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“Too much Satire in their Veins”: Swift, Austen, and the Transformation of Genre

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By

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## “Too Much Satire in their Veins”: Swift, Austen, and the Transformation of Genre

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This study explores the transformation of eighteenth-century satire through an analysis of the satiric techniques of John Dryden, Jonathan Swift, Delariver Manley, Charlotte Lennox, Elizabeth Inchbald, and Jane Austen. It takes as a starting point Dryden’s “Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire,” traditionally seen as foundational in the development of the satiric theory. The “Discourse” outlines the requirements of the genre, which include a public, moral authority and specific generic goals in line with classical Persian, Horatian, and Juvenalian forms. As such, it consciously limits the production of satire by women, who were traditionally denied a classical education. Swift interrogates Dryden’s theory in *A Tale of a Tub*, using a process of inhabitation. This process is a unique synthesis of various critical approaches describing Swift’s ability to impersonate another style of discourse so flawlessly that he seems to become it. Swift calls into question not only Dryden’s theory of satire, but the ability of satire itself to effect moral change. In finding Dryden’s theory flawed, Swift unconsciously opened the doors for women writers of satire. These women, who had little or no classical education and no public moral authority, embraced Swift’s critique of the satiric tradition and attempted to integrate it into the novel, a form more acceptable for women writers. Using Swiftian inhabitation, such early women novelists as Manley, Lennox, and Inchbald experimented with satiric form, theme, and narrative voice. In so doing, they fundamentally changed the nature of satiric writing in eighteenth-century

Britain, transforming it from an inflexible genre to a more elastic mode. These experiments informed the work of Austen, who used the process of Swiftian inhabitation to successfully integrate satire and the novel.

This dissertation by Heather Beth Young fulfills the dissertation requirement for the doctoral degree in English approved by Christopher J. Wheatley, Ph.D., as Director, and by Rebecca Rainof Mas, Ph.D., and Stephen McKenna, Ph.D. as Readers.

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Christopher J. Wheatley, Ph.D., Director

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## Dedication

To Christopher and Jain: for your love, patience, and family eyebrows.

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## List of Abbreviations

### Jane Austen

- E* *Emma*, ed. Richard Conin and Dorothy McMillan, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
- J* *Juvenalia*, ed. Peter Sabor, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
- MP* *Mansfield Park*, ed. John Wiltshire, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
- NA* *Northanger Abbey*, ed. Barbara M. Benedict and Deirdre Le Faye, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
- P* *Persuasion*, ed. Janet Todd and Antje Blank, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
- P&P* *Pride and Prejudice* ed. Pat Rodgers, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
- S* *Sanditon*, in *Later Manuscripts*, ed. Janet Todd and Linda Bree, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
- S&S* *Sense and Sensibility*, ed. Edward Copeland, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

### John Dryden

- DCS* "Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire," in *Poems 1693-1696*, ed. A. B. Chambers, William Frost, and Vinton A. Dearing, vol IV of *The Works of John Dryden*, H. T. Swedenberg, Jr., George R. Guffey, and Vinton A. Dearing (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).

Elizabeth Inchbald

*N&A*

*Nature and Art*, ed. Shawn Lisa Maurer, Broadview Editions (New York: Broadview Press, 2005).

Charlotte Lennox

*FQ*

*The Female Quixote, or The Adventures of Arabella*, ed. Margaret Dalziel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

Delarivier Manley

*TNA*

*Secret Memoirs and Manners of Several Persons of Quality, of Both Sexes. From the New Atalantis, an Island in the Mediteranean. Written Originally in Italian*, ed. Rosiland Ballaster (London: Penguin Books, 1992).

Jonathan Swift

*BB*

*A Full and True Account of the Battel Fought Last Friday, Between the Antient and the Modern Books in St. James's Library, in A Tale of a Tub, to which is added The Battle of the Books and the Mechanical Operation of the Spirit*, ed. A. C. Guthkelch and D. Nichol Smith, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958).

*TT*

*A Tale of a Tub, in A Tale of a Tub, to which is added The Battle of the Books and the Mechanical Operation of the Spirit*, ed. A. C. Guthkelch and D. Nichol Smith, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958).



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## Introduction

### Reclaiming the Daughters of Swift: Women, Satire, and the Transformation of Genre

“Satire shall lead my sharp words on, break ope these gates, and anger like consuming fire will destroy your will and base desire.”

--Margaret Cavendish, *The Several Wits*

According to Margaret Cavendish—or more correctly, according to her character Caprisia in *The Several Wits*—the first satirist was a woman. As Mihoko Suzuki argues in “Margaret Cavendish and the Female Satirist,” Caprisia “traces the origins of satire to [the Biblical Fall] and names Eve as the originary satirist,” arguing that women’s wit comes from Eve “whet[ting] her tongue with [the serpent’s] sting.”<sup>1</sup> Rejecting the traditional idea (one which carries well into the present) that women who are bold enough to critique society are, as Jayne Lewis notes, “Nags, viragos, witches, or whores,”<sup>2</sup> Cavendish’s character instead embraces the notion that she neither a nag nor a virago, but a satirist, and one who can trace her satiric authority back to the most canonical text in Western culture—the Bible. Surprisingly, Eve’s part in the creation of satire is never mentioned in texts on satiric theory. Neither is that of any other female satirist, including Cavendish. Or perhaps this is to be expected. In the Western canon, which privileges masculine authority and morality, Eve is not remembered as the first person to satirize, but as the first cause of satire, and female satirists, these daughters of Eve, are not remembered at all. Whether they count Eve as their predecessor or not, however, women

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<sup>1</sup> Mihoko Suzuki, “Margaret Cavendish and the Female Satirist,” *Studies in English Literature*, 37 (1997), 488.

<sup>2</sup> Jayne Lewis, “Compositions of Ill Nature: Women’s Place in a Satiric Tradition,” *Critical Matrix*, 2, no. 2 (1986), 34, 37.

satirists in the eighteenth century, the great age of satire, are not as rare as might be imagined from their prolonged absence from the satiric canon. They include playwrights such as Margaret Cavendish, Aphra Behn, and Susannah Centlivre, poets such as Anne Finch, Lady Mary Montagu, and Anna Letitia Barbauld, essayists such as Jane Collier, and, most notably, novelists such as Delarivier Manley, Eliza Haywood, Mary Davys, Charlotte Lennox, Sarah Fielding, Elizabeth Inchbald, Fanny Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Jane Austen. As the eighteenth century progressed, these women not only could be identified as the daughters of Eve, but also, in the case of women who wrote satiric novels, as the daughters of an unlikely progenitor: Jonathan Swift. Using Swift's narrative satire as a model, these women, traditionally excluded from the classical conventions of satire, successfully transformed satire to their own purposes. The novel permitted women to refashion satire from a masculine, public method of excoriating vice and folly into a more feminine form, allowing them to comment on the problems of both the public and private worlds without seeming to ape any manly satiric voice.

Women's exclusion from the satiric canon has been noted before—in fact, it may be the one aspect of women's satire that *is* canonical. In 1940, David Worcester attempted to describe the absence of women from the satiric canon in *The Art of Satire*. His observation is both poignant and revealing. When describing Juvenal's satire, he argues that the Roman rhetorician could not have personal experience of the sufferings he wrote about, because “intense suffering does not leave a man in a literary frame of mind.”<sup>3</sup> Rather,

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<sup>3</sup> David Worcester, *The Art of Satire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940), 13.

People threatened with suffering or forced to watch others suffer are far more apt to “take pen in hand” than the man who has spent ten years in a mercury mine or who has been run down by a drunken driver. Feminine readers may find in this observation a possible explanation for the fact that no woman has ever made a mark in satire.<sup>4</sup>

Worcester makes an intriguing point—that women’s lives in present and past sociocultural situations have been and are equal in suffering to those of mine workers or accident victims. They are unable to write effective social critique because they have no distance from suffering; for Worcester, women writing satire would be equivalent to Irish peasants writing “A Modest Proposal.” However sympathetic he may seem to women’s suffering, Worcester is mistaken in suggesting that women have not made a mark in satire. Whether experiencing suffering, threatened by suffering, or observing suffering from a distance, women have consistently “made their mark” in satire; it is only through hegemonic sociocultural values that this mark has not been recognized.

Dustin Griffin makes a similar observation in 1994. Although he does not frame his discussion of women’s exclusion from the satiric canon in terms of women’s suffering, he acknowledges that women’s absence from the satiric canon is based on their sociocultural status. This has occurred for a number of reasons, for example,

because women historically lacked access to a classical education (and thus to the conventions and traditions of satire); because women were long permitted little knowledge of the world outside their own domestic domain; because until recently women have been trained not to develop or display aggressiveness; because hostile images of gossip, nag, complainer, termagant, and virago may have discouraged women from cultivating in public a form that deals in grumbling and railing.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>5</sup> Dustin Griffin, *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994), 189-190.

On the surface, all of Griffin's explanations are correct: women were excluded from education—not just a classical education, but often from any sort of higher education that would detract from female accomplishments of embroidery and musical adequacy.<sup>6</sup> Many women did have little knowledge of the world outside their domestic domain and were not “trained” to be aggressive, a trait that would do a woman little good in a world where she is literally her husband's property. Griffin's answers, however, respond to a question not asked: not, why did women fail to write satires, but why are the satires that have been written consistently ignored. Sociocultural disadvantages—a lack of education, a lack of worldly knowledge, a lack of aggressiveness, and a lack of support for public utterance—never discouraged women from writing satire; it did, however, encourage critics to dismiss women's satire as unworthy of canonization.

The absence of women in the satiric canon is noticed again in 1995 in Brian Connery and Kirk Combe's work *Theorizing Satire: Essays in Literary Criticism*. Connery and Combe note that the genre is, in fact, gendered precisely because “satire as a literature of power and attack has been seen as radically masculinist, and in fact a form of power exerted frequently against women.”<sup>7</sup> In 2001, Frederic Bogel again makes this

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<sup>6</sup> Aphra Behn concedes this lack of education in *An Epistle to the Reader, Prefixed to The Dutch Lover*, in *The Works of Aphra Behn Vol 5 The Plays*, ed. Janet Todd (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1996). She notes that she cannot write a philosophical or religious treatise “for want of languages,” 160. Jane Austen continues this trope, somewhat disingenuously, in a letter to James Stanier Clarke (11 December 1815), in which she cites her lack of education as a reason for declining to write a novel about a clergyman: “Such a Man's conversation must at times be on subjects of Science & Philosophy of which I know nothing.—A Classical Education, or at any rate, a very extensive acquaintance with English Literature, Ancient & Modern, appears to me quite Indispensible.—And I think I may boast myself to be...the most unlearned & uninformed female who ever dared to be an Authoress,” in *Jane Austen's Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye, third edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 306.

<sup>7</sup> Brian A. Connery and Kirk Combe, “Theorizing Satire: A Retrospective and Introduction,” in *Theorizing Satire: Essays in Literary Criticism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 11-12.

“discovery” in the introduction to his work *Difference Satire Makes: Rhetoric and Reading from Johnson to Byron*, acknowledging that “women’s satire defines itself as both different and in opposition to male tradition.”<sup>8</sup> Charles Knight recognizes in *The Literature of Satire* (2004) that “the absence of women as satirists before the twentieth century ... seems an instance of the historical exclusion of women from authorship, from public activity, and from controversy.”<sup>9</sup> Together, these authors provide the basic history for women’s exclusion from the satiric canon. These critics acknowledge, as Griffin does, that “to discover how women writers sought to evade or overcome such discouragements might not only expand our sense of the range of satire from Aphra Behn to Jane Austen but might also enhance our sense of how satire functions within a culture.”<sup>10</sup> Few, however, focus their scholarly discussion on women.

Eighteenth-century hegemony only, however, does not explain why women are consistently denied access to the literary canon in contemporary texts; it is also based on the fact that the criteria for the satiric canon itself has been formulated on the works of male authors only. Ignoring Cavendish’s speculation that the original satirist was a woman, contemporary satire theorists trace the roots of satire back to Greek drama and the Roman satirists Horace and Juvenal, and forward through the Renaissance ideals of Isaac Casaubon and others; they were then consolidated by John Dryden into the recognizable rules implemented or acknowledged by most male satirists of the eighteenth

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<sup>8</sup> Frederic Bogel, *The Difference Satire Makes: Rhetoric and Reading from Jonson to Byron* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), viii. Bogel does not explain how, exactly, women’s satire defines itself.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Knight, *The Literature of Satire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 8.

<sup>10</sup> Griffin, 189-190.

century. These rules, found in Dryden's 1692 essay "The Original and Progress of Satire," focus on the excoriation of vice, the advancement of virtue, and the assertion of what Maynard Mack calls "the validity of norms, systematic values, and meanings that are contained by recognizable codes."<sup>11</sup> As such, satire is also fundamentally conservative.<sup>12</sup>

The examples upon which satire theory has developed, then, have been primarily those of the great male authors of the eighteenth century—Dryden, Swift, Pope, and Johnson—who were all learned and could position themselves as authorities on the social and political milieus of their world. Without fail, the satiric narrator of these theories is identified as a "blunt, honest man with no nonsense about him,"<sup>13</sup> "immune from all the follies and the foibles which he pillories,"<sup>14</sup> and "forced by frightful wrongs to pour forth his indignation."<sup>15</sup> According to Mack and others, the satirist must also establish an authoritative *ethos*. "If he is to be effective," Mack states, "he must be accepted by his audience as a fundamentally virtuous and tolerant man ... a man of good will, who has been, as it were, forced into action."<sup>16</sup> So when critics argue that satire is "a highly rhetorical and moral art ... designed to attack vice or folly, us[ing] wit or ridicule to

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<sup>11</sup> Maynard Mack, "The Muse of Satire," *The Yale Review* 41 (1951): 85.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Matthew Hodgert, *Satire: Origins and Principles* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969).

<sup>13</sup> Alvin Kernan, *The Cankered Muse: Satire of the English Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 16.

<sup>14</sup> Ronald A. Knox, "On Humor and Satire," In *Satire: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. Ronald Paulson (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1971), 59.

<sup>15</sup> Worcester, 13.

<sup>16</sup> Mack, 86.

persuade an audience that something or someone is reprehensible or ridiculous [and] usually proceeds by clear reference to some moral standard,”<sup>17</sup> they are assuming that all satirists are in a position—whether as insiders or outsiders—to attack and persuade, with the approbation of their audiences. Robert Elliott argues in *The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, Art*, that “satire originated in the immediate desire to achieve psychic, military or social dominance”;<sup>18</sup> if this is the case, at least two of the three goals of satire are precluded for women, who had little authority outside the domestic sphere or, often enough, even within it. For women, who were afforded only limited political, social and legal status, it would also be nearly impossible to establish the necessarily authoritative *ethos* needed to become an effective satirist. In fact, attempting to establish this *ethos* could result in the loss of what little authority a woman might have, as it would be seen not only as unfeminine, but unnatural. As Felicity Nussbaum notes, it was a convention in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that “it [was] a woman’s natural function to ... order the domestic world.”<sup>19</sup> As such, any movement away from this world would be, by definition, unnatural.

In her discussion of Cavendish’s satiric comedies, Suzuki argues that, far from being “naturally” feminine, satire was—and still is—considered a masculine genre “supposedly unsuitable for female writers” because of its “generally aggressive hostility,

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<sup>17</sup> Griffin, 1.

<sup>18</sup> Elliott, *The Power of Satire*, quoted in Patricia Meyer Spacks, “Some Reflections on Satire,” in *Satire: Modern Essays in Criticism*, 363.

<sup>19</sup> Felicity A. Nussbaum, *The Brink of All We Hate: English Satires on Women 1660-1750* (Lexington, University Press of Kentucky, 1984), 5.



its materializing tendencies, and the writer's engagement in the public sphere,"<sup>20</sup> a sentiment echoed by Jayne Lewis in her essay on women satirists. Lewis argues that "the satirist recommends the 'natural'—what lies within a providential order, is classifiable—in the face of the 'unnatural,' and the woman satirist is, in her very nature, 'unnatural'."<sup>21</sup> Women who had enough experience of the world to engage in the writing of political satires, such as Aphra Behn and Delarivier Manley, were often dismissed as whores, and those who chose to focus their satires on more domestic concerns, such as Jane Collier, were often just dismissed. Closed off from being both virtuous and having enough experience of the world to provide authoritative comment on it, women could not compete with male satirists in terms of the quality and topics of their work.

This lack of authority, coupled with the lack of education and lack of public presence, are not the only reasons women's satire has struggled in the satiric marketplace. Most works of satiric theory focus on formal verse satire and narrative verse or prose satire written by men, ignoring narrative satire written as prose fiction or novels. Many

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<sup>20</sup> Suzuki, 484. Women's exclusion from the public sphere in the eighteenth century had been discussed extensively by Jürgen Habermas in his groundbreaking *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000). Nancy Fraser and Mary Ryan continue this discussion in "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," and "Gender and Public Access; Women's Politics in Nineteenth-Century America," respectively, in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 109-142 and 259-288. Frank Palmeri's *Satire, History, Novel: Narrative Forms, 1665-1815* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003), which focuses on the role of the public sphere in the decline of satire in the eighteenth-century, includes a discussion of women's exclusion from the public sphere, while works like Janet Todd's *The Sign of Angellica: Women Writing and Fiction, 1550-1800* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), *Women, Writing, History: 1640-1740*, eds. Isobel Grundy and Susan Wiseman (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1992), *Women and Literature in Britain, 1700-1800*, ed. Vivien Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) and *Women, Writing, and the Public Sphere, 1700-1830*, eds. Elizabeth Eger, Charlotte Grant, Cliona O Gallchoir and Penny Warburton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), try to negotiate the ways women's public roles as authors publishers, printers, and other figures intersect with their private roles as women.

<sup>21</sup> Lewis, 37.

male satirists, in fact, are very careful to exclude their prose works from the label “novel”: Swift parodies the novel in *Gulliver’s Travels*, Henry Fielding is careful to call *Joseph Andrews* a “comic epic poem in prose,” and Sterne refuses to acknowledge novelistic conventions at all—except to satirize them.<sup>22</sup> Satire theorists often draw very firm lines between narrative satire and the novel, seeming not only to provide solid barriers between genres but also clearly to ensure that the feminine genre of the novel did not encroach on the masculine preserves of satire. Perhaps this is why Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* is used as a primary example of what is *not* a satire.<sup>23</sup>

Charles Knight argues that women’s satiric production has been restricted by the fact that “satire is not, on the whole, private and domestic, and that novels themselves are less amenable to satiric conventions because they are concerned with individual consciousness,”<sup>24</sup> not public morality; women satirists, however, have used this to their advantage. In “Women and the Rise of the Novel: Sexual Prescripts,” Ros Ballaster argues that women’s novels, from Behn’s *Oroonoko, or the Royal Slave* on, are attempts to rectify women’s inability to speak publicly, to “locate female power not in instrumental public speech but in influential novelistic discourse, indeed to transform the latter into a compensation for exclusion from the former.”<sup>25</sup> As Margaret Doody argues,

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<sup>22</sup> Henry Fielding, *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and of his Friend, Mr. Abraham Adams*. The Wesleyan Edition of the Works of Henry Fielding, ed. Martin C. Battestin (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1967), 3.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Alvin Kernan, 33, and Sheldon Sacks, *Fiction and the Shape of Belief: A Study of Henry Fielding with Glances at Swift, Johnson, and Richardson* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966): 12-16.

<sup>24</sup> Knight, 8.

<sup>25</sup> Ros Ballaster, “Women and the Rise of the Novel: Sexual Prescripts,” in *Women and Literature in Britain: 1700-1800*, ed. Vivien Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 202.

the “feminized” novel is made “officially unimportant, because it is primarily directed toward females, [who] are theoretically disabled from bringing concepts into social currency,” so women exploited this strategy, concealing both political and social satire within the confines of a feminine, private voice.<sup>26</sup>

The impetus for this strategy comes not only from the emerging tradition of the novel as the most acceptable genre for women, but also—and surprisingly—from the narrative satires of Swift. The juxtaposition of Swift and women satirists—especially later ones such as Fanny Burney and Jane Austen—may seem extreme. In fact, very few critics notice his influence on female contemporaries and followers.<sup>27</sup> He is famous for ridiculing his closest female friends and colleagues. In a letter to Joseph Addison, he excoriates the writing of colleague Manley—a woman he liked and who wrote well enough to take over the editorship of *The Examiner*—noting, “It seems to me as if she had about thousand Epithets, and fine words putt up in a bag, and that she puled them out by handfuls, and strowd them on her Paper, where about once in five hundred times they

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<sup>26</sup> Margaret Doody, *The True Story of the Novel* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 278.

<sup>27</sup> For example, Margaret Doody discusses the reactions of women writers to Swift, and his influence on their works, in “Swift Among the Women,” *Critical Essays on Jonathan Swift*, ed. Frank Palmeri (New York: G. K. Hall & Co., 1993), 13-37. The most comprehensive discussion of Swift’s relationship with women writers can be found in *Pope, Swift, and Women Writers*, ed. Donald C. Mell (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996), which has chapters on Swift’s relationship with Anne Finch, Manley, Mary Wollstonecraft, and women scholars. Most recently, Peter Sabor has noted Swift’s influence on Austen’s satiric histories, in “Jane Austen, Satirical Historian,” in *Swift’s Travels: Eighteenth-Century British Satire and Its Legacy*, ed., Nicholas Hudson and Aaron Santesso (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 217-232. In the same volume, Jenny Davidson comments on Swift’s inspiration for Austen’s authorial persona in “Austen’s Voices,” 233-250. More common is the view of Swift as misogynist who, in the words of John Middleton Murry, held a “peculiar physical loathing of women,” in *Jonathan Swift: A Critical Biography* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954), 439.

happen to be right.”<sup>28</sup> He describes Eliza Haywood, a woman whom he had never met, and whose writings he never acknowledged reading, as a “stupid infamous scribbling woman.”<sup>29</sup> That Swift disliked many women writers for their choice of subject matter and their inability to write, and yet, through his work, that he became a primary, if unconscious motivation for female satirists is a paradox that Swift perhaps could not fully enjoy; however, his works, which subvert classical notions of satire, provide women—who would rarely have been educated in the classical forms—a partial blueprint for creating their own satires.

This study seeks to synthesize disparate theoretical strands of satire, the novel, and literary history to inform an examination of the evolution of satire as women writers developed an alternative to Dryden’s influential prescriptions in the “Discourse.” From Swift’s questioning of the goals of satire in *A Tale of a Tub*, it moves to a description of Swift’s influence on the writing of satiric narratives by women who either worked with Swift, such as Manley, or who were influenced by him, such as Lennox and Inchbald. It culminates in a study of the satiric strategies of Austen. In her juvenilia and later novels, Austen ties together the threads of satire, fiction, and narrative strategy to cultivate an entirely feminized space for satire. By bringing this very public and masculine form into the private, domestic, and feminine sphere of the novel, these women cultivate a place

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<sup>28</sup> Swift to Joseph Addison, 22 August 1710, in *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, D.D. in Four Volumes* Vol I, Letters 1690-1714 nos 1-300 ed. David Woolley (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2001), 437. Swift later praised Manley in the *Journal to Stella* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1948), as having “very generous principles for one of her sort; and a great deal of sense and invention”; he also says she is “very homely, and very fat,” 311.

<sup>29</sup> Swift to the Countess of Suffolk, 26 October 1731, in *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, D. D. in Four Volumes* Vol III Letters 1726-1734 nos. 701-1100 ed. David Woolley (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2001), 437.

that accommodated women's voice in a satiric tradition. By focusing on the more interiorized realms of the novel, individual consciousness and the way that consciousness functions within its society—whether that consciousness is Manley's Delia or Austen's Elizabeth Bennett—women who write satire become agents of transformation, ensuring that satire evolved from its classical traditions into a more elastic and ultimately sustainable mode. In so doing, eighteenth-century women satirists have more than earned in their place in the literary canon, allowing us to reclaim the daughters of Swift, and finally “expand the sense of how satire functions in a society”<sup>30</sup> to actually include one half of that society.

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<sup>30</sup> Griffin, 190.

## **Chapter One**

### **Making Malefactors Die Sweetly: John Dryden and the Context of Eighteenth-Century Satire**

In the context of eighteenth-century literary history, Dryden's "Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire," dated 1692, sits at the beginning of a watershed in the theory and practice of satire. The "Discourse" influenced works by authors such as Joseph Addison, Richard Steele, Alexander Pope, and Samuel Johnson, who ostensibly followed Dryden's prescriptive notions of satiric authority, morality, and persuasion to create what the essayist hoped would be a truly English satire. It also influenced the theory and practice of satire for over three hundred years, as critics overtly or implicitly used Dryden's theory as a model for their own explorations of the genre. As influential as Dryden's "Discourse" is, however, the ideals it promotes do very little to foster a truly "English" satire, as Dryden rejects prevailing English models and focuses on classical Roman ideals. First, Dryden's attempt to specify the kinds of writing most appropriately defined as satire draws unnecessary boundaries around the genre, excluding most narrative and prose forms by giving precedence to the classical verse tradition. Second, his focus on Roman tradition limits the distinction of successful satire to that which is presented by a person with the authority—publicly sanctioned or not—to decry vices and present virtuous alternatives in order to effect reformation. In both classical and eighteenth-century terms, this authority remains firmly entrenched in masculine hegemony, excluding fully one half of humanity from writing successful satires.

While many twentieth-century critics have noticed these discrepancies in Dryden's work, Swift offered an alternative to this theory in *A Tale of a Tub* (1704). Swift's rejection of notions of satiric authority and moral superiority and his refusal to write formal verse satire in favor of narrative and prose forms call into question Dryden's classical claims and ultimately pave the way for the prose satires and satiric novels of many eighteenth-century women, an evolution that culminated in the novels of Jane Austen. This chapter provides an historical and theoretical context for subsequent discussions of alternative theories and practices of satire in the works of Swift and Austen. It outlines Dryden's argument for classical models of satire within the "Discourse," examines the influence of these arguments on the subsequent production of satire and satiric theory in the eighteenth-century and beyond, and reviews relevant literature regarding modern criticism of the work. This criticism focuses on Dryden's insistence on a binary theory of satire, which excludes any form that does not meet his standards, and his claim for the need of public satiric authority, which limits women's presence in the satiric canon. It also introduces the alternative theory of satire Swift presents in *A Tale of a Tub*, which will be more fully analyzed in the next chapter.

One of the most famous passages in Dryden's "Discourse" is his likening of satire to a good execution: "there is still a vast difference betwixt the slovenly Butchering of a Man," Dryden states, "and the fineness of a stroak that separates the Head from the Body, and leaves it standing in its place" (*DCS*, 71). This sentence provides a deft précis for Dryden's more thorough discussion of what satire should be: clean, sharp, fine, and deadly. Offering myriad prescriptions for satirists to acquire this fineness of stroke, the

ability “to make a Malefactor die sweetly” (71) Dryden’s “Discourse” has been considered one of the most comprehensive explorations of satire in the eighteenth century and one of the most influential on modern satiric theory. In his evaluation of Dryden’s influence on eighteenth century satire, Howard Weinbrot goes so far as to say, “Dryden dates his ‘Discourse’ on 18 August 1692. He might as well have dated [it] the Year One.”<sup>31</sup>

In many ways, Weinbrot is correct: Dryden’s “Discourse” does indeed, “consolidate trends, ma[k]e a new contribution and change the future and view of the past [of satire]”.<sup>32</sup> In this preface to a translation of Roman satirists Persius and Juvenal, Dryden incorporates the works of earlier authors—most notably Renaissance theorists Isaac Casaubon and Daniel Heinsius, and his French contemporary Andre Dacier<sup>33</sup>—and supplements these earlier theories of the history and purpose of satire with his own ostensibly more modern account of the genre, providing satire with what he argues are some badly needed boundaries and creating a context for the construction of eighteenth-century satire. Modern critics universally acknowledge this influence. For example, Ronald Paulson has stated that Dryden’s “Discourse” is “the best essay in English on the nature of satire,”<sup>34</sup> while Brian Connery and Kirk Combe recognize that Dryden’s *oeuvre*

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<sup>31</sup> Howard Weinbrot, *Eighteenth Century Satire: Essays on Text and Context from Dryden to Peter Pindar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 2.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Isaac Casaubon, *De Satyrice Graecorum Persio et Romanorum Satira* (1605), David Heinsius, *De Satyra Horatiana* (1629), and Andre Dacier *Oeuvres d’Horace* (1681-89).

<sup>34</sup> Ronald Paulson, “Dryden and the Energies of Satire,” in *The Cambridge Companion to John Dryden*, ed. Steven N. Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 37.



is foundational in the creation of satire in the eighteenth century.<sup>35</sup> Rose Zimbardo concurs, calling the “Discourse” a “seminal critical treatise, standing at the threshold of the new satire that we have come to name ‘Augustan’.”<sup>36</sup> As influential as it seems, however, Dryden’s “Discourse,” does not have the revolutionary impact Weinbrot suggests, as, ultimately, Dryden’s discussion of modern satire clings to ancient notions of satiric worth, seeking to tie English satire to Roman predecessors rather than to foster an evolving English tradition.

In the context of eighteenth-century literary history, Dryden’s “Discourse” may appear to be “Year One” because it represents a defining moment in the theory and practice of satire. Dryden, however, had been considering the importance of classical models in the production of modern satire for many years. As early as 1679, Dryden had been associated with the Earl of Mulgrave’s “Essay Upon Satyre,” in which Mulgrave links ancient and modern satire and argues that the “shining satire” of the ancients far exceeds its vulgar modern counterparts. Mulgrave notes that

In this great work [satire] the wise took diff’rent ways,  
Tho each deserving its peculiar praise.  
Some did our follies with just sharpness blame,  
Whilst others laugh’d, and scorn’d us into shame.  
But, of these two, the last succeeded best,  
As men hit rightest when they shoot in jest.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Brian A. Connery and Kirk Combe, “Theorizing Satire: A Retrospective and Introduction,” in *Theorizing Satire: Essays in Literary Criticism*, ed. Brian A. Connery and Kirk Combe (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), 3.

<sup>36</sup> Rose A. Zimbardo, *At Zero Point: Discourse, Culture, and Satire in Restoration England* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1998), 141.

<sup>37</sup> John Sheffield, Earl of Mulgrave, “Essay Upon Satyre,” lines 15-20, in *The Works of John Sheffield, Earl of Mulgrave, Marquis of Normandy, and Duke of Buckingham*. Vol. I: Poetical Works (London: John Barber, 1726), 58. Being associated with this poem may have resulted in Dryden being ambushed in Rose

Modern satirists, the writers of the “loose libels” with “little wit,” are encouraged to follow ancient masters, writing jesting satires rather than sharp attacks, and “learn[ing] to write well, or not to write at all.”<sup>38</sup> In his 1681 Preface to *Absalom and Achitophel*, Dryden launches his own campaign for a laughing rather than a rough satire, arguing that satire should not be based on invective or personal grudges (which lead to lampoons) as many state satires appear to be; rather, satire should be an impersonal tool used for social, political, and moral reform:

The true end of *Satyre* is the amendment of Vices by correction. And he who writes Honestly [e.g., without thoughts of personal vengeance or invective], is no more an Enemy to the Offender than the Physician to the Patient, when he prescribes harsh Remedies to an inveterate Disease.<sup>39</sup>

Whether Dryden follows his own ideas of impartiality or not—*MacFlecknoe* is a fairly personal statement with little or no remedy offered other than that of a nearly fatal purge—he continues to advocate for classical uses of satire.

In the “Discourse,” however, Dryden at first suggests he has evolved past his dependence on these models, recognizing that, unlike most genres in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Britain (which display a sense of indebtedness to classical forms),

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Alley, as contemporary accounts attributed the *Essay* to Dryden. In “Dryden’s Anonymity” (*The Cambridge Companion to John Dryden* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004]), John Mullan notes that, although Dryden originally was considered to be the author or co-author of the work, “since the eighteenth century it has been widely accepted that the poem was by John Sheffield, ...one of Dryden’s most important patrons,” 156-157. In *John Dryden and His World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), James Anderson Winn concurs, noting, however, that the Rose Alley incident may have encouraged Dryden’s satiric works, as “the political caution in Dryden’s work of 1679 vanished in his inventive and partisan work of the early 1680s. . . . and unleashed the true powers of the century’s greatest satirist,” 328-329.

<sup>38</sup> Sheffield, “Essay Upon Satyre,” lines 37, 39, and 281; 58-59, 65.

<sup>39</sup> John Dryden, “To the Reader,” *Absalom and Achitophel*, *Poems 1681-1684*, ed. H. T. Swedenberg, Jr., and Vinton A. Dearing, in vol. II of *The Works of John Dryden*, ed. H. T. Swedenberg, Jr., George R. Guffey, and Vinton A. Dearing (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 5.

English satire has outstripped the influence of ancient ideals. Early in the essay he argues, “In Tragedy and Satire I offer my self to maintain against some of our Modern Criticks, that this Age and the last, particularly in *England*, have excell’d the Ancients in both those kinds” (12). At this point, however, Dryden’s advocacy of modern satire, particularly the rough, aggressive satires of the Renaissance and early Restoration—like those of John Oldham and of his closest contemporary, John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester—is at an end. Although a self-named champion of modern satire, Dryden is at a loss to name any great English satirists. Throughout the “Discourse,” a text that ostensibly advocates modern satiric technique and the mastery of English satirists, modern authors—with the exception of the Earl of Dorset—are generally given little or no attention. In fact, as Dustin Griffin suggests, Dryden does not acknowledge his recent predecessors or contemporaries, such as Andrew Marvell or Oldham, while Rochester is mentioned only once.<sup>40</sup> Reaching further back, Dryden acknowledges that John Donne has talent, but points out that Donne’s poetry lacks “Dignity of Expression” and “affects the Metaphysicks” (6-7). As Melinda Alliker Rabb notes, Dryden also criticizes Donne for engaging women as an audience, “perplexing the Minds of the Fair Sex with nice speculations of Philosophy, when he should engage the Hearts, and entertain them with the softness of Love” (7).<sup>41</sup> Although Samuel Butler is “above censure,” his burlesque and style of double rhyme “is not so proper for Manly Satire” (81). Paradoxically,

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<sup>40</sup> Dustin Griffin, “Dryden and Restoration Satire,” in *A Companion to Satire*, ed. Ruben Quintero (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 178.

<sup>41</sup> Melinda Alliker Rabb, “Angry Beauties: (Wo)Manley Satire and the Stage,” in *Cutting Edges: Postmodern Critical Essays on Eighteenth-Century Satire*, ed. James E. Gill, vol. 37 of Tennessee Studies in Literature (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995): 132.

Dryden's modern history of the origin and development of the genre provides far more evidence for the preeminence of the ancients than the excellence of his modern counterparts.

As a preface to the works of Roman satirists, Dryden was bound to pay homage to the Roman achievements in satire and to link this "process of refinement" to modern English satires.<sup>42</sup> The modern editors of the California edition of Dryden's works assert that one of Dryden's goals in the essay was to "to contribute to the development of satire ... by placing the word 'satire' in its historical context,"<sup>43</sup> and Edward Nathan argues that "[Dryden] prizes literary pedigree," making his insistence on the connection between ancient and modern satirists more understandable: in order to have authority, modern satire must trace its roots to a suitably honorable origin.<sup>44</sup> In "Dryden and Restoration Satire," however, Griffin notes that this was only one of Dryden's goals in entering the debates about the origin and purposes of satire. Another, more complex one, was to erase the memory of Restoration state satires that focused on political corruption and the rough satires of the Renaissance that veered into personal invective, and instead to "redirect the attention of English readers and would-be satirists to the Roman tradition of Persius,

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<sup>42</sup> Griffin, "Dryden," 177.

<sup>43</sup>[A. B. Chambers, William Frost, and Vinton A. Dearing], "Contributions to *The Satires of Juvenal and Persius*," in *Poems 1693-1696*, ed. A. B. Chambers, William Frost, and Vinton A. Dearing, vol. IV of *The Works of John Dryden*, ed. H. T. Swedenberg, Jr., George R. Guffey, and Vinton A. Dearing (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 514.

<sup>44</sup>Edward P. Nathan, "The Bench and the Pulpit: Conflicting Elements in the Augustan Apology for Satire," *ELH* 52, no. 2 (Summer 1985): 380.

Juvenal, and Horace,” to bring satire back to its origins so that it may evolve properly.

<sup>45</sup> Although Dryden acknowledges the role of Greek Satyr plays and satiric *silli* in the evolution of satire, he insists that they are “the Under-wood of Satire, rather than the Timber-Trees”(35). The Romans, however, “began to be better bred, . . . and [when they entered] into the first Rudiments of Civil Conversation, they left these Hedge Notes” (39) for the poetry that became the more sophisticated satires of the great Roman poets.<sup>46</sup> In this way, Dryden’s “Discourse” does lay claim to being a revelation of sorts in English satiric theory; by binding modern satire to its ancient Roman counterparts, Dryden was clearing the decks of the rowdy and uncontained satires of the Renaissance and Restoration and paving the way for a tradition of English satire he surely considered to be created according to his own image.

In order for modern English satire truly to exceed the ancients, Dryden argues in the “Discourse,” it must have appropriate guidelines. These guidelines, however, are designed not to promote a decidedly English satire, but to take an acknowledged English form and bend it to classical ideals. Dryden asserts that the art of satire consists first of Horatian “fine raillery,” which pleases rather than offends, not the harsh invective of previous satirists like Oldham and Donne. “How easie it is to call Rogue and Villain, and that wittily!” Dryden notes, “but how hard to make a Man appear a Fool, a Blockhead, or a Knave, without using any of those opprobrious terms!” (7) However, it must not be insipid or groveling; like Juvenal’s satires, true satires should be “noble,” “vigorous,” and

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<sup>45</sup> Griffin, “Dryden and Restoration Satire,” 178. Griffin also makes this claim in his book *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994), 17-21.

<sup>46</sup> Griffin, *Satire*, 18.

of a “Masculine Wit” (63). Most important, however, is the purpose of this art: “Satire is of the nature of Moral Philosophy; as being instructive,” notes Dryden. “He therefore, who instructs most Usefully, will carry the Palm” (55). To be a true satire, then, the work must not only instruct, but instruct usefully—it must be practically effective rather than simply polemical or aesthetically affecting. To this end, true satires should focus on one subject only, and this subject must be handled in a very precise manner: “the Poet is bound, and that *ex Officio*, to give his Reader some Precept of Moral Virtue, and to caution him against some one particular Vice or Folly” (80). Any variety in subject should be subordinate to the broader vice and its corresponding correctives, and, in general, all virtues must be publically praised and recommended, while all vices are to be publically “reprehended, and made either Odious or Ridiculous” (81).

The public nature of satiric utterance, moreover, placed stringent requirements on who had the authority to make such utterances. “In Dryden’s opinion,” note Dryden’s modern editors, “the successful satirist is a public figure, either praised and rewarded by the political standard-bearers of his society, or neglected by them to society’s discredit. What the satirist says is relevant to his society, and his fate ... is an implicit judgment on that society.”<sup>47</sup> Simply put, Dryden’s ideal satire is written by the ideal man, an amiable but noble figure with the moral authority not only to instruct but to act publicly to ensure this instruction is successful: “none is so fit to Correct ... Faults, as he who is not only clear from any in his own Writings, but is also so just, that he will never defame the good; and is arm’d with the power of Verse, to Punish and make Examples of the bad”

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<sup>47</sup>[A. B. Chambers, William Frost, and Vinton A. Dearing], “Contributions to *The Satires of Juvenal and Persius*,” in *Poems 1693-1696*, 526.

(9).<sup>48</sup> These rules ensure that the form is not only a creative act, but a morally appropriate one as well.

In the “Discourse,” Dryden continues to link the “art”—the creative act—of satire to a specific reformatory purpose. Satire is linked, not to the base, rude, and lascivious sexual energy of Greek Satyr plays, but more profoundly to the origins of human nature and the relation of human to the divine. Before turning to the pagan history of satire in Greek and Roman literature, Dryden finds the true origin of satire in God’s curse on Adam and Eve and their subsequent invective toward each other; satire, then, has its origins in God’s attempt to “instruct” Adam and Eve about their sins and in their own imperfect response to this instruction.<sup>49</sup> He notes, however, that “the Original...is not much to the Honour of Satire; but here it was Nature and that depriv’d: When it became an Art, it bore better Fruit” (28). Dryden stresses that Biblical satire is “Satire in the general signification of the Word, as it is used in all Modern Languages, for an Invective” (28), citing not only Genesis but the Book of Job; but to achieve greatness, satire must move from personal attack to divine instruction. “Dryden’s overriding concern,” according to Claude Rawson, “is to remove art from too immediate a correspondence

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<sup>48</sup> In short, Dryden himself. In the “Discourse,” he intimates this when discussing his role as a satirist and the character Zimri in *Absalom and Achitophel*. After noting that only Jack Ketch could make a malefactor “die sweetly,” Dryden notes, “I wish I could apply it to myself, if the reader would be kind enough to think it belongs to me.” “Discourse,” 71.

<sup>49</sup> As noted in my introduction, this originary myth was noted almost 30 years earlier by Margaret Cavendish in *The Several Wits* (1662), with the character of Caprisia tracing women’s satiric authority back to Eve and the moment of the Fall. Mihoki Suzuki, “Margaret Cavendish and the Female Satirist,” *Studies in English Literature* 37 (1997): 488.

with life.”<sup>50</sup> Therefore, according to Dryden, only when disciplined into poetic form and shorn of its unruliness, given not to personal criticism but general instruction, can satire be called an art. As an art, satire achieves what Weinbrot calls a “sublimity of expression,”<sup>51</sup> which links it to both heroic and epic poetry. For satire to achieve this sublimity, Dryden must expel the nature from the genre and distill the art, deciphering the “rules” of what he calls “True Satires” and providing a prescription for future English satires that will be works of art rather than works of nature—fine strokes rather than slovenly butchering, works with very little blood, but a great deal of refinement.

These rules, as part of the “pre-eminent theoretical document in the history of English satire,”<sup>52</sup> had a profound impact on the eighteenth-century theory and practice of satire. As Griffin suggests, satirists ostensibly turned away from the earlier rough, aggressive, and narrative satires that had defined the English genre and became amenable to Dryden’s rules, particularly his concept of formal verse satire. Weinbrot has shown that both major and minor writers were aware of Dryden’s theory and that it “influenced the theory of commentators, the expectation of readers, and the practice of satirists” throughout the century.<sup>53</sup> In *The Augustan Defence of Satire*, P. K. Elkin describes in detail how subsequent satirists and theorists, from Addison and Steele to Pope and

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<sup>50</sup> Claude Rawson, *Satire and Sentiment: 1660-1830: Stress Point in the English Augustan Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 139.

<sup>51</sup> Weinbrot, *Eighteenth Century Satire*, 5. Additionally, Griffin notes that “it is not until satire is considered an art as a species of poetry that Dryden takes a real interest in it,” and that even to consider satire as an art, Dryden has to construct a “selective history that puts the emphasis where he wants it, on satire as a form,” *Satire*, 17-18.

<sup>52</sup> Griffin, “Dryden,” 177.

<sup>53</sup> Weinbrot, “The Pattern of Formal Verse Satire in the Restoration and the Eighteenth Century,” *PMLA* 80, no. 4 (September 1965): 394.



Johnson, paid homage to Dryden's theory of satire,<sup>54</sup> insisting on—or at least paying lip service to—Dryden's concept of a wise and witty man who could fulfill every classical need: "Juvenalian wit and 'Majesty,' Persian moral rigor, and Horatian finesse."<sup>55</sup>

In the *Spectator* and *Tatler*, Addison and Steele take up Dryden's critical mantle, arguing that personal invective toward an individual "betrays a base, ungenerous Spirit" (*Spectator* No. 23) and dissuading satirists from any kind of satire that condemns viciousness without acknowledging corresponding virtues (*Spectator* No. 209).<sup>56</sup> Instead, the satirist should aim to be good natured, a trait which will lead him to concentrate on general satire that serves to improve society as a whole (*Spectator* No. 422); he may with justice "assault the Vice without hurting the person" (*Spectator* No. 34), but he should only expose "what is corrigible."<sup>57</sup> In *The Tatler*, Steele echoes these remarks, reinforcing Dryden's notion that the satirist's inherent good nature gives him a moral imperative and the moral authority to write satire. "Good nature," Steele argues,

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<sup>54</sup> See P.K. Elkin, *The Augustan Defence of Satire*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973). Elkin notes that even Swift argued for Dryden's points in *The Intelligencer*, No 3, 25 May 1728, the "Vindication of Mr. Gay, and The Beggars' Opera," stressing the corrective power of satire. Elkin, however, is clear that "it is evident from his writings as a whole that [Swift] did not really share this belief at all," 3.

<sup>55</sup> Griffin, *Satire*, 21. In *Alexander Pope and the Traditions of Formal Verse Satire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), Weinbrot notes that critics such as Niall Rudd have found Dryden's characterization of the Roman poets to be misleading or blatantly in error. Although acknowledging that Dryden's errors should be recognized, Weinbrot argues that "generations of readers ... behaved as if these portraits were accurate and therefore appropriate for certain literary and political purposes. In such a case, the historian is obliged ... to record [Dryden] and to draw relevant implications for the development of British formal verse satire in the Restoration and the eighteenth century—namely, for that satire commonly based on Roman models," xvi.

<sup>56</sup> [Joseph Addison, Richard Steele, et al.], *The Spectator* no. 23, March 27<sup>th</sup>, 1711, in *The Spectator* ed. Donald F. Bond (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), I: 97; *The Spectator*, no. 209, October 30, 1711, II.

<sup>57</sup> *The Spectator*, no. 422, July 4, 1712, II; *The Spectator*, no. 34, April 9, 1711, I: 144-45.

“produces a Disdain of all Baseness, Vice, and Folly, which prompts them to express themselves with Smartness against the Errors of Men, without Bitterness towards their persons” (*Tatler* No. 242).<sup>58</sup> Like their critical predecessor, Addison and Steele are invested in a theory of satire that is clean, orderly, and effective, without risk of becoming corrupted by personal vendetta or invective. Their insistence on a good-natured, general satire ensures that malefactors do, indeed, “die sweetly”—so sweetly, in fact, that they may never know they have been sacrificed for the good of society. As Addison notes in the *Spectator* No. 34, “I promise ... never to draw a Faulty Character which does not fit at least a Thousand People; or to publish a single Paper, that is not written in the Spirit of Benevolence and with a Love of Mankind.”<sup>59</sup>

Zimbardo suggests that this strain continues with Walter Harte’s 1730 *An Essay on Satire, Particularly on the Dunciad*, which praises Dryden for taming the chaotic Renaissance and Restoration satirists to join “wit” with “language, Harmony, and Rhyme” in the creation of true satire.<sup>60</sup> Consistent with Dryden’s insistence on the connection between satire and the divine, Harte recognizes Dryden’s work as “a sacred instrument for discriminating the virtuous orderly from the foolish and vicious disorderly,” a distinction that earlier satirists could not achieve.<sup>61</sup> In his *Essay*, Harte argues that Donne “teem’d with wit, but all was maim’d and bruis’d,” while “Oldham

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<sup>58</sup> [Richard Steele], *The Tatler*, ed. Donald F. Bond (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), III: 241.

<sup>59</sup> *The Spectator*, no. 34, April 9, 1711, I: 145.

<sup>60</sup> Zimbardo, 142; Walter Harte, *An Essay on Satire, Particularly on the Dunciad* (1730), no. 132, The Augustan Reprint Society (Los Angeles: University of California William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1968), 19.

<sup>61</sup> Zimbardo, 142.

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rush'd on, impetuous and Sublime/But lame in Language, Harmony, and Rhyme.”<sup>62</sup>

According to Harte, Dryden joins these two to create modern satire, which is perfected in Alexander Pope, who “taught'st old Satire nobler fruits to bear/And check'd her Licence with a moral Care.”<sup>63</sup>

As literary heir to Dryden, Pope recognizes his predecessor's desire to provide the genre with a more lofty pedigree, according to Michael Seidel. Seidel argues that “[Pope's] understanding replicated Dryden's in elevating the original rude, rough-hewn status to a higher level of poetic expression.”<sup>64</sup> He notices that, in *The First Epistle of the Second Book of Horace Imitated*, the Epistle to Augustus, Pope defends the genre by insisting on its inherent dignity:

The Poets learned to please, and not to wound:  
Most warp'd to Flatt'ry's side; but some, more nice  
Preserv'd the freedom, and forbore the vice.  
Hence Satire rose, that just the medium hit,  
And heals with Morals what it hurts with Wit.<sup>65</sup>

Pope also acknowledges that this satiric style was perfected by Dryden in “the varying verse, the full resounding line/The long majestic march, and energy divine.”<sup>66</sup> By

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<sup>62</sup> Harte, 19.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 21. Weinbrot offers an exhaustive examination of Pope's multifaceted approach to this literary inheritance in *Alexander Pope and the Tradition of Formal Verse Satire*, which describes the influence of earlier British and French satirists on the poet before providing a comprehensive discussion of Pope's developing relationship with the satires of Horace, Juvenal, and Persius.

<sup>64</sup> Michael Seidel, “Satire, Lampoon, Libel, Slander,” in *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature: 1650-1740*, ed. Steven N. Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 39.

<sup>65</sup> Alexander Pope, “The First Epistle of the Second Book of Horace Imitated,” lines 258-262. *The Poems of Alexander Pope. Imitations of Horace with An Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot and the Epilogue to the Satires*, vol. 4 of *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. John Butt (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1939), 217.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., lines 266-268; 217.

distinguishing satire as a genre that chooses the middle way between malice and flattery, it maintains its integrity—its freedom—while fulfilling its purpose to both hurt and heal; it also provides satire with what Seidel calls “an almost heroic status...embodied in the great works of Dryden.”<sup>67</sup>

Thomas Maresca recognizes this attitude in Pope’s *The First Satire of the Second Book of Horace Imitated*, where the poet comments on his own satiric art. As an apologia for his life’s work, Pope goes to great lengths to persuade people that his satire is the picture of moderation:

In Moderation placing all my Glory,  
While Tories call me Whig, and Whigs a Tory.  
Satire’s my Weapon, but I’m too discreet  
To run a Muck and tilt at all I meet.<sup>68</sup>

As Maresca notes, Pope suggests that his satire is not merely moderate, but a form of “*concordia discors*,” a discordant harmony that once again blends the Roman ideals of Horatian good nature, Juvenalian resonance, and Persian forbearance.<sup>69</sup> In this, Pope follows Dryden in linking satire to the sacred, as Maresca finds the poet’s use of the *votive tabella* a “comparison of satire to a religious object or act,” an “almost sacred

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<sup>67</sup> Seidel, “Satire,” 39.

<sup>68</sup> Pope, “First Satire of the Second Book of Horace Imitated,” lines 67-70. *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, 11.

<sup>69</sup> Thomas E. Maresca, “Pope’s Defence of Satire: The First Satire of the Second Book of Horace, Imitated,” *ELH*, 31, no. 4 (December 1964): 372. Weinbrot concurs with this assessment, but argues that “the direction of Pope’s career as a formal verse satirist is from an essentially Horatian ethic epistle, to mingled satire with a variety of Horatian, Juvenalian, and Persian emphases, to the overwhelmingly Juvenalian-Persian elevation and gloom,” *Alexander Pope*, 331.

act.”<sup>70</sup> In Pope’s satire, the barbs of accusation lead not just to reformation, but to “healing” and even redemption.

The relationship of satire to the sacred is echoed in Pope’s understanding of himself as a satirist: he recognizes that, unlike his masters Dryden or Boileau—who were ultimately kept in check by their dependence on their lords and pensions—he is “Unplac’d, unpension’d, no Man’s Heir, or Slave.”<sup>71</sup> Because he has no place or pension, he has no socially sanctioned authority or support if he makes unpopular comments. This freedom, however, allows him to make moral distinctions based on a higher standard. In the *First Satire*, he argues

Yet, while I live, no rich or noble knave  
Shall walk the World, in credit, to his grave.  
To VIRTUE ONLY and HER FRIENDS, A FRIEND  
The World beside may murmur, or commend.<sup>72</sup>

Friend not to earthly knaves, but to a heavenly ideal, Pope becomes the quintessence of Dryden’s satiric aspirations.

Samuel Johnson was also influenced, in a very concrete way, by Dryden and his “Discourse.” Weinbrot argues that Johnson was not only aware of the “Discourse,” but that both the *Dictionary* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes* were written with close reference to Dryden’s authority.<sup>73</sup> Although biographer Walter Jackson Bate suggests that

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<sup>70</sup>Maresca, 370-372.

<sup>71</sup> Pope, “First Satire of the Second Book of Horace Imitated,” line 116; 17. This is the very fault Dryden finds with Horace. In the “Discourse,” Dryden suggests that Horace’s “mild admonishments” come because he is a Court Satirist, and “as he was a courtier, complied with the interest of his master,” 90-91.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., lines 119-122; 17.

<sup>73</sup> Weinbrot, “Pattern,” 398

Johnson was uncomfortable with satire, needing to balance the “satiric impulse [with] the charity and justice he is always bringing to the ‘helpless man’,”<sup>74</sup> Johnson used Dryden’s pattern of praise and blame in satires like *The Vanity of Human Wishes* to turn “satiric protest” into an argument for redemption.<sup>75</sup> In his *Dictionary of the English Language*, Johnson put the capstone on Dryden’s authority with his definition of satire: “A poem in which wickedness or folly is censured; Proper satire is distinguished, by the generality of the reflections, from a lampoon which is aimed against a particular person.”<sup>76</sup> His example—as are his examples for most variations of the word *satire*—is from Dryden.

This tradition continued in the twentieth century, with critics such as Mary Claire Randolph cementing the form of the formal verse satire according to Dryden’s suggestions,<sup>77</sup> and schools of critics in the middle of the twentieth century casting the genre as a combatant in “a fictional war between good and evil” and providing their own totalizing theories about the nature of satire.<sup>78</sup> Despite the efforts of authors such as Wyndham Lewis to argue that “the greatest satire is nonmoral” and that “there is no

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<sup>74</sup> W. Jackson Bate, *Samuel Johnson* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich: 1975), 493.

<sup>75</sup> Bate, 493; Weinbrot, “Pattern,” 401.

<sup>76</sup> Samuel Johnson, *Dictionary of the English Language* (London: Times Books, 1979), np.

<sup>77</sup> Mary Claire Randolph, “The Structural Design of the Formal Verse Satire,” *Philological Quarterly*, 21 (1942): 368-84.

<sup>78</sup> Griffin, *Satire*, 39. In his critical history, Griffin focuses particularly on the Yale and Chicago schools of theorists, which include Maynard Mack, Alvin Kernan, Robert Elliot, and Ronald Paulson (Yale), and Sheldon Sacks and Edward Rosenheim (Chicago), respectively. According to Griffin, the Yale school focused on a rhetorical theory of satire, while the Chicago school focused on satire’s roots in historical particulars.

prejudice so inveterate ... as that which sees in satire a work of edification,”<sup>79</sup> theorists have consistently assented to Dryden’s approach to the genre, particularly that of “edification” or moral education. In *The Anatomy of Criticism*, for example, Northrop Frye argues that satire must have an object to attack, but this object must be free from “personal or even social hatred,” and it must be joined with “wit or humor” and “relatively clear moral boundaries.”<sup>80</sup> Alvin Kernan also insists that “satire always contains either an implicit or explicit set of values”; like Dryden, he links these moral values to art, noting that in great satire “art and morality ... become interrelated and create the oneness characteristic of great writing.”<sup>81</sup> Thus, satire has its own form of organic unity.

With its clear-cut prescriptions about the appropriate purpose, nature, and form of satire, Dryden’s “Discourse” remains, as John Barnard notes, “the most important statement in English by a practicing satirist about its nature.”<sup>82</sup> For over three hundred years, it has shaped the practice and theory of the genre, providing a solid base from which writers and critics could begin to construct a coherent understanding of a particularly elusive subject. Recent analyses, however, offer a far more critical perspective, suggesting that these clear-cut prescriptions restrict the genre by forcing it into a model that limits its range of production and content. Moreover, this model inhibits

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<sup>79</sup> Wyndham Lewis, “The Greatest Satire Is Nonmoral,” in *Satire: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. Ronald Paulson (Englewood Cliffs, 1971), 69.

<sup>80</sup> Northrup Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 223-24.

<sup>81</sup> Alvin Kernan, *The Plot of Satire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), 16-17

<sup>82</sup> John Barnard, “Dryden and Patronage,” in *The Cambridge Companion to John Dryden* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 209.

the production of satire by much of the population, as critics have recognized that Dryden's insistence on the public and authoritative nature of satire precludes those on the other side of the dichotomy, those without the power of public authority—most notably women—from being included in the canon of this genre.

The modern editors of Dryden note that, in writing the "Discourse," Dryden hoped to resolve four major confusions regarding "both the word and the idea of satire: One was generic: Is satire verse or drama? A second was etymological: Is the word actually 'satire' or 'satyr'? A third was ethical: What is the appropriate character for the imagined speaker of a satire? And a fourth was literary: In what style should a satire be written?"<sup>83</sup> Zimbardo argues that, in answering these questions, the "Discourse" has led to a binary model of satire, reinforcing the idea that "in order to be a satire a text must direct its reader to a positive norm, or must, at least by implication, uphold a clear alternative to foolish and vicious behavior."<sup>84</sup> The messy, chaotic invective that sprang from original sin—and acknowledged in the rough satires of the Restoration—has been refined into a simple moral code of evil and good, with the legion of these expressions distilled into poetic form as one vice and one corresponding virtue that can be easily constructed in verse. For Dryden and subsequent satirists and theorists, this structure is the only way to create satiric art. Therefore, Dryden's model of binary thinking—ordered and morally unambiguous—does not open up the range of the genre but rather limits it, forcing it to become not just an arbiter of morality, but also a "sharp instrument for

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<sup>83</sup> [A. B. Chambers, William Frost, and Vinton A. Dearing], "Contributions to *The Satires of Juvenal and Persius*," in *Poems 1693-1696*, 515.

<sup>84</sup> Zimbardo, 17.



discriminating ... ‘us’ from ‘them’ and ‘English’ from ‘Other’.”<sup>85</sup> On one level, the discrimination of “English” from “Other” includes the discrimination of “True English Satire” (according to Dryden’s model) from “Other and therefore Illegitimate English Satire”; from Dryden on, satirists who do not fit the binary description must be “explained away,” and considered “the exception that proves the rule.”<sup>86</sup> This model effectively fixes the genre as a form with very clear definitions of right and wrong, yielding a prescriptive form and moral code provided by an authority vested with the power to stabilize a myriad of individual perceptions into a single moral vision.

This constant, single moral vision that both stabilizes the genre through a primary authority and prohibits the “Other” from participating in its production is in keeping with what both Connery and Frederic Bogel have called satire’s “boundary keeping” function. As part of a broader discussion of authorial intent and satiric meaning, Connery notes that satire “is a genre engaged in boundary keeping, [and] like a priest, the satirist transgresses boundaries in order to reify them”;<sup>87</sup> in other words, satire may seem to subvert social, political or other moral norms, but in reality, it serves only to prove their existence and demonstrate their moral purpose. This type of boundary keeping often serves to reaffirm the binary process of what Connery calls absolutist satire, in which satiric transgression

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 20. Zimbardo’s discourse on “Otherness” in satire focuses on homosexuality and racial issues—most specifically the concept of the “Oriental”—but does not touch on specific issues related to women writing satire.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 42. According to Dustin Griffin, one such satirist is Horace, on whom Dryden bases his theory *Satire*, 23.

<sup>87</sup> Brian A. Connery, “The Persona as Pretender and the Reader as Constitutional Subject in Swift’s *Tale*,” in *Cutting Edges: Postmodern Critical Essays on Eighteenth-Century Satire*, ed. James E. Gill, vol. 37 of Tennessee Studies in Literature (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995):173.

specifically fixes the meaning of right and wrong according to the authoritative—and inherently correct—voice of the “Father Satirist,” a holy arbiter of good and evil who, like Dryden’s physician, only dispenses harsh punishment to effect a radical cure.<sup>88</sup> Readers, therefore, are relieved of the burden of individual judgment by being given a definition of appropriate behavior so that they may “stand apart from what [they] deride and are not implicated in what [they] mock.”<sup>89</sup>

In *The Difference Satire Makes: Rhetoric and Reading from Johnson to Byron* and corresponding essays on the rhetorical nature of satire, Bogel concurs that satire defines the boundaries of clear normative standards and corresponding violations of right conduct, providing both “an exemplary vision and condemnation.”<sup>90</sup> For Bogel, however, the origins of these boundaries are as consciously constructed as Dryden’s vision of satiric art. Although satirists may argue that they are “simply registering and responding to differences already at work in the world”<sup>91</sup>—after all, a convention of satire is the honest commentator on the world as he sees it, and one cannot satirize something that does not exist—Bogel argues that they do precisely the opposite. The satirist does not reify existing boundaries; rather, by setting himself up as a self-proclaimed arbiter of morality, he creates boundaries of right and wrong that previously may not have existed. In fact, Bogel suggests, the satirist creates satiric boundaries precisely *because* none have

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Thomas Jemielity, “Ancient Biblical Satire,” in *A Companion to Satire*, ed. Ruben Quintera (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 15.

<sup>90</sup> Frederic V. Bogel, *The Difference Satire Makes: Rhetoric and Reading from Johnson to Byron* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 3.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 21.

previously existed; in attempting to seize moral authority, the satirist must differentiate himself from something that is entirely too close for comfort. Satire, then, is “not a response to prior difference, but an effort to make a difference, to create a distance between figures whom the satirist perceives to be insufficiently distinguished.”<sup>92</sup> The satirist “works to convert an ambiguous relation of identification and division into one of pure division.”<sup>93</sup> In this way, Dryden’s art is removed from too close a correspondence with nature. The satirist can safely provide authoritative messages at a safe distance from the abhorred behavior, and the binary code of “Us” and “Other” is satisfied. Satirists, then, police boundaries that they themselves have created, while arguing effectively that they are just being responsible citizens.

This boundary policing, however, extends beyond the choice of satiric subjects and the identification of figures as the objects, others or “them” of satiric moralizing—it extends to the creation of satire itself. Griffin particularly notes that Dryden’s “Discourse” is limited precisely because it works from ancient tradition, ignoring and suppressing what Griffin calls the “proliferation of native forms” of English satire.<sup>94</sup> Although Dryden argues that satire cannot be limited to one form, stating, “Why shou’d we offer to confine free Spirits to one Form, when we cannot so much as confine our Bodies to one Fashion of Apparel?” (78) his models of “true satire” seek to do this very thing. Dryden describes three broad forms of satire—lampoon, formal verse satire, and

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<sup>92</sup> Bogel, “The Difference Satire Makes: Reading Swift’s Poems,” in *Theorizing Satire: Essays in Literary Criticism*, ed. Brian A. Connery and Kirk Combe (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1995), 45.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>94</sup> Griffin, *Satire*, 17. Included in this discussion are Edmund Spenser’s *Mother Hubbard’s Tale*, Samuel Butler’s *Hudibras*, and Dryden’s *MacFlecknoe* and *Absalom and Achitophel*.

narrative satire—but he limits his discussion of “true satire” to formal verse satire and suggests that along these lines—not the existing tradition of narrative (or Varronian) satire in English—should all “Modern satires” be written. Griffin notes that Dryden “showed no interest . . . in promoting or even defining a Varronian tradition,” although he acknowledged that many English satirists wrote in the Menippean or Varronian style, including Spencer and Butler.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, Dryden himself admitted that his verse satires were Varronian rather than Horatian or Juvenalian, and Randolph later noticed that very few eighteenth-century satirists wrote formal verse satires: “Dryden . . . wrote none; Swift, Gay, Addison, Steele, and Arbuthnot wrote none; only Edward Young and Alexander Pope, in company with a certain few lesser poets, wrote any formal verse satires that could properly be termed original.”<sup>96</sup> Despite Dryden’s lack of interest, then, the irregular Roman narrative tradition became the primary and regular English tradition of satire. From the earlier narrative satires of Donne and Butler (those lacking in ‘manly’ satiric grace) spring narrative satires in poetry, drama, and prose—most characteristically in the satiric essay, but also more subtly, and in a more lasting and influential way, in the novel, so when Dryden argued that the English had excelled the ancients in satiric production, he was correct—just not in the way he anticipated.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>96</sup> Randolph, 383.

<sup>97</sup> For more on the development of Menippean/narrative satire, see Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, ed. Caryl Emerson, vol. 8 of *Theory and History of Modern Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); Michael Seidel, *Satiric Inheritance: Rabelais to Sterne* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); Frank Palmeri, *Satire in Narrative: Petronius, Swift, Gibbon, Melville, and Pynchon* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990); and Weinbrot, *Menippean Satire Reconsidered: From Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

In contemporary criticism, it is almost a cliché to call satire “protean,” “malleable,” or “parasitic,” to say that it is without form, or, more precisely, within any form: satire itself can inhabit artistic endeavor—from poetry to sculpture—and is recognized as both a genre and a mode.<sup>98</sup> As Guilhamet notes, “satire, more than other genres, draws much of its artistic power from its generic tradition,” a tradition which includes what he calls the transformation of genre.<sup>99</sup> This protean quality, however, lends itself to very specific boundary policing; satire, it seems, is always on the brink of accidentally becoming something else: too much personal parody, and satire becomes lampoon; too much anger (without positive antithesis), it becomes invective; too much closure, and it becomes comedy (or tragedy)—or worse, a novel.

The presence of satire in the novel has been a particularly difficult subject for contemporary literary critics. While some critics have embraced satire’s flexible nature and accept its status as mode rather than genre, others are more cautious.<sup>100</sup> In his critical re-introduction to satire, for example, Griffin side-steps the issue by claiming that, while satire “complicates narrative fiction ... what happens when satire invades the novel is a subject so vast and unwieldy that I do not attempt to treat it here.”<sup>101</sup> In this, Griffin is not

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<sup>98</sup> Almost every introduction to satire addresses its protean nature; see, for example, Worcester, 3-12; Leonard Feinberg, *Introduction to Satire* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1967), vii; and Matthew Hodgart, *Satire* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), 13. For satire’s ability to inhabit other genres, see Paulson, *The Fictions of Satire* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1967); Leon Guilhamet, *Satire and the Transformation of Genre* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987); George Test, *Satire: Spirit and Art* (Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1991); and Charles Knight, *The Literature of Satire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>99</sup> Guilhamet, *Satire*, 3.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Hodgart, *Satire*, 214-240, Edward A. and Lillian D. Bloom, *Satire’s Persuasive Voice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), *passim*, and Knight, *Literature of Satire*, 203-232.

<sup>101</sup> Griffin, *Satire*, 3.

alone.<sup>102</sup> Satire theorists often draw very fine lines between narrative satire and the novel, emphasizing their (ostensibly) different goals. Although most critics recognize that satire can be found in novels, and that novels can be satiric, they tend to see the genres as mutually exclusive. One reason for this has been noted by Frank Palmeri, who argues that, generally, satire in prose or poetry is seen as an open-ended form, while the prose narrative, most particularly the novel, is a closed form. In *Satire, History, Novel: Narrative Forms, 1665-1815*, Palmeri argues that satire, particularly narrative satire, is distinguished from fiction and novelistic forms in that satire “sets against each other opposed points of view, devot[ing] little or no attention to positions that might mediate or accommodate the differences between them,” while novel forms “represent progress toward reconciling opposed cultural or historical claims.”<sup>103</sup> While satire is resistant to closure, the novel is resistant to remaining open. Satire cannot progress to mediation between extremes, and the novel requires this reconciliation. Kernan argues this point when he notes that “*Pride and Prejudice* has some of the deftest satire written—and one of the finest satirists, Mr. Bennett—but ‘good sense’ and ‘warm hearts’ bring an ending

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<sup>102</sup> In *The Fictions of Satire*, Paulson suggests that the novel, as a new form, created new satiric fictions, but as an effect reduced satire to “one element in a larger work, placed, and criticized, or merely used as decoration” 222. However, Paulson is one of a very few critics who focuses on the relationship between satire and the novel; see, for example, *Satire and the Novel in the Eighteenth-Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967). In *The Cankered Muse*, Kernan also differentiates pure satire from what he calls “mixed modes” (34) as does Sacks in *Fiction and the Shape of Belief: A Study of Henry Fielding with Glances at Swift, Johnson, and Richardson* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 7-15.

<sup>103</sup> Palmeri, *Satire, History, Novel: Narrative Forms 1665-1815* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003), 11, 14. Palmeri first introduces this theory in *Satire in Narrative: Petronius, Swift, Gibbon, Melville, and Pynchon*, outlining the carnivalesque elements in parodic satire in narrative, but his later work, which focuses on the development of the novel in the eighteenth century through the twin paths of satiric and historical works, is more relevant to this discussion.

of tolerance and adjustment,” an ending that makes Austen’s text a novel, not a satire.<sup>104</sup> Sacks also makes this argument. He suggests that the appearance of satire in novels, if “not included to facilitate a scornful attack” on its object, is not really satire; this is the case because “the ridicule not only has its own role to play as part of a work whose informing principle is *different* than that of satire, but [also] ... the ridicule ... achieves an end *opposed* to that of satire” (emphasis mine).<sup>105</sup> Given these restrictions, it is not surprising that novels inhabit a liminal space in satire theory, most often being seen as the form that evolved *from* satire rather than one that could accommodate it.<sup>106</sup>

Even as satire transgresses other generic boundaries, however, it acknowledges its own; by reinforcing moral boundaries, it creates its own generic difference.<sup>107</sup> To “carry the palm,” to be satire, according to Dryden and many others, satire must instruct and correct; as Connery and Combe argue, “satire insists on its efficacy, its ability to chasten, chastise, reform and warn”<sup>108</sup>—all actions that reify boundaries and place satire itself outside or apart from other genres. As a genre or mode, satire is in a unique position as literature because it has a specific purpose: what it is as a literary form is entirely dependent on what it does—instruct, correct, and if possible, reform; unlike other genres,

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<sup>104</sup> Kernan, *The Cankered Muse*, 33.

<sup>105</sup> Sacks, *Fiction and the Shape of Belief*, 12.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Paulson, *Satire and the Novel in the Eighteenth Century*, 11-22 and *passim*; and G. S. Rousseau, “From Swift to Smollett: The Satirical Tradition in Prose Narrative,” in *Columbia History of the British Novel*, ed. John Richetti (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 128-129.

<sup>107</sup> Connery and Combe, “Theorizing Satire,” 11.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

satire can only *be* satire if it somehow acknowledges a moral aim.<sup>109</sup> As Deborah Payne notes, “for satire to be a satire, an object—an ultimate point—of the attack must emerge, even if that object is the very opacity of satiric fictions.”<sup>110</sup> According to the rules outlined by Dryden and accepted by his numerous successors, for satire to be successful, this object of attack must be presented by someone with the moral authority to instruct, correct, and reform—an authority that excludes women from the production of satire.

In “Angry Beauties, (Wo)Manley Satire and the Stage,” an examination of the satirical plays of Delarivier Manley, Rabb argues that this exclusion has its origins in Dryden’s “Discourse.” According to Rabb, Dryden sets up the gender and genre relations that complicate any examination of satire, noting that all subsequent theories of satire, from the seventeenth century to the present, are “dominated by figures of masculine aggression, and almost always fail to question its own gendered assumptions and thus

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<sup>109</sup> W. B. Carnochan notes, “we take it for granted, as an original condition of satire, that it *has* a critical purpose, although satire is probably the only artistic form about which we would make that sort of assumption so readily: the only one, not even excepting comedy, in which we think of moral criticism as its *raison d’être*,” in “Swift’s *Tale*: On Satire, Negation, and the Uses of Irony,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 5, no. 1 (Autumn 1971): 123. That satire reforms is a universal—what satire reforms is often up for debate. In *The Anatomy of Satire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), Gilbert Highet argues that the goal of satire is to “stigmatize crime or ridicule folly, and thus to aid in diminishing or removing it,” 241. Other critics, such as James Sutherland in *English Satire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), Bloom and Bloom, in *Satire’s Persuasive Voice*, and Elkin, in *The Augustan Defence of Satire*, argue that satire influences attitudes with the hope of changing action. Even theorists who argue that satire has no inherent moral purpose as a genre, such as Knight and Griffin, ultimately admit this boundary. Knight unconsciously supports satire’s moral difference, maintaining that “satire has no moral purpose. Its purpose ... is perception rather than changed behavior, although change in behavior may well result from change in perception,” 5. Although Griffin argues that satire may be less about moral edification and more about the “inquiry” and “provocation,” both processes suggest a change in perception, which again, may lead to a change in behavior.

<sup>110</sup> Deborah C. Payne, “Comedy, Satire, or Farce? Or, the Generic Difficulties of Restoration Dramatic Satire,” in *Cutting Edges: Postmodern Critical Essays on Eighteenth-Century Satire*, ed. James E. Gill, vol. 37 of *Tennessee Studies in Literature* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 5.



perpetuate notions of a ‘masculine’ genre.”<sup>111</sup> As the preeminent essayist on satire theory in the seventeenth century, Dryden established women’s exclusion from the genre “by assuming that what he calls ‘manly satire,’ is beyond a woman’s prerogative,” and thus “contributed tellingly to the ... broad cultural project of asserting male autonomy and traditional gender difference.”<sup>112</sup> Rabb’s description of the “Discourse” outlines the specifics of how satire came to be so gendered. First, Dryden considers most satire written in English—satire that was most accessible to women, who had little or no classical education—to be unmanly and therefore unworthy of consideration.<sup>113</sup> Second, his insistence on the relationship of satire to the epic gave him the opportunity to solidify the masculine nature of the genre by presenting the satirist’s skill as heroic and public. As evidence, Rabb cites numerous instances of Dryden’s comparison of satiric skill with weapons of war and the penetration of satiric thrusts with masculine sexual gratification.<sup>114</sup> These requirements—a classical education coupled with a public and heroic presence capable of making war on any opponent—preclude women from making use of the traditional and accepted satiric modes (in verse or prose) of men such as Dryden, Pope, and Johnson, who all placed a premium on a manly style and verse or

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<sup>111</sup> Rabb, 127. Rabb cites the preoccupation with the masculine found in Frye, Elliot, Mack, Kernan, and Rawson.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 132-133.

<sup>113</sup> Barnard argues that Dryden’s translations were, ironically, a response to the “widening audience of readers for the classics in translation, which included women, few of whom knew Latin,” 210.

<sup>114</sup> Rabb, 133-134.

prose that was at once dignified and hearty; in fact, Johnson's definition of *manly* is similar to the values he finds in good verse: "dignity; bravery; stoutness."<sup>115</sup>

The manly voice is also the public, rather than the private one; it would not be concerned with the mundane domestic tasks with which women would be most familiar. The importance these satirists place on the idea of public authority can be seen in Johnson's definition of *publick*: "Belonging to a state or nation," versus that of *private*: "being upon the same terms with the rest of the community; particular; opposed to public."<sup>116</sup> Linked to Johnson's definition of public and private is his definition of community. Although private is defined as being part of the community, the word *community* itself is defined as "the commonwealth; the body politick."<sup>117</sup> Therefore the public and private are linked through the idea of commonwealth or political body—in effect, a state where women have no ability to speak. Although Addison gives women a place in this political body by arguing that the ideal woman could, through her modesty, economy, and prudence, create a home that "looks like a little Common-Wealth within itself"<sup>118</sup> (*Spectator* No. 15)—thus linking domestic order to a larger social order—this forced domesticity deprived women of the right to participate in this order; they therefore had no voice with which to critique its structure.

Knight also discusses the apparent "gender exclusivity" of satire, asserting that women's exclusion from the production of satire has its roots in the fact that women play

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<sup>115</sup> Johnson, *Dictionary*, np.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, np.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, np.

<sup>118</sup> *The Spectator*, no. 15, March 17, 1711, I: 68.

a very specific role in the evolution of satire—as satiric victim. From Juvenal on, women’s part in the creation of satire has been as the “Other,” that which is discriminated from “us,” and around which definite boundaries have been policed. He argues, “What makes satire more-or-less a masculine genre is not a gender exclusivity, ... [but] the fact that women as a gender were treated as an identifiable group, while men (as we all know) are merely people.”<sup>119</sup> This perspective was examined extensively in Felicity Nussbaum’s *The Brink of All We Hate: English Satires on Women 1660-1750*, which provides a comprehensive evaluation of what Nussbaum calls the “anti-feminist” satire of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries.<sup>120</sup> While satirists see it as their duty to attack the flaws in human nature—which includes both men and women—Nussbaum argues, they rarely attack the flaws in men as a sex; women, on the other hand, are seen as something “Other,” and their characteristics as a *sex* are open for rebuke.<sup>121</sup> Basing her arguments on the definitions of satire provided by such critics as Elliott, Kernan, Mack and others, she suggests that these anti-feminist satires—written by most satirists of the age, including Dryden, Pope, and Swift—“defend male superiority [and] create an illusion of power,” casting women as “the violator of that authority of [the] contractual bonds to the patriarchal order.”<sup>122</sup> As a group identified apart from general human nature, women are particularly vulnerable to satiric assault and far less equipped to provide successful

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<sup>119</sup> Knight, 6.

<sup>120</sup> Nussbaum, *passim*.

<sup>122</sup> Nussbaum, 159, 3.

counterattacks, particularly if the standard of success involves submission to a patriarchal authority that insists on the silence of women's voices.

In their discussion of women's exclusion from the canon, Connery and Combe point out the effects of this marginalization on the lack of scholarship devoted to women satirists. They note that

satire as a literature of power and attack has been seen as radically masculinist, and in fact a form of power exerted frequently against women. . . . On the other hand, little work has appeared to recuperate eighteenth-century English women of letters, who responded to such attacks and wrote their own satire. Feminist critics have most often referred to the power of women's humor—rather than satire—implying that satire is indeed gendered.<sup>123</sup>

For Connery and Combe, the absence of women is noticeable not only because satire is considered a masculine—or masculinist—genre or because satire often has been used to exert power over women, but also because women seem disinclined to appropriate the genre for themselves. Although eighteenth-century women satirists are being “recuperated” and studies of individual satirists are flourishing,<sup>124</sup> Connery and Combe

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<sup>123</sup> Connery and Combe, “Theorizing Satire,” 11-12.

<sup>124</sup> For example, in 1986, Jayne Lewis wrote “Compositions of Ill Nature: Women's Place in a Satiric Tradition,” for *Critical Matrix* 2, no 2 (1986), which examines reasons women have been ignored in the canon. In 1993, Barbara Olive examined the aesthetics of women's satire in the eighteenth century according to Carol Gilligan's theory of moral development in “Women Satirists of the Eighteenth Century: Towards a New Aesthetic?” *Proceedings of the First Dakotas Conference on Earlier British Literature*, ed. Jay Rund (Aberdeen, SD: North State University Press, 1993). In 1995, James Gill published *Cutting Edges: Postmodern Critical Essays on Eighteenth-Century Satire* (Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1995). Contributors to this volume explore the drama of Manley, the novels of Fanny Burney, Mary Davys and Maria Edgeworth, and the prose satire of Elizabeth Hamilton. In 1997, Suzuki examined Margaret Cavendish's role as woman satirist in “Margaret Cavendish and the Female Satirist.” In 1999, David Buchanan wrote his dissertation, *Augustan Women's Verse Satire* (Dissertation Abstracts International, Section A: The Humanities and Social Sciences 1999 June; 59 (12): 4433. U of Alberta, 1998), about Sarah Fyge, Lady Mary Lee Chudleigh, Elizabeth Thomas, and Letitia Pilkington. That same year, Dolores Altaba-Artal examined Behn's work in *Aphra Behn's English Feminism: Wit and Satire* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1999). Aaron Santesso explores Manley's insistence that her work was satire in “The New Atalantis and Varronian Satire,” *Philological Quarterly* 79, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 177-204. In 2002, using arguments by Bogel, Griffin, and Lewis, Elizabeth Young argued that Behn was a successful verse satirist, although not in the formal tradition in “De-Gendering Genre: Aphra

make an excellent point: few—if any—studies of women’s satiric methods on a generic level exist, and studies of women’s humor focus on “the power of women’s humor” rather than satire. Works like Judy Little’s *Comedy and the Woman Writer*, Nancy Walker’s *A Very Serious Thing: Women’s Humor and American Culture*, Regina Barreca’s *Untamed and Unabashed: Essays on Women and Humor in British Literature*, and Eileen Gillooly’s *Smile of Discontent: Humor, Gender, and Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* all discuss satire tangentially, as it refers to women’s humor, rather than as a genre or mode that women could, or would want to, appropriate.<sup>125</sup>

Given the restrictions noted earlier, it is no surprise that studies of women’s satiric texts turn to humor, rather than satire, as their major focus. Under Dryden’s prescriptive theory of the genre and the subsequent directions handed down through centuries of writing dominated by men, women who are so inclined to see themselves as satirists and who follow any form of masculine discourse and stereotypical satiric themes (particularly political and public ones) are doomed to failure, either in their reputation or in the canonical marketplace because they do not offer anything original. However, when the production of satire began to die off in men’s poetry and prose, while, simultaneously, the novel began to emerge as an accepted literary form, women found a method of

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Behn and the Tradition of English Verse Satire.” *Philological Quarterly* 81, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 185-205. Most recently, Claudia Thomas Kairoff described women’s contributions to satire in various literary forms in “Gendering Satire: Behn to Burney,” in *A Companion to Satire*, ed. Ruben Quintero (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 276-292, and Peter Sabor and Jenny Davidson discuss the satire of Jane Austen in *Swift’s Travels: Eighteenth-Century British Satire and its Legacy*, eds. Nicholas Hudson and Aaron Santesso (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 217-232, 233-250.

<sup>125</sup> Judy Little, *Comedy and the Woman Writer* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983); Nancy Walker, *A Very Serious Thing: Women’s Humor and American Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), Regina Barreca, *Untamed and Unabashed: Essays on Women and Humor in British Literature* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994); and Eileen Gillooly, *Smile of Discontent: Humor, Gender, and Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1999).

critiquing the vices and follies of their society in a genre wherein satire can be dispensed with fewer negative consequences.<sup>126</sup> Because novels, like women, occupy a liminal space, they offered women a narrative strategy that would be both comfortable and concealing. According to Ros Ballaster in “Women and the Rise of the Novel: Sexual Prescripts,” the novel, with its emphasis on “domestic virtues and private morality [and] moral worth . . . provided through action and behavior”<sup>127</sup> gave women the power to observe, judge, and critique the problems in their world without seeming to ape the masculine satiric voice.

Although numerous studies describing women’s involvement in the evolution of the novel have emerged, including those by Jane Spencer, Dale Spender, Nancy Armstrong and others, they do not focus on the relationship of women and satiric fiction.<sup>128</sup> In *Satire and the Novel in the Eighteenth-Century England*, Ronald Paulson discusses women’s place in the satiric traditions, but sees women primarily as novelists. One notable exception is Palmeri, whose discussion of women’s participation in narrative satire in *Satire, History, Novel* implicitly argues for women’s inclusion in the satiric

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<sup>126</sup> For a comprehensive description of the parallel “rise of the novel” with the decrease in production of satire, see Paulson, *Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England* and Palmeri, *Satire, History, Novel*.

<sup>127</sup> Ros Ballaster, “Women and the Rise of the Novel: Sexual Prescripts,” in *Women and Literature in Britain: 1700-1800*, ed. Vivien Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 202.

<sup>128</sup> Jane Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986); Dale Spender, *Mothers of the Novel: 100 Good Women Writers Before Jane Austen* (London: Pandora Press, 1986); Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). Other critics who emphasize the role of women in the development of the novel include John Richetti, in both *Popular Fiction Before Richardson: Narrative Patterns 1700-1739* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969) and *The English Novel in History 1700-1780* (London: Routledge, 1999), Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody’s Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), and Margaret Doody, *True Story, passim*.

canon. Noting that “narratives by British women retained strong elements of satiric form through the century even as narrative satire faded and almost entirely disappeared from the writings of men,”<sup>129</sup> Palmeri describes how the “continued use of satiric form by British women in the second half of the century in response to their lack of access to the political public sphere parallels the practice of the continental writers, both male and female, in response to a similar exclusion.”<sup>130</sup> Although Palmeri’s discussion of women such as Delarivier Manley, Sarah Fielding, Elizabeth Inchbald, and Elizabeth Hamilton describes why women use satire to critique society (their exclusion from the public sphere), his brief (eight-page) examination of these works does not take into account the ways women’s satire is similar to or different from narrative satires by Dryden, Pope, Swift, Johnson, or other male satirists. While his discussion is enlightening, Palmeri’s survey of women’s narrative satire should be considered an introduction to the subject rather than an exhaustive survey.

Palmeri’s introduction, however, points the way toward a more developed examination of women’s participation in the transformation of satire as a genre. Palmeri notes that his own work is based on the influence of Swift’s narrative satires on later works, arguing both that “[Swift] was the exemplary narrative satirist in the tradition who explored the possibilities of almost every satiric sub-genre” and that “even more important ... is the extensive influence his satiric writings exerted on succeeding generations and on different genres of narrative. ... Swift ... helped shape narrative forms

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<sup>129</sup> Palmeri, *Satire, History, Novel*, 221.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

later in the eighteenth century.”<sup>131</sup> Palmeri’s work is primarily about the influence of Swift on male writers; however, if Swift’s narrative satires are the most influential of his generation, then they undoubtedly influenced women as well. In fact, Swift’s narrative satires, his attitude toward satiric efficiency, and his use of satiric authority intersect to provide women with the means and opportunity to transform the genre into one more amenable to their own goals. Swift’s narrative satires subvert the received understanding of satire and expose the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of older notions of the form by exposing the futility both of satire as an effective method of behavior change and of satiric authority to provide a moral imperative to change. In so doing, Swift provides a method for women—who were provided with no moral or public authority to command change—to examine social and political problems in their worlds.

Swift’s subversion of traditional satiric norms is seen primarily in *A Tale of a Tub*, in which Swift, who delights in transgressing of boundaries, takes on Dryden’s carefully considered rules, presenting a satire that is everything Dryden’s satire is not: it is messy, chaotic, and blunt. In the *Tale*, Swift suggests an alternative to the traditional theory and practice of satire by consistently shattering any normalizing approach to the genre, illuminating the instability of the form and undermining any positive notions of moral obligation found in Dryden’s theory of satire. In his parody of Dryden’s “Discourse,” Swift deftly exposes the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of older notions of satire by examining their insistence on the totalizing approach to knowledge, without taking into account human nature and its fallen state. By destabilizing the legitimacy of

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 42.



satiric action without offering a positive alternative, the *Tale* calls into question Dryden's binary theory of satire, leaving it without unifying boundaries of intent, form, or moral purpose, thus opening the genre for women writers, who worked within non-canonical forms.

Swift's re-visioning of satire also calls into question the ideal of the authoritative satiric subject. Although often styled as authorities on their subjects, rarely do Swift's narrative satirists show themselves to be anything but the fools and knaves that they themselves mock. The Tale Teller (an authority on learning and religion), the Modest Proposer (an authority on economics and public policy), Gulliver (an authority on human nature), the Religious Reformer of *Argument against Abolishing Christianity*—they all show not only the hollowness of the positions they argue, but the hollowness of holding positions of authority. In these authorities—obtuse, incorrect, often delusional, and occasionally cannibalistic—Swift again and again calls into question the moral imperative of satire, because his “authorities,”—the moral standard-bearers who are called on to show society how far it has fallen—are often the most depraved characters in the work. In the world of Swift's satires, having “moral authority” is tantamount to admitting guilt to the most grievous crimes against humanity.

How then, do women fit into this picture? Given Swift's attitudes toward women as revealed in his personal correspondence and such poems as “A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed” (1734), it is easy to see how his influence on women writers—particularly such writers as Jane Austen—has been ignored. However, Swift's critique of classical models of satire, his success with narrative satiric voice, and his understanding

of satiric authority provide a successful model for women to comment on and critique the social and political sphere. Classical and eighteenth-century models of satire require both a sharply divided sense of right and wrong and the moral, social, and/or political authority to persuade an audience of one's opinions. Swift's satires acknowledge that this model is no longer effective. For women, who have no established authority, this acknowledgement is a literary blessing. Consciously or not, women apply Swift's strategies of narrative satire to their own narrative forms, simultaneously subverting patriarchal satiric authority and creating a feminine one.

## Chapter Two

### **“Last Week I Saw Dryden’s Satire Flayed—And You Will Hardly Believe How Much it Altered its Person for the Better”: *A Tale of a Tub* and the Inhabitation of Satire**

If the image of satire as a good execution—publicly sanctioned, authoritative, and almost sublime in its artistry—is the central metaphor for Dryden’s “Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire,” the corresponding metaphor in Swift’s *A Tale of a Tub* is equally arresting, but far more disturbing: “Last Week I saw a Woman *flay’d*, and you will hardly believe how much it altered her Person for the worse” (TT, 173). Although both statements reinforce the tradition of satiric punishment through metaphorical bodily degradation and physical death, these literary effigies serve very different purposes. Rather than present an image of a satire so fine and sharp that intended victims may not even know that their heads have been severed from their bodies—thus “dying sweetly”—Swift presents his reader with quite a different picture: in his vision, satire is nothing short of torture, peeling layer and layer of appearance away, and—in a grand understatement—doing nothing but altering the victim for the worse. Satiric death, when it comes, is far from sweet. While Dryden’s “Discourse” exhorts satirists to be good natured, artistic, morally appropriate, and distant from that which they excoriate, Swift’s *Tale* recognizes that this satiric distance is deceitful. Only through *flaying*, through stripping the victim of every appearance and closely examining the gruesome inner truths—a process more akin to identification than distance—can one become a satirist. Swift’s satire is interior rather than exterior, full of unwelcome

knowledge about both the satiric victim and the satirist's intent, and ultimately pessimistic about the ability of traditional satire to effect any sort of reform—moral or perceptual, individual or social.

In this process of identification, Swift has led critics down disparate paths in the search for his own authorial intent. He has been called a director, an impersonator, a mask wearer and a ventriloquist,<sup>1</sup> each appellation designed to fix Swift's satiric technique and make it comprehensible and comprehensive, allowing readers and critics to finally understand Swift's satiric goals. However, all attempts to define the intent of Swift's satiric processes do not take into account the fact that Swift practiced what he preached. While critics look for satiric authority in Swift's texts, Swift inhabits other authors, becoming them and transforming their own intent into his own. In this chapter, I use the term "inhabitation" to describe my synthesis of the technique of identification and "becoming" that has been described, in different ways, by such critics as John Traugott, Edward Said, Robert Phiddian, and Clive Probyn.<sup>2</sup> This method leads to a unique approach to Swift's *Tale*, as his critique of Dryden's "Discourse" becomes much more than a satiric attack: it becomes an inhabitation of both Dryden and Dryden's theory of satire, a process that leads to an interrogation of the nature of satire itself. In this

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, W. B. Ewald, Jr., *The Masks of Jonathan Swift* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), David Nicol Smith, "Jonathan Swift: Some Observations," in *A Casebook on Gulliver among the Houyhnhnms*, ed. Milton P. Foster (New York, 1961), Ann Cline Kelly in *Swift and the English Language* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), and Michael Seidel, "Gulliver's Travels and the Contracts of Fiction," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Eighteenth Century Novel*, ed. John Richetti (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 73.

<sup>2</sup> John Traugott, "A Tale of a Tub," in *Focus: Swift*, edited by C. J. Rawson (London: Sphere, 1971), 176-220; Edward Said, *The World, the Text, the Critic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Robert Phiddian, *Swift's Parody* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and Clive Probyn, "Starting from the Margins: Teaching Swift in Light of Poststructuralist Theories of Reading and Writing," in *Critical Approaches to Teaching Swift*, ed. Peter J. Schakel (New York: AMS Press), 19-35.

interrogation, Swift suggests ways in which the women satirists can participate in a genre previously denied them by Dryden's proscriptions.

First conceived and written when Swift was a protégée of Sir William Temple, a noted participant in the battle of the Ancients and Moderns, the *Tale* is traditionally seen, along *The Battle of the Books*, as Swift's contribution to this philosophical war.<sup>3</sup> This controversy contrasted the achievements of the Ancients with the progressive tendencies of the Moderns to determine "whether the ancient writers had completed the stock of human wisdom ... or whether, on the contrary, modern writers had new things to say and intellectual progress was a valid concept."<sup>4</sup> Although critics have enumerated countless other interpretations of the *Tale*, the importance of the Ancients and Moderns controversy to Swift's text is undeniable.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Temple's essay "Upon Ancient and Modern Learning" marked his entrance into this debate. A thorough discussion of this participation can be found in Joseph M. Levine, *The Battle of the Books: History and Literature in the Augustan Age* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> Brean Hammond, "Swift's Reading," in *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Swift*, ed. Christopher Fox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 80. See also Joseph M. Levine, "Ancients and Moderns Reconsidered," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 15, no. 1 (Autumn 1981), 76; Judith Mueller, "A *Tale of a Tub* and Early Prose," in *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Swift*, ed., Christopher Fox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 202; and David Oakleaf, "Politics and History," in *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Swift*, ed. Christopher Fox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 42.

<sup>5</sup> From its inception, the *Tale* has provided fodder for interminable explications since William King first published "Some Remarks on *A Tale of a Tub*" in the same year the book was written, arguing that, although the book may be witty, it "exceeds all bounds of modesty, [and has] a great affection for everything that is nasty," in *Jonathan Swift: The Critical Heritage*, ed., Kathleen Williams (London: Routledge, 1995), 33. Reaching beyond this somewhat limited interpretation, more discerning critics have found in the *Tale* myriad interpretations, not only analyzing it in terms of its stated purpose as a satire on the abuses of religion and learning, but also in light of any number of other themes: politics, language, art, print culture, and satire itself. Phillip Harth conducted a comprehensive examination of the satire on abuses in religion in *Swift and Anglican Rationalism: The Religious Background of A Tale of a Tub*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), and Warren Montag describes how Swift's perspective was informed primarily by his position as an Anglican cleric in *The Unthinkable Swift: The Spontaneous Philosophy of a Church of England Man* (London: Verso, 1994). A full discussion of Swift's satire on abuses in learning can be found in Miriam Starkman's *Swift's Satire on Learning in A Tale of a Tub* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950). The political elements of the *Tale* are outlined in *Swift's Politics: A Study of*

Swift's antipathy toward modern tendencies has been discussed extensively by many critics, most notably Kenneth Craven and Frank Boyle, who both suggest that the root of Swift's satire in *A Tale of a Tub* (and in Boyle's case, *Gulliver's Travels*) is his concern with the emergence of the New Philosophies and New Sciences in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in works by authors such as John Toland, Anthony Ashley Cooper (Third Earl of Shaftesbury), Francis Bacon, Rene Descartes, and Isaac Newton, as well as the experiments of the Royal Society.<sup>6</sup> Boyle, specifically, argues that, to Swift, the new sciences place all merit in "a detached experimental technique ... in which inhuman detachment is collectively sanctioned" and humanity—like Swift's woman flayed—is reduced to its basest parts, with no intrinsic meaning or value.<sup>7</sup> It is a form of narcissism that "has become a trope for the destructive human consequences of a

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*Disaffection* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 96-143, in which Ian Higgins examines the partisan meanings of the text. J. A. Downie also discusses the *Tale's* political import in *Jonathan Swift: Political Writer* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 87-111. Swift's complicated relationship to language is noted by Frederik N. Smith in *Language and Reality in Swift's A Tale of a Tub* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1979) and Ann Cline Kelly in *Swift and the English Language* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988). In *Form and Frenzy in Swift's Tale of a Tub* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), John R. Clark focuses on the *Tale* as mimetic art. J. Paul Hunter discusses the relationship of the *Tale* to emerging print culture in *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts for Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* (New York: WW Norton, 1990), and Nick Rushworth focuses on how the *Tale's* incompleteness focuses on the physical state of books as a way to transmit meaning in "'This Way of Printing Bits of Books': The Fiction of Incompletion in *A Tale of a Tub*," in *Representations of Swift*, ed. Brian A. Connery (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2002), 41-56. The *Tale's* criticism of satire is noted by W. B. Carnochan in "Swift's *Tale*: On Satire, Negation, and the Uses of Irony," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 5, no. 1 (Autumn 1971): 122-144 and Everett Zimmerman in *Swift's Narrative Satires: Author and Authority*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983). Swift's modern editors, A. C. Guthkelch and D. Nichol Smith, have identified the major texts that inform Swift's satire, as well as the numerous passages in which Swift attacks particular authors and styles of writing, in their Notes and Introduction to *A Tale of A Tub, to which is added The Battle of the Books and the Mechanical Operation of the Spirit*, ed. Guthkelch and Nichol Smith. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), *passim*.

<sup>6</sup> Kenneth Craven, *Jonathan Swift and the Millenium of Madness: The Information Age in Swift's A Tale of a Tub* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992).

<sup>7</sup> Frank Boyle, *Swift as Nemesis: Modernity and its Satirist*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 38.

measurably powerful cultural monologue on the material world,” and therefore calls into question its own insistence on the progress of the human condition.<sup>8</sup>

Although Swift’s aversion to the New Philosophies and New Sciences lies at the center of *Tale of a Tub*, his true nemesis in the battle of the Ancients and the Moderns is neither a scientist nor a philosopher, but rather his distant cousin, Dryden. Steven Zwicker argues that this antagonism, what Samuel Johnson has called “Swift’s perpetual malevolence to Dryden,” stems precisely from the debate between ancient and modern learning.<sup>9</sup> Although Dryden located himself among the ancients, Swift saw in his competitor all the “niggling self-satisfaction, excesses, blindness, stupidity, and self-promotion of contemporary [modern] writers.”<sup>10</sup> Zwicker finds in Swift’s attacks on Dryden a complex interplay of philosophical and personal differences: although Swift despised Dryden’s modern tactics of self-promotion and aggrandizement, he also felt threatened by his predecessor’s role as both a “translator of antiquity and master of Swift’s own art”;<sup>11</sup> in order to succeed as a champion of ancient ideals, Swift needed to place Dryden firmly in the modern camp, if only to more easily dismiss him as a self-indulgent *poseur*.

Swift’s enmity for Dryden, however, goes far deeper than his concern with his own literary standing. In Dryden’s “twinning project of inventing new literary forms and

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>9</sup> Samuel Johnson, “Dr. Johnson on Swift,” in *Jonathan Swift: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Kathleen Williams (London: Routledge, 1995), 200.

<sup>10</sup> Steven N. Zwicker, “Dryden and the Problem of Literary Modernity: Epilogue,” in *The Cambridge Companion to John Dryden*, ed. Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 281.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

positioning those in relation to literary antiquity and the vernacular past,” Swift perceives the totalitarianism of modern systematic thought.<sup>12</sup> Historically, critics have noticed Swift’s obsessive criticism of Dryden as a Modern in both *The Battle of the Books* and *A Tale of a Tub*, primarily through his self-proclaimed parody of Dryden’s *Aeneid*.<sup>13</sup> Few, however, have recognized in the *Tale* Swift’s underlying criticism of modernity in another of Dryden’s work, one that is much more relevant to the themes of the *Tale*—specifically, the “Discourse.” Only Anne Cotterill focuses on Swift’s relationship to the “Discourse”; she argues that Swift hated Dryden’s modern project of the “Discourse,” which “promises an optimistic history of the progress of satire,” as one of the many modern “grand systems of thought disguised as legitimate products of human reason.”<sup>14</sup> Dryden’s broad directions for the creation of a satire that is clean, efficient, dispassionate, distant from that which it attacks, and—most importantly—practically reformatory, were anathema to Swift, who believed that, given humanity’s fallen state, neither distance nor reform is possible.

In light of Swift’s attitude toward Dryden’s theory, *A Tale of a Tub* seems deliberately constructed as an answer to questions that Dryden’s “Discourse” would rather not ask. The *Tale* is everything that Dryden’s “Discourse” is not; rather than a

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 282.

<sup>13</sup> See, primarily, Robert Phiddian, *Swift’s Parody*, Cambridge studies in eighteenth-century English literature and thought: 26 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), *passim*.

<sup>14</sup> Anne Cotterill, *Discursive Voices in Early Modern English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 291. Cotterill, in fact, devotes an entire chapter to Swift’s use of the “Discourse” in the *Tale*, focusing primarily on the digressions; see 278-305.



binary and morally informed art, Swift's work is "indecorous, digressive, disordered."<sup>15</sup> His satire is narrative rather than verse, myriad rather than unified, and so morally ambiguous that it required the addition of the 1710 Apology to explain its alleged moral purpose. In all these transgressions, however, the *Tale* is a profoundly revelatory work. In Swift's hands, Dryden's precise executioner becomes a mad scientist, and what he cuts open are not just his ostensible satiric objects; in *A Tale of a Tub*, Swift flays Dryden's satiric theory, first stripping away all appearances of Dryden's authorial intent, his self-proclaimed public authority to fix the boundaries of the genre, and finally exposing the folly of believing only in the surface of satire's claims—that, as a genre, it has a moral imperative to remove, with surgical precision, the disease of vice from an otherwise healthy body.<sup>16</sup> In so doing, Swift not only opens up Dryden's work for criticism, he gets inside it—he inhabits it—and through this inhabitation explodes the sharp, clean and moral aims of the "Discourse," calling into question the concept of a

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<sup>15</sup> C. J. Rawson, "The Character of Swift's Satire," in *Focus: Swift*, ed. C. J. Rawson (London: Sphere Books, 1971), 19.

<sup>16</sup> Swift had already expressed his disagreement with this idea in the unfinished "Ode to Dr. William Sancroft," quibbling with Dryden's comparison of the satirist with a physician, both of whom may use harsh measures to effect a cure. Swift, however, finds it hard to tell the cure from the poison, arguing:

Reformers and physicans differ but in name,  
One end in both, and the design the same;  
Cordials are in their talk, whiles all they mean  
Is but the patient's death, and gain—

The passage continues, "check in thy satire, angry muse/Or a more worthy subject chuse." In the introduction to Volume I of the *Prose Works*, Herbert Davis suggests that in this Ode, Swift is influenced by his mentor, Sir William Temple, and that the stanza is meant to show that "the spring of poetry must not be sullied by the impurities of party bitterness of the language of controversy." In light of Swift's early and continued disdain for Dryden's work, the lines may be read with less certainty. Swift, "Ode to Dr. William Sancroft," lines 255-60. in *Swift: Poetic Works*, ed. Herbert Davis (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 31. Davis, "Introduction" [*Prose Works*], vol I, ed. Herbert Davis (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), xiv.

public, authoritative, and effective satire, an art identified by its ability to form a singular moral order out of the chaos of human nature. In its critique of Dryden's "Discourse," the *Tale* becomes a satire on satire, ridiculing the idea that satire can change either behaviors or perception and questioning whether this "highly moral art" is anything but "a sort of glass wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own" (*BB*, 215).

Swift's inhabitation of Dryden and his theory of satire begins with his need to understand his subject completely. Frederic Bogel argues that "to satirize effectively requires intimate knowledge [of a subject], which presupposes identification,"<sup>17</sup> and Swift could not agree more. In the *Tale*, he lays down a telling maxim regarding literary analysis:

Whatever Reader desires to have a thorow comprehension of an Author's thoughts cannot take a better Method, than by putting himself into the Circumstances and Postures of Life, that the Writer was in, upon every important Passage as it flow'd from his Pen; For this will introduce a parity and strict correspondence of Ideas between the Reader and the author. (*TT*, 44)

While Swift suggests, on the surface, that readers must know the external circumstances of textual creation (in the case of the *Tale*, conceived in a bed, in a garret, while the author was hungry, poor and receiving enemas), a closer examination reveals that Swift requires much more than empathy; to understand textual creation, one must be part of it—one must "put [oneself] into" those circumstances and "become" the author to understand authorial intent, a task rendered nearly impossible for understanding satire in Dryden's conceptualization of the genre, which insists upon the authoritative voice of the

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<sup>17</sup> Frederic Bogel, *The Difference Satire Makes: Rhetoric and Reading from Johnson to Byron* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 32.

Father Satirist to impart intent from without.<sup>18</sup> In traditional satire, Deborah Payne notes, readers “grasp the point of the satire, quite simply, because the narrator identifies it.”<sup>19</sup> Swift, however, insists upon far more comprehensive knowledge: to know what he is criticizing, he does not just imitate the voices or discourses he satirizes—he does not distance himself from the act of satiric creation—he becomes the things he wishes to avoid. In the case of *A Tale of a Tub*, he becomes his nemesis Dryden, showing a complete understanding of his rival’s need for an authoritative satiric theory that rises above vice and folly, ultimately exposing this authority to the ridicule Swift feels it so justly deserves. Swift’s identification with Dryden and his carefully constructed boundaries, however, does not lead to transgression of boundaries in order to reify them, but to subvert them, to split apart any singular unifying purpose and to turn a process of “pure division,” as Bogel has noted, into one of pure identification. In attacking the “Discourse” in its own terms of construction, Swift destabilizes the boundaries between satirist and satiric object that Dryden had so carefully erected.

Ann Cline Kelly argues that Swift’s choice of Dryden’s “Discourse” as a target was as personal as it was professional. She notes that, at the beginning of his career, Swift “mistakenly looked to his cousin, John Dryden . . . for guidance,” and that this

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Brian A. Connery, “The Persona as Pretender and the Reader as Constitutional Subject in Swift’s *Tale*,” in *Cutting Edges: Postmodern Critical Essays on Eighteenth-Century Satire*, ed. James E. Gill, vol. 37 of *Tennessee Studies in Literature* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 173.

<sup>19</sup> Deborah C. Payne, “Comedy, Satire, or Farce?” Or, the Generic Difficulties of Restoration Dramatic Satire,” in *Cutting Edges: Postmodern Critical Essays on Eighteenth-Century Satire*, ed. by James E. Gill, vol 37 of *Tennessee Studies in Literature* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 6

misguided hero worship led to some embarrassingly bad poetry, but little else.<sup>20</sup> After Swift's missteps with the "Ode to the Athenian Society" and "Ode to Congreve," in which he used "Dryden and Temple as exemplars to ... boldly define himself as the voice of his generation," and instead found only criticism, the satirist needed to re-define himself by annihilating his past and creating a new literary future.<sup>21</sup> Whether or not Dryden ever infuriated Swift by stating, "Cousin Swift, you will never be a poet," it is clear that Swift spent his early career struggling with the anxiety of Dryden's influence.<sup>22</sup> Rawson has noted that "Dryden is an obsessive figure in the early Swift, cited or mimicked again and again,"<sup>23</sup> most notably in *The Battle of the Books*, where the poet appears as a mental midget with a "Helmet ... nine times too large for the head, ... like a Mouse under a Canopy of State, or like a shrivled Beau from within the Penthouse of a modern Periwig" (*BB*, 215). Not content literally to belittle Dryden's person, Swift figuratively renders his cousin impotent, insisting that Dryden's voice—his poetic vision—is "weak and remote," and that although the older poet claims kinship with the Ancients, an armor and horse exchange with Virgil proves that Dryden is unequal to the task, "afraid, and utterly unable to mount" (215).

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<sup>20</sup> Ann Cline Kelly, *Jonathan Swift and Popular Culture: Myth, Media, and the Man* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 13.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-16. Additionally, Herbert Davis notes that even the odes, particularly the "Ode to Dr William Sandcroft" and the ode "To Mr. Congreve" show Swift's propensity for satire. In the introduction to Volume I of Swift's collected works, Davis shows that even as Swift tries to imitate Sir William Temple, his poetry ends up "vainly spent/In satire, to my Congreve's praises meant." Swift, "To Mr. Congreve," quoted in Davis, "Introduction," [*Prose Works*], xv.

<sup>22</sup> For a larger discussion of this argument, see John Robert Moore and Maurice Johnson, "Dryden's 'Cousin Swift,'" *PMLA* 68. 5 (December 1953): 1232-1240.

<sup>23</sup> Claude Rawson, "Behind the Tub," *Times Literary Supplement*, 10 September 2004, 3.

This obsession continues in *A Tale of a Tub*, where Dryden is once again Swift's nemesis. Swift acknowledges this in the Apology, stating, "some of those passages in this Discourse, which appear most liable to Objection are what they call Parodies, where the Author personates the Style and Manner of other Writers, whom he has a mind to expose" (*TT*, 7) explicitly naming Dryden as one of those authors and the *Aeneid* as a major source of satiric inspiration.<sup>24</sup> Widely acknowledged as a primary pre-text of Swift's parody, Dryden's *Aeneid*, with its bloated prose, numerous dedicatory and prefatory "Godfathers," and "self-righteous apologia" are all obvious fodder for Swift's satiric cannon.<sup>25</sup> Robert Phiddian argues that Swift consciously visits indignity on Dryden by calling into question all aspects of the *Aeneid*: "the moral stance, physical appearance, political allegiance, rhetorical structure, and [even] marketing strategy," blatantly parodying, plagiarizing, and incorrectly translating the older poet's work.<sup>26</sup> Exposure of Dryden's faults in the *Aeneid*, however, is not the only or even the most important of Swift's purposes in the *Tale*. In the Apology to the *Tale*, Swift recognizes that "when any great Genius thinks it worth his while to expose a foolish Piece; so we still read [it] with pleasure, tho' the Book it answers be sunk long ago" (10). In order to become the "voice

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<sup>24</sup> Swift's Tale Teller notes in the Dedication to Prince Posterity that "there is now actually in being, a certain Poet called John Dryden, whose Translation of Virgil was lately printed in a Large Folio, well bound, and if diligent search were made, for ought I know, is yet to be seen." *Tale of a Tub*, 36. Guthkelch and Nichol Smith also note specific instances of Swift's satire of Dryden's *Aeneid* (e.g., 70, n.5, 72, n.1). Davis provides another clue about Swift's animosity toward Dryden's *Aeneid*, noting that Swift attempted his own translation of Virgil that was both unsatisfying and uncompleted. Davis, [*Prose Works*], xii.

<sup>25</sup> Robert Phiddian, *Swift's Parody*, Cambridge studies in eighteenth-century English literature and thought: 26 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 131. More discussion of the *Aeneid* as a pre-text for Swiftian parody can be found in Irving Ehrenpreis, *Swift: The Man, the Works, and the Age*, vol. I, *Mr Swift and his Contemporaries* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 204, and Davis, *Jonathan Swift: Essays on his Satire and other Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 116-119.

<sup>26</sup> Phiddian, 131.

of his generation,” Swift needed to do more than mockingly imitate his rival: he needed to erase Dryden’s voice from literary memory by undermining any moral or textual authority Dryden may have had, not only as a translator or poet, but as an arbiter of literary, cultural, and moral appropriateness<sup>27</sup>—in other words, a dismantling of Dryden’s “Discourse on the Origins and Progress of Satire.” In the *Tale*, Swift achieves this subversion not through obvious parody, but through a satiric inhabitation, which transforms the “Discourse” so completely that it is unrecognizable except as its own inversion.

As Phiddian and others have noted, Swift’s satiric parodies are rarely simple imitations of something Swift disliked. Rather, they are inhabitations of an author, text, or genre, simultaneously drawing attention to the internal processes of the original text while insisting on a recognition of its inherent instability. This inhabitation calls into question the integrity of the works parodied, fracturing any sense of singular authorial, textual, or generic intent into a multiplicity of meanings. John Traugott noticed this element of Swift’s work in his 1971 essay “A Tale of a Tub.” Traugott states that Swift’s parody works precisely *because* Swift does not impersonate an external style, but rather gets to know his victims intimately. Swift’s parody succeeds, according to Traugott, not because he has a good ear for imitation, but because he is “speaking in tongues,” and “as

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<sup>27</sup> Phiddian, 131-133. Deborah Baker Wyrick agrees, noting in *Jonathan Swift and the Vested Word* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988) that “Dryden’s offense may ... lie in what Swift perceived to be a double rivalry for literary supremacy in a particularly historical moment and for literary legitimacy in an unfolding historical tradition. At the time Swift wrote *Battle of the Books*, Dryden was England’s greatest living satirist. Swift’s energetic attacks upon Dryden in *A Tale of a Tub* and *Battle of the Books* seem directed toward usurping Dryden’s place by diminishing his territory. Destructive ridicule of Dryden’s religious writings, panegyrics, and translations reduces the base upon which his reputation rests, making his satire (which Swift did not criticize overtly), more vulnerable.” 136-137.

he adopts the extravagances of his enemies, his invention takes fire, and he becomes his enemy, working out his own sceptical ideas in the enemy's guise."<sup>28</sup> This guise is not just a mask, persona, or imitation, however; all these techniques provide outer rather than inner knowledge of the enemy. Traugott argues that Swift's parody goes beyond the surface and becomes, not an imitation, but an inhabitation, not a critical impersonation, but a "sympathetic transformation," until "the most radical discoveries of the realities of human life come not as satiric parodies of perverse figures, but when the author is speaking in the idiom and guise of those figures."<sup>29</sup> Because Swift inhabits his character so completely, Traugott contends, "distinctions between [himself] and his speaker collapse," and the idiom and guise that were meant to ridicule become reality.<sup>30</sup>

In "Swift as Intellectual," Edward Said concurs, arguing that Swift's satiric program invariably is not about satiric imitation, which requires outside acknowledgement of a specific form, but about satiric inhabitation, which corrodes from within; in his impersonations, Said argues, "Swift's technique is to become the thing he attacks, which is normally not a message or a political doctrine, but a style or manner of discourse."<sup>31</sup> According to Said, Swift does not just imitate the form or person he attacks, he becomes it; he does not just identify with what he is criticizing, he inhabits it, turning himself into the very thing he works to destroy. This idea of inhabitation from within calls into question the perception of an author who distances himself from his topics, as a

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<sup>28</sup> Traugott, 89.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>31</sup> Said, 87.

director, a mask wearer, or even an absentee host. Inhabitation reaffirms Swift's own views, that one must become what one wishes to understand—even if that means becoming what one most despises.

Phiddian continues to develop the idea of Swift's multiplication of authorial intent, indeed the constant deferral of any stable intent. Like Traugott, Phiddian recognizes that Swift's "true" voice in *A Tale of a Tub* cannot be found in parody, because the author does not comment on things from without, but attacks "the terms of their own construction" from within.<sup>32</sup> Phiddian asserts that Swiftian parody in *A Tale of a Tub* destabilizes authorial intention by replacing the satiric voice with a parodic one. This parodic voice invades and inhabits its cultural, literary, and historical pre-texts, but comments on rather than condemns them. In doing so, parody does not "criticize error from a distance," but "engag[es] in the textual madness."<sup>33</sup> According to Phiddian, this inhabitation explodes any notion of univocal meaning—authorial, textual, or generic—because it "interacts with other texts and discourses but does not claim a unique and meaningful integrity of its own."<sup>34</sup> This interaction allows for multiple interpretations and the interplay of multiple voices, all of which have equal validity. "It is not finally possible," Phiddian suggests, "to prove that [Swift's] whole self supports any particular judgment or pattern of judgments," because his parody ultimately supports what it

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<sup>32</sup> Phiddian, 2.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 197.



criticizes.<sup>35</sup> Inhabitation precludes judgment, because “the thing that is not” is also the thing that is.

In his essay on Swift’s relationship to poststructuralism, Clive Probyn continues the discussion of Swift’s textual inhabitation, arguing that “Swift’s style is endoskeletal, defining from the inside, a parasite sustained by the vital fluids of a temporary host.”<sup>36</sup> Probyn then extends this argument, noting that this parasitical relationship creates a “textual implosion” in his own works, forcing readers to recognize both the legitimacy of each text and the inherent distortion created by Swift’s subtextual recycling, “the surface rhetoric and the deep-structure sabotage of the rhetoric.”<sup>37</sup> In so doing, Probyn argues, Swift does not simply rewrite his parodic hosts to erase their original meaning, but creates instead a palimpsest, in which “the original, target, or model-text remains a legible phantom text, immediately recoverable only in the process of its distortion or rewriting.”<sup>38</sup> In the process of recovering the original text, readers simultaneously experience the original meaning of the work and its distorted deep structure, forcing them to look beneath the surface of a simplistic concept of singular authoritative meaning and consider the “impossibility of any authoritative definition” of intent. This fracturing of textual authority, while deconstructive, is not entirely destructive. “Texts can fall to

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>36</sup> Clive Probyn, “Starting from the Margins,” 25.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 29.

pieces under the weight of indeterminable meanings,” Probyn notes, “and also constantly re-form into new shapes with new significations.”<sup>39</sup>

In *A Tale of a Tub*, the authority of Dryden’s “Discourse” is crushed beneath the weight of indeterminable—and interminable—meanings placed on it by Swift’s inhabitation of the text. Swift’s parody of Dryden creates a palimpsest of the “Discourse,” flaying its decorous and artificial surface and compelling readers to look beyond the folly of believing in the moral effectiveness of satire to the recognition of its own indeterminate nature. Without a moral imperative, the meaning of satire itself implodes, leaving individuals to make their own imperfect decisions about vice and virtue.

On a simply formal level, *A Tale of a Tub* is a straight-forward parodic renunciation of Dryden’s theory. Considered in the light of Dryden’s insistence on a morally instructive verse satire constructed with Horatian fine raillery, Juvenalian vigor and nobility, and Persian moral instructiveness, a work of art that concentrates on detailing one vice and recommending one virtue through the moral authority of its author, the *Tale* can barely be considered a satire. It is written by a modern author—often called the Hack—who cannot seem to follow the most basic rules of his own modern genre: he has constructed a satire in *prose*, and worse, one that ostensibly satirizes two things: abuses in learning and religion. These vices are not even put into a hierarchy, as Dryden would wish—they are given equal time, not integrated but constructed in separate parts that seem to have very little to do with one another, with the seemingly perfunctory and

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 24.

self-explanatory satire on “abuses” in religion ultimately being overwhelmed by the chaotic satire on “abuses” in learning. Although these “vices” appear to be reprehended, no corresponding virtues can be easily construed. As Griffin has noted, “it would take a confident critic to declare that we can draw from Swift’s work clear conclusions and moral directives.”<sup>40</sup> Rather than fine raillery, readers are subjected to wit that drops like an anvil and often seems to miss its intended target, and this from a narrator who shows none of the majesty Juvenal inspires. Alternately arrogant and cringing, self-absorbed, possibly insane, and oblivious to his own faults and failings, this modern writer epitomizes everything Dryden despises in modern satiric art. In fact, with its focus on the material world—on the filth and muck that make up human existence—it is the opposite of Dryden’s artistic vision which is removed, as Rawson noted earlier, “from too much correspondence with life.”<sup>41</sup> This renunciation, however, just scratches the surface rhetoric of Dryden’s “Discourse”—it is just the beginning of Swift’s inhabitation of Dryden. While attacking the terms of Dryden’s “Discourse” formally—from without—he also begins to attack the essay’s construction from within, stripping away layer upon layer of appearance to get at the heart of both Dryden’s intent and the intent of satire itself.

Swift’s inhabitation of the “Discourse” begins with Swift’s inhabitation of Dryden himself, a processes that allows Swift—and his reader—to understand exactly why Dryden is not the literary and moral giant he claims to be. Rawson has argued that for

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<sup>40</sup> Dustin Griffin, *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1994): 27.

<sup>41</sup> Rawson, *Satire and Sentiment: 1660-1830: Stress Points in the English Augustan Transition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 139.

Swift, Dryden was “an ignoble instance ... of creeping modernity, confessional, veristic, in-your-face,” believing that “the convoluted self-absorption” of Dryden’s prefaces, postscripts, and criticism set dangerously pretentious precedents for modern writers.<sup>42</sup> Dryden’s *Aeneid*, for example, had separate prefaces, observations and dedications for each of its three parts.<sup>43</sup> Swift mocks this misplaced need for gratification openly in “A Digression in the Modern Kind,” noting,

Our Great *Dryden* has long carried [the tradition of bloated prefatory material] as far as it would go, and with incredible success. He has often said to me in Confidence, that the World would have never suspected him to be so great a poet, If he had not assured them so frequently in his Prefaces, that it was impossible they could either doubt or forget it. (131)

Direct mockery, however, would not ever satisfy Swift. In order to truly “understand” Dryden, he must become him, and so his work must become Dryden’s. Therefore, Swift provides his tale with not one but two “Godfathers”—Lord Somers and Prince Posterity—a “Note” from the Bookseller, a Preface, and in 1710 an added Apology, which captures Dryden’s overweening ego and makes it not admirable, but laughable.<sup>44</sup> The processes of open attack and formal parody call into question Dryden’s greatness as

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<sup>42</sup> Rawson, “Behind the Tub,” 3. Swift continues this critique in “On Poetry, A Rapsody,” *Poetic Works*, 576, stating:

Read all the *Prefaces* of Dryden,  
For these our Criticks much confide in,  
(Tho’ merely writ at first for filling,  
To raise the Volume’s Price, a Shilling), lines 251-254.

<sup>43</sup> Davis, *Jonathan Swift*, 117.

<sup>44</sup> In the Introduction to the *Tale*, Swift notes: “I confess to having been somewhat liberal in the Business of Titles, having observed the Humor of multiplying them, to bear great Vogue among certain writers, whom I exceedingly Reverence. And indeed, it seems not unreasonable, the Books, the Children of the Brain, should have the Honor to be Christned with variety of Names as well as other Infants of Quality. Our famous *Dryden*, has ventured to proceed a Point farther, endeavouring to introduce also a Multiplicity of Godfathers; which is an Improvement of much more Advantage, upon a very obvious Account,” 71-72.

a writer by ridiculing his need, not only to play to his audience, but to manipulate it into understanding his greatness.

Although primarily a parody of Dryden's *Aeneid*, Swift's prefatory material in the *Tale*, most significantly the double dedications, is equally applicable to the "Discourse," which is presented wholly as a dedication to the Earl of Dorset. It follows the tradition of such works, beginning with an extended apotheosis of the earl's literary ability and moral fortitude: "I saw you in the East at your first arising above the Hemisphere...the Restorer of Poetry...You...without Flattery, are the best of the present age in *England*" (*DCS*, 4, 5, 24). Dryden continues with platitudes of humility that are both self-deprecating and celebratory of his own work: "I never attempted anything in Satire, wherein I have not study'd your Writings as the most perfect Model; ... but I have one privilege which is almost particular to my self ... I was inspired to foretell you to mankind" (7, 4-5). Dryden follows this with a slavishly fawning gesture of gratitude for all Dorset has done for him in the past and may continue to do in the future: "your Lordship was pleas'd, out of no other Motive but your own Nobleness, without any Desert of mine, or the least Sollicitation from me, to make me a most bountiful Present...when I was most in want of it" (23). In his Dedications, Swift also follows these conventions, but in his work, they serve a very different purpose. Taken together, the Dedication to the Right Honourable John Lord Sommers and the Epistle Dedicatory to His Royal Highness Prince Posterity expose these traditions as meaningless cant and Dryden's use of them as narcissistic by attacking the terms of their own construction—writing dedications that do precisely what Dryden's do, but with all their pretenses exposed.

The Dedication to Lord Sommers functions primarily as a direct attack on Dedications in general and on Dryden's in particular.<sup>45</sup> Purportedly written by a bookseller to counteract the seemingly inappropriate Dedication to the Prince of Posterity, the Dedication to Lord Sommers is in fact a meta-dedication that illuminates the wholly grandiose intent of all such works, depicting the most unflattering, albeit most honest, dedication one could make. Rather than apotheosizing Somers, the bookseller—who clearly is not versed in modern flattery—explains in distinctly practical terms why he dedicated the book to his lord: first, the original dedication was to Prince Posterity, a figure this seller of popular modern works is never likely to meet; second, and more importantly, Somers is valuable not because of any contribution he could make to the literary or moral landscape, but because his name on any work “will at any time get off one Edition”—he is an important commodity (23).<sup>46</sup> Although the bookseller attempts to flatter Somers, he once again misses, offering an interminable list of general virtues furnished that he *could* ascribe to Somers; he is, however, so busy cataloging these virtues that he never gets around to applying them to the lord. Finally, these virtues come not through intimate knowledge of the lord's character, but through Modern Wits who are paid to ransack the characters of the ancients.<sup>47</sup> Ultimately, the only virtue actually ascribed to Lord Somers is patience, a characteristic he sorely needs in order to swallow

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<sup>45</sup> The correct spelling is “Somers.”

<sup>46</sup> Guthkelch and Nichol Smith note that Somers would have been an appropriate dedicatee to the book, as he was apparently quite sympathetic to writers. Swift, *A Tale of a Tub*, 22 n.1.

<sup>47</sup> See Brean Hammond, “Swift's Reading,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Swift*, ed. Christopher Fox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 83.

this dedication, and one that the Earl of Dorset must possess if he is to wade through Dryden's increasingly outrageous obsequiousness.

If the Dedication to Lord Sommers is Swift's direct attack on the falsity of Dryden's dedications, satire with a blunt object, the Dedication to the Prince of Posterity is his inhabitation of the form, which works more insidiously to exploit these conventions. Using Dryden's own obsequious tone, Swift begins with an over-the-top humility trope that presents the *Tale* as the "Fruits of a very few leisure Hours," as "the poor Production of that Refuse of Time which has lain heavy on my hands, during a long Prorogation of Parliament, and great Dearth of Forein News, and a tedious Fit of rainy Weather" (30). He continues with the fawning that is so characteristic of his predecessor: "for which, and other reasons [this work] cannot chuse extremely to deserve such a Patronage as that of *Your Highness*, whose numberless Virtues in so few Years, make the Worlds look upon You as the future Example to all Princes" (30-31). In this, Swift both channels Dryden and exposes the premises upon which his claims to both humility and greatness have been made. If the work is as bad as he claims—after all, it is produced from the *refuse* of Time—how can it make claims to posterity?<sup>48</sup> From this point, Swift leaves all pretense of traditional dedications behind and turns his attack to the subject near and dear to Dryden's heart: the quality of modern writing. After accusing Time for keeping Prince Posterity from knowing all the production of this era, "persuading *Your*

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<sup>48</sup> Not content to let his readers make this inference themselves, Swift added a footnote in the 1711 edition to clarify his stance: "It is the usual Style of decry'd Writers to appeal to *Posterity*, who is here represented as a Prince in his Nonage, and *Time* as his Governour, and the Author begins in a way very frequent with him, by personating other Writers, who sometimes offer such Reasons and Excuses for publishing their Works as they ought chiefly to conceal and be ashm'd of" 30.

*Highness*, that our Age is almost wholly illiterate,” particularly after studying the Ancients, Swift, like Dryden in his “Discourse,” makes a list of those venerable writers whose works are not quite up to the appellations “immortal” and “never-dying” (31, 33). As Brean Hammond points out, however, this list is quite different than Dryden’s.<sup>49</sup> While Dryden castigated authors such as Donne, Marvell, Butler, and Rochester for lacking in ancient graces, Swift’s list includes authors such as Nahum Tate, Dennis, Bentley, Rhymer, William Wotton, and Dryden himself. He notes:

what I am going to say is literally true this Minute I am writing: ... there *is now actually in being*, a certain Poet called John Dryden.... There *is* another call’d Nahum Tate. There is a Third, known by the Name of Tom Durfey ... There *are* also one Mr. Rymer, and one Mr. Dennis.... There *is* a person Styl’d Dr B—tl—y....Farther, I avow to *Your Highness*, that *with these Eyes I have beheld* the Person of William W—tt—n. (36-37; emphasis mine)

In Swift’s eyes, these authors share the commonalities of being modern, popular, and eminently ephemeral. Their works exist only in the moment of their creation, snuffed out—quite appropriately, according to Swift—through literary infanticide by Time. By including Dryden in this list, Swift makes his feelings about his predecessor quite clear: Dryden’s greatness—as a poet, translator, critic, and satirist—exists only as long as readers can be reminded of it through his self-serving dedications, and since his works are destined to end in the way all other modern works end—in the Jakes or Ovens—this genius is exposed as the refuse it will eventually become.

Swift’s inhabitation of Dryden calls into question not only his literary stature but his moral one as well, a particularly sensitive point given Dryden’s insistence on his own authority as a moral satirist. Swift again attacks Dryden directly in the Apology:

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<sup>49</sup> Hammond, “Swift’s reading,” 84.



Dryden ... and some others I shall not name, are here leveled at who having spent their Lives in Faction, Apostacies, and all manner of Vice, pretended to be Sufferers for Loyalty and Religion. So Dryden tells us in one of his Prefaces of His Merits and Suffering, thanks God that he *possesses his Soul in Patience*. (7)

The Preface that outrages Swift so much is from the “Discourse.” For Swift, Dryden’s “Suffering” for his “Loyalty and Religion” is little more than hypocritical, self-serving propaganda, and Swift’s first goal is to expose this “overlook’d” authorial intent through a concentrated parody of Dryden’s own words.<sup>50</sup>

At first glance, however, Swift’s parody does not appear to be about criticism—he is merely getting to know Dryden more intimately. In the “Discourse,” Dryden first works to establish his own moral authority by proving that he is better than satirists who indulge in attacks against him; he refuses to degrade himself by responding to these attacks and lowering himself to their level of personal invective. Instead, he argues that his integrity will be vindicated by Time. He notes, “for my Morals, if they are not proof against their attacks, let me be thought by Posterity, what those Authors wou’d be thought, if any Memory of them or of their Writings, cou’d endure so long as to another Age” (*DCS*, 50). He then offers a humility trope that magnifies this authority by playing on his suffering for his cause:

Being encourag’d only with fair Words, by King Charles II, my little Salary ill paid, and with no prospect of a future Subsistence, I was then Discourag’d in the beginning of my Attempt [to write an epic]; and now Age has overtaken me, and Want, a more insufferable Evil, through the Change of the Times, has wholly disenabl’d me.... Since this revolution, ...I have patiently suffer’d the Ruin of my

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<sup>50</sup> Although some of Swift’s rage against Dryden surely stems from Dryden’s conversion to Catholicism, Anne Cotterill argues that “crucial for Swift’s ‘malevolence’ toward Dryden ... may be the fact that the paternal grandfather whom Swift venerated, Thomas Swift... was an Anglican and Royalist vicar who had been persecuted harshly by the Puritans. The laureate, on the other hand, had descended from a line that produced quite vocal Puritans,” 290.

small Fortune, and the loss of that poor Subsistence which I had from two Kings, whom I had serv'd more Faithfully than Profitably to myself. ... I speak of my Morals, which have been sufficiently aspers'd: That only sort of Reputation ought to be dear to every honest Man, and is to me. But let the World witness for me, that I have been often wanting to my self in that particular; I have seldom answer'd any scurrilous Lampoon: When it was in my power to have expos'd my Enemies: And being naturally vindictive, have suffer'd in silence; and possess'd my Soul in quiet. (23, 59-60)

In his process of becoming Dryden, Swift's parody in the Introduction to the *Tale* is almost flawless. He writes:

These Notices may serve to give the Learned Readers an Idea as well as a Taste of what the whole Work is likely to produce: wherein I have now altogether circumscribed my Thoughts and my Studies; and if I can bring it to a Perfection before I die, shall reckon I have well employ'd the poor Remains of an unfortunate Life. This indeed is more than I can justly expect from a Quill worn to the Pith in the Service of the State, in Pro's and Con's upon Popish Plots, and Meal Tubs, and Exclusion Bills, and Passive Obedience, and Addresses of Lives and Fortunes; and Prerogative, and Property, and Liberty of Conscience, and Letters to a Friend: From an Understanding and a Conscience, threadbare and ragged with perpetual turning; From a Head broken in a hundred places, by the Malignants of the opposite Factions, and from a Body spent with Poxes ill cured, by trusting to Bawds and Surgeons, who, (as it afterwards appeared) were profess'd Enemies to Men and the Government, and revenged their Party's Quarrel upon my Nose and Shins. Four-score and eleven Pamphlets have I writ under three Reigns, and for the Service of six and thirty Factions. But finding the State has no farther Occasion for Me and my Ink, I retire willingly to draw it out into Speculations more becoming a Philosopher, having, to my unspeakable Comfort, passed a long Life, with a Conscience void of Offence. (TT, 70-71)

When Dryden talks of his poverty and suffering, the contradictory encouragement and discouragement of his art, noting that "Age has overtaken me, and Want, a more insufferable Evil, through the Change of the Times, has wholly disenabl'd me," Swift could finish the sentence: "And if I can bring [my whole work] to a Perfection before I die, shall reckon I have well employ'd the poor Remains of an unfortunate life." In this, Swift has achieved Traugott's sympathetic transformation, speaking in Dryden's tongue.

The surface rhetoric of the “Discourse” has been inhabited, but the deep structure has not yet been sabotaged.

However, as Dryden continues his sincere complaint in the “Discourse,” and Swift continues his parodic one in the *Tale*, the parasite that is Swift begins to transform its host. Dryden notes: “I have patiently suffer’d the Ruin of my small Fortune, and the loss of that poor Subsistence which I had from two Kings, whom I had serv’d more Faithfully than Profitably to myself. ... My Morals ... have been sufficiently aspers’d.” Now Swift, still sympathetic: “From an Understanding and a Conscience, thread-bare and ragged with perpetual turning; from a Head broken in a hundred places, by the Malignants of the opposite Factions.” Swift continues the parody, but at this point inhabitation becomes transformation, and identification with the enemy has become the key. He begins: “Fourscore and eleven Pamphlets have I written under three Reigns, and for the Service of six and thirty factions,” disposing handily of Dryden’s claims to loyalty. He does the same with Dryden’s moral authority: “From a Body Spent with Poxes ill-cured, by trusting to Bawds and Surgeons, who (as it afterwards appeared) were professed Enemies to Me and the Government, and revenged their Party’s Quarrel upon my Nose and Shins.”

Dryden’s original intent, both to justify his endeavour and to uphold his integrity and morality, has become inhabited by Swift’s own intent and voice, and a singular meaning becomes harder to perceive. In becoming his enemy—and by doing so, suggesting that Dryden actually has the morals his judges accuse him of—Swift is doing what Phiddian suggests: attacking the terms of Dryden’s construction from within. This

does less to destroy Dryden out-right than to destabilize any sense of moral authority.

In fact, Swift's parody robs Dryden of any authority at all: as a literary critic, a satirist, or even a defender of his own life. In this example, Dryden's authorial intent becomes Swift's, and in so doing a multiplicity of voices can be heard: Dryden the sincere, Dryden the self-absorbed confessor, Swift the rector, Swift the disgruntled poet, Swift the vindictive younger relative, Swift the cultural critic, and more. The trope of genteel humility and moral superiority has been exploded through Probyn's parasitic inhabitation and then transformed into its opposite, thereby exposing the hypocrisy that may reside behind it. Dryden's moral authority becomes the woman flayed, and he would not believe how Swift has altered his appearance for the worse.

In light of this, it is a small step to suggest that Swift's Tale Teller, a Modern Hack who exploits all forms of modern discourse for his own excruciatingly self-absorbed and narcissistic ends, is modeled after Dryden.<sup>51</sup> Rawson's characterization of the Tale Teller as a "compound of intellectual and religious deviation, and of disordered thought, compulsively confessional and wildly digressive,"<sup>52</sup> fits quite well the picture of Dryden painted by Swift—and indeed, by Dryden himself. When the Tale Teller resolves "to circumscribe within this Discourse the whole Stock of Matter I have been so many Years providing[,] Since my Vein is once opened, I am content to exhaust it all at a Running, for the peculiar Advantage of my dear Country, and for the universal Benefit of Mankind," his voice is unmistakably Dryden's (*TT*, 184). Additionally, Ronald Paulson

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<sup>51</sup> Phiddian makes this argument about Dryden's *Aeneid*. Phiddian, 129-132. This argument is equally valid for Dryden's "Discourse."

<sup>52</sup> Rawson, "Character of Swift's Satire," 19.

has noted that “each of Dryden’s prefaces embodies an attempt, Dryden’s belief of the moment, but provides no over-all structure of critical theory. ... When he writes one, it represents that absolute truth of that moment; the next, though a reversal of opinion, will be as valid to him because it represents the truth of that moment, as he sees it.”<sup>53</sup> Swift’s Tale Teller also embodies this belief in momentary absolute truth, as noted in the Dedication to Prince Posterity: “I profess to Your Highness, in the Integrity of my Heart, that what I am going to say is literally true this Minute I am writing: What Revolutions may happen before it shall be ready for your Perusal, I can by no means warrant” (36). Given the forcefulness with which Dryden argued in the “Discourse” that his morals and his writing will be linked as they stand the test of time, Posterity is encouraged to peruse his work as soon as possible. As Dryden’s proxy, the Tale Teller—an authority on learning and religion—shows not only the hollowness of the positions he argues, but the hollowness of holding positions of authority, particularly the position of having the moral authority to judge satire.

Having exposed Dryden’s inherent literary and moral posturing, Swift turns his attention to exposing the internal processes at work within the “Discourse” itself. It begins, appropriately enough, with Swift’s recognition that a satirist must understand intimately that which he attacks. He notes that “to answer a Book effectually, requires more Pains and Skill, more Wit, Learning, and Judgment than were employ’d in the Writing it” (10), and he goes to great lengths to prove it, showing his intimate knowledge of the “Discourse” by consistently using Dryden’s carefully considered rules against him

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<sup>53</sup> Ronald Paulson, *Theme and Structure in Swift’s Tale of a Tub* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), 21-22.

in the Preface to the *Tale* and then applying this almost word-for-word inversion of satiric theory in the *Tale* proper. In so doing, Swift forces his readers to experience the original intent of the “Discourse” while simultaneously recognizing the cracks in its surface rhetoric and its flawed deep structure, a process that dismantles the most ingrained traditions of satire—its reliance on the ancients, its moral imperative, its efficacy, and its relation to the sacred—and ultimately provides a model of satire more amenable to the modern, chaotic world.

Deborah Baker Wyrick has noted that Swift liked writing prefaces because they “gave him the opportunity to parody self-promotional writing practices” and to show that their “actual function is to stake out textual territory.”<sup>54</sup> In the *Tale*, this self-promotional activity is parodied through an exponential expansion of prefatory material, with Dedications that contradict the purposes of dedications, a Preface that contains very little prefatory material, and an added “true” Preface in Section X—the penultimate chapter of the *Tale*—that finally lays out the narrator’s ostensible purpose. If the purpose of a preface is to give a reader an introduction to the writer’s intentions, Swift’s readers—particularly those modern readers who get their knowledge by reading only prefaces and indexes—would be hard-pressed to discern their narrator’s intentions from his prefatory material: the *Tale* is alternately a work of fiction, a diversionary tactic, a treatise on Attic culture, and a lesson in panegyric. It is equally about academics and whales, mountebanks and cooking. The one thing is it ostensibly *not* about is satire. “ ‘Tis a great

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<sup>54</sup> Wyrick, *Vested Word*, xiii.

Ease to my Conscience,” the Tale-Teller states, “that I have writ so elaborate and useful a Discourse without one grain of Satyr intermixt” (47-48).

In this, Swift’s Preface is most commonly seen as a defacement of modern satire—not satire based on Dryden’s form but on the satires he himself railed against. Swift’s extended indictment of modern satires is often seen as an indictment of “the spate of satire in the 1690s which so offended Sir William Temple,”<sup>55</sup> an interpretation that is predictably in line with Dryden, who found most modern satirists to be mere lampooners who practice personal invective, libelers who lack wit, “Dignity of Expression,” “manly grace,” and the ability to practice fine raillery (*DCS*, 6, 81, 70). As Rose Zimbardo suggests, these satirists—including Oldham, Rochester, and Wycherley—offer none of the comforts of Dryden’s binary satire: “There is no good man of common sense speaking to us and assuring us of our community in the empire of reason.”<sup>56</sup> Swift appears to agree with his predecessor, noting, “Most of our late Satyrists seem to lye under a sort of Mistake, that because Nettles have the Prerogative to Sting, therefore all other Weeds must do so too” (*TT*, 48). Swift’s Tale Teller eschews modern satire for the much the same reasons Dryden does: it is a lash, a weed, a thistle, a disease—and worst of all, possibly from *Scotland*—none of which is in line with Dryden’s insistence on a clean, ordered, and moral satire with its roots in Greece and Rome. Read in light of Dryden’s binary theory of satire, this interpretation is correct: Swift does take on the persona of a Modern satirist to criticize satire not drawn from the Ancients, arguing that

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<sup>55</sup> Robert C. Elliott, “Swift’s Satire: Rules of the Game,” *ELH* 41, no. 3 (Autumn 1974): 425.

<sup>56</sup> Rose Zimbardo, *At Zero Point: Discourse, Culture, and Satire in Restoration England* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 14.

his work cannot be satiric because it does not display the characteristics of what he calls “the Satyrical itch” (48)

In his guise as Dryden, a “most devoted Servant of all Modern Forms” (45), however, Swift does something much more complex. In his extended criticism of satire, Swift uses the *Tale*’s Preface not just to stake out literary territory, but to “defac[e] the works of others, sully[ing] their claims upon the subject in order to eject them from the literary space [he] wishes to occupy.”<sup>57</sup> In his satire on Modern satire, he not only defaces the modern satires of the early 1690s; in turning Dryden’s own rules against him, he defaces the “Discourse” and its insistence that truly modern satire can only be created by thorough literary obeisance to Ancient forms. As a litany of everything that is wrong with satire, however, the Preface does, in fact, reveal the author’s intentions: *A Tale of a Tub* is not about satire; rather its intent is to destabilize the assumptions of satire itself. In the Preface, Swift reiterates his predecessor’s contradictory claims—that the Moderns have excelled the Ancients in satire, that satire should be based on Ancient norms, that satire should be fine, noble, moral and instructive—and does so in a manner that not only sullies Dryden’s claims upon the subject of satiric boundaries, but upon all claims that satire itself could have any authority to change human behavior, perception, or nature. In the Preface to the *Tale*, Swift deconstructs Dryden’s theory into a literary void, so that the space he wishes to occupy—and which he fills with the *Tale* proper—becomes a literary, moral, and interpretive abyss, one in which any sense of boundary, structure, or authority are hopelessly compromised.

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<sup>57</sup> Wyrick, *Vested Word*, xiii.



In the Preface to the *Tale*, Swift begins his inversion of Dryden's rules with an examination of the earlier poet's purported argument in the "Discourse": that in tragedy and satire, modern English writers have excelled their ancient predecessors. Unlike Dryden, however, Swift sees this originality as somewhat less than flattering, as modern writers have only "exceeded" their earlier counterparts in destroying all sense of satiric purpose. For Swift, as for Dryden, the "originality" of satire in England has much to do with English character. For Swift, however, it can only be for the worse. In Athens, Swift's narrator argues, satire had a moral purpose, because any member of the public could rail against an individual—a specific action against a specific person, which led to specific consequences—while satirizing the public was uncalled for, because general action would have bitter consequences. However, English satire, which is based on Dryden's principles, has mastered the art of the vague generalization that destroys much of satire's purpose, if that purpose is in any way moral:

In England ... you may securely display your utmost Rhetorick against Mankind, in the Face of the World . . . and when you have done, the whole Audience, far from being offended, shall return you thanks as a Deliverer of precious and useful Truths. . . . Satyr being leveled at all, is never resented for an offence by any, since every individual person very wisely removes his particular part of the burthen upon the shoulders of the world, which are broad enough, and able to bear it (51-52).

Swift places this fault directly at Dryden's doorstep, using his predecessor's own words to indict him. In the "Discourse," Dryden exalts the Earl of Dorset for his satires, noting specifically that the earl "only expose[s] the Follies of Men, without Arraigning their Vices; and [he has] been sparing of the Gaul; by which means [he] has pleas'd all Readers, and offended none" (*DCS*, 6). Whereas Dryden believes that true satire is the

enemy of no person because it impartially identifies a vice—an illness—and prescribes remedies that, however harsh, will ultimately purify a person, a community, or society, Swift's narrator knows that this type of "healing" is impossible, because people refuse to acknowledge their own complicity in vice. In recognizing this contradiction, Swift subverts Dryden's first rule of satire: if satire follows the Horatian characteristic of "fine raillery," that is, it is good natured and general, then no one person is forced to recognize his or her *own* folly (let alone more vicious tendencies), and thus, the moral purpose of satire becomes increasingly unstable.

Having destabilized Dryden's insistence on satire's moral effectiveness, Swift continues his inversion by summarily dispatching Dryden's other satiric prescriptions. While Dryden claims that true satires should treat one vice and promote one virtue, Swift dispenses with this handily, arguing, "as Health is but one Thing, and has been always the same, ... Diseases are by thousands, besides new and daily additions; So all the Virtues that have been ever in Mankind, are to be counted upon a few Fingers, but his Follies and Vices are innumerable, and Time adds hourly to the heap" (*TT*, 50). In Swift's eyes, promoting one virtue is possible, because there are so few left, but no self-respecting satirist could begin to settle on one vice; when Juvenal writes, "*difficile est saturam non scribere*" (it is hard *not* to write satire), modern satirists would agree.<sup>58</sup>

Although modern satirists have a myriad of English vices to excoriate, according to Swift, their reliance on Dryden's rules lead to satires that are a pale shadow of Juvenal's. While Dryden insists that true satires must be full of Juvenalian nobility and

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<sup>58</sup> Juvenal, "Satire 1," line 30, *Juvenal and Persius*, ed. Susanna Morton Braund, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Harvard University Press: 2004), 128.

majesty, Swift reduces Modern satires based on Dryden's prescriptions to the discipline of a sniveling brat. "I have observed some Satyrists," he notes, "to use the Publick much at the Rate that Pedants do a naughty Boy ready to be Hors'd for Discipline: First expostulate the Case, then plead the Necessity of the Rod, from great Provocations, and conclude every period with a lash" (48). This is a far cry from the sublimity of a swift execution. Unlike the image of the Juvenalian satirist who stands apart from the moral turpitude of his society and dispenses wisdom from a morally unassailable height, modern satirists, who follow Dryden's proscription that the satiric subject "die sweetly," are reduced to pedantry, pleading their cases with the public and defending their own satiric positions of authority with satiric objects who do not even have the decency to indulge in noble vices. If Juvenal's satires are great because the poet "had more of the Commonwealth Genius; he treats Tyranny, and all the Vices attending it, as they deserve, with the utmost rigour" (*DCS*, 65), modern satirists are left to punish naughtiness, the crimes of petulant schoolboys, and their insistence on the lash for such petty crimes makes satire a mockery of itself. Worse still is the fact this pedantry has no effect, because these naughty boys are incorrigible. What makes so-called modern English satire so different, so original, is that it is entirely useless, because it is entirely without effectiveness: "these Gentlemen might very well spare their Reproof and Correction: For there is not, through all Nature, another so callous and insensible a Member as the World's Posteriors, whether you apply to it the Toe or the Birch" (*TT*, 48).

It is in the recognition that satire has no useful instructive purpose that Swift offers the death blow—and not with a particularly fine stroke—to Dryden’s theory of satire. Having stripped satire of the good-naturedness of fine raillery and of the dignity of Juvenalian nobility and majesty, having exposed the reality that virtues are few and vices are many, Swift completes his inhabitation of the “Discourse” by flaying its single seemingly incontrovertible truth: that, through its moral imperative, it has the capability to change human nature—not just for the better, but at all. In an invective that shows the poverty of Dryden’s theory of a singular, unifying moral vision to effect change, Swift encourages satirists to do their worst and see how it affects their subjects: “It is but to venture your Lungs, and you may preach it in Convent-Garden ... at White Hall ... at the Inns of Court Chappel ... [from] the Pulpit ... ‘Tis but a Ball bandied to and fro, and every Man carries a Racket about Him to strike it from himself among the rest of the Company” (52-53).<sup>59</sup> In a grand understatement, he concludes: “But I forget that I am expatiating on a Subject, wherein I have no concern, having neither a talent or an Inclination for Satyr” (53).

In light of this, it is without irony that Swift’s Tale Teller can argue that his own “Discourse” has not “one grain of [Drydenesque] satire intermixt.” If the stereotypical view of satire is, “a highly moral art . . . designed to attack vice or folly, ... proceed[ing]

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<sup>59</sup> The rest of Swift’s rant is worth reproducing in its entirety: “But on the other side, whoever should mistake the Nature of things so far, as to drop but a single Hint in publick, How such a one, starved half the Fleet, and half-poison’d the rest: How such a one, from a true Principle of Love and Honour, pays no Debts but for wenches and Play: How such a one has got a Clap and runs out of his Estate: How Paris bribed by Juno and Venus, loath to offend either Part, slept out the whole Cause on the Bench: Or how such an orator makes long Speeches in the Senate with much Thought, little Sense, and to no Purpose; whoever, I say, should venture to be thus particular, must expect to be imprisoned for Scandalum Magnatum: to have Challenges sent him; to be sued for Defamation; and to be brought before the Bar of the House.”

by clear reference to some moral standard,”<sup>60</sup> then Swift is correct in saying that the *Tale* is not a satire. Robert Elliott has argued that Swift’s attack on Modern satires in the Preface to the *Tale* is not an attack on satire itself, stating categorically, “to attack *that* satire is by no means the same as attacking satire itself.”<sup>61</sup> For Swift, however, the indictment of Modern satire is an indictment of Dryden’s theories of satire, and, finally, of all satires written in this tradition. In Swift’s view, the belief that one can stand apart from that which one abhors—stand in the street and rail against any number of sins—as if there is a “particular historical target of Swift’s satire,” as Gardner Stout, Jr, notes, is to “avoid seeing ourselves reflected in the *Tale’s* satiric glass,” thus proving his point precisely.<sup>62</sup>

Like his inhabitation of Dryden, Swift’s inhabitation of Dryden’s “Discourse” in the Dedications and the Preface forces readers to experience the surface rhetoric of the work—the original authoritative intent to re-create satire in line with ancient ideals—and the undermining of its deep structure, which suggests that these ancient ideals carry no weight if satire’s purpose to provide a single, authoritative moral vision that works effectively to reform even one vice or folly has been destabilized. In the *Tale* proper, he extends this inhabitation to satire itself. Taken at face value, *A Tale of a Tub* is exactly as Swift describes it in his Apology: a satire on abuses in religion and Modern learning. Swift explains his satiric goals in terms so carefully crafted that even the simplest of

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<sup>60</sup> Griffin, *Satire*, 1.

<sup>61</sup> Elliot, “Swift’s Satire,” 253.

<sup>62</sup> Gardner D. Stout, Jr., “Speaker and Satiric Vision in Swift’s *Tale of a Tub*,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 3, no. 2 (Winter 1969), 177.

readers would understand: the author believed that the “numerous and gross Corruptions in Religion and Learning might furnish Matter for a Satyr.... The abuses in Religion he proposed to set forth in the Allegory of the Coats, and the three Brothers, which was to make up the Body of the Discourse. Those in Learning he chose to introduce by way of Digressions” (4). This simple interpretation, however, is just the surface rhetoric of the *Tale*, designed for his “superficial readers,” who are “strangely provoked to laughter” and “who will by no means be persuaded to inspect beyond the Surface and the Rind of things” (184, 66). Any reader who expects more—such as a satire that extols a virtue, perhaps, or a unification of disparate themes—will be sadly disappointed. In writing the *Tale*, Swift not only distorts the deep structure of the “Discourse” and countless other modern writings to make a satiric point, he distorts his own deep structure, creating a satire that is seemingly comprehensible by a reader on the surface while simultaneously deconstructing the boundaries by which this satiric comprehension can exist. In the *Tale*, Swift contends that satire “comprises the conventions of its own invalidation”<sup>63</sup> through its own interpretive instability, illuminating the indeterminate nature of the genre.

The problem of The *Tale*’s interpretive instability has been at the heart of critical discussion of the text since its inception, when numerous Keys and “Observations” were written to address any uncertainties readers might have in deciphering the author’s original intent. One of the first was the widely known “Observation” on the *Tale*, written

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<sup>63</sup> Erin Mackie, “The Culture Market, The Marriage Market, and the Exchange of Language: Swift and the Progress of Desire,” in *Theorizing Satire: Essays in Literary Criticism* ed. Brian Connery and Kirke Combe (New York: St Marten’s Press, 1995), 173-174.

in 1705 by William Wotton (Swift's nemesis from *The Battle of the Books*). These notes offer an explanation of the religious allegory, an interpretation that is redundant to all but the most oblivious readers. According to Frank Palmeri, Wotton believed that his "own critical language provided an adequate and direct access to the truth of other texts."<sup>64</sup> Any pretensions to such "direct access to the truth," however, were thoroughly compromised when Swift published the 1710 edition of the *Tale* and appropriated Wotton's notes into the *Tale* itself, fixing Wotton's commentary at the bottom of the text. "Underneath the text dangles Wotton's critical analysis," Wyrick observes, "exposed as nothing more than obvious allegorical identification plus word-for-word repetition...subordinate, marginal, unnecessary."<sup>65</sup> By crushing Wotton's interpretive authority, Swift forces Wotton's "language [to join] the other languages in the *Tale* that are parodied for their claims to give an adequate account of the world."<sup>66</sup>

In many ways, this is the fate of all interpretations of the *Tale*, as any critical analysis that insists upon a unified and unifying meaning ultimately fails, becoming as incomplete and marginalized as Wotton's notes. Wyrick has noted that "if there is a central subject that unites the disparate elements of *A Tale of a Tub*, it is exegesis, the transmission and interpretation of texts."<sup>67</sup> Terry Castle concurs, recognizing that "interpretation of the text is the theme which conjoins Swift's satire of religious abuse in the allegorical portion of the tale with his satire on pedagogic abuse, exemplified in the

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<sup>64</sup> Frank Palmeri. "The Satiric Footnotes of Swift and Gibbon," in *Critical Essays on Jonathan Swift*, ed. Frank Palmeri (New York, GK. Hall & Co, 1993), 194

<sup>65</sup> Wyrick, *Vested Word*, 56.

<sup>66</sup> Palmeri, "Satiric Footnotes," 194.

<sup>67</sup> Wyrick, *Vested Word*, 133.

Modern editor's insane critical apparatus."<sup>68</sup> Although the *Tale* itself gives ample evidence of the theme of interpretation, from Peter's misinterpretation of the Father's Will to misreadings by modern "Criticks" whose "whole Course of useful study" is in Prefaces and Prologues, the *Tale* itself is stubbornly resistant to interpretation, just as Swift designed it:

The Reader truly Learned, chiefly for whose Benefit I wake, when others sleep, and sleep when others wake, will here find sufficient Matter to employ his Speculations for the rest of his Life. It were much to be wisht, and I do here humbly propose for an Experiment, that every Prince in Christendom will take seven of the *deepest Scholars* in his Dominions, and shut them up close for seven Years, in seven Chambers, with a Command to write seven ample Commentaries on this comprehensive Discourse. I shall venture to affirm, that whatever difference may be found in their several Conjectures, they will be all, without the least Distortion, manifestly deduceable from the Text. (185)

Recognizing that "where [he is] not understood, it shall be concluded, that something very useful and profound is coucht underneath" (46), Swift invests the *Tale* with so much usefulness and profundity that any attempt to consider the work as a whole is ultimately fruitless. If the goal of critical analysis is to prove an arguable point, providing concrete evidence that illuminates the meaning of a work, *all* so-called authoritative interpretations of the *Tale* are equally valid, according to Swift, which means all such interpretations are equally invalid.

To recognize the invalidity of authoritative interpretation, however, is to recognize Swift's final end in writing the *Tale*. It cannot be adequately interpreted precisely because of what it claims to be: a satire. As Probyn observes, "the satirical

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<sup>68</sup> Terry Castle, "Why the Houyhnhnms Don't Write: Swift, Satire, and the Fear of the Text," in *Critical Essays on Jonathan Swift*, ed. Frank Palmeri (New York: G. K. Hall & Co, 1993), 60.



energy in Swift's work drives a paradox ... the energy is entropic: it frustrates the expected system of a particular genre,"<sup>69</sup> and the *Tale* explodes the definition of any expected system of satire because satire, by Dryden's definition, must have a single meaning, a movement toward reforming something, if not behavior, than at least perception. Even as Swift insists that textual interpretation is possible—going so far as to hand his readers the main satiric targets in the Apology—he reaffirms that interpretation of satire is impossible through a subversion of his own aims. While both the satire on religious abuses and the satire on modern learning have distinct points of attack, this attack ultimately proves fruitless as it offers no particular boundaries for change. While it transgresses boundaries, as Connery has described one of satire's aims, it does not do so to reaffirm them, but destabilize them.<sup>70</sup> Because the *Tale* does not take the aim of classical satire to reform, it has no pre-defined objective, leaving any authoritative interpretation to be necessarily incomplete; any single interpretation is ultimately contradicted by any other interpretation that insists upon a unitary meaning. The text resists meaning as it resists reformatory purpose.

The Allegory of the Coats, what Swift calls "A Tale of a Tub," is Swift's apparent attempt to write "legitimate" satire, one that lays out its moral maxims, decries the vices and follies of his satiric objects, and provides a moral message through the contrast of right and wrong. It begins as a straightforward satiric Christian allegory, which hardly needs Wotton's interpretive insertions to make sense. As Brian McCrea observes, "No

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<sup>69</sup> Clive Probyn, "Swift and the Reader's Role," in *The Art of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Clive T. Probyn (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1978): 7.

<sup>70</sup> Connery, "Persona as Pretender," 173.

one has claimed that the religious allegory in Sections II, IV, VI, VIII and XI of the *Tale* is particularly hard to understand (Peter equals Roman Catholicism, Jack equals religious dissent as practiced by English Calvinists, Martin equals legitimate Protestant reformation and vindicates Anglicanism).<sup>71</sup> The satiric purpose is equally clear: the vices of the Catholic Church are compounded by Protestant enthusiasm, leaving only the Anglican tradition—flawed but on its way to redemption—in a state of legitimacy. As Richard Nash notes, “the allegorical mode of the parable encourages the reader’s submission to the text...the *Tale* itself remains essentially closed to differing interpretations.”<sup>72</sup> This point is emphasized within the Allegory itself; the brothers’ willful misreading of the Father’s will—the gospel that provides clear direction for the care of the coat of Christian doctrine—leads not to authoritative interpretive power but rather to madness. The Will of the Allegorical Father is the will of the Father Satirist, who provides prescriptions of right and wrong and clear consequences for disobedience (equating bread with roast and sleeping in a kennel, at the very least).<sup>73</sup>

It is precisely at this moment, however, when readers submit to the will of the text—to the will of the Father Satirist who claims to dispense authoritative moral wisdom—that the satire begins to unravel. The clear-cut narrative, which has progressed in an orderly fashion in Sections II, IV, and VI, with Peter mad with power, Jack simply

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<sup>71</sup> Brian McCrea, “The Canon and the Eighteenth Century: A Modest Proposal and a Tale of Two Tubs,” *Modern Language Studies*, 18, no. 1 Making and Rethinking the Canon: The Eighteenth Century (Winter 1998): 60.

<sup>72</sup> Richard Nash, “Entrapment and Ironic Modes in *Tale of a Tub*,” *Eighteenth Century Studies* 24, no. 4 (Summer 1991): 417-418.

<sup>73</sup> Connery, “Persona as Pretender,” 174.

mad, and Martin ripping out embroidery, comes to a grinding halt when the allegory pauses to give a tortured digression on the Aeolists (only tangentially referred to as Jack's particular religious doctrine), a trip to Bedlam, and an orphaned Preface in Sections VIII, IX, and X, respectively. It only re-surfaces in the penultimate section when the Tale Teller literally finds his way back, apologetically explaining, "After so wide a Compass as I have wandred, I do now gladly overtake, and close in with my Subject"—and then proceeding to another pointless digression (188). After finding his way back, however, the Tale Teller cannot "close in" with his subject in any meaningful way, because somewhere in his travels he has had the "unhappiness in losing, or mislaying among my Papers the remaining Part of these Memoirs" (203-204). Rather than continuing the allegory to provide a virtue—Martin's apparent reformation and the legitimacy of the Anglican church—the satirist is left to speculate on what might have been:

There was a full Account, how *Peter* got a *Protection* out of the *King's-Bench*, and of a Reconcilement between *Jack* and Him, upon a Design they had a certain rainy Night, to trepan Brother *Martin* into a *Spunging-house*, and there strip him to the Skin. How *Martin*, with much ado, shew'd them both a fair pair of Heels. How a *new Warrant* came out against *Peter*: upon which, how *Jack* left him in the lurch, stole his *Protection*, and made use of it himself. How *Jack's* Tatters came into Fashion in Court and City; How *he* got upon a great Horse, and eat Custard (204-205).

He concludes, "but the Particulars of all these, with several others, which have now slid out of my Memory, are lost beyond all Hopes of Recovery. For which Misfortune, leaving my Readers to condole with each other, as far as they shall find it to agree with their several Constitutions" (205). "Closing in" on the meaning of this religious satire will never be an option. In creating a satire that purports to have some interpretable meaning and falls instead into oblivion, Swift exposes the poverty of traditional

reformatory satire. In the world of the *Tale*, submitting to the will of the Father Satirist leads not to any singular unified meaning, an authoritative depiction of right and wrong, but rather to meaning that is interminably deferred, lost beyond all hope. Readers are left alone in an interpretive wilderness—or a morass of lost papers—to determine what, if any, moral conclusions can be drawn from trepanning, a Spunging-house, and a custard.

Having written a “traditional” satire to reveal the inability of the form to adequately represent a coherent system of signification, Swift uses the Digressions within the *Tale* to reveal this paucity in satire as a genre. Like the Allegory of the Coats, the Digressions serve a very straightforward purpose: to satirize all the flaws in bad modern writing;<sup>74</sup> as a parody of this writing, it is also an ostensible paean to those Ancient writers whose works are clear, precise, and most importantly, understandable. Again and again the Tale Teller returns to what must be interpreted as an ironic discussion of the superiority of the moderns when compared to their ancient predecessors. The Digression Concerning Criticks, a send-up of modern criticism, exposes the “weak sides of the Ancients” (96); the Digression in the modern Kind considers “how exceedingly our Illustrious moderns have eclipsed the weak glimmering Lights of the Antients” (124) and the Digression on Madness reduces great achievements by the ancients to little more than modern “phrenzy” (166). Eventually, the Digressions overtake the “Tale” proper, overwhelming the well-behaved allegory with its Modern disorder, allegedly critiquing

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<sup>74</sup> In *Digressive Voices*, Cotterill focuses on Swift’s parody of Dryden’s digressions in the “Discourse,” arguing that Swift’s own digressions in the *Tale* “stylize the voice of digression as modern voice of permanent dislocation and dispossession,” 304.

the inability of Modern writers to sustain a coherent thought, let alone a coherent sentence.

Like all of Swift's inhabitations in the *Tale*, however, this straight-forward approach is simply the surface rhetoric; in the act of sabotaging Dryden's concept of Modern writing, Swift in effect creates the template by which "modern" writing can be achieved. According to Rawson, Swift had an "intuitive understanding of [fractured] 'modern' sensibility and its subsequent literary production,"<sup>75</sup> and the Digressions do less to sway writers toward following ancient forms than to provide a blueprint for a truly modern literature. By inhabiting bad literature, Swift intends the reader to acknowledge how bad it really is, particularly in comparison to classical ideals. However, this inhabitation is often so well done (as in the earlier *A Meditation upon a Broomstick*),<sup>76</sup> that the parody ends up affirming the intent of the original author. In the Digressions, bad literature is shown as something to avoid, but the Digressions are also bad literature done to the heights of badness.<sup>77</sup> As Traugott argues, "Parody imperceptibly seems to pass into positive statement of what really goes on in the world, and goes on world without end."<sup>78</sup> In inhabiting the texts he wishes to destroy, Swift gives them new life in his own text and

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<sup>75</sup> Rawson, "Character of Swift's Satire," 20.

<sup>76</sup> In the Introduction to the Prose Works, Davis recounts Swift's presentation of *The Meditation on a Broomstick* as a parody of the Hon. Robert Boyle's *Meditations* during a visit to the Berkeleys in 1703. Davis notes, "Not sharing [Lady Berkeley's] enthusiasm for the book, Swift on one occasion substituted this meditation of his own, [and], with an inflexible gravity of countenance, proceeded to read [it], in the same solemn tone which he has used in delivering the former," xvii. Lady Berkeley was entirely taken in by this parody and did not recognize the joke until she opened the book and found the Meditation written by Swift.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Judith C. Mueller, "A Tale of a Tub and Early Prose," in *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Swift*, ed. Christopher Fox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 202-15.

<sup>78</sup> Traugott, "A Tale of a Tub," 89.

eventually transforms them—not into an equally bad imitation of classical ideals, but into a positive example for future generations of authors. By turning examples of execrable writing into a masterpiece, he actually creates the conditions for which this bad writing becomes not only accepted, but lauded.<sup>79</sup>

As the Digressions paradoxically create a vision for future generations of authors, the Digression on Madness establishes the conditions that make modern satire possible. Swift begins this digression by exposing the greatest of ancient achievements in Love, Civilization, Philosophy, and Religion to their crudest motivations: that of a “*Bully* [who breaks] the Windows of a Whore who has jilted him” (165). Having handily accomplished this, Swift turns to Dryden’s apotheosis of classical ideals in satire. In its treatment of surface and depth, credulity versus curiosity, the Digression implicitly returns to Dryden’s modern conventions built on classical tradition that insists upon a satire that must be authoritative, moral, and instructive; in doing so, he exposes what Everett Zimmerman has called “the literariness of satire,” the necessity of the genre to define itself as a privileged form with polemical intent in order to exist.<sup>80</sup> In the Digression on Madness, Swift strips away this literary façade, anatomizing it as the Tale

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<sup>79</sup> In *Jonathan Swift and Popular Culture*, Kelly argues this point about Swift’s early work, suggesting that the book containing *Battle of the Books*, *The Mechanical Operation of the Spirit*, and *A Tale of a Tub* allowed Swift to experiment with different styles and identities to see which would be most successful. She notes that *Battle of the Books*, with its focus on the Ancients vs Moderns controversy, “did not inspire the coffee-house talk or pamphlet reactions that signified eighteenth-century celebrity,” 25. Likewise, *The Mechanical Operation of the Spirit*, which laboriously examines the threat of dissenters to the Anglican Church, contained nothing “amusing, amazing, or shocking enough to create a stir or even a flicker of response,” 29. With *A Tale of a Tub*, however, Swift embraced Grub Street culture even while mocking it. Kelly notes, “While most critics believe that Swift condemns his *Tale*-teller, Swift’s subsequent adoption of the *Tale*-teller’s attitudes and identity reveal the opposite: that in the *Tale*-teller he found himself and saw his future as a writer of provocative popular literature,” 29.

<sup>80</sup> Everett Zimmerman, *Swift’s Narrative Satires: Author and Authority* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 28.

Teller anatomizes a beau, flaying the idea that satire can effect any sort of moral change as “a perpetual Possession of being well Deceived” (171). As Griffin has observed, “the inquiry into the merits (and dangers) of curiosity and credulity in the *Tale* is one instance of a recurrent inquiry (not just occasional misgivings) throughout Swift’s work into the nature of satire itself, its norms and efficacy.”<sup>81</sup> In his analysis of the Digression on Madness, Griffin continues:

Should we prefer “Curiosity” or “Credulity”? The former ... corresponds to that urge in the satirist to unmask, to anatomize, to expose the unpalatable truth.... The latter corresponds to that need in us to avert our eyes, to avoid dwelling on civilization’s dirty secrets...to accept less than the ideal. Characteristically, Swift does not settle the debate but requires that we weigh both the gains and costs of either “credulity” or “curiosity.” You cannot have it both ways; choose either one and you lose.<sup>82</sup>

In Swift’s inhabitation of satire, credulity—not accepting less than the ideal—is firmly entwined with Dryden’s theory of the ideal satire—the sublime execution that allows victims to die sweetly. Satirists who follow Dryden’s theory may have a “peaceful Possession of the Mind” (173) because, having constructed a noble art that is removed from “too immediate correspondence with life,” they believe only in the surface of satire’s claims: that it has a generic and moral imperative to provide an authoritative account of vice and virtue. Satiric curiosity, however, demolishes this “peace” because it “enters into the Depth of things and then comes gravely back with Information and Discoveries, that in the inside they are all good for nothing” (173).

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<sup>81</sup> Griffin, *Satire*, 96.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 48-49.

For Swift, the information and discoveries that satire makes are not the result of satiric distance, but the consequence of thorough understanding—the inhabitation of the satiric subject. Unlike Dryden, who claims that the satirist is a physician who can stand on the outside of a subject and provide a diagnosis and remedy, Swift recognizes that the satirist is an anatomist, and that satiric inhabitation is both futile and fatal, as every attempt to uncover the diseases of vice only uncovers more corruption and leads not to change, but to death. In the Digression on Madness, satire finally realizes a state of entropy. Cotterill argues that, in this Digression, “Swift assails the degenerate ‘carcass of Humane Nature’ by way of anatomy, and his target is the presumption of modern critics and the natural philosophers whose ambition is to anatomize nature of texts and uncover the invisible mechanical principles of design.”<sup>83</sup> Although Swift specifically discusses the new sciences and philosophies in this context, this Digression is also a metaphor for satire and its supposed ability to uncover human vice in order to reform it. Swift’s view on the progress of all these things is noted in a passage worth quoting in its entirety:

In most Corporeal Beings, which have fallen under my Cognizance, the *Outside* hath been infinitely preferable to the *In*: Whereof I have been farther convinced from some late experiments. Last Week I saw a Woman *flay’d* and you will hardly believe, how much it altered her Person for the worse. Yesterday I ordered the Carcass of a *Beau* to be stript in my Presence; when we were all amazed to find so many unsuspected Faults under one Suit of Cloaths: Then I laid open his *Brain*, his *Heart*, and his *Spleen*; But, I plainly perceived at every Operation, that the farther we proceeded, we found the Defects increase upon us in Number and Bulk: from all which, I justly formed this Conclusion to myself; That whatever Philosopher or projector can found out an Art to sodder and patch up the Flaws and Imperfections of Nature, will deserve much better of Mankind, and teach us a more useful Science, than that so much in present Esteem, of widening and exposing them (like him who held Anatomy to be the ultimate End of Physick). And he, whose Fortunes and Dispositions have placed him in a convenient Station

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<sup>83</sup> Cotterill, 299.



to enjoy the Fruits of this noble Art; He that can with *Epicurus* content his Ideas with the *Films* and *Images* that fly off upon his Senses from the *Superficies* of Things; Such a Man truly wise, creams off Nature, leaving the Sower and the Dregs, for Philosophy and reason to lap up. This is the sublime and refined point of felicity, called, the *Possession of being well deceived*; The Serene Peaceful State of being a Fool among Knaves. (173-174)

According to Swift, believing in the efficacy of satire based on classical norms, like believing in the progressive power of the new sciences, makes one a fool. Far from equating satire with human progress, this passage “reduces the analytical vision of the moderns [whether in science or literary production] to intellectual violence ... that deforms the visible body and kills the invisible life.”<sup>84</sup> To think that either science or satire can function as an “Art to sodder and patch up the Flaws and Imperfections of nature” after stripping, flaying and torturing its subjects to death means nothing except that one truly is in the serene and peaceful possession of being well deceived.<sup>85</sup> To believe Swift, however—to believe in the curiosity of satire—makes one no less culpable; in fact, this knowledge earns one a worse appellation: that of a knave. As Denis Donoghue has noted, “If, reading the *Tale*, you are not happy with the serene and peaceful possession of being well deceived, you may choose to be undeceived, with no greater boon to happiness.”<sup>86</sup> Knowledge of the satiric subject, having the satiric authority to strip apart the façade of human existence—to flay human nature—to its

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<sup>84</sup>Cotterill, 299.

<sup>85</sup> Craven concurs, noting, “The *Tale* has made a deluded fool ... of every modern reader, to the extent that the reader subscribes to the modern rational information synthesis. ... If one takes the modern world seriously on these terms, Swift recommends that true happiness for fools ... consists in staying at the information surface of things within the comforting purviews of credulity and self-deception. The rational pursuit of serene happiness “is a *perpetual Possession of being well Deceived*” 8.

<sup>86</sup> Denis Donoghue, *The Practice of Reading* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 168.

depths, is ultimately meaningless, because nothing can be done to change it, and it can only be altered for the worse. As such, it is once again without irony that Swift can claim that he is “trying an Experiment...which is to *write upon Nothing*” (208). With this, Dryden’s theory of clean and effective satire has been inhabited, the deep structure of his work has been thoroughly sabotaged, and his authority has been exposed as the void it has always been; in its place, Swift has filled it with the *Tale*.

In undermining Dryden’s theory of satire, however, Swift accomplishes two things. First, he achieves Dryden’s most cherished goal for his work: to create art. Elliott has argued that “satire becomes art and, thus, worthy of critical analysis, exactly at the moment when the belief in its efficacy is extinguished....satire transforms itself into art when the belief in its power to hurt has dissipated.”<sup>87</sup> Unlike Dryden, Swift recognizes that art cannot be removed from nature; in fact, as Peter Conrad has noted, Swift’s deconstruction of satire in the *Tale* acknowledges that “art does not outlast nature; like life, literature is a morbid phenomenon,” while human nature is eternal and unchanging.<sup>88</sup> Dryden’s pretensions to link satire and the sacred by achieving “the very *bottom* of all the *Sublime*” (44), as Swift mockingly calls it, ultimately come to nothing, and only resistance to this transcendence, the recognition that satire has no power at all—neither to hurt nor to heal—can lead to artistic greatness.

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<sup>87</sup> Robert Elliott, *The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, Art*. Paraphrased in Connery and Combe, “Theorizing Satire: A Retrospective and Introduction,” in *Theorizing Satire: Essays in Literary Criticism* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1995), 5.

<sup>88</sup> Peter Conrad, *Cassell’s History of English Literature* (London: Cassell, 2003), 320.

More significantly, however, Swift's demolition of satiric authority sows the seeds for a truly modern satire. By removing the purpose of satire and silencing the voice of the Father Satirist, Swift forces his readers to recognize multivalent readings of a work, which can have no singular unitary meaning because it has no singular voice guiding the interpretation. Swift may leave his readers with nothing but "to condole with each other, as far as they shall find it to agree with their several Constitutions," but this interpretive abyss is not empty. As Probyn argued earlier, "the impossibility of any authoritative definition of intent" is not entirely destructive, but rather allows texts to "re-form into new shapes with new significations," and meaning can be constructed through what Connery calls "provisional determinacy," which stems from the loss of the voice of the Father Satirist.<sup>89</sup> He argues, "the text itself represents to us an indeterminacy and in so doing offers us the opportunity either to stabilize its meaning through recourse to the collective construction of an authorizing voice or to lament its indeterminacy."<sup>90</sup> Readers who wish to derive meaning from any text, then, must condole with each other in an interpretive community, a "constitutional settlement of meaning" that allows for individual interpretations to be negotiated.<sup>91</sup>

In forcing readers to negotiate such meaning, Swift does something with satire that even he may not have recognized. Michael Suarez, Jr., has argued that Swift deliberately "refuses to offer any overarching textual authority in his satires," not to foil Dryden's claims to authority, but "because such a presence would forestall the kind of

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<sup>89</sup> Connery, "Persona as Pretender," 177

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980).

moral discrimination that these writings are meant to set in motion.”<sup>92</sup> In deconstructing Dryden’s satiric authority—indeed the authority of any work to claim the power of moral discrimination for every person, Swift creates a satire that is more modern than even he might recognize, as this insistence on personal moral discrimination leads to the discernment of individuality in the novel, a genre in which women could express their own satiric concerns. Using Swift’s technique of inhabitation, women prose writers of the eighteenth century, women such as Delarivier Manley, Charlotte Lennox, and Elizabeth Inchbald conducted experiments with satiric theme, form, and narrative point of view within the developing novel form. In so doing, they participated in the integration of satire and the novel, a process that came to fruition in the works of Jane Austen.

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<sup>92</sup> Michael F. Suarez, “Swift’s satire and parody,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Swift* ed. Christopher Fox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 116.

### Chapter Three

#### **“Amazons of the Pen”: Women Writers, the Novel, and the Transformation of Satire**

In the “Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire,” John Dryden attempted to lay down maxims that would fix the uncertain parameters of satire and generate clear boundaries for its creation, purpose, and moral appropriateness—boundaries that excluded anyone who was not an authoritative and morally upstanding figure from executing the “sweetest” of blows with a literary attack that was both deadly and artistic. In *A Tale of a Tub*, Jonathan Swift registered his contempt for this project, demonstrating the artificiality of these boundaries—indeed negating the idea of boundaries altogether—and subverting each of Dryden’s proscriptions through the creation of a satire that was chaotic, messy, morally ambiguous, ultimately pointless, and delivered by a narrator who is deficient in moral authority. Although most male authors of the eighteenth century continued to apply Dryden’s theory to their own productions of satire in both verse and prose, Swift’s critique of Dryden paved the way for one group of authors traditionally denied access to the formation of satiric literature: women. Women lacked any classical education through which to obtain the sanctioned knowledge to write satires based on pure Horatian or Juvenalian forms, were barred by their gender from having any sort of moral authority to protest publically their concerns about political or social issues, and were most commonly linked to satire as an object of vice or folly that participates in rather than stands apart from the corruption of the world around them. In spite of these limitations, however, women who wrote satiric narrative—Amazons of the

pen, as Samuel Johnson called them, perhaps unwittingly carrying on the tradition of the satirist as a warrior<sup>1</sup>—embraced Swift’s critique of satiric tradition and merged it with the tradition of the novel, thus fundamentally changing the nature of satiric writing in eighteenth-century Britain. As the most prolific authors of novelistic satire, these Amazons of the pen, including Delarivier Manley, Charlotte Lennox, and Elizabeth Inchbald,<sup>2</sup> transformed satire from the inflexible genre proscribed by Dryden and his followers into a more resilient mode that was amenable to an increasingly diversified

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Johnson, [The Itch of Writing Universal], *The Adventurer*, 115, December 11, 1753, in *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson*, Vol II, *The Idler and The Adventurer* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963). Johnson notes: “In former times, the pen, like the sword, was considered as consigned by nature to the hands of men; the ladies contented themselves with private virtues and domestic excellence, and a female writer, like a female warrior, was considered as a kind of excentric [sic] being, that deviated, however illustriously, from her due sphere of motion, and was, therefore, rather to be gazed at with wonder, than countenanced by imitation. But as in the times past are said to have been a nation of Amazons, who drew the bow and wielded the battle-axe, formed encampments and wasted nations, the revolution of years has now produced a generation of Amazons of the pen, who with the spirit of their predecessors have set masculine tyranny at defiance, asserted their claim to the regions of science, and seem resolved to contest the usurpations of virility,” 457. Although Johnson’s essay is not particularly focused on women who write satire (but on the pretensions of many people who write, whether or not they have talent), the metaphor of a violent Amazon who usurps what can only be seen as male virility to wield satiric power seems apt when viewed through the lens of classic metaphors of satire as a weapon.

<sup>2</sup> Discussion of novelistic satire written in the eighteenth century is usually limited to that written by men, particularly Henry Fielding, Tobias Smollet, and Laurence Sterne. For example, see Ronald Paulson, *Satire and the Novel in the Eighteenth-Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), and G. S. Rousseau, “From Swift to Smollett: The Satirical Tradition in Prose Narrative,” in *Columbia History of the British Novel*, ed. John Richetti, John Bender, Deirdre David, and Michael Seidel (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 127-153. However, many women wrote novelistic satires in this period. In *Satire, History, Novel: Narrative Forms, 1665-1815* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003), Frank Palmeri notes that satire written by men faded after the early development of the public sphere in Britain, but that women had “noticeable recourse to narrative satire ... because the political public sphere was not open to them,” 32. In his discussion of women satiric novelists, he counts, other than Manley, Lennox, and Inchbald, Eliza Haywood (*Eovaai* in 1736), Sarah Fielding (*Adventures of David Simple* in 1744 and *Volume the Last* in 1753), Fanny Burney (*Evelina* in 1778), and Elizabeth Hamilton (*Memoirs of the Modern Philosophers* in 1800). Another writer excluded from this list, but who should be included as a writer of novelistic satire, is Mary Davys, whose satiric novel *Familiar Letters Betwixt a Gentleman and a Lady* (1725) investigates the legitimacy of the patriarchal social order. Even earlier, both Margaret Cavendish and Aphra Behn wrote narratives with elements of satire, such as *The Blazing World* and *Love Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister*, respectively. Time and space prevent discussion of all of these authors. I have chosen to focus on Manley, Lennox, and Inchbald because each had a personal or literary relationship with Swift, Dryden, or both.

audience and to adaptation by future writers, most notably Jane Austen, who perfected the form in the nineteenth century.

The links between the decline of satire in verse and narrative and the corresponding “rise of the novel” have been well examined. Ronald Paulson’s *Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England* chronicles the evolution of satire into the novel of sentiment, while in *Post-Augustan Satire: Charles Churchill and Satirical Poetry, 1750-1800*, Thomas Lockwood argues that changing conceptions of poetry after 1750, and the death of Pope, precluded satirists from writing successful satiric poetry.<sup>3</sup> J. Paul Hunter, in *Before Novels*, suggests that, while satire may not lead directly to the novel, the novel succeeded largely because “the programs of Augustan satire failed.”<sup>4</sup> Most recently, Frank Palmeri has argued in *Satire, History, Novel* that the development of the public sphere eliminated the need for indirect satiric attack and that novelistic forms (particularly the Bildungsroman and the comic realistic novel) appropriated satiric elements as a part of a program of mediation and progress that satire, which emphasizes instability, opposition, and openness, was unable to offer.<sup>5</sup> Although they develop

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<sup>3</sup> Paulson, *Satire and the Novel in the Eighteenth-Century*; Lockwood, *Post-Augustan Satire: Charles Churchill and Satirical Poetry, 1750-1800* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1979). Lockwood asserts that after 1750, the idea of what constitutes poetry moved toward a more limited provenance of “human feeling but not human wit, natural imagery but not artificial, meditative and symbolic modes of expression but not discursive or dialectical,” 172. Satire, with its emphasis on wit, artificiality, and dialectical nature, lay outside this provenance. As Lockwood notes, “The effect...is to give the would-be writer a choice: either to be a poet and not a satirist, or to be a satirist and not a poet—but not both,” 182. See also Palmeri, “The Metamorphoses of Satire in Eighteenth-Century Narrative,” *Comparative Literature*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (Summer, 1996), 237-264. The decline of satire is most commonly discussed in terms of formal verse satire, as in Andrew’s Wilkinson’s “The Decline of English Verse Satire in the Middle of the Eighteenth Century,” *Review of English Studies* 3 (1952), 222-33.

<sup>4</sup> J. Paul Hunter, *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* (New York: WW Norton & Co, 1990), 125.

<sup>5</sup> Palmeri, *Satire: History Novel, passim*.

different theories of how and why the novel gained precedence over satire in the eighteenth century, these critics agree on one thing: satire ultimately declined and the novel ultimately ascended because of the importance of the individual. Whether as a public display of private history, a focus on personal sentiments, or the privileging of particular experience, the novel offers something that satire seemingly does not: a realistic examination of private and domestic concerns, and an acknowledgement of the ability of persons to make moral decisions from within, rather than insisting on the establishment of morality from a higher public authority.<sup>6</sup>

As Hunter has noted, these works became popular because “this subjective writing, whether genuine or fictional, seems to offer a personal yet universal key to reality,”<sup>7</sup> providing provisional validation of readers’ wholly particularized experiences

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<sup>6</sup> Numerous critics have tracked the development of these characteristics in eighteenth-century literature. In *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), Ian Watt describes how literacy and the new “middle class” of readership resulted in the need for “formal realism” in narrative. Lennard J. Davis argues in *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983) that the novel derived from journalism and such nonfictional forms as “parliamentary statutes, newspapers, advertisements, printer’s records, handbills, letters, and so on,” 7. Michael McKeon examines questions of truth and questions of value within the novel as it emerged within public consciousness in *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987, 2002); more recently he details the evolving separation of public and private in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries in, among other things, the emerging novel in *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005). The consideration of “ordinary life” led to the creation of domestic fictions by women, according to Nancy Armstrong in *Desire and Domestic Fiction* (London: Oxford University Press, 1987). Hunter, in *Before Novels*, suggests that the novel developed as a result of changing cultural trends and an expansion of available types of reading material. Jürgen Habermas has argued, in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into Bourgeois Society*, translated by Thomas Burger (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), that the novel was popularized in the eighteenth century because the development of a public sphere encourages forms that explored individual judgment, particularly for men, who were the only participants in this sphere. In *The True Story of the Novel* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996), Margaret Anne Doody charts the development of the novel from Ancient Greece and Rome, including the relationship between the novel and the emerging concept of the individual.

<sup>7</sup> Hunter, “*Gulliver’s Travels* and the Novel,” in *The Genres of Gulliver’s Travels*, ed. Frederick N. Smith (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1990), 66.



and recognizing that these experiences had significance in a broader sociocultural context. As such, these narratives also served to “define the absolute boundaries or limits of reality,” and “by extension, of moral significance.”<sup>8</sup> In their generalization of individual experience, these narratives took on elements more traditionally found in both straightforward religious and didactic texts and in satires, serving to generalize social and cultural norms and moral codes, whether implicitly through an examination of individual behavior or explicitly as Defoe does in his Preface to *Robinson Crusoe*, which claims that “the story is told with modesty, with seriousness, and with a religious application of events to the uses to which wise men always apply them, viz. to the instruction of others by this example.”<sup>9</sup> Clive Probyn notes that these narratives did not always clarify the moral they attempted to teach. They served, instead, to instruct an expanding reading population about appropriate perceptions and behavior in a more secular age that increasingly insisted on individual judgment rather than on an authoritative voice (whether God the Father or the Father Satirist) who dispensed wisdom from on high.<sup>10</sup>

For Swift, these characteristics were anathema, as his inhabitation of Dryden illustrates. As Hunter argues, these elements were all fodder for the *Tale*, as Swift “isolate[d] one quality after another of the modern sensibility and temperament—

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<sup>8</sup> John Richetti, “Introduction,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, ed. John Richetti (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 4.

<sup>9</sup> Daniel Defoe, *The Life & Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner, Volume I*, Shakespeare Head Editions of the Novels and Selected Writings of Daniel Defoe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1927), vii. This insistence on the elements of moral education in the novel becomes more pronounced as the novel itself develops, as both Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding go out of their way in their own works (see, for example, *Pamela* and *Joseph Andrews*, respectively) to explain how moral truth works in each of their novels. For a broader discussion of this phenomenon, see Clive T. Probyn, *English Fiction of the Eighteenth Century, 1700-1789* (London: Longman, 1987).

<sup>10</sup> Probyn, *English Fiction*, 16.

subjectivity, novelty, contemporaneity, interest in individual lives, digressiveness, circumstantiality, the eccentric, and the bizarre.”<sup>11</sup> With its focus on personal interpretation of perceptual experience, the novel investigated questions of authority and morality, not through the voice of the Father Satirist, who imparted moral reformation from a dispassionate distance, but through individual understanding. In Swift’s eyes, the discernment of individuality (the authority of the individual self that comes to characterize the novel) was as offensive to his sentiments as Dryden’s belief in the authority of satire, because it relied on the same flawed premise: that meaning can be constructed in any authoritative manner, whether through the voice of the Father Satirist or the negotiation of individual meaning in novels. For Swift, the belief that individuals are capable of significant and sustainable moral discrimination or that this discrimination can be developed from reading either satire or novels, is absurd. In his interpretation, meaning can never be negotiated with enough certainty to translate into consequential action, whether through a change in behavior or perception and, more simply, because human nature is not capable of change.

Paradoxically, Swift’s parodic inhabitation did not destroy these execrable characteristics, but rather gave them new life. “The recognition that such works as *A Tale of a Tub* ... bestowed on literary modernism legitimized the issue,” Hunter argues, “and the ‘popular culture’ aspects of novelty ... came to exist, ironically, in a canonical literature because the most traditional rivals put them there.”<sup>12</sup> Nowhere is this

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<sup>11</sup> Hunter, *Before Novels*, 108.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 171. Of course, Swift himself was not above using popular literature in his own works, and not always to satirize it. Margaret Doody argues that Swift draws on romance in “Swift and Romance,” in

legitimization more apparent than in the development of the novel, as these characteristics represent what Hunter calls a “comprehensive list of features that found their labyrinthine way into the novel as it emerged in the half century after the *Tale*.”<sup>13</sup> While the *Tale* does not parody the novel precisely because “it is hard to parody something that ha[d] as yet no concrete form, tradition, or definitive example,” it does expose “the cast of mind and set of values that ultimately produced novels.”<sup>14</sup> Although

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*Walking Naboth's Vineyard: New Studies in Swift*, ed. Christopher Fox and Brenda Tooley (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame press, 1995), 98-126. For Swift's use of amatory fiction and secret history, see Melina Alliker Rabb in “The Secret Memoirs of Lemuel Gulliver: Satire, Secrecy and Swift,” *ELH* 73, No. 2 (Summer 2006), 325-354 and “The Secret Life of Satire,” in *Companion to Satire*, ed. Ruben Quintero (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 568-584.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 108. In fact, Gabriel Josipovici has argued that the *Tale* is a parody of the novel before it was invented. *The World and the Book: A Study of Modern Fiction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971), 154. *A Tale of a Tub*, of course, is not the only work in which Swift registered his abhorrence to the interpretive authority of the individual. Many insightful critics have noticed how Swift called into question the large-scale claims of the novel with the publication of *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World* (more commonly known as *Gulliver's Travels*) in 1726. See for example, Clive T. Probyn, “Swift and the Reader's Role,” in *The Art of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Clive T. Probyn (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1978), 7-14; Everett Zimmerman, *Swift's Narrative Satires: Author and Authority* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); Deborah Baker Wyrick, “*Gulliver's Travels* and the Early English Novel,” in *Critical Approaches to Teaching Swift*, ed. Peter J. Schakel (New York: AMS Press, 1992), 132-148; Probyn, “Swift and Typographic Man: Foul Papers, Modern Criticism, and Irish Dissenters,” in *Reading Swift: Papers from the Second Munster Symposium on Jonathan Swift*, ed. Richard H. Rodino and Hermann J. Real (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1993); Claude Rawson, *Satire and Sentiment: 1660-1830: Stress Points in the English Augustan Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Alan D. Chalmers, *Jonathan Swift and the Burden of the Future* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1995); Michael Seidel, “*Gulliver's Travels* and the Contracts of Fiction,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Eighteenth Century Novel*, ed. John Richetti (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 72-89; John Mullan, “Swift, Defoe, and Narrative Forms,” in *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature, 1650-1740*, ed. Steven N. Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 250-275; Seidel, “Satire, Lampoon, Libel, Slander,” in *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature, 1650-1740*, 33-57. Swift's use of novelistic techniques in a satiric manner is described by Rawson in “Gulliver and Others: Reflections on Swift's ‘I’ Narrators in *Swift: The Enigmatic Dean: Festschrift for Hermann Joseph Real*, ed. Rudolf Freiburg, Arno Löffler, and Wolfgang Zach, Volume 12, *Studies in English and Comparative Literature* (Tübingen: Stäbenberg-Verlag, 1998), 231-246; Hunter, “*Gulliver's Travels* and the Later Writings,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Swift*, ed. Christopher Fox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 216-240; and Brean Hammond, “Swift's Reading,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Swift*, 73-86. In *Making the Novel: Fiction and Society in Britain, 1660-1789* (New York: Palgrave, 2006), Hammond and Shaun Regan call *Gulliver's Travels* an anti-novel, “a work of prose fiction that was at least partly designed to summarize novelistic developments and to call a halt to them...though a parasitic system of characterization and narrative ordering,” 74-84. McKeon locates the *Travels* in a dialectic conversation

Swift undoubtedly would have been horrified that his attack on Dryden's theory of satire and other modern systems of thought ultimately opened the floodgates for modern novel writing, his stance toward satire in *A Tale of a Tub* was fortitious for women. Forced by cultural constraints to develop a different kind of satire, one that was apparently feminine, connected to but not wholly inscribed by traditional masculine satiric forms, women who wrote satiric novels embraced Swift as their unlikely champion for three particular reasons. First, as noted earlier, his rejection of Dryden's theory of classical satire created a breach in traditional satiric forms, allowing for more elastic, modern conceptions of the genre to develop. Second, his annihilation of the Father Satirist who dispenses moral wisdom from a morally indefensible distance afforded women, who lacked the ability both to speak publically about important social and political matters and still to retain any reputation for morality and virtue, an unprecedented opportunity to assert their views. Finally, his insistence on satiric inhabitation, on becoming intimately involved with the object attacked, destabilized traditional boundaries between the satirist and the satiric object, and women who wrote satire manipulated this idea to their advantage, forcing readers to "become the thing attacked," both through the act of reading the "feminized" text of the novel and through the subject matter read, most notably the private and domestic relationships between men and women.

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with Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* in *Origins of the English Novel*, 338-356; in their discussion of the development of the novel, most other critics have followed McKeon's example. See, for example, Terry Eagleton, *The English Novel* (Malden, MA; Blackwell, 2005), 22-52.

The lack of recognition that women in the eighteenth-century produced satires stems directly from the persistence of the authenticity of the classical model as the preeminent method for writing good literature. Claudia Thomas Kairoff, for example, notes that Dryden's insistence on a Roman model of satire that distinguished itself from the cruder Satyrs of the Greeks did nothing to help women, as "certainly no lady wished to be associated with satyrs. On the other hand, Horace and Juvenal had censured contemporary rules and cultural practices with an authority few, if any, women dared emulate."<sup>15</sup> Therefore, women who wished to write satire had only classical masculine verse models on which to base their works, making their satirical authority "in some sense borrowed or compromised from the outset."<sup>16</sup> Disqualified by their gender from obtaining the classical education required to write satires that followed orthodox models, women who wished to write satire had to look elsewhere for a literary progenitor.

Compounding this exclusion was the assertion that satires must be written by a person who had the moral, social, or political authority to speak persuasively in protest of vice. Women, then, were segregated from writing satire on two counts. First, as Charles Knight notes, satire is primarily concerned with public issues, and "is not, on the whole, private and domestic," the domain in which women were granted influence, if granted any influence at all.<sup>17</sup> "Thus," he notes, "in societies in which women are confined to the private sphere and in which writing of any sort by women is considered unusual or

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<sup>15</sup> Claudia Thomas Kairoff, "Gendering Satire: From Behn to Burney," in *A Companion to Satire*, ed. Ruben Quintero (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 277.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Charles A. Knight, *The Literature of Satire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 7

inappropriate, women's writing of satire seems virtually unthinkable."<sup>18</sup> Not only is it unusual for women to write satire; it cannot even be conceived. Second, in order to speak at all, one must be able to speak with a position of moral authority: one must act virtuously (or be perceived as virtuous) in order to command virtuous behavior. Because satire is such a transgressive genre, women who asserted their own ability to critique vice and folly were often seen as singularly lacking in virtue, notorious "whores" like Aphra Behn and Delarivier Manley.<sup>19</sup> The morality of these women is called into question, because the very act of public speaking by women is considered immoral in itself.

This claim dovetails with one of the oldest and most cherished traditions of satiric writing: that of woman as satiric object. From the satires of Juvenal through the misogynist pamphlets of such men as John Swetnam and Robert Gould and the writings of Pope and Swift, women have been considered, not as satirists, but as objects of satire. As Jayne Lewis notes, "the female satirist is not a persona meticulously constructed by a woman who wants to diagnose and redress a particularly virulent social disease [as is so often the case with male satirists]. On the contrary, she is regarded as a symptom of that disease.... Women ... [are] properly the object or bull's eye of written satire, never its subjective 'I'."<sup>20</sup> Nancy Walker has argued that "even when the ... male humourist

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 37. See, for example, Felicity Nussbaum, *The Brink of All We Hate: English Satires on Women 1660-1750* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984) and Ellen Pollak, *The Poetics of Sexual Myth: Gender and Ideology in the Verse of Swift and Pope* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985). Lewis notes that satiric attacks on women are particularly popular in the seventeenth century, noting works such as John Swetnam's *Arraignement of Lewd, Idle, Froward and Unconstant Women, or the Vanity of them, Chose You Whether* (1615) and *Poor Robin's True Character of a Scold, or the Shrew's Looking Glass* (1678). A particularly virulent attack can be found in Robert Gould's 1682 *Love given o're: or, A satyr*

adopts for his own purposes the stance of the outsider ... he writes with the authority of the insider, the person who is potentially in a position to change what he finds wrong, whether it is the law or the cut of a dinner jacket,”<sup>21</sup> while women are consistently barred from this position of authority. As the butt of satire throughout the ages, women are rarely in a position to change what they find wrong.

Women’s place as the satiric Other is also found in one of the main goals of satire. As stated earlier, Frederick Bogel argues that the principle feature of satire is not attack, moral judgment or behavior change: rather, its goal is to “define the satiric object as different” through boundary policing which works to differentiate insufficiently distinguished figures: right and wrong, for instance, or good and evil, or even men and women.<sup>22</sup> In using the novel as a satiric mode, however, women are actually working to subvert that difference. Rather than defining the satiric object as “different” or “other,” women’s satire provides a relational examination of political and social problems, and their novels acknowledge the “undifferentiated” nature of human relationships, the struggle for identity.

If the novel is an exploration of the structures of individual identity, then satiric novels by women are further exploratory, because these works, with their roots in

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*against the pride, lust, and inconstancy, &c. of woman*, which characterizes women as “sluices gaping for a multitude,” in *Satires on women: Love given o’re / Robert Gould, (1682). The female advocate / Sarah Fige, (1687). The folly of love / Richard Ames, (1691)* (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, 1976).

<sup>21</sup> Nancy Walker, *A Very Serious Thing: Women’s Humor and American Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 11.

<sup>22</sup> Frederick V. Bogel, *The Difference Satire Makes: Rhetoric and Reading from Jonson to Byron* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 41.

romance, letters, and scandal chronicle, do what traditional satire historically does not: place women as the subjects and center of the narrative. “In novels where the female voice is privileged,” notes Joan Douglas Peters, “female narration is meant to be read as the preferred narration and analyzed seriously ... they have authority in their texts.”<sup>23</sup> For Peters, “women’s narratives,” whether written in first or third person, can be written by either men or women to undermine patriarchal systems. In fact, Peters argues, “writers who privilege women’s narratives are asserting that a women’s style of thinking and speaking is the most effective for conveying experience and for revealing the processes of interpreting experience that define the novel as genre.”<sup>24</sup> In their satirical novels, women writers also are asserting that their style of thinking and speaking is significant for the production of satire.

In the novel, a genre which “advocate[s] the exercise of authority in invisible, private economies of writing and knowledge rather than acts of public utterance,” women found a form which allowed them to develop a feminine satiric vision that could encompass their preferred subject matter, the needs of their audiences, and their own sense of human nature.<sup>25</sup> Although novels eventually had a reputation as dangerous entertainment, were increasingly identified (as the century progressed) as a form inferior to other genres, and were relegated to the private and domestic realm, the genre became “identified with an explicitly female authority ... extending opportunities for a liberty of

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<sup>23</sup> Joan Douglas Peters, *Feminist Metafiction and the Evolution of the British Novel* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002), 20.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ros Ballaster, “Women and the Rise of the Novel: Sexual Prescripts,” in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1700-1800*, ed. Vivien Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 202.



speech often denied elsewhere in eighteenth-century culture.”<sup>26</sup> Using the cover of “it’s only a novel,” women accommodated the apparent limits of the form and turned them into assets, making the feminized, interiorized, private, and domestic sphere the one most suitable for them to comment on political, literary, and social concerns.

In this accommodation, Manley, Lennox, and Inchbald each turn to Swift as a mentor. The texts written by these women vary widely in their themes and context: Manley’s *Secret Memoirs and Manners of several Persons of Quality, of both Sexes. From the New Atalantis, an Island on the Mediteranean. Written Originally in Italian* (1709) is a satiric scandal chronicle designed to expose the vices of the Whig government. Lennox’s *The Female Quixote* (1752) is a realistic novel ostensibly intended to ridicule the reading of fantastic romances by young women. Inchbald’s *Nature and Art* (1796) is a straightforward indictment of the injustices wrought by late eighteenth-century English society. For all their differences, however, these texts are similar in their use of the process of satiric inhabitation outlined by Swift to reconcile the emerging tradition of the feminine novel and the masculine tradition of satire. This process allows each author to posit the private and domestic spheres (a place of limited authority) as the center of their works, to examine their complicated relationship to “women’s literature,” whether scandal fiction, romantic fiction, or sentimental fiction, and to create strong female characters (whether as narrators or main characters) to define a moral center for their works. Although they fail to integrate fully the generic demands of the novel with

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 214. See also Margaret Doody, *The True Story of the Novel*, 214-293. The idea of novel reading as dangerous for young women is ubiquitous in eighteenth-century criticism; for example, see Jan Fergus, “Women Readers: A Case Study,” in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1700-1800*, ed. Vivien Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 155-176, as well as Ballaster and Doody, above.

those of satire as conceived and written by men, these women undertake important experiments that will be implemented by Jane Austen in a full assimilation of satire and novel.

Delarivier Manley: *The New Atalantis*

Manley's relationship with Swift was both personal and professional. Both served as Tory propagandists under Robert Harley, and Manley took over the editorship of the *Examiner* for Swift.<sup>27</sup> Both had similar contempt for the Whig Junto, and both wrote extraordinarily popular works that helped to bring down the Whig government: Manley wrote *The New Atalantis* in 1709,<sup>28</sup> and Swift followed with the more straight-forward propaganda piece *The Conduct of the Allies* in 1711. Modern critics, however, have observed that the two have more in common than political views. Patricia Köster, one of Manley's early twentieth-century editors, has argued that Manley's style has much in common with Swift's in terms of grammatical patterns.<sup>29</sup> Although Manley is most well known for her contribution to the development of the novel through her use of amatory fiction in such works *The New Atalantis*, *Memoirs of Europe* (1710), and *Court Intrigues*

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<sup>27</sup> Manley's relationship with Swift has been noted by such critics as Melinda Alliker Rabb, "The Manl(e)y Style: Delariviere Manley and Jonathan Swift," in *Pope, Swift, and Women Writers*, ed. Donald C. Mell (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996), 125-153; Carole Fabricant, "The Shared Worlds of Manley and Swift," in *Pope, Swift, and Women Writers*, 154-178; Ruth Herman, *The Business of a Woman: The Political Writings of Delarivier Manley* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003); and Louise Barnett, *Jonathan Swift in the Company of Women* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 160-161.

<sup>28</sup> For a more extensive discussion of Manley as a political satirist, generally, see Gwendolyn Needham, "Mary de la Rivière Manley, Tory Defender," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 12 (1948-49), 255-89, and Herman, *Business of a Woman*. Paulson, in *Satire and the Novel in the Eighteenth Century*, states that Manley "makes a great pretense, if nothing else, of writing satire," noting that her work is "an elaborate facsimile of formal verse satire," but he balks at the suggestion that she is a satirist, 222.

<sup>29</sup> Patricia Köster and Louis T. Milic, "Words and Numbers: A Quantitative Approach to Swift and some Understrappers," in *Computers and the Humanities* 4, no. 5 (May 1970): 301, *et passim*.

(1711),<sup>30</sup> such critics as Ros Ballaster and Melinda Alliker Rabb have noted the correspondences between Swift's satire, most particularly *A Tale of a Tub*, and Manley's *The New Atalantis*.<sup>31</sup> Both works share a similar concern for the corruption of the human body, the ability of people to achieve happiness only through self-deception, and skepticism about the project of the New Sciences and New Philosophies.<sup>32</sup> Both works also are related in their extratextual matters. These include framing devices that "remind us frequently that the moral is always in excess of the story, and the story of the moral,"<sup>33</sup> keys that are both factual and fantastic, and seemingly endless digressions that end with characters yawning in boredom rather than learning morality.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Most recent histories of the novel now discuss Manley's relationship to the development of the form, placing her with Aphra Behn and Eliza Haywood as a practitioner of amatory fiction. Richetti, *Popular Fiction Before Richardson: Narrative Patterns, 1700-1739* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 119-67; Dale Spender, *Mothers of the Novel: 100 Good Women Writers Before Jane Austen* (London: Pandora Press, 1986); Hunter, *Before Novels*; Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1820* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 88-144; William B. Warner, *Licensing Entertainment: The Elevation of Novel Reading in Britain, 1684-1750* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Richetti, *The English Novel in History 1700-1780* (London: Routledge, 1999), 18-51. Ros Ballaster's work centers on Manley's relationship with the novel, for example, in "Seizing the Means of Seduction: Fiction and Feminine Identity in Aphra Behn and Delarivier Manley," in *Women, Writing, History: 1640-1740*, ed. Isobel Grundy and Susan Wiseman (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 93-108; and in *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684-1740* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992).

<sup>31</sup> For general correspondences between *The New Atalantis* and *A Tale of a Tub*, see Ballaster, "Manl(e)y Forms: Sex and the Female Satirist," in *Women, Texts, and Histories, 1575-1760*, ed. Clare Brandt and Diane Purkiss (London: Routledge, 1992), 217-241. and Rabb, "The Manl(e)y Style."

<sup>32</sup> Although they do not directly compare Swift and Manley, Janet Todd in *The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing and Fiction, 1660-1800* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 90, Herman, in *Business of a Woman*, 76, and Nicola Parsons, "Secrecy and Enlightenment: Delarivier Manley's *New Atalantis*," in *Libertine Enlightenment: Sex, Liberty and License in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Peter Cryle and Lisa O'Connell (New York: Palgrave, 2004), 146-160, consider Manley's engagement with Francis Bacon's work *The New Atlantis* (1623) as a criticism of empiricism and utility, one of Swift's topics-of-choice in the *Tale*.

<sup>33</sup> Gallagher, 127.

<sup>34</sup> Discussion of extra-textual uses of keys in Manley and Swift can be found in Gallagher, *Nobody's Story*, which suggests that keys "continue to defer...a simple binary opposition between fictional and real names," 125; Parsons, where the keys refer not to "extra-textual reality," but to "extra-textual fiction," 155; and

What most critics have not discerned, however, are the ways in which Swift's inhabitation of Dryden's theory of satire, which ultimately leads to an interrogation of the satiric form itself, inform Manley's own satiric vision. Like Swift, Manley bases her own theory of satire on Dryden's "Discourse," and she rejects Dryden's insistence on a neat, orderly, and authoritative form.<sup>35</sup> Like Swift, she uses a process of inhabitation to break down barriers between satiric narrators and objects, and she implicates herself in her satire. She also interrogates the form in which she writes: just as Swift wrote a supremely successful satire while undermining every tradition of the genre, Manley exposes the follies and dangers of writing and reading romances and amatory fiction, even while creating one of the most well-known works in the genre. Finally, like Swift, Manley comes to disheartening conclusions about the effectiveness of satire. Swift's *Tale* ends in nothingness, a rejection of the authority of the Father Satirist to claim moral discrimination for every person, thereby opening avenues for personal moral discrimination through individual interpretation. In investigating these avenues, Manley ultimately rejects the idea that individual interpretation can lead to moral discrimination or virtuous behavior; in fact, it leads only to self-deception, dishonor, and death,

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Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Novel Beginnings: Experiments in Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), in which the keys helped Manley "exploit her work's connection with actuality.... By her promulgation of a key, she claimed [literal truth] what she denied [when claiming her work was fiction]," 29. Gallagher also considers the digressiveness both Manley's and Swift's works, 127-129, and the extra-textuality of the moral of both *The New Atalantis* and the *Tale*, 127.

<sup>35</sup> Both Ballaster and Rabb have noted Manley's relationship with Dryden's work. In "Manl(e)y Forms," Ballaster suggests that Manley uses Dryden's essay as a model for her own satiric work, linking *The New Atalantis* to Dryden's "Discourse" through a discussion of Varronian satire—a form that Dryden ultimately rejects. In her discussion of Manley's satiric plays, "Angry Beauties: (Wo)Manley Satire and the Stage," in *Cutting Edges: Postmodern Critical Essays on Eighteenth Century Satire*, Tennessee Studies in Literature, Volume 37, ed. James E. Gill (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), Rabb is more emphatic that Manley is working against Dryden.

particularly for women. For all these similarities, however, Manley achieves something quite unique with her work. Through her use of female narrators, she provides an opportunity for women to enter the realm of satire through an examination of the inner workings of individuals whose only goal is self-interest. These characteristics directly associate *The New Atalantis* with the early novelization of satiric narrative.

*The New Atalantis*, an allegorical tale in which the goddess Astrea returns to earth to examine humanity's public and private affairs,<sup>36</sup> functions as satirical Tory propaganda against the Whig government: almost every aspect of political life at the time is documented satirically to bring down John Churchill, first Duke of Marlborough, his wife Sarah, and the rest of the Whig Ministry.<sup>37</sup> In negotiating a successful satire, however, Manley first had to contend with the notion that women could not and, more importantly, *should not*, write satire. In Volume I, dedicated to Henry, Duke of Beaufort, a Tory, Manley goes out of her way to assure readers that her work is nothing more than a simple fable; indeed, it begins with "Once upon a time," the time-honored beginning of all such tales. Cognizant of the fact that "men may regain their reputations, though after a complication of vices—cowardice, robbery, adultery, bribery and murder—but a woman, once departed from the road of virtue, is made incapable of a return" (*TNA*, 45), Manley is determined to escape traditional accusations that women's satiric writing is mere

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<sup>36</sup> Astrea states, "I have thought it necessary to visit this lower globe, where all the arts and virtues are professed with more ostentation, than in the lunar. . . . I will go to the courts, where justice is professed, to view the magistrate, who presumes to hold the scales in my name, to see how remote their profession is from their practice; thence to the courts and cabinets of princes, to mark their cabal and disingenuity; to the assemblies and alcoves of the young and fair to discover their disorders and the height of their temptations; the better to teach my young Prince how to avoid them."

<sup>37</sup> Herman also has detailed how Manley's mixture of "scandal fiction, romance, and *ad hominem* satire" was also applied to certain Tories, including her cousin and husband, John Manley, 67-69.

gossip bandied about by a vicious woman. Following the conventions of humility used by Dryden and mocked by Swift, Manley states that she is merely an “unknown and mere translator” (3) who had the work put into her hands by a friend who found it in Brussels; the work was originally in “mixed Italian, a speech corrupted” (3) and then naturalized into French before being rendered into English. In this way, any “corruption” found in the text can be placed at the door of the original text and its first translator, while Manley’s humble person is simply “a sedentary editor toiling in libraries to secure some kind of stable meaning or utterance from a mass of competing and corrupted sources from the four corners of the globe.”<sup>38</sup> Although this convention is patently disingenuous, given that every part of the work is designed to reveal the salacious secrets of the nobility by appealing to the most prurient curiosity of its readers, it provides a simulacrum of fictionality that protects the writer from charges of libel, and, as in the case of Swift’s Hack in *A Tale of a Tub*, satirizes “the meaningless function of the truth claim in fictional texts.”<sup>39</sup>

In its insistence on the fictionality of fact, and the factuality of the fictions, Manley’s work becomes Swiftian in its rejection of a single, unified meaning, as Ballaster points out:

Manley offers her readers “facts” (an account of eighth-century European politics, the history of an imagined island called Atalantis) which are in reality fictions created by the author feigning the role of translator. In turn, the fictions point to a different set of “facts,” contemporary political and sexual scandal, disclosing the supposed “truth” of Whig degeneracy and corruption. Finally, of course, these

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<sup>38</sup> Ballaster, “Seizing the Means of Seduction,” 103.

<sup>39</sup> Ballaster, “Manl(e)y Forms,” 235.

“facts” are themselves “fictions,” in that the stories she tells of Whig politicians are largely invented or hearsay, deployed in the service of Tory ideology.<sup>40</sup>

Like *A Tale of a Tub*, *The New Atalantis*, with its interminable interchange of fiction and fact, interrogates the idea that meaning can be fixed, or that any moral purpose can come from “facts” that are both true and false, ultimately based solely on individual interpretation. More importantly, this insistence suggests the method in which satire and the novel can successfully merge: by simultaneously saying the thing that is not, and the thing that is.

In the Dedication to Volume II, Manley continues the humility trope—“Unknown! Unfriended! An obscure original, a nameless translator” (131)—but she eschews the idea that the work is merely a translated account from ancient Europe, calling instead on Dryden’s “Discourse” to name the work a satire. This claim, however, is not to “turn her image from a female scandal-monger into a male satirist in the line of Horace, Juvenal, and Dryden,”<sup>41</sup> an act that would have been impossible given women’s place as traditional satiric object. Rather, it is meant to call into question the idea that classical satiric tradition (as represented by Dryden) is appropriate for the woman who writes satire. Ballaster, in “Manl(e)y Forms, Sex and the Female Satirist,” has enumerated the ways in which Manley may have used her connection to Varronian tradition to emphasize her legitimacy as a satirist. She does so first by “furthering her (false) claim that her novels are simply fictions, invented stories, rather than taken from

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<sup>40</sup> Ballaster, *Seductive Forms*, 130.

<sup>41</sup> Todd, 88.

the lives of contemporary persons” because they follow the Varronian tradition of mixed modes (prose and poetry), treating more than one subject, and invented characters whose lewd behavior can be found in the works of Mennipus and Lucian.<sup>42</sup> Second, this tradition “offers Manley a way out of the sexualized dichotomy of Horace and Juvenal that Dryden’s essay established,” providing a form more accommodating to women who wished to write satire.<sup>43</sup> Ultimately, Ballaster decides that the use of Varro is merely “an audacious trope” possibly designed to give Manley’s work some classical scaffolding on which to hang her scandal, but she does not notice how Manley’s use of Varro to situate herself in the classical tradition is akin to Swift’s process of inhabitation, which leads ultimately to a complete rejection of this tradition.<sup>44</sup>

Unlike Swift, who uses the “Discourse” in *A Tale of a Tub* to undermine Dryden and his theory of satire, Manley originally defers to her predecessor’s greatness by insisting that “nothing can be added to Mr. Dryden’s learned discourse of satire in his dedication of Juvenal” and extensively citing Dryden’s prescriptions of what English satire should be: “scourging of vice,” “exhortation to virtue,” with “the nature of moral philosophy” and instructing “most usefully” (132). Like Swift, however, Manley rejects these ideals to write a digressive, disorderly prose work with poetic asides, one that makes use of Ancient allegorical figures (such as goddesses) in the service of the most

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<sup>42</sup> Ballaster, “Manl(e)y Forms,” 223.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 223-224.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 224. However, Aaron Santesso explores Manley’s legitimate reasons for identifying her work with Varronian satire in “*The New Atalantis* and Varronian Satire,” *Philological Quarterly* 79, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 177-204, as does Howard Weinbrot in *Menippean Satire Reconsidered: From Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 38



modern of genres, and one that is filled with myriad, unrelenting accounts of man's inhumanity to women, personal attacks rather than general admonishment. In this work, human nature is again the woman flayed without any hope of reform.<sup>45</sup> By creating this type of satire and breaking all of Dryden's most cherished rules, Manley reveals Swift as her progenitor and makes the case that there is, in fact, something that can be added to Dryden's "Discourse."

What Manley adds to the satiric tradition is the perspective of half of the human population. To do so, she discards the tradition of public satire and instead turns her focus inward, using *chronique scandaleuse* to record the extensive personal private, and domestic failings of the men and women who ruled England, insinuating that their personal corruption had corrupted the ruling body of the nation,<sup>46</sup> and therefore "instantiate[ing] a woman's right to political opinions [and] interpret[ing] politics mainly in terms of personal relations, traditionally women's sphere."<sup>47</sup> Recognizing that "the sphere of 'love' was ... considered the 'proper' realm of the woman writer"<sup>48</sup> (indeed the *only* realm) Manley embraces that limitation and turns it to satiric advantage, representing love in Swiftian terms: that of a jilted bully breaking the windows of a

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<sup>45</sup> In defending her use of personal satire, Manley could almost be mistaken for Swift: "At this rate [without personal attack] vice may stalk at noon, secure from reproach, and the reformer sulk as if he were performing an inglorious as well as ingrateful office...who ever is withheld by the considerations of fear, danger, spiteful abused, recriminations, or the mean hope of missing pity, has views to dastardly and mercenary for loft, steadfast souls, who can be only agitated by true greatness, by the love of virtue, and the love of glory," 132.

<sup>46</sup> Ballaster, in "Manl(e)y Forms," argues that although party politics were not restricted to men, citing Sara Churchill's own political practices, satire as a political tool was decidedly masculine, 220-221.

<sup>47</sup> Spacks, *Novel Beginnings*, 32.

<sup>48</sup> Ballaster, "Seizing the Means of Seduction," 95, 103.

whore. In Manley's *Atalantis*, love is reduced to political interest, and personal, intimate relationships between men and women are nothing more than a never-ending account of sexual treachery, vice, and political corruption.

She also provides a distinctly feminine satiric perspective by casting women (the goddess Astrea,<sup>49</sup> her mother Virtue, and Intelligence) as the narrators, and therefore the moral center, of her satire. Manley has no qualms about satirizing women; Barbara Palmer, Sarah Churchill, and the "New Cabal" of female poets (including Sarah Fyge Egerton, Mary Pix, Catherine Trotter and Susanna Centlivre) are only a few of the women skewered in the text. However, her use of women as narrators breaks down the boundary between the convention of male satirist and female satiric object. Rather than the butt of satire, a symptom of social disease, or the root of all evil, these women are placed in positions of the highest authority, allegorically representing the time-honored outcome of satire: Justice and Virtue. It is through their travels that readers become aware of the vice of the corrupt court, and it is through their eyes that readers are asked to judge and condemn these follies.

Unfortunately, the mere fact that these goddesses are women strips them of any divine power to change humanity; it is perhaps a happy coincidence for Manley that Justice and Virtue are traditionally represented as women, as they clearly have no authority in *Atalantis*, satiric or otherwise. Manley recognizes this irony and represents it in textual terms by cloaking her narrators in invisibility. At first, this invisibility is seen

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<sup>49</sup> The name of the goddess Astrea is significant in this text for a number of reasons; first, her appearance is relevant satirically, as Juvenal uses Astrea's departure from earth to indicate the corruption of women. Second, Astrea was the pseudonym of Aphra Behn, Manley's predecessor in both political satire and amatory fiction.

as advantageous, giving the goddesses freedom to come and go as they please. “We will make us garments of the ambient air,” states Astrea, “and be invisible, or otherways, as we shall see convenient” (9). While this invisibility is initially convenient, as it allows the goddesses access to otherwise undisclosed conversations and actions, it becomes increasingly problematic, because it also renders them unable to intervene in human affairs, a state mirroring the role of most women in eighteenth-century society. They are also quite inaudible, and not just to the humans they observe; although both Astrea and Virtue spend their evening moralizing upon story after story, no one, not even Intelligence, bothers to listen. After one particularly didactic lecture on the vices of humanity that ends with the cry “OH RACE! UNWORTHY OF THE TRUTH! NOW MAY BE SEEN THE BENEFIT OF RELIGION!” (136), Intelligence responds, “your Eminences are declaiming a length beyond my understanding” (136). Justice and Virtue may be walking the earth, but they are nowhere to be seen or heard, literally or figuratively.

This invisibility, however, is the key to Manley’s satiric strategy, because it allows both the goddesses and the readers of the text unprecedented access into the private motivations, thoughts, and actions of corrupt politicians. Throughout the long night, as the goddesses travel through the lavish courts and countryside of Atalantis, they are privy to events and tales that the public and therefore authoritative satirist would otherwise not experience. In this, Manley achieves a version of Swiftian inhabitation that introduces novelistic elements into satiric narrative. Like Swift’s satiric inhabitation, which requires an intense “becoming” of the satiric object, Manley’s involves

identification with the satiric object to fully understand what is being criticized.

Unlike Swift, however, who becomes the public persona of Dryden in order to dismantle his rival's moral authority, Manley focuses on the interior processes of individual experience and sentiments, leading to what Brean Hammond and Shaun Regan call "a more internalized approach to personality,"<sup>50</sup> a recognition of the private sphere that typically remains unacknowledged in public.

This internalized approach to personality—Manley's satiric inhabitation—can be observed throughout the text in myriad short vignettes and longer sequences that chronicle a multitude of bad behavior, such as drunkenness, lasciviousness, seduction, rape, incest, infanticide, and murder. However, it is most clearly articulated in the story of the Duke and his ward Charlot. The Duke (aka Hans Willem Bentinck, first Earl of Portland) is first seen by the goddesses in a positive light, as one of the only people who honestly grieves for his recently deceased monarch. Although Intelligence acknowledges that the Duke is "not free from the vices of men in power" (26), she originally focuses on his public achievements: heroic feats in battle, a "towering genius" (27), and a fidelity to his King. During this encomium, the Duke's thoughts are never disclosed: as a public figure, these internal processes are less important than his public actions.

When the story turns to the domestic realm, however, the narrative takes a different turn. Recognizing that "as malice loves to mingle in the characters even of the most deserving, not being able to find a fault from without they have recourse to the inside" (29), the Duke is revealed almost immediately to be afflicted with "the sting of a

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<sup>50</sup> Hammond and Regan, 52.

passion”(29) for his young ward, Charlot. Although none of the Duke’s emotions, not even paternal ones, are disclosed when Intelligence describes how the Duke educates Charlot into public virtue, they are exposed when he first sees his ward as an adult: a “cleaving sweetness thrill[s] swiftly to his heart...and cast[s] fire through his whole person” (32); he is “immovable ... with the greatest taste of joy” (32); and he feels “hostile fires in his breast” (33) as “love ... enter[s] with all his dreadful artillery” (33). The Duke’s internal struggle between desire and political ambition is recounted in minute detail, until he reads Machiavelli and realizes that his soul is, indeed, great enough to be “completely wicked” (34), and his seduction and eventual abandonment of the innocent Charlot are achieved.

Charlot’s emotions are displayed in a similar fashion: while she is a proper young lady, she is depicted as an emotionless paragon of virtue who recognizes that “occasion was not to be sought of eminently distinguishing one’s self in anything but solid virtue” (35). When the Duke’s attentions take a decidedly unparental turn, however, Charlot’s feelings are brought to light; she is at first afraid, then delighted, and finally enchanted by her own power. Again, Manley painstakingly represents Charlot’s inner conflict as the girl moves from modesty and virginity to an appreciation of the “dangerous delights ...of love” (37). She also symbolizes this process by moving Charlot from the court, a public space where marriage is an appropriate conclusion to courtship (or so the Duke’s family and the court believe), to a private villa, where the outcome of the Duke’s courtship is nothing less than rape.

The depiction of Charlot's loss of innocence is a further example of Manley's novelistic inhabitation; in this case, however, becoming the thing "attacked" takes on a somewhat different meaning. In this Swiftian inhabitation, Manley reverses the satiric tradition that defines Woman as Other by forcing readers to identify primarily with Charlot rather than the Duke at this moment. Charlot is "undone," and this undoing is depicted through her perspective as she moves from joy at seeing her lover to comprehension of his intent. She is "nailed to the bed with kisses, [and] whilst yet her surprise made her doubtful of his designs, [the Duke] took advantage of her confusion to accomplish 'em. Neither her prayers, tears, nor struggling could prevent him, but in her arms he made himself a full amends for all those pains he had suffered for her" (39). In this inhabitation, Charlot's perspective, like that of the goddesses, becomes the moral center of the work, calling into question the satiric convention of women as seductive temptresses who lead virtuous men astray and forcing a recognition of the corruption, not of humanity, but of men.

Like Swift, however, Manley cannot resist using Swiftian inhabitation to subvert any unifying meaning in her work, as she undercuts the *pathos* of this scene in numerous ways, such as stopping at a passionate moment to describe her innocent's *dishabille*—"a cherry-coloured ribbon, which answered well to the yellow and silver stuff of her gown"—and writing a scene that is almost identical to an earlier, bathetic scene in which an older woman is tricked into having sex with a young man she believes to be her lover (39).<sup>51</sup> Even more destabilizing is Charlot's reaction to her rape. After Intelligence

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<sup>51</sup> The earlier seduction scene involves Count Fortunatus (John Marlborough), his friend Germanicus (Henry Jermyn), and Fortunatus's lover, the Duchess [of Cleveland] (Barbara Palmer, née Villers). Wishing

moralizes for a moment, wailing, “Thus was Charlot undone! Thus ruined by him that ought to have been her protector” (40), she recounts that the girl almost immediately forgives the Duke, thus “espous[ing] his crime” (40), and negating any sympathy she might have been afforded. After this, it is no surprise to anyone but Charlot that the Duke stays with her only until he grows bored, then leaves her to marry her confidant, the more worldly Countess. Charlot finds that the “remainder of her life [is] one continued scene of horror, sorrow and repentance,” while the Duke lives happily ever after (44).

Manley does not reserve this inhabitation for her “fictional” characters, however. Recognizing, like Swift, that “destructive self-reference is finally the price satire pays to articulate any point of view at all,”<sup>52</sup> she implicates herself in her own satire, erasing the boundaries between satiric narrator and satiric object by placing herself as a character in her tale. Manley appears twice in *The New Atalantis*: first, as a male poet who was defrauded after writing an elegy in which a character “Delia” has a song, and second as the character of Delia, whose history is Manley’s. Gallagher sees differences in the ways Swift and Manley put themselves into their satires, noting that “by implicating himself in his satire, [Swift] distinguished himself from the mass of venal hacks who feigned sincerity, ... thus ... tak[ing] up a position superior to the satirized form and transform[ing] through parodic imitation,” while Manley both playfully satirizes

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to rid himself of his mistress, Fortunatus arranges a meeting with her, but instead puts Germanicus in his place. Coming upon Germanicus asleep, the Countess accosts him, and only later realizes her mistake. As in the scene with Charlot, Manley at first states that Germanicus is “in a dress and posture not very decent to describe”; she then goes on to describe both in great detail, 20-21. This earlier scene is patently comic, personally skewering Palmer, one of Manley’s enemies, but its satiric intent is the same: to describe the perfidy of men at the expense of women.

<sup>52</sup> Lewis, 60.

authorship without “displaying her superiority by her self-ironization” as Swift does, and “includes herself in her satire in such a way as to figure for the age its own worst fears about the new publicity of politics.”<sup>53</sup> While Manley’s first appearance as a poet is, as Gallagher asserts, a straightforward satire on the public politics of authorship in the eighteenth century, her second appearance, as herself, collapsing completely any distance between moral authority and the satiric object. Manley/Delia’s early childhood education devoted to feminine virtue, her bigamous marriage to her cousin, and her eventual “ruin” and repentance become the epitome of Swiftian inhabitation, as the novelist is both the satirist who rails against man’s inconstancy to woman, and the satirized woman who allows her reputation to be ruined by forbidden love. She puts herself into her own satire, quite literally, and uses her own life to call into question the social norms that require judgment of women in her position. In this satiric vignette, Manley articulates the difficulties faced by women who would write satires, as “the female satirist finds her own image figured in the glass she would smash; her place in her own writing thus emerges as deeply problematic, for what that writing clearly reveals is that the female voice has no place within it,”<sup>54</sup> except as satiric Other.

Manley’s inhabitation also extends, as Swift’s does, into an interrogation of her chosen *métier*. Throughout *The New Atalantis*, Manley consistently emphasizes the dangers of reading novels, romances, and scandal fiction even as she creates one of the most scandalous chronicles of her day, arguing, “there are books dangerous to the community of mankind, abominable for virgins, and destructive to youth; such as explain

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<sup>53</sup> Gallagher, 129-130.

<sup>54</sup> Lewis, 61.



the mysteries of nature, the congregated pleasures of Venus, the full delight of mutual lovers and which rather ought to pass the fire than the press” (37). Young women such as Charlot, whose reading originally is limited by the Duke to books of virtue, are corrupted when given access to “dangerous books of love,” such as Ovid (including the love of Myrra for her father), Petrarch, Tibullus, sexual manuals (such as the unnamed *Aristotle’s Master-piece*), and outright pornography (35-37). In a similar manner, Delia learns about love from an aunt, who “would read books of chivalry and romances, [which] ... infected [Delia] and made [her] fancy every stranger ... some disguised prince or lover” (223-24). Another young woman who reads only romances and plays is seduced by a soldier and abandoned after she becomes pregnant. She kills the infant and is condemned to death for the murder. Manley’s critique of romance fiction has two distinct purposes. First, as William Warner observes, by “aligning the delusion of novel reading with the proverbial madness of love, Manley shifts Cervantes’ satire on reading into a feminine register,” an association which gives the criticism satiric and moral resonance.<sup>55</sup> Second, it allows Manley to imply that *her* work does not corrupt, because its goal is to teach virtue, and, as such, “can inscribe in its purview the sort of reading it warns the reader against.”<sup>56</sup> Warner goes on to argue, however, that “the moral efficacy of this warning is vitiated by the fact that it appears in an anthology of novels [*The New Atalantis* itself] less refined and more licentious than the heroic romances Manley mocks.”<sup>57</sup> This is precisely

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<sup>55</sup> Warner, *Licensing Entertainment*, 99-100.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. 108.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 100.

Manley's goal. Her representation of salacious acts while condemning the representation of salacious acts, like her interchangeable use of fact and fiction, deters any sense of a single, unified meaning, as it forces readers to recognize the pleasure they take in reading such scandal, even as they condemn it.

Ultimately, Manley's work reveals the poverty of satire to change either behavior or perception. Recognizing that "the driving force in humanity is desire, both for money and sex, [in which] a virtuous education in moral principles, sincerity and chastity is revealed as socially inept, even dangerous for girls" in such a civilization, Manley instead argues that the only real virtue is self-interest, the very thing she has been satirizing.<sup>58</sup> As Todd argues, "chastity is not really a virtue at all, but simply good social sense."<sup>59</sup> Women who comprehend this, such as Charlot's confidante, the Countess, become far better teachers than the moralizing Astrea and her mother. Understanding that "the first thing a woman ought to consult was her interest and establishment in the world" (40), the Countess recognizes the Duke's inconstancy, and through her "superior charms ... vivacity of wit and conversation" (44) gains what Charlot was denied. She, not Charlot, nor Delia, nor any of the myriad innocents who lose their virginity, their reputations, or their lives, is the true moral exemplar in Manley's world. In light of this, Manley's work ends in the same moral abyss as Swift's *Tale*: women are still seduced and abandoned, illegitimate children are still born and murdered to hide their existence, the powerful still abuse those over whom they have control, and corruption within still reveals the

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<sup>58</sup> Todd, *Sign of Angellica*, 90.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

corruption without. Justice and Virtue are mute, their didactic speeches tedious and unrealistic in a world where morality is found only in manipulation, betrayal, and deceit.

Although Manley rejects the tradition that satire can change the world, her work is much more clearly satiric than novelistic: her characters are flat and unchanging, the events recounted are unrealistic and improbable, the plot is monotonous, and it ends without even a facsimile of closure. However, her representation of internal personality processes combined with satiric inhabitation affords her the opportunity to fashion what Gallagher calls “a ‘novelistically’ satisfying story, one read for its own sake as well as for its scandalous referentiality.”<sup>60</sup> The stories, she argues, “inspired a partial disregard for veracity that allowed them to develop simultaneously toward a more specific referentiality and a more independent fictionality.”<sup>61</sup> In combining thinly veiled satiric vignettes of Whig leaders with fictionized accounts of their hypocrisy, deceit, and treachery toward women, Manley both influenced the development of the novel and made her satire all the more effective. In fact, Gallagher argues, *The New Atalantis* is an effective satire *because* of its fictionality: “it can be enjoyed as mere story, suspending the referential issue, or as defamation. Such doubleness, moreover, makes the defamation all the more pleasurable, effective, and indeed, explicit.”<sup>62</sup> For Manley, then, the scandal chronicle, an early form of the novel, provides the most successful shape for women’s satire. Manley’s female characters do not achieve any level of subjectivity; as Hunter

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<sup>60</sup> Gallagher, 101.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 103.

notes, “even when women are central ... they are central objects[;] when they appear to be subjects [like Delia] ... they turn out to be objects in disguise.”<sup>63</sup> However, her concern with representations of women’s perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors in a private domestic setting provide later novelists, such as Lennox, with the tools in which to fashion what would eventually become the satiric novel.

Charlotte Lennox: *The Female Quixote*

As a writer in the middle of the eighteenth-century, Lennox, who published *The Female Quixote* in 1752, faced even greater challenges to crafting a successful satire than did her predecessor. Not only relegated to the domestic realm and the world of “love,” as Manley had been, Lennox and her contemporaries were constrained in their choices of subject by changing codes of conduct for women, including the greater separation of public and private spheres, more restrictive attitudes about the appropriate character of and roles for virtuous women, and the emergence of the concepts of sentiment and sensibility rather than satire as the most appropriate literary vehicles for women authors who wished to discuss virtue and vice. As Todd notes, “synonymous with sentiment and sensibility, women must write moral didactic or sentimental works suitable, above all, for the perusal of other women[;] satire might intrude in the episodes of female fiction but should not be the whole mode since satire was essentially masculine.”<sup>64</sup> Women’s writing

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<sup>63</sup> Hunter, *Before Novels*, 84.

<sup>64</sup> Todd, *Sign of Angellica*, 128. More complete accounts of the change in social attitudes toward women and women writers can be found in Jane Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), Todd, *Sign of Angellica*, Spender, *Mothers of the Novel*, and Gallagher, (which specifically chronicles the “political and economic transformation” of women authors, 147). Paulson, in *Satire and the Novel*, chronicles the evolution of satire into the novel of sentiment. Joseph F. Bartolomeo considers the importance of sensibility in women’s satiric fiction in Restoration and

was to educate other women in matters of decorum and appropriate characteristics, such as modesty, chastity, and piety, with a level of “moral seriousness” that left little room for the creation of such risqué political and satiric works as Manley’s *New Atalantis*.<sup>65</sup>

Lennox was also influenced by the most prominent writers of her era and the genre in which they wrote and wrote about: the novel. Like Manley, she was connected to the most distinguished male writers of her time; Lennox counted as her admirers Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, and Samuel Johnson, who were directly involved both with bringing the emerging novel into prominence and with developing its structural and moral boundaries.<sup>66</sup> Both Richardson and Fielding were invested in distancing their own works from such earlier genres as romance: Richardson’s novels focused on the domestic concerns of private individuals, and Fielding’s were centered on more objective, public goals, but both disdained the fantastic realms of the romance as having any instructional value and both used the older genre primarily as a foil to showcase the novelty of their own didactic texts.<sup>67</sup>

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Eighteenth-Century Satiric Fiction,” in *A Companion to Satire*, ed. Ruben Quintero (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 271.

<sup>65</sup> Gallagher, 147.

<sup>66</sup> In *Mothers of the Novel*, Spender notes that Lennox had assistance in publishing her works from Johnson, Richardson, and Fielding, all of whom “thought she merited the label ‘genius’,” 197. Johnson was a close friend, and he introduced her to Richardson, who not only printed the first edition of *The Female Quixote*, but also used his literary authority to her benefit. Fielding had nothing but praise for the *Female Quixote*, and his review of it in the *Covent Garden Journal* as a satire against romance helped cement interpretations of the work for 200 years, 198. In *Nobody’s Story*, Gallagher recounts a celebration for the publication of Lennox’s first novel *The Life of Harriot Stuart, Written by Herself* (1750), at which a crown of laurels from Johnson, 145-146.

<sup>67</sup> For a fuller account of both Richardson’s and Fielding’s relationship to earlier romance writing, particularly in relation to women’s writing in the middle of the eighteenth century, see Mary Patricia

Johnson concurred with these goals in *The Rambler*, No. 4, arguing,

the works of fiction, with which the present generation seems more particularly delighted, are such as exhibit life in its true state, diversified only by accidents that daily happen in the world, and influenced by passions and qualities which are really to be found in conversing with mankind.... Its province is to bring about natural events by easy means, and to keep up curiosity without the help of wonder; ... These books are written chiefly to the young, the ignorant, and the idle, to whom they serve as lectures of conduct and introductions into life.<sup>68</sup>

For Johnson, the novel is an educational tool, with each work serving as a “teachable moment” for impressionable readers: the young, the ignorant, and the idle (and, as Doody notes in *The True Story of the Novel*, women<sup>69</sup>). As such, these texts must eschew the conventions of romance, with its “wild strain of imagination” that recounts events “so remote from all that passes among men that the reader [is] in very little danger of making any applications to himself.”<sup>70</sup> He also delineates the proper scope of the novels. Much like Dryden’s ideal satire, novels are to represent virtue and vice in their appropriate colors: they should “exhibit the most perfect idea of virtue: of virtue not angelical, nor above probability,...but the highest and purest that humanity can reach. ... Vice, for vice is necessary to be shown, should always disgust; ... it should raise hatred by the malignity of its practices, and contempt by the meanness of its stratagems.”<sup>71</sup> Even earlier,

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Martin, “High and Noble Adventures”: Reading the Novel in *The Female Quixote*” *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 31, no. 1 (Autumn 1997): 45-62. See also, Ballaster, “Women and the Rise of the Novel,” 207-208.

<sup>68</sup> Johnson, [The Modern Form of Romances Preferable to the Ancient. The Necessity of Characters Morally Good.] *The Rambler* No 4. Saturday, 31 March 1750. *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson*. Vol III, *The Rambler*, eds. W. J. Bate and Albrecht B. Strauss (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), 19.

<sup>69</sup> Doody, *The True Story of the Novel*, 277-278.

<sup>70</sup> Johnson, 20, 21.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

Tobias Smollett had outlined similar goals for the novel in the Preface to *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (1748), in which he asserts, “Of all kinds of satire, there is none so entertaining, and universally improving, as that which is introduced, ... occasionally, in the course of an interesting story, which brings every incident home to life...invest[ing] them with all the graces of novelty, while nature is appealed to in every particular.”<sup>72</sup>

In writing *The Female Quixote*, Lennox seems to have taken these pronouncements to heart. Rather than writing a satire made up of loosely connected vignettes of the unsavory behavior of the rich and powerful, she created a realistic comic text that is a novelistically satisfying representation of “life in its true state.”<sup>73</sup> Unlike Manley’s text, which moves from the public realm to the private in order to expose the private vices of public figures, Lennox’s novel, as in most novels of development, moves from the private sphere of Arabella’s secluded estate to the public sphere of Bath and London, but her concern is always on the internal processes of her characters, and as for Manley, romantic and realistic love in the domestic sphere is her focus. Although it is a Cervantean satire,<sup>74</sup> the novel (unlike Manley’s *The New Atalantis*) has a plausible plot that leads to a denouement and closure and characters that are developed and capable of

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<sup>72</sup> Tobias Smollett, *The Adventures of Roderick Random*, ed. by Paul-Gabriel Boucé (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), xliii.

<sup>73</sup> Johnson, *Rambler* No. 4, 19.

<sup>74</sup> For more on the Cervantean nature of the novel, see Ronald Paulson, *Don Quixote in England: The Aesthetics of Laughter* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); Scott Paul Gordon *The Practice of Quixotism: Postmodern Theory and Eighteenth-Century Women’s Writing* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); and Anna Uddén, “Narratives and Counter-Narratives—Quixotic Hermeneutics in Eighteenth Century England: Charlotte Lennox, *The Female Quixote*,” *Partial Answers* 6, no. 2 (2008): 443-457.

change. While the events that unfold in the novel are hardly “accidents that daily happen in the world”—unless one considers jumping into the Thames to escape imaginary rapists an everyday occurrence—they suit the comic requirements of the plot without resorting to mythological creatures, flights of fantasy, or the “wild strain of imagination” that caused Johnson so much concern; any outlandish events that occur serve only to reinforce the idea that Arabella is consistently misinterpreting reality. The novel is satirically concerned with the dangers of reading romances (in this case, bad translations of seventeenth-century French romances, which, as Manley argued earlier, are prone to corruption), and the plot centers around Arabella, a young woman with a “fiction-maddened imagination”<sup>75</sup> who was raised in isolation with only these romances as a model for “appropriate” feminine behavior.<sup>76</sup> In order to be reconciled with the world as it is (a reality that does not involve countless suitors disguised as gardeners or highwaymen, innumerable abductions by said suitors, and absolute power over the lives

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<sup>75</sup> Todd, *Sign of Angellica*, 152.

<sup>76</sup> Many interpretations of the novel focus on the positive elements of Arabella’s romance reading, noting that it is the only way in which she is able to achieve power and authority in her world. See, for example, Spencer, *Rise of the Woman Novelist*, 186-191, and “Not Being a Historian: Women Telling Tales in Restoration and Eighteenth-Century England,” in *Context of Pre-Novel Narrative: The European Tradition*, ed. Roy Erikson (New York: Morton de Gruyter, 1994), 319-40; Todd, *The Sign of Angellica*, 155; Doody, “Introduction,” in *The Female Quixote* by Charlotte Lennox, ed. Margaret Dalziel, Oxford World Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), xx-xxxii; Catherine A. Craft, “Reworking Male Models: Aphra Behn’s *Fair Vow Breaker*, Eliza Haywood’s *Fantomina*, and Charlotte Lennox’s *Female Quixote*,” *Modern Language Review* 86 (1991): 821-38; Ros Ballaster, “Romancing the Novel: Gender and Genre in Early Theories of Narrative,” in *Living by the Pen: Early British Women Writers*, ed. Dale Spender (New York: Teachers College Press, 1992), 194; Regina Barreca *Untamed and Unabashed: Essays on Women and Humor in British Literature* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994), 34-44; Richard A. Barney, *Plots of Enlightenment: Education and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 270-280; Sabine Volk-Burke, “Romance, Madness, and Women’s History: Charlotte Lennox’s *The Female Quixote* Revisited,” in *Echoes in a Mirror: The English Institute after 125 Years*, ed. Wolf Kindermann and Gisela Hermann-Brennecke (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2001), 63-84;



and deaths of these men) she must be cured by a Doctor of Divinity<sup>77</sup> who shows his charge the proper way to read and see the world, using direct quotes from Richardson and Johnson.<sup>78</sup>

Lennox was so successful at satirizing the conventions of romance fiction in the realistic novel that Fielding praised it in *The Covent Garden Journal*, stating that although “some of the Incidents in the Original [*Don Quixote*] are more exquisitely ridiculous than any which we find in the Copy ... possibly ... owing to the Advantage, which the Actions of Men give to the Writer beyond those of Women,”<sup>79</sup> Lennox has the advantage over Cervantes in two main ways. First, in keeping with Johnson’s strictures, she tells “a regular story,” in which the “Incidents, or if you please, the Adventures, are much less extravagant and incredible.... [*Don Quixote*] approaches very near to the

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<sup>77</sup> There is speculation that this character is modeled after Johnson, and it is a common rumor that Johnson himself wrote this chapter. Margaret Dalziel discusses the evidence for and against this in explanatory notes in her edition of *The Female Quixote* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 414-415. Her examination is based on Duncan Isles’s appendix, 419-428. For further discussion of this topic, see Spacks, “The Subtle Sophistry of Desire: Dr. Johnson and *The Female Quixote*,” *Modern Philology* 85, no. 4 (May 1988): 534; Debra Malina, “Rereading the Patriarchal Text: *The Female Quixote*, *Northanger Abbey*, and the Trace of the Absent Mother,” *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 8 (1996): 281, and David Marshall, “Writing Masters and ‘Masculine Exercises’ in *The Female Quixote*,” *Eighteenth Century Fiction* 5, no. 2 (1993): 133.

<sup>78</sup> Most commentaries on the novel, while acknowledging its satiric elements, focus on the work’s criticism or acceptance of romance conventions and the uneasy relationship between the romance and the novel. See, for example, James L. Lynch, “Romance and Realism in Charlotte Lennox’s *The Female Quixote*,” *Essays in Literature* 14 (1987): 51-63; Deborah Ross, “Mirror, Mirror: The Didactic Dilemma of *The Female Quixote*,” *Studies in English Language* 27 (1987): 456- 473; Catherine A. Craft, “Reworking Male Models,” 821-38; Laurie Langbauer, *Women and Romance: The Consolations of Gender in the English Novel*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990) and “Romance Revised: Charlotte Lennox’s *The Female Quixote*,” *Novel* 18 (1994): 29-49; Ellen Gardiner, “Writing Men Reading in Charlotte Lennox’s *The Female Quixote*,” *Studies in the Novel* 28 (1996): 1-11; Jane Spencer, “Not Being a Historian,” 319-40; Ballaster, “Romancing the Novel”; Helen Thompson, “Charlotte Lennox and the Agency of Romance,” *The Eighteenth Century* 43, no. 2 (2002): 91-114; and Sharon Smith Palo, “The Good Effects of Whimsical Study: Romance and Women’s Learning in Charlotte Lennox’s *The Female Quixote*,” *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 18, no 2 (Winter 2005-06): 1-26.

<sup>79</sup> Henry Fielding, *The Covent Garden Journal*, edited by Gerard Edward Jensen, Vol. I (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1915), 280

Romances which he ridicules. In [*The Female Quixote*] there is nothing except the Absurdities of the Heroine herself, which is carried beyond the Common-Life.”<sup>80</sup>

Second, Fielding notes,

tho’ the Humour of Romance, which is principally ridiculed in this Work, be not at present greatly in fashion..., our Author hath taken such Care throughout her Work, to expose all those Vices and Follies in her Sex which are chiefly predominant in our Days, that it will afford very useful Lessons to all those young Ladies who will peruse it with proper Attention.<sup>81</sup>

Above all, Lennox fits the mold of the proper female satirist: her novel is morally appropriate and, while her ridicule of romance may not be *au courant*, her exposure of the vice and follies of women is timeless.

Like its predecessor *Don Quixote*, *The Female Quixote* is considered to be a parodic commentary on romance reading. Modern critics, however, see in the work a critique of many aspects of the novel. For example, Gallagher argues that the primary goal of the text is not to ridicule fiction, but rather to make it *recognizable* as a genre—to acknowledge what she calls “the fictionality of fiction.”<sup>82</sup> Helen Thompson notes that the text is a self-reflexive, metafictional work that is “simultaneously inventing and deconstructing the novel” by “examining the nature of fiction.”<sup>83</sup> While many critics view Lennox’s novel as either a straight-up satire of romantic conventions and the dangers of believing in such conventions, a parodic investigation of contemporary

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 281.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 282.

<sup>82</sup> Gallagher, 193.

<sup>83</sup> “Charlotte Lennox’s *The Female Quixote*: A Novel Interrogation,” in *Living By the Pen: Early British Women Writers*, ed. Dale Spender (New York: Teachers College Press, 1992), 113-114

novelistic forms,<sup>84</sup> or as a turning point in the development of the novel away from romance and toward realism,<sup>85</sup> very few recognize that the goal of Lennox's novel is far more synthetic. In *The Female Quixote*, Lennox uses the techniques of inhabitation developed by Swift and extended by Manley to convey a multiplicity of interpretations. While Manley uses a process of inhabitation to break down barriers between satiric narrators and objects through an examination of internal personality processes, Lennox uses it on a formal level, to break down the barriers between romance, the novel, and satire.

If the romance, as many critics suggest, is a "fantasy of female power"<sup>86</sup> that links female desire and the novel, and satire is undeniably a form of masculine power according to most texts on satiric theory, then *The Female Quixote* is an attempt to combine these forms to give women an authoritative voice. The text is a realistic novel that satirizes romantic fiction while simultaneously asserting its positive role in women's lives. Its structure is "one of satire wrapped in romance," what Spacks calls an "unusual arrangement."<sup>87</sup> As such, becomes more than a parody of the developmental novel that makes "unlearning the crucial action," as noted by Spacks.<sup>88</sup> Its central question becomes

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<sup>84</sup> Richard A. Barney argues that Arabella, and the text, "reject the narrative logic of domestic fiction," in *Plots of Enlightenment*. Spacks notes that the work parodies the form of the developmental novel by "making unlearning the crucial action," *Novel Beginnings*, 85.

<sup>85</sup> See, for example, Doody, *True Story of the Novel*, 288; Langbauer, *Women and Romance: The Consolations of Gender in the English Novel*, 65.

<sup>86</sup> See, for example, Spencer, *Rise of the Woman Novelist*, 187. This interpretation is accepted by Spacks, *Novel Beginnings*, and Bartolomeo, "Resotation and Eighteenth-Century Satiric Fiction."

<sup>87</sup> Spacks, *Novel Beginnings*, 85.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

whether or not romances are all bad, or whether they can provide useful instruction for women. In *The Female Quixote*, Lennox examines whether women are being limited by following the models provided by such novels. Her answer, based on Swiftian inhabitation, opens up the text to a number of interpretations. First, Arabella does have to “unlearn” much of what romances have taught her about the way the world operates on a mundane level. She cannot, for example, continue to believe that every person around her is a nobleman in disguise. For all their misguided instruction, however, romances provide Arabella with a moral center that allows her to see clearly and to speak authoritatively about the faults in her society and the dangers faced by women in that society. In light of this, Arabella moves from being the object of satire (the traditional role of women) to becoming a satirist herself.

Ultimately, however, Lennox (like Swift and Manley before her) comes to some troubling conclusions about the effectiveness of satire, particularly that written by women. Arabella may have the moral authority to recognize the vices of her world, but she, like all other satirists before her, must recognize that the world is not going to change. In such a world, Arabella must come to realize that her role is not that of a romantic heroine, nor of an authoritative satirist, but that of a wife. By the end of the novel, she is made to recognize the folly of her behavior: both the folly of her romantic delusions and the folly of her own authority. She must be “reformed” by marriage, providing the happy ending required by domestic fiction and even romances, relinquishing her authority to her husband, Glanville. This happy ending, however, is deeply ambiguous, as it also marks the end of Arabella’s ability to interpret her own life.

Lennox begins her work by taking to heart Swift's admonition that, in order to satirize something appropriately, one must become the thing attacked. In the novel's opening pages, Lennox quite literally puts her main character Arabella *into* the romance she is satirizing. Not only does Arabella spend time reading bad English translations of French romances, she *lives* in one. As Doody and others have noted, the novel opens with "a character who is a slave to imagination—but that character is Arabella's father, not Arabella herself."<sup>89</sup> Banished from court life, Arabella's father, the Marquis of \_\_\_\_\_, retreats to his country estate where "the most laborious Endeavours of Art had been used to make it appear like the beautiful Product of wild, uncultivated Nature, [an] Epitome of Arcadia" (*FQ*, 6). Arabella is raised in this "perfect Retirement" (6), educated solely by her father after the death of her mother and restricted from any interaction with the outside world. She is permitted only two activities: riding into the country—"the only Diversion she was allowed, or ever experienced"(8)—and attending church, both of which she does sparingly, "making use of the Permission the Marquis sometimes allowed her" (9). She herself is described with terms reserved for romantic heroines, having "native Charms" such as "a most charming Face, a Shape easy and delicate, a sweet and insinuating Voice, and Air ... full of Dignity and Grace, perfectly magnificent Dress, [and a] perfect Mistress of the French and Italian Languages" (6-7). Given Arabella's "promising Genius" (6) and her extremely limited experience, it is no surprise that, when given full access to her father's library, she turns to the romances her mother had bought "to soften a Solitude which she found very disagreeable" (7) and which unconsciously

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<sup>89</sup> Doody, "Introduction," in *The Female Quixote*, xx.

serve the same purpose for her daughter. It is also no surprise that Arabella fails to recognize those romances as fiction, as her whole existence has been as a character in her father's own romance, a "Nymph [ranging] through Gardens, ... the Woods and Lawns in which she was inclosed" (7).

Left alone with these books as her only source of social education, Arabella believes that romances "were real Pictures of Life" (7), in part because they are shelved in the library with her father's works of History. Insisting on her own right of individual interpretation, she subsequently fashions herself after their heroines, because romances have women at their center. Romances "uphold the central importance of Woman—and of women,"<sup>90</sup> and Arabella, alone in her Arcadian life, naively believes that her own story will follow this generic pattern. She does not realize that the real generic pattern of her life is mundane domestic fiction. Reading romances about such legendary figures as Statira, Clelia, Mandana, and Cleopatra, "all the illustrious Heroines of Antiquity, whom it is a Glory to resemble"(44), Arabella finds "the most shining examples of Generosity, Courage, Virtue, and Love" (48) and seeks to emulate them, demanding not only her sovereign right to choose her own spouse, but to choose him after she has had a life full of adventures and public significance: in other words, a life that some men unquestioningly would be expected to have. For this reason, Arabella also admires the Amazons in romances, because they represent "the possibility of having masculine power without any loss of feminine virtue."<sup>91</sup> After establishing Arabella as a romance heroine

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<sup>90</sup> Doody, "Introduction," In *The Female Quixote*, ed. Margaret Dalziel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), xxvii.

<sup>91</sup> Barney, 279.

through the use of sincere romantic tropes, Lennox continues this initial process of inhabitation. She presents the form as authentic in order to attack it in terms of its own construction by including lengthy passages of these romances *verbatim*, primarily as discourses by Arabella, who uses them in another aspect of female power to educate her male relatives and suitors about appropriate behavior, as in her discussion of raillery (267-268), which is drawn almost word for word from Madeline de Scudery's *Artamenes* and *Conversations*.<sup>92</sup>

Unfortunately for Arabella, this “fantasy of female power” is precisely that—a fantasy. Almost immediately after presenting Arabella as a stereotypical heroine of a romance novel, the author begins dismantling romantic conventions by exposing their follies; this attack even includes a by-now *de regueur* denunciation of Dryden for using romantic conventions in his plays. Lennox begins her inhabitation by using very traditional satiric techniques, including the time-honored custom of placing Arabella as the object of satire, because, as a woman, she has no other place in the satiric form. As the satiric Other, Arabella and her romantic pretensions are first exposed by a rational narrator who wrenches narrative authority from Arabella to provide an alternative moral center for the work. This narrator recognizes the dangerous nature of Arabella's reading, because her “Mind, being wholly filled with the most extravagant Expectations, she was alarmed by every trifling Incident; and kept in a continual Anxiety by a Vicissitude of Hopes, Fears, Wishes, and Disappointments” (8), and it is this narrator who first recognizes that Arabella's “Imagination, always prepossessed with the same fantastic

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<sup>92</sup> Dalziel, “Explanatory Notes” to *The Female Quixote*, 406.

Ideas,” leads her to make mistakes both “absurd and ridiculous” (21). Although Arabella “had a most happy felicity in accommodating every incident to her own Wishes and Conceptions” (25), the rational narrator ensures that the reader knows how deluded these accommodations are. Even the chapter titles serve as ridicule, as such headings as “The Adventure of the Books” and “In which the Author condescends to be very minute in the Description of our Heroine’s dress,” deride the importance Arabella places on very insignificant matters.

In this inhabitation, Arabella’s “adventures,” which include believing that every man she meets is either a potential suitor or rapist, are exposed by the narrator to be the follies they are: the gardener, for instance, is not a nobleman in disguise for love of her, and her uncle is not attempting to seduce her when he pays her compliments. Her power over the lives and deaths of her suitors is demonstrated to be nothing more than the recovery from a headache, and her attempts to educate her male relatives provide little more than amusement. Arabella’s antics reach their zenith when, on a visit to London, she sees four horsemen riding toward her, believes them to be kidnappers, and throws herself into the Thames to escape ravishment, an action that almost leads to her death. Far from being a romantic heroine, Arabella is shown to be a normal woman who is deluded by her education, and her affectations render her insane to everyone she meets.

The narrator is not the only one who asserts moral authority to arbitrate Arabella’s behavior; as the novel continues, each male character assumes the right to judge her and find her wanting, although only one (Sir George, the unscrupulous neighbor) has ever read the romances she so values. Again and again, the men in the novel question



Arabella's sanity, not only because romance novels have warped her perceptions of reality, but also because she refuses to submit to their will (marrying her cousin). For these eighteenth-century men, insanity can be the only explanation for such recalcitrance. For example, Arabella's first suitor, Mr. Hervey, is unnerved by her extravagant behavior (they meet while out riding, and she accuses him of attempting to ravish her), but blames it on her "Simplicity"(21)—a word which can be used to convey both unsophisticated behavior and simplemindedness. Her father calls her a "strange girl" (41) and believes that she is "certainly distracted"—another word with connotations of madness, because the romances have "turned her Brain" (55). Even Glanville, her cousin, suitor, and eventual husband, a man who recognizes Arabella's true worth, ridicules his future wife. He calls her notions of life strange, her humour odd (45), and, in the fashion of all true male satirists, believes that "it was his Business to produce a Reformation in her" (64). In fact, effecting Arabella's "cure" is one of the most common concerns of Lennox's male counterparts.

The importance of male authority is only emphasized when a female character, the Countess of \_\_\_\_\_, is introduced to help effect Arabella's "cure." Unlike Arabella's many male reformers, the Countess originally seems have the potential to effect change because she was once in the same predicament as Arabella: a young girl who had read too many romances. Because of this, she is the only woman in the novel (and one of only two characters) who can speak Arabella's language and communicate with her on her own level. At first, the interactions between Arabella and the Countess prove promising; in forcing Arabella to recognize how the conventions of romance fiction are incompatible

with contemporary Christian values, the Countess awakens in her protégée an awareness of the potentially devastating effects of living in a romance. As a woman, her voice should carry more moral weight, because her experiences have prefigured Arabella's own. Therefore, Arabella is more amenable to instruction when the Countess argues that the appropriate "natural Incidences which compose the History of a Woman of Honour," should only include the following: "I was born and christen'd, had a useful and proper Education, receiv'd the Address of my Lord \_\_\_\_\_ through the Recommendations of my parents, and marry'd him with their Consents and my own Inclination, and ... have liv'd in great Harmony [with him]" (325). In keeping with masculine satiric tradition, however, no woman would have the moral authority to effect change, and the Countess's attempt at reformation is brief and abortive. Arabella's cure can only be effected through the moral authority of a Divine who disputes with Arabella about the immorality of romances and, symbolically, the immorality of female power.

Lennox's inhabitation, however, does much more than satirize romance conventions and the women who follow them. Like Swift's *Tale*, which destabilizes any singular notion of satiric authority, and like Manley's *New Atalantis*, which incorporates ridicule of scandal fiction into an even more scandalous fiction, *The Female Quixote* destabilizes satiric boundaries by sanctioning the very thing it ridicules: the ability of romance novels to provide an appropriate method for women to view the world. This destabilization works in two distinct ways: first, Arabella's reading is shown to provide her with an education far superior to that of other women, giving her the linguistic power to reshape and redefine language; second, Arabella's place as the satiric Other is

reversed, allowing her to examine, evaluate, and comment on the vices and follies of contemporary English society. Paradoxically, romance reading, far from destroying Arabella, gives her a moral authority unmatched by any other character in the novel.

The romances Arabella reads cause some particularly dangerous notions. For example, she believes that a lady's reputation is only as good as the amount of blood shed in her honor. However, they also teach her invaluable lessons. First, they provide her with knowledge of numerous topics, including the Olympics, antiquities, rhetoric, and moral philosophy; she is called, more than once, "one of the most accomplished Ladies in the World" (48). Her knowledge of history, particularly, allows her to silence the smug Mr. Selvin at Bath. Her reading in general gives her an eloquence commended both by her father and, in a backhanded manner, by her uncle, who insists that, "if she had been a Man, she would have made a great Figure in Parliament, and that her Speeches might have come perhaps to be printed in time" (311). The compliment is ironic because, as a woman, Arabella can never achieve a position of political power. Romances, however, have given her a linguistic power far more impressive than that of any male character in the novel. Moreover, as a heroine of her own romantic novel (*The Female Quixote* itself), Arabella does have her speeches "printed," and in a more lasting manner than those of most political speeches.

In turn, this eloquence allows Arabella to question even the meaning of language as it is used to regulate women's behavior. As Laurie Langbauer notes, Arabella's linguistic prowess stems directly from romance, because the genre is "empowering, not

imprisoning. ... the conventions of romance ... give women voice.”<sup>93</sup> Arabella uses this voice to question the validity of contemporary language to order the world appropriately. For example, not recognizing that “romance vocabulary has been appropriated and devalued by conversion into a series of euphemisms for sexual misbehavior,”<sup>94</sup> Arabella thinks nothing of asking her female companions, Miss Groves and Miss Charlotte Glanville (her cousin), to recount their “Adventures,” or to talk of the “Favors” they have granted their lovers. These women fail to recognize that Arabella is using language quite literally, and they are appalled by her forwardness; for Arabella, however, Adventures involve action and movement, not illicit sex, and Favors involve scarves or bracelets, not kisses. In such discussions, the only world that retains its meaning across centuries is “Glory,” which always defines chastity. In this discussion and others like them, Lennox, like Swift and Manley before her, questions whether the moral meaning of action can be fixed by a language that is constantly changing and subject to individual interpretation. As Thompson points out, “it is language that has changed, not human nature and behavior,” and therefore, “the reliability of language to convey the truth is weakened and its fixity made uncertain.”<sup>95</sup>

This same concern is addressed in the metafictional “History and Adventures” of Sir George, who cynically presents his seduction of numerous women in the heightened language of romance. Thompson notes that, as in Manley’s factual fictions, “real

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<sup>93</sup> Langbauer, *Women and Romance*, 84-85.

<sup>94</sup> Thompson, “Charlotte Lennox’s *The Female Quixote*,” 117.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

adventures are presented as fiction, where the true is told as ‘false’ to part of the audience [Glanville, his sister, and his father], and the false romance tale told as true to the credulous Arabella.”<sup>96</sup> Once again, the thing that is not is also the thing that is: fact and fiction are shown to be eminently interchangeable. In this case, however, linguistic indeterminacy is no help to the would-be seducer. Although unacquainted with Sir George’s “factual” morality, Arabella is well versed in the language of romance, and therefore can see his “History,” littered with such heroines as Dortha the Shepherdess (aka Dolly the milkmaid), Sydmiris, and Philonice, for what it is: a trail of nothing but seduction and deceit. When Arabella recognizes that he “deserve[s] to be ranked among the falsest of Mankind” (250), she is not wrong.

Romances also provide for Arabella a standard of moral action that is unmatched by any in her society. She is generous, kind, considerate, with a natural gentility. She is generous to the other women in the novel, particularly to Miss Groves, a “ruined woman.” Contemporary eighteenth-century fiction would interpret the history of Miss Groves, which includes a negligent upbringing, multiple seductions, and illegitimate children, as a “warning to women [by] exposing deviant female behavior.”<sup>97</sup> However, by interpreting the adventures of this woman through the lens of romance (the story of Cleopatra’s abandonment by Julius Ceseur), Arabella recognizes the inherent unfairness of social judgment, because while Miss Groves’s seducer is as much a participant in vicious activity as Miss Groves, he is allowed to move in society without incurring any

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>97</sup> Volk-Burke, 80.

comparable social sanctions or loss of reputation. Lennox accedes to Arabella's interpretation in her own manner, by having Miss Groves marry and thus escape the fate of all fallen women, what Manley calls "one continued scene of horror, sorrow and repentance" (*TNA*, 44). Most interpretations of the novel also recognize that romance novels provide Arabella with a sense of the very real dangers that exist for women; although she misreads the intentions of most men in the novel, her fears of abduction and rape are legitimate. "When men try to convince Arabella that reality does not include any of the dangers she reads about in romances," Sabine Volk-Burke notes, "they either ignore the facts or lie."<sup>98</sup> Romances may provide incorrect information about the frequency with which these crimes occur, but they are not incorrect in their representations of such acts. Because of her reading, Arabella retains her virtue throughout her myriad adventures, and it is in this, "her moral purity," as Hammond and Regan recognize, "that Arabella becomes the normative standard for the novel's satiric attack, not upon romances, but upon contemporary society."<sup>99</sup> Taken together, these positive explanations of Arabella's reading, which are opposed to the more straightforward understanding of the novel as a satire against romance, have more interpretive force when considered in light of Swiftian inhabitation and its subsequent multiplication of meaning. In *The Female Quixote*, romances and the virtues they promote are both the reason that Arabella is the satiric object and the reason she can become the normative

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<sup>98</sup> Volk-Burke, 76. Doody concurs with this interpretation in the "Introduction" to *The Female Quixote*, noting that stories of rape and abduction could be found in many contemporary news reports, and were used in such fictions as Richardson's *Clarissa*, xxxi.

<sup>99</sup> Hammond and Regan, 154.

standard of the novel. Lennox collapses satiric boundaries once again, because both interpretations are valid.

Even before she leaves the solitude of her father's estate, Arabella recognizes that "the World is not more virtuous now than it was in their Days [of romance], and there is good Reason to believe it is not much wiser; and I do see why the Manners of this Age are to be preferred to those of former ones, unless they are wiser and better" (45). This supposition proves correct when she begins to interact with the larger world, particularly with women. From Miss Groves and Miss Glanville, for example, she learns that women are *not*, and never should be, heroic or honorable, but instead should be selfish, petty, and spiteful, more concerned with the cut of a gown than with noble pursuits. This ridicule is almost boilerplate for satiric attacks on women. However, when Arabella criticizes these behaviors and other such feminine pursuits as "Dressing, Dancing, listening to Songs, and ranging the Walks with People as thoughtless as herself" (279), she condemns far more than the manners and interests of shallow women; like Manley before her, she stands in judgment of a world that socializes women into believing that these superficial occupations are their only worthwhile accomplishments. Arabella is correct when she rails, "How mean and contemptible a Figure must a Life spent in such idle Amusements make in History. Or rather, Are not such Persons always buried in Oblivion, and can any Pen be found who would condescend to record such inconsiderable Actions?" (279) When women are educated to believe that idle amusements and inconsiderable actions are their only appropriate goals, then they most certainly will *not* make history. Even more significantly, even if women choose to pursue a life of public significance, they still

will be buried in oblivion, because their actions will always be “inconsiderable,” and only inferior fiction, such as the romance, condescends to put women at its center.

However, Arabella does not only satirize contemporary social standards for appropriate feminine behavior. Her high moral code and outsider status allow her to function, for a brief moment, as an authoritative satiric figure that takes the place of the Father Satirist. She becomes, instead, the Mother Satirist, who can critique both male and female behavior equally from within. From her encounters in Bath, Arabella discovers that vices such as gossip, pretentiousness, and deceit, rather than virtues such as courage, honesty, and fidelity, are the common currency of *all* society. For example, in Bath Arabella encounters the affected Mr. Selvin; the Beau who takes delight in humiliating others with raillery; malicious and catty women; and the gossipy Mr. Tinsel, whose sheer delight in mean-spirited scandalmongering provokes Arabella’s statement of satiric theory. When asked why gossip should not be heeded, because it shows clearly what behaviors to avoid (as satire does), Arabella replies,

The ugliness of Vice ... ought only to be represented to the Vicious; to whom Satire, like a magnifying Glass, may aggravate every Defect, in order to make its Deformity appear more hideous; but since its End is only to reprove and amend, it should never be address’d to any but those who come within its Correction, and may be the better for it: A virtuous Mind need not be shewn the Deformity of Vice, to make it be hated and avoided; the more pure and uncorrupted our Ideas are, the less shall we be influenc’d by Example, A natural Propensity to Virtue or Vice often determines the Choice: ’Tis sufficient therefore to shew a good Mind what it ought to pursue, though a bad one must be told what to avoid. In a Word, one ought to be always incited, and other always restrain’d (277).

Caught up in her own idealistic fantasy, Arabella does not recognize that in the magnifying glass of Bath society, viewers will see everybody’s face except their own.



In elucidating this theory of satire, however, Lennox once again destabilizes satiric boundaries in a self-reflexive manner. Margaret Dalziel argues in the explanatory notes to *The Female Quixote* that Arabella contends that “literature should on the whole avoid representing vice,”<sup>100</sup> comparing this paragraph to Johnson’s theories of literature. However, if good minds and virtuous readers have no need for satire, the appropriate audience for *The Female Quixote* itself is called into question. Read as a simple satire of romantic fiction, the audience would certainly be women who read romance fiction, because the “deformity” of such reading is magnified. However, Lennox’s satiric inhabitation, which also shows romances in a positive light and satirizes almost every element of contemporary society, implies that *all* readers of this work are vicious and in need of correction. For what other reason is Chapter IX of Book VII, the chapter that immediately follows Arabella’s discussion of satire, entitled “Being a Chapter of the Satirical Kind” (278)? Readers who have smugly judged Arabella from a distance are suddenly implicated in Lennox’s satire, because the very act of reading this chapter proves their own viciousness. The chapter itself is the practical application of Arabella’s theory, designed to illuminate the flaws in Bath society and to reinforce Arabella’s own satiric authority by suggesting that her ridicule is merely observation. “All I have said,” Arabella states, after excoriating everything from parades to foppish dress, “was the natural Inference from your own Account of the Manner in which People live here. When Actions are a Censure upon themselves, the Reciter will always be consider’d as a Satirist” (280). Like the male satirists she emulates, she only speaks the truth. For

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<sup>100</sup> Dalziel, “Explanatory Notes” to *The Female Quixote*, 408.

Arabella and Lennox, as for Juvenal, Swift, and Manley, contemporary society makes it difficult *not* to write satire.

Unfortunately for Arabella, social strictures and the generic demands of both satire and domestic fiction will not allow a woman to take the place of the Father Satirist or to have any independent power. Arabella's satiric observations, like those of Manley's goddesses, do not effect change in the behavior of those around her or in the larger society; in fact, the only person who "reforms" is Arabella herself. Masculine authority abruptly reasserts itself in the figure of the Divine, who re-establishes linguistic certainty and negates any possibility of individual interpretation not in keeping with patriarchal hegemony. He convinces her that the Histories that have ordered her world for so long are not facts but instead fictions, which bear no resemblance to truth, in part because they posit women as the center of historical narrative. No matter how "adamantly Arabella rejects the narrative logic of domestic fiction,"<sup>101</sup> Lennox reveals that Arabella's place in the history of narrative is not that of romantic heroine or Mother Satirist, but of domestic wife, and her story must end as all domestic fiction does, with her marriage. As such, Arabella is forced to renounce all romantic pretensions, to "reflect on the Absurdity of her past Behavior ... [and] expiate upon the Follies her vitiated Judgment had led her into" (383). In so doing, she becomes again the satiric Other, "renounc[ing] narrative power, and submit[ting] to the role of object of the paternal authority which also claims the name of reason."<sup>102</sup> Through the character of Arabella, Lennox symbolizes the

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<sup>101</sup> Barney, 270.

<sup>102</sup> Doody, "Introduction," xxxii.

difficulties of integrating satire into any fiction, whether romantic or domestic, in which women are at the moral and interpretive center.

Most critics interpret the ending of *The Female Quixote* as Arabella's recognition that she has no power in the eighteenth-century world, and that she is silenced by the masculine voices around her. While these interpretations are valid because, in accepting Glanville, Arabella does give up her autonomy and the power to interpret and narrate her own life, they overlook Lennox's final destabilization of boundaries. The novel is subtitled *The Adventures of Arabella*, and the novel is precisely that. Like the romantic heroines she so admires, she marries the man of her choosing and does so only after having the adventures she desired. Thus, to read Lennox's satire of romantic conventions is, paradoxically, to read a straightforward romance. Like Swift's *Tale*, Lennox's *The Female Quixote* forces readers perform multiple interpretations of the text, thus opening avenues for the integration of satire and the novel that Jane Austen explores thoroughly in such works as *Northanger Abbey*.

Elizabeth Inchbald: *Nature and Art*

Elizabeth Inchbald's *Nature and Art* (1796) continues the tradition of experimenting with the forms of both satire and the novel that were established by Manley and Lennox. Like Manley, Inchbald juxtaposes private, domestic concerns with public, political ones to skewer the injustices wrought on innocent women by a society concerned only with self-interest. Like Lennox, she is concerned with the form of the novel. Lennox criticizes the genre of romance while also acknowledging its importance to women writers and readers. Inchbald incorporates many elements of sentimental

fiction (particularly in the character of Hannah Primrose and her seduction by the young William)<sup>103</sup> while critiquing the social processes that censure fallen women and ignore the role of men in that fall. Inchbald diverges from the tradition of placing women at the center of her domestic fiction by making her protagonists two men and their sons. Like Manley, however, Inchbald does not shy away from both satirizing the follies and vices of women or from explicitly outlining men's inhumanity to women.

Like these women, Inchbald also was connected to some of the most influential writers of her era, including William Godwin and Thomas Holcroft. She was a successful playwright, critic, and novelist in her own right, publishing 20 plays, two novels, and a host of theater criticism. Originally a well-regarded playwright of comedies and farces, Inchbald was inspired by her relationships with Godwin and other Jacobin writers to write increasingly political plays. However, after suppressing her tragedy, *The Massacre* (1792, inspired by the massacre of Royalist prisoners in France) in the face of political pressures, Inchbald recognized that "no dramatist writing for the conventional theatre [of the time] could deal realistically with such actual social problems" and turned her political focus toward novel writing.<sup>104</sup> This development was supported by Godwin, who, after reading parts of *Nature and Art*, noted, "It seems to me that the drama puts

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<sup>103</sup> Susan Staves analyzes Hannah's place in this tradition in "British Seduced Maidens," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 14 (1980-81): 109-34.

<sup>104</sup> Rogers, Katherine. "Britain's First Woman Drama Critic: Elizabeth Inchbald." In *Curtain Calls: British and American Women and the Theater, 1660-1820*. Ed. Mary Anne Schofeld and Cecilia Macheski. (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1991), 287.

shackles upon you, and that the compression it requires prevents your genius from expanding itself.”<sup>105</sup>

Inchbald’s use of the novel form for political writing was not unusual. Earlier novelists, from Manley to Eliza Haywood, had employed the genre to articulate their political visions. Their use of amatory fiction and *chronique scandaleuse*, however, was not only seen as unseemly by the end of the eighteenth-century; the fantastic events and otherworldly elements (such as gods and goddesses) in such fictions were anathema to writers in the Jacobin tradition (both men and women) who were committed to the application of psychological realism as a method of integrating personal experience and social issues.<sup>106</sup> Therefore, these writers attempted to elevate the genre from its low status as a popular fiction written merely for the entertainment of women. In *Mothers of the Nation*, Anne K. Mellor has described how women writers of Inchbald’s era attempted to re-define generic hierarchies that place the domestic novel as the lowest genre, noting that such critics as Clara Reeve in *The Progress of Romance* (1785) and Anna Barbauld in *The British Novelists* (1810) both trace the origins of the novel back to Greek literature. Unlike Dryden, however, who argued that Greek satyr plays were only the rough “underwood” of satire, these women embraced the novel’s roots in Greek romance, arguing that with this pedigree, the novel was “the highest literary genre because it was

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<sup>105</sup> William Godwin to Elizabeth Inchbald, quoted in James Boaden, *The Memoirs of Mrs. Inchbald, Including her Familiar Correspondence with the Most Distinguished Persons of her Time* Vol II (London: Richard Bentley, 1833), 354.

<sup>106</sup> A detailed discussion of the role of Jacobin novelists in the evolution of the novel can be found in Gary Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel: 1780-1805* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976).

both the most moral and the most realistic.”<sup>107</sup> Like Johnson before them, Reeve and Barbauld note the importance of the novel as an appropriate genre to describe realistically human interaction and experience, “a world more probable, more psychologically acute, and more politically relevant” than other literary genres.<sup>108</sup> As such, the novel became the genre of choice for politically concerned women writers of the late eighteenth century precisely because it was supposed to describe “things as they are,” which, in the 1790s, included radical political and social protest. Inchbald’s novel, *Nature and Art*, originally titled both “The Prejudice of Education” and “A Satire upon the Times,” has most commonly been interpreted in this light, as her contribution to the Jacobin movement of the 1790s, with critics examining the radical tendencies of the novel in terms of Rousseauvan and Godwinian philosophies.<sup>109</sup>

These philosophical underpinnings are evident in the plot of the novel, which focuses on the contrasting figures of William and his younger brother Henry, and their

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<sup>107</sup> Anne K. Mellor, *Mothers of the Nation: Women’s Political Writing in England, 1780-1830* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 96-98.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>109</sup> B. G. MacCarthy, *The Female Pen: Women Writers and Novelists 1621-1818* (New York: NYU Press, 1946, 1994); Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975); Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel*; Mona Scheuermann, *Social Protest in the Eighteenth-Century English Novel* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1985); Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist*; Spender, *Mothers of the Novel*; Claudia L. Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988); Katherine M. Rogers, “Elizabeth Inchbald: Not Such a Simple Story,” in *Living by the Pen: Early British Women Writers* ed. Dale Spender (New York: Teachers College Press, 1992); Eleanor Ty, *Unsexed Revolutionaries: Five Women Novelists of the 1790s* (Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 1993); Shawn Lisa Maurer, “Masculinity and Morality in Elizabeth Inchbald’s *Nature and Art*,” in *Women, Revolution, and the Novels of the 1790s* ed. Linda Lange Perlata (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1999); Mellor, *Mothers of the Nation*; Jenny Davidson, *Hypocrisy and the Politics of Politeness: Manners and Morals from Locke to Austen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Frank Palmeri, “Narrative Satire in the Nineteenth Century,” in *A Companion to Satire*, ed. Ruben Quintero (Blackwell: Malden, MA, 2007); and Amy Garnai, *Revolutionary Imaginings in the 1790s: Charlotte Smith, Mary Robinson, Elizabeth Inchbald* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009).

sons, also named William and Henry. William and his son are highly educated, highly successful (William the elder is a dean and bishop, while William the younger is a magistrate), and highly corrupt, representing the influence of “art”: the public world that leads to self-interest and hypocrisy. Henry, a musician, and his son, who was educated solely by his father in a remote African country, represent “nature,” the fundamental virtue that has not been tainted by contact with England’s inherently flawed social norms. While William and his son achieve material success, they both lead lives of emotional and moral poverty. In the case of William the younger, this also leads directly to the death of Hannah, the woman he loves. Henry and his son, in contrast, suffer greatly from material poverty and years of physical separation, but in the end are rewarded; Henry, his son, and his son’s wife (Rebecca Rymer, whom he marries after a 20 year absence) live out their days in a quiet, self-sufficient hut separated from the rest of corrupt society.

Although Inchbald was influenced by her relationships with earlier women writers and with the Jacobin writers, primarily Godwin, who regularly read and critiqued her novels and plays, she was also influenced by Swift. Her early biographer James Boaden, noted her resemblance to the Dean:

To those who remember her in private, she seemed to possess many of the qualities of Swift: like the Dean, “she told a story in an admirable manner;” she absolutely painted while she spoke, and her language started into life. Her sentences were like HIS, were “short and perspicuous; her observations piercing.” She too had seen much of the world, and had profited much by experience.... “She was decidedly polite, but in a manner entirely her own. She resembled Swift too in her frankness, for she spoke strictly what she thought.”<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Boaden, 290-291.

Not only does Inchbald share with Swift some singular personality traits; she shares with him satiric propensities. Although it is most commonly associated with Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726),<sup>111</sup> *Nature and Art* is also indebted to *A Tale of a Tub*. Like *A Tale of a Tub*, *Nature and Art* is a satire on abuses in religion and learning, albeit with notable differences. These abuses lead Inchbald to observe, as Swift does, that those with the authority to administer justice are often the most morally bankrupt and incapable of moral discrimination. Inchbald is also concerned with the instability of linguistic meaning; as Swift's *Tale* explodes univocal meaning, Inchbald exposes the paucity of language to retain meaning in a deeply flawed world. Finally, like Swift, Inchbald's repudiation of satiric authority places the reader as the final arbiter of judgment and suggests that such meaning can only be found in a community of interpretation.

Like Swift's *Tale* and Manley's *The New Atalantis*, Inchbald's *Nature and Art* begins as a fable. Although it does not contain the opening line, "Once upon a time," as do the earlier works, the novel opens with a timeless, fairytale-like quality: William and Henry, recently orphaned by the death of their father (a poor country shopkeeper), set out to seek their fortunes in London, "at a time when the nobility of Britain were said, by the Poet Laureate, to admire and protect the arts" (*N&A*, 41). This quality is enhanced by the sudden remembrance, after a year of living in poverty, that Henry is a talented violinist, which gains him immediate access to the highest circles of society and the opportunity to

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<sup>111</sup> See, for example, Kelly, Davidson, Ty, and Nora Nachumi, *Acting Like A Lady: British Women Novelists and the Eighteenth-Century Theater* (New York: AMS Press, 2008). Particularly relevant for these authors is Inchbald's use of the "noble savage" trope and Henry's Houyhnhnm-like, literal understanding of words, both of which are drawn from *Gulliver's Travels*.



provide an education for his bookish brother. This education leads to William's own meteoric rise to deacon, dean, and eventually bishop.

From there, their satiric paths diverge. Swift satirizes the abuses of religion and learning in "A Tale of a Tub" and its interminable digressions while simultaneously employing inhabitation to question the ability of satiric authority to effect moral change. *Inchbald*, however, is a novelist committed to the realistic portrayal of "things as they are." Her satire, therefore, shows the effects of these abuses, not in an abstract sense, but in a literal one, as real abuses have real effects on both individuals and society. The corrupting influence of religion and education is shown primarily through the characters of William and his son. At the beginning of the novel, William and Henry are similarly committed to a life of honor, loath to renounce their "mean accomplishments of 'honesty, sobriety, humility'"(42) to gain employment. However, as William receives a classical education, becomes first dean and then bishop, and marries a well-connected woman he does not love, he abandons his earlier virtues, becoming vicious and hypocritical. Again and again, *Inchbald* exposes William's corruption: he prostitutes his writing ability to gain favor with his bishop, excoriates the poor for their poverty while refusing to alleviate their plight, and educates his son into nothing less than libertinism. Religion and education do nothing but degrade William's natural capacity for human decency and justice.<sup>112</sup> He dies a man rich in material wealth but poor in all other ways; at his death, there is only the "malicious joy" (148) of the peasants he neglected.

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<sup>112</sup> Extensive analysis of *Inchbald*'s indictment of the corruptions of religion and learning can be found in Kelly (education ) and Scheuermann (religion).

This same corrupt education applies to the younger William. Raised as a spoiled only child in an atmosphere of luxury, young William is surrounded by tutors who “interfere” (53) with both his body (teaching him effeminate manners and postures) and mind, teaching him “to walk, to ride, to talk, to think like a man—a foolish man, instead of a wise child, as nature designed him to be” (53). The education William receives renders him unable to think critically about anything, to question unjust social norms, or to have “one native idea” of his own. Inchbald likens young William to a “parrot or magpie—for he merely repeated what had been told to him, without one reflection upon the sense or probability of his report,” or, more damningly, “a monkey” (53-54) who performs tricks without any awareness of purpose or intent. Inchbald, however, is careful to portray William’s *education* as the root cause of his problems, rather than any inherent flaw. He is considered to be “a rather commendable youth, [and] it was some credit to him that he was not an idiot [sic] or a brute” (53-54). Like his father, William is wildly successful, marrying a wealthy woman and becoming a magistrate. Doomed to follow in his father’s footsteps, however, William finds that material success does not lead to happiness. Having married a woman he neither loves nor values, William finds that his own marriage is barren. Ultimately, it is proven a sham when his wife elopes with another man. Having reached the pinnacles of success in part because his youthful “indiscretion” with Hannah (a woman he loves and which led to the birth of a son) is covered up by his father, William is fated to sentence Hannah to death when she is arrested for theft. This action leads to the deaths of both the only woman he ever loved and his only son.

Although Inchbald's realistic portrayal of the abuses of religion and education has few similarities with the textual madness of Swift's *Tale*, both come to the same disheartening conclusions regarding the ability of authority provide appropriate moral judgment. For both authors, having "moral authority" is often indistinguishable from depravity. As Claudia Johnson recognizes, the novel shows "that the same magistrates who condemn ruined women to death also seduce and abandon village beauties in order to advance their careers and protect the blood of their families."<sup>113</sup> This perversion of authority is clearly described in the prosecution of the father of Hannah Primrose's child (who was given to Henry's beloved Rebecca to raise after Henry found it abandoned). William the elder, who was relentless in the pursuit of justice when he thought young Henry was the father of Rebecca's child, calls the affair "some little gallantry" (118) when he discovers the child is William's. He uses his authority to hush up the business and ensure young William's marriage to another woman; his curate, clerk and two constables concur, stating, "his honour was a gentleman, and of course must know better how to act than they" (118). In this instance, Inchbald shows the "legal as well as moral relativity in the pursuit of justice, for not only does the law exert itself forcibly only towards the disempowered ... the combined forces of rank, religion and law pervert rather than service the cause of truth."<sup>114</sup> While William's part in the affair can be overlooked because "vice ... might be most exquisitely pleasing, in a pleasing garb" (108), Hannah's part can never be overlooked, because she is a poor young women without the means to protect either herself or her child from society's judgment.

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<sup>113</sup> C. Johnson, 8.

<sup>114</sup> Garnai, 141.

Although William and William are both excoriated for their vices, they are not the only characters who represent the perversion of authority, moral or otherwise. Women with power, such as Lady Bendham, have the freedom to “banish from her doors every woman of sullied character”(90) while in the country, and still entertain such women while in London, as long as they are the mistresses of powerful men. When Rebecca, a clergyman’s daughter, is thought to have given birth to an illegitimate child, no one is more shocked than Lady Bendham. This perversion of justice becomes even clearer when William the younger’s wife commits adultery. Whereas Hannah is punished harshly for the crime of being seduced by William, and Rebecca nearly suffers the same fate when she is found caring for Hannah’s child, William’s wife suffers few consequences; as one peasant states, “if it had been my wife or yours, the bishop would have made her do penance in a white sheet [public punishment for fornication]—but as it was a lady, why it was all very well.” (148). In fact, she marries again, and quite happily. As Maurer notes, “those who have been accorded the role of evaluating others are often the least fit for such assessment[, as Inchbald] skillfully renders all arbiters of justice, whether empowered by rank, sex, or profession, unjust by virtue of their patent inability to judge themselves and their motives.”<sup>115</sup> In a world that equates morality with rank, very little justice is served.

Although Inchbald exposes the moral bankruptcy of the most authoritative characters in her novel, indeed the moral bankruptcy of having any authority at all, she does not leave her readers, as Swift does, in a moral abyss. Just as Inchbald’s portrayal

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<sup>115</sup> Maurer, “Introduction,” 12-13.

of religious and pedagogic corruption is more realistic than Swift's, her inhabitation is more novelistic, akin to that of Manley. Unlike Manley, however, who unfolds her narrative as a series of conversations among goddesses and mortals, Inchbald, like Lennox, employs a strong and sane narrative voice originally to provide a moral center; it is the narrator, for example, who notes, "that, which in a weak woman [Old William's wife, Lady Clementina] is called vanity, in a man of sense is termed pride" (50). It is also the narrator who recognizes that "there is a word in the vocabulary more bitter, more direful in its import, than all the rest[:] *remorse*" (50). As Inchbald's biographer Annibel Jenkins notes, "the narrator remains, throughout, a guide for the reader, not a political orator or a preaching churchman or a reformer or a romantic poet or writer."<sup>116</sup> This voice becomes less and less pervasive, however, as Inchbald focuses on the internal personality processes of her characters, allowing the dialogue of the characters to reveal her satiric intent.

Inchbald's inhabitation through novelistic discourse is most evident in her examination of linguistic meaning. Like Swift, Manley, and Lennox before her, Inchbald critiques the idea that any moral purpose can be derived from language when no fixed meaning can be ascertained; as a novelist committed to realism, however, Inchbald's investigation is not a metalinguistic discussion, but rather a "means of cutting down pretense, of questioning what common usage has made unquestionable."<sup>117</sup> In this inhabitation, Inchbald uses the naïve questioning of young Henry, the ultimate outsider to

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<sup>116</sup> Annibel Jenkins, *I'll Tell You What: The Life of Elizabeth Inchbald* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2003), 277.

<sup>117</sup> Maurer, "Introduction," *Nature and Art*, 21.

English society, to challenge received definitions of language, behavior, and morality.

Henry, the narrator states, has “an incorrigible misconception and misapplication of many words; ... He would call *compliments*, *lies*—*Reserve*, he would call *pride*—*stateliness*, *affection*—and for the words *war* and *battle*, he constantly substituted the word *massacre*” (63). Unlike William, who has been educated out of critical thought, Henry has the capacity for individual interpretation, which gives him a moral authority that William lacks.

Like Swift’s Houyhnhnms, Henry believes that words have meaning, and he is confused when language and meaning are incongruent. For example, he is confused when William refers to his father as Sir, wondering, “how can a child call his father Sir, and not father?” (59). When he is told that “in this country polite children do not call their parents father and mother,” he responds, “Then don’t they sometimes forget to love them as such?” (59). Henry, who has been raised by a loving father, recognizes correctly that the language of the parent-child relationship has meaning and promotes love and respect, whereas formal address promotes only distance, as is the case with William and his son. When told that men wear wigs and women wear jewelry “as a distinction between us and inferior people...to give importance to the wearer” (58), he begins bowing to both his uncle and his uncle’s wig and “respected the ear-rings of Lady Clementine almost as much as he respected herself” (61). In his constant questioning of linguistic meaning, Henry becomes the moral center of the work, the only one who can provide a not-so-subtle critique of the values of English society.

This interrogation extends to the realm of human relations, in which the characters' vices or virtues are illuminated through contrasting dialogue and behaviors to similar situations; as Maurer has noted, "in both narrative and moral terms, each character can function only in explicit connection to his counterpart."<sup>118</sup> For example, the younger William's courtship, seduction, and abandonment of the innocent Hannah is contrasted with the younger Henry's courtship and eventual marriage to Rebecca through a series of conversations that reveal the young men's differing thoughts about love, status, and honor. William can know himself to be in love with Hannah, because he is "well versed in all the licentious theory" (77). This education has taught him, however, that *love* is nothing more than sexual desire, which requires not a wife, but a mistress. When he tells Henry of his plans, Henry doubts, not William's definition of love, but his own, because "his tender regard for Rebecca, did not inspire him even with the boldness to acquaint her with his sentiments" (78). When William reveals "triumphantly" that he knows Hannah loves him in return, Henry responds, "with equal triumph, he had not dared to take the means to learn, nor had Rebecca dared to give one instance of her partiality" (78). Henry knows the true meaning and value both of words and of love, and he will not tarnish either with manipulation, a scruple that William does not have. For example, when William tells Henry that he "make[s] use of no unwarrantable methods" in his assault on Hannah's virtue, Henry simply asks, "What are the warrantable ones?" (83). This conversation concludes with a prescient statement, as Henry warns William, "I know... that you are studying the law, ... but let me hint to you, that though you may be

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<sup>118</sup> Maurer, "Masculinity and Morality," 158.

perfect in the knowledge how to administer the commandments of men, unless you keep in view the precepts of God, your judgment, like mine will be fallible” (84). Henry, unlike William, understands that “warrantable methods” in this fallen world have no place in God’s world.

William’s “warrantable methods”—his ability to manipulate language—overwhelm Hannah. “[Un]accustomed to the conversation of men in William’s rank in life” (81), she listens “with a kind of delirious enchantment to all her elevated and eloquent admirer uttered” (80). Like Henry, she believes that words have meaning. Therefore she believes that William’s protestations of love are real, which allows her to submit to his desire. Unfortunately, she also believes that William’s “rank in life” makes him honorable, and that his protestations of love will lead to marriage, because this is what would be expected of an honorable man. For William, however, “rank in life” has a decidedly different meaning. He is very nice in his discrimination. “Bred up with strict observance both of his moral and religious character,” Inchbald notes, “William did not dare to tell an unequivocal lie even to his *inferiors*—he never promised Hannah he would marry her” (82, emphasis mine). In William’s mind, Hannah is an *inferior* in multiple ways; first, as the daughter of a poor cottager, she is his inferior in rank. Second, and just as important, Hannah is a woman, and therefore she is simply inferior. In Inchbald’s world, however, Hannah is inferior in one way only: having little or no education (because she is a poor woman), she does not have the linguistic capacity to resist William; she is shown taking weeks to read a letter from William after he leaves her pregnant, and just as long to write to him. In fact, her only linguistic power comes after



her death, when her full confession, which includes naming William as the father of her son, becomes known to her seducer. Only then does William feel any sense of remorse for his “warrantable actions.”

In the character of Hannah, Inchbald achieves her final satiric inhabitation. Although William and Henry (and their sons) are the ostensible protagonists of this novel, their status is matched by Rebecca and Hannah, the “heroines” of the text. In positioning these women as heroines, not just love interests for the male protagonists, Inchbald foreshadows the dramatic (or rather melodramatic) turn the novel takes in the second volume. If, as Marilyn Butler states, “sentimental novelists ... reflect a new awareness of the subjective life of the individual,”<sup>119</sup> Inchbald shows her intimate knowledge of the form by focusing the second volume almost entirely on the subjective life of Hannah. Turning from cutting satire to sentiment, Inchbald interrogates the conventions of sentimental fiction, which often rely on descriptions of fallen women and their tragic deaths. In Inchbald’s inhabitation, this fiction becomes even darker, chronicling Hannah’s fall in heartbreaking detail. Cast out of her home and refusing to abandon her child a second time, Hannah can find no work except as a farm laborer. When her employer dies, she is unable to find work anywhere but in a brothel, where she descends from maid to prostitute. From there, she becomes a thief and is sentenced to death by William. Her son, her only companion, dies with her.

Hannah’s final letter to William is the last element of Inchbald’s satiric inhabitation of the sentimental form. As Mona Sheuermann asserts, “in a sentimental

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<sup>119</sup> Butler, 32.

novel, Hannah's letter of appeal to her judge and lover would reach him and effect a pardon";<sup>120</sup> in *Nature and Art*, a novel dedicated to showing "life as it is," the letter comes far too late to save anyone. In this, Inchbald refutes the idea that only fallen women deserve justice, while men shoulder no blame. Unlike many sentimental authors, Inchbald does not allow William to escape retribution. Like Manley's ruined Charlot, whose life after seduction is "one continued scene of horror, sorrow, and repentance," (*TNA*, 44), William suffers bitterly after the death of Hannah and her son. Finally, he is full of remorse, "in the consciousness of having done a mortal injury for which he never now by any means could atone, he saw all his honours, all his riches, all his proud selfish triumphs dance before him! He envied Hannah the death to which he...condemned her." (*N&A*, 142). His final appearance in the book is as a man "calculat[ing] with precision" (142) the days until his own death.

Inchbald, however, does not leave her all her characters in despair. Henry, his son Henry, and young Henry's wife Rebecca, who have been absent from the narrative for most of the second volume, are reunited at the end of the book to provide a final survey of the destruction wrought by the immorality of English society. Entering the town where they both grew up, Henry and Henry encounter the funeral procession of William the elder, discover that all the powerful members of the community have also died, and that William the younger is alone and unwell. However, Henry the younger is rewarded with marriage to Rebecca after a 20 year absence; her steadfast love for him renders her unchanged by time. Rather than submit to life in a society corrupted by wealth and status, the three "form an humble scheme for their remaining life, a scheme depending upon

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<sup>120</sup> Scheuermann, 193.

their *own* exertions alone, on no light promises of pretended friends, and on no sanguine hopes of certain success”(152). They live together self-sufficiently in a small hut near the ocean, where the Henrys fish and Rebecca tends to a garden. Although standard interpretations see this ending as Inchbald’s attempt to wrap up major plot points with simplistic moralizing about the prejudice of education—and this is a valid criticism—Inchbald also provides what Maurer calls “a vision of community, ... a new society of equals, unstructured by rank or fortune, ... choosing the lasting comfort of human relations.”<sup>121</sup> This vision, however, involves even more than a utopian society of equals. Living together apart from the corrupt world, Henry, Henry, and Rebecca constitute a Swiftian “community of interpretation,” where words and their meanings can finally be congruent, and where authority is not imparted by wealth or rank, but through a negotiation of equals. This idea of community will become particularly relevant for Austen, who focuses on small communities and the way they must negotiate meaning within a larger social milieu.

Together, Manley, Lennox, and Inchbald took Swift as their satiric model and, in doing so, transformed the shape of satire through experiments with theme, form, and narrative point of view. Combining elements of domestic fiction with Swiftian inhabitation, these authors gave a voice to women’s satiric ideas by interrogating the tradition of women as satiric other and positing instead a place where women can be at the moral center of a text. Although they fail to integrate the generic demands of the novel with those of satire as conceived and written by men, these experiments are

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<sup>121</sup> Maurer, “Introduction,” 25-28.

important for the development of the satiric novel, an achievement that is realized finally in the works of Jane Austen.

## Chapter Four

### **“The Supreme Delight of Slicing their Heads Off”: Jane Austen and the Satirical Novel**

If the female novelists of the eighteenth-century were “Amazons of the Pen,” using Swiftian inhabitation to alter satire’s strict conventions as a genre into a more elastic mode, Austen, who shared with Swift the belief that satire ultimately comes to nothing, and that reformation through either classical or modern literary models is impossible, is a more intriguing figure. Austen shares with Swift “the supreme delight of slicing ... heads off”<sup>1</sup>—a delight that goes far beyond that of Dryden’s well-mannered executioner—but she does not maintain his despair. Instead, Austen does something radically different, appropriating the masculine, public idea of excoriating vice and folly to reform society and refashioning it into an intensely private, feminine context, that of “3 or 4 Families in a Country Village,”<sup>2</sup> which furnish the “follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies” (*P&P*, 62) of the satirical novel. The greatness of these novels lies in Austen’s integration of opposing forms; as James Sutherland observes, “it is not sympathy on the one hand, and a satirical withholding of sympathy on the other, but of every shade of mingled sympathy and satire.”<sup>3</sup> She may be, as Virginia Woolf notes, “one of the most consistent satirists in the whole of literature,” but her achievement lies

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<sup>1</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Common Reader* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1925), 199.

<sup>2</sup> Jane Austen to Anna Austen 9-18 September 1814, *Jane Austen’s Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye, third edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 275.

<sup>3</sup> James Sutherland, *English Satire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 121.

in the recognition that “she would not alter a hair on anybody’s head, or move one brick or one blade of grass in a world which provides her with such exquisite delight.”<sup>4</sup>

Given’s Woolf’s assessment, it is surprising that Austen’s connection to Swiftian satire is rarely recognized, particularly given the fact that Austen is universally acknowledged as a satirist.<sup>5</sup> Noticing her satire is almost as *de rigueur* as noticing that she called her work “[a] little bit (two Inches wide) of ivory.”<sup>6</sup> Whether Austen is described as a “ladylike satir[ist]” by Julia Kavanagh,<sup>7</sup> or “savagely satirical” by A. C. Ward,<sup>8</sup> whether her satire is claimed in the service of conservative<sup>9</sup> or progressive<sup>10</sup> politics, and whether her satire is considered to be literary or social, critics are united in describing Austen as a satirist.<sup>11</sup> Few critics, however, have noticed Austen’s relationship

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<sup>4</sup> Woolf, *Common Reader*, 198, 199.

<sup>5</sup> This “universal acknowledgment” of Austen as a satirist can be determined by a look at any bibliography of Austen studies. For example, Barry Roth and Joel Weinsheimer’s *An Annotated Bibliography of Jane Austen Studies, 1952-1972* (Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1973) contains 40 articles related in some way to Austen’s satire; Roth’s *An Annotated Bibliography of Jane Austen Studies, 1973-1983* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1985), contains 35; and Roth’s *An Annotated Bibliography of Jane Austen Studies, 1984-1994* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1996) contains 42.

<sup>6</sup> Austen to James Edward Austen, 16-17 December 1816, *Jane Austen’s Letters*, 323.

<sup>7</sup> Julia Kavanagh, *English Women of Letters: Biographical Sketches* (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1862), 249. Elsewhere, Kavanagh notes that Austen writes “quiet satire” and “the gentlest of satires,” 271, 272.

<sup>8</sup> A. C. Ward, “Introduction,” *Sense and Sensibility* (London: Collins, 1953), 11-16.

<sup>9</sup> Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

<sup>10</sup> Claudia L. Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women Politics and the Novel* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988).

<sup>11</sup> Although Austen was identified as a satirist in the 1960s, when she was most commonly considered as part of the “Augustan” or “neoclassical” tradition, this interpretation has diminished as critics have opened new avenues for study. Both in the past and present, however, discussions on Austen’s satire focus narrowly on specific elements of her satire in specific instances, rather than examining her satiric technique in its own right. David P. Demarest, Jr., “*Reducto Ad Absurdum*: Jane Austen’s Art of Satiric Qualification,” in *Six Satirists* Carnegie Series in English No. 9 (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Institute of Technology, 1965), describes Austen’s use of minor characters as “comic qualifiers” that adjust a reader’s

to Swiftian satire, or the ways that Swift's own satiric agenda informed the how and why of Austen's work. Even works that foreground Austen's satire, such as Allison G. Sulloway's *Jane Austen and the Province of Womanhood*, Audrey Bilger's *Laughing Feminism: Subversive Comedy in Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Jane Austen*, and Eileen Gillooly's *Smile of Discontent: Humor, Gender, and Nineteenth-Century British Fiction*, all of which make valuable contributions by examining Austen's satire in its historical or narrative context, focus primarily on how Austen uses satire in the service of social criticism.<sup>12</sup> In fact, Austen is most commonly considered as an ironist who only

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attitude toward major characters; Frank J. Kearful, in "Satire and the Form of the Novel: The Problem of Aesthetic Unity in *Northanger Abbey*," *ELH* 32, no. 4 (Dec. 1965): 511-527, examines Austen's relation to satire and the novel; David Groves, in "Knowing One's Species Better: Social Satire in *Persuasion*," *Persuasions* 6 (1984): 13-15, notes that although *Persuasion* is a conservative novel, Austen differentiates between the "self-serving" conservatism of Sir Walter and the "humane" conservatism of his daughter, Anne; Mary Jane Curry, "A New Kind of Pastoral: Anti-Development Satire in *Sanditon*," *Persuasions* 19 (1997): 167-176, argues that Austen uses pastoral motifs to criticize the exploitation of nature in early nineteenth-century culture; Richard Quaintance, in "Salutes and Satire in Jane Austen's Characters' Sense of 'Nature'," *Persuasions* 19 (1997): 219-225, mocks the clichés of Nature-worship; Claude Rawson, one of the few contemporary critics who places Austen on a continuum of satirists with authors such as Fielding, Pope, and Swift, notices the "stylistic innovations" of Austen's satire in *Persuasion* in *Satire and Sentiment 1660-1830: Stress Points in the English Augustan Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); in *The Springs of Liberty: The Satiric Tradition and Freedom of Speech* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1999), Stewart Justman describes Austen's "controlled satiric energy" as a mechanism of freedom; Judith Wylie, in "Dancing in Chains: Feminist Satire in *Pride and Prejudice*," *Persuasions* 22 (2000): 62-69, argues that Austen interpolating in the seemingly conservative tenor of her novels a satiric feminist subtext; Karl Kroeber uses evolutionary psychology and the conjunction of cultural and biological forces as a frame for Austen's satire in "Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*: Self-reflexive Satire and Biopoetics," in *The Satiric Eye: Forms of Satire in the Romantic Period* ed. Steven E. Jones (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 99-114. In *Swift's Travels: Eighteenth-Century British Satire and Its Legacy* edited by Nicholas Hudson and Aaron Santesso (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), Peter Sabor and Jenny Davidson build on the work of Rawson by discussing Austen's satirical annotations to Goldsmith's *History of England* and her use of narrators who are reminiscent of Swift's first-person narrators. Most recently, J. A. Downie, in "Rehabilitating Sir Thomas Bertram," *SEL: Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 50, no. 4 (Autumn 2010): 739-758, argues that *Mansfield Park* is not a satire of patriarchy, but a satire on Sir Thomas's failings in particular, with an eye to his rehabilitation.

<sup>12</sup> Sulloway, in the *Jane Austen and the Province of Womanhood* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), is unambiguous in her argument that Austen is a satirist; she acknowledges that one of Austen's sources comes from classical and neoclassical satire, but the other comes from her "outsider" status—a status she compares with that of concentration camp victims and enslaved persons, arguing that this status places Austen's works in a radical political stance and allies Austen with Mary Wollstonecraft.

laughs at the world, rather than as a satirist who tries to reform it—a neat bit of discrimination that would never be applied to her masculine counterparts.<sup>13</sup> In light of this, it is no surprise that J. A. Downie must begin a recent article on *Mansfield Park* by reminding readers, “Jane Austen is a satirical novelist.”<sup>14</sup>

If Austen’s satire—one of the constant currents that run through her work—is acknowledged but understudied, her relationship with Swift is so rarely mentioned as to be almost inconceivable. Critics have acknowledged the influences on Austen’s work by such various authors as John Locke, Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, Alexander Pope, Samuel Johnson, Charlotte Lennox, George Crabbe, Charlotte Smith, Elizabeth Hamilton, William Cowper, Fanny Burney, Maria Edgeworth, Jane West, James Thomson, Elizabeth Inchbald, Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Brunton, and Anne

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Although her work is ostensibly about Austen’s satire, this theme becomes submerged by Sulloway’s examination of the condition of women. In *Laughing Feminism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), Bilger focuses on women’s humor rather than on satire *per se*, although she recognizes satire as an effective weapon in the arsenal of comic women writers. In her critique of nineteenth-century women writers, *Smile of Discontent* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), a psychoanalytic and narrative perspective on women’s comedy, Gillooly ostensibly eschews discussion of satire completely, arguing that the feminine humor of these novelists “refrains from pervasive satiric engagement” 18.

<sup>13</sup> In the influential *Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), Marvin Mudrick argues that Austen’s “characteristic defense is irony ... she observes and defines, without moral or emotional engagement, the incongruities between pretense and essence....Irony becomes for her a positive agent and appears as the only possible interpreter of life,” 1. This interpretation has become canon in Jane Austen studies. See, for example, Andrew Wright, *Jane Austen’s Novels: A Study in Structure* (Middlesex: Chatto & Windus, 1953); Rachel M. Brownstein, “Jane Austen: Irony and Authority,” *Women’s Studies* 15, no 1-3 (1998): 57-70; and Mary Waldron, *Jane Austen and the Fiction of Her Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). In *Genius: A Mosaic of One Hundred Exemplary Creative Minds* (New York: Warner Books, 2002), Harold Bloom places Austen in the same context as John Donne, Pope, Swift, and Lady Murasaki, but recognizes their shared irony, rather than satire.

<sup>14</sup> Downie, 739.



Radcliffe.<sup>15</sup> Swift is noticeable by his absence. This absence can be easily attributed to Austen's place in history, writing almost 100 years after Swift published *A Tale of a Tub*, far removed from the Ancient-Modern debate. She was also writing as a woman within the moral confines of her era; therefore, according to her brother Henry, she only liked Johnson, Cowper and Crabbe because they were moral writers, and she ostensibly did not care for Fielding, for whom, "neither nature, wit, nor humour, could make her amends for so very low a scale of morals."<sup>16</sup> On such a scale, Swift would not even make an appearance.

Austen's choice of genre would also separate her from any apparent influence by Swift, because Austen's satiric propensities have been overshadowed by her greatness as a novelist. Austen is commonly viewed as a novelist so committed to realism and reticence that she is often described as a "cameoist oblivious to her times,"<sup>17</sup> whose works are, in Walter Scott's words, like Flemish paintings: "the subjects are not often elegant, and certainly never grand; but they are finished up to nature, and with a precision which delights the reader."<sup>18</sup> A writer, and a woman writer at that, who wrote realistically with such precision would seem to have little in common with Swift's chaotic worlds, extravagance of thought, and linguistic excess. Even when Austen is granted status as a

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<sup>15</sup> In *Jane Austen's Art of Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), Jocelyn Harris also notes that Austen was well read in earlier writers, such as Geoffrey Chaucer, John Milton, and William Shakespeare.

<sup>16</sup> Henry Austen, "Biographical Notice of the Author (1818)", in J. E. Austen-Leigh, *A Memoir of Jane Austen and Other Family Recollections*, ed. Kathryn Sutherland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 141.

<sup>17</sup> C. Johnson, xiii. Johnson, however, disagrees with this assessment.

<sup>18</sup> Walter Scott, unsigned review of *Emma* in the *Quarterly Review*, dated October 1815, issued March 1816, in *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage*, ed. B. C. Southam (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), 67.

satirist, it is in direct opposition to Swift. As Frank W. Bradbrook notes, “though the satire and irony of Swift reminds one of Jane Austen, his indignation, hatred and violence were too direct and extreme to make his writings generally of use to her.”<sup>19</sup> While Swift’s Juvenalian and Menippean credentials are incontrovertible (according to traditional critics), Austen is most commonly seen as Horatian, “one who corrects human and social flaws through ridicule, wit, and humor, with a wry smile as opposed to angry invective”;<sup>20</sup> as such, she is the heir to, not Swift, but Dryden and Addison. As Stewart Justman notes, “the art of beheading someone and leaving them standing Jane Austen made her own.”<sup>21</sup> According to these critics, Austen may make fun of the “large, Fat sighings” (*P*, 73) of Mrs. Musgrove, but she will not be flaying her creation alive to discover her inner workings. At best, Swift and Austen are categorized—although rarely together—as Tory conservatives, committed to upholding the patriarchal status quo.

However, by recognizing Swift’s rejection of these labels in the *Tale*—his denial of the adequacy of classical satiric forms through satiric inhabitation, his rejection of the Father Satirist who can correctly make moral judgments from a distance, and his negation of satire’s ability to effect change—one can begin to recognize both Swift’s influence on

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<sup>19</sup> Frank W. Bradbrook, *Jane Austen and Her Predecessors* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 84.

<sup>20</sup> Joan Klingel Ray, “Victorians versus Victorians: Understanding “Dear Aunt Jane,” *Persuasions*, 30 (2008), 43. Paulson, however, notes the Juvenalian qualities of *Mansfield Park* in *Satire and the Novel*, 307; in *Jane Austen the Novelist: Essays Past and Present* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), Juliet McMaster calls *Pride and Prejudice* “the closest to being what Northrop Frye calls a menippean satire, a satire on eggheads and diseases of the intellect,” 77.

<sup>21</sup> Justman, 65.

Austen and her own satiric agenda. Although Austen admired her “Dear Dr. Johnson,”<sup>22</sup> once joked about marrying Crabbe and comforting him on the death of his wife,<sup>23</sup> and recognized that “there has been one infallible Pope in the World,”<sup>24</sup> her mentors were Swift and the women writers who followed him. Using these authors as her model, Austen reconciled in the satirical novel the Swiftian understanding of satire and the generic demands of the novel. From the parodic inhabitation of the juvenilia and her earliest novels, Austen moves to meditations on satiric authority in both *Pride and Prejudice* and *Mansfield Park*, and finally to an integration of satiric and novelistic practices in *Emma* and *Persuasion*.

Swift’s influence on Austen is most clearly seen in her juvenilia, Volumes I, II, III, and “Lady Susan,” which are obsessed with the forms of both the novel and of satire. These works, which include a twelve-chapter novel of twelve brief paragraphs (“The Beautiful Cassandra”), “scraps” of fiction, a comic play that encompasses three scenes in two pages (“The Mystery”), and two longer novellas (*Catherine, or The Bower* and *Evelyn*), were written between 1787 and 1793,<sup>25</sup> when Austen was between eleven and seventeen years old; they showcase Austen’s astonishing capability and understanding of literary forms. Claudia Johnson contends that Austen’s early creations were “a workshop,

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<sup>22</sup> Austen to Cassandra Austen, 8-9 February 1807, *Jane Austen’s Letters*, 121.

<sup>23</sup> James Edward Austen Leigh, “A Memoir of Jane Austen (1871) in, *A Memoir of Jane Austen*, 71: Austen to Cassandra Austen, 21 October 1813, *Jane Austen’s Letters*, 243.

<sup>24</sup> Austen to Cassandra Austen, 26 October 1813, *Jane Austen’s Letters*, 245.

<sup>25</sup> Although the date of “Lady Susan’s” creation is unclear, as the only existing fair copy of the novel was made long after its first creation, Janet Todd and Linda Bree suggest that it was probably written in 1794, before Austen began writing the first drafts of her “Elinor and Marianne” and “First Impressions.” See “Introduction,” in *Later Manuscripts*, ed. Janet Todd and Linda Bree, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), xxiii, xxxii.

where the would-be artist first set hand to the tools of her trade, identifying operative structures and motifs, and then turning them inside out in order to explore their artificiality and bring to light their hidden implications.”<sup>26</sup> In this workshop, however, Austen scrutinized more than just the inner workings of novels; in the process of learning about the novel, she also learned about satire, and, more precisely, about Swiftian inhabitation.

Like Swift, Austen recognized that in order to understand one’s subject completely, one must “become the thing attacked.” In the *Tale*, Swift becomes his nemesis Dryden in order to shatter his predecessor’s claims for the efficacy of classical models of satire to effect change. In the juvenilia, Austen, who was “fascinated by the formal qualities of fiction itself, and by the fictionality of fiction,”<sup>27</sup> does much the same thing with the novel, inhabiting the genre and its subgenres. Her parodies function much the same as Swift’s do: to explode the idea of univocal meaning in any text and to question the ability of any literary genre to provide a model for appropriate human behavior. In light of this, Austen’s juvenilia becomes what Sulloway calls “[her] own version of *A Modest Proposal*; it contains an astonishing demonstration of deliberately unredeemed satire”.<sup>28</sup> This satire is unredeemed, of course, because no redemption can be found in satire in the Swiftian sense.

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<sup>26</sup> Johnson, 29.

<sup>27</sup> Margaret Doody, “Introduction,” in *Catherine and Other Writings* by Jane Austen, ed. Margaret Anne Doody and Douglas Murray, Oxford World Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), xxxii.

<sup>28</sup> Sulloway, 46.

Unlike Swift, however, Austen's inhabitation does not involve an immediate attack on a particular author, although her parodies of Samuel Richardson and Samuel Johnson are both regularly noted. Her inhabitation turns instead to issues raised by authors such as Manley, Lennox, and Inchbald: the authority of sentimental fiction to order women's behavior. Austen understood that "sentimental representations were often considered to redeem an otherwise suspect new form [of the novel],"<sup>29</sup> but she found these representations, with their models of perfection, both coercive and confining.<sup>30</sup> She knew that "the truisms fostered in exemplary fiction are not true," and that the authority these truisms demonstrated was not only erroneous but dangerous for women readers, because, as Margaret Doody observes, "the world does not reward virtues... and only in the pages of fiction can it be made so."<sup>31</sup> In the juvenilia, Austen shows just how easily this authority can be overturned by exposing the underlying hypocrisy of works that ostensibly provide moral instruction for women while really outlining models of moral bankruptcy.

Austen's inhabitation of the sentimental novel begins much the way Swift's inhabitation of Dryden's "Original and Progress of Satire" does: by getting to know the form. Like Swift's *Tale*, much of Austen's juvenilia appears Menippean in scope, using such various forms as drama, prose, history, and epistolary fiction—what José Landers calls "extraordinary situations, parodies of many existing texts, and contrasting themes,

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<sup>29</sup> John Mullan, "Sentimental Novels," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Eighteenth-Century Novel* ed. John Richetti (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 237.

<sup>30</sup> In a letter to her niece, Fanny Knight (23-25 March 1817), Austen asserts that "pictures of perfection as you know make me sick & wicked," *Letters of Jane Austen*, 335.

<sup>31</sup> Doody, "Introduction," xxxv.

characters and styles”—to test an “ideological idea or ‘truth’.”<sup>32</sup> In her juvenilia, the ideological “truth” or idea Austen tests is the truth of literary forms themselves to represent the real world appropriately. Austen provides extraordinary situations that are Swiftian in range: hungry children who bite off their mother’s fingers (*Henry and Eliza*, J, 43), a woman caught in a steel trap calmly telling “her life and adventures” (*Jack and Alice*, 22), and a female rake blithely commenting, “I am now going to murder my Sister” (*Letter from a Young Lady*, 223). Austen however, does not test this truth with “detachment, ... moral distance... [or] coldness,” as John Halperin has suggested,<sup>33</sup> but rather with satiric intimacy. Through this intimacy, she illuminates the indeterminacy of such novels to reveal any singular moral meaning for women.

Like Manley’s and Inchbald’s novels, Austen’s early texts provide a catalog of violence by and against women: “executions, amputations, female starvation, suicides, and attempted and successful murders of all kinds: matricide, fratricide, sororicide, and the attempted infanticide of an unwelcome newborn girl.”<sup>34</sup> The world of Austen’s juvenilia is Manley’s and Inchbald’s, a world of self-interest, where “conventionally situated characters engage in an orgy of greed, lust, and violence,”<sup>35</sup> and only the most heartless, devious characters, like Lady Susan, flourish. It is also Lennox’s world, where young women can be “corrupted” by reading romantic or sentimental fiction. Austen’s

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<sup>32</sup> José Laners, *Unauthorized Versions: Irish Menippean Satire, 1919-1952* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 5.

<sup>33</sup> John Halperin, “Unengaged Laughter: Jane Austen’s Juvenilia,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 81 (1992): 286-287, 299.

<sup>34</sup> Sulloway, 47.

<sup>35</sup> Doody, “Introduction,” xxxiv.

universe, however, has no room for a rational Divine to turn romantic madness into novelistic sanity. Her heroines are on their own, running amok or “faint[ing] alternately on the sofa” (114), in circumstances that Swift surely would appreciate. While Manley implicates herself in her satire through her character of Delia and her tale of romance reading, Lennox creates sympathy for Arabella while consistently providing a corrective narrative point of view, and Inchbald relies on a strong authorial presence to excoriate Hannah Primrose’s plight, Austen recognizes that true authorial intent can only come through identification, attacking sentimental fiction on its own terms of construction. In this manner, Austen’s parodies, like Swift’s *Tale*, destabilize generic boundaries, allowing a multiplicity of meanings to be discovered.

Although Austen investigates the conventions of novels in all of her juvenilia, her satiric inhabitation is observed most clearly in “Love and Friendship,” Austen’s sharpest satire on sentimental fiction. It begins immediately with her choice of style: the epistolary novel so favored by sentimental authors like Richardson. In relating “the Misfortunes and Adventures” (103) of her life in a series of letters to a young Marianne, Austen’s aptly-named Laura is the sole arbiter of her story, unfettered by narrative correction, thus allowing Austen to reveal the poverty of sentimental fiction through a typical sentimental heroine who is thoroughly committed to the cult of sensibility. In order to reveal this poverty, however, Austen first must allow readers to recognize the authenticity of Laura’s voice. Far from parodic excess, Laura’s sensibility, a feeling “too tremblingly alive to every affliction of my Freinds, my Acquaintance and particularity of every affliction of my own” (104), is presented originally as sincere, as is her immediate attachment to

Edward, her instant recognition of her grandfather, her prioritizing love over money, and her awareness of “the Shackles of Parental Authority” (116) that seek to divide young lovers forever; these are all standard conventions of sentimental fiction and could be taken almost directly from any number of eighteenth-century novels that seek seriously to represent the philosophy and aesthetics of sensibility.<sup>36</sup>

Austen, however, understood that the “world does not operate according to the logic of eighteenth-century fiction,”<sup>37</sup> and as Laura’s letters continue interminably—like the letters of Pamela and Clarissa—Laura’s voice becomes inhabited by Austen’s, shattering her sincere representation of sensibility, the capacity to respond emotionally to beauty and pathos, and revealing its inherent selfishness and heartlessness; while these sentimental heroines “proclaim their delicate feelings, tender sentiments, and refined sensibilities,” note Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, “they are in fact having a delightful time gratifying their desires at the expense of everyone else’s.”<sup>38</sup> The principles of sensibility authorize Laura and Sophia to defy not only their own parents, but *all* parents, to refuse to pay their debts, and to steal money from Macdonald, rationalizing that “it would be a proper treatment of so vile a Wretch” (125). When confronted with an unsympathetic evaluation of her actions, Laura cannot or will not perceive that her

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<sup>36</sup> These conventions are detailed in the explanatory notes of the Cambridge Edition of the *Juvenilia*, 427-444. They are also discussed in Jocelyn Harris, *Jane Austen’s Art of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), in Patricia Meyer Spacks, “Plots and Possibilities: Jane Austen’s *Juvenilia*,” and in Juliet McMaster, “Teaching ‘Love and Freindship,’” both in *Jane Austen’s Beginnings: The Juvenilia and Lady Susan*, ed. J. David Grey (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989), 123-134 and 135-151, respectively.

<sup>37</sup> Doody, “Introduction,” xxxv.

<sup>38</sup> Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 115.



actions, and those of her friend, have left behind a trail of nothing but heartache, resentment, and death; she considers only “that [she] had always behaved in a manner which reflected Honour on [her] Feelings and Refinement” (135), and therefore all reproaches are unjustified. Through Austen’s inhabitation of the sentimental genre, the inherent moral superiority of sensibility is exposed as nothing more than a self-interest that would be well-known to Swift, Manley, and Inchbald.

The illusion of sensibility’s “refinement” is also disrupted through parodic inhabitation of the text as, again and again, Laura regales her reader with the superiority of sensibility over all other qualities, while simultaneously revealing its inherent pettiness. A young man who is “Sensible, well-informed, and Agreeable...has no soul” (122) in part because of his hair color. A young woman, first described as “one of the best of ages, ... could not be supposed to possess either exalted Ideas, Delicate Feelings, or refined Sensibilities” (131) because she is plain and is named Bridget. She may possess a soul but she is “only an object of contempt” (131) for those with truly refined sensibilities. Again, Laura is sincere in representing the conventions of the cult of sensibility; beauty and pathos *are* required to inspire a response, and Men such as Graham, and girls such as Bridget, who have committed the grave offense of not reading “the Sorrows of Werter” (122), or even worse, of being ordinary, *would* be beneath acknowledgment. The contempt Laura feels for these characters, whose only transgressions are to be good-tempered and civil, fractures the cultured veneer of sensibility, forcing readers to recognize that Laura’s refined emotions are little more than superficial posturing.

Nowhere is this posturing more pronounced than in the physical representations of Laura's and Sophia's sensibility. Every event renders these women unconscious: for example, the meeting of Edward and Augustus: "It was too pathetic for the feelings of Sophia and myself—We fainted alternately on a Sofa" (114); the arrest of Augustus for stealing money and not paying his debts: "Ah! What could we do but what we did! We sighed and fainted on the Sofa" (117); and the sudden appearance and departure of their long-lost grandfather: "[we] instantly fainted in each other's arms" (121). Finally, these exquisite emotions have a fatal effect: when Laura and Sophia witness the phaeton crash and death of their husbands—which Laura describes as both "lucky" (128) and "fortunate" (129) because it distracts Sophia from her far more important melancholic indulgence—"Sophia shrieked and fainted on the Ground—I screamed and instantly ran mad....For an Hour and a Quarter did we continue in this unfortunate Situation—Sophia fainting every moment and I running Mad as often" (129). Without a sofa to catch her fall, Sophia contracts a galloping consumption that kills her, but not before she can deduce a final lesson from her sensibility: "Beware of fainting-fits....Though at the time they may be refreshing and Agreeable....I die a Martyr to my grief for the loss of Augustus...Run mad as often as you chuse; but do not faint—" (132-133). In this satiric assault on the excesses of sensibility, Austen enters completely into Swift's textual madness of trepanning and custards, where running mad is considered a healthy lifestyle choice and the lack of a convenient sofa results in death.

In her satire of sentimental fiction, however, Austen's parodic goal is not simply to excoriate these conventions, as her parody "is never so essentially prescriptive nor so

unitary.”<sup>39</sup> Like Swift’s inhabitation of Dryden’s “Discourse,” Austen’s inhabitation of sentimental novels “interacts with other texts and discourses but does not claim a unique and meaningful integrity of its own.”<sup>40</sup> Austen’s parodic inhabitations simultaneously excoriate the clichés of sentimental fiction, ridicule the condition of women as they are depicted by these clichés, and provide fantastic alternatives to them, thereby revealing a multiplicity of possible interpretations.

Gilbert and Gubar recognize one possible interpretation of Austen’s work when they argue that Austen’s parody of sentimental fiction is not simply to ridicule bad writing; rather “the point ... is precisely to illustrate the dangerous delusiveness of fiction which seriously presents heroines like Laura... as models of reality,”<sup>41</sup> giving women nothing more to do in life than indulge in their own narcissistic excesses while waiting to be rescued by their heroes. The dangers of misreading sentimental fiction is a theme that Austen repeatedly revisits in her novels: In *Northanger Abbey*, Catherine Morland is led astray by reading gothic fiction, and in *Sense and Sensibility*, Marianne Dashwood’s excessive sensibilities almost lead to her death from wandering about in the rain. Austen also recognizes that misreading sentimental fiction is not limited to women; in the late fragment *Sanditon* (1817), Austen examines the effect of sentimental fiction on Sir Edward, a man who “deriv[ed] only false principles from lessons of morality, and incentives to vice from the history of its overthrow” (S, 183). From the sentimental

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<sup>39</sup> Johnson, 31.

<sup>40</sup> Robert Phiddian, *Swift’s Parody*, Cambridge studies in eighteenth century English literature and thought: 26 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 197.

<sup>41</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, 115.

novels of Richardson, he learns to be, not Sir Charles Grandison, but Lovelace, bent on seducing a young woman whose circumstances “in every way call for it....She [is] young, lovely and dependant” (184)—in short, the perfect sentimental heroine; even her name, Clara, recalls Richardson’s doomed heroine.

Gilbert and Gubar may be correct that these “ludicrous ... novelistic clichés ... create absurd misconceptions”<sup>42</sup> in the minds of women readers already socialized to place paramount importance on “culturally mandated ties of affection and solicitude to ... figures of male authority,”<sup>43</sup> but Austen’s own views cannot be so easily established. As Johnson observes, “we will look in vain for unqualified and securely embedded norms that enable and oblige us to conclude that Austen is simply ‘against’ impetuous feeling.”<sup>44</sup> Johnson recognizes that Austen uses such conventions as “impetuous feeling” as recognized idioms, and therefore they should not read with any specific moral judgment. However, Austen’s perspective on her early female characters is complicated also because she creates parodic heroines who are spectacularly triumphant in their transgressions. While exposing the inherent selfishness, pettiness, and general ridiculousness of sentimental fiction, Austen creates fantastic alternatives to the traditional female narrative. Unrepentant, unencumbered by the troublesome morality required by souls who lack fine sensibility, malicious, aggressive, and shamelessly arrogant as they dominate other characters, Austen’s heroines—from Lady Williams

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<sup>42</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, 115.

<sup>43</sup> Bilger, 21.

<sup>44</sup> Johnson, 32.

(*Jack and Alice*) to Lady Susan—“impose their will over and against a society which insists that they have none.”<sup>45</sup> The Beautiful Cassandra takes whatever she wants (a bonnet, ices, or a coach ride) without permission, without paying her debts, and certainly without physical restraint (knocking down the Pastry Cook), and finds in this chaos “a day well spent” (*J*, 56). In *Henry and Eliza*, Eliza, after surviving her mother’s attempted infanticide and her own children’s cannibalism, raises an army to slaughter her enemies (43-45). In *Lady Susan*, Austen’s anti-heroines reach their zenith with the most Swiftian of all her creations. Rachel Brownstein has eloquently summarized Lady Susan’s character: “a beautiful, glamorous, devious, thirty-six-year-old widow with ... a knack for seducing other women’s men for the fun of it... rampag[ing] from country house to country house, wrecking other people’s families[;] she has contempt for little children ... and maternal affection; ... her charm is her deceitful eloquence.”<sup>46</sup> Unapologetically sexual, predatory, and avaricious, Lady Susan is, in short, everything that patriarchal society dreads. Far from ridiculing these monsters, Austen instead uses them as what Bilger calls “cathartic releases from feminine restraints,” to illuminate the present condition of women by imagining its opposite.<sup>47</sup> Austen’s mature novels largely forego these fantasies of female power, but in Lydia Bennet, they have a realistic counterpart. Like her fantastic predecessors, Lydia revels in her sexuality, and even the shame of seduction does not quell her; returning to her family after eloping with Wickham, “Lydia

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<sup>45</sup> Bilger, 200.

<sup>46</sup> Rachel Brownstein, *Why Jane Austen?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 244, 248.

<sup>47</sup> Bilger, 200.

[is] Lydia still...untamed, unabashed, wild, noisy and fearless" (*P&P*, 348). Far from receiving the retribution that would be meted out to the fallen heroines of sentimental fiction—the inhabitants of Meryton are convinced that she will “come upon the town”(342)—she instead marries her seducer; although Austen implies that this may be punishment enough.

In her juvenilia and other early writings, Austen gives free range to her satiric imagination, using Swiftian inhabitation to break apart novelistic conventions into “arbitrary but delicious play, depending on rules that can be amazingly broken from moment to moment.”<sup>48</sup> She was aware, however, that writings such as the juvenilia would not be accepted by a nineteenth-century public, for whom Richard Elliott notes, “the word *satire* had acquired ... a wide range of generally unpleasant associations.”<sup>49</sup> Austen had read Cowper’s “The Task” (1785), which articulated contemporary ambivalence toward satiric aggression:

Yet what can satire, whether grave or gay?  
It may correct a foible, may chastise  
The freaks of fashion, regulate the dress,  
Retrench a swordblade, or displace a patch;  
But where are its sublime trophies found?  
What vice has it subdued? What heart reclaimed  
By rigour? Or whom laughed into reform?  
Alas! Leviathan is not so tamed....<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Doody, “Introduction,” xxxvi.

<sup>49</sup> Richard Elliott, *The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 269.

<sup>50</sup> William Cowper, *The Task*, Book II :The Time-Piece, lines 315-322, in *The Poems of William Cowper* Volume II: 1782-1785, edited by John D. Baird and Charles Ryskamp (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 147. In her introduction to the Oxford World Classics edition of *Sense and Sensibility* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), Doody suggests *The Task* as one possible Cowper poem that Edward might have read to the Dashwood sisters.

She also knew of Burney's ambivalent characterization of satiric women in *Evelina* (1778), in which the heroine's middle-aged guardian, Mrs. Selwyn, is described as "extremely clever; her understanding, indeed may be called *masculine*; ... She is not a favorite of Mr. Villars, who has often been disgusted with her unmerciful propensity for satire."<sup>51</sup> Embedded in Burney's statement is the common idea that satire—and the cleverness it requires—is a masculine trait, and one that is "disgusting" in women, whose job was, as Jayne Lewis suggests, to "keep human nature from revealing itself in all its lawless brutality ... [to] veil society from the truth about itself."<sup>52</sup> Austen acknowledges this attitude in a number of her works, giving characters who represent social norms (whether satirically or sincerely), a distrust of satire and wit. In *Sense and Sensibility*, for example, Lady Middleton does not like Elinor or Marianne because "she fancied them satirical, perhaps without knowing what it was to be satirical, but *that* did not signify" (*S&S*, 280), and in *Persuasion*, Lady Russell, while a much more sympathetic character than Lady Middleton, distrusts Frederick Wentworth because, among other things, "she had little taste for wit" (*P*, 73). For Jane Austen, who had a great taste for wit, finding an appropriate place for her view of the world *did* signify, but she appreciated that the heartless laughter of her juvenilia would not be welcomed, both because of changing literary tastes and because she was a woman.

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<sup>51</sup> Burney, Fanny. *Evelina*, ed. Kristina Straub Bedford Cultural Editions (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997), 307.

<sup>52</sup> Jayne Lewis, "Compositions of Ill Nature: Women's Place in a Satiric Tradition," *Critical Matrix* 2, no. 2 (1986): 42.

Aware that she is precluded from making use of the classic and accepted satiric modes (in verse or prose) of men such as Dryden, Pope, and Johnson, Austen draws primarily on the works of her female predecessors in her mature novels. Like them, she would have been aware of the importance male writers placed on a manly style and verse that was at once dignified and hearty. This manly voice is also public, one that speaks to the world about grand themes, rather than one that finds relevance in such mundane things as domestic chores or neighborhood gossip. Austen's knowledge of these writers and their attitudes toward literature would prohibit her from both writing in the "manly" style, or, by definition, from ever achieving dignity. In imitating traditional masculine forms, Austen would have become one of the women writers Pope attacks in *The Dunciad*. Instead, she turns to the novel, a feminine genre, which, according to Ros Ballaster, "from classical times to the present, has comically enacted the radical instability of masculine forces of social and personal control."<sup>53</sup> The novel is also a flexible genre that "can simultaneously incorporate, absolve itself of incorporating, and go blithely on incorporating a variety of satiric elements;"<sup>54</sup> this genre, which she knew inside and out, afforded Austen ample opportunity to develop further a feminine satiric vision that could encompass her preferred subject matter, the needs of her audience, and her own sophisticated sense of human nature and humor.

This private and domestic sphere of satire is clearly set apart from the manly ideas of Dryden, Pope, and Johnson, and, ironically, closer to the ideals of Swift, for whom

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<sup>53</sup> Ros Ballaster, "Women and the Rise of the Novel: Sexual Prescripts," in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1700-1800* ed. Vivien Jones. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 199.

<sup>54</sup> Lewis, 65.



public satire is “a sort of glass wherein beholders do generally discover everybody’s face but their own” (*BB*, 215). Realizing that her voice would carry no weight in such a public realm, Austen turned to the works of her female predecessors and redefined satiric boundaries by examining and writing about communities; in other words, the private, domestic sphere. Although Austen’s use of the domestic novel has been criticized “for failing to engage the world beyond the domestic confines of private feeling, the middle-class household, and the English nation or for inadequately acknowledging the dependence of these private benefits on public—on class and colonial—exploitation,”<sup>55</sup> Michael McKeon argues that the domestic novel in general, and Austen’s in particular, provide “not (only) an alternative to the public, but (also) its internalization.”<sup>56</sup> This internalization of the public sphere into the domestic form of the novel is what allows Austen’s satiric designs—the public made private—to flourish.

This community separates Austen from her male satiric predecessors primarily through the process of inhabitation. In her juvenilia, Austen had used Swiftian inhabitation to critique the ability of fiction to serve as a moral authority through exemplary characters that have no place in reality. In Austen’s mature work, there is again no satiric separation as readers become part of the social milieu of the novel, privy to news that the world at large does not care about: the arrival of new neighbors, the romantic inclinations of lower-middle-class farmers, and the unavailability of wagons

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<sup>55</sup> Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 716. McKeon specifically cites Edward Said’s *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993), which critiques Austen’s treatment of slavery and empire in *Mansfield Park*.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 716.

until haying season is over; the community does not represent abstract public ideals that no one could ever hope to obtain, but individuals whose social interactions intersect with their private concerns. These small, seemingly private concerns are the basis for Austen's most stinging satires on such topics as marriage, women's education, and family responsibility. Conversely, Austen's critiques of many important social issues, such as illegitimate children, unwanted pregnancy, adultery, and abandonment, tend to be treated with much more sincerity and much less satire than would be supposed. In *Sense and Sensibility*, for example, Willoughby's seduction and abandonment of a pregnant Eliza (and the seduction and abandonment of Eliza's mother) is portrayed without satire, and in *Pride and Prejudice*, Wickham's attempted seduction of Georgiana Darcy and his successful seduction of Lydia are treated as grave errors, but when Wickham marries Lydia and social order is restored, Austen resumes her satire.

More importantly, Austen uses Swiftian inhabitation to further integrate satire with the novel by focusing on the internal processes of individuals as they perceive their world. "What is really new to Austen," states Katheryn Sutherland, "is the inwardness of the heroine, whose complex inner life of the mind replaces the less probable adventures in the body of her conventional counterpart. ... a narrative method inflected by the personal subjectivity of a self-conversing heroine."<sup>57</sup> There is no voyeuristic separation between satiric object and satirists as there are in so many satires by men; for example, even in satires of "private" moments, such as Belinda dressing in Pope's *Rape of the*

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<sup>57</sup> Katheryn Sutherland, "Jane Austen and the Invention of the Serious Modern Novel," in *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature, 1740-1830*, ed. Thomas Keymer and Jon Mee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 254.

*Lock*, there is a sense that the world is watching through a peephole, separate from the object of the discourse. Austen, however, like Swift, knew that understanding is not possible from such a distance; therefore, she invests her characters, from Catherine Morland to Anne Elliot, with an individual consciousness and complex internal processes that allow the reader to comprehend the heroine's development from her own perspective. These processes are enhanced through free indirect discourse, which "combines the ostensibly factual reporting of speech and thought with complex and shifting intimations of judgmental perspective."<sup>58</sup> Austen's use of free indirect speech has been interpreted as a distancing device, allowing the reader to interpret both an individual's internal, and often incorrect, judgments and align one's self with the corrective voice of the narrator, Austen's version of the alleged Father Satirist. These lines begin to blur, however, as early as *Sense and Sensibility*. Although the narrator's satiric portrayals of John and Fanny Dashwood and the Palmers are provided to shed light on otherwise unknown events, to attack the avariciousness of family or the potential lovelessness of marriage, the narrative is most often linked to that of Elinor and her perspective of the world. In Austen's two late completed works, *Emma* and *Persuasion*, the narrator is almost fully immersed in the perspective of the main character. Although Austen's satiric narrator is never far away, the point of view is almost always Anne's. Consider, for example, the narrator's comment on Anne Elliot's love for Wentworth: "Prettier musings of high-wrought love and eternal constancy, could never have passed along the streets of Bath.... It was almost enough to spread purification and perfume all

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<sup>58</sup> Claude Rawson, 269.

the way" (*P*, 208). This immersion induces readers to do exactly what Swift suggested in the *Tale*: to blur the lines between satirist and satiric object. In *Emma*, for example, the main consciousness of the novel is Emma's and most of the satire is directed at her, and by extension, the reader. "Austen induces us to commit Emma's errors," John O'Neill affirms, "to misjudge the characters and situations in the novel as she misjudges them and to recognize our misjudgments as she recognizes them. Sharing Emma's errors, we share her shame at having committed them."<sup>59</sup> Austen's successful integration of the inhabitation of Swift's satire and that of such novelists as Manley, Lennox, and Inchbald is, as Sutherland suggests, "really new," and everlasting; O'Neill suggests that Austen's narrative strategy is "one very important reason why the novel has become...the genre of choice for satirical writers."<sup>60</sup>

Austen's earliest novels, *Northanger Abbey* (1818) and *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), illuminate the author's first efforts at integration of satire into the domestic novel. They most clearly resemble the juvenilia in their preoccupation with popular literary forms—the gothic and sentimental fiction, respectively—as well as with the inherent dangers of misreading these works as models for real life. As in Swift's *Tale*, Austen creates in the juvenilia a palimpsest of popular fiction, "where the surface text conceals and half reveals another, less obvious text,"<sup>61</sup> and in so doing, reveals a multiplicity of interpretations. Like Manley and Lennox, she reveals a complicated relationship with

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<sup>59</sup> John J. O'Neill, "The Experience of Error: Ironie Entrapment in Augustan Narrative Satire," *Papers on Language and Literature* 18 (1982): 278.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 284.

<sup>61</sup> Angela Leighton, "Sense and Silences: Reading Jane Austen Again," in *Jane Austen: New Perspectives*, ed. Janet Todd. Women & Literature New Series Volume 3 (New York, Holmes & Meier, 1983), 131.

“women’s” literature, as her inhabitation of gothic and sentimental fiction both ridicules the follies such exemplary fiction while simultaneously affirming many elements of the genres. As Sutherland states, “If Austen’s fiction is a sustained dialogue with and allusive critique of the contemporary novel, it is so on terms which endorse the genre’s high social and moral purpose even as they satirize its more extravagant effects.”<sup>62</sup> These early works also are concerned with the conflicting generic demands of satire and the novel, specifically the tradition that satire is an open form that resists closure, while the novel is a form that requires closure.

With its well-known parody of Anne Radcliffe’s *Mysteries of Udolpho* and other gothic fictions, its highly allusive nature, and its narrator who consistently interrupts the flow of the novel with satiric asides, *Northanger Abbey* is Austen’s most Swiftian novel. This is appropriate, as the novel begins where Swift’s *Tale* ends: in negation. As Terry Castle notices, the novel “begins with a resounding no,”<sup>63</sup> announcing the theme of rejection that permeates the book: “No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy, would have supposed her born to be a heroine” (NA, 5). At every opportunity, Austen negates gothic clichés: Catherine is *not* a gothic heroine, Henry Tilney is *not* a gothic hero, Northanger Abbey is *not* a crumbling pile of rubble, General Tilney did *not* murder his wife, and a concealed laundry list is *not* a manuscript of the wretched Mathilda’s misfortunes. Consistent with this negation, Austen’s narrator relentlessly reminds the reader that the book is *not* reality by reflexively drawing attention to its own

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<sup>62</sup> Sutherland, “Jane Austen and the Invention of the Serious Modern Novel,” 252.

<sup>63</sup> Terry Castle, “Introduction,” in *Northanger Abbey, Lady Susan, The Watsons, and Sanditon*, ed. Terry Castle Oxford World Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), vii.

fictionality. The narrator interrupts a description of Bath to describe Mrs. Allen, Catherine's chaperone, "that the reader may be able to judge, in what matter her actions will hereafter tend to promote the general distress of the work, and how she will, probably contribute to reduce poor Catherine to all the desperate wretchedness of which a last volume is capable" (89). The narrator also forces readers to recognize Catherine's own fictionality by "dismissing my heroine to the sleepless couch, which is the true heroine's portion" and threatening to keep her from sleep for three months (89). By the end of the novel, all pretense of realism is gone, and the narrator takes over the text as Swift's Digressions take over the *Tale*, as meta-discussion of how to resolve plot points degenerates into "a tell-tale compression of pages" (259). The novel ends in a similar fashion, with a deeply ambiguous moral: "whether the tendency of this work be altogether to recommend parental tyranny, or reward filial disobedience" (261). Whatever moral readers choose, they are left with the same quandary as readers of the *Tale*: to become either Fools or Knaves.

Veiled among these interminable "no's" however, is Austen's first "yes." Castle notes that, in parodying Radcliffe, Austen "performed an essential act of artistic self-individuation,"<sup>64</sup> and Johnson concurs, observing that "*Northanger Abbey* is a dauntlessly self-affirming novel,"<sup>65</sup> in which Austen asserts her own position in the tradition of the satirical novel along with Burney and Edgeworth. If, as Betty Rizzo argues, "satire is the

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<sup>64</sup> Castle, "Introduction," xi.

<sup>65</sup> Johnson, 48.

intellectual method, gothic the emotional method of dealing with the threat of evil,”<sup>66</sup>

*Northanger Abbey* is Austen’s attempt to reconcile these traditions. Standard interpretations of *Northanger Abbey* suggest that Austen’s straight-up parody of gothic forms characterizes Austen’s commitment to realistic fiction, but Austen’s satire, like Swift’s, “expose[s] the perspectivity of various discourses and demonstrate[s] how stock figures, expressions, and paradigms are not ... reality, but rather themselves are constructions, which promote certain agendas and exclude others.”<sup>67</sup> To observe that Austen only ridiculed gothic romances, whether from a desire to promote literary realism or from a social anxiety that novels encouraged inappropriate reading by women, is to accede to an agenda that devalues women’s writing and reading, an agenda that Austen wholeheartedly rejects:

I will not adopt that ungenerous and impolitic custom so common with novel writers, of degrading by their contemptuous censure the very performances, to the number of which they are themselves adding...and scarcely ever letting them be read by their own heroine, who, if she accidentally take up a novel, is sure to turn over its insipid pages with disgust....Although our productions have afforded more extensive and unaffected pleasure than those of any other literary corporation in the world, no species of composition has been so much decried. From pride, ignorance, or fashion, our foes are almost as many as our readers. And while the abilities of the nine-hundredth abridger of the History of England, or of the man who collects and publishes in a volume some dozen lines of Milton, Pope, or Prior, with a paper from the Spectator, and a chapter from Sterne, are eulogized by a thousand pens,—there seems almost a general wish of decrying the capacity and undervaluing the labour of the novelist, and of slighting the performances which have only genius, wit, and taste to recommend them... “Oh, it is only a novel!... It is only Cecilia, or Camilla, or Belinda;” or, in short, only some work in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough

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<sup>66</sup> Betty Rizzo, “Renegotiating the Gothic,” in *Revising Women: Eighteenth-Century “Women’s Fiction” and Social Engagement*, ed. Paula R. Backscheider (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 58. See also Kearful, 511-527.

<sup>67</sup> Johnson, 32.

knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour are conveyed to the world in the best chosen language (30-31).

In this satiric aside about the hypocrisy of novelists and literary critics, the injured body Austen is talking about is not all novelists in general, but female novelists in particular. When discussing the “appropriate” reading or writing material, she describes histories (which Austen herself satirized) or collections of poetry and prose by significant male writers. When naming novels that are dismissed as useless—despite genius, wit, and taste—Austen does not say “it is *only Clarissa, Tom Jones, or Tristram Shandy*” or any novels written by men. Only novels written by Fanny Burney and Maria Edgeworth are “discredited.” Here, Austen satirizes the very idea that novels by women can be overlooked as insignificant. Even as she has Henry Tilney argue that young men, including himself, read as many novels as do women, Austen also has him intimate that they are not serious reading compared to histories and political tracts. Austen, however, was aware that this type of reading would be of little interest to most women, because, as Catherine Morland points out, “the men [in history, popes and kings] are all so good for nothing, and hardly any women at all” (110). History, then, is strikingly similar to satire. Austen may parody Anne Radcliffe and other female writers, but she is acutely aware that novels written by (and ostensibly for) women could be used for strong social critique, particularly because they were not taken seriously.

In being aware that “the gothic as a literary mode was suitable to the inferior author because it involved the emotional response to evil of the impotent—discomfort,



fright, terror, or horror,”<sup>68</sup> Austen uses this literary cover to demonstrate that even “inferior” literature has a purpose in helping the “impotent” female reader learn to understand the world. Unlike Lennox’s Arabella, who must undergo a process of “unlearning,” or recognizing that her romantic education has really been a mis-education, Austen’s Catherine first must learn to read gothic romances (taught primarily by her friend Isabella), and then learn that the lessons of gothic fiction are both false and true.<sup>69</sup> Although Catherine’s attempts to see the world through the Gothic lens are consistently undercut and finally given their death blow with Henry’s shocked speech—“Remember the country and age in which we live. Remember that we are English, that we are Christians”(203)—Austen subverts this satire by making Gothic fiction the means by which Catherine can interpret General Tilney more clearly than can any sensible, history-reading person. Tilney’s treatment of his wife and children borders on the abusive: he dominates Henry and Eleanor, and in their father’s presence they become quiet and withdrawn, whether in Bath or at the Abbey. When forcing Catherine out of the Abbey, Eleanor bitterly remarks, “you must have been long enough in this house to see that I am but a nominal mistress of it, my real power is nothing” (232). His treatment of his wife, as related by Henry, is much the same; “I will not pretend,” he states, “that while she lived she might not often had much to bear, ... his temper injured her” (203). The General’s appalling behavior reaches its height when he discovers that Catherine has no fortune and subsequently expels her from the Abbey with no money to return home and

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<sup>68</sup> Rizzo, 58.

<sup>69</sup> Cf Johnson, 35. Johnson argues that Austen satirically points out gothic conventions in order to illuminate some very real dangers for young women.

no servant to ensure that she arrives safely. As Thomas Keymer argues, Tilney has much in common with Radcliffe's Count Montoni, and, far from deceiving Catherine, "reading Radcliffe has in the most important sense not misled Catherine at all,"<sup>70</sup> as she rightly recognizes "that in suspecting General Tilney of either murdering or shutting up his wife, she had scarcely sinned against his character, or magnified his cruelty" (256). While ridiculing gothic conventions, Austen recognizes the way this "inferior" form of literature can be used to reveal human nature, in all its lawless brutality. In this way, her parodic inhabitation of gothic fiction, like that of sentimental fiction, promotes multivalent readings of what could be considered a straightforward satire on literary convention.

In *Sense and Sensibility*, Austen's satiric impulses are more controlled. Rather than allowing elements of satire and elements of the novel "to exist side by side in seeming contradiction,"<sup>71</sup> as in *Northanger Abbey*, Austen blends a less explicit (but no less satiric) parody and a far-more muted narrator with what Keymer calls "a state-of-the-art regency novel, ... with its focus on female experience and emotion, and the struggles of young women against romantic obstacles and social conventions,"<sup>72</sup> in an apparent acceptance of generic conventions for women readers. *Sense and Sensibility*, however, is

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<sup>70</sup> Thomas Keymer, "Northanger Abbey and Sense and Sensibility," in *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen* ed. Edward Copeland and Juliet McMaster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 30-31.

<sup>71</sup> Kearful, 514.

<sup>72</sup> Keymer, 31.

not a circulating-library novel that “popularize[s] female destruction”<sup>73</sup> by punishing young girls who are corrupted by “bad” reading. As in all of Austen’s texts, satire is used in *Sense and Sensibility* to open a multiplicity of meanings: while Marianne Dashwood’s excessive sensibility is the subject of much of the novel’s ridicule, Austen subverts fictional conventions by refusing to allow Marianne to suffer the fate of conventional fallen heroines, instead rewarding her with a true romantic hero—albeit not in the form she expects.

Marianne is described as “sensible and clever; but eager in everything; her sorrows, her joys, could have no moderation.... She was everything but prudent” (*S&S*, 7). Her responses to poetry, nature, and men are the affectations of the heroines of the novels of sensibility: the “beautiful lines” of Cowper’s poetry have “frequently almost driven [her] wild” (20); “with what transporting sensations [has she] formerly seen [the dead leaves at Norland] fall! What feelings have they... inspired” (101); and “[she] could not be happy with a man whose taste did not in every point coincide with [her] own. He must enter into all [her] feelings; the same books, the same music must charm [them] both” (20). While she consistently rejects convention and “detest[s] jargon of every kind” (113), Marianne cannot see that she is the very picture of sentimental cliché. She vets potential suitors in the same manner. Not only is Colonel Brandon far too old for her, but she believes “that a man of five and thirty might well have outlived all acuteness of feeling and every exquisite power of enjoyment” (42). In Willoughby, however, she finds

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<sup>73</sup> Barbara M. Benedict, “Jane Austen and the Culture of Circulating Libraries: The Construction of Female Literacy,” in *Revising Women: Eighteenth-Century “Women’s Fiction” and Social Engagement*, ed. Paula R. Backscheider (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 181.

her soul mate: a man whose tastes are “strikingly alike” hers, who “estimate[s] the beauties [of Cowper and Scott] as he ought” (56), and who “admire[s] Pope no more than is proper” (57). Her literal fall and rescue by Willoughby is, in sentimental convention, a symbolic fall into sexuality, and her ultimate response to Willoughby’s rejection—near death from wandering about in the rain—is the only appropriate end for such a character. “Women abused in love are expected to die,” observes Johnson. “This is what conventionally happens in sentimental novels, and this is what everyone, with stunning matter-of-factness, expects from Marianne.”<sup>74</sup>

Austen, however, subverts these conventions not only by allowing Marianne to live, but also by allowing her to mature from her experiences. “I saw in my own behavior ...nothing but a series of impudence towards myself, and want of kindness to others” (391), she tells Elinor after recovering from her illness. “I saw that my own feelings had prepared my sufferings, and that my want of fortitude under them had almost led me to the grave....it would have been self-destruction” (391). Unlike Hannah Primrose and other heroines of sentimental novels who die for and from love, and unlike Austen’s juvenile characters, who never develop (and never need to develop) any sense that their excessive sensibility devastates those around them, Marianne realizes that her “potent sensibility” almost has destroyed not only herself, but her family. Urging this realization, that private acts can fracture a community (no matter how small), is one of the main goals of Austen’s satire.

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<sup>74</sup> Johnson, 64.

Austen further subverts sentimental convention in another way: by rewarding the sinning heroine with a true sentimental hero—but that hero is the dour Colonel Brandon rather than the dashing John Willoughby. Austen plays with sentimental convention by consistently portraying Willoughby with language befitting a sentimental hero: he is at first shrouded in mystery, with “manly beauty and more than common gracefulness, ... equal to what [Marianne’s] fancy had ever drawn for the hero of a favourite story” (51); he cares nothing for creature comforts, wanting only the coziness of a Barton Cottage; his tastes are in every way compatible with Marianne’s, and he is as instantly devoted to her as she is to him. These conventions are stripped away, however, when it is revealed that not only is he “expensive” and avaricious, but that he seduced and abandoned Brandon’s ward, Eliza, with no sense of responsibility, and that he originally attempted to do the same to Marianne (361-365). His confession to Elinor is a litany of blamelessness: he truly loved Marianne and could not fathom marrying her into poverty, he forgot to give Eliza his direction—and, more infuriatingly blames her for not having the common-sense to discover it—and he married a woman he neither respects or loves because his aunt cut off his inheritance. Willoughby’s confession itself is a deconstruction of romantic convention, as it alleviates his own suffering while adding to that of Elinor and Marianne. When he asks Elinor, “do you think me most a knave or a fool?” (360), the perceptive reader will recognize the allusion to Swift’s *Tale*, in which knowledge only alters things for the worse. Willoughby’s catalog of regret is undercut in the final chapter, when the narrator acknowledges that, while Willoughby may think of Marianne with regret, “that he was for ever inconsolable, that he fled from society, or

contracted and habitual gloom of temper, or died of a broken heart, must not be depended on—for he did neither. He lived to exert, and frequently to enjoy himself” (430). For this most unromantic of heroes, life goes on quite well, if Austen’s narrator is to be believed.

In the figure of Colonel Brandon, however, Austen provides not only a counterpoint to Willoughby’s faithlessness, but a hero in the romantic fashion. His life, and the lives of the two Elizas, is straight out of romantic literature.<sup>75</sup> In love with his foster sister; parted cruelly forever by parental tyranny; returning home after a long separation only to find his love not only married to his brother, but then seduced, abandoned and dying with an illegitimate child; devoting himself to raising that child only to have *her* seduced and abandoned by Willoughby; finding in Marianne the very picture of his own love (and her daughter); seeing her on the precipice of ruin with no power to change the situation; and bearing it all with dignity and grace, Colonel Brandon is Austen’s depiction of a romantic hero: dedicated, steadfast, and faithful, albeit one in need of flannel wrappings. In marrying Brandon, Marianne is indeed “born to an extraordinary fate” (429). Not only “born to discover the falsehood of her own opinions” (429), she, unlike her companions in sentimental fiction, is rewarded with her hero.

Austen’s experiments with integrating satire into gothic and sentimental fiction are concerned with conventional plots: marriage, money, and family relations. As such, they require the conventional “happy” endings of these novels, with appropriate marriages for exemplary moral figures like Catherine and Eleanor in *Northanger Abbey*

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<sup>75</sup> One probable source is Inchbald’s *Nature and Art*, in the plight of Hannah Primrose.

and Elinor and Marianne in *Sense and Sensibility*. Lloyd W. Brown has argued that Austen's parodic endings "serve the serious purpose of emphasizing Austen's concern with continuous realism throughout each work."<sup>76</sup> As a satirist, however, Austen cannot resist adding ambiguity to these endings, and to the endings of all her novels. In *Sense and Sensibility*, not only are Elinor and Marianne rewarded with marriage, but Willoughby finds domestic felicity in the arms of Mrs. Grey, as does the manipulative Lucy Steele in the arms of the coxcomb Robert Dashwood. Romantic conventions are mocked again when Elinor and Edward are "neither of them quite enough in love" (418) to forgo practical concerns rather than sacrificing all to be together. Many of Austen's endings frustrate reader expectations by telling, rather than showing successful proposals. In *Pride and Prejudice*, for example, the only proposals shown are the failed ones, while in *Emma*, readerly expectations are deliberately frustrated at the crucial proposal scene. Instead of encountering fond protestations of love, the readers hear only the voice of the narrator: "What did she say?—Just what she ought, of course. A lady always does" (*E*, 470). While Austen does not leave her readers in an interpretive abyss that Swift does in the *Tale*, she does leave them with a similar sense of frustration. Without the concrete knowledge of how Elizabeth Bennet, Emma Woodhouse, and other heroines responded to proposals by their prospective spouses, readers are left "to condole with each other" (*TT*, 205) in order to create these scenes for themselves.

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<sup>76</sup> Lloyd W. Brown, *Bits of Ivory: Narrative Techniques in Jane Austen's Fiction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), 227.

Her endings are also resistant to the closure that so often accompanies novels and preclude her novels from ever being seen as satires.<sup>77</sup> As Regina Barreca argues, “the endings of comic works by women writers do not, ultimately, reproduce the expected hierarchies, or if they do there is often an attendant sense of dislocation even with the happiest ending.”<sup>78</sup> Austen’s novels are no different. In *Northanger Abbey*, Henry and Catherine’s happy ending is wrought by the ridiculously contrived resolution of plot points signaled by the “tell-tale compression of pages” in the final two chapters, and Marianne’s happy fate is marked by an unusual sense of ambiguity: although Marianne is happy in her marriage—Austen is quick to point out that Marianne “could never love by halves” (S&S, 430)—her marriage is the product of systematic coercion, as everyone believes that she is to “be the reward of all” Colonel Brandon’s “sorrows” and “their obligations” (429). Austen’s language is important here: “With such a confederacy *against* her...what could she do?” (429). “Against” renders Marianne’s happy ending to Brandon unsettling, as she is given as a reward for his trials, not receiving a reward for overcoming her own; she is once again the object of desire, rather than the desiring and rewarded subject. This unsettling pattern continues in *Mansfield Park* with the marriage of Edmund Bertram and Fanny Price. As Barreca observes, far from falling deeply in love with a woman who adores him, Edmund “persists in the rather insensitive manner of telling Fanny over and over that he cannot imagine any women as his wife except

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<sup>77</sup> Frank Palmeri, *Satire in Narrative: Petronius, Swift, Gibbon, Melville, and Pynchon* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990, and *Satire, History, Novel: Narrative Forms, 1665-1815* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003).

<sup>78</sup> Regina Barreca, *Untamed and Unabashed: Essays on Women and Humor in British Literature* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994), 23.



Mary.”<sup>79</sup> The ending to this novel is as contrived as that of *Northanger Abbey*, with a narrator interjecting, “I only entreat everybody to believe that exactly at the time when it was quite natural that it should be so, and not a week earlier, Edmund did cease to care about Miss Crawford, and became as anxious to marry Fanny, as Fanny herself could desire” (*MP*, 544). Like Marianne, Fanny gets her heart’s desire, but with a similarly unsettling sense of ambiguity. Although Barreca argues that the need for “the resolution of tensions, like unity or integration” in women’s comedic fiction is “too reductive to deal with the nonclosed nature of women’s writings,”<sup>80</sup> she does not notice that Austen’s work in particular resists closure, resolution, unity and integration on any but a superficial level because it is satiric.

Austen’s integration of satiric and novelistic, public and private concerns is evident in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and *Mansfield Park* (1814). The novels are most commonly considered in contrast: *Pride and Prejudice* is Horatian, *Mansfield Park* is Juvenalian;<sup>81</sup> *Pride and Prejudice* is “rather too light and bright and sparkling,”<sup>82</sup> while *Mansfield Park* offers nothing but sobriety; *Pride and Prejudice* is illuminated by the brilliant wit and exuberance of Elizabeth Bennet, but *Mansfield Park* has only dour Fanny Price to recommend it. When examined together, however, these texts can be seen as meditations on satiric authority in which Austen tests and rejects both male and female authority to effect change through satiric utterance.

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Paulson, 306.

<sup>82</sup> Austen, Letter to Cassandra Austen, 4 February 1813, *Jane Austen’s Letters*, 203.

*Pride and Prejudice* may not be seen as Austen's most satiric novel.

*Northanger Abbey* and *Sense and Sensibility* both have specific satiric targets that make the satiric asides of *Pride and Prejudice* seem tame by comparison. *Pride and Prejudice*, however, is the novel in which Austen contemplates most deliberately the effect and effectiveness of satire and satiric authority. Swift recognizes that no Father Satirist exists to teach moral authority from on high, but Austen acknowledges that, in fiction and in life, a higher authority (ostensibly) exists for women in the figures of fathers and husbands. For Austen, however, this authority often leads, as Swift's does, to nothing: or more specifically, to a life spent hiding from six women in a library with no authority, moral or otherwise. In the character of Mr. Bennet, Austen dismantles the myth of parental authority literally, while subverting that of the Father Satirist figuratively; in the characters of Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth, however, Austen symbolizes "an effort to work through established forms"—in this case satiric authority—"in order to transform them into the purveyors of ecstatic personal happiness."<sup>83</sup>

Austen's critique of paternal authority is not unique to *Pride and Prejudice*; in every other novel, fathers are either absent physically or emotionally (Mr. Morland, Sir Thomas Bertram, and Mr. Price), abusive (General Tilney, the Crawfords' Admiral uncle), dead (Mr. Dashwood), useless hypochondriacs (Mr. Woodhouse), or moral disasters (Sir Walter Elliot). In the character of Mr. Bennet, however, Austen creates a portrait of paternal authority gone pathetically astray to illustrate the ineffectualness of

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<sup>83</sup> Johnson, 92-93. Here Johnson is particularly talking about eighteenth-century fiction, but the statement is applicable to the transformation of Elizabeth and Darcy from dueling satirists trying to impose their authority on each other into happily married spouses.

satire to provoke any type of change. Standard interpretations of Mr. Bennet view him as the main satirist of the text. Kernan calls Mr. Bennet “one of the finest satirists,”<sup>84</sup> and Jenny Davidson concurs that the novel’s “chief satirist is Mr. Bennet.”<sup>85</sup> “The novel tempts us to accept him as a guide,” Patricia Meyer Spacks notes, because his “ridicule often conveys accurate moral judgments,”<sup>86</sup> such as the servility and self-importance of Mr. Collins, the thoughtlessness and flightiness of his own daughters, and inferiority of his wife, while recognizing the value of daughters Elizabeth and Jane. Like the Father Satirist he represents, he sits in judgment from a distance: in this case his library, a place of “leisure and tranquility; and though prepared ... to meet with folly and conceit in every other room in the house, he was used to be free from them there” (*P&P*, 80). As the novel progresses, however, Austen reveals Mr. Bennet’s ineffectual nature and the very real harm it does to his family; in so doing, Austen reveals the paucity of satiric authority to effect any real change. While Mr. Bennet relishes his role as satirist—he has no qualms about publicly ridiculing Mary’s musical performance at the Netherfield Ball, and he consistently mocks his wife—he abdicates his role as a literal authority figure, a father who could have used his own talents to “at least have preserved the respectability of his daughters, even if incapable of enlarging the mind of his wife” (263). Instead, his family serves as intellectual sport; “contented with laughing at them,” Mr. Bennet would never exert himself to restrain the wild giddiness of his youngest daughters” (236). As such, he

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<sup>84</sup> Kernan, *Cankered Muse*, 33.

<sup>85</sup> Davidson, “Austen’s Voices,” 237.

<sup>86</sup> Patricia Meyer Spacks, “Austen’s Laughter,” in *Last Laughs: Perspectives on Women and Comedy*, ed. Regina Barreca (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1998), 71.

is, in Bilger's observation, "in the mode of misogynist satirists [who] ridicule with no intention of reforming."<sup>87</sup> In the private, domestic world of Austen's novels, abnegation of parental authority leads to the same moral abyss as satiric authority that stands apart from the world and judges from on high.

In the characters of Darcy and Elizabeth, however, Austen suggests a method for satiric accommodation. Both characters are described as satirists. Mr. Darcy is said to have "a very satirical eye" (26) and, by his own assessment, he sits in Juvenalian judgment of others, certain that his own assessments are correct. "I cannot forget the vices and follies of others so soon as I ought," he avers, "nor their offenses against myself. My good opinion once lost is lost forever" (63). Elizabeth, too, sees the world with the satirical eye, but it is Horatian rather than Juvenalian and, at first, aligned with her father's own assessments. "Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies do divert me," she admits, "and I laugh at them whenever I can" (62). Throughout the novel, Elizabeth is described by herself and others as a great studier of character, and her assessments are usually correct—except in the cases of Wickham and Darcy. Both convinced of their own authority to speak the truth about individuals and social situations, Elizabeth and Darcy enact their own fantasies of satiric authority. While Darcy intimidates people into behaving the way he wants them to—convincing Bingley that Jane Bennet is not interested in him, and almost terrifying his younger sister, Georgiana, into submission—Elizabeth revels in her own superiority of knowledge. For all that Elizabeth speaks "archly" to Darcy in discussing their shared characters at the Netherfield

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<sup>87</sup> Bilger, 163.

ball, her assessment of their similar dispositions is generally correct: “We are each of an unsocial taciturn disposition, unwilling to speak, unless we expect to say something that will amaze the whole room, and be handed down to posterity with all the éclat of a proverb” (103). As authoritative satirists who know the world better than any others, they would expect nothing less than public amazement.

Like Swift, however, Austen recognizes that this satiric will-to-power is ineffectual. Justman notes that there is a place for satiric authority in Austen’s novels, as “Elizabeth’s...exaggerated and yet just portrayal of Darcy to his own face, her satiric freedom, is exactly what started him on the way to transformation,”<sup>88</sup> and Darcy’s letter, with its equally just portrayal of Elizabeth’s family, Wickham’s true character, and his own behavior toward Bingley, begins Elizabeth’s own. For their transformation to be complete, however, all such satiric authority must be discarded. Darcy must realize that “good principles” coupled with “pride and conceit” are not only “insufficient to please a woman worthy of being pleased,” but also destructive to happiness of those around him, such as Bingley (410). Elizabeth must learn to part ways from her father’s satiric view, to recognize how his failings have injured the whole family and to reject the pleasure he takes in the shameful acts of his daughters. In so doing, Elizabeth and Darcy are able to negotiate a more equitable relationship where moral discrimination is based not on abstract moral authority but on a more communal interpretation of value. In abjuring satiric authority, Elizabeth succeeds where her father fails; far from retiring to a library with only ironic laughter as a consolation, she marries happily to a man who can interpret

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<sup>88</sup> Justman, 66.

her “impertinence” as “liveliness of mind,”<sup>89</sup> even if he has “yet to learn to be laught at.”<sup>90</sup>

Austen continues her meditation on the limits of satiric authority in *Mansfield Park*, what Ronald Paulson calls her “Juvenalian satire...with the Juvenalian convention of the isolated protagonist: in a large family, universally obtuse, there is only one member, a moral agent, who is both good and intelligent.”<sup>91</sup> Although the “isolated protagonist” in this novel is Fanny Price, Austen most clearly examines satiric authority in the character of Mary Crawford. In fact, Austen splits satiric and moral authority between the two characters to draw some interesting conclusions. As light and bright and sparkling as any character in *Pride and Prejudice*, Mary is described in much the same manner as Elizabeth. Her interests, like Elizabeth’s, lie in the observation of character: “her attention was all for men and women, her talents for the light and lively” (*MP*, 94), and, like Elizabeth, she assumes “the right of a lively mind ... seizing whatever may contribute to its own amusement or that of others” (75). Like Elizabeth, she is charming, witty, attractive, and confident in her own opinions of the world, “completely unintimidated by authority, and ... the sharpest wit in the novel.”<sup>92</sup> For all these similarities, however, Mary is *not* Elizabeth; she is, rather, Elizabeth turned inside-out, with all of Elizabeth’s perception and none of her perspective. Mary appears to be the novel’s satirist, able to see through the hypocrisy of social conventions, whether of

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 421.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 412.

<sup>91</sup> Paulson, 306-307.

<sup>92</sup> Gillooly, 97.

marriage, of religious practice, or of parental obligation, but as satire turns to cynicism, as her pun on the “Rears and Vices” of Admirals shows, Mary is aligned less with Elizabeth than with the heroines of Austen’s juvenilia. Like them, she is motivated by pure self-interest; this may be explained by her inheritance of twenty-thousand pounds and her uncle’s abusive treatment of her aunt. Her belief that “everybody should marry as soon as they can do it to advantage” (50), originally appears to be simple prudence, but this prudence is soon revealed as cynicism as she systematically decides that Tom Bertram may make a good husband for her—sight unseen—and then that Edmund Bertram would be much better, if only he would forgo ordination. Mary’s cynicism leads her to acquiesce to Henry’s plot to make Fanny love him, to wish Tom Bertram were dead so that Edmund would inherit Mansfield Park, and finally, and most gravely, to attribute Maria Rushworth’s elopement with Henry Crawford to mere folly and imprudence. She may not run mad like Laura, or rampage from country house to country house like Lady Susan, but in her cynicism, self-interest, and heartlessness, she is their daughter. Unlike Elizabeth, Mary does not, or cannot, concede her satiric authority to negotiate moral discrimination with Edmund and thus loses her chance for happiness.

Austen’s consideration of satiric authority in the character of Mary stands in contrast to her consideration of moral authority in the novel’s heroine Fanny Price, who is at once the moral center of the work (she is nearly always correct in her interpretations of people, events, and social situations) and, arguably, the dullest heroine Austen ever created. In contrast to Mary’s cynicism, Fanny is all good; she is the “judge, critic, and

normative” element of the novel.<sup>93</sup> As Spacks suggests, “her gravity registers her unfailing commitment to understanding.”<sup>94</sup> Fanny is as capable as any of Swiftian invective, as noted by her rant against her mother: “She might scruple to make use of the words, but she must and did feel that her mother was a partial, ill-judging parent, a dawdle, a slattern, who neither taught nor restrained her children, whose house was the scene of mismanagement and discomfort from beginning to end, and who had no talent, no conversation, affection towards herself” (451-452). These would be harsh words from any Austenian heroine, but they are particularly jarring from Fanny, the quiet, fragile girl who cannot even request that a fire be built in her room during the winter. However, if Mary represents satiric authority and its failings, Fanny represents moral authority in the novel. She is consistently described as the only person in the novel with an unfailing moral sense: she alone can see through the Crawfords from the beginning, she alone abhors both the play *Lover’s Vows* and its enactment without the approbation of Sir Thomas Bertram, and she alone considers the good of everyone before herself; in short, she is the opposite of Mary. Austen, however, seems to have an ambivalent attitude toward this authority, as she consistently portrays Fanny as less attractive, less appealing, and less exciting than Mary. It is easy to comprehend Austen’s attitude toward Mary: the character symbolizes how moral laxity, satiric wit, and self-interest can be very attractive, particularly to people like Edmund, for whom family duty is paramount. Austen’s attitude toward Fanny is much more complex, however, because morality is far less appealing to

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<sup>93</sup> Paulson, 307.

<sup>94</sup> Spacks, “Austen’s Laughter,” 77



most people than pleasure. In the creation of Mary and her counterpart Fanny, Austen “deliberately thwarts readers’ desires, refusing to provide easy satisfactions, forcing one to recognize the inadequacy of enjoyment as a criterion of excellence, demanding that we take pleasure in the working out of narrative strategies controlled by moral intent”<sup>95</sup>—no matter how dull they may seem originally.

Austen’s emphasis on the compromise of satiric authority to a communal interpretation of moral discrimination is grounded in what Brian Connery called Swift’s “constitutional settlement of meaning,” in which interpretation is determined through “collective construction,” an idea that relies on interpersonal relations rather than on outside authority.<sup>96</sup> In her discussion of eighteenth-century women satirists, Barbara Olive notices something similar; however, she cites not Swift but Carol Gilligan’s “ethics of care” based on the primacy of human relations.<sup>97</sup> Olive suggests that these female satirists have a complex relationship with their audience because, as women, they define moral situations in terms of relationships,<sup>98</sup> a definition that precludes the idea of a hostile satirist alienated from the corruption of the masses and dispensing morals from on high. While Austen does not dramatize an “ethics of care”—her sheer delight in skewering (or beheading) her characters precludes this—she does recognize, as Gilligan suggests, “a world comprised of relationships rather than of people standing alone, a

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<sup>95</sup> Spacks, “Austen’s Laughter,” 78.

<sup>96</sup> Connery,

<sup>97</sup> Barbara Olive, “Woman Satirists of the Eighteenth Century: Towards a New Aesthetic?” *Proceedings of the First Dakotas Conference on Earlier British Literature* ed. Jay Rund (Aberdeen SD: Northern State University Press, 1993), 97

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 97

world that coheres through human connection rather than through systems of rules.”<sup>99</sup> 217

Although it may seem beyond the scope of this argument, Gilligan’s consideration of morality is relevant to a discussion of Austen’s satire because it is in accordance with traditional satiric conventions and the reasons many women are excluded from the satiric canon. Gilligan argues that men have a “rights conception of morality,” one in which every reasonable person can agree on what is just and fair, while women have a “responsibility conception,” in which what is right is based on what is right for a relationship. “The morality of rights differs from the morality of responsibility,” states Gilligan, “in its emphasis on separation rather than connection, in its consideration of the individual rather than the relationship as primacy.”<sup>100</sup> The rights conception of morality can be clearly seen in works of male satirists, in which a clearly defined, public set of rules sets the standard for individual public behavior, while Austen’s morality is clearly based on the primacy of relationships and the ways individual and private choices affect their community.

Public systems of rule followed blindly are, in fact, usually the main object of Austen’s satire. While Austen does not satirize the idea of marriage itself because it brings human connection (as seen in the happy marriage of Elizabeth and Darcy), she does satirize marriages based on economic need or social convention (as seen in the marriages of Lydia and Wickham and Mr. and Mrs. Bennet), which do not bring people together in any meaningful manner. In fact, most of Austen’s earlier “villains” are those

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<sup>99</sup> Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 29.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-21.

who lack any such human connection. They are individuals who “stand alone,” who enter an already-connected community and destroy its coherence; often, these villains are also unconnected to a community or family of their own: for example, Willoughby has an aunt who never appears “onstage,” Wickham has no known relations, and Henry and Mary Crawford have each other (and an abusive Uncle), but have no parents and come from no true family. In fact, one of the ways Austen “punishes” her wrong-doers is to exile them from any sort of relationship within community: Willoughby is exiled from the Dashwoods’ community, Lydia is sent to Northumberland with only an unloving husband for a partner, and Maria Rushwood’s elopement with Henry Crawford allows Austen to give her the harshest punishment she ever devised: living alone with Mrs. Norris.

The importance of human connection leads Austen to a further integration of satire and the novel. Austen, like Swift, knows that character reformation through satire is not possible. As Woolf notes, Austen acknowledges that “even if the heat of moral wrath urged us to improve a world so full of spite, pettiness, and folly, the task is beyond our powers.”<sup>101</sup> She also recognizes that even satirists had “to keep on reasonably good terms with the associates of her everyday life.”<sup>102</sup> People are not going to change, and they are not going to go away, either. In this recognition of the necessity of human connectedness in a world filled with both virtue and vice, Austen does in her texts what Swift cannot do in his. “Here,” Ronald Paulson notes, “is the ‘acceptance world’ of the novel, which

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<sup>101</sup> Woolf, 200.

<sup>102</sup> D. W. Harding, “Regulated Hatred: An Aspect of the Work of Jane Austen.” *Scrutiny* 8 (1940), 349.

replaces the rigorous moral demarcations of satire; ... the real world, good mixed with bad, ideals with corruption of ideals, in which one cannot realistically withdraw from its relation with the other.”<sup>103</sup> Austen understands the world as it is and delights in it, rather than despairs. People are what they are: spiteful and petty, but also pleasant and, occasionally, virtuous. “Beauty,” Woolf states, “illumines these fools.”<sup>104</sup>

Austen’s satire, with its focus on private values, community relationships, and nonaggressive, laughing assessments that seem to offer no clear moral resolution, is the final refutation of Dryden’s masculine satire that ridicules public vice and folly with a clear eye to reform. In the inhabitation of individual characters, the rejection of satiric authority, and the recognition of satire’s inability to change behavior or perception, Austen accomplishes her final achievement in the successful integration of satiric and novelistic forms in *Emma* (1816) and *Persuasion* (1817). When compared with Austen’s earlier novels, particularly *Northanger Abbey* and *Sense and Sensibility*, these novels seem to contain much less overt satire (and very little parody); Austen has progressed beyond broad satiric commentary of literary genres and satiric authority and instead focuses on the importance of human relations and connection. Of *Emma*, Johnson observes, “In no novel are Austen’s methods particularly instructional, but *Emma* most conspicuously lacks the clarity of emphasis and the conclusory arguments that mark didactic fiction,”<sup>105</sup> while Rawson calls *Persuasion* “Austen’s ... mellowest novel.”<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Paulson, 304.

<sup>104</sup> Woolf, 200.

<sup>105</sup> Johnson, 127.

<sup>106</sup> Rawson, 267.

Although both novels have satiric elements, they center primarily on the internal lives of their heroines, Emma Woodhouse and Anne Elliot, respectively, and on the ways each heroine interacts with her community; in both, satiric energies are directed at those interlopers who would destroy human connection and relations.

The satiric elements of *Emma* center around the character of Emma Woodhouse herself; Sutherland has argued that “Emma ... is as completely realized as any character in English fiction, and yet her creator is fully alive to the imperfections in her character, and expresses them with a delicate satire that still leaves her free to explore the hidden springs of Emma’s personality.”<sup>107</sup> As noted earlier, Austen’s use of inhabitation allows the reader to understand Emma’s thoughts, motivations, and behaviors, ensuring that he or she sees things Emma’s way, and, as O’Neill has pointed out, ensuring that he or she commits Emma’s errors of judgment. This technique places Emma as the moral authority of the novel, but it is an authority she must learn to put aside in order to help ensure the stability of the community of Highbury.

In fact, *Emma* is unique among Austen’s novels in placing Highbury as a center of importance. Only in *Pride and Prejudice* is another small town itself given so much prominence and, in that novel, Meryton is primarily important as a militia station. Highbury, however, is almost a character in its own right, and its prominence reveals Austen’s insistence on community relations. The letters of Frank Churchill, for example, are not only important to Mr. and Mrs. Weston, Emma, and Knightley, but to the town itself, as “Highbury feel[s] a sort of pride in him too” (*E*, 25) and “every morning visit in

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<sup>107</sup> Sutherland, 121.

Highbury included some mention of the handsome letter Mrs. Weston had received” from Frank on the occasion of her marriage (26). Highbury is united in vilifying Frank’s aunt, Mrs. Churchill, for forbidding him to attend his father, and equally united in mourning her death, as “the event acquitted her of all the fancifulness, and all the selfishness of imaginary complaints” (422) in the eyes of the village.

“First in consequence” in this neighborhood, Emma is “handsome, clever, and rich” (3-4), with an acute sense of her responsibility to this community. Although much of the novel’s satire turns on Emma’s cluelessness about both her own power and her ability to interpret the motivations and behaviors of others, she is the one most consistently shown to be concerned with the social welfare of Highbury, attempting to alleviate the needs of the poor in her community, from the tenants she visits to Miss Bates and her family. She quietly overrides her father’s insistence on a gruel-based diet, providing her dinner guests with the delicacies they would not have at home and sending them choice cuts of meat. She understands the importance of human connection and community. Her status also gives her the ability be “a ruthless truth teller,”<sup>108</sup> accurately diagnosing (if not correcting) larger social problems. For example, it is Emma who takes apart the opening lines of *Pride and Prejudice* when discussing her own reluctance to marry. Inverting the earlier novel’s maxim on marriage (“It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife” [*PP*, 3]), Emma argues, “A single woman, with very little income, must be a ridiculous, disagreeable, old maid! ... but a single woman, of good fortune, is always

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<sup>108</sup> Sulloway, 21.

respectable” (91). Emma recognizes that a single woman of good fortune may not be in want of a spouse; she also recognizes, however, that it *is* a truth universally acknowledged that a poor woman must be in want of a husband in order to escape being far more than just ridiculous.

This authority, however, also threatens to fracture Highbury as her matchmaking antics prove, not only fruitless, but highly disruptive. Her efforts to keep Harriet from Mr. Martin lead to needless anguish for most of the Highbury community, from Harriet and Mr. Martin to George Knightley, who recognizes Emma’s error long before she does; her subsequent attempts to match Harriet with Mr. Elton lead to a humiliating proposal—for Emma—and the subsequent entrance of a new, insufferable Mrs. Elton; finally, her interest in Frank Churchill leads to an indiscreet conversation about Jane Fairfax’s love for a married man and threatens the bond between Jane and Frank. Only when she renounces this authority will everyone—including Emma herself—find his or her own spouse, not through the machinations of an authority who stands above the matrimonial fray, but through individual connection and shared meaning, in which “the wishes, the hopes, the confidence, the predictions of the small band of true friends” can be negotiated (528).

Emma’s authority also works to rupture the community in other ways. When Emma tells Miss Bates that she is allowed a limited number of dull things to say, “only three at once” (403), her direct “satiric” attack offers neither stinging social critique nor laughing admonition. It serves only to fragment the community of picnickers and fracture Emma’s relationship with one of her oldest acquaintances. Unlike Emma, Miss Bates is

not the first of consequence in Highbury, but, arguably, the least, because “she had no intellectual superiority to make atonement to herself, or frighten those who might hate her, into outward respect” (20), and Emma’s statement makes this quite clear. In Highbury, however, Miss Bates “enjoy[s] a most uncommon degree of popularity for a woman neither young, handsome, nor married” (20). She is as much a part of Highbury as Emma herself, and Emma’s cruelty does nothing but destroy her own place in that world. Community can only be restored through Emma’s recognition of her own flaws and her resolution to correct them. Emma, however, “is an authority figure responsive to the morally corrective influence of public opinions. This is what makes her feel the truth of Knightley’s reproach at Box Hill, and this is what makes her resolute, swift, and feeling in her amends.”<sup>109</sup> Again, Emma’s authority must be tempered by the needs of the the public opinion of Highbury to maintain human connection.

*Persuasion*, Austen’s final complete novel, is most commonly viewed as Austen’s acknowledgment of Romantic inclinations; however, Rawson argues that “the accentuated ‘romantic’ sympathies of [the novel] do not signal any abandonment of satire,”<sup>110</sup> but rather their enlargement, as they become more integrated with the generic demands of the novel. It incorporates many elements of her earlier works: like *Northanger Abbey*, it begins in negation, and, as in Austen’s earlier work, there is a more definite distinction between the narrator and the point of view of the main character, Anne Elliot. However, as the process of inhabitation continues and the consciousness of

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<sup>109</sup> Johnson, 130.

<sup>110</sup> Rawson, 267.



Anne emerges throughout the text, the more satiric voice of the narrator recedes. In *Persuasion*, Austen focuses even more firmly on the importance of individual feeling and interpretation to effect moral change. As in *Emma*, Austen's focus is on the relationships of members of a community. Unlike the community created in *Emma*, however, the community in *Persuasion* is not the stable confines of a small village, but the community that coalesces around Anne as she moves from the narrow confines of her family to the Musgroves', to Lyme, and finally, to Bath, where a community of like-minded friends allows for a communal understanding of the importance of human relations. As such, *Persuasion* is the final integration of Swiftian satiric energy and the generic demands of the novel.

If *Northanger Abbey* begins in a resounding "No," negating the romantic prospects of her heroine, the beginning of *Persuasion* is even more profoundly negative, as it does not even mention Anne Elliot. In fact, the first chapter is devoted to a description of Sir Walter Elliot and his oldest daughter, Elizabeth; Anne is only a middle child whose "bloom had vanished early" (*P*, 3). In fact, Anne does not speak until well into the third chapter, and her consciousness as a controlling point of view does not emerge until Chapter Four. Austen's reticence to introduce her heroine serves twin purposes. First, it showcases the world of Anne's family, in which she is, literally, "nobody." The middle daughter of three—"an awful legacy for a mother to bequeath" (5)—without the handsomeness or pride of place of the eldest, or the importance of the youngest in being married, Anne has no standing in her own home because there is no one who values her place within it. As John Wiltshire notes, "Anne is without power in

her family circle as she is at first without dramatic prominence in the text.”<sup>111</sup> By refusing to give Anne’s consciousness prominence in the opening narrative—or even as full a description as she gives to Elizabeth—Austen symbolizes Anne’s social isolation.

Austen’s second purpose in delaying Anne’s emergence in the novel is to establish a narrative consciousness separate from her heroine’s, specifically for satiric purposes. “A notably impatient voice”<sup>112</sup> in the text, the narrator delivers satiric attacks that Austen’s more reticent heroine could not. This voice hearkens back to Austen’s juvenilia and earlier novels, in which the satiric energies are rarely contained. Like Emma Woodhouse, the narrator is a ruthless truth-teller, but the truths she tells are far more jarring than anything Emma would ever say, and far more cutting than anything Anne (who almost always provides benign interpretations for others’ folly) would even think. Thus, the narrator functions originally as the moral center of the work, allowing readers to understand just how emotionally and socially impoverished Anne has become. The novel begins with this narrator, setting a surprisingly satiric tone. For example, the narrator’s description of Sir Walter Elliot, a man for whom “vanity was the beginning and the end of ...character” (4), a man who “never took up any book but the Baronetage” (3)—what Elizabeth calls “the book of books” (7)—in order to feel secure of his own place in the world, is one of Austen’s sharpest attacks on class prejudice and personal vanity. Elliot is a terrible father, valuing his children only as assets to his own self-image.

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<sup>111</sup> John Wiltshire, “*Mansfield Park, Emma, and Persuasion*,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*, ed. Edward Copeland and Juliet McMaster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 76.

<sup>112</sup>*Ibid.*, 78.

As the novel continues, the narrator's asides become sharper and more jarring.

For example, after the death of Richard Musgrove is described with appropriate sorrow by a sister, the narrator fills in the facts, providing the knowledge everyone in the family knows but would never say:

The real circumstances of this pathetic piece of family history were, that the Musgroves had the ill fortune of a very troublesome, hopeless son; and the good fortune to lose him before he reached his twentieth year; that he had been sent to sea, because he was stupid and unmanageable on shore; that he had been very little cared for at any time by his family, though quite as much as he deserved; seldom heard of, and scarcely at all regretted (54).

The narrator again shows her satiric impatience when Mrs. Musgrove sits between Wentworth and Anne on a sofa to discuss her dead son. Anne's "slender form" is contrasted with Mrs. Musgrove's "large, fat sighings, over the destiny of a son, whom alive nobody had cared for" (73)—a surprisingly insensitive comparison given the nature of the older woman's grief. The narrator is quick to point out that "personal size and mental sorrow have certainly no necessary proportions," and that "a large bulky figure has as good a right to be in deep affliction, as the most graceful set of limbs in the world" (73-74). She immediately undercuts this recognition, however, by noting succinctly, "fair or not fair, there are unbecoming conjunctions, which reason will patronize in vain,—which taste cannot tolerate,—which ridicule will seize"(74), and which, of course, the narrator has already seized, quite happily.

Like Swift, however, Austen is aware that a distant satiric authority will never effect moral change; her satiric asides are more jarring here because they are about not only moral lapses, but also about physical facts that will never change. In this novel, as in her others, Austen recognizes that only individual feeling and interpretation can effect

change, both in one's self and in others, when a community of like-minded individuals is formed. In *Persuasion*, "the narrative becomes gradually suffused with [Anne's] presence, idioms, and approach,"<sup>113</sup> a development which coincides with Anne's recognition and acceptance of her own individual feeling and interpretation as a moral guide, rather than on social pressures from without, her willingness to act on these feelings, and on the establishment of a community that is based around Anne herself. At the beginning of the novel, Anne recognizes the effect of persuasion in her life—the persuasion of Lady Russell to reject Wentworth as a suitor—but her very social isolation precludes her from acting with any authority that comes from this knowledge until her place in the social world moves from peripheral to central. While Emma had to learn to temper her authority to the needs of her community, Anne must learn that she has authority in this new community that emerges after the accident at Lyme. As her confidence in her own ability grows, her presence is more and more important to those around her. She is no longer just "useful" to her family; she is a respected part of a community that includes, ultimately, almost every character in the novel, but excludes those who cannot, or will not recognize Anne's true worth or moral authority: her father, Elizabeth, Mr. Elliot, and Mrs. Clay.

Austen puts the capstone on Anne's authority, her recognition of individual feeling as an agent of change, in the climatic scene in which Anne and Harville discuss constancy and fidelity. Anne's authority, her ability to see others correctly, is similar to that of Fanny Price, but, unlike Fanny, Anne is not forced to wait for Wentworth. In a reversal of sentimental convention, Wentworth can only declare his feelings after hearing

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<sup>113</sup> Wiltshire, 78.

Anne indirectly declare her own, in a scene in which Anne's consciousness and her voice are finally congruent. In fact, Anne's acceptance of Wentworth's proposal—"Would I?" (268) in response to Wentworth's query about renewing their engagement years ago—is as close to an acceptance of marriage as Austen ever allows readers to see. Although the satiric narrator re-emerges to close the novel with more jarring truths—Sir Walter does not love Anne, and her sister Mary is happy primarily because Anne is marrying someone richer than did her sisters-in-law—Anne has a permanent community in Wentworth's family and friends, as well as Mrs. Smith and Lady Russell.

In all her works, from the juvenilia to *Persuasion*, Austen shows that she is the true daughter of Swift. However, in her use of Swiftian techniques, satiric inhabitation, a recognition of satire's inability to effect change, and an understanding of the importance of individual interpretation, Austen does not deconstruct satire, but rather rehabilitates it in the satirical novel. James Sutherland has noted that "so little is the prevailing satirical atmosphere in Jane Austen's novels a limiting factor that it does more than anything else to preserve them in a condition of eternal freshness."<sup>114</sup> In combining the generic demands of the novel with Swiftian satiric energies, Austen also preserves satire in an imitable mode that is itself eternally fresh.

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<sup>114</sup> Sutherland, 122.

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