are the charges that Arabella's astonishing behavior and bewildering pronouncements are the result of her own lack of reason and insight into how she is seen by others. One assessment of her character and condition is that she is simply "a girl so affected by her reading of romances that they seem to have driven her mad" (Langbauer 29). Her madness and madness itself can be defined by the gulf between self-perception and social perception, the classic quixotic gulf between chivalry and foolery, values that matter and apparent worthlessness. The burden of the 'mad' label rests squarely on the shoulders of the individual and their rational, perceptual, and affective failures that leave them out of step with the sane. Glanville's reflection on the explicitly social foundation of any cure he might force upon Lady Bella illuminates the extent to which the cause is social as well, and that Arabella is hardly out of step but has mastered a form of social intelligence. Since "his Happiness [depends] upon curing her of her romantic Notions," Glanville must discover and administer Arabella's treatment which he identifies as social pressure and group influence: he "[fancies] Company, and an Acquaintance with the World would produce the Alteration he wished" (Lennox 117). But Arabella already has her own company whom she conjures regularly through verbal invocations, and rather than explain her friction with her immediate social world as an inability to drop antiquated rules for

appropriate social behavior, Lennox invites the reader to see her allegiance as not to rules but to people. One of the frequent moments when Arabella is described as retiring to her apartment makes it clear such retirement is not to read or reference her books, but to exist in a community that has its own social space: “Lady Bella went up to her Apartment, and betook herself to her Books, which supplied the Place of all Company to her (Lennox 91). These books are not merely a massive catalogue of precepts and examples that Arabella imitates, but a place, a world, and a social space animated by social power. Glanville is quite incisive to believe that the cure will be found in company given that the cause of the condition he seeks to treat is embedded in the influence of company, too. In one optician’s mid-century essay on the eyes and vision that I will examine in the following section, he writes that to counteract visual defects and cure them, “as in physick, the quantum must be proportioned to the quality of the drug, and altered according as it is good or bad of its kind” (Ayscough 17). Glanville’s self-interested doctoring of Arabella that depends upon a kind of social vaccine mirrors the medicinal law of fighting disease with the agent of its cause, and as we shall see the physical mechanics of vision seem built to support a social consciousness that makes company and the social audience a primary source of information about the self.

Company is a benign euphemism for the social monitoring, shaping, and shaming that are ever present in *The Female Quixote*, and reframing Arabella’s ‘flaw’ in the context of these social forces helps offer a new reading of it that universalizes Arabella’s behavior which is frequently particularized in romance terms. The superficial account of Arabella’s character assumes that “she acts the way she does because she believes in romance and is simply acting out its conventions” (Langbauer 29). Arabella’s “believing” is an act of faith performed by all who respond to social expectations regardless of the source of those expectations, and rather than

tie her behavior and motivations to the particular literary conventions of romance, I am suggesting Lennox has created a model that represents the universal power and force of social expectations that are continuously enforced and obeyed in any social realm. The exchange of letters between Arabella and Glanville when she first banishes him seem to manifest quite literally an epistolary quirk of the company Arabella keeps with her books, but it more importantly exposes the omnipotent presence of her company as a social audience to her behavior. The Marquis of course remarks that her writing “Stile was very uncommon,” criticizing her superscriptions that actually characterize both herself and Glanville according to the romantic types of the “unfortunate” maiden and “ungenerous” lover (Lennox 40). The Marquis squirms because of the revelation this style will provide for the immediate audience of the messenger when he huffs that he doesn’t “choose my Messengers should know, that you are unfortunate, or that my Nephew is ungenerous” (Lennox 40). Arabella, however, does not address her letter this way to keep the messengers abreast of her dysfunction. Nor does she do so out of a hollow mimetic habit. Her address serves as a kind of rise to the social expectation created by her implied audience that is, apparently, ever present. When Glanville insists that he is innocent of conspiring with Edward, Arabella’s retort confirms this presence, as she makes it clear that it is not even her opinion of him that is most important. The imperative is that he make his innocence “apparent to the world,” and it this internalized world and its implied denizens that matter and that have been thoroughly internalized by the protagonist through her devotion.

The persistent notion that Lennox “structures [the novel’s] story on the contrast between the novel and romance” blots out the author’s insight into the universality of the role of social control in all worlds, even imagined ones (Langbauer 29). Rather than using this text as a fulcrum for contrast to pit certain literary conventions or social expectations against one another,

we might use it to see the remarkable similarity of the function of social monitoring in all ‘worlds’ regardless of the idiosyncrasies of the rules adhered to therein. Indeed and again emphasizing the plurality of ‘forms’ and ‘fictions’ here that signifies similarity rather than contrast, “it is thus only in the “Cure” of Arabella’s uncured mind that the world of empty social forms, of fictions, can actually be inspected” (Lewis 187). The significance of the plurality embedded in this revelation cannot be understated, for it is not one type of social form nor one variety of social fiction that Lennox exposes for investigation, but the social principles and laws that operate with startling consistency in all such worlds. Arabella proves that once an individual has committed to a set of social expectations, a setting for those scripts, and a monitoring audience of social actors, it is impossibly difficult for the individual to break this commitment, this habit, and even this addictive form of thinking and self-monitoring. Such a break is tantamount to the kind of banishment the Marquis experienced and which birthed the setting of the novel and enabled Arabella’s absorption into a world not recognizable to those around her.

Such banishment is a form of social death that is threatening and menacing, likely wired by the fact that social death in primitive society frequently precipitated a literal death as the shunned pariah was cut off from the security and resources of the group. Social psychologist Kip Williams has done extensive research on the connection between the arresting power of social ostracism and shame because, in primitive societies, such ostracism was a portent of physical death while in modern times ostracism signals a social death which he equates with separateness and a generally “meaningless” existence (Williams 71). Throughout the novel, oaths sworn to death abound, and such oaths often link shame and death together, as when “Mr. Glanville was ready to die with Vexation, at the charmer of his Soul’s being thus exposed” (Lennox 97).

Embarrassment at being exposed to a social audience triggers the shame that is linked with death itself, suggesting the primacy of the role of shame as something that affects the social self on a fundamental level that is threatening and so would wield a substantial influence over that social self. The threat of death, wired to shame itself, serves as a potent force behind behavior monitoring and modification. The many sensible mortifications these characters experience throughout the novel move the reader to see less of the comedy and triviality in these incidents of embarrassment, and more of the true root behind all mortification, even its etymological root: death (i.e. the Latin ‘mors’ is defined as: death). Lennox’s preponderant focus on when and why characters experience the waves of shame that constitute the personal experience of social mortification draws attention away from the idiosyncratic triggers for each individual’s embarrassment and toward the universal role such embarrassment plays regardless of each character’s ideological commitments and social devotions.

Such oaths sworn to death in socially mortifying situations serve as a needful reminder of the stakes here, for despite the thread of levity and absurdity that always accompanies the friction between Arabella’s ‘delusion’ and the ‘reality’ of those around her, there is a suppressed dread and terror of being finally severed from the social fabric once and for all that occasions the recurrent blushing and shaming that dominate the text. From even the most minor challenges to the decorum of her world, Arabella flushes with shame and anxiety. When she cries out wishing for the company of Glanville amidst the imagined threat of Edward carrying her away, she immediately takes care to note her own transgression in front of Lucy and admonishes her never to tell him of her wish. She resorts to her familiar hyperbole, claiming that “she should die with Shame at having so indiscreetly contributed to his satisfaction” (Lennox 93). The casual reader might miss the frequency with which other characters utter similar dramatic oaths in the face of a

social rebuke, and might instead pathologize the behavior of Lady Bella and her fantastic delusions. As mentioned above, when Arabella finally returns home safely after her failed escape from Edward, Miss Glanville begins to mock Arabella's account of the proceedings, and "Mr. Glanville was ready to die with Vexation, at the charmer of his Soul's being thus exposed; but there was no Help for it" (Lennox 97). It is the exposure to the critical audience that catalyzes a flash of shame and anger that occasions the narrator's use of the figure of death as the possible result of such an experience. The common oath expresses a collective hypersensitivity to shame and public exposure, such that this exposure offers a real threat to the well-being of the one exposed who must endure more than a passing wave of affect. The force of shame reverberates through the somatization of social norms and becomes a foundational motivation for behavior in the social world that Lennox depicts.

Even minor characters in the novel are used to elucidate the significance and extent to which the tool of social shaming is used as a means of social shaping. The tale of Miss Groves, the temporary visitor with a majestic mien and indiscreet past, serves as a microcosmic account of the power of shame in *The Female Quixote* and details both the active and passive influence it wields over individuals in every social world. With a flourish of narrative symmetry, Lennox brings Miss Groves into the rural setting as an escape from the shame of pregnancies and concomitant social expulsion, and sends her away because of the shame this story's public telling causes which leads to her own self-expulsion from Arabella's company. Predictably enough, after the knowledge of Miss Groves' repeated pregnancies circulates through her social circles, she can no longer subsist among them. The narrator records plainly: "Her Story became generally known: She was shunned and neglected by every body" (Lennox 75). The shunning here proves to be an active function of the collective, and Miss Groves has no choice but to seek out another

social world as the narrative of her indiscretions eclipses her person and becomes her identity: the shamed pariah. Perhaps more fascinating is the passive shaming, or the mere possibility of shaming, that leads Miss Groves to once again take leave of a social world that has learned her story. Even though Arabella affects tears and consolation rather than judgment upon hearing the account of her history, Miss Groves nevertheless takes abrupt leave of the castle upon hearing that Mrs. Morris has in fact shared her history. “Miss Groves, quite transported with Shame and Anger, refused absolutely to stay,” and here the reader can see a literalizing of the effect of shame and its potential to physically transport and remove someone from their environment, whether by necessity, as was initially the case in her first social world, or by fear as in the latter case when Miss Groves flees from the castle as if her fight or flight mechanism had been activated by the exposure (Lennox 78). Her automatic response to this exposure bespeaks the nature of habitual perceptions and how a self becomes dependent upon those perceptions, even when social actors diverge from social scripts as does Arabella when she embraces rather than shames Miss Groves’ past.

The primitive underpinnings of this practice of social shaming must be noted to differentiate it from more subtle exercises of social power in social spheres, and Lennox highlights this primeval quality by demonstrating that the relevant social actors from the social audience need not have social influence or rank to impose the force of shame. Lennox’s use of the servant class as ready and effective social enforcers proves that the audience we fear need not be particular, only human, and perhaps even imagined. The aforementioned example of the Marquis’ experience of shame and annoyance at the letter Arabella pens to Glanville exposing their trouble ‘to the world,’ which in this case was a messenger, supports this point that social stature is inconsequential in the arena of shame. When Lucy begins to relate the tale of

Arabella's horrific failed escape from Edward that left her stranded mid journey, Glanville can already smell the shame inducing content of the incident, and "suspecting this was some new Whim of *Arabella's*, would not suffer Lucy to say any more before the Servants, who stood gaping with Astonishment at the strange Things she uttered" (Lennox 96). While we cannot read their astonishment as the damning judgment of the social audience, we can interpret Glanville's reactive move to silence Lucy's retelling as one designed to silence social judgment that may have not yet taken place.

Astonishing also is that Glanville would be so worried about an audience of servants who do not share his social position and seemingly cannot readily affect him or inflict a social consequence in his world. Arabella's own response to one of Glanville's early transgressions in their courtship offers some understanding that might untangle this acute sensitivity to any social actor. After his mere pretending to mind romantic mores is exposed, Arabella fumes that her cousin ought not to be excused "for daring, by the Cheat he put upon me, to expose me to the Shame of seeing myself so ridiculously imposed upon" (Lennox 54). The self bilocates here, in part existing as an individual and simultaneously as a member of the social audience it fears, and it is the self's wholesale adoption of that perception that seems almost involuntary which is a primary component of the experience of shame. Thomas Schmid observes that "what is striking about Arabella's experience [is] not so much the way she views the world from the standpoint of a coherent subject seeking power and influence, as the way she views the world viewing *her*" (Schmid 22). Schmid links this perspectival shift to a form of hysterical madness in which Arabella must compulsively construct her own desirability in the romantic mode, and in doing so she "unwittingly participates in a version of female hysteria" (Schmid 22). The contribution of this discussion is to explore how shame, rather than desire, might also serve as a primary catalyst

behind this shift whereby the social self coexists as both individual and audience simultaneously. The shame Arabella refers to comes from literally “seeing herself” from the position of the social audience whose sole purpose is to enforce conventional codes of behavior and conduct.

The use of spatial language to describe the operation by which the social self comes to awareness by and through the social audience is certainly useful, but there is convincing evidence that we need not limit ourselves to metaphor and can suggest the brain itself is wired to see the self in terms of spatial distance. Michael Graziano, professor of Neuroscience at Princeton University, has developed a theory of social consciousness which marks an exciting and radical departure in studies on awareness and consciousness. Graziano writes that “the theory proposed in this book can be summarized in five words: awareness is an attention schema. A schema is an informational model, constantly recomputed, that represents something worth tracking and predicting” (Graziano 69). The primary shift that concerns us here is from the individual to the social, where consciousness is not conceived of as an internally closed circuit process whereby the brain constructs a sense of self, but through attending to the environment and the information tracked there. Graziano argues that “our verbal descriptions of [awareness] and our cultural mythology about it presumably reflect the contents of that information set as abstracted, summarized, schematized, and slightly garbled through the cognitive machinery of introspection and linguistic embedding” (Graziano 70). Pivoting away from the cornerstone of language-bound introspection and toward a vision of consciousness as an information set that describes the social environment, Graziano’s theory adds a rich dimension to this discussion about the primary importance of the social audience and the role it plays in not only self-perception, but apparently consciousness itself.

I will return to this theory in the next section, as Graziano also writes specifically on the role of vision in his theory of consciousness, but here Graziano offers evidence that my claim of individual bilocation in the construction of self-perception may indeed be predicated on how the brain models awareness. In his analysis of the out-of-body illusion that some experience while asleep, near death, or under the influence of anesthesia, Graziano argues that this illusion “highlights a specific property of awareness: awareness comes with a computed spatial arrangement. Evidently, machinery in the brain computes one’s awareness and assigns it a perceived source inside one’s body, and interference with the relevant circuitry results in an error in the computation” (Graziano 71). The sense of intimate privacy usually associated with consciousness that is, as he says, often “garbled” through the language of introspection in most theories of consciousness, might be far more arbitrary than anyone has heretofore believed. Such a sense of intimacy and “I-ness” can be easily dislodged, as “an out-of-body illusion [can be] induced by applying electrical stimulation to a specific region of the cerebral cortex,” proving that our sense of awareness which usually seems “vaguely inside the body, usually the head” is not a fixed but rather easily manipulable property of consciousness (Graziano 72). Arabella’s pregnant report that she experiences shame as a result of “seeing herself” from the outside through her social audience indicates a psychic out-of-body experience that has a scientific parallel with the nature of consciousness as computed in part through a spatial network. At the outset of this discussion, I used Brennan’s claim about the distance injected into the birth of the psychical apparatus to establish the relevance of the mapping metaphor in understanding the spatial components of how the individual comes to develop a self-conception via social points of reference, and this neurological insight lends a new kind of credibility to the argument that these

individuals in *The Female Quixote* are processing shame via a social consciousness designed to construct ‘private’ awareness through social information.

The previous examples of the persistence of a sensitivity to an audience apparently divorced from the social world that the Marquis and Glanville occupy offer two ready conclusions. First, that the waves of shame and subsequent reshaping of behavior designed to prevent them in the future reflect a more primitive and primal component of all social worlds, rather than a studied and particular kind of social mechanism belonging to a single type of social world. The second conclusion concerns the power of communication and gossip, and how the servants do possess power insofar that they are capable of transmitting the transgressions they have witnessed to others who do in fact have the position and influence to affect more damage than they are capable of. With respect to this second conclusion, Lennox uses the dynamic between Lucy and Arabella to finely dissect the workings and meanings of social communication and the concomitant effects on the individuals embedded in these communicative networks.

The transmission of Arabella’s delusional thinking to Lucy serves as a demonstration of Arabella’s social mastery of successfully transmitting social beliefs and expectations so that one has not merely company in delusion, but social power and influence that ultimately protects the ego from the shame of the audience in her immediate environment. In what may be a joke on Lennox’s part, the narrator claims early on that the Arabella and Lucy are and have always been *simpatico*, sharing a mutual understanding of the world around them. However, it is not true that “Lucy...always thought as her Lady did,” but rather that Arabella successfully cultivates Lucy’s thinking, planting the scripts of romance in her reflections so they produce a very practical social fruit: conformity (Lennox 26). During the brief and clumsy exchanges with the visiting Mr. Hervey at the start of the novel, Lucy functions as a necessary participant in the proceedings as

Arabella's servant, but it is clear that she does not share Arabella's perspective and the emotions that arise from it. In fact, Lennox frequently employs laughter and smiles to signal those who share a disparate perspective of the events unfolding in front of them; rather than feel with or be affected by, this social actor laughs, separated from events by a perspective not shared by those involved. When Arabella fears that Mr. Hervey will harm himself, which she inevitably fears at some point with any potential suitor, Lucy "[begs] her not to be so much concerned for the Gentleman: There is no Fear, added she, that he will do himself a Mischief" (Lennox 15). Lucy admits that when she returns Mr. Hervey's letter of interest and he mistakes it for an encouraging response from Arabella, "he laughed heartily, as well as myself" (Lennox 15). While Arabella perceives something fatal, those who are not also "strict [Observers] of Romantic Forms" see something funny (Lennox 13). Funny or not, the possibility of the incident being exposed to his social audience incites Hervey to run for the hills. "Fearing this ridiculous Adventure would soon be made public," he flees to avoid the inevitable shaming of the audience, and the reader ought to observe the transformative power of the audience, which can turn the trivial into a possibly trying humiliation (Lennox 21).

But Lucy's separation from her mistresses' beliefs soon disappears, as she too quickly becomes as strict an observer of romantic forms, and in her conformity with her Lady, Lennox clarifies the underlying motivations for the conversion. In the subsequent incident with Edward and the stealing of the carp, Lucy does expect fatality and worries that Edward was trying to commit suicide. Lucy literally interrupts the head gardener while he relates the story of Edward's theft, and when he first mentions the fish pond, Lucy cries out "O dear!" (Lennox 25). The exclamation confounds all present until Lucy explains that she assumes "he was going to make away with himself" (Lennox 25). Lucy has already internalized the social script that had

just recently struck her as an occasion for laughter; it is now an occasion for alarm. But it seems Lucy has not been wholly converted to devotion to romantic forms, as she experiences a fleeting moment of doubt regarding the fact that Edward did emerge from the pond holding carp. Lucy mentions the stolen fish and ventures aloud to Arabella with seemingly innocent and plain curiosity: “I wonder what he was going to do with them” (Lennox 26). Arabella’s reaction to the innocuous comment is one filled with anger, as she calls Lucy a foolish wench and asks her furiously if she “still will wound my Ears with that horrid Sound?” (Lennox 26). This sound is the echo not just of another reading of the events that have unfolded, but of another world that speaks a different language and has a different set of social expectations. It is indeed a wound, perhaps less to her ears than to her ego which faces its destruction when even briefly challenged with convincing information that her version of reality is possibly deluded. The immediate reaction, then, when facing the shame of being outside and against the ‘true’ perception of events, is to shame Lucy into submission as one who can offer her not merely ‘company’ or an immediate sense of validation, but rather the restoration of truth by turning her particular and individual perception into a collective one.

Here we can see that it only takes two to build a social world. Heidegger conceives of addiction as “a sickness which strives to spread itself,” and Arabella’s effort to bring Lucy into her fiction and away from the social world of her immediate company is yet another manifestation of her ‘addiction.’ Arabella’s attempt to first convert and then maintain Lucy’s devotion to both herself and the social fictions she values is once again driven by a primal sense of shame even expressed through the breath of the body. When the gardener insists on explaining to Arabella that the issue at hand was carp and not undying love, she cuts him off abruptly and is “out of breath with Shame and Vexation,” offering no more response than the

imperative to “tell me no more of these idle Tales” (Lennox 25). I have suggested that shame in *The Female Quixote* is more powerful than what might typically be termed social embarrassment. Rather it is “a very sensible Mortification” that is experienced by the senses of the body in such an extreme fashion as to suggest the primitive underpinnings of social approval and belonging as a necessity for life. The sensible mortification is an adaptive mechanism designed to prevent mortality, whether social or physical, and to prevent the social self from being banished from the social world it inhabits as an object for observation by an audience that exists first as a reference point by which the psychic mechanism is birthed, then as the immediate feedback system constituted by social actors in the self’s environment, and finally as a global audience that is internalized in the mind of the social self.

The primary mechanism by which this global audience, either actual or imagined, wields its influence in the practical exchanges amongst social actors is the gaze, and in *The Female Quixote*, Lennox foregrounds the eyes and their attention-shaping capacity. In the next section, we will examine the extent to which the gaze both shapes attention and consciousness itself according to Graziano’s theory that awareness is an attention schema created by the brain, and we will track how Lennox’s fiction reveals the eyes as the primary social tool for attention-shaping. I will subsequently marry this analysis of the role of the eyes in the construction of attention with the psychological consequences that follow the understanding of vision as a primary vehicle for attention, shame transmission, and ultimately social consciousness as the gaze becomes a vehicle for social power. While the eyes’ connection to attention and consciousness necessarily involves the physicality of social actors in social places, “the gaze does not just create and invade physical spaces; there is a sense in which the gaze invades and traps [the individual] psychologically” (Vaz 38). The crucial components of this trap involve the

kinetic springs of shame and a net of dependence that constitute the modern addiction to social schemas of meaning and belonging, such that belonging is both the precondition and consequence of meaning that the individual narrates for the self.

It is not merely that Arabella is addicted to referencing her romances or fallaciously drawing parallels between romantic exemplum and her current surroundings; it is her inescapable belief in herself as an active member of that fictitious community that breeds her dependence, such that her behavior signals belonging, and her attentional and cognitive processes are organized around maintaining that belonging. Arabella once exclaimed to the unhappy Glanville at the races that “the Sight of you is not so dangerous, but that such sort of People, as these are, may escape your Chains,” both dismissing and also introducing the threatening potential of the presence of one with a gaze that can be a mechanism for entrapment that operates by what Foucault termed “subjection by illumination” (Foucault 154).

The subjection we will now examine is one that need not depend upon a social actor with the intention to subject another. This subjection is predicated on the ubiquitous nature of the social audience, the global audience as termed by Arabella herself, and on how the attentional mechanism of the gaze triggers internal schemas of meaning and belonging without respect to the intentions and motivations of the one who gazes. While much discourse on vision in the eighteenth century concerns the issue of agency between two discrete social actors who are entangled in a subject-object relationship, I find that it is more productive to focus on the gaze as a social monitoring tool that continuously registers attention and transmits social information that is fundamentally outside the control and intent of those involved in social exchange. Thus my use of the term ‘monitoring’ in the following section is a conscious one that privileges the primitive role of shame in this discussion and how it relates the visual matrix as a space of

instinctual reaction and not just a space of manipulation as it is often understood. By destabilizing the dichotomy of gazers and gaze objects, I hope to usher in a new understanding of vision as an instance of heteronomy for all social actors, not just those that lack social power. In this context, we shall see how all social actors become the pawns of shame and its affective opposite in *The Female Quixote*, ecstasy. Lennox's drawing of this powerful tension between shame and ecstasy suggests that desire itself is a construct of shame as well as pleasure, and that the current understanding of the eighteenth century dialectics of vision will be greatly clarified by recognizing the force of shame in the social matrix of vision.

II. "The Influence of your Eyes": The Gaze, Social Attention, and Social Control

In Berkeley's *A New Theory of Vision*, he writes that

It is evident that when the mind perceives any idea, not immediately and of itself, it must be by the means of some other idea. Thus, for instance, the passions which are in the mind of another are of themselves to me invisible. I may nevertheless perceive them by sight, though not immediately, yet by means of the colours they produce in the countenance. We often see shame or fear in the looks of a man, by perceiving the changes of his countenance to red or pale. (Berkeley 18)

Berkeley's assertion of indirect perception by which we only perceive shame as mediated through the face is a helpful starting point for this discussion of the social gaze that must necessarily be expanded in order to account for how shame and vision function in *The Female Quixote*. For it is not merely the face as a readable text of signs and signals that will be relevant here; Berkeley writes about shame here from the point of the observer, as shame is something

you see “in the looks of a man,” but here we will examine how the looks of a man might not only register but cause shame as well. The cultural assumptions about vision in the eighteenth century included a particular kind of reverence for it as a fundamentally social process (see in part Berkeley’s multiple references to shame), and one that, even as many tried to explicate visual mechanisms both biological and psychological, is often inscrutable. James Ayscough, a practicing optician and author of *A Short Account of the Eye and the Nature of Vision* published in 1752, notes that even while he would attempt to explain various components of the eye and their failures that could be corrected with glasses, truly explaining the particulars behind the phenomenon of vision is “an inquiry [into] the faculties of the soul, a work too mighty for man” (Ayscough 2). His assessment of the ultimate importance of vision is structured on the dual process of pleasure seeking and shunning the disagreeable; he asks the reader how a living being, without sight, could “judge to advance this, or retire that way, to enjoy any useful, agreeable, or pleasant object? Or shun a nauseous, or disagreeable stumbling block that lay in his way” (Ayscough 6). The eyes here are a conduit to personal enjoyment, but also a means to avoid and even reject that which displeases the self. In the context of the current discussion, the notion of the eyes as a mechanism for shunning, typically connoting social rejection rather than just mere avoidance, is a particularly apposite starting point for understanding how the gaze is implicated as a vehicle in the transfer of shame amongst social actors in public spaces. The centrality of shame and the role it plays in social relationships yet still depends upon a practical vehicle by which to explain its passing from party to party, from mind to mind, or from attentional state to attentional state. The social gaze is this practical vehicle.

One of the primary vehicles suggested by Graziano is simply the eyes and the vigilant monitoring that humans engage in with respect to their gaze and the gaze of others. Indeed,

“humans have unusual eyes,” and on a purely physical level the eyeball and its properties, including and especially the contrast between the dark iris and white sclera, constitute an “evolutionary adaptation [that allows] humans to monitor each other’s gaze” (Graziano 88). In Arabella’s social environs, there is an enormous emphasis on the gaze and where people look and what those looks communicate. In this section, I will challenge the assumption that the eyes are merely a means of emotive expression, a kind of conduit to the articulation of private subjectivity. In addition to expression, the eyes and the gaze they create in *The Female Quixote* are a source of information about attention and also a means by which to manipulate attention, and so exert a form of social control. This novel is a unique artifact of the eighteenth century that documents the prevailing preoccupation with the function of the gaze in the social world because it suggests that visual forms of social control are not necessarily dependent on one social self with an agenda for such control. Rather, such control is often exerted internally and immediately, and is merely catalyzed by the gaze of the other who may not even have to be physically present. This novel is a case study that challenges assumptions about agency and the gaze as a kind of weapon in the search for power amidst social engagements, with a final conclusion that suggests the social self is always in a state of subjection to the audience via the gaze regardless of stature or position. Arabella’s relationship to her imagined community is particularly instructive because it demonstrates how she is herself always subjected to the gaze of this community, and so suggests that the power of the social gaze for the eighteenth century individual is not just about actual interpersonal social dynamics. This is not to negate the severity and seriousness of actual social imbalances and the subjection created by such imbalances, especially those concerned with gender and sexuality in the eighteenth century, but to explore how the gaze functions in conjunction with the primitive schema of shame and

belonging rather than as a consciously and carefully wielded weapon in service of agendas designed to harness social power.

The contribution of this discussion to current discourse about vision in the eighteenth century is to challenge the dialectics of subject and object that guide nearly every argument concerning the function of vision in fiction, and how such fiction mirrors or undermines the function of vision in real social spaces. I will not, and cannot imagine how anyone might, neglect the significance of the eighteenth century critical fascination with the “visual dialectics by which subjectivity is constituted;” I would rather suggest that any agency exerted through vision, and any social control associated with such agency, happens incidentally via acts of microaggression and microcontrol, and that vision itself does not constitute, contain, or construct the subject-object relationship in the social sphere. “It is not necessarily the eyes that look at us then,” but rather “the ‘look’ is my fearful apprehension of the probable existence of an Other,” and Foucault asserts that this apprehension is realized by “‘systems of micropower’ which pervade our society-the tiny, everyday minute physical mechanisms that are essentially nonegalitarian, asymmetrical, and disciplinary” (Vaz 35). I find that vision in *Quixote* is a conduit to attention which, according to Graizano’s theory of consciousness, forms the foundation of consciousness itself which then becomes a socialized space rather than the sort of individuated space we have come to associate with consciousness, and the eyes and the gaze of the individual serve as one potent medium through which the systems of micropower operate. With respect to the Foucauldian Panopticon, “the mere presence of a being with the potential for seeing and objectifying a prisoner is enough to invoke fear and vulnerability in the inmates so that they conform to the modes of morality inscribed and enforced in the social space of prison” (Vaz 36). While *The Female Quixote* is not explicitly concerned with the space of the prison, it

nevertheless makes regular use of the trope of the criminal which is frequently and indiscriminately applied to and by all the characters based on changing circumstances and shifting social contexts, thus undermining the narrative of stable subjects and objects constituted by the gaze.

The eyes and the gaze they create serve as a source of constant observation with attendant social expectations that the one gazed at must monitor, respond to, and even deceive in order to successfully navigate the channels of social communication. Crucially though, these expectations arise spontaneously within the individual's consciousness *as a reaction* to changes in gaze; considering this reactive nature makes this process appear primitive and instinctual, rather than studied and strategic. One exchange between Sir George and Arabella that takes place in front of an audience consisting of Glanville and his sister serves as a fundamental artifact for the function of the individual gaze in this text. Upon learning that his letter to Arabella had been made public and shared with others, Sir George "blushed, and turned pale alternately; and not daring to look, either upon *Miss Glanville*, or her Brother, or to meet the Eyes of the fair Visionary, who, with great Impatience, expected his answer, he hung down his Head in a very silly Posture" (Lennox 195). The blush is of course indicative of a wave of personal shame with the eyes acting as the means of exposure and of communication, and Sir George, intuitively aware of this, tries to create a private space in the public sphere where he might recollect himself. The shame signaled by the blush is evidence of the reactive nature of this affective response; it is automatic. While his eyes are averted from his entire audience, he attempts to discover a resolution and "the Means of extricating himself out of the ridiculous perplexity he was in," with the perplexity most concisely defined as the friction between Arabella's romantic

referents and those of her surrounding society that bear little resemblance to her own (Lennox 195).

Indeed it is the “Expectation from all Parties” that Sir George is trying to seek refuge from while he searches for a way not to integrate these ineluctably separate visions of the world, but rather to deliver a meaningful social response that might simultaneously fit both scripts represented by the gazes of those parties belonging to the romantic and contemporary realms. The resolution he reaches depends upon the use of comedy, where he might validate Arabella’s offense such that she will believe it sincere, while turning “the whole Matter into a Jest” for the rest of the company such that he may remain credible in their eyes (Lennox 195). There is a pregnant emphasis on the eyes following Sir George’s period of contemplation and attempt to draw himself behind a curtain of perception while still in front of the company, and only after he has decided on a course of action does he “therefore [raise] his Eyes, and looking upon *Arabella,*” begin his attempt to manage his image and so her affect toward him (Lennox 195). Even though Sir George is undoubtedly trying to manipulate others’ perception of him, his posture is a defensive one dictated by shame. His final act of looking upon Arabella is the reluctant return to the arena of social attention where he hopes he is ready to shape her attention, and Sir George, though he is attempting to control, is as passively subject to the gaze that leads to his retreat as much as he actively wields the gaze as social strategist. The wave of shame was the fundamental starting point for this exchange, and subsequent gaze manipulation was only an attempt to recalibrate and recover what was initially lost in that wave of subjection and loss of control.

Graziano belabors the point that describing awareness as a process based on the brain modeling the attentional states of others is not tantamount to eye-tracking, even though gaze

monitoring does play a crucial role. He argues that “in the attention schema theory, the human brain constructs a model of what it *means* to pay attention to something,” and while this distinction might seem like a matter of semantics, the distinction Graziano draws is crucial given the ongoing dual process of both attention modeling coupled with the significance of knowing that others paying attention carries with it important social consequences. Sir George’s shame in the above reading is a material and bodily manifestation of the knowledge of such social consequences, and this knowledge is activated in an instinctual, immediate, and reactive fashion. Sir George does not need to think about feeling embarrassed to register the wave of shame. These social consequences are an integral part of the phenomenon of gaze processing as a mode of attention monitoring. Such consequences are social in nature, predicated primarily on existing social scripts available to those involved in gaze exchanges, and it is crucial to emphasize this social axis of importance lest we are led astray into believing that which we process through the gaze is limited to the objective features of the environment and persons around us. Graziano argues that “when people scan a picture of a face, we tend to look disproportionately more at the eyes, as though seeking information from that facial feature,” and continues writing that “we are experts at watching other people’s eyes and extracting information from the eyes” (Graziano 88). Here the term “information” is employed without concrete elaboration, thus the objective connotation lends itself to the assumption that what we can extract from the gaze of social actors is dependable, accurate, material data about the social world. Graziano’s primary concern is not the role of the gaze itself or visual processing, as his discussion of the importance of the eyes is embedded in his explanation of his theory of consciousness as a model of attention, thus supplementary arguments are required to address the nature of visual processing and how more complex social elements, like bias, social scripts, and expectations, are involved in this process.

In his book *Brain and the Gaze: On the Active Boundaries of Vision*, neuroscientist Jan Lauwereyns points out that “the ability to detect and monitor prized types of stimuli with little effort and great speed, however, comes at a cost” (Lauwereyns 109). The cost is, most significantly, a social one. The nature of this cost comes down to a balance sheet that will not reconcile, as the interpretation of visual stimuli by one social actor whose vision has literally been compromised does not correspond meaningfully with the interpretations of others. It is imperative that we register the physicality of this process rather than assume that we are referring more generally to failures in perception or cognition. Lauwereyns stresses that “neurons in the visual cortex become *tuned* to specific information. It is a form of cortical plasticity that creates a structural bias in information processing” (109). Ayscough also made very similar claims in 1752, though without the support of modern neuroscience, noting that “defects of the eye will likewise alter by habit, and even that these defects may be remedied by habit; and according as people accustom themselves to such habits, they may either increase or diminish these defects” (Ayscough 12). Thus the nature of habitual perception that I posit is the cornerstone of how one social actor becomes dependent on their social audience as a reference points is physicalized in visual mechanisms. My claims of ‘addiction’ in *The Female Quixote* then are rooted not just in a metaphor that describes dependence, but in anatomical structures that alter by habit and can evacuate personal agency. If this is the case that brain structures are altered by both intentional and unintentional habits that tune the visual cortex as Lauwereyns argues, then we must take a nuanced view of the role of agency in this process and even allow that mistaken vision might be seen as a less conscious and more automatic process by which the individual is not actively misreading from cognitive disturbance, but responding honestly to the structural bias that Lauwereyns refers to. He even uses the term “false alarm” in his work to describe the

misreading of visual stimuli, and there is a plenitude of such false alarms that Arabella experiences and acts on, often transforming the innocuous into threats to personal safety or glory.

When Lady Bella suspects that Edward the hapless gardener has hatched a perfidious plot to steal her away from her bedchamber, she decides that it is better to try her luck on a trek to Lucy's brother's estate rather than hazard her person by remaining in the midst of a sea of servants who, she imagines, are complicit in Edward's design. This trek also happens to track the nexus between the tuning of the visual cortex and the visual stimuli that Arabella thinks she sees, and her mistaken vision argues for the explicitly social nature of this tuning that Lauwereyns documents. Along her journey, "Arabella, begging Heaven to throw some generous Cavalier in her Way, whose Protection she might implore, and, taking every Tree at a Distance for a Horse and Knight, Hastened her steps to meet her approaching Succour; which, as soon as she came near, miserably balked her Expectations"(Lennox 95). Such visual failure is not an occasional mishap, as Arabella's tuning causes her to misperceive the figures in her visual field *every* time; it was not one tree but every tree, and we can trust that her expectations, gleaned from the social scripts that occupy her beloved romances, transform her vision and lead to a tuning that causes disharmony with her surrounding environment. In a startling parallel to the words of Pope and Lennox, English Mathematician William Emerson, author of *The Elements of Optics* (1768), also writes about the possibility of correction, stating that "optics also tends to free the mind from several prejudices it had imbibed," emphasizing again the liquid subjectivity that defines our learning as a social process (Emerson ix). Emerson stresses the relationship between the visual and other forms of understanding, even going so far as to make a similarly hyperbolic claim to the one Ayscough makes writing that "Optics is not only a science of the most extensive use, but likewise of the greatest pleasure and delight," and adding the centrality

of the most useful and pleasurable science to endeavors of the mind insisting that “a great many things in Philosophy can neither be understood nor prosecuted without the knowledge of Optics” (Emerson viii). The understanding of visual principles here becomes a corrective to not only the imbibing of false learning, but the foundation for understanding even philosophical knowledge suggesting a cultural preoccupation with the connection between vision and the self’s understanding.

The misery Arabella feels when reality fails to meet her expectations highlights the maladaptive nature of her visual tuning, but as we see throughout the novel, she does not incorporate this feedback meaningfully in any to attempt to more carefully monitor her environment in a manner that would create a more accurate risk calculation mechanism which could then inform her interpretation of visual stimuli. It is important to remember that Arabella did indeed imagine Edward’s plot, and as a result puts herself into actual danger and does come to some harm when she strains her ankle, swoons, and is subsequently abandoned by a panicked Lucy who returns to the house for assistance. Rather than see this episode as a demonstration of Arabella’s anomalous inability to see, read, or understand her environment and the actors in this environment, we can read it as persuasive evidence of the powerful role that mistaken vision plays in the process of decision making and risk calculation. Given that “neurons that are used to respond to specific stimulus features do so even more vigorously and specifically when these features become more valuable or behaviorally relevant, say, predicting a reward or indicating the imminent danger of an unpleasant event,” we can see how the context of imagined danger in which Arabella thinks she finds herself helps facilitate a kind of vigorous false firing (Lauwereyns 109). Here my purpose does amount to a kind of apologetics on behalf of Arabella’s antics that are often seen as absurd, when they should rather be read as examples of

the universality of the fragile and flawed relationship between the visual cortex and the social context of the individual, whether actual or imagined as is with the case of Arabella. Arabella stands as a representation for all flawed processing, rather than a flawed individual who ought to be assimilated into a more appropriate, meaningful, or mainstream context that might lend itself to a rewiring of the neuronal structures that ultimately compound her distance between herself and her society.

As Rivka Swenson argues, of the many rich social contexts that define the eighteenth century, “one of these contexts is the contemporary fascination with the dynamics of vision as a physical as well as social process,” and she argues that Eliza Haywood’s *Anti-Pamela* “describe[s] a visual dialectics by which subjectivity is constituted;” in *The Female Quixote*, we can witness the presence of this context and discover a parallel concern with the nature of the relationship between vision and the social scripts that inform the visual field. The contemporary appreciation for vision’s social matrix has been duly supported by Lauwereyns claims about the process by which biases become anatomized in the visual cortex, and even more importantly for this discussion he dissects the complex dance between autonomy and dependence that occurs in the visual processing of our surroundings. For as biases become anatomized and every tree turns into a knight, the individual loses autonomy and becomes increasingly subjected to a brain that creates a stream of false images. From the start of the novel, there is an inherent awareness of the importance of the role vision plays in the process of understanding and the likelihood of its failure; Arabella “suppose[es] Romances were real Pictures of Life,” and the text proceeds not to focus on the illusory nature of the romantic pictures themselves, but uses Arabella’s relationship to them to draw out the illusory nature by which all pictures of life are optical tricks supported by internalized social scripts that are shamed into place and then reconfirmed in the visual field after

anatomical structures are tuned to support such scripts. “Biases operate implicitly and autonomously,” and visual processing is often “done before consciousness gets a chance to kick in,” but Lauwereyns also emphasizes a conscious “follow-up” to all of the unconscious processing writing that “as with the autonomous retinal mechanism that call an eye movement to an abrupt visual onset or some kind of motion, we are likely to find that the highly specialized (learning-dependent) cortical mechanisms elicit orienting responses to gather more information” (Lauwereyns 110). One key aspect of the follow up is the fact that it, too, is learning dependent, and Lauwereyns has a particularly hopeful reading of this dual process by which autonomous bias and conscious follow-ups create our visual interpretations, our pictures of life. He insists that “we get the best of both worlds,” because “the implicit biases give us speed and minimalism,” while “the conscious follow-up increases our sensitivity and allows us to confirm or disconfirm the first thoughts and initial hunches” (Lauwereyns 110).

It seems distinctly plausible that conversely, the “the worst of both worlds” might be as apt a description of the influence of social scripts, especially given the existing literature detailing the power of confirmation bias to pollute interpretations of available stimuli. I previously analyzed the incident when Lucy finally makes it back to the house after Arabella flees an imaginary plot only to twist an ankle on a “fatal stump.” Glanville’s response to the social exchange that documents the incident emphasizes the role of shame and its connection to the social audience (Lennox 95). While Lucy begins to narrate the reasons for her ‘escape’ and the details surrounding her ordeal, the social audience naturally reacts with disdain and degrades Arabella into an object on which to vent their laughter. Miss Glanville, as she usually does in response to Arabella’s antics, laughs aloud and “long[s] to know where [her] cousin is,” not to relieve herself from fear that she might be in danger, but to bolster her own sense of importance

as an observer whose vision is dependable in contrast to the delusional and absurd Arabella (Lennox 97). Above I emphasized that the shame Glanville feels is framed in fatal terms, reinforcing the social significance of shame as an operative mechanism that shapes behavior. We can now see that with respect to the visual process as a social process, the sense of fatality Arabella imagines compounds the visual biases which Lauwereyns says become exacerbated because visual neurons respond more vigorously and specifically when there is a presence of reward or imminent danger. The local danger in this anecdote is Arabella's misperception of Edward, but the larger danger present is shame, and given its primordial relationship with actual death which accompanied social ostracism in primitive society, it can be concluded that the presence of imminent danger might be a constant in social life even if it is suppressed. As the social audience is always present (in the mind if not in the room) , so is the possibility of shame, and thus the likelihood of mistaken vision increases as visual bias increases in the presence of such a threat. If Arabella is here a fool, so are we all, as the object of Lennox's satire is not Arabella's false vision but the very process by which the individual sees, perceives, and acts according to the false pictures of our variously conceived worlds.

While much of the discourse surrounding eighteenth century dialectics of vision is concerned with agency and sexual virtue, and so more broadly desire, I find that *The Female Quixote* explores the antithesis of desire, namely shame, as a primary force in the experience of the gaze and the workings of the social process of vision production. "The [eighteenth century] novel interacts with and exploits cultural anxieties about gazing, especially the vulnerability of the male gaze" with respect to sexual dynamics and the possibility of latent female power (Swenson 33). We can see instances of this in *Quixote*, as with the portrait of the foolish Mr. Tinsel in London whose inability to interpret the eyes follows a more mainstream model of the

role of desire in the social dynamics of the gaze. The misguided Mr. Tinsel “soon discover’d in the bright Eyes of *Arabella* a secret Approbation of his Person, which he endeavor’d to increase by displaying it” (Lennox 287). Here Tinsel not only misreads the gaze of Arabella, but subsequently tries to circulate and compound its value by “displaying it” to the social audience present. He imagines that Arabella has a sexual preference for him, and “conceiving such a Preference must proceed from a latent Motive which was not unfavourable for him,” he not only misreads the gaze but misattributes the psychological motive underlying the gaze, thus confirming for himself what he desires (Lennox 287). Perhaps this combination of autonomous visual bias with a conscious follow-up first seems to be the best of both worlds here for Mr. Tinsel, until he realizes that Arabella indeed has no such preference and that the tuning of his own visual cortex is painting a false picture of his social reality.

In the case of Mr. Tinsel, we see the sad failure to correctly interpret the other’s gaze which leaves him ultimately vulnerable to the revelation that Arabella has no such preference for him, and in Swenson’s analysis of *Anti-Pamela*, she examines a parallel case in which the male’s failure to navigate the social space of the gaze leaves him vulnerable, arguing that “Syrena is a Newtonian causal object who draws open the eye, enters as an image, and situates herself amid the mind’s furniture; unwary lovers are addicted scopophiles” (Swenson 36). Swenson’s use of the term addiction here suggests the vulnerability to a loss of will that is ultimately predicated on a visual act that morphs into a psychological state which evacuates the agency of the individual. In her example, what ultimately evacuates this agency is a succumbing to pleasure which leads to dependence, but just as powerful and yet less attended to is not the seeking of pleasure, but the avoidance of pain, specifically the psychological pain of social rejection that attends the heat of shame as it is experienced. The compulsive avoidance of shame can then constitute an equally

palpable evacuation of agency as that which we typically associate with pleasure seeking. The dynamic between the gazer and the one who is seen dominates discourse about agency and its relationship to what the eyes can do in the social sphere, and in the counterintuitive eighteenth century construct, “the ‘object’ of the gaze is not the one who is seen but the one who sees” (Swenson 29). In the context of this limiting focus on whether the object of the gaze can either harness or lose social power, Swenson argues that “the original circular construct of gazer-as-agent needs another look” because there is more to the visual process than subject/object relationships predicated on desire and power (Swenson 29). In practical social exchanges, it seems impossible to draw the line between two seeing subjects and determine that in any given exchange, one consistently occupies either the role of the gazer or the object of the gaze as a kind of consistent identity. The only method to draw such a line would be to allow preexisting assessments of and assumptions about the social actors’ relative positions in society to determine their position as gazer or object. In *The Female Quixote*, we experience a destabilizing of any such boundaries as all individuals are subjected to and subject others to shame as an operative tool for shaping behavior which is ultimately internalized as a feature of attention modeling, and so finally as a feature of consciousness itself in the context of Graziano’s theory. From this perspective of assessing the gaze, it seems that “a constant watch kept *over everyone by everyone* simultaneously” creates a space in which “the power mechanism of the ‘look’ seems to take on a life force of its own; it is as though the gaze becomes a kind of implosion, a vacuum which slowly, insidiously, absorbs and entraps everyone” (Vaz 42). Such a hyper-vigilant watch and insidious social vacuum supports my previous suggestion that the gaze must ultimately operate through primitive and reactive mechanisms, rather than as a function of the carefully crafted agendas of social selves. If the gaze takes on “a life force of its own,” it is a force to which all

must ultimately succumb, obliterating the possibility of attributing the nuanced roles of gazer and object to social actors who are all keeping watch and being watched. My focus on vision as a social matrix in which the self universally succumbs to social monitoring and its implicit scripts thus needs the language of addiction to fully understand the habituation of anatomical mechanisms that create habitual forms of perception.

Glanville is a particularly useful starting point for understanding how the individual primarily responsible for Arabella's 'cure' is in a constant state of 'curing' himself as he monitors, enforces, and internalizes the same conventional frames of reference that constitute her cure. There are certainly textual moments that supply the more predictable gendered dynamics that revolve around power and desire. One moment in particular marks a sinister prelude to the cure itself, where the portrait of Glanville oscillates between predatory triumphalism and the euphoria one might associate with the non-sober. As "Mr. *Glanville* had just finish'd her Eulogium, when *Arabella* appear'd; Joy danc'd in his Eyes at her approach; he gaz'd upon her with a Kind of conscious Triumph in his Looks; her consummate Loveliness justifying his Passion, and being in his Opinion, more than an Excuse for all her Extravagancies" (Lennox 310). Arabella certainly occupies the role of both the object of gaze and of Glanville's desire in this instance, and his giddy anticipation of this conquest bespeaks the ominous nature of assimilating the 'addict' back into the fold; Glanville's self-interested investment in Arabella's rehabilitation suggests the self-interest of conventional social actors who may want to reform subversive persons to eliminate any challenge to the legitimacy of the social fictions that prop up 'normal' and so healthy social life.

His dancing eyes recall Arabella's glittering eyes, which are oft noted for their sparkle when she reads her books, the material manifestation of her dependence and the physical symbol

of the imagined social community that makes such a dependence possible. It is not uncommon for Arabella to implore her women to “place them upon a Table before her” so that she might “[open] them, one after another, with Eyes sparkling with Delight;” this delight marked by sparkling, dancing, and glittering eyes smacks of possession and the kind of transport associated with the dependent self, often literally transported outside the mainstream social community by such attachments. Drawing variously from Nietzsche, Kant, Hegel, and others, David B. Allison writes that what is

Ecstatic is, of course, eccentric- to put out of place, to be outside, to be drawn outside oneself, out of one’s wits, transported: at once, rapture and dispossession. It has to do with the transgression of limits, forms, boundaries- of oneself, one’s own limits, and often enough, of imposed limits, laws, and prohibitions. Generally speaking, the whole issue of ecstasy is marginal enough to be proscribed by authority, normalcy, and traditional orthodoxy. (Allison 46)

While the focus of this discussion has not been ecstasy, it is important to recognize that it is present in the wild and glittering eyes of the dispossessed. There seems to be an apparent affective ‘high’ that serves as the corollary to shame, and I would argue that this high is not always relegated to transgression but can also be tied to conformity as when there is a sense of rapture in absorption in the social body. This pleasurable transport is the antithesis of the transport associated with shame, and this antithetical sentiment helps clarify the parallel operation of separating self from society though with a completely contrary affective state associated with the separation. At one point the disgraced Miss Groves is so “transported with Shame and Anger” that she “refused absolutely to stay” in the company of the audience whose knowing gaze was the vehicle of such transport (Lennox 78). But in Glanville’s case, rather than

forcibly expel, he sparkles at the thought of forcibly including Arabella for the sake of a pleasurable possession. He affirms that it is Arabella's consummate loveliness that justifies his passion, but despite such an apparently innocuous affirmation, it is both the drive to possess in pleasure and, just as importantly, avoid the shame that has plagued Glanville as well, even as he occupies the place of the powerful gazer in this instance. Just as he dies with shame and vexation when Arabella exposes her outsider status as one who does not share the beliefs and values of those around her, he is overcome with a pleasure that is a direct consequence of avoiding such shame. This pleasure does not stand alone as pure desire; it is propped up by the shadow of the very sensible mortifications that all these characters endure. The look of conquest in his eyes does not spring from a place of secure social power, but a space of fear and shame he himself occupies as well.

The frequency with which Glanville is himself moved and controlled by shame via the power of the gaze destabilizes the hegemonic narrative of the gaze as an expression of social power that can be tied to discrete individuals who occupy static positions. At one point in London amidst the very critical company there, Glanville is nearly distraught over the impending humiliation that he merely anticipates will result from Arabella's inclinations and the frequent inclusion of her romantic constellation of references in her dialogue. Even while "Mr. *Selvin* in secret repin'd at her prodigious Knowledge of History" and lost himself in admiration, "Mr. *Glanville*, with his Eyes fix'd on the Ground, bit his Lips almost through with Madness" (Lennox 278). Glanville suffers socially alongside Arabella, even when she is not the object of scorn, not necessarily out of concern for her humiliation, but just as likely out of concern for his own mortification by proxy.

Shame for Glanville then, very significantly, is something that is strongly related to social association, regardless of the actual behavior he might exhibit; he may still become the object of shame from the proximal connection to Arabella who is the most distant outsider and social ‘criminal’ who transgresses scripts and expectations. As Glanville struggles to fix his eyes on the ground safely averted from any gaze in the immediate company, he attempts to avoid this proximal shame but fails miserably while he gnaws away at his lips. Hardly a powerful or manipulative gazer here, Glanville is weak, shame-bound, and incapable of asserting any agency as he succumbs to the mere anticipation of friction between the signs and signals of Arabella’s mediated ‘world’ and the immediate ‘world’ created by the company in London who know nothing of the noble Artmenes or the legendary Mandana. The gaze transcends the eyes, and is always both “the ‘look’ and a process of *interiorisation* which is frighteningly insidious” because such a process makes the individual his own “overseer” and his own source of subjugation (Vaz 38). Glanville cannot be said to exist only as a social force in the secure role of the gazer, even though he may occasionally occupy such a position; he just as clearly suffers under this gaze himself, a tortured social object gnashing his own teeth, even without a direct social stimulus to justify such a wave of shame. In yet another example, Glanville employs the same technique of gaze aversion as an attempt to create a private refuge in a public space, which Arabella mistakes for humility. Lady Bella offers Glanville praise she believes he deserves, protesting that she hopes “you have made him swear upon your Sword, that he will never make a second Attempt upon my Liberty. I perceive, pursued she, seeing Mr. *Glanville* continued silent, with his Eyes bent on the Ground, for indeed he was asham’d to look up; that you would willingly avoid the Praise due to heroic Action you have just perform’d” (Lennox 303). Arabella naturally resorts to romantic scripts to narrate the previous encounter with a man who threatened her safety, and

rather than experience any shame herself from the presence of the gaze of her company, Glanville is once again overcome by shame and can do nothing more than stare at the floor.

Rather than use the gaze in any meaningful fashion for what might be his own social benefit, Glanville is void of any such power, skill, or capacity, and here strikes a craven portrait of a pawn in the eyes of those around him, leaving him with little more recourse than to try to shut his own. This particular example demonstrates how vulnerable Glanville is to the release from these chains of shame as well, ensconcing shame avoidance as a primary motive for social behavior in *The Female Quixote*. Arabella continues to make a speech that is very well received; she reflects on the nature of virtuous action, and asserts that a virtuous action can be described “as Light is an Effect of the Sun which causeth it, and has no Dependence on any other Cause,” which itself can be read as a scathing critique of the embedded interestedness that must be seen as the foundation of shame avoidance, whereas Arabella imagines that the virtuous heroes and heroines have no interest in an audience that only represents convention and law (Lennox 304). As she argues elsewhere, the romantic glory she loves has no concern with law, and Sir Charles in particular is taken with this analysis and remarks that “that’s very prettily said” (Lennox 304). Social approbation, much as the perceived scorn threw him involuntarily into a shame spiral, puts Glanville into a giddy swoon as he is now “charm’d into an Extacy at this sensible Speech of Arabella’s” (Lennox 304). Once again Lennox drives home the connection between not only the gaze and desire, but the gaze as a potent vector of shame, and invites her readers to discern the intimate connection between pleasure and shame, perhaps even suggesting that pleasure itself is inextricably dependent on being free from shame rooted in social spurning. Glanville here is not repulsed or taken by Arabella herself, but thrown haplessly into the opposing states of shame and ecstasy based on what he perceives the social audience believes about his beloved. Contrary

to Allison's claim about the transgressive nature of ecstasy, we can also see that social belonging and approval transport Glanville making him ecstatic and his state of mind essentially dependent upon the social audience.

And just as Glanville cannot easily be compartmentalized into either an object or agent of the gaze that would stabilize his fictitious social identity and so help delineate our understanding of the power he exerts or loses in gaze exchanges, Arabella herself defies such easy categorization as well. It is not possible to link her to the straightforward female-body-as-gaze-object script, nor would it be appropriate to suggest that her prevailing romantic commitments coupled with her social charms make her invulnerable to the shame that Lennox maps throughout *The Female Quixote*, especially considering that shame and the criminal label catalyze her conversion. She is, like Glanville, and like all social persons, an agent of the watch and its object, where, as previously noted, the gaze is a watch that is kept over everyone by everyone. There are times when Arabella herself, despite superficially occupying the role of the delusional recluse who has adopted antiquated social scripts, turns the tables and also skillfully employs the gaze mechanism and the power of shame to solidify her own social power. In one noteworthy example in London, we can see how Arabella employs the very same figure of the criminal, eventually used against her during her conversion, to shame Selvin and preserve herself. Whilst dealing with some correspondence from the supercilious Selvin, "*Arabella*, pleas'd at her Solicitude, open'd one of the Letters; but glancing her Eye to the Bottom, and seeing the Name of Selvin, she threw it hastily upon the Table, and averting her Eyes, What a Mortification I have avoided, said she, that letter is from Selvin; and questionless, contains an avowal of his Crime" (Lennox 294). Once again the reader is made to see the significance of the eyes and the sensitive and powerful nature of the gaze, as even glimpsing Selvin's name on paper is enough to make

her guilty by association, and so she does what most characters do in the novel when threatened by shame: stare at the floor. Such a simple and silly behavior, as it does recall the childlike reaction to a transgression just discovered, is significant for how it illuminates the parallel of the adult who is ‘caught’ as well. The ‘criminal’ adult is trapped by the social conditions in which they are always and ever immersed, and always and ever bound by the gaze which signals this immersion in every social exchange.

Graziano’s emphatic distinction that consciousness is not a mere model of attention but a model of meaningful attention suggests that subjects are wired to not merely attend, but also interpret. According to his line of thinking, the model the brain creates is a matter of attention, but also of the mechanisms of attention, including the gaze and countless other sensory and contextual clues, operating with the *awareness* that attention is meaningful. Such an awareness is a permanent condition. It is not temporary or fleeting, nor can it be halted. The aforementioned habit of ground gazing could possibly be interpreted in any number of ways, but my own inclination would be to see it as a naïve attempt to hit pause on this inescapable awareness that always accompanies a constant stream of social stimuli and social feedback. If I can’t see it, it doesn’t exist; with their eyes smashed shut, the social actors in the novel are demonstrating Graziano’s insight about the nature of human consciousness as a mechanism of attention which is inherently social because it is focused outward on the environment rather than inward. Just as Sir George sought a kind of refuge and relief from the gaze of his audience while determining his course of action, so we see Glanville and Arabella employ this behavior as well as they all seem to be using gaze aversion as a kind of coping mechanism designed to help ameliorate the stress caused by the expectations and assumptions of the onlookers. Lennox indefatigably ties the knot of anger, shame, and the social gaze: Arabella “[blushes] with Anger,

as she before did with Shame,” and again “[blushes] with shame” a couple pages later as she assesses the circumstances surrounding Sir George and decides that considering him as a lover “would be a great Mortification,” while on the following page Glanville experiences “the mortification to know” that Arabella has been narrating in her romantic mode (Lennox 161, 160, 164, and 165). Loosed from explanations regarding social standing, Arabella confesses her thoughts to Lucy with “shame and confusion,” she is overwhelmed by the “Shame and Rage she conceived at so glaring a Proof of [Glanville’s] Disrespect,” and in the end the Doctor who assimilates her “[leaves] her in a strange Embarrassment” (Lennox 108, 51, 367). Shame in this novel is ubiquitous, and Glanville frantically biting his lip to shreds while vexed with shame is perhaps one of the most fitting images to represent the maddening abundance of shame in these pages and in these minds.

Even amidst preconditions that ought to organize both social roles and the predictable sentiments that would accompany such roles, the dynamics of the gaze make such organization impossible. In one confused dialogue between Sir Charles and Arabella, the social script a reader might expect would involve Arabella’s deference to this paternal figure who would exert an authoritative power, but instead there is clumsy communication that leaves both characters out of sorts, Arabella of course ashamed and angry, and Sir Charles “half angry with himself” for playing his part in the confusion between them. Even after he apologizes, and the narrator emphasizes that Sir Charles was here “very polite and good-natured,” Arabella exhibits the paranoia that must become a natural consequence of a watch over everyone kept by everyone. And so “fancying she saw something in his Looks that confirmed her Apprehensions, she removed her Eyes from his Face, and, fastening them on the Ground, remained for some Moments in Confusion” (Lennox 161).

The confusion persists and Lennox makes it persistent along with the relentless waves of shame and anger that keep eyes alternately locked on the ground and anxiously searching faces for signs and signals of how the audience is reacting. The significance of the face as a kind of billboard of affect supports the more simplistic connection between the gaze and social relations, as people use their eyes to both express feeling and seek out such expression in order to comprehend their environment and strategize with respect to the social actors within that environment. We can witness Sir George trying to discern his effect on Lady Bella and whether the stratagems he employs are working, as in the midst of his social gaming he “ventured slowly to lift his Eyes to her Face, in order to discover if there were any Signs of Anger in it” (Lennox 162). Glanville also practices this basic face reading, seeking ‘information’ from Arabella’s expression when he fears his father has imposed his matrimonial intent upon his beloved and “he drew a bad Omen from the Discontent which appeared in her Eyes” as confirmation of his fears (Lennox 169).

To conclude, I want to cast such omen reading and affect anticipating as a lower-level benchmark for understanding the significance of the gaze and how Lennox pushes past this type of exchange. In this type of exchange, the face may be an honest surface expressing what is genuinely felt, or the face might be manipulated to spread false information for one’s social advantage. But the influence of the eyes in this novel transcends information exchange or the advertising of affect; the way the gaze serves as a constant internalized influence on attention itself suggests that the kind of watch that results from this condition of chronic attention in no way depends upon our individual participation at any given moment. Vaz extrapolates from Foucault’s assertion that we constantly live in the midst of panoptic techniques that we can never escape, as the gaze migrates into the mind and no longer needs observing eyes, suggesting that

“we seem to live in an eternal state of being- for-others” (Vaz 45). Graziano’s theory of consciousness takes this a step further, arguing that we are not merely being for others, which suggests an active psychology of motivation, anticipation, and conscious manipulation, but that we are in essence processing-for-others at the level of consciousness in the brain, an astounding proposition that levels existing discourse about the relative agency of gazers and objects.

In a heated debate about female decorum between Miss Glanville and our heroine who accuses her of bestowing “criminal favors” such as letting men speak to her of love, Miss Glanville defends herself and in turn accuses Arabella arguing that visiting any man is far worse than any such crime she has committed. Naturally, Arabella resorts to romantic examples in her defense, exclaiming that “many other illustrious Ladies [did] not scruple to visit their Lovers, when confined to their Beds, either by the Wounds they received in Battle, or the more cruel and dangerous ones they suffered from their Eyes?” (Lennox 183). Lennox confirms that the eyes possess a wounding power consummate with weapons of war; her characters die with shame regularly and are vexed to the limits of their sanity. Shame is not bound by any character’s adherence to a particular set of conventions; Arabella is not the only one shame-bound because of her romantic allegiance and her failure to comply with contemporary conventions, values, and vocabularies. Lennox “seems to have been less interested in *reviving* romantic apparition than she was in *deriving* it from the collective *folie* that bound not just the living literary culture about her, but the social sphere of social relations about it” (Lewis 166). There is psychosis inherent in all communities as they use the gaze and the shame that attends it to shape social relations into a single shared delusion, and Lennox uses her romantically inclined heroine to demonstrate for the reader the universal nature of all social spheres as a kind of psychosis, of which Arabella belongs to only one of many.

III. "This is all Artifice": The Lateral Nature of Arabella's Conversion

The rhetorical framing of a debate with a learned clergyman suggests that Arabella's final conversion is one accomplished by "the Force of Truth," as Arabella herself surmises (Lennox 381). This framing is a powerful one that produces the illusion of the patriarchal force of reason, and it is one usually reproduced in subtle ways even within critical challenges to this specious power dynamic between Arabella and the clergyman. Patricia Meyer Spacks argues that Arabella "yields to the clergyman's arguments only because he persuades her that his principles are more rigorous than her own" (Spacks 541). Even while Spacks rejects the masculine principle that reforms the feminine threat to a social order Arabella actively spurns, the consensus is that the vehicle for this change is reason and articulation. Spacks continues suggesting that "Arabella, heroine of a didactic novel, responds readily to a wise man's naming of her experience" (Spacks 541). I would argue that reason and articulate naming are not the primary vehicles for Arabella's assimilation into socially sanctioned habits of mind. She responds not to an act of naming but an act of shaming.

The moment in which the debate ceases is one marked by Arabella's accepting embrace of the shame that has been thrust upon her, and she expresses this acceptance by identifying with the figure of the criminal, a host of shame and guilt who has been expelled from society, recoverable only through confession and punishment. Arabella's conversion is, in effect, a confession: she wonders "how the Blaze of Enthusiastic Bravery, could hinder [her] from remarking with Abhorrence the Crime of deliberate unnecessary bloodshed" (Lennox 381). Arabella is guilty, according to herself, and her submission to the force of shame that pins her with the guilt of 'murder' catalyzes her return to the fold of society. Spacks also labels the

operation of the clergyman as one in which he “converts Arabella to normality,” a much more apt description of this submission as a giving way to the pressure of contingent social norms rather than an intellectual embrace of rigorous principles (Spacks 534). The momentous conversion is a change in self-perception and not of principle, one that hinges on the notion of criminality and the concomitant shame that attends such a label. Formerly, Arabella confidently accused others of various crimes, as when she self-assuredly points out to Miss Glanville that she has “granted Favours of a Kind in a very great Degree criminal” (Lennox 183). The journey from a dispenser of romantic justice to the humiliated criminal is driven by shame and the affect associated with it which drives the subject to convert to normalcy to dissolve both the label and affect it creates.

The marriage to Glanville immediately following the confession cements the social operation of sloughing off the shame Arabella has been saddled with, and it is a marriage not of love but of social scripts and habits of mind. The narrator’s separation of worldly commingling and more private unionizing obfuscates the extent to which the latter mirrors the former in this case. The “Pair were indeed [not] only married in the common Acceptation of the Word; that is, they were privileged to join Fortunes, Equipages, Titles, and Expence; while Mr. Glanville and Arabella were united, as well as in these, as in every Virtue and laudable Affection of the Mind” (Lennox 383). The telling phrase, affection of the mind, encapsulates the explicitly social nature of this affection and echoes the earlier account of Arabella’s dependence on her romances which is described as “her Habit of thinking, a Principle imbib’d from Education” (Lennox 329). Affection of mind can be cast as a euphemism for the more precise ‘habit of thinking’; the foundation of the union is dependent on conversion to a habit of thought rather than affect that begets a more profound sense of love. The rhetorical timing of the conversion and subsequent

marriage is itself indicative of the suspect nature of this abrupt about face. Without much ceremony or prolonged sense of real transformation, Arabella collapses into the new “habit” and so into a marriage to Glanville, who represents the society which she had always remained outside of throughout the novel. Arabella’s collapse into this paradigm is more or less the result of a kind of shame fatigue; her confession and transformation is a false one not unlike those offered by the weary innocent in the interrogation room. When the countess first attempts to wear down Arabella’s defenses and calls into question her relative conceptions of vice and virtue, she is “surpriz’d, embarras’d, perplex’d, but not convinc’d” (Lennox 329). This is one complex constellation of affects and states of mind that suggests the fundamental relationship between shame and “intellectual” submission. Being first perplexed and then convinced indicates the mind’s journey toward understanding, while being surprised, embarrassed, and then convinced indicates the self’s journey toward assimilation to mainstream values via the vehicle of shame. The latter is Arabella’s journey, and the rhetoric of rigor and understanding is only a thin veil in the world that Lennox draws as a stage of shaming and reclaiming. First pushed away into privacy by her father’s misdeeds, Arabella is finally pulled back by the shaming of those who surround her, those who have imbibed the common education. The question that remains, though, is the relative sobriety of either habit of mind. If Lennox is an “apt social critic able to show wisdom in folly,” the wisdom she imparts is the lack of sobriety in any social system that requires variously impaired forms of judgment. Shame is the primary vehicle by which persons are ushered from one inebriated state to another. *The Female Quixote* is, finally, a demonstration of the universality of the social mechanism behind such movement, a mapping of the social consciousness we experience and the shame we sometimes use to control and other

times give in to, just like Arabella who first fights and then finally succumbs to the social world that surrounds her.

Succumbing in this case summons notable ambiguity regarding the agency associated with the respective roles of the individual and the surrounding social actors, and I would suggest a stronger slant toward a darker vision of the intent and influence of the actors rather than the individual. Deborah Ross counters this position, arguing that *The Female Quixote* embodies “repressive self-criticism, satirizing and exploiting the romance at the same time,” effectively diminishing the force of the social sphere and emphasizing the reflexive nature of the individual’s role in behavior modification (Ross 470). Ross’s assertion about the dual use of the romance genre belies the extent to which that which is satirized transcends genre itself; the core focus of the satire is precisely the aggressive investment of the community in the behavior modification of the individuals who constitute its parts. One exchange between Arabella and Glanville concerning suicide, with Arabella naturally having specific precepts for the act itself and how methods differ in terms of decorum (hanging is vulgar, the sword is valiant), exposes the confusion enveloping the individual’s agency as Glanville pronounces: “you’ll make me hang myself” (Lennox 318).

The abdication of will in his expression follows one of Arabella’s typical digressions on the examples set by the likes of Statira and Oroondates, so it is as much an expression of frustrated fatigue as anything, yet in it there is an honest reaction to the force Arabella summons by continually asserting the values and precepts of her social community that conflict with those held by Glanville’s community. His reaction naturally has the flair of the dramatic, but it is a telling reaction nevertheless: someone’s version of the world must die for them to come together, and the self they embody in that world must perish also. The extreme futility that Glanville feels

throughout the novel is an intuitive awareness of the impossibility of blending these mutually exclusive worlds. Ross's final word on Arabella's conversion uses the language of death and mourning, and it is this language which I find to be the only appropriate path to approach what has happened when Arabella accepts her fate to be either criminal or wife in Glanville's world. In Ross' observation that "the cure of Arabella is as much to be mourned as the death of *Don Quixote*," there still remains the unspoken elaboration of what exactly is to be mourned, but Arabella herself identifies what exactly is lost and should be grieved (Ross 470). In her discourse on suicide with Glanville, she remarks that "truly the killing of one's self is but a false Picture of true Courage" as it is grounded in fear, and "Hope being of all other the most contrary Thing to Fear, this being an utter Banishment of Hope, seems to have its Ground in Fear" (Lennox 319). The cure of Arabella hinges on this pivot between hope and fear, and is primarily driven by fear. It is the exposure of this presence of fear and shame as two of the primary engines of social engagement that Lennox satirizes and mourns in *The Female Quixote*.

In her *Solitude and the Sublime: Romanticism and the Aesthetics of Individuation*, Frances Ferguson notes that "the individual subject relates to objects by turning itself into a measuring stick- albeit one that, in a psychic version of Lewis Carroll's Alice, alters its self-estimation often enough to necessitate continual revisions of what counts as less or more powerful than it is" (Ferguson 8). Looking forward to the romantic ascension of faith in thought forms as an expression of subject-hood and interiority, I would suggest that Ferguson's insight complements the focus of the current discussion, as the continual re-visioning of estimations of power are at the heart of social dynamics and define a primary occupation of the individual subject. The measuring stick that the self becomes, however, cannot be self-determined, but is itself a mirror of preexisting measurements established by the communities that surround and

engulf the individual. If *Crusoe* is a test for how comedic perception might aid the individual in extricating itself from the hierarchical values and measures established by the self's social world, then Arabella's adventure proves how the price of participation in that world is perhaps underestimated. Not merely by social mores, obligations, or limitations is the self circumscribed by its world, but its very thoughts and affects may not be expressions of subject-hood and private interiority; they are another notch on the measuring stick that the self cannot wield for the sake of calculation, but must succumb to and be shaped by as the barrier between interiority and the other is eroded. In her delusional state, shamelessly dependent on and addicted to her romantic schemas, Arabella experienced some safety from such erosion that precipitates the loss of agency in the social realm, and Lennox's mapping of shame and social consciousness excavates the universal dependence of social selves as they must stay addicted to remain both motivated and credible in their social realm lest they slip into the role of the unhappy criminal, either banished by force or default due to ineluctable discrepancy between social forms of communication.

While discussing the decorum that applies to ladies as they hear inappropriate discourses full of their admirer's confessions, Arabella proclaims that

Whoever is guilty of such an Offence, merits a most rigorous Punishment:

Moreover, you find, that when a Sentence of Banishment or Silence is pronounced upon them, these unhappy Criminals are so conscious of the Justice of their Doom, that they never murmur against the Judge who condemns them; and therefore, whatever are their Fates, in Consequence of that Anger they have incurred, the Ladies, thus offended, ought not to be charged with it, as any cruel Exertion of their Power. (Lennox 147)

This pronouncement is here a fitting end inasmuch as it serves as an apology for the conventions Arabella uses to guide her exertions of power, it also condemns the final sentence of criminality placed upon her own person. Curiously, the sentence of banishment and silence are here yoked, while the ending of the novel proves the reversal where the social reincorporation of the protagonist is dependent upon a particular form of silence, namely of protest against the norms that she has avoided in favor of the glory of her beloved romances. The charge of a cruel exertion of power that Arabella avoids here in her justification of spurning vocal lovers is a charge that the reader is invited to leverage against the final exertion of power against Arabella and the universal and continuous exertions that this example represents, where the social audience consists of judges who doom, silence, and banish, effectively employing shame as the primary tool that serves to regulate the behavior of the social self. Such shame ultimately migrates and resides inward; the subject can now self-regulate and subjugate itself according to the dictates of shame before the rigorous punishment is recommended by any external social force. Certainly Arabella “resists her own conversion into either an instrument or a joke and instead actively composes the man-made atmosphere that verbal or visual instruments pretend to make visible,” but her final succumbing does indeed mark a grave removal from the composition process (Lewis 177).

Chapter 3

“That world which he had never seen”:

Private Wishes and Political Fictions in Johnson’s *Rasselas*

The *vita activa*, human life insofar as it is actively engaged in doing something, is always rooted in a world of men and of manmade things which it never leaves or altogether transcends. Things and men form the environment for each of man’s activities, which would be pointless without such location; yet this environment, the world into which we are born, would not exist without the human activity which produced it...or which established it through organization, as in the case of the body politic. No human life, not even the life of the hermit in nature’s wilderness, is possible without a world which directly or indirectly testifies to the presence of other human beings.

~Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (1958)

The nature of laws and the nature of moods stem from the same locus in the soul: they presuppose the impossibility of an attained and meaningful substance, the impossibility of finding a constitutive object adequate to the constitutive subject. In its experience of nature, the subject, which alone is real, dissolves the whole outside world in a mood, and itself becomes mood by virtue of the inexorable identity of essence between the contemplative subject and its object.

~Georg Lukacs. *The Theory of the Novel* (1920)

Rasselas is a book about happiness, and for all the famous despondency of its author it caught the mood of its time.

~Thomas Keymer, Introduction to *Rasselas* (2009)

Rasselas itself claims to be about happiness, and Keymer confirms not only this dominant focus, but also suggests that this central source of gravity of the work matches the mood of Johnson’s contemporary world. I would argue against the notion that ‘happiness’ here is a strictly private enterprise, and suggest instead that this text is one that charts the dissolution between the boundaries of supposedly private wishes for ‘happiness’ and the social motivations and political consequences of such wishes. Arendt implicates the hermit in political life,

challenging superficial assumptions about the nature of political choices, and as I will argue later, it is apparent that Johnson's hermit is much more worldly himself and concerned with worldly order than might first be apparent. Rather than conceive of the tour that Rasselas and company take as one that documents a linear presentation of discrete possible choices to be made in service of the self's happiness, I will present their journey as one that exposes a particular self-affirmative mode of being by which all of these choices are equalized. I will also chart how this self-affirmative mode of being is implicitly political and implies political consequences as the constitutive subject engages in the activity of 'doing happiness' which dissolves the world in service of personal needs that in turn reconfigure the organization of the world. When Rasselas contemplates "that world which he had never seen," he not only longs for it as a source of escape and excitement, but as a passive stage to act out a personal fantasy of social power that I will argue is common to all of these characters who think they are seeking happiness when in fact social domination and control is the central object of their quest (Johnson 14). Lukacs links the official rules of the body politic and the subjective sense of mood as springing from the same "locus in the soul," and through this episodic tale Johnson narrates this link and mounts a sustained critique of western values that guide quests for self and personal satisfaction.

My choice of title here represents two competing authorial impulses within as well as critical assessments of Johnson's *Rasselas* as a work concerned at once with individual fulfillment and social consequence. My combination suggests a constructive and even necessary reconciliation between two disparate discourses, those of the personal and the political. The exploration of such a reconciliation is hardly novel given the numerous and nuanced accounts of how the personal and political spheres each implicate the other, going all the way back to Aquinas' translation of Aristotle in which he announced: "homo est naturaliter politicus, id est,

socialis” (Quoted by Arendt 23). In the following discussion, I will be examining and articulating how the supposedly personal quest undertaken by the protagonist and his cohort is first and foremost a quest for a viable social identity that implicitly requires a community for contrast and ultimately for the affirmation of the value of that identity. As articulated by Freud in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, there is an inherent tension between the individual’s idiosyncratic pursuit of happiness and the simultaneous need for a community not only as an arena for the enactment of such a pursuit, but also as a ready reservoir that supplies the raw social material necessary for the formation of a personal identity; the individual’s pursuit of happiness, then, becomes a standoff between “ego-instincts and object instincts [that confront] each other” (Freud 753). Freud defines ego-instincts as instincts whose aim is self-preservation and self-affirmation, and though Freud initially drew a contrast between these and the sexual instincts, he later linked ego-instincts with sexual ones assigning both as supportive of the life instinct. I will apply Freud’s core arguments in *Civilization* throughout this discussion as a lens to analyze what I am deeming a quest for identity designed to affirm personal identity in the social sphere. In my analysis of *Crusoe*, I was primarily concerned with an individual’s ability to test the limits of a world he had left behind through the cultivation of comic perception. My examination of Lennox’s *The Female Quixote* scrutinizes the interpersonal operations that govern the individual’s immediate social world and her capacity to move between worlds more similar than different. This chapter finally stages the confrontation between ego-instincts and object instincts through which the individual does not test the limits of the world in solitude nor in the immediate social environment, but through the attempt to create a social self that implies a world in which all needs are met. In *Rasselas*, such attempts fail miserably. Or rather, they fail

according to certain criteria of evaluation which I will argue Johnson interrogates and exposes as untenable western values and commitments.

One key contribution this chapter makes to the larger project to which it belongs is the inclusion and exploration of a work of fiction that lacks the core subjectivity present in both *Crusoe* and *Quixote*. Johnson leverages the formal restrictions inherent in *Rasselas* to prevent any comic intrusion created by the fundamental subjectivity that, for instance, allows Crusoe to improvise his identity without restriction on his island; the pattern Johnson creates is one that ultimately points the way to comic enactment, I will later argue, but the futility and circularity of *Rasselas* limit both the narrative and the models of self contained therein to consolidate Johnson's critique of western politics with their personal and psychological origins. The self-affirmative mode of being that defines this personal and psychological origin depends upon the figuration of types that can only exist through a social lens of objectification. Crusoe and Arabella are both literary quixotes insofar as they both refuse to absorb and assimilate how the social audience views them; Rasselas is an anti-quixotic figure who only considers himself through social roles, and Johnson's interrogation of these roles reveals how they are similar rather than how they are different. The formal restrictions ensure that the reader will register the sense of futility that must accompany this revelation of similarity, and there can be no subjectivity through which to re-interpret comically the overly-determined social roles embodied by characters who mark brief stops on a circular journey as closed as the Happy Valley itself.

It is telling that regardless of the social arena, art, politics, science, or the supposedly devout seclusion of the hermit, the individuals of this tale who inhabit the concomitant socially determined roles of such domains all employ the metaphors of government, sovereignty, and divinity to describe them. Such descriptions are meant to capture and secure the social power

these roles offer the individuals who claim them. Imlac refers to poets as “superior beings” who must act as the “legislators of mankind,” Rasselas conceives of his role as a heroic prince relieving oppression in the masses of his people, and the mad astronomer has crossed the line from stately sovereignty into a theological one, conceiving of himself as an omnipotent being who orders the heavens and must protect the “welfare of a world,” a position which he says makes a king’s station seem insignificant (Johnson 29, 14, 92). The unhappy hermit’s role is socially determined even if socially isolated, and the greeting he exchanges with his visitors smacks of kingly formality, as the visitors bow in reverence and he responds like one “not unaccustomed to the forms of courts” (Johnson 49). Whether “mankind,” masses in need of saving, a “world” whose welfare needs protecting, or courtly figures paying polite respects, in each formulation of the social role there is a definite sense in which one self is central and superior to an indeterminate, inferior, and mass of others. The ego-instincts, and in particular the need for self-affirmation, that drive the pursuit of each of these roles as possible gateways to happiness are all reconfigured through the lens of social power and control. It is not enough to be a poet or astronomer or hermit, engaging in the activities of each to satisfy the self; the self’s satisfaction in each case is derived from the role’s superior hierarchical position.

To read *Rasselas* as an incidentally fictional work that merely uses characters as mouthpieces for Johnson’s critical thoughts, philosophical conclusions, and ideological insights is to miss the import of this work as a piece of fiction that indeed is a “report on the world and an invention that parodies that report” (Davis 213). Later in this discussion, I will return to the question of genre in reading *Rasselas*, rejecting the many prevailing attempts to cull didactic offerings from discrete episodes which effectively neglects larger implications of the narrative structure of the whole which forms a parodic report on the search for ‘happiness.’ This

particular report parodies a quintessentially western mode of thinking and being that governs both individual and larger social movements toward fulfillment; as such, this western mode of thinking can be seen as the fundamental psychological condition leading to the failure of the modern self's search for happiness as well as the collapse of empires. Freud discerns this stubborn binding thread between the self's search for fulfillment and the success of its surrounding civilization, writing that "the analogy between the process of civilization and the path of individual development may be extended," suggesting that the labor of each sphere bears heavily on the other (Freud 769). The cornerstone of the western mindset I am referring to is the elevation of the individual self which seeks satisfaction over and through other individuals in social arenas marked by various forms of aggression and domination, even and especially sublimated forms of aggression that drive social pursuits in the arts, sciences, and elsewhere. Invoking "the worldly wisdom of the East" in an antithetical challenge to the west's implicit faith in the personal reward that results from the satisfaction of the ego-instincts, Freud suggests that it is this faith which catalyzes an individual quest for happiness in the first place, and I am extending this line of thought by arguing that these private wishes for an enduring state of satisfaction via ego-instincts serve as the pith for political fictions that are the final realization of this mindset on a grand social scale (Freud 731).

In his introduction to the most recent edition of Johnson's novel, philosophical romance, or moral fable, Thomas Keymer draws out a strange contradiction between Johnson's own intent to elevate the rational aspects of *Rasselas* while the physical manifestation of the work privileges the poetic. He documents how Johnson's preference for the working title, *The Choice of Life*, as well as select correspondence and even the titular character's name all suggest a work primarily concerned with philosophical deliberation that is merely propped up the personal narrative of the

Prince of Abyssinia (Keymer xvi). The attention Johnson paid to the material layout of the publication, however, suggests an antithetical impulse toward the poetic as the supposedly rational deliberation that drives the ‘story’ was physicalized through contemporary conventions of the poetic, including a font and format that was almost exclusively reserved for poetry at this time (Caslon Pica) and “disproportionately large type in a small octavo format,” which both created the visual manifestation of a poetic rather than didactic text (Keymer xvii). Rather than read *Rasselas* exclusively through either the personal lens that necessarily depends upon the imagination (even as self rationalization through philosophical flights must be seen as imaginative acts) or the political lens that studies the magnification of personal choices as they are acted out in the social sphere, I will argue that each of these interpretive “parts” already contains the whole that is *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia*.

In the first section, I will demonstrate how Rasselas’ founding fantasy that constitutes the psychic engine of this narrative establishes a self-affirmative mode consonant with both Freud’s account of ego instincts and Said’s argument that this self-affirmative mode of being and seeking is the beginning of what leads to political conflicts supported by political fictions of power. These political fictions of power are supported by the same impulse toward superiority, sovereignty, and even omnipotence that I outlined above as the common impulse behind individual roles as various as poet, prince, and hermit. Rasselas’ heroic personal fantasy as benevolent prince and also his fantasy of escape are seminal moments of self-deception that have deceived many readers into thinking that this text investigates a variety of possible choices of unique philosophy or activity; in the second section, I will argue that this choice of life is primarily about a choice of self. The key to this second section is the revelation that differences among the possible social selves are dwarfed by their common impulse toward the gratification

of ego-instincts which will be the same in every case. In the third section, I will show how Johnson conceives of this common impulse in the political sphere, and will argue that rather than dissect *Rasselas* piecemeal, reading the whole as a sustained critique of western values prevents the exclusion of certain parts to preserve the interpretations of others. This third section also includes an analysis of Johnson's introduction to *The World Displayed*, which serves as a rich nonfictional record that complements the critique of the west made in the fiction. *The World Displayed* presents a typical contemporary sample of travel narratives that would entertain and divert readers, but Johnson's introduction is dissonant in purpose and effect, serving instead to invert and critique the binary of social roles that pit the 'enlightened' against the 'barbaric.' I will conclude by pivoting from Johnson's critique to how the pattern of *Rasselas* that ends in frustration anticipates the comic release of *Tristram Shandy*. Reading *Rasselas* as an anti-Quixote moves the critique of western values I will elaborate in previous sections toward action; rather than leave my reading at mere critique, I will demonstrate how this critique maps a movement away from the apparent disillusionment of its conclusion.

I. "The detection of fraud": *Rasselas*' Founding Fantasy of Self-Deception

The narrative of *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia* is a prescient account of how a troupe of seekers, not an individual, pursue an individualized sense of satisfaction that recedes with the horizon. This troupe is apparently benign; *Rasselas*, the prime mover behind the exodus from the Happy Valley, expresses apparently innocuous hopes not only to find and experience happiness, but also to create a similar experience for others who may be less capable of creating it for themselves. Here we find a familiar danger, however benevolent the original hope and wish may seem. Johnson indeed employs a rhetoric of innocent wishing to establish

the engine that propels Rasselas' from his supposedly happy home. He is every bit the child dreaming of heroic feats:

His chief amusement was to picture to himself that world which he had never seen; to place himself in various conditions; to be entangled in imaginary difficulties, and to be engaged in wild adventures: but his benevolence always terminated his projects in the relief of distress, the detection of fraud, the defeat of oppression, and the diffusion of happiness. (Johnson 14)

The pictures of the world that Rasselas paints and the scenarios he constructs are amusements, fodder for the child's play of his mind, and constitute oversimplified stories loosely constructed with and through places and people he has never seen or known. Perhaps most significant here in this initial account of Rasselas' waking fantasy is the marriage between amusement and difficulty. One may not be complete without the other, as the child plays at war, and so Rasselas must include a measure of difficulty along the imaginary road leading to the termination and satisfaction that he seeks, and such difficulty is grossly absent in the Happy Valley. The termination of this passage is a trifecta of triumph, first of immediate truth as he detects and exposes fraud, then social victory which follows as oppression is overthrown, and finally the mystical release of happiness diffused like so many atoms in the air presumably breathed in by those who people his projects and prop up his adventures.

Within the confines of *Rasselas*, there seems to be an imaginary mountain range that barricades "the world" from the harm that could be caused by the motion of Rasselas and his band whose self-centric mindset blinds them to the possibility of collateral damage. Apparently, by the conclusion which refuses the happy denouement Rasselas fantasizes about, no harm has been done. Yet here with Rasselas' fantasy we have a startling intersection between the personal

and the political, a rather insistent adjoining of the private wishes of one self not with the social per se, but the explicitly political. The happiness Rasselas dreams of is entwined with the cessation of “oppression” and his role as the reliever of ills propagated by injustice which will be replaced by a diffusion of happiness that spreads widely and freely in his wake. In his 2003 preface to *Orientalism*, Edward Said comments on international conflict, writing that

The breathtaking insouciance of jejune publicists who speak in the name of foreign policy and who have no live notion (or any knowledge at all) of the language of what real people actually speak has fabricated an arid landscape ready for American power to construct there an ersatz model of free market “democracy,” without even a tract of doubt that such projects don’t exist outside of Swift’s Academy of Lagado. (Said xv)

Rather than indulge in an oversimplified conflation between Rasselas’ fantasy of personal power and Said’s vision of American power, I will chart the parallels between Rasselas’ initial formulation of his personal fantasy and Said’s account of one western nation’s political fiction.

Both are predicated on lack, both of knowledge and first-hand experience. Said’s phrase, “no live notion,” is more than apt and reflects Johnson’s choice to couch Rasselas’ fantasy in a pictorial rhetoric that emphasizes the two-dimensionality as well as invented nature of the “pictures of life” that he uses to “amuse” himself. Both require a place, a landscape, that must be constructed as the setting of a fiction that has already been concluded; not only does Johnson gesture heavily in his first sentence to the frustrating finale, but here in Rasselas’ microcosmic fantasy, he shows his readers that Rasselas’ imaginary adventures are not adventures per se, which might require surprise or suspense, but rather scripted fictions which already have endings that reaffirm the heroic role and the people’s need for such a hero. Both Said and Johnson refer

to the activities of these fictions and fantasies as “projects,” emphasizing the intentionality inherent in these fictions and dismissing the whimsical quality one might associate with that which we consider to be amusing and imaginary. Indeed Said’s invocation of Swift here injects satire as the proper mirror to reflect the absurdity inherent in the fiction of western power. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the meaning and use of “project” comes in part from the classical Latin “proiectum,” which refers to the physicality of a projecting structure, and a later Middle French influence, “projetter,” meaning to plan. Leaving aside the naïve assumption that fantasy and the imaginary is synonymous with that which is inconsequential, the parallels between Rasselas’ initial expression of his personal fantasy and Said’s commentary on a much later political manifestation of a fiction of power constitute an important reminder. What may have first been cloaked in the language of fantasy might already be or eventually become an intentional project, and what may have passed for the merely personal can become through social enactment a protuberant political structure, perhaps less physical but no less real than the gates to the Happy Valley.

That Rasselas does not explicitly outline the human objects that are to serve as the passive players in his fantasy may initially seem to make the scenarios constructed for his own amusement more innocuous than inimical. I would, argue, however, that this anonymity that characterizes those who will be relieved by Rasselas is yet more dangerous. Said notes that “the modern Orientalist [is] a hero rescuing the Orient from obscurity, alienation, and strangeness which he himself had properly distinguished” (Said 121). The heroic role that Rasselas imagines for himself is obvious, as is its plain connection to the political dimension with reference to social ills and oppression, even if the identity of those he wishes to rescue remains shadowy, obscured, and unnamed. And more important for this discussion than the fully functioning

heroic social role which *Rasselas* certainly does not possess at this juncture is the nature of this inclination that would drive such a fantasy and the social conditions that might enable it.

One point worth belaboring here is that *Rasselas* is, essentially, a work that captures the inclination that drives this fantasy in its nascent form before it can transform into an expression of socio-political aggression. Said argues that “there is a difference between know-ledge of other peoples and other times that is the result of understand-ing, compassion, careful study and analysis for their own sakes, and on the other hand knowledge—if that is what it is—that is part of an overall campaign of self-affirmation, belligerency and outright war” (Said xv). My argument here is that *Rasselas* is at the beginning of this campaign, and that his goal is essentially a matter of self-affirmation that may seem innocuous even while it establishes the kind of mindset that can eventually be externalized in outright war. Freud delimits the ego-instincts as those which propel the individual toward self-affirmation, and Said charts this self-affirmation as the beginning of a personal quest for power that moves toward aggression and is sometimes realized in war. Particularly noteworthy is *Rasselas*’ own formulation which weds self-affirmation explicitly to social justice and is rather severe in its conception of objective opposites, particularly with respect to the social roles that posit a superior individual demarcated by nameless and helpless masses. Readers are never able to witness in practice the kind of justice that *Rasselas* imagines, but the cognitive foundation seems to lend itself to forming a public form of “abstract justice [that] provides only a minimal guarantee for noninterference or liberty and equality. Justice that is not accompanied with care and sympathy could be, as Hume observed, a very cold thing” (Lee 256). My point here is not to fruitlessly project what sort of sovereign the Prince might make in practice, but to argue that the impulse that leads to the escape from the Happy Valley is indeed a burgeoning though ostensibly innocuous self-affirmative

mindset that is the kind Said imagines as what gestates in the individual and is ultimately turned outward as political aggression.

Throughout the process of Rasselas' exit and the mental anguish that attends it, Johnson emphasizes the appetitive nature at the heart of this search which encourages the Freudian reading that the ego-instinct for self-affirmation is a primary force behind this quest. Regretting his own folly for wasting time that could have been spent actively working toward his escape from his homeland, Rasselas bemoans his idle passivity and describes how he "sat feasting on intellectual luxury, regardless alike of the examples of the earth and the instructions of the planets" (Johnson 15). By his own account, he was suspended in a kind of solipsistic reverie that carries on without respect to or account of his surroundings, and at the heart of this reverie is his appetite. He "feasts" gluttonously on intellectual luxury no less, suggesting something equally grotesque about the act of feasting on concepts as on cake. In this same passage, Rasselas berates himself mercilessly to the point of comedy, complicating the portrait of the protagonist by exposing the highly self-critical and fallacious nature of his reflections. Rasselas' fantasies and intellectual indulgence are not simply a pleasure cruise, but apparently sometimes create effects that are quite contrary to pleasure: sorrow and loss. "Sorrowful meditations fastened upon his mind," and did so for a significant amount of time (Johnson 15). Apparently, the Prince "past four months in resolving to lose no more time," effectively wasting plenty of it through the process of determining that none of it should be lost (Johnson 15). Johnson belabors this absurdity for his audience by noting that Rasselas "regretted his regret," emphasizing a kind of feeble humanity splayed open before the reader as the Prince fails to keep his resolutions (Johnson 16). Hardly just a decisive hero driven to use or abuse, he seems equally incapable and hapless while trapped both in the Happy Valley and in the circular reflections of his mind.

But the comic here is not enacted through behavior or a meaningful move toward the anti-affirmative as Crusoe accomplishes both with his continually itinerant behavior and spurning of the identities associated with his various ‘victories’ (wealth, salvation, etc.). Instead, the comic moment here is immediately followed by ever more strenuous resolutions. This episode of doubt, confusion, and absurdity concludes with a kind of monomaniacal resolve that seems almost guaranteed to be frustrated; Rasselas “bent his whole mind upon the means of escaping from the valley of happiness” (Johnson 16). Perhaps more so here than in any other sentence in Rasselas’ history, we have a vital demonstration of the confusion between means and ends, with the narrator reflecting Rasselas’ faith that his physical egress from the Happy Valley is only the beginning of a journey which would indeed constitute it as a means to the more important end of happiness and fulfillment. But the end here is precisely an escape, an escape from the failure of all convenience and pleasure to resolve in satisfaction, and for any paradigm represented by those the troupe will soon meet. The ethic of personal satisfaction and gratification is precisely what dooms this search, and it is the circularity of the search that depends upon the self’s appraisal of resolutions that is most deeply problematic. Said writes that Orientalism “also retained, as an undislodged current in its discourse, a reconstructed religious impulse, a naturalized supernaturalism,” and Rasselas’ circular cognitions that must strike the reader as absurd gesture toward the concomitant circularity and absurdity that undergird this naturalized supernaturalism when it becomes the primary engine behind the seeking self (Said 121). When Rasselas bends his whole mind upon escaping, he confuses his means with his end; the first momentous exit will be succeeded by further departures from what becomes present experience, and all the while such escaping which seems directed toward the end of happiness becomes the end itself by which to leave the vacuum of dissatisfaction that results from the

adoption of a counterproductive and entrapping identity-affirmative mindset that is peculiarly western. Escape becomes the only possible end to seek when trapped in this mode of thinking and being.

In my discussion of *Robinson Crusoe*, I argued that Crusoe is essentially anti-affirmative with respect to the modes and operations of self-construction available to him, and that while he certainly participates in various modes such as spiritual and economic ones, he does not finally embrace them as leading to a settled identity meant to guarantee the incentives peculiar to each mode. Crusoe does masquerade as the saved pilgrim, the savvy profiteer, and the social sovereign who minds his island subjects, but he never finally becomes any of these social actors, and so the adoption of such roles is an expansive rather than limiting process because final affirmations of identity are refused. I would also argue that, contrarily, *Rasselas* works in the antipodal affirmative mode which does seek appetitive resolution in the form of personal satisfaction, and that this seeking is primarily directed toward a form of self that can maintain that resolution such that satisfaction will not be lost.

Two strikingly similar passages from *Crusoe* and *Rasselas* illustrate this point with respect to their focus on personal desire and fulfillment of this desire, but the formulae of these passages are diametrically opposed and demonstrate the prevailing mode of self-testing and seeking present in each text. At the close of the novel after having realized that he is a wealthy man reaping the economic boon from various investments, Crusoe reflects on his past, and rather than embrace his good fortune, he instead longs for the island as a place "where I wanted nothing but what I had, and had nothing but what I wanted" (Defoe 240). In this final chiasmic pronouncement on the relationships among desire (want), the self (I), and material (nothing), Crusoe aggressively contests the conflation of self-improvement with economic improvement

and the values that quietly attend it. Crusoe destroys the assumption that desire can be assuaged with material or accounted for in any material way. While still trapped in the confines of the Happy Valley, Rasselas makes a pronouncement using the very same words but arranges them quite differently, breaking the chiasmic formulation and in the process affirming a need to materially account for his desire even while he spurns the material currently available to him. Rasselas sums up the problematic nature of his excessively comfortable existence with the following echo of Crusoe's rejection of his economic ease: "'That I want nothing,' said the Prince, 'or that I know not what I want, is the cause of my complaint'" (Johnson 12). Crusoe equates the nothingness of the island with the open field of possibility that furnishes him with everything, whereas Rasselas rejects the chiasmic formulation and breaks it, asserting that the very fact that he "wants nothing" is itself a crucial form of lack. In both instances, these protagonists are doing more than venting a sense of satisfaction or lack thereof. Each sets up a model for the self and its relationship to the material world: Crusoe actively states an anti-affirmative stance that negates the import of even the most extreme of material dichotomies (everything and nothing), whereas Rasselas' formulation of his complaint enshrines 'want' as an implied material answer and so begins the fruitless mission to calibrate the relationship between self and material world to satiate the former with the latter. This doomed hope is the heart of his initial self-deception, and his heroic fantasy of social sovereignty serves as the confining cognitive context of the journey which will examine all possible choices of life through the ego-instinct of self-affirmation which desires social power and a self fit to guarantee it.

II. "Burthened with myself": The Choice of Life as Choice of Self

In this section, I will combine close readings of the hermit, the stoic, the community of learned men, and the astronomer with an application of two key arguments that Freud articulates in *Civilization* concerning philosophical judgments and aggression. The core argument of this section is that the ‘tour’ that takes place in *Rasselas* is essentially an illusion of seeking. The exploration of supposedly discrete possibilities for happiness that all fail in their own way is actually the same failure of the same model of self-formation. The illusion is that these different social actors who embody different ‘choices of life’ that might lead to happiness are, in fact, different; I argue instead that despite the variety of occupation and context, these individuals all seek and fail to find the satisfaction of their ego-instincts in the same way and discover that they cannot finally be satiated by any social role. The choice of life is treated largely as a choice that is an informed one in *Rasselas*; there is an implicit faith and confidence in the self to make the choice and discern meaningful differences among available possibilities.

At the outset of their journey, Imlac expresses awareness of the lack of informed thinking as well as cooperative personal agency in the unfolding of most lives that are formed without the direct force of the individual’s vision. Imlac preaches the following summary on the plight of the common man: “‘Very few,’ said the poet, ‘live by choice. Every man is placed in his present condition by causes which acted without his foresight, and with which he did not always willingly cooperate; and therefore you will rarely meet one who does not think the lot of his neighbor better than his own’” (Johnson 42). By discerning the ignorance and passivity that accompany most ‘choices’ of life, Imlac is separating himself and his company by proxy from the same folly, and his pronouncement at the beginning of their travels suggests that they will avoid this error. Rather than be placed into any condition without foresight or cooperation, supposedly they will investigate various choices of life, interrogate the virtues and pitfalls of

each, and then make a decision with full awareness and agency. Imlac certainly “[aggrandizes] his own profession,” which is primarily a semi-discreet way of aggrandizing himself, and the haughtiness of his account as one who is “a being superior to time and place” is precisely part of the central problem of the social role seeking that I argue is the central task of the group (Johnson 29). I need to emphasize the haughtiness of his discourse on his profession and not the haughtiness of Imlac himself. Rather than tie analysis in this section to individual failures or the weaknesses of particular characters, I will be tracking how Johnson treats them in such a way so as to underscore a pattern of how individuals use their philosophical commitments as a veneer for a quest for social power and a social role to secure that power.

Freud’s key insight about the nature of philosophical and critical judgments cannot be understated, and he argues that they are formed *after* one has formed wishes for happiness and estimated their ability to secure the means leading to that happiness they seek. Freud even lapses into hyperbole while formulating this position, stating “one thing only do I know for certain, and that is that man’s judgements of value follow directly his wishes for happiness- that accordingly, they are an attempt to support his illusions with arguments” (Freud 771). This insight reverses the essential faith in the individual to make a choice at all, and suggests that decisions are made first and subsequently arguments are constructed to buoy the illusion that choices were indeed made from a position of clear discernment and an unencumbered liberty to choose. The initial encounter with the hermit in particular supports Freud’s assertion, as the hermit articulates the same sentiment which problematizes the nature of personal choices and suggests that narratives constructed to describe or justify choices already made are perhaps more powerful than the choices themselves. The hermit confesses that he is “sometimes ashamed to think that I could not secure myself from vice, but by retiring from the exercise of virtue, and suspect that I was

rather impelled by resentment, than led by devotion, into solitude” (Johnson 50). The hermit’s self-aware admission exposes that limitations on his choice of life as a hermit were imposed by his “resentment,” and rather than portray the role he occupies as a possible gateway to happiness that should interest his visitors, he lays bare the fact that his choice of life is not a thoughtful act of will but decidedly a default to being “impelled by resentment.”

The source of this resentment is largely caused by a past wound he suffered in the world while trying to satisfy his ego-instincts and ego needs. In his worldly life, the hermit was a military man who “was raised by degrees to the highest military rank,” and “traversed wide countries at the head of [his] troops” (Johnson 50). While enjoying this superior station in the military world, the hermit was challenged by competition among his ranks, and “being disgusted by the preferment of a younger officer,” leaves his post and resolves to “close [his] life in peace, having found the world full of snares, discord, and misery” (Johnson 50). The hermit generalizes that the rampant misfortune present in the world drove him to seek refuge, but it is clear that a challenge to his superior position was a particular misfortune that played a key role in his “choice” to defect to a life of solitude. The hermit runs from the prospect of losing his social role as a powerful military leader rather than willfully toward a life of solitude as a form of devotion and virtue. That the hermit picks up stakes and runs once again to Cairo to escape the apparent blunder which he hopes will not “gain any imitators” might obfuscate the degree of passivity and reactivity that drives his “choices” (Johnson 50). After confessing his anger, resentment, and disillusionment at the prospect of losing the social power associated with his role as a leading military man, the hermit rehearses a supposedly thoughtful deliberation on the relative values of solitude and being in the world: “In solitude, if I escape the example of bad men, I want likewise the counsel and conversation of the good. I have long been comparing the

evils with the advantages of society, and resolve to return into the world to morrow” (Johnson 50).

This rehearsal of carefully weighing relative values that supposedly inform his choice is precisely the kind of inversion that Freud insists is the typical pattern; the hermit constructs arguments that masquerade as thoughtful insights that trail after choices have already been made to accommodate his ego instincts. Most do not notice this sleight of hand which elevates the individual’s capacity to choose meaningfully and minimizes the possibility that one may indeed be made a pawn of ego-instincts and concomitant needs for identity affirmation. Duane H. Smith’s account of the hermit’s role in the narrative reaffirms the illusion that Freud’s insight exposes. In his argument, he introduces the hermit as “another example” of the “pattern of potential panacea, test, and failure,” and the rhetorical effect of his language here even emphasizes a pseudo-scientific method of careful trial and error that first runs a test and then accepts failure, moving on in the search for happiness (Smith 630). What the hermit does is not a form of vigilant and thoughtful testing; his choice to run from the loss of social power is hardly a studied examination of a form of living, even though he tacks on a performative oration that would suggest such an examination after revealing the real motivates for his retreat from the world. Smith summarizes the hermit’s life trajectory as follows: “he withdrew from the disquiet of the world to seek quiet in the wilderness; there, he found disquiet; therefore, he is ready to return to the disquiet of the world to find quiet” (Smith 631). This summary masquerades as a reasonable syllogism acted out; it implies that the hermit has a consistent goal or guiding set of values (quiet), and that he is able to seek, find failure, and recalibrate according to judicious attention to that goal.

Consider an alternative but similar critical assessment of the hermit's "choice of life" that privileges the bias toward the hermit as a thoughtful and informed seeker rather than a disillusioned social climber who seeks refuge in the wilderness to pout after his worldly prestige has been wrested from his grasp. Robert Mayhew writes that "the hermit finds, however, that the mental pleasures of the natural world provide no more lasting fulfillment than the sensual pleasures; as the Happy Valley became 'tasteless tranquility,' so the hermit confesses that his natural-historical study 'is now grown tasteless and irksome'" (Mayhew 545). Here we have the same faith that the hermit is carefully weighing mental pleasures and examining personal fulfillment like a social scientist curating a "natural-historical study." I argue that these and other similar critical assessments fall into the very same neglectful pattern that expresses a faith in the reasonableness of the individual's ability to even make the "choice" of life in the first place, even when provided with a humble character who openly confesses discrepant motives for their behavior that are not part and parcel of the social script that supports their social role. The hermit admits he was haughty and a blow was dealt to his then wounded ego, he insists that he thinks no one should do as he has done, and he presents the frank self-aware assessment that he feels shame because of his choices and the knowledge that virtue in isolation is meaningless when prevented from the exercise of vice in the world. And yet even still, critical assessments of him characterize his life trajectory as a carefully studied test of a form of life rather than an honest and flawed reaction to social disillusionment that followed his social triumph as someone who rose "degree by degree" in the social world. I suspect that, in part, critics respond most powerfully to the contemplative rehearsal he delivers to justify his return to the world.

We can find a parallel example in the character of the stoic that supports Freud's insight in *Civilization* that individuals will be compelled by ego instincts and subsequently adopt

persuasive arguments to mask the true force behind their decisions. In *Rasselas*, the tour that Rasselas and his cohort take physicalizes this process, as each method for masking becomes the concealing social self that hides the reality behind the process that leads to the adoption of a particular social role. Robert Folkenflik points out the discrepancy between the stoic's social role and his behavior, particularly his emotional succumbing to personal tragedy. It becomes apparent that the stoic simply cannot live out the principles he preaches, and Folkenflik asserts a related formulation to Freud's insight, arguing that the stoic is part of a demonstration which proves that "experience undercuts philosophy and rhetoric" (Folkenflik 345). My previous analysis of the hermit fleeing the failure of satisfying his ego-instincts in the military can extend and complicate this statement, specifying what it is exactly about experience that trumps professed philosophies. In addition to this insight that particular segments of experience will supersede professed philosophy as predictors of behavior, Folkenflik's abstraction from the stoic's apparent failure to actually be a stoic also dovetails with my previous argument concerning Rasselas' seminal fantasy of being a hero that helps establish the guiding search for a choice of superior social self rather than a disinterested philosophy, occupation, or choice of life.

While we might cruelly fault the stoic for his all too human foible for failing to let his principles dictate his behavior, it is even more important to note how he narrates his stoic philosophy to Rasselas through examples of socially superior 'heroes' rather than a detached and nuanced account of philosophical ideals. The stoic "[enumerates] many examples of heroes immovable by pain or pleasure, who looked with indifference on those modes or accidents to which the vulgar give the names of good and evil" (Johnson 45). Here we have not only the lionizing of particular individuals, but the stark contrast between the superior heroes and the vulgar masses who help prop up their lofty station. Such a contrast is consonant with my

previous analysis of Rasselas' imaginary dominion over anonymous masses, Imlac's superior ability to legislate 'mankind' that needs his insight, the astronomer's omnipotent power over a hapless 'world,' and even the hermit playing at courtly rituals in his isolation. The consistency of this enduring contrast between a superior individual who rises over and above inferior multitudes erodes the credibility of a search for a meaningful choice of life which increasingly appears to be a quest for social power rather than benign personal happiness. As Folkenflik points out, "Rasselas transfers the heroism described to the sage himself," emphasizing the process of social identification at the expense of philosophical argumentation and assent to reason (Folkenflik 345). This transfer is key in understanding how this tour is indeed one that examines choices of self rather than disinterested choices of life, and that the driving need of the ego-instincts, particularly self-affirmation, is the most significant psychic engine driving this search. It is not merely the heroes who serve as possible selves to imitate, but Rasselas sees the stoic as a superior being, and by making this choice of life it would follow that Rasselas would be able to also participate in this social superiority.

At the beginning of this section I identified two key arguments that Freud makes in *Civilization* that would support my claim that the quest at the center of *Rasselas* is not really a quest for a choice of life that would be most conducive to personal happiness, but is rather a hunt for a social role that might furnish the individual with social power. I first demonstrated the extent to which these choices of life bear out Freud's insight that the reasoned narratives individuals create to explain their choices usually do not predate that choice, but are constructed as fictions ex post facto to disguise the role of ego-instincts. The second key insight of *Civilization* that lends a particularly instructive lens through which to read *Rasselas* is Freud's claim about the role of aggression in the very endeavors and occupations that Rasselas and his

band encounter throughout their journey. Freud writes that “sublimation of instinct is an especially conspicuous feature of cultural development; it is what makes it possible for higher psychical activities, scientific, artistic or ideological, to play such an important part of civilized life” (Freud 742). He also points out that such sublimation is never finally complete, and the particular instinct he spotlights in the conclusion of *Civilization* is aggressiveness. Freud states plainly that “men are not gentle creatures,” but are rather “creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness,” and it is in fact man’s “neighbor” who serves as “someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on him” (Freud 749).

My application of this claim in *Rasselas* is that social aggressiveness serves in part to explain the drive to seek not a disinterested “choice of life,” but a choice of self that satisfies a need for power and superiority and can also act as a sufficient outlet for the partial sublimation of aggression. Freud views the social arenas of higher psychical activity such as art, science, and philosophy as arenas in which aggression is sublimated, and I am arguing that this impulse for aggression is what drives the compulsion toward seeking superior social roles. The incessant agitating for superiority in these arenas of art, science, and philosophy is what defines them as a socially interested activity that is turned outward, frequently in an attempt to dominate, rather than inward in an attempt to enlighten the self or cultivate a personal sense of well-being and happiness. *Rasselas*’ encounter with the community of learned men in Cairo bears out this insight regarding the centrality of aggression as the animating quality that compels the individual to seek out a choice of self that will provide dominion over others. Hardly a cooperative group of men who value learning for either its own sake or for that of social utility, these men form a supposedly civilized community which obfuscates the extent to which they each as individuals

succumb to instincts of aggression and fail to adequately develop or grow in philosophical prowess.

Johnson employs language that connotes aggression, hostile attempts to assert superiority, and even a drive toward sovereignty which undermines the social roles these learned men supposedly occupy as scholars in the community. Rather than provide intellectual diversion or contribute intellectual property to the public, these men seem to be exercising their aggression in a partial sublimation of instinct in one of the civilized realms that Freud imagines as the outlet for one of the individual's basest instincts. This claim may at first seem to lack credibility; the chapter in which Rasselas encounters this community of learned men, entitled "The Happiness of a life led according to nature," is brief, and is introduced in a fashion that confirms the expectations one would have of individuals occupying their social role. Initially described in terms that reflect the fiction of their social roles, they are presented as "an assembly of learned men, who [meet] at stated times to unbend their minds, and compare opinions" (Johnson 51). Such a description hits just the pitch of detached philosophizing and communal discoursing which the reader would assume to be their primary activity; the phrase, "unbending the mind," suggests not only cerebral activity, but a kind of deliberate intellectualizing that would be conducted with a calm mien. The first definition of "unbend" in the Oxford English Dictionary is "to release or relax from tension." The actual behavior of these men is quite contrary. Their disputations are "sometimes too violent," "every one was desirous to dictate to the rest," and "every one was pleased to hear the genius or knowledge of another depreciated" (Johnson 51).

These descriptions of the learned men paint them less like scholars and draw them closer to Freud's vision of the aggressive individual trying to sublimate that aggression in a supposedly civilized social sphere by asserting power over others. Not only are they violent in conversation,

but they have a tendency to dictate and so lord over others in the community, and apparently they are all anxious to see their knowledge appraised as rich rather than merely meaningful as they seek to cheapen the insights of those around them. Their pleasure at the depreciation of others' knowledge is a clear signal that this social arena and their social roles are a mask for a less noble activity, namely a competitive, petty, and aggressive social contest meant to gratify them individually. Such is the case in the community at large, as these descriptions do not only apply to a small segment of the population of this community. Hardly so, such "faults were almost general among them" (Johnson 51). The consistent failure of the community concerns both their motive and behavior, which appears to be a motive for superiority that is expressed by violent discourse and petty dictating. Johnson closes this chapter with another blow to the supposed "life lived according to nature," as when Rasselas converses with one of the men for an extended period of time, "the prince soon found that this was one of the sages whom he should understand less as he heard him longer" (Johnson 53). In addition to portraying these men as power hungry, Johnson suggests that they may know very little and be capable of communicating even less. The suggestion that this might indeed be an emperor with no clothes situation with the community of learned men helps support the notion that this social theatre which lacks substance and is dictated by partially sublimated aggression is constructed to support power seeking individuals. Neither happiness, nature, nor learning seem to be playing a very significant part in a chapter entitled "The happiness of a life led according to nature."

Both of my previous readings of the hermit and the stoic establish a definite discrepancy between a predictable social script that obfuscates any extraneous material of experience that does not fit flush with the boundaries of the social roles adopted by individuals in *Rasselas*. The hermit produces his brief oration that supposedly weighs carefully the components of his

decisions, even after confessing that an ego wound more or less drove him into a form of solitude that is not truly about the exercise of virtue. The stoic professes a philosophy of detachment while betraying those ideals by passionately telling tales of stoic ‘heroes’ “with great energy” and receiving Rasselas’ gold “with a mixture of joy and wonder;” hardly detached, the stoic is emotionally engaged, moved by worldly riches, and encourages his audience to see him as “a superior being” (Johnson 45). And the reading of the learned men continues this pattern in which Johnson draws a marked contrast between a superficial social perception that conforms to the qualities and characteristics one would associate with a corresponding social role and the experience of these individuals who occupy such roles and who contradict those perceptions. My previous assessment of critical readings of the hermit even suggests that readers respond powerfully to the social scripts of social roles, forgetting or glossing over discrepant information that does not support the identity associated with the social role. The hermit is not remembered as one who took flight from social injury while a powerful military leader; he is an introspective and reflective hermit who conducts a careful “natural historical study.” The stoic is supposedly a superior being who heroically governs his passions, when in actuality he is no such governor but rather seeks social capital and is in rapture when repaid in actual capital. And now finally we have a community of learned men who supposedly practice relaxing the mind in social discourse, but actually seek to dominate each other with violent disputations and aggressive attempts to discredit other members of the group.

The title of this section implies its thesis. When Rasselas is still ensconced in the suffocating tranquility of the Happy Valley, he wanders forlorn among the animals and muses: “Ye are happy and need not envy me that walk thus among you, burthened with myself” (Johnson 11). Here Rasselas’ own formulation of his unhappiness has embedded in it an implied

answer; a form of self. Self is burden, and apparently self is solution in this supposedly personal fiction of dissatisfaction. The very structure and pattern of Johnson's work supports this thesis, as the tour the band takes is one defined by encounters with individuals who occupy discrete social roles that are variously interrogated and debated. Even while there is some attention paid to place in this work, it is a subsidiary concern. While *Rasselas* does of course link his disenchantment to the Happy Valley as a numbing social space, when the band takes its journey, there is not the same focus and attention paid to the impact of place on happiness, or any other dimension of measurement of satisfaction for that matter.

There are certainly isolated and episodic-based debates on the relative merits of solitude versus community, or marriage versus a single life, but the fundamental structure of the narrative is a chain of encounters with individuals who occupy supposedly discrete social roles that offer one option for the choice of life. One self equates with one possible choice. Johnson constructs a synecdochic pattern that elevates a part of each person to represent the whole. Rather than encounter a John Doe who ascribes to stoic principles, or a Sam Johnson who prizes solitude, we meet the stoic, the hermit, and the astronomer. Their social role has eclipsed their identity and they are nameless without it. This rather absurd demonstration of possibly naming these characters generically also calls to mind the glaring absence of female social roles in *Rasselas*, which I would argue is yet another manifestation of the guiding value of this search for social power which masquerades as a search for happiness. While Nekayah and her maid Pekuah are along for the ride, as it were, the absence of women along the journey who might represent a social role worth seeking is tied to the inherent lack of social power associated with the feminine in the western social sphere, and so such options are not debated or explored. The ego-instincts

that seek self-affirmation in the social sphere would indeed not be fulfilled by feminine roles that would necessarily be devoid of the social superiority sought.

The final and crucial point of this argument that the choice of life presented in *Rasselas* is fundamentally presented as a choice of self to make via the adoption of a discrete social role, and that this choice is governed by an ego-instinct that seeks self-affirmation and power in the social sphere, is that the apparent failure of this choice or ‘flaw’ in the individuals seeking power is not a personal foible. I find instead that this quest for personal power that employs the social self as a device to capture and maintain self-affirmation has become ensconced at the center of the modern Western experience, and that this method to seek what might then be labeled as ‘happiness’ or personal satisfaction is doomed to fail and produce the disillusionment played out in *Rasselas*. Consider the following argument made by Harvard theologian Krister Stendahl concerning the Western preoccupation with a project of introspection and reflection that centralizes the self internally first as an object for religious scrutiny and then subsequently as an object for psychological scrutiny:

The introspective conscience is a western development and a western plague. Once the introspective conscience came into the theological bloodstream of the western culture, it tended to dominate the scene far beyond its original function. It reached its theological climax and explosion in the Reformation, and its secular climax and explosion in Sigmund Freud. (17)

Stendahl identifies Augustine’s *Confessions* as the catalyst of the injection of the introspective conscience into the theological blood stream of western culture, and I argued in my first chapter on *Crusoe* that it is with Augustine’s prototype of spiritual autobiography that “man turned in on himself” and became preoccupied with “introspective achievements” (16). Such introspective

achievements, however, cannot continue to exist within the individual's concept of self unless they are enacted socially, which catalyzes a process by which the internally constructed sense of self must be tested in the social sphere and affirmed by an audience. The power of this audience that I explored in my analysis of *The Female Quixote* is ever present in *Rasselas*. I charted how shame is one primary tool by which the social audience exercises its power over the individual, and when analyzing the hermit's choice to return to the city, the aggressive learned men surmise that "if shame did not restrain, or death intercept him," the hermit might change his mind yet again and return to his hermitage, and possibly even back to the city once again. But perhaps in one of their more insightful moments, these men point out the primary role of shame in the decision-making process, which supports my thesis that seeking social power or avoiding social failures which trigger shame are driving the choice of life.

I previously suggested that in *Crusoe* the self undergoes a process of comic dismemberment whereby the model of self produced by Puritan spiritual autobiography is exposed as fiction, and that through this process a newfound autonomy can be created and is explored by Crusoe who refuses to embrace the self-affirmative mode of being. We have quite the opposite motion in *Rasselas*, toward affirmation and resolution (of course refused) and away from anti-affirmative improvisation. Rather than be comically dismembered in solitude, individuals move into the world seeking a social role that can secure them with what they imagine to be human happiness. When *Rasselas* encounters the men of spirit and gaiety, the manner in which they laugh him out of their social circle shows the markedly different approach this text takes to comparisons between self and the surrounding social sphere. Crusoe experiences the subjective sense of amusement we associate with laughter and frequently smiles when he considers his alien position as a stranger whom none of his contemporaries could

recognize; his comic experiences release him from the binding ties of the social sphere. Laughter in *Rasselas*, on the other hand, is frequently of the Hobbesian variety that marks a social comparison with another who is inferior, and the sudden glory of superiority is what triggers the subjective sense of amusement. The conduct of the men of spirit and gaiety is “at once wild and mean,” and “they laughed at order and at law” (Johnson 43). The portrait of these men is quite brief, as is the chapter that documents Rasselas’ encounter with them, so it is difficult to extrapolate precisely how comic perception might be connected to their collective understanding of law and social order. Nevertheless, it is clear enough that Rasselas’ departure from this group shows how the comic functions as a tool to dominate and exclude. After he presents the group with his perception of their choice of life as one that will lead to a dreadful state in old age which was not planned for or anticipated by their riotous and gratuitous embrace of the present moment, he is summarily dismissed as irrelevant and inferior by this group. Quite simply, “they drove him away by a general chorus of continued laughter” (Johnson 44).

A similar incidence of the same type of laughter that smacks of a sense of superiority in the one who laughs occurs when Nekayah and Pekuah react to the astronomer’s madness with a sense of smug superiority. After supposedly passing the baton to Imlac as his successor who will protect the welfare of the world by ordering the motions of the heavens, “the princess [smiles], and Pekuah [convulses] herself with laughter” (Johnson 93). They see the frailty of the astronomer as stupidity, a failure in personal reason to which they themselves are invulnerable. Rasselas offers a corrective and more sympathetic perspective, as he hears the astronomer’s narration “with very serious regard” and argues that where the astronomer has gone astray so might we all, suggesting that “all may suffer his calamity” (Johnson 93). Humor and the comic do not frequently appear in *Rasselas*, yet when laughter is present, it is typically that kind which

protects the individual ego at the expense of those perceived as inferior, as we see in the examples above. While Crusoe uses the comic as a way to extricate himself from social order, in this narrative it tends to reinforce that order. Rather than dismantling the self in a form of comic dismemberment as Bakhtin conceives of the operation of the comic in contexts that challenge social order, humor functions in these examples in an antithetical fashion, fortifying the self and asserting superiority.

And so the operation of humor in Johnson's tale is yet another element that reflects the characters' quest for a viable social role that will project and protect the self, and assert that self's power over those who make other choices of life. The laughter of the spirited men is not a mere expression of feeling or amusement; it "drives" Rasselas away, and so can be seen as a manifestation of agency, of an internal sense of superiority turned outward in an expression of status that actively excludes and reduces one who has not made the same choice of life. I have already suggested that the ego-instinct for self-affirmation causes the hermit to flee as a result of a wounded ego, leads the stoic to use his philosophical commitment to mask his worldly attachments, and causes the aggressive dictating in the community of men of learning. Such flaws are not personal but symptomatic of a larger western project of selfhood that has such flaws built into its process. The laugh of superiority is yet another symptom of the individual's need for a social role that accommodates ego-instincts, particularly the instinct for self-affirmation.

To classify this search for social power and a social role that will contain and preserve it as a need is the only proper way to understand the profound influence of this necessity in modern western experience. Hannah Arendt argues precisely this point in *The Human Condition*:

It is self-evident that public admiration and monetary reward are of the same nature and can become substitutes for each other. Public admiration, too, is something to be used and consumed, and status, as we would say today, fulfills one need as food fulfills another: public admiration is consumed by individual vanity as food is consumed by hunger. (Arendt 56)

Arendt's attribution of social status-seeking to individual vanity is a bit less forgiving than my own formulation which suggests that status, social superiority, and social power are at the heart of the western project of self hood and that it has become a practical necessity for individuals to accept this in order to participate meaningfully in the social sphere. In *Crusoe*, the island denizen makes a declaration about furnishing himself with "necessary things," and he makes a table so that he can eat and write (Defoe 59). Defoe's pairing of eating with the act of writing an autobiographical account that tests the flexibility of the self anticipates Arendt's claim about the elevation of an individual's need for a viable social self that can consume social status and power to satiate a fundamental hunger of the modern individual. *Rasselas* also articulates his psychic dissatisfaction by equating it with physical hunger:

'What,' said he, 'makes the difference between man and all the rest of the animal creation? Every beast that strays beside me has the same corporal necessities with myself: he is hungry, and crops the grass; he is thirsty, and drinks the stream, his thirst and hunger are appeased, he is satisfied and sleeps; he rises again and is hungry, he is again fed and is at rest. I am hungry and thirsty like him, but when thirst and hunger cease, I am not at rest; I am, like him, pained with want, but am not, like him, satisfied with fullness.' (Johnson 11)

This hunger is primal, and as such the claim made in this section cannot be tied to any of the individuals, their personal failures, or the insufficiency of any particular “choice of life.” Rather, the quest for power and a choice of self that might secure such power should be seen as a failure of the western model of self-formation that privileges power at the expense of all else, and Johnson’s narrative structure that repeats the disillusionment with various choices of life invites a reading that discerns their common failure. I would also argue that *Rasselas* invites and perhaps insists that its readers see this failure as one that is more significant than just an immediate misfortune for the self, but is a western problem that indeed affects the politics of the world.

III. “The nations which are now in possession of all power”: From Personal Quest to Critique of Western Imperial Enterprise

If the problem of disillusionment that the characters of *Rasselas* must face is, at its heart, the result of a form of ‘self’ seeking and self-formation that is doomed from the start, then the culmination of this problem will not finally be in personal misery but political conflict. To help elucidate the implications of *Rasselas*’ founding fantasy which serves as the catalyst of his egress from the Happy Valley and so the entire journey, I introduced Said’s incisive connection between a particular mode of self-affirmation and political conflict. He argues that what might first begin as a campaign to fortify a social role for the self’s personal satisfaction generates a form of belligerency which is expressed most violently through outright war. The link between personal desires for happiness and political consequences is one Johnson threads through his fiction, and perhaps never more clearly is this link presented than in his contrast between the east and the west, with the latter representing a supposedly superior order of ‘selves’ as well as a

political collective that is allegedly in possession of all ‘power.’ When Imlac relates his history to Rasselas, he constructs an antithesis between the east and the west that generalizes my claim made in the previous section about an individual’s quest for power and a choice of self to secure that power, abstracting a personal journey not into a pattern that would describe human nature, but rather the habit of mind and behavior peculiar to the West. Imlac does not restrict himself to recounting personal history, or even just pontificating on the superiority of his poetic profession; he articulates the western illusion of power, dominion, and limitless satisfaction:

‘From Persia,’ said the poet, ‘I travelled through Syria, and for three years resided in Palestine, where I conversed with great numbers of the northern and western nations of Europe, the nations which are now in possession of all power and all knowledge, whose armies are irresistible, and whose fleets command the remotest parts of the globe. When I compared these men with the natives of our own kingdom and those that surround us, they appeared almost another order of beings. In their countries it is difficult to wish for anything that may not be obtained...’ (Johnson 29)

In this passage, the transition from self-affirmation to belligerence and finally war that Said imagines has decidedly been made. While Imlac concludes here with an emphasis on personal wishes that might furnish western individuals with their every desire, the introduction of the military and the command of the globe in service of the west shows precisely how what began with private wishes subsequently generates a political fiction which resolves in militaristic dominion over nonwestern peoples. When a large collective attempts to follow the quest outlined in the previous section, the result can be read in Imlac’s unsettling account of western men and western power.

I would say that describing his account as unsettling is still insufficient, and that the idealized domineering power he projects onto the west ought to inspire terror at the possibilities of how this power might be acted out on and through ‘inferior’ people who are an integral part of this model of power. A “different order of beings” here suggests precisely the kind of horrific self-conception that can catalyze much more than the shaming laughter of the men of spirit and gaiety or the pitiable condition of the astronomer: here we are faced with the makings of exploitation, enslavement, and even genocide. In her study of British empire building, Linda Colley identifies *Robinson Crusoe* and *Gulliver’s Travels* as two parables that chart “the makings and meanings of British empire;” I would suggest a third with *Rasselas*, and that the very failure of the search which famously cannot be concluded anticipates the redoubling of western efforts to seek and secure a self that might furnish personal power but which inflicts insidious social consequences (Colley 1). Such a redoubling mirrors *Rasselas*’ own fixation on satiating his desires at the start of the narrative. Imlac’s excessive admiration of the godlike character of men of the west is no doubt an expression for Johnson’s vehement disapproval of the ethics that attend building such character personally and politically. Through his self-interested worship of a power structure maintained by power hungry individuals, Imlac appears as a hopeful participant in western dominion, and so constitutes Johnson’s fervent attempt to encourage readers to recognize their own participation in such an order and to question its merit and morality. Colley writes that “alongside routine declarations of Britain’s political, religious, economic, and ultimately racial superiority, there were always other voices, sometimes very powerful ones,” that broke with the chorus that valued social power and dominion and saw through the justifications, theoretical defenses, and euphemistic explanations for such power mongering (Colley 10). Johnson contributes his voice to this cause through *Rasselas*, and rather

than view this fiction as an interrogation or examination of possible vehicles to happiness, I suggest that it can and should be read as a critique of western values that foil both personal journeys toward happiness and the possibility of political diversity.

Criticism of *Rasselas* is as varied as its parts, and the episodic nature of the text almost seems to invite extremes between microcosmic analysis of certain claims or insights on the one hand, and the abstracting of general principles from the particular on the other hand. Nicholas Hudson argues “that what is implied in Johnson's *Rasselas* is not a ‘reader,’ but more accurately, a broad and complex understanding of ‘human nature,’ and, along with that, a conception of how certain textual and subjective factors will influence readers to respond” (Hudson 47). I would contest these pivots toward the general, which often assert claims about human nature as in this instance, and I would instead argue that it is in fact an account of western culture and not human nature that lies at the center of this text. The reading that would insert western culture for human nature is one that is sensitive to those parts that critique this culture but are occasionally glossed over in the text, minimized, or reframed in a positive fashion that neglects the context I am alleging creates this sustained critique. Continuing with an analysis of the various retirements from the world that the characters seek, Hudson writes that “although they are secure, they also require the sacrifice of what the tale often denominates simply with the word ‘pleasure,’ the positive enjoyments possible only through social and competitive interaction with others” (Hudson 49). As my own readings above suggest, there is a significant danger that presents itself when categorizing the social pleasures sought as benign enjoyments that are positive or healthy. ‘Positive enjoyments’ strikes me here as a counterproductive euphemism which obscures not only the role of personal aggression that drives such enjoyments but also the political consequences that Johnson invites the reader to see.

Rather than see a critique of western culture or values, many critics track the utterances of various characters, perhaps Imlac in particular, and connect these to Johnson's personal views expressed prolifically in various essays and publications. Howard Weinbrot criticizes this critical tendency, writing that too many have incorrectly assumed that "Imlac's attitudes toward general nature and the poet are used to explain Johnson's since they are, after all, not merely consistent with Johnson's but emblematic of them" (Weinbrot 80). This pattern of viewing *Rasselas* as an emblematic statement of Johnson's attitudes and philosophical ideals is particularly problematic, as it reduces the text to a pamphlet which it certainly is not, and dwarfs the implications of the whole in favor of aligning pieces and parts of it with Johnson's ideology as it was frequently expressed in print. Weinbrot concludes his own analysis with a scorecard of correspondence after attempting to track various threads of thought in the fiction with Johnson's nonfiction, ending with the cautious summation that "we may say, then, that a minority of Imlac's critical principles in chapter ten of *Rasselas* are wholly Johnson's, he would have misgivings about several others, and clearly disagree with two" (Weinbrot 95). In contrast to the broad and complex understanding of human nature that critics such as Hudson argue lie at the heart of Johnson's fiction on happiness, this critical methodology that seeks to unravel Johnson's fiction and nonfiction in an attempt to see a precise similitude between the purpose and effect of both lacks a sensitivity to the discrepancies and complications present in each. Weinbrot persuasively charts the errors inherent in suggesting such similitude by articulating the disagreement and possible disagreement between Johnson's characters in *Rasselas* and his own professions of belief, and yet his tentative conclusion above that Johnson would indeed have misgivings or disagree even with Imlac who is most frequently treated as Johnson's fictional mouthpiece does not speak to the purpose of such disagreement. Using the particular in *Rasselas*

to extrapolate broad philosophical claims or burrow into Johnson's personal ideals undercuts the potential of the text as a whole, especially with respect to how the kind of disagreement Weinbrot imagines serves as the first step toward discerning Johnson's critique of western values. In my previous section on social role seeking as the basic function of the choice of life, there are as many similarities as differences that can be used to explain the episodic meetings with these characters who represent schools of thought or philosophical postures and attitudes. To isolate one and pivot to human nature or to Johnson himself negates the value of discerning the connections among them.

It is my contention that these connections, once drawn, form a critical portrait of western values and identity, specifically with respect to the aggression that drives and the power that motivates the seeking of a social self to secure that power in the world. In her book length study on the influence of Ethiopian thought in Johnson's work, Wendy Laura Belcher attempts "to shift postcolonial literary studies beyond a focus on Europe's reconstitution of other places and peoples--or those peoples' resistance to that reconstitution--to add a perspective on the power of other peoples' discourse to infuse European texts and to render European authors the objects of their subjects" (Belcher 1). While this last part is particularly interesting given the sheer frequency with which Johnson himself does become the object of *Rasselas* criticism, Belcher's suggestion is a much needed countermand which encourages the investigation of how powerful alternative perspectives and discourses might illuminate a particular western text. In the case of reading *Rasselas*, what might be illuminated are subtle assumptions that haunt claims about western habits of mind that have been globalized as "human nature," or western philosophical attitudes about 'the world' which have been accepted simply as philosophical attitudes about the world.

Belcher's scholarship singles out Johnson as an anomaly among his contemporaries with his awareness of and positions on the relationship between the east and west concerning both faith and politics. She writes that "Johnson told Boswell that a thoughtful Christian faith was impossible without having studied the Eastern churches," noting that "this is a striking comment" and that "it is difficult to imagine another contemporary" expressing the sentiments that Johnson formulates (Belcher 71). Johnson's unique sensitivity to east and west differences undergird his insistence that complementarity and interdependence rather than dominance or the ranking of relative value should be the guiding vision for how to treat the collision of east and west in the modern world. Such ranking of relative value is the rule rather than the exception in *Rasselas*, as when Imlac humorously surmises that Europeans "are less unhappy than we, but they are not happy" (Johnson 32). As my assessment of the body of *Rasselas* criticism has suggested, there is frequently an implicit privileging of western perspectives in the analysis of various parts of the narrative as material artifacts of western critical attitudes and philosophical positions, whereas the pattern of the whole suggests a sustained critique of such artifacts. To say that "Johnson produces a condensed satirical history of western philosophy" (Keymer xxvii) still does not quite capture my position that it is the manner in which the self employs western philosophical ideals to prop up the self's search for power which is satirized more so than the ideals themselves. In addition to Belcher's scholarship which so thoroughly charts non-western influences on Johnson's work and thought, there is a burgeoning subset of *Rasselas* criticism that examines this fiction's relationship to imperialism, empire building, and the ethic of domination that guides such activities. Donald Greene, Thomas Curley, and Steven Scherwatzky have made thoughtful and productive contributions, and their work "shows [Johnson's] systematic and lifelong loathing of imperialism," but there is a particularly instructive moment in this

conversation that most clearly outlines my own contribution to this particular subset of *Rasselas* criticism (Hawes 119).

Responding to Steven Scherwatzky's work, James Watt praises his "illuminating essay" which demonstrates in part how *Rasselas* satirizes the conflict between political virtue and imperialist ambition, but he also suggests that "'satire' is perhaps too strong a term to use here, though, both because the tale's direct engagement with empire is so minimal, and because it continually suggests that ambition of this kind is a function of innate human restlessness with an unstoppable momentum" (Watt 31). In my own view, the most contestable claim here is the doubt expressed about the tale's "direct engagement with empire;" while clearly we do not have an account of exploitation or outright conflict in *Rasselas*, what Johnson has done so thoroughly is represent the western self-affirmative mode of being in the world that is the most conspicuous psychological catalyst of imperialist behavior. I used Said's argument which clarifies this claim as the foundation of this discussion, and highlighted his assertion that the search for self-affirmation is the precursor to the aggression which is the antecedent of war. Supplementing this reading with Freud's assessment of the self's value judgments as a prop for social power as well as the role of aggression in supposedly civil social arenas, I have tried to insist that this text is in fact quite directly engaged with empire, albeit at the personal beginning of the endeavor. This beginning is in the individual's initial commitment to a self-affirmative approach to social life that prizes power over all else, and this is precisely why Said himself claimed it is the beginning of what finally becomes war. Divorcing this text from imperialist discourse compromises the rich critique of the individual mindset on which the imperialist endeavor is predicated.

Johnson's introduction to *The World Displayed*, a collection of travel narratives published in 1759, is one of his many contributions to the essay genre that encompasses his

political outrage at the motives for and consequences of imperialist enterprises. This introduction is noteworthy not merely for its unambiguous reproach of the western imperial endeavor, but also as a rhetorical tour de force that reverses the social roles associated with western explorers and ‘native barbarians,’ as Johnson makes plain a sentiment of disgust through forceful social commentary on the nature of western power lust and the striving for dominion. As noted by Hawes, “Johnson’s critique of colonialism thoroughly exposes the contradictions and bad faith built into an ersatz universalism that denied full humanity to colonized peoples. In his introduction to *The World Displayed* (1759), which deserves to be much better known than it is, Johnson performs an extraordinary delegitimation of such imperial civilization mongering” (Hawes 119). In addition to the function of exposing such contradictions and bad faith, this introduction also serves as a provocative lens through which to view the preceding reading of *Rasselas*, not only as confirmation of the merit of the reading, but also as a lens which might magnify aspects of the fiction which invite the sustained western critique I suggest.

In the first section, I emphasized the political nature of *Rasselas*’ initial fantasy, and how what at first might read as a fictitious dream of personal desire is laden with political values and implies a political resolution. In Johnson’s introduction to *The World Displayed*, he uses a parallel formulation of Portugal’s imperialist enterprise undertaken by Don Henry, son of King John, that recalls *Rasselas*’ founding fantasy as I have termed it, and which was likely written a matter of months before the introduction to this volume of travel narratives. Recalling that *Rasselas*’ “chief amusement was to picture to himself that world which he had never seen,” it is apparent that this unseen and unknown world is the stage on which he can become a kind hero with “his benevolence always [terminating] his projects in the relief of distress” (Johnson 14). In the introduction, Johnson writes that Don Henry “now began to please himself with the success

of his projects,” emphasizing in both passages the mental conception of the “project” as a personal fantasy that entertains, pleases, and provides boundless control over the project and its outcome (Johnson viii). Despite that *Rasselas* seems to possess the personal benevolence to prevent his project from resolving in violence and exploitation, there is still a distinct echo in the introduction of *The World Displayed* that uses the same phrases and positions self pleasure at the heart of the imperialist project. Donald Spector notes that Johnson was adept at “transforming the ordinary mercenary tasks done for publishers into significant personal expressions that create either memorable essays or portions of the genre,” emphasizing the purposeful nature of this introduction to a volume that was primarily a source of entertainment and excitement for readers (Spector 120). That both *Rasselas* and the introduction begin with a striking similitude in the formulation of the respective projects of each text invites their comparison and suggests the purpose of each might also be far more similar than different.

Also in the introduction, Johnson frequently forgoes any circuitous satirical commentary in favor of sharp disapproval and scathing critique, and in one such instance Johnson rhetorically reframes “European” curiosity as the antecedent to cruelty rather than scientific or philosophical inquiry. After expressing scornful disapproval of Portugal’s various imperialist ventures, Johnson closes the introduction with a gesture to Columbus, writing that “in 1492, Columbus made the daring and prosperous voyage, which gave a new world to European curiosity and European cruelty” (Johnson xxx). This rhetorical parallelism suggests the frequently euphemistic nature of the former term to obfuscate the cruel consequences that often attended exercises of European curiosity. Indeed it is *Rasselas*’ “original curiosity” to see the world he can only imagine that fuels his egress from the Happy Valley (Johnson 17). When *Rasselas* meets with the man of mechanic powers who promises the Prince a physical flight from his

home, he notes also that Rasselas possesses a “curiosity so extensive,” and provides him with the following fantasy of flight to entice the Prince who

will easily conceive with what pleasure a philosopher, furnished with wings, and hovering in the sky, would see the earth, and all its inhabitants, rolling beneath him, and presenting to him successively, by its diurnal motion, all the countries within the same parallel. How must it amuse the pendent spectator to see the moving scene of land and ocean, cities and deserts! To survey with equal security the marts of trade, and the fields of battle; mountains infested by barbarians, and fruitful regions gladdened by plenty and lulled by peace. (Johnson 19)

Considering Johnson’s active despising of colonial enterprises, in addition to the fantasy of flight itself here is the fantasy of benign spectating, which is nowhere to be seen in *The World Displayed*. In *Rasselas* we have an emphasis on the world as a source of amusement to the western philosopher who is a spectator taking in the sights of barbarians in the mountains and the regions of plenty, ready to be exploited. In the introduction, Johnson bemoans the haughtiness of western ‘explorers’ who “without right or provocation” wreak havoc on those whom they have no defense for abusing. This flying fantasy, juxtaposed with Johnson’s wrath for ‘surveyors,’ seems naïve and childish, and perhaps even dangerous as it purifies the curiosity that Rasselas seeks to satisfy which Johnson thoroughly derides in the introduction. Barbara Benedict opens her study on curiosity by asserting that “Curiosity has long been considered a virtue in Western culture” (Benedict 1). She immediately problematizes this statement, noting the frequency with which western civilization has cast curiosity as the precursor to vice and downfalls of various kinds. I would argue that Johnson also uses *Rasselas* to cast curiosity in the full light of its

complexity, even in the midst of the fantasy of flight, which, not surprisingly, includes observing barbarians for amusement.

Even the use of this particular term, “barbarian,” would have been a loaded one for Johnson, who uses it to invert the essentialism used to justify colonial enterprise in the first place. Rather than stop at questioning or critiquing the action of western explorers, Johnson uses the introduction as an opportunity to completely invert the social roles associated with exploitative curiosity and its various destructive consequences. Johnson writes that “we are openly told, that they had the less scruple concerning their treatment of savage people, because they scarcely considered them as distinct from beasts; and indeed the practice of all the European nations, and among others of the English barbarians that cultivate the southern islands of America proves, that this opinion, however absurd and foolish, however wicked and injurious, still continues to prevail” (Johnson xiv). Completely upsetting the dichotomy used to explain and justify the wicked and injurious behavior he refers to, Johnson casts European explorers as barbarians leaving no room for interpretation in the introduction. Such room remains in *Rasselas*, and as a result there are charges like the one mentioned above that the text barely engages with empire, and hardly warrants readings that consider this fiction as one concerned with imperialist enterprises. Given the close temporal proximity in which this fiction and the introduction were composed, it is particularly difficult after comparing the above passages to exempt *Rasselas* from western colonial discourse.

In addition to the subversion of the binary of civilized and barbaric people, Johnson also takes pains in the introduction to draw other similarities between the colonizers and the colonized that erode the boundary between these social roles. And rather than just draw superficial similarities, Johnson comments on the psychology of self-deception that enables the

colonial enterprise in the first place. In one instance in which a Portuguese admiral uses material gifts to placate the inhabitants of a land he sought to exploit, the admiral brings out “presents” which “if they were of no great value they were rare, for the negroes had never seen such wonders before, they were therefore received with ecstasy, and perhaps the Portuguese derided them for their fondness of trifles, without considering how many things derive their value only from their scarcity” (Johnson xx). Indeed, one could read the entire imperialist enterprise as one driven by this very same ecstasy that accompanies the possession of the unfamiliar, and Johnson’s reflection here, as does his labelling the Europeans as barbarians, serves to collapse the semantic distance of the dichotomy that upholds the social roles associated with the colonial enterprise. Johnson’s persistent criticism of the western lust for rare and valuable baubles lends particular bite to passages such as this one in which the stoic behaves in the same manner that would have been derided by colonizers when witnessed in those they sought dominion over. Earlier in the introduction, Johnson belabors the arbitrary nature of the colonial enterprise using this same equation between rarity and value, emphasizing that “the acquisition of the riches of distant regions [were] supposed to be more wealthy, as more remote” (Johnson ix). The master of mechanic arts tries to entice the prince with this same promise of being able to “pass over to distant regions” with ease, emphasizing the same lust for difference in his fiction as he does in the introduction (Johnson 19).

Belcher analyzes the failure of Johnson’s oriental tragedy, *Irene*, and focuses on this contemporary desire for the exotic, remote, and far-flung, and argues that the play was received poorly precisely because Johnson was working against this prevailing lust for contrast particularly as it pertained to social roles not just material goods. Her primary insight concerns the intimate relationship between contrast and feeling, both contrast of character and larger

cultural dichotomies that produce affective animation. She notes that most of Johnson's contemporaries thought that the drama "was 'noble' but not moving," and concludes from this reception that "because difference is the font of sentiment (say, pity or envy), the drama lacked the necessary contrast between Christians and Muslims, men and women, east and west that would produce feeling" (Belcher 166). This desire for such contrast is one Johnson was clearly very sensitive to as he wrote an entire drama to undermine such difference by drawing comparisons between dichotomous social categories. His work in the introduction is part of the same intellectual project, drawing parallels between the 'barbaric' people and the English, and I would argue that *Rasselas* shares this project as well, with Johnson critiquing and erasing rather than upholding the boundaries among the various social roles interrogated therein.

Considering Johnson's attention to eastern and western dichotomies which was principally expressed by an effort to invite readers to surrender the attachment to them and their supposedly inherent differences, reading Imlac's pronouncement that western men constitute another order of beings (Johnson 29) who occupy the nations which possess all knowledge as nothing less than scathing critique seems misguided. The pattern of the narrative which interrogates supposedly contrasting social roles also invites a consideration of their similarities and how such similarities map onto the formation of a collective identity as well. In the conclusion of *Orientalism*, Said couches his goal in Freudian terms, writing that he aims

to show that the development and maintenance of every culture [requires] the existence of another different and competing alter ego. The construction of identity — for identity, whether of Orient or Occident, France or Britain, while obviously a repository of distinct collective experiences, is finally a construction — involves establishing opposites and "others" whose actuality is always subject

to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from
'us.' (Said 332)

The contemporary atmosphere that prized contrast and which Johnson continually sought to challenge is founded on the self-affirmative mode that first seeks what might initially seem to be personal 'happiness,' but which quickly becomes political as such a psychological appetite comes to depend on the other for sustenance. *Rasselas'* founding fantasy is the primary example of such an appetite, cloaked in political ambition and the faux relief of oppression, and the subsequent tour reveals a pattern that discovers the universality of this appetite and how it manifests in manifold environments through 'types' of people who represent possible "choices of life." Imlac's pronouncement about the superiority of the west is the most forceful invitation that Johnson makes for readers to see the rest of the fiction through a lens that concerns eastern and western tensions, with the emphasis on the only partially sublimated western aggression that fuels a search for happiness via social power as much as it fuels political strife. The conceptual move from the violent discourses of the learned men to political fictions that might justify actual violence is a short one, and *Rasselas* insists that we make it.

IV. "He smiled at the narrative of my travels": *Rasselas* Anticipating the Comedy of
Tristram Shandy

The smile referred to in the title of this coda is none other than the astronomer's, who responds to Imlac's narrative with something like delight, as the poet's experience becomes a form of entertainment rather than a personal reference to either imitate or avoid. Perhaps this smile can be discredited by the astronomer's madness; the grinning lunatic hardly recommends a stable reading to accompany it. And yet *Rasselas*, before ever leaving the Happy Valley to reach

the conclusion in which nothing is concluded, is similarly delighted and diverted by Imlac's ability to tell his history in a pleasing manner. In one of the more pregnant interruptions, Rasselas cuts Imlac off when he lapses into the "enthusiastic fit" that serves to do nothing but narcissistically praise his profession and his power to legislate the world; his response is, simply, "Enough!" (Johnson 29). But Rasselas immediately encourages Imlac to continue his diverting history, only warning him that he "will at present hear no more of [the poet's] labours" (Johnson 29). In both of these brief moments which capture a levity tied to storytelling that is not focused on philosophical disquisition or personal responsibility, we have a distinct departure from the primary pattern and purpose established throughout this journey toward disillusionment.

I will not conclude this argument with any attempt to establish the comic potential of *Rasselas*, but will instead suggest that it is the prelude to later comic formulations of the very same patterns and principles, proving that disillusionment comes not from insufficient endings but narrative approaches to fiction and self-formation alike. Keymer argues that "*Tristram Shandy* is a work that comically enacts, in extended form, some of the most unsettling themes of Johnson's text," asserting the necessity of understanding the force such enactment has to transform the substance of belief, attitude, and philosophical commitment (Keymer xix). If *Shandy* represents the "comic enactment" of the principle pattern of the story of *Rasselas*, then the colonial impulse must be its tragic enactment. We might alternatively say that this fiction anticipates the tragic enactment when individuals who are absorbed by the notion that they are constitutionally superior perpetrate the terror of the manifestation of such a belief in its most extreme and modern forms. Johnson then rests his reader at the top of a very steep precipice that provides the views of danger and enlightenment proceeding from the same patterns and principles. With the elevation he provides, we might survey the possible comedy and possible

tragedy that are borne from the same truth that he presents in *Rasselas*. The examination of choices of life as choices of self can lead to the same conclusion that Sterne comes to: “human nature is the same in all professions” (Sterne 143). I would add that the western tendency to rank, order, and seek superiority in such an order is responsible for the refusal to see the common denominators present throughout this quest for happiness. Describing his father, Shandy notes that “he was systematical, and, like all systematick reasoners, he would move both heaven and earth, and twist and torture every thing in nature to support his hypothesis. In a word, I repeat it over again;—he was serious” (Sterne 41). In a phrase, then, we are all astronomers. *Rasselas* receives the astronomer’s narration “with very serious regard,” marking the frailty of the episode and even emphasizing the universality of such frailty--asserting that “all may suffer his calamity” (Johnson 93). This recognition is marked by fear that it is possible to remain oblivious while slipping into the astronomer’s position, whereas Sterne’s fiction celebrates the awareness of even pitiable and ridiculous conditions. I introduced Freud’s formulation that the individual’s judgments follow after, not before, choices that are then continually supported with contorted thinking, and Sterne makes a remarkably similar assertion writing that “it is the nature of an hypothesis, when once a man has conceived it, that it assimilates every thing 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 (Sterne 116).

And so while the hypothesis grows stronger the individual is weakened by the loss of the position as an observer who can tolerate extraneous feedback and nourish the self without depending on the affirmation of ego-instincts that would depend on the rightness of the hypothesis and the seriousness of the context that would validate such a hypothesis. The effete circularity of *Rasselas* is reconceived in *Shandy* as entertaining rather than defeating, sometimes

in even the most platitudinous of formulations. Shandy attests that “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 book along with them” (Sterne 54). This thesis on reading gestures toward a profound one on living and making choices of life that will buoy rather than burden the self; the notion of digression has no place in *Rasselas* in which a context of progression, improvement, and satisfaction through enlargement of the self and expansion of social power makes all else outside these bounds futile and useless. It is through Sterne’s work that this futility, filtered through a surrender to the impotence of social forms of power to secure personal well-being, can finally become comedy.

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